

Letter to the Future

Your last assignment for this class is to write a letter to the students who will be in my class next year. Having survived the last nine months in the Den of the Ogre (or the Classroom of the Clown...some of you know what that means....), you are in the unique position of being able to tell others how to make the most of their year here. Your letter does not have to be a five-paragraph argumentative essay, but there are certain topics you must cover. And, of course, specific details and examples from your own experience will make your suggestions more meaningful and believable. So, even though it is not an argumentative essay, you are going to make some claims about the class and support them with specific stories from your time here. It's like a combination of an argument and a first-person narrative, get it? It's *your* story about this class. In other words, it should *very long* because it has to meet lots of different requirements! *[Anyone who asks "How long does it have to be?" will be required to write at least 2,000 words to get credit! If you have to ask, that's the answer!]* Your letter will be graded on completion, legibility, and effect: You have meet the requirements below in handwriting that is easy to read, and your stories should make your reader *feel* something. And, yes, it *will be delivered* to a random student (or multiple random students if it is popular with the first one who sees it) on the first day of school in August. You have a real audience, a noble purpose, and all the resources you could possibly need right here in this room. You recently reviewed and turned in your English Binder; think of some of the things that were in it and get started! *This assignment is to be done neatly on separate paper.*

Here is what you should include in your letter:

- **Heading:** Your name and today's date in the upper-right corner of the page
- **Salutation:** All letters have them. You might start with something polite like "Dear Fortunate Soul," or "Hello, Incoming Ninth Grader!" On the other hand, I am sure you remember some of the less savory greetings that you encountered when you read these letters on the first day. However you greet your audience, remember that you will be signing your name to this work, so if you wouldn't say it to your Grandma, don't say it in this letter.
- **General Introduction:** Tell the new student a little about yourself and how you did in this class. It will help him/her to know a little about you so s/he can decide if you are a good person to take advice from.
- **Introduction to the Class:** In this section, include hints that will help future students avoid the mistakes you made. Again, focus on your own experiences to support your advice and suggestions. Tell them some stories about things you did (or wish you had done) to succeed in the class.
- **Reading:** Reflect on the reading you did this year. Discuss the role of reading in this class. Include book reviews/tests and the way we read novels and stories in class as a group. You can name the books we read this year and talk about why you liked (or didn't like) them, but realize that I may not use the same ones next year. Tell them how to make the most of the reading assignments, whatever they may be.
- **Writing:** Reflect on the writing you did this year. Explain the major writing assignments. Give some hints on how to get the highest possible scores from me as well as from Utah Compose. Don't forget about the English Binder! Any hints about how to do well on these things will help.

- **Great Expectations:** Think back to your first day in the class. What did you expect this class to include? Did it turn out the way you thought it would? What do you wish we had done more/less of? Was the class what you expected it to be? Give the new student some suggestions as to how s/he should set his/her expectations for the class. [*When I started this class, I thought _____, and/but what actually happened was _____....*]
- **The Class Website:** For the sake of humanity, please tell them how important this resource is. I know lots of other teachers have a website, and most of them are useless. I run my classroom and all the assignments from this site! I update it every freakin' day! There are no excuses. If you have a access to a computer or a modern cell phone, you have access to everything we do in here. Tell them that!
- **Stuff We Did:** Besides the "educational" stuff, we did quite a bit of informal conversation, storytelling, arguing, etc. Think of some of those memorable moments from class and share them.
- **The Teacher:** Okay, this is where you can get even. Tell the new kids what they need to know about me. Tell them how to stay on my "good side" and/or how to get on my "bad side." Tell them what makes me grumpy (and warn them not to do it). Share one of those memorable (or scary) moments in class when my Teacher Mask fell off and the Real Me burst out for a few moments (sometimes it's rage; sometimes it's tears -- no apologies here!) Share all the stuff you wish you had known at the beginning.
- **Conclusion:** Sum it all up. Send those new students into the year with smiles on their faces and a lust for learning in their hearts! (Okay, if you can't do all that, at least include a few lines of encouragement.)
- **Complimentary Closing:** "Yours truly," "Sincerely," "With condolences," or something along these lines will work.
- **Signature:** Sign your name legibly.

Lest you haven't figured it out by now, this letter not only will introduce new students to my class, but it is also an opportunity for you to reflect on the time you have spent here. Please give it some thought and make it a true reflection of what you have learned and how you feel about that learning.

You will have 60+ minutes to complete this assignment, and it is due at the end of the period. It should represent your absolute best writing, and it will count for a significant percentage of your final term grade. The students next year will thank you for your suggestions and advice, and I will enjoy hearing what you thought of our time together.



Always watching...