**School Wide Write**

**English 8-12**

**September 2014**

What: This **1 hour** session will ask every student in our school to write on the same topic. It will give teachers the chance to discuss the strengths and difficiencies of all writers, with a focus on what we can do to improve the quality of your expression.

When: Wednesday, September 10, 2:10-3:10.

Why: This timed affair will not count for marks, but since teachers of all subjects will be reading your work, it will give us a chance to “speak the same language” when it comes to helping you improve. This endeavor will also provide us with a look at the general skills and competencies of our five grade levels.

**Expectations for Grades 11 and 12**

Length of response: In one hour, you should be able to write **at least 300 words, divided into THREE paragraphs or more.**

Type of response: This short piece must be **personally relevant**. You can write a story, but it must be about you and your thoughts, opinions, and/or experiences. **Write in the first person** (I am…we could…my time there was…I wish I…).

You will be given a two-word topic. It is your job to make meaning of it however you wish!

Language: Please use formal, varied, and appropriate language. Your response will be read by two teachers, so keep this in mind and show off your skills assuming these folks may not know who you are.

Other reminders:

* consider how you might employ the writing techniques, transitions, and Words of the Week we’ve discussed: rep for effect, sentence length variety, rhetorical question, punctuation variety, Rule of Three.
* also think about the good, the bad, and the “somugly” (somewhat ugly) from the essays you evaluated in small groups
* remember the criteria as outlined in the rubric we looked at in class
* paragraph with a purpose! If you change perspective, setting, focus, time (flashback), or mood, then start a new body.

Here’s an example of a response for the hypothetical topic “Perfect Mess”

Brainstorm

* time when I was a kid; keep it detailed and “real”; don’t mess with content
* friends, outside, summer, birthday, food
* wanted sun and blue skies, but got rain and mud
* could have been a downer but we chose to make the best of it
* use a combo of narration and description

My eighth birthday party was memorable for multitudinous reasons. Firstly, I was turning eight. And despite seven’s supposed lucky status, eight was a much more attractive age and number. Symmetrical not jagged. Healthy not skinny. Round and snowmanish – not angled and pointy. But turning eight also meant that for the first time, I would be inviting more of my classmates to my party than family friends. In other words, it meant that my Filipino friends - Marcial, Romel, and Jun Jun - would be outnumbered by my white friends: Logan, DYlan, Will, and the whitest of them all, Rick, aka Hick Rick. I feared that things would turn messy, and my fears became a reality when the clouds rolled in.

The plan was for the eight of us to spend the afternoon outside playing soccer, Kick the Can, ninjas with tree branches, and 500-Up. My mom set the picnic table with care and cultural attention, adorning it with a contrasting potpourri of Filipino and Canadian cuisine: lumpia, pancit, mango juice, and fried rice; hot dogs, French fries, iced tea, and back bacon. Everything was perfectly laid out and we were getting along so well, when Mother Nature decided to open the heavens and rain down hell.

The food became soggy, the grass turned slippery, my mother went crazy. Filipino rolls were quickly tossed under aluminum foil while iced tea spilled all over our recently stained deck. Our baseball game morphed into hockey as shouts for pop flies and “500”were replaced by screams for…more rain? That’s right. My set itinerary for the day was soaked in sheets of regret and chaos, but from the confusion came a spontaneous celebration of pure childish joy. We ran and slid across the grass before realizing that my mom’s old garden was a great place to wrestle and throw mud balls. Marcial’s and Will’s bikes were passed around – ghost ridden actually – between us as we ended the party with an impromptu mud bog race.

My eighth birthday didn’t follow the intended plan, and I am glad it didn’t. We learned many lessons that day, from the power of the skies to the power of laughter to bring people together. My mother learned how to put up a portable rain tent later that week, and I learned how to take a mudball in the eye without shedding tears, at least until my friends weren’t looking. But, ultimately, we learned that sometimes a mess can be perfection. That was by far the best birthday I had ever had – until exactly one year later when we did it a year later in 24 degree heat…with ample water hoses on hand.

Your topic for Wednesday’s school wide write? “Finders keepers”