

REGENTS ENGLISH 10: FINAL ESSAY

May 28, 2013

RE: General Commentary and Revision Conferences

Sophomores:

You were given the entire week from May 13 to May 17 to conference with me as you finished these essays. During that week, only seven students asked for help. In Period 2, two full periods passed without a single question. Students in Period 7 spent Friday the 17th discussing workout routines, fighting over chairs, and asking, “What are we doing?”

These were not isolated lapses. In both periods, half of you spent the week doing other work, including work for other classes. Many of you wasted entire periods doing absolutely nothing to finish this writing. Video games were played, gossip was discussed, animal sounds were made.

Only after the submission process began, during the time reserved for your metacognition and reflection, did you begin to request help and seek conferences. The deadline was here, and you hadn’t prepared. As a result, you had to put off your metacognitive and reflective work. You were still writing the actual essay during the four days of submission -- when, that is, you weren’t checking your grades in other classes, discussing Twitter feeds, or packing up early¹.

I want you to note that almost everything we’ve written this year has built toward this final essay. Most of the skills we’ve practiced have led here. Your essay on *The Invisible Man* was a primer for this kind of inquiry-based instruction, and you’ve been working on modes of discourse since September. The submission process was nearly identical to the submission process for every essay we’ve written this year.

And you each signed a contract stipulating that you understood all this. You signed a contract saying that you were aware of your responsibilities.

There’s more, obviously. You had a calendar for the entire writing process. You had a step-by-step guide to the essay. You had, in Jerry Jesness’ “Why Johnny Can’t Fail,” a perfect model for your own work. And you had two adults—your teacher and your library media specialist—helping you with the research.

How many of you can look at yourselves and say that you used your time well? How many of you can honestly say you didn’t waste time?

In the end, this is your essay. You *own* it, good and bad. It reflects your work ethic and ability to follow directions as much as your ability to write in the modes of discourse. But you already know this. You know if you worked diligently over the last few weeks. You know if you were still

¹ This one deserves a footnote. You packed up earlier and earlier as the conference days wore on. By Thursday, May 23, Period 7 was packing up almost ten minutes before the bell. Either you can’t tell time, or you decided you just didn’t need those last ten minutes, despite the many deficiencies in your final essays.

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scrambling on Friday²—a day after the original deadline, which itself was extended from Wednesday. You know what's coming now.

Today, you will receive the following:

1. A holistic score out of 100 points that reflects your final paper's effectiveness
2. A copy of the holistic rubric, based on the DAMAGES rubric, that was used to score you
3. No specific commentary beyond that holistic score
4. A copy of one peer's essay with general commentary
5. The opportunity to conference with me to receive complete commentary and annotations
6. The opportunity to revise *if and only if* you conference with me

The last two items on that list mean that you must sit down in person with me to conference if you want to know *why* you received the score you received. You must schedule that conference during your free time. You must bring questions and observations of your own to that meeting, and you must prepare for it by reviewing all materials used in the writing of this final paper. Then I will go over your essay with you and explain exactly how you fared -- paragraph by paragraph, line by line, and word for word.

This conference is also the only way that you can revise your essay. You will have until June 7 to schedule a conference; you may meet with me up until June 14; and the deadline for all revisions will be June 17, the Monday of the second week of final exams. Your content score can be revised as much as you like -- again, if and only if you sit down and go through your paper with me.

Note that your submission scores *cannot* be changed or corrected. If you failed to follow directions, even after three weeks of work and an extra five days beyond the original deadline, you do not get a second chance.

Good luck,

Mr. Eure

² This is to say nothing of the disrespectful behavior of some of you in Period 2 on Friday, May 24. Slamming doors? Disrupting other classes? This is obviously unacceptable, but the real lesson needs to be this: When you are not serious, and when you do not work diligently, your final product will reflect that immaturity.