



## Week One: Vocabulary

### Lesson & Assignments: Introduce New List

**Assignment 1:** Read the list of vocabulary words below. Then, using a dictionary as needed, match the vocabulary words with their definitions listed in the definition bank on the next page. Write each vocabulary word, follow it with a punctuation mark such as a hyphen or colon, and then write the definition.

e.g.

1. *to eat* – to put (food) into the mouth and chew and swallow it

### Vocabulary Words –

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. ardor       | 9. impetuous     |
| 2. avarice     | 10. jargon       |
| 3. benefactor  | 11. misnomer     |
| 4. conjecture  | 12. presumptuous |
| 5. divest      | 13. reverberate  |
| 6. emphatic    | 14. stringency   |
| 7. formidable  | 15. vestige      |
| 8. impertinent |                  |

<b>Definition Bank</b>	
extreme greed for wealth or material gain	expressing something forcibly and clearly
a loud noise repeated several times as an echo	not showing proper respect; OR irrelevant
an opinion or conclusion formed on the basis of incomplete information	failing to observe the limits of what is permitted or appropriate
to deprive someone of power, rights, or possessions	enthusiasm or passion
acting or done quickly and without thought or care	a wrong or inaccurate use of a name or a term
severe, strict, constraining character, condition, or behavior	a trace of something that is disappearing or no longer exists
inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable	a person who gives money or other help to a person or cause
special words or expressions used by a particular profession or group and are difficult for others to understand	



## Week One: Grammar

### Lesson & Assignments: Nouns & Pronouns

Writing is not just about having good ideas. If it were, people with good ideas would automatically be good writers. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

A good writer knows that he must have more than creative ideas in his head. In fact, he must have much more than ideas. A good writer must have *knowledge* of his language.

If you want to be a good writer and do not understand your language (whether English, Japanese, or French), you will not get very far. Understanding the basic mechanics of your language is essential to crafting good writing in letters, essays, reports, and stories. Although these studies may seem boring to you, **your writing has no ability to improve or grow unless you take the time to build a strong foundation in mechanics.**

We begin our study of writing mechanics with *the parts of speech*. Our English language has **eight** parts of speech. Below are the names and some examples of each:

Noun	Names a person, place, thing, or idea	Examples: mom, Mr. Grape, Seattle, NYC, apple, guitar, happiness, joy
Pronoun	Replaces a noun	Examples: he, she, it, I, you, some
Verb	States an action, helps another verb, or links another word to the subject	Examples: be, have, do, like, work, sing, can, must
Adjective	Describes a noun	Examples: a/an, the, sixty-nine (69), blue, some, good, big, red, interesting
Adverb	Describes an adjective, verb, or another adverb	Examples: quickly, silently, well, badly, very, really

Conjunction	Joins clauses or sentences or words	Examples: and, but, when
Preposition	Links a noun to another word	Examples: under, above, over, in, on, after, to, at
Interjection	Short exclamation, sometimes inserted into a sentence	Examples: My! Oh! Ouch! Hi!

## THE NOUN –

***A noun names a person, place, thing, or idea.***

We can separate nouns into two main groups: **concrete nouns** and **abstract nouns**.

***Concrete nouns are nouns that we can touch with our hands, see with our eyes, smell with our nose, hear with our ears, or taste with our tongue.*** In other words, we use one or more of our five senses to experience the concrete noun. Concrete nouns name people, places, and things.

***The other type of noun is an abstract noun. This is a noun that we cannot see, hear, feel, touch, or taste.***

*Happiness* is an example of this. We cannot see, hear, smell, touch, or taste happiness. It is an idea or a concept. You cannot say what color happiness is or what it tastes like. If you tried to touch happiness, you would have a very hard time doing so because there is nothing to touch. Does happiness have a smell? No. *Happiness* is an abstract noun. *Freedom* and *liberty* are two other examples of abstract nouns. Abstract nouns do not have color, sound, taste, etc. Abstract nouns name ideas.

We can also categorize nouns in another way: ***common nouns and proper nouns.*** **Let us look at common nouns first.**

## COMMON NOUNS –

### Person

- mother
- brother
- clerk
- policeman
- athlete

### Place

- home
- store
- street
- bedroom
- warehouse

### Thing

- cup
- bananas
- table
- book
- computer

### Idea

- love
- hope
- happiness
- fear
- anger

Notice that the nouns in the table above do not start with a capital letter. That is because they are not naming a specific person, place, thing, or idea. We call these types of nouns *common nouns or improper nouns*. We use common nouns when we are not referring to someone, someplace, or something by a specific name.

**Assignment 1A:** Write ten common nouns for each:

Person	Place	Thing	Ideas
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.
6.	6.	6.	6.
7.	7.	7.	7.
8.	8.	8.	8.
9.	9.	9.	9.
10.	10.	10.	10.

**Assignment 1B:** Underline the common nouns in the following sentences. (Some of the sentences contain more than one.)

1. He watched a video.
2. The girl dropped the bag.
3. My shirt is wet.
4. I love rainbows.
5. The grass is long.
6. We do not have any pets.
7. The customers waited in the line.
8. Ella has small feet.
9. My family made pizza for dinner.
10. Dad drove the car.
11. She delivered a flower.
12. Our parents bought a new couch.
13. Did you look at the clock?

- 14. My phone is broken.
- 15. That woman is our teacher.

**PROPER NOUNS –**

Person	Place	Thing
• Mom	• Highland Park	• Empire Apples
• Aunt Susan	• Walgreens	• Bible
• Grandpa Chuck	• King's Dominion	• Android
• President Anderson	• France	• Nile River

Note that all of the nouns in this table begin with a capital letter. These nouns are naming a specific person, place, or thing (note that ideas – abstract nouns – can never be made proper.) ***We call these types of nouns specific or proper nouns. We use proper nouns when we are referring to something by a specific name.***

The following categories are always proper nouns.

**1. Names of people and pets:**

Mrs. Edwards      David      Snoopy      Garfield

**2. Names of places and buildings:**

Madrid, Spain      Main Street      Washington Monument  
 Lake Ontario      Alaska      Pacific Ocean

**3. Names of books, movies, newspapers, and magazines:**

Charlotte's Web      Toy Story      The Orlando Times  
 Highlights      Monsters, Inc.

**4. Names of holidays, days of the week, and months:**

Christmas      Sunday      April  
 Memorial Day      Thanksgiving      Friday

## 5. Names of languages:

Spanish

English

French

Italian

## 6. Names of companies and brand names:

Google

Pepsi

Nike

Apple

## 7. Titles of people when used in front of their names:

President Lincoln

King George

Captain Hook

Judge Peterson

Prince William

Doctor McNeish

## But do not capitalize these titles when used alone.

For example:

- “My uncle is a judge for the county.”
- “The doctor returned my phone call.”

## 8. Names of religions:

Baptist

Protestant

Jewish

Catholic

## SOME CONFUSING NOUNS –

Two groups of nouns that can be confusing when it comes to capitalizing them are the seasons (spring, summer, fall, and winter) and directions (north, south, east, west).

- The general rule for seasons is that you do not capitalize them unless they start a sentence or are part of the name of an event such as the "Winter Olympics."
- The rule for directions is also easy. If you are referring to a specific part or location of the country (such as *the South*, *the Northwest*, *the East*), then you should capitalize the noun. But, if you are just referring to a general direction, then do not capitalize the noun (such as *north of town*, *southeast of my house*, *go west on Woolridge Rd.*).

**Assignment 1C:** Write five proper nouns for each. Remember to capitalize each proper noun:

Person	Place	Thing
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.

**MAKING NOUNS PLURAL –**

Making nouns plural is something you should already be familiar with as a growing writer. Most of the time, it is something you learn just by speaking. You know to turn *eyelash* into *eyelashes* or *chair* into *chairs*. You know that there are various plural forms such as *tomato* turned into *tomatoes* or *sheep* into *sheep*. For the sake of time, we will not review rules for making nouns plural here. If you feel you do not understand the rules, you can ask for review material from your instructor.

**MAKING NOUNS POSSESSIVE –**

Although this also should be something you are familiar with, making nouns possessive can be confusing for a lot of students. Let us review the basic rules:

**Rule #1 - If the noun ends in any letter other than S, we use an apostrophe and then the letter S to show possession.**

- the dog - the dog's bone
- the men - the men's team
- the quiz - the quiz's answers

**Rule #2 - If a singular noun ends in the letter S, we can use EITHER an apostrophe and the letter S or we can use ONLY an apostrophe to show possession.**

- Charles - Charles's book OR Charles' book
- the boss – the boss' paperwork OR the boss's paperwork
- Jesus - Jesus's mother OR Jesus' mother



**Rule #3 – If a plural noun ends in the letter S, we use only an apostrophe to show possession.**

- guys – guys' night out
- dogs – the dogs' bones

**Rule #4 - Acronyms form the possessive with an apostrophe and the letter S.**

- NASA - NASA's spaceship
- USA - the USA's flag
- ABC - ABC's documentary

**Rule #5 - If you have two nouns and two objects that are individually owned, then each noun is made possessive.**

- John and Mary - John's and Mary's hats (they each have their OWN hat)
- James and Ann - James' and Ann's dinners (they each have their OWN dinner)

**Rule #6 - If you have two or more nouns and all nouns own the same object, then just the last noun is made possessive.**

- John and Mary - John and Mary's children (they have the same children)
- James and Ann - James and Ann's car (they own the same car)
- Kara, Dave, and Julie – Kara, Dave, and Julie's father (they all have the same father)

**Assignment 1D:** Make the following nouns possessive.

1. Everett
2. the island
3. the cup
4. the stairs
5. the USFSA
6. the friends
7. Julie and James (house)
8. the octopus
9. Brazil
10. Judah and Micah (backpacks)
11. the rooms
12. Eleanor
13. the fish
14. the glass
15. Ross
16. the monkeys

## NOMINATIVE PRONOUNS –

Next up is the pronoun. We can study the pronoun immediately following the noun because it performs the same job as the noun. ***A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.*** Pronouns are very useful because otherwise we would be repeating the same noun over and over again. There are several kinds of pronouns in English. Each type of pronoun is used in a specific way. This lesson will teach you how to use **nominative** and **possessive pronouns (You will learn about the other kinds of pronouns Lesson 11).**

**Nominative pronouns are sometimes called *subject pronouns*, because they usually take the place of a noun that is functioning as the subject in a sentence.**

Here are the **nominative** or **subject pronouns**. The singular is given with its plural in the next column.

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
I	we
you	you
he	they
she	they
it	they

Remember, these pronouns are used as the subjects of a sentence. Below are some examples using each of these pronouns.

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<i>I</i> drive a car.	<i>We</i> drive a car.
<i>You</i> eat ice cream.	<i>You</i> (all) eat ice cream.
<i>He</i> speaks Russian.	<i>They</i> speak Russian.
<i>She</i> swims every day.	<i>They</i> swim every day.
<i>It</i> keeps food cold.	<i>They</i> keep the food cold.

Imagine that two friends, Hannah and Ashley, are having a conversation about a field trip. The subjects are placed in parentheses to make it easier for you to see them.

(Hannah, speaking) went on a field trip.

(Ashley, being spoken to) went on a field trip.

(Caleb) enjoyed the field trip.  
(Jane) arrived too late for the field trip.  
(The car) was full.  
(Jane and Caleb) bought some souvenirs.

Below are the same sentences with nominative pronouns in place of the nouns used above.

**I** went on a field trip.  
**You** went on a field trip.  
**He** enjoyed the field trip.  
**She** arrived too late for the field trip.  
**It** was full.  
**They** bought some souvenirs.

### **POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS –**

Lastly, we will move on to **possessive pronouns**. As you learned above, we can make nouns possessive to show that someone or something owns something. Possessive pronouns show ownership as well but are used at the end of a sentence.

Here are the **possessive pronouns**. The singular is given with its plural in the next column.

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
mine	ours
yours	yours
his	theirs
hers	theirs
its	theirs

We use possessive pronouns as substitutes for possessive forms of nouns, when these nouns are used at the end of a sentence. For example –

- “This dog is Andrew's.” (possessive form of noun)
- “This dog is his.” (replaced with possessive pronoun)

Remember, these pronouns are only used to show possession. Look at some examples using each of these possessive pronouns.

Singular

The car was *mine*.

The ice cream is *yours*.

The book will be *his*.

The swimming pool is *hers*.

The tires were *its*.

Plural

The car was *ours*.

The ice cream is (all of) *yours* .

The book will be *theirs*.

The swimming pool is *theirs*.

The tires were *theirs*.

**Assignment 1E:** Underline all of the nominative or possessive pronouns in the following sentences.

1. What are you drinking?
2. The fish are theirs.
3. He is a toddler.
4. They are our leaders.
5. Is that book yours?
6. It is going to be fun.
7. That iPad is mine.
8. The balloons are hers.
9. Are we going to Disney World?
10. She loves making pasta.
11. The blankets are ours.
12. Which are they buying?
13. Where are ours?
14. You are going to be late!



## **Week One: Writing**

### **Lesson & Assignments: Reviewing the Topic vs. Thesis**

The word *thesis* can sound daunting and so advanced, but the concept is not hard to understand. Simply put, a thesis statement is a **sentence that clearly identifies the topic and main idea of an essay**. Whereas a topic sentence identifies the topic and main idea for a particular paragraph, a thesis statement identifies the topic and main idea of the entire essay. The thesis is like a road map for the essay, telling the reader what to expect from the rest of the essay. Though the structure of a thesis statement can vary slightly depending on the type of essay being written, all essays *must* have a thesis statement.

Developing a strong, compelling thesis statement does require significant practice, so do not imagine that we will overwhelm you with lots of information about thesis development right now. In this lesson, we only want to introduce the concept and its importance in a simple way. A specific and clear thesis sets the tone for a strong, focused, and interesting essay.

Of course, one of the biggest confusions we run into is the difference between a topic and a thesis. It is important to discuss the difference first.

#### **TOPIC VS. THESIS –**

A topic and a thesis are not the same thing, and they are not interchangeable. A topic can come in several forms: as a single word, as a command, as a simple sentence, or even as a question. **However, the thesis is always a statement sentence.**

Example:

- **Topic:** Cheese
- **Thesis:** Of all kinds of cheese, my favorite is Swiss.

## **BEGINNING STEPS –**

### **1. Define your topic.**

When you begin writing an essay, you must first choose a topic. Perhaps the assignment gives you a topic, or perhaps you are allowed to choose your own. Regardless, you must first define the topic. Did the assignment give an extremely specific topic, or is the topic only somewhat specific, rather general, or completely open to your decision?

- An extremely specific topic: Write about how ice cream is made.
- A somewhat specific topic: Write about ice cream.
- A general topic: Write about your favorite dessert.
- An open topic: Write a descriptive essay on the topic of your choice.

**But how do you choose?** Choosing a topic is one of the very first obstacles that many students must overcome. Even when it comes to writing paragraphs, such as we did last week, many students struggle just to know what to write about in the first place.

1. The best piece of advice we can offer is to write about things that interest you. Do you like building model planes? Write about it. Do you participate in Boy Scouts? Write about it. Do you dance? Do you ski? Do you love to bake or draw or sing? Write about it. Your writing will always be more interesting if you choose topics that you love or that inspire you.
2. Another way to choose a great topic is to write about experiences that are personal to you. Write about the time you met your best friend or a special experience you have had with a friend. Write about a time you were afraid, sad, excited, or inspired. Write about the time you camped in your backyard or the time you skied down a giant hill and felt so proud. Write about the time your grandmother passed away or the time you traveled to China with your family to adopt a new sibling. Writing about personal things will help you more easily think of what to say and connect with your readers.
3. Sometimes, you must choose a topic within a certain realm. Perhaps you must write about a historical character or something you have recently studied in science. Of course, these guidelines may limit your ability to write about a major interest or a personal experience, but you can still use the first two concepts to help you. Is there a person in history that you find very interesting? Or have you read about someone in history that you relate with? You can apply

these same concepts of interest and personal relation to just about any subject.

## **2. Narrow your topic.**

Unless the assignment gives you an extremely specific topic, you will likely need to narrow it to be more specific. For example, if the assignment asks you to write an essay about ice cream, your topic is still a bit too general to start writing. There are a lot of things about ice cream on which you could write.

You need to narrow the topic. Will you write about the history of ice cream? Will you write about the first time you ate ice cream? Will you write about how your family always makes homemade ice cream for birthdays? Will you write about the ice cream disaster you had at the beach last weekend? Will you write about your decision-making processes when choosing ice cream flavors?

Essentially, when we are creating a thesis, we are narrowing the topic down to a **very specific statement of purpose or opinion**. The thesis is built from our core ideas and beliefs. The reality is, because we all have individual worldviews, experiences, and ideas, everyone's thesis should be slightly different.

## **3. Understand The Difference.**

In basic terms, there are two types of thesis statements: **expository and persuasive**.

The expository thesis presents the topic and main idea to the reader, **without providing an argument or opinion. The expository thesis should be factual.** In this class, we will use *only* the expository thesis, as this is what you will use for all of your beginning essays, whether expository, narrative, or descriptive.

The persuasive thesis, on the other hand, presents not only the topic **but also an arguable perspective about the topic**. This type of thesis presents an idea for which there is argument or opposition, which you then must *defend* and *prove* based on reliable evidence.

### **Expository Thesis Statements:**

- Students can become more effective writers by employing three strategies.
- Wolves are often pictured in fairy tales as ferocious animals, but they are very social and unique animals who do not deserve their scary reputation.
- George Washington was an excellent leader, because he was a man of courage, perseverance, and

desire to help our country succeed.

- The rewarding process of photographing a lunar eclipse requires careful preparation and sound equipment.

### **Persuasive Thesis Statements:**

- Grover is the most important character on *Sesame Street*.
- A longer school day does not guarantee that students will be productive in classes, reminding us that young people must find learning meaningful in order to do well.
- Free public transportation should be implemented as a key step in reducing unemployment rates.
- Our family should get a dog because of the opportunity it will provide us children for learning responsibility.

### **HOW TO CREATE AN EXPOSITORY THESIS –**

We will focus now only on the expository thesis, as that is all you will need for a while.

Follow these steps to develop an expository thesis:

1. **Identify the topic.**
2. **Make a statement of fact.** Remember, an expository thesis is always factual. “Dogs are popular pets because they are loyal, useful, and excellent companions” = fact. With this statement, I am merely explaining three key reasons why dogs are popular pets. On the other hand, if I say, “Dogs are better than cats because they are loyal, useful, and excellent companies,” I have now made an opinion-based claim, which is persuasive, not expository. With this statement, I am challenging the reader to see these three reasons as proof for liking dogs better than cats, when in fact, cats have their own traits which make them wonderful pets as well. An expository thesis should focus on explaining, not proving a point.

**NOTE:** This is also a good place to discuss personal fact vs. personal opinion. A statement such as “My favorite holiday is Christmas” is considered personal *fact*. It may not be a scientific fact or a world-wide fact, but it is a fact of who YOU ARE. With this statement, you are not trying to prove why Christmas is the best holiday, nor are you trying to convince others to like Christmas as well. You are merely explaining why Christmas is your favorite holiday. Personal facts are acceptable for use when writing expository thesis statements. On the other hand, personal opinion is reserved



strictly for persuasive writing. For example, if you write that “Christmas is the best holiday,” you are now stating a personal *opinion* and making a *claim*, suggesting that Christmas is better than any other holiday. Personal opinion is not acceptable for use when writing expository thesis statements.

3. **If useful, qualify the topic.** For expository thesis statements, a common and simple qualifying word is *because*. “Spring is my favorite season because I love planting the garden with my mom, visiting the local Lilac Festival, and celebrating all of the birthdays in my immediate family.”
4. **Write just a sentence, not a paragraph.** A lot of students get confused with this one. A thesis is not a group of sentences, not a paragraph, and not the complete introduction (more on this next week). A thesis should be one sentence.

### **STRONG VS. WEAK –**

There is really quite a lot to get into when it comes to writing strong, compelling thesis statements, but there are two key errors we will focus on right now. These are the errors we see most frequently in the early stages of essay writing.

#### **ERROR 1: Your thesis is too general.**

- I like herbal tea.
- I am going to write about George Washington.
- This paper will cover three reasons why good sleep habits are important.

What makes your essay important to read is a thesis that is interesting and compelling, a statement that contains not just the topic but the main idea about it.

#### **Strong:**

- Because of its medicinal qualities and ability to improve focus, herbal tea is often my drink of choice.
- George Washington was an excellent leader, because he was a man of courage, perseverance, and desire to help our country succeed.
- Many people view sleep as an inconvenience, but plenty of quality sleep on a regular basis is necessary for our bodies to heal and stay healthy.

**ERROR 2: Factual, but overly obvious:**

- Exercise is good for you.
- Education is important.
- Traveling the world is exciting.

While it is fine to use factual statements when writing expository, narrative, and descriptive essays, they still must contain some interest. Your audience doesn't want to read another essay about the basic facts about the importance of exercise or education. They want you to inform them of something they perhaps do not already know or fully understand.

**Strong:**

- Exercise doesn't mean you have to join a gym, register for a marathon, or start lifting weights; moving your body is always the goal, and there are several really fun ways to accomplish this!
- As education has always been considered a crucial part of any society, there are several major educational methods promoted today.
- Traveling the world has given me the opportunity to grow in empathy for people of many different cultures.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Remember that there are two types of theses – expository and persuasive. Expository thesis statements will always present fact, whereas persuasive thesis statements will present opinion. However, both types of statements are capable of being strong, because they are needed for different types of papers. When assessing whether or not a thesis statement is strong, do not base your assessment solely on seeing fact or on your agreement/disagreement with the statement. Look instead for statements that are both specific and thought-provoking.

**FINAL NOTES –**

One method of thesis writing is often taught and used for writing five-paragraph essays. This type of thesis identifies the topic and the three main ideas that will be covered within the essay.

- Example: “Dogs are loyal, useful, and excellent companions.”

This method is really straightforward and easy to use. However, please know that you can also write a thesis statement without listing main ideas; a thesis statement can be more open-ended while still being specific, as you might see in many of the examples above.

We encourage you to try writing a variety of interesting thesis statements, because eventually you will need more room for explaining and expanding on your ideas once you are writing more than five paragraphs.

Writing a thesis is not a method. While the thesis should clearly identify the topic and main idea of the essay and provide direction for the contents of the essay, it should still be interesting.

**Assignment 1A:** Write whether each thesis statement below is strong or weak. Then, briefly explain why.

(NOTE: Some of the thesis statements below are opinion-based [persuasive]; remember, absence of fact or the use of opinion does not make a statement weak. Remember that a strong thesis statement may be either expository OR persuasive, as long as it is both specific and thought-provoking.)

1. Fear is very common.
2. Hunger persists in Appalachia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.
3. Having at least one sibling shapes a child in many important ways; especially, siblings influence each others' ability to socially interact with others.
4. A good meal is a meal that is delectable and is melt-in-your mouth delicious.
5. Because of its intriguing characters and historical plot, *A Tale of Two Cities* is one of my favorite books.
6. This paper will discuss three important qualities of a strong leader.
7. Even though it can be challenging, making friends is worth it.
8. Reading books is an excellent way to learn new information, entertain one's imagination, and experience various emotions.
9. There are many similarities and differences between George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
10. In the 1600s, pilgrims separated from the Church of England and made the dangerous journey to America to find freedom from religious persecution and imprisonment.

**Assignment 1B:** Write a strong expository thesis statement for each of the following topics.

(NOTE: For this assignment, please stay away from opinion-based [persuasive] theses. We will be writing expository essays for the remainder of this class, so we want your practice to focus primarily on expository thesis statements.)

If you are having trouble with this assignment, try to make each topic as personal as possible. Avoid merely writing something like, “A great invention is something that has benefited society in a remarkable way.” INSTEAD, write a statement about an invention that you find particularly great. For the topic of chores, write a statement about one of your actual chores. Write a statement about *your* favorite movie or what *you* think is the best surprise. Etc.

1. Playing a . . . (game, sport, instrument)
2. Libraries
3. A Great Invention
4. Science
5. The Best Surprise
6. Honesty
7. Making a Change
8. Chores
9. Your Favorite Movie
10. A Time Machine



## **Week One: Literature**

### **Lesson & Assignments: Intro to Poetry & *Meeting William Wordsworth***

Throughout this year, we are going to study literature from the early 1800s to modern times. As we read various works, you may notice some similarities in structure, characters, themes, etc. You may also realize that some of our favorite modern stories resemble works from decades ago. As we study works across wide ranges of time, we can appreciate the value of quality writing to society and the impact of literature on generations.

Let's begin by learning a little more about the first half of the 1800s!

Between 1800 and 1850, The United States of America burgeoned from a nation of sixteen states to a nation of thirty states. On November 1, 1800, John Adams—the second President of the United States—became the first president to live in the White House. The early 1800s brought the Lewis and Clark expedition (1803-1806) and the Louisiana Purchase (1804). These events led countless pioneers to the west, settling the rolling plains and prairies. The California Gold Rush took off in 1848.

Outside of the United States, many notable events occurred around the world. Napoleon Bonaparte served as the Emperor of France from 1804-1814. Napoleon was a dominant, though controversial, global force, winning the majority of wars and battles he engaged in. Considered one of the greatest commanders in history, Napoleon's tactics are still studied at military academies worldwide.

On June 20, 1837, eighteen-year-old Queen Victoria ascended the throne, serving as the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland for nearly sixty-four years. Her reign was the second-longest reign of any British monarch, following only behind the currently-reigning Queen Elizabeth II. For better or worse, during Queen Victoria's reign, the British Empire gained control of nearly one-fourth of the world's population.

To some other prominent world events, in 1814, Norway gained its independence from Denmark and Sweden; two years later, on July 9, 1816, Argentina declared its independence from Spain.

The first half of the 1800s also brought numerous wars. After the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) came the

War of 1812 (1812-1815). As part of this war, British troops invaded Washington, D.C., burning down and damaging countless buildings. The Texas Revolution took place between 1835-1836, known for the Battle of the Alamo. Between 1846-1848, the US-Mexican War was fought, a result of dispute over Texas, annexation politics, and further expansion of the United States.

In addition, the 1800s formed a prominent century in regard to the slave trade. In 1807, the United Kingdom abolished the slave trade. Nonetheless, the practice of slavery continued in other parts of the world as well as in the United States, although several states did begin to outlaw slavery within their own borders. The Underground Railroad was established and helped lead perhaps 100,000 or more enslaved people to freedom by 1850. Of course, the fight for freedom ultimately led to the Civil War, which we will discuss more in *1800s Literature Part II*.

The first five decades of the 1800s brought many important inventions. The modern-day battery was invented in 1800 by Alessandro Volta. Richard Trevithick built the first steam locomotive in 1802, and travel by train became a significant part of global growth in the 1800s. Also in 1802, Humphry Davy invented the first electric light. In 1810, British merchant Peter Durand was granted the first patent for his idea of preserving food in tin cans. In 1825, Danish physicist Hans Christian Oersted announced his discovery of aluminum. Although the camera had been invented some 150 years before, photography began to take off in the early 1800s. The oldest-known photograph is believed to have been taken in 1826. In 1829, French tailor Barthélemy Thimonnier invented the first sewing machine for practical use. In 1837, the first full-length book published in Braille was produced by the Institute for Blind Youth. On January 11, 1838, the first telegram was sent by Morse Code over two miles of wire. On May 1, 1840, the world's first adhesive postage stamp was issued in the United Kingdom. 1845 brought the patent for the rubber band and the first codified set of rules for baseball. Rounding out the first half of the century was the invention of the safety pin by Walter Hunt in 1849.

The early 1800s also brought the world many well-known musicians. Ludwig van Beethoven was a prominent composer and pianist of the time, now considered one of the most celebrated figures of classical music. His famous “Fur Elise” was composed in 1810. Other well-known composers of the time included Franz Schubert, Franz Liszt, Felix Mendelssohn, Frederic Chopin, Vincenzo Bellini, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms.

Finally, as this class focuses on the literature of the time period, the early 1800s were full of prolific poets and authors. Important poets of the time included Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, William Wordsworth, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Robert Browning, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Allan Poe, and John Greenleaf Whittier.

In terms of prose, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was published in 1813, followed by several more classic works by the prominent female author, including *Emma* (1815) and *Persuasion* (1817). Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was published in 1817. The 1830s brought us the first of many works published by the infamous Charles Dickens. In 1844, Alexander Dumas published both *The Count of Monte Cristo* as well as *The Three Musketeers*. Charlotte Bronte published *Jane Eyre* in 1847, the same year in which her sister Emily Bronte published *Wuthering Heights*. In 1850, Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* was published. In 1851, *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville was published. This year also brought the publication of Harriet Beecher Stowe's important novel about slavery, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

With all of this history covered, let's get started! This week, we cover an introduction to poetry.

### **WHY POETRY? –**

Have you ever listened to a song that truly moved you?

Maybe it resonated with an experience you had – maybe it said something you'd never been able to say – maybe it made you relate to someone else on a deeper level. Honestly, maybe it just made you really happy when you needed a mood boost.

Let's approach poetry the way that we approach music. While not all poetry rhymes, all poetry has a rhythm. Poems are uniquely crafted to share emotions and experiences in remarkably small spaces and guided structures – sometimes a single line!

It may be hard to believe, but poetry was the rockstar of written genres until the Victorian period, when novels rose in popularity. Poets explored history and current politics, captured moving experiences, and examined philosophical debates. Their work was popular culture, widely read and referenced, and often had real impact on cultural change. Poetry is also one of the best ways to experience how much variety there is in literary works and styles throughout history.

### **HOW DO WE READ POETRY? –**

First, let's make sure that we know how to best experience poetry. Here are a few reading tips:

- **READ ALOUD.** Most poetry has unique rhythms that can only be heard aloud. Therefore, find a safe and quiet location where you can read the poem aloud to yourself. Read in your natural voice, just as if you were reading prose.

- **ONLY PAUSE WHEN THERE IS A PUNCTUATION MARK.** When reading poetry, we don't pause at line breaks, but follow punctuation cues just like any written work. Unless you see a comma, period, dash, etc., keep reading as if it's a sentence broken up across lines. Think about how that changes your experience with the poem. Is it hard to read in one breath? Is it stilted? Why does the poet break the line where he or she does? After all, we still visually notice the separation.
- **DO NOT BE AFRAID OF NOT KNOWING.** Many poems are ambiguous or vague. There may or may not be one clear answer or meaning. Try your best to identify what the author wants to share with you, and what you yourself draw from the work, but don't worry about finding clear answers. (For those who have structured brains, this may be difficult! Reading poetry can be a great opportunity to expand your mind, so try not to get too stressed out by finding black and white answers.)

#### **A BRIEF NOTE ON CLOSE READINGS & RHYME SCHEMES –**

Our assignment for this week contains a close-reading exercise. Essentially, close reading is a **method of delving deeper into a specific work** to understand it more fully and interact with it on another level.

Close reading helps develop your **critical thinking and analysis skills**, as well as teaching you to look for **patterns and details in literary writing**.

After you have read all of the poems, you will select one that you want to think about more deeply. Then, you will follow the directions in the assignment section to perform a close reading.

In case you haven't worked with poetry before, it's important that we have a brief introduction to **rhyme schemes**.

To help us organize rhymes, we assign each sound a letter, starting from the first line and moving from A-Z. If a sound is repeated, its corresponding letter is repeated. For example, in the poem below, "sung" and "young" both have the -ung sound. They would share a letter, even when they occur across stanzas.

If a line in this poem did not rhyme with any other line, we would mark it with an "X" to signify that it doesn't rhyme.



## Selection from “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, (A)  
And sorry I could not travel both (B)  
And be one traveler, long I stood (A)  
And looked down one as far as I could (A)  
To where it bent in the undergrowth; (B)

Then took the other, as just as fair, (C)  
And having perhaps the better claim, (D)  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear; (C)  
Though as for that the passing there (C)  
Had worn them really about the same, (D)

### MEETING WORDSWORTH –

William Wordsworth was born in the Lake District of England—Cumberland, to be precise—on April 7, 1770. The second of five children, young Wordsworth was taught to read by his mother and later attended two local schools, one at which he met Mary Hutchinson, who would later become his wife.

Sadly, when Wordsworth was just seven years old, his mother passed away. Wordsworth was sent to Hawkshead Grammar School in Lancashire, where he and his three brothers—one older, two younger—eventually all studied together. Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy, with whom William himself was quite close, was sent to live with varying relatives, and the two did not see each other again for nine years.

Tragedy struck again when, in 1783, Wordsworth's father passed away. Because of John Wordsworth's frequent business-related absences, none of the five children had a close relationship with their father. Nonetheless, thirteen-year-old Wordsworth and his four siblings now faced the world alone.

Although he had been composing verse for several years, William Wordsworth began his journey as a published writer in 1787. He also began attending St. John's College, Cambridge, from which he graduated in 1791. The year prior, Wordsworth took a walking trip in Europe. Impressed by the natural beauty of both France and Switzerland as well as the revolutionary political movements of the time, Wordsworth began expressing himself more fully in writing. His first book of poems was published in 1793. In 1795, he made the acquaintance of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, another poet of the time. The two became close friends and remained so for some fifteen years.

Over the coming decades, William Wordsworth wrote numerous poems which express ideas of nature, politics, and religious beliefs in addition to his own personal experiences. Wordsworth was given several awards and served as Poet Laureate—official poet of the United Kingdom—from 1843-1850, though his age and the sudden death of his daughter left him depressed and uninspired, causing him to become the only Poet Laureate to never pen any verses during the course of his position.

William Wordsworth passed away on April 23, 1850. Mary Wordsworth took it upon herself to have her husband's autobiographical poem published several months after Wordsworth's death. *The Prelude*, a poem of some 8,000 lines, went largely unrecognized at the time, but it is now considered William Wordsworth's masterpiece.

**Assignment 1A:** Read each of the following poems by William Wordsworth, attached with this week's lesson.

- “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”
- “Lines Written in Early Spring”
- “My Heart Leaps Up”
- “Surprised by Joy”

**Assignment 1B:** Select ONE of the poems that you just read. You will perform a close reading on that poem. Begin by writing down the rhyme scheme. (You **must submit** the end rhyme scheme with this assignment. Please reach out with any questions!) Then, in complete sentences, answer the following questions for this poem.

### **CLOSE READING QUESTIONS:**

#### **Structure:**

1. What is the name of the poem?
2. How many lines does this poem have?

#### **Rhyme –**

1. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?
2. What does the rhyme scheme add to the poem?
3. What does the rhyme scheme make you think or feel?

**Sound –**

1. What does this poem sound like when read aloud?
2. Does the sound connect to the subject matter? If so, how?
3. Why might the poet have written it this way?

**Repetition –**

1. Is there any repetition in the poem? (Look at words, punctuation usage, rhyme schemes, sounds, etc.) If so, why might it be there? If not, why might it not be there?
2. Are these patterns ever broken? Why might the patterns have or have not been broken?

**Personal Connections –**

1. What is your favorite phrase or line in this poem? Why?
2. What does this poem remind you of in literature, your life, and the world as a whole?