

HIGHLAND

American Studies

MRS. ROWLAND

Summer Reading Assignment

Welcome to the American Studies class! We look forward to spending a unique and lively school year with you—after a LONG and relaxing summer vacation, of course!

In preparation for our momentous year together, we are asking you to complete some work over the summer. What's that we hear? Could it possibly be *whining*? No way. We expressly forbid whining. It must be the sound of eager students expressing intense interest in what we have planned! Oh, joy.

First, you are to read The Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change the World Around Them. This book is readily available in any bookstore or online at Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and Borders. If you purchase it online, you can buy a used copy of the book and save a lot of money. Do **NOT** purchase the companion book for the film or the Teacher's Guide. You need the actual book.

You may be familiar with the 2007 film with Hillary Swank who portrayed teacher Erin Gruwell. This is a collection of diary entries by Ms. Gruwell's students, written in response to the challenges they faced in their inner city community and the stereotypes and prejudices they had to overcome.

THE FILM AND THE BOOK ARE DIFFERENT. The film narrates Erin Gruwell's experience with her students and the writing project. The book is a collection of diary entries with narration by Ms. Gruwell. View the film if you wish, but it is not a substitute for the book.

Second, complete the attached assignment. You will be constructing a Coat of Arms to help us and your classmates get to know you better. Use the template provided as a guide. Ideally, you should transfer this to a piece of poster board or a large sheet of construction paper. Be creative! Add color, texture, dimension—whatever you wish to bring some personality to your Coat of Arms.

Next, purchase or make some kind of notebook that will serve as a journal for the coming year. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate. A binder with loose leaf paper is fine or a large spiral notebook. Feel free to decorate and/or personalize it as you wish. As we explore early American writing, we will quickly discover that journal writing was a very common form of expression. You will be using your journal for various assignments and activities throughout the year.

Finally, write your first entry! It is titled “What Makes Me Unique.” Use the attached graphic to do your planning. List specific personality traits, for example, and brainstorm ideas for stories (personal anecdotes, events, and experiences) that convey what makes you so unique. After you complete your pre-writing, write your story in your journal.

As you will discover in The Freedom Writers Diary, Ms. Gruwell’s students learned that their journals were safe havens and private places to explore difficult issues and move toward important insights. Even those who “hated” writing (sound familiar?) eventually developed a comfort zone with their journals. Your journal is an outlet to write about your feelings, ideas, and personal experiences without anxieties about grammar or punctuation. **JOURNALS WILL NOT BE GRADED ON SPELLING, GRAMMAR, OR CONTENT AND WILL NOT BE SHARED WITH CLASSMATES.**

I ask, however, that you refrain from using words considered inappropriate for a school setting. Also, understand that while I will protect the content of your journal from other students, I will act immediately if you indicate that your own actions or the actions of others have placed you in danger—emotionally as well as physically.

Later in the year we can discuss the possibility of setting up online blogs, but for now we will do it the old-fashioned way! If you have any questions over the summer or just want to chat, you can contact me at Arowland@bhprsd.org. Feel free to get in touch anytime.

The Coat of Arms and the journal entry are due on the day you return to school in September.

Mrs. Rowland

Coat of Arms

Fill in the small paper shield with the following information.

- A) **Goals:** What are your immediate and future goals. These could include personal, school, career or family-related goals.

- B) **Favorite Things:** Show your favorite things, including sports, pets, entertainers, and hobbies

- C) **Someone You Admire:** Draw or paste in a picture of someone you admire. You can also use cut-out words that describe why you admire that particular individual. Possible options: family members, a sports hero, a political figure, a religious leader, a celebrity.

- D) **What makes You Unique:** Use words, pictures or drawings to show what makes you unique. Describe your personality, talent, or special characteristic, such as “good cook,” “good in basketball,” or a “good dancer.”

The Ribbon Across the Bottom of the Shield: Motto

Write your own personal motto across the bottom of the shield. Choose a favorite saying that expresses a principle, a goal, or an idea. For example, Gandhi’s was “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” Anne Frank is known for saying, “In spite of everything, I still believe that people are truly good at heart.” Another example is “What doesn’t kill you, will make you stronger.” The Freedom Writers original motto was, “When diverse words come together, beauty is inevitable.” Your motto doesn’t have to be totally original. You can borrow a line from a song or paraphrase a saying you heard and liked.