

Summer Reading Assignment: English I—All Levels

For questions before the start of the school year, contact Ms. Sarah Shepard (shepards@leonschools.net).

Please direct questions to your English teacher once the year has begun.

General Instructions

All incoming 9th grade students, regardless of level, will complete the following assignment. All of the reading materials, tasks, and instructions needed for this assignment can be found in this packet. There are three (3) short texts—an informational text, a poem, and a personal narrative—each with an assigned task consisting of annotations and analytical responses, plus a culminating final task that requires you to use your knowledge from your reading to develop your own ideas. All four tasks are required. Please read all directions carefully and pay attention to word count requirements. Your Summer Reading Assignment will be due the second Friday of school—August 23rd—and will count as a summative grade in the first nine weeks. Only your annotations should be handwritten; your responses to the analysis questions in each task must be typed and submitted to Canvas. Handwritten responses to the tasks will not be accepted. Please type your responses to each task in a single document and be sure to save your work as you go. You will hand in your annotations to your teacher and submit your typed responses digitally to Canvas where they will be run through Turnitin.com, a tool to detect plagiarism and AI. Assignments that are excessively plagiarized and/or AI generated will not receive credit. Your teacher will give you instructions for submitting your assignment the first week of school.

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**"Letter to My Younger Self"
Informational Text
David Robinson
2016**

Retired NBA player David "The Admiral" Robinson (b. 1965) was drafted by the San Antonio Spurs in 1987 and continued to play center for the team until his retirement in 2003. Robinson was hailed as one of the "legends" of basketball, joining famous contemporaries such as Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, and Magic Johnson, in forming the Dream Team, an acclaimed basketball team that won the gold medal in the 1992 Summer Olympics. Before signing on full time with the Spurs, Robinson had graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and was required to complete a two-year military commitment, pushing his start date to 1989. In "Letter to My Younger Self," Robinson confronts one of the most difficult memories surrounding his first year as a new cadet in the Navy.

BEST Standards addressed in this task: ELA.K12.EE.1.1, ELA.K12.EE.2.1, ELA.9.R.2.3, ELA.9.C.3.1

Nov. 22, 2016

Dear 18-year-old David,

Please allow me to give you fair warning about something from the future.

Tomorrow morning, you're going to take your first swim test at the U.S. Naval Academy. Believe it or not, the Navy requires plebes¹ to actually be able to swim.

Of course, you know that part already. You're in good shape, right? What's a little morning swim?

But what you might not realize is just how long 20 minutes of treading water feels like.

That's right, 20 minutes.

When you first get into the pool, you're going to be feeling good. But after 10 minutes, your arms and legs are going to be burning so bad you'll want to quit. After 15? I don't even want to tell you.

But you'll think about your dad, and what he'd say if you failed, and you'll find a way to keep your head above water for 20 minutes.

The only problem is, you're not done yet. Your stone-faced water survival instructor will bark, "Alright, next up: 100-meter crawl stroke."

There's no break. There's no, "Sir, can I catch my wind?"

You are overboard in deep open water without a PFD (personal floatation device), or at least that's what your instructor is yelling. Sink or swim, plebe.

You choose to swim.

¹ **plebe** (n): a nickname for freshmen at a military academy

A thought will come to your mind as you push off the wall and use all the strength left in your six-foot-eight body to take your first stroke².

Oh my goodness. What have I done?

When you touch the wall and turn to start your second lap, another thought will come to mind.

Uh-oh. I'm sinking.

You're done. You grab the wall and tell the instructor, "I can't do this."

You, David Robinson, have flunked your introductory swim test.

Your swim test. In the Navy.

Tomorrow night, when you lie down in your bedroom after this embarrassment and you stare at the ceiling for hours, you'll have another thought. This one is very important.

What have I gotten myself into? Why am I doing this?

I want you to think long and hard about this particular question.

We both know the obvious answer: You chose the Naval Academy because of your father and grandfather, who both served in the military.

Your grandfather is and will always be your hero, your inspiration³. He fought in World War II, came home to Little Rock, Arkansas, and worked for 50 years as a mailman in the segregated south. Not once did he get a job promotion in five decades. But he kept working all the same. He saved up enough money to buy a piano for his home, and he used it to teach his four children how to play.

Be true to who you are. You don't know the lasting impact you're going to have. David Robinson shares some words of wisdom with his younger self. (1:12)

When you think of that piano, you don't think about music. You think about all the family around the piano. You think about how much joy it spread. It was more than a piano, it was a symbol of something.

Up.

Keeping moving the family up.

Keep working and saving and striving for a better future for your children, and for their children, even if you won't be around to see it pay off.

² **stroke** (n): in sports, a repeated motion or movement with the arms

³ **inspiration** (n): something or someone that motivates or compels one to do something

That's what your grandfather did, rain, sleet or snow.

I want you to think about your grandfather's integrity⁴ and grit when you're staring at the ceiling of your barracks room, but I also want you to think a little deeper. You need to learn a practical lesson. Grit alone is not going to save you from sinking.

Remember when your dad used to make you study a page of the dictionary every night after school? Then the next day he'd quiz you on the definitions.

"O.K., David, your next word is ambidextrous."

"Dad, this is crazy. None of the other kids are doing this!"

"Ambidextrous...."

Your father is very demanding of you (actually, a lot like a coach you're going to have in the future by the name of Larry Brown, but that's a story for another time.) But the reason he's so demanding is because he's preparing you for the real world. He's not just giving you the tools to excel in school and eventually choose where you'll go to college, he's also showing you how to succeed in your life after basketball.

He's doing what your grandfather did for him.

Up. Always up.

How do you build a solid vocabulary?

The same way you build a house.

Brick by brick. Word by word. Night after night.

The same rule applies to learning to swim, or developing a post move, or building a business.

Preparation is everything. This is a simple but undeniable truth that is completely lost on you at 18 years old.

The reason I'm writing to you now is not the swim test. The swim test is nothing. Come on, you're an African-American kid from Virginia. You didn't exactly grow up diving in the ocean every summer. Just relax and practice every day, and you'll get past the swim test.

What this is really about is how you're going to approach this very short thing called life.

I'm going to drop a bombshell on you now.

In four years, you will be an ensign in the U.S. Navy, and you'll earn a monthly salary of \$1,260.90.

⁴ **integrity** (n): the quality of being honest or having strong moral principles

I know that sounds like a tremendous amount of pizza money, but no, that's not the bombshell.

The bombshell is that you're going to be drafted No. 1 overall by the San Antonio Spurs.

You will sign a \$3 million contract, with a \$1 million signing bonus.

You will be stationed on a submarine base in Kings Bay, Georgia, serving your two-year commitment in the Navy, waiting to play in the NBA, and you'll get a check for one million dollars.

It will be the most surreal moment of your life. You will be sitting in the diving-control station of the U.S.S. Buffalo submarine going about your duties as a civil engineer, when you will think, I have one million dollars in the bank.

This is really a turning point in your life.

That's why I want you to reflect so deeply on the question that will pop into your head when you fail your swim test.

Why am I doing this?

As I write this letter to you, you're much older, and a little grayer. You have experienced so many incredible things, and you have screwed up plenty, too.

You will win two Olympic gold medals, lift two NBA championship trophies, sign many more contracts, and inevitably your career will end, as all things do, and you will start a second life a businessman.

But the question remains. Whether we're talking about a swimming test, or your bank account, or what you do with your life after the NBA....

Why am I doing this?

You will make more money than your grandfather could ever dream of seeing. My advice to you is to save that first million dollars. Do not touch it. Live off your military paycheck. It's plenty.

Your peers will respect you for your integrity and character, not your possessions. What are you gonna do anyway, drive a Ferrari around the naval base? How is that going to help anyone?

Use the financial power you'll be blessed with to create a company that can invest⁵ in the community, especially the African-American community. And create connections with the many influential people you meet along the way so that you can create a foundation that will empower young people like you to pursue their dreams.

⁵ **invest** (v): to give, usually of time, money, or attention

I hate to say it, but in the future, the times will be much more unforgiving. The world will be very challenging place for young African-American kids like you. Not all of them will have role models like your grandfather.

So, before I leave you, remember these two things:

When you fail the swim test, don't get too bent out of shape. Just remember how your father built up your vocabulary with that thick dictionary. Practice, son.

And when you get that signing bonus, don't start thinking about all the things you can do with \$1 million. Instead, think about all the things your grandfather did with \$100.

When all else fails, trust God.

Sincerely,

David

Task 1: Analyzing Informational Texts

Read and annotate the text. In your annotations, identify and explain important elements in the text:

- Highlight or underline key words and phrases or major ideas. Explain their significance in the margins.
- Circle unfamiliar vocabulary and define it in the margins.
- Draw arrows between related ideas and explain their importance in the margins.
- Draw a question mark (?) when you don't understand something. Use the text or do some quick research to find the answers.
- Draw an exclamation point (!) when something surprises you and explain why in the margins.

After you have read and annotated the text, answer the following questions. Cite text evidence as necessary.

1. According to an older Robinson, what motivated him to join the Navy? Cite specific evidence from the text.
2. "Preparation is everything," Robinson says. Why does he believe preparation is so important? Explain.
3. What is David Robinson's financial advice to his younger self? Explain in a few sentences.
4. How does the older David Robinson view his past failures? Does he write this letter to himself with regret or self-loathing, or with a calm acceptance? In a minimum of 250 words, explain Robinson's purpose in writing this letter to himself. Make sure to cite specific textual evidence to support your claims.

“Ode to the Selfie”

Poetry

**Megan Falley and Olivia Gatwood
2016**

In the summer of 2014, writers Megan Falley and Olivia Gatwood performed spoken word poetry as part of a slam team, expanding their partnership into a national tour. Falley’s “Ode to the Selfie” is one of the pieces the duo performed, a clarion call about self-acceptance. While selfies are often disparaged as frivolous or narcissistic, this free verse poem takes the opposite stance, describing the many ways a photograph shared through social media might empower young girls, allowing them to view themselves and their surroundings with a more celebratory eye.

B.E.S.T Standards addressed in this task: ELA.K12.EE.1.1, ELA.K12.EE.2.1, ELA.9.R.1.1, ELA.9.R.1.2, ELA.9.C.3.1

Today you thought, I look beautiful.

Today you thought, I look so beautiful

I want to remember it forever.

Today you thought, I look so beautiful

I want everyone to see.

Today your hair was a river down your back.

Today your eyes were the still point of the turning world.

Today you can see the resemblance⁶ to your ancestors—

can tell you are a direct descendent⁷ of stars.

Today your winged eyeliner nearly flew off your face

it was so fly.

Today there was a lipstick named after your pout.

Today you loved the gap in your teeth.

Today your freckles were sprinkles on ice cream.

Today you had #nomakeup

and #nofilter

and you looked

#flawless.

Today you woke up like this.

Today you took a selfie from above because maybe that’s how God sees you.

Today you chose the ‘Rise’ filter⁸ because that’s what you’re gonna do.

Today the iPhone is the Louvre⁹ and you are Mona Lisa¹⁰.

⁶ **resemblance** (adj): the quality of looking alike

⁷ **descendent** (n): a person, plant, or animal that comes from an ancestor

⁸ **‘Rise’ filter**: a filter developed by photographer Cole Rise for use on the Instagram app

⁹ **Louvre**: Musée de Louvre in Paris, France, founded in 1793m is the largest and most visited art museum in the world.

¹⁰ **Mona Lisa**: the title of a portrait of a woman painted in 1503 by the artist Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), perhaps the most known painting in the world

Today Frida Kahlo¹¹ would call your selfie stick a magic wand.

Today the magazines are glossy haters.

Today you are the front page babe of because all your followers feeds

Today 62 people admit that

they like your face.

Today pride is no longer a sin.

Today you don't want to be full of anything—

but yourself.

Today you control the lens, the light, the angle, the pose,

the gaze, the face, the filter, the feeling, the caption¹².

Today you are the boss of your own incredible body.

Today millions of girls loved themselves

in the face of a world who tells them not to.

And isn't that small revolution¹³ enough?

And isn't that the greatest revolution of all?

Task 2: Analyzing Poetry

Read and annotate the text. In your annotations, identify examples and explain the meanings of the following literary devices: allusion, imagery, metaphor, personification, and repetition.

After you have read and annotated the poem, answer the following questions. Cite text evidence as necessary.

1. Based on the poem, what can you infer about the role social media plays in the life of the main character? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
2. How does the speaker incorporate the vocabulary of cell phones and social media into their writing? What are the pros and cons of using such language? Be sure to cite evidence from the text in your response.
3. Analyze the last two lines of this poem. How can a selfie be a kind of revolution? What claim are the authors making? Do you agree? Why or why not? Cite evidence from the text to support your analysis.
4. This poem is written so that the main character is "you," a point of view called *second person*. Why do you think the authors chose to write the poem in this manner and address the poem to the reader directly? How does this choice reinforce the message of the poem? In at least 250 words, explain the significance of second person point of view and the impact it has on the reader. Be sure to include important lines from the poem to support your analysis.

¹¹ **Frida Kahlo:** Frida Kahlo de Rivera (1907-1954) was a Mexican painter whose work was notably composed of colorful and surrealistic self-portraits

¹² **caption (n):** a comment or title that goes with a picture

¹³ **revolution (n):** a forceful change in government or social order

from *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*
Informational Text
Brené Brown
2017

Brené Brown (b. 1965) is a writer and teacher, as well as the CEO of Brave Leaders, Inc., which teaches team-building to organizations. She is best known for her viral TED-Talk, "The Power of Vulnerability." She is also the author of Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone, which focuses on empathy, courage, shame and vulnerability. In this excerpt, the author reflects on trying out for her high school's drill team, using the experience to teach valuable lessons about success, failure and belonging.

BEST Standards addressed in this task: ELA.K12.EE.1.1, ELA.K12.EE.2.1, ELA.K12.EE.3.1, ELA.9.C.1.2

When we moved back to Houston at the very end of eighth grade there was, thankfully, just enough time to try out for the high school drill team, called the Bearkadettes. This was to be my everything. In a house that was increasingly filled with the muffled sounds of my parents arguing, heard through the walls of my bedroom, that drill team was salvation. Just picture it: lines of girls in white--fringed blue satin vests and short skirts, all of them wearing uniform wigs, white cowboy boots, small white cowboy hats, and bright red lipstick, strutting into high school football stadiums filled with crowds afraid to leave their seats during halftime lest they miss the high kicks and perfectly choreographed¹⁴ routines. This was my way out, my new, pretty, impeccably ordered refuge¹⁵.

Eight years of ballet was plenty to get me through the task of learning the routine, and a two--week liquid diet got me through the brutal weigh--in. All of the girls swore by the cabbage soup and water diet. It's hard to think of letting a twelve--year--old go on a liquid diet, but for some reason it seemed normal.

To this day, I'm not sure I've ever wanted anything in my life more than I wanted a place on this drill team. The perfection, precision¹⁶, and beauty of it would not only offset the growing turmoil at home, but also deliver the holy grail of belonging. I would have a "big sis" and she would decorate my locker. We'd have sleepovers and date football players. For a kid who had seen Grease forty--five times, I knew this was the beginning of a high school experience that included sudden, spontaneous sing--alongs and the 1980s version of sock hops¹⁷.

And most of all, I would be a part of something that literally did everything together in lockstep. A Bearkadette was belonging personified.

I didn't really have any friends yet, so I was on my own for tryouts. The routine was easy to learn—a jazzy number performed to a big band version of "Swanee" (you know, the "how I love ya, how I love ya" one). There was a lot of sliding with jazz hands and an entire section of high kicks. I could kick higher than all of the

¹⁴ **choreographed** (v): to compose a sequence of dance steps, often to music

¹⁵ **refuge** (n): shelter from danger or hardship

¹⁶ **precision** (n): the quality of being exact

¹⁷ **sock hops**: events popular in the 1950s at which teenagers danced in their socks and socialized

girls except one dancer named LeeAnne. I practiced so much that I could do that routine in my sleep. I still remember parts of it today.

Tryout day was terrifying, and I'm not sure if it was my nerves or the starvation diet, but I was lightheaded when I woke up, and I stayed that way after my mom dropped me off at the school. Now, as the mother of a teen and a tween, it's a little hard to think of how I had to walk in by myself, surrounded by groups of girls who were piling out of cars and running in together, holding hands. But I soon realized I had a bigger problem than walking in alone.

All of the girls—and I mean all of the girls—were made up from head to toe. Some were wearing blue satin shorts and gold shirts, and others had blue and gold tank tops with little white skirts. There was every iteration of blue and gold bows that you could imagine. And they were all in full makeup. I had on no makeup, and I was wearing gray cotton shorts over a black leotard. No one had told me that you were supposed to get decked out in school colors. Everyone looked so bright and shiny. I looked like the sad girl whose parents fight a lot.

I made the weigh-in with six pounds to spare. Even so, the sight of girls stepping off the scale and running into the locker room weeping traumatized me.

We wore numbers safety-pinned to our shirts and danced in groups of five or six. Lightheaded or not, I nailed the routine. I felt pretty confident when my mom picked me up and I went home to wait it out. They would post the numbers later that evening. Those hours in between moved in slow motion.

Finally, at five or six, we pulled into the parking lot of my soon-to-be high school. My entire family—mom, dad, brother and sisters—was in the car. I was going to check my number and then we were headed to San Antonio to visit my grandparents. I walked up to the poster board hanging on the outside of the gym door. Standing next to me was one of the girls from the tryout group. She was the brightest and shiniest of all the girls. And on top of that, her name was Kris. Yes, she even had one of those coveted¹⁸ girl-body names that we all wanted.

The list was in numeric order. If your number was there, you'd made the team. If your number wasn't there, you were out. I was number 62. My eyes went straight for the 60s: 59, 61, 64, 65. I looked again. I just couldn't process it. I thought if I stared hard enough and the universe knew how much was on the line, the number might magically appear. I was ripped out of my negotiation¹⁹ with the universe by Kris's screaming. She was jumping up and down, and before I could make sense of what was happening, her dad had jumped out of the car, run up to her, grabbed her, and twirled her around, just like in the movies. I would later hear

¹⁸ **coveted** (v): to want in an inappropriate way

¹⁹ **negotiation** (n): a discussion intended to produce an agreement

through the grapevine that I was a solid dancer by not really Bearkadette material. No bows. No shine. No group. No friends. Nowhere to belong.

I was alone. And it felt devastating.

I walked back to our station wagon and got in the backseat, and my dad drove away. My parents didn't say one word. Not a single word. The silence cut into me like a knife to the heart. They were ashamed of me and for me. My dad had been captain of the football team. My mom had been head of her drill team. I was nothing. My parents, especially my father, valued being cool and fitting in above all else. I was not cool. I didn't fit in.

And now, for the first time, I didn't belong to my family either.

My drill team story is one that's easy to dismiss as unimportant in the larger scheme of what's going on in the world today. (I can already see the #firstworldproblem hashtag.) But let me tell you what it means to me. I don't know if this was true or it was the story I told myself in that silence, but that became the day I no longer belonged in my family—the most primal and important of all our social groups. Had my parents consoled me or told me I was brave for trying—or, better yet and what I really wanted in that moment, had they taken my side and told me how terrible it was and how I deserved to be picked—this story wouldn't be one that defined my life and shaped its trajectory. But it did.

Task 3: Analyzing Narrative Texts

Read and annotate the text.

- Use context clues to analyze and determine the meanings of the unfamiliar vocabulary terms and make notes of their definitions in the margins.
- Ask questions about passages of the text that may be unclear or unresolved
- Identify key details, events, individuals, and connections among them
- Make connections to personal experiences or ideas in other texts

After you have read and annotated the poem, answer the following questions. Cite text evidence as necessary.

1. What kinds of things would a place on the drill team provide for the author? Why are these things important to the author? Explain using specific examples from the text.
2. The author wishes her parents reacted differently to her not making the team. What does she wish they said? Support your response with evidence from the text.
3. How does the author convey her sense of anxiety throughout the text? Citing examples from the text, list as many ways as you can think of that the author illustrates her anxiety about the tryouts.
4. Analyze the various details the author uses to describe her preparation, the other students trying out, and her own experience during and after the tryout. What images stood out to you and why? In at least 250 words, and using evidence from the text, explain how the author uses detail to convey emotion about the tryouts.

Task 4: Reflection

Once you have read the three texts, complete the following analysis.

All three of these texts deal with the theme of identity and how we view ourselves. What makes you unique? How has your identity been nurtured by those around you (friends, family, etc.)? What have been the biggest influences on who you are as a person? Write a well-developed response of at least 300 words that pulls specific examples from these three texts, as well as from a significant text you read in 8th grade (it can be a short story, essay, poem, novel, etc.), that explains how identity is formed and what has influenced your development throughout your life.

Summer Reading Checklist

- ☐ Annotated all three (3) texts (highlighting/underlining and margin notes)
- ☐ Completed all three (3) text-based tasks
 - Text evidence is properly cited
 - Word counts are met where needed
- ☐ Completed Task 4
 - Specific references to four (4) texts: “Letter to My Younger Self,” “Ode to the Selfie,” excerpt from *Braving the Wilderness*, and a significant text from 8th grade
 - Minimum of 500 words
- ☐ All four (4) task responses are typed in a single document
- ☐ Responses have been proofread and revised for clarity of ideas, grammar, and spelling
- ☐ Each task is clearly labeled within the document
- ☐ Summer Reading is saved and ready to turn in no later than Friday, August 23rd
 - Annotations are hand-written and are due in-class to your teacher
 - Tasks are typed and are due to Canvas to be checked by Turnitin