Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_\_

**English 12**

 **Life 101**

English 12 – Life 101

Welcome to English 12! *Ideally*, my goal is that we have multiple days throughout the year reserved for Life 101 Days in which, it is my fervent hope, we can dig deeply into what makes us human and why we should care, and how we, at our very cores, are all searching for similar things.

As you prepare to enter “the real world”, I ask you to consider that at some point, and for some that point is sooner rather than later, *we are all held accountable*. Whether that means that we must repeat a failed class, deal with a break-up, assume responsibility for multiple bill payments, manage looming college loans, or suffer a loss or trauma that teaches us about the delicateness and unpredictability of life, *no one* is immune to all of life’s challenges. Life has a strange way of teaching us lessons, some of them harder than others, and it is my belief that the majority of us may not be prepared for them. This is not because we are incapable, but because we may lack the ability or experience, for whatever reason, to sustain us throughout life’s obstacles.

To that end, these Life 101 Days will be about YOU. We will explore who *you* are, but more importantly, who *you* wish to become. What is your two-year plan? Your five-year plan? Your ten-year plan? How will you navigate life’s challenges? What do you want people to see when you step out into the world? How will you make these things happen for yourself? What are your strengths? What skills do you need to achieve your goals? Will you ask for help when you need it? Do you really know what to anticipate when you leave high school? How will you learn what you need to know? How will you make the world a better place?

We may do journal writing during these days, or we may have guest speakers come in, or it might just be a day of sharing our thoughts about our deeper human concerns and questions. It is possible that we may implement new literary works or literature we are exploring as a springboard to our discussions and journeys. It is one of the reasons why I love teaching English: it is a vehicle through which authors, poets, artists, and performers communicate what they have gleaned from their own life experiences. It is simply up to us, my dear seniors, to be mature and willing enough to recognize this notion, or at least give it a chance. It is also our responsibility to be open-minded enough and brave enough to communicate what our own questions, hopes, fears, desires, and life lessons are as we travel along our individual journeys.

I do not define myself as “*just* an English teacher”, just as all of you, no doubt, do not define yourselves as “*just* students.” I am a human being first, someone who has my heart in the right place, and someone who is willing to step into “unknown waters” to experiment with something that, quite honestly, terrifies me a bit: How do I reach all of you, my students, in a way that is truly meaningful? How do I uphold my responsibilities as a teacher while also recognizing that you as young people may not readily understand why these last thirteen years of school have been so crucial, or what awaits you as you face the challenges outside the four walls of this high school?

I hope that this English class is like no other academic journey you have ever experienced, but I also hope that you *sincerely* understand that a huge part of that responsibility now rests upon *your* shoulders. It is *my* responsibility to facilitate your academic English 12 experience in the best way I know how. If you want to enter into something worthwhile, you must make the commitment to be present (*NOT* just physically – but intellectually), to be honest, to act selflessly, to behave respectfully, to be driven, to have courage, and to be willing to admit when you fail, and/or when you may need help or guidance.

I know that many of us have just met, but I can promise you that whatever my intentions are spring from my deep desire to assist you in your own personal journey. It is not always easy to look at ourselves in the mirror, admit our short-comings, confess that we are in need of help, push ourselves when we are not motivated, etc., but how grateful we should feel knowing that we do not have to go through this specific English 12 journey alone. We have each other as sounding boards, champions, and motivators.

Thank you for your attention.

Now, let’s make the most of these 181 days and commit to one another.