**Unit One: Language and Literacy**

Readings

Other writers who talk candidly about their relationship to reading and writing will inspire you, and you will read them for this Unit.

They include the following authors:

**Unit 1:**

* Malcolm X
* Ellen Carillo
* Sandra Cisneros
* Hellen Keller (2 readings)
* Anne Lamott
* Stephen King (optional)
* Excerpt from *The Bedford Book of Genres* (*From Hunger of Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez)*

All readings for this unit will be available at little or no cost to you; they are posted on our OpenLab course site under READINGS and you must print them out yourself unless otherwise instructed.

Major Assignment:

Your Literacy Narrative, the keystone of this Unit, is going to tell your own, honest story as a learner and writer -- the truth as best you can tell it. Here is where you name and acknowledge the people who helped you, who hindered you, the ways in which you reacted, struggled, succeeded, or didn’t. It’s *your* story, and no one else’s.

The Learning Objectives we address in UNIT 1 include #1, 4, 5

The Keywords of this UNIT include: Metacognition, Reflection, Literacy, Writing Process

UNIT I

**Schedule of Assignments with Due Dates**

**Date**

**Jan 27 Overview: First** day of class. Introduction to class, teacher, and syllabus. Meet each other. Get in-class “buddies”: exchange contact information with two other students. View OpenLab course site. Introduction to constraint writing and “prisoner’s constraint” and how we can write in ways we never thought possible.

In-Class Assignments (if you add this class late, you must make up this work!):

**Read** excerpts from *A Void* by George Perec and *Gadsby* by Ernest Vincent Wright.

**Write** Describe your day so far without using the letter “o.” No length limit.

**To Do:** Join our OpenLab website

***Question: “How am I graded on this kind of handwritten work?” Answer: All*** *short, handwritten assignments like the above will go in your Writer’s Journal. Your Journal is 15% of your final grade, and is checked periodically throughout the semester on a check minus, check, check plus system. These assignments have no length requirement unless specified – but they are very important to your success in this class.*

***Question: “Where do I find our course Readings?”*** *Answer: our OpenLab READINGS page, unless otherwise noted.*

**Due Homework**

**Feb 3** **Write** using a prisoner’s constraint without descending letters (p, q, y, g, j). No length requirement. Topic: Music (music I like…favorite music…music is life…music is the best artform ever…) or Food  (favorite food…food I like…food is incredible…anything you wish…).

**` Reading**: There is an excerpt from **Malcolm X’**s autobiography on our [COURSE READINGS](https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/schmerlereng1101sec361spring2020/readings-and-resources/) page called “[**Learning to Read**](https://openlab.citytech.cuny.edu/schmerlereng1121e106spring2019/files/2019/02/Malcolm-X-Learning-to-Read.pdf).” **Print** it, **read** it, and **bring** it to class.

**Monday Review**: When we begin class on Mondays, we briefly review and reflect on what we have done in class the previous week. Be prepared to discuss. (Re-read your notes before class!)

**Circle Time:** Introduction to the rules and format for creating a safe space for sharing our writing. Reading and of commenting in circle.

**Feb 5 Read: Sandra Cisneros’ “Only Daughter.”** (Readings are posted for download on our READINGS page unless otherwise specified and you must print them and bring them to class.)

**Watch:** Videos about the life of Helen Keller and how she learned to read and speak (in class).

**Planning ahead:** Our first major paper will be your personal Literacy Narrative. Your telling of your journey in how you learned to read and write. What sort of experiences you had. What sort of struggles you had. Who helped you along the way. You should start taking notes on this for yourself now. Come to class with questions or insights. It will be due on Feb 19.

**Feb 10 Read**: **Helen Keller’s “I Go Adventuring.”** **Circle** any words you don’t know.

**Write:** Write a short reflection on the reading. What were some of the main and also most interesting points of the piece? Do you like the way Keller writes? How does her writing effect you?

**Look up and Write:** Look up your name in an etymological dictionary. Find out its LITERAL translation — what it means. Here is an [example](https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=richard). I looked up the name “Richard” at www.etymonline.org and found that it means “strong in rule.” I want you to write the literal definition of your name. Also, write about why or how you got your name — what is its significance? Are you named for your grandfather? Did your parents have some reasons for naming you? Maybe Richard was named for a character in a book that his mom read when she was pregnant? Maybe he is named for an uncle who passed away? You get the idea.

**Monday Review; new Readings** distributed in class: “Literacy Narratives” from the *Bedford Book of Genres;* Helen Keller’s “Letter on the Empire Building to John Finley”

**Discuss: length and format for your typed Literacy Narratives. Continue to watch** videos on how Helen Keller learned.

Feb 12 No Class

**Readings Assigned over Break**: The chapter on “Literacy Narratives” from the *Bedford Book of Genres* (previously distributed in class)

Helen Keller’s “Letter on the Empire Building to John Finley” (previously distributed in class). **Annotate** and **reflect** as you did on the previous Helen Keller essay.

Feb 17 No Class

Feb 19 **Literacy Narrative Due**. Recap: Length -- 700 words max. Format -- double-spaced typed and printed. Your name, the course number and section number, professor’s name, and the date all appear at the upper left of the first page.

**Typed Entry on your Name Due**: Now that you have researched the literal definition and personal significance of your name, by today you must type up this information and submit it to me. Staple it to the front of or simply print it at the front of your Literacy Narrative. **This “name” information does not count as part of your Literacy Narrative’s word count.** It is simply informative, almost like a file entry, and you can make it as brief or lengthy as you need.

**Schedule**: One-on-one meetings with Professor. Have you come to Office Hour yet?

***Question: “How am I graded on this kind of typewritten assignment?” Answer: Each typewritten*** *assignment will have its own grading Rubric. This assignment will be assessed for your performance in the following 4 categories:*

*Narrative and Creative Content; Structure and Development; Mechanics and Grammar; Instructions Fulfilled (did you complete the job in the format and time frame requested).*

*You will receive a letter assignment (A-F) on this assignment, and will also receive comments on how to revise and improve it. We will discuss these points at length in class.*

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**Feb 24 Read**: Two chapters in Anne Lamott’s book *Bird by Bird*: **“Shitty First Drafts”** and **“Perfectionism.” Write:** short reflections on them in your Journal. What did you think of what she had to say? Do you agree? What has been your own experience in these areas? No length limit or minimum.

**Read**: Donald Murray, “Internal Revision” and respond in your notebooks on the points Professor discusses in class. Make notes. They will be checked.

**Continue** one-on-one meetings with Professor.

**Read Literacy Narratives in Circle Time**

**Monday Review**

**Feb 26 Reflection on UNIT 1:** In your journal, write a Reflection on the work you have done so far. What were your struggles? Successes? Did you have fun? How was this work different (or similar) to the way you learned and wrote in high school? What would you have liked to have done more of? What do you think you learned? What surprised you about this Unit? Be specific about this. Label it: “UNIT 1, Reflection.” See below for further instructions.

**Reflection on your Literacy Narrative:** How might you be able to make your Literacy Narrative Better – what revisions or edits could you do to improve it? What did you learn from listening to other people’s narratives in the class? What did you learn from our readings? What did you learn from me? (Well, I orchestrate the whole thing, but if something I did or said stood out for you, please tell me.)

**Give yourself a grade for the work you did in UNIT 1.** Be specific – your reading work, your short writing assignment work, your final paper, your ability to work and be heard in the class community as a whole? What do you feel is a fair grade given your history and ability.

**Mar 2** *UNIT 1 is completed, though we will return to its themes throughout the semester. Congratulations!*

**Hand in a final draft of the Reflections you did for UNIT 1 (above).** Double-spaced, typed. Be sure that all your personal course info appears at the top, upper left. Label these writings “UNIT 1 Reflections and Grade.” Be sure to edit your language so that it is clear and understandable. Length: 500 words, minimum.