English 3 & 4 Independent Project

Hello Students,

This resource packet includes a project that you can work on independently at home. You should also have project packets for some of the other courses you are enrolled in. These projects are standards-aligned and designed to meet the Remote Learning instructional minutes guidelines by grade band.

High school project packets are available for the following courses:

- English 1
- Algebra
- Biology
- US History
- English 2
- Geometry
- Chemistry
- World Studies
- English 3
- Algebra 2
- Physics
- Civics
- English 4

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11th and 12th Grade Independent Project: My World in Review

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<th>Estimated Time</th>
<th>~225 minutes</th>
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### Grade Level Standard(s)

- **RI.11-12.6** Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
- **W.11-12.4** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- **L.11-12.3** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

### Caregiver Support Option

Read through this assignment to understand the purpose of a review and the goal of writing one. Find reviews of things you’ve purchased or read to show them real life examples.

Remind your student that everyone has opinions and we determine what we eat, drink, buy, and do because of it. Share your review of something positive for your student.

### Materials Needed

- Pen/Pencil
- Notebook paper
Activity 1: Reviews-- They’re More than Just Opinions

When you are interested in seeing a new movie, reading a new book, purchasing shoes or clothes, or even trying out a new spot for lunch, how do you decide where to go or what to do? How do you learn information about sites or sounds you’ve never experienced? For some people, that answer comes from friends while others trust the word of complete strangers to tell them what works!

These perspectives and observations we so rely on for various aspects of our lives are types of reviews! Reviews are written to give an opinion about an item or entity that may or may not influence the reader towards action-- be it good or bad. Have you ever read a negative review that made you decide not to go somewhere or decided to make a purchase based off of positive reviews?

A. **Time to Write**: In your notebook, write 2-3 sentence short responses about those experiences-- the positive and the negative.

B. Reviews have different purposes. Here are three types of reviews. For each, given an example.
   1. **Themed Review**
      - Written about a series of subjects under a particular genre or category
      - Provides a broad perspective on topic at hand
   2. **Single Item Review**
      - Written about a specific topic, product, or media
      - Level of familiarity with subject needed/expected
   3. **Blurb**
      - Short description to promote or impede a product’s success
      - 150 words or fewer

Think about the types of reviews you most commonly encounter-- what type are they? Are they typically in blurb form or more extended (150 words or more)?

An effective review typically has a few essential components that set it apart from a regular rant or opinion. These include:
- Attention grabber
- Stated opinion/position
- Reasons for given opinion
- Evidence and description of subject at hand
- Comparison to a similar work (for better or worst)
- Recommendation for the reader
C. People have long written about what it takes to create a successful review. Read below as this New York Times critic gives his perspective and then answer the questions.

a. What is the job of a reviewer?
b. How is a review different from reporting?
c. What are three things you need to do in order to write a good review?
d. The author states, “A review is not about the reviewer.” Explain what is meant by this.

Jon Pareles, Popular Music Critic

Reviews are where an experience meets ideas. You go to a concert, a movie, an art exhibition, a restaurant, and it makes you think. Maybe the experience is a catalyst for a brand-new idea; maybe it crystallizes something you’ve been thinking about for a while. It becomes something worth writing about.

The job of the reviewer is to get both the experience and the ideas into words — and into proportion. In some ways, a review is the same as reporting: The facts have to be correct and presented in a coherent way. And in some ways, a review is very different from reporting: Your subjective experience and your reactions — intellectual, emotional, visceral — are a big part of it.

The best criticism merges the details of the individual experience — the close-up — with a much broader picture of what the experience means. It’s not just about that concert or art exhibit. It’s about how to listen or how to look. It’s about changing the perception your readers will bring to the next experience because your ideas awakened theirs.

Yes, that’s a tall order. You need to select your details. You need to make sure your ideas are clearly expressed. You need the writing itself to be engaging, to be worth that reader’s attention. It can be serious, a little poetic, even funny — whatever communicates the Ideas.

You’ll probably do best if you write about something that leaves you with a strong opinion, positive or negative. (It’s always illuminating, and part of a critic’s education, to experience something you hate but a lot of people love. Figure out how it works and what it does for its fans, and feel free to explain why you still hate it.)

A review is not about the reviewer. As a reader, I don’t care about when you got there or your mood or the weather that day. It’s about what you experienced when you met the work head-on with full attention: what your knowledge tells you about the work, what your immediate experience added to that and where the work can lead next. You might be writing about something your readers don’t know about but you’ve discovered; help them share that sense of discovery. Or you might be bringing a new perspective to something familiar. Make it convincing. It’s about feeling, learning, thinking, judging. And making all that vivid to your reader. *New York Times*

**Activity 2: Reading Reviews**
A. Now that you have learned a little about what reviews are and what they include, it is time to read a few examples and make note of what the writers do to make their reviews effective. Read the review below and note the author's choices while writing. Then, answer the following questions in your notebook:

a. What type of review is this and what form is it written in (blurb or extended)?
b. Does the author have an attention grabber? If so, what is it?
c. What appears to be the author's position on Ocean's work? Provide 2 pieces of textual evidence to explain how you know.
d. Give two examples of particularly effective word choice used in this writing.
e. What comparison is made? Is it effective? Explain why or why not.
f. What is this author's recommendation on this topic? How do you know?

Sample #1:

Frank Ocean, ‘Cayendo (Side A — Acoustic)’
‘Frank Ocean, ‘Dear April (Side A — Acoustic)’

Jon Caramanica

Into the grand global slowdown seeps Frank Ocean, his voice powerful and a little reluctant. These new songs — he debuted versions of them at his PrEP+ parties last fall — show Ocean reducing his sound to a kind of ambient folk music, overlaid with soul plaint. The result is like new age music that doesn’t soothe: The pace is molasses, the anguish will make you wince. These are marked as acoustic versions, though they feel like a post-technological kind of acoustic, slightly dirty and uncertain. (“Cayendo,” which includes Ocean singing in Spanish and echoes of Sade's “Love Is Stronger Than Pride,” is the more jolting of the two.) On the vinyl releases of these songs, though — which were put on sale last fall but have not yet been released — the B-sides are both dance remixes: Justice on “Dear April,” Sango on “Cayendo.”

That review was a quick taste. Let’s look at another.

B. Let’s do the same for this review as the one before. There’s more information to choose from, but the central components of a review are still present here.

a. What type of review is this and what form is it written in (blurb or extended)?
b. Does the author have an attention grabber? If so, what is it?
c. What appears to be the author’s position on Beyonce’s work? Provide 2 pieces of textual evidence to explain how you know.
d. Give two examples of particularly effective word choice used in this writing.
e. What comparison is made? Is it effective? Explain why or why not.
f. What is this author’s recommendation on this topic? How do you know?
Beyoncé the Creator: 'Homecoming' review

By: Aisha Harris (NY Times)
April 19, 2019

About midway through Beyoncé’s performance at Coachella last year, the booming, disembodied voice of the motivational ad-libber DJ Khaled proclaimed that, henceforth, the music festival would be known as “Beychella.”

Unlike almost everything else Khaled pronounces in his music and on social media, the statement hardly felt hyperbolic: This was a career-defining performance for Beyoncé, who became the first black woman to headline the festival since its debut in 1999. For nearly two hours, she and an astounding cast of dancers, singers and musicians wove together a beloved, unparalleled collection of hits and deep cuts, interpolated with music from the “Dirty South” and civil rights activists like Nina Simone — served against the visuals and iconography of historically black colleges and universities.

A year later, as the second weekend of Coachella approaches, the memory of Beychella looms large; no accumulation of star-studded guest appearances or secret movie reveals in the desert from this year’s lineup can gin up the same excitement. Which is what makes the Wednesday release of the Netflix documentary “Homecoming” — accompanied by the surprise release of a corresponding live album — even more of a coup. She may not be headlining this year, but we’re all going to pay attention and bow down anyway.

At almost 140 minutes, the majority of “Homecoming” is what many viewers have already seen (and, perhaps, seen again and again) this time through a greater variety of angles and Instagram-like filters. The performances from the first and second weekends (denoted by the differing color schemes and costume choices) are seamlessly intercut; this technique is particularly effective early on, when the performer’s outfits shift from all-yellow (Weekend 1) to all-pink (Weekend 2), just as “Crazy in Love” drops an infectious sample of Juvenile’s “Back That Thang Up.”

The “intimate” and “candid” moments touted by Netflix are brief in comparison, appearing between long, uninterrupted musical segments from the show. Those moments will be enough to satisfy the overzealous Beyhive (though what Beyoncé-related content doesn’t satisfy the Beyhive?) and probably more casual fans and admirers, too. Montages reveal footage of the rehearsal process; performers practice, smile, make funny faces at the camera, gush about the experience of working on such a momentous event with perhaps the biggest star in the world. There are cameos from Jay-Z and their eldest daughter, Blue Ivy, who sings “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

There’s Beyoncé, in voice-over (which is mostly how we hear her voice in these segments), talking about trying to balance family and getting in shape after the birth of her twins. (Her diet, which she describes as no bread, carbs, dairy, sugar, meat, fish or alcohol … sounds extreme and not at all
As with the film “Lemonade,” which included a Malcolm X audio clip, the singer puts herself directly in conversation with voices from black American history. The sage words of Maya Angelou, Audre Lorde, W.E.B. DuBois, Toni Morrison and others sprinkle “Homecoming” with inspiration. The overarching theme here is ostensibly education: Beyoncé schools her audience on the beauty of black culture, yes, but also on the importance of preserving and encouraging the legacy of historically black colleges and universities, which she stresses throughout the film.

Above all, “Homecoming” is about Beyoncé, who served as the writer, director and an executive producer, asserting, yet again, her power and control. In part because of preconceived notions about what it means to be a pop star and a black woman, questions around her claims to authorship of her own music and image have always lingered closely behind. It doesn’t help that she has usually chosen to let the work speak for itself, avoiding interviews that rise above surface-level promotion — not a bad thing for an artist to do, to be sure, though it allows plenty of room for doubters to deny her credit.

“Homecoming” reinforces the idea that Beyoncé the performer is also Beyoncé the creator. In voice-over, she speaks of the weeks spent in preparation. In footage, she oversees the music and dance rehearsals and advises on the visuals. At one point, she politely but forcefully communicates to her team that she’s not getting what she wants — it’s “janky” and “not translating,” she says, bluntly.

It’s Beyoncé exactly as she wants us to see her and has always wanted us to see her: as a perfectionist, and as the hardest-working person in show business. “I definitely pushed myself further than I knew I could,” she says, as we watch footage of her sweating it out profusely.

“I will never, never push myself that far again,” she adds, with a chuckle: a chuckle that suggests Beyoncé — who, two decades in, keeps finding new ways to set the bar higher — can’t convince even herself that such a thing could possibly be true.

C. Now that you have read two reviews:
   a. What similarities do you note between the two reviews?
   b. What differences do you note between the two reviews?
   c. Which one is more effective at getting its point across?

D. Time to Write: Both of the samples here give feedback about musicians and their work. Think about a musician you enjoy. Did they have an album or performance that stands out above the rest? Perhaps there was a song that evoked strong feelings for you and others must know more about it. In your notebook, write a quick 5-10 sentence blurb about that particular artist or performance. As you write, try to keep the essential elements in mind!

Activity 3: Drafting Reviews

Now that we’ve been reading and learning more about reviews, it’s time for you to write your own.
Although you read two music reviews, your review can be about any topic: a book, film, show, video game, or food.

Your review will be roughly 450-600 words and should include the following requirements:

- Clear position/stance on subject
- Evidence and facts about subject (can be researched or from personal experience)
- Detailed yet appropriate description of product
- Defined introduction, body, and conclusion
- Clear recommendation on product

A. First, let’s brainstorm a few key ideas:

Think about 3 possible products/subjects you may want to review. These can be items around your house, something you’ve recently read or watched that stood out to you, or general items of entertainment or interest. Then, answer the following questions in your notebook for each product/subject review you are considering.

Topic: ____________________________

- Will it be a single review or themed under a specific genre/category? (Note: For themed reviews, try to limit to 2-3 items under a given category.)
- What is a description of that product?
- What comparisons can be made to other, similar products?
- What is your familiarity with it? What do you already know?
- What is your overall recommendation regarding this subject? Why?
- What research, if any, might you need to do to make your review complete? **Remember, evidence is key! Research can include asking another person what they think.

B. Next, let’s outline your claims in preparation to write your review. If you prefer to free write first and then organize, you can also try that.

a. Topic
   i. Themed or Single Review?

b. Introduction
   i. Attention Getter
   ii. General Opinion

c. Body
   i. Reasons for overall opinion
   ii. Examples
   iii. Evidence/Description
   iv. Comparison

d. Conclusion
   i. Restating main idea
   ii. Recommendation

C. Then, write a draft of your review. It should flow in the same order as your outline. Keep in mind the given requirements at the beginning of this assignment. This can be written in your notebook.
E. If possible, have someone in your house to peer review your writing for you once you’re finished. If that isn’t an option, give yourself a break after drafting and then re-read with a critical eye. For the peer review, here are a few things to consider:

- Is there a clear theme or topic that ties together the whole review?
- Is the attention grabber engaging and appealing enough for you to want to read more? If not, what should be changed?
- Which product(s) is/are reviewed? Is there something missing?
- How much information and detail does the student provide about the subject? Does it strike the balance between not being too much or too little? What could be improved?
- Is there a clear recommendation/position established in this review? What is it?
- Are there any glaring errors in spelling or grammar that take away from the effectiveness of the review? If so, how can they be addressed?

F. After your draft has been reviewed, go back through and make any edits and adjustments needed to your draft!

Extension:
For the person with whom you share your review, have them play “Devil’s Advocate” and disagree with your recommendation. If you were promoting your product, have them debate why the product should not be promoted or accepted and vice versa. Debate your claims for 5-7 minutes and see if you can change the other person’s mind.

Activity 4: Reflection

A. Once you have finished writing and share your review, take a moment to think about what you learned from this process.

- Why are reviews relevant and meaningful to people?
- How easy or challenging was it for you to write a review under the given parameters?
- What did you learn about your style of persuasion from this experience?
- Will you think differently when recommending something to a friend in the future?

Expand on your thoughts and reflect on what you’ve learned. Write 5-10 sentences in your notebook about this experience.

Additional Activity:
Students can engage with the political coverage as of late and review their news source (a specific channel, paper, person, etc) for how effective or ineffective it is and why.