

The Learning Choice Academy

August 28, 2017

7th-8th Grade Language Arts - First Week's Assignments

Greetings Students!

Welcome to 7th-8th grade Language Arts! I am excited to be your teacher, and I am looking forward to an exciting and academically rewarding year.

During your first week of school, you will need to complete this packet and be prepared to submit it to me at our first class meeting.

I can't wait to get to know you, and to begin discovering and enjoying great literature together!

Assignments:

1. Review the class syllabus. Bring all required materials to our first class.
2. Complete your "Getting to Know Me" essay.
3. Read the short story provided in this packet ("The All-American Slurp" by Lensey Namioka). We will be discussing this story during our first week of class in our study of narrative writing.
4. Complete the attached Grammar Practice assignment.

Happy Learning!

-Mr. Chris Trompas

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2016-2017 Study Group Syllabus: Middle School Language Arts (6-8)

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Description and Overview: This Middle School Language Arts course is designed to begin preparation for high school English courses. Students will read and study a variety of literature, as well as practice multiple genres of writing. Through their literature and writing genre studies, students will enhance their grammar proficiencies and vocabulary repertoire. Students will also learn research, revision, and presentation skills.

Literature Reading and Analysis:

1) Responses to Literature and Informational Texts – Every learning period, you will be assigned several literature pieces and/or informational texts to read and analyze. The stories and texts will be assigned by the teacher and sent home with students. For full credit, please answer thoroughly and in complete sentences.

2) Novel Reading – Each semester, we will read a selected novel in its totality and complete meaningful assignments related to the text.

Writing Assignments:

Regular Writing Assignments – Every learning period, you will be assigned writing projects and essays, which vary in format and genre. Your final drafts need to be typed and should reflect your very best effort. Rubrics will be provided so that you know how your writing assignment will be evaluated. Where possible, model samples will also be provided. We will focus on the following:

1. Narrative writing
2. Literary analysis writing based on novel reading
3. Informative research essay writing
4. Argumentative essay writing

Additionally, students will be completing spelling and grammar practice throughout the year.

Approximate Weighting of Assignments & Assessments:

Reading and Responses to Literature
30%
Writing Assignments
30%
Participation/Attendance
10%
Vocabulary/Spelling/Grammar
10%
Projects and Presentations
20%

Attendance:

Weekly and punctual attendance is expected and necessary for student success.

Necessary Materials:

- 1) 1 ½ inch binder
- 2) Notebook
- 3) Pencil
- 4) Highlighter
- 5) Notebook dividers

Week One - "Getting to Know Me" Essay

Dear Student,

This first assignment will allow you to introduce yourself to me via writing, and will give you an opportunity to share a little about yourself. As your teacher, I am interested in getting to know who you are as a person, not just as a student. Please compose a 1-2 page typed, double-spaced, essay which tells me the following snippets of information about you:

Note: Please write in paragraphs, not a bullet point list.

The Basics:

- What is your name? What is the origin/ethnicity of your name?
- How long have you been a student at TLC? How would you describe your experience at our school?
- What do you consider your strongest subject in school? What subject do you struggle with the most? Why?
- What is your favorite and least favorite part of English class?
- Do you consider yourself more of an introvert or an extrovert?
 - *Introverts* (or those of us with introverted tendencies) tend to recharge by spending time alone. They lose energy from being around people for long periods of time, particularly large crowds.
 - *Extroverts*, on the other hand, gain energy from other people. Extroverts actually find their energy is sapped when they spend too much time alone. They recharge by being social.

Fun Stuff:

- What is your favorite hobby or pastime?
- Who is your favorite musical artist? Why?
- Name the most interesting movie you have seen during the past year. In what ways was it interesting to you?
- If you could go anywhere in the world on vacation, where would you go? Why?
- Tell me about something interesting that you learned, about yourself or about the world, over summer.
- What would you like to be doing in five years?

I want you to have fun with this assignment. Be creative in your responses, as I will read all of them to gain some insight into who you are as a person.

I am looking forward to receiving your essay on our first class day.

-Mr. Chris Trompas
ctrompas@learningchoice.org

Short Story: "The All-American Slurp" by Lensey Namioka

The first time our family was invited out to dinner in America, we disgraced ourselves while eating celery. We had emigrated to this country from China, and during our early days here we had a hard time with American table manners.

In China we never ate celery raw, or any other kind of vegetable raw. We always had to disinfect the vegetables in boiling water first. When we were presented with our first relish tray, the raw celery caught us unprepared.

We had been invited to dinner by our neighbors, the Gleasons. After arriving at the house, we shook hands with our hosts and packed ourselves into a sofa. As our family of four sat stiffly in a row, my younger brother and I stole glances at our parents for a clue as to what to do next.

Mrs. Gleason offered the relish tray to Mother. The tray looked pretty, with its tiny red radishes, curly sticks of carrots, and long, slender stalks of pale green celery. "Do try some of the celery, Mrs. Lin," she said. "It's from a local farmer, and it's sweet."

Mother picked up one of the green stalks, and Father followed suit. Then I picked up a stalk, and my brother did too. So there we sat, each with a stalk of celery in our right hand.

Mrs. Gleason kept smiling. "Would you like to try some of the dip, Mrs. Lin? It's my own recipe: sour cream and onion flakes, with a dash of Tabasco sauce."

Most Chinese don't care for dairy products, and in those days I wasn't even ready to drink fresh milk. Sour cream sounded perfectly revolting. Our family shook our heads in unison.

Mrs. Gleason went off with the relish tray to the other guests, and we carefully watched to see what they did. Everyone seemed to eat the raw vegetables quite happily.

Mother took a bite of her celery. *Crunch*. "It's not bad!" she whispered.

Father took a bite of his celery. *Crunch*. "Yes, it is good," he said, looking surprised.

I took a bite, and then my brother. *Crunch, crunch*. It was more than good; it was delicious. Raw celery has a slight sparkle, a zingy taste that you don't get in cooked celery. When Mrs. Gleason came around with the relish tray, we each took another stalk of celery, except my brother. He took two.

There was only one problem: long strings ran through the length of the stalk, and they got caught in my teeth. When I help my mother in the kitchen, I always pull the strings out before slicing celery.

I pulled the strings out of my stalk. *Z-z-zip, z-z-zip*. My brother followed suit. *Z-z-zip, z-z-zip*. To my left, my parents were taking care of their own stalks. *Z-z-zip, z-z-zip, z-z-zip*.

Suddenly I realized that there was dead silence except for our zipping. Looking up, I saw that the eyes of everyone in the room were on our family. Mr. and Mrs. Gleason, their daughter Meg, who was my friend, and their neighbors the Badels—they were all staring at us as we busily pulled the strings off our celery.

That wasn't the end of it. Mrs. Gleason announced that dinner was served and invited us to the dining table. It was lavishly covered with platters of food, but we couldn't see any chairs around the table. So we helpfully carried over some dining chairs and sat down. All the other guests just stood there.

Mrs. Gleason bent down and whispered to us, "This is a buffet dinner. You help yourselves to some food and eat it in the living room."

Our family beat a retreat back to the sofa as if chased by enemy soldiers. For the rest of the evening, too mortified to go back to the dining table, I nursed a bit of potato salad on my plate.

Next day Meg and I got on the school bus together. I wasn't sure how she would feel about me after the spectacle our family made at the party. But she was just the same as usual, and the only reference she made to the party was, "Hope you and your folks got enough to eat last night. You certainly didn't take very much. Mom never tries to figure out how much food to prepare. She just puts everything on the table and hopes for the best."

I began to relax. The Gleasons' dinner party wasn't so different from a Chinese meal after all. My mother also puts everything on the table and hopes for the best.

Meg was the first friend I had made after we came to America. I eventually got acquainted with a few other kids in school, but Meg was still the only real friend I had.

My brother didn't have any problems making friends. He spent all his time with some boys who were teaching him baseball, and in no time he could speak English much faster than I could—not better, but faster.

I worried more about making mistakes, and I spoke carefully, making sure I could say everything right before opening my mouth. At least I had a better accent than my parents, who never really got rid of their Chinese accent, even years later. My parents had both studied English in school before coming to America, but what they had studied was mostly written English, not spoken.

Father's approach to English was a scientific one. Since Chinese verbs have no tense, he was fascinated by the way English verbs changed form according to whether they were in the present, past imperfect, perfect, pluperfect, future, or future perfect tense. He was always making diagrams of verbs and their inflections, and he looked for opportunities to show off his mastery of the pluperfect and future perfect tenses, his two favorites. "I shall have finished my project by Monday," he would say smugly.

Mother's approach was to memorize lists of polite phrases that would cover all possible social situations. She was constantly muttering things like "I'm fine, thank you. And you?" Once she accidentally stepped on someone's foot and hurriedly blurted, "Oh that's quite all right!" Embarrassed by her slip, she resolved to do better next time. So when someone stepped on *her* foot, she cried, "You're welcome!"

In our own different ways, we made progress in learning English. But I had another worry, and that was my appearance. My brother didn't have to worry, since Mother bought him blue jeans for school, and he dressed like all the other boys. But she insisted that girls had to wear skirts. By the time she saw that Meg and the other girls were wearing jeans, it was too late. My school clothes were bought already, and we didn't have money left to buy new outfits for me. We had too many other things to buy first, like furniture, pots, and pans.

The first time I visited Meg's house, she took me upstairs to her room, and I wound up trying on her clothes. We were pretty much the same size, since Meg was shorter and thinner than average. Maybe that's how we became friends in the first place. Wearing Meg's jeans and T-shirt, I looked at myself in the mirror. I could almost pass for an American—from the back, anyway. At least the kids in school wouldn't stop and stare at me in the hallways, which was what they did when they saw me in my white blouse and navy blue skirt that went a couple of inches below the knees.

When Meg came to my house, I invited her to try on my Chinese dresses, the ones with a high collar and slits up the sides. Meg's eyes were bright as she looked at herself in the mirror. She struck several sultry poses, and we nearly fell over laughing.

The dinner party at the Gleasons' didn't stop my growing friendship with Meg. Things were getting better for me in other ways too. Mother finally bought me some jeans at the end of the month, when father got his paycheck. She wasn't in any hurry about buying them at first, until I worked on her. This is what I did. Since we didn't have a car in those days, I often ran down to the neighborhood store to pick up things for her. The groceries cost less at a big supermarket, but the closest one was many blocks away. One day, when she ran out of flour, I offered to borrow a bike from our neighbor's son and buy a ten-pound bag of flour at the big supermarket. I mounted the boy's bike and waved to my Mother. "I'll be back in five minutes!"

Before I started pedaling, I heard her voice behind me. "You can't go out in public like that! People can see all the way up your thighs!"

"I'm sorry," I said innocently. "I thought you were in a hurry to get the flour." For dinner we were going to have pot-stickers (fried Chinese dumplings), and we needed a lot of flour.

"Couldn't you borrow a girl's bicycle?" complained Mother. "That way your skirt won't be pushed up."

"There aren't too many of those around," I said. "Almost all the girls wear jeans while riding a bike, so they don't see any point in buying a girl's bike."

We didn't eat pot-stickers that evening, and Mother was thoughtful. Next day we took the bus downtown and she bought me a pair of jeans. In the same week, my brother made the baseball team of his junior high school, Father started taking driving lessons, and Mother discovered rummage sales. We soon got all the furniture we needed, plus a dartboard and a 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle (fourteen hours later, we discovered that it was a 999-piece jigsaw puzzle). There was hope that the Lins might become a normal American family after all.

Then came our dinner at the Lakeview restaurant.

The Lakeview was an expensive restaurant, one of those places where a headwaiter dressed in tails conducted you to your seat, and the only light came from candles and flaming desserts. In one corner of the room a lady harpist played tinkling melodies.

Father wanted to celebrate, because he had just been promoted. He worked for an electronics company, and after his English started improving, his superiors decided to appoint him to a position more suited to his training. The promotion not only brought a higher salary but was also a tremendous boost to his pride.

Up to then we had eaten only in Chinese restaurants. Although my brother and I were becoming fond of hamburgers, my parents didn't care much for western food, other than chow mein.

But this was a special occasion, and father asked his coworkers to recommend a really elegant restaurant. So there we were at the Lakeview, stumbling after the headwaiter in the murky dining room.

At our table we were handed our menus, and they were so big that to read mine I almost had to stand up again. But why bother? It was mostly in French, anyway.

Father, being an engineer, was always systematic. He took out a pocket French dictionary. "They told me that most of the items would be in French, so I came prepared." He even had a pocket flashlight, the size of a marking pen. While mother held the flashlight over the menu, he looked up the items that were in French.

"*Paté en croute*," he muttered. "Let's see ... *paté* is paste ... *croute* is crust ... hmm ... a paste in crust."

The waiter stood looking patient. I squirmed and died at least fifty times.

At long last Father gave up. "Why don't we just order four complete dinners at random?" he suggested.

"Isn't that risky?" asked Mother. "The French eat some rather peculiar things, I've heard."

"A Chinese can eat anything a Frenchman can eat," Father declared.

The soup arrived in a plate. How do you get soup up from a plate? I glanced at the other diners, but the ones at the nearby tables were not on their soup course, while the more distant ones were invisible in the darkness.

Fortunately my parents had studied books on western etiquette before they came to America. "Tilt your plate," whispered my mother. "It's easier to spoon the soup up that way."

She was right. Tilting the plate did the trick. But the etiquette book didn't say anything about what you did after the soup reached your lips. As any respectable Chinese knows, the correct way to eat your soup is to slurp. This helps to cool the liquid and prevent you from burning your lips. It also shows your appreciation.

We showed our appreciation. *Shloop*, went my father. *Shloop*, went my mother. *Shloop, shloop*, went my brother, who was the hungriest.

The lady harpist stopped playing to take a rest. And in the silence, our family's consumption of soup suddenly seemed unnaturally loud. You know how it sounds on a rocky beach when the tide goes out and the water drains from all those little pools? They go *shloop, shloop, shloop*. That was the Lin family, eating soup.

At the next table a waiter was pouring wine. When a large *shloop* reached him, he froze. The bottle continued to pour, and red wine flooded the tabletop and into the lap of a customer. Even the customer didn't notice anything at first, being also hypnotized by the *shloop, shloop, shloop*.

It was too much. "I need to go to the toilet," I mumbled, jumping to my feet. A waiter, sensing my urgency, quickly directed me to the ladies' room.

I splashed cold water on my burning face, and as I dried myself with a paper towel, I stared into the mirror. In this perfumed ladies' room, with its pink and silver wallpaper and marbled sinks, I looked completely out of place. What was I doing here? What was our family doing in the Lakeview restaurant? In America?

The door to the ladies' room opened. A woman came in and glanced curiously at me. I retreated into one of the toilet cubicles and latched the door.

Time passed—maybe half an hour, maybe an hour. Then I heard the door open again, and my mother's voice. "Are you in there? You're not sick, are you?"

There was real concern in her voice. A girl can't leave her family just because they slurp their soup. Besides, the toilet cubicle had a few drawbacks as a permanent residence. "I'm all right," I said, undoing the latch.

Mother didn't tell me how the rest of the dinner went, and I didn't want to know. In the weeks following, I managed to push the whole thing into the back of my mind, where it jumped out at me only a few times a day. Even now, I turn hot all over when I think of the Lakeview restaurant.

But by the time we had been in this country for three months, our family was definitely making progress toward becoming Americanized. I remember my parents' first PTA meeting. Father wore a neat suit and tie, and Mother put on her first pair of high heels. She stumbled only once. They met my homeroom teacher and beamed as she told them that I would make honor roll soon at the rate I was going. Of course Chinese etiquette forced Father to say that I was a very stupid girl and Mother to protest that the teacher was showing favoritism toward me. But I could tell they were both very proud.

The day came when my parents announced that they wanted to give a dinner party. We had invited Chinese friends to eat with us before, but this dinner was going to be different. In addition to a Chinese-American family, we were going to invite the Gleasons.

"Gee, I can hardly wait to have dinner at your house," Meg said to me. "I just *love* Chinese food."

That was a relief. Mother was a good cook, but I wasn't sure if people who ate sour cream would also eat chicken gizzards stewed in soy sauce.

Mother decided not to take a chance with the chicken gizzards. Since we had western guests, she set the table with large dinner plates, which we never used in Chinese meals. In fact we didn't use individual plates at all, but picked up food from the platters in the middle of the table and brought it directly to our rice bowls. Following the practice of Chinese-American restaurants, Mother also placed large serving spoons on the platters.

The dinner started well. Mrs. Gleason exclaimed at the beautifully arranged dishes of food: the colorful candied fruit in the sweet-and-sour pork dish, the noodle-thin shreds of chicken meat stir-fried with tiny peas, and the glistening pink prawns in a ginger sauce.

At first I was too busy enjoying my food to notice how the guests were doing. But soon I remembered my duties. Sometimes guests were too polite to help themselves and you had to serve them with more food.

I glanced at Meg, to see if she needed more food, and my eyes nearly popped out at the sight of her plate. It was piled with food: the sweet-and-sour meat pushed right against the chicken shreds, and the chicken sauce ran into the prawns. She had been taking food from a second dish before she finished eating her helping from the first!

Horried, I turned to look at Mrs. Gleason. She was dumping rice out of her bowl and putting it on her dinner plate. Then she ladled prawns and gravy on top of the rice and mixed everything together, the way you mix sand, gravel, and cement to make concrete.

I couldn't bear to look any longer, and I turned to Mr. Gleason. He was chasing a pea around his plate. Several times he got it to the edge, but when he tried to pick it up with his chopsticks, it rolled back to the center of the plate again. Finally, he put down his chopsticks and picked up the pea with his fingers. He really did! A grown man!

All of us, our family and the Chinese guests, stopped eating to watch the activities of the Gleasons. I wanted to giggle. Then I caught my mother's eyes on me. She frowned and shook her head slightly, and I understood the message: the Gleasons were not used to Chinese ways, and they were just coping the best they could. For some reason I thought of celery strings.

When the main courses were finished, mother brought out a platter of fruit. "I hope you weren't expecting a sweet dessert," she said. "Since the Chinese don't eat dessert, I didn't think to prepare any."

"Oh, I couldn't possibly eat dessert!" cried Mrs. Gleason. "I'm simply stuffed!"

Meg had different ideas. When the table was cleared, she announced that she and I were going for a walk. "I don't know about you, but I feel like dessert," she told me, when we were outside. "Come on, there's a Dairy Queen down the street. I could use a big chocolate milkshake!"

Although I didn't really want anything more to eat, I insisted on paying for the milkshakes. After all, I was still hostess.

Meg got her large chocolate milkshake and I had a small one. Even so, she was finishing hers while I was only half done. Toward the end she pulled hard on her straws and went *shloop, shloop*.

"Do you always slurp when you eat a milkshake?" I asked before I could stop myself.

Meg grinned. "Sure. All Americans slurp."

Fun facts: Both chow-mein and fortune cookies were invented in America. Restaurants in China that serve fortune cookies advertise them as genuine *American* fortune cookies.

Words like slurp, zip, crunch, and so on are called onomatopoeia, or, words spelled/said how they sound.

Grammar Practice

Name Class Date

8.1–2 Sentences and Sentence Fragments

Key Information

A **sentence** is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. A sentence consists of a **subject** and a **predicate**. A group of words that does not have both parts does not express a complete thought and is called a **sentence fragment**.

Every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.

A **declarative sentence** makes a statement.

Mexico has many pyramids.

An **interrogative sentence** asks a question.

How old is this pyramid?

An **exclamatory sentence** expresses strong feeling.

How steep the sides are!

An **imperative sentence** gives a command or makes a request.

Take a photo of this scene.

A. Recognizing Sentences and Kinds of Sentences

Decide whether each of these groups of words is a sentence or a sentence fragment. If it is a sentence, write whether it is *declarative*, *interrogative*, *exclamatory*, or *imperative*. If it is not a complete sentence, write *fragment*.

1. What a long day I had! _____
2. Juyong, too. _____
3. The full moon is shining between the clouds tonight. _____
4. Did you turn off the lights? _____
5. Remember to bring an umbrella. _____
6. On the third shelf. _____

B. Correcting Sentence Fragments

Add words to each sentence fragment to form the kind of sentence indicated in parentheses. Add the correct end punctuation.

1. the natives of North America (declarative) _____

2. after school today (imperative) _____

3. finished your homework (interrogative) _____

4. great concert (exclamatory) _____

Grammar Practice

Name Class Date

8.3, 5 Subjects and Predicates

Key Information

All of the words in the subject make up the **complete subject**. The main word or group of words in the subject is called the **simple subject**. All of the words in the predicate make up the **complete predicate**. The main word or group of words in the predicate is called the **simple predicate**.

The simple subject is usually a **noun** or a **pronoun**; the simple predicate is always a **verb**.

The red **car** is in the lead.

A **compound subject** has two or more simple subjects joined by *and*, *or*, or *nor*.

The red **car** and its **driver** are in the lead.

When the simple subjects are joined by *and*, the compound subject is plural and takes the plural form of the verb. When the simple subjects are joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

Either the red **car** or the two blue **ones** **use** gasohol.

A **compound predicate** has two or more verbs with the same subject.

He **skids** but **stays** ahead.

The verbs are joined by *and*, *or*, *nor*, *but*, or *yet*.

A. Recognizing Sentence Parts

Underline each complete subject once and each complete predicate twice. Write each simple subject and simple predicate, or verb.

1. Shama exercises every day. _____
2. Children at the party scrambled for the balloons. _____
3. My brother met his best friend and went to the movie. _____
4. The cactus, the century plant, and sagebrush grow in the desert. _____

B. Combining Sentence Parts

Combine each pair of sentences by forming a compound subject or compound predicate. Remember to use the correct form of each verb.

1. Usually, on a picnic, ants sting me. Or a bee stings me. _____

2. The cloth has a high price. But the cloth is just right for your costume. _____
