

The-Beginning-of-Everything-You-Need-to-Know-in-Fifth-Grade-English Packet

* Please review this entire packet with your family!*

Dear Fifth Graders,

Welcome to fifth-grade English—the wonderful world of reading, writing, grammar and more! Being new to middle school, you may feel scared, excited, nervous, happy ... or maybe all of the above. Please know I am excited to get to know you, and know that you are ready for the new challenges that await you.

Fifth-grade English will hopefully be a class you look forward to. As you're probably expecting, we'll be doing a lot of reading and writing. In fact, you should know that daily reading and writing will be expected. And while perhaps you just let out a large sigh when reading that, I hope that before you know it you'll be reading and writing easily, clearly, and with reflection. That's what happens in fifth grade, which is just one of the reasons I love it so much.

While there are lots of rules that I could spell out here, you're in MPA's Middle School now, so instead I'd like you to think about your rights and responsibilities. Specifically:

Your Rights:

- You have the right to an opportunity to learn and improve your skills in reading and writing. This class is filled with opportunities to expand upon your abilities and skills in all aspects of English/language arts including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- You have the right to be heard. Your opinions are welcomed and valued in this class.
- You have the right to high expectations from your teacher. I will push you this year. It may not always feel like fun, but it's not my form of torture; it's my respect for your potential.

Your Responsibilities:

- Be prepared. This means always bring your notebook and something to write with because we will be writing every day. If we're reading a class book or literature circle book, that should be with you as well. Being prepared, however, also speaks to a state of mind. Be prepared to listen,

- participate, and learn.
- Be respectful. Respect yourself and make sure you present your thoughts and ideas in a way that represents yourself well. Respect the opinions of others and their right to be heard. That means no interruptions and insults, but also means making sure that your attention is with whomever is contributing to class at any given moment. Respect the room and the people who care for it. Treat the furniture and room with care and pick up after yourself so others don't have to.
 - Stay on top of your homework! It is a continuation of what we do in class as well as an introduction to tomorrow. It is also the single most important part of your grade!

Supplies

It is important that you come to class prepared each day. Please make sure you have the following supplies as the school year starts:

- Two, wide-ruled, spiral-bound notebooks; you may need more as the year progresses (choose colors/designs that don't conflict with other classes)
- Loose-leaf paper (wide rule)
- One two-pocket folder (choose a color/design that doesn't conflict with other classes)
- #2 pencils. Mechanical seems to be a preference for many students, but the old-fashioned kind work well too!
- Red pens. We go through a bunch of these, so make sure you have at least two.
- One highlighter
- Book of stamps (we'll be mailing lots of letters!)
- Colored pencils
- An address book

* Please note that there are four novels you need to purchase (as outlined on the online MPA bookstore) as well as a vocabulary book. While they are noted on the online bookstore, you may purchase them anywhere you like. You will also be loaned lit circle books this year, but may purchase them instead if you want your own copy "for keeps."

Optional Supplies (some students like these, but they're not "must haves")

- Personal pencil sharpener
- Extra erasers
- Post-it notes
- Post-it flags (these can be especially helpful in literature circles)
- Mini-stapler

Grades

The grading scale in fifth grade is similar to Lower School:

O: outstanding work ... working *significantly* above grade level *consistently* (Please note there are usually only a few "O's" given. This is a grade that is difficult to achieve.)

S+: Beyond expectations for a traditional fifth grader ... working above grade level fairly consistently

S: Satisfactory ... completing work in a fashion that meets my expectations for fifth grade (Please note that most of the class will receive an "S." This is not a bad thing; it means you are functioning at grade level.)

S-: Below expectations ... performance is moving to a level below my expectations for fifth graders. Typically students who move to this range have missing/late work or are turning in work that does not show effort.

N: Not Satisfactory ... this could be due to lack of effort, missing assignments, or personal difficulty with the subject matter. You, your family, and I will talk before a final marking period if your grade hovers near this area.

Grades are comprised of homework, classwork, and exams—all weighted equally.

Our first few weeks together will be spent getting familiar with the routines of class, as well as with each other. Bring any questions ... and come prepared for a great year!

Ms. Wentzel

English Routines

Every class has its routines, and fifth-grade English is no different. Learning and getting used to those routines as quickly as possible will help you find success. So, let's get started!

1. **Respect:** I know you've heard it before, but I want to make sure we're clear: You deserve it, your classmates deserve it, the custodians who clean our room deserve it, I deserve it, the classroom deserves it. *And I know we all know how to show it.*
2. **Homework:** You should count on English homework every night. Much of the time, that homework will be reading, but you can also count on writing, projects, and some practice with mechanics. Sometimes, if you're struggling in a specific area, I might give you different homework. Sometimes, if you really "get" something, I might give you different homework. But just make sure you count on *something*. Generally speaking, you should plan on around thirty minutes a day, with twenty of it being reading.
3. **My Favorite Color:** I like the color yellow. In fact, it's my favorite color. Because of that, always keep track of yellow papers; if I print something on yellow paper, it means "Keep this in your English folder!"
4. **DEAR:** This does not stand for Daring Energetic Aerodynamic Rodents, but rather Drop Everything And Read. You'll be doing a lot of this, and it's explained in full detail on an attached page.
5. **A Letter a Week:** You will be writing and sending a letter almost every week. Each week will present the letter's topic, and you will get to decide whom you want to write to ... Aunt Sally? Your next-door neighbor? Your mom? Mr. Cooke? Because of this, it's important that you each have a small address book. Make sure you've got different names (first and last!) and addresses in it that represent people you think you may write to at one point or another. You're likely going to need to add some, and that's fine. But try to get a good start!
6. **Extra! Extra! Read All About It!:** You and your classmates will be publishing an online newsletter almost every week. This is a big task, and the jobs associated with it are explained on another sheet.

7. **A Word to the Wise:** Actually, Wordly Wise. Each of you will have a Wordly Wise book. It's how we work on spelling and vocabulary, root words, and more. We'll use this book weekly, and you'll have homework associated with it as well.

There are a number of other routines that you'll learn over the course of the first few weeks, and I know you'll pick them up quickly. I realize that everything you're taking in may seem overwhelming, but before you know it you'll be handling routines and workload like a pro!

Newsletter Jobs

Jobs are an integral part to our classroom and help it function well. Primarily, we need to take our jobs as students and teachers (because we are all both) very seriously. But one of your jobs in the classroom will be related to having our online class newsletter run smoothly. Many weeks you will have a job associated with the newsletter, and, like all jobs, you need to be prepared. Responsibilities will be assigned on the Thursday or Friday before each week, with all of the "writing" work needing to be done on Writely.com as weekend homework. *Make sure you come with work completed on time!*

Job Title: Poet

Responsibility: Create an original poem; have it written on Writely and be ready to *read* on first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: Idiom Master

Responsibility: Bring in an idiom or saying to share. Make sure to know its meaning, as well as its background (or how it came to be) if that is available. Have a paragraph description written on Writely and ready to *read* on first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: Linguist

Responsibility: Bring in a challenging (but usable) word to share. You must have the word (spelled correctly), its primary definition, the use of the word in a sentence, and the linguistic roots or history of the word. Have a paragraph description written on Writely and ready to *read* on first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: MPA Reporter

Responsibility: Write a two- or three-paragraph news report on some of the things going on at MPA. This might be about what's happening in English class, other fifth-grade classes, or MPA in general. Have it written on Writely by first class day of the week. Write everything in black.

Job Title: Local News Reporter

Responsibility: Write a one- to three-paragraph news report on something relevant in local news. Have it written on Writely by first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: National News Reporter

Responsibility: Write a one- to three-paragraph news report on something relevant in national (United States) news. Have it written on Writely by first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: World News Reporter

Responsibility: Write a one- to three-paragraph news report on something relevant in world (outside the United States) news. Have it written on Writely by first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: Interviewer

Responsibility: Using a five-question format, interview a classmate, teacher, or MPA employee. Write a one- or two-sentence intro, then the questions and answers in interview format. Have it written on Writely by first class day of the week. Write "written by" and your name. Write everything in black.

Job Title: PIL (Poet, Idiom, Linguist) Editor

Responsibility: Go through the poem, idiom report, and linguist report to check for spelling, grammar, and mechanical errors. Write "edited by" with your name in red. Do all editing/revising in red, and have completed by the second class day of the week.

Job Title: LANN (Local And National News) Editor

Responsibility: Go through the local and national news reports to check for spelling, grammar, and mechanical errors. Write "edited by" with your name in red. Do all editing/revising in red, and have completed by the second class day of the week.

Job Title: WAI (World And Interview) Editor

Responsibility: Go through the world news report and interview to check for spelling, grammar, and mechanical errors. Write "edited by" with your name in red. Do all editing/revising in red, and have completed by the second class day of the week.

Job Title: Final Proofer (2 students will hold this position)

Responsibility: Go through the entire newsletter for final proofing. Write "proofed by" with your name in green. Do all editing/revising in green, and have completed by Friday (regardless if we have class or not).

August 2006

Dear Families,

Fifth grade students will be working on writing, editing, and publishing their own weekly online newsletters for much of this year. While I, of course, will help guide them, I will be somewhat hands-off. Their publications, therefore, will truly be their own.

This means, however, that the publications will not be flawless. There will likely be some spelling, grammatical, and mechanical errors. There might be simpler sentences than you'd like to see. But as the year progresses, you will see improvements in all the areas mentioned above. Students will go home and view their (and their peers') newsletters and catch errors that were missed. They'll think of better ways to say things. And that's part of the process.

I ask that you be patient with this process, but also that you support the growth that will occur. View the newsletters with your children and praise them. Note when a sentence hits you just right, or when a great vocabulary choice makes a difference. Also help them see mistakes or give ideas for different word choices that might have made a "bigger impact" on the piece.

The other piece I would greatly appreciate your assistance with is helping your child purchase/find and complete an address book with full names and addresses of family and friends. Students will be writing letters almost every week, and they will count on their address books to be able to send them to family members and friends. They likely won't write to everyone in the book, and, on the flip side, they're likely to eventually think of someone they want to write to that's not in the book. But for now, any assistance in being as thorough as possible would be appreciated. These won't be needed until the second week of school, although students should know their home addresses (including zip code) by the first week.