

First Term Reflection

(can you believe it's already November??)

A couple of times over the course of the year we will write reflections that will go home for your parents to read, so that they can share in your learning process. Your parents will have homework, too: to offer positive feedback on your reflective powers (only commenting on what you are doing well), and to offer advice as to how to take a step forward in the area you yourself have identified as where you would like to grow. Notice that this is very different from them correcting your writing or criticizing your work. I will send home instructions for them that will make this very explicit.

If the idea of this makes you want to vomit because you are nervous/anxious/scared about how your parents may respond, please find a private time to talk to me and I will work with you to help assuage (ease) those fears.

Beyond communicating your learning to your family, the act of reflection is a very important part of the learning process: by actively looking back at our journey, we cement the learning that occurred, and we give ourselves the opportunity to take purposeful steps forward in the name of positive change; and by doing so, we increase the odds of our finding success and happiness.

Several years ago, the 6/7 MACC class at Suncrest came up with criteria for what they considered successful reflections; that is the criteria I will use when looking at your work:

- **Honest**
- **Thorough and detailed**
- **Provides context:** assumes your reader is a very smart person who knows nothing about what you are describing—you don't need to talk down to them, but you cannot assume knowledge about your topic; you were there, they were not
- **Descriptive:** you are using words in such a way that your reader can experience what you experienced—they can see and feel it
- Use of **specific examples**, shared as **short stories**, using storytelling techniques
- Digs into **how** and **why**; digs below the surface and resists surface answers
- **Proofread** for errors in conventions and opportunities for **precise word choice**
- *Optional:* the Suncrest class also had the following as a key aspect of the criteria: use a **signature**, in case you become famous—I'll leave that one up to you!

And I'm also going to ask you to go one step further: can you embrace the Pullman Challenge?

The Pullman Challenge

This is defined as actively applying what you have learned thus far from exploring and exploding the language and structural choices of master writer, Philip Pullman, to your own writing. As noted by you, embracing the Pullman Challenge would include some combination of the following:

- Image-building through purposeful verb, adjective, and adverb choice
- Experimenting with juxtaposition: unexpected by effective combinations of adjectives
- Variety in word choice: when is using specific descriptive language the right choice? When is using simpler words the more effective choice?
- Using the Language of the Discipline associated with your topic(s)
- Having an intimate, person-to-person narrative voice
- Variety in sentence structure and length
- Purposeful breaking of the rules of conventions (but first you have to understand what the rule is!)
- The use of antithesis/parallel structure
- Use of literary devices, such as:
 - simile and metaphor
 - alliteration and/or assonance, in order to establish rhythm and draw attention to key words
 - onomatopoeia
 - personification
 - repetition
- An effective use of punctuation, including colons, semi-colons, em-dashes, parentheses, and commas—for clarity, and also to help build images and convey complex ideas

Questions for Exploration

1. In what area or areas do you feel you have demonstrated the most growth since starting the school year? This could be in an area related to academics or work habits or social-emotional development.

- Clearly identify the area or areas – be specific (not just Group Work, but my ability to make others feel included by doing X, Y, and Z, etc.)
- Tell the story of how this growth occurred—what were you doing (or not doing)? Do your best to make this story detailed and specific. Take your time. Consider what you have learned about effective storytelling from Pullman.

Remember that your audience (your parents) has not experienced these things in the ways that you have, so you need to provide them with enough context to follow your ideas.

- Explain how this growth may help you in the future, short-term (this month) and long-term (a year, five years, ten years from now). Use specific examples.
2. Where do you feel stuck right now? What is challenging for you? Again, this could be in the area of academics or work habits or social-emotional development.

- Explain the idea
- Tell a story, with you as the main character, about you engaging with this thing and encountering stuckness or challenge. Do your best to make this story specific and detailed.

Remember to provide context for your reader so that they can follow your story with ease. What do you need to explain to them (who, what, where, when, why, how)?

- Explain why, for you, this is particular thing is challenging? What is it about you—the way you work, your typical ways of being, your upbringing, your past experiences—that makes this challenging?
- Explain why unlocking change in this area might bring greater ease and happiness in your life: what has life been like in the past for you, in relation to this way of being? How is it negatively impacting your present? What does the future look like with this way of being unchanged? What does the future look like with this way of being released?

Try to use specific examples.

After you have written your first draft:

- Look at the criteria. Have you done your best to address each of those aspects?
- Reread the questions in this document. Have you done your best to address each of the bullet points?
- Proofread carefully, line by line. In addition to looking for errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence construction, also keep an eye out for opportunities for precise word choice.
- Find a private place to read your work out loud to yourself—this is the best way to spot uncaught errors and to listen for flow between ideas

Things We Have Done Since the Beginning of the Year (a non-exhaustive list)

Language Arts

Seen and Heard lists

Daily Diary entries

The Golden Compass

- exploding paragraphs
 - exploring the impact of
 - word choice
 - punctuation
 - image-building
 - sentence length and sentence structure
 - paragraph length and paragraph structure
 - use of literary devices: alliteration, repetition, simile, metaphor
 - asking questions
 - making logical predictions
- class discussion while reading
- reading character roles aloud
- noticing Prof. Great Brain's oral language techniques

Short reflections: what to keep and what to release from the past; first week learning and challenges

Sharing ideas in partnerships, groups, and with the whole class

Active listening during class and small group discussions and during the instructive phase of lessons

Socials presentations (oral language; writing content)

Written aspects of Brain Lapbooks

Math

Math mindset videos

Alien counting systems

Number Theory: defining place value, describing numbers of great value and decimals (verbally, in writing, and in expanded form), modelling with base-10 blocks

Visual representations of the problem-solving process

Estimation

Operations with decimal numbers

Following problem-solving criteria

Measurement for art and design activities

Socials

Jigsaw learning of the three branches of the U.S. government

Schoolhouse Rock! and Crash Course videos about the three branches of government

U.S. election—the issues involved, voter demographics, working to understand why the election played out the way that it did

Note-taking while watching *NewsHour* videos

3-in-3 politician research and presentations (content)

Definitions of forms of government

Knock Down the House—watching with Depth and Complexity

Science

Brain videos—making webs

Independent research into brain parts

Following criteria for note-taking

Making connections to other brain parts

Preparing to communicate learning from independent research

Connections to CEC work

Art and Design

Comp book covers

Index Cards—image creation, silencing The Two Questions (“Is it good?” “Does it suck?”)

Lynda Barry drawing exercises; Ivan Brunetti-style drawing

Visual aspect of the Brain Lapbooks

Name plates

Slides for the 3-in-3 presentations

Physical Health Education

Good sportspersonship – all-out participation, encouraging of teammates, celebrating wins and loses equally, trying to make steps forward from your current level of skill

Minor games—team work, ball skills, and strategic thinking

Volleyball

6-Square bootcamp

Ball/chicken passing exercise as metaphor for group work; cooperative juggling as metaphor for group work

Morning Check-ins—emotional intelligence

CEC

Mindset exploration (Bruce Lee and Wu Wei, Joni Mitchell, Lynda Barry, math mindset, Lyra’s mindset with the alethiometer)

Group Work

Team building: strategies passing the variety of sports objects and the rubber chicken; cooperative juggling; class names

Group work jobs: Chairperson, Diplomat, Questioner, Reporter, Encourager

Small groups work: alien counting systems; *The Golden Compass* discussions, Yahtzee

Class jobs

Actively creating a respectful, inclusive, and positive work environment

Partner work

Minor games—working as a group, strategic thinking and planning

Silent Chicken

Brain part connections

Clean-up

Work Ethic

Staying on task during Work Block

Applying mindset exploration to Work Block (silencing the Two Questions, approaching work with Lynda Barry's calm and friendly way of being, etc.)

Homework

Organization of materials

Attempt at thoroughness

Using criteria to shape the approach to the work

Focus tools

Self-regulation: adjusting your voice and body to suit the environment

Music and Band

Friendships and social interactions—in class, at recess and lunch, before and after school

Volunteer positions in the Cap Hill community