

Class of 2009 Final Week Reflection Activities

Directions: During the last week of class during your final year of high school, you will reflect a bit on your life thus far and on your future. You must complete three of the following assignments but may choose to complete an additional two for bonus points.

1. If I Had High School to Live Over

Begin this crucial week in your life by reflecting on the past four years. Read Erma Bombeck's essay "If I Had My Life to Live Over" and use it as a model to honestly and seriously evaluate your high school career. Following Bombeck's model, compose a list of the ways you would have lived your high school life differently if you could go back in time and begin again as a freshman.

2. Advice to Salem's Class of 2013

Based on your own wisdom as graduation candidates of the Class of 2009, compose a list of helpful hints for next year's entering freshmen. Provide advice for these students so that they may be in your position four years from now. Use your own experience—your successes and your failures—to guide the Class of 2013. Your words do not need to be written as a formal letter; instead, use the example of "Everybody's Free to Wear Sunscreen." In following this song as a model, begin with your most important piece of advice, which you repeat at the end.

3. This I Believe <<http://www.thisibelieve.org/>>

In the 1950s, journalist Edward R. Murrow hosted a radio series called *This I Believe*, in which people shared their most central belief(s). Recently, National Public Radio has resurrected the series and asks listeners to submit essays in which they profess the "core values that guide their daily lives." Visit the *This I Believe* website and read the essays that other people from all ages and walks of life have submitted; then, visit the page of the website that offers essay-writing tips <<http://www.thisibelieve.org/essaywritingtips.html>> and compose your own statement of belief in approximately 350 to 500 words.

4. Now I Am Eight-and-Ten

Contemplate who you were one year (or two or five or eight years) ago and how you are a different person today because of a lesson that you had to learn the hard way. Using Housman's "When I Was One-and-Twenty" as your model, write a two-stanza ballad about the advice you did not heed and the tragic or heartbreaking lesson you learned as a result.

5. Bucket List

In the 2007 comedy film *The Bucket List*, two friends facing their imminent deaths create a list of feats to accomplish before they *kick the bucket*. The list they compose includes wishes such as "witness something truly majestic," "help a complete stranger for a common good," "laugh till I cry," visit Stonehenge," "get a tattoo," "drive a Shelby Mustang," and "see the Pyramids." Focusing on the horizon of your life, create your own bucket list of at least ten aspirations that imaginatively and effectively define who you are and what is important to you. For each item on your list, compose a multiple-sentence explanation of what this wish reveals about you.

6. Ordeal by Cheque

How could you tell a story of your personal experience without writing a narrative of events? Using Wuther Crue's inventive short story "Ordeal by Cheque" as a model, write the story of a specific pivotal event from your life, in the form of some sort of document (e.g. checks, credit card statements, school progress reports, birthday cards, library card, legal documents, text messages).

7. Contemplative Letters to Influential Adults

As you face the final week of your high school career, write two reflective letters—one letter to your parent(s) or an adult who has served as a guide for your life and one letter to a faculty or staff member at Salem High School who has had a positive impact on your education. You will submit a final draft before handwriting your final letters. You will present your letters to these influential adults as a gift on graduation day. Consider including the following elements in your letter:

- gratitude for their assistance and nurturing
- regrets and apologies for mistakes
- examples of their influence on your life
- memories of pivotal events with specific detail
- plans for your future
- impending changes in your and their lives