

DE ANZA COLLEGE

**English Department
Part-time Faculty Handbook**

2012

Contents

Office Hours	3-4
Communications	4
Grades	5-6
Campus Services	6-7
Load and Pay	7-8
Classrooms	8-10
Keys	10
Getting Help in Desperate Times	11-13
The English Department	13-14
Faculty Resources	14
Other Contacts and Resources	14
Acknowledgments	15
Best Practices	16



Office Hours

Where can I hold office hours?

As a part-time instructor you will not have your own office. If you choose to hold office hours (which is recommended, since students do have questions and you should be available to them AND you will get paid for one hour per week), there are a few options:

1. The **Writing Reading Center (WRC)/ Student Success Center**: you may be able to hold your office hours at the **WRC in the Library temporarily**. The good thing about holding office hours there is that it will encourage your students to come and use that space; plus, you will be available to help students other than your own who might need help. But then again you will be asked to help students other than your own when in fact you might not have time for it. The space is also a bit noisy and the students and you might get a bit distracted. Finally, you will not be able to store any of your material there and you will not have your own designated space, as it is open to all. But overall it is a good option.
2. **SHARING**: another option is to ask full-time instructors if they are willing to share their offices with part-time instructors. Very often offices are empty while the full-timers are on sabbatical or other types of leaves. In addition, many full-timers will let you share office space. If you choose to do this make sure you coordinate your schedules so that your office hours are not overlapping. If they are comfortable with you having a key to their office, be sure to request one right away (see also Keys section). Many instructors are also willing to share their office when they are on leave. You can find out through the division (or asking around) to figure out who might be interested in sharing their office while they are away.
3. **EMPTY CLASSROOMS**: If you can find an empty classroom, you can hold office hours there. This will not give you a storage space, just a space to meet with students.
4. **ON-CAMPUS**: You can also coordinate meeting times and places with students on campus. These places might be too noisy and again, no storage, but they are a last resort. We do not recommend meeting with students off campus.
5. Apply for a locker and or a desk with or without a computer in the **Baldwin Winery**. You can get this by submitting the Intent-to-Participate form and asking for space in the Baldwin Winery. First come, first served.

How do I get paid for holding office hours?

You should fill in a form called “Intent to Participate” which is available through your portal.

Communications

How do I get a campus phone?

In your introductory packet, there is a form that helps you set up your campus voicemail. Please note that it is only a voicemail, not an actual phone where you will get a call. Let your students know that as well so they do not expect you to answer when they call. You will be assigned an extension and you will follow the instructions to set up a security code, which you will use to access your messages.

Do I get a campus mailbox?

Yes. It is located in the center of campus in Administration Building, Room 111. Please check your mailbox regularly for pertinent information. Also, please refer to the student drop-off box (located next to mailroom door) in your greensheet/syllabus.

Can I get a De Anza Email account?

Yes! Again, in your introductory packet from the division, there will be a form that helps you set up your email. Your email will be lastnamefirstname@deanza.edu and you will get a password as well. You can log in to your email at <http://www.mailreader.fhda.edu>. You can also choose to have your De Anza email forwarded to your regular email, one that you check more frequently. It is recommended that you only share your De Anza email with students, not your personal email.

Will De Anza host a webpage for me?

At this very moment, honestly, no. The recommendation is that you use the Course Studio element of your portal, but that is a weak second to a real webpage. There are several places on the net where you can get a free website and build your own easily. Ask Marilyn Patton (pattonmarilyn@deanza.edu) for suggestions.

Grades

What kinds of records do I need to keep?

It is mostly up to you what your students will be graded on, and how much each criterion is worth. The most common criteria are papers, journals, participation, attendance, midterms, finals, etc. You are responsible to be able to show in writing how you came up with each student's grade. Therefore you should keep detailed records on whatever you plan to base your grades on.

When are final grades due?

Grades are due on the Wednesday after finals week. Be sure to turn in your grades by the due date! They are turned in electronically. The one exception is Incompletes, for which a form must be filled out. Both you and the student must sign it.

What if I need to change a grade after I've turned in my grades?

If you need to change a grade, you can find the Change of Grade form online. Look in your portal on the Faculty page in a box called Faculty Resources Online. You can fill it out digitally but it looks as if you must turn in it to your dean, who has to sign it. Then make a copy for yourself and turn in one copy to A&R.



How long should it take me to grade a student's essay?

Grading is probably the task teachers complain about the most. It has to be done, so here is how to make sure you do not devote more time to it than necessary: take between fifteen and twenty minutes per paper. No more! Give yourself a rule: once you start grading a paper, do not stop until you have finished it (barring it is the end of the world). To make sure that you are not grading a paper longer than 20 minutes use a timer. It is like conditioning.

Effective, fair grading. Use a rubric! It will not only help you be objective and fair in your grading, and let students know exactly what you expect of them, and what they need to improve on, and it will keep you from having to write the same comments repeatedly, thereby saving you precious minutes. (Sample rubrics for different types of papers are under construction on the English Department Resource website <http://group.deanza.edu/ETR/>. Azin Arefi will be more than happy to share hers with you.)

What is a passing grade?

The lowest grade a student can receive and still pass the course is a C (usually calculated at 70-75%). There are no C minuses.

Do I have to give a plus/minus grade?

No. How you choose to grade and evaluate your students is up to you. And if you prefer to give them solid grades you can. However, the college as a whole has voted to implement plus/minus grading because the faculty voted in favor, judging that it is a more accurate assessment of the students' performance. No matter which kind of grading system you will use, you should describe it on your syllabus for your students' information.

For more information, see:

[http://faculty.deanza.edu/academicsenate/stories/storyReader\\$725](http://faculty.deanza.edu/academicsenate/stories/storyReader$725)

Why do students sometimes request a D when they earn a C?

If a student receives a D in a course, he/she is allowed to repeat the course. Therefore some students may prefer to receive a D so that they can repeat the class for a higher grade.

Campus Services

Where can I make copies?

If you would like to make 1-10 copies you are allowed to use the copier in the division office. This copier does not have colored paper, nor does it do fancy jobs, such as stapling and hole punching. It is meant for small and quick jobs.

If you would like to make more than 10 copies, you may use the copier in ADM 111, where the faculty mail boxes are or the ones in Printing Services facing the A-Quad. There is another copier near the Faculty Window of Admission and Records.

To avoid standing in line and the risk of paper jams (yikes!) you can also pick up a "Print Request" form there, fill it out, and leave your handouts and pick them up

later. You can even email your request and electronic handout/job to daprint@fhda.edu and avoid complications. Check out their site at: <http://www.deanza.fhda.edu/faculty/services/printing.html>

How do I order books for my class?

Way before you even thought you had to think about your next quarter, there will appear in your faculty mailbox a book order form, along with its due date. You may order online or use the form. Online ordering is standard.

Where and what should I eat?

There are many great things about De Anza College; our cafeteria is not one of them. They are trying to improve but with limited success.

Off-campus food is generally better. Close to De Anza you can find Whole Foods, Baja Fresh, Rio Adobe, Subway, Togo's, Le Boulanger, Panera, Quizno's, Wahoo Tacos, Panda Express, as well as a few sit-down places if you have more time, such as BJ's, Chili's, Elephant Bar, and Hobee's.

Load and Pay

How is a composition class calculated in terms of load?

All of the composition classes are considered 1/8 (one-eighth) of a year's work, so they count as a decimal (0.125) and a whole year's work is considered 1.000. A full-timer's load is considered to be eight classes plus another 30% in committee work, office hours, and other college business.

How about a literature class? Or Creative Writing?

Even though literature classes have 45 students and take lots of preparation, they are only considered 0.1, meaning you would have to teach ten of them to equal a full year's work. Creative Writing is loaded at .111, meaning you would have to teach nine to equal a year's work. This translates into lower pay!!

Am I only allowed to teach five classes per year?

You are currently allowed to teach 0.670. This means that you should be allowed to teach five composition courses during the year (0.625) and do a little substituting as well. If you teach a literature course, you will earn lower pay because your total possible will be 0.60 (four composition courses and a literature course).

What if I don't get assigned classes for Fall Quarter?

This frequently happens to people who were hired during Winter or Spring. If you get no classes, it is not a judgment on you or your teaching. Most part-timers with preference want to teach during Fall Quarter, so there is huge demand. You can still get a full year's load by teaching Winter and Spring Quarters (and we REALLY need teachers during Spring Quarter), so try to put your Fall to good use elsewhere.

Warning: It could happen that an offer of classes is placed into your De Anza mailbox during a quarter when you are not teaching. The offer is rescinded if you do not respond in time. You can avoid problems by checking your mailbox or by making sure that Becky Roberts sends you the offer by snail mail.

What about summer school?

Summer school teaching is completely independent of the limits mentioned above. All of the allotment of summer school classes takes place during Winter Quarter, so if you are not teaching during Winter Quarter, you should contact the scheduler (Lydia Hearn) to be certain you get a chance to teach summer school (if you want to). You are eligible to teach summer school if you were "employed for one or more quarters during each of the two preceding academic years" (See contract 26.1.3).

The rule is that if you didn't teach ANY classes the previous summer, you have priority over other part-timers. Some people in this situation get an offer of two classes, which is a lot to teach, since, with a session half the length of a quarter, it's the equivalent in time commitment of teaching FOUR classes. If you taught two classes the previous summer, you can ask for summer school classes, but should not count on anything.

How can I move up on the pay scale?

You should check the contract, Appendix C. Every time you teach the equivalent of a full year, you move down a step (to a higher salary). When you add units of education past your M.A., you can advance over the columns. You have to provide documentation to Cynthia Smith. There is also a Longevity Step after you have been at the E step for twelve quarters.

Classrooms

Did I get this awful classroom just because I'm a part-timer?

No. Sorry. We all get terrible classrooms and we often get two terrible classrooms clear across the campus from each other for classes with only a five or ten-minute break in between.

Where can I get chalk, white-board pens, pens for writing on overhead transparencies, overhead transparencies, yellow pads, letterhead paper, envelopes, staples, notecards, and so on?

All of these items are available in the Language Arts Division Office. The cupboards are labeled. You are supposed to find the items you need yourself.



What can I do if the classroom is simply unacceptable?

You can ask Jane Swanson or Mi Chang, in the Administration Building, in the back on the left, for a better room. You may also telephone them at 864-8934.

How do I get a smart classroom, that is one with a big pull-down screen plus a console containing a computer, a DVD/ VCR, and an Elmo?

You should begin when you put in your class request in the first place. Only do this if you have a particular need based on your curriculum. Keep at it when you get your assignment (check to make sure the room is “smart.”) Email or talk to Becky about your needs at that point. If nothing else works, wait until the first week because some classes don’t fill.

When will the above question become irrelevant?

The goal is to make every classroom a smart classroom, but it is going slowly.

Meanwhile, how do I get a computer/ projector/ CD player/ tape player/ or even a DVD player?

The answer to all of the above is that you need to email techhelp@fhda.edu or call **864-TECH**. You can bypass the message on that machine by hitting 0. Be certain to give them 24-hour’s notice. They do not deliver. You have to pick up each piece of equipment and often they will act as if they have never heard of you – and sometimes you are warmly welcomed with waiting equipment. It’s not you! It’s them.

How can I get the technical equipment in my classroom fixed?

Email techhelp@fhda.edu or call 864-TECH and tell them about the problem. If you are having an emergency, talk to a real person (“0”) and use the words “classroom emergency.”

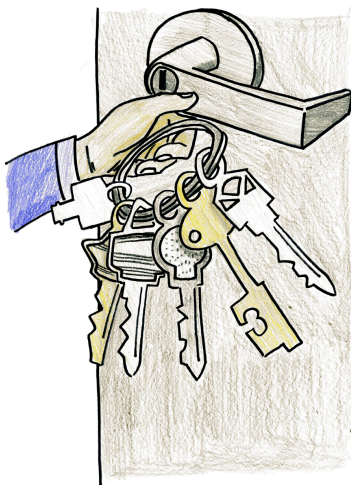
What is the campus etiquette about the minutes between classes? How soon can I get in? When must I leave?

If there is a ten-minute window between classes, try to split the difference. Don't try to move in until five minutes before your class starts. Try to clear out (and have the white or blackboards erased) by five minutes after your class ends. If you only have a five minute window, again try to split the difference and give yourself two minutes to set up and two minutes to clean up.

Must I leave the classroom in the even rows that denote a top-down lecture-style class?

The best idea is to mention this issue to the teacher after your class. If she or he is fussy, then try to help her or him out. Often the incoming students will help you to arrange the chairs in the manner desired by that teacher. This will not be your biggest problem, so try to let it roll off your back.

Keys



What keys will I need?

An FOB key is an electronic key that can be programmed to open several doors.

A D 44 key is large and opens various classrooms in the L Quad. It is also used for the mailroom.

A 44 key is average size (looks like a regular house key) and opens other various classrooms.

How do I get keys?

AFTER YOU ARE IN THE SYSTEM (having met with Cynthia Smith), you are able to get keys.

There is a Key Request Procedure book in the part-timer room, second on the right as you enter the Language Arts Division Office. To order keys, it is best to do so in that office, on the computers which are on both sides of the Procedure Book. Follow the instructions there. You should get a 44 key, a D44 key, and a Division Office FOB key at the minimum. Try to get a key that will open the staff restrooms, too.

As soon as you get your keys, try them on your rooms!

Is it important to lock my classroom when I leave?

Yes. It would be your fault if any equipment were damaged or stolen if you left the room open.

What happens if I lose my keys or have not received them yet?

Call **Security at 864-5555** ahead of time (at the very least one hour) to open the classroom door for you. You can request to have them continue opening the door until your keys are delivered to your faculty mailbox.

Getting Help in Desperate Times

Where can I go for help in dealing with student/ classroom issues?

- If your problem is directly related to English teaching (or even classroom control), you can ask **Becky Roberts (864-5764)** or **Lydia Hearn (864-5718)** or another teacher whom you trust.
- Another idea is to talk to Dean Thomas Ray if you need help. Email is a good way to contact him.

Where can I get support when having to teach a course that I haven't taught before?

- The first step is to read thoroughly the course outline!!! Available online: <http://group.deanza.edu/languagearts/english>. Know it well and follow it – it constitutes a contract between you and the District.
- The second step is to look at one of the large binders near the Dean's office. Page through all of the greensheets/syllabi for the course which you are going to teach and find (and Xerox) those you like. Then you will want to talk to those teachers and visit their classes.
- Sample assignments, greensheets/syllabi, rubrics – plus many useful suggestions for making your teaching a success – all available now on the English Teaching Resources website: <http://group.deanza.edu/ETR/>
- Look through the books for that course on the shelves of the bookstore. The textbook personnel have lists of the publisher representatives or websites where you can go to ask for desk copies.
- Figure out your own passions and how you can use some of those passions in your teaching.
- Work out a syllabus which incorporates parts of the course outlines (see website in above). Sample greensheets/syllabi are available in binders in the Division Office. (See also Resources People section for contacts).



What should I do if I'm too sick to teach?

If your class starts after 9:00 am, you can call the L.A. Division Office (**864-8547**) and tell them about your situation. They will post a notice on your classroom so students will know. If your class is earlier, you will need to call the Police/ Security (**864-5555**) to ask them to post a notice on your classroom door. After 5:30, if you suddenly get sick, you should call the **Evening Office, 864-5532**.

What should I do if I'm going to be late for class?

At the beginning of the quarter, you should request that students stay for fifteen minutes and explain that emergencies happen. If you are going to be more than ten minutes late, the people in the L.A. Division Office will often be willing to walk over to your class and explain the situation to your students. If you can get the cell phone number of a couple of students, you might possibly be able to reach one of them and ask that person to ask the class to wait.

What if an emergency happens in my classroom or during an office hour?

If you have a medical emergency in the classroom, call Campus Security at 864-8911 (8911 from a classroom phone). Campus Security is hooked into the local emergency system and will be able to get help to you more quickly than if you call off-campus. In addition, if you call regular 911, you may be liable for the costs of the ambulance.

For other types of emergencies, call **5555** from the classroom phone or **864-5555** from a cell phone.

Some situations, such as a threatened suicide, may require that you walk with the person to the Health Center or Counseling (see below). Breathe.

What if a student has more problems than I am able to deal with?

For some students, it is appropriate to tell them about the related resource (nurse in Health Services, counselor upstairs in the Student Services Building, or Educational Diagnostic specialist in the EDC). However, there are some students who need even more assistance. It may be appropriate to walk with them after class or even to take a break from the class, in order to be certain they reach the needed destination. You can, for example, go with a student to the Health Center and explain the issue or to the Educational Diagnostic Center or even walk up to Counseling and ask for emergency help.

The English Department at De Anza

How do I get onto the English Department listserv?

You should contact the moderator of the listserv (ask Becky), give that person your email address, and ask to be sent an invitation. You must then respond positively to the invitation.

What about meetings? Should I attend?

English Department meetings happen about once a month, and are interesting “texts” for analysis, with plots, subtexts, and themes. They are excellent places to go when issues like grading, curricula, and textbooks are under discussion because you will be able to contribute your ideas and experience and also to develop a better sense of the expectations for the classes you are teaching (and for the ones before and after yours). Becky Roberts will always announce the agenda in advance so you can decide about participation.

How else can I participate in English Department events?

Almost all events are mentioned on the DAEnglish@yahooogroups.com listserv. Try coming to discussions of books, birthday parties, and Friday workshops. Other events in which we all hang out together are the CCC annual convention and the book discussion/ pizza after at the beginning of each quarter.

May/ Can I vote?

You may vote on almost every issue, and everybody in the department has an equal vote.

Should I join a committee?

Yes, if the topic is of interest to you.

Which ones are there?

Distance Learning, Creative Writing, Literature, Developmental Education, and Transfer-level Composition.

Will I get paid?

No. Sorry!

What are the advantages & disadvantages of serving on a committee?

Serving is definitely a learning experience because this is where hard work is done and changes are formulated. As you apply for full-time positions, your service on committees will be looked upon favorably as departments are constantly searching for candidates who will share committee-work burdens. The disadvantage: It will use up valuable time which you could be using to read essays, read on your own, develop your own classes, or apply for full-time positions.

Faculty Resources

Name	Email	Phone Number	Willing to Help with...
Azin Arefi	azinarefi@yahoo.com		Grading Rubrics for a variety of papers/ Good vs. bad books
Bob Dickerson	dickersonbob@fhda.edu	864-8540	Teaching/Getting Literature courses
Carolyn Keen	cmkeen@aol.com		Classroom instruction strategies.
Jill Quigley	quigleyjill@fhda.edu	408-864-5564	EWRT 200/211 development/portfolios
Karen Chow	chowkaren@fhda.edu		Faculty and student resources/ Syllabus & Assignments
Laura Raffaelli McLeish			Faculty/Professional Development
Marilyn Patton	pattonmarilyn@deanza.edu	408-864-8543	Sample assignments, techniques for lively teaching

Other Contacts/Resources

Service	Contacts & Phone Numbers
Security/Emergencies	864-5555
Department Chairs	Becky Roberts (864-5764) or Lydia Hearn (864-5718)
Dean Thomas Ray	raythomas@deanza.edu or 864-8546
Division Office	864-8547 (Susan Edman, others)
Tech Help	techhelp@fhda.edu or call 864-TECH.

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Annotation - Part #1 of Best Practices



**Best Practices Workshop
Jan. 26, 2012**

**Veronica Avila
Kristin Skager
Reading Department**

Think-Pair Share Procedure

(adapted from Wlokskowski, 1999)



1. Take a minute to first silently and independently think about your own answer to the question—or, Think (write) briefly about what has just been stated or observed.

“Please take a moment to think (write) about how this material relates to your own life.”

2. At the signal, turn and face your partner so you can discuss your answers face-to-face—or, so you can share your reflections.

“Now turn to your partner and have a brief conversation about reflections.”

3. Explain clearly to your partner your own answer to the question.

Listen carefully to your partner’s answer, and pay attention to similarities and differences in your answers.

Ask your partner to explain more if you don’t understand or agree with his or her answer.

Name: _____
Partner’s Name: _____

Think Aloud Grid

Category	Number of times Used (make at “tick” mark)
Prediction or Verifying Predictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I predict that...” • “This is what I predicted...” • “This a bit different than what I predicted...” 	
Picturing “I can picture...”	
Relating “This reminds me of...”	
Identifying Problems “This confuses me because...”	
Fix-Up “I need to think about/reread this.”	
Questioning “I agree/disagree.” “Why did the author say this?”	

Think Aloud Language

Prediction: Making predictions of what will happen next in the reading.

“From the title, I predict that...”

“After reading this, I think that maybe...”

Picturing: Describing a visual image you “see” while reading.

“When I read this, I can picture...”

“The image I have here is...”

Relating: Relating the text to your knowledge or experiences in the past.

“This reminds me of...”

“This is like the time when...”

Identifying Problems: Thinking about your confusion in the reading.

“This confuses me because...”

“I don’t understand this. Maybe...”

Fix-Up: Realizing you need to re-think OR re-read something.

“Wait. I need to think about this more. Maybe...”

“I’ve forgotten what I was reading about! I’ll re-read this sentence/paragraph/section.”

Questioning: Asking questions about what the author has written OR agreeing or disagreeing with the author.

“Why did the author say this? S/he didn’t explain it very well.”

“I don’t agree. From my experience...”

“I totally agree. I’ve often thought the same thing.”

Making Annotations: A User's Guide

What does it mean when you annotate your text?

Annotations are written responses you have about what you are reading. As we read we constantly think about *what* we're reading, we question, we agree, we completely disagree, we doubt, we learn, and always we develop as humans. Writers at every level use this technique to fully comprehend as well as gain insight to what they read.

Annotations are written on the margins of the original document you are reading; it is what we call "talking with your text."

As you work with your text, consider all of the ways that you can connect with what you are reading. Here are some suggestions that will help you with your annotations:

- § Define words or slang; make the words real with examples from your experiences; explore why the author would have used a particular word or phrase.
- § Make connections to other parts of the book/article. Feel free to use direct quotes from the text.
- § Circle vocabulary words you are not familiar with (keep reading and then go back to look up the meaning of those words)
- § Make connections to other texts you have read or seen, including: Movies, Comic books/graphic novels, News events, Other books, stories, plays, songs, or poems
- § Draw a picture when a visual connection is appropriate.
- § Re-write, paraphrase, or summarize a particularly difficult passage or moment.
- § Make meaningful connections to your own life experiences.
- § Describe a new perspective you may now have.
- § Explain the historical context or traditions/social customs that are used in the passage.
- § Offer an analysis or interpretation of what is happening in the text.
- § Point out and discuss literary techniques that the author is using.
- § State the thesis (overall message) or main points of a reading.

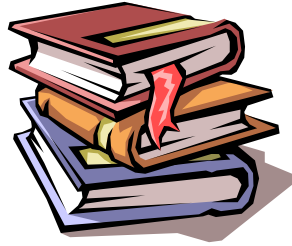
Annotation Peer Review Guide

Read your partner's selected text and annotations carefully. Then respond to the prompts below. Refer to your Annotation Guide of the list of possible annotation types.

Indicate the type of annotation here	I like this annotation because..	This annotation could be improved by..	Check if this annotation has potential for revision

(As adapted from Brown, Matthew D., Read, Write, Think, International Reading Association)

ANNOTATION



PURPOSE:

Annotation involves note taking for better reading comprehension. Marking the text while you read helps you focus on your purpose for reading, concentrating on the relationship between the main ideas and the details in the margins of your lecture notes or in the margins of your books. These key points in the margins also serve as a recall column when you review for a reading or your lecture notes for class discussion, a writing assignment or an exam.

PROCEDURE:

1. After previewing the selection and establishing a purpose for reading, read carefully and reflectively. Speed is not important at this point.
2. After reading a few paragraphs or a short section, stop and think about the key ideas. Recite these ideas out loud in your own words.
3. If you are reading an article that is divided into subsections (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, and some essays(s)), write these ideas as brief summaries in the margins of the text.

-next page-

4. In addition to summary notes, you can annotate in the following ways:
 - underline or highlight key phrases that signal main ideas.
 - note examples of concepts (Ex.).
 - note confusing ideas (?).
 - jot down possible test questions.
 - comment on the author's ideas by giving your own opinion.
 - note a personal experience you are reminded of and why.
 - make a connection to another reading or class discussion.
 - draw a picture or graph to help you "see" the relationship between main ideas and supporting details.

5. Review your annotations when you are preparing to discuss, write about, or take a test on a particular reading. Recite the information out loud. It may feel silly at first, but if you cannot state the main points in your own words, chances are you need to reflect more deeply about why the information is meaningful to you.

Evaluating your Annotations: How do you know if you're doing it right?

1. Look for study guides or questions at the end of the reading selection: Do your markings help you answer the questions?
2. Compare your markings to your class notes: Do your markings support or enhance your notes?
3. Discuss what you marked with serious study partners. Talking aides comprehension (plus it lightens the workload!)

Nutshell Annotation

What is a nutshell?

The process of nutshelling involves being able to write down the central idea of a paragraph. It is an ideal strategy to use when the readings are quite difficult and especially good to use when you are reading non-fiction pieces.

Here's how it works:

After you have looked over your reading, take time to read each paragraph and then respond in writing to what you think the overall message (main idea) of the paragraph is. Your written response should be no more than 9 words long, and should not include any of the words in print. In other words, write the overall message of the paragraph in your own words.

Use the excerpt from Baca's memoir to write a nutshell response alongside the text.

Example:

"Language gave me a way to keep the chaos of prison at bay and prevent it from devouring me: it was a resource that allowed me to confront and understand my past, even to wring from it some compelling truths, and it opened the way toward a future that was based not on fear or bitterness or apathy but on compassionate involvement and a belief that I belonged." *A Place to Stand*, by Jimmy Santiago Baca

How does this help me understand what I'm reading?

An Offering to the Power of Language

HERITAGE

October 26, 1997 | Sandra Cisneros | Sandra Cisneros, a novelist and poet, is the author of "The House on Mango Street" and "Loose Woman."

1) SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS — 'Mi'ja, it's me. Call me when you wake up." It was a message left on my phone machine from a friend. But when I heard that word "mi'ja," a pain squeezed my heart. My father was the only one who ever called me this. Because his death is so recent, the word overwhelmed me and filled me with grief.

2) With my father's death, the thread that links me to my other self, to my other language, was severed. Spanish binds me to my ancestors, but especially to my father, a Mexican national by birth who became a U.S. citizen by serving in World War II. My mother, who is Mexican American, learned her Spanish through this man, as I did. Forever after, every word spoken in that language is linked indelibly to him.

3) I continue to analyze and reflect on the power a word has to produce such an effect on me. As always, I am fascinated by how those of us caught between worlds are held under the spell of words spoken in the language of our childhood. After a loved one dies, your senses become oversensitized. Maybe that's why I sometimes smell my father's cologne in a room when no one else does. And why words once taken for granted suddenly take on new meanings.

4) "Mi'ja" (MEE-ha) from "mi hija" (me EE-ha). The words translate as "my daughter." Daughter, my daughter, daughter of mine, they're all stiff and clumsy, and have nothing of the intimacy and warmth of the word "mi'ja." "Daughter of my heart," maybe. Perhaps a more accurate translation of "mi'ja" is, I love you.

5) When I wish to address a child, lover or one of my many small pets, I use Spanish, a language filled with affection and familiarity. I can only liken it to the fried-tortilla smell of my mother's house or the way my brothers' hair smells like Alberto VO5 when I hug them. It just about makes me want to cry.

6) The language of our antepasados, those who came before us, connects us to our center, to who we are and directs us to our life work. Some of us have been lost, cut off from the essential wisdom and power. Sometimes, our parents or grandparents were so harmed by a society that treated them ill for speaking their native language that they thought they could save us from that hate by teaching us to speak only English. Those of us, then, live like captives, lost from our culture, ungrounded, forever wandering like ghosts with a thorn in the heart.

7) When my father was sick, I watched him dissolve before my eyes. Each day the cancer that was eating him changed his face, as if he was crumbling from within and turning into a sugar skull, the kind placed on altars for Day of the Dead. Because I'm a light sleeper, my job was to sleep on the couch and be the night watch. Father always

woke several times in the night choking on his own bile. I would rush to hold a kidney-shaped bowl under his lips, wait for him to finish throwing up, the body exhausted beyond belief. When he was through, I rinsed a towel with cold water and washed his face. --Ya estoy cansado de vivir, my father would gasp. -- Si, yo se, I know. But the body takes its time dying. I have reasoned, since then, that the purpose of illness is to let go. For the living to let the dying go, and for the dying to let go of this life and travel to where they must.

8) Whenever anyone discusses death, they talk about the inevitable loss, but no one ever mentions the inevitable gain. How when you lose a loved one, you suddenly have a spirit ally, an energy on the other side that is with you always, that is with you just by calling their name. I know my father watches over me in a much more thorough way than he ever could when he was alive. When he was living, I had to telephone long distance to check up on him and, if he wasn't watching one of his endless telenovelas, he'd talk to me. Now I simply summon him in my thoughts. Papa. Instantly, I feel his presence surround and calm me.

9) I know this sounds like a lot of hokey new-age stuff, but really it's old age, so ancient and wonderful and filled with such wisdom that we have had to relearn it because our miseducation has taught us to name it "superstition." I have had to rediscover the spirituality of my ancestors, because my own mother was a cynic. So it came back to me a generation later, learned but not forgotten in some memory in my cells, in my DNA, in the palm of my hand that is made up of the same blood of my ancestors, in the transcripts I read from the great Mazatec visionary Maria Sabina Garcia of Oaxaca.

10) Sometimes a word can be translated into more than a meaning. In it is the translation of a world view, a way of looking at things and, yes, even a way of accepting what others might not perceive as beautiful. "Urraca," for example, instead of "grackle." Two ways of looking at a black bird. One sings, the other cackles. Or, "tocayola," your name-twin, and, therefore, your friend. Or, the beautiful "estrenar," which means to wear something for the first time. There is no word in English for the thrill and pride of wearing something new.

11) Spanish gives me a way of looking at myself and at the world in a new way. For those of us living between worlds, our job in the universe is to help others see with more than their eyes during this period of chaotic transition. Our work as bicultural citizens is to help others become visionary, to help us all examine our dilemmas in multiple ways and arrive at creative solutions; otherwise, we all will perish.

12) What does a skeleton mean to you? Satan worship? Heavy-metal music? Halloween? Or maybe it means--Death, you are a part of my life, and I recognize you, include you in mine, I even thumb my nose at you. Next Saturday, on the Day of the Dead, I honor and remember my antepasados, those who have died and gone on before me.

