

Chip Barham

Mr. Barham

Rhetoric

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### Introductory Letter

Dear Students,

I like to begin each year getting to know the people I'll be spending so much time with. After all, we'll be spending some big blocks of time in here together, and it helps to start off by getting to know and trust the people around you.

As a basic introduction to me, you should know that I have been teaching high school for twenty-eight years, that I have a wonderful wife and the five most perfect children anyone could ask for (although they are not really children anymore), that I am now a proud grandfather of a beautiful one-year-old girl, and that I'm a typical English teacher in that I geek out on anything literary. One of my favorite pastimes is to go to the bookstore, get a cup of coffee at the café, and sit and read for at least a couple of hours. This activity involves two of my favorite things: books and coffee. I also like to work puzzles (jigsaw and logic puzzles), listen to audio books, go for long walks, and spend time with my family. I also like computer programming and building websites. In fact, I spent part of this summer taking an online class on JavaScript to improve my programming skills. It's fun! One other thing you should know is that a significant part of my family's culture is sarcasm. We love to laugh, and sarcasm tends to be our preferred style of humor. You'll see this first-hand from me on occasion in class, along with some of my other personality quirks, such as a penchant for producing bad jokes and awkward silences.

Another part of getting to know me involves learning my background. I grew up in Hermitage, a suburb of Nashville, and I graduated from McGavock High School with a strong

background in math and science. Unlike many English teachers I know, I don't have an aversion to the sciences. In fact, I spent two years studying engineering in college before changing my major to English. This radical shift in my academic pursuit really reflected a shift in my belief system. My whole reason for going into engineering in the first place was to make a lot of money. After discovering the misery of pursuing only financial gain without a passion for my career, I switched to studying English, which had become a passion in my spare time, and I decided to become a teacher, actively working to make this world a better place. However, I try to keep my math skills up to par by tutoring students in math as a side job.

This year is a first for me in a couple of ways. This is the first year I have taught a class of middle school students. Last year, I tutored seventh grade students in math during Power Hour after school and I've had middle school study halls, but I haven't actually taught a middle school class until this year. Also, another first for me is teaching rhetoric as a class. In my English classes, we discuss rhetoric, and it is a part of much of what we do, but I haven't taught a class specifically focusing on rhetoric as a subject. It's an important subject, and my goal is for us to learn and have fun with it this semester.

Those are the essentials you need to know about me as we begin to learn about each other. What I hope you can see most from this letter is that I'm excited to meet you and to get to know you more as we work hard together to learn this year. In fact, your first assignment will be to write a letter back to me, letting me know more about you. Welcome to the class. I'm looking forward to a great year with you!

Sincerely,

Mr. Barham