

## **Incoming 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Summer Assignment**

Due Date: This assignment is due on the first day of school, Thursday, September 6, 2012. Your 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA teacher, Ms. Binaso or Ms. Braverman, will collect the assignment during your ELA class. This assignment will be graded and factored into your first marking period average.

Your Task: After reading the following personal essay and recent articles, write an essay in which you argue your position on whether or not English should be declared America's national language. Support your position with textual evidence (direct quotes or paraphrasing) from the articles. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. You are encouraged to also use outside sources to illustrate or clarify your position. You may use experiences from your life to support your claim as well. This should be at least five well-developed paragraphs (approximately 500 words).

### **Possible Outline**

- I. Introduction (including thesis statement)- You must make a claim that you will support throughout the essay.
- II. First argument supporting your claim
- III. Second argument supporting your claim
- IV. Introduce counterclaim (opposing view) but show how your evidence refutes it
- V. Conclusion

Rationale: This task will provide background knowledge for our first unit, which will focus on Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*.

## Article #1: Cultural Identity Through My Name(s)

By Dongeun (Jane) S., Davis, CA

Source: TeenInk Magazine



Photo credit: Narongsukchai T., Sachse, TX

She fumbled with a rhinestone button on her purple cardigan, and then brought the pen cap to her mouth before breaking the silence.

“Dongeun?” she said, waiting for a hand to shoot up in the air. I raised my arm halfway and said, quietly,

“Here.

“You can just call me Jane,” I added loudly.

“That makes things a lot easier,” the substitute teacher muttered, marking a check next to my name.

Dongeun, pronounced Dong-Un, is the first name printed on my Louisiana birth certificate, my passport, and the school roll-call sheet. I've heard many variations of my name, including my favorite, Don-Joon, which makes me sound French.

The name, which is rare even in Korea, means “a hill of the East.” It's a hill I abandoned when the other kids giggled at its sound the first day of fourth grade, when I moved to California. I

quickly reintroduced myself by blurting out the only American name I knew. Thus, “Jane” was born.

As Jane, I felt a sense of belonging with a group of blonde-haired, blue-eyed peers. I packed turkey sandwiches for lunch instead of rice, even though my stomach growled for Korean food. I walked around the house in my dirty shoes, ignoring the footprints staining the clean carpet. The more I assimilated into the American culture, the less I appreciated my own. Together with my Korean name, Korean culture became one big blur.

Last summer, I was one of a hundred Americans selected by the Korea Foundation to travel to South Korea as part of a cultural exchange. During two weeks of living in a traditional village house, I learned how to perform Korean mask dancing, make kimchi and kimbop, and defend myself through taekwondo. I also gained lifelong friendships and an appreciation for my parents' home country.

I came home with a new desire to plunge into the 5,000-year-old Korean history, sound the elaborate curves of the Korean language, and feel the silky texture of its traditional dress, Hanbok. Luckily, I didn't have to search far to satisfy these wishes. My parents, the ones who still call me Dongeun, have always been more than happy to teach me about Korea.

Since the trip, I've learned to live in two cultures. At home, I speak Konglish, a vague mixture of Korean and English. I greet friends with a “Hello” and wave my hand, and address Korean adults with “Anyong,” bowing my head. In November, my family celebrates Thanksgiving and Chusuk with a dinner table piled with turkey, yams, kimchi, and bulgogi. I speak at the International House about my Korea experience, serving as an ambassador to inform people about Korean culture.

Yesterday, when I saw a substitute teacher in class, my palms didn't sweat and my heart didn't race. Instead, when she butchered my name, I politely corrected her, loudly and clearly: “Please call me Dongeun. It's my Korean name.”

## Article #2: Should English be declared America's national language?

### A nation of immigrants considers the pros and cons of giving English official status.

Source: Scholastic Scope

#### YES

English is the official language of 51 nations and 27 states in the United States. Last year, a Zogby International Poll found that 85 percent of Americans supported making English the official language of all government operations. Among Hispanics surveyed, 71 percent supported this idea. This is nothing new; many polls over the years have shown similar numbers.

Speaking English is a guaranteed way for new immigrants to succeed in school, increase their earning potential, and enhance their career options.

This nation decided long ago that you must know English to become a citizen. So there is no reason to offer government services in foreign languages. In the same way that the Pledge of Allegiance and the National Anthem bring this nation together, English is something we share and should promote.

In 2001, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Martha Sandoval, a Mexican immigrant who had lived in the U.S. for 10 years without learning English, could not sue Alabama because the state did not offer foreign-language driver's license tests.

Other federal courts have held that there's no right to foreign-language government forms, deportation notices, or civil service exams. There are 30 years' worth of cases like these.

Both the courts and America's citizens and immigrants have sent a clear message: We must unite our country behind our proud national language, help new immigrants advance by learning it, and save taxpayer dollars by making English our national language.

—**Senator James M. Inhofe**  
Republican of Oklahoma

#### NO

English is our common language, but it is not the only language spoken in the United States.

**DEBATE**

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**Should English be declared America's national language?**

**A nation of immigrants considers the pros and cons of giving English official status**

**NO** English is our common language, but it is not the only language spoken in the United States. Making English the national language and relieving the government from its responsibility of providing non-English speakers with language assistance could have major consequences that would affect the entire nation.

Throughout our history, the government and minority organizations like the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) have helped immigrants learn English and successfully integrate into society at all levels. NCLR is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy group.

We at NCLR respectfully agree that everyone should learn English. We'd be thrilled with legislation that devoted additional money to teaching English, but we cannot pass a law declaring English the national language and magically expect everyone to learn the language overnight.

Declaring English our national language hampers the government's ability to reach out, communicate, and serve people in the event of a natural or man-made disaster such as a hurricane, earthquake, or civil unrest, another terrorist attack. That puts everyone's health and safety at jeopardy.

The thousands of young immigrants born in the U.S. are not even old enough to build the dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. If lawmakers declare English the national language, they will be turning their backs on this common dream as well as their responsibility to the security and safety of the entire nation.

—**Cecilia Meléndez**  
Vice President  
National Council of La Raza

**DANGER CONTAMINATED WATER KEEP OUT**

**PELIGRO AGUA**

14 The New York Times 10/1/01

Making English the national language and relieving the government from its responsibility of providing non-English speakers with language assistance could have tragic consequences that would affect the entire nation.

Throughout our history, the government and nonprofit organizations like the National Council of La Raza (N.C.L.R.) have helped immigrants learn English and successfully integrate into society at all levels. (N.C.L.R. is the nation's largest Hispanic civil rights and advocacy group.)

We at N.C.L.R. wholeheartedly agree that everyone should know English. We'd be thrilled with legislation that devoted substantial money to teaching English, but you cannot pass a law declaring English the national language and magically expect everyone to know the language overnight.

Making English our national language hampers the government's ability to reach out, communicate, and warn people in the event of a natural or man-made disaster such as a hurricane, pandemic, or, God forbid, another terrorist attack. That puts everyone's health and safety in jeopardy.

For hundreds of years, immigrants have come to America to contribute to this great nation and work to fulfill the dream of a better life for themselves and their families. If lawmakers declare English the national language, they will be turning their backs on this common dream as well as their responsibility for the security and safety of the entire nation.

—**Cecilia Muñoz**

Vice President, National Council of La Raza

## Article #3: Mauro E. Mujica: English as the Official Language of the US

By [Mauro Mujica](#)

Published February 04, 2012

Fox News Latino

[Newt Gingrich](#) has said it is essential we have a common language: English. [Mitt Romney](#) has said people need to learn English to be successful. [Rick Santorum](#) has called learning English the greatest gift his father and grandfather received as immigrants. [Ron Paul](#) has agreed that at a national level, we need one official language. Even President Obama has agreed that immigrants should learn English.

With the 2012 Presidential election in full swing, the English language has been an increasingly hot-button issue—and rightly so. With less than a year until the next president of the [United States](#) is chosen, the four Republican candidates have all said they favor English as the official language of our nation's government.

Yet the Migration Policy Institute reports that between 1990 and 2010, the number of people who are limited English proficient grew 80 percent—from just under 14 million in 1990 to more than 25 million in 2010. Limited English Proficient individuals now weigh in at nine percent of the U.S. population. In a world where English is the language of commerce, and a country where English is the language of success, these rising numbers are cause for concern. Now, more than ever, we need to enact a policy that will provide immigrants with the best possible opportunity to achieve the American dream. This means making English the official language of our government.

As the Chairman of U.S. English, a group that lobbies for preserving the unifying role of the English language in the United States, I have heard every possible argument against Official English. Yet, as an immigrant myself, I can speak to its importance. I have seen firsthand the doors that open to foreign newcomers as a result of learning the English language.

Life without English proficiency in the United States is a life of low-skilled, low-paying jobs—on average, immigrants who speak English earn two and a half times more than immigrants who do not speak English. Knowledge of English leads to the realization of the American Dream of increased economic opportunity and the ability to become a more productive member of society. After all, how can one fully appreciate all that America has to offer, and how can one participate fully in the democratic process, without a firm grasp of the English language?

Studies have shown that immigrants are slower to learn English when they receive more native language support, such as the translation of government forms and documents. No one can deny the comfort that comes from receiving native language support upon arriving in a new country.

But with a majority of immigrants coming to the U.S. to experience our freedom of opportunity, their first goal should be adjusting to the culture—and learning the language—that will allow them to attain a better life here.

Official English removes the crutch of government translations and encourages immigrants to assimilate and learn the language of success in America. Private businesses and everyday conversations would not be affected, and because Official English only applies to government, citizens are free to speak their language of choice as they go about their daily lives. In fact, despite misconceptions to the contrary, Official English does not discourage multilingualism. I believe that Americans should be free to speak whichever language they choose. I myself am fluent in four languages! But in order to fully live the American way, all citizens must be able to speak English.

At a time when our country is so divided, Official English is the one thing that can serve as our common denominator. The movement is not about protecting the English language, but rather about preserving our national unity and allowing us to remain a unified country rather than a divided one. As we continue to move closer to electing our next President, let us remember to consider each candidate's position on Official English. Is our next president willing to ensure the best opportunity for immigrants while ensuring our national unity? Several candidates have committed. For more information on the Official English movement, as well as candidates' positions on the issue, visit [www.usenglish.org](http://www.usenglish.org).

*Mauro E. Mujica is the CEO of U.S. English, Inc.*

Read more: <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2012/02/04/mauro-e-mujica-english-as-official-language-us/print#ixzz1yzxDXYTu>

## Article #4: Making English official language ethnocentric

By [REBECCA KELLUM](#)

**Published:** Tuesday, April 3, 2012

Source: The Reflector

Though English is the primary language heard throughout our campus outside of foreign language classrooms, events such as the International Fiesta remind me that many people even within the greater Starkville area speak languages other than English. Which raises the question: if there's a relatively large group of people in Starkville whose first language is something other than English, how many more throughout our nation speak another language in their homes?

Even if they speak something other than English at home, should it be required to learn English to assimilate into our society? Do those who wish to make English the United State's official language believe it is truly the superior language, or do they assume that everyone "converting" to English would make everyday life more simple?

Either way, the assumptions for the basis of the argument advocating English as the official language of the United States are false. According to the United States Census Bureau, "Nearly 47 million people — about 1-in-5 U.S. residents — age five and older, reported regularly speaking a foreign language at home in 2000. The figures represented an increase of 15 million people since the 1990 census." The part of the nation's population that speaks another language at home is clearly increasing, so why not embrace our own individualistic ideals and allow everyone to speak the language they choose?

Many in the past have tried to deem English as America's official language, including President Theodore Roosevelt who once said, "We have one language here, and that is the English language, and we intend to see that the (assimilation) crucible turns our people out as Americans." Though Roosevelt claims it would be more "American" for everyone to speak English, was it not to America many ran to escape persecution? Is it not prejudice in some ways to ask those who wish to preserve their own culture and heritage to learn a new language to fit into our current American society?

In response, some may argue that those who speak a language other than English would only have to learn it for the official interactions that would need to take place outside of the home. However, how long would the children of those who speak other languages continue in their parents' ways if the schools they attended and the majority of their friends only spoke English? Susana C. Schultz, an employee of Strictly Spanish Translators, mirrors my sentiments when she said, "According to U.S. English, Inc., an advocacy group that supports declaring English as our official language, 322 languages are spoken in the country, with 24 of those spoken in every state and the District of Columbia. California has the most languages, with 207, while Wyoming has the fewest with 56. So why won't Congress declare an official language?

Because we are a nation of immigrants, and these numbers prove it. Because declaring an official language would abridge the rights of individuals with limited English proficiency, individuals who are paying taxes and who are entitled to the same rights as those who speak English."

When people are truly aware of the numbers, there's only one other reason why they would support one national language: ethnocentrism. Ethnocentric views revolve around one culture, such as those who speak English in the United States, believing that their ways are superior to others. If their only argument for deeming English the official language is that it's simply "the American way," then I'd dare to say it isn't American at all.