Monday, March 16th, 2015

Dear AP English Students,

I know that we have a bit of an unusual situation on our hands here, but I *am* excited about taking over Mrs. Herrera’s AP English classes for the rest of the 2014-2015 school year. Once upon a time, before I become a nerdy librarian, I used to be an even nerd-ier AP English teacher; in fact, for my first six years teaching at Buena, 11th-grade AP English was pretty much my heart and soul. When my first daughter was born in 2010, however, I made the decision to leave the classroom in order to focus on my family. Since then, I have happily lived the life of a mild-mannered librarian… until recent events forced me out of “AP retirement.”

If you really want to know about my personal life, here is the big, important stuff: I live with my wife and our two beautiful daughters, Alexandra and Charlotte, in the “bird track” area of Ventura. My wife, Kathleen, is a special education teacher at the Dorothy Boswell School, and we just celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary last summer. As for me, I was born a long time ago, in a galaxy not-so-far away: Ojai, CA. I’ve spent the majority of my life in Ventura and I attended Ventura public schools as a kid (Elmhurst, Balboa, Anacapa, and Buena). I graduated from Buena High School in 1998, went to UC Berkeley (where I received my BA in English with a minor in Education), and then trekked off to Stanford University (where I received my Masters in Education and Teaching Credential). A few years ago, I completed the Masters in Educational Leadership program at CSUN, and then later attained my Library Services credential from CSULB. Yes, you counted correctly: I have attended (and graduated from) four different universities… and I have the student loan bills to prove it.

Another important thing to know is that I’m a *HUGE* music nerd: as a result, we’re probably going to do a bunch of music-related stuff in the weeks ahead (I promise you, though, that it will all be geared towards preparing you for the AP test). In addition to lots of listening to – and reading about – rock music, I also play half a dozen instruments. For a long time, I used to be the singer-songwriter/front-man for an indie rock band, Far From Kansas (look us up on iTunes and/or Spotify), though I haven’t been able to squeeze in much playing time since my second daughter was born last August. Basically, if they ever make a “Mr. Holland’s Opus” kind of movie about my life, it might look something like “School of Rock.”

For the sake of brevity, though, I’ll give you a brief list of my basic stats:

**Born:** August 14th, 1980, in Ojai, CA

**BA Degree (in English):** UC Berkeley

**MA/Teaching Credential:** Stanford University

**MA in Educational Leadership:** CSUN

**Library Services Credential:** CSULB

**Number of years teaching:** Thirteen

**Number of years teaching AP English:** Six

**Number of years as a librarian:** Five

**Current Band:** The Briar Rose Ramblers

**Favorite restaurant:** Andria’s (in the harbor)

**Favorite fast food:** In ‘n’ Out

**Hot coffee drink:** Starbucks Café Mocha

**Cold coffee drink:** CBTL Ice-Blended Mocha

**Favorite movie:** *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*

**Favorite albums**: The Beach Boys, *Pet Sounds*

Death Cab for Cutie, *Transatlanticism*

Ryan Adams, *Heartbreaker*

Weezer, *Pinkerton*

Wilco, *Being There*

And that’s a pretty decent starting point. I could easily ramble on and on about myself (I am a teacher, after all), but we’ve probably given you more than enough info as is. I look forward to getting to know each and every one of you over the course of the next few months!

Sincerely,

Mr. Levin