

Hey, Teacher, Why Do We Study...

By Carole Marsh,
The Queen of Common Core



LANGUAGE ARTS

If you can't speak grammatically, write briefly, clearly, and with impact, read and comprehend a basic newspaper article, you will always be a "kid" and never grow into an adult reader and writer... and you need to! The world of work is made up of communication, that's all there is to it. The words that come out of your mouth make all the difference in your future and your future job. Also you gotta write something sometime. And whether you work in Hollywood or a warehouse, there are things to read—and understand. Work is *not* school; there is not much hand-holding. Besides, who wants to pay to take classes later, when you can learn to read and write for free now?! One day, you'll see reading is a lot of fun and you can read about anything *you* want to. Also, once you learn to write in your own unique voice, in your own way, you will enjoy entertaining others with your words. Just imagine NOT being able to read and write, and you'll see why you WANT to learn to read and write!

SPEAKING IN FRONT OF THE CLASS

Ewww... no one wants to get up and speak in front of the class, do you?! The surprising thing is that unless you try, you will never know that you are good at it. Now I don't mean a professional, boring speaker. You might find your smart aleckness, or your sense of humor, or your wildly waving arms (to overcome your nervousness), or speaking in your own voice about things you care about... is very popular and you are pretty good at it. It might even be fun. Charm and wit come in handy in the work world. When no one else will stand up and ask a question or make a savvy remark, and you do, people notice. Speaking well is not about wearing a suit, just in case that worries you. My favorite speaker has a straight-up Mohawk and several tattoos. My other favorite speaker is... five years old!

OTHER LANGUAGES

Most people seldom take French and learn to speak eloquent French. Few kids take Latin and write their term papers in Latin (while wearing a toga?), but learning a different language helps you with English, culture, awareness of the world, and who knows, you might retain enough so that on your resume you can say, "Yes, I do speak some Spanish!" Can you say "HIRED!" Besides, you might work anywhere in the world one day, or grow up and marry someone from a different country. No matter what your "native" language is, learning another language is a good skill and a great workout for your brain!

MATH

When I give kids a job, I will not pay them until they can figure out what I owe them. Sometimes, that takes them a while! You will use math for everything. I just heard of a young man who did not get an \$85,000-a-year welding job because he did not know how to use a ruler. A RULER! If you are interested in a career that requires algebra, calculus, geometry, trigonometry, and such, you probably like math. Never turn your nose up at math; even if only part of it sticks, you will find that the concepts of math affect your life each day. The only way to measure up at a job is to have some good, solid math skills. And, oh yes, in your personal life you will use a lot of math. Unless you don't learn how—and then you will just lose a lot of money, IF you make any.

SCIENCE

Get over it: the world is science. You ARE biology. You ARE chemistry. Earth science is where you live. You are a living biome, environment, life science experiment, and so is your home, your yard, your neighborhood, your county, state, nation, and all those other places. The Big Secret about English and math and science (and many other subjects) is that one often helps you a lot with the others. That is how critical thinking comes about: you make inferences, see parallels; you think, "Oh, this is sort of like that thing I learned in the other class."

An education is not about grades; it's about a patchwork quilt of subjects and classes that seem like wildly different squares, when truly, it's their cobbled together combination that keeps you warm at night. Getting smart is a great feeling. No one is an expert at everything, but Getting the Big Picture is worth a lot, whether you're an A student or a C student. It does not take a genius to invent something. An ordinary person can invent many things, and a general knowledge of "how things work" (a.k.a. *science*) is a bit of a help. Besides, you might get on *Jeopardy* one day and will need to know your *tibia* from your *fibula*.



HISTORY

I will try very hard not to get on my soapbox! I honestly do not know how to hire ANYONE who does not know basic American and world history. Also, good geography knowledge and skills (like using a map, even if you know how to use a GPS) are essential. History includes biography—people. And if you want to take a real short-cut and just skip school but still learn a lot of what you need to know: read biographies—even simple biographies. The lives of people tell us how to live and how to fail, how to succeed and how to overcome, how to make a difference, and how to scrape ourselves off the sidewalk and start over. People, the story of history, and the places of the world are all worth learning about. It's not about answering a specific fact later (although it's not so smart to book a flight to Mexico when you're headed to New Mexico, amigo). It's all about this general knowledge that tells everyone that you went to school, you are smart enough, and you are worth training, teaching, giving a chance at an entry-level job.

That soapbox I'm not on came from somewhere, has a history, was invented by a person. Now point to everything you can see within your sight and think about it. Don't be silly—study history. Actually, all of those beheadings, face-to-face wars, presidents with bad hair days, families stuffed in a frontier fridge called a covered-wagon (or, in the summer, an oven), how Milton Hershey invented chocolate, the gigantic and hilarious boo-boos many famous people made, and more, are really fairly fascinating. Besides, in the work world, people are liable to talk about anything. With your cloak of general history knowledge (history, culture, arts, politics, world affairs, football and “futball”), you will always feel comfortable in conversation with others—a sort of big deal in the work world.

COMPUTER

Technology is amazing, but it isn't magic. Someone has to know how computers work! And that someone should be you. Chances are, you already know a ton of stuff your parents don't even know about using a computer! Computers are used by almost every adult, at home and at work. Can you imagine going in for the first day of your new job as an adult, and not being familiar with basic computer software? Or not knowing how to print anything? Now is always the perfect time to take advantage of your school's computer class! And don't forget, computers and other technology are fun; the more you know, the more you can enjoy them!

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical + education will be important in the future. Even after your illustrious career as the star quarterback for the _____ (fill in the blank of your favorite team), there are plenty of PE-related jobs. And if you never play sports, PE can show you if you have interest in, oh, I don't know, creating a better basketball, or zoom-ier golf ball; athletic medicine; physical therapy; youth leagues; psychological coaching, and other things that probably don't even exist right now, but will soon. It's ok to be interested in what YOU are interested in. There are a million ways to make a difference, to carve out a career, and to make a great living doing something you love.

ART & MUSIC

Oh, trust me: the “arts” are not about painting a teacup or playing the jiggledy-thing-that-makes-a-bell-sound. If you are desirous or destined to be an artist or musician of any kind, you will gravitate to these classes. However, art teaches you discipline, design, creativity, color, form, communication—all outstanding work skills. Hey, someone's gotta design the interiors of corporate jets, hotel rooms of the future, new Ikea products, roller coasters! There is an “art” aspect to all jobs. A great rivet is a thing of beauty. So is the space shuttle. A giant machine. A tiny nano-robot. Art and music help you laugh, feel, wonder, imagine, visualize, dream—all useful skills for your future, no matter what you do!

