

# World Wisdom Project

Fall 2020

## The Search for Deeper Connection

*Unity is also the source of intelligence, for it grants the ability to integrate knowledge and to correctly define priorities. That is the beginning of wisdom.*

Love Without End

*By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.*

Confucius

**Dear AHS Sophomore,**

When you think about it, it's odd. We name each generation just like we do hurricanes. The generation after the First World War—they left so many millions of young men dead on Europe's battlefields that young women after the war could find precious few to marry—we called them the **Lost Generation**. For some of you, this was your great grandparents' generation. Then we called their children, some of your grandparents' generation, the **Greatest Generation**. Walking away from even greater horrors in World War II, they made a hopeful and energetic new beginning--my generation. How energetic? Well, we grew into the largest generation at that point in U.S. history. So large were we that we were called the **Baby Boomers**. But not for long did we stay the safe, well-protected post-war children our parents assumed we would remain.

A string of national tragedies as we grew up in the sixties shook the sheltered lives the Greatest Generation had provided for many of us. The world was not as our parents had represented it to us. Confused, outraged, we stormed out of our safe communities at tender ages, striking out to forge a better world. The civil rights struggle, culture-rocking music--our hair may be gray now, but when it was long we were a generation on the march. Whether as soldiers or war protesters, flower children or spiritual seekers, we Boomers did unpredictable things to find truth in the world we inherited. But as the sixties faded, so did our vision. Some of our more extreme efforts to save the world in one generation dissolved in misguided abuses. Partly in reaction against our excesses, after the Boomers came a wary, pragmatic generation known as **Gen X**. Just before the millennium, a *Newsweek* story proclaimed the emergence of **Gen Y2K**. Larger even than the Boomers, the **Millennials** (born 1982 to 1997ish) have made their presence known. Now the stage is set for a new generation. So far, most refer to you as **Gen Z**. At the moment, you straddle the fence between generations.

So what is your new generation's character? What special challenges are shaping you, and might set you apart from other generations? Like the Millennials' parents, your parents work more than previous generations, leaving some of you on your own more. The internet offers you opportunities to find troubles like cyber-bullying and extremist sites. Yet, like the Millennials, you are **more connected** to each other than previous generations. Another influence is also shaping you as it did the Millennials: more of you grow up around peers from backgrounds or cultures different from your own. In the tense times since September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, more of you are learning early to become **tolerant**, to accept those who are different from yourselves. Some of you have already learned not to judge others just for being different. Some of you have moved beyond merely tolerating others, and are learning to truly **understand** them. Many would say that tolerance and understanding are signs of increasing **wisdom**. Does your generation, then, have its own wisdom?

What *is* wisdom, after all? How do our different generations and traditions recognize it? What other challenges might be shaping your generation and your wisdom? Is the nation’s continuing response to the rise of terrorism, or its response to other crises like global warming, school and police shootings, and our polarized political system, being guided by wisdom? Do the challenges we face today require new kinds of wisdom? What wisdom is coming into the world through your generation? Will increasing tolerance and understanding mean your generation becomes more deeply connected to others? Yourselves? The world? Will we one day become aware that what connects us is deeper than what keeps us apart? These are only some of the questions you could choose as your guides in pursuit of our **First Quarter Class Big Question: How can a sophomore in a fragmented world find deeper connections to self, others and world?**

**Enjoy!**

**Four Project Driving Questions** (PDQs) to guide this project:

- ◆ What is wisdom? How does it benefit us? How do we acquire it? More particularly, what can our various traditions tell us about becoming more deeply connected to self, others, and world?
- ◆ How do the generations sharing our culture today understand and teach wisdom?
- ◆ How can the expressions of connectedness or unity we find in traditional sources of wisdom help us deal successfully with the challenges we face today—specifically the challenges teenagers face?
- ◆ When they do not, what new wisdom do we need to help us rise to challenges like terrorism, systemic injustice, and environmental catastrophe?

**Project Activities:**

We will read selected short pieces of literature (see p. 4) from a variety of religious and cultural perspectives. To help explore these perspectives, you will have the opportunity to:

- ◆ learn various **Notetaking Strategies**--and use them to participate in team and whole-class discussions;
- ◆ write **Inquiry Journals** to further develop your thoughts on project activities and your own questions;
- ◆ experience **Thought and Song Logs** and other classroom conversations to consider even more perspectives;
- ◆ see one **film** in the classroom and at least one more **film** outside the classroom.

Beyond these ongoing activities, you may enjoy these special project activities:

**Early in the Project**

Hold **Philosophical Chairs**, examining a contemporary issue

**During the Project**

Conduct **Community Interviews**  
Hold **Socratic Classroom Dialogues**

**End of Project**

Write your culminating **Wisdom Project Essay**

**Common Core Standards:** You address standards in this project in the following areas:

**READING STANDARDS**

**Key Ideas and Details**

- CCR.1: Citing evidence
- CCR.2: Determining theme; creating summary
- CCR.3: Analyze character; determine plot theme

**Craft and Structure**

- CCR.4: Figurative / connotative meanings
- CCR.6: Analyze a point of view/cultural in world literature

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING STANDARDS**

**Comprehension & Collaboration**

- CCSL.1: Initiate a range of collaborative discussion
- CCSL.2: Integrate multiple sources of info in diverse formats
- CCSL.3: Evaluate a speaker’s content & presentation

**Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas**

- CCSL.4: Presentation content & techniques

**WRITING STANDARDS**

**Text Types & Purposes**

- CCW.1 (a, b & c): Introduce & develop claims / counterclaims coherently
- CCW.2 (a, b, & c): Introduce & develop thesis statement on informational topic

**Production & Distribution of Writing**

- CCW.5: Writing process
- CCW.6: Use technology to produce writing product

**Research**

- CCW.7: Conduct short research projects to answer question

**Range of Writing**

- CCW.10: Write routinely (reflection/revision) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audience

## World Wisdom Project Step I: Community Interviews

Write the heading “**Wisdom Project Interviews**” at the top of a sheet of paper. Using instructions and interview questions we’ll create in class, conduct a total of ***nine interviews***.

### Interviewee Requirements:

- **two** of these nine with members of Gen Z (currently in high school)--**peers**
- **two** of these eight with Millennials @ 25-40—**older peers**
- **three** with people @ 40 through 68—**parents’ generation**
- **two** with people 68 and over—**grandparents’ generation**

### Further Interviewee Requirements:

- **Two** of your nine interviewees must be from a *cultural, religious, or political* background different from your own, or your family’s.
- **One** of your nine interviewees must be an *immigrant* to the U.S.
- **Two** interviewees must be adults **beyond** your family.

**Interview Question Requirements.** Create **three pairs** of interview questions (we will brainstorm more in class):

- **Two** interview questions to learn your interviewees’ ideas about **your generation**. For example, what do your interviewees feel are: **1) the greatest challenges** that shape your generation; **2) your generation’s greatest strengths**; **3) your generation’s areas of least strength**; **4) the one thing your generation most needs to understand, to know, or to do?** **5) How might experiencing greater connectedness to self, others and/or world** be important to your generation?
- **Two** questions to probe your interviewees’ ideas about **wisdom** and/or **unity**. For instance: **1) what qualities** do your interviewees think **show that a person is wise?** **2) What is the most important piece of wisdom** they think the world needs to know? **3) What does humanity most need to know** if we hope to overcome forces of disunity and achieve a deeper unity?
- **Two** questions that ask your interviewees to reflect on whether they feel the various **actions our government has taken** in the War on Terror--or any recent crisis--have been **guided by wisdom**.
- **Note:** Before creating your six interview questions, re-read your Personal Big Questions from Inquiry #1 (which should be in your binder). Refer to your PBQs as you create your interview questions.
- **Note:** In conducting your interviews, follow the interviewing techniques and tips you will receive. Working from your interview notes, **record the main points** of each interview. Use additional sheets if necessary.
- **Note:** Find a way to make use of your interviews in your project essay. Incorporate a quote from an interviewee into your project essay? [The class decides how to use the interviews in a slightly different way for each essay option?]

## World Wisdom Project Step II: Brainstorm an Essay Topic

**Preparing for Brainstorming:** Get ready to write Brainstorms A, B, and C (next pages) by completing the two bulleted instructions below:

- Get out all Reading Logs and other notes that have been returned to you. Skim through them to activate your memories of reading and discussing them.
- Get out your list of **Big Questions** from Inquiry #1 (Inquiry #1, Step C), in the Personal Explorations section of your binder. Look over your list and try to recall what you thought and felt as you wrote about your Big Question(s) in Inquiry #1.

**Brainstorm A—My Favorites: Most Meaningful Wisdom Readings.** Your purpose here is to zero in on readings in this project that you might enjoy writing about. Put a check below beside the two or three wisdom readings we have read and/or discussed in class that you have found most meaningful. For each of your choices, write a paragraph in which you attempt to **identify or describe the selection’s essential wisdom as you see it**. Be on the lookout for wisdom that relates to **some form of deeper connectedness**. Some questions that might help:

- What message or lesson does this reading offer you that you might take away and use in your life?
- How does the reading present this wisdom? Through its characters? Its plot (the *what happens* part)? Through its poetic images?
- How might this wisdom help you understand, experience, or deepen your own sense of connection?

**The readings and their page numbers:**

**Judeo-Christian Perspectives**

Abraham and Isaac, 905  
 The Parable of the Prodigal Son, 916  
 \* Psalm 23, 910  
 \* To Everything There is a Season, 912

**Asian Perspectives (add optional Gita passages)**

Taoist Anecdotes, 936  
 Zen Parables, 942  
 \* Poems of Lao Tzu, 937  
 Poems from Tagore and Kabir  
 \* “By Any Other Name” (367)

**Sufi Perspectives**

“The Guest House,” Rumi (poem, handout)  
 Sayings of Saadi, 928  
 Tale of the Sands, 929  
 \* Passages from the Koran, 926  
 \* “The Love Religion,” Ibn Arabi (poem, handout)  
 \* Selected supplemental Sufi poems

**African-American Perspectives**

“Keep Ya Head Up” (song, Tupac)  
 “Strange Fruit” (song, Billie Holiday)  
 \* “Mother to Son,” 508 (poem, Hughes)

**Latin Perspectives**

“I Am Offering This Poem,” Jimmy Santiago Baca 551  
 \* “Who Understands Me But Me?” J.S. Baca  
 \* “Like an Animal,” Jimmy Santiago Baca

**Various Perspectives**

\* “Kindness,” Shihab-Nye (poem, handout)  
 \* “The Bet,” Anton Chekhov, 210

**\* Optional Supplemental Readings**

**Brainstorm B—My Big Questions: Exploring My Personal BQs and/or our Sophomore BBQ.** Here your purpose is to **generate ideas** you might use later when you write your project essay. Brainstorm ideas with a freewrite, cluster, or bulleted list. **(One-half page.)**

**Instructions:**

- Look once again over your Personal BQs (Inquiry #1 in the Personal Explorations section of your binder). Which of your Wisdom Project readings (check over your Conversation Notes connect to any of your BQs? Which readings? Which questions? How do they connect?
- If none of your BQs connect to any of the readings, please explain why. What kinds of questions were you asking in Inquiry #1?

**Brainstorm C--Challenges: Wisdom and Challenges We Face Today.** Re-read the two or three wisdom readings you wrote about in Brainstorm A above. (*Two paragraphs*) Consider the following questions:

- List several **challenges** you and your generation face today or will in the future. Which of our wisdom readings might help you address these challenges? How so? Write a paragraph in response.
- What challenges you face today do you feel *couldn't* be addressed by any of our readings? How not? Why not, do you suppose? Write another paragraph in response.

**Preparing for Brainstorm D—Levels: Three Levels of Wisdom / Seven Levels of Consciousness.** First, look over your Brainstorm A (above) and your project Interviews (Step I). Now consider **Three Levels of Wisdom:**

- ❖ **Level 1 Wisdom. Wisdom at the ground level** we can think of as close to material knowledge, common sense, or cleverness—one has a knowledge of things, is *wise to the ways of the world*, knows how to get what one wants.
- ❖ **Level 2 Wisdom. In its intermediate levels, wisdom** helps us to decide what we should regard as our *duty*, what is *right and wrong*. It is a moral and intellectual perspective.
- ❖ **Level 3 Wisdom. Wisdom in its higher forms** gives us the *desire to serve* others, the urge to understand the universe on a spiritual level, to love and be loved, to *balance the needs of body, mind, heart and spirit*.

Now review **Barrett's Seven Levels of Consciousness** in your Course Locker, and see any notes from our class conversation on these levels. Again, look over your Brainstorm A (above) and your project Interviews (Step I).

**Brainstorm D: "Levels of Wisdom" or "Levels of Consciousness" Your choice. (*three paragraphs*)**

- 1. Levels of Wisdom or Consciousness in Interviews:** Think back over your interviews. Which one or two of them stands out in your mind? One at a time, reflect on these interviewees' ideas about wisdom? Do you agree with their ideas? Disagree with them? Why? Which **levels of wisdom or consciousness** (above) have your "standout" interviewees expressed, if any? If none, please discuss "why not?"
- 2. Levels of Wisdom or Consciousness in Essential Readings:** In a second paragraph, consider the wisdom from the two or three readings you summarized in Brainstorm A. What level(s) of wisdom or consciousness (above) does each reading seem to you to represent? Please explain. If none, again, please explain why this might be.
- 3. Personal Definition of Wisdom:** Re-read everything you've written so far for this project. Reflecting on these things in a third paragraph, **write your own personal definition of wisdom.** You could begin your definition, "Wisdom is . . ." Or you could begin, "A wise person is . . ." Feel free, if you wish, to incorporate in your definition insights from your thoughts on the **three levels of wisdom or seven levels of consciousness.** What next? Stay tuned!





**Option D Topics--Levels:** Write on readings that illustrate a certain *level of wisdom or consciousness*.

**Sample Main Claims:**

- Langston Hughes' poem "Mother to Son" represents the Third Level of Wisdom.
- The Hindu fable from the Panchatantra, "The Tiger, the Brahman and the Jackal" demonstrates the Fourth Level of Consciousness.
- The Sufi "Tale of the Sands" exemplifies Level Three wisdom.
- The New Testament's "Parable of the Prodigal Son" and the Old Testament's Psalm 23 both present Level Three wisdom.

**Hot Tip:** Review your **Brainstorm D.** **Note:** In this option, in addition to evidence from the text you are writing about, you *may* use one or two examples from a film we have watched in class.

**Option E--Themes:** Write on a *theme you see appearing across our readings* in world wisdom.

- Wisdom from various cultures, traditions and time periods in human history consistently reveals the theme of *faith* [or *compassion, simplicity, balance, or any other you find in your class notes*].
- The policies of our government since the attacks of September 2001 **appear / do not appear** to be grounded in wisdom. (Use 2-3 of our readings along with your definition of wisdom, if it applies.)
- The actions of our government in regards to the crisis of global warming **appear / do not appear** to be grounded in wisdom. (Use 2-3 of our readings along with your definition of wisdom, if it applies.)

**Hot Tip:** Review your **Brainstorm E**—especially your right column of inductions—and your class notes, the clusters on the various genres of wisdom readings.

**Note:** In this option, you *may* use one or two examples from a film we have watched in class.

**NOTE:** In any of the options, in your commentary, you may choose to incorporate:

- Any information or insights you gained from your Wisdom interviews
- Any of your Big Questions and/or the sophomore BBQ (Brainstorm B)
- The levels of wisdom or consciousness (Brainstorm D).

## World Wisdom Project Step IV: Create a Visual Plan for Each of Two Essay Topics

### A Sophisticated Thinking Tool: the Visual Plan

Turn a new sheet of binder paper horizontally, and write along the long edge (now on top): "**Essay #4 Visual Plan**". At the center of this sheet, copy your choice of Main Claim (from Step III). Draw a rectangle around it. In a moment, using a pencil, you will be adding general Supporting Ideas to support your main point. Group these ideas around your rectangle, and enclose them in ovals. Before you do this:

- Skim over everything you have written in all your brainstorms.
- With these ideas in mind, read back over your reading selection, and find **general** ways in which the reading selection supports your Main Claim. You are **not** looking yet for specific evidence, such as examples or quotations, but supporting ideas.
- With your pencil, jot down as many of these general ideas as you can think of (four to six is a good number). Group them around your rectangle.
- Choose what you think are the three best general supports you have. Draw ovals around these. Save the other general supports by jotting them down on the back of your emerging Visual Plan. You may need them again! Once you have saved these spare ideas on the back, erase them on the front.

**Stay Tuned!**