ENG 2D1

**Introductory writing assignment**

Much of what we will look at this semester will deal with the power we have as people to influence others and events, in both a positive and negative way. What happens around us, what is said by others, and how we react to it has a direct influence on the people we become.

With this in mind…WHAT HAPPENS IF WE STAY SILENT? IF WE DON’T USE OUR VOICE AND SPEAK UP? SPEAK OUT?

This can apply on a small level like not speaking up if you are unsure of an assignment in class or not letting a friend know why you are upset with him/her, but it can also work on a very large or even global level: bullying, mental health, discrimination, war – the list goes on.

The media is very aware of this issue. In fact, the media is all about speaking out; it’s what they do. We watched a TED Talk yesterday and today, 3 music videos. You have the written text for all 4 of these pieces.

Your first writing assignment asks you to consider the question above: WHAT HAPPENS IF WE STAY SILENT?

* This writing piece is to be a personal response to this question. To answer the question, find ONE line (quotation) from any of the four texts you have and base your answer to the question around it.
* Your piece is to be written in 1st person (singular and/or plural).
* Use the quotation you select as your title.
* The piece is to be approx. 200 - 400 words in length and will be “marked” for development of your focused idea, the use of concrete examples to support it, as well as language.
* Your piece is due on Friday.

See example

Personal response example

“Silence is the residue of fear” (C. Smith)

My voice is the most powerful tool I have. As a teacher, I speak all day long. I use my voice to teach, to influence, to guide. Somedays I get tired of hearing my own voice and wish I didn’t need to use it quite so much. But the voice I use every day is not the voice that really matters. The voice that matters is the one I use to speak up, to speak out, to make my opinion count. I will never tire of using this voice but that doesn’t mean it’s always easy.

I haven’t always made my own choices, spoken up for myself, for what I want out of life. I do now, most of the time, but it took me a long time to get here. When I was younger, being popular, doing what my parents wanted me to do, checking off the life boxes all stopped me from speaking up. At this point, I’m not so sure that I was afraid to speak up, just more focused on doing what I thought I was supposed to do. I didn’t realise that all of this was a form of fear. The fear of not fitting in. The fear of disappointing my parents. The fear of making the wrong choice, of checking the wrong box. Well, this fear turned me into a terrible decision maker. This fear lingered as I got older and I found myself shying away from doing what I really knew, deep down inside, I wanted to do. It stopped me from traveling instead of going to University; it stopped me from pursuing a different, less stable career. I stopped me from quitting my stable career, selling my house and moving, permanently, half way around the world.

The good news, however, is that once I said the words out loud – “I’m afraid” – the fear seemed smaller. It seemed real, but smaller and somehow conquerable. Breaking the silence of the fear was the first, in a very long series of steps, to not letting it win. This win isn’t a permanent thing. The win isn’t a final destination. It’s a state of awareness of what I was doing, to myself, by not simply, speaking up. By not saying, “I think I want to do this differently”. And so, I do. It’s taken me a long time to get here, and every day I have to remind myself not to let the fear win, but I’m here. I say things out loud, without fear of what will happen.

I speak up for myself.