

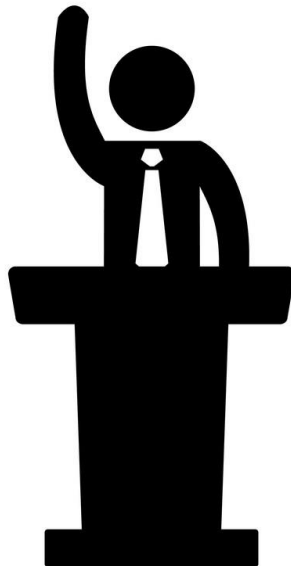
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Dr. Bray

ENGL 1101

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Speak Yourself

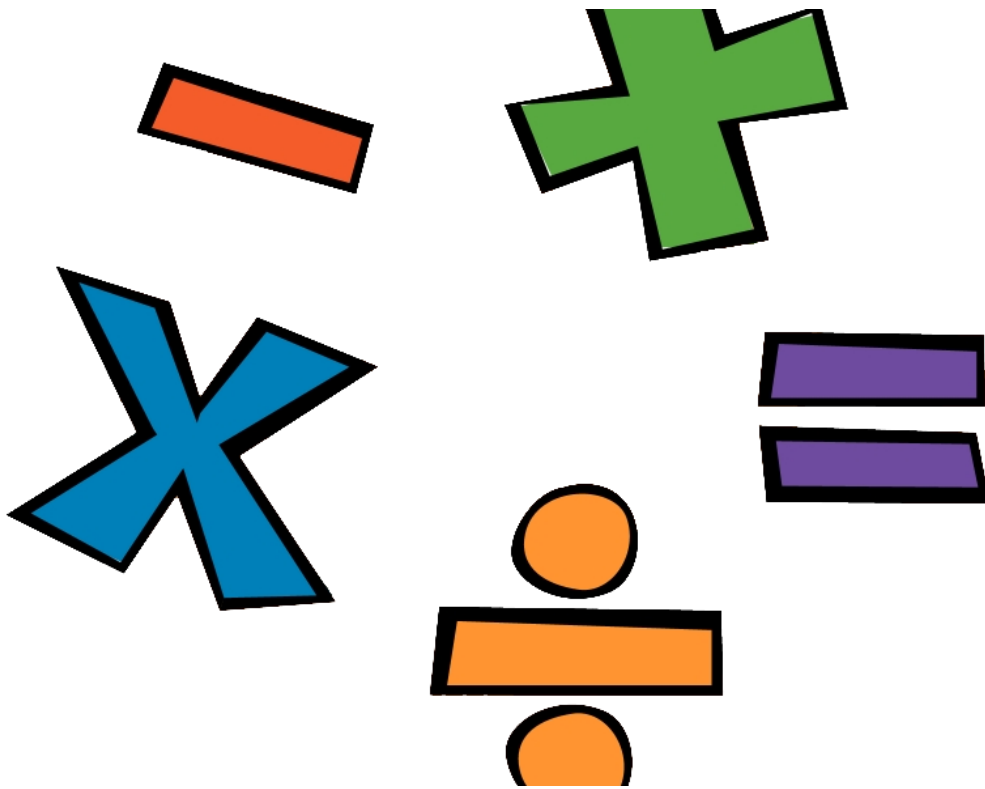


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My name is Peng Qi, but you can call me Ella if it is easier to remember. I am nineteen years old, and this is my fourth year away from my home country of China to study abroad in America. My introduction sounds just as boring as all other official introductions you hear in the orientation during the first week of school. Obviously, it is hard to tell you

everything about me so that you remember a Chinese girl who may not stand out, even among only twenty Asian students. However, if there is one thing I must share with you about me, it is that I always try to pursue freedom, break down restrictions, and live as the best version of myself.



When I was in China, math was the hardest subject on my schedule. I didn't understand those hard concepts and I was afraid to ask my teacher for help because her words restricted my freedom to speak up. Instead of hearing my reasons for struggling and encouraging me to keep working, my math teacher simply asked me to stop finding excuses

for not paying attention in class and stop wasting her time by asking those stupid easy questions. I didn't find joy in math; rather I tasted the bitterness of giving my voice. So, I decided to study abroad in America, a country that promotes the right to speak, hoping to find a sense of freedom here.

I could still remember the first time when I attended after-school help session for Algebra II. It was the day before my first math midterm in America and it was one of the most important days in my life so far. Of course, I went there because I had many unsolved questions. However, I didn't want to go at first, because I couldn't bear another blow. After struggling for days by myself, I finally went to this room filling with students and discussion about math. I held a notebook with my questions and waited in line to talk with Mr. Washington. I was so nervous that I didn't even realize it was my turn.



"Hi Ella, it's nice to see you here! Come, what you got for me?" I showed him the notebook and hoped that he wouldn't criticize or laugh at me. Mr. Washington looked at my questions and then turned to me with a big smile. "Great Ella! These are some good questions. Come here, let's work them out together." He was so patient and gentle. Without doubting my in-class participation, he only asked my thoughts and then taught me how to solve each question step by step. After every few steps, he asked me whether or not I have any question so far. When he eventually answered all of my questions, he said math is a subject that requires asking and discussions, otherwise people cannot make any progress. The encouragement and help I received from Mr. Washington acted like a key to unlock my voice and released my freedom to speak up. I started to ask more and more questions not only at help session, but also in class. I felt confident to express my feelings and my curiosity to the world. Now, thanks to Mr. Washington, I major in math at UGA and have figured out what I want to do as a career.

There is a traditional Chinese proverb, which has become my life motto since then:

Do not force other people to do things that you hate as well. This saying sounds clear and simple, but it can also be understood as people have their rights and freedom to decide

what to do and who to be. I want to be freed from all the restrictions and get closer to the best version of the real Ella.