English 1B Spring 2017  **An Exercise in Analyzing a Film**

**Overview:** This exercise is intended to warm you up for the complex task of writing a critical analysis of a story. We can all summarize a plot and give an opinion, but analysis is harder. This particular kind of analysis involves understanding and discussing fiction (in this case a short film) as another form of argument, in keeping with the general education goals for English 1B.

More specifically, the goal is to “recognize how significant [fictional] works illuminate enduring human concerns.” Part of the task is to decide which “enduring human concern” is in focus, and the other part is to decide what the story is saying about it (the thesis).

**The two short films we will focus on** both deal with people from other countries coming to Ireland and having a hard time adjusting, at least at first.

1. **New Boy** by Roddy Doyle: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1APWteq8niM>
2. **Yu Ming is Is Ainm Dom** : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqYtG9BNhfM>

**The Task:** The prompt for the longer assignment will ask you to “**Explain how the text’s *language, characters*, and/or *events* (plot points) lend insight to contemporary issues, concerns, and/or problems.**

Although these two films are set in Ireland at a time of accelerated change, you should be able to discuss **what insights it offers** to humanity in general about this **enduring human concern:** how difficult it can be to be perceived as “Other” by citizens in a rapidly changing society, particularly by traditionally-minded people who might fear or resent change.

**Directions:** In your mini-analysis, you will focus on how the story’s ideas are developed into something like a **“thesis,”** a particular statement about the human experience. Then you will discuss how **particular elements** of the film—**language, character development and/or events** (plot points) contribute to that thesis and help get the message across.

**Answering these questions** will help lead you to a workable claim about what the story/film means:

1. **Language:** How does the particular language used here figure into our understanding of the story? What words, phrases, or lines of dialog are particularly significant?
2. **Character:** Who is the protagonist and what conflict does he/she face? How is this person’s character portrayed? What other characters are involved, and how do they contribute to our understanding of the protagonist?
3. **Events:** How does the plot carry the ideas forward? How does our understanding of the theme change or grow with each event that unfolds?

**Note**: Since these are films, you could also discuss how the “visual language” contributes to our understanding of and response to the story, but let’s not go there now. It’s not a film class.