

Name: Jady Ko
Grade: 11th
School: Mundelein High School

My Inspirational Teacher

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, a teacher is defined as, “one that teaches; especially, one whose occupation is to instruct.” I have been surrounded by instructors for almost all of my life, but one in particular has had a lasting impact on me. Mrs. Willis was my Honors English 2 teacher, and is currently my AP Language teacher. I was ecstatic when I found out that I was placed in her class again. It is a privilege to learn from my favorite teacher, and it is also a privilege to be gifted another year filled with inspiration.

Almost all of my growth, both personal and academic, has been a result of the greatest lesson I’ve learned, which happens to have come from Mrs. Willis. She challenged me to redefine normalities, to have complex thoughts, and to seek out new perspectives. I cannot express how important this concept is to me; the process of redefining, assessing, and discovering other viewpoints shows up in everything I do.

In Mrs. Willis’ class, we challenge the world. Our world is divided, which is, unfortunately, no surprise. However, I have seen how much Mrs. Willis’ lesson has taught me about community when living in a disjointed world. As a result, I am able to communicate effectively. Now, I can understand the other side of the story without feeling a sense of remorse or distrust. Now, I have riveting discussions that no longer become arguments. Now, I am one to challenge traditional rules that are offensive or exclusive. Now, I am able to think critically about how I influence our world, and how it influences me. In a divided climate, it is essential to communicate, to understand, to listen, and to be open-minded. That is exactly what I am striving to become with Mrs. Willis’ inspiration driving my motivation. She is the perfect example of what it means to truly teach students. I have never felt neglected or miniscule in her class. Mrs. Willis was willing to talk to me for over an hour after school. Without a doubt, I know she has done this time and time again for many more of her students. She has taken on projects solely for her class because she loves to support them. Mrs. Willis knows me as a student, a reader, a writer, a big sister, an artist, a Type A personality, and most importantly, a human being. She has seen me grow from a 1-dimensional thinker into a person who adores metacognition and complex thoughts.

I have given this word much thought, and I would like to redefine it now. The word “teacher” is known as one who instructs, or one whose job is to teach. However, I would like to define it anew: Teacher (noun.) a person who challenges their students. A person who chooses to foster inclusivity in everything they do. A person who talks *with* their students, and not *to* their students. Synonyms: leader, inspiration, friend, and confidant; origin: Mrs. Willis.