***Embedding Literature into Research***

Read the following text, not paying so much attention to the content of the paragraph but looking instead at how literature can play a role in informational writing. Let’s have a conversation after you have read each paragraph.

*Introduction: Cultural Assimilation*

If the American Dream were not a thing any longer, we would not need border walls. We would not have debates about a new immigration process. We would not have families risking their lives to come here. Part of what makes this nation a great melting pot is just that: people come from other places to become “American.” They are no longer Italian…Polish…Mexican…they are *American.* But is that fair? The idea of cultural assimilation is not new. **In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the character of the teacher discusses with main character Junior, “No, no, it’s just a saying. I didn’t literally kill Indians. We were, supposed to make you give up being Indian. Your songs and stories and language and dancing. Everything. We weren’t trying to kill Indian people. We were trying to kill Indian culture” (35).** According to Peter Salins, to be truly American requires all people to speak English, to live by a strong work ethic, and to believe in the American principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness (Skerry). In order for a large society of diverse peoples to live harmoniously without giving up their “person”, immigrant people ought not to assimilate under these strict principles.

*Body: Cultural Assimilation*

Many Americans believe that in order to enculturate into American society, our native language of English must be spoken, but this can be problematic. Native speakers learning English who are school-aged get the added advantage of being immersed in the language of English, and in some areas, great care is given to the English Language Learner. However, Perry reports that what we believe to be these advantages are not really benefits. Students from other countries have at first a very positive attitude about a new language, however bit of a struggle this is from their native language. But “among Latino students born in the United States, the opposite is often the case. Despite fluency in English and familiarity with American schools, many such students are prone to adopt an adversarial stance toward school and a cynical anti-achievement ethic” (Perry). **Additionally, Lorraine Hansberry compounds the idea of language development and the difficulty many face when she writes a conversation between two of her characters in the 1958 play, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Beneatha, the daughter of the Younger family, a family of poor means whose matriarch has come into some money, has a discussion with a Nigerian student at her college. This Nigerian student, Asagai, relates that he has created a nickname for Benetha: “Alaiyo.” Beneatha exclaims, “You didn’t tell us what Alaiyo means…for all I know, you might be calling me Little Idiot or something…” to which Asagai replies, “Well…let me see…I do not know how just to explain it…The sense of a thing can be so different when it changes languages” (I, ii, 70). Asagai relates how nonnative English speakers must feel when they do not have an adequate vocabulary and feeling the frustration of each party trying to communicate.** Not learning and speaking English in the US would not be in anyone’s best interest. However, when discussing assimilation, one should note that with the advantages of understanding and using English are profound, it has some disadvantages as well.

*Conclusion: Cultural Assimilation*

Cultural assimilation under strict policy is detrimental to our great diverse America. Harmony includes having a similarity with others in a community, while appreciating valuable differences which make every human unique. **In dramatic form, William Golding narrates the story of boys, trapped on an island, who must cope with living within the elements until they are rescued. In essence, they must adapt, or assimilate, to their surroundings. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding proves the point of humanity and its natural evil tendencies when Jack, the protagonist, begins to ‘take on the wildness’ of the animals and jungle around him: “Jack planned his new face. He made one cheek and one eye socket white, then he rubbed red over the other half of his face and slashed a black bar of charcoal across from right ear to left jaw…He looked in astonishment, no longer at himself but at an awesome stranger” (63).** To culturally assimilate should mean that one embraces his newfound American identity while never—to himself or to the native Americans around him—be considered an awesome stranger.