



THE BOARDING SCHOOL & CUSHMAN PROJECT: THE EDUCATION OF THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THIS LAND

WRITING PROMPTS

Please pick one of the following categories for your written response, use the questions below each topic to guide and fill in your response.

YOUR ANCESTORS AND ANCESTRAL LANGUAGES

Where do your ancestors come from and what languages did they speak? (List as many as you can)

- **If you do not know** where your ancestors come from or languages, who you can ask to find this information?
 - If you are disconnected from your biological family, think about someone close to you who you can ask about their ancestors and ancestral languages.
- **Do you have African American ancestry?** Due to the history and lack of information for many African American people today it can be difficult or almost impossible to know where, specifically, your ancestors come from.
 - Many African Americans can trace their ancestry back to Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly West and Central Africa. What might you do to look further into tracing your African roots? What African languages might you be drawn to learning? African jargon languages?

If you know where your ancestors came from and what languages they speak, are you drawn to one culture group or language more than the others? Why?

MULTILINGUALISM AROUND YOU

What languages do you hear in your daily life besides English?

Do you speak another language besides English? If so, please list all languages.

- What **friends, family members, fellow students, and co-workers** do you see weekly that speak a different language?
 - From that list, have you taken the time to ask these people in your life about their language?
 - Have you asked these people how to say certain phrases to use with them when you see them?
- Did your **parents or grandparents** speak another language in the home besides English?



THE BOARDING SCHOOL & CUSHMAN PROJECT: THE EDUCATION OF THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THIS LAND

WRITING PROMPTS

- If your parents spoke another language in your home, do you speak it? Or did the English language take over as your dominant language?
- If you don't speak your parent's first language, how does that make you feel? Have you thought about the implications of not passing your ancestral language forward?
- Do you feel that your ancestral language is important to pass on to your children and future generations?
- If you **do not speak your ancestral languages**, what are some resources that can assist you in learning them? (This could be your relatives, online resources, language apps, etc.)
 - If you don't feel connected to your ancestral language or don't know what your ancestral language is, would you be open to learning someone's ancestral language that you are close to (spouse, friend, co-worker)?

CULTURE

- How would you describe the American culture?
 - This includes traditions, foods, beliefs, values, ceremonies, etc.
- If your ancestry includes another culture besides American, please describe your culture.
 - This includes traditions, foods, beliefs, values, ceremonies, etc.
- What is ethnocentrism?

MULTILINGUALISM ACROSS THE WORLD

There are more multilingual speakers in the world than there are monolingual speakers. We are going to dive into what the United States looks like compared to the world around us. This section is going to challenge you to think outside the parameters of the US borders and shift your thinking to be more open to other cultures and languages.

In the continent of North America, there are three predominant languages used: English, Spanish and French. English is the predominant language in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland. There are approximately 379 million English monolingual speakers, and 1.132 billion bilingual English speakers in the world.



THE BOARDING SCHOOL & CUSHMAN PROJECT: THE EDUCATION OF THE FIRST PEOPLE OF THIS LAND

WRITING PROMPTS

Within the United States, there are approximately 175 Native tribal languages spoken by approximately 350,000 people, however English is the predominant language. Upon European contact, there was believed to be approximately 150 million speakers of 2000 different tribal languages.

(Resources: [Babbel.com](https://www.babbel.com))

1. What are the benefits of multilingualism?
2. How do you feel knowing that most of the world is bilingual and/or multilingual?
3. What steps could you take to add little pieces of different languages into your daily life?
4. How do you think others would feel if they were greeted by you in their ancestral language?

Trevor Noah reportedly speaks 8 languages and continues to acquire more languages. This is not uncommon around the world. What do you think about these quotes taken from Trevor Noah, “Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood”?

- “Language, even more than color, defines who you are to people.”
- “Language brings with it an identity and a culture, or at least a perception of it. A shared language says “we are the same.” A language barrier says “we are different.”
- “Accent is not a measure of intelligence. An accent is someone speaking your language with the rules of theirs.”
- “Nelson Mandela once said, 'If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.' He was so right. When you make the effort to speak someone else's language, even if it's just basic phrases here and there, you are saying to them, 'I understand that you have a culture and identity that exists beyond me. I see you as a human being.'”