



**Summer Reading 2019**  
**Upper School Humanities**  
**Humanities I**

**Entering the Universe of Obligation**

*“I speak not for myself, but so that those without a voice can be heard”*  
- Malala Yousafzai

**Summer Reading & Viewing :**

***I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai**

Competency: [ELA.1 Reading Critically](#)

[HIST 9-12. 5,8](#) Historical Context and Perspective

[The Girl Who Demanded School: Kakenya Ntaiya](#) (Watch the Ted Talk)

Competency: [ELA. 2 Expressing Ideas](#)

[HIST 9-12.1-3](#): Change, Continuity and Context

**Universe of Obligation Reading, Connection & Questions**

What does it mean to be a member of a group? In groups we meet our most basic needs; in groups we learn a language and a culture or way of life. In groups we also satisfy our yearning to belong, receive comfort in times of trouble, and find companions who share our dreams, values, and beliefs. Groups also provide security and protection from those who might wish to do us harm. Therefore, how a group defines its **membership** matters. **Belonging** can have significant advantages; **being excluded** can leave a person vulnerable.

How the members of a group, a nation, or a community **define who belongs and who does not** has a lot to do with how they define their **universe of obligation**. Sociologist Helen Fein coined this phrase to describe the group of individuals within a society “toward whom obligations are owed, to whom rules apply, and whose injuries call for amends.”

Scholar and social activist Chuck Collins defines his universe of [obligation](#) differently from the example Sacks offers. In the 1980s, Collins gave the half-million dollars that he inherited from his family to charity. Collins told journalist Ian Parker:

“Of course, we have to respond to our immediate family, but, once they're O.K., we need to expand the circle. A larger sense of family is a radical idea, but we get into trouble as a society when we don't see that we're in the same boat.”

### Connection Questions

Using prior knowledge and examples from *I Am Malala*, answer the questions in paragraph form.

1. What factors influence the way a society defines its universe of obligation? In what ways might a nation or community signal who is part of its universe of obligation and who is not?
2. What do you think might be some of the consequences for those who are not within a society's universe of obligation?
3. What factors influence how an individual defines his or her universe of obligation? In what ways might an individual show others who is part of his or her universe of obligation and who is not?
4. Identify one issue that is resonating with you from your learning about Malala and The Universe of Obligation. What action steps could you take address this problem?

**Class of 2023**  
**Materials Needed for Humanities I**

1. Three Ring Binder (1 inch or wider) with dividers and paper for organizational skills
2. Highlighters for coding and annotating
3. Post-it notes for annotations, collaboration, articulation
4. Pens, pencils
5. A laptop/chrome device