1. What is family? Is family people to whom you are biologically related? People who have a connection to your family of origin? People who care for you? Other influential adults in your life? Answer the question in 2-3 sentences. Does your family include ONLY those people to whom you are biologically related or people with whom you live? If yes, explain why you feel that way. If no, please explain why not, and list five other categories of people “family” could include (for example, teachers, neighbors, etc.).

2. Think of a “family” member in your life who “threw you a lifeline” as young Margarite discusses in the excerpt, “Mrs. Flowers” from Maya Angelou’s autobiography “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.” Consider how this person impacted your life and discuss any particular incident that significantly affected you (there may be no specific incident—it may be more of a relationship that developed over time.) Write a three-paragraph journal entry or 15-line poem explaining your relationship to this person, how she or he affected your life (the difference this person made), and why his or her contribution to your life was important, what you admire, and any interesting information about this person.

3. List 10 open-ended questions you would want to ask your influential person about his or her life. These questions cannot be yes or no questions. They should be questions the person can discuss in depth. For example, do NOT ask, “Are you married?” Instead ask, “Can you tell me about your family?” Categories might include questions about family, education, teen challenges, life celebrations, regrets or tragedies, career, inspirational people in the person’s life, disappointments, traveling, and so on. One question everyone must ask is “What is the most important life lesson you have learned?”

4. Schedule a time to interview your influential person. Tell the person the interview will take about 30 minutes when you politely ask for the interview. Schedule a quiet place to interview your person. Make sure you take notes as you listen attentively to the answers to your questions. At the end of the interview give the person a copy of your poem or journal entry about him or her.

5. Turn the person’s answers into a five-paragraph informational essay. Include a visual component: it could be a photo album, a collage, video, or Keynote. You might want to include some quotes from your interview. You must include the life lesson he or she taught you. Prepare to present your visuals in class.