

Grade 8 English Language Arts 2017-18
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Course Description:

Eighth grade English will focus on literature studies & the development of story knowledge; writing and the development of narrative voice and analytical skills; research tools; and formal language study. Eighth graders will closely examine the literary elements of setting and theme in literature and the structural element of the journey. They will investigate the four levels of conflict in stories and how they interact with one another. They will express their discoveries through creative writing and in essay form.

Eighth graders will explore how the literary themes are reflected in the real world using our school's surrounding neighborhood(s) as a text, and history as essential back-story. Through this study, students will conduct original research and create journalistic writing pieces that convey their findings on an aspect of the neighborhood to an intended audience. In the second semester, students will engage with the themes of oppression and resistance and read novels and theories around the journey motif in literature. Finally, students will write fictional journey stories of their own, using the literary elements and devices studied throughout the year. Formal language study will focus on classical roots, prefixes and suffixes, through the use of Classical Roots workbook, as well as precision in word usage, punctuation and grammar through individual conferencing in writing workshop.

Writing Workshop: Twice per week, students will meet in small groups with writing tutors in a designated workshop period. During this time, students will develop their writing habits, have time and support to move through the writing process (planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), and *receive individualized feedback on their writing* at various stages.

Writing Portfolio: Students will maintain a writing portfolio. They will formally reflect on their progress throughout the year, celebrating accomplishments and setting goals for improvement. At the end of the year, each student will plan and deliver a presentation of selected writing from the year to members of the Renaissance community.

Seeker Opportunities: Throughout the year there will be "Seeker" opportunities for students to go beyond the required curriculum and read selected books and take on writing assignments that will allow for more in depth study of the ideas of the course. Students will have the choice to

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take on Seeker projects, which count toward the student's grade if completed, but are not required assignments.

Grading Policy

Grades will be based on the following categories:

Reading Notes & Assessments 30%
Writing Projects & Assessments 30%
Class Participation 20%
Assignment Completion 20%

Course Aims:

- Use language as a vehicle for thought, creativity, reflection, learning, self-expression and social interaction
- Develop the skills involved in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing and presenting in a variety of contexts
- Develop critical, creative and personal approaches to studying and analyzing literary and non-literary works
- Engage in literature from a variety of cultures and representing different historical periods
- Explore and analyze aspects of personal and other cultures through literary and non-fiction works
- Engage with information and communication technology in order to explore language
- Develop a lifelong interest in reading widely
- Develop a habit of writing to learn
- Apply English Language Arts skills and knowledge in a variety of real-life contexts

Student Expectations:

Students are expected to keep up with the required reading for English and maintain notes or other assigned forms of response to literature. Daily reading is essential to academic success, now and in the future! Students will be assigned reading *nearly* every night of the year, beginning in late-September. For all whole class novel studies, students will receive a reading schedule. They may read ahead of the schedule but should not fall behind. Generally, each night students must write 4 responses on sticky notes, posted directly on the pages of the book, unless otherwise directed.

During times when we are working on writing projects (often linked to a novel study), students will select a book to read independently and create their own reading schedules, using a template. They will need to get their parent's signature on the template before they start and the day before the book is due. During these periods, students will be able to choose from different

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formats for responding to the book as they read. They will then submit a proposal for a project they will do upon completion of the book.

Preparation: Students are expected to bring their ELA notebook, reading books, and ELA folder with all current handouts, and writing utensils to class every day. Students will begin each marking period with a grade of 100% for preparation (in the category of participation). Any time they are missing a required item, they will lose one point on their preparation grade.

Books: Books will be signed-out from the classroom library, and students are expected to return the books to the library when they are finished with them. They will be fined for the cost of the book if they fail to do so. Students are encouraged to utilize the New York Public Library for independent reading selections.

Computers, Internet Use & Google Classroom: Students are expected to access the Internet for some homework assignments. These will be posted through Google Classroom. Students must have a working “rencharter” email account to access Google Classroom and complete online assignments. Students are expected to type final drafts of most major writing assignments. Computers will be available for some time during class, but students will need to complete the typing outside of class. Computers are available in the media center after school most days and students may request computer time with Meredith during lunch any Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. **Students are responsible for printing their work prior to class on the day an assignment is due.** They must contact Meredith at least a day in advance if they need help with this.

Homework: Homework will be assigned nearly every night. Students should copy the homework into their planners at the start of class every day. Assignments are also posted in Google Classroom. **Students are expected to work on major writing assignments in class and at home.** Most writing assignments are begun in class, but require students to follow through on completing the assignment at home, by the due date. Parents are encouraged to check Pupilpath to see their student’s progress in class and identify missing assignments. (Note that a grade of 45% or 1.5% indicates that an assignment is missing, since zeros are not assigned as per Middle school policy.) Once per month, students will take notebooks home, review their notes and write a reflection on their learning. They must show this reflection to a parent/guardian and get them to sign. Parents are encouraged to discuss the work with students.

Course Outline:

Unit 1 (September)	Unit 2 (October-)	Unit 3: November	Unit 4 (December-January)
<p>Classroom Community as Society</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habits & principles of healthy community • needs of individual vs. needs of group • dealing with differences <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <p>Active Listening Whole Group Discussion Response to reading Personal essay writing Independent Reading</p> <p><u>Text :</u></p> <p><i>The Hundred Dresses</i> by Eleanor Estes <i>The Memory of Things</i>, Gae Polisn <i>All American Boys</i> by Brendan Kiely and Kwame Alexander Student-selected books</p>	<p>4 Types of Conflict</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 types of conflict in literature • focus on character vs. society conflict • themes: the “other,” crossing borders • literary essay <p><u>Skills :</u></p> <p>Reading response formats Analyzing conflicts Literary Essay Writing Quoting from a text</p> <p><u>Text :</u></p> <p><i>Smoke Signals</i> (film) <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie <i>American Born Chinese</i> by Gene Luen Yang</p>	<p>Language of Setting</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interaction of environment and community • impact of setting on characters • impact of telling a story <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identifying and tracing themes across a longer text • analyzing and responding to figurative language • analyzing author’s purpose in novel • using descriptive language in writing • developing theme in writing <p><u>Text :</u></p> <p><i>The House On Mango Street</i> by Sandra Cisneros <i>Martian Chronicles</i> by Ray Bradbury <i>A House of My Own</i> by Sandra Cisneros <i>The Hero with a Thousand Faces</i> by Joseph Campbell & Interview with Bill Moyers</p>	<p>Oppression & Resistance</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oppression & resistance • Roles of oppressor, victim, bystander & resistor • Author’s purpose • Counter-culture <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing author’s purpose • Strategies for accessing complex text • Rereading for deeper understanding <p><u>Text:</u></p> <p><i>The Chocolate War</i> by Robert Cormier <i>Swing Kids</i> (film) <i>The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks</i> by E. Lockhart Zusak, <i>The Book Thief</i></p>

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Unit 5 (February-March)	Unit 6 (April)	Unit 7 (May)	Unit 8 (June)
<p>Journalism Study & Test Prep</p> <p><u>Concepts :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • urban environment • multiple perspectives • primary source research • journalistic writing: feature articles, op-eds • competition to meet human needs <p><u>Skills :</u></p> <p>Observation & recording Interviewing Drawing conclusions Presenting multiple perspectives Writing for an audience Close Reading Paragraph response structures On Demand Writing Multiple Choice strategies</p> <p><u>Texts:</u></p> <p>Selected newspaper articles Selected short stories & poems</p>	<p>Family & Cultural Identity Book Clubs & Poetry</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <p>Past & present Family history Cultural history Youth culture Multiple identifications Celebrating identities through poetry Asking questions Interview & research skills Using imagery in poetry</p> <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <p>Independent reading stamina Student-led discussions Connecting literature our lives Questioning techniques</p> <p><u>Texts:</u></p> <p><i>Shadowshaper</i> by Daniel José Older <i>My Heartbeat</i> by Garret Freeman-weyr <i>Nobody's Family Is Going to Change</i> by Louise Fitzhugh <i>Like Sisters On the Homefront</i> by Rita Williams-Garcia <i>Anya's Ghost</i> by Vera Brosgol <i>The Ear, the Eye & the Arm</i> by Nancy Farmer <i>The Devil's Arithmetic</i> by Jane Yolen</p>	<p>Social Commentary through Allegory</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dystopian fiction • connecting knowledge and power; suppression of knowledge • role of propaganda & public speaking • human nature depicted in literature <p><u>Skills:</u></p> <p>analyzing allegory and symbolism close reading challenging vocabulary in context Fiction writing Interior monologue Using imagery</p> <p><u>Text:</u></p> <p><i>Animal Farm</i> by George Orwell Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> Coelho, <i>The Alchemist</i> Other dystopian fiction Pan's Labyrinth (film)</p>	<p>Final Portfolio Work</p> <p><u>Concepts:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision • Reflecting on the work • Presenting to community <p><u>Skills :</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revision strategies • Public speaking skills

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