

English 8 Course Overview

2019-2020

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English Eight is a discussion-oriented class with two over-arching objectives – to improve students’ ability to communicate in language – both verbally and in writing and to extend their appreciation and understanding of literature. This course is designed to align with the eighth grade history curriculum, deepening understanding in both areas through thematic connections across the humanities.

Grammar is taught and emphasized while proceeding from the point where we left off with last year’s curriculum. We will begin with a diagnostic, the results of which will help determine which particular areas will require more emphasis or review before moving forward. A brief review of the parts of speech will be followed by the study of phrases, clauses, subordination, and types of sentences. Sentence combining and variety, structure, mechanics, punctuation, and usage are also elements of the grammar component. Our focus will be on enhancing existing writing and speaking skills and preparation for standardized exams, and we will be using the *Holt Handbook* (Red Grammar Textbook) to further this goal.

The writing component begins with the paragraph and will include descriptive, expository, narrative, and persuasive formats; students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to write well-organized, cohesive, and meaningful examples of each type before moving to longer pieces of writing. Storytelling in the form of personal narratives will also be addressed throughout the course of the year. Special attention will be paid to argumentative writing, the written format likely to become the most utilized in the forthcoming years. Review and reinforcement of research skills – documentation, attribution and avoidance of plagiarism, although covered in the History curriculum, will be reinforced as well.

The literature component of the course will include selected short stories, a Shakespearean play, and a modern classic novel and a contemporary young adult novel. The chosen texts will allow students to explore the elements of fiction, which include, setting, characterization, plot, theme, and irony. The literary selections will examine such themes as loyalty, trust and betrayal, tolerance, perseverance, coming of age, dealing with adversity, making and living with choices, peer and parental pressure, and coping with societal expectations. The course will also include a brief examination of the origin and evolution of theater.

In addition to what is read in class, students have an additional independent reading requirement, which will include a minimum of one book per quarter of a different genre or set of authors. Through independent reading, eighth-graders will be exposed to literature designed to deal with young adult, contemporary themes and conflicts. Follow up or reporting will include a variety of options – oral book talks, critiques, reviews, creative projects, or Google Slides presentations – aimed to provide opportunities for each student to utilize and develop his or her unique talents and interests to make meaning and demonstrate understanding.

The in-class readings will be the primary source of vocabulary, which will be developed throughout the school year. Students will be accountable for spellings, definitions, and any alternate forms of the words given, and most importantly how to use them properly so they become part of their active vocabularies.

Eighth-grade students will have the use of Chromebooks in their instruction. Protocol regarding their use will be carefully administered and monitored over the course of the school year.

Learning Objectives:

Students will be expected to:

- Enhance their ability to communicate in language and to effectively write interesting and thoughtful pieces of writing.
- Embrace and value literature with active, open and analytical minds by reading works of different styles, themes, and structures.
- Contribute insightful ideas about literature to class discussions and articulate ideas and responses to interpretive questions.
- Learn to listen to and respect the ideas of their peers and take pride in their own ideas.
- Expand their vocabulary skills, which will strengthen their usage, articulation of ideas and prep students for upcoming standardized tests.

Major Units of Study:

- *Refugee* by Alan Gratz
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexia
- Selected poetry and prose

Materials:

Students will be expected to bring the following to class each day unless otherwise noted:

- A binder with looseleaf and dividers
- A composition book
- Pen and/or pencil
- Highlighters
- A charged Chromebook

Assessment:

Student progress is measured by consistency and quality of homework, oral presentation, writing assignments (both short- and extended-responses), quizzes, unit exams, projects, and class participation. Class participation includes contributing to class discussions, group or partner activities, remaining on task and engaged in one's own work, and engaging in behavior that allows other students the space to learn. Extra help periods are built into each student's schedule.

In keeping with the academic honesty policy, the work that any student brings to class should be his or her own, irrespective of whether it is being collected or graded.

Absences:

In the event of an absence, students should check for homework on the portal. If possible, arrange for a friend or sibling to bring home necessary textbooks, etc. In the case of multiple days or extended absence, please email your advisor, who will alert the student's teachers. When *any* school is missed, please be sure to consult the teacher during extra help or before or after school to go over what was missed in class, *even if there were no homework assignments.*

I am looking forward to a wonderful year of academic and personal growth and learning, and am thrilled to be working with your child this year. I can be reached via email at kaitlyn_seigneuray@fa.org, or by contacting Mrs. Tobia in the middle school office. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at any time.