

The English program provides students with the skills and insights necessary for academic competence and for growth as independent and creative individuals. We strive to introduce students to a variety of literary genres, and to great writers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Students begin to see literature as an art, as a mirror that reflects their lived experiences, as a window that illuminates the experiences of others, and as a powerful tool for raising consciousness regarding pressing issues. Our curriculum is grounded in our Learn Well, Live Well, Lead Well goals and competencies and endeavors to cultivate thoughtful readers and adept writers of the English language. Students take English each year in the Middle and Upper Schools.

Grade 9	<i>The Odyssey, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Persepolis, Romeo & Juliet, Catcher in the Rye, and a choice of independent reading books</i>
Grade 10	American Literature – <i>The Joy Luck Club, The Scarlet Letter, The Great Gatsby, The Glass Menagerie, The Piano Lesson, The Children’s Hour</i> , assorted short stories, personal essays, and poetry Research paper
Grade 11	British Literature – <i>Nervous Conditions, Beowulf, Grendel, Canterbury Tales, Macbeth, Pride & Prejudice, Wuthering Heights</i> , poetry
Grade 12	Fall semester in personal writing; Possible spring electives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Digitopia: The Implications of a Digitizing World ● War and Literature ● Love and Literature ● 60’s Protest Literature ● African-American Literature

English FAQs

How are students grouped for English classes?

Students are placed in heterogeneous groups for English classes in grades 7-12. In the senior year, students choose from a variety of electives.

How are reading selections made?

Teachers choose for each grade level a mix of readings which represent a range of traditional and less traditional texts, challenging and more accessible works. Grades 9 and 10 are genre courses where students read examples of each of the four main literary genres: novel, short story, poetry, and drama.

Grade 11 offers an historical perspective on British literature. The course begins with a postcolonial novel by Tsitsi Dangaremba and then moves back to *Beowulf*. The first semester of Grade 12 is a required course in personal writing; electives begin in January. Please see the course catalogue for a sampling of the texts read at each grade level and the electives currently offered for the senior year.

What kind of writing program do you offer? Do students get a chance to do creative writing?

The English Department believes that all writing is to some extent creative. The purpose of most writing assignments in Upper School, however, is to help students develop and refine their skills in exposition, i.e., writing organized to defend a thesis statement with appropriate evidence on both literary and non-literary subjects. Expository essays usually consist of an introduction, several body paragraphs, and a conclusion. At every level there is also some opportunity to write in a less structured or less formal way. Examples are a poem in the voice of an *Odyssey* character in grade 9, personal essays in grade 10, an original Pilgrim's Tale in the style of Chaucer in grade 11, and personal narratives in grade 12 which are the focus of the first half of the year for all students. Additionally, if a student has a particular interest in exploring more creative writing, she can take the creative writing elective for a trimester, which explores both structured and free-writing opportunities.

Which research activities are offered through English classes in Upper School?

Students have a variety of research opportunities in Upper School English classes. Grade 10 is home to the Term Paper: a 2,500-word paper on a general (non-literary) topic. In grade 11, students research a trade or profession from the Middle Ages and write their own Pilgrim's Tale on the model of Chaucer and use critical sources to write a long paper on *Pride and Prejudice* or *Wuthering Heights*. A term paper on a subject related to each elective is part of every senior course.

[Julia Grandison](#)

English Department Chair; Middle and Upper School English