LOLHS English Department

The Teaching of the Classics

Classic Literature

"The literature of any language in a period notable for the excellence and enduring quality of its writers' works" (*Collins English Dictionary*).

Why do we teach the Classics?

English Department Reading Mission Statement:

- The LOLHS English Department believes that it is vital for all students to develop a curiosity and love of reading.

- Through the close reading of ***challenging texts***, both in class and independently, students acquire skills essential to their future success.

- Students will cultivate ***reading stamina*** by engaging with and persevering through a variety of texts that represent a range of diverse backgrounds, voices, and perspectives.

Why do we teach the Classics?

- **Cultural touchstones** - *these texts are referred to in popular culture and referenced throughout contemporary literary works.*
- **Timeless and universal themes** - *students explore connections between classic texts and contemporary themes, topics, and events.*
- **Text complexity** - *interacting with challenging texts builds reading stamina and skills for future success.*
- **Cultural and historical relevance of the text** - *gives students a lens to view the time period and the author's purpose/point of view.*

Where do we see the Classics?

- All classes, beginning in grade 9.

- Titles align with College Board (SAT), Common Core of Learning, and College/University expectations.

Grade 9:

The Odyssey by Homer (725-675)

Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare (1597)

A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens (1859)

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury (1951)

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry (1959)

Poetry: Hughes, Arnold, Shakespeare's sonnets

Independent Reading - Choice of various classic works of literature

Grade 10:

Various classical myths & folk tales

The Taming of the Shrew by William Shakespeare (1590-1592) / *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare (1605)

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck (1937)

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams (1947)

Lord of the Flies by William Golding (1954)

To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee (1960)

Selected poetry and short fiction: Dunbar, Burns, Angelou, Hughes, Bradbury

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey (1962)

Grade 11:

Native American poetry (traditional songs)

Macbeth by William Shakespeare (1611)

Selections from Colonial Literature: Bradstreet, Paine, Franklin, Edwards, Wheatley

Selections from Transcendentalist writers: Emerson, Thoreau, Fuller

The Scarlet Letter by Nathaniel Hawthorne (1850)

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)

Harlem Renaissance poetry (Hughes *et al.*)

Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston (1937)

Independent Reading: Choice of various classic American works of literature

Grade 12:

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles (429)

Beowulf (6th Century)

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer (1400s)

Hamlet by William Shakespeare (1602) / *King Lear* by William Shakespeare (1606)

Gulliver's Travels by Jonathan Swift (1726)

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (1813)

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley (1818)

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte (1847)

Grade 12, Continued:

Dubliners by James Joyce (1914)

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe (1958)

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger (1951)

Slaughterhouse Five by Kurt Vonnegut (1969)

Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison (1977)

Poetry Selections: Shakespeare, Burns, Blake, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Yeats, Cullen, McKay, Cummings, Heaney, Boland, Oliver, Atwood, Lee

What do we teach in addition to the Classics?

Contemporary Literature

Why do we teach contemporary literature?

From English Literature and Composition Course Description, The College Board, 2014:

"Most of the works studied in this course were written originally in English including African, Australian, Canadian, Indian and West Indian authors. Some works in translation may also be included (e.g., Greek tragedies, Russian or Latin American fiction). In addition to British and American writers, as well as works written from the 16th century to contemporary times…In an ongoing effort to recognize the widening cultural horizons of literary works written in English, the AP English Literature Development Committee will consider and include diverse authors in the in the representative reading list."

Contemporary Texts - Grades 9 & 10:

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan (1989)

Interpreter of Maladies (selected stories) by Jhumpa Lahiri (1999)

Krik Krak (excerpts) by Edwidge Danticat (1996)

Selected contemporary poetry and short fiction titles: Garcia Marquez, O'Flaherty, Gordimer, Murakami, Allende, Erdrich, Tan, *et al.*

Independent Reading - Choice of contemporary literature from a curated list of titles

Contemporary Texts: Grades 11 & 12*

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros (1984)

Into the Wild by Jon Krakauer (1996)

The Things They Carried (selected stories) by Tim O'Brien (2009)

Hamilton by Lin Manuel Miranda (2015)

Grand Union (selected stories) by Zadie Smith (2019)

Selected contemporary poetry and short fiction titles: Angelou, Harjo, Liu

**Titles align with Common Core of Learning, College Board, and UConn Early College Experience courses.*


Thank You