

AMITY REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 5 Bethany
Orange Woodbridge
25 Newton Road, Woodbridge, Connecticut 06525



September 2024

Dear Parents/ Guardians,

The 2024/2025 school year marks the third year of implementation of Reading Workshop in all English classes. This past school year, English teachers and Reading consultants finalized curriculum, purchased books and planned for the 2024/2025 school year.

During the year, students will participate in a variety of units of study. The following is a description of each unit.

- **Launching Unit- 7th and 8th grade**

Students will learn the ins and outs of Reading Workshop. The workshop model is structured into 3 parts: mini lesson, independent reading and sharing. The mini lesson is a brief 10–15-minute session in which the teachers explicitly teach a skill or strategy. Students will have an independent reading session where they can practice that skill or strategy. There is another brief follow up at the end of the class where students and teachers will recap or share ideas from the day. The launching unit will focus on short stories and about written responses to text including annotating and summarizing.

- **Characterization- 7th**

The Characterization Unit is intended to allow students to better understand the intricacies of story within the context of realistic fiction. In this unit, we will not only explore characters, but also how authors create these characters. This investigation allows “students to see more in the stories they read“ (*Investigating Characterization* p. viii)

- **Social Issues- 7th grade**

A driving force in this unit is the power of reading to transform how we see others and to show us new ways to be kind, to connect, and to stand up for what’s right. In middle school, many kinds of issues start to weigh more heavily on students: relationship issues, school issues, and a growing awareness of larger societal pressures. This unit will provide students the opportunity to explore issues that impact their lives from a variety of perspectives.

- **Contemporary Fiction- 8th grade**

The Contemporary Fiction Unit will allow students to explore this generation of contemporary writers. It is concerned with cultural relevance and is dedicated to contemporary critical literacy skills. Students will be introduced to the work of Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop and the concept of “mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors.” This work involves allowing students to see themselves in literature or gain perspective of others. Teachers College asserts that, “Through teaching contemporary literature our hope is to empower students as democratic readers, thinkers and young activists” (*Critical Literacy* p. vii)

- **Dystopian Book Club Unit- 8th grade**

This unit will support classes who will learn to talk more deeply about their reading and push themselves to read with greater volume. It will also take advantage of the power of this popular genre to lure kids into studying complexity and symbolism and allusions.

- Historical Fiction- 8th grade

This unit will support classes who will learn to talk more deeply about their reading and push themselves to read with greater volume. It will also take advantage of the power of this popular genre to lure kids into studying complexity and symbolism and allusions.

Other important information for our parents:

- Reading is a life-long skill. The only way to get better at reading is to read—this holds true for excellent readers as well as reluctant readers. With this in mind, our goal is for your child to read extensively this year. We will do our best to motivate your student to read academically as well as for enjoyment. Some of the reading will be assigned, but your child will have many opportunities to select his or her own books to be read independently.
- To encourage a love of reading, we have worked hard to develop our classroom libraries. The classroom libraries are available for students to choose a book for independent reading. Research shows that students who are surrounded by books at school and at home read more, and students who read more are students who read better.
- We want you to know that we are sensitive to having appropriate reading materials in our classroom libraries. That said, what is considered “appropriate” may vary from one family to another. Some families do not mind their child reading Stephen King; others may object to the horror genre. Please be aware that the selections in our classroom library, just like a public library, have a range of reading material. As a parent or guardian, we ask you to remain aware throughout the year of the books your child has selected to read and assist in gauging appropriateness.
- *Rest assured, the books in our classroom libraries are usually not assigned. They are checked out on a voluntary basis only, and students have a choice.*
- As a parent, we ask that you check in with your child over the next few weeks and discuss the short stories and books they are reading. We are also encouraging students to read at home in order to support the learning and discussions in the classroom.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact us by email or by phone at AMSB 203-393-3102 or AMSO 203-392-3200.

Sincerely,

Andrea Drewry
District Literacy Coach

Jason Tracy
Principal
Amity Middle School Bethany

Kathy Burke
Principal
Amity Middle School Orange