

LCCS 7th Grade ELA Curriculum Overview

Month	Unit
September-November	Unit 1: Persepolis/ Punk Rock & NWT Writing
December- January	Unit 2: Disney STEAM Project & RST Writing
February-March	Unit 3: House on Mango Street & LAT Writing
March-April	Unit 4: Fahrenheit 451 & ELA Skills Review
May	Unit 5: Poetry & Figurative Language & Spoken Word
June	Unit 6: LGBTQ+ Playwright Lit Circles

Unit 1: Persepolis/ Punk Rock/ NWT Overview

Overview: This unit focuses on the coming-of-age theme. Coming-of-age stories mark a loss of innocence, and they punctuate the shift from childhood to adulthood. In this unit, we will examine why writers use this universal motif to describe their experiences after 1945, a period marked by the end of several global atrocities (the Holocaust, the Atom Bomb, colonialism) and the beginning of new revolutions for individuals, communities, and nations. This unit includes work outside the American and British literary canons; these international texts are generally written abroad and in other languages. In this introductory literature course, we will examine a short story from the Caribbean that features the coming-of-age theme.

Novels: Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi

Short Stories: “Girl” by Jamaica Kincaid, “The Secret Garden” by Azadeh Moaven, “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson

Timeline: 45 Days

Unit 2: Disney STEAM Project & RST Writing

Overview: This unit focuses on STEAM– science, technology, engineering, English, art, and math. Imagineering emphasizes the importance of collaboration between different disciplines and areas of expertise. Cross-pollination of ideas from those with different skill sets, talent, and points-of-view is really the secret that makes their work so successful. Students will produce initial research logs, essential questions, outlines, varying sources, annotations, an Annotated Bibliography, intro paragraphs in isolation, conclusion paragraphs, in-text citations, CSERSERC body paragraphs, a finished research essay, a creative component, and feedback to their peers.

Timeline: 25 Days

Unit 3: House on Mango Street & LAT Writing

Overview: This unit focuses on the question of what it means to be American. Throughout 7th grade, students read texts that address diverse aspects of the American experience, including those discussing indigenous Americans, African Americans, first- and second-generation immigrants from different time periods and countries of origin, undocumented youth, and white Americans. Through these texts, students will think deeply about the complex past, present, and future of America, and how to define their ever-changing identity as a nation.

Students will learn the difference between simple summary and literary analysis, practice writing about specific elements in literature or a combination of elements (for example: mood, perspective, theme, characterization, etc.), use the five-paragraph structure again with specific LAT formatting, craft and develop solid literary arguments, utilize two fiction texts at once and understand that they will end up with two different genres and formats (e.g. short story vs. play, fable vs. poem, etc.), and understand the importance of selecting the best pieces of textual evidence for each claim.

Novels: *House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

Timeline: 24 Days

Unit 4: Fahrenheit 451 & ELA Skills Review

Overview: This unit focuses on the impossible, but important conversations that came out of the post-WWII years. As the “Greatest Generation” concluded the war years, they were left to make sense of everything they encountered. In the late ‘40s and early ‘50s, science fiction became a more prevalent and respected genre of literature. As industry and technology grew, and as soldiers made their way home and into factories, these writers pondered what the future would look like after opening Pandora’s Box. But Ray Bradbury knew that nothing about the war could be buried or hidden. People needed to meet these facts head-on and have difficult conversations. If past and present were not addressed properly amid immense scientific progress, Bradbury knew that a Dystopian future was imminent. And that Dystopian future would be completely reliant on technology, devoid of humanity, and all-controlling. No one would be allowed to read because reading builds empathy and empathy creates human connection. Human connections are a threat to dictatorships and control everywhere.

Fahrenheit 451 is one of the most relevant texts in existence. Teenagers recognize how different (and oddly similar) life is for the teenage protagonist in the novel, and that the technology that they currently value was predicted by a man in the 1950s: flat-screen TVs, Oculus, robotic animals, AirPods, AI, etc. In addition, *Fahrenheit 451* is an incredibly valuable vehicle for teaching literary analysis: building off of *Persepolis* (history, politics, and governance) and *House on Mango Street* (the human condition, rich figurative language). The novel’s meaning shifts and changes as time passes and new eyes scan the pages. At once very political and very human, *Fahrenheit 451* speaks to such weighty political themes as censorship and a government’s purposeful use of lies to maintain an ugly truth. But the book also becomes a very personal human study of such concepts as marriage, friendship, family, happiness, and the question of how to live a fulfilled life.

Beyond advanced literary analysis, students will also learn: allusions, other literary devices and terms, symbolism, advanced analogies, mood, setting, conflict, tone, direct/indirect characterization, narrative structure, irony, audience, author's purpose, and theme. We will also review multiple choice test-taking strategies, prefixes and suffixes, NWT, RST, LAT, thesis statements, leads, conclusions, CSERSERC, timing, reading charts, etc. Students will also complete advanced vocabulary work for the *Fahrenheit 451* unit. Students will design and build their versions of the Mechanical Hound in *Fahrenheit 451*. They will need to think about science; measure area and diameter, and identify geometric shapes from the 7th-grade math curriculum; choose a medium that can include (but is not limited to) coding, graphic design, video and editing, sewing, woodworking, programming, basic robotics, video games, clay, 2D, etc.

Novels: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

Timeline: 32 Days

Unit 5: Poetry & Figurative Language & Spoken Word

Overview: This unit focuses on the reading and writing of poetry, but more distinctly 1.) the experience of poetry 2.) the interpretation of poetry 3.) the evaluation of poetry. Experience, interpretation, and evaluation are three very separate, but interwoven skills concerning the study of poetry. In some ways, reading poetry is much like reading fiction: we observe details of action and language, make connections and inferences, and draw conclusions. Students will learn to read poetry well by learning how to ask questions about how we experience poems, how we interpret them, and how we evaluate them. Students need to understand that during this part of the unit, the act of interpretation does not always end with reading the poem. New ideas can always emerge, particularly after having discussed the work with a teacher and classmate or after reading other works that can relate to the work in question.

Reading poetry in context is very important because it's the experiential piece of the writer rather than the reader. Students will have the opportunity to study the background of certain poets, for example, Robert Frost. The educator will ask students to consider poems in the context of a writer's life. By understanding context, students are also better equipped to interpret; but more importantly, context allows a student to understand that interpretation never really ends. Students will also learn that evaluation also requires them to consider how much significance a poem has for them personally, and what significance it may have for other readers—both for those like them and for those who differ in age, race, gender, culture, and ideology. Poetry is art, and visiting with them is like going to a museum: some poems speak to us more than others do; some poems mean more to us on some days than on other days; and some poems mean both more and less to us at different periods of our lives.

The writing of poetry is the last piece. Students will have the opportunity to TWIST various poems, but then learn to write their own. Students will be exposed to specialized poems known as spoken word or slam poems. Students will learn the difference between various styles, listen to competitive slam poems, and have the opportunity to write and compete with their slam poems. This unit culminates with the grade's slam poetry competition. Winners from the grade are then entered into LCCS' school-wide slam poetry competition.

Particular poems featured in the direct instruction of this unit include: "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden, "War is Kind" by Stephen Crane, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost, "A Song in the Front Yard" by Gwendolyn Brooks, "My Papa's Waltz" by Theodore Roethke, "The Hill We Climb" by Amanda Gorman, "The Cathedral Is" by John Ashbery, "Sonnet 18" by William Shakespeare, "Holy

Sonnets: "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" by John Donne, "Crossing" by J. Robert Oppenheimer, "Introduction to Poetry" by Billy Collins.

Timeline: 10 Days

Unit 6: LGBTQ+ Playwright Lit Circles

Overview: In this unit, students will examine how plays become vehicles of persuasion. Hansberry, Wilde, and Williams frequently use the stage to dramatize ideas and issues. Students will pay special attention to performance elements like the voices of the characters, tones, and inflections. Students will try to see how their characters look, where they stand in relation to one another, and how they move and gesture. Students will come to understand that plays offer representational quality. Students will learn how to read a play theatrically. Students learn to look at not only what a play's words mean, but also what they suggest about characters' behavior, movements, gestures, and feelings. Students learn to listen for the effect the characters' words have on one another. Students try to imagine how those words might be uttered—loudly or softly, swiftly or slowly, gently or threateningly. Students imagine the manners of the characters, the style of their physical gestures, and even facial expressions. Reading aloud, and perhaps reading aloud in small groups in the form of literature circles, helps students think about the art of language. In terms of skill, students will engage in the elements of drama and analyze plot, character, subtext, dialogue, staging, and theme.

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams is a portrayal of loneliness among characters who confuse fantasy and reality. It is a commentary on modern American culture, class structure, and characters who do not fit into mainstream modern America. *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry dramatizes the powerful attractions of the American dream of success. Although the play reflects Hansberry's deep concern with Civil Rights, it transcends its racial and urban focus. *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde examines the ludicrous constraints of familial obligation and social constructs like marriage in the highly structured and oppressive Victorian era. Each play examines the complexities of the family structure and the horrors that come with family dynamics on social status. Each play examines personal identity. Each play examines a refusal to accept the harshness of reality. Each play examines what it means to be an "outsider" as an author and whether or not it is wise to forsake the colors that each brings to their art.

Plays: *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams

Timeline: 9 Days