8th Grade ELA

Mrs. Jensen

Curriculum Night 26-27

Welcome!



This is my 3rd year teaching at Sonoran Foothills. Prior to teaching here, I taught 8th grade ELA at Paseo Hills.

I have one daughter who is in 8th grade this year, and I've been married to my college sweetheart for 23 years.

I graduated with a degree in English Literature from Southern Utah University. Books are my passion and I love sharing that with students.

Thank you for taking time out of your evening to support your student!

My Goal for Students

This year students will become...

- Better readers
- Better writers
- Better thinkers
- Better communicators
- More confident learners



My biggest goal isn't simply getting students through another English class. I want them leaving 8th grade feeling confident that they can read challenging texts, communicate their ideas clearly, and think critically.

What We'll Be Learning This Year

Reading



Writing



Speaking



Listening



Vocabulary



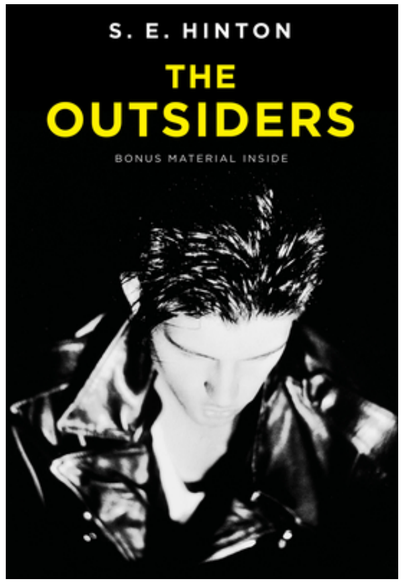
Critical Thinking



For writing, we will focus mainly on informative, argumentative, and persuasive. During our novel studies, we will focus on Reader-Response analysis (how the reader responds to the text) and Historical Criticism (how the text was influenced by the times).

Q1 Novel Study

The Outsiders, by S.E. Hinton



Rationale

The Outsiders was selected because it provides opportunities to explore identity, belonging, empathy, and character development while engaging students in meaningful literary analysis.

Q2 Novel Study ADV. ELA

Something Wicked This Way Comes, by Ray Bradbury

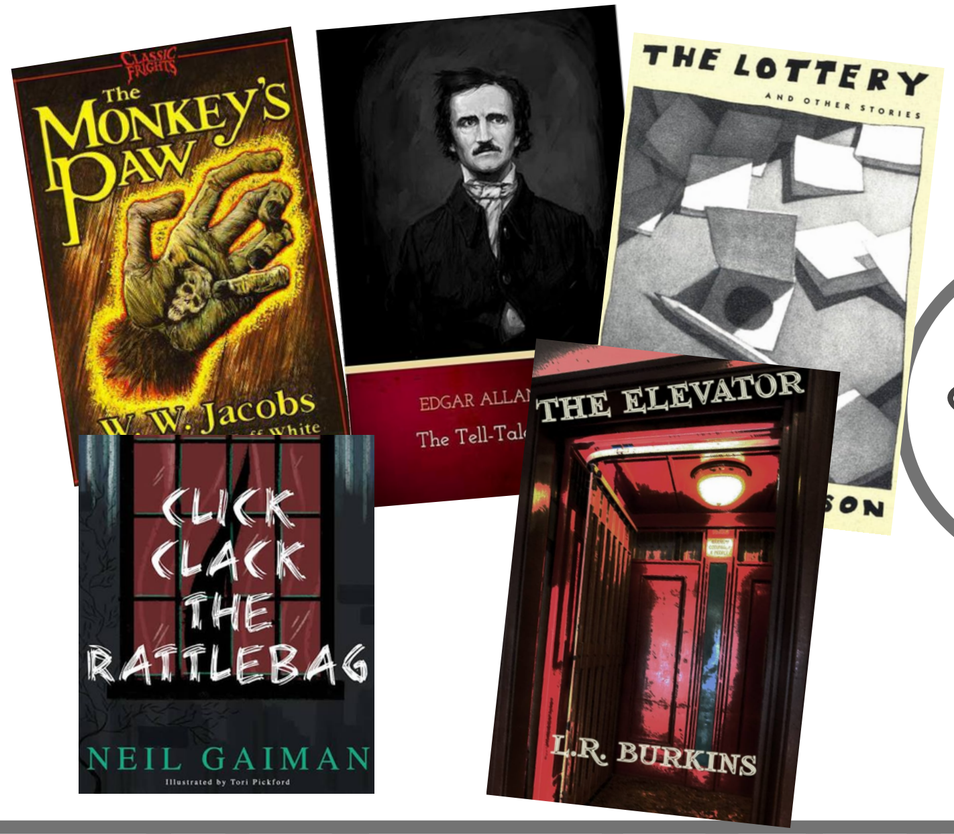


Rationale

This novel challenges students with complex language while exploring relatable themes of fear, temptation, friendship, and growing up. It gives students the opportunity to closely examine Bradbury's use of symbolism, word choice, and mood while developing their ability to analyze more sophisticated literature.

Q2 ELA Texts

Short Stories

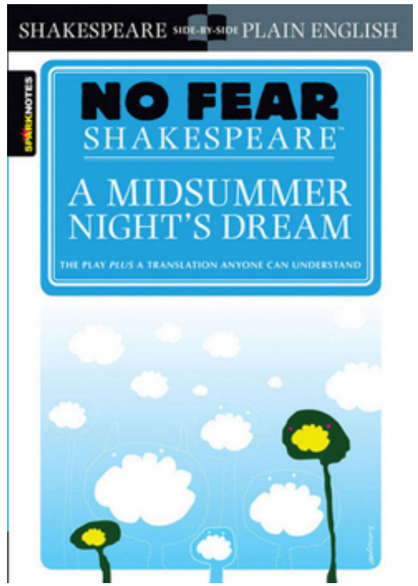


Rationale

Our suspense short story unit gives students the opportunity to explore how authors build tension, create suspense, and keep readers engaged. Through a variety of stories, students will analyze plot, characterization, mood, foreshadowing, and author's craft while developing their ability to make predictions and support their ideas with evidence.

Q3 ADV. ELA Text

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," by William Shakespeare

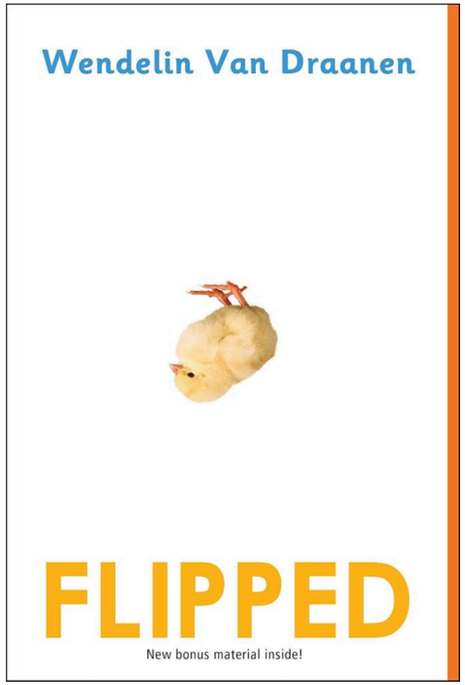


Rationale

This play is a surprisingly accessible and humorous introduction to Shakespeare. Its mix of romance, comedy, mistaken identities, and ridiculous situations helps students realize that Shakespeare can actually be fun and understandable. Reading it builds students' confidence in tackling Shakespearean language and prepares them to approach more challenging classic texts in high school.

Q3 Novel Study

Flipped, by Wendelin Van Draanen

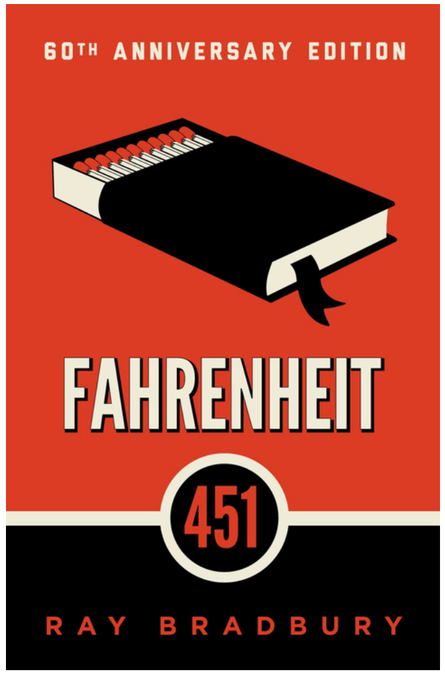


Rationale

This is an engaging way for students to explore how perspective shapes the way we understand people and events. By experiencing the story from two different points of view, students can see how the same situation can look completely different depending on who is telling the story. It encourages students to think about empathy, assumptions, and the importance of seeing things from another person's perspective.

Q4 Novel Study

Fahrenheit 451, by Ray Bradbury



Rationale

Fahrenheit 451 challenges students to think critically about censorship, technology, information, and the importance of independent thought. Its dystopian setting gives students plenty to question and discuss while helping them analyze symbolism, author's purpose, and how a writer uses a fictional world to explore real-world issues.

Books at Home - Optional

Students can learn more when they can write in their books.

- Annotation improves comprehension
- Students can take books home
- Helpful if absent



Additional Areas of Focus



Quarter 1: Analyzing literature, identifying theme and character development, and writing personal responses to reading.
Quarter 2: Reading informational texts, analyzing nonfiction, and writing informative essays.
Quarter 3: Evaluating arguments, comparing texts, participating in discussions, and writing argumentative essays.
Quarter 4: Comparing literature across different formats, evaluating authors' arguments, and refining informative and argumentative writing skills.

Building a Strong Vocabulary

Monday → Friday

Monday: 5 New Words

Tuesday-Thursday: Practice, Games, Writing, Discussion,

Friday: Assessment Quiz



Vocabulary isn't just memorizing definitions. Students will use the words in speaking, writing, and reading throughout the week.

What Makes This Class Special

- We read real books together.
- Students discuss ideas, not just answer questions.
- Annotation is a regular part of learning.
- We practice writing in multiple genres.
- We celebrate growth and effort.
- We learn to support our thinking with evidence.
- We build independence and confidence in preparation for high school.





I don't expect perfection. I expect effort.

How Families Can Help



Support their success by building independence.

✔️ Ask what they're reading and what vocabulary words they are studying.

✔️ Encourage daily independent reading - comic books, magazines, recipes Reading is reading!

✔️ Check PowerSchool to stay up-to-date

✔️ Encourage organization - backpacks get messy!

✔️ Reach out with questions

✔️ Read the biweekly newsletters

The students who grow the most usually have adults who simply stay interested in what they're learning.

8th Grade - Last Practice Year!

This is their practice year. Support their success by building independence.

- Eighth grade is an important transition year and an opportunity for students to practice managing deadlines, communicating with teachers, advocating for themselves, recovering from mistakes, and taking ownership of their learning before entering high school, when grades carry greater long-term consequences.



Communication & Grading

- Email: Britney.Jensen@dvusd.org
- Tutoring: 8-8:30 AM by appointment
- Retakes: before or after school by appointment
- Grading: refer to DVUSD's PRAG (found on the DVUSD Handbook Portal website) or in the student handbook passed out at the beginning of the year. The 8th grade team works hard to be consistent and follow those guidelines.



Questions?

"We read to know that we are not alone."

-C.S. Lewis



Thank you for attending and for partnering with me this year!