

English Curriculum 2009-2010

English 9 – Writing About Literature

Freshman English tries to make reading and writing more interesting for students by showing them that it can be relevant to their lives through a focus on life principles like respect, integrity, compassion, and wisdom. Students will read classic and contemporary novels in which people like them from around the world face these life principles. Students will discuss their own places among the questions and issues, putting themselves and their beliefs at risk in order to do meaningful writing that will inspire them to develop as individuals and community members.

Students will build a foundation for good writing in the first semester, and will continue to read, consider, and write about literary texts—always working to see how the text might be exploring and questioning life principles they find relevant to themselves—in the second semester. The course will follow a traditional genre structure. Student will write various types of essays, focusing on literary, persuasive, and argumentative forms.

READING LIST: *The Secret Life of Bees*, *Great Expectations*, *Jane Eyre*, *A Gathering of Old Men*, *Antigone*, and *Backpack Literature*

English 10 - Literature, History, and the Human Imagination

Sophomore English is a study of human experience through the prism of literary genre. Using primarily English and European literature, it asks how the literary imagination over the course of several centuries has helped human beings make sense of their world. This course seeks to build on the foundation of ninth grade English by studying a variety of genres, including novels, plays, short stories, and poems. Through readings from these varied sources, class discussion, grammar drills, and lots of writing, the course asks students to consider what literature does and whether or not it has value in the modern world of DVD movies, television, cell phones, and computers. It also encourages students to think critically and skeptically, and it emphasizes the importance of evidence in reaching literary - or any other kinds of - conclusions.

READING LIST: *Oedipus Rex*, *Macbeth*, *English Romantic Poetry*, *Frankenstein*, *A Doll's House*, *Interpreter of Maladies*, *Obasan*

English 11 - American Literature

In this course, students become engaged with a number of American authors, beginning in colonial times with works by the Puritans, and progressing through the romantics, transcendentalists, and early and post-modernists. In class discussions, students grapple with recurring themes, specifically the American dream and its transformation throughout the shaping of American culture over time. Close readings of texts encourage students to think about the craft of writing - honing their prose to express ideas succinctly. Literary analysis is the focus for discussion and writing. Fueled by the literature and the students' own writing, grammar and vocabulary are also fundamental elements of study in this course.

READING LIST MAY INCLUDE: *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Things They Carried*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *The Glass Menagerie*, and *101 Great American Poems*

Honors English 11-American Literature

Honors English 11 is a rigorous course in American literary study for motivated students. Students will refine their ability to critically analyze, discuss, and write intelligently and insightfully about a piece of literature. Although formal, academic writing will continue to be emphasized, they will explore various kinds of informal writing including personal expression, fiction, and poetry. Developing their voices as writers will be important. Students will focus on the distinctive writing styles of our authors to discover how their choice of diction, sentence patterns, etc. contributes to the uniqueness of their styles. Students will begin with selections from early American writings and progress to contemporary classics.

READING LIST: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *The Things They Carried*, and *Six American Poets*.

AP English 11- English Language and Composition

This is a college-level course in reading, writing, and rhetoric for motivated students, constructed in accordance with College Board AP guidelines. The major objective of this course is to help students write effectively and confidently in their college courses across the curriculum.

We'll read and carefully analyze a broad and challenging range of texts--expository, analytical, personal, and argumentative essays; letters; speeches; images; imaginative literature--deepening our awareness of rhetoric and how language works. Through close reading and frequent writing, we'll develop our ability to work with language and text with a greater awareness of purpose and strategy, while strengthening our own composing abilities.

We'll write in a variety of modes for a variety of audiences, developing a sense of personal style and an ability to analyze and articulate how the resources of language operate in any given text. Because we live in a highly visual world, we'll also study the rhetoric of visual media such as photographs, films, advertisements, comic strips, and music videos.

READING LIST: *The Elements of Style*, *Emerson's Essays*, *Slouching Toward Bethlehem*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings*.

English 12 - Introduction to College Literature

An ongoing theme in this course is the effect on an individual and his/her society of being labeled a "minority." Reading focuses on demanding, provocative novels with complex syntax, vocabulary, and themes. Grammar is examined as problems arise. Vocabulary is studied weekly and tested through definitions and sentences. Classes are discussion-centered. Bi-weekly literature-based compositions require students to state their positions clearly and defend them exhaustively. All compositions may be rewritten. College application essay practice also is an element of the course.

READING LIST: *Native Son*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *The Oxford Book of American Short Stories*

Advanced Placement English 12 - Advanced Literature

Students are expected to read difficult material in depth, and sometimes must read a great deal of material in a short time. But more often the course focuses on shorter, more subtle selections that students are expected to analyze on their own. In the process they develop the ability to articulate single and multiple themes and work extensively with indirection and irony. The degree of independence expected of members of this course is best illustrated by the term-long poetry project in the spring. Each student reads a book of poems by a single author, writes five papers demonstrating theme and exploring technique in five separate poems, then produces a ten-page paper which explores the themes and techniques of a single poem. Components of vocabulary, grammar, and college essay writing are also part of the course.

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READING LIST: *Sound and Sense*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *King Lear*, *All the King's Men*, *No Exit*, and *Dubliners*.

Honors English 12

Honors English 12 is an alternative to English 12 and AP English 12 offered according to need. It is open to students who wish to work at an advanced level in senior English but need more support than AP English can provide. Course content is the same as AP English, but more teacher support is available to help understand the literature and to re-write compositions. Students are expected to be as self-motivated as those who select AP English.

ELECTIVES

Electives, especially literary and writing electives, vary year by year. Past elective titles include *Chick Lit*, *Writing with Power*, *Literature of World War I*, *Literature of the American West*, *Spy Novels*, *Novels Made into Films*, and *Hard-boiled Detective Stories*.

Public Speaking

Public Speaking is a required semester course, taken primarily by sophomores, designed to develop basic communication and listening skills. A variety of speeches covers topics chosen by students and is designed to persuade, inform, and entertain. The semester concludes with lessons taught by the students. Every member of the course is required to give a speech during Morning Meeting.

Creative Writing

This one-semester course explores a wide variety of informal, fictional, and poetic forms of writing. Students share virtually everything they write in order to pool ideas and get advice from as many sources as possible. Among the elements of writing they may touch upon are description, imitation, autobiography, short story, metaphor, limerick, haiku, free verse, and drama. Grades are based upon effort, imagination, and, most importantly, the quality of three rewritten pieces in each nine weeks. Outstanding work is published in Cupola, the Upper School's literary magazine. (Fulfills writing requirement)

Nonfiction Writing

This elective is a performance-based class in which students write predominately nonfiction pieces and produce the Upper School's student news magazine, Soothsayre. The objective of the class is for students to become comfortable with the writing process, specifically with nonfiction writing, and become more accomplished writers. Students learn about writing for an audience, and during numerous drafts they consider subject matter, length, style, and syntactical issues before finalizing pieces.

Students are asked to self-generate ideas for articles, as well as take on story assignments as needed for individual issues. They are asked to write in a variety of genres from news and sports features to human interest articles, from movie, music or book reviews to commentaries on popular culture. Students write every day in class with the goal of producing rough drafts fairly quickly (in 2-3 days' time) and completing one finished piece per week. Rough drafts are submitted to the teacher and returned with suggestions for improvement. It is normal for students to be working on two different pieces at the same time. They often collaborate on pieces or share articles with each other.

Students volunteer for certain roles during the production phases. Some work on layout; others work on getting photographs for articles or putting together a photo collage, while others help with final proofing or writing headlines. Six or seven issues of the Soothsayre are produced annually. (Fulfills writing requirement)

Publications

The purpose of this class is to enhance students' communication skills and to provide "hands on" experience in the design and production of Sayre's yearbook, Pillars. Students develop an aesthetic "eye" and learn practical techniques relating to publications. This includes the study of photography, graphic design, journalism, and business. Specific course objectives include improvement or initial skill development in these four areas. A culmination of their best work results in a portfolio created by each student. This portfolio includes samples of photography, design work, and writing as well as journal entries that chart skill development and completion of classroom tasks. Assessment includes the portfolio and self and peer written critiques.

A Will to Write: Using Writing to Explore the Works of Shakespeare

A Will to Write fulfills the writing elective by combining creative writing and academic writing as responses to Shakespearean plays which are not otherwise covered in the curriculum. This one-semester class covers the politics and history of the Elizabethan era relating to the theater, Shakespeare's language and characters, and Shakespeare's appeal to readers today. The following plays will be approached in print, video, and audio: King Lear, Henry V excerpts, Richard III excerpts, Twelfth Night, Othello. Exploration of these plays includes a combination of creative writing and analytical essays. (Fulfills writing requirement)

READING LIST: *King Lear*, *Othello*, *Twelfth Night*

Media Literacy

MEDIA no longer just influences our culture; in many ways it has become our culture. Media Literacy is about becoming competent, critical, and ... literate in all media forms so that we control the interpretation of what we see and hear. In this class, we'll look specifically at TV, music, magazines and newspapers, movies, and the internet. We'll learn to raise the right questions about what we're watching, reading, or listening to so that we can develop the "critical autonomy" that lets us think for ourselves. We'll analyze media's explicit and implicit messages and evaluate them against our own ethical and moral principles. We'll also create our own messages using a variety of media tools. Mostly in-class work. Frequent short writings. This class fulfills the Writing Requirement.

Sea Stories

In this elective students will read both fictional and true stories of the sea. There will be pirates, solo circumnavigations, the smell of gun powder, the whiff of grapeshot, and of course lyrical celebrations of the oceans that cover three fourths of our earth's surface. This class fulfills the writing requirement: frequent writing assignments will supplement the reading. We may also see a movie or two. Extra credit for anyone who can explain "Thalassa, Thalassa!"

READING LIST: *HMS Surprise*, *Beat to Quarters*, *Treasure Island*, *The Perfect Storm*

The Murder Mystery

Whodunit? Stories that deal with crime and its solution, especially the finding out of murder, have exercised the literary skill of authors since Cain dispatched Abel. In this course, which fulfills the writing elective, students will read and emulate and analyze both classic mysteries of the kind perfected by Agatha Christie along with detective stories of more recent vintage. The mystery in film may also be a subject of discussion. This is a one semester course.

READING LIST: *Six Great Sherlock Holmes Stories*, *Lord Edgeware Dies*, *An Unsuitable Job for a Woman*, *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*, *S is for Silence*.