

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS  
GRADE 8: SYLLABUS  
Ms. Hillinger A309

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Welcome to Grade 8 English Language Arts! My name is Ms. Hillinger, and I'm excited to navigate ELA together during your final year of middle school.

Throughout 8th grade, we will read phenomenal literature and talk a LOT about identity, choices, and the reciprocal impact between ourselves and our communities.

My hope is that you recognize the value and importance of your ideas, interpretations, and insights, especially as we tackle these topics. Literature isn't meant to have "one right answer," which is why I love teaching this subject.

I can't wait to hear your thoughts and contributions to class, and to get to know you all!

## **UNITS OF STUDY**

### **Unit One: Short Stories**

Texts: "Lamb to the Slaughter" by Roald Dahl; "The Veldt" by Ray Bradbury; "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

#### Essential Questions:

- How are universal experiences and themes expressed through literature?
- How do authors effectively use literary techniques to tell a story?
- How do authors convey purpose and meaning in literature?

#### Literary Devices:

- Irony, foreshadowing, mood, tone, theme, symbolism

#### English Language Arts Skills:

- Engaging in collaborative discussions, citing and explaining evidence, determining literary devices and author's purpose, writing extended expository pieces

### **Unit Two: Nonfiction**

Texts: *Stamped: Racism, Anti-Racism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi (Crosscurricular Unit with Civics!)

#### Essential Questions:

- What steps need to be taken, in order to be an antiracist?

- How might learning about the source of racist ideas help us to understand the present day?
- Why is hope so central to the antiracist movement?

Literary Devices:

- Tone, author's purpose, colloquialism, point of view

English Language Arts Skills:

- Engaging in collaborative discussions, reading and writing persuasive language, researching relevant topics, citing credible sources

**Unit Three: Verse and Drama**

Texts: *Long Way Down* by Jason Reynolds; *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers

Essential Questions:

- How do our decisions influence our community?
- In what ways can we positively impact our world?
- How do our choices shape our identity, and how others view us?
- How is identity formed within different cultures?
- What turning points determine our individual pathways toward adulthood?
- What are some main factors in identity creation?

Literary Devices:

- Simile, metaphor, alliteration, repetition, line-spacing, imagery, stage directions/ script format, flashbacks, author's purpose

English Language Arts Skills:

- Engaging in collaborative discussions, citing and explaining evidence, writing compare/ contrast multi-paragraph essays, writing creatively while using author's modality

**Unit Four: Realistic Fiction**

Texts: *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson

Essential Questions:

- What are the effects of peer pressure on young adults?
- What defines an outsider?
- How do creative expressions, and different art forms, help people?
- Is it better to stay silent, or to speak out, against authority?

Literary Devices:

- Tone, symbolism, theme, imagery, flashbacks

English Language Arts Skills:

- Engaging in collaborative discussions, determining a theme of story, writing arguments to support claims and ideas

**→ GRADE BREAKDOWN**

→ Each assignment will be given a certain amount of points, depending on the frequency and density of assignment.

- ◆ For example, homework assignments will be worth 10 points, classwork assignments will be worth 30, and tests/essays will be worth 50.

### → **HOMEWORK**

To help best prepare you for high school, ELA homework will be primarily:

1. Weekly journal prompts.
  - At the beginning of each term, you will be provided the due dates for all journal prompts, to help you plan ahead of time.
2. IXL practice activities, based on what we're doing in class.

## **CLASS PROCEDURES AND EXPECTATIONS:**

### → **ENTERING CLASS/ZOOM MEETINGS**

- Sign in, using your MEAPPS account.
- Our Zoom meetings will have a “waiting room.” Please show up on time in order for me to let you into the class and take attendance.
- Please complete the “Do Now” posted within Zoom.

### → **EXPECTATIONS DURING CLASS/ZOOM MEETINGS**

- Be on time.
- Be muted when you aren't talking. When you'd like to speak, use the Zoom feature of raising your hand.
- Bring your materials.
- Be dressed and ready for school.
- Have a dedicated workspace. If possible, use headphones to help you focus and block out any distractions.
- Be respectful and appropriate in the chat and on video.

### → **LEAVING CLASS/ZOOM MEETINGS**

- Write down the homework assignment in your planner.
- Complete the lesson's “exit ticket.”
- Please do not leave class until I've ended the Zoom session.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

**→ ABSENCES**

If you are absent, please log onto Google Classroom. Class notes, assignments, and handouts can ALWAYS be found on there. For every day you are absent, you will be given two additional days (outside of school) to complete all missing work.

**→ LATE WORK**

Late weekly journals will have 50% automatically deducted, as the due dates will be given at the beginning of each term.

**→ REMIND**

“Remind” is a free texting tool used in this classroom. You will be sent reminder text messages about homework, tests/quizzes, and projects, as well as other important information. I will never see your phone numbers, and all text responses will go directly to my Remind account. To sign up for Remind, please use the link below:

- <http://rmd.at/268khg>

**→ CONTACT INFORMATION**

→ Email: [hillinger@meapps.org](mailto:hillinger@meapps.org)

**→ STUDENTS--PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#) TO VERIFY THAT YOU’VE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE 8TH GRADE ELA SYLLABUS. DEADLINE IS FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25TH.**

**→ PARENTS/GUARDIANS--PLEASE CLICK [HERE](#) TO VERIFY THAT YOU’VE READ AND UNDERSTOOD THE 8TH GRADE ELA SYLLABUS. THERE IS NO DEADLINE FOR YOU, BUT I WOULD LOVE TO KEEP THE LINE OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!**