

8th Grade Language Arts Block

INSTRUCTOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides students with the opportunity to explore their language through reading, speaking, listening and writing. Students will study literature selections from our text and will study one class novel per nine weeks. Students will be required to read novels outside of class for projects/ presentations each nine weeks as well. Writing assignments will be the practice of standards skills as we review them in our literature. Vocabulary and STEMS will come from the GCS required list and literary context as well. Our studies follow the guidelines of the SC Language Arts/Literature Standards, which are listed at the end of the syllabus and on our web page.

TEXTBOOK:

Prentice Hall Literature, Grade 8 Penguin Edition, Pearson
Prentice Hall, Inc., 2007.

OTHER REQUIRED MATERIALS, AND EQUIPMENT:

Students should have a 3 ring binder in class organized with dividers (for Starters, Stems/Vocabulary, Journal, Notes, Returned papers), loose leaf paper and two pencils or a lead supply each day. Students will also keep a writing portfolio in the room. Students can pick their own style.

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION:

Presentation of notes for study
Discussion and Role Play
Demonstration/ Modeling
Supervised Practice/ Groupwork
Audio-Visuals
Written Assignments for practicing skills
Written and Oral reports

GRADING SYSTEM:

Description of grading system.

93-100	=	A
85-92	=	B
77-84	=	C
70-76	=	D
Below 70	=	F

Notes are an important part of eighth grade. The student should take notes when they read their assignment and when the teacher goes over class work and homework in class. Homework is given regularly, most often a completion or extension of what we have done in class. See assignments in the website menu.

GRADE CALCULATION METHOD:

Major tests: 50% of grade
Minor: 50% of grade

It is the student's responsibility to arrange a private meeting/conference with the instructor to discuss questions concerning the evaluation process. Students will have one

week from the time a graded evaluation (test, quiz, examination, assignment, lab grade, etc.) is returned to meet with the instructor to discuss any questions concerning the established grade. The instructor will clarify any questions concerning their evaluation of the student's performance so that the student may learn from errors.

ASSESSMENT POLICY: Students will be assessed on reading assignments, class discussions/notes, STEMs, vocabulary and projects. Book reports are assigned regularly. Pop quizzes may be given at any time.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Regular and punctual attendance at the scheduled classes is essential in order for the student to obtain success in these studies. Students are expected to stay in class and not ask to leave to use the restroom, run to the locker, visit other classrooms, or run to get water. Each student may have a single emergency pass for use to go to the restroom, locker or get water per semester. When illness or other emergencies occur, the student is responsible for completing work missed.

CLASS PROCEDURES: Success is easier if a classroom runs efficiently and everyone understands procedures for orderly conduct. Procedures are reviewed extensively during the first weeks of school to be sure students understand policies. A copy of classroom procedures should be kept in each student's notebook.

Homework
The policy of Riverside Middle on school work is "Failure is not an option!" Students not turning in homework at the time it is taken up or checked, or students not giving an acceptable effort, immediately lose thirty points on the assignment. If it is turned in after 24 hours later, it loses fifty points, and the matter becomes a discipline issue. Students with assignments not turned in are assigned to a Thursday afternoon Homework Recovery session until the assignment is complete.

I have read and understand the class syllabus, Class Outline, and class procedures.

Students signature _____ Parent Signature _____

Tentative Course Outline:

First Nine Weeks

Daily/weekly Practice: Daily Oral Language, Stems, and Journal Writing
Unit 1: Fiction and Nonfiction
Reading Skills Addressed: Analyzing the genre, Comparing and contrasting, Making predictions
Foreshadowing, personification
Grammar : Nouns: compound,
Writing Portfolio: Description of a person, Autobiographical essay, one book report
Novel: *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton or *the House of Dies Drear* by Virginia Hamilton
We have a visiting author, and students will be given extra credit for doing book reports on his books.

Second Nine Week

Daily/weekly Practice: Daily Oral Language, Stems, and Journal Writing
Unit 2: Short Stories
Reading Skills Addressed: Analyzing the genre, Evaluating character and setting,
Ongoing Grammar Study: Pronouns
Writing Portfolio: Short Story
Unit 3: Types of Nonfiction
Reading Skills Addressed: Evaluating articles and essays, Analyzing current topics and issues
Relating to the lives of others, Examining the author's tone, voice, and organization
Writing Portfolio: Persuasive Essay
Novel: *The Pigman* by Paul Zindel

Third Nine Weeks

Daily/weekly Practice: Daily Oral Language, Stems, and Journal Writing
Unit 4: Poetry
Reading Skills Addressed: Surveying the work of various poets, Analyzing the forms and components
of poetry
Ongoing Grammar Study: Adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and clauses
Writing Portfolio: Research paper
Novel: *We Are Witnesses* by Jacob Boas

Fourth Nine Weeks

Daily/weekly Practice: Daily Oral Language, Stems, and Journal Writing
Unit 5: Drama
Reading Skills Addressed: Studying the dramatic conventions, Analyzing a dramatic work
Ongoing Grammar Study: Prepositions, interjections, and conjunctions
Writing Portfolio: Business letter
Play: *A Comedy of Errors*

*Because our primary goal is to maximize student achievement, material may be added, deleted, and/or substituted at the teacher's discretion based on the individual needs, levels, and learning styles of each class. Non-block classes shared with Mrs. Thomas will be geared towards working together on common topics and projects. Creative projects, written assignments, and supplemental materials may also be included throughout the year as opportunities arise

I have read and understand the class syllabus, Class Outline, and class procedures.

Students signature _____ Parent Signature _____

Class Rules and Procedures and Consequences:

1. Come to class on time, prepared and positive.

2. Respect all people and things in the class.
3. Follow instructions immediately with your best effort.
4. Raise your hand and speak appropriately.
5. Follow all school rules and class procedures.

Class procedures and consequences help to keep class running smoothly and increase the amount of learning and enjoyment of the class. Students who do not follow the class rules as explained in procedures will be handled according to school and district policy in the following manner:

1st offense: verbal warning, possible parent contact

2nd offense: parent contact and detention

3rd offense: parent contact and detention

4th offense: parent contact and detention

5th offense: parent contact and office referral

Each incident is unique, and the teacher reserves the right to handle situations with an individual approach for the best interest of the students.

Procedures for entering and beginning class:

- o Enter the room calmly and go directly to assigned seat. Leave your troubles at the door and bring only a positive attitude. There is no task too hard or problem that can't be solved with a calm, positive approach. Prepare materials for class from seated position. Look at the board or projector screen for the Starter instructions. Starter time is completely quiet. Keep hands out of the air and work quickly. For written openers, try every answer even if you are not sure. Correct the answers as we go over them. All questions will be handled after opening work is completed. Write your question down if you are worried you will forget it.
- o If there is no DOL or other starter listed, then the starter will be our SSR or DEAR time.
- o Get out your latest homework assignment or the last thing we worked on. If there was no new assignment, get out clean paper, two pencils, class book(s). Prepare your paper in the upper right corner with First and Last Name, The Class and Class period, and The Date. Write the Essential Question as your title in the notes section, and copy any notes given there for test study.

Five or ten openers will be graded as a minor assessment, for 10 or 20 possible points apiece. Keep them in a section labeled "Openers" **If you finish** the opener earlier than those around you, double check it to make sure it is complete. Then you may read, rehearse your vocabulary, or write down the day's homework from the assignment board in your agenda. Remain quiet until the lesson begins.

SSR or DEAR (Sustained Silent Reading or Drop Everything and Read) time is completely silent time. No questions to the teacher or talking to each other. Students should visit the library and find a book which is interesting. Leave books borrowed from our bookshelf in our room. This 15 minutes is time that no more than 5 students may obtain a library pass to search for new books. No one can go more than once per week.

Procedures for asking Questions:

If a question comes to mind, Please Ask! All questions are respected, as long as the student is sure the timing and subject are appropriate. Carefully consider: Does it relate to the subject at hand? Have I listened to the teacher's instructions completely before interrupting with a question? Is it a question OTHER THAN "Is this going to count?", because the answer to that is "Everything always counts, so you should always do your very best." If the answer to all of the above questions is "Yes", then the student may raise their hand to ask questions at any time other than Openers, Moment of Silence, SSR and during instructions of what we are going to do.

When you do ask your questions, try to be specific by saying what you do understand, and what you need to know to move forward. Simply saying, "I don't understand" and sitting frozen doesn't help the teacher to help you. Do everything you DO know how to do **first**. Copy the question, give a start, even if you don't understand it all yet. Then point out to the teacher exactly which word or step has you stumped.

Notebooks

A student should have a separate notebook for Language Arts. It should be a 3 ring binder and have tabs or dividers for the following sections:

Notes: This is the place for the class syllabus and daily notes taken to review for tests.

Starters: Keep the daily openers here. You can keep more than one on each sheet if there is room. Correct them and keep up with them both for test review and to turn in for a grade every 5 – 10 days.

Journal: We will write in our journals about the stories we read and on other special topics when given.

Returned Papers: Keep older lessons here. These lessons make good exam review material, and we will refer back to some of the lessons since science knowledge builds upon itself.

Stems/Vocabulary: We will alternate weeks doing our stems, then vocabulary building.

Restroom/Locker visits Procedure:

Students are expected to use the restroom and visit lockers between classes. An emergency pass is given to each student for use one time per semester. Any more than that is treated as a discipline problem.

Classwork Procedures

Students are expected to follow work instructions quickly, instay on task and use time wisely to finish assignments

Students should avoid talking or any other action which could distract other students.

If the work is difficult or an answer unknown, the student is expected to use all resources to figure it out, such as looking for clues in the class text, reviewing notes, using references, or asking the teacher. It is never acceptable to quit or give up.

Teamwork Procedures

Students are sometimes assigned either a partner or a team to complete work. When assigned to a team, the student is expected to accept their partner without argument. A part of learning and growing up is to learn to work well with others.

Each student does their own thinking and writing for their own grade. The teamwork and sharing is for brainstorming, testing ideas and asking/answering questions, sharing in strengths, building weaknesses, and proofreading. Some of what you write may be the same, but each person's final presentation should have your individual personality.

Sometimes in groups each member is assigned a duty as a part of their grade. Each team member should complete his own responsibilities as a leader in that area.

Test Procedures

Tests are an important part of learning and should be prepared for carefully. If you are one who experiences test panic, schedule a morning or afternoon for a workshop with the teacher to help you work through it. There are lots of techniques that can help!

Test time is completely and totally quiet, beginning with the teacher explaining its instructions. No banging books, crumpling papers, fidgeting, tapping or any type of noise is allowed so that students may concentrate.

A book or assignment should be ready for quiet work after your test is turned in.

Any talking during the test for any reason will result in the involved students tests being taken up and given a zero. After a conference with the student's parents, if it is decided that a retest will be allowed, then the new test will be a harder version of the same test.

Bring a book to read or extra project/assignment to work on after test completion.

When a student completes his/her test, they should double check it for name, class/ period, and completion of all items. Then it can be turned in to the class's area for turning in papers.

Remember, only one person up at a time.

Return to your desk and read or work quietly. Get something private out to work on and keep your eyes on it during the remainder of the period. If a person talks to you, ignore them.

Procedures for Tardies

Be inside the classroom **before** the bell begins to ring.

Sign in at the sign-in notebook if you are late for any reason.

All tardies after class has begun, including late buses, breakfasts, and those with passes still require a student to sign in at the door before moving to their seat, giving the time of arrival, reason for being late, and note of whether or not they have a pass or have signed in at the office.

If a student accumulates four unexcused tardies, they will be assigned detention from 7:30 to 8 am. A note will be sent home and detention must be served within the week.

Procedures for Seating charts and leaving your seat:

Each student should stay in his/her assigned seat during instruction.

When students move to groups for projects, that becomes the assigned seat, and students should stay in the assigned section. Students should not leave their seat to ask questions. If there is a need to ask a question, the student should raise the hand and wait for teacher to call on him or to come by his or her desk.

If there is a valid reason to leave the seat, and discretion has been used to be sure it will not interrupt student work, then a student should be up only one person at a time.

Students may get up at only at appropriate times to move to sit near an assigned partner,

sharpen a pencil (have two sharpened ones ready in class, but on occasion, they could both break)*to turn in your , paper to the designated box, or to get tissue. Be sure that it does not interrupt other students' work.

Students should hold trash at their desk until the lesson ends or another appropriate time. No hoop practice with the trash cans!

Procedures for End of class/lesson dismissal:

Keep your books open and paper ready to write all period. Do not close down the lesson because time is approaching.

The teacher dismisses the class, not the bell.

Students remain seated and continue working until dismissed by the teacher.

If you are given permission to go ahead and pack books, do so from a seated position.

Procedures for Moving through the halls as a class.

Watch for the teacher's instructions to go (and stop occasionally), and wait periodically at intersections to be sure the class is together.

Walk quietly in single file

Keep adequate space between each person to prevent bumping or stepping on each other.

Keep to the right, approximately three tiles from the wall.

Class change and Lockers:

Students may go to lockers only between classes and should never request to go to them during class.

Students should work quickly and efficiently to finish their work at a locker so that others can have their turn.

No sharing lockers.

No kicking or beating lockers or trying to pry or force them.

Locker visits should be planned for strategic times rather than between every class. Getting the books for more than one class at a time gives the student time for restroom and water breaks during some class changes.

Homework

The policy of Riverside Middle that failure is not an option will drive a new homework policy. Students not turning in homework at the time it is taken up or checked, or if it is not an acceptable effort, immediately lose thirty points. If it is turned in later than 24 hours later, it loses fifty points and the matter becomes a discipline issue. Students with assignments not turned in are assigned to a Thursday afternoon Homework Recovery session until the assignment is complete