

Gresham Middle School

8th Grade English Language Arts Fall 2016

Instructor: Mrs. Robin Bell
Room 103

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COURSE OUTCOME:

Course Description: English Language Arts classes encompass eight Common Core strands: Reading (Literature and Informational Text), Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. In compliance with the Knox County Curriculum, students will have a writing portfolio that will include student composed writing samples including timed writings and short research papers.

Hyperlink to local curriculum and state standards:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/8>

INSTRUCTION:

Skills Covered: As students master the standards, they will demonstrate independence; build strong content knowledge; respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline; comprehend as well as critique; value evidence; use technology and digital media strategically and capably; and come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

General Pacing: Instruction will follow the pacing and guidelines set forth by the Knox County Middle Schools English/Language Arts department.

Materials Needed: In addition to supplies listed on the 8th grade supply list, students will need a spiral notebook (they may need an additional spiral notebook for the second semester). Also, they will need 2 packs of index cards and 5 ziploc bags.

Resources:

School-based: Students who check out a textbook will be held financially responsible if the book is not returned at the end of the course.

Pearson/Prentice Hall *Literature: Common Core Edition (Grade 8)*

Library: Students will go to the GMS School Library on a regular basis to check out books. Additionally, they will have a classroom library to use as a resource.

Major Works to be Read: *Touching Spirit Bear*(by Ben Mikaelson), *Harriett Tubman: Conductor on the Underground Railroad* (Ann Petry), *The Diary of Anne Frank: Acts I and II* (Hackett & Goodrich). Language Arts classes will read Knox County approved materials, and parents will be notified before any other major novel study is begun.

Films: *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Devil's Arithmetic*, and *Spirit Bear: The Simon Jackson Story*. Throughout the course of study, students **may** view films, film-clips, documentaries, or educational programming directly correlated to their study. All audio-visuals will comply with Knox County guidelines.

Religion in the Curriculum

Knox County Board policy states:

The Board affirms that it is essential that the teaching about religion—and not of a religion be conducted in a factual, objective and respectful manner in accordance with the following:

1. Music, art, literature, or drama with a religious theme or basis are permitted as part of the curriculum for school-sponsored activities and programs provided it is essential to the learning experience in the various fields of study and is presented objectively;
2. The emphasis on religious themes in the arts, literature and history shall be only as extensive as necessary for a balanced and comprehensive study of these areas. Such studies shall never foster any particular religious tenets or demean any religious beliefs; and
3. Student-initiated expressions to questions or assignments which reflect their beliefs or non-beliefs about a religious theme shall be accommodated. For example, students are free to express religious belief or non-belief in compositions, art forms, music, speech and debate.

* If you do not approve of a specific resource listed in this syllabus, please make your request to me in writing and an alternative assignment and/or materials will be provided. The request should include your name, the child's name, the specific activity/materials in which you do not want your child to participate or to which you do not want them exposed, and the nature of your objection.

ASSESSMENT

Expectations/Skills: Students are expected to read independently a total of 10 books during the school year. Research proves that regular reading improves comprehension, vocabulary, and writing skills.

Because of the variety of skills covered in this course, a variety of techniques will be used to assess them. A mix of both formative assessments (such as quizzes, writing assignments, and other checks for understanding) and summative assessments (such as unit exams and other written products) will be used.

Grading Policy/Rubrics: Standards Based Grading is used at Gresham Middle School. **Students and parents will receive Standards Based Grading Rubrics for**

project-based learning as well as for quizzes. The following Knox County grading scale will be used:

A = 93-100	ADVANCED
B = 85-92	PROFICIENT
C = 75-84	BASIC
D = 70-74	BASIC
F = 69 and lower	BELOW BASIC

Grades are cumulative spanning an entire semester. The final semester (alpha) grade will be based upon the cumulative class numerical average according to the KCS grading scale. The second semester grade will be determined by calculating the final cumulative class average (numerical) along with the numerical TCAP grade provided by the state factored in at 15% of the final average. The one overall yearly grade will be determined by calculating the average of the first and second semester grades. Interim reports will be issued every 4½ weeks during a semester.

HOMEWORK: Students are expected to read independently throughout the year with a goal of reading a total of 10 books. While some of their independent reading is done during class time, students will also need to read at home, approximately 3-5 times per week for a minimum of 30 minutes each night. Documentation of books read (which must be approved by the teacher) is required through either A.R. tests or a one-page written summary for each book.

Makeup Work: Students must check with me to discuss the work they miss after an absence. Knox County policy states that students have up to three days after an absence to inquire about makeup work. All makeup work is due within one week of the absence.

Late Work: If a major assignment is past due, there will be a minimum of a 10% penalty. If an assignment is worth 100 points and it is turned in late, the highest grade that assignment will receive is a 90. Excessively late work (more than one week) could receive a maximum of a 30% penalty. In that case, if the assignment is worth 100 points and it is more than one week late, the highest grade would be a 70.

Portal Post Policy: One way in which I am able to communicate with the student and parent is through Parent Portal. In order to give timely feedback, I will update grades in a timely manner.

STUDENTS

Attendance Policy: I expect students to make attendance a top priority. If you are not present, you miss out on valuable learning opportunities and end up playing “catch-up.”

Classroom Rules:

- Respond appropriately.
- Expect nothing but the best.
- Study!
- Perform your best . . . always.
- Expect to be treated as you treat others.
- Come prepared to learn.
- Take responsibility for your actions.

Honor Code: According to Harbrace Handbook, 15th edition:

“Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s ideas, research, or opinion as your own without proper documentation, even if it has been rephrased. It includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Copying verbatim all or part of another’s written work;
- Using phrases, figures, or illustrations without citing the source;
- Paraphrasing ideas, conclusion, or research without citing the source;
- Using all or part of a literary plot, poem, or film without attributing the work to its creator.

Consequences of Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of stealing and academic fraud. Students who are found guilty of plagiarism will have the option of either redoing the assignment within a specified time period and accepting a grade letter drop or taking a zero on the assignment. Parents should be involved in making the decision.

TEACHER

Communication Strategy: The best way to reach me is by e-mail at robin.bell@knoxschools.org. I check it several times a day and will respond quickly. You may also call the school phone at 689-1430 and leave a message for me. If you would like to request a conference, please e-mail your child’s team leader, Michelle Baker, at michelle.baker@knoxschools.org or call the school office at 689-1430.

Tutoring/Extra Help: I am available for extra help if notified in advance. Students may see me personally, or parents may e-mail me at the above address to set up a tutoring or extra help session. In addition, school-wide tutoring sessions will be offered throughout the year. Also, ample opportunities will exist for students to complete assignments. These opportunities include Early Study Hall, Homeroom Study Hall, and daily Focus Groups.

