

St. Luke School  
Middle School Language and Literature 2016-2017  
Grade 8

### **Coursework**

Based on International Baccalaureate principles and Common Core Standards for middle school language and literature, students will improve their literacy skills through exploring key concepts across subject areas in a global context. Ensuring a breath of critical thinking, eighth graders will explore the key concepts of Identity, Connections, Communication, Perspective, and Creativity this year. Students will learn inquiry and discussion techniques to build a depth of understanding and skills through related concepts based on reading, writing, applied grammar instruction, and vocabulary development.

Students will be assessed according to their achievement on areas of vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, discussion participation, writing assignments, and projects. Homework will average twenty to thirty minutes each weeknight with weekends free for time with family and for attending Mass. However, homework also includes long-term projects requiring time management skills, and procrastination is not recommended.

### **Reading**

As we explore key concepts, students will read a variety of genres of literature, including novels, short stories, poetry, plays, and nonfiction texts associated with critical thinking. The emphasis will be on gaining experience with more complex texts, increasing vocabulary acquisition while reading, and the thought processes, which good readers use to improve reading comprehension. Our analysis will focus on how the text builds our understanding of chosen key concepts. Students will be quizzed on the depth of their understanding and recollection of details from the text to support their analysis. Quizzes also ensure their consistent completion of reading assignments, which is essential to properly analyzing and making connections through critical thinking.

In addition to texts associated with chosen key concepts, students will complete at least one book report per month on a book of his or her choice. Students will explore different genres or styles of writing as well as the key concepts revealed in each book they choose. The book choice **must** be approved by me at the beginning of the month in order to ensure that each student is choosing a reading challenge based on their individual abilities.

### **Writing**

In preparation for the writing necessary at the high school level, students will continue to hone their writing skills and process. Effective writing for middle school students will depend on making steady progress throughout the year. In addition to writing informally about analysis of reading assignments, students will have monthly formal writing assignments in a variety of forms, for different

purposes, and with differing audiences as they correspond to each key concept explored. They will focus on particular aspects of the craft of writing according to the needs of the class and a grammatical emphasis for each assignment. Rubrics will be available on Google Docs and in print. Some examples of correlating writing assignments are:

- While focusing on our study of the key concept of Communication, students will focus on researching and writing a lengthy, fully annotated MLA research paper. The grammatical emphasis will be on complete sentences and format.
- While focusing on the key concept of Creativity, students will write their own poetry in various forms. The grammatical emphasis will be on figurative language and spelling.

The specific requirements will be outlined in a rubric distributed before the assignment begins. Analytical writing will be a particular emphasis this year as we build our understanding of each key concept and as analysis will be consistently required in high school.

Each student will be assessed according to the analysis of the key concept, skills required for each assignment, the process followed for that genre of writing, and their own individual progress made as a writer and thinker over the course of each trimester. If a student is struggling with a writing assignment, it is his or her responsibility to see me for help and ask for an extension to finish the assignment. **Late writing assignments will not be accepted without an extension being given!**

### **Grammar**

Lessons in grammatical constructions are offered in conjunction with writing assignments. Knowing the various elements that comprise the English language and how these facets work together makes students clearer, more deliberate writers. In addition to using these grammatical constructions in their own writing, homework assignments on specific skills may be assigned within the unit of study. Grammatical constructions will always be studied in conjunction with their application to student writing and how it impacts the text.

### **Vocabulary**

In order to increase reading comprehension and build effective writing skills, students will study vocabulary in Language and Literature class. We will use Membean.com to increase each student's base of commonly used adult vocabulary words. This website builds student vocabulary based on the individual needs and learning style of each student, including study aids such as videos, games, and interactive usage of words to effectively reach each student. Students will also learn word skills, such as common roots, prefixes, suffixes, and contexts, to increase vocabulary acquisition.

Through this website, common vocabulary discussed in class, and words encountered in outside reading, students will create a Master List of new words. From this list students will apply new words to conversation and written assignments. This allows each student to encode these new adult words into their long-term memory for future use.

Eighth graders will be required to learn and use at least 300 new words this school year. Students will be required to focus on vocabulary using Membean.com for 15 minutes three times each week for a total of 45 minutes.

Throughout the school year, students will take online quizzes of the words learned so far. Prior to these quizzes, students should use their new words as frequently as possible, in writing and in speech, in school and in their daily lives. Vocabulary study is cumulative; a midterm exam and a final exam will be given covering all the words in Membean.com up to that point.

### **Late and Missing Work**

Homework is posted on the shared Google calendar for each class well in advance of the due date. Because eighth grade students need to practice academic responsibility and time management skills before continuing to high school, I do not usually accept late homework from a student without discussing the exceptional circumstances with me personally or through email. I will gladly grant extensions on classwork if a student explains the necessity and has a valid reason for needing more time. However, all work must be completed by the end of the given unit of study. When work is missing due to an excused absence, the student has one week to complete the missing assignments unless other arrangements are made with me upon the student's return to school.

You may email me anytime at [jfargo@stlukeshoreline.org](mailto:jfargo@stlukeshoreline.org) to discuss any issues that arise during the year. I am also available before and after school by appointment for additional help or to clarify assignments. I look forward to an excellent year of learning together!

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the expectations and requirements outlined in the syllabus for eighth grade Language and Literature class.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date