

# Middle School English/Language Arts Curriculum

## Fifth Grade Language Arts

The curriculum for fifth grade language arts emphasizes an integrated approach to the study of grammar, reading comprehension, literary appreciation, spelling, vocabulary, oral communication, and the writing process. Language Arts class for fifth grade students meets twice each day. In addition to selections from Collections for Young Scholars published by Open Court, students read, discuss, analyze, and write about the novels The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle, Running Out of Time, A Family Apart, and The Cay. In grammar, students identify by definition and usage the eight parts of speech including possessive forms, complements, and tenses. Additionally, students study the use of possessive nouns, direct and indirect objects, predicate adjectives, and predicate nominatives. Students diagram all parts of speech, modifiers, and complements of a sentence. Students use English, Houghton Mifflin publishers, as their basis of study for grammar and writing; Mastering Spelling, Fearon-Pearson publishers, for spelling instruction. Vocabulary study comes from the context of the literature plus SAT vocabulary enrichment. Students spend one class period per week in the library and one class period per week in the computer lab becoming more proficient at word processing skills. Students become familiar with A Rookie's Guide to Research, which is used across the curriculum.

## Sixth Grade Language Arts

The curriculum for sixth grade language arts continues the integrated approach to the study of grammar, reading comprehension, literary appreciation, spelling, vocabulary, oral communication, and the writing process. Students read, discuss, analyze, and write about the novels Nothing But the Truth, The Watsons Go to Birmingham, The Giver, and The Westing Game. In their study of grammar students identify the four kinds of sentences and correct punctuation for each, identify run-on sentences and fragments, and differentiate between transitive and intransitive verbs. Students review sentence diagramming. Students use English, Houghton Mifflin publishers, as the basis for their study of writing and grammar as well as Grammar and Usage Workbook, McDougal Littell publishers. Class periods begin each day with sentences from Daily Oral Language, which contain errors that must be identified and corrected in similar fashion to some questions on the writing portion of the SAT. Vocabulary study comes from the context of the literature plus SAT vocabulary enrichment. Each spring sixth grade students do an extensive research project on a foreign country on which the world history and language arts teachers collaborate for the research writing portion of the project.

## Seventh Grade English

The seventh grade English curriculum promotes student growth in reading, vocabulary, language usage, and expression through literature. Students identify elements of literature and make inferences as they read. Seventh grade students read Walk Two Moons, The Martian Chronicles, Night, Tangerine, and Give Me Liberty. Additionally, students read short stories and poetry from the anthology The Language of Literature, McDougal Littell publishers. In their study of grammar, students hone punctuation and capitalization skills and identify direct and indirect objects, predicate nouns, and predicate adjectives. Vocabulary study comes from the context of the literature plus SAT vocabulary enrichment. Research skills are reinforced and MLA formatting is introduced.

## Eighth Grade English

The Eighth Grade English curriculum continues emphasis on literature, writing, and critical thinking. Literature is studied by genre and is used as a model for good writing. Students study grammar for structured writing and the effect it has on the meaning of a text. Eighth grade students solidify their grammar knowledge by reviewing parts of speech, sentence structure, punctuation, and capitalization. Additionally, students study the appropriate use of active and passive voice. By the end of the course, a thorough understanding of grammar is expected. Eighth grade students hone writing skills with particular emphasis placed on the modes of writing: narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. In addition to short stories and poetry taken from The Language of Literature, Grade Nine, published by McDougal Littell, students read, discuss, and write about To Kill a Mockingbird, The Odyssey, The Shakespeare Stealer, and Romeo and Juliet. Vocabulary study comes from the context of the literature. Reinforcement of research skills continues. The primary grammar text is Language Network: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics Workbook, Grade Nine, McDougal Littell.

## Eighth Grade Honors English

Prerequisite: An average of B+ or better in Seventh Grade English or special permission.

The eighth grade Honors English curriculum emphasizes literature, writing and critical thinking skills at a level generally reserved for students in grade nine. Students are expected to read independently and discuss with sophistication so that their synthesis of the works under consideration is evident. Students in the honors section are expected to demonstrate mastery of the modes of writing: narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. As a component of mastery, students learn to develop their own distinctive voice. In addition to short stories and poems taken from The Language of Literature, Grade Nine, published by McDougal Littell, students read Animal Farm, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, To Kill a Mockingbird, The Odyssey, and Romeo and Juliet. Grammar is reviewed for the effect it has on the meaning of a text with specific attention given to subordinate clauses, active and passive voice, and the use of phrases. Vocabulary study is derived from the works of literature plus SAT vocabulary enrichment. The primary grammar text is Language Network: Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics Workbook, Grade Nine, McDougal Littell. Students taking Honors English must demonstrate a higher level of proficiency in all areas of language expression.

## Eighth Grade Advanced Writing

Eighth Grade Advanced Writing is a one-semester course taken in addition to Eighth Grade English or Eighth Grade Honors English. The course further develops expository writing skills with emphasis on upper school writing techniques required in Advanced Placement history and English courses. Students practice style analysis, response to document-based questions, research, narration, description, exposition, and persuasion. Specifically, students learn to write strong thesis statements and insightful introductions as well as smoothly integrate quotes, use effective transitions, and demonstrate unity and coherence in their writing. Emphasis is placed on grammar and mechanics topics including proper punctuation, subject-verb and antecedent-pronoun agreement, proper use of verb tense, and appropriate use of active and passive voice. Students read the historical novel Under a War-torn Sky by L.M. Elliot to identify historical references while analyzing literary style. Students research and present a topic using proper techniques and MLA formatting as presented in A Rookie's Guide to Research. Students demonstrate the ability to paraphrase, create a parallel outline, create a bibliography, cite quotes, and avoid plagiarism. Students learn not only to type a professional-looking paper but also to create, format, and revise tables and to rotate text within tables. In addition to the novel and research guide, students study various excerpts from fiction, non-fiction, and poetry as models for good writing.