

Middle School Reading and Language Arts Syllabus

Course Description

Middle School Reading and Language Arts provides a bridge from the Primary School to High School. Students are expected to master the basics of reading fiction and non-fiction books, learn deeper writing and grammar skills, grow in their oral presentations, collaborations and deepen the complexity of their reading choices.

Instructor: Mr. Elliot Guerra

Mr. Guerra graduated with a dual degree in Catholic Studies and English Literature from Seton Hall University where he was a two-time Lily Endowment recipient for Spirituality and the Arts. He is the current Director of Confirmation at the Parish and the Director of Mission Development for both the Parish and Academy. He also is the creative director of OLMC's Theatre Arts program.

Grading (Reading)

Participation / Homework 10%
Vocabulary 20%
Quiz – 20%
Test / Project – 50%

Grading (Language Arts)

Participation / Homework - 10%
Spelling / Vocabulary - 10%
Writing Projects - 30%
Test / Project - 50%

Required Texts

Grades 6-8: (*Texts will be given.*)
Grammar for Writing. New York: Sadlier, 2014.
Holt McDougal. *Literature*. Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
Shostak, Jerome. *Vocabulary Workshop* New York: Sadlier, 2013.

Grade 6: (*Please purchase.*)
Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. New York: Scholastic, 1998.

Grade 7: (*Please purchase.*)
Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978.

Grade 8: (*Please purchase.*)
Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. New York: Perigee, 1954.
Bradbury, Ray, 1920-2012. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967.

Learning Objectives

Middle school language arts focuses on phonics, fluency, grammar, spelling, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing processes and more. The goal for the program is to help students develop strategies for active reading, clear writing and cultivate an appreciation for different cultures and traditions from around the literary world. The class will make prayer a central part of our academic life in the classroom.

Learning Goals (In this course you will learn how to...)

1. Accept personal responsibility

You will learn how to take greater personal responsibility, and gain more control over the outcomes and experiences that you create both in class and in the halls.

2. Increase self-motivation

You will learn to create greater inner motivation by, among other things, discovering your own personal meaningful goals for the class.

3. Improve personal self-management

You will learn numerous strategies for taking control of your time and energy in class that will allow you to move more effectively and efficiently toward the accomplishment of your academic goals.

4. Develop interdependence

You will learn how to develop mutually supportive relationships with your classmates who will help you achieve your goals as you assist them to achieve theirs.

5. Increase self-awareness

You will learn how to respect other people's beliefs and opinions and be more aware of your possible unconscious limiting beliefs.

6. Maximize your learning

You will learn key research techniques and how to properly source material. You will apply this knowledge to develop your writing and reading skills more effectively. You will learn how to improve your writing skills through the extensive writing and reading practices.

7. Improve creative and critical thinking skills

You will learn how to enhance the thinking skills essential for analyzing and solving problems in your academic life. You will also develop reasoning skills that will help you construct persuasive arguments.

8. Master effective study skills

You will learn how to improve essential skills such as reading, taking notes, studying, memorizing, and conquering academic anxiety!

9. Appreciate diversity and raise cultural awareness

We will create a classroom community with people who have ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and, behaviors that are different from our own and learn to appreciate and better

understand the differences. We will learn that “what hurts our brothers or sisters, hurts all of us.”

Rules for Success (Student Responsibilities)

This course has three important rules. If you choose to follow these rules, your odds of learning the material and becoming a better reader and writer will increase exponentially. (These rules will also help you succeed in your other classes.)

1. Show up!

To succeed in this course, you must choose to attend ready and prepared to work. Be attentive, interested and interesting. As soon as you enter the classroom or digital classroom, regardless of what we are doing, you should have your reading material, a notebook, homework and a writing tool out. Classes will begin with prayer.

2. Do work!

Everything I assign I expect to be completed in a timely fashion, including reading and viewing of materials. If you are assigned to read (*or watch*) something, do not treat the assigned reading as an inferior exercise. Actively read, by which I mean read in a way that you are able to retain the information given. You will be expected to be able to speak on the material.

Do your work well the first time; don’t waste your time with inadequate work. If an assignment is rushed or incomplete, you will be asked to do the assignment again. Your work is the most precious thing you can give someone other than your love. I care less if your work is done correctly as I care it is done well.

3. Respect Yourself!

Students are expected to act with integrity in all they do and say. I find discipline to be not a matter of punishment but a matter of self-respect. Calling out, criticizing others, not listening, etc. shows a lack of respect for yourself and the dignity in which you were raised. Respect yourself and remember you are representing your parents and families in the way you carry yourself at all times.

I have always treated my middle school students as the young, aspiring young adults they are, not as children. If students behave like children, they will be asked to leave the room. A discipline slip will be issued and a phone call placed home.

Instructor Responsibilities (You can expect me to...)

1. Come to class with a good attitude.
2. Be respectful of your ideas and value the diversity of thought you bring to the classroom.
3. Be open to dialogue and ideas that challenge me, or that I may disagree with.
4. Answer any appropriate questions you may have. Admit when I do not know

something and get back to you in a timely manner.

5. Use a variety of teaching techniques and modalities to accommodate different learning styles.
6. Return written assignments in a timely fashion and provide helpful feedback.
7. Offer you engaging and stimulating lectures and activities to the best of my ability.
8. Respect, Defend, Encourage and Discipline you so you can reach your highest potential.
9. Treat you fairly.
10. Communicate often with your parents, especially when you're doing positive and interesting things.
11. Pray for you and encourage you.