

Middle School Reading Syllabus

Course Description

Middle School Reading provides a bridge from the Primary School to High School. Students are expected to master the basics of reading fiction and non-fiction work, 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 is also the founding creative director of OLMC's Odyssey Theatre.

Grading

Participation / Homework 20%

Quiz – 30%

Test / Project – 50%

Required Texts and Themes

All Grades: *(Texts will be given.)*

- *Close Reading of Complex Texts*. New York: Sadlier, 2014.
- Holt McDougal. *Literature*. Orlando: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012.
- Shostak, Jerome. *Vocabulary Workshop* New York: Sadlier, 2013.

Grade 6 Grade Level: *(*Please purchase.) Community*

- Letter of St. James, *The Bible*
- Making Community in *Holes* by Louis Sachar*
- Fear and Mystery of Your Neighbor: *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin*
- “Sí Se Puede”: Belong to a Movement in *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan *
- Seeking Truth in *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle*
- Adapting to Survive in *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen*

Grade 6 Accelerated: *(Please purchase.) Coming of Age*

- The Story of David in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, *The Bible*
- Expressing Yourself in *El Deafo* by Cece Bell*
- Developing Resilience in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis*
- Challenging Authority in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry*
- Finding Connections in *New Kid* by Jerry Craft*
- Fleeing Conflict: *Refugee* by Alan Gatz*

Grade 7 Grade Level: (**Please purchase.*) *Coming of Age*

- The Story of David in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, *The Bible*
- Expressing Yourself in *Rollergirl* by Victoria Jaimeson*
- Developing Resilience in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis*
- Challenging Authority in *The Giver* by Lois Lowry*
- Finding Connections: *New Kid* by Jerry Craft*
- Fleeting Conflict: *Refugee* by Alan Gatz*

Grade 7 Accelerated: (**Please purchase.*) *Country*

- Defining America: Literature of Early America
- Fighting Injustice: *To Kill To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee*
- Pursuing Dreams: *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry*
- Finding Home: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros*
- Exploring Identity: *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander*
- Claiming Our Place: Native American Voices and Experience in the United States

Grade 8: Grade Level: (**Please purchase.*) *Country*

- Defining America: Literature of Early America
- Fighting Injustice: *To Kill To Kill A Mockingbird* by Harper Lee*
- Pursuing Dreams: *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry*
- Finding Home: *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros*
- Exploring Identity: *New Kid* by Jerry Craft*
- Claiming Our Place: Native American Voices and Experience in the United States

Grade 8: Accelerated: (**Please purchase.*) *Justice*

- The Jewish Prophets and the Carmelite Tradition 1 Kings, The Bible
- Making Connections: *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton*
- Encountering Evil: *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding*
- Abusing Power: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell*
- Surviving Repression and Censorship: *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury*
- Facing Calamity: *Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway*
- Rhetoric, Violence and Power: *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare*
(do NOT purchase an abridged or “No Fear” version of Julius Caesar)

Reading Without Walls

A commitment to literature doesn't just happen in the four walls of an English classroom. With that in mind we are expanding the notion of where a student might encounter powerful fiction and thought-provoking non-fiction. We now offer, (at all levels) exciting opportunities for cross-curriculum reading as we are incorporating non-fiction and novels into other subject areas.

Grade 6 will be reading and creating in the MakerSpace with *Calling All Minds* by Temple Grandin. In Grade 7, in Social Studies, students read *Fever, 1793* by Laurie Haulse Anderson and in Grade 8 Science, students will be reading Oliver Sacks's *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat and Other Clinical Tales*.

Drop Everything And Read (DEAR)

In order to foster a deeper appreciation of reading and to help build effective reading habits, students are required to have with them a book or graphic novel of their choosing in their desks at all times. The only activity approved for downtime in class is reading. If students need a new book, they are welcome to borrow any from the teacher and are encouraged to log all the books they read throughout the academic year. Additionally, throughout the week, the teacher may announce “drop everything and read” which means all will be given time for independent reading.

Learning Objectives

Middle School readers will apply reading strategies to improve comprehension. Demonstrate understanding of textual features, determine meaning of vocabulary in context and apply reading comprehension skills to a variety of genres.

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 extensive journaling 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 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 treated thusly. 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 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.