

8th Grade Literature Syllabus

Ms. Willette willette@stjosephsea.org, <http://sjs8lit.weebly.com>

8th Grade Literature uses American Literature and the adolescent experience to explore, analyze and interpret an array of literary genres. Throughout the year, we will build vocabulary through literature and word study, develop an appreciation for and facility with literary elements, hone comprehension strategies, and use writing and creative response to foster critical thinking. Our theme for the year will be “**metamorphosis.**”

I. Class Expectations

Each student will work cooperatively with others, use different forms of technology, discuss ideas and concepts, and gather various pieces of literary, social science, and historical information to meet the goals of this course. Students will be assigned homework each night that should be completed prior to coming to school the next day.

All students will:

- Challenge themselves,
- Work to the best of their ability,
- Participate and cooperate, and
- Take personal responsibility for their learning and homework.

Essential Questions: Every assignment and project done in this class fits into the framework of goals for the course – the academic Essential Questions.

Content-Based Questions:

1. Why do people write for others?
2. How can literature help us understand ourselves and our society?
3. How does conflict and choice impact change?
4. How does the author’s craft shape expression?
5. How does the reader’s POV (point of view) shape perception and response?
6. What are the key aspects of excellent literature?

Skill-Based Questions:

1. How can I use my resources?
2. How can I best substantiate my opinions, beliefs, and arguments?
3. How do reading and writing help me understand?
4. How do reading and writing help others understand me?
5. How do I assess and continue to improve the quality of my work?

Behaviors for Building a Learning Community - 8:

Respect -

- Others, Self & Property
- The Right to Speak & be Heard
- The Learning Environment

Responsibility -

- For Your Own Learning & Other’s Right to Learn
- For Building Community
- For Developing Love, Respect, Integrity (Including Academic Honesty) & Service

Behavioral Consequences for Literature- 8:

1. Verbal warning
2. Removal & Consequence matching the offense
3. Referral & Call to Parents
4. Restitution & Further consequences can apply

II. Academic Procedures

Assignment Sheet: Every three to four weeks each student will receive a calendar outlining the week's reading & writing assignments. Vocabulary tests are usually every 3-4 weeks on Tuesday and cover the words assigned during the prior weeks as well as all prior vocabulary & word parts. Vocabulary is cumulative. Student journals will be collected for review approximately every four to five weeks. **Please check out my 8th grade literature website for the calendar and assignment directions: see <http://sjs8lit.weebly.com> or go to the School website, click on "School Info," scroll down and click on "academics," click on 8th lit and enter my site.**

Resources: We use the McDougal Littell 8th grade anthology in addition to many handouts, websites and novels. We will read from a wide range of genres including whole class novels, poems, short stories, plays, and nonfiction writings such as letters, journal entries etc.. Handouts are to be kept in three-ring binders, organized neatly in the order they were passed out. There will be periodic binder checks to ensure that students keep what they receive in class.

OSB Reading & Projects: Students are required to read approximately **80 pages per week** from either assigned or "Outside Books" (OSB). They must record their daily reading in reading logs and complete two or three OSB Projects over the course of the year.

III. Grading Policy

The grades will be totaled from the points that a student earns on his or her specific assignments. The grading scale will follow the standard percentage scale as outlined in the *Parent Handbook*. Students will earn points for class participation and reading log (10%), daily homework (25%), and assessments (65%) such as tests, writing, quizzes, and projects, which evaluate the student's knowledge in specific content areas, especially vocabulary, spelling, literary terms, writing and basic reading comprehension. The students will also keep a portfolio of their best work to reserve for student led conferences and learning profiles.

Late Work: Students complete most of their daily homework in their journals. When students fail to complete homework assignments, they can redo the assignments before the next Journal check for late points (20% off).

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is a very serious offense and will be dealt with according to the magnitude of malfeasance. Regardless, academic dishonesty will always result in a loss or negation of points. Serious infractions of plagiarism and copying will also result in a referral and phone call home.

IV. Communications

Contact Information: The easiest way to communicate with me is via **email**. I also have a phone extension I periodically check. Whenever you have a concern, question or would like to set up a conference please feel free to contact me via email. Ms. Willette: x 758; willette@stjosephsea.org

V. Course Outline

8th Literature focusing on American Literature will approximately follow this outline:

A. Native American Mythology

- a. Compare Contrast Puritan & Native cultures
- b. Native Myths & Indian identity: compare contrast essay
- c. Modern Myths (Batman, Star Wars, Lord of the Rings etc.)
- d. Adolescent identity
 - i. Childhood & adolescent poetry
 - ii. *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hilton novel study – reviewing comprehension strategies, literary elements and the impact of conflict & choice on adolescent change
 - iii. **Adolescent Novel choice** with OSB & Literature discussion groups

B. Colonial & Revolutionary Eras: Emergence of National Identity

- a. Federalist writings & poetry
- b. Persuasive, poetry & maxim writing

C. Romantic or Civil War Era

- a. Civil War Novels & plotline review
- b. Slave narratives *To Be a Slave*
- c. Dickinson poetry
- d. Emerson's & Whitman's descriptive nature writing

e. 1/2 year Final

D. Naturalism & Realism of the Turn of the Century

- a. Jack London, Mark Twain, *Red Badge of Courage* (sections) & *The Jungle* (sections)
- b. Reality of the Adolescent Experience
 - i. Media analysis: how personifies teens, males, females
 - ii. Personal expression via poetry & memoir
 - iii. Nonfiction study groups – (peer relationships, family dynamics, drugs, violence/suicide, mental illness) & media presentation relating to study group topic

E. Novena of Grace

F. War Years

- a. Harlem Renaissance Research & poster
- b. **Novel studies:** *Mice & Men*, *The Pearl*, *Hiroshima*, *Night*, *Old Man & the Sea*,
- c. War reporting & writing: When is nonfiction false & fiction true?
- d. OSB Choice War Novels

G. Modern Era

- a. Diverse Voices & Cultures
- b. 8th Grade Final
- c. *House on Mango Street*
 - i. Voice & Dialogue
 - ii. Vignette Book

H. Modern Fun = Shakespeare

- a. “Much Ado About Nothing”
- b. Sonnets, Story Boards & Staging

V. Agreement & Signatures

Each student and their parent or guardian needs to read through the course syllabus and sign the following agreement:

Detach and return to Ms. Willette by Friday, Sep.12)

THE LEARNING PROCESS IS THE ULTIMATE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STUDENT.

I, _____, have read and understand the expectations and responsibilities for the 8th Grade Literature. I agree to work towards these expectations by:

- A. Using my assignment sheet & planner
- B. Making reading a routine and reading 80 pages per week
- C. Completing both daily and long term assignments on time
- D. Mastering Vocabulary through repeated study

(student signature)

(date)

I, _____, have read and understand the expectations and responsibilities for my student in the 8th Grade Literature. I agree to work toward helping my student achieve success in this classroom by:

- A. Checking my student's literature calendar
- B. Turning off the computer & TV to encourage my son/daughter to read
- C. Modeling reading
- D. Quizzing my child before literature & vocab tests
- E. Helping my child plan out & schedule long term assignments

(parent/guardian signature)

(date)