

Grade 8 Language Arts with Mrs. Graves

Overview of Studies

Welcome to eighth grade English Language Arts. I have enjoyed teaching English to students in grades 8-12 for many years, and I look forward to teaching you. Please visit my website at kgraves@bownet.org. You may email me at kgraves@bownet.org.

Grading policy - assignments are divided into two categories, formative and summative. Formative grades are calculated as 40% of the quarter grade, and summative grades are calculated as 60%. You may retake an assessment if you need to study the material again and complete additional study material. *Formative homework and other skill-building assignments:* If an assignment is not turned in when due, it is worth 60% of the grade earned thereafter, unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case you should speak with me. An assignment is accepted up to two weeks after it is due, but the grade becomes a zero after the two weeks. All work must be turned in no later than two weeks before the quarter ends. *Summative assignments, such as larger assessments and projects:* If an assignment is not turned in when due, 10% per day will be deducted from the grade earned, up to 40% off, unless there are extenuating circumstances, in which case you should speak with me.

Class Decorum – One word should guide your behavior - RESPECT. Respect yourself, your classmates, and your teacher. Follow the Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.

Units and Skills

English Language Arts is a course in learning how to communicate effectively. The units and skills are not and cannot be studied exclusively from one another. When studying one unit, the other units are touched upon as well. It is the same with skills; using one skill often requires the use of others. Therefore, language arts is a yearlong, continuous spiral of units and skills.

Grade eight language arts focuses on improving and enriching the student's communication skills in: **reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, thinking, and representing**. As the student reads nonfiction, classic and modern short stories, novels, plays, and poetry, he/she completes assignments that require improvement and practical application of all communication skills. As he/she writes on topics in response to the reading, the student learns and practices various forms and styles of writing throughout the year.

Skills in **grammar and usage, spelling, vocabulary, and critical thinking** are studied in individual units and in the everyday reading and writing throughout the year. The student also receives instruction on how to apply the skills to class and homework material.

The specific *units* of study include the following:

Nonfiction, The Short Story, and The Novel

While reading and studying selected nonfiction, short stories, and novels, the student builds skills in vocabulary, inquiry, analysis, and synthesis of ideas, concepts, themes, and literary elements. He/she writes in response to the literature, applying strategic and extended thinking skills.

Writing

As an area of specific instruction and as an integral part of studies throughout the year, writing includes grammar and usage, spelling, active vs. passive voice, form and style, the thesis statement, the topic sentence, the transitional sentence, the 5+ paragraph essay, researching, documentation, citation, purpose, and audience.

Study Skills

This unit includes building skills in studying, taking notes, researching, and outlining. The student practices skills for achieving success this year and in high school, and he/she is guided in the use of these skills throughout the year.

Drama

This is a study of William Shakespeare or another playwright, his/her life and times, theatre, plays, and artistry.

Poetry

In this unit the student acquires knowledge of the various forms and elements of poetry while reading and writing poems.

Literature reflects life, and life reflects literature.

Writing enriches thinking, and thinking enriches writing.