**Grade 8 Core English, 2019-20**

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Hello students and parents! Welcome to another fun and interesting year at Ashbrook! I am very excited and motivated about our study of Language Arts/English. In this course *we will read, we will write, we will talk, and we will learn*. Our class is small and there should be some great opportunities for individualized projects and pursuits according to interests :)

In 8th grade we will think critically about a variety of themes. We’ll achieve this by reading novels, plays, short stories, poems, newspaper articles, and non-fiction pieces, by watching films, by having discussions, and by expressing our thoughts in written and verbal form. **This year we will especially learn and think about overcoming adversity.** For example, our first whole-class text will be *My Antonia*, which chronicles homesteading and immigrant life in the 1880s plains. Later in the year, we’ll read *The Glass Castle* and *A Raisin in the Sun*, among other titles (see below).

We will also improve our grammar, speaking skills, vocabulary acquisition, understanding of literary devices, oral presentation style, reading levels, writing abilities, and more! Our goals and objectives will draw on the Common Core Standards adopted by Oregon, but will also be broader and more reflective of the students’ interests and areas of strengths and areas that need improvement. To become acquainted with the Oregon ELA standards, visit:<http://www.corestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/ELA_Standards1.pdf> and scroll down to page 34 for grades 6-12. Note that our school uses standards as a guideline for responsible and informed teaching, but we also have the freedom to adapt to our needs. Some of the standards will have more emphasis than others in my classroom, based on our school’s mission and my own pedagogical emphases.

\*My preferred salutation(s) is Ms. or Dr. (not Mrs. or surname only).

**Materials:**

Note: *I do not let students go to their lockers to get materials that should have been brought to class.* It is a safety issue and getting organized is a worthy goal. Students have to borrow or otherwise make do when they’ve forgotten materials. Assignments written in highlighter or ink/lead other than blue/black. If I have to struggle too hard with handwriting, I will also hand it back for a re-do.

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| 1 spiral English notebook (provided) | -bring this to class every day  -ONLY English should be included, since I collect them from time to time |
| Pencils, erasers, and pens (provided at the beginning of each term) | -bring this to class every day |
| Vocab books (9th-grade level Prentice Hall *Literature*  and Wordly Wise 3000, 4th edition, level 9, provided)  \*at times I will use “they” rather than “he/she” for singular to promote non-binary language, as recommended by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) | **-**generallystay on the classroom shelves  - if student has homework from the textbook or vocabulary book, then they\* need to bring home their assigned number and then bring it back to class with them  -please keep these books in the condition in which you receive them. Note that if you lose or overly damage a book, you will be responsible for replacing it immediately.  -do NOT write in these books |
| -miscellaneous handouts | -one hard copy will be given to each student; if lost, a student must borrow from a peer, or print out at home from the website IF it’s posted; I am trying to vastly reduce paper use |
| Novels and various classroom library books | -these will be assigned by number, or signed out individually by students |

**Grading breakdown**

The below categories use *averages in those areas*, not an accumulation of points.

The MS grading scale is **A= 90 or higher, B=80-89, C= 70=79, D= 60-69, F=59 or lower.**

Scores and/or letter grades will be posted on MSP in timely manner, generally within one week of a due date or test date. *I’d suggest looking at MSP once a week*, perhaps on Thursdays, so that Friday can be used to ask teachers for clarification if needed and the weekend used to catch up. Please note that it takes multiple grade postings in each category to accurately reflect overall achievement because my class uses weighted categories. I try to annotate scores when explanations are needed.

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| **Writing**  Informal and formal writing opportunities which may be essays, stories, quickwrites, journals, reports, timed responses, reviews, etc.  We will focus on the 6 traits (organization, ideas, voice, conventions, sentence fluency, and word choice) and 4 writing modes (Narrative, Imaginative, Persuasive, Expository). The expectations of quantity grow with each grade level, i.e. 8th graders write the most overall. | 25% |
| **Reading**  Quizzes on reading, keeping to schedule (when appropriate), in-class sustained reading, independent reading units, etc.  \*Note that due to the nature of this subject, some quizzes may have points that are categorized as writing and reading both. | 25% |
| **Projects and Presentations**  Possible projects include research oriented, creative, collaborative, and individual. Emphasis on the content, not artistic merit. Presentation may be formal, informal, memorized or not, individual or group, etc. We will mostly likely prepare one Socratic Seminar. | 20% |
| **Grammar and Vocabulary**  Exercises, quizzes, grammar-specific writing assignments, application to writing assignments and verbal usage. | 20% |
| **Participation and Class Contributions**  Joining in to ask and answer questions, being prepared, engagement in class endeavors. This does NOT include citizenship, which has a separate grading scheme of N (needs improvement), S (satisfactory), and O (outstanding). | 10% |

**Communication**

*Students* are always encouraged to inquire about individual scores on assignments rather than parents. This should happen before class (not as the bell is ringing), as class is ending, during passing time, or by email. *In 8th grade I expect most students at most times to communicate with me directly*. Anything concerning bigger-picture issues or along along behavioral lines I encourage parents to communicate about, but again, if possible, a direct conversation between the student and me is best, with follow up between parents and me. Encourage your student to talk to me and I will also remind them they can always approach me. The family handbook has some new guidelines for communication; please take a look.

**Homework**

Please see the family handbook for general guidelines (p.36-37). For English in 2019-20, I plan to minimize homework to the extent possible. The vast majority of what we need to achieve for high school readiness can be achieved during class hours. I plan to strive for ample preparation time in class for projects, papers, and readings. However, when we are in the midst of a literature unit, there will likely be some additional reading nightly. Note also that some fluctuations are natural to this subject, particularly before a paper or project is due, or if we are reading a lengthy novel. (Papers and novels are part of high school reality.) Please get in touch if the homework load specific to English is feeling too light or too heavy, because we can come up with flexible solutions! Also note that I expect students to *use their class time diligently* to minimize left over work for their evening hours.

\*The 8th grade designated assessment day is Tuesday, which I will try to adhere to as long as it makes reasonable sense.

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| **Grade 8 Core English**  (this list is representative, but not an exhaustive or unchangeable) |
| ***NOVELS***  *My Antonia* by Willa Cather  *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding  *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer  **Literature circles choices** such as: *Refugee* by Alan Gratz, *Animal Farm* by George Orwell, *The Sun is Also a Star* by Nicola Yoon, and others  **Independent novel choices:** approved by teacher  ***NON-FICTION***  *The Glass Castle* by Jeannette Walls; *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot, *The Narrative of Sojouner Truth*, and others |
| ***POETRY***  Various collections and poems Maya Angelou, Robert Frost, Rita Dove, American and British poetry collections |
| ***STORIES***  “My Husband’s Jump” by Jessica Grant; “Chrysanthemums” by John Steinbeck; “A Wagner Matinee” by Willa Cather; and others |
| ***DRAMA* and FILM**  “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” by Shakespeare (and its film version)  “The Importance of Being Earnest” by Oscar Wilde (and its film version)  “A Raisin in the Sun” by Lorraine Hansberry (and its film version) |

Regarding attendance, late work, plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty, we will follow the Family Handbook.

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I have read and understand the syllabus :) Sign and print please, then return to Ms. Gottlieb.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_