

BLUE HERON MIDDLE SCHOOL

3939 San Juan Avenue
Port Townsend, WA 98368
Phone: (360) 379-4540
Fax: (360) 379-4548



Ms. Victoria Kalscheuer, Principal
Ms. Erin O'Leary, Assistant Principal
Grades 6 - 8
<https://blueheron.ptschools.org/>

8th Grade Language Arts Syllabus

KayDee Weddle
Classroom: 604
Phone: 360-680-5692

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

Welcome to Language Arts! I am looking forward to a wonderful year full of adventure and creativity. Below is some basic information about this class and how it works. Let me know if you have any questions.

Course Description/Overview

Coursework is designed to facilitate mastery of the Common Core State Standards and to help you become a better reader, writer, speaker, and thinker. Along this journey, we will enjoy compelling and rich fiction, as well as nonfiction reading.

We will also be working on several cross-curricular activities and place-based learning opportunities this year: US Coast Guard visit, Kilisut Harbor Restoration and Seining Project, and Capitol Tour. We will improve your grammar, advance your vocabulary, increase your confidence, and prepare you for high school.

1.Be here. Be prepared in your assigned seat when class starts. If you fail to show up for class, you are jeopardizing your learning as attendance is imperative to your success. When you are absent, it is your responsibility to check Google Classroom and The Absent File for any missing work or handouts.

2. Be Responsible. Most of your supplies can stay in my classroom, but you must be prepared daily. All assignments are turned into the turn-in tray or on Google Classroom. Please have an outside novel to read at all times, as mandatory reading time will be assigned when we finish an assignment/project early. Each week, you will be required to write the weekly homework and assignments in your planner so you can keep track of your work. You can also find this on our weekly agendas in Google Classroom. All assignments are expected to be turned in on time. All work given is valuable and offers insight into the growth and understanding of the student based on their ability to reach state benchmarks and standards. The 8th-grade team will accept late work **two weeks** after the assigned due date. Once the late work deadline has passed, no late work will be accepted. Assignments turned in after an absence will not be counted as late but must be turned in in a timely manner upon return from an absence. If it exceeds the due date after an absence (for example, if a student is absent four school days, they will get four school days to make up the work and not be counted late), then that assignment will be deemed late and receive the same penalty for late work. It is imperative that students not procrastinate, keep track of their assignments, be timely and prompt, and turn everything in on time.

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3. **Be Respectful.** You must be courteous and respectful to all teachers, students, and guests. There will not be any swearing, name-calling, or snide comments. Your cell phone must be turned off and stowed in your bag unless we use it for class or you're given special permission. Otherwise, it will be sent to the office if misuse occurs. Respecting the learning space includes Chromebook, classroom, materials provided to you, books checked out, etc.

4. **Be Awesome.** Simply put, if you respect others, they will respect you. Be willing to be goofy and laugh but also hard-working and someone everyone enjoys being around daily. Being a hard worker, a critical thinker, and willing to take risks makes my heart happy. If you do all of these things, you will love ELA.

Units of Study

The Habits of Lifelong Readers and Writers
Introduction to Interpretive Work
Superstitions, Patterns, and Control
Dealing with Difficulty
Metaphorically Speaking
Faces of the Essay
Poems as Puzzles

Choice Read Novel Studies

- **Coming of Age Unit**
 - **The Outsiders**
 - **Orbiting Jupiter**
 - **The Hate U Give**
 - **The First Rule of Punk**
- **Climate Change Unit**
 - **Students will pick their own Nonfiction books**
- **Resilience Unit**
 - **Unbroken**
 - **Boys in the Boat**
 - **Games of Deception**

Place-Based Learning Project #1: Civics in Action

Essential Question: Why is it important to be engaged citizens?

Project Overview: Students will research current state legislative bills that affect their community, determine their position on a specific bill, and write a letter to one of their legislators, using evidence and elaboration to support their position. They will apply their

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understanding of state government as they travel to Olympia to tour the Capitol to see where laws are made that affect them and their community. They will participate in a mock trial and experience the judicial system firsthand, and meet with their legislators to advocate for researched bills and issues that are important to them.

Community Partners: Washington State Senator Mike Chapman, Washington State Representatives Steve Tharinger and Adam Bernbaum.

Time Frame: Jan-Feb (Due to possible transportation budget/Capitol tour availability constraints, this trip may be virtual.)

Place-Based Learning Project #2: Kilisut Harbor Restoration Project/Oak Bay Clamming Survey

Essential Question: Why is it important to be good stewards of our environment?

Project Overview: Students will participate in a WDFW clam survey to learn how limits for shellfish collection are established for tribal nations and the general public, multi-year beach seine to collect data on nearshore organisms at the Kilisut Harbor Restoration Site, tour the Navy base to learn its Native American history, and accompany a WDFW invertebrate biologist on a naturalist's interpretive walk during low tide.

Community Partners: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), United States Geological Survey (USGS) with partner National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and U.S Navy (NAVMAG Indian Island base)

Time Frame: May-June

Place-Based Learning Project #3: The Impact of Climate Change on Local Forests

Essential Question: Why is it important to study climate change and its impact on our native forests?

Project Overview: Students will study native trees and the impact that global climate change will have on existing forests.

Community Partner: Jefferson Land Trust

Time Frame- Oct-April

Standards/Benchmarks as stated in the Common Core State Standards

Students will have multiple opportunities to practice the following specific targeted reading and writing skills:

Reading Literature & Informational Text

1. **RL.8.1 / RI.8.1** – Cite the strongest textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and inferences drawn from it.

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2. **RL.8.2 / RI.8.2** – Determine central ideas or themes and analyze their development; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. **RL.8.3 / RI.8.3** – Analyze how particular lines, events, or ideas propel action, reveal character, or shape meaning.

Writing

4. **W.8.1 & W.8.2** – Write arguments and informative/explanatory texts to examine topics, support claims, and convey ideas clearly and logically.
5. **W.8.3** – Write narratives that develop real or imagined experiences with effective techniques, descriptive details, and well-organized sequences.
6. **W.8.9** – Use evidence from literary and informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Speaking & Listening

7. **SL.8.1** – Engage effectively in collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly and persuasively.
8. **SL.8.4** – Present claims and findings in a clear, focused, and organized way, using appropriate evidence and reasoning.

Language

9. **L.8.1 & L.8.2** – Demonstrate command of standard English grammar, usage, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
10. **L.8.4** – Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words using context clues, root words, and reference materials.

Expectations for Success

Students will spend time working independently and in small groups. I encourage all students to develop positive working relationships in the classroom and take responsibility for contributing to the learning environment. Part of the grade a student earns in ELA is based on their participation and positive contribution to the classroom community.

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Grading

Students will show their learning through various summative and formative assessments outlined in the Common Core State Standards. Daily assignments/activities will include journal entries, reading comprehension activities, creative pieces, timed responses, vocabulary quizzes, grammar assignments, current events, and Socratic Seminars. All significant projects or pieces of writing are assessed based on rubrics. Rubrics are given before the completion of the assignment to help students better meet learning targets. Throughout the year, students will keep portfolios of their work and reflect upon their progress. This practice benefits both students and teachers in setting goals for further learning.

Assessment Procedure

Students' grades will be weighted as follows:

Writing (planning, drafts, peer reviews, final drafts, journals, etc.) 30%

Classwork/Assignments 40%

Discussion (This aligns precisely to Speaking and Listening Common Core State Standards) 10%

Quiz/Tests 10%

Participation (engaged in class activities, formative assessment checks, personal responsibility, utilizing class time effectively, etc.) 10%

Anytime you want to know how your child is doing in class, you may access Skyward for their current grades. You may also call or email, and I will send a report home with them.

Grade scale:

A	93% - 100%	B+	87% - 89%	C+	77% - 79%	D+	67% - 69%
A	90% - 92%	B	83% - 86%	C	73% - 76%	D	63% - 66%
-		B-	80% - 82%	C-	70% - 72%	D-	60% - 62%
							59% and below
							NC

Work Completion/Work Habits

All major assignments must be turned in for the student to earn a passing grade for the class. No late work will be accepted one week before the last day of the quarter. All students must read at home for at least 30 minutes each night. While I do not assign homework, any assignments not finished during the allotted class time will need to be completed at home and turned in before the due date.

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Cell Phone Policy

Phones and electronic devices must be silenced and placed out of view in this class. Note to Parents: Please contact your child by calling the office and not calling or texting the student's cell phone. The Blue Heron Handbook has complete details on the phone policy.

Academic Integrity

The student's individually-assigned work must be their own. This includes using a peer's work and AI to create their assignments. If a student cheats or copies work and claims it as their work, they will receive reduced or zero credit on the assignment/test. The student may or may not (at the teacher's discretion) have the opportunity to make up the grade. A parent/guardian will be notified with concerns about questionable academic integrity. In instances of copied work, both parties will receive a score of 0 for the assignment.

A.I. Policy

AI tools may only be used when explicitly directed by the teacher. To ensure students are completing their own work and developing essential skills, many assignments may be required to be handwritten first before being typed or submitted. Any use of AI on assignments without permission will be considered academic dishonesty and will result in a zero on the assignment.

Weddle Weekly

Every Friday, I will send out a newsletter called Weddle Weekly. This will give you a glimpse of the upcoming week. This is sent via Skyward email. If you did not receive this week's Weddle Weekly, please contact the Blue Heron office to confirm the email you have on file. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

How Can Parents Help

The best support you can provide your child in 8th grade ELA is to ask them regularly what we are working on in class. Take an active interest in the subjects your child is exploring. You can stay current on their assignments by checking your child's planner and their Google Classroom.

Contact Information

I am here to assist your student with their learning and hope that you will help make this a positive collaboration for your student to be successful. As mentioned, this is the year students are given much more responsibility and need support and guidance to handle their school work independently. Working as a team is essential for your child to be successful. However, it is your student's responsibility to communicate with their teachers about missing assignments, making up work, and what they can do to improve their grades.

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I am available **by appointment only (unless otherwise notified)**. Students are held accountable for their class work and behavior in class, and I hold them to this standard on a daily basis. If they need extra help, I am available first thing in the morning, for lunch, and on an appointment basis after school. You can always email me, as this is the quickest way to reach me.

Please reach out if you have any questions.

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Detach and return to Ms. Weddle **by September 12th.**

I have read and understood the course syllabus and outline for Ms. Weddle's 8TH ELA.

Student's name (Printed)

Student's Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature

Please ensure ALL SKYWARD INFORMATION IS UP TO DATE, as I use Skyward Messenger for quarterly/unit-based updates! If Skyward is incorrect, please contact the Blue Heron Middle School office.