Hommocks Middle School Curriculum Overview
English: Grade 8

Note: Teachers retain professional discretion in how the learning is presented based on the needs and interests of their students.

Course Description:
Grade 8 English
Full Year

Aligned to the New York State Next Generation Language Arts Learning Standards, this course is designed to engage 8th graders in reading, writing, and discussion around complex texts and ideas centered on the world around them and to prepare them for English at the high school level. At the start of the year, students explore narrative, studying literary elements and narrative craft (e.g. suspense, dialogue, and figurative language) through several short texts. During the year, they read whole class texts together as well as participate in book clubs aligned to their study of American history and contemporary society. Students will research and write informational texts on subjects about which they feel passionate, studying and critiquing models of informational writing in multiple forms. As they grow as critical thinkers, readers and writers, they will learn how to select, research, and compose a persuasive argument, as well as discuss and debate important contemporary issues through literary and nonfiction lenses. This course is further enriched with an infusion of poetry through which students study the craft and creation of figurative language to convey ideas, culminating in an opportunity to create their own original work. In the spring, students study the work of William Shakespeare through excerpts of his comedies, tragedies and sonnets or through the study of a complete play. Students will read, imitate through writing and performance selected works of Shakespeare, analyzing the texts for craft, structure, language and meaning.

Sample units/topics
Reading and Writing Workshop: Narrative
Book Clubs (Various Themes)
Argument & Persuasion
Poetry
Shakespeare
All Thirteen whole class study

Published Writing (6-8 pieces):
Narrative essay
Literary Analysis Essay
Argument Essay and/or Informational text
Shakespeare study

Essential Questions:
- What processes make for successful reading and writing?
- How can we write our stories and read the stories of others to develop empathy?
- How can we build community, while establishing our writer's notebooks and strengthening independent reading?

- How do people overcome adversity? In the face of adversity, what causes some individuals to prevail while others fail?
- How can literature influence public opinion, and lead to meaningful action?
- In communicating with others, how do we use literal and figurative language to write, speak, and present effectively?
- Who is telling the story? Who/what is present or who/what is missing?

Writing:
Aligned to the NYS Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards, this course is designed to help eighth-graders continue to develop their writing stamina over the course of the year by using mentor texts to inform the structure and organization of their writing. Within the writing workshop model, they will utilize a variety of strategies to plan, revise, and strengthen their writing as they work independently and collaboratively with adults and peers to produce texts, and to learn about and develop oral-written language and reading-writing connections. Students will use notebooks to develop thinking and experiment with craft. In addition, they will use more advanced grammar, vocabulary and punctuation with the intention of raising the level of written expression. They will learn how to incorporate MLA9 style and in-text citation technique.

Students will write for multiple purposes– to entertain, to explain, to persuade–and learn about various print and digital tools to produce, share, and publish writing. To do this, students will engage in all aspects of the writing process and will write with depth of thought, precision in language and voice,

Students will follow the routines of the writer's workshop and the writing process. Students will write for multiple purposes such as for communication and enjoyment, as well as learn how to use and adjust the language to best communicate ideas, content, and message to readers. To do this, students will engage in all aspects of the writing process from brainstorming to text and language study, generation of ideas, editing and revision and publishing. Essays are assessed using rubrics.

By the end of this course, students will be able to do the following:
- Write literary analysis developing an original idea (claim) about a text and support for it using cited, textual evidence
- Construct an essay that shows thinking over time, such as following an argument, character arc or the deepening of theme
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, express ideas clearly and persuasively and build on others' ideas
- Evaluate multimedia resources for effectiveness, validity, and purpose
- Conduct research to answer questions, including self-generated questions, drawing on multiple sources and refocusing the inquiry when appropriate
- Generate additional related questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration

In their writing, students will

- Introduce a topic clearly and develop it with relevant supporting information
- Use precise language and specific vocabulary
- Produce clear, coherent, and concise writing that is appropriate to the task, purpose, and audience
- Using transitional words and phrases to transition between ideas
- Gather relevant information from multiple sources to support their topic

- Use punctuation correctly for effect
- Understand connotation vs. denotation
- Use up-to-date MLA citation formatting (MLA 9)

Language Study and Grammar

The study of language and grammar is integrated into the study and practice of writing. Through language study, students are taught to be inquisitive about how language works. Students study mentor texts, their own writing and direct instruction to learn how language works in writing. Grammar is taught in whole-class lessons and in small group or one on one conferences tailored to students' specific needs.

At the sentence level, students will practice

- Identifying how to use pronouns
- Identifying verbs and simple tenses (past, present, and future)
- Making subjects and verbs agree in simple situations
- Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., *precede, recede, secede*).
- Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood.
- Use verbs in the active and passive voice and in the conditional and subjunctive mood to achieve particular effects (e.g., emphasizing the actor or the action; expressing uncertainty or describing a state contrary to fact).
- Using adverbs as modifiers of verbs
- Composing simple, complex and compound sentences
- Recognizing and using appositives
- Recognizing active and passive voice

There are "Non Negotiables" expected in published pieces of writing, including

- Capitalization
- Using end marks
- Using apostrophes for contractions and possessives
- Using commas for dates, addresses, series, direct address, quotations, and compound sentences
- Using quotation marks
- Recognizing basic spelling errors
- MLA formatting for essays

Reading

Over the course of the year, students will read and study a robust range of texts, including whole class texts, book clubs, independent reading and informational and literary short texts.

Skills:

- Determine themes and central ideas and analyze their development over the course of a text and summarize a text

- In literary and informational texts, compare and contrast texts in order to analyze how structure contributes to meaning
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text including figurative and connotative meanings
- Trace an argument or claim in a text, assessing the validity of the argument and supporting evidence
- Identify an author or character's point of view and how it compares to the positions of others.
- Evaluate how different formats contribute to the understanding of a subject

Sample Reading list

Two whole class, full-length novels:
All Thirteen, by Christina Soontornvat (nonfiction)
In addition, teachers choose from: *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, *Disability Visibility* by Alice Wong (nonfiction), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, *Furia* by Yamile Saied Mendez (fiction), *The Last Cuentista* by Donna Barba Higuera (fiction)

Sample Book Clubs: *Salt to the Sea, We Are Not Free, The Port Chicago 50, Unbroken, Almost American Girl: An Illustrated Memoir, Efren Divided, Front Desk, Illegal, Land of the Cranes***,** *A Land of Permanent Goodbyes, Outcasts United, All the Light We Cannot See, White Rose*

Short texts (sample list): Student Voice: 100 Essays by Students (New York Times) , "I Have a Dream" by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "I, Too" by Langston Hughes, Shakespeare sonnets and excerpts, "The Lottery," "Thank You, Ma'am," personal narrative: excerpts from works by Kwame Alexander, Elizabeth Acevedo, Ralph Fletcher and Jacqueline Woodson
Independent Reading: guided student choice

Standards:
New York State ELA Standards