

2026-2027 8th Grade English- Introduction to Literature

COURSE SYLLABUS AND POLICIES

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Office Hours: Thursday, 2:40-3:30 & by appointment

SYLLABUS NOTE

Each student is responsible for knowing the information outlined in this course syllabus. Please keep a copy of this document and refer to it regularly. Information may be subject to change; students will be notified by the instructor of any changes in course requirements or policies, and changes will be posted on the class website.

COMMUNICATION POLICY

Please use my BFCS email address to communicate with me. Be sure to label all messages with a brief subject description. I urge you to contact me as soon as you have a question or a concern via email. Please don't wait until the last minute to ask for help with an assignment in case I am unable to get back to you right away.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is based on reflective reading and writing essays using textual analysis. In this class, students will learn to read, write, and think logically and produce sound arguments based on thoughtful interpretation. Students will read novels and stories chosen for their timelessness and thematic depth and will be graded on discussion and insight. The course will touch on cultural, historical, societal, and other issues, and students are expected to discuss these issues objectively and understand them within the context of literature.

Books

Students must have the book in class on the day it is due – please plan accordingly. *** Additional reading selections will be taken from the 8th Grade Reader.*

- *My Brother Sam is Dead*, James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier
- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain
- *Shane*, Jack Schaefer
- *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
- *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*, John Boyne
- *Animal Farm*, George Orwell
- BFHS 8th Grade History and English Reader

MATERIALS NEEDED

- One **college-ruled** spiral notebooks for daily use and class notes
- Loose leaf **college-ruled** paper
- A binder or folder to organize handouts, worksheets, and other materials
- Black, blue, and red pens
- Pencils
- Highlighters (and an optional set of Sticky Notes) for annotations
- Colored pencils

COURSE CONTENT

Socratic Seminars and Novel Discussions

Throughout the course, ***students are required to participate in Socratic Seminars and Novel Discussions*** which allows them to develop their reflective thinking skills and oral communication.

Essays and Major Assignments

All work is due on the due date and must adhere to APA formatting norms, including margins, font, font size, and title requirements. Email submissions are not permitted unless otherwise noted. ***All essays and major assignments are mandatory and must be completed. Because of the overall volume of essays, they will be graded within two weeks of the due date.***

A note about essays and major assignments: You are expected to share your writing with others. Please avoid writing about things that you may not be prepared to share with other students. In addition, avoid writing about subjects about which you feel incredibly strongly and are unable to openly discuss alternative perspectives.

Homework: Students should anticipate homework being assigned every night. Typically homework will consist of reading the current novel or story assigned in preparation for the following day's class discussion. Homework could also consist of writing and/or grammar assignments. Homework assignments will be explained in class and should be written in the appropriate space in the student's agenda.

Absent and late work: Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the deadline provided by the teacher. No late work is accepted. Students are responsible for any material covered during an absence. That means that students must check the teacher website, get the notes from another student, and then meet with Ms. Ferguson. Students must do this the day they return to school. If a student misses an in-class assignment, they must make it up within two days of their return to school. Any work a student misses shall be marked as a zero until make up work is received. Ms. Ferguson is not responsible for reminding students of missed work. It is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with Ms. Ferguson to turn in missing work due to an absence from school.

Sports/Extracurricular Work Policy: Absences for **school sponsored events, trips, or games, or other extracurricular activities** are not considered an absence from class and therefore do not receive any extended time for completion or submission.

NOVEL DISCUSSIONS AND SOCRATIC SEMINARS: Throughout the course, students are required to participate in Socratic Seminars and Novel Discussions which allows them to develop their reflective thinking skills and oral communication using self-generated questions. As seminars are a key component of instruction at Benjamin Franklin High School, points for missed seminars may only be made up through both of the following:

- Completing a written assignment given to the student upon their return to class and submitting it within the time given for an excused absence (counts for 60% max of total possible points)
- Attending a conference period on the following Wednesday (Room 204) of the missed seminar to participate in a make-up discussion with peer(s) and/or teacher (counts for remaining 40%); students who do not attend conference for any reason, can only receive up to a 60% on the missed seminar.

GRADING

Grading is figured using a weighted system. Your grade will be based on a combination of effort and progress toward the following:

GRADING CATEGORY	WEIGHTED VALUE
Discussions	25%
Homework/Classwork	15%
Essays	20%
Quizzes/Tests	20%
Final Semester Exam	20%

GRADING SCALE	
89% - 80%	B
79% - 70%	C
69% - 60%	D
59% - Below	F

- Participation includes but is not limited to: daily classroom behavior and participation; being prepared for class (i.e. have your novel and other supplies with you!)
- Essays and Long-Term Assignments includes but is not limited to: reading logs/journals; in-class and extended essays, projects.
- Tests and Quizzes include but are not limited to: grammar and vocabulary quizzes; reading quizzes; exams.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDY POLICY

Students who miss school time lose valuable classroom instruction. It is essential for students to attend school daily. There may be times when a student must be absent due to illness. Parents should make every effort to schedule appointments after school to prevent students from missing essential elements of their education.

Arizona State law requires that parents ensure that their children between the ages of six and sixteen attend school. On the fifth unexcused absence or 18 total excused/unexcused absences, regardless of the reason, the parent or guardian of the child could be issued a citation for a violation of an Arizona Revised Statute §15-803. The school tardy policy will be followed and strictly enforced.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

“It is more honorable to fail than to cheat.” – Abraham Lincoln

Academic integrity is not just an educational matter but a moral one as well. A major aspect of classical education is instruction on growing in character and our goal of becoming a virtuous person. With this in mind, BFHS takes very seriously the willful misrepresentation of another student’s work as their own. This includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (intentional or unintentional), cheating on exams, any use of AI-generated responses, and copying the work of other students. Using AI, in any capacity, is prohibited and is regarded as academic dishonesty.

BFHS uses a variety of tools to uphold academic integrity via plagiarism similarity reports and generative AI probability. Any papers submitted with a plagiarism similarity report of 25% or more and/or returned as 25% or more of “qualifying text...[being] determined to be generated by AI” may not be accepted for credit. Suspected papers will be reviewed by the teacher and could result in a conference with the student and/or parent.

Consequences can include but are not limited to referral to administration and a score of 0 on the paper. Students are required to draft all of their written work using their school Google account and Google Drive. This allows teachers the ability to check version and revision histories to help mitigate plagiarism (intentional or unintentional) as well as the use of generative AI on a portion or all of the writing assignment.

DAILY ROUTINE

Class begins as soon as the bell rings. Please be in your seat working when the bell rings.

Upon entering the class, please enter quietly, turn in homework, collect all new paper/ assignments, get out other required materials, put backpacks on a hook in the back of the room, take your assigned seat, and begin working on the bellwork.

At your seats, you should have all required materials including: paper, pens, and any homework due that day.

Each morning there will be an assignment for you to do at the beginning of class. Please begin the bell work as soon as the bell rings to begin class. We will often open class with a short discussion on our responses.

At the end of class:

Please do not begin packing up until I have dismissed you.

Please return all materials to their proper place and leave the classroom as neat and tidy as possible.

Complete your Exit Ticket before you leave the classroom.

Transition Between Activities

Class time is valuable and limited. Please transition between assignments and activities as quickly and quietly as you can.

All materials that are no longer needed should be returned to their proper place and the new materials acquired.

FOOD and DRINK: Students are not allowed to eat in my classroom at any time. Water is permitted, but it must be in a bottle with a closable lid.

BATHROOM POLICY: Students are expected to remain in class for the duration of the class, so please use passing periods to use the restroom. However, in emergency situations, you will be given 1 bathroom pass per quarter. You are **required to sign in/out**. Bathroom passes NOT used during the quarter may be submitted for extra credit. Please note: the teacher reserves the right to ask you to wait so the educational process is not disrupted.

HOMEWORK POLICY: In order to receive credit for homework, all work must be done completely. Partial work will receive zero credit for a homework assignment. Students have a responsibility to label all assignments with their names and to turn in work that is legible. The teacher reserves the right to not grade any work that has no name and/or is illegible. Cursive is required for all assignments unless otherwise instructed.

TECHNOLOGY: All students are to use technology for the purpose of learning. Any student using technology for any material not related to the class might receive a detention and/or have the technology banned for use in class.

VISITOR POLICY: Students are to continue working on class material and/or participating in class discussion if or when a visitor comes to class.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

All school rules will be upheld in this classroom. For further details not covered in this syllabus, please refer to the [Family Handbook](#).

You will find the instructor holds all students accountable, and expects:

- Positive language at all time (this instructor has a ZERO tolerance policy for discriminatory language)
- Daily preparedness for class (arriving to class on time, bringing required supplies, completing assigned work)
- Contribution to class discussions
- Appropriate input and involvement in group tasks
- Attentiveness and preparation for presentations
- Preparedness for minor tasks that build towards larger tasks
- Appropriate, professional, respectful behavior during engaging discussion and class activity
- Respect for the opinions and property of each of your classmates (assume positive intent)
- Students to attend Conference or Tutoring when struggling

FOR PARENTS

In an effort to help your child be more successful in class and as a part of our BFHS community, I would like you to use the following parent tools:

- **PowerSchool:** student grades and attendance are housed here; please note that grades are updated a minimum of once a week.
- [Teacher website:](#) features weekly lesson plans with due dates, classwork/homework, links to documents handed out in class, and other resources.

TEACHING LITERATURE RHETORICALLY

At Benjamin Franklin High School, the English department strives to select literature that touches on deep themes and profound moral truths that relate directly to the human condition. As such, we, as a school, adamantly seek to lead our students to that which is true, good, and beautiful. However, for students to be able to fully recognize that which is true, good, and beautiful, sometimes they need to be able to see its inverse.

We have a moral obligation to learn from the human experiences of the past; we cannot understand where we are going unless we know where we have been. We do that by studying past humans who have lived, how they addressed their current issues, and how they imagined their futures. The best way to do that is to read what they wrote and to try to understand it from their time period.

To that end, we teach literature rhetorically:

From literature, we learn about the transformative power of stories, the gift of imagination, the pleasures of reading, and the importance of craft. From rhetoric, we learn about critical reasoning, the structure of arguments, the tools of persuasion, and the significance of context. Combining the two gives students the best of both worlds. (Jennifer Fletcher, *Teaching Literature Rhetorically*)

Through explicit guidance, our teachers provide students with a controlled environment in which they can carefully guide their students through difficult themes. Where other schools may shy away from such a task, our students *get* to confront and develop healthy and correct responses to and/or rejections of hatred, selfishness,

bigotry, and rage. Studying novels wherein the characters have experienced those traumas, we inoculate our students and inculcate them with ideals of wisdom, self-control, respect, and love for those around them.

Upon our students' graduation, it is our hope the literature and philosophical concepts we have discussed will have prepared them to enter the world as virtuous adults, adults who cling to what is good while knowing how to identify and firmly reject what is morally unjust.

PARENTS:

Please scan the QR code or follow this [link](#) to sign the Syllabus Acknowledgement Form.

