

Full Year 9-12 ELA Curriculum

Instructional Philosophy & Vertical Design

This curriculum is built on progressive analytical growth. Students do not simply read harder books each year, they develop deeper ways of thinking.

Each grade level intentionally builds toward independence.

Vertical Skill Progression

9th Grade — Structure & Foundation

Students learn how literature works.

Focus:

- Plot, conflict, character, theme
- Text evidence and paragraph structure
- Foundational argument writing
- Structured discussion

Goal: Students leave 9th grade able to make clear claims and support them with evidence.

10th–11th Grade — Complexity & Ideology

Students move from identifying meaning to evaluating meaning.

Focus:

- Symbolism and allegory
- Author's purpose and social commentary
- Power, systems, and human behavior
- Thesis-driven literary analysis
- Counterargument and rhetorical precision

Goal: Students analyze not just what a text says, but why it says it — and who it impacts.

12th Grade — Independence & Application

Students apply critical thinking beyond the classroom.

Focus:

- Literary criticism lenses
- Advanced rhetorical analysis
- Research and synthesis
- Professional and real-world writing

Goal: Students graduate able to analyze complex ideas, defend positions with nuance, and communicate effectively in academic and professional settings.

Across all grades, instruction prioritizes:

- Clear learning targets
- Text-centered analysis
- Structured writing progression
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Depth over coverage

9–12 Vertical Skills Progression Chart

Core Skill Development Across Four Years

Skill Area	9th Grade	10th–11th Grade	12th Grade
Reading Complexity	Plot, character, theme, structure	Symbolism, social commentary, author's purpose	Literary criticism lenses, ideological critique
Annotation	Guided annotation system	Independent close reading	Advanced rhetorical and lens-based annotation
Literary Analysis	Paragraph-based responses	Multi-paragraph analytical essays	Thesis-driven, lens-based literary criticism
Argument Writing	Claims + evidence + reasoning	Counterargument + sophistication	Nuanced, rhetorically mature argumentation
Research Skills	Mini research project	Formal research paper	Thematic or comparative research

Discussion Skills	Structured Socratic seminars	Student-led discussion	Seminar leadership & synthesis
Poetry Analysis	Figurative language & tone	Comparative poetry analysis	Structural & postmodern analysis
Drama & Shakespeare	Plot & character focus	Thematic & rhetorical analysis	Performance + philosophical analysis
Vocabulary	Context clues + foundational terms	Academic vocabulary & rhetoric	Discipline-specific vocabulary & precision
Grammar	Sentence clarity & conventions	Style & sentence variety	Rhetorical precision & concision
Writing Revision	Guided revision process	Peer workshop & structural revision	Independent refinement & voice development
Real-World Application	Creative projects	Research & synthesis	Career writing & financial literacy

*** Units are flexible and can be extended or condensed based on student need and schedule structure.**

9th Grade – Foundations & Literary Thinking

Theme of the Year: Building the Analytical Reader

Core Focus: Structure, evidence, confidence, routine

Writing Progression: Narrative → Argument → Literary Analysis → Research

Ongoing Skills: Grammar spiral, vocabulary in context, annotation, discussion norms

Quarter 1 – Identity, Archetypes, & Foundations (Weeks 1–9)

Essential Question: What shapes a hero?

Weeks 1–2

- Classroom systems & annotation framework
- Diagnostic writing
- Narrative writing mini-unit
- Short stories (literary elements review)
- Grammar + sentence structure foundations

Weeks 3–6

- *The Odyssey*
 - Hero's Journey structure
 - Epic conventions
 - Character arc tracking
 - Socratic seminar
 - Paragraph-based literary analysis

Weeks 7–8

- Analytical essay (text-based)
- Hero's Journey creative project

Week 9

- Quarter assessment
 - Reflection + revision cycle
 - Vocabulary review
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Quarter 2 – Power, Allegory, & Persuasion (Weeks 10–18)

Essential Question: How does power shape truth?

Weeks 10–11

- Argument writing foundations
- Claims, evidence, reasoning
- Rhetorical appeals
- Nonfiction annotation

Weeks 12–15

- *Animal Farm/Lord of the Flies*
 - Allegory & satire
 - Political messaging
 - Theme tracking
 - Argumentative essay

Weeks 16–17

- Nonfiction pairings
- Debate / Socratic seminar
- Timed argument writing

Week 18

- Quarter exam
- Writing portfolio check

Quarter 3 – Human Nature, Dreams, & Disillusionment (Weeks 19–27)

Essential Question: What happens when dreams collide with reality?

Weeks 19–21

- Poetry unit
 - Imagery
 - Tone
 - Figurative language
 - Structural analysis
 - Comparative poetry writing

Weeks 22–25

- *Of Mice and Men/Fahrenheit 451*
 - Symbolism
 - Character psychology
 - Theme development
 - Literary analysis essay

Weeks 26–27

- Creative thematic project
 - Grammar spiral review
 - Mid-year skills benchmark
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Quarter 4 – Fate, Choice, & Consequence (Weeks 28–36)

Essential Question: Are we ruled by fate or free will?

Weeks 28–32

- Shakespeare (*Romeo & Juliet*)
 - Drama conventions

- Close reading
- Performance-based analysis
- Comparative essay

Weeks 33–34

- Research mini-unit
- Literary analysis extension

Weeks 35–36

- Final portfolio
- End-of-year reflection
- Cumulative exam

10th–11th Grade – Analysis, Discussion, & Rhetoric

Theme of the Year: Literature as Social Commentary

Core Focus: Thematic depth, academic writing, seminar leadership

Writing Progression: Analytical → Argument → Comparative → Research

Ongoing Skills: Vocabulary study, rhetorical analysis, revision cycles

Quarter 1 – Voice, Structure, & Close Reading (Weeks 1–9)

Essential Question: How do authors shape meaning?

Weeks 1–2

- Diagnostic literary analysis
- Annotation refinement
- Academic paragraph structures

Weeks 3–6

- Short story unit (Kafka, Hawthorne, Jackson, Bradbury)
 - Psychological & symbolic reading
 - Timed analysis writing

Weeks 7–8

- Argument refresh
- Rhetorical strategies

Week 9

- Quarter assessment

Quarter 2 – Society, Morality, & Power (Weeks 10–18)

Essential Question: What does literature reveal about society?

Core Novel Options:

- *Lord of the Flies*
- *To Kill a Mockingbird*
- *The Great Gatsby*
- *Frankenstein*
- *The Crucible*

Weeks 10–15

- Full novel study
- Socratic seminars
- Analytical essay

Weeks 16–17

- Drama unit
- Performance + thematic writing

Week 18

- Timed literary analysis
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Quarter 3 – Identity, Culture, & Conflict (Weeks 19–27)

Essential Question: How does culture shape identity?

Weeks 19–22

- Full poetry unit
- Comparative poetry essay

Weeks 23–26

- *A Raisin in the Sun*
 - Cultural analysis
 - Thematic exploration
 - Seminar discussion

Week 27

- AP-style synthesis practice
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Quarter 4 – Control, Dystopia, & Research (Weeks 28–36)

Essential Question: How does power control society?

Weeks 28–31

- 1984 or dystopian pairing
- Research paper

Weeks 32–34

- Memoir project
- Narrative revision

Weeks 35–36

- Portfolio defense
- Final seminar

12th Grade – Analysis & College/Career Readiness

Theme of the Year: Meaning, Responsibility, & Legacy

Core Focus: Independent thinking, rhetorical mastery, transition to adulthood

Writing Progression: Literary criticism → Argument → Research → Professional writing

Ongoing Skills: Advanced vocabulary, rhetorical precision, revision workshops

Quarter 1 – Identity & Literary Lenses (Weeks 1–9)

Essential Question: How do we interpret meaning?

Weeks 1–2

- Diagnostic essay
- Personal narrative

Weeks 3–6

- *The Great Gatsby* or *Frankenstein*
 - Literary criticism lenses
 - Advanced thesis development
 - Socratic leadership

Weeks 7–8

- Rhetorical analysis

Week 9

- Timed AP-style essay
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Quarter 2 – Memory, Power, & Responsibility (Weeks 10–18)

Essential Question: What responsibility do individuals have to society?

Weeks 10–14

- 1984, *The Crucible*, or *The Kite Runner*
 - Thematic research paper
 - Comparative discussion

Weeks 15–17

- Comparative literary analysis

Week 18

- Quarter exam
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Quarter 3 – Voice, Irony, & Intellectual Maturity (Weeks 19–27)

Essential Question: How do language and performance shape truth?

Weeks 19–22

- Advanced poetry unit
- Structural and voice analysis

Weeks 23–26

- Shakespeare (*Much Ado About Nothing*)
- Performance-based rhetoric
- Literary analysis essay

Week 27

- Timed literary analysis
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Quarter 4 – Transition, Application, & Legacy (Weeks 28–36)

Essential Question: What does it mean to leave well?

Weeks 28–30

- Resume
- Cover letter
- Interview simulations

Weeks 31–33

- Financial literacy
- Real-world writing

Weeks 34–35

- Senior memory book
- Reflective essay

Week 36

- Capstone presentations
- Exit portfolio
- Course reflection