

Thurston Middle School Grade 7 English Language Arts

Introduction

In Grade 7, students continue to practice reading closely, writing in a variety of genres, listening with care, and speaking confidently. We encourage students to ask thoughtful questions about words, stories, and people as they explore our central literary theme: what does it mean to grow up?

Class Texts

The focus of close reading for class texts is to identify literary elements and examine how authors use them to create well-crafted texts, vibrant characters, and thought-provoking themes. Possible books include, but are not limited to the following titles:

- *The Crossover* (K. Alexander) -- Told in verse, 2015 Newbery Award winner *The Crossover* is the story of Josh Bell, a young man struggling to find his way as he grows up both on and off the basketball court. Students use the poems in the book as mentor texts, crafting their own poetry centering around the theme of identity: what makes us who we are?
- *The Outsiders* (S.E. Hinton) -- Where do you belong? Even though Ponyboy is a Greaser, he is unlike the others he hangs out with. His love of sunsets and books separate him from the others. Is he an Outsider in his own group? We consider the themes of this novel; students also view the film and complete an assignment comparing and contrasting the film and novel.
- *Twelve Angry Men* (R. Rose) -- An active and engaging play that utilizes not just dialogue but also detailed stage directions. Through this play we investigate characterization as we learn about the different personalities of the jury members. We also consider the question of what “justice” is.
- *American Born Chinese* (G.L. Yang) -- A graphic novel told in three interwoven stories, this Printz Award winner and National Book Award finalist captures the complicated self-image of an Asian-American boy in a mostly white school. We learn how to analyze and closely read images and respectfully discuss the multifaceted topics of diversity and identity.
- *The Golden Compass* (P. Pullman) -- In a universe *almost* like ours, a girl longing for an adventure is thrown into one far greater - and more mysterious - than she could have imagined. As Lyra sets out

to rescue a friend and seeks answers to her questions, students learn to use their own questions to guide our reading and discussions.

- *The Graveyard Book* (N. Gaiman) -- Winner of the Newbery Award in 2009, *The Graveyard Book*, a loose homage to Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, follows Nobody Owens, a boy who finds an unusual family among ghosts in a graveyard. Students work on metacognitive reflection as they read, focusing on what questions Gaiman deliberately leaves unanswered and making inferences across the text.
- *The Little Prince* (A. de Saint-Exupéry) -- Part fable, part modern-day fairy tale, this classic French novella tells the story of a stranded pilot and the unusual voyager he encounters in the desert. While the plot is simple, the story challenges students to think deeply about life and human nature - as well as how authors tell stories.

Independent Reading

When we read books, we learn English in its best setting. We see vocabulary in context, internalize countless grammatical conventions, and build a knowledge base of idioms and references. We pay attention to details and nuance in form. We build stamina of sustained attention. We rehearse empathy and expand cultural literacy. And, best of all, when we read books we like and choose ourselves, we hardly notice how much our minds grow. For more information and research on the value of self-selected choice reading, [visit Ms. Iden's classroom website.](#)

Poetry

Seventh grade poetry units focus on the poetic elements, specific poetic forms, and various strategies for reading and analyzing poetry. The poems listed are a sample of those used in class; as with the novels, poems vary by teacher.

- "Introduction to Poetry" (B. Collins)
- "On Turning Ten" (B. Collins)
- "Nothing Gold Can Stay" (R. Frost)
- "Invictus" (W.E. Henley)
- "Southbound on the Freeway" (M. Swenson)

Short Stories

As in Grade 6, short stories are used for close reading and analyzing the specific literary elements that appear and are developed throughout the story. We also look at how authors' writing styles vary. Possible titles include:

- “On Turning an Every Day Ordinary Hoop Court into a Place of Higher Learning With You at the Podium” (M. de la Peña)
- “The Difficult Path” (G. Lin)
- “The Scarlet Ibis” (J. Hurst)
- “The Landlady” (R. Dahl)
- “All Summer in a Day” (R. Bradbury)
- “Thank You, M’am” (L. Hughes)
- “Zlatah the Goat” (B. Singer)
- “The Names They Gave Me” (T. Herwees)

Grammar

Topics include:

- Sentence fragments and run-ons, including identifying how sentence length and structure create meaning
- Subject and verb agreement, especially when interrupted by a prepositional phrase
- Application of common grammar rules to seventh-grade-level sentences and students’ own writing
- Agreement of pronouns and antecedents

Mechanics

Topics include:

- Correct comma usage
- Using quotation marks in dialogue and when using quotations in essays
- Semi-colons versus colons
- Application of writing mechanics to seventh-grade-level sentences and students’ own writing

Vocabulary

Students will learn to approach vocabulary in a variety of ways, such as through roots, prefixes, and suffixes, word formations, and part of speech. Vocabulary is taught through both contextual and traditional methods.

Assessment

Students are assessed in a variety of ways, including class participation, tests, quizzes, and many writing assignments.