

St. Clement's School
Course Outline
Eighth Grade Language Arts
Fall Semester

This course outline is a general guide to familiarize students and parents with an overview of Eighth Grade English Language Arts for the fall semester; however, the rate of progress may vary depending on the learning pace that students accomplish. Course content is divided into four areas: Literature, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Writing.

I. Literature

A. *Of Mice and Men*

1. Author study of John Steinbeck
2. Background study of the Great Depression, migrant workers
3. Themes: friendship, loyalty, difficult choices
4. Literary elements: plot, characterization, conflict, setting

B. *To Kill a Mockingbird*

1. Genre study: historical fiction
2. Author study of Harper Lee and the Pulitzer Prize
3. Background study of the Old South, race and racism in America, and civil rights
4. Themes: compassion, justice, honor, and conviction
5. Literary elements: author's style, symbolism, diction and dialect

C. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

1. Genre study: dramatic conventions
2. Author study of William Shakespeare and the Elizabethan theater
3. Background study of comedy and tragedy ~ from Aristotle to the present day
4. Literary elements: rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.

II. Vocabulary

- A. Weekly vocabulary words
- B. Review of dictionary skills
- C. Study of Latin and Greek root words
- D. Use of context clues to determine meaning
- E. Weekly vocabulary/spelling quizzes (every Friday)

III. Grammar

A. The mechanics of writing

1. Capitals and lower case
2. apostrophes
3. commas, colons and semi-colons
4. quotation marks and italics
5. sentence fragments and run-ons

B. Review of the parts of speech:

1. subjects and predicates (simple, complete, compound)
2. action verbs and helping verbs
3. verbals: infinitives, participles, and gerunds
4. adjectives and adjective phrases
5. adverbs and adverb phrases
6. prepositions and prepositional phrases
7. appositive phrases
8. complements: direct and indirect objects
9. complements: predicate nominatives and predicate adjectives
10. Homonyms and words often misspelled

IV. Writing

- A. Students will keep a Writing Folder in the classroom, and will work in class on writing assignments on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Their rough drafts, revisions, and final drafts will be kept in the folders and the teacher will meet with students individually to go over writing skills and make suggestions. Writing assignments will include:
1. a personal narrative
 2. a descriptive essay
 3. a persuasive essay
 4. one or more literary essays about material they are reading
 5. poems and short stories
 6. outlining text
 7. paraphrasing text
 8. summarizing text
 9. a short research paper, using MLA format to cite sources.
- B. The writing process will consist of a pre-write, rough draft, revision, peer editing, final revision, and final draft. All steps in the writing process must be completed to get full credit for the final paper, and most of this will be done in class. All final papers must be typed, double-spaced, using 12 font Times New Roman font. Throughout the semester, students will monitor their own progress in writing skills, along with one-on-one conferences with the teacher.
- C. Students will use MLA format when citing sources for a report or research paper: this includes using parenthetical citations within their paper, with a Works Cited page at the end.

Learning Objectives:

- ~ **READ** with insight and comprehension ~ identifying literary elements, interpreting irony and symbolism, and analyzing characters and their actions;
- ~ **SPEAK** with clarity and purpose, using expanded vocabulary and correct grammar;
- ~ **WRITE** clearly, stating a thesis and supporting it, and using precise vocabulary, correct spelling and grammar, and appropriate voice and diction in essays, reports, and their own creative endeavors.

Grading:

Homework*	25%
Reading checks and quizzes	25%
English Notebook	15%
Major projects/Tests*	20%
Class participation	15%

* Grades given for writing assignments and essays will be counted either as homework or a project, depending on the nature of the assignment.