

8th Grade Language Arts Syllabus - Hillview Middle School

Teacher: Mrs. Kausen “Mrs. K”

Location: Room 507

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Welcome to Language Arts!

In this class we will practice and improve upon our skills in both reading and writing. At bottom, improving in both of these areas requires that you improve your ability to critically think. We are going to be thinkers in this class and will actively work at improving our reading and writing abilities by refining our capability to think clearly, logically, and critically about a host of topics important in the world today.

Clear thinking is essential to becoming a skilled reader and writer. It's my goal to provide you with opportunities to practice critical thinking in a learning environment that is engaging, thought-provoking, and safe. By the end of this year, my hope is that you will have grown into a more discerning reader, a creative writer, a cooperative collaborator, a compelling oral communicator, and overall a more informed and critical thinking citizen.

Required Materials:

- Pens - black/blue and red
- Pencils
- Highlighter(s) - any 4 colors
- 1-inch 3-Ring Binder with 5 dividers
- Lined notebook paper
- Reading book (student choice)

Novel List:

Lord of the Flies, by William Golding
The Boy in the Striped Pajamas, by John Boyne
Chasing Lincoln's Killer, by James L. Swanson

Assignments:

- **Writing** (essays, reflections, journals, portfolio)
- **Reading** (reading quizzes, comprehension activities, projects)
- **Speaking and Listening** (class discussion activities, presentations)
- **Grammar** (class practice, quizzes)
- **Vocabulary** (class activities, quizzes)
- **Homework/Classwork** (take-home assignments and participation)

Classroom Guidelines: In order to ensure that every student has the opportunity to learn in a safe and productive environment, I have set specific guidelines for the way students must behave in my classroom:

- **Respect:** Students will engage with others in a respectful manner, refraining from negative or rude comments (this includes situations on class websites and online discussion boards as well as in the classroom).
- **Responsibility:** Students must be prepared to work in class each day, bringing in all necessary materials and assignments.
- **Focus:** Students are expected to be on task and working effectively, following directions and avoiding distracting behaviors.
- **Participation:** Students will be asked to actively participate in class activities and discussions, giving an honest effort.

Consequences for Choosing Not to Follow Classroom Guidelines:

- Nonverbal warning - “Stink Eye”
- Verbal Warning
- Written Warning
- Lunch Detention
- Office Referral and Call Home

Class Website: This course will be available in Google Classroom. A link to the website can be found inside your Google apps. To join, make sure to input the following code:_____. I will update this website every school day. You will have access to class worksheets, PowerPoint presentations, homework assignments, and project/essay guidelines. Students may ask questions and request clarification on assignments directly in Google Classroom to which I will do my best to respond as soon as possible.

Binder: Notes will be taken almost daily. You will be required to organize and keep these notes throughout the course. Many consider organization as an essential element to academic success. As such, your notebook must be a three ring binder with 5 dividers. Binder sections must include: *Reading, Writing, Vocabulary & Grammar, Handouts, and Graded Work.* Binder checks will occur periodically for credit.

Homework: There will be a variety of homework assignments in this course. Homework can include readings, short answer responses, essays, online discussion board posts, and projects. To receive full credit on assignments you must *turn in your work on time.* Homework will always be due the next class period unless otherwise noted. If due dates are later than our next class period, these will be made clear in class as well as on our Google Classroom. Be sure to keep all graded work until the end of each semester.

Late Work Policy: You cannot receive full credit on an assignment unless you turn it in on time. If you need to turn in an assignment late the final score will drop by 10% each day past the due date. A zero will immediately be added on PowerSchool & will be updated at the teacher’s convenience when the work is turned in. Late work will no longer be accepted after one week. Online assignments submitted late must have a Past Due form filled out.

Absent Policy: It is your responsibility to find out what work you missed while you were absent. I will post our daily agenda, homework assignments, and any worksheets passed out during class onto our Google Classroom at the end of the school day. You will also find PowerPoint presentations shown during your absence on Google Classroom so you can make up the notes you missed. If you ask me what it was you missed I will always refer you to Google Classroom.

Quizzes: We will have quizzes on a variety of lessons. These will mostly be scheduled to give you a chance to study, however, there will be an occasional pop quiz to ensure students are studying and reviewing their notes daily.

Tests: We will have tests on class notes which will detail the material we’ve covered. Additionally, we will have written response essays where I will be looking for evidence that you have comprehended specific writing styles and techniques we will be working on.

Restroom Usage: Students should use the restroom before class. However, each quarter students will be given two opportunities to use the restroom. If these remain unused they will each be worth five points extra credit. If the student chooses to use both during the quarter they will have no more bathroom trips available until the following quarter.

Electronics:

All electronics are to be turned off or silenced and put away into a backpack. Unless otherwise noted, students may not have any electronics out during class.

Tardy Policies:

It is critical that students arrive to class on time. School policies will be enforced. Please refer to your Planner for the school's tardy policies.

Cheating/Plagiarism:

Academic honesty is extremely important. If a student is found cheating or plagiarizing on any assignment, all students involved will receive a zero on the assignment and a call home.

Grading Scale:

- A = 90-100%
- B = 80-89%
- C = 70-79%
- D = 60-69%
- F = 59 and below

If you have any questions about this information or about Language Arts, please feel free to contact me. I'm looking forward to a fun and productive school year!

Best Regards,

Mrs. Kausen

a.kausen@westside.k12.ca.us

661-722-9993 ext 77215

This portion of the syllabus will need to be filled out, signed, and returned

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Name of contact: _____ Relationship: _____

Email: _____

Daytime Telephone: _____

Evening Telephone: _____

Please sign below to verify that you and your student have reviewed the information in this syllabus and that you are both aware of the expectations in Language Arts. This slip counts as their first graded assignment.

Parent Name Parent Signature Date

Student Name Student Signature Date

PARENT PERMISSION: Movies

At various points throughout the year, to complement the curriculum and to aid in the development of certain literary analysis skills (e.g. identification of story elements, analysis of theme, development of plot, etc.) the students may watch a movie or short film. These will be rated G or PG. 8th graders will also be doing a full text study of “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas” during second semester. As a conclusion to the study, I would like to show the movie in class. The movie, however, is rated PG-13 due to “some mature thematic material involving the Holocaust.” Being able to watch the movie will provide students with the opportunity to conduct an analysis of how differing media presentations affect the way in which a story is told. Developing this skill is in accordance with state educational standards for middle schoolers as noted in the Common Core State Standard below.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.7

Analyze the extent to which a filmed or live production of a story or drama stays faithful to or departs from the text or script, evaluating the choices made by the director or actors.

I authorize my child, _____:

STUDENT NAME

****Please initial all that apply****

_____ To watch movies that are rated PG

_____ To watch “The Boy in the Striped Pajamas”

PARENT SIGNATURE

DATE