

8th Grade English

English Language Arts

Grade(s) 8th, Duration 1 Year
Required Course

Course Overview

8th Grade English Language Arts is a course designed to bridge the gap between middle school and high school. During this class, students will be challenged in the areas of reading, writing, and critical and creative thinking, grammar, vocabulary, investigating, listening, and speaking. Students will demonstrate their abilities to work on their abilities to work independently and collaboratively in order to achieve set goals.

Scope And Sequence

Timeframe	Unit	Instructional Topics
27 Day(s)	Everyone Loves a Myster	
22 Day(s)	Past and Present	
27 Day(s)	No Risk, No Reward	
28 Day(s)	Hear Me Out	
25 Day(s)	Trying Times	
28 Day(s)	Beyond Reality	

Materials and Resources

- Various short stories
- Various Novels
- MAP Writing Rubrics
- Write Source 2000

Prerequisites

- 7th Grade English

Course Details

Unit: Everyone Loves a Myster

Duration: 27 Day(s)

Unit Description

Hairs rising on the back of your neck? Lips curling up into a wince? Palms a little sweaty? These are tell-tale signs that you are in the grips of suspense.

But what attracts us to mystery and suspense? We may have wondered what keeps us from closing the book or changing the channel when confronted with something scary, or what compels us to experience in stories the very things we spend our lives trying to avoid. Why do we do it?

Those are the questions your students will explore in this Grade 8 unit.

Edgar Allan Poe. Shirley Jackson. W. W. Jacobs. Masters of suspense stories are at work in this unit, with its focus on fiction. And there's more: Alfred Hitchcock, the "master of suspense" at the movies, shares tricks of the trade in a personal essay. Students will also read a suspenseful excerpt of a novel presented as a screenplay by award-winning YA fiction writer Walter Dean Myers. After reading classic thrillers and surprising mysteries within and across genres, your students will try their own hands at crafting fiction, applying what they have learned about suspense to their own narrative writing projects. Students will begin this unit as readers, brought to the edge of their seats by hair-raising tales, and they will finish as writers, leading you and their peers through hair-raising stories of their own.

Unit: Past and Present

Duration: 22 Day(s)

Unit Description

What makes us who we are? As we form bonds with other people and our communities over time, we realize that experiences from our past shape who we are in the present. With a genre focus on poetry, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about how we see ourselves in the world.

Poets Yusef Komunyakaa, Robert Frost, and Natasha Trethewey use description and figurative language to examine ideas related to identity and community. Author Thanhà Lai approaches questions of belonging in a novel written in verse. WNBA star Swin Cash's essay and former First Lady Michelle Obama's speech discuss the people and events who helped make them who they are. Judith Ortiz Cofer and Sandra Cisneros use fiction to inspire students to think about how characters' identities are affected by the world around them. After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write a literary analysis, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and essays to an argumentative writing project.

Students in this unit will discover what it means to be yourself, to make tough decisions, and even to feel on top of the world, using the lens of figurative language to understand how authors express varied ideas about identity and belonging, past and present.

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Unit: No Risk, No Reward

Duration: 27 Day(s)

Unit Description

Why do we take chances? Every time a person takes a chance, he or she risks losing something for the possibility of a reward. Sometimes these chances pay off, and sometimes they don't. Yet, people still take risks every day. With a genre focus on informational texts, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about why we take chances.

Nonfiction authors explore risk-taking from a variety of viewpoints. Walter Lord takes a historical approach to the topic, sharing an account of a real event with a surprising outcome that still affects people today. Anya Groner and Nina Gregory look at contemporary risk-takers who search for solutions in the face of environmental challenges, while essayist Thomas Ponce is a current risk-taker seeking environmental justice. President Ronald Reagan shares his perspective after a shocking national tragedy. Frederick Douglass explains risks he had to take in order to improve his own life as an enslaved person in the time before the Civil War; poets Langston Hughes and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper reveal how taking risks was historically necessary for African Americans. Classic American novelist Jack London depicts a risk-taking fictional character—a dog.

After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write an informative essay, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and informational texts to an informative writing project.

Unit: Hear Me Out

Duration: 28 Day(s)

Unit Description

Intrigue. Uproar. Inspiration. Hilarity. Heartbreak. Choosing the right words can have a strong effect on an audience. But how do you know which words are the right words? With a genre focus on argumentative texts, this Grade 8 unit prepares students to explore questions about how authors choose the right words.

Some of history's greatest wordsmiths are represented in this unit. Iconic speeches by Abraham Lincoln and Sojourner Truth show students how the right words can inspire and challenge a diverse audience. An excerpt from Mark Twain's classic novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* shows how the right words can yield results. In Irene Hunt's *Across Five Aprils*, family members try to find the right words to express their feelings on the issue that was threatening to tear their country apart.

Other selections help students understand that choosing the right words is still important today. The graphic fantasy story “/HUG” offers a surprising take on the sharing of bad news. The point/counterpoint article on gaming challenges students to consider how online behavior affects communication skills. Tim Schafer's “Cover Letter to LucasArts” is an example of how using the right words can showcase a writer's unique skills and personality.

After reading about these ideas within and across genres, your students will write an argumentative essay, applying what they have learned from the unit's literature, speeches, and informational texts to an argumentative writing project.

Unit: Trying Times

Duration: 25 Day(s)

Unit Description

World War II was a time of crisis for many different groups of people. Some faced danger head-on in the battlefields, oceans, and skies. Others, including Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel, and Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, found themselves in a different kind of danger. These people and millions of others like them were targets of extreme prejudice. The war changed everything about their lives. Many, like Anne Frank, did not live to tell the tale. Yet, their stories survive. With a genre focus on drama, this Grade 8 unit helps students to understand how times of crisis affect people.

The unit includes a focus on World War II, with texts such as *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* and the dramatic adaptation *The Diary of Anne Frank: A Play*. Other selections that shed light on this international crisis include an excerpt from *Parallel Journeys*, a multi-perspective historical look at Kristallnacht, as well as iconic speeches by Winston Churchill and Elie Wiesel. Students will experience the American side of the crisis in *Farewell to Manzanar*.

Other selections help students understand different types of crises. The drama *Teen Mogul* depicts a teenage girl's response to her family's emotional and financial crisis. The poem “America” gives insight into the African-American experience and the speaker's outcry against prejudice and racism. Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* takes a look back on a crisis that has passed, while *Refugee* focuses a personal lens on the more recent conflict in Syria.

After reading about crises within and across genres, your students will write and deliver an oral presentation, applying what they have learned from the unit's dramas, fiction, poetry, speeches, and informational texts to an extended oral project.

Unit: Beyond Reality

Duration: 28 Day(s)

Unit Description

Aliens. Ghosts. Vampires. Wizards. Fantasy and science fiction stories have endless possibilities. Whether the characters are humans dealing with mysterious otherworldly elements or extraterrestrial beings looking for a place to call home, science fiction and fantasy authors mesmerize readers by creating new worlds.

But what can fantastical stories teach us about our own world? Why are these stories so compelling to readers and writers alike? How can an escape into an imagined reality help us understand our own society?

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Those are the questions your students will explore in this Grade 8 unit.

Iconic science fiction authors H. G. Wells and Ray Bradbury are featured in this unit, alongside novelists Susan Cooper and Tomi Adeyemi. Ekaterina Sedia and Raouf Mama draw from folktales to create their stories of "other worlds." Poems by Sara Teasdale and Derrick Harriell feature speakers discussing war and retelling memories about out-of-this-world relatives, respectively. These works challenge students to reconsider their understandings of the past, the future, and what makes us human. Nonfiction texts by Randall Munroe and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights inspire students to think about two alternate realities: one in which humans need to evacuate the planet, and one in which all people live together peacefully.

At the end of the unit, students will turn from readers into researchers as they plan and write a research paper on the topic of their own choosing. Drawing inspiration from the authors and texts they've read in the unit, students will craft a research question and use primary and secondary sources to answer it. Their answers will guide them toward understanding how fantasy and science fiction texts help us understand the world in which we live.