

Course Description:

This one-year course emphasizes the development of critical reading and writing skills. A variety of literature and informational text of steadily increasing sophistication is used. Through close reading, careful writing, class discussions, and presentations, students deepen their ability to independently write, analyze, evaluate, and critique text. Students demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening. Technology is used thoughtfully to enhance reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. This course fulfills the eighth-grade English requirement.

CCSD implements the National Common Core State Standards which can be found at www.corestandards.org.

I. Course goals

- a. To determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. [CCSS: RL.8.2, RI.8.2]
- b. To analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. [CCSS: RL.8.3, RI.8.3]
- c. To interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. [CCSS: RL.8.4, RI.8.4]
- d. To analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole. [CCSS: RL.8.5, RI.8.5]
- e. To assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. [CCSS: RL.8.6, RI.8.6]
- f. To integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. [CCSS: RL.8.7, RI.8.7]
- g. To delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. [CCSS: RI.8.8]
- h. To analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. [CCSS: RL.8.9, RI.8.9]
- i. To write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. [CCSS: W.8.1]
- j. To write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. [CCSS: W.8.2]
- k. To write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences. [CCSS: W.8.3]
- l. To develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach. [CCSS: W.8.5]
- m. To conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation. [CCSS: W.8.7]
- n. To gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism. [CCSS: W.8.8]
- o. To draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. [CCSS: W.8.9]

- p. To write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. [CCSS: W.8.10]
- q. To collaborate, express and listen carefully to ideas, evaluate and integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, use media and visual displays strategically to achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task. [CCSS: SL.8.1, SL.8.2, SL.8.3, SL.8.4, SL.8.5, SL.8.6]
- r. To demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. [CCSS: L.8.1]
- s. To demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. [CCSS: L.8.2]
- t. To apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening. [CCSS: L.8.3]
- u. To determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate. [CCSS: L.8.4]
- v. To demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. [CCSS: L.8.5]
- w. To acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression. [CCSS: L.8.6]

Each anchor standard has been correlated to the grade-specific standard.

II. Course content and time schedule

Quarter 1: This unit introduces the Challenge theme by examining heroes: in our personal lives, in literary work, and in the world at large. You will be introduced to the archetype of the hero's journey and will view various examples of heroes through that archetypal lens. After exploring heroism, you will then examine the challenges of society as you encounter texts in which individuals take great risks as they struggle to do what they think is right.

Quarter 2: As life continues to grow more complex and challenging, you will need to continue to develop your critical thinking skills. By focusing on nonfiction texts, this unit will teach you to ask insightful questions, to develop clear and logical arguments, and to express those arguments in both written and oral texts. It will also equip you with the tools to unlock other people's arguments, to evaluate their positions clearly, and to support or oppose other views in an appropriate manner. In addition, the unit will guide you to become a more critical consumer of media messages as you examine their effects on your life.

Quarter 3: Every year brings challenges. In the first two units, you encountered individuals, both real and fictional, who have faced obstacles and challenges, and have found ways of mastering or triumphing over their limitations. You and your classmates, too, have faced challenges: personal, social, and academic. Midway through the year is a good time to pause and reflect on the work you have done during the past months and a good time to revisit and revise some of your earlier work. Some of the work you have done has been easy for you, and some has been more difficult, depending on which of your "multiple intelligences" you were able to use in accomplishing the work. You will

investigate further the many kinds of "intelligences" people possess, which will help you determine how you can accomplish challenging tasks more successfully.

Quarter 4: The world has dark pages in its history, and at times the challenge of righting such immeasurable wrongs is impossible. A study of narratives about the Holocaust, whether nonfiction accounts or fictionalized accounts based on true events, will reveal the worst in human behavior. And yet, as Anne Frank, the most famous young victim of the Holocaust, wrote in her diary, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." In this unit, you will apply the lessons of the Holocaust and take action about a challenging issue in your school, in your community, or perhaps in the world.

If laughter is truly the best medicine, then a study of challenges would not be complete without a close examination of the unique elements of comedy. Overcoming challenges is often easier when we are able to look at the humorous side of life. However, finding humor is not always easy; it can be a challenge in itself. This unit explores the common elements found in humorous writing, as well as the difficulties encountered when attempting to write or perform comedy. This unit defines common features of humorous texts through short stories, play excerpts, anecdotes, essays, poems, comic strips, and film clips. You will use a variety of learning strategies to focus on the characteristics and specific challenges of comedy as you read, write, view, analyze, and perform humorous, texts.

III. Course activities

- a. Journal writing on a regular basis
- b. Using the writing process to complete final drafts
- c. Participation in class discussions, debates, presentations, and Socratic Seminars
- d. In-class assignments
- e. Special projects/homework
- f. Silent/oral reading
- g. Conducting and presenting research

IV. Evaluation

Criteria for arriving at students grades

- a. 40% Formative Assessments (classwork, practice, review)
60% Summative Assessments (Final Drafts, projects, tests, quizzes)
- b. Semester exams will be worth 20% of the SEMESTER grade
 - i. Semester exams will not be administered early. Students who are absent may make-up their exams on the district approved make-up day.
- c. Explanation of student grades
 - i. A 100 – 90%
 - ii. B 89 – 80%
 - iii. C 79 – 70%
 - iv. D 69 – 60%
 - v. F 59 and below
- d. How and when students will be advised of their grades
 - i. Parents and students are urged to check the Infinite Campus Portal for grades regularly.

- e. Citizenship/behavior expectations- Citizenship is taken very seriously at Leavitt Middle School. Teachers expect the best of their students at all times. Students are to bring supplies to class and pay attention. It is important to stay on task and to be respectful of others. Nuisance items, gum, and food should not be brought to class. Students who cannot work within these expectations will have points deducted from their citizenship grades. Other actions, which disrupt the environment of the classroom and other students, will also be documented and points will be lost.
 - i. Below is a scale for citizenship. All reports of misconduct will be documented by the teacher.
 - 0-1 - Outstanding
 - 2-4 - Satisfactory
 - 5-8 - Needs Improvements
 - 9 or more - Unsatisfactory
 - ii.
- f. Late Work policy –If a student does not complete any assignment (for reasons other than an absence), they will be assigned a make-up work detention the following school day from 3:30 to 4:25 EVEN if they turn the assignment in the next school day.
- g. Test retake policy –A student may only retake a test if 1) all assignments have been turned in 2) the student has asked for help, clarification, or exhibited evidence of further studying and a further mastery of the subject matter.

V. School-Wide Rules

- a. Follow directions quickly.
- b. Raise your hand for permission to speak.
- c. Raise your hand for permission to leave your seat
- d. Make SMART Choices: Kindness, Leadership, Courage, Invincible Grit, Creativity
- e. Work hard to do your best for your teachers and parents at all times.
- f. ♦Keep your eyes on the target. ♦

VI. TARDY POLICY – Progressive Steps

- a. 1st Tardy – Warning & Parent Phone Contact
- b. 2nd Tardy – Warning & Parent Phone Contact
- c. 3rd Tardy – Non-TRS RPC
- d. 4th Tardy – After School Detention
- e. 5th Tardy – In-House Suspension (IHS)
- f. 6th Tardy – Required Parent Conference – RPC/Tardy Contract
- g. 7th Tardy – IHS/parent and student meet with the principal

VII. BEHAVIOR- Progressive Discipline

- a. 1st Incident – Verbal warning
- b. 2nd Incident - Parent contact by teacher
- c. 3rd Incident – Written contact to parent
- d. 4th Incident – Counselor referral
- e. 5th Incident – Deans’ referral

- VIII. Supplies needed for this course
- a. Composition notebook for journaling, freewriting, etc.
 - b. Something for notes: iPad, spiral notebook, composition notebook, etc. (Phones are NOT permitted for note taking purposes.)
 - c. "Writing" Pens (Blue or Black only)
 - d. Revising" Pens/Markers/Highlighters (Any colors other than blue or black)
 - e. Pencils (preferably mechanical)
 - f. Loose, college-ruled paper
- IX. Utilizing technology to learn – At Leavitt, we want to encourage the daily use of technology in and out of the classroom to further enhance the educational experience. As such, Leavitt will be providing students with individual devices in all grades to utilize in class and at home. Students will also be provided with a Google email address to correspond with their teacher and classmates on projects, as well as to turn in assignments. Students may choose to utilize their own electronic tablets (iPads, Kindle Fire, Samsung, etc.) cell phones, laptops, and reading devices for educational purposes. Please be reminded that your student is responsible for the safety of their personal device and must utilize the district's Wifi to ensure their internet safety. All use of these devices will be for educational purposes and must be approved by the individual teacher.
- X. Teacher's hours of availability
8:30AM-3:41PM. I will be available at other times by appointment only. Passes must be obtained by me ahead of time if the student plans on coming to the classroom before or after school.
- XI. Please sign up for Remind101 for assignment descriptions, helpful updates and extra opportunities. You can also email me at spiezgm@nv.ccsd.net with any questions.