

# LANGUAGE ARTS

## *Course Syllabus*

Clara Barton Open School

2010-2011

1st, 3rd, & 4th Periods

Amber Damm, Room 18

Voicemail: 612.692.1545 & E-mail: [amber.damm@mpls.k12.mn.us](mailto:amber.damm@mpls.k12.mn.us)

### Course Description

#### **Poetry & Verse!** *Fall*

Poetry is a poet's intuition of truth. It combines rich meaning with sounds of language arranged in an interesting form. Understanding poetry is a continuous process that evolves through the experience of hearing, reading, discussing, memorizing and writing poetry. Reading poetry will help students to: read more fluently, learn how language works, remember the content of a poem, develop and hone speaking ability, increase writing skills, identify the essence of a subject, observe how writers use frameworks and structures, and develop a large vocabulary. Poets are wordsmiths who play with infinite possibilities of language. Student poets will use sound, rhythm, and meaning in unique ways and will memorize and recite poems. We will study many poetry forms including: narrative, lyric, free verse, haiku, cinquain, concrete, ballad, and sonnet. Students will create an individual poetry anthology at the end the unit.

#### **Fiction! To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee** *Late Fall/Winter*

Students will read short stories and novels and study the elements of setting, plot, characters, style, and theme. We will explore both the author's intent in writing these works and our own responses as readers. We will read Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird and watch the film version. This will serve as a strong follow-up to last year's The Pearl and A Raisin in the Sun for eighth graders, and it's a nice precursor for seventh graders to next years reading of the Steinbeck and Hansberry classics. We will explore issues of racism and social identity as we read the novel. Activities around the novel will include a Type 3 essay regarding Atticus Finch instilling conscience in his children, poetry exercises, the keeping of a personal response journal, a character analysis Type 3 essay called "The Folks of Maycomb," and a final academic choice project called the "TKM Project," which includes options in film making, photography, essay writing, and drawing. This work of fiction will be the main lens we use to explore Civil Rights. In addition, we'll study Langston Hughes' poem "Poet to Bigot" and we'll watch and discuss excerpts of the PBS series "Eyes on the Prize." Finally, we'll conclude by studying Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter From a Birmingham Jail" and his sermon "The Drum Major Instinct," and focusing on Dr. King's prodigious use of metaphor. This will culminate in an artistic project where students write and illustrate a Civil Rights metaphor. All 90 metaphors for justice will be displayed together.

#### **Book Reviews & Projects** *All Year*

Approximately once a month, students will independently (or with help from an adult) read a book of their choosing. Students (with our help) will select seven fantastic books they would like to read at home over the course of the school year. I recommend students select books from different authors and genres throughout the year. Each month students will write a Type 3 book review, create an artistic project based on the book, and share their book with a small group within the classroom. Please see the attached assignment sheet for more details on the Type 3 (keep this copy at home for your reference). I will hand out an assignment sheet with a due date and an in-class workday as each book review is due. For our last book review students will read a book and share/discuss it with someone important in their lives.

#### **Word of the Day & Elements of Style** *All Year*

We will be learning a plethora of prodigious words this year and applying them to our writing and conversations. We will explore context, usage, root words, prefixes and suffixes. Each word of the day is selected from commonly used vocabulary on the SAT exam. By the end of the year we should have added about 150 words to our vocabularies. These will be recorded and practiced daily in a section of our English notebooks. We will also work on grammar by practicing and attempting to conquer common problem areas in punctuation, pronoun use, verb agreement, sentence transition, and word choice.

## The Five Types of Writing (Cumulative Writing Folders) All Year

Students will keep all of their Type 3 writing in a cumulative writing folder that will be revisited and revised throughout the year. We will use focused practice in both writing content and grammar areas to ensure growth in writing. Please see the attached letter outlining The Five Types of Writing. ([www.collinseducationassociates.com](http://www.collinseducationassociates.com))

## Great Books & Shared Inquiry Discussions All Year

The goal of Great Books programs is to instill in adults and children the habits of mind that characterize a self-reliant thinker, reader, and learner. Great Books programs are predicated on the idea that everyone can read and understand excellent literature—literature that has the capacity to engage the whole person, the imagination as well as the intellect. Shared Inquiry is a distinctive method of learning in which participants search for answers to fundamental questions raised by a text. This search is inherently active; it involves taking what the author has given us and trying to grasp its full meaning, to interpret or reach an understanding of the text in light of our experience and using sound reasoning. In Shared Inquiry, participants learn to give full consideration to the ideas of others, to weigh the merits of opposing arguments, and to modify their initial opinions as the evidence demands. They gain experience in communicating complex ideas and in supporting, testing, and expanding their own thoughts. In this way, the Shared Inquiry method promotes thoughtful dialogue and open debate, preparing its participants to become able, responsible citizens, as well as enthusiastic, lifelong readers. ([www.greatbooks.org](http://www.greatbooks.org))

## Creative Writing Spring

This unit of study is a beginning creative writing course designed to provide students with exposure and practice in a variety of creative writing forms including memoir, character sketch, dialogue, and the short story. Students will journal daily and three sketches will be completed over the course of the unit, they are as follows: Observation Sketch, Experience Sketch, and Character Sketch.

## Requirements

- The student will be thoroughly prepared for each class meeting.
- The student will actively listen and participate in each class meeting.
- The student must complete all required assignments in order to receive his/her grade for the course.
- The student will complete his/her work on time. Late work is unacceptable. Students will be given ample time to thoroughly complete their work, and it is imperative that students hand it in on time.
- The student is responsible for getting notes or assignments from a classmate or the teacher in the event of an absence. Planned absences need to be provided in writing to me at least 5 days before leaving so I will be able to provide work.
- Students will need one notebook of at least 100 pages to begin this course; a hearty three-subject notebook is preferred. It should not be used for other classes. Students must bring a writing utensil to class, as I will not provide one.
- The student will bring his/her planner to class and write daily assignments in it.

*My mission is to help foster an authentic love of literature and to awaken or cultivate an intrinsic joy in reading for pleasure. It is my desire that students will become effective communicators (wordsmiths) through expository and narrative writing, and I hope to encourage imaginative thinking and intellectual curiosity in all of our endeavors as we study humanities together this year.*

**We have read and discussed this syllabus.**

Student

Parent/Guardian

**Here's a copy of our monthly assignment sheet for students and parents to keep at home for reference.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Month (s): September -June

In class workday: \_\_\_\_\_

Due date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Book Project & Review!

### Review Criteria

**Title of book:**

**Author of book:**

**No. of pages:**

#### FCAs

1. Describe the plot of this book including the rising action, conflicts, and climax, but don't give away the ending/ make it short & sweet/ **1 paragraph only** (10)
2. Explain ONE MAIN CHARACTER from the book/3+ external details & 3+ internal details/ **1 paragraph only** (10)
3. State your opinion with 2 specific reasons (topic sentences)/ support your reasons with at least 3 specific examples each/ **2 paragraphs only [one paragraph for each reason]** (20) *\*See the break down on the back of this sheet! Plan out your paragraphs before you begin writing.*

Please write a brief review of the book you read. Include the main characters, plot, and your opinion of it. Pay attention to detail and make sure you use complete sentences. Your review should be four paragraphs long (w/ each paragraph being at least 5 sentences long.) Type or neatly handwrite your final draft of your review.

\_\_\_\_\_/ 40 Points

### Project Criteria

Your creative project is just that—creative! You've read your book and are now responsible for making a quality book project that creatively demonstrates what your book was about. You may focus on a key character, setting, or scene in the book.

\_\_\_\_\_/ 10 Points

- Book title underlined (everywhere it appears in the review) and author's name included in review! (\_\_\_/ 2)
- Correct Type 3 format—SKIP LINES! (\_\_\_/ 1)
- Edited! Read aloud in a one-foot voice with very few irregularities in grammar and spelling. (\_\_\_/ 5)
- Use 2+ direct quotations from your book in your review. Incorporate the quotations in any of the three FCAs. Use them to support a character description, explain your book's plot, or to support a topic sentence as a specific detail from the book. (\_\_\_/5)
- Review is written in 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person. Don't use "you" or "your" when referring to the reader. Use "I" or "my" or "the reader." (\_\_\_/ 1)
- This assignment sheet! (\_\_\_/ 1)

**Total Project: \_\_\_\_\_ / 65 points**

PLEASE FILL THIS OUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN WRITING . . .

FCA 2 Planning

| internal details | external details |
|------------------|------------------|
|                  |                  |

FCA 3 Planning

REASON #1 (Topic Sentence w/ Opinion):

Specific Example #1:

Specific Example #2:

Specific Example #3:

REASON #2 (Topic Sentence w/ Opinion):

Specific Example #1:

Specific Example #2:

Specific Example #3:

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Barton students will continue to do a great deal of writing in all their classes this year. We strongly believe that writing is critical to language development and the development of thinking skills.

Using the Collins Writing Program, we will regularly utilize five different kinds of writing. You will probably hear about these Five Types of Writing from your child, so we wanted to briefly explain them in this letter.

*Type One writing* is the type we use just to get ideas down on paper.

- It is not a composition, but rather a “quick-write” to generate ideas, express an opinion, make a prediction, or reflect on an event.
- It is not evaluated for spelling or writing conventions.
- Type One writing will be used frequently because we feel it contributes significantly to your child’s learning and language development.

*Type Two writing* is also a quick write, and your child will be answering a specific question about something we are learning about in class.

- In evaluating Type Two writing, we will be looking at only the content of the writing – not the conventions.
- Type Two writing also contributes significantly to your child’s writing fluency.

*Type Three and Type Four writing* are compositions done to produce ideas and develop specific writing skills.

- We will use a strategy called focus correcting.
- Focus correcting is based on the belief that writing improves more quickly when students work to improve a few skills at a time.
- You will know what the focus correction areas (FCAs) are on any writing project your child does because they will be listed at the top of the paper.
- Only the focus correction areas are evaluated.

We will also do some *Type Five writing*. This is the most difficult type for all writers, especially young, developing writers. Type Five writing is writing that is revised and edited to be as free as possible of all types of errors.

- This kind of “publishable” writing requires multiple drafts.
- Most of the Type Five writing we do will start as Type Three or Four.
- Then over time, your child will polish it so that it becomes a publishable Type Five piece of writing.

You can help at home in several ways. First, encourage your child to write as frequently as possible about a wide range of topics. Second, be aware of the Five Types of Writing your child does at school. Remember that all writing does not have to be perfect and free of errors to be of value to your child’s language development. Third, be a helper and encourager of your child’s writing efforts. Talk about your child’s writing and ask that it be read out loud (a strategy we use in class) as a way of checking it.

If you have questions or comments about our writing program, please call.

Regards,

The Barton Teaching Staff