

KELLY MIDDLE SCHOOL
COURSE SYLLABUS
2018-2019

A book is made from a tree. It is an assemblage of flat, flexible parts (still called "leaves") imprinted with dark pigmented squiggles. One glance at it and you hear the voice of another person, perhaps someone dead for thousands of years. Across the millennia, the author is speaking, clearly and silently, inside your head, directly to you. Writing is perhaps the greatest of human inventions, binding together people, citizens of distant epochs, who never knew one another. Books break the shackles of time—proof that humans can work magic. —Carl Sagan

Teacher: Ms. Mora
e-mail: mora@4j.lane.edu

Phone: 541-790 - 4740

blog: <http://blogs.4j.lane.edu/mora>
Room 29

Course: 8th grade Language Arts

Course Description: This course is designed to facilitate mastery of the Common Core State Standards and to help you become a better reader, writer, speaker, and thinker. While we will continue to strengthen our skills as readers and writers, we will also work to develop a critical literacy in our daily consumption of information and myriad texts. My hope is that the content of this class will help you be lifelong learners. The units of study will include:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short Story• Poetry (the entire month of April)• Shakespeare: Romeo & Juliet• Novels (still deciding on which ones)• Nonfiction (year-long UpFront News Magazine) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing Workshops throughout the year: essays - narrative, persuasive and expository (pre-write, draft, revise/edit, publish)• vocabulary (year-long)• Media Literacy |
|---|---|

In studying the content, we will:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build vocabulary and background knowledge• Compare and contrast literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures and world views• Develop critical literacy skills through questioning/inquiry and reflection• Explore Essential Questions and develop additional questions that direct one's learning• Visualize, predict, infer, make connections and summarize while reading fiction | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehend and evaluate complex texts• Write summaries, expository and persuasive texts and adapt communication in relation to audience, task, purpose and discipline• Discuss and analyze literary elements and techniques of fiction• Speak in front of the class and give brief presentations (individual/partner/group)• Collaborate with our peers during learning activities• Practice the sixteen Habits of Mind
(please see attached document) |
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Students will show evidence of their learning through:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worksheets, quizzes, unit tests• Group projects and presentations• Tableau (a form of theatre)• Written reflections | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creative assignments like posters, political cartoons, podcasts, Keynotes, collages, response journal, interactive notebook |
|--|---|

Grades:

Grades are individual assessment tools that predominantly measure effort and organization. Grades will be posted every 2-3 weeks on Synergy. Students should not wait until after I've posted grades to make up assignments. Being responsible does not hinge on Synergy communication. I am available every day after school! Please understand that the focus in class will not be on grades but on learning, making meaning and learning how to learn.

"To read is to fly: it is to soar to a point of vantage which gives a view over wide terrains of history, human variety, ideas, shared experience and the fruits of many inquiries." —A.C. Grayling

Late work will be accepted up to one week after the original due date for reduced credit. Typically an assignment deadline is established, at minimum, a week before it is due so, work delivered late because of an expected or absence may be counted late unless I receive parent notification or prior arrangements are made with me.

Cheating, copying answers from a fellow student and plagiarism will not be tolerated and consequences will include a grade of 0 for the assignment and a possible office referral.

Grades are calculated using a total points system. All student work is designated into three different categories: formative assessment, summative assessment and participation. All categories of assessment are unweighted. Proficiency in standards will also be assessed but those scores will not contribute to the overall grade.

A= 90% - 100%

B= 80% - 89%

C= 70% - 79%

D= 60% - 69%

F= 59% and below

Materials Provided for this Class:

1. Class binder with pencil pouch
2. all required texts including a vocabulary workbook ☺
3. **all** art materials necessary for creative responses to learning (scissors, colored pencils, glue)

Materials Necessary for this Class:

1. pencils and pens (dark blue or black ink only) – all year!
2. 1 homework folder to keep papers that are not 3-hole punched
3. index cards

Vocabulary Workshop:

Each student will receive his/her own vocabulary workbook. This is not a textbook, rather students will be writing in and studying from the workbook and will not be sharing it with other students. Typically the class will study a vocabulary unit for 2 weeks and then skip a week. If a student misplaces their vocabulary workbook, it can be replaced for \$10.

Homework:

Homework is designed to prepare students for class assignments, extend learning beyond the classroom and to practice the study habit in preparation for high school. Weekly homework will be assigned in the beginning of the week and be due at the end of the week. The work will vary from specific worksheets to general studying and researching. When we focus on a project, homework could involve research, drafting, planning, editing, reading, drawing, coloring, interviewing or just plain thinking about the key concepts of what we're studying. Homework assignments are due at the beginning of class on the last day of the week. If students need clarification about the homework they can refer to my **blog** on the *2018-19 Class Focus Page* for assignment information and a general plan for activities in the class. No password is needed to access this information. I typically post the week's agenda at the end of the day on Monday. (Please refer to heading of this document for the blog address.)

Assignments and Attendance:

If you have an excused absence, you are responsible for setting up a time **other than class time** for receiving assignments and instruction and then making up the work. Good attendance is essential to the learning process and being successful in class. Often the instruction will involve group and partner work, hands-on activities, and presentations. When you miss such activities your comprehension of the content is jeopardized. You cannot make up participation points or classwork unique to that day.

As your teacher I am fully invested in making your 8th grade year successful and rewarding. I will do everything I can to help you progress academically and these guidelines and expectations will help ensure a positive experience for all of us. I look forward to learning with you. - J.Mora

"Literacy is an active phenomenon. Its power lies not in a perceived ability to read and write, but rather in an individual's capacity to put those skills to work in shaping the course of his or her own life." — Paulo Freire

Middle School Language Arts Power Standards - 4j School District

READING

1. Identify main ideas. (RL1-2/RIT 1-2)
2. Make an interpretation and cite text-based evidence. (RL1-3)
3. Identify and explain how literary devices, word choice, and structure convey meaning. (RL 4-6/RIT 3-6)
4. Evaluate an author's claims and evidence. (RIT 8)
5. Make comparisons between information delivered in different media. (RL7,9/RIT7,9)

WRITING

1. Write detailed and organized argumentative texts, supporting claims with evidence. (W1,4,9,10)
2. Write detailed and organized informative/explanatory texts that explain a subject in a meaningful way. (W2,4,9,10)
3. Write detailed and organized narratives that tell a story in a clear way. (W 3,4,9,10)
4. Research topics and report findings in an organized way. (W 7-10,4)
5. Develop and strengthen skills by planning, revising, and editing as needed. (W5,6,)

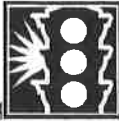














SPEAKING/LISTENING

1. Collaborate with others respectfully, prepare for discussion, and listen/respond critically. (SL 1,3)
2. Present information in a manner that enhances understanding of content. (SL 2,4-6)

LANGUAGE

1. Use correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. (L 1-2)
2. Learn, use and spell challenging words correctly. (L 3-6)

Habits of Mind

 <p>1. Persisting Stick to it! Persevering in task through to completion; remaining focused. Looking for ways to reach your goal when stuck. Not giving up.</p>	 <p>2. Managing impulsivity Take your Time! Thinking before acting; remaining calm, thoughtful and deliberative.</p>
 <p>3. Listening with understanding and empathy Understand Others! Devoting mental energy to another person's thoughts and ideas. Make an effort to perceive another's point of view and emotions.</p>	 <p>4. Thinking flexibly Look at it Another Way! Being able to change perspectives, generate alternatives, consider options.</p>
 <p>5. Thinking about your thinking (Metacognition) Know your knowing! Being aware of your own thoughts, strategies, feelings and actions and their effects on others.</p>	 <p>6. Striving for accuracy Check it again! Always doing your best. Setting high standards. Checking and finding ways to improve constantly.</p>
 <p>7. Questioning and problem posing How do you know? Having a questioning attitude; knowing what data are needed and developing questioning strategies to produce those data. Finding problems to solve.</p>	 <p>8. Applying past knowledge to new situations Use what you Learn! Accessing prior knowledge; transferring knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned.</p>
 <p>9. Thinking and communicating with clarity and precision Be clear! Striving for accurate communication in both written and oral form; avoiding over generalizations, distortions, deletions and exaggerations.</p>	 <p>10. Gather data through all senses: Use your natural pathways! Pay attention to the world around you Gather data through all the senses; taste, touch, smell, hearing and sight.</p>
 <p>11. Creating, imagining, and innovating Try a different way! Generating new and novel ideas, fluency, originality</p>	 <p>12. Responding with wonderment and awe Have fun figuring it out! Finding the world awesome, mysterious and being intrigued with phenomena and beauty.</p>
 <p>13. Taking responsible risks Venture out! Being adventuresome; living on the edge of one's competence. Try new things constantly.</p>	 <p>14. Finding humor Laugh a little! Finding the whimsical, incongruous and unexpected. Being able to laugh at oneself.</p>
 <p>15. Thinking interdependently Work together! Being able to work in and learn from others in reciprocal situations. Team work.</p>	 <p>16. Remaining open to continuous learning I have so much more to learn! Having humility and pride when admitting we don't know; resisting complacency.</p>

Dear students,

It may sound funny, but I believe the more you read, the more you'll read. In other words, the best way to gain and improve one's literacy skills is by exercising one's literacy skills. The act of reading builds background knowledge, contributes to being a more well-rounded person, leads to strong and critical thinking, bolsters empathy skills and....improves one's ability to read.

So, as your language arts teacher, I'm charged with improving your reading skills (and maybe even your interest in reading, which often evolves from an increase in reading skills). Therefore, I've carved out class time devoted to your reading enjoyment. Yes, I want you to read what you're interested in and just keep reading. Perhaps, you'll even develop an appreciation for what reading can do for you and how it can literally change your life! This daily personal reading where the purpose for reading is primarily enjoyment will not take the place of other readings and literacy activities. It will be in addition to our coursework and language arts studies.

Now, keep in mind literacy doesn't only mean having the ability to read. Writing is the other half of literacy and if the goal is for you to be fully literate you must also practice writing/communication. Thus there is a writing component connected to your choice reading. After you have finished reading your novel of choice (at your own pace) I expect you to choose and complete one of the options listed on the Reading Choice Project Option sheet. This will not disrupt your choice reading in class. A new novel should be chosen within two days of finishing the previous book. Please don't feel pressured to hurry your reading. I am most concerned with measuring progress and I will intervene and problem-solve with you if you are not getting through a significant number of pages each day over a period of time. Many times it's just a matter of finding the "right" book.

Lastly, please keep these reading choice guidelines in mind:

- Avoid books that are "too easy". Often times the content of these simple texts can't keep your interest nor hold your attention. You now have more sophisticated tastes than when you were in elementary school. Trust me.
- Avoid books that are "too difficult". If you find yourself questioning the meaning of every other word, and you're rereading each sentence 3 - 4 times in an effort to understand what's happening, the story will be lost and well... what then would be the point of reading?
- You can absolutely read a book you've already read. Just ask yourself if you're reading it again because you LOVE the story or if you're trying to get out of work. If your answer is related to avoiding work my reminder to you is being able to read what you want shouldn't be dreaded since you're the one choosing the novel and for the record, easy tasks are boring tasks!
- Be open to trying different authors and different kinds of stories (genres)
 - add some variety.

ENJOY!!

"The books that help you most are those which make you think the most. The hardest way of learning is that of easy reading; but a great book that comes from a great thinker is a ship of thought, deep freighted with truth and beauty." -Theodore Parker (1810 – 1860)

TIMELINE FOR READING CHOICE PRODUCTS

*I expect all of my students, at the BARE MINIMUM, to independently read **3** choice novels by the end of the school year by using the class time provided. I hope you will read more (many more) than 3 books and that you will read outside of class, but I will only require **3** reading choice products (RCPs). I suspect that ALL of you will end up reading more than 3 books this year but I don't want the reading to be turned into drudgery. ☺*

Here is a general timeline, keeping in mind the different reading paces, the different lengths of stories being read and the different reading times being put into the novels (some of you also read at home while others only use the 10-12 minutes provided in class).

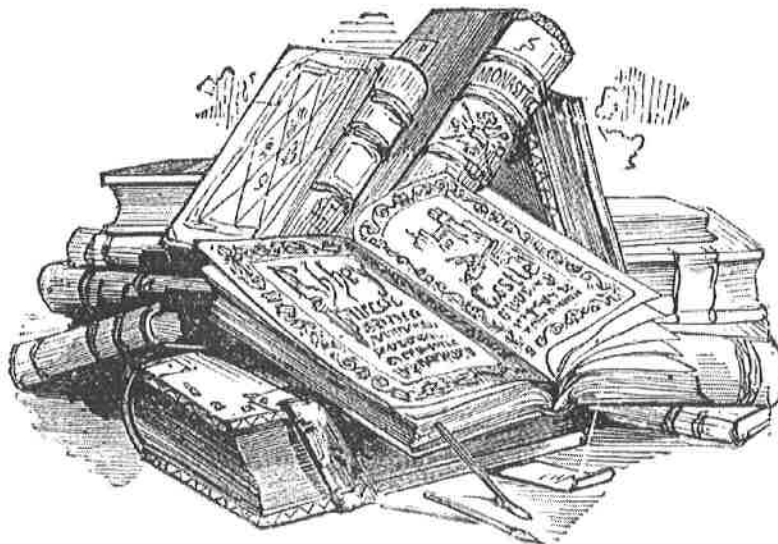
RCP #1: DUE BY MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19th

RCP #2: DUE BY MONDAY, MARCH 11th

RCP #3: DUE BY FRIDAY, JUNE 3rd

☆ *For every book you complete reading you will need to fill out an information sheet. I will be keeping track of your progress and counting the number of pages you have read.*

☆ *At the end of the First and Second Trimesters there will be a time set aside in class to discuss a novel you have read and to give your personal commentary (Book Talk).*



Reading Choice Project Options - 25 points

*All RCPs must also include your name, the title of the book and the author
If there is a * next to the RCP option, an outline of the novel is required.*

* 1. Write a 1-page **letter** to:

- the author, (evaluate, discuss story and ask questions related to author's creative choices)
- a friend, (give a review and summary, recommend or discourage reading the book)
- a teacher, (give a review and summary, include info. a teacher would appreciate) or
- a character from the book (discuss elements of the story with the character as if he/she were real)

2. **Compare/Contrast:** Read a book that has been made into a movie. (Caution: it must have been a book *FIRST*. Books written from screenplays are not acceptable.) Write an essay comparing the movie version with the book focusing on 3 similarities and 3 differences.

* 3. Draw a **portrait** of one of the characters and fill in a personal survey as if it is about that character. Provide at least two excerpts from the novel that support your interpretation of the character traits. (survey and paper provided)

* 4. Create a **timeline** of the events in the story. Provide details and specifics. A minimum of ten events is required on the timeline.

* 5. Create a **book jacket**. Must be in color. Include the author's name. On the back write a one paragraph teaser about the book and include quotes that promote the book. (paper provided)

6. Provide a **summary of the story in the form of a comic book**. You may use ComicLife but may also freehand your drawings. In keeping with the style of comic books, color and ink is required.

7. **Write a critique of the novel**. A critique partly analyzes the author's techniques and comments on whether or not the author was successful. A critique also reviews and evaluates the story.

8. **Write the dialogue of a dinner party** between your guests and one of the characters from the novel. Pretend you've invited a character over for dinner. What will you serve and why? Write out the dialogue and action of the dinner as if it is a scene from a play.

* 9. Create a **collage** of the themes, setting, and action of the story. On a separate piece of paper write an explanation of how the images and words represent the story. (base paper provided)

10. Create a **Keynote** Presentation or **Prezi** slideshow summarizing the plot of the story and your review/commentary.

* 11. Construct a **diorama** (three-dimensional scene which includes models of people, buildings, plants, and animals) of one of the main events of the book. Include a written description of the scene.

12. **Write a feature article (with a headline)**. Tell the story of the book as it might be found on the front page of a newspaper in the town where the story takes place.

* 13. Design a **movie poster**. Considering the mood and themes of the novel design a movie poster that includes the title, cast, rating and a quote from the book. Must use color. (paper provided)

STUDENT LAST NAME: _____

STUDENT FIRST NAME: _____

Dear Student and Parent/Guardian:

After you have read the materials listed below and visited my blog (<http://blogs.4j.lane.edu/mora/>), please sign your names in the space provided and return this page only by **Friday, September 21st**.

Please then file these documents in the student's personal binder for future reference:

- Course syllabus - LA 8th grade: Mrs. Mora
- 4j School District LA Power Standards
- Letter about reading, RCP options, RCP due dates
- Habits of Mind reference sheet

Student Signature: _____

(Dear Students, there is a short survey for you to fill out on the back of this signature sheet) →

Adult Signature: _____

Comments/ Questions:

**REMEMBER THE COURSE SYLLABUS AND REFERENCE MATERIALS ARE FOR YOU, NOT ME!
PLEASE SEPARATE THIS SHEET AND THEN TURN IT IN WITH YOUR SIGNATURES.
KEEP ALL THE OTHER PAPERS IN THE STAPLED PACKET.**

Favorite movies:

Favorite books:

Books you've read in class with a teacher:

What is the title of the last book you read for fun?

Literary character you'd most like to have as a classmate:

What kind of stories most interest you? Do you have a favorite genre?

Are you reading a book now? YES NO

If "yes", what is the title? If "no", is there a book you'd like to read that you've heard about?

Dream job:

DOODLE:

How do you feel about writing? Write about it.

How do you feel about revisions and rough drafts?

Poetry is:

Hidden talent(s) revealed:

The benefits of being literate are:

Most looking forward to: