

**9th Grade English: Unleveled
2014-15**

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Contact Information: Please do not hesitate to contact me. I will get back with you as soon as I possibly can. The best way to reach me is by email, but you can also leave a phone message, and I will return your call. My email address and the school phone number are posted above. Please know that I welcome and encourage student and parent questions and ideas that stretch outside the allotted class time.

Course Description: This year in 9th Grade English, literature study and writing adventures will be based around essential questions. My idea is that these questions - our wonderings about identity, truth, heroism, deception, human nature, science, love - are at the root of why we read and why we write. I also believe that these questions are accessible to all; and that the more varied the experiences of the group examining the queries of life and literature, the more colorful and honest the answers will be. This is part of the rationale behind unleveled classes. Not only does an unleveled class promote diversity and equity, it also paints a far more textured picture of the world in which we live. Students will have their assumptions challenged and their ideas expanded. They will be able to grow their personal talents through working with students who possess a different skill set. I believe that this unleveled class will satiate and create curiosity in a way that more homogeneous classes cannot. I believe that it will encourage students to enter and exit literature with questioning minds. I believe that it will inspire deeper and more thoughtful writing. I believe that this unleveled class will provide students with experiences relative to living and learning in our diverse world. I am excited beyond words.

The entire class will be consuming and composing literature that addresses one overarching question at a time. In order to maintain a level of rigor that is challenging and appropriate for all students, there will be regular opportunities for differentiated self-selection. I will provide a group of high quality texts of varying literary complexity. I will label each text using a color-coded leveling system. As there will be no texts lacking in literary integrity, students will have the option to choose based on interest; however, I will ask that the Honors level student make more complex selections with regularity. I will, on an individual basis, speak to Honors students who exhibit reluctance to dive into the more difficult texts.

With regards to creating literature, all students will be challenged with regular and rigorous writing assignments. Among this year's writing fare, students will be responsible for crafting poetry, essays - both personal and persuasive, short stories, plays, literary analyses, business letters, blogs, and advertisements. Many of these works will become part of the student's ePortfolio. We will adhere to the "Six Plus One Traits of Writing" format adopted by CHS, and will focus on the 9th grade Common Core Standard expectations for grammar and mechanics mastery. This said, I acknowledge that each student will be facing different writing hurdles. In order to address my varied writers, I will provide individual feedback, both written and verbal, for each writer. I will also develop individual "Writing Checklists" that focus on the individual student's editing needs.

Unleveled English 9 is an Honors option class. Each student enrolled in the class may choose to receive either Honors or Academic credit for the year. This selection must be made by Friday, October 10th. This is two weeks before the end of the first grading period, allowing for me to adjust my grade book accordingly, and giving the student time to submit his or her Honors Project* proposal.

Students choosing the Honors track can expect an additional writing prompt per test, Three AP List Homework choice readings**, aforementioned in-class text selection expectations, and a year-long Honors Project* assignment. Honors track students will sign a contract committing to the above requirements. Students choosing to receive Academic credit will be exempt from these requirements.

This Unleveled class is aimed at making differentiation and equity the norm in an exciting exploration of the questions that beg for written answers.

Homework: For homework, students will engage in rigorous "choice" reading, paired with varied written reflection assignments. Students will be required to read a minimum of 20 pages per night in their homework text. Student homework reading progress will be recorded at the top of each class, and a portion of each Friday will be dedicated to a Homework Reading activity. Though there will always be an element of choice, students will sometimes be asked to select a text that falls within our current question-based / thematic unit. **Honors level students will be given a list of novels, essays, plays, and collections of poetry that have appeared on the AP exam in the past ten years. I ask that they choose three of their homework texts from this list throughout the year.

*** The Honors Project:** This will be a year-long project that is designed by the student, and that should be based on individual student interests and skills. The students will apprise me of their project parameters by the end of the first quarter. There will be project "check-ins" and drafting due dates during the following three quarters. These will be based on a drafting plan created by the student and submitted for approval. The final project will be due during the week of May 26-30.

Examples of student projects will be provided for students who choose the Honors track.

Materials:

- Student Tablet
- Student Tablet Keyboard
- Writing Utensils
- Notebook Paper
- Headphones
- **Confidence in yourself, an open mind, and respect for yourself and others**

Textbooks:

- *Holt McDougal* online textbook
- *Write Source* online textbook
- Various novels, literary excerpts, and web resources

School Expectations:

- Be present and on-time
- Obey the dress code

My Big Expectations:

- Demonstrate respect for yourself and for everyone in the class
- Bring materials every day
- Submit assignments on time
- Ask questions
- Be confident
- Be curious

My More Specific Expectations

- Cell phones are to be turned off and put away during class time.
- Food and drink are totally fine, as long as you are not disgusting / messy with said items.
- You will have two bathroom passes per quarter. These will be in your agenda, and you may use them whenever you choose – but when they are gone, they are gone.
- Hats are fine.
- No cobras allowed.
- *Failure to follow school and class expectations will result in student/teacher conferences, parent conferences, after school and lunch detentions, and - finally - administrative referral.*

Late Work: For every school day an assignment is late - barring accident, illness, or injury - a letter grade will be deducted. There is one “hard” due date per quarter. For this assignment, late submission is not an option.

Make Up Work Policy: Class work, tests, and quizzes must be made up. It is the student's responsibility to note missed assignments on the class website, and through contact with me via conference or email. Together, we will work out a date on which these assignments will be due.

Assessment: I will be grading on a point scale. Following is a breakdown of assignment weights:

Writings and Projects: 35%

Tests and Quizzes: 30%

Class Work: 25%

Homework: 10%

Grading Scale:

A	91-100
B	81-90
C	71-80
D	61-70
F	60 or below

Pacing Guide

SOL term assessments will be given during the following weeks:

- Unit One: The week of October 20th
- Unit Two: The week of December 15th (This will be a part of the midterm.)
- Unit Three: The week of March 23rd
- Unit Four: The week of June 1st (This will be a part of the final.)

Quarter One	Questions	The students will...
Week 1	<p>What have you liked about English classes in the past? What have you not liked?</p> <p>What does the most awesome English class look like? How is it interesting? Safe? Challenging? Exciting?</p> <p>How can a class work as a team?</p> <p>What does respect look like when you give it?</p> <p>What does respect look like when you get it?</p> <p>Why do we read?</p> <p>Why do we write?</p>	<p>Feel that their opinion matters in creating a successful and equitable classroom environment.</p> <p>Realize that they are part of a learning community.</p> <p>Acknowledge and build respect based on agreed upon, collaborative norms.</p> <p>Open the year answering the biggest question: "Why am I taking this class, anyway?"</p>

<p>Weeks 2--3</p>	<p>What is identity?</p> <p>How is identity tied to culture?</p>	<p>Read and analyze short personal narratives, poetry, musical pieces, and essays based around cultural identity. Authors include John Howard Griffin, Frank McCourt, Nikki Giovanni, Sherman Alexie, and Sandra Cisneros. Read <i>In Darkness</i> by Nick Lake.</p> <p>Examine their own culture through the creation of poetry / song.</p> <p>Apply literary devices found in the works of both modern and classical poets</p>
<p>Weeks 4-5</p>	<p>How is identity tied to family and friends.</p>	<p>Read and analyze short personal narratives, poetry, musical pieces, and essays based around family and friends. Authors include David Sedaris, Chris Crutcher, Firoozah Dumas, and F.Scott Fitzgerald. Read <i>In Darkness</i> by Nick Lake.</p> <p>Begin to create personal narratives.</p>
<p>Weeks 6-7</p>	<p>How is identity tied to personal experience?</p>	<p>Read and analyze short personal narratives, poetry, musical pieces, and essays based around personal experience. Authors include Jenny Lawson, Maya</p>

		<p>Angelou, Richard Wright, Margaret Edson. Read <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie.</p> <p>Continue to write personal narratives.</p>
Weeks 8-9	How does identity translate into ideals?	<p>Read selected on-line editorials, NPR "This I Believe" essays. Read <i>The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian</i> by Sherman Alexie.</p> <p>Craft and publish "This I Believe" statements.</p>

Quarter Two	Questions	The students will...
Weeks 1-2	What are the qualities that define human beings?	<p>Read and analyze both fiction and nonfiction texts re. "Being Human."</p> <p>Create a "Being Human" class wiki.</p>
Weeks 3-6	How is humanity represented in realistic fiction? How does this differ from nonfiction?	<p>Read John Steinbeck's <i>Of Mice and Men</i>, as well as other realistic fiction and nonfiction texts.</p> <p>Write both realistic fiction / nonfiction compare and contrast essay and creative short story.</p>

Weeks 7-9	How is the image of humanity altered in future dystopian writings? Why do you think this is?	Read works by authors including Kurt Vonnegut, Suzanne Collins, Scott Westerfeld, Ray Bradbury, and Adolus Huxley Create/script future dystopian podcasts or videos.

Quarter Three	Questions	The students will...
Weeks 1-2	Who is the "Hero with 1000 Faces?" Why does the epic hero model show up in the lore of so many different cultures?	Read and analyze Joseph Campbell's <i>The Hero with 1000 Faces</i> and <i>The Power of Myth</i>
Weeks 3-5	How does the epic hero compare to a hero of the modern era?	Read Homer's <i>The Odyssey</i> and engage in two separate compare and contrast activities: 1) compare and contrast Odysseus with other epic heroes, and 2) compare and contrast Odysseus with heroes of the modern era. Read companion texts through which to explore the above comparisons.

		Create an epic hero and tell his or her tale through poetry, prose, or drama.
Weeks 6-9	<p>How can you be a hero through social activism?</p> <p>Why is fact checking important when building an argument?</p>	<p>Read and analyze essays and speeches from authors such as Carl Sandburg, Henry David Thoreau, Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.</p> <p>Discuss fact -v- opinion and the veracity of various internet and print media sources.</p> <p>Engage in research around a chosen social concern.</p> <p>Write both a research paper around the chosen concern, and an activist letter to the V.I.P. of their choosing, addressing said concern.</p>

Quarter Four	Questions	The students will...
Weeks 1 - 5	<p>Why have Shakespeare's plays endured for so long?</p> <p>How have the roles of men and women changed since Shakespeare's day? How have they stayed the same?</p> <p>Is deception an inherent part of humanity?</p> <p>Is deception always wrong?</p>	<p>Read differing biographical accounts of William Shakespeare and write opinion pieces around which rings most true.</p> <p>Read and analyze Shakespeare's <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>.</p> <p>Read Shakespearean sonnets and other companion texts.</p>

		Watch and analyze the 2005, BBC version of the play.
Weeks 6-9	<p>What role does deception play in our society?</p> <p>What are the markers of truth?</p> <p>How can we promote and demand truth?</p>	<p>Examine truth and deception in various modern texts, including advertisements, political speeches, and news reporting.</p> <p>Based on model texts, create two advertisements, political speeches, and/or news reports. One must employ deception, the other truth.</p>

Course Specific Objectives / Expectations based on 9th Grade Standards of Learning:

Read in a variety of literary genres with a focus on understanding, interpreting and analyzing.

- Learn and apply reading strategies
- Learn and apply Cornell note taking strategies
- Understand literary terms as a means of clarifying interpretations
- Use writings and classroom discussions as a means of presenting interpretations and opinions
- Pursue media literacy through close examination of online sources

Write effectively in a variety of styles

- Define effective writing
- Apply "6+1 Writing Strategies" to crafting, drafting, and revision
- Apply learned principles of grammar and mechanics
- Apply literary techniques
- Develop personal writer voice and style
- Engage in authentic writing

