

8th Grade Humanities 2015-2016

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Literature

This year's Literature curriculum will include the following texts: *The Chosen* by Chaim Potok, *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, *The Book Thief* by Marcus Zusak, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, and *Night* by Elie Wiesel. It will also include short stories and independent reading projects.

Some of the many themes we will explore include: friendship, love, parenting, social class, persecution, strength, innocence, and overcoming obstacles. Skills include analysis of literary elements, understanding vocabulary in context, learning and using terms specific to literature, responding to ideas, and expressing oneself clearly, among others.

Reading selections have been selected and organized in order to coincide with the history curriculum when possible. Emphasis will be placed on reinforcing a holistic understanding of historical periods through fiction and non-fiction texts, as well as other mediums.

American History

We learn about the past to understand the present and to prepare for the future. Our focus this year will be foundational documents the United States, most specifically the Constitution. We will learn about how the United States was founded, and we will carefully consider how it developed as a nation. Skills include identifying sequence of events and cause/effect, analysis of primary and secondary sources, and interpretations of significant events from multiple perspectives, among others.

Our primary text is *Call to Freedom*. Topics will include:

- The Thirteen Colonies
- The American Revolution
- Formation of a Government
- The Constitution
- The Bill of Rights
- The Civil War
- World War I
- World War II
- The Holocaust

Writing

This year, Hannah Senesh teachers are engaged in a coordinated effort to teach three types of writing simultaneously and across all grade levels. Students will cycle through these forms at least twice during the school year. Some specific assignments will include:

- Narrative-personal narrative, descriptive/travel writing, creative short stories
- Expository-literary analysis, research essays, the Constitution project
- Persuasive- speeches, debates

Attention will be also given to conventions, such as grammar and spelling. Students will continue to study vocabulary using the *Wordly Wise* series. Additionally, students will use interactive notebooks as a hands-on tool for learning grammar skills.

Homework

Students are responsible for completing classwork and homework assignments. When absent, students should be in touch with a classmate and follow up with me to collect any material missed. They may also email me directly about classwork and homework. Students should expect around 45 minutes of Humanities homework per night. Points will be deducted for work turned in late. See the Middle School Humanities late work policy for additional information.

Grading

I expect students take pride in their work. Student work should be neat and complete, with proper headings and formats. Spelling and grammar count! Students always have the option of typing their homework, and they will be required to type longer assignments or projects. Grades are based on points for individual assignments. Every few weeks, students will receive a score report of their grades up to that point – they should be aware of their current grades, and any work that needs to be made up.

Organization and Independence

Eighth grade offers students a wonderful opportunity to practice good habits for high school. Each Wednesday, students attend Study Hall/Office Hours and Class Meeting/Advisory, where homework is reviewed and announcements are made. This is also an opportunity to students to meet with teachers to receive help on assignments. Students are expected to maintain their homework planners and other class materials.

While we understand that high school admissions are a big focus of the first semester of eighth grade, we still have a great deal of learning to do! Students will be supported throughout the admissions process, but academic expectations remain. Please help your child make the best use of his/her time, and please inform the school of any anticipated absences. It is a student's responsibility to follow up about work missed because of high school visits.

Blog

This year, Hannah Senesh will continue to use class blogs to share news, pictures and information from the school week. However, in an effort to streamline communication, there will be **only one blog per grade level**. Every Friday, you will receive an email that a new post has been published. You can access the blog via the school website, or at the following link:

<http://blogs.hannahsenesh.org/eighthgrade1516/>

Password: **parachute**

I am truly excited to get to know you all this year, as we grow and learn as a community! ☺

"Education is not the learning of facts but the training of the mind to think," –Albert Einstein