

# Grade 8 ELA Syllabus 2024-2025

Ms. Sechrist (Ms. S.) lsechrist1@helenaschools.org  
Welcome to our English Language Arts class! 😊

**Required Materials:** \*3-subject notebook (or 3 1-subject notebooks) \*pens and pencils \*highlighters or colored pencils—at least 5 different colors \*independent reading book (from home or school library) Optional materials: index cards, loose leaf paper

**Course Summary:** This course is designed to provide students with learning tasks and opportunities in order to develop language and literacy skills that will prepare them for high school and beyond. Montana state standards aligned curriculum steeped in the classics, modern literature, multimedia, and non-fiction genres will guide all of our units. Students will be expected to participate and demonstrate proficiency standards of Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language throughout the year.

**Online Resources:** Teams, commonlit.org, turnitin.com, noredink.com, dictionary.com

**How will student learning be assessed?** A student's learning is assessed using a variety of formative and summative assessments including traditional tests, projects, written papers, or verbal assessments.

Exceeds standard	=	90-100%
Meets standard	=	80-90%
Progressing	=	70-80%
Below standard	=	60-70%
No Evidence	=	0-60%

**Reassessment:** The goal in a standards-based class is to ensure that students master the essential standards for the class, so any effort to raise a student's grade will have the same goal. **The student should meet with me to arrange for reassessment. Only assessment assignments can be reassessed. Reassessments may be done within 1 week of the grade being posted to PowerSchool. Reassessments must be prearranged with me and completed in my classroom during Advisor or lunch.**

## **Gradebook Categories and Weight:**

Classwork - classroom activities, practice, preparation assignments, etc	25%
Quizzes - vocabulary, reading journals, other formative assessments	15%
Assessments - measure of student proficiency on any particular standard	60%

## **Student Hints for Success:**

- Check PowerSchool, TEAMS (even if absent if you are able), and the whiteboard in my room every day.
- Attendance, participation, being on time, coming to class prepared and being ready to learn are essential for success.
- If you are absent, you are responsible for getting missed assignments from Teams and completing them within 3 days of your return. If you are absent multiple days, please speak with me to arrange alternate due dates.
- Reassess! Mistakes are part of the learning process. Take advantage of this opportunity to learn more and try again.

## **Classroom Rules:**

1. Be responsible for yourself, respect others, and do your best!
2. Be on time and bring materials to class every day.
3. Misuse of technology will have natural consequences; stay on task. No phones or earbuds!
4. No food (that includes candy) or beverages, other than water, should be brought into the classroom.
5. ZERO harassment: Be kind/respectful toward one another and open to other viewpoints.
6. ZERO cheating: Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional presentation of someone else's ideas or work as your own. Plagiarism/AI or any other form of cheating will result in an automatic ZERO for the assignment. More than one offense will result in an office disciplinary referral. **This applies to all work in this course. Your job is to THINK for yourself; LEARN for yourself; CONVEY that knowledge in your own words.**

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## UNITS OF STUDY

### Unit 1: Research and Argument

**Summative Assessment:** Original argumentative essay  
**Texts:** Various nonfiction articles on animal conservation  
**Standards:** RI.8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text... RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic... RW.8.1 Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. RW.8.1.a Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims... RW.8.1.b Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence.... RW.8.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources... RW.8.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts.... SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions...L.8.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases. L.8.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

### Unit 2: Mood and Literary Analysis

**Summative Assessment:** Original literary analysis essay  
**Texts:** “Button Button” by Richard Matheson  
“Lamb to the Slaughter” by Roald Dahl  
“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe  
**Standards:** RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence... RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text...; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.8.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. RL.8.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor. RW.8.5 With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed...L.8.5.d Recognize the influence time, culture, gender and social relationships have upon word meaning. SL.8.1.a Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

### Unit 3: Novel and Narrative

**Summative Assessment:** Original fictional narrative  
**Texts:** *Rain is not my Indian Name* by: Cynthia Leitich Smith  
**Standards:** RL.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. RL.8.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the textRW.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events....RW.8.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.SL.8.1.d Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.L.8.1.d Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb voice and mood.

### Unit 4: Theme and Literary Analysis

**Summative Assessment:** Original literary analysis essay.  
**Texts:** “Sonnet” by James Weldon Johnson  
“Letter to Harriet Tubman” by Frederick Douglass  
“Address to the United Nations” by Malala Yousafzi  
“The Terror” by Junot Diaz  
**Standards:** RI.8.3 Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, cultures, or events...RI.8.6 Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text including texts by and about American Indians, and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints. RW.8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner... use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation. SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations...L.8.2.b Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.

### Unit 5: Evidence-based Opinion and Argument

**Summative Assessment:** Original argumentative essay.  
**Texts:** “To Build a Fire” by Jack London  
*Unbroken* (excerpt) by Laura Hillenbrand  
**Standards:** RL.8.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. RI.8.1 Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.RW.8.1.c Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence. RW.8.1.d Establish and maintain a formal style. RW.8.1.e Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.SL.8.1.c Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.L.8.3 Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

### Supplemental Unit: Figurative Language and Poetry

**Assessments:** Create and analyze a variety of poems  
**Texts:** “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon  
“The Miracle of Morning” by Amanda Gorman  
**Standards:** RL.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.RW.8.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.L.8.5 Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. L.8.5.a Interpret figures of speech (e.g. verbal irony, puns) in context

Greek/Latin Root Vocabulary: Students will learn, study, and be quizzed on vocabulary throughout the year.

**Standards:** L.8.4.b Use common, grade-appropriate Greek or Latin affixes and roots as clues to the meaning of a word (e.g., precede, recede, secede). L.8.4.c Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech. L.8.5.b Use the relationship between particular words to better understand each of the words.

Book Projects: Students will complete a book project each semester, for which they will read, write about, and then present information on a book of their choice.

**Standards:** RL.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently. RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently. RW.8.10 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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.