

**Robert C. Parker School**  
**Curriculum Summary**  
**6,7,8 Language Arts**

**Grades 6 and 7**

Language Arts consists of all types of communication: written, verbal, and aural. Therefore, our curriculum consists of many different forays into these areas. This is accomplished by utilizing both reading and writing workshops.

Students are asked to read, listen to, and dramatize many short stories, essays, poems, plays, novels, and nonfiction pieces. We then have various types of activities surrounding these pieces including: whole groups discussions, small groups discussions and activities, dramatic readings, homework questions, essay and epilogue writing. Within these activities, students are expected to be able to formulate and articulate individual and group thesis statements and ideas, listen to others' points of view, engage in respectful dialogue, and learn about the authors/pieces and where they fit within the larger realm of literature and society. Since this is the beginning of middle school, we have an overview of genres and aspects of literature (including points of view, themes, climax, etc.). In addition, students will organize and write reflective and persuasive essays about the pieces of literature.

Students are also asked to do a large amount of creative writing in our writers' workshops. Students learn how to initiate, keep, and utilize a writer's journal. They work on a weekly basis to fill their journals with relevant (and not so relevant) material that they then use to pick "seed pieces" to "nurture" into final pieces of writing. Both the formal essay and the creative writing processes necessitate several stages from pre-writing (including peer and teacher review, and self-editing) through to finished pieces. These stages include lessons on grammar, writing, revision, editing, spelling, and vocabulary. The writing workshop involves a large amount of student problem solving and decision-making. The goals are always to have students find their individual writing voices and to take several steps forward within their own "personal best." This will, of course, vary from grade to grade as well as from student to student. We are very aware that 6<sup>th</sup> graders have not yet been introduced to much of this work. Therefore, the class is geared to be an introduction for the 6<sup>th</sup> graders and an extension for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders of what they began and accomplished last year. Each year presupposes a growing maturity level that should be apparent in their level of responsibility and growing ability to organize and execute their writing pieces.

There are many obvious ties between the reading and writing workshops and often the two overlap. One example is that we use many different books, stories, poems, essays, etc. as mentor texts for creative writing. In addition, we are constantly making connections between all kinds of writers and their writing and students' writing. The next logical step to communication is making connections. Students are encouraged to

make connections from their language arts work to their own lives, other academic subjects, and the world around them.

Some of the books we read:

*The Giver*, Lois Lowry

*Gathering Blue*, Lois Lowry

*Animal Farm*, George Orwell

*Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, Mildred D. Taylor

*The House of Dies Drear*, Virginia Hamilton

*Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury

*Holes*, Louis Sachar

*The Outsiders*, S. E. Hinton

*Peeled*, Joan Bauer

*The Misfits*, James Howe

various Shakespeare plays, such as: *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Comedy of Errors*,

*Taming of the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest*

*So Be It*, Sarah Weeks

*The Trouble with Lemons*, Daniel Hayes

Stories and poems by authors such as:

Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Naomi Shihab Nye, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Agatha Christie, H. G. Wells, Bruce Coville, Jacqueline Woodson, Jack London, Alice Munro, Langston Hughes, Anton Chekov, Stephen Vincent Benet, Washington Irving.

## **Grade 8**

Language Arts consists of all types of communication: written, verbal, and aural. Therefore, our curriculum consists of many different forays into these areas. This is accomplished by utilizing both reading and writing workshops.

Students are asked to read, listen to, and dramatize many short stories, essays, poems, plays, novels, and nonfiction pieces. We then have various types of activities surrounding these pieces including: whole groups discussions, small groups discussions and activities, dramatic readings, homework questions, essay and epilogue writing. Within these activities, students are expected to be able to formulate and articulate individual and group thesis statements and ideas, listen to others' points of view, engage in respectful dialogue, and learn about the authors/pieces and where they fit within the larger realm of literature and society. In addition, students will organize and write reflective and persuasive essays about the pieces of literature.

Students are also asked to do a large amount of creative writing in our writers' workshops. Students learn how to initiate, keep, and utilize a writer's journal. They

work on a weekly basis to fill their journals with relevant (and not so relevant) material that they then use to pick “seed pieces” to “nurture” into final pieces of writing. Both the formal essay and the creative writing processes necessitate several stages from pre-writing (including peer and teacher review, and self-editing) through to finished pieces. These stages include lessons on grammar, writing, revision, editing, spelling, and vocabulary. The writing workshop involves a large amount of student problem solving and decision-making. While the goals are always to have students find their individual writing voices and to take several steps forward within their own “personal best,” the 8<sup>th</sup> grade year presupposes a growing maturity level which should be apparent in their level of responsibility and growing ability to organize and execute their writing pieces (especially their thesis projects).

There are many obvious ties between the reading and writing workshops and often the two overlap. One example is that we use many different books, stories, poems, essays, etc. as mentor texts for creative writing. In addition, we are constantly making connections between all kinds of writers and their writing and students’ writing. The next logical step to communication is making connections. Students are encouraged to make connections from their language arts work to their own lives, other academic subjects, and the world around them.

Some of the books we read:

*The Crucible*, Arthur Miller

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Mark Twain

*The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros

Various Shakespeare plays, such as: *Othello, Hamlet, Romeo & Juliet, Macbeth*

*Of Mice & Men*, John Steinbeck

*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee

*The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Frederick Douglass

*Twelve Angry Men*, Reginald Rose

*Click*, various authors

*New Boy*, Julian Houston

*Inherit the Wind*, Jerome Lawrence & Robert E. Lee

*I Am a Taxi*, Deborah Ellis

Stories and poems by authors such as:

Edgar Allan Poe, Arthur Conan Doyle, Naomi Shihab Nye, Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, Agatha Christie, H. G. Wells, Bruce Coville, Jacqueline Woodson, Jack London, Alice Munro, Langston Hughes, Anton Chekov, Stephen Vincent Benet, Washington Irving.