



**MRS. AMANDA MCINTOSH**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS**  
**SURVIVAL GUIDE**  
**WESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
**2007 - 2008**

Dear Eighth Graders,

Welcome to eighth grade! You are at the peak of middle school, and you should enjoy your predominance this year! You may feel like this middle school thing is a breeze by now. You've done one other year of this already, and so this one ought to be pure icing, right? We'll see. I hope you find it that way but, chances are, you're going to be challenged by the intensity and scope of your work this year. Of course, none of it is beyond you, unless you let it become so.

Over the course of the year, you're going to stretch your mind and expand your abilities in ways you never thought you could. If you work with me, you'll come out of this year more thoughtful, better able to understand what you read, with a mind that is sharper and with the confidence to use it well. I want you to find success this year. Most of all, I want this year in Language Arts to be a milestone, turning point, or springboard for you. Years from now, I'd love for you to be able to remember this year and say, "That's when I stopped just being a student, and became a Scholar."

Your scholarship and success this year and into the rest of your life is my goal. I'm chomping at the bit to start. This handbook will lay the framework in which we'll accomplish all the stuff I've just mentioned.

I'm glad you're here!



## **WHAT WILL WE STUDY?**

Scholar, our literary study will include (but not be limited to):

1. Vocabulary, Vocabulary, Vocabulary!
2. Literature: Novels, Poetry, Short Stories, Essays, Non-fiction – GREAT STUFF!!
3. Major Research Project
4. Grammar & Parts of Speech
5. Adventures in Technology!  
(Podcasting, Video Podcasting)
6. Writing Assignments: Journals, Timed Writing, Rhetoric

# NEED SPECIFICS? NO PROBLEM!

## Regular Language Arts Syllabus (Subject to change!)

Please refer to MISD's Curriculum Website for updates:  
<http://www.mansfieldisd.org/curriculum/english/home.htm>

- 1<sup>st</sup> Six Weeks: Procedures  
"The Diary of Anne Frank"/Tolerance  
Research Project (Big 6)/PSA
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Six Weeks: Literary Elements/Short Stories  
Edgar Allan Poe – Poetry & Short Stories  
Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Six Weeks: Modern Folklore/Urban Legends
- 4<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks: Nothing But the Truth by Avi
- 5<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks: Redwall by Brian Jacques
- 6<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks: Tangerine by Edward Bloor

\*\*\*\*Ongoing – Vocabulary & Grammar Study\*\*\*\*

# Pre~AP Language Arts Syllabus (Subject to change!)

Please refer to MISD's Curriculum Website for updates:  
<http://www.mansfieldisd.org/curriculum/english/home.htm>

## 1<sup>st</sup> Six Weeks:

- Reading Strategies – Bloom's Taxonomy, Three Levels of Reading, Annotation
- Short Story Analysis – DIDLS (Diction \* Imagery \* Details \* Language \* Syntax) and SOAPSTONE (Speaker \* Occasion \* Audience \* Purpose \* Subject \* Tone)
- Composition – Timed Writing Skills

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Six Weeks:

- Short Story Analysis, focusing on poetry & short stories of Edgar Allan Poe
- Literary Archetypes & The Hero's Journey
- Novel Study – The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Six Weeks:

- TPCASTT Method (Title \* Paraphrase \* Connotation \* Attitude \* Shift \* Title \* Theme)
- Close Reading Strategies in Nonfiction Prose (Annie Dillard, Mark Twain, etc.)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks:

- Sentence Structure & Variation
- Style & Voice
- Independent Research Project (The Big 6 Research Strategy)

## 5<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks:

- Rhetoric Analysis : Sensory & Persuasive Appeals
- Connotation
- Author's Purpose

- Novel: The Killer Angels by Michael Shaara

6<sup>th</sup> Six Weeks:

- William Shakespeare's Sonnets & Plays
- "Much Ado About Nothing"

\*\*\* Ongoing: Vocabulary, Grammar, Timed Writing & Dialectical Journals \*\*\*

# WEEKLY VOCABULARY RITUAL

Our **FABULOUS** vocabulary ritual consists of three parts:

**A.** At the beginning of each week, you will be assigned a list of **FIVE** (only five!) vocabulary words. In fact, I have provided you with a list of words for the **ENTIRE SEMESTER**, can you believe it?)

It is **YOUR** responsibility to **STUDY** the definition, part of speech, and spelling for each of the words on that week's list

**B.** The **FIRST 20 MINTUES** of class on **MONDAY** and **TUESDAY** will be dedicated to completing a **WORD MAP** for each of that week's fabulous five words. You are responsible for locating and writing down valuable information about each word as well as writing a **MEANINGFUL SENTENCE** for each word. What you don't complete in class must be completed at home, so be responsible with your time!

**C.** All five **WORD MAPS** are due within the first 15 minutes of class on **WEDNESDAY**. At that time, word maps will either be graded & discussed in class or turned in. **LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

**D.** Each **FRIDAY** you will take a **QUIZ** unless you hear otherwise from me. Scholars who will be absent for school-sponsored activities need to make arrangements to take the quiz on the day it is given or prior to that day. You are responsible for knowing the part of speech, the correct spelling and the definition for each word.

**E.** At the end of each six weeks, you will take a test over **ALL** of the words from that six weeks!

\*\*\* Warning: Vocabulary quizzes are **CUMULATIVE** \*\*\*

If you don't keep up, don't be afraid. Be terrified. You know it's true.  
(then relax and come for help.)

# S.O.S. (Steps of Success)

So let's say you are lost, confused, clueless, or otherwise freaked out about an assignment we're working on in class. Maybe you got your vocabulary quiz back ...and the grade? Not so sweet. Have no fear! This is where S.O.S. comes in. Not only is S.O.S. a distress signal indicating that help is needed, it's what we call the Lions' Language Arts teacher tutorials!

I am available most mornings from 8:00 - 8:40 (and some afternoons from 4:00 - 4:30) to help you in any way I can. During tutorials, skills for the week can be reviewed and time spent re-teaching any lessons from class as needed.

## STEPS OF SUCCESS:

- ❖ If your grades are slipping, come to S.O.S.!
- ❖ If you're confused about vocabulary, come to S.O.S.!
- ❖ If you don't have a clue how to do a writing assignment, come to S.O.S.!
- ❖ If you're lost in the literature lesson for the week, come to S.O.S.!

S.O.S. is 100% optional - it is there if you need it, but you are not required to attend. Be sure to sign up with me & obtain a pass if you plan to attend, so that plans can be made and materials prepared for you.

I also have some great links to Language Arts websites on my blog to help you with your homework - check it out @ <http://teachercoach.edublogs.org>!

# LITERATURE STUFF

Literature is the transfer of information from the author to the reader by means of some sort of story or written work. That's all it is, really. Our task this year will be to read a variety of different literary works and figure out what the authors thought was so important to communicate, and what things they did to make it (hopefully) interesting. Now, some authors are a little better than others in keeping our attention, or getting us involved in the story, and there are some who, it seems, cannot write a story to save their lives. We're going to decide who's who and what's what.

There are a lot of things that go into creating and reading good literature. We're going to explore and learn those things, too. The skills you will gather in this class will serve you well in your high school courses and beyond in your lives beyond high school. I want you to be prepared to receive these communications and interpret their importance for you: Does the message matter to you?

\* \* \* \* \*

I expect you to read the stories, chapters, essays, and novels I assign. Most are fairly concise and interesting. If you find they are not, read them anyway. My class requires that your brain be present and prepared – this means you!

\* \* \* \* \*

# GRADES: (THE STUFF THAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF)

Of the work I give you this year,  
some will count for points and some will not;  
some I will collect and some I will not;  
some we will review and correct; some we will not.

*ALL* of it will have purpose.

Regardless, your grade in this class consists of the percentage you earn of the points possible to earn in the work I assign:

**Daily Work = 30 %**  
**QUIZZES = 30 %**  
**MAJOR TESTS/PROJECTS = 40 %**  
**Total = 100 %**

*YOU* determine your success this year!

Isn't that exciting? Don't you feel powerful?

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## NEVER EVER FORGET:

Your grades do **NOT** indicate your intelligence or worth. They indicate the amount of **EFFORT** you have put into your classwork.

(Which may only indicate something about your character...)

I've seen brilliant scholars do very poorly (even fail) for lack of effort and not-quite-as-bright scholars work hard and do really, really well. If you want to do well, I will do most anything to help you work hard, but in the end, it all comes down to **what you are willing to do.**

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# HOMework

(AFTER ALL, YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO ALL YOUR WORK AT SCHOOL!)

"Completing homework is important for your success."

You've heard that a hundred times by now, I'll bet. Still, it remains true. If you want to do well, or you just don't want to fail, **YOU must do the work the class requires.** If you don't read what I assign, we've got nothing to discuss.

(How sad that would be - all of us staring at each other morosely.)

I will make sure that everyone understands the assignment before class ends. It will then be your scholarly responsibility to complete it and bring it to class. There **WILL** be a quiz for nearly every reading assignment. If you do not read, you will not do well.

Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek help as you need it!

I am **ready** and **willing** to assist scholars who seek additional help with difficult concepts and assignments, and I expect that when they need my help, they will seek it **ACTIVELY.**

# The Four Occupations

Adults are expected to work. Little children are not. You are traveling now from one stage to the other. Adults no longer see you as little children (which is the good news) and they expect you to start working (which for some of you is the bad news). If this is all news to you, then wake up now.

In this class (and in this stage of life in general) you have four jobs to occupy you:

## 1. OBEY your Authorities

You must do what I ask of you without hesitation or question, unless I direct you to do something immoral or unethical (which, by the way, I would never do). You are involved in a course of study that I have designed for your benefit, and I demand your full cooperation. I will know that you are responding cooperatively to a request when I hear you say, "Yes, ma'am." (or "Yes, sir," if the situation dictates).

Approach those in authority respectfully and express your opinion in a mature tone of voice. I have great things planned for your experience and education, and to realize them we must have a healthy working relationship.

## 2. BE KIND to Those Around You.

You must treat your fellow scholars (and your wise, fashionable teacher, of course) with kindness. This class works best when the scholars are free to express their thoughts or opinions without fear of ridicule or derision (go ahead and look it up). Learning and true fun occur when the class is unified and without "sides," cliques, or divisions. Look for opportunities to help each other succeed rather than ways to wound each other. I will not tolerate any abuse of one scholar by another. In this class and in life, kindness goes a long way.

### 3. LEARN as Much as You Can

The State of Texas provides you a thirteen year span of time in which the taxpayers (your parents and me, among others...) will pay for your education. After that, it's up to your wallet. During that span, teachers work to help you understand and use the knowledge that humankind has amassed in the thousands of years before you were born. Sounds pretty serious, doesn't it?

Your job is to learn, understand, comprehend, assimilate and master as much of that stuff as you can before your "free" time is up. Your chance began several years ago, and continues today. However, no one can **make** you learn anything. Some of you may already know this firsthand. **You** must do it, if it's going to be done. Your parents, relatives, teachers, and I are willing to help you but, in the end, it's all **YOU**. You must decide every day to absorb as much knowledge and gain as much wisdom as you can lay your hands on.

**BE PREPARED. BE DILIGENT.**

**PARTICIPATE.**

## 4. Have as Much FUN as You Can

There is so much fun to be had, you should be pursuing it with great abandon, with everything you've got. Your job is to enjoy life and this class to the fullest! Squeeze mirth from every slice of time you have! Laugh as often as possible! Play to your heart's content! Follow this rule whenever you ever can!

**BUT**... (and this is a big but...)

Occupation # 4 CANNOT override  
Occupations # 1-3.

YOU MAY NOT IGNORE THE FIRST THREE  
TO FOLLOW THE FOURTH.

That's how things begin to fall apart, in this class, in your life, and in society.

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# **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**AKA. THE WAY THINGS WORK AROUND HERE**

## **A. GENERAL CLASS RULES**

- ✓ Be prepared for class when the bell rings.
- ✓ Follow all instructions.
- ✓ Talk only at appropriate times.
- ✓ Respect yourself, others, property, and your school.

## **B. DISCIPLINE**

Behavioral indiscretions will not be tolerated & will result in consequences. Consequences include:

- ✓ Teacher/student conference, change of seating, parental contact, teacher D-Hall, school D-Hall, office referral
- ✓ I may write a morning D-Hall any time student behavior warrants it; however, serious infractions will be referred to the office immediately.

## **C. ENTERING OUR CLASSROOM**

- ✓ You are expected to enter the classroom respectfully; it is a place of learning. Take your seat, and look at the board. Every

day you will find the day's assignments listed there. You MUST copy them down into your agenda, planner, calendar, etc. There is often valuable information there for you: due dates, reminders, etc. I will take a grade on your agenda entries every three weeks, so be diligent!

- ✓ Once you enter the classroom, stay in the classroom. This is important because you will often have warm-up activities and your time is VERY limited.

## **D. YOUR FABULOUS NOTEBOOK**

- ✓ Your notebook must include dividers. Sections should be labeled:

1. VOCABULARY      2. LITERATURE      3. GRAMMAR  
4. WRITING/JOURNALS   5. GRADED ASSIGNMENTS (OPTIONAL)

- ✓ After assignments have been graded and recorded, papers will be returned to your own personal file folder. Check it often!!! Some graded assignments can be kept in your notebook while others will be kept in class. Please do not throw any paperwork away until the end of the six weeks.

## **E. A HEADING FOR YOUR PAPERS**

In the top right corner of your paper, neatly write your heading:

Your Name (first and last)

(Your Class Period)

The Day's Date

Assignment Title

**PLEASE NOTE:** Assignments without a name on them  
**WILL BE DISCARDED.**

## **F. WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE ABSENT**

- ✓ When you return to class after being absent, check the **MASTER CALENDAR** at the front of the room to see what assignments you missed. Copy those assignments into your agenda for the days you were absent. If there was a handout, it will be in the folders divided by period under the master calendar. Hopefully this will save a diligent scholar the time it would take for him/her to come and ask me personally for the work that was missed!
- ✓ If there was a test or quiz, **YOU** will need to arrange a time to make the quiz up. I will most likely not remember, and if it comes time for me to enter grades, you'll get a zero for the test or quiz unless you've taken the responsibility to make it up.

## **G. MAKE-UP WORK AND LATE WORK POLICIES**

- ✓ Our fabulous district policy allows scholars one day to complete the work for each day of absence. I won't remind you to get your make-up work. I expect you to remember to do it yourself. Don't hesitate or procrastinate! The late work policy applies to make-up work, too!
  
- ✓ The district late work policy is as follows:
  - 1 day past due date – maximum grade of a 70
  - After one day past due date – ZERO

*I am a stickler about this. Be prepared. Be diligent.  
Be responsible.*

## **H. CORRECTING A QUIZ OR OTHER ASSIGNMENT**

- ✓ Occasionally you will find a red stamp with the words, "PLEASE CORRECT AND RETURN" on an assignment that has been returned to your folder. Beside that stamp will be a date. This means that you are allowed to make & turn in corrections to that assignment (be it daily work or a quiz) until the stamped date. After that date, you're out of luck. No corrections will be accepted. Sometimes there will not be a stamp. That just means corrections are not an option on that assignment or quiz.

- ✓ Corrections can be made up to a 70 on certain assignments by coming to S.O.S., but please keep in mind that when grading corrections to an assignment, I begin grading at a 70, and any deductions for incorrect or incomplete answers will be made beginning there.

## **I. EXTRA CREDIT**

- ✓ Scholars will sometimes approach me and ask if there is any form of extra credit available. I consider those requests on a "case by case" basis. Generally, though, I'm hesitant to give extra credit opportunities to scholars on either end of the grade spectrum.
- ✓ If a scholar has an "A," then he/she has proven his/her effort and skills without splitting hairs over percentage points.
- ✓ Likewise, if a scholar has an "F," then he/she has let things go already and his/her request is likely to be too late.
- ✓ However, extra credit chances DO crop up from time to time for the whole class. The scholar on her/his toes may collect points here or there. Keep your ears pricked, and your eyes open. (Just so you're prepared – unless otherwise mentioned, extra credit is always always due the day after it is assigned.)

## **J. ACADEMIC HONESTY**

- Cheating in any form is unacceptable. It demonstrates a lack of character and breaks down the trust between a teacher and student. Cheating includes any of the following:
  - a. Copying homework – in whole or in part
  - b. Copying from someone during a quiz or test

- c. Discussing the questions on a quiz or test with students during passing period
  - d. Plagiarism – the theft of an author’s words or ideas without giving him/her credit
  - e. Helping someone else cheat
- Consequences for Academic Dishonesty may include a Disciplinary Referral or a zero earned for the assignment.

**K. WHEN YOU GOTTA GO, YOU GOTTA GO**

- ✓ If you must use the restroom or get a drink, please arrange to do so between classes or at lunch. However, since nature **WILL** call unannounced, your Lions Team professionals have awarded you **THREE** opportunities **PER SIX WEEKS** (Waaaaaay generous, if you ask me) to leave the room during class.
- ✓ These opportunities will come in the form of a pass that your homeroom teacher will pass out to you at the beginning of each six weeks.
- ✓ Please understand that these **THREE** priceless opportunities are for your use in **ALL** of your classes – they are not Language Arts - specific.
- ✓ I will **NOT** let you go (no pun intended) if your three are used up. Be wise.

**I RESERVE THE RIGHT TO DENY YOUR REQUEST IF NECESSARY.**

# NOTICE

A lack of planning on your part  
does NOT constitute an  
emergency  
on my part.

In other words,  
please feel free to panic if your work  
is not complete or on time,  
but don't expect me to panic, too.

# NOTICE

Leave **nothing** in my room after school if you value it!

I have had issues in the past with students who see my classroom as their room at home. Therefore, I am not responsible for anything left in my classroom after 4:00 each day. This list includes (but is not limited to):

pens, pencils, geyliner, papers, reports, bookbags, Bertie Bott's Every Flavor Beans, 80's movies posters, the complete works of William Shakespeare, Manolo Blahniks, tiaras, stirrup pants, pets, loved ones, Chicken Reds landing strips, winning lottery tickets, goldfish crackers, textbooks, unauthorized biographies, mood rings, folders, three-ring binders, notes, Vote for Pedro T-shirts, hats, lugnuts, toenail clippers, cosmetics, power tools, toys, LOST theories, Happy Bunny keychains, boots, photos Suri Cruise, gloves, coats, guitars, posters, mortgage payments, credit cards, glossy photos of Link Larkin, athletic equipment, cameras, anvils, any fruits and/or vegetables, carnival supplies, Dippin' Dots, Purina products of any sort, Britney Spears wigs, prisms, software, dulcimers, candied yams, seven swans a-swimming, any Dole canned fruit products, your Patronus, Happy Meal toys, chinchillas, cassette tapes, Gogurt, comic books, trading cards, weight belts, Myspace layout codes, kazoos, homing pigeons, spare change, toe rings, Geiger counters, Smurf dolls, herbs & spices, gift certificates, hanging chads, pacifiers, in-line skates, bowling gloves, Boy Band keychains, magazines, toilet paper, postage stamps, telephone directories, iPods, autographed pictures of Pete Wentz, pieces of the Berlin Wall, Kabbalah bracelets, model planes, imposter designer handbags, cereal straws, thumbtacks, baby name lists for Nicole Richie, sealing wax, toupees, contestant applications for "Don't Forget The Lyrics", caramel frappachinos from Starbucks, rented tuxedos, favorite blankies, llamas, earplugs, beloved childhood stuffed animals, enchiladas, widgets, bags of fertilizer, parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme, secret decoder rings, Macadamia nuts or any other manner of paraphernalia...

If it's yours, keep it that way.

Take it with you when you leave, or **KISS IT GOOD-BYE.**

# NOTICE

## THE FUTURE IS NOW

It's astounding.  
Time is fleeting.  
The things you do (or don't do) will affect  
your satisfaction down the road.

The secret?

If you want to reach a goal  
at the end of the week,  
the six weeks,  
the semester,  
the year,  
figure out what you can do TODAY  
and then do it.

Don't wait for the perfect starting time.  
There isn't one & there never will be.  
Start now and start again tomorrow.

# NOTICE

YOUR INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR IN CLASS WILL  
SHOW ME HOW MUCH FREEDOM I MAY  
GIVE YOU AS A GROUP.

DON'T BE A REBEL.  
THERE'S NO CAUSE.

# THE DAZE OF SCHOOL

Count 'em up or count 'em down,  
your days in Eighth Grade are now numbered...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17  
18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30  
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43  
45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57  
58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70  
71 72 73 74 75 76 78 79 80 81 82 83 84  
85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97  
98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107  
108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116  
117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125  
126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134  
135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143  
144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152  
153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161  
162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170  
171 172 173 174 175 176 177

How do you want to feel about the year when you finish it?

Decide now.

# JUST FOR THE RECORD.....

Yes, I have read this Scholar's Survival Guide and I understand the policies within it. As a scholar, I agree to abide by these policies in Mrs. Sanders's classroom for this school year. Next year, when I'm no longer in that class, I am no longer bound by these policies, unless I really like them, in which case I will exercise my American freedom, for which many brave citizens fought and died to earn and preserve, and carry on in that manner while promising not to write run-on sentences like this one.

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Scholar's Signature

Date

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**ATTENTION: PARENTS OF 8<sup>th</sup> GRADE SCHOLARS!!!**

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN BY FRIDAY:

Yes, I have read this **Scholar's Survival Guide** and I understand the policies within it. I will amply support, praise or admonish my scholar as necessary during the course of this school year.

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Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

If you have questions, contact me at 817-453-7200.