

English Literature and History Class

Learning Objectives

Reading and Literary Studies

Students will complete a chronological survey of British literature by reading a large variety of poetry and prose within the context of the periods in which the works were written. In addition to their literary study, students will learn about the important historical events that shaped the particular work. The study will encourage students to observe the influences of movements and ideas upon literature and to recognize the importance of having a basic knowledge of history in understanding the content of many classic works. For example, Southey's famous poem "The Battle of Blenheim" will be presented as a period piece of Romantic poetry as well as a work written to defame the so-called victory of the English in the eighteenth-century War of the Spanish Succession. Preceding and following the reading selections are exercises that develop vocabulary, instruct the student in poetics and in composition (irony, style, diction, tone, etc.), and test reading comprehension. Corresponding to the period literature, the dates and details of sovereigns and historical events will be committed to memory. In addition to the assigned novels, the following works will be studied:

THE BRITON PERIOD

Selection from *The Death of Arthur* by Thomas Malory; "Gareth and Lynette" from *Idylls of the King* and "The Lady of Shalott" by Alfred Tennyson; "Boadicea: An Ode" by William Cowper; "King Leir" by Geoffrey of Monmouth; "King Lear" by Charles and Mary Lamb; Adaptation of *Cymbeline* and excerpt from *King Lear* by William Shakespeare.

THE MIDDLE AGES

"Cædmon" by Bede; *Beowulf* (anonymous); Excerpt from *Everyman* (anonymous); "Harp Song of the Dane Women" by Rudyard Kipling; Three Women of the Middle Ages by M. B. Synge; "Robin Hood Turns Butcher" by Howard Pyle; "Bruce to His Men at Bannockburn" by Robert Burns; "Geoffrey Chaucer" by H. E. Marshall; "The Pardoner's Tale" by Geoffrey Chaucer; "The Maid's Sword and Banner" by Mark Twain"; "The Douglas Tragedy" ballad.

THE ELIZABETHAN AND STUART PERIODS

Sonnets by William Shakespeare; *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare; Selected Poems by George Herbert; "Peace" by Henry Vaughan; "Ask Not for Whom the Bell Tolls" by John Donne; "Holy Sonnet IV" by John Donne; Selected Works by John Milton; "The Great Fire of London" by Samuel Pepys.

THE NEOCLASSICAL PERIOD

“Being Chased by the King” by Frances Burney; “Tawney Rachel, or the Fortune-Teller” by Hannah More; Selected Poems by Isaac Watts; “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” by Thomas Gray; “The Diverting History of John Gilpin” by William Cowper; “An Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog” by Oliver Goldsmith; Selected works by William Cowper; “The New Neighbor” (from *Pride and Prejudice*) by Jane Austen; Selected poems by Robert Burns.

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

Songs of Innocence and Experience by William Blake; Selected poems by William Wordsworth; Selected poems by George Gordon Byron; Selected poems by Percy Bysshe Shelley; Selected poems by John Keats; Selected poems by John Clare; “The Convalescent” by Charles Lamb; “The Death of Horatio Nelson” from the biography by Robert Southey; “The Battle of Blenheim” by Robert Southey.

THE VICTORIAN PERIOD TO MODERN PERIOD

Selected poems by Christina Rossetti; Selected poems by Gerard Manley Hopkins; Selected works by Thomas Hardy; “If” by Rudyard Kipling; “The Hunting of the Snark” by Lewis Carroll; Selected Poems by Alfred Tennyson; “The Duty of Remembering the Poor” by C. H. Spurgeon; Selected detective stories by Arthur Conan Doyle; “The Devoted Friend” by Oscar Wilde; Horatius Defend the Bridge by Thomas Babbington Macaulay; Selected poems by William Butler Yeats; Selected poems by Katharine Tynan.

Students will study literary terms, apply them to the assigned works, and be tested on them regularly during the year. Literary topics and concepts include

- nemesis
- Shakespeare’s literary sources
- tragedy and Aristotle’s *Poetics*
- Shakespeare for types of dramas: tragedy, comedy, history and romance
- symbolism in poetry
- Old English poetry and its influences; kennings and alliteration
- the English ballad
- rhymed couplets
- poetic justice
- figures of speech, such as metaphor
- tone
- elegy

- allusion
- nonsense poetry
- eponyms

Vocabulary

Students will learn the vocabulary found in the passages and complete the exercises that follow. The study guide instruction includes introductory passages that discuss basic linguistics and the etymology of certain words on the word list. The exercises were designed to help students understand the nuances of words and enable them to use them in speech and writing. Students will complete the following exercise types:

- analogies
- synonyms and antonyms
- context suggestions
- fill-in-the-blank

Book Reports

Students will be assigned four books to read during the year, which are as follows:

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*

Lewis Carroll, *Alice Adventures in Wonderland*

J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*

Two of the assigned books will be written and two will be oral. Specific directions for both will be detailed on a handout given in class. If students have read any of the above books, or if any of them prove too easy or challenging, any of the following novels may be substituted:

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

Beowulf (translated by poet Seamus Heaney)

Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped*

Howard Pyle, *The Story of King Arthur and His Knights*

Lewis Carol, *Through the Looking Glass*

William Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

Charles and Mary Lamb, *Tales from Shakespeare*

Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*

Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

Arthur Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

C. S. Forester, *The Happy Return* (from the *Horatio Hornblower* series)

Writing Assignments

In addition to the book reports, students will complete five to seven essays of varying length for the year. The essays will be listed on the syllabus.

- Narrative Essay
- Classification and Division essay
- Public Speech
- Expository essay
- Comparison Essay
- Argument Essay

In preparation for these written assignments, students will do the following:

- read models for imitation
- learn the format of the particular essay and its practical importance for readers
- learn how to develop a paragraph with a main idea and supporting detail
- learn the importance of detail, dialog and description, especially in narrative writing
- learn the importance of creating a natural style that comes from close observation and imitation of great past writers
- begin to develop a “voice”
- learn the importance of neatness, carefulness, proofreading, and following grammar and usage conventions

Poetry, Poetry Memorization and Poetics

Students will memorize a stanza of poetry and a famous quotation every week, and recite a poem in the school year in front of an audience. They will also complete a chapter in poetics (found in the grammar and poetics textbook) every week and learn the following terms, concepts, and topics:

- rhythm of poetry: syllables; meter (monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter, octameter, free verse, sprung rhythm); stress patterns (iambic, trochaic, spondaic, anapestic, dactylic, anapestic); rhyme scheme, alliteration
- scansion
- caesura

- rhyme: perfect and imperfect rhyme (eye rhyme, assonance, consonance, identity), masculine and feminine rhyme; internal rhyme and caesura rhyme
- stanza forms (couplet, triplet, quatrain, sestet, octave); the sonnet; heroic verse
- imagery
- kinds of poetry (epic, ode, ballad, sonnet)
- enjambment and end stop
- catalectic and acatalectic
- figures of speech and rhetorical devices: simile, metaphor, hyperbole, understatement, litotes, synecdoche, metonymy, personification, apostrophe, anaphora, epistrophe, symploce

Grammar

A lesson in grammar will be assigned every week, which will focus on usage and punctuation. Students will learn the following terms and concepts:

- Pronouns: pronoun shift, pronoun agreement, vague pronouns, ambiguous pronouns, S-V agreement with pronouns, relative pronouns, case, awkward relative and interrogative clauses, miscellaneous pronoun areas
- Verbs: principal parts, tense, tense shift, subject-verb agreement, mood, miscellaneous verb problems
- Parallel structure: series, comparisons, correlative conjunctions
- Comparisons: redundant comparisons, faulty comparisons, ambiguous comparisons, compound comparisons, parallel structure, and other problems
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers
- Awkward sentence structure
- Run-ons and fragments
- Idioms and collocations
- Punctuation: commas, semicolons, colons, hyphens, dashes, quotation marks, italics, apostrophe

Spelling

In addition to learning words misspelled in compositions, students will be quizzed on spelling words every week in a quiz, spelling bee or dictation. Students will be given the spelling lists at the beginning of the year.

Note-taking, Outlining, Organization and Neatness

Students will have weekly lessons on note-taking. The lessons will involve taking down notes on lectures regarding grammar, literature and literary devices, poets, poetry and poetics. The practice of note-taking will instruct the students in

- organizing their thoughts
- being careful and neat
- using quick and legible handwriting
- taking responsibility for their belongings

The students will be graded on each of the above areas mentioned.

Oratory

Students will learn the technical aspects of writing and delivering speeches and read various essays and speeches as models. At the end of the year, students will deliver a speech in front of an audience. Students will learn the following:

- importance of communicating a central idea in a speech through details and description
- importance of holding an audience's attention through narration and suspense
- importance of the effective organization of material
- the role that the volume, pitch and inflection of one's voice has in holding the interest of an audience
- the role of gestures and poise