

Pre-AP English 9 Syllabus

Instructor: Mr. Plansinis

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Course Description

This course emphasizes critical reading, research analysis, and composition. Individual works and units of specific genre will be considered for structure, meaning, theme, characterization, and where applicable, for contemporary value. Writing in various modes will be a major part of the course. Grammar, usage, and mechanics will be correlated with the study of literature and composition to incorporate a variety of writing types. This class is also designed to enhance discussion skills. Students will be expected to analyze, formulate, and support ideas in both oral and written form. Students are encouraged to think for themselves, build independent study habits, budget their time wisely, and tolerate conflicting ideas and/or opinions. Four novels, two dramas, and various short stories in fiction and nonfiction will be included. A summer reading assignment is required.

Regular Expectations

- **Weekly Grammar Lessons** – Each week, we will review one grammar or style concept that you learned in elementary or middle school as a way of reinforcing those lessons. On Monday (or whatever the first day of the week is), we will review the concept and practice examples together in class. You will then take a short 5-point grammar quiz on Canvas to demonstrate your understanding of the concept. Notes from the lesson can be used while taking the quiz.
- **Independent Reading** – In this class, most reading assignments will be completed on your own. The reading assignments are paced for your grade level, reading aides are provided on Canvas, and some in class time will be given for you to read; however, we will not read together as a class (except for a few challenging texts). Many quizzes, writing assignments, and discussions are based on these readings, so if you don't complete them, you will do very poorly on the other assignments.
- **Writing Assignments** – Through the course, you will complete many short writing assignments and a few full-length essays as well. You will be introduced to brainstorming activities, outlining practices, peer reviews, and revision strategies that will help you along the way. Very few people can write perfectly on the first attempt of any assignment; that's why we'll often use multiple drafts and revisions. Writing assignments are graded on several criteria: focus, content, organization, style, and grammar. That means that you can receive credit not just for *what* you write, but *how* you write it, too.
- **Tests** – Major tests will take place on Mondays and Thursdays whenever possible to avoid major conflicts with other courses. Tests will always be scheduled on Canvas and announced well in advance.
- **Late Work** - All assignments must be completed on time for full credit. Assignments will be accepted late for half credit for a period of two weeks. Large scale assignments (essays, projects, etc.) will be docked one letter grade for each day late until you reach 50%, at which point you have three weeks to turn it in for half credit.
- **Makeup Work** – Making up missed work is your own responsibility. If you're absent, you need to speak with me about making up the missed assignment. I will not track you down and hound you for missing work. As a rule, you have the number of days you missed to make up the work. For instance, if you missed two days of school, you have two days to make up the work. If you missed three days, you have three days to make it up.
- **Zeros in the Gradebook** – Be aware that anytime an assignment is not turned in on time, a zero will be put in the gradebook regardless of the reason. This is so that you are aware that the assignment is missing. If you were absent that day and the absence is excused, you will be given full credit for the assignment once you turn it in. If the assignment is simply late (not due to an excused absence), you will receive half credit for the assignment once you turn it in. If you never turn it in, the zero stays.

Units of Study

Unit 1: Guilt and Justice – Building on the summer reading assignment, we will explore the structure and style of mysteries using *And Then There Were None* as an example. We'll also examine how the concepts of "justice" and "morality" sometimes align and sometimes don't. Students will write an analytical essay centered on this novel and this concept.

Unit 2: New Perspectives – This unit focuses on point of view and the idea that narratives can change depending on the storyteller's perspective. The primary text for this unit is Harper Lee's classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Each student will read the novel independently, though some class time will be provided to do so. We'll analyze the novel's vocabulary, discuss its social implications, and write about key literary merits.

Unit 3: Duality and Conflict – The year continues with a variety of texts centered on the idea of duality – two opposing concepts existing in the same place. In addition to several short stories and poems, we read and discuss William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* together in class. As the play can be difficult for 9th graders, we slowly work through the play and respond to its plot, characters, and Shakespeare's command of the English language. Students will then perform a section of *Romeo and Juliet* to demonstrate their understanding of the concepts.

Unit 4: Social Injustice – Each student will be assigned one of five available nonfiction books: *Unbroken*, *Zeitoun*, *Outliers*, *Enrique's Journey*, or *Nickel and Dimed*. All of these books explore an important social issue that's still relevant today, whether it's wartime experiences, immigration, success, prejudice, or poverty. Students will examine how the concept is explored in the book and the techniques used to describe real-world events.

Unit 5: Challenging Authority – The year ends with George Orwell's short novella *Animal Farm*, in addition to several other short stories and poems. We'll look at how this allegory is still relevant today and the importance of questioning blind obedience, propaganda, and gaslighting.

Classroom Behavior

- **Phone and In-Ear Headphone Use** - You may not use your personal phone or earbuds/headphones during ANY classroom activities. It is expected that your personal phone/earbuds will be put away when the bell rings for the beginning of the period. If there is free time in class (for example, you've completed an assignment with time to spare), you may use your phone or listen to music **with my permission only**.
- **Being On Time** – Arrive for class on time. If you are late, you are expected to have a pass from a teacher. If you don't, it counts as a tardy. After five tardies, you will receive a detention or office referral.
- **Personal Space** – Do not touch another student's body, belongings, desk, or invade his or her personal space without that student's clear permission.
- **Bathroom Procedures** – During class, get a pass from me and sign out on the clipboard that's on the table by the door. Ask for a pass when I'm not in the middle of lecturing or helping students. At the beginning of class, if you can be back before the bell rings, you do not need a pass. If you will be back after the bell, you need a pass. You can't just roll into the room five minutes late and use the bathroom as an excuse.
- **Appropriate Language** – Even if you swear, yell, and insult other people on your own time, that kind of behavior is not tolerated here.
- **Food and Drink Policy** – Food/drinks are permitted ONLY if they aren't distracting (too noisy, smelly, etc.), they aren't being shared or passed around the room, you don't make a mess, and they don't contain allergens. If any of these rules are violated, the entire class will be banned from having food and drinks.
- **Cheating** – Copying another student's work or taking it from the Internet counts as plagiarism, no matter how small the assignment is. You are not permitted to 'work together' on assignments unless I have given you specific permission to do so. If you plagiarize or cheat in any way, you and any other student(s) involved will receive a zero, and there will be no opportunity to make up the assignment.

Consequences for Inappropriate Behavior

Behaviors that interfere with the learning of other students (violating the rules in red above) will not be tolerated. If you are doing something that is negatively interfering with the classroom environment or the learning of another student, I will follow the district's discipline guidelines

- **1st Offense: Verbal Warning** - I will warn you not to do it again.
- **2nd Offense: Phone Call Home** - I will call home to report what you have been doing and what will happen if you persist in the behavior.
- **3rd Offense: Teacher Assigned Detention** - You will receive an after-school detention. Parents will be contacted again. The student is responsible for his or her own transportation home.
- **4th Offense: Office Referral** - The student will receive a full write-up to the assistant principal who will then provide more extensive disciplinary action (in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, etc.)

NOTE: Serious behaviors can be dealt with more severely as per the district handbook. For example, plagiarism (as noted below), will earn you a detention and a parent phone call on your first offense. Drug use, severe insubordination, or a physical altercation will get you sent immediately to the main office.

English Department Academic Integrity Rules

- Accurately cite all sources and include a works cited.
- Proofread your work to assure accuracy
- Accurately represent your sources
- Read all assigned readings to assure accuracy
- Do not download a composition from the Internet
- Do not copy another person's work
- Do not make up quotes that are not in the text you have read
- Do not give your work to others
- Do not write a paper for one course and turn the same paper in for another course

This class will utilize a program called Turnitin.com to check for plagiarism. All students are required to submit written work through that program (integrated with Canvas), which compares submitted work with all text on the internet as well as previous papers submitted to teachers who use Turnitin.com.

If you are caught plagiarizing on an assignment...

- **1st Offense:** You will receive a zero on the assignment with no opportunity to make it up. Your parents will be notified.
- **2nd Offense:** You will receive a zero on the assignment with no opportunity to make it up. Your parents will be notified. You will be sent to the office and receive 1 day of in-school suspension.
- **3rd Offense:** You will receive a zero on the assignment with no opportunity to make it up. Your parents will be notified. You will be sent to the office and receive 1 day of out-of-school suspension.

My Contact Information

- The best way to contact me is through email at: jplansinis@efsd.net
- You can also reach me by calling the school at 412-896-2360, extension 7804.
- I will use the website "Remind 101" throughout the year to contact both students and parents. It's a one-way form of communication where I can send a mass text out to anyone who signs up for the class. To sign up, simply text the code **@planman2** to the number **81010**.

I look forward to getting to know each of you and having a successful school year for everyone in the class.

Sincerely,
Mr. Justin Plansinis