

## **Middle School English A**

### **Course Overview**

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Middle School English A is designed for advanced 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders who are seeking a year-long comprehensive study of literature and writing through online learning. If you are at least 12 years old and you're searching for a class that is fun, but challenging—a class where you will write both analytically and creatively, and read critically—then this class is for you! Throughout the year, you and your classmates will focus on themed novel and non-fiction studies in a variety of genres, read and analyze short stories and poems, engage in friendly, active discussions, and refine your grammar and vocabulary skills. This may be your first online class, or you may be an online pro. Either way, unit coursework will help you develop and improve your technological skills.

Throughout the year, students in this middle school class will review and reinforce the components of the writing process. You will use strategies such as outlining, revising, rewriting, and occasional peer editing to improve your writing skills. Expect assignment to include narrative, descriptive and argumentative writing, as well as writing to compare and contrast and an introduction to the research paper. Do you enjoy creative writing? An important addition to structured compositions will be your creative writing journal, where you will explore your creative side! Each major learning unit will include a project or concluding assessment, so you can demonstrate your proficiency and understanding. And naturally, unit goals, detailed rubrics, and criteria for success will be provided!

The class will be highly interactive, while still offering you and your family the flexibility of an online format. Expect to participate in lively weekly forums, responding to literary analysis exercises in give-and-take discussions with your classmates and teacher. Live sessions will be held on designated weekdays per student/teacher schedules. Individual tutorials will be offered at a time mutually agreeable to both student and instructor. Chat recordings will be posted on the course page for students who cannot attend or who opt out. You will work independently in your grammar text throughout the year, and you'll expand your vocabulary through both workbooks and words drawn from your reading.

By the end of the year you and your Middle School English A classmates will be amazed by your ability to navigate the exciting world of online learning, and you will feel prepared to take on advanced middle school writing and research projects.

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## Course Goals

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Students will:

- Express an informed personal response to literary and non-literary texts and demonstrate the ability to approach works independently
- Understand and respond to the structure, language, and significance of familiar and previously unseen pieces of writing
- Compare texts and connect themes to show similarities or differences across genres
- Demonstrate a critical awareness of a range of written and visual texts
- Interpret the author's or speaker's intentions
- Distinguish the main ideas in a text from the secondary ideas
- Use language to narrate, describe, analyze, explain, argue, persuade, inform, entertain and express feelings
- Express ideas with clarity and coherence in written communication
- Structure ideas and arguments logically and support them with relevant examples
- Creatively respond to writing prompts
- Use and understand a varied range of vocabulary
- Use correct grammar with appropriate and varied sentence structure

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## Student Resources

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Writing:

- [\*Write Source 2000, 4th edition: A Guide to Writing, Thinking and Learning\*](#)
- [\*Rip the Page! Adventures in Creative Writing\*](#), Karen Benke
- [\*Merriam-Webster's Intermediate Thesaurus, Grades 5-8\*](#)

Vocabulary:

- [\*Vocabulary from Latin and Greek Roots: Book 1\*](#), Osborne, Moliken and Knox
- [\*Wordly Wise Book 7\*](#)

Grammar:

- [\*180 Daily Teaching Lessons, Easy Grammar Ultimate Series, Grade 8\*](#), Wanda Phillips (student text only)

Short Stories and Poetry:

- [\*Little Worlds, A Collection of Short Stories for Middle School\*](#), Peter Guthrie

- [\*The Barefoot Book of Classic Poems\*](#), Jackie Morris

Fiction and Non-Fiction\*:

- [\*Bridge to Terabithia\*](#), Katherine Paterson
- [\*Holes\*](#), Louis Sachar
- [\*Number the Stars\*](#), Lois Lowry
- [\*Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry\*](#), Mildred Taylor
- [\*The Secret Garden\*](#), Frances Hodgson Burnett
- [\*The Story of My Life\*](#), Helen Keller
- [\*Treasure Island\*](#), Robert Louis Stevenson
- [\*The Westing Game\*](#), Ellen Raskin
- [\*Where the Red Fern Grows\*](#), Wilson Rawls

\* Please note that there may be minor modifications to the fiction reading list.

Students who have read one or more of these selections may opt to re-read or substitute worthy alternatives in the same genre.

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## Course Activities

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- Read novels, poetry, short stories, and non-fiction—including informational texts and essays
  - Quizzes and tests on assigned literature work
  - Writing instruction with detailed, individual feedback
  - Daily grammar and vocabulary exercises and weekly quizzes
  - Online discussion forums on each piece of literature, as well as feedback forums on every essay and on literary analysis work
  - Introduction to literary analysis and essay writing
  - Live sessions where students can interact with each other and get immediate feedback as we discuss literature, play review games, and prepare for upcoming tests
  - Assessments in the form of varied writing tasks and projects; major units include project or assessment to show proficiency and learning established in goals
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## Summer Assignment

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Students will read [\*Holes\*](#) over the summer, and there will be a fun summer writing assignment.

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## **Online Format**

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Course instruction occurs through module progression, class forums, and live chats. I welcome and encourage student and parent communication. I will be available to students through Skype, as well. Assignments are set up on a Monday-Sunday timetable. You will access the website regularly, and interact with your classmates throughout the week, according to your own school and family schedule. Live meetings are hosted weekly to address course content, curriculum and questions. The meetings are fun and engaging for any who wish to participate, and if you are unavailable, a recording and transcript will be provided for your review. Interaction is frequent and friendly. Peer-to-peer collaboration, dialogue, and debate via our discussion boards and meetings are what make the course engaging and enjoyable!

The class is hosted on CANVAS, a learning management system that is popular among online educators and universities. You will need access to a computer with an *up-to-date* browser (Firefox, Safari, Internet Explorer, or Chrome). You will complete assignments directly on the website and upload your writing assignments as Microsoft Word documents. The course website is password protected and accessible only to registered students and parents for observation.

The class website will open a week early and parents and students will receive an invitation to join the course.

## **Use of Technology and Technical Requirements**

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Many students are new to online learning, so there will be significant time spent during the first week or two of the course helping students become acquainted with expectations, procedures, and the CANVAS format. Questions are expected and welcome!

High speed Internet and an e-mail account that accepts large files. Microphone or headset highly suggested. Students must have access to Microsoft Word/Office, full Internet and printer access (broadband Internet recommended but not required), and they must be able to view PDF files. Anti-virus software is highly encouraged.

## **Course Tuition, Size, and Schedule**

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Middle School English A is open to home-schooled students who are in 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> grades and are at least 12 years old. Tuition for 2014-2015 is \$549 for the year.

The class will run from August 25, 2014 to May 1, 2015.

- Thanksgiving - Week off
  - Winter break December 22-January 5
  - Spring break March 9-13
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## Questions

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Students often wonder "which class is the best fit for me?" Robust reading and writing in Middle School English A is designed to challenge and prepare middle school and early high school students, but also recognize and remember that reading and writing can and should be fun.

Do you love to read and write? Are you willing to commit to reading 20-50 pages per week? Do you want to improve your skills in literary analysis? Are you ready to work diligently on long term writing projects? If you answered "yes" to those questions, then this course is for you! The ideal student is one who will invest time and energy into exploring the coursework deeply—a student who is committed to improving reading and writing skills. Students do not need to have a specific course background. What's most important is a willingness, openness, and eagerness to learn. We will work and learn together in this course!

If you have questions or would like additional information about this course, please contact the instructor.

## INSTRUCTOR QUALIFICATIONS

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Emily holds a B.A. degree in psychology and education from Bryn Mawr College and is certified to teach elementary education (K-6) and English Language and Composition (7-12). As a former elementary school classroom teacher and experienced K-12 online educator, Emily has a passion for making reading and writing accessible and fun. She has high standards for her students but is warm, compassionate and approachable. Emily is also a TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) certified instructor and has taken a variety of graduate courses in literacy education.

## REVIEWS FROM PARENTS ON WRITING COURSES TAUGHT

- It's a pleasure to see our daughter's writing and confidence improve day by day. We appreciate her teacher's corrections as well as her encouragements, which we have found extremely helpful. - *D.W.*

- I cannot tell you how grateful I am for this program! My son has blossomed in his writing skills, far exceeding my expectations. Emily has pulled out of him a love for writing that I could never do. I didn't know he had that in him to write that well:-) Now if I could find something to teach science as well my world would be perfect! - *C.J.*
- Ms. Emily Mulvihill is a very productive instructor. She gave out detailed instruction about lessons and assignments. She gave helpful comments on assignments. Overall, I highly recommend her. Thank you. - *M.M.*
- We love Mrs. Emily! She is very organized, attentive, encouraging, and knowledgeable. She is great at returning assignments in a timely manner for corrections and she is very good at making suggestions for the students to use their own thinking to make corrections and not just giving the answers to copy down. We will be straying from our regular schedule just to take Mrs. Emily's class again! - *A.T.*
- Great balance of encouragement along with suggestions. -*M. H.*
- I think the assignments were engaging for my daughter, and she enjoyed spreading her writing wings. She seemed to get good feedback; Emily seemed positive and upbeat, and constructively critical in the right ways. My daughter enjoyed the class, and Emily was a good teacher for her. - *E.F.*
- A year ago, my son and I were extremely frustrated with writing. He was far behind grade level and we fought each other when it came to writing everyday. I was beginning to feel that it was hurting our relationship and considered stopping homeschooling. Out of desperation, I decided to try an on-line writing class that would provide an outside teacher, rather than Mom. Through Emily's class, I feel like my son's writing has improved tremendously. He no longer hates writing. It's been wonderful to have such a patient teacher to help him. My son has taken more responsibility for his own assignments. I've seen his writing confidence soar. -*S.B.*
- The emails from his teacher have been so encouraging and helpful. - *J.C.*
- Emily did an excellent job. She was on top of things. She was thorough & spent the necessary time with my son. I was quite impressed with her. -*E.C.*