



Language Arts

Ms. Jessi Leavell

Course Description: This course is designed to emphasize reading comprehension, writing, and methods of inquiry as found in the Core. The course will focus on the processes, skills, and strategies for effective communication in all its forms. Students will be required to do outside reading and writing assignments throughout each quarter.

“May your coming year be filled with magic and dreams and good madness. I hope you read some fine books ...and don't forget to make some art -- write or draw or build or sing or live as only you can. And I hope, somewhere in the next year, you surprise yourself.”

-Neil Gaiman

Course Expectations: Ms. Jessi structures her classroom in a fairly different way. At the beginning of each unit, students receive a “Unit Plan,” that provides a list of possible assignments students must complete to receive a favorable grade. The first group of assignment choices are called “Layer C.” That means, if students simply desire to pass the class with a “C,” they only need to complete the requirements in that category. These assignments could include options such as: illustrate a character, write a letter to an author, or create a diorama. Though these assignments are fun, they don’t require higher level thinking. The second group of assignment choices are called “Layer B.” To receive a “B,” students must complete the required number of “C” assignments as well as one “B” assignment. These are all research based papers; students must find additional sources to answer a question in essay format. The final category is “A.” To receive an “A,” students must complete the required number of “C” assignments, one “B” assignment, and one “A” assignment. This is an opinion based paper, or an argumentative essay. Students will research given topics, form their own opinions, and write a paper to persuade others that their stance is right. Students will also be required to read at least one novel (125 page minimum) each calendar month. Students will demonstrate their understanding and connections to that novel with a book report created in any pre-approved genre.

Textbooks and Materials: Books used for in-class work will be provided by the school. Students will have the chance to check books out of Ms. Jessi’s lending library for their monthly book reports. If you choose to not allow your student to borrow these books, you (the parent/guardian) are expected to provide access to new books of differing genres each month. (See “Lending Library” below.)



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Grading Plan:

A	93-100	C	73-79
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	64-66
B-	80-82	F	Below 64
C+	77-79		

Portfolio: Throughout the year, students will complete and compile a portfolio of their best work in all areas, highlighting growth and understanding. Those pieces will be submitted and assembled in the Advisory course.

Group Activities: Many of Ms. Jessi's assignments are group activities. At the junior high level, students are expected to work in groups thereby reinforcing time management, leadership, communication, and social skills. Grading will be based on the group's final product or on individual growth and understanding, as circumstances vary. Accommodations can always be made, but must be addressed in a timely manner.

Homework Expectations: Through Ms. Jessi's numerous assignment options, every student can complete meaningful, worthwhile assignments. No student needs to simply go through the motions of an English class, simply because he/she doesn't like the work, because in this classroom, students decide their own relevant assignments. With that in mind, work should be at the best of the student's ability. Students will also be required to answer questions about those assignments orally, showing thought, consideration, and growth.

Typing Papers: Word processing and computer skills will be a major factor for students in *every* class from grades 7-12 and beyond. Grade-level expectation is that by 7th grade, students should be able to complete a word-processed paper with minimal assistance. Two papers every "Unit" will be typed. Accommodations can always be made, but must be in advance.

Late Work: Late work is accepted, but will be held to a higher and stricter grading standard than those assignments turned in on time. In addition to the tougher grading practices, an automatic 15% of the possible points will be deducted from the earned score.

Extra Credit: Extra credit is never guaranteed and will only be offered sparingly. Students are expected to earn their grades with the layered course work and class participation.

Absences: Because of the nature of Ms. Jessi's units, students can time the completion of their unit assignments around scheduled absences and are expected to do so. Unexpected absences and classwork, on the other hand, must be completed within 7 calendar days to receive full credit. After those 7 days, assignments will be considered late and will be docked 15% of possible points.

Citizenship Grade: Students receive a citizenship grade to reflect their attitude and respect of others in the classroom. All students start with an "S" (satisfactory), but Ms. Jessi can change it



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at any time as she sees fit. An “H” (honor) reflects an exemplary student who goes above and beyond the usual student. An “N” (needs improvement) indicates that a student struggles in some aspects of grace and courtesy, but shows a desire or willingness to improve. A “U” (unacceptable) is when additional action was needed to help improve a student’s attitude.

Lending Library: As previously stated, Ms. Jessi has a small collection of books that is available for students to check out. Though there is no set time limit on how long a student may keep a book, it is expected that students be mindful of others and return the book within a timely manner. If books are lost or destroyed, students have two options: 1) Pay Ms. Jessi the cover price of that book or 2) simply purchase a new/used copy of that exact book to replace it. For the second option, Amazon.com is a wonderful source of all things used and cheap. If you (the parent or guardian) wish that your child not be allowed to check out books, please write a sentence stating such below your signature on the following page. Without that statement, students are free to borrow books and are held responsible for their return or replacement.

Class Rules:

Be respectful of all

Disagree with ideas, not people

Be supportive of classmates and their work

Please Note: Ms. Jessi is very sensitive to artificially perfumed chemicals. If a student has a highly distracting perfume or heavily scented item, Ms. Jessi will ask that it be removed or washed. If a perfume or cologne cannot be washed away, the student could be offered a temporary, code-compliant change of clothing. It’s nothing personal; it’s simply an allergy.

Class Materials:

All students will need the following:

a 3 ring binder

paper (loose or spiral bound)

colored pencils

sticky notes (optional but awesome for annotations)

I have read and understand the rules for _____ class.

Parent/Guardian Signature:_____ **Date:**_____

Parent/Guardian’s Email Address:_____ and/or _____

Student Signature:_____ **Date:**_____
