

G/T ENGLISH - GRADE 8 CLASS DESCRIPTION

The eighth grade program facilitates student exploration of the language arts through four required literature units: The Short Story, Literature in the Tragic Mode, Fantasy and Science Fiction, and Epics. The required works for intensive study in G/T English 8 are *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, *The Odyssey* by Homer, and *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane.

G/T ENGLISH CLASS DESCRIPTION

The G/T English program promotes students' growth in reading, writing, speaking, and listening through four required literature strands: genres, archetypes, forms, and origins. Highly able and high achieving English students explore literary works, develop their thinking about literature, and create compositions of their own while refining appropriate language skills.

Differentiation for students participating in the G/T English program is accomplished through a tiered approach with an emphasis on designated G/T objectives that are outlined by the *Howard County Middle School Essential Curriculum* documents. These objectives extend the essential objectives by focusing more on synthesis, application, and analysis. Composition goals for highly able and high achieving English students are classified into three categories based upon the writing goals in the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP): Writing to Express Personal Ideas, Writing to Inform, and Writing to Persuade. The emphasis on composition for students participating in the G/T English program is on style, tone, and complex forms, while the literature emphasis is on language and theme.

Highly able and high achieving English students are expected to work at an accelerated pace, to read and interpret challenging and complex literature independently, and to formulate their own hypotheses about authors' intent and style. Students participating in the G/T English program are required to read three full-length works for intensive study. These literary selections are reserved for G/T English students because their complex sentence structure, advanced vocabulary, or difficult content present a special reading challenge. Through a shared inquiry approach to literature discussion, teachers encourage students to search for answers to fundamental questions raised by the text. Consequently, students consider problems from many angles as they analyze ideas, learn to give full consideration to the ideas of others, weigh the merits of opposing arguments, and modify their initial opinions as the textual evidence demands. Finally in assessments, students are asked to transfer what they have learned to interpret challenging texts which they have never seen before.

By extending and refining knowledge, creative productions and investigations enable students to apply what they know about literary content and composition to the development of original works. To substantiate their learning, students participating in

G/T English are expected to apply advanced-level research skills as they generate these creative productions and investigations. Possibilities for productions and investigations may involve writing a multi-paragraph composition explaining how the elements of fiction contribute to the development of the selection; creating a work of art that reflects significant qualities of a literary work; or converting a news story into a more complex poetic form such as a ballad. Finally, students participating in G/T English are encouraged to use technology to create real-world products which represent their research findings.

G/T English students will create and maintain portfolios to assess and enhance their growth. Portfolios offer the most appropriate way to assess growth in the G/T English program where student reflection, investigation, and self-assessment are high priorities. In maintaining portfolios, students gain deeper insight into their own learning as they investigate themselves as writers and readers. As a result, students become better thinkers and communicators.