

# English 8

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## Goal

**Students will enrich their perspective on life as encountered in literature, expand their reading horizons to include epics and science fiction, master the basic skills of journalistic writing, and grow to see their unique place in the work of the Kingdom.**

## Standards Alignment and Goals

This course aligns with the Common Core standards for English and Language Arts in general and for 8th grade in particular.

<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards/english-language-arts-standards>

**Learning objectives** derive from the **Common Core standards** and include

- Teaching students careful **observation** of a written text, going beyond the surface level to notice an author's writing techniques, themes, and word choices and to organize and discuss those observations with **clarity** and **precision** in written essays or class discussion
- Learning to state an idea about a text and back it up using **evidence** from the work itself as well as the student's own observations
- Developing skills to **analyze** a writer's argument in a nonfiction piece, recognize logical fallacies, and identify basic rhetorical techniques
  - A survey of literary **genres** like personal narrative, short story, poetry, epic literature, and science fiction
  - A thorough introduction to the skills of **journalism**, including asking good questions, interviewing, observation, photography, news writing, op/ed, project management, teamwork, and publishing (both online and print)
  - Learning to use a variety of tools for collaboration and publishing, including Google Docs, DropBox, WordPress, and MS Publisher.
  - Regular **writing practice** to develop a student's ability to follow grammatical and stylistic conventions, including strong sentence and paragraph organization and to develop a robust vocabulary
  - Regular practice in creative writing, informative writing, writing-to-learn, and reflective journaling through a Writing Workshop format



## Content Overview

Unit Concepts	Questions	Skills	Assessments*
Challenges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What kinds of challenges do humans face individually, in families, and in society?</li> <li>2. How is the USA facing challenges right now?</li> <li>3. How is CONFLICT related to literary plot development?</li> </ol>	<p>Identifying genre, problem, plot, setting, and characters in a story</p> <p>Use Freytag's pyramid to chart a plot</p>	<p>Plot charts Journals Hero interview Test</p> <p>Grammar review</p>
Individualism and Interdependence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What makes you unique as a person?</li> <li>2. What gifts can you share with the classroom community?</li> <li>3. Which of your weaknesses are strengthened by other classmates' strengths?</li> <li>4. Which weaknesses in reading, analysis, writing, grammar, etc will you target this year throughout this course?</li> </ol>	<p>Self-evaluation Critique and Discussion Setting goals Partnership</p> <p>Personal reflective writing</p>	<p>ME Magazine!</p>
The Media  Journalistic Writing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How is my daily life or my opinion affected by the media?</li> <li>2. How can the 8th grade class serve the community of NCS by providing interesting, engaging news in a timely manner?</li> <li>3. How can I work as part of a team to accomplish a major task within a tight time frame?</li> </ol>	<p>Journalistic writing</p> <p>Interviewing</p> <p>Writing Process</p> <p>Goal-setting, time management, and project management</p> <p>Revising and proofreading</p> <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Using technology in writing and publishing</p>	<p>NCS Times—<i>yearlong project</i></p> <p><i>Interviews</i> <i>Note-taking</i> <i>Drafting and revision</i> <i>Publication-ready final drafts</i> <i>Multimedia</i></p>
Intellectual Freedom and Democratic Ideals  (SciFi and <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> )	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How are democracy and intellectual freedom linked?</li> <li>2. How should Christians deal with issues like censorship?</li> <li>3. Why do science fiction authors choose alternate or unrealistic settings?</li> <li>4. How does an author communicate her Theme?</li> <li>5. How does an author's cultural and chronological situation affect his/her work?</li> </ol>	<p>Identifying themes</p> <p>Identifying social and cultural influences on lit</p> <p>Understanding alternate points of view</p> <p>Researching controversial topics</p> <p>Reflective reading</p>	<p>Journal</p> <p>Literary topic essays</p> <p>Creative writing project</p> <p>Independent research</p> <p>Test</p>
Heroism and Literature	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What did past cultures value in a hero?</li> <li>2. What does our culture value as heroism?</li> <li>3. How do societies transmit those values?</li> <li>4. What makes epic literature distinct as a genre?</li> </ol>	<p>Identify epic characteristics</p> <p>Compare and contrast ancient and modern concepts of heroism</p>	<p>Creative writing</p> <p>Art based on epic</p> <p>Test</p>

\*Not all assessments or major assignments are listed.

Students will take **semester exams** in December and in May. The exam will assess the student's ability to read a selection "cold," analyze it, and answer an essay question.

## Calendar

I adjust the course each year to fit the needs of the students, so my schedule will vary depending on student ability and interest, opportunities for integration with other courses, and need for additional practice.

I spend the bulk of 1st quarter establishing the writing process for the school newsletter, including note-taking, interviewing, writing, revising, and teamwork. Students learn to use the tools of Publisher and WordPress by writing a creative, reflective personal "magazine." I also establish a 1st quarter foundation in basic literary analysis through the "Challenges" unit.

These foundational units set the pace for the bulk of the year when we are engaged in writing, reading a wide variety of texts, rhetorical analysis, and grammar review. The NCS Times project also continues throughout the year.

During 3rd quarter I will introduce a short story unit which leads into a discussion of science fiction as a primarily-American genre. We will use scifi stories as a springboard to understand the effect of an author's historical context on his own writing. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* offers an excellent example for class discussion and literary critique

Finally, we will conclude the year with an overview of *heroism* in three major epic cycles: *The Iliad*, a portion of *Beowulf*, and the King Arthur mythology.

## Outside Reading: Through the Decades

For most of the year, students will choose outside (independent) reading books every 3 weeks. I expect students to read the entire book (and hopefully enjoy it) as they grow in their ability to comprehend texts on their own.

To integrate with Coart's 8th grade 20th Century History class, my outside reading selections this year will come from a special list of books about certain periods in 20th C history. I'd like for students to "see" history through a character's eyes. The decade lists will include a wide variety of books, genres, and difficulty levels. I encourage advanced readers to stretch their wings. I also hope parents will read along with us, either in your own adult-level lit or read aloud with your kids. (They are never too old for it!)

Because the timing and selection of the readings is somewhat dependent on the history sequence, I will pass out a decade list a few weeks before students need to have a book. Please take advantage of local libraries and interlibrary loan; I don't expect parents to purchase OR books. E-books are also welcome (eg: Kindle or Nook).

Every 3 weeks we will gather to discuss outside reading. Students are graded on their completion of the assignment. Occasionally, I will assign a formal book project, and I will let students know about the project before they choose their books.

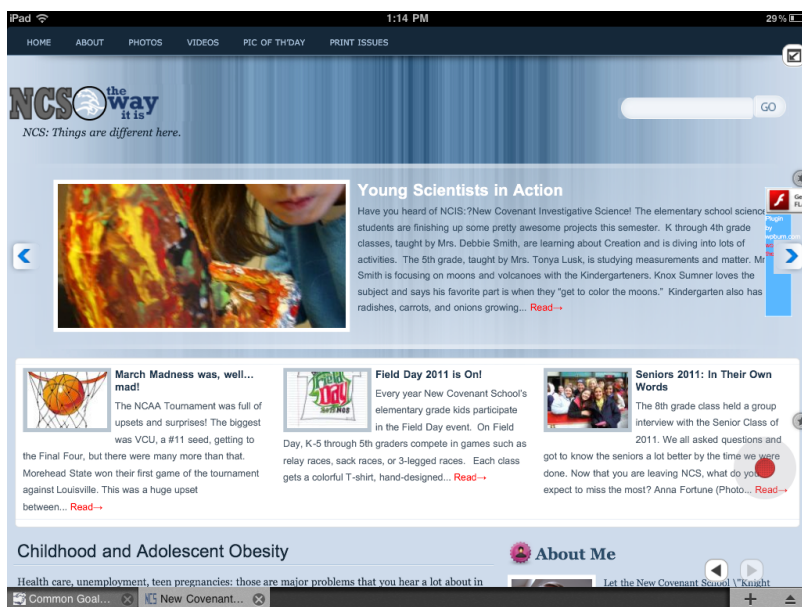
## About the Newsletter

For the past decade, the 8th grade English class has provided the NCS community with a regular news publication. Over the years the format and layout have changed but the original goal remains the same: students serve the school community by providing news and feature stories while honing their own writing, collaboration, and project management skills.

The newsletter project ushers students into a real-world task with realistic deadlines and actual responsibility. It's normal for students to feel a little intimidated at first, but we work together on the project and I ramp up the responsibilities over time. By the end of the year, kids are unafraid to tackle a complex project under a deadline with maturity and spirit of teamwork.

### Technology requirements

We create the print newsletter using **Microsoft Publisher**. Students do **not** need to own a copy of the program at home though several have found it useful to work at home rather than after school in the lab. (Since students can buy software at a discount, MS Publisher Student Edition costs around \$50.) You can download a 30-day free trial version from the Microsoft website; that's sufficient to accomplish the *ME! magazine* project in September.



Every 8th grader needs to have an **active email address** for collaboration on writing projects. I highly recommend getting a GMail account because students will need a **Google login** anyway to access Google Docs. I will teach students how to use these *free* tools early in the year.

Students need to submit newsletter article drafts **typed** in one of 3 formats:

- typed in an email
- MS Word
- Google Doc format

The companion school news website ([www.NCS.sc/times](http://www.NCS.sc/times)) uses WordPress blogging software. Students do not need to purchase anything. I will teach them how to log in, create a new post, format, insert media like photos or videos, and publish their articles.

By the end of the year, students will have earned a practical working knowledge of print and online publishing tools, skills which they can carry into high school and beyond.

## Grading

I label assignments as Homework, Quiz, Test, or Writing when I enter grades into TeacherEase. Each category makes up a percentage of the final grade:

Homework	25%
Quizzes	20%
Tests/Projects	25%
Writing	30%

**Tests** include a variety of objective questions (multiple choice, true/false, matching, short answer) and subjective essay questions.

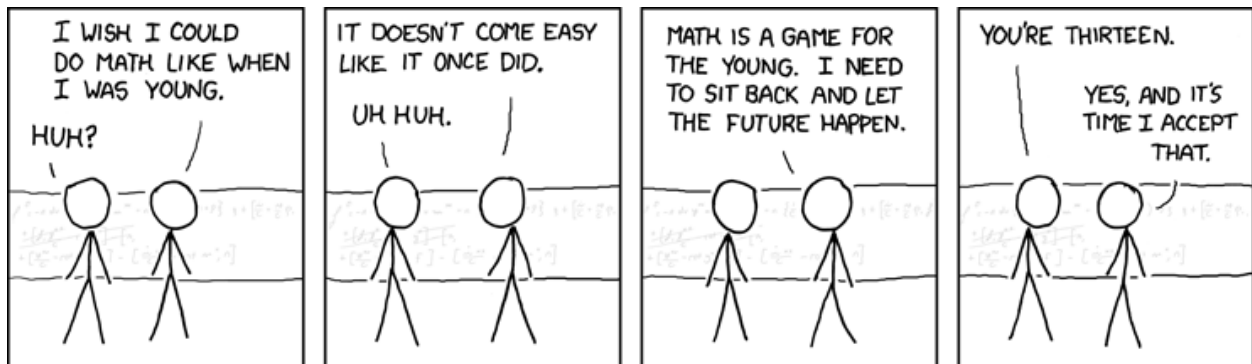
## Textbooks

*Writing and Grammar* (hardback rental, orange)

*Adventures for Readers, vol 2* (hardback rental, green)

*Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury

*King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table*, R L Green



xkcd

## Course Policies

### Please bring to class daily

- Paper and pencil/pen
- English notes/binder/folder....please keep all handouts
- Textbooks and last night's homework
- **Red pen for grading**
- Journal (or composition notebook for that purpose)

**Class Behavior:** I expect students to learn wisdom and discernment.

Don't leave a class when I'm actively teaching except for an emergency (like a nosebleed). On the other hand, if we are working independently, you may leave to go to the bathroom without asking permission.

Love your neighbor by listening when someone else is speaking, keeping your clutter under control, and treating everyone with the same respect and grace you expect to receive. Don't talk, play games, distract or text when I am talking.

Be on time for class.

Don't pack up before I finish teaching--it's rude.

**Attendance and Make-up Work:** I rely heavily on class discussion; therefore, students need to be in class unless they are sick. It's hard to recreate the learning experience lost when a student misses the day's discussion.

**Students who miss class are expected to take the initiative to get notes over the day's discussion from classmates and to make up assignments promptly.** I will try to remember to ask students to turn in the work, but makeup work is ultimately the *student's* responsibility.

The NCS handbook explains how many days a student has to make up work. After that time, late work will accrue penalties (see below). But I am always happy to work with students who ask for extra time due to illness.

I expect students who miss for reasons other than being sick (like a dentist appt or a weekend trip) to return to class the following day with that day's homework ready to be turned in.

**Formal Writing:** Students may neatly handwrite or type most assignments. Occasionally, they will need to type a draft for final publication. They may ask adults or older students to type them as long as the typist does not make changes to the final copy apart from basic proofreading.

**Communication:** I prefer to communicate face-to-face or via email.

Students are welcome to text me (wise) questions in the evenings or find me on Facebook if they have a question about an assignment.

If you missed class, call a *classmate* to get the assignment. I also write HW assignments on my white board and leave them posted until the next day for students' reference.

**Late Work:** All work is due at the beginning of the class period.

Students without an excused absence may incur late penalties as follows:

- Late homework which can be made up: 0% grade until work is submitted, then I will raise the grade no higher than 50%. (Example: lit reading assignment and questions)
- Some homework assignments cannot be replaced (ie: "Bring in two articles to use in the day's class discussion on \_\_\_\_\_"). Those assignments will earn a 0% if a student is present without her homework. Absent students must bring the assignment to class the day they return to get credit.

- Late papers and projects incur a 10% penalty each day. Once the penalty has reached 0%, the grade is permanent. The student can request a new assignment as makeup work; I will average the grade if the makeup assignment with the missed assignment.

**Grading:** Check your grades on a weekly basis. I try to enter grades within 7 days. If you have your own email address, you can get your own TeacherEase login.

**Electronic Devices** are welcome in my classroom in certain situations: you may listen to your iPod after finishing a test, for example, if you can do so without distracting anyone else.

If you own a Kindle or Nook or iPad, you may be able to find your outside reading books in electronic form. Your device is welcome in my classroom, but YOU are responsible for it at all times.

Texting during class, using Facebook, playing Solitaire (etc) distracts me and you, so please refrain....or I will confiscate your device for 24 hours, contact your parents, and/or ban your device completely.

Your cellphone ringer should be set on silent during class, and it would be inappropriate to answer your phone during class.

