



7th AND 8th GRADE LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION AND GRAMMAR

August 2019

“There is no neutral ground in the universe; every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.” -- C. S. Lewis

Dear Parents of 7th and 8th Grade Literature and Composition and Grammar Students,

This year’s 7th and 8th grade class will construct a worldview framework on the foundation of literature and writing fundamentals that we built in the 6th and 7th grade last year.

Grammar: During the first semester, the 7th grade class will start with Lessons 13-30 to review the seven sentence patterns and verbals with *Shurley Grammar 8* as our primary text. In the second semester, after we finish our research paper, we will move on to the *First and Second Book of Sentence Diagramming* by Eugene R. Moutoux. We will concentrate on diagramming and the logic of classifying words in a sentence to discern their meaning and importance. Meanwhile, the 8th grade class will build on the sentence diagramming skills from last year using *Second Book of Sentence Diagramming* by Eugene R. Moutoux and *Grammar by Diagram* by Cindy Vitto as our primary text. For both classes I will reinforce the logic of word order and the importance of diligently seeking to ask the right questions, thereby reinforcing thinking skills.

Literature: This year’s combined 7th and 8th grade class will focus on identifying and comparing different worldviews in poetry, novels, short stories, and nonfiction. How we view the world determines how we think and what we believe. Then we act on what we believe. The same is true for writers who explore God, Nature, and Man: his human nature, his problems, and the solutions. Augustine proclaimed in the opening chapter of his *Confessions*, “Oh Lord, You have created us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” In conflict with this Christian worldview, the prominent astronomer Carl Sagan proclaimed, “The cosmos is all there is, or was, or ever will be,” and later added, “Who are we? We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people.” Both authors contradict each other. Both authors cannot be right. If one is right, then the other is wrong. One worldview brings hope, and one brings hopelessness, one life and the other death. Again, we act on what we believe.

After reviewing the Christian worldview of our summer reading, John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, we will examine the competing humanistic (nihilism) worldview of John Steinbeck’s novella *The Pearl*. Then students will experience a survey of changing worldviews through the periods of American poetry. As we move through the literary periods, we will look at the impact of changing cultures and American writers’ disintegrating view of the subjects of God, Nature, Man, Bible, and authority in contrast to the biblical view. This is an art, not an exact science. Then we will contrast the view of novels and short stories from different periods: John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* to Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “The Celestial Railroad,” John Steinbeck’s *The Pearl* to Mary Rowlandson’s *The Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson*, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* to Langston Hughes’ “On the Road,” Jack London’s *Call of the Wild* to Washington Irving’s “Rip Van Winkle”.

By the last quarter we will look at the consequences of a man centered worldview without God when good intentions lead not to the individual freedom desired, but to dictatorship and tyranny in British author George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. In the end, to review the differing worldview periods, we will examine a couple short pieces (essays and short stories) from each literary period. (See attached reading list.)

Yes, literature proves a powerful tool to change the soul, but as the great theologian, R.L. Dabney cautioned in 1849, “It is perfectly easy to paint truth at the bottom and error at the top when falsehood holds the brush.” The goal of this class is not to make your 7th and 8th graders worldview experts for

whom John Stonestreet would be proud, but to teach them to identify falsehood and have compassion on the writer who rejected the hope of the Cross. A successful result of this class will be that your students can not only read literature with a compassionate soul, but that they will recognize worldview, in their music and movies and media, and no longer be entertained by the sins that sent Christ to the Cross.

Composition: Students have a solid writing foundation from the last two – three years. They will continue to build on that foundation and framework. Again, they will tie major writing assignments to their reading. I will be adding style elements from their poetry and the *Institute of Excellence in Writing* programs. Composition will consist of a combination of long pieces and short pieces, sometimes only a paragraph, bouncing back and forth between cognitive and creative assignments and poetry. I desire to have students become more creative in their cognitive writing and the addition of the above elements should help them achieve that goal.

7th-8th Grade Literature and Composition Goals

- Develop proficient readers who know not only what an author says, but also discerns why he says it.
- Develop student understanding of the changing worldviews of American literatures as the cultural understanding moves away from the God of the Bible
- Develop competent and creative writers not frightened of a blank page
- Develop students capable of reading, thinking, and writing from a Christian perspective
- Develop readers competent of understanding literature from a historical perspective.

7th – 8th Grade Unit Outcome (How the final goal will be measured by the end of the year)

The learner will actively read (writing on the literature) and appraise literature from a Christian worldview in a final piece of literature and write an essay on how God, Nature, Man, Bible, and Authority are presented in the literature in comparison/contrast to the Bible.

HOMEWORK AND GRADING: Although not all assignments will be graded (such as paper drafts), each is important and required to be submitted on time for full credit. I receive literature assignments in the morning and students receive feedback by class that same day; therefore, for students to receive immediate feedback, students must turn their work in on time.

| | Mon | Tues (due Thurs) | Wed | Thurs(due Tues) | Fri |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|---|-----|---|-----|
| Grammar | Tests or independent grammar work | Instruction and independent grammar work (completed in class unless absent) | | Instruction and independent grammar | |
| Literature | | Reading and questions (due at 8am). | | Reading and questions (due at 8am) | |
| Composition | | Writing (due on Monday night before 8pm), but I appreciate work submitted earlier (Sunday night). | | Writing (due Wednesday night before 8pm) I appreciate work submitted earlier (Tuesday). | |

I am excited to help your student succeed. If you have questions, you may contact me at the following:
E-mail any time at mrichards@trinitasclassical.org; Phone: 916-3751 (cell) or 531-6715 (home) until 10:30p.m.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Maureen Richards

LITERATURE READING PLAN

1st QUARTER (may also overlap into 2nd Quarter) – Novel, and Short Story comparison and American Poetry comparison.

1. Bunyan, John, *The New Pilgrim's Progress*. 1678 (200 pages – summer reading) This Christian allegory is one of the most significant works of religious English literature that has been translated into more than 200 languages and has never been out of print. It centers on the journey of an ordinary character, Christian and his journey from his hometown of the City of Destruction to the Celestial City, documenting the trials, pitfalls, and blessings of the Christian life along the way. This version is annotated and foot noted.
 - Hawthorne, Nathaniel. “The Celestial Railroad”
2. Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl*. 1947. (96 pages) For the diver Kino, finding a magnificent pearl means the promise of a better life for his impoverished family. His dreams blind him to the greed that the pearl arouses in him and his neighbors. Baring the fallacy of the American dream--that wealth erases all problems--Steinbeck's classic illustrates our fall from innocence. Beautifully written, *The Pearl* provides an excellent example of modern man's loss of all hope for salvation in this world or the next.
 - Rowlandson, Mary. *The Captivity and Restoration of Mary Rowlandson* (excerpts). 1682. (10-27 pages).
3. **AMERICAN POETRY:**
 - **EARLY AMERICAN / PURITAN 1607-1750** - Roger Williams, Michael Wigglesworth, Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor.
 - **NEOCLASSICISM 1750-1820** - Philip Freneau, Phillis Wheatley, Timothy Dwight, William Cullen Bryant
 - **ROMANTICISM 1820-1865** – Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allen Poe
 - **REALISM AND NATURALISM 1865-1920** -- Emily Dickinson Stephen Crane, Edwin Markham, Fanny Crosby, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Paul Laurence Dunbar
 - **MODERNISM 1914-1965 / POST MODERNISM 1965 to Present** -- Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Archibald MacLeish, E.E. Cummings, Langston Hughes

2nd QUARTER

4. Douglas, Frederick. *The Narrative Life of Frederick Douglass*. 1845. (Ch 6-7, 6 pages)
5. Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 1852. (364 pages) This moving abolitionist novel fueled the fire of the human rights debate in 1852 and melodramatically condemned the institution of slavery through powerfully realized characters. The story occurs in the days when African slavery flourished under the free skies of America. Evil times befall the house of Shelby, and pressing debt requires the sacrifice of a portion of the holdings of the Kentucky planter in human chattels. Uncle Tom, instead of receiving the freedom that had been promised him as the reward of a lifetime of devoted service, finds himself torn from wife, home, and children, transferred to the hands of an unscrupulous trader, and consigned to the terror-ridden slave-markets of the lower Mississippi. Despite various opportunities to escape to freedom, Tom's fidelity to his masters is too strong, and he bravely faces the miseries of the future. Stowe masterfully links Uncle Tom's suffering with the life and death of Jesus Christ as she weaves together slavery, the most

controversial issue of the time, with Christianity, the culture's most profound belief system. Her political point was that Christianity and slavery were mutually exclusive and through this novel, she succeeded beyond her wildest expectations.

- Hughes, Langston. "On the Road." (4 pages)

3rd QUARTER (may carry into 4th Quarter)

6. Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. 1945. (139 pages) Written as a "fairy story" (Orwell titled the book "Animal Farm: A Fairy Story"), the subject of *Animal Farm* is very much aimed at an adult audience. Orwell paints a vivid picture of a violent political revolution of farm animals against the farmer who owns all, works the animal population hard, sends their offspring to slaughter, and feeds them little. Arguably not critical of revolution itself, Orwell describes an all-too-familiar corruption that undermines the goal of the revolution: in which those leading the revolution rally the masses not so much for the good of the masses, but so that the leaders can assume the role of master, complete with all of the oppressive conduct that goes with an authoritarian regime.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Birthmark." 1843. (12 pages)

4th QUARTER

7. London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild*. 1903. (62 pages). Adventure enthusiasts love this gripping tale of a heroic dog that, thrust into the brutal life of the Alaska God Rush, ultimately faces a choice between living in man's world and returning to nature (if time).
8. Worldview Short story/narrative review:
 - Sewall, Samuel. "The Selling of Joseph." *Africans in America*. 1700.
 - Franklin, Benjamin. *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. (selections on writing and achieving moral perfection - 12 pages) AND Edwards, Jonathan, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." (12 pages)
 - Irving, Washington. "Rip Van Winkle." (12 pages) AND Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Nature." (last paragraph only) (1 page)
 - London, Jack. "The Law of Life." (4 pages) AND Porter, William Sydney. "The Gift of the Magi." (4 pages)
 - Thurber, James. "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty" (4 pages) AND Jackson, Shirley. "The Lottery." (4 pages)