

Teacher: Mr. Nick Sfarzo
Email: nsfarzo@chicousd.org
Phone: 530-895-4110 Ext. 42156

Marsh Junior High School
ELA 8 Course Description
2026-2027

Welcome to 8th Grade HONORS English Language Arts! (ELA 8H)

Over the course of this year you will:

- Read, analyze, interpret, and discuss various genres of literature: fiction, non-fiction, short stories, and poetry
 - Novels (novel list is subject to variation): *The Outsiders, The Book Thief, The Pearl, Scythe, The Tempest*
 - Short Stories and Poems: Edgar Allan Poe, Ray Bradbury, other incredible writers!
- Learn how to intelligently discuss, write, and engage with complex texts and ideas
- Learn and understand the structures of effective writing
- Plan, write, revise, and edit various styles of essay: argumentative, narrative (personal and creative), research, and response to literature
- Be creative
- Find your voice

Chromebook Policy

- Chromebooks are a vital part of this class and must be brought and charged *everyday*
 - If you are in need of a chromebook/charger, go to the library as soon as possible
- A vast majority of assignments, work, quizzes, etc... are completed on the chromebooks
 - You can absolutely request to work on paper if you prefer
- This class operates in this way to encourage technological literacy and greatly reduce paper usage

Citizenship Points: Phone, Food, and Behavior

- At the start to every 10 week period, you will be given **100 citizenship points**
- You will retain these points as long as you are following proper classroom behavior expectations
 - No phones used in class without permission
 - No airpods in (saying I forgot they were in is NOT an excuse)
 - In addition to a loss of points, these items will be confiscated as per school rules regarding electronics
 - Acting in a way that disrupts others' learning
 - Eating food
 - I do NOT want you to be hungry! If you need a quick snack, I will almost always allow you to step outside if your ask me

- Failure to follow rules regarding citizenship will result in a 5-10 point deduction from your points total

This should not seem scary! This should be a slam dunk 100 points every 10 weeks! The point of this is to make personal behavior and accountability an aspect of your class grade, since the two go hand in hand.

Academic Integrity

- Plagiarism, which is copying someone else's work and passing it off as your own, will result in a 0 and will be noted on your record
- Plagiarism occurs whether intentional or not!
 - Plagiarism is copying word for word, as well as copying the structure of someone's writing, meaning just changing a few words of a summary, definition, etc... is STILL plagiarism
- Copying off classmates/giving classmates answers, on homework assignments and on tests, will also result in a zero
 - **Important Note: Helping and discussing with classmates on homework assignments is absolutely fine! Copying, even if a few words are changed, is not!**
- During tests and quizzes, there is absolutely no talking or helping, even when finished!
- Any talking or attempts to look at other screens for answers will result in a zero
- **AI Plagiarism** and cheating will result in all standard plagiarism consequences and may result in a loss of digital privileges
- AI plagiarism can include
 - Taking writing/sentence structuring from an AI source
 - Using AI generated ideas and themes in your writing
 - Rewording, if the ideas are not your own, is still plagiarism—don't let AI think for you—I'd rather you struggle and think for yourself than to have AI think for you

Remember, cheating/lapses in academic integrity are noted on your academic record

Technological Literacy

- Technological literacy means being fluent in how to operate various computer-based programs
- The main programs that we will use for assignments will be google docs and google slides
- Other programs will include pear deck, padlet, quill, IXL, Canva, and others
- The expectation is that you will become very familiar with these programs and understand *how* to utilize all the nuances these programs have to offer to make your work meet standards for organization, creativity, and professionalism

Google Classroom

- Google classroom is the homebase for *everything* in this class
- All assignments, slideshows, materials, etc... will be posted on google classroom
- If you are absent, look at the unit slideshow (under the topic *materials*) to see what we did that day
- Become familiar with google classroom and the different topics that will be there, as we will be using it frequently

Late Work Policy

- Homework must be completed and turned in at the beginning of class
- **Late work will receive up to 50% credit** unless there is an *excused* absence or reason
- You have until the end of the specific unit to turn in late assignments in order to receive partial credit
 - Late assignments are graded before the upcoming Monday
 - Remember, late assignments are graded late and it can take time for your grade to update
 - To ensure you have a strong, up-to-date grade, it is important that your assignments are submitted on time
 - IXL assignments are NOT graded late. In order to receive credit, they must be completed before the Monday after it was assigned
- Some assignments will be completed through google classroom--MAKE SURE YOU PRESS THE TURN IN BUTTON
 - "I forgot to press turn in" is not a valid excuse for it being late and WILL still result in late penalty

Classroom Rules & Procedures

- When you come into class, that means you are ready to begin working
- Your interactive notebook--assigned on google classroom-- will be the document for most typical class work

Interactive Starter Notebook

- Everyday, the first task will be to complete the starter posted on the board
 - Typically there will be a timer for when you should have the starter completed
- All starters will be completed in your **Starter Notebook**
 - This can be a composition book (ideal) or a spiral notebook
- After completing the starter, review the agenda snapshot and open up any books or documents as directed on the daily slide
- Each starter notebook will be turned in *at the end of a unit*
- Although starters are the primary focus of the notebook, the notebook will also be used for reflection, free writes, drawing, and other activities

- Do NOT lose your starter notebook

Be respectful

This is the most important rule in the class

- *Everyone* has the right to learn and everyone learns at a different pace. *Nobody* has the right to interrupt, disrupt, or jeopardize another's right to learn.
- Being respectful includes but is not limited to: not speaking while I or one of your peers are speaking, being considerate of your peers' opinions during class or individual discussion, and conducting yourself **maturely** and **appropriately**. *Respect and maturity is necessary in order to succeed in this class.*
- Act like a mature human being = get treated like a mature human being. Act like a child = get treated like a child. **Be mature!**

Be your best

Be prepared, be respectful, but of equal importance is to be your best. This is English Language **Arts**. That means we get to explore and discuss ideas, read great literature, be creative, and express ourselves through discussion and writing! You will get out of this class what you put in. If you sit back and don't participate or engage in the activities, you won't get much. Be engaged, be active, participate, and be your best! All I can ask for is your best, and that is something I will always recognize.

Honors Expectations

- This class will operate at a faster pace than a standard English class
- We will read more books in a shorter period of time
- Writing assignments are expected to be well thought out and revised
- An emphasis for response to literature is not just *what* happens, but *why* it happens
 - Everything should be framed through a critical lens
- As you respond to the texts that we read, understand that there are themes and archetypes that run through ALL texts, as well as life experiences
- I want writing and class discussion to use our texts as a platform to leap into the boundless realm of deeper understanding

Honors Grade Requirement

- Honors placement means that you have scored above grade level on your IXL diagnostic and your SBAC state test
- In order to remain in honors English, you must have a grade of a A or B (80% or above) on your final semester report card
- If you have a grade **below an 80%** then you will be exited from honors at the semester
 - This is non-negotiable

Grading Breakdown–Weighted Grading

*Weighted grading means that 1 point in a higher weighted category is worth more than 1 point in a lower weighted category

Categories

Tests/Essays/Quizzes: 40%

Homework/Classwork: 30%

IXL/Independent Reading (IR)/Accelerated Reader (AR): 15%

Citizenship Points: 15%

Grading

- Proper MLA formatting is a component of all assignment grades
- Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall structuring/formatting is a component of all assignment grades
- Assignments can be requested to be re-done if the purpose is missed or an intended structure was not used

Sign Below—by signing, you are stating that you understand the content in this syllabus. Have a parent review this syllabus with you and sign it as well.

It is up to YOU as a student to know your syllabus. Reference this syllabus throughout the year as needed.

Student Signature

Parent Signature
