

Middle School Language Arts 2009-2010

Stuff you will be reading and writing:

This year, we will be looking in depth into the following genres:

Expository writing
Poetry
Drama
Fantasy
Persuasive writing

However, we will be looking more generally at four main genres:

Short story
Poetry
Memoir
Nonfiction

We will read Romeo and Juliet as a class, as well as conduct literature circles in the fantasy genre.

Throughout the course of the year, you have total freedom to choose the topics you write about. You will, however, be expected to complete at least one of each of the following by June:

- a. a short story
- b. three to five poems or songs
- c. a profile of a local citizen based on original research, or an op-ed piece or essay about an issue that matters to you.
- d. a book review
- e. a memoir

Stuff you will need:

You will need to have the following items with you **every day**. There will be places in the classroom to store most of these items.

A language arts binder with the following sections:

- a. reading and writing record
- b. spelling
- c. texts and lyrics
- d. editing
- e. conferencing

A folder for homework and daily writing (I provided at the start of the year)

A spiral notebook for a writing handbook (I provided at the start of the year)

A composition notebook for a writing journal (I provided at the start of the year)

A pencil or pen

Schedule:

This is the tentative plan of how we will conduct class. As always, it is subject to change based on our schedule, or our needs for the class period or week.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Poem Mini Lesson Spelling Writing Read Aloud Silent Reading	Poem Mini Lesson Spelling Writing Read Aloud Silent Reading	Writing Prompt Mini Lesson Writing Read Aloud Silent Reading	Writing Prompt Mini Lesson Writing Read Aloud Silent Reading	Spelling Test Reading Journal Response Silent Reading

Classroom Expectations

1. Each chair should hold one person, only. We have killed too many chairs the other way.
2. You may use the bathroom only during independent work time, unless it is an emergency. (Boredom does not constitute an emergency.)
3. You may bring a snack to class, but you may not eat your lunch during class. No sharing food with others... it is too distracting to be running a catering operation during class. Failure to clean up after yourself will result in a loss of snacking privileges for everyone.
4. You break it, you fix it.
5. Disruptive or otherwise rude behavior will result in give back time, or in extreme or repeated cases, a phone call or email home. If you choose not to do your work during class, I will choose to have you do it during lunch or after school.
6. Do your best, on every assignment, always.

Expectations for Writing

1. Find topics and purposes for your writing that matter to you, your life, who you are, and who you want to be.
2. Keep a list of your territories as a writer: topics, purposes, audiences, genres, forms, and techniques.
3. Try new topics, purposes, audiences, genres, forms and techniques.
4. Make your own decisions about what is working and needs more work in pieces of your writing. Be the first responder to your writing.
5. Listen to, ask questions about, and comment on others' writing in ways that help them move the writing forward.
6. Create a handbook of writing and reading minilessons, recorded chronologically, with a table of contents.
7. Produce at least three to five pages of rough draft each week and bring at least two pieces of writing to completion every six weeks.
8. Maintain a record of the pieces of writing you've finished, and file finished pieces in your portfolio.
9. Sometime during this academic year, produce a finished piece of writing in each of the following genres:
 - a. a short story
 - b. three to five poems or songs
 - c. a profile of a local citizen based on original research, or an op-ed piece or essay about an issue that matters to you.
 - d. a book review
 - e. a memoir
10. Recognize that readers' eyes and minds need your writing to be conventional in format, spelling, punctuation, and usage. Work toward conventionality and legibility, and use what you know about format, spelling, punctuation, and usage as you compose.
11. Keep an individual proofreading list that you check your writing against when you edit and proofread.
12. Enter words you don't know how to spell, or aren't certain of on the personal spelling list in your Language Arts binder.
13. Take care of the materials, resources, and equipment I have provided for you.
14. Establish and work toward significant and relevant goals for yourself as a writer each semester.
15. Take a deliberate stance toward writing well: try to make all of your writing literature.
16. Work as hard in writing workshop as I do. Re-create happy times from your life, work through sad times, discover what you know about a subject and learn more, convey information and request it, parody, petition, play, explore, argue, apologize, advise, sympathize, imagine, look and look again, express love, show gratitude, and make money.

Expectation for Reading

1. Find book, authors, subjects, and themes that matter to you, to your life, to who you are and who you want to become.
2. Keep a list of your territories as a reader: authors, subjects, purposes, and genres.
3. Try new authors, subjects, purposes, and genres: expand your reading schemas.
4. Recognize that there are different modes of reading and different stances readers take in regard to different kinds of texts.
5. Develop and articulate your criteria for selecting and abandoning books.
6. Go *inside* your books and respond to the writing you are reading; decide what is working and needs more work in the books you read.
7. Write a letter at least once a week in your log about what you think and notice about the writing you are reading and in response to my and friends' letters to you.
8. Read as much as your can, as joyfully as you can.
9. Read for at least 1/2 hour every night, at least 5 nights a week.
10. Maintain a chronological record of the books you finish reading or abandon.
11. Create a handbook of writing and reading minilessons, recorded chronologically, with a table of contents.
12. Take care of the books I have provided for you. Return each book you borrow to the classroom library, shelving it by the author's last name.
13. Establish and work toward significant, relevant goals for yourself as a reader each trimester.
14. Take a deliberate stance toward reading and responding with your whole heart and mind.
15. Work as hard in reading workshop as I do. Live other lives and learn about your own, see how other writers have written, acquire their knowledge, escape, imagine, think, connect, contrast, travel, ponder, laugh, cry, love, and grow up.

Resources:

Atwell, Nancie. In the Middle. 2nd ed. Portsmouth: Boynton/ Cook Heinemann, NH.