

# Mr. Wechsler's 7th Grade English Class 2019-2020

Dear Families,

Our year-long journey through 7th grade English begins today, August 20. I am proud to be your child's teacher, and I promise to make the most of every moment. The theme that runs through this year's reading and writing activities also serves as the theme of this class: the importance of meeting tough challenges with intelligence and a can-do spirit.

My own enthusiasm for the subject I teach began at an early age, and I was fortunate to have wonderful teachers who motivated me to push my limits. I became an English major at UCLA, where I received my B.A., and then ventured over to USC, where I earned my M.A. in journalism. I have held a series of positions in the communications business, including thirteen years at *Variety* and ten years running my own graphic design firm. Eventually, I switched gears and turned to teaching. Eighteen years later, I can't imagine doing anything else.

At the start of each grading period, I distribute a detailed syllabus listing all reading and writing assignments and other activities. You may view the syllabus and other class information online at [www.mrwclasses.com](http://www.mrwclasses.com). Scores for each activity will be posted on Schoology. Then, at the end of each grading period, your child will bring home a grade sheet for you to sign along with a portfolio containing each graded activity. This portfolio will provide a clear picture of your child's performance and it is crucial that you see it.

Whenever you want to discuss your child's academic progress or behavior in class, you may leave a message for me at **310-917-4800**. You may also e-mail me at [exw7362@lausd.net](mailto:exw7362@lausd.net). Paul Revere's Back-to-School Night on Tuesday, August 27 will offer another great opportunity to learn more about the course.

**Curriculum** — In this class, the school year is divided into eight units, each lasting about four to five weeks. The **Common Core Grade 7 English Language Arts Standards** will play an important role in each lesson. In addition to short selections of poetry and prose, we will thoroughly dissect and write about eight thought-provoking classic novels:

- The Red Pony, Of Mice and Men* and *The Pearl* by John Steinbeck
- The Call of the Wild* by Jack London
- The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton
- The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
- O Pioneers!* by Willa Cather
- The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett

Over the course of the year, we will draft eight major compositions:

- *Autobiographical Narrative* about a life-changing experience
- *Fictional Narrative* that extends one chapter of *The Red Pony*
- *Informative/Explanatory Text* about two very unlikely friendships
- *Research Report* on an influential person who overcame adversity
- *Homage Poem* about the individual profiled in the research report
- *Response to Literature* on a theme common to three of our novels
- *Literary Tribute* modeled after a composition by Frederick Douglass
- *Persuasive Argument* revolving around characters from *O Pioneers!*

**Homework** — Each week, students will complete at least one significant writing activity at home, after first reviewing it in class. At least three times a week, students will be assigned specific pages that they must read carefully before the next class. The quizzes that follow each reading assignment will assess reading comprehension as well as knowledge of specific vocabulary words found in the texts. It is essential that students spend sufficient time reviewing the color-coded vocabulary flash cards that they create in class. This vocabulary review is an ongoing homework assignment.

**Student Rules & Responsibilities** — Every day, students are expected to arrive with their reading and writing assignments completed so that they will be fully prepared for the new lesson. They must be in their seats and ready to work when the bell rings or they will be marked tardy. They must bring their copy of the novel the class is currently reading and a three-ring binder exclusively designated for this class. This binder will hold a see-through pouch containing their color-coded vocabulary cards, at least two black or two blue ballpoint pens, and at least one sharpened pencil.

**Academic Integrity** — As stated in Revere's student handbook, "Students must rely on their own talents and abilities to complete academic work at the level in which they take pride. Academic dishonesty usually involves an attempt by students to show a level of knowledge or skill that they do not possess at this time. . . . It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine whether or not a violation has occurred and to take the appropriate action." Cheating and plagiarism will trigger a "U" on the next grading report and a zero for the activity in question. Although there are online study guides for all eight of our novels, students must not use these guides as a substitute for actually reading the required pages by themselves.

**Missing Work / Quizzes** — All activities are clearly posted on the syllabus, and it is a *student's* responsibility to know what was missed during an absence. To allow for an absence or an occasional "off day," at least one quiz each grading period will not count. Any additional quizzes missed due to *excused* absences will not be included in the grading calculation mix. Thus, a student will *not* receive a zero for a quiz not taken due to an *excused* absence. (Per LAUSD policy, "vacations or trips" are *not* excused absences.) Students *will* have a chance to make up any writing assignments, but at the end of each grading period, any work that is still missing will receive a zero and trigger a "U" in work habits.

**Grading Policy for Subject Achievement** — Each activity is worth a set number of points with a detailed rubric to guide student performance. Over the course of each grading period, the total number of points a student accumulates will be converted to a letter grade based on a percentage scale:

A = 90–100%    B = 80–89.75%    C = 70–79.75%  
D = 60–69.75%    F = Less than 60%

After you have carefully reviewed the information on this sheet, please join me in signing the cut-off portion to signal our shared commitment to the important work that lies ahead.

Sincerely yours,  
Mr. Wechsler

WORK HABITS	"E" (Excellent)	"S" (Satisfactory)	"U" (Unsatisfactory)
HOMEWORK	Always on time and complete	Always turned in, but late one or more times	One or more assignments not turned in at all
MATERIALS	Always on hand and accessible	Almost always on hand, with few exceptions	Often or always missing something or other
ATTENDANCE	No tardies/unexcused absences	One, two, or three tardies/unexcused absences	Four or more tardies/unexcused absences
COOPERATION	"E" (Excellent)	"S" (Satisfactory)	"U" (Unsatisfactory)
COURTESY	Always courteous, never disruptive	Rarely disturbs others, usually courteous	Frequent disruptions and disrespectful actions
CONDUCT	Promotes the general welfare	Supports the general welfare	Opposes the general welfare
IMPROVEMENT	Rarely or never needs correction	Accepts corrections with a positive attitude	Makes little attempt to improve