

Mrs. Morrison's English Literature and Composition Course Description

This challenging and engaging course is designed to develop students' critical reading, analytical writing, and academic discussion skills through the study of a diverse collection of American and world literature. Students begin with short stories that represent a range of cultural perspectives, literary genres, and historical periods, with future units expanding to include full-length novels. Authors studied include Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ray Bradbury, Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Gabriel García Márquez, and many others.

Through each unit, students will:

- Conduct brief research to understand author background and historical context
- Read texts closely and identify key literary elements such as theme, conflict, plot structure, and author's message
- Analyze character development and symbolism
- Make inferences and predictions based on textual evidence
- Engage in thoughtful class discussions and collaborative activities
- Build academic vocabulary, including relevant SAT terms
- Take active reading notes and complete structured brainstorming outlines
- Write analytical essays in response to literature-based prompts

Students also receive embedded instruction in writing conventions, with a focus on MLA format, literary analysis, and essay organization. Weekly writing assignments progress from brainstorming to color-coded rough and final drafts, promoting metacognition and alignment with writing criteria. Students will share and revise their work in class, with personalized teacher feedback provided on Google Docs.

Learning Goals and Outcomes:

- Strengthen critical thinking and interpretation skills through close reading of complex texts
- Develop clear, structured, and persuasive analytical writing skills
- Build confidence in verbal and written expression of ideas
- Learn and apply skills aligned with English Honors and AP Literature expectations
- Expand academic and literary vocabulary
- Deepen understanding of cultural, historical, and thematic relevance in literature

Instructional Format:

- Live, interactive Zoom classes with frequent use of the chat feature for discussion
- Reading assignments completed both aloud and independently
- Multi-step writing process supported by teacher feedback
- Each short story spans 2–4 sessions and includes prep work, guided reading, drafting, and peer review
- Future units will introduce full-length novels to deepen literary engagement and analysis

Sample Reading Selections:

- *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* – Nathaniel Hawthorne
- *The Veldt* and *The Pedestrian* – Ray Bradbury
- *Button, Button* – Richard Matheson
- *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* – Mark Twain
- *Rip Van Winkle* – Washington Irving
- *The Mask of the Red Death* – Edgar Allan Poe
- *The Gift of the Magi* – O. Henry
- *Harrison Bergeron* – Kurt Vonnegut
- *The Adventure of the Speckled Band* – Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- *The Queen of Spades* – Alexander Pushkin
- *The Sins of Prince Saradine* – G. K. Chesterton
- *The Tall Woman* – Pedro Antonio de Alarcón
- *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World* – Gabriel García Márquez

This course is ideal for students in Grades 8–11 who wish to enhance their literary analysis skills and prepare for advanced English coursework, including Honors and AP-level classes.