Instructor: Michelle Porter
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Plan Periods: A3 and B6
Office/Classroom: Room 265
Best times to contact: Before or after school

Course Description: This course designed for 9th graders is an in depth study of language, literature, and composition. A more rigorous and intensive study of the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening is central to this course. Students will produce a variety of writing samples in the following modes: descriptive, narrative, analytical, expository, persuasive, and technical. Additional course work is required above the regular English 1-2 course.

Prerequisite: Grade of an A or B in previous Honors English/Language Arts or teacher recommendation

STEM Academy Overview: This course includes an innovative curriculum across English and STEM disciplines to prepare students for the fundamentals of public speaking, written expression, and critical thinking within STEM fields. Students will engage in technical writing activities, informational reading relevant to STEM topics, and formal/informal presentations in anticipation for your post-secondary and career studies.

Instructional Philosophy: My intention is to do all I can to help students be successful. My goals for the upcoming year are to assist each student in the realization of his/her potential by teaching essential skills for college or the workplace. In addition, I hope to have fun, even if it is an English class, while maintaining high expectations that meet the state standards.

Nebraska State Standards: For a complete list of the standards visit: https://www.education.ne.gov/academicstandards/sit/
LA 12.1 Students will learn and apply reading skills and strategies to comprehend text.
LA 12.2 Students will learn and apply writing skills and strategies to communicate.
LA 12.3 Students will learn and apply speaking and listening skills and strategies to communicate.
LA 12.4 Students will identify, locate, and evaluate information.

Major Units of Study: In addition to covering the skills and standards described in the Nebraska State Standards for Language Arts, this class will examine common themes within a variety of literature and non-fiction sources. These themes are organized as follows:

English 1-2:
- Quarter 1: The Bonds Between Us
  - Tentative Texts: *Black and White* by Paul Volponi and *ID: voice:vision:identity* by Scholastic
- Quarter 2: A Matter of Life and Death
  - *The Odyssey* by Homer
- Quarter 3: Sweet Sorrow
  - *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- Quarter 4: The Struggle for Freedom
  - Tentative Text: *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas
Course Expectations:
- Read several novels by a variety of authors, and complete a set of assignments and discussions related to your reading.
- Grammar and Vocabulary acquisition
- Work on speaking and listening either individually or in groups, including “elevator pitches”
- Read in and out of class. You will be expected to keep up with class reading assignments.
- Complete homework and be prepared to ask/answer questions over the given assignments.
- Write a variety of essays and essay types throughout the course.

Policies and Procedures:
Rules and guidelines set forth in the student handbook will be followed in this class. Any student who distracts other students, the instructor, or interferes with the learning environment should expect consequences.

- **Class Materials:** The student is required to come to class with the appropriate textbook/novel, login information, paper, and a writing utensil. The student will also need to make sure they do NOT lose their computer privileges throughout the year since this class works with computers daily.

- **Attendance (absences and tardies):** Omaha Public Schools are currently counting absences in minutes missed. This means that tardies and single class absences count. These minutes are added up into school days and do NOT start over at semester. Absences are accrued all school year. Furthermore, anyone entering the classroom after the bell has stopped ringing is considered tardy, and all tardies will be noted for administrators, parents, and teachers to see.

- **Passes:** In order to leave the classroom for any reason, students must have their valid (2017-2018) school ID with them, or they will be unable to leave the room. In addition, a student must have a written pass and the clipboard from the teacher before leaving. **Note:** I have not set a limit or a number of passes for each student. I do, however, reserve the right to restrict pass use for students who abuse the privilege (I will discuss restrictions with parents/guardians if such a case arises).

- **Electronic Devices:** No electronic devices (cell phones, mp3 players, game players, etc.) are permitted to be seen, heard, or used in the classroom without permission.

- **Academic integrity:** is a reflection of the character of an individual. If a student shows he or she is dishonest, his or her parents will immediately be called and the students will not get credit for the assignment. There are no exceptions to this rule, so do your own work. Plagiarism will result in an automatic zero.

- **Activity Absence:** If a student is going to be absent for a school-approved activity, it is their responsibility to obtain class work and homework PRIOR to the date of the absence. All work is due upon their return to class.

- **Missing Coursework:** Work not turned in at all will be recorded in Infinite Campus (district grade book) as an M (missing) which calculates to a score of zero.

- **Late Coursework:** Students are expected to complete coursework on time. Students are also expected to complete missing work, and late work will be accepted as long as there is still opportunity to learn from it. Accepted late work will not result in a reduction, and the M (missing) will be replaced with the score earned by the student. Missing assignments will not be accepted after the final summative assessment for the unit of instruction. A zero or M will remain for the missing work. The teacher or school, however, may make exceptions depending upon student circumstances (such as prolonged absences due to illness).

- **Weighting Assignments (Using a Multiplier) **
  **Secondary only:** When entering grades in the grade book, teachers may assign greater weight to some assignments. For example, the final exam may impact a student’s summative grade more than a unit test. Teachers will have the option use the multiplier to weight both formative and summative assessments to a maximum of 4. If a weight of 2 or more is applied to an assessment, this information will be communicated to students at the time the assessment is announced.

Assessments: Major tests and/or writing projects are to be expected at the end of each major unit outlined above.

**District Assessments:**
- OPS requires English 1-2 students to complete an online assessment (MAP Test), to determine their strengths and weaknesses with the standard set for a freshman English course.
- OPS requires all students to complete a research paper/project (GLE).
OPS Secondary Grading Practices*
All coursework and assessments are judged based on the level of student learning from “below basic” to “advanced.” This course will provide multiple opportunities to achieve at the “proficient” to “advanced” levels. Students are evaluated based on a proficiency scale or project rubric. Proficiency scales for this course are available upon request (teacher will identify location such as portal, teacher website, attached, etc.)

There are three types of coursework*

- **Practice** – assignments are brief and done at the beginning of learning to gain initial content (e.g., student responses on white boards, a valid sampling of math problems, keyboarding exercises, and diagramming sentences, checking and recording resting heart rate). Practice assignments are not generally graded for accuracy (descriptive feedback will be provided in class) and are not a part of the grade. Teachers may keep track of practice work to check for completion and students could also track their practice work. Practice work is at the student’s instructional level and may only include Basic (2) level questions.

- **Formative (35% of the final grade)** – assessments/assignments occur during learning to inform and improve instruction. They are minor assignments (e.g., a three paragraph essay, written responses to guiding questions over an assigned reading, completion of a comparison contrast matrix). Formative assignments are graded for accuracy and descriptive feedback is provided. Formative work may be at the student’s instructional level or at the level of the content standard. Formative assessments/assignments will have all levels of learning – Basic (2), Proficient (3), and Advanced (4), which means that for every formative assessment/assignment, students will be able to earn an Advanced (4). Teachers will require students to redo work that is not of high quality to ensure rigor and high expectations. The students score on a formative assessment that was redone will be their final score.

- **Summative (65% of the final grade)** – assessments/assignments are major end of learning unit tests or projects used to determine mastery of content or skill (e.g., a research paper, an oral report with a power point, major unit test, and science fair project). Summative assignments are graded for accuracy. Summative assignments assess the student’s progress on grade level standards and may not be written at the student’s instructional level. Summative assessments/assignments will have all levels of learning – Basic (2), Proficient (3), and Advanced (4), which means that for every formative assessment/assignment students, will be able to earn an advanced (4).

To maintain alignment of coursework to content standards, which is a key best practice for standards-based grading, teachers will utilize a standardized naming convention for each of the standards within a course. The content standard will be marked on each assignment entered into Infinite Campus (District Grading Program) using all capital letters followed by a colon. After the colon will be the title of the coursework.

At the end of the grading period, scores are converted to a letter grade using this grading scale.

- A = 3.26 – 4.00
- B = 2.51 – 3.25
- C = 1.76 – 2.50
- D = 1.01 – 1.75
- F = 0.00 – 1.00

Redoing/Revising Student Coursework*

1. Students are responsible for completing all coursework and assessments as assigned.
2. Students will be allowed redos and revisions of coursework for full credit as long as they are turned in during that unit of study while a student still has an opportunity to benefit from the learning. When time permits, teachers should allow the redoing or revising of summative assessments.
3. Students are expected to complete assessments when given to the class, or if a student was justifiably absent, at a time designated by the teacher.
4. Redoing, retaking or revising will be done at teacher discretion in consultation with the student and parent(s). Teachers may schedule students before, during, or after school to address needed areas of improvement if not convenient during class. The time and location for redoing, retaking or revising will be done at the teacher’s discretion in consultation with the student and parent(s).
5. Scores for student work after retaking, revising or redoing will not be averaged with the first attempt at coursework but will replace the original score. *Indicates standardized language
Communication:

- In addition to traditional methods of communication, I would like to utilize a system called REMIND (www.remind.com). Remind is a free communication tool that will allow me to periodically send out classroom and school reminders via text message and/or email. These messages will NOT come from my personal phone number, and any replies sent will come to my REMIND account. This is available for all of my students and parents, if you are interested. Types of messages will include assignment, test, and school reminders, as well as any additional resources I think may be of assistance. Additionally, this is an easy way for students to contact me with questions.

- If you elect to join, all phone numbers and email addresses will remain private. These messages may come up to a few times a week, but you can always opt out. Remember, if you have a limited number of text messages with your cellular plan, you may want to use the email option instead.

- If you would like to sign up, please do one of the following:
  - **Option 1:** Text @mporter21 to the number 81010. You will receive a prompt to finish the initial setup (For example: it might ask you for your name or birthdate.)
  - **Option 2:** Email mporter21@mail.remind.com
  - **Option 3:** Simply email a list of any phone numbers or email addresses you would like to add to my class to my school email address. This may include parents, guardians, or the student. When I receive an email, I will add numbers and addresses to my class, and you will start to receive my texts.

If you aren’t sure you would like to sign up at this time, you can always join later in the year!