

DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CURRICULUM GUIDE

American Literature 200

DARIEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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PREFACE

This English Department curriculum guide is designed to articulate the content and context of this course within the English academic program. Its goal is to serve as a resource and instructional guide for teachers, as well as a document that describes the elements of the English academic program in the district. It is essential, in order to ensure the continued quality of the English program at Darien High School, that the curriculum template be seen as representative of the course and not complete in or of itself of the whole course curriculum. The Department's ability to add materials and to request new texts that add dimension or depth and the teachers' ability to create new units of study based on research or resources they discover is crucial to the quality of study for students in the English program. The professional development workshops that teachers attend frequently, both in and out of the District, generate new ideas and opportunities for the curriculum. Selection of new texts is a collaborative process in the Department, and the inclusion of new titles is carefully considered in light of the curriculum's objectives. Although unit titles and essential questions might change as the course is evaluated from year to year, the instructional goals serve as the foundation of study for all students at this level. The dynamic nature of the English curriculum is one of its greatest strengths. Our goal in instructional design is to provide a combination of flexibility, cohesiveness, and integration in all of the course structures we offer as part of our program.

Since our program is skill-based, our instruction uses a variety of literature and activities to accomplish its goals. We have tried, however, to create curriculum guides that provide a consistency within their framework, so that students in one section of a course are learning common skills and experiencing similar assignments in reading, writing, research, and presentation.

Our goal in the development of the curriculum guide is to provide clear articulation that ensures the existence of consistency and the capacity for creativity in our approach to instruction.

SECTION I - Course Information

American Literature 200 is designed for students who, for various reasons, have not met with success at the 300 level of instruction. While a number of the students have learning disabilities, and therefore have specific IEP goals and accommodations tailored to their strengths, the course is open to all students whose needs are not being met at the 300 level. Because of this broad spectrum of abilities, the American Literature 200 course (which works quite closely with the American History 200 course) has a wide range of goals for its students: Firstly, students must develop a greater ability to read for information and think critically about what they have read. They must also develop strategies for organizing their thoughts and transferring them into clear, polished analytical writing. Lastly, students must gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for the American experience through a thematic, rather than chronological, study of American literature. In considering a number of key questions and examining recurring themes and patterns of conflict in America's history, students will gain a critical perspective of the United States that they would likely not get out of a traditional survey of American literature.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The Language Arts Philosophy

Students communicate with the world around them through the use of language. Language is comprised of several components, primarily reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Language arts is the instructional program that teaches these components as interdependent and interrelated parts of the communication process.

The aim of the Darien Public Schools' Language Arts Program is threefold: to help students become effective language users; to produce graduates who demonstrate their ability to think, read, write, speak, and listen proficiently; and to assist students in developing language fluency, not only in the school setting but in the wider world.

Acquisition, development, and mastery of both basic and advanced language arts skills are a continuous process. Students attain higher levels of skill development in incremental stages. Measurable gains in language arts skills are realized when challenging language activities occur in meaningful contexts and through purposeful applications.

(from Darien Public Schools K-12 Language Arts Guide – 1997)

Darien English Department Statement of Philosophy

The English Department of Darien High School provides for its students a climate that fosters intellectual development, that encourages aesthetic appreciation, and that promotes critical inquiry. It offers a curriculum that recognizes the differences in abilities and goals of our students and which helps each achieve maximum growth. We wish to encourage within each student a sense both of individuality and of connection to others, and to foster a love of language and literature. Our goals include encouraging creativity, scholarship, and inquiry. We believe the English curriculum should include the important works of western literature and works that reflect multicultural diversity within the United States and throughout the world. Through interdisciplinary courses, students make connections to other academic areas and real-life contexts. We believe the English curriculum should comprise a core of required courses as well as elective courses from which students may choose on the basis of their interests, talents, and needs.

The English Department believes all forms of communication - including reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing - are part of the English instructional program. Though these aspects have been treated as distinct skills in the past, current thought views all forms of communication as interrelated and complementary. The Department believes that students learn in multiple ways; therefore, we support an English program that addresses multiple learning styles and encourages interpretation through various kinds of communication such as art, photography, and music, etc. We also believe the rapid advancement in communication technology requires the integration of technological skills in contemporary research, composition, and presentation so that students are better prepared to be successful learners in today's world. As a consequence, the language arts classroom is changing from a lecture hall into a communications workplace where students learn to find meaning under the guidance of teachers who facilitate, rather than simply transmit, learning. We believe students learn best in an active learning environment where they have opportunities to collaborate in "real world" inquiry, where the process of learning is as important as the product of learning, and where the development of individual skills is integrated into complex, real-world activities and evaluated using multiple forms of authentic assessment.

The English Department believes that our philosophy of teaching and learning is as important as our course descriptions, our district, state, and national goals for student achievement, our strategies for fluency in reading, writing, and discussing, our rubrics for evaluation, and our selection of texts. We hope that new teachers as well as returning teachers will read carefully our philosophy and consider it to be the foundation of our curriculum work. "How" we teach is as important as "what" we teach.

The English Department has agreed on certain assumptions about teaching and learning:

- Teaching and learning take place in an historical, cultural context.

- Students have a better understanding of their responsibilities when they understand the goals of a course, the reason for selective texts, and the purpose of assignments.
- When possible, the input from students in the design of an assignment engages them in the process of taking responsibility for their own learning.
- Learning takes place best in a classroom where an ethic of care is observed by the teacher and the students and clearly articulated.
- A community of learners develops when both individuality and diversity are encouraged and where individual intellectual and creative abilities are respected and cultivated.
- Students achieve their potential when they are given models of excellence and when expectations are clear and challenge their intellectual and creative capabilities.
- Teachers, aware of multiple theories of intelligences, create curriculum and assignments to acknowledge a diversity of learning styles and abilities. Students should be guided to think probatively, reflectively, narratively, poetically, visually, meta-cognitively.
- Differences in a classroom are acknowledged and rewarded with availability of choices, when possible, in reading and writing assignments.
- Students develop a commitment to curriculum and performance when they are invited and encouraged to make choices among clear, humane, and responsible methods of inquiry, interpretation, and criticism.
- Choosing a topic or making a persuasive argument depend on having a sense of what other people are saying and developing a relationship to a critical community of thinkers, readers, and writers.
- Teachers inspire students to take personal possession of a text and become fluent thinkers when they offer students multiple methods of inquiry and response instead of imposing an interpretation between the students and their experience of literature.
- According to the editors of *Rereading America*, students develop a habit of mind necessary for academic inquiry when they acquire the ability to imagine and value points of view different from their own, then strengthen, refine, enlarge, or reshape their ideas in light of those other perspectives. This intellectual habit includes openness to new and old ideas and a willingness to test those ideas

against experience, literature, belief, and history. Critical thinking, then, requires a diversity of reading experiences and exposure to multiple voices.

- As readers, our students should be concerned with both the questions posed by the text and the questions we bring to the text from our own differing interest, gender, and cultural background.
- Teachers create opportunities for responsible critical analysis when students are encouraged to enter the contemporary critical debate that has evolved around the value of teaching traditional texts of the canon and the value of teaching texts written with a diversity of ethnic, racial, and gendered voices.
- Students learn meaningfully and enthusiastically when they are invited to be active learners.
- Students who write to learn use writing as a means of interpretation and inquiry rather than a means of translating and transmitting ideas. Writing leads to thinking and re-thinking, shaping and re-shaping, questioning our questions.
- When students participate in self-evaluations, they are clear about expectations and the criteria of assessment; consequently, they take more responsibility for their performance and maturation in a course.
- Students are not isolated learners; interaction among peers is essential for sharing knowledge and experience and for appreciating each other's work.

PROGRAM GOALS

Language Arts Goals

The overarching goal of the Darien Public Schools' Language Arts Program is to produce students capable of demonstrating the highest levels of communication proficiency and fluency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Basic Assumptions, Instructional Principles, and Teaching Strategies

1. Students come to school with different levels of knowledge and skill upon which further learning will be based. While specific language skills are initially taught to all students through direct instruction, students acquire more sophisticated levels of communication through the integration of the four primary language arts components in a variety of interrelated and interdependent activities and experiences.
2. Skillful communication, however, is more than a working knowledge of the primary language arts components. It is the composite of all acquired skills, achieved through the proficient use of the reading, writing, speaking, and listening components.
3. When students are immersed in an atmosphere that supports a love of learning and engaged in topics that interest them, learning how to communicate skillfully occurs in a natural, integrated way.
4. Language arts learning is enhanced when students are provided with a language-rich environment and given opportunities to communicate in a variety of ways.
5. Language arts instruction must be embedded in all curriculum areas.
6. Excellent communication models for students are essential for continued growth at all grade levels. Models of appropriate student and professional writing and speaking provide examples for students to emulate; they also set challenging standards for students to meet.
7. A wide variety of high quality literature, both fiction and non-fiction, must be read.
8. Building upon students' existing knowledge on a topic is a fundamental means of engaging students in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Drawing upon students' current base of knowledge by challenging them to analyze, anticipate, and predict information and themes found within their reading develops readers who come to understand and relate to what they read.
9. The most effective way to teach writing systematically is as a process: brainstorming, composing, conferring, revising, editing, and polishing for others to read.
10. The teaching of writing should focus on the process of writing as a means toward an end: developing clear, thoughtful, polished pieces of writing.
11. The development of strong, basic language skills (e.g. grammar, punctuation, phonics, vocabulary, and spelling) is an essential part of the language arts

- program. Skill development is best addressed by a combination of direction instruction and individual instruction within the context of each student's own reading and writing experiences.
12. Speaking and listening skills need to be addressed in all grade levels. Students need opportunities to speak confidently and proficiently in informal and formal settings appropriate to grade level; they need to become adept at listening for ideas and information, tone, and point of view.
 13. The effective use of technological resources is an important part of developing students' skills in research and communication.
 14. The Language Arts Program and its stated goals must be supported by all staff throughout the District. Regular communication among staff members and administration, as well as District support of appropriate ongoing staff development activities, is essential.
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American Literature 200 Goals

The goals of American Literature 200 mirror those of the Darien Public Schools, but extend beyond those over-arching goals to specific ones intended to build upon the work done by students and teachers in the primary and middle school grades and to prepare students for the new challenges and expectations of both high school and college courses. These additional goals are:

1. to read literature from various time periods and sub-groups of American life in order to explore the similarities and differences of diverse peoples and their beliefs.
2. to encourage close textual reading as a means to recognize, analyze, and evaluate recurring issues and patterns of conflict in American life and literature.
3. to read more effectively for information.
4. to think analytically and use textual evidence to support arguments.
5. to organize ideas into outline form, and to utilize these outlines to craft structured, analytical pieces of writing.
6. to understand, through literature, how different groups of Americans define themselves and their experiences.
7. to identify and correct grammatical and mechanical errors through careful revision of writing.
8. to develop methods of inquiry for enjoying, studying, discussing and writing about literature.
9. to understand the role of language in the construction of imagery, metaphor, and meaning
10. to respond to written and visual works through analytical and narrative writing.
11. to gain a greater understanding of one's own identity and responsibilities as an American, and to discover one's place in American life.

OVERVIEW

This American literature course (which has strong interdisciplinary ties with the US History course) will focus on the study of American culture through the integration of American literature, history, art, film and music. Materials to be studied include the writings of many American authors and historical persons, as well as a considerable number of American films, works of art and songs.

The course follows a thematic approach revolving around a different central question each unit; the central question for each unit, then, contains several sub-questions. Student learning will revolve around the following central questions:

What does it mean to be an American? In considering this question, students will reflect on what the United States symbolizes to its people and to the rest of the world.

What is the “American Dream?” Students will form personal definitions of this term and also explore its meaning to different groups of Americans and future Americans.

In what ways has the United States been successful in living up to the principles upon which it was founded? In what ways has it failed to meet its own expectations? During the course of this unit, students will seek to understand why certain groups of Americans prosper while others struggle to survive day to day. They will also consider the sources from which marginalized people find hope and optimism despite hardship.

What does it mean to be “other” in the United States, and what forces shape the individual? Emphasis will be on the assimilation of immigrants, ethnic and cultural plurality, Americanization, changing attitudes and values, changing economic and social structures, and the changing place of the individual in society. The class will also discuss the ways in which being apart from the majority shapes one’s self-perception and group identity.

What are our responsibilities/duties as Americans? In response to this question, students will explore the often-conflicting needs to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution but also to speak out in protest. They will ultimately form their own opinions on the ideal American citizen.

Unit One – *What does it mean to be an American? : Understanding the American Dream*

In this unit of study, students will begin to form definitions of themselves as Americans and understand what the United States symbolizes to its people and the rest of the world. They will become acquainted with the idea of the “American Dream,” and will identify the competing values which have shaped this dream. Of particular interest will be the nature of the dream, the consequences of the dream, and the ways the dream affects the relationship between the individual and his/her society. Readings will include: *The*

Declaration of Independence, a statement on the *Declaration* by Colin Powell, Crèvecoeur's *What is an American?*, "I Hear America Singing" by Walt Whitman, and either *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller or *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry." Throughout the quarter students will work on writing thesis statements, topic sentences and outlines, and will use these newly-acquired skills to draft a literary analysis essay on one of the plays. They will also write personal essays exploring their own definitions of the "American Dream."

Unit Two – ...And Justice for All: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America

In this unit, students will study issues of race and class in American literature by reading a wide variety of texts dealing with the assimilation of immigrants, ethnic and cultural plurality, Americanization, changing economic and social structures, and the changing place of the individual in society. They will closely examine the principles upon which the country was founded, and examine to what extent these expectations have been fulfilled for *all* Americans. Finally, they will consider the reasons why certain Americans prosper while others struggle with poverty, and understand the forces that keep such marginalized people hopeful and ambitious. Readings include: *There Are No Children Here*, selections from the anthology *Growing Up Ethnic in America* and *Nickel and Dimed*, and *America Beyond the Color Line*. Students will also view, discuss and write about films like *My Family/Mi Familia*, *Smoke Signals* and an episode of *Ken Burns' Baseball* that deals with the Negro Leagues and Jackie Robinson. During this unit of study, students will learn to incorporate research into their writing.

Unit Three – The Ideal Citizen: Examining Responsibilities and Duties

Third quarter, students will be asked to reflect on the central question, "What are our responsibilities and duties as Americans?" They will look at a variety of historical documents, speeches and essays, films, stories and songs which articulate the need for Americans to preserve, protect and defend their rights, and will analyze the conflict present when those same Americans feel the need to voice their protest. In readings like Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Hemingway's *In Our Time* and the film *Saving Private Ryan*, students will examine the reasons Americans make the ultimate sacrifice for their country, and in the writings of Martin Luther King, Bob Dylan, Henry David Thoreau and others, they will seek to understand why protest is an essential part of democracy. They will also observe in films like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* and *Do the Right Thing*, and in an episode of *The Simpsons* entitled "Itchy, Scratchy and Marge," some of the different forms such opposition to the status quo takes. Writing during this unit will be focused on oratorical techniques and on taking critical stances via persuasive essays and speech writing.

Unit Four – In Search of America: Independent Inquiry

In the final unit of study, students will read excerpts of works by authors in search of a definitive American identity. (Such works may include Steinbeck's *Travels with Charley in Search of America* and *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac.) They will then set out "in

search” of some aspect of American history or culture that they feel a particular connection to or desire to know more about. Since the class up to this point has revolved around central questions students must answer, at this point in the course students will develop their own as-yet-unanswered questions about American literature, history and life. This culminating project will take the shape of an inquiry-based analytical paper centered on one issue or question. Students will work toward answering their essential question by drawing on a piece of literature, a historical event and a piece of art or music and developing a thesis-based essay. This process will require students to conduct independent research, draft working theses, create outlines and write different drafts.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Unit One – What Does It Mean to Be an American? : Understanding the American Dream

- What does it mean to be an American?
- What does the United States symbolize to its people and to the rest of the world?
- What is meant by the term “American Dream?”
- How is the “American Dream” different to different groups of Americans and to future Americans?
- What competing values have shaped this dream?
- What are the consequences of this dream?
- How does this dream affect the relationship between the individual and his/her society?

Unit Two – ...And Justice for All: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America

- On what principles were the United States founded?
- To what extent has the country been successful in honoring these principles?
- To what extent has the U.S. failed to live up to its expectations?
- What factors influence a person’s success or failure in the U.S.?
- Why do certain people in America prosper while others struggle to stay afloat day to day?
- From what sources do marginalized people find hope for the future and the will to achieve despite hardship?
- How do race, ethnicity and class shape an individual’s perception of him/herself and his/her country?
- How have these issues of race, ethnicity and class changed since the birth of the nation?

Unit Three – *The Ideal Citizen: Examining Rights and Responsibilities*

- What are our responsibilities as Americans?
- What does it mean to “preserve, protect and defend” the principles of the United States?
- When is it acceptable to speak or act out against one’s country?
- To what extent are rebellion and non-violent protest instrumental to democracy?
- How have characters in literature seen their responsibilities to their country?
- Why have characters felt it necessary to voice their protest?
- To what ends does protest lead? What are some of the different outcomes and consequences of such protest?
- Who is the *ideal citizen*?

Unit Four – *In Search of America: Independent Inquiry*

- What are the tensions in modern America?
- How do the competing values evident in Colonial America compare or contrast to the conflicting values in contemporary America?
- What issues in American life concern you the most?
- How do contemporary literature, film, art and music mirror issues at the forefront of modern culture?
- What do contemporary authors and artists have to say about the issues that concern you?

PROCESS SKILLS

Reading and Responding

Content Standard 1: Students will read and respond in individual, literal, critical and evaluative ways to literary, informational and persuasive texts.

- a. describe the thoughts, opinions and questions that arise as they read, view or listen to a text, demonstrate a basic understanding of the text, and identify inconsistencies and ambiguities
- b. examine the fit between the text and prior knowledge by reconciling differences, extracting clues or evidence, making inferences, drawing conclusions, predicting events, inferring motives and generalizing beyond the text
- c. demonstrate literary and aesthetic appreciation of the text, awareness of the author's style, understanding of textual features, and ability to challenge the text and think divergently
- d. adapt appropriate strategies to deepen initial understanding and go beyond the text to judge its literary quality
- e. ask and answer their own and each other's text-related critical and analytical questions
- f. predict outcomes of the texts they read, listen to and view, then assess the validity of their predictions
- g. determine the most effective means of monitoring their comprehension, then apply those methods to texts read, listened to and viewed
- h. apply their understanding of textual features of each genre to their interpretations of that genre
- i. use word recognition strategies to perfect reading fluency in ever more sophisticated works
- j. read extensively and apply the variety of vocabulary strategies to read ever more complex texts
- k. describe theme, symbolism, tone and other complex elements of fiction, and identify point of view, manipulative language and other elements of bias in nonfiction materials
- l. use the literary elements of a text (theme, symbolism, imagery, conflict, etc.) to draw conclusions about a text
- m. entertain, explore and defend multiple interpretations of all fiction and nonfiction they read
- n. apply collaborative skills to elaborate on concepts being addressed and to describe processes used in achieving results

Producing Texts

Content Standard 2: Students will produce written, oral and visual texts to express, develop and substantiate ideas and experiences.

- a. select from the complete variety of text structures (essay, short story, poetry, academic essay, report, research paper, response to literature, documentary, etc.) the appropriate organizational pattern for addressing audience, purpose and point of view
- b. identify and use effectively the salient features of all appropriate oral, visual and written discourse
- c. determine which primary and secondary sources are appropriate to the task (research paper, fiction, school newspaper, video) and integrate and elaborate upon information effectively in the final product
- d. identify and use the most effective process for them to create and present a written, oral or visual piece

Applying English Language Conventions

Content Standard 3: Students will apply the conventions of standard English language in oral and written communication.

- a. demonstrate command of capitalization, punctuation, usage and spelling skills, and utilize effective strategies and appropriate resources for proof-reading and editing
- b. use the spoken and written syntax made standard by television announcers and newspaper editorialists and use the diction of skilled writers and orators
- c. evaluate the language they use in written and oral tasks for its suitability for the audience being addressed
- d. draw conclusions regarding the evolution of language and how it influences and reflects societal changes

Exploring and Responding To Texts

Content Standard 4: Students will use the language arts to explore and respond to classical and contemporary texts from many cultures and literary periods.

- a. read a combination of “classic” and contemporary texts, determine the ways in which they shape or have shaped American culture, and analyze the reasons for their being effectiveness
- b. read, view and listen to key works of contemporary literature and create responses that examine the works’ principal elements.
- c. analyze the appeal of various works and determine their literary value
- d. determine the various influences on authors and analyze the impact of those influences on the text
- e. explain how all of the literary conventions and devices in a text or performance are used by an author to express tone, create mood and establish overall theme
- f. read, listen to and view literary texts and identify and explain the human experiences they convey
- g. name and explain their aesthetic reactions to literary works
- h. read classic and contemporary literature to determine political and social ideas which characterize those works
- i. examine classical and contemporary literature to consider various cultural and historical influences on the authors
- j. read and respond to both classic and contemporary texts to examine themes central to the American experience and those portrayed in the range of traditional literature

STUDENT PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

Reading

Strategies:

Students will be able to do the following:

- Read American literature of varying complexity.
- Compile lists of needed references, using bibliographies and literature-search techniques.
- Integrate material drawn from different disciplines (history, literature, art, film, and music.)
- Select relevant passages or phrases to answer questions without necessarily reading the whole text.
- Develop reading strategies according to purposes for reading and the nature of the text.

Responses:

Students will be able to do the following:

- Formulate research topics and questions
- Find relevant information from reading and visual materials
- Make connections between texts and recognize similarities of themes and values
- Support arguments or opinions by reference to evidence presented in sources outside the text
- Compare and offer critical analysis of reading assignments
- Identify different authors' points-of-view on a topic
- Reformulate a task in the light of available reading resources
- Consider a variety of interrelationships between those who create print and visual texts, a particular text itself, contexts, and the reader and viewer
- Show understanding by being able to adopt an alternative point of view to the author's
- Discuss style used by different authors
- Acknowledge in writing and discussion a range of interpretations of text.

Interest and Attitudes:

Students will explore the historical and cultural contexts in American Literature.

Writing

What the Student Writer will do:

- Edit work to improve coherence
- Summarize critical essays on literature
- Integrate narrative appropriately into other writing
- Express meaning precisely

- Organize written text accurately and appropriately for purpose, situation, and audience
- Present criticism, description, and narrative effectively and appropriately
- Develop critical essays coherently

What the Student's Writing will show:

- Paragraphs with topic sentences, textual support and a cohesive structure
- The ability to present relationships and argue or persuade
- Passages written with clarity and accuracy
- A use of vocabulary that shows an awareness of ambiguities and shades of meaning

ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES AND TOOLS

As **readers**, American Literature 200 students will exhibit their understanding and proficiency through the following:

- Tests and Quizzes on text plot and vocabulary
- Discussion of primary text understanding and interpretation
- Application of primary text concepts to other texts.

As **writers**, American Literature 200 students will exhibit their understanding and proficiency through the following:

- Analytical Essays
- Creative Writing
- Journal Responses

As **oral communicators**, American Literature 200 students will exhibit their understanding and proficiency through the following:

- Oral Presentations with Visuals (from story boards, overhead transparencies, Power Point, Internet sites, etc.) based on research and classroom discussion
- Participation in Debate, Small and Large Group Discussions and student teaching segments

GRADING GUIDELINES

Evaluation of the students' work in this course will be based on the following:

- 1) Complete and thorough writing of journal responses.
- 2) Self-, group-, and teacher-assessments of papers, class and small group discussions, editing sessions, dramatic readings, tests, quizzes, and visual presentations.
- 3) Participation in class and small group discussions.
- 4) Teacher assessment of mid-year and final examination work.

	<u>Expectations of Students</u>	<u>% of Report Card Grade</u>
Homework	On time and complete	12.5%
Quizzes	Student has done nightly reading	25%
Essays, Tests, Presentations, and Projects	On time and complete	50%
Participation/Conduct	active and consistent participation	12.5%
Mid-Year Exams	Counts 20% of semester grade. Each quarter grade counts 40%.	
Final Exams		

NOTE:

These percentages can change to reflect types of assignments given in different quarters and emphasis placed on various tasks. Students will be given weights for assignments at the beginning of the quarter.

SAMPLE UNITS

<u>Unit Title</u>	<u>Duration (Weeks)</u>
First Quarter – What Does It Mean to be an American?	
Segment 1: American Identities/American Artifacts (including poetry by Whitman, Hughes and others)	(2 weeks)
Segment 2: The American Dream/Competing Values (including <i>Death of a Salesman</i> or <i>Raisin in the Sun</i>)	(4 weeks)
Second Quarter – ...And Justice for All	
Segment 3: Issues of Race and Class (see sample unit)	(4 weeks)
Segment 4: Beyond Black and White: a Multicultural America (see sample unit)	(4 weeks)
Third Quarter – The Ideal Citizen	
Segment 5: To Preserve, Protect and Defend (including <i>The Things They Carried</i> , <i>In Our Time</i> , <i>The Gettysburg Address</i> , “Saving Private Ryan” and “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington”)	(4 weeks)
Segment 6: Civil Disobedience – The Ideal Citizen (including “Do the Right Thing,” <i>Civil Disobedience</i> , <i>Letter from a Birmingham City Jail</i> and 20 th century protest music)	(4 weeks)
Fourth Quarter – In Search of America: Independent Inquiry	
Segment 7: On the Road: Writers in Search of America (including selections from <i>On the Road</i> , <i>Travels with Charley</i> and a collection of “road” poetry)	(2 weeks)
Segment 8: Our America: Independent Research Project	(6 weeks)

SAMPLE UNIT: ...And Justice For All: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- On what principles were the United States founded?
- To what extent has the country been successful in honoring these principles?
- To what extent has the U.S. failed to live up to its expectations?
- What factors influence a person's success or failure in the U.S.?
- Why do certain people in America prosper while others struggle to stay afloat day to day?
- From what sources do marginalized people find hope for the future and the will to achieve despite hardship?
- How do race, ethnicity and class shape an individual's perception of him/herself and his/her country?
- How have these issues of race, ethnicity and class changed since the birth of the nation?

CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES

Students will gain knowledge and initial understanding of these issues by:

- reading seminal and contemporary texts regarding the history of race and class struggle in America and the current state of American multiculturalism
- reading two contemporary case studies, one about coming-of-age in the Chicago projects, and one about current working conditions for much of America
- identifying techniques of persuasive writing and oratory employed in these writings

Students will gain and develop an interpretation and analysis of these issues by:

- analyzing the evolution of race and class struggle as the nation has grown
- examining the effects economic hardship and racial/ethnic discrimination have on different groups and individuals
- seeking to understand the ways in which marginalized peoples find the strength and will to overcome enormous obstacles

Students will be able to make connections, synthesize, and extrapolate connections between different groups of Americans through the years by :

- identifying and evaluating patterns of thought and action of those affected through the years
- responding orally, artistically and in writing to a variety of non-fiction writings, speeches, essays and films that deal with race, ethnicity and class
- creating analytical essays and creative narratives that effectively communicate an understanding of race, ethnicity and class

Students will be able to evaluate, judge, order, and take a critical stance on issues race, ethnicity and class by:

- comparing older and more contemporary perspectives on the state of race and class in America
- evaluating the progress of human rights and opportunities since the United States' inception
- taking a personal stance to articulate in writing what they find both admirable and troubling about the current state of multiculturalism in America.
- considering how prejudice and poverty shape individual and group attitudes toward the United States

VOCABULARY

Key vocabulary, terminology, and objective information for this unit include:

equality, multiculturalism, assimilation, affirmative action, prejudice, ethnicity, working-class, poverty, marginalization, dignity, perseverance, “the Other America”

Other vocabulary is drawn from the individual texts and material under study.

ACTIVITIES

During this unit, students will become familiar with issues, old and new, of race, class and ethnicity through several primary texts. They will, therefore, develop *an initial understanding* of these issues through teacher guided questions and class discussion focusing on human rights, the nature of prejudice and discrimination, what it is to be “other” in America, and the ways in which being “other” shapes individual and group

attitudes and self-perception. These readings and discussions will be a catalyst for personal and analytical writing.

To develop an interpretation and to make connections, the class will turn to literary texts that exemplify the views expressed by those most affected by poverty and discrimination. For example, they may read excerpts from the non-fiction work *Nickel and Dimed: On Getting By in America*, paying particular attention to how individuals struggle to make ends meet for themselves and their families, all the while maintaining hope that things will get better. They will also examine the ways different peoples' economic circumstances shape their attitudes about their country.

To further develop their own understandings of and connections to the texts and their ideas, students will write journal responses, narrative and persuasive essays. In addition, students will develop their own understandings of what it is to be "other" in America by reflecting on experiences of their own in which they felt marginalized or apart from the mainstream. They will write comparative analysis essays exploring the views of writers from diverse backgrounds, and will uncover similarities between different groups of people. Students will use their learning *to take a critical stance* by engaging in a debate on the present state of race, ethnicity and class in America. They will then speculate as to the future equality of *all* American people.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

In order to assess student performance, students will exhibit their knowledge and understanding through the following performance assessments:

- Quizzes on texts and vocabulary
- Discussion of primary text for understanding and interpretation
- Discussion of additional literary and artistic works for understanding and interpretation
- Participation in Debate and Group Discussion
- Journal Responses
- Interdisciplinary Writing Prompts
- Analytical Essays
- Creative Writing

Students may take reading quizzes on their daily reading in order to evaluate its completion and comprehension. Reading quizzes will be evaluated based upon accuracy. Students will also be assessed based upon regular and thoughtful participation in discussions. Student participation grades will be based upon level of engagement, thoughtful and regular contribution, and level of preparedness. Students may also complete journal responses on the texts read (specific topics may include a response to critical questions, important quotes, thematic ideas, connections with events in U.S.

History). Responses will be graded based upon depth of thought, analysis of issues and ideas, complexity of issues and questions raised, level to which thoughtful and insightful connections are made, and use of specific evidence and examples. In addition to journal responses, students will also be assessed based on an analytical essay and persuasive writing essay. Students will be encouraged to use frequent textual references and quotations to support their ideas. Student performance will be assessed based upon clarity and complexity of thesis, supporting evidence and discussion, seamless integration of quotations, overall depth of thought, relevance of references and quotations, introduction and conclusion, essay structure, clarity of language, grammatical correctness, and appropriate title. Finally, students will develop creatively written pieces to demonstrate their understanding of language and to make connections between the unit themes and their own thoughts. Some of the ways creative writing pieces may be evaluated include: level of effort, use of language, ability to rework and revise drafts, presence of personal voice, effective introduction, clarity of writing and structure, quality and development of description, use of transitions, effectiveness and development of writer's point of view, effective conclusion, and grammatical correctness.

CAREER AWARENESS

Students who complete this unit have done much to prepare themselves for their futures. No matter what fields students eventually enter after school, they will all be faced with the same challenges in a changing, more diverse America, one that requires them to be active spokespersons for human rights and equal opportunity. As a famous historian once said, "The past is prologue."

SAMPLE CORE TEXTS FOR STUDENTS

Thomas Jefferson: *The Declaration of Independence*
The Constitution of the United States and *The Bill of Rights*
Alex Kotlowitz: *There Are No Children Here*
Nickel and Dimed: On Getting By in America
selections from *Growing up Ethnic in America*
selections from *America Beyond the Color Line* by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (adapted)
poetry of the Harlem Renaissance (Langston Hughes' work in particular)

ADDITIONAL TEXTS/ RESOURCES FOR USE BY STUDENTS

Films: *Smoke Signals*

My Family/Mi Familia

When I Was Puerto Rican

Ken Burns' Baseball (the episode dealing with Jackie Robinson and the Negro Leagues)

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY

In this and all subsequent units, students will use the following technology as a means to enhance learning:

Computer / Writing Labs will be used to allow students to write journal responses, draft and revise analytical essays, and research text and background information on the Internet

The Technology Lab may be used to allow students to view the video resources and respond on computer immediately after viewing parts of the film.

The Learning Connections Center offers potential for students in different sections of the course to work together on collaborative projects.