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8TH GRADE ELA SYLLABUS

Dear Students and Families

Welcome to 8th grade English! This year our curriculum, *We Are Such Stuff*, is centered around the tangible things that shape who we are: the objects we carry, the keepsakes we guard, the histories we inherit. Together, we'll ask: *How do the things we hold dear tell the story of who we are? How do they connect us to our families, our communities, and the wider world? What do the stories we create and encounter reveal about the values we choose to carry forward?*

In this class, we'll explore literature that spans genres, cultures, and centuries, alongside the stories you'll craft yourselves. This is a space for curiosity, courage, and discovery—where you can struggle and grow, where your voice matters, and where the “stuff” of life becomes the starting point for wonder. We can't wait to see what you'll uncover—and what you'll create—this year.

My email is aaldige@schools.nyc.gov. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything at all.

It's going to be a great year!

Ms. Aldige

CURRICULUM ROADMAP

The topics we will explore this year are outlined below. We are in the process of getting a **class website** up and running that we will update weekly so that you can preview and keep track of our learning.

Unit 1: Ego Trippin' In this short two week unit, students will start the year with writing personal narratives organized around an object of meaning in their lives in order to develop their voice and confidence as writers.

Unit 2: A Great Patchwork: Exploring Migration and Belonging in Literature This unit explores migration as a universal human experience, showing how the movement of people has shaped families, communities, and culture right here in New York. Through literature, art, research, and interviews, students will document a migration story and create a written profile that highlights resilience, cultural exchange, and the threads that connect us all.

Unit 3: 12 Angry Men In this unit, students will read aloud and perform the 1954 teleplay, *12 Angry Men*, exploring the ways that personal biases, groupthink, and structural racism impact the pursuit of justice. We will sharpen our argumentative writing skills through weekly reading responses and mini trials throughout the unit, culminating in a research project in which students examine a real life case.

Unit 4: Writing in Color: How to Talk about Art In this unit, students will become art critics! Not only will we analyze art from a range of mediums, time periods, places and artists, we will also get out into the city to visit some of the incredible museums we have at our fingertips. This unit will help students to deepen their analytical writing and research skills.

Unit 5: Children of Blood and Bone: *Children of Blood and Bone* by Tomi Adeyemi is a West African-inspired fantasy novel about a young girl, Zélie, who fights to restore magic to her people and resist oppression. In this 8th grade unit, students will explore themes of power, identity, and justice while analyzing how fantasy can reflect real-world struggles, and they will develop skills in literary analysis, critical thinking, and evidence-based discussion.

HOMework

Our only homework will be to revise, review and complete your classwork. Classwork and due dates will be updated weekly on our homework calendar/agenda.

EXPECTATIONS

Deadlines are important and we encourage you to complete your work on time, but we also want to encourage you to advocate for yourself when you need more time or are struggling to complete your work. Come to us and we will come up with a plan to support you!

GRADING

Category 1: Independent Reading

This grade will be based on your independent reading. Each week, you will be able to select how you show us your growth through reading logs and teacher conferences. **Note: We have a small classroom library but we encourage students to get their library card and check out the offerings there and in the online library! We also love the Sora app (a free digital library) and we'd be happy to help set students up to read a digital copy of a book of their choice.**

Category 2: Classwork

This grade will be based on the day-to-day assignments, including small group and large group discussions, we do in class. Think of these tasks as the base of each unit, where you begin to practice the skills that you learn in class. Generally, these can be finished in class but may need to be completed at home occasionally. In this category, students will also be assessed (and will self-assess) their contributions as community members to our class activities and discussions.

Category 3: Reading Responses and Analysis

Think of these assignments as longer and more in-depth than classwork (Category 2) but shorter and more casual than a major assignment (Category 4). In these assignments, students will explore and expand upon a topic using analysis and critical thinking. You will usually have two or three days in advance to complete these assignments.

Category 4: Major Assignments

Major assignments vary depending on the unit, but they are always the project that we are working toward in the unit. This grade includes turning in, editing, and polishing drafts throughout the process.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

- **Mondays:** Each Monday will be reserved for vocabulary acquisition, independent reading and deepening our reading stamina, comprehension and joy.
- **Tues-Wed-Thurs:** On these days, we will dig into new content.
- **Fridays:** Each Friday, we will have a vocabulary quiz and writing workshop in which we both learn and practice new skills as well as review and revise our work.

GOAL SETTING

Instructions: In the space below, set a goal for yourself and state your commitment to this class. *An example might be: *Over the course of this semester, I will work hard to to actively participate in class, create my best work, and support my peers.*

Over the course of this year, I will work hard to...

Your Signature _____

Date _____

Guardian(s) Name _____, _____

Guardian(s) Preferred Phone Number: _____, _____

Guardian(s) Preferred Email Contact: _____

Guardian(s) Preferred Mode of Communication: Email, Phone Call, Text (please circle)

Guardian(s) Preferred Language _____

Anything else you'd like us to know?

Signature _____

Date _____