

Sierra Madre Middle School

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Welcome to English 8 and US History. Working with 8th Grade is an exciting job. For students it is a momentous time in their lives- the final year in middle school before moving on to high school. In many ways, both socially and academically it is a pivotal year. My goal is to provide a safe, respectful, intellectual learning environment where students will take responsibility for their actions and efforts. 8th Grade content standards will continue to build on the foundation established in previous years.

My aim is to guide and sharpen minds through writing, critical thinking, reading, listening and speaking. Discussions, presentations and debates are an important part of our classroom dynamic. Our first topic of debate will be focused on History- Patriots vs Loyalists. Students will need to engage in speaking with one another, cooperate within small groups, and practice facilitation of whole class learning. I want to encourage students to meet their fullest potential intellectually, socially and emotionally. They will have the opportunity to work independently as well as in teams, they must think critically, problem solve and work well together. I do believe everyone has something special to add to our experience.

English

Textbooks- Not on website used primarily for poetry including work from Edgar Allan Poe

Literature and Language Arts- Holt

Grammar for Writing- Mc Dougal Littell

Our first book is historical fiction. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth G. Speare is an easy read that promotes empathy and kindness toward others. Next we will be focusing our attention on Poetry. We will be referencing our Literature and Language Arts book. Students will be responsible for creating a poetry book with their own original work.

Other titles we **may** be reading as a class include:

Fahrenheit 451 Ray Bradbury

Animal Farm George Orwell

The Outsiders *S.E. Hinton*
The Tell-Tale Heart *Poe*
Princess Bride *William Goldman*
Harry Potter and the Cursed Child *JK Rowling, Jack Thorne, John Tiffany*
The River Between Us *Richard Peck*
The Pearl & Of Mice and Men *Steinbeck*
The House of the Scorpion *Nancy Farmer*
The Thief *Megan Whalen Turner*

History

Textbook

Discovering Our Past: The American Journey to World War I -Glencoe
You may access this book through my classroom webpage.

We will be devising projects based on our history topics. Our first project is focused on exploration. In small groups, students will complete research and present material that highlights a specific explorer. This project includes original art, research with references and an oral presentation. Their next project will be focused on the 13 colonies. This will include a tri-fold brochure of your groups colony and/or something that represents your colony. More detailed information will be given for each project.

Students who are interested, may choose to participate in the annual History Day LA. History Day - The theme this year is Breaking Barriers in History - (nhd.org)
Date Saturday March 14, 2020 (San Gabriel High School)
Cost \$ 55.00 -(PTSA may pay for a portion, but I need to confirm)
Please be patient with me, more information will be available as I collaborate with colleagues.

Homework

Here is a quick look at a typical week of homework, class work and assessments. Please be aware that homework may fluctuate or diverge due to changes in the school schedule or as I see academically advantageous. Late homework is marked down unless accommodations have been prearranged.

Seating: I will accommodate those who require preferential seating. My seats rotate on a weekly basis (Monday). I rotate tables to ensure equity - no student is always seated in the back of the class due to their last name or because they are “quiet”, “mature” or “immature”. I can also get to know them a little better when they are seated up front next

to me. I have been doing this for the past 3 years and have had great response from my students. Thank you for being open to the unique arrangement.

English Homework/Class work

- Monday- Reading & Writing
- Tuesday- Vocabulary is introduced on Tuesday and due the following Tuesday with an assessment. Cursive writing is supported in class on vocabulary homework as practice and is not graded. Cursive is used in reading and researching historical primary sources and used throughout higher education.
- Wednesday and Thursday- Grammar is our focus and open book assessments will be given with notice on the classroom website.
- Friday- Focus is on creative writing and reading.
- Comprehension Tests are given with plenty of notice and are also open book. These tests come from our red Literature book.
- Time given for writing assignments, will depend on the length of the writing task and research needed. I will do my best to give the students plenty of time. Usually 1 week to 1 month.
- I will do my best to put due dates for any other supplemental assignments on the web.
- Most homework assignments are started in class for clarity especially at the beginning of the year.

History Homework/Class work

- Quizzes- Each chapter usually has 3-5 sections. We typically cover a section in 2-3 days depending on its content. The quizzes are not openbook, however, students may use 1 loose page of handwritten notes they take during class lecture or while studying at home. Time is given during class for students to complete notes.
- Tests- Tests will include the entire chapter and will follow classroom review. The tests are closed book without notes.
- “AR” (Active Reading and Note-Taking Guide) copies are given to students to use as homework and are collected near the end of the chapter. We will go over answers in class when needed. Students often use some class time to work on these.
- Chapter Assessments (in our book)- These are a great way to tie up the chapter and are assigned just before the chapter test.
- We also enjoy challenging each other in “Jeopardy” type games. These are perfect for reviewing a chapter.

EXTRA CREDIT!!!

Extra credit is offered to both classes during both semesters. Not all students take advantage of the extra credit options, but I offer them regardless to any who are willing to take the opportunity.

English extra credit options given throughout the year.

For our poetry books- add 2 extra poems

Write a biography about yourself

Write a script and get your friends to act it out for our class

Interview a veteran or active military personnel- details given in class

Students, you are creative and often have better ideas than your teachers. Let me know if you have a passion for literature and how you want to share your unique creative talents.

US History extra credit options given throughout the year.

Memorize - The US Preamble and/or The Gettysburg Address,

Make a US Historical Transparency Sheet- instructions given in class

Participate in History Day

Interview a veteran or active military personnel- details given in class

Students, talk to me about an alternative extra credit idea you would like to present to the class other than these choices. I am very flexible and would love to hear what you are interested in sharing.

*Phones must be put away or they will be collected and turned into the office for parent pick up. Students are encouraged to use their smart-phones to take pictures of notes on the board, but must ask for permission first.

*Please let me know if I can accommodate any special circumstances. We all need a break now and then, I am more than happy to adjust or extend assignment dates for emergencies, family crisis, illnesses, etc.

I'm asking each student to acquire a binder with dividers for English assignments. It helps us to stay organized and focused. **Also**, if Ms. Martinez makes an error (and she will) students are able to show proof and the mistake will be corrected ASAP. Also, a smaller binder for History would be helpful. Journals will be used in both classes. Students may use one for both classes or opt for two separate journals.

What we need now- tissue for sniffles & cleaning wipes for various surfaces, baby wipes for hands.

Grading

English

Homework	5%
Participation	5%
Assessments (vocabulary/reading)	25%
Comprehension Tests	30%
Writing	35%

History

Homework	5%
Participation	5%
Projects	20%
Quizzes	30%
Tests	40%

Please check the parent portal weekly. I work hard to keep you informed by uploading grades as quickly as I can. I do make mistakes and I encourage students to keep their work just in case I make a grading error. I am more than happy to make any corrections necessary as long as proof of work is shown. Please give your child the opportunity to advocate for themselves when possible.

I am looking forward to a wonderful and exciting year,

Sincerely,

Ms. Julie Martinez

I read the Student/Parent Welcome Letter from Ms. Julie Martinez. I will try my best throughout the year and advocate for support when I struggle. I will keep my work organized, at least until I see that the grading portal reflects appropriately my current grade. I will be respectful to my peers, Ms. Martinez (staff) and school.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

I read the Student/Parent Welcome Letter from Ms. Julie Martinez. I will support and encourage my child.

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

I will do my best to keep learning and training as an educator. I will do my best to listen to my students and support them in any way I can. I will respect and encourage my students.

Teacher Signature _____ Date _____