

8th Grade ELA Content Overview

Unit 1: Writing with detail

Middle school is your time to really develop as a writer and all writers rely on being able to paint a picture for the audience. We will focus on three major characteristics of detailed writing:

- Showing vs. Telling
- Literary Devices
- Exploding a Moment

We will do this through reading and analyzing mentor texts, developing our own story ideas, using inquiry to dive deeper into the central ideas of our writing, and going through each step in the writing process. Ultimately, this will result in a detailed and vivid short story or scene.

Unit 2: Expository/Persuasive Speech Writing and Presenting

For our next piece of writing we will build on writing with detail and explore how we can use narrative techniques in a more formal piece. The overarching goal of this unit is to move beyond a traditional five paragraph essay formula into something more relatable and intriguing. We will explore how we can create something that is both informative and interesting to read by focusing on the following:

- Identifying a central idea or message
- Using evidence to support claims
- Maintaining a clear structure and flow through various organizational techniques

We will then be taking this writing and developing it into a speech that will be performed in front of the class. We will focus on the following techniques:

- Eye Contact and Body Language
- Fluctuation of voice to emphasize key words and information
- Using visual aids to enhance and impact the overall message

Unit 3: Literature Analysis and Discussion

The goal of this next unit is to dip your toes into more of what you will be doing in high school language arts. We will be reading and analyzing various poems, short stories, and potentially plays to explore the deeper meaning behind them. We will be looking at several elements to identify the theme or central idea of a piece:

- Literary techniques and devices authors chose and why they chose them
- The historical context of the writing
- The tone of the writing
- The characters and how they develop throughout

To help with this analysis we will be participating in small and large group discussions. These will be student led discussions that use inquiry to help look beyond the surface of our reading and into what they are about on a more universal level. This will be your introduction to what is known in the literary world as the human condition.

Unit 4: Short Story/Personal Narrative

At this point in the year we will be revisiting earlier concepts of writing with detail to create a short story or personal narrative. We will again utilize the entire writing process to develop our own stories of fiction or something based on personal experiences. While we develop our stories we will be building off of the last unit where we identified how these literary techniques are used to represent some sort of deeper meaning. Our stories will have a theme or central idea that these literary techniques will represent. Once we finish our stories, as part of the publishing process, we will be analyzing them in the same way we did for the stories in our previous unit. Ultimately, we will be doing the same work as the last unit but with our very own writing.

Unit 5: Multimedia Campaign

During our multimedia campaign students will be creating speeches within the theme of a Ted Talk. The guiding message of any Ted Talk is that they are *Ideas Worth Sharing*. We will develop our own ideas worth sharing by focusing on the following:

- Identifying an area of interest, significance, or expertise to share
- Conducting research and identifying credible sources to better understand our idea
- Creating visual aides to enhance the message

During this unit students will be working closely with others to develop, research, and practice their speech. This work will lead directly into our SBAC testing, giving students one more opportunity to practice and hone their persuasive and expository writing before they take the test in the spring.

Unit 6: Novel Study

Following SBAC testing we will be finishing out the year by reading, analyzing, and discussing the novel *The Outsiders*. During the unit we will be focusing on character development and analyzing the themes within the novel. This will be an opportunity to showcase our note taking, questioning, and discussion skills, as well as our ability to look beyond the surface or basic events of the story and dive deeper into what makes this story a classic. This will be a fun final unit that is both engaging and will prepare students for the type of analysis they will be doing in high school language arts.

Note: Each unit will usually be between 4-8 weeks in length, including time for regular classroom routines such as writing practice, evaluate testing, and other activities as necessary. *Advanced Language Arts* will follow the same basic plan with room to explore topics and standards more thoroughly or briefly as needed.