**9th Grade Syllabus  
2014-2015  
Ms. Caler**

The following is the syllabus for your class. Because I am incredibly flexible, and find that each class works at its own pace, I plan lessons weekly. I adjust my lesson plans and daily goals according to my class’s learning, understanding, and mastery of skills and concepts. I use the Common Core Standards to guide my planning, along with the needs and skill level of not only my individual classes, but individual students.  
  
**The School Year:** Using thematic units in the classroom helps students to, “come to better personal understanding of the topic and their related experiences, gain fluency with tools that will enable them to read and produce new texts in the future, and work within a social context in which they can develop this new knowledge to the best of their potential” (Smagorinsky 112). Thematic units really help students to develop a thorough and personal understanding of a subject, especially a controversial subject. By critically examining a text for a theme, “the point is to help adolescent readers read text and worlds more carefully as they become aware of the ideologies within which both are inscribed” (Appleman 76). Because of this, our school year will be divided into two themes: *Adventure and Exploration* and *Coming of Age*.

**First Semester: Adventure/Exploration:** 1st Semester will be Adventure and Exploration.

***Unit One: The Hobbit***

We will begin the school year by studying J.R. Tolkein’s *The Hobbit*. We will begin focusing on The Epic Hero, Oral Traditions, and Adventure and Exploration. Along with *The Hobbit*, we will be reading various riddles and myths.

**Prepare and Engage:** While reading *The Hobbit*, we will explore plot, character development, setting, idea, various figurative language and literary elements, think critically and write clearly about Tolkein’s themes, with special emphasis on their contemporary relevance. This unit will be broken down into three sections: Introducing Tolkien and His Worlds, Riddles, Ruins, and a Ring of Power, and There and Back Again. Our themes will be Creating Meaning through Literature, Creating Meaning Through Myth, and The Quest in Life an Literature.   
  
We will do a variety of activities that include, reading, writing essays, narratives, poems, myths, and riddles. We will also do various smaller, daily activities to enhance our reading and understanding, and go beyond basic comprehension to analysis of ideas and make real world connections. Students will work in large and small groups, as well and independently.

***Unit Two: The Odyssey***  
  
Continuing on with the Adventure and Exploration thematic topic, we will read Homer’s *The Odyssey*. We will begin with some background on Mythology and the gods/goddesses of Greek Mythology. Our study will segue into the reading of *The Odyssey.*

**Prepare and Engage:** As we read The Odyssey, students will to begin building an understanding of Greek mythology, and will understand the role of the hero and myth in The Odyssey. They will also identify and recognize the importance of key Greek Gods/Goddesses to Greek life. In addition, students will use a variety of technological resources to learn about Homer, Greek culture, and mythology, as well as analyze recognized works of world literature from a variety of authors. Students will continue to contrast major literary forms, techniques, and characteristics of Homeric Greece.   
  
Students will also look at the relationship between decisions and consequences and explore how a person’s decisions and actions can change his/her life. We will also look at character development by asking: How do the decisions and actions of characters reveal their personalities? And how do decisions, actions, and consequences vary depending on the different perspectives of the people involved?

As with *The Hobbit,* We will do a variety of activities that include, reading, writing essays, narratives, poems, and myths. We will also do various smaller, daily activities to enhance our reading and understanding, and go beyond basic comprehension to analysis of ideas and make real world connections. Students will work in large and small groups, as well and independently.

**Second Semester: Coming of Age**

***Unit Three: Romeo and Juliet***

We will begin this semester with an in-depth reading of William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. We will explore the concept of coming of age on an individual level, and look at how our personal choices shape our future and the lives of those around us.

**Prepare and Engage:** As we read *Romeo and Juliet*, students will learn to comprehend, analyze, and discuss the Shakespearean language in which the play is written. They will monitor their comprehension of the play by asking questions, re-reading, and paraphrasing. Students will learn to make and confirm inferences through strategies used to understand words and text, and by making word connections from what is read. As we delve deeper into the play, we will explore what makes *Romeo and Juliet* a classic, and students will relate events of the play to real-life experiences.  
  
Students will examine the choices of various characters, as well as the cause and effect progression of the play. Connections to the situations and events of the play will be explored through imagination, characters, and personal experiences.  
  
We will utilize a variety of response strategies to understand and explore the text of the play by journaling, creative and exploratory activities (such as reading aloud and acting out the play, as well as various daily activities that will increase understanding and analysis).

***Unit Four: To Kill a Mockingbird***

In this unit, we will focus on ourselves in relationship to society. How do our personal choices and beliefs contribute to society? We will look at how what we think and believe affects the world around us, and how the world around us affects what we think and believe.

**Prepare and Engage:** We will explore and develop a deep appreciation of the cultural and historical events in the South in the 1930’s and how it affects us today. They will also understand what creates prejudices, how they affect others, and how to prevent discrimination. We will accomplish this through historical research, character analysis, theme inferences, point of view, exploration of how the events of the novel, the various plots, the setting, themes, and the characters all work interchangeably to shape one another. We will read and write for a variety of purposes, and complete a variety of projects and activities that enhance our reading and understanding of the complex issues in the novel.

We will also read excerpts from the novel *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, and look at various speeches in history by Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King Jr., and Ghandi to explore the major themes in the novel.

***Additionally:*** We will not only explore these four texts, but we will read short fiction, non-fiction, poetry, essays, editorials, etc., to enhance our reading. We will write for a variety of purposes such as narrative, fiction, non-fiction, essays, expository, persuasive, argumentative, rhetorical, etc.   
  
In addition to these readings and writings, students will be required to read a novel/book of their choosing outside of class. Approximately once a week students will read and complete an Independent Novel Response. The Independent Novel Response (INR) will be a different prompt every week in which each student is required to delve into the novel they are reading *at that time*, and reflect and write on what they are reading currently. INRs require specific, textual evidence to be used, along with titles of novels and page numbers. Each writing prompt is a combination of basic comprehension, analysis, and the exploration of: character, plot, setting, dialogue, author purpose, character motivation, point of view, theme, motif, rhetorical devices, figurative language, and evidence.  
  
Skills we will be focusing on are: building and growing reading level, writing skills (grammar, punctuation, style, organization, spelling, analysis, argument, rhetoric, voice, word choice, and types of writing), reading comprehension, inference, exploring rhetorical devices and figurative language and how those shape author’s purpose, audience, plot development, text-to-self/text-to-text/text-to-world connections, use of textual evidence, research, and correctly using MLA formatting for research, documentation of evidence, and works cited.

**EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:**

Students’ assignments are evaluated on the following grading scale:

A 100-90%

B 80-89%

C 70-79%

D 60-69%

F 59% and below

Test scores, daily work, papers, and projects are not weighted, but each assignment is given a particular value. Students’ interim and quarter grades are based on total points received. Each quarter is worth 50% of the student’s semester grade.

**Washington State Common Core Standards:** The CCR anchor standards and high school grade-specific standards work in tandem to define college and career readiness expectations—the former providing broad standards, the latter providing additional specificity. Throughout this year, we will be meeting the required CCSS for our state. You may access the Common Core online at <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/> and follow the links provided.