

A Parent's Guide To Eighth Grade English Language Arts

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Eighth Grade English Language Arts (ELA) develops strength in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing skills. Your child should increase his/her ability to analyze and synthesize information, increase their reading ability and become a more proficient writer.

Glossary Terms

Words that have asterisks(*) are defined in the Glossary section located in the back of this booklet.

By the end of the eighth grade, your child should be able to do the following:



READING

Word Study

- Use word structure, sentence structure, and prediction to aid in decoding and understanding the meanings of words.
- Use structural*, syntactic*, and semantic* analysis to recognize unfamiliar words in context such as idioms*, analogies*, metaphors*, and similes* to infer* the history of the English language, common word origins or syllabication.
- Recognize frequently encountered words automatically.
- Know the meaning of frequently encountered words in written and oral contexts (research to support specific words).
- Apply strategies to construct meaning and identify unknown words.
- Fluently* read eighth grade materials (read increasingly demanding texts as the year proceeds).
- Use strategies, such as prior knowledge, text features, structures and authentic content-related resources to determine the meaning of words and phrases in context (examples: historical terms, content area vocabulary, literary terms).

Narrative Text

- Investigate through classic and contemporary literature recognized for quality and literary merit various examples of distortion* and stereotypes* such as those associated with gender, race, culture, age, class, religion, and other individual differences.
- Analyze elements and style of narrative genres (examples: historical fiction, science fiction, realistic fiction).
- Analyze the role of rising and falling actions, and minor characters in relation to conflict, and credibility of the narrator.
- Analyze how authors use symbolism*, imagery*, and consistency to develop credible narrators, rising and falling actions and minor characters.

Informational Text

- Analyze elements and style of informational genre.
Examples:
 - comparative essays*
 - newspaper writing
 - technical writing
 - persuasive essays*
- Analyze organizational patterns such as theory, evidence, and sequence.
- Explain how authors use text features such as illustrations, author's pages, prefaces and marginal notes to enhance the understanding of central, key, and supporting ideas.

Comprehension

- Connect personal knowledge, experience, and understanding of the world to themes and perspectives in the text.
- Read, retell, and summarize grade level appropriate narrative and informational texts.
- State global themes, universal truths, and principles within and across texts to create a deeper understanding.
- Apply significant knowledge from what has been read in grade level appropriate science and social studies texts.



Metacognition

- Independently self-monitor comprehension when reading or listening to text by automatically using and discussing the strategies used by mature readers to increase comprehension and engage in interpretative discussions.
Examples:
 - predicting
 - constructing mental images representing ideas in text
 - questioning
 - rereading or listening again if uncertain about meaning
 - inferring
 - summarizing
- Plan, monitor, regulate, and evaluate skills, strategies, and processes for his/her reading comprehension by applying appropriate metacognitive skills.
- Apply significant knowledge from what has been read in grade level appropriate science and social studies texts.

Critical Standards

- Evaluate the appropriateness of shared, individual, and expert standards based on purpose, context, and audience in order to assess his/her work and the work of others.

Reading Attitude

- Be enthusiastic about reading and do substantial reading on his/her own.

WRITING

Writing Genres

- Write a narrative piece that includes appropriate conventions* for genres such as historical fiction, science fiction, realistic fiction and contains literary and plot devices (examples: narrator credibility, rising and falling actions, and/or conflict, transitional language, and imagery).
- Write an historical expository piece such as a journal, biography or simulated memoir that includes appropriate organization, illustrations, marginal notes, and/or annotations*.
- Formulate research questions that demonstrate critical evaluation of multiple resources and perspectives and arguments/counterarguments that end in a presented, final project.

Writing Process

- Set a purpose, consider audience, and replicate authors' styles and patterns when writing narrative or informational text.
- Apply a variety of pre-writing strategies for narrative text (examples: story maps designed to depict rising and falling actions, roles of minor characters, credibility of narrator) and informational text (examples: compare/contrast, cause and effect, sequential text patterns).
- Experiment with various ways of sequencing information such as ordering arguments, sequencing ideas chronologically or by importance.
- Review and revise compositions for coherence and consistency regarding word choice, cause and effect, and style, then read his/her own work from another reader's perspective in the interest of clarity.
- Edit his/her writing both individually and in peer editing groups, using proofreaders' checklists.



Personal Style

- Exhibit individual style to enhance the written message (example: in narrative text: personification, humor, element of surprise; in informational text: emotional appeal, strong opinion, credible support).

Grammar and Usage

- Use style conventions such as the Modern Language Association* (MLA) and a variety of grammatical structures in his/her writing including infinitives*, gerunds*, participial phrases, and dashes or ellipsis*.

Spelling

- Use correct spelling conventions.

Handwriting

- Be legible in compositions.

Writing Attitude

- Be enthusiastic about writing.

SPEAKING

Conventions

- Use enunciation* and stress to emphasize key ideas and concepts when presenting.
- Use body language such as gestures, posture, and facial expressions, along with tone of voice, and pace of speaking to enhance meaning and influence interpretation when presenting.
- Present work in standard American English or his/her developing version of standard American English if in the process of learning the language.

Discourse*

- Engage in interactive, extended discourse to socially construct meaning by participating in book clubs, literature circles, partnerships or other types of conversation groupings.
- Discuss multiple text types in order to explore problems and pose solutions, take a stand on an issue and support it, and identify personally with a universal theme.
- Discuss written narratives such as biographies* and autobiographies* which contain a variety of literary and plot devices (examples: description of relevant situations, well-chosen details, relevant dialogue, specific action, physical description of characters).
- Plan and deliver an informational presentation that incorporates precise, interesting, and vivid language. The presentation is organized logically to deliver the message, includes persuasive non-verbal techniques such as voice modulation, expression, tone, appropriate pace, and makes use of rhetorical* strategies to support the purpose and to positively impact the intended audience.

Examples:

- supportive narratives
- key information
- vivid descriptions

LISTENING AND VIEWING

Conventions

- Listen to and view a variety of peer speeches and presentations to analyze for key factors (Example: main idea, significant details, fact and opinion, bias, propaganda*, argumentation*, or support).
- Demonstrate the appropriate social skills of audience behavior and critically examine the verbal and non-verbal strategies in the communication process.

Response

- React to a speaker's intent and apply a speaker's reasoning to other situations and topics.
- Respond thoughtfully to both classic and contemporary texts recognized for quality and literary merit.
- Paraphrase a speaker's main ideas, purpose, and point of view, and ask relevant questions about the content, delivery, and purpose of the presentation.
- Analyze oral interpretations of literature such as language choice, delivery, and the effect of the interpretations on the listener.
- Respond to multiple texts when listened to or viewed by speaking, illustrating, and/or writing in order to anticipate and answer questions, to determine personal and universal themes, and to offer opinions or solutions.
- Evaluate the credibility of a speaker by determining whether the speaker may have hidden agendas or be otherwise biased.
- Interpret and analyze the various ways in which visual image-makers such as graphic artists, illustrators communicate information and affect impressions and opinions.

GLOSSARY TERMS



analogies (pl.) – comparisons of similar objects. An analogy suggests that since objects are alike in some ways, they will probably be alike in other ways. (Example: Pets are like plants. If you give the pets proper care and attention, they grow strong and healthy. If you neglect them, they become weak and sickly.)

annotations (pl.) – remarks or explanations added to a written piece to give further information

argumentation – a discussion in which reasons are advanced for and against some proposition or proposal

autobiography – the story of a real person's life, written or told by that person

bias – an attitude that always favors one way of thinking over any other

biography – the story of a real person's life, written or told by another person

comparative essay – a written paper characterized by the systematic comparison of ideas or things, especially of their likenesses and dissimilarities

distortion – A statement that twists fact; a misrepresentation

discourse – To engage in conversation or discussion

ellipsis – a series of marks (example: ... or * * *) used in writing or printing to indicate an omission, especially of letters or words

enunciation – to pronounce clearly

gerunds – verbs that end with ing that are being used as nouns (Example: We enjoyed the glee club's *singing*.)

idioms – words used in a special way that may be different from their literal meaning. (Example: Rush-hour traffic moves at a *snail's pace*. This idiom means "very slowly.")

inference (infer) – to arrive at a conclusion with the material you have read, an educated guess

imagery – the use of vivid or figurative language to represent objects, actions, or ideas

GLOSSARY TERMS, continued

metaphor – a figure of speech that compares two things without using the words *like* or *as* (Example: The cup of hot tea was the best medicine for my cold.)

Modern Language Association (MLA) – style of writing used for documentation

persuasive essay – a written paper characterized by the writer's intention to convince the reader to agree with the writer's message

personification – a figure of speech in which a non-human thing or quality is talked about as if it were human

participial phrases – a phrase that uses the verb form ending in *-ing* or *-ed*. A participle is used as an adjective. (Example: The idea of the earth shaking and splitting both fascinates and frightens me.)

propaganda – information that is meant to mislead or persuade

rhetorical – concerned with effect or style of writing and speaking; a rhetorical question is one asked solely to produce an effect (especially to make an assertion) rather than to elicit a reply

semantic analysis – reader studies the meaning of words

simile – a figure of speech that compares two things using the words *like* or *as* (Examples: The dog danced around like a clown at the circus. The ice was smooth as glass before the skaters entered the rink.)

stereotype – regarded as embodying or conforming to a set image or type

structural analysis – reader studies the way writing is organized

symbolism – the practice of representing things by means of symbols or of attributing symbolic meanings or significance to objects, events, or relationships

syntactic analysis – reader examines the way words are put together in a sentence

QUESTIONS

