Hello parents and students,

Welcome to 8th Grade Language Arts! Below you will find a brief outline of the essential questions, major assessments, and exciting content we will explore throughout this school year. I have also included my contact information should you need it for future reference.

**Quarter 1: The Challenge of Heroism**

Essential Questions: What defines a hero?

How does the Hero’s Journey archetype appear in stories throughout time?

Texts: Kung Fu Panda (film); various poetry; *Ender’s Game* (novel).

Major Assessments: Hero’s Journey Narrative; Definition Essay, Graphic Novel.

**Quarter 2: The Challenge of Utopia**

Essential Questions: To what extent can a perfect society exist?

What makes an argument effective?

Texts: *The Giver* (novel); various informational articles.

Major Assessments: Compare/Contrast, Expository, and Argumentative Essays.

**Quarter 3: The Challenge to Make a Difference**

Essential Questions: Why is it important to learn about the Holocaust?

How can one person make a difference?

Texts: Holocaust Literature Circles (novel); *Tears of a Tiger* (novel).

Major Assessments: Present panel discussion on Holocaust novel; Major Issue Multimedia campaign.

**Quarter 4: The Challenge of Comedy**

Essential Questions: How do writers use humor to convey truth?

What makes an effective performance of a Shakespearian comedy?

Texts: Various humor pieces; *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (play).

Major Assessments: Analysis of Humorous Text; Shakespeare Performance.

**Grammar/Vocabulary:** The majority of our grammar/vocabulary instruction will be taught using the book *Giggles in the Middle*, however, grammar will also be instructed throughout the writing process.

**Independent Reading:** It is expected that students will continuously strive to develop life-long reading habits by selecting appropriate independent reading texts throughout the year. We will utilize the Accelerated Reader (AR) program and students are expected to successfully pass tests and accumulate twenty points per quarter.

**Behavior:** Harrisburg South Middle School follows the PBIS behavior model <http://www.pbis.org>, and it is expected that all students will comply with these guidelines. My role as a teacher is not limited to English content; I also intend to nurture the development of positive social behaviors in students.

**Homework:** It is expected that all out of school assignments will be completed by the designated due date. This includes out of class reading assignments, as well as written assignments that are to be delivered to me electronically through email or online drop boxes. Failure to abide by these rules will result in a ZAP, lunch/study hall, as noted in the HSMS Student Handbook.

Parents, please feel free to contact me as any needs or concerns arise at: [Jared.Berg@k12.sd.us](mailto:Jared.Berg@k12.sd.us)

I prefer that students contact me and attach assignments via my gmail account:

[Tigerberg85@gmail.com](mailto:Tigerberg85@gmail.com)

Research demonstrates that when parents and teachers work in collaboration with each other students achieve at consistently higher levels both academically and socially. Please contact me concerning any academic or social struggles your student faces. We are all in this together!

Go Tigers!

Jared Berg, M.Ed

8th Grade ELA

Harrisburg South Middle School