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: Coming of Age**

Essential Questions: What does it mean to “come of age”?

How are rhetorical appeals used to influence an audience?

Texts: Coming of Age Literature Circles (novels of student’s choice).

*Huckleberry Finn, Slam, The Secret Life of Bees, The Lord of the Flies.*

Major Assessments: Interview Narrative, Argumentative Essay.

**Quarter 2: Defining Style**

Essential Questions: What makes a good story?

What are the essential features of an effective style analysis?

Texts: E.A. Poe stories, Tim Burton films.

Major Assessments: Writing a Short Story, Writing a Style Analysis Essay.

**Quarter 3: Coming of Age in Changing Times**

Essential Questions: What impact does context have on a novel and on the reactions of readers to it?

How does a key scene from a novel contribute to the work as a whole?

Texts: *To Kill a Mockingbird.*

Major Assessments: Historical Investigation & Presentation; Literary Analysis Essay.

**Quarter 4: Exploring Poetic Voices/Coming of Age on Stage**

Essential Questions: What is Poetry?

What can a writer learn from studying an author’s craft and style?

How do actors/directors use theatrical elements to create a dramatic interpretation?

Why do we study Shakespeare?

Texts: Various Poetry/Songs. *Romeo & Juliet.*

Major Assessments: Creating a Poetry Anthology; Analyzing and Presenting a Poet; Presenting a Dramatic Interpretation; Writing a Synthesis Argument.

**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.

**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.

**Independent Reading:** Students are required to read a pair of one classic/one contemporary novels as outlined on the IR sheet and complete the assessment for each quarter. This will total 8 novels throughout the school year, 4 classic and 4 contemporary.

**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 Advanced ELA

Harrisburg South Middle School