



## Middle and High School English

The English program at Mount Madonna School aims to help develop the capacities of our students in a range of areas relating to English Language Arts. We understand that in addition to the core competencies, we want our students to be confident and skilled writers, capable of thoughtful analysis, respectful of complexity and uncertainty, and aware of the iterative process of writing. We value learning materials that are inclusive, equitable equitable and reflect grade-level

learning goals. Therefore, the curriculum emphasizes all persons, including historically marginalized individuals and groups, people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQA+, and the diversity of people who are pivotal to understanding of our school community and the wider world.

The program emphasizes self-reflection and discovery through dialogue. A rigorous study of literature and encouragement of creative writing skills allow students to see beyond the surface of a text and appreciate deeper meanings.

### Middle School English

#### 6th Grade

The sixth grade English course is designed to help students understand and appreciate classic, contemporary, and multicultural literature and writing perspectives. Students study a variety of literature genres and media formats. Students read grade-level texts to analyze, assess point of view, and express their knowledge of vocabulary acquisition and use. Our daily practice includes learning routines that help students reflect on what they are reading. We use a variety text-based and visual analysis exercises to learn about the character, setting, plot, and themes of the stories we read (ie. using Quick writes and Thinking Maps). Sixth graders read for understanding using annotation (highlighting words and writing in the margins) to show active engagement with the text. We encourage those students who need different modalities for learning to use audiobooks and dictation software to support their learning in the classroom and at home. Student reading, writing, speaking and listening performance are assessed using the four major areas of the sixth grade curriculum that complement California's English Language Arts Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language Practice. Students write three one to two page performance-based assessments (Narrative Nonfiction Narrative, Explanatory Essay, and an Argument Essay) based on the readings from the unit of study.

#### 7th Grade

English 7 emphasizes the development of creative self-expression as well as critical thinking skills. Through reading, writing, and discussion, students sharpen abilities to clearly put their thoughts, ideas, and feelings into words, both written and spoken. In addition, we listen to each other and the voices of other writers that add to our experience of life, and more importantly, develop our humanity and empathy. The class continues our journey as writers, readers, critical thinkers, and creative individuals. Using our confidences, we build on strengths, but also expand our abilities with new methods and approaches.

We spend time establishing the foundations of literary interpretation in terms of plot, character, and theme. Our readings include novels, short stories, essays, and poems, classic and contemporary. The readings seek to reflect cultural and philosophical diversity as well as serve as lightning rods for intellectual and emotional response.

Class time is also invested in establishing the structures for essay writing and original story creations. As students gain experience, they tweak those norms to personalize their own styles and rhythms. Writing genres explored include literary essay, personal memoir, original story, poetry, and playwriting. Students are encouraged to bring their unique voice, imagination, and perspective. To support point of view and assertions, students are encouraged to use description, fact, definition, explanation, example, quote or dialogue. In terms of the writing process, revision is taught as a necessary tool for improving craft.

Students adventure through units of thematic focus, such as Identity, Rites of Passage, Race and Equality, as well as the Art of the Fairy Tale. Methods of responding to literary works and other relevant topics include in class seminars, group activities, and larger developed individual writing projects. Students are expected to work hard, enjoy the process of discovery, and respect one another as well as the learning environment.





# Middle and High School English

## Middle School English cont.

### 8th Grade

Admittedly, 8th Grade English bears similarity to the 7th Grade in terms of approach and respect for the learning journey of each student. The class provides an opportunity for the expansion of intellectual horizons and the fostering of our creative potential. Rather than focusing only on what we already know, the urging is to also try new methodologies, to experiment and reflect. In our time together, we read of a variety of published authors, participate in a full range of writing opportunities, and in seminar context, listen to one another share ideas and writings.

In terms of our reading, selected works are from all over the spectrum of literature, from classical to modern, essay to short story, poem to songs. Units of study include Finding Our Identity, Cultural Diversity in America, Racism and Equality, Going Beyond Gender Stereotypes, Utopia and Dystopia, and Rites of Passage. The expectation is that as we enjoy the literature, we continue developing a language for critical analysis that feels relevant, personal, and connected. Students extrapolate theme, note plot design and search for character development in the literature they read and apply that knowledge in the writings they produce based on their reading.

Within our writing, we experiment with various styles ranging from expository essay to memoir, from narrative fiction to poetry and playwriting. We experience writing as not only doable, but an essential venue for expressing what is in our hearts and minds. We are reminded writing is a craft that we take pride in, and as such, demands our attention to revising, and developing our skills.

More importantly, through reading, resulting conversation, and writing projects, students gain empathy and appreciation for other cultures, races, faiths, and gender. Awareness is raised concerning oppression and the struggles of those around us. Our focus is to feel some agency in creating positive change for all around us.

In this final year of Middle School, students are expected to work hard, gain essential experience in expanding their boundaries within the subject material, and mainly, to enjoy the creative process.





# Middle and High School English

## High School English

### English 9: World Literature

The ninth grade English curriculum complements the study of world history. English 9 students develop their reading skills by reading a variety of non-fiction, short fiction, poetry, and long fiction texts and learning how to observe, think, and discuss reasons for their interpretations. Students continue to develop skills in formal analysis of short fiction and poetry, identifying and discussing formal elements such as character, plot, point of view, setting, language, theme, and poetics. Non-fiction texts include argumentative essays that challenge students to identify arguments, assess reasoning, and use textual evidence. Students develop their writing skills by the continual practice of the craft. They learn to write short critical responses, longer essays, and creative projects. Through the practice of writing and peer review, students hone their understanding of form, craft, and meaning. Students develop critical thinking skills, learning to give and assess reasons for thinking that claims are true, useful, or reasonable, using both nonfiction and fiction/poetry texts as evidence. Students develop their critical skills further by engaging in class discussions that challenge students to reflect on what they observe and the reasons, implicit and explicit, that they have for what they believe to be true.

### English 10/ Honors: American Literature

This course will focus on both reading comprehension and compositional skills for second year High School students. Curriculum complements the focus of 10th grade level history; thereby, students will work with texts from within American Literary canon with a critical emphasis on a diversity of authors as well as explore recent literary content influencing new understandings of American history and identity. For reading comprehension, students will read in multiple genres of literature from novels (including graphic novels), short stories, poetry, and one play. To build compositional skills and competency, students will focus on sentence mastery through essay writing, including paragraph structuring and sequencing. Cumulatively, students will work toward larger writing assignments that include multiple essays as well involving relevant sources within these assignments. Essays include a reflection essay, a persuasive essay, and a research essay. Students will gain a deeper practice of close-reading, analysis and synthesis of multiple sources. Honors students will read additional titles as well as write longer writing assignments as suited to the task.

### English 11/AP Language and Composition: Identity

This course will continue to focus on reading comprehension and compositional skills for third year High School students. English 11 students' reading curriculum will complement the Values Course focus of exploring self-identity. Assigned texts keep this focus in mind and more deeply examine thematic inquiries such as who gets to tell the story and how to find stories that speak back to the dominant narrative. Students will continue to read across multiple genres of literature from novels (including graphic novels), short stories, poetry, and one play. Additionally, these students continue to build compositional skills and focus on a mastery of longer essays, including essay preparation and organization. Writing assignments include multiple short reflection essays, two position papers, and a longer essay that combines argument with research. Research skills include sources that both complement as well as challenge the writer's primary assertion. AP students will read additional Literary titles as practice rich and organized responses to timed essays.





# Middle and High School English

## High School English cont.

### **English 12 Honors/Non-Honors: Values and Character**

English 12 makes use of AP Language and Composition resources, Socratic dialogues, a novel, and a memoir, focusing on developing good argumentative writing skills, close-reading skills, and synthesis writing skills. Students begin the semester with an exploration of the elements of rhetoric and argument and develop their close-reading skills. Students finish the semester with a unit devoted to developing their synthesis writing skills. English 12 students continue to master the fundamentals of sentence writing, paragraph writing, essay writing, and creative narrative writing, focusing on longer essays and research projects, more complex claims and counter arguments, and more advanced creative fiction and poetry. English 12 students also continue to master the fundamentals of grammar (parts of speech, parts of sentences, phrases and clauses, verb and pronoun agreement, verb tenses). Finally, English 12 students learn how to write longer research papers. Honors students have extended assignments based on College Board AP Language and Composition questions from previous exams. Although the class is not approved by the College Board as an AP Language and Composition course, the skills developed in the honors version of the class serve to prepare students well for both college writing and the AP Language and Composition Exam, should they choose to take it.

### **Values 12: Self and Society (Honors)**

This course is designed to engage the students in meaningful dialogue. True dialogue is a collaborative process of active listening and discussion that helps the students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and respect and curiosity about the ideas of others. We promote a safe atmosphere where students can develop and share their thinking and discover what they do and don't know through the process of listening to the ideas of others. The class fosters critical thinking, active listening, writing, speaking, media literacy, research skills, process and facilitation skills, and citizenship and social emotional literacy. It supports the development of thoughtful, discerning, and empathetic individuals that are capable of taking responsibility for their actions and capable of both facilitating and engaging in collaborative work. It prepares students to be constructive citizens in whatever communities they are a part of. Through class discussions, analysis, writing, engaging in conversations with individuals both inside and outside of the classroom setting, self-reflection, and the integration of concepts students will better understand themselves, thinking practices, and the complexity of the world around them.

### **Creative Writing (Grade 9-12 Elective)**

This course focuses on individual creative writing and how to build and affirm a writing process that suits individual creativity. During this class, writers will gain exposure to a variety of writers across multiple disciplines so that they may begin to recognize which forms of creative writing they would like to pursue from poetry to creative nonfiction to playwriting to short and longer narrative. We will also explore style, voice, and categories of tales from the gothic to the fantastical; historical fiction to other forms of world-building; horror and romance. The list continues.





## Middle and High School

# History and Social Science

Mount Madonna School is committed to preparing students to have an exceptional understanding of the historical, political, and cultural context of their place in the world. Our history/social science program prepares students to be active participants in their community at all levels. The program focuses on supporting global citizens capable of discernment and effective civic action. During middle school, students study ancient world history, medieval world history, and U.S. History. High school students study World History, Government, and U.S. History. They also complete a two-year capstone course, Values in World Thought, which includes international and domestic travel. We also offer a psychology and philosophy elective.

### Middle School History and Social Science

#### 6th Grade

In sixth grade ancient world history, students study the geography, environment, political systems and power structures, and civic engagement of people in Mesopotamia, Egypt, ancient Israel, Indus River Valley, China, Mesoamerica and the Mediterranean basin. The study of these regions is divided into three chronological periods: Beginnings to 4000 Before Common Era (B.C.E.), 4000-1000 (B.C.E.) Kingdoms and Innovations, 1000-300 (C.E.) and Age of Empires and Interactions. Students practice history as an interpretive discipline and through inquiry based assignments. Students read and analyze artifacts and writings from the past (primary and secondary sources) to investigate and analyze how people and the environment influenced the development of civilizations and empires. From these investigations students create project-based understandings (i.e. recreations of Mesopotamian artifacts, dioramas of ancient Egyptian monuments). Throughout the year, sixth grade students begin to learn the components of historical essay writing through interactive note taking and short narrative writing samples. This allows sixth graders to gain proficiency in writing claim-evidence based historical essays.

#### 7th Grade

Seventh grade world history is the study of medieval and early modern periods (500 C.E. - 1500 C.E.) and focuses on the larger geographic, historical, and economic patterns in this era of world history. Particular attention is given to case studies like Rome and Christendom, Persia and the World of Islam, South Asia, China and Japan, The Americas, and West Africa. Our study investigates the rise and fall of empires, the diffusion of religions and languages, and the significant movements of people, ideas, and products. Students approach this history as an investigative discipline by analyzing sources from written and visual primary sources, and through experiential classroom activities. Seventh graders read and analyze artifacts and writings from the past to investigate and learn how people influenced the growth of civilizations and empires, as well as their decline over time. Students learn how to use evidence in their writing and projects to show their understanding of events in the past through document-based essay assessments.

#### 8th Grade

The eighth-grade U.S. history course begins with the exploration movement that brought Europeans and Africans across the Atlantic. Students investigate the exploration efforts in the New World and the transatlantic slave trade of African people in the fifteenth century. Particular attention is given to the geographic and social, political and economic development of the North American colonies, and how the colonists gained their independence from Great Britain and formed the new republic. Our course ends with a survey of the American Civil War and beginnings of the Reconstruction era. Students study American history through the lens of the people who were trying—and are still trying—to fulfill the promise of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Our year-long course investigates the impact of religion and culture on political movements, as well as the ideas and philosophies that shaped the formation of a democratic republic. Students study this history as an investigative discipline by analyzing sources from written and visual primary sources, and through experiential classroom activities. Students learn how to use evidence in their historical writing to demonstrate their understanding of events in the past through multiple document-based assessment essays.





## Middle and High School

# History and Social Science

### High School History and Social Science

#### World History and Geography 9

World History 9 students take a “Big History” approach to the study of world history and the development of historical and social science analysis skills. Students study a progression of “complexity thresholds”—from the Big Bang to stars, elements, planets, life, collective learning, agriculture, industry, and technology—to gain a rich context for the study of humans and human history. Students develop their chronological thinking about history by taking a Big History approach that surveys the development of the conditions for human history, the rise of civilizations and culture, and the development of agriculture, industry, and technology. Students develop their spatial thinking about history by learning about plate tectonics and learning to identify all the countries of the world on a map. The Big History approach also exposes students to the fundamentals of historical research, evidence, and historical point of view by having students read, discuss, and write on topics and debates in the history of science, the history of ideas, and the history of the social sciences. Students develop their skills in historical interpretation by using primary and secondary sources as evidence for making claims in writing, beginning with writing paragraphs and concluding the year with writing a five-paragraph essay on a significant historical topic. Students practice all forms of student literacy—listening, speaking, reading and writing—and advance their skills in note taking, research, and analysis of both primary and secondary sources. Course themes include the history of science, agriculture and knowledge revolutions, religion, warfare, slavery, colonialism, nationalism, industrialization, migrations, and globalization. The course meets the History and Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools by meeting the requirements for Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills for Grade Nine and the requirements for World History, Culture, and Geography: the Modern World for Grade Ten.

#### U.S. History 10 (with Honors Option)

This course is a one-year chronological survey of the social, cultural, and political history of the North American colonies and the United States, from the age of exploration to the present day. In the first semester, students study US history from prehistory to the end of Reconstruction in 1877. In the second semester, students study the rise of industrial America, America’s involvement in the two World Wars, and the history of America as a superpower in the postwar world order. Discussions, readings, and writing exercises involve analysis of primary sources and developing an understanding of the role of historians in interpreting historical events and themes. Students learn good critical thinking skills by focusing on giving and assessing reasons for historical claims. Honors students deepen their understanding of US history further by writing more frequent and more developed essays, using a wider variety of sources and historical perspectives. Students continue to develop all forms of student literacy—listening, speaking, reading and writing—and advance their skills in note taking, research, and analysis of sources. Students work with a variety of primary and secondary sources—including texts, videos, photographs and pictures, and slides—as they continue to develop their historical writing skills by learning to reason effectively, construct clear and concise topic sentences and essay theses, and use texts as evidence for claims in writing paragraphs and multi-paragraph essays. The course meets the History and Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools by meeting the requirements for United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the twentieth Century for Grade Eleven.





## Middle and High School

# History and Social Science

### High School History and Social Science cont.

#### **U.S. Government and Politics 11 (with AP Option)**

All students revisit U.S. History through the lens of government in their junior year. The students take a one semester, college-level introduction to United States Government and Politics course that prepares them for active and engaged citizenship. Course themes include Constitutional foundations, the roles of the three branches of American government, civil rights and civil liberties, political socialization and beliefs, political parties, the role of interest groups and media in politics and voting and the electoral process. Students in the Advanced Placement option study government with more depth, and are eligible to take the College Board AP U.S. Government Exam in the spring.

#### **Values 11: Constructing Self**

This course is part of a two year program designed to engage the students in meaningful dialogue. True dialogue is a collaborative process of active listening and discussion that helps the students develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter and respect and curiosity about the ideas of others. We promote a safe atmosphere where students can develop and share their thinking and discover what they do and don't know through the process of listening to the ideas of others. The class fosters critical thinking, active listening, writing, speaking, media literacy, research skills, process and facilitation skills, and citizenship and social emotional literacy. It supports the development of thoughtful, discerning, and empathetic individuals that are capable of taking responsibility for their actions and capable of both facilitating and engaging in collaborative work. It prepares students to be constructive citizens in whatever communities they are a part of.

Through class discussions, analysis, writing, engaging in conversations with individuals both inside and outside of the classroom setting, self-reflection, and the integration of concepts students will better understand themselves, thinking practices, and the complexity of the world around them.

#### **Psychology (with Honors Option, Grades 11 and 12)**

This course introduces the major areas of the field of psychology. The course covers theories, basic research methodologies, and current research in various subject areas. Students are challenged to apply what they learn to their own life and develop a deeper understanding of their own personal psychology. Students will develop a firm grasp of the following areas: history and foundations of psychology, biological basis of behavior, sensation and perceptual processes, human sexuality, variations in consciousness, learning and processing information, memory, motivation and emotions, human development, personality theory, stress and health, psychopathology, therapy, and social psychology.

#### **The Modern and the Post-Modern (with Honors option, Grades 11 and 12)**

This course is concerned with the relations between culture and historical change, drawing on texts from a variety of disciplines, including philosophy, the novel, critical theory, and art. The course is also concerned with what it means to be modern today, and with whether it makes sense to "leave" the modern for the postmodern. Finally, this course is concerned with the distinction between the Western idea of modernity and the related idea of modernism. The course examines both ideas and considers postmodernism in relation to the philosophical idea of modernity and to the aesthetic considerations of modernism. The first half of the course is an examination of modernism, beginning with the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau and concluding with the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Charles Baudelaire, with a look at paintings and literature along the way. Themes of postmodernism emerge, and a discussion of how modernism becomes postmodernism constitutes the second half of the course.

