

# High School Contemporary Literature and Issues

## Course Planning

This course emphasizes dignity and diversity and encourages students to understand more than one perspective. Students express ideas in class discussions and make connections to their own lives and culture. Reading and writing about literature complete the studies.

### Enduring Understandings

- What understandings about the big ideas are desired? *(what you want students to understand & be able to use several years from now)*
- What misunderstandings are predictable?

### Academic Vocabulary

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key concepts, terminology and methodologies are necessary for the analysis of contemporary works.</li> <li>• Understanding historical, social, political, cultural and aesthetic contexts is essential to comprehend contemporary literature and related issues.</li> <li>• Contemporary literature explores issues of diversity and ethics raised in works, including issues of ethnic heritage and religion.</li> <li>• Because contemporary literature shapes perspective and opinion with immediate relevance, it is important to be able to read closely and critique with evidence.</li> <li>• Major historical and political issues and events influence writers and their works, in literature, journalism, video, photography, and audio.</li> </ul>	Theme Tone Symbolism Metaphor Analyze Compare Culture Social Justice Plot Structure Primary Source Podcast Editorializing Comparative Literature Ambiguity	Poetic license Satire Parody Technique Syntax Diction Cultural Criticism Bildungsroman Denouement Globalization Documentary Ecocriticism Aesthetic
--	---	--

## Essential Questions

What provocative questions will foster inquiry into the content? *(open-ended questions that stimulate thought and inquiry linked to the content of the enduring understanding)*

### Instructional Essential Questions

- What concepts, terminology and methodology characterizes contemporary literature?
- How does historical, social, political, cultural and aesthetic context influence contemporary literature?
- What issues of diversity and ethics are raised in contemporary literature?
- What role does contemporary literature play in society and democracy?

### Reflective Student Essential Questions

- How does the critique of contemporary literature and issues shape my own opinion and beliefs?
- How is the ability to read critically essential to a person's ability to process contemporary literature and issues?
- In what ways does the understanding the writing process and tools of writing add value to communication?
- How does reading contemporary literature compare to traditionally chosen to read in school literature?
- What issues can I predict that will be raised in contemporary literature and issues in my future?

## Assessments

- Construct a variety of expository, analytical, and argumentative essays citing text evidence from contemporary literature and issues.
- Identify and explain writing styles and rhetorical devices used in contemporary literature and non-fiction.
- Identify and analyze key literary elements in contemporary literature, including theme, character development, tone, setting, point of view, plot, and conflict.
- Analyze contemporary literature and its impact to form opinion, especially as it relates to historical, social, political, cultural and/or aesthetic influences. This should include no less than two literary analysis papers.
- Contribute to evidence-based discussions with clear, relevant and substantive content, adhering to the norms of active listening.
- Plan, create, and produce example of personalized contemporary literature in the form of poetry, short story or essay, or podcast that demonstrates understanding of a societal, environmental, or governmental current issue/event.

## Standards Addressed

### Reading

#### Key Ideas and Details

1. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matter uncertain (ambiguity).
2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; restate and summarize main ideas or events, in correct sequence, after reading a text.
3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

#### Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)
5. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
6. Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, understatement, or attitude)

#### Range of Reading

10. By the end of grade 11; students will read and comprehend a range of literature from a variety of cultures, within a complexity band appropriate to grade 11 (from upper grade 10 to grade 12), with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12; students will read and comprehend a range of literature from a variety of cultures, at the high end of the grades 11–12 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

### Language

#### Conventions of Standard English

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
  - a. Observe hyphenation conventions.
  - b. Spell correctly.

#### Knowledge of Language

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

#### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

1. Acquire and use accurately general academic and domain-specific words and phrases, sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

### Writing

#### Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Use narrative writing to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, style, and features are appropriate to task, genre, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1–3 above.)
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1–3 up to and including grades 11–12.)
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

## Speaking and Listening

### Comprehension and Collaboration

11. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

12. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.
13. Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

## Assessments

### Concepts to be Assessed

*What knowledge will the student acquire as a result of this course?*

- Close reading and interpreting rich text.
- Expository, analytical and argumentative writing as the basis for academic and professional communication.
- Literature comparison and defense in theme, structure, and influence.
- Understanding how contemporary literature reveals struggles in historical, social, political, cultural and aesthetic contexts
- Understanding how contemporary literature influences opinion and ethics.
- Recognizing the difference between contemporary and timeless literature.
- Recognize the influence of audio-visual to the contemporary consumer of literature and information.

### Skills to be Assessed

*What skills will the students acquire as a result of this unit?*

- Annotate texts and prepare informative notes.
- Construction of a variety of expository, analytical, and argumentative essays citing text evidence from contemporary literature and non-fiction.
- Contribute to evidence-based discussions following norms of active listening.
- Identify and explain writing styles and rhetorical devices used in novel, short story, essays, and poetry.
- Identify and analyze key literary elements in contemporary literature, including theme, character development, tone, setting, point of view, plot, and conflict.
- Identify and analyze the influence of audio-visual literature and information on the reader and/or consumer.
- Summarize and paraphrase with succinct clarity.
- Develop a supported analysis that is carefully developed, well supported, and warranted.
- Debate claims with substantial evidence and counter arguments.

## Novels and Resources

The course should include at least one full length contemporary book (fiction or non-fiction), as well as a variety of other contemporary literature and/or audio, including poetry, podcasts, lyrics, fiction and non-fiction. It is important to note that contemporary literature is a mobile genre. Consider that two novels now considered 'classic' *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Grapes of Wrath* were also contemporary literature at one time, exploring social injustice and commenting on political issues of their time. Lists for Contemporary Literature and Issues' recommended texts is somewhat fluid from one year and/or contemporary issue to the next. Four contemporary titles and four short stories are suggested. It is advised to revisit the list every 24-months.

Suggested resources include but are not limited to:

### **Novels**

Hosseini; *The Kite Runner* – A story of two friends in Afghanistan during the rise of the Taliban. The book looks at prejudice, poverty, war, and twists of fate.

Lamb and Yousafzai; *I am Malala*- The story of Malala Yousafzai who spoke out against the Taliban's prohibition of school for women. She was shot in 2015 and a nomination for the Nobel Peace prize.

Moore; *The Other Wes Moore*- A non-fiction book that details the lives of two boys both named Wes Moore who live just blocks from each other, but who grow up in distinctively different ways. One grows to be a Rhodes scholar and the other a convicted murderer. The book takes on social class, socioeconomic disparity, parental support, and education.

Cleave; *Little Bee* A story of a young Nigerian refugee fleeing to Britain and the family who she takes refuge with. The book tasks readers to empathize with people living under the threat of violence and hardship and the consequences of globalization.

### **Short Stories:**

O'Brien; *The Things They Carried* – a collection of short stories about the Vietnam War and the lasting effects of war on the men and women who fought in war.

Walker; *Everyday Use* Alice Walker describes a mother's relationship with her two daughters in the Deep South. One daughter returns home for a visit after moving north and going to college. The other daughter lives at home, unable to leave due to disabilities. The story studies the meaning of heritage and the division that education can create.

Lahiri; *Interpreter of Maladies* Jhumpa Lahiri's story of a family in India on vacation and a hired driver uses a minimal plot to study the difficulties of communication and the undesirable effect of romanticism.

### **Essay**

Jonathan Kozol- *The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society*- This informs the reader on what an illiterate goes through on a daily basis. It discusses how illiteracy lowers people's quality of life, reduce the education, and prevents them take part in democratic society fully.

### **Podcasts**

*The Moth*- dedicated to the art of storytelling, true stories are told live on stage, covering a variety of topics and themes.

*This American Life*- Each week includes a collection of stories sharing a common theme such as "How Do I Say This"

*This I Believe*- Each week a different person reads an essay they have written about their most deeply held beliefs.

**Recommended Text/Film List Summary- MSBSD English Elective Course**

Contemporary Literature

<b>Kahled Housseni; <i>The Kite Runner</i></b>	The Kite Runner is mainly a coming-of-age story about two boyhood friends, Amir and Hassan, in Afghanistan during the 1970s. It takes place over four decades. Flash forward to modern-day California, where we find the protagonist as an adult dealing with guilt over his abandonment of his childhood friend. The novel deals with themes of bullying, compassion, forgiveness, and shame.	
<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	This historical fiction novel set in the 1970s in Afghanistan is a well-liked book among mature teens. It looks carefully at loyalty, guilt, forgiveness and redemption. The book uses flashback and parallel plots that in addition to the universal truths told, also shows an inside look at what a war-torn society behaves like.	<a href="#">Kite Runner- Banned Books</a>
<b>Arguments Con</b>		<b>Arguments Pro</b>
The book has a violent rape scene early in the book, perpetrated by the book's bully Assef on the young protagonist Hassan. The book has explicit language.		Though it's a graphic, violent act, the attack and rape instigated by the bully, Assef, is central to the story. Removing that element would deaden its plot and take away from the protagonist's experience of shame and forgiveness.
<b>Lamb and Malala Yousafzai; <i>I am Malala</i></b>	The story of Malala Yousafzai who spoke out against the Taliban's prohibition of school for women. She was shot in 2015 and a nomination for the Nobel Peace prize.	
<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	"Malala's memoir opens the door to some of the greatest challenges of our modern world. It is about politics, education, culture, religion and violence against women and girls."	<a href="#">I am Malala</a>
<b>Arguments Pro</b>		<b>Arguments Con</b>
This novel has not been contested. It is worthy of a contemporary lit and issue course with its relevancy and its potential for discussion on politics, education and gender equity.		
<b>Wes Moore; <i>The Other Wes Moore</i></b>	A non-fiction book that details the lives of two boys both named Wes Moore who live just blocks from each other, but who grow up in distinctively different ways. One grows to be a Rhodes scholar and the other a convicted murderer. The book takes on social class, socioeconomic disparity, parental support, and education.	
<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	The Other Wes Moore was selected as John Hopkin University's summer reading selection in 2017. "The Other Wes Moore follows the extremely different paths of two people named Wes Moore. One Wes Moore, the author of the book, became a Rhodes Scholar. At around the same time, the other Wes Moore received a sentence of life in prison without the chance of parole after robbing a Baltimore jewelry store and murdering a veteran policeman. After communicating with the other Wes Moore through a long series of letters and reaching out to the other Wes Moore's family, the author Wes Moore was able to organize an account of their two different paths. The account describes the factors and decisions that made each Wes Moore take a distinct path."	<a href="#">The Other Wes Moore- John Hopkins</a>

Arguments Pro		Arguments Con	
This novel has not been contested. It is worthy of a contemporary lit and issue course because it discusses "how the world is bigger than what is directly in front of us" (Moore).			
<b>Chris Cleave;</b> <b>Little Bee</b>	A story of a young Nigerian refugee fleeing to Britain and the family who she takes refuge with. The book tasks readers to empathize with people living under the threat of violence and hardship and the consequences of globalization.		
<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	Winner of the 2010 ALA Award, Little Bee is the story of two women's life changing friendship that began after a horrifying event on a Nigerian beach. It has a shifting narrative between the British wife Sarah and the Nigerian refugee Little Bee. The book details the confusion and fear a refugee can experience as it also addresses the themes of justice, communication and hope.	<a href="#">Little Bee- summary and analysis</a>	
Arguments Con		Arguments Pro	
This novel has not been largely contested. It is intended for a mature audience. There is allusion to a beating and rape in the beginning of the book against Little Bee's sister. There is also reference to an affair.		Though there is a rape scene early in the book and a violent ending for Sarah, the author does not use graphic descriptions. The shifting narrative requires close reading and attention to implied details. This makes it worthwhile to teach since it holds the potential to create better readers, too.	

**Recommended Text/Film List Summary – MSBSD English Elective Course**

Contemporary Literature - Short Stories

<b>Tim O'Brien; <i>The Things They Carried</i></b>	<i>The Things They Carried</i> is a collection of short stories about the Vietnam War and the lasting effects of war on the men and women who fought in war. Recommended stories include: <i>Rainy River</i> and <i>A Field Trip</i> and <i>The Things They Carried</i> .
--	---

<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	This book part memoir, part historical fiction was never meant to be a book about war, more it is about the memories, the spiritual, emotional, and psychological burdens that we all carry with us Each story, though deeply entrenched in the Vietnam War, shares themes of friendship, loyalty, loss, and courage.	<a href="#">The Things They Carried</a>
----------------------------------	---	---

<b>Arguments Con</b>	<b>Arguments Pro</b>
----------------------	----------------------

The book has been challenged as recently as 2015 in Texas for profanity, sexual references and for being 'complete garbage trash'.	<i>The Things They Carried</i> (1990) won the France's Prix du Meilleur livre étranger award and the Chicago Tribune heartland Prize, and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and national Book Critics Circle award. The book is relevant to mature teens. It also is about the writing process and the value of storytelling.
--	---

<b>Walker; <i>Everyday Uses</i></b>	Alice Walker describes a mother's relationship with her two daughters in the Deep South. One daughter returns home for a visit after moving north and going to college. The other daughter lives at home, unable to leave due to disabilities. The story studies the meaning of heritage and the division that education can create.
-------------------------------------	--

<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	Alice Walker explores what it means to be African American during the Civil Rights era. She examines what heritage means to people. It is relevant to teens as they struggle with identity and how to understand their present life in relation to their culture, traditions and family.	<a href="#">Everyday Uses</a>
----------------------------------	--	-------------------------------

<b>Arguments Con</b>	<b>Arguments Pro</b>
----------------------	----------------------

Alice Walker's collection of short stories *The Color Purple* is often challenged for language, violence and sexual content. The collection won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award in 1983. However, *Everyday Uses* is a part of the *Love and Trouble* collection (1984). This collection has not been challenged in schools.

<b>Lahiri; <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i></b>	Jhumpa Lahiri's story of a family in India on vacation and a hired driver uses a minimal plot to study the difficulties of communication and the undesirable effect of romanticism. The story centers around a day in the life of an Indian tour guide, Mr. Kapasi. An Indian American family has come to India on vacation, obtaining his services as their guide. There are five in the family: Mr. and Mrs. Das, along with their children Ronny, Bobby and Tina. Mr. Kapasi is quickly struck with how "American" they are in dress, language and actions.
---	--

<b>Rational and Source Links</b>	<i>Interpreter of Maladies</i> is the anchor story in the collection of stories of the same name. Like all stories within the collection, the main characters are flawed in ways that make the reader feel empathy. The take-away from the stories are that we are more	<a href="#">Interpreter of Maladies</a>
----------------------------------	---	---

	alike than different. Universal themes of forgiveness, society and class and marriage are explored. Jhumpa Lahiri is one of the few 'world' female authors students have access to.	
<b>Arguments Con</b>		<b>Arguments Pro</b>
Ms. Lahiri's <u>Namesake</u> was challenged in Idaho in 2015 for "explicit language and descriptions of sexual conduct". <u>Namesake</u> is about a first-generation Indian struggling to keep one foot in a Western culture and one in his traditional Indian home.	<u>Interpreter of Maladies</u> is not part of <u>Namesake</u> . Ms. Lahiri won the Pulitzer in 2000 and the National Medal of Arts and Humanities in 2016.	