

English Middle School Level 1

2022-2023

T/R 12:00 PM EST

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I. Course Description:

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In this course, students are introduced to some of the Good Books, Legends, and Stories that prepare our hearts and minds to receive the Great Books. As St. Basil the Great says in his address to young men on the right use of Greek literature, “We must be conversant with poets, with historians, with orators, indeed with all men who may further our soul's salvation... if we would preserve indelible the idea of the true virtue, become *first initiated in the pagan lore*, then at length give special heed to the sacred and divine teachings, even as we first accustom ourselves to the sun's reflection in the water, and then become able to turn our eyes upon the very sun itself.” My goal is to teach the students to *see*. One of the most prevalent themes in all of literature is the progression from blindness to sight, and that’s because all of us have the need to learn to see in so many ways. We must see the images and storylines God has written on the human heart and how they are reflected in stories from many different sources. Rather than being asked “comprehension questions” or given worksheets to assess reading, the students will be constantly asked: What did you see? The basis offered in this class will be built upon in the Level 2 and Level 3 courses and help to prepare students for the high school level classes.

II. Course Aims and Outcomes:

A. Aims

This course aims to help students build a foundational understanding of the components and organizational structures of short stories, novels, and poems and develop synthetic thinking skills from a foundation of the Orthodox Christian faith, with the end result of being able to recognize patterns and make connections across a broad spectrum of literature. It also aims to help students pay careful attention to short texts, learning practical lessons on spelling, grammar, and punctuation from these. Finally, it aims to teach students to retell narrative stories, even complex ones, with clear sentences and paragraphs and to write expository paragraphs as well.

B. Specific Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Be able to collect evidence that supports or negates a premise.
- Be able to write an outline as the basis of a formal essay.
- Be able to write a thesis, body paragraphs, and introductory and concluding paragraphs.

- Be able to compare a work of literature to the standard features of others in its genre.
- Be able to read assigned chapters each week and write about (as well as tell orally) their contents, using correct capitalization, punctuation, and sentence structure, and incorporating other elements as instructed by the teacher.
- Be able to take notes on a character or theme from the beginning of a novel to the end.
- Improve their grammar and punctuation use by studying well-written sentences, parsing them, and writing them when given as oral dictations.
- Be able to write sentences, paragraphs, and compositions with clarity, structure, and beauty.

III. Format and Procedures:

Tuesday: Class Day

Tuesdays will be Literature Discussion time. It is **very** important that the reading assigned the previous week be finished by Tuesday class time so that students can participate in the class discussion.

Written narrations will also be due on Tuesdays.

After class on Tuesday, you will know:

- what the new reading assignment to be discussed the following Tuesday is.

Thursdays: Class Day

Thursdays will be about language usage instruction. On the grammar & usage side of things, the students will take down a dictation that they have studied for spelling and punctuation, and we will have a new grammar lesson to prepare for the following week's work on "Sentences to Study."

The other emphasis on Thursdays will be on writing. Each week, we will focus on something we can do to meet our three writing goals better (to communicate knowledgeably, clearly, and effectively).

After class on Thursday, you will know:

- what they will need to focus on in their written narrations or other writing assignments, due the following Tuesday
- how to complete the "Sentences to Study" assignment due the following Thursday

Daily: One additional aspect of class that runs for several weeks at a time is our Poetry Recitation. Each weekday, the students should recite the assigned poem, whether that be during class on Thursday or at home on Monday / Tuesday / Wednesday/ Friday. The goals are: fluid reading & appropriate intonation, familiarity with poetic language, and memorization of the poems. At the end of each 3-4 week period, the students will recite the poems individually. If you feel that your child needs a modification for this assignment, please contact me directly.

IV. My Assumptions

I recognize that students may come into this course with a variety of past experience and mastery levels. My goal, seeing each student as made in the image of God and with unique gifts, strengths, and weaknesses, is to move the student from where they are *toward* mastery of the course content and objectives. I welcome parent comments and conversation on how I can help your individual child grow.

V. Course Requirements:

Prerequisite: Students will be taking down dictation based on a passage they have studied in real time during class most Thursdays. It is critical that they be able to type fluently before class begins.

1. Attendance:

Please make every effort to attend every class. If you have a special circumstance, please contact me before class to inform me of your absence. Persistent absences will negatively impact your grade in the class. We attempt to record all Zoom meetings to make them available for students who are absent, but we are unable to promise that 100% of meetings will get successfully recorded and posted. The recorded classes, while not as useful as live interaction, are made available for enrolled students to review when absent. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to review the videos, read posted assignments, and keep up with deadlines.

2. Course readings:

A. Texts to be Provided by Parents/Guardians:

Note: I recommend buying used books when possible. Amazon.com, thriftbooks.com, and Abebooks.com all work well. Your local library may carry several of these texts, but not all, and several may be public domain (search Project Gutenberg or Open Library for Public Domain novels, poetry, etc). Though some texts are public domain, I highly encourage a used copy of novels as reading lengthier texts online can become problematic in the classroom setting.

- *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* by C. S. Lewis
- *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle
- *King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table* by Roger Lancelyn Green

B. Texts Provided by Instructor:

Note: Links or files will be provided in advance. As with the novels above, having a printed version to bring to class will provide for the best classroom experience.

- Fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, etc.
- Aesop's Fables

- Various short stories and poems

3. Classroom Expectations:

- Arrive to class on time and keep your camera on for the whole class.
- Be prepared, with your **books** and supplies on hand, at the start of class.
- Respect your classmates and teacher.
- Give your best effort and take responsibility for your actions.
- Please plan and come prepared to take notes.
- You are expected to speak up vocally and, unless otherwise told, avoid using the chat feature in place of speaking.
- Please be sure you have a good Internet connection that can support Zoom streaming. *A dedicated headset with a microphone is ideal* so that you can contribute in class without concerns about background noise interfering.

VI. Expectations for Parents

- Set aside a calm, quiet, distraction-free space for your child(ren) to work every day.
- Ensure virtual learning equipment is available and charged.
- Establish routines and expectations and a basic schedule for completing classwork.
- Help students ‘own’ their learning.
- Check Edmodo for communications from teachers and help students print off resources that are provided.
- Stay abreast of teacher feedback in the form of grades or other messages.
- Proctor tests, quizzes, or other assessments as scheduled by the teacher. Parents ensure academic integrity because they are on the “live” side of the screen.
- Communicate with teachers regularly via email or Edmodo regarding any questions or issues that arise.
- If your child is having trouble completing work, email teachers to schedule a time for an online meeting.

VII. Grading Procedures

Grades are provided to parents as part of the parents’ overall assessment of student success in that particular subject area. Note that St. Athanasius does not keep a record of student grades or provide transcripts.

As such, each assignment will receive feedback from the teacher, but it will be at parent discretion how to record the grades and weigh them. If I were weighing grades, I would weigh participation as the largest percentage of the grade because that provides the most opportunity for student growth.

Participation is graded by the student’s willingness to contribute to class discussions - being ready to tell what they have read and what they saw and what connections they made in the process of reading - and willingness to ask and answer questions about grammar and writing instruction.

Please see the “Format and Procedures” section above for an idea of what kind of assignments will be due each week. Each assignment will appear on the Edmodo calendar on its due date. I will only accept and correct work for up to one week after it is due. If there are unusual circumstances leading to a student needing to turn in work later than that, I ask that a parent contact me via Edmodo or email.

VIII. Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is copying words, sentences, images, or ideas for use in written or oral assessments without giving proper credit to the source. Cheating is defined as the giving or receiving of illegal help on anything that has been determined by the teacher to be an individual effort. Both are serious offenses and will significantly affect your course grade. If you are struggling, please let me know right away and I will work with you. I am available to help you understand so you can be successful in this class.

Please note: St. Athanasius Academy policy, as stated in the FAQs on the website, states that quizzes, exams, and tests are proctored at home by the parents to maximize live engagement and also to ensure academic integrity.

IX. Tentative Course Schedule

(May change to accommodate student needs. Updated schedule will always be reflected on the Edmodo calendar.)

Unit	Grammar / Writing Targeted Skills	Readings to be discussed	Writing Assignments
1,	Understanding, Identifying, Unscrambling Sentence Parts	Teacher-provided short stories	Simple narrations/ narratives
2.	Sentence Variety & Imitation; Comma usage; punctuating dialogue	<i>Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i>	More narratives, composing and including dialogue, writing a comparison essay
3.	Paragraph Imitation	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>	More narratives, essay writing around the skill of

			definition, topic sentences and introductory paragraphs
4.	Sentence Combining; rules for using semi-colons	<i>Princess & the Goblin</i>	Comparison essay adding thesis, introductory paragraph, conclusion paragraph, running list of character analysis
5.	Sentence Composing with Grammatical Tools	<i>King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table</i>	Essay around the topic of cause & effect, simple summaries