

## Eighth Grade English Language Arts (ELA)

### Course Description/Mission

*Adda Clevenger Upper School ELA:  
Building foundational knowledge and exploring creative depths*

The primary goal of Adda Clevenger's upper school ELA program is to provide student-centered ELA instruction in reading, writing, language, and philosophical inquiry, while also fostering each child's creative potential. This is achieved by knowing every student in-depth. In fact, each year our primary texts and projects often change based on the needs and interests of that year's students. By discovering every child's learning style, strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and then providing them a variety of student-centered learning opportunities, as well as a safe space to explore their unique potential, students become academically competitive and creatively courageous.

In 8th grade ELA, students receive instruction over the course of four units: Memoir, Nonfiction: High School Admissions Prep, Humanities: Philosophy, Media Literacy/Dystopian Fiction. Each unit relates to our 8th grade yearly college and career readiness theme: **Philosophical Inquiry & Critical Thinking Skills**. As students progress through each unit, they will ask the overarching essential questions, "Who am I?" "Is reality subjective or objective?" "What is thinking?" "What is consciousness?" "Does life have an objective meaning?" "Are ethics and values universal or cultural constructs?" "What are biases, and how do they influence the way we experience the world?" These questions regarding philosophical inquiry and critical thinking skills are explicitly investigated in order to facilitate the ACS mission to ensure students make the developmental, social, and intellectual progress necessary to become leaders at school and beyond.

Each student-centered unit begins with a primary reading focus and culminates with a writing performance task which mirrors the prior reading. Over the course of the year, students will receive standard-specific instruction in the following major domains: Reading: *Foundational Skills*, Reading: *Literature*, Reading: *Informational Texts*, Writing: *Informational*, Writing: *Narrative*, Writing: *Persuasive*, Language: *Conventions*, Language: *Vocabulary*. In addition to our in-class reading and writing, students will complete 600 pages of independent reading and construct two critical responses to literature to demonstrate their comprehension of the texts.

### Text Examples (These Can and Often Do Change from Year to Year)

#### **Primary ELA Texts:**

*Into the Magic Shop*

*Getting In by Standing Out*

*Escape Essay Hell*

*Essay Heaven*

*Sophie's World*

*Man's Search for Meaning*

*KQED's Facing History... Media Literacy Unit*

*1984*

#### **READING and WRITING ACROSS the CURRICULUM**

In addition to our ELA units, students also receive 4 Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum units, 2 in Science and 2 in Social Studies.

#### 1st Semester:

Social Studies Text - *To Be a Slave*

Science Text - *Einstein's Dreams*

#### 2nd Semester:

Social Studies Text - *Bread Givers*

Science Text - *A Brief History of Time*