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Queens Academy High School English Program of Studies

Coming of Age Curriculum

Philosophy

Theme

The topic of the course is **Coming of Age**, with an emphasis on experiences that mark the transition from adolescence to adulthood, including moral development, relationship building, rites of passage, loss of innocence, and many others. The following examples of understandings and essential questions may be used as models to plan thematic units.

- a. Suggested enduring understandings
 - i. Many factors influence the development of one's social and moral responsibilities.
 - ii. One's past experiences, especially in youth, help shape one's outlook on life, and one's outlook on life influences one's interpretation of literature.
 - iii. The relationship of the individual and his society influences his growth as a person.
 - iv. Decisions made in adolescence affect the rest of life.
 - v. Individuals can act responsibly on various levels – personal, familial, social – and may choose to accept or deny responsibility.
 - vi. Individual decisions do affect other people.
 - vii. Writing can help us make decisions, handle our emotions, and reflect on our lives.
 - viii. Literature can provide a record of the past and help us realize our roles and responsibilities as a participant in society.
 - ix. To grow as a person one must move from naïveté to maturity, from ignorance to knowledge, from innocence to experience, and from youth to adulthood.
 - x. Different cultures hold different values and represent rites of passage in different ways.
 - xi. We use language to acknowledge, celebrate and confront the events and experiences that move us from childhood to adulthood.
 - xii.
- b. Suggested essential questions
 - i. What are my responsibilities as a student, citizen, and family member?

- ii. How do our values shape our lives?
- iii. How do my decisions in adolescence affect the rest of my life?
- iv. What is the proper way to express anger or dissent?
- v. How does our audience influence our communication with it?
- vi. What can I learn from texts and writers about the struggle of adolescence?
- vii. How can writing about the literature I read help me to understand my responsibilities as a member of this society?
- viii. What rites of passage must we navigate through to reach adulthood?
- ix. Can evil be conquered?
- x. What does it mean to be a productive member in a democratic society?
- xi. What is the difference between naïveté and maturity, ignorance and knowledge, innocence and experience, and youth and adulthood?
- xii. How can language help us to acknowledge, celebrate and confront the events and experiences that move us from childhood to adulthood?

Reading

Students will read one **full-length text** per book period—or its equivalent. Although **vocabulary instruction** is required, each teacher will devise his or her own approach.

During marking period 1, students will read one of the Marking Period 1 selections below. The texts should be related to the course theme and should, ideally, be connected to the required writing assignments for the marking period: the comparison/contrast essay, the literary response paper and the Multigenre Project.

During marking period 2, students will explore the touchstone text *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* in the context of the course theme. This text can serve as a mentor text to the Multigenre Project, that is, as a model and inspiration for students' own writing.

During marking period 3, students will participate in Literature Circles or Book Clubs. Literature Circles are student-led discussion groups. Students should, at this point, be using journals (or literature logs) in lieu of role sheets. The journal entries should raise interesting questions about the reading, make connections to students' lives and to the world, discuss important ideas conveyed through the reading, analyze the literary elements (characters, point of view, etc.) and techniques used to convey those ideas and relate the reading to the theme of the course. Journals should be informal in tone and flexible enough for students to include a variety of responses to their reading, including illustrations and creative writing.

Ideally, a Literature Circle session will consist of the following components:

- 5-10 minute mini-lesson
- 20-30 minute small-group discussion
- 5-10 minute planning and reflection

In defining Literature Circles in his 2nd edition of *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups*, Harvey Daniels offers these 11 key ingredients.

1. Students *choose* their own reading materials.
2. *Small temporary groups* are formed, based on book choice.

3. Different groups read *different books*.
4. Groups meet on a *regular, predictable schedule* to discuss their reading.
5. Kids use written or drawn *notes* to guide both their reading and discussion.
6. Discussion *topics come from the students*.
7. Group meetings aim to be *open, natural conversations about books*, so personal connections, digressions, and open-ended questions are welcome.
8. The teacher serves as a *facilitator*, not a group member or instructor.
9. Evaluation is by *teacher observation and student self-evaluation*.
10. A spirit of *playfulness and fun* pervades the room.
11. When books are finished, *readers share with their classmates*, and then *new groups form* around new reading choices.

The unit on Literature Circles will conclude with a presentation and portfolio. Each group will introduce its book to the class in creative fashion, i.e. skit, collage, song, etc. And each student will submit a portfolio of completed work (copies or journal entries and evaluations) with a cover letter introducing that work and reflecting on the experience as a whole.

Reading Texts

<u>Titles</u>	<u>Comments</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marking Period 1: Whole Class Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Catcher in the Rye</i> ○ <i>A Separate Peace</i> ○ <i>Siddhartha</i> ○ <i>Monster</i> ○ <i>The Perks of a Wallflower</i> ○ <i>Breath, Eyes, Memory</i> ● Marking Period 2: Touchstone Text <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>To Be Young, Gifted and Black</i> ● Marking Period 3: Literature Circle Texts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Under the Wolf, Under the Dog</i> ○ <i>The Usual Rules: A Novel</i> ○ <i>Hope Was Here</i> ○ <i>Life is Funny</i> ○ <i>Parrot in the Oven: Mi Vida</i> ○ <i>The Brothers Torres</i> ○ <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> 	

Writing Texts

- (Class sets available upon request)

Writing

The **Coming of Age** curriculum, and the English curriculum in general, will be writing intensive. We want students to understand that writing is a process, to become proficient in many kinds of writing, and to realize that writing can help them to learn.

Students will understand that writing is a process. Prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and proofreading strategies will be reinforced, as well as the following six qualities of good writing: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, conventions and presentation. Teachers are expected to model good writing and to improve student writing through shared and guided writing activities. Peer review will be practiced regularly, particularly for major writing assignments, and revision will be encouraged and expected. Thus, teachers are expected to use a **writing workshop model**.

Students will also come to understand that writing can help them to learn. They will continue to explore their thinking and extend their knowledge through writing. Thus, they will be expected to apply to their own writing these and other strategies: summarizing, analyzing, close reading, generating vivid imagery, questioning, making connections, inferring, interpreting, synthesizing, note taking, using figurative language and evaluating. They will keep a **reading log or journal** to record their reactions to their reading of literature. They will use the school writing rubric to peer-review and self-assess their writing. To facilitate this process and to familiarize students with technology, teachers will encourage students to type their work. To become more critical and self-reflective, students will be required to maintain a **portfolio** of their writing and to periodically submit their portfolio with written reflection for assessment.

To **build the students’ proficiency in many kinds of writing**, teachers will promote student ownership. They will more often than not provide students with choices, although whole-class writing assignments are appropriate at times. Teachers will encourage and nurture writing that exhibits a strong sense of voice and creativity, even when the assignment is analytical in nature.

The uniform substantive writing assignment for Coming of Age will be the Multigenre Project.

To build students’ capacity to write well, teachers will assign **at least 600 words of writing a week**, and they will provide students with time to write in the classroom daily.

Grading of writing assignments is informed by what Jonathan Saphier calls the belief in “effort-based ability,” or “the belief that students can do rigorous academic work at high standards, even if they are far behind academically and need a significant amount of time to catch up.” Each course has a minimum pass grade for writing assignments:

English Course	Minimum Pass Grade
Identity	3
Coming of Age	3
	3
Man’s Inhumanity to Man	4
Literature and Justice	4
The American Experience	4
Transitions	4

Only assignments meeting the minimum pass grade will be accepted. Assignments not meeting the minimum standard are given a “Not Yet” grade and specific feedback for improvement. “Not Yet” assignments must be revised and resubmitted for credit. Teachers may help students who receive “Not Yet” grades or refer them to LSS for one-to-one tutoring. Even students who meet the minimum standard must be encouraged to revise and resubmit their writing for a higher grade. All students should be aware of this grading policy.

During marking period 1, students will be

- informed of the **grading policy** mentioned above.
- introduced to the journal and portfolio requirements and expectations.
- re-introduced to the concept of plagiarism, to the school writing rubric and to **the Daily Tutoring Period**.
- assigned the following major writing assignment:
 - o **Comparison/Contrast Essay**. Students will write a comparison/Contrast essay. In *Classroom Instruction that Works*, Marzano points to identifying similarities and differences as the most effective research-based strategy for increasing student achievement. Teachers can use a variety of classroom practices to teach students how to identify similarities and differences: using comparison tasks, using graphic organizers to compare (such as Venn Diagrams, Comparison Matrixes, etc.), using classification tasks, using graphic organizers to classify (such as tables, flow charts, etc.) and creating metaphors and analogies. These are described in chapter two of Marzano’s book. The assignment will be graded using the school writing rubric with an emphasis placed on the trait of Organization and with a minimum pass grade of 3.

During marking period 2, students will be

- assigned the following two major writing assignments:
 - o **Literary Response Paper**. If students have had the opportunity to respond to what they read by questioning, making connections, visualizing, summarizing, annotating and responding to powerful language, they should be prepared to combine these and other strategies to write a literary response paper. If students have been practicing these strategies and responding freely in their journals, they will have already developed the necessary skills to write a literary response paper. The literary response paper should have a focus chosen by the student, though the teacher and class can suggest a number of different areas upon which to focus. For instance, students may focus on the impressions and reactions they had to the text; or on the connections they made between the text, their personal lives and the world around them; or on the wonderings, thoughts and reflections elicited by their reading. During the “pre-writing” stages, it would be extremely helpful if students used their journals to prepare a running commentary. That is, they can jot down their observations, questions, thoughts and realizations as they read. This writing can then be used to write the literary response essay. The assignment will be graded using the school writing rubric and will require a minimum pass grade of 3.

During marking period 3, students will be assigned the following major writing assignment:

- o **Multigenre Project (various pieces)**. This is the major writing assignment for the term. For this project, the touchstone text read during marking period 2—*To Be Young, Gifted and Black*—can act as a mentor text, that is, as a model and inspiration for students’ own

writing. For this project, students will select a topic that is personally relevant to them and write about that topic through a number of genres. In *Blending Genre, Altering Style*, Tom Romero defined the multigenre paper this way:

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author's. The trick is to make such a paper hang together.

As Romano states, “The trick is to make such a paper hang together.” In addition to finding ways to help students do this, the teacher can share with students a model of a multigenre paper. Organization of this unit is crucial. Teachers must provide students with enough time to write and revise a number of pieces, with multiple opportunities for peer review and teacher feedback, and with time to share and celebrate their work. The assignment will be graded using the school writing rubric and will require a minimum pass grade of 3.

MK PD	Type of Writing	Evaluation Method*	Minimum Pass**
MP 1	Comparison/Contrast Essay	School Writing Rubric	3
MP 2	Literary Response Paper	School Writing Rubric	3
MP 3	Multigenre Project	School Writing Rubric	3

* Tailor-made rubrics (rubrics specific to the writing task) may be substituted for the school writing rubric provided they are designed to be superior assessment tools.

** Any assignment not meeting the minimum standard specified is incomplete and must be resubmitted for credit. Recommend that the student LSS during period zero. Students should be encouraged to revise and resubmit their writing for a higher grade even if they meet the minimum standard.

Homework

Students will be assigned 30 minutes of homework, including reading and writing, on a daily basis. The homework should be both meaningful to and engaging for the students. It will be collected, assessed, and returned promptly.

Grading

Students will know the English Department’s official grading policy and teachers will abide by the department guidelines when determining grades. Each teacher will have on file a signed student/teacher contract that specifies the grading policy:

- Classwork

- Major Writing Assignments, Exams and Projects
- Homework*

* Students who complete homework assignments are rewarded for doing so. According to the grading policy, students may receive up to additional points on their report card for consistently doing their homework.