

May 2011

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

We are excited that your daughter/son is enrolled in Enriched Language Arts 7 for the 2011-2012 school year. We are confident that this course will be an exciting and challenging experience for all students. Students in Enriched Language Arts 7 will be asked to read extensively and analyze more difficult and complex literature. They will also be asked to complete more in-depth assignments, participate regularly in class discussions, and have an increased homework load. Students will be expected to apply and use their knowledge in a wide variety of ways and work more independently, often at a faster pace. In addition, the literature they read may be more abstract and theoretical.

In keeping with these rigorous standards, we are requiring students to read two books this summer that will allow for earlier immersion in coursework once school begins. We have chosen *The House of the Scorpion* by Nancy Farmer and *Nothing But the Truth* by Avi. Students need to either purchase the books or get them from a library. Students should read the novels and complete the attached activities in order to be prepared for class. **On the first day there will be a test on the two books.**

Naturally, students should not consult websites or outside materials to assist them in their notes; their notes should be reflections of their own ideas about both books. If students choose not to read the summer reading books but remain enrolled in the course, the natural consequence of doing poorly on the test and essay may result; extra time to complete the test and essay will only be granted to students who were enrolled in our district after August 15, 2011.

Should you misplace the directions for the summer reading assignment, the information will be posted on the Valley View website: <http://www.edina.k12.mn.us/valleyview/>.

In addition to reading these required books, we expect students to read several additional books of their choice during the summer. For suggestions, check the following reading links, which offer lists of recommended Young Adult literature: <http://www.ala.org/yalsa/booklists/> and <http://www.hclib.org/teens/read.cfm>.

Thank you for your commitment to your child's education. Please review with your son or daughter the enclosed list of characteristics that will enable each child to have a successful experience in Enriched Language Arts 7. We look forward to working with you and your student in the fall.

Sincerely,

Jane Andrews and Kevin Mertz,
Language Arts Grade 7

(over →)

Characteristics for Success

Students in Enriched Language Arts 7 cover most of the same topics as the traditional classes, though often on an accelerated timeline. The enriched classes will work with the material in a more rigorous, in-depth, and abstract manner. Tests on the topic will reflect this rigor, and more will be expected of projects and other assignments. There are also one or two additional units of study covered in the enriched sections, which are not part of the traditional syllabus. Overall a higher level of maturity and the ability to function independently is expected at the enriched level.

Another way to think of an enriched class is as a "challenge" class. The course is designed for those students whose learning needs and desires require that they be stretched to a higher level of performance. It does not mean that enriched students are better than other students; their learning needs are more accelerated.

Enriched students should demonstrate the following characteristics:

- 1. A passion for language arts.** This should be the first consideration when deciding on enriched language arts. If a student does not enjoy extensive reading and writing, this course is not a good fit.
- 2. Strong reading and writing skills.** Enriched students must be proficient, skilled readers who can achieve a high level of comprehension independently. Students must also enjoy writing and be able to articulate their thoughts in many different writing modes.
- 3. An ability to think beyond concrete levels and to process information quickly** are also characteristics of students for whom the enriched classes are designed. Students should be able to make leaps of abstract thought to connect and further ideas.
- 4. A willingness to participate positively in both large and small group discussions and activities.** The enriched student should not be waiting around for others to give the answer or do the work for him/her. Students are expected to participate in class on a daily basis and to offer thoughtful, serious opinions.
- 5. A strong work ethic.** An enriched language arts student will have a greater workload and will be asked to go more in depth into the work. In addition, an enriched student may be asked to do more work outside of the classroom, including a summer assignment.

Students who match these characteristics will feel successful in this class.

*****SUMMER ASSIGNMENT*****

Task: Obtain copies of *The House of the Scorpion*, by Nancy Farmer, and *Nothing But the Truth*, by Avi. As you read each novel, keep track of the salient points using the following tips as a guide. Review your notes for the test we will have on the first day of class. Also bring your notes to class on the first day; the books are not required.

Take notes on the topics below for each book:

Characters: Make a list of major characters, their roles in the book, and adjectives that describe their personality (you do not need to include minor characters that are only mentioned briefly in the novels and do not impact the overall plot).

Plot: Write a brief summary (less than 300 words) of each book.

This is not the type of assignment that you need to labor over—the goal is not perfection; rather, it is a chance to show your teachers your ability to work and think independently and articulate your thoughts in informal writing. These notes will prepare you for the assessments at the start of the year.