

English Department

Criteria for Text Selection and Parent Notification

Clearview Regional High School District develops its curriculum in order to best serve the district's mission and meet the subject-area benchmarks established by NCLB and other local, state and national criteria for curriculum development. We recognize that adolescence through young-adulthood is a time when students of the same age are at different maturity levels, so the selection of materials is undertaken with care and deliberation. The English Department selects literary texts that reflect a diversity of perspectives, are age-appropriate, are high quality literature and are useful to fulfill the district's mission and the course's benchmarks. Parents are encouraged to investigate the texts explored by their children; we urge parents to take an active role in helping our students to develop admiration for the elegance and richness of human expression.

Criteria for Text Selection

It is the English Department's desire to foster the love of learning and literature in its students and lay the foundation for academic scholarship and success. In order to fulfill this goal, the faculty and supervisor use the following criteria to select literature that will be a part of the English curriculum. The works must:

- be high quality literature;
- support the district's mission and the course's benchmarks;
- be age appropriate;
- taken as a whole, represent a variety of genres, eras, authors and viewpoints;
- represent a balance between timeless classics and heralded contemporary pieces.

A variety of standards are used to determine the quality. The authors read are well respected in the literary community and academia for the excellence of their writing and the depth of their work. The books read are recognized as classics, or at least are considered contemporary classics, as they appear on reputable recommended book lists or have been honored with renowned literary awards.

Although the themes developed in the work may introduce students to new ideas, they are presented with sensitivity to the readers' maturity level. Since a goal for the English teacher is to challenge students and help develop their reading ability and cultural literacy, teachers examine universal themes and experiences unique to the human condition. Teachers therefore supply instructional support and guidance as readers access texts and cultivate in students a deeper understanding and appreciation of life through the literature. In addition to the above criteria, students' overall literary experience will reflect a diversity of genres, eras, authors, and perspectives. Texts for individual courses reflect both variety in genres (such as plays, novels, short stories, and poetry) and authors' backgrounds (such as gender, race, and cultural & historical context). While the variety of genres and authors are rich, the content of the literature and the instruction of the teacher provide a thematic coherence to the course.

Parental Notification

Teachers will publish a list of required texts to parents in the first month of each school year via a course overview, syllabus, or other required reading list. In addition, a complete list of all approved texts is available upon request. Book lists will be made available by June 30.

Recognizing that not all works are appropriate for all students, texts identified with an (*) may contain mature or sensitive language or issues; parents or guardians may wish to preview texts prior to student participation. This statement will be affixed to all syllabi and course outlines.

Parents who would like additional information about specific texts can:

1. Identify texts that contain sensitive topics, mature situations or mature language which will be considered for identification with an (*) along with the departmental statement listed above.
2. Email or call the current teacher or future teacher to discuss the content of the texts.
3. Visit online sites, which will be accessible via the CRHS webpage to provide current reviews and other relevant information for many of the contemporary texts found in our courses and within our summer reading assignments. Currently, the NJ State Library pays for EBSCO Host, a viable academic resource that offers reviews and specific categorical information found within texts that parents might wish to review. Currently, most contemporary titles can be reviewed at <http://web.ebscohost.com/novelist/results>. Other useful sites include: www.barnesandnoble.com, www.amazon.com or www.worldcat.org. Most public libraries house similar subscription services and online catalogues that provide categorical information as well.

Additionally, the English Department reviews its offerings on a yearly basis and will continue to do so to ensure that the texts identified support the vision, role, and philosophy of our academic and elective program offerings

4. Preview texts – parents have access to preview texts. The English Department may provide Preview texts, which can be picked up by parents/guardians who wish to preview texts prior to student engagement of texts. A form will be signed by Parent/Teacher/Supervisor. The recommended course of action would be for parents to contact teachers approximately two weeks in advance of the start of a unit to explore alternative options.
5. Teachers may provide additional information for required texts that contain mature situations, explicit language or other material that is graphic.
6. *Alternative Text offerings – parents have the option to arrange for an alternative text.

Note: The above process applies only to full-length works, such as plays and novels, or anthologies—of stories, essays, or poetry—that are being considered for purchase and long-term use in the English curriculum. Nevertheless, teachers frequently augment these “permanent” texts with poems, columns and essays found in periodicals, brief biographies of authors, film clips, critical essays, book reviews, student writing, and other short works that may change from year to year. Discovery of such materials may be purely serendipitous, and their relevance time sensitive, precluding a lengthy selection process. For these kinds of materials, teacher judgment and application of the Criteria, in consultation with members of the English Department or Supervisor where appropriate, is sufficient.