**1st 9-weeks**

**Text Selections:**

Primary Text: *The Looking Glass Wars* by Frank Beddor  
Nonfiction: “The Cutting of My Long Hair” by Zitkala-Sa and “Fish Cheeks” by Amy Tan  
Poetry: “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon, “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, and “Jabberwocky” by Lewis Carroll  
Fiction: “Edna’s Ruthie” *from The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros

In preparation for their transition to high school, eighth grade students hone their analytical reading and writing skills. They deepen their understanding of literary strategies by first reviewing them and then examining the author’s purposeful use of them. Since identifying theme is often a challenging task for middle school students to master, each nine is designed with a different thematic focus. While the themes may differ, the skills taught within each nine weeks scaffold toward the final quarter of the year and culminate with students independently evaluating an author’s use of literary strategies in a complex text. Beginning with the end task in mind, this nine-weeks uses relatively simple texts so that students can focus on complex tasks without becoming bogged down by basic comprehension.

**2nd 9-weeks**

**Text Selections:**

Primary Text: *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Fiction: Excerpts from *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and *The First Betrayal* by Patricia Bray

Poetry: “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes and “The Shark” by E.J. Pratt

Nonfiction: Excerpt from *Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption* by Laura Hillenbrand

Songs: “The Highwayman” by Loreena McKennitt and “Everywhere” by Fleetwood Mac

Painting: *Watson and the Shark* by John Singleton Copley

In preparation for their transition to high school, eighth grade students continue to hone their analytical reading and writing skills. Since eighth graders are expected to master how an author creates suspense, this nine-weeks focuses on a theme of mystery and suspense. Students begin with an easily accessible lesson on mood, explore suspense in multiple texts from various genres, and then progress to the more complex skill of analyzing tone.

**3rd 9-weeks**

**Text Selections:**

Primary Text*: Genesis Begins Again* by Alicia D. Williams

Short Story: “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut

Nonfiction: “Dancing to Connect to a Global Tribe” by Matt Harding; “Ain’t I a Woman” by Sojourner Truth

Nonfiction: Excerpts from *Seabiscuit* by Laura Hillenbrand

Music: Select songs as referenced in *Genesis Begins Again*

In preparation for the transition to high school, eighth graders continue to hone their analytical reading skills while progressing from expository to argumentative writing. Students are exposed to many forms of argument. Before writing their own arguments, students study appeals and practice recognizing them in various mediums. The argumentative texts are scaffolded so that students have the opportunity to build this challenging skill. First, students analyze advertisements before moving to nonfiction and fiction and, finally, to social arguments. With each text, students engage in discussions requiring them to make claims and support them; then they write their analysis. The nine weeks culminates with an argumentative essay and a student debate. Within the nine weeks, grammatical skills are layered with the study of SAT vocabulary from the novel. Students are introduced to active and passive voice, and they quickly move into exploring its purposeful use. Other grammatical skills, such as subject-verb agreement, capitalization, and spelling, are refined throughout the nine weeks. A number of standardized test practices are embedded within the curriculum, so summative test preparation becomes a comfortable routine.

**4th 9-weeks**

**Text Selections:**

Primary Text*: A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare

Poetry: “When icicles hang by the wall” by Shakespeare; “Blue Flag” by Elizabeth Brewster

Short Story: “A Midsummer Night’s Dream" adapted by Charles and Mary Lamb

Nonfiction: "Shakespeare's Other World" by Kim Zarins, COMMONLIT

Video: “Why Shakespeare?” By Lawrence Bridges, National Endowment for the Arts

In preparation for the transition to high school, eighth graders continue to hone their analytical reading skills while progressing to more complex literary analysis. Summative test preparation is a comfortable routine by this point. This nine weeks’ big idea is that there is nothing new under the sun, which emphasizes that literature is timeless. Students learn about allusions throughout the nine weeks; however, they first encounter them in advertisements that serve as approachable texts, much like last nine weeks’ approach to argument. Then students research allusions, create presentations, and teach their classmates, while simultaneously identifying allusions in the drama. The main text for this nine-weeks is Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Although this drama seems ambitious for 8th grade, the short story version serves as a scaffold to the drama; since the plot is no longer a barrier, students will more readily grasp the language. The culminating assessment of the drama is an essay analyzing how the play remains relevant to readers today. A nonfiction article on dreaming enhances students’ understanding of the drama and reaffirms the play’s relevance. Since students have written multiple essays this year, they are given more freedom in topic choice. An in-depth analysis of “Blue Flag” and multiple-choice practice serve as a review for the entire year, covering phrases, syntax, and close reading.