

# Welcome Back!

Hill Creek  
Ms. Monica Roque

Welcome back families! I am so excited to be working with your student this year in Language Arts. I will try to consolidate as much info as I can into this welcome back letter. Please read it thoroughly, sign and return ONLY the signature sheet, and the front/back permission slip with your student (2 pieces of paper). Keep the rest of this info for your records. A copy of this letter can also be found on the class website. **In the future, ALL forms and correspondence from me will be through my class website, Google Classroom, or email in an effort to promote a clutter-free, eco-conscious, streamlined classroom. Therefore, it is IMPERATIVE that you send in 1-2 valid working emails at the end of this packet. I use this platform to send correspondence about what we are working on, upcoming deadlines, ways to support your student on their coursework, things to look out for, fun updates, etc. This will also be my primary means of communicating with you about your student, as I can send an email to ask a question, or point out any negative or positive behaviors on the fly, even while class is in session. Phone calls will likely take 24-48 hours to be returned.**

## Language Arts Curriculum

We will be using *Amplify* as our Middle School language arts curriculum. This curriculum is digital, which means all materials for the course will be online. Students will not need to bring a Language Arts book home. We are also attempting to be Paper-less, so students will rarely turn-in something in to the class basket, but rather will transition to emailing assignments or sharing through Amplify or Google Classroom.

This class will be a largely “project-based” learning experience for the students. Most work will be done in class, however your student may need time at home for larger projects. They will not have nightly worksheet practice or pages of our in-class novels to read. They will be assessed in multiple ways in order to show broad, personalized understanding of what we are learning in class.

## Google Classroom

Google Classroom is an online platform that we will be using frequently this year. Students can create, share, and receive feedback for many of their assignments. Families are invited to participate as well. All that is required to sign-up is a G-mail account. Once signed up, you can opt in to receive weekly summaries of your child’s progress in class i.e. upcoming, missing, and graded assignments.

It is imperative that you give permission for your student to use Google Classroom this year. Please make sure to fill out the forms in PowerSchool and say “YES” to Google Classroom!

## Homework

If homework is assigned, it will be project-based. Students will be given NO LESS than 1 week to complete any class project. All current assignments will be posted and updated weekly on PowerSchool and/or Google Classroom. You can ALWAYS rely on these platforms being up to date and accurate (Pending any extenuating circumstances). All resources needed to complete the class assignments will be available on Google Classroom. \* Please note, STUDENTS are responsible for completing classwork in class, if they don’t use the time wisely, or need more time, they may take it home to complete it, however this is not considered a “homework” assignment, and may not be indicated on Google Classroom.

### **Email, Powerschool, and Google Classroom**

It is IMPERATIVE that you send me 1-2 working email addresses that can be used to contact your family. It is also *incredibly* helpful for your student to have their own email (preferably gmail since we will be using Google Classroom), though this is NOT required and the students can always use a class email account to submit assignments and ask questions. I encourage students AND parents to check their progress on Powerschool frequently. All of your students assignments and scores are available here for all of their classes. I update grades every 2 weeks. Students are responsible for knowing what assignments they are missing, and arranging to turn them in for partial credit if they have missed a deadline.

### **Bathroom Policy**

Students in Middle School are expected to use the restroom before school, at lunch, and after school. A student may not use the restroom during direct teacher instruction, however, they may go during independent/ partner work time. All check-in and out times are monitored and students should be gone for no more than 5 minutes. If a student has a medical/ personal need for an altered policy, please contact me so I can accommodate them.

### **Behavior**

Students in Middle School are expected to have a well-developed understanding of what is acceptable school behavior and what is not. Maintaining respect for themselves, others, and their teachers at all times is key to this idea. If a student behaves in a way that is disruptive or disrespectful, he or she will receive the following consequences:

**Step 1** Conference with teacher and parent signature on STEP card.

**Step 2** Parent notification (telephone, e-mail, or in person) and loss of next monthly middle school activity

**Step 3** Referral to office and phone call home from vice principal

**Step 4** Office referral and administrative action

All infractions will be recorded on STEP cards, so please check them on a regular basis to stay on top of any behavior issues. Students should carry their STEP cards with them to every period.

### **Attendance**

Showing up for school has a significant impact on a student's academic success. We realize some absences are unavoidable due to health problems or other circumstances, but we also know that when students miss too much school— regardless of the reason – it can cause them to fall behind academically. We are aiming for a goal of at least 96.5% attendance this year. Let us know how we can best support you and your student so that they can show up for school on time every day. Hill Creek wants your student to be successful as possible in school so EVERYDAY COUNTS!

### **Grading Policy:**

#### **Independent Reading (formerly AR)- 10%**

Independent reading will take on a new form in Middle School this year. Outside/ Independent reading IS important and students should be reading about 20 minutes per night. Often this will not happen without support in the home environment. This year, students will be REQUIRED to read 1 book of an appropriate level per trimester. They will then complete one of various in-depth projects showing their understanding of the book. This will enable those who struggle with reading motivation to remain focused on one outside book. They will then be free to convey understanding of the book in a way that makes sense to them (i.e. a power point, a newsletter, an alternate ending, etc.) Students who enjoy reading frequently, and consume literature will be able to apply additional outside reading points in their Language Arts Achievement grading category. There will be no half goal.

\*Please note: I ask that you know what your child is reading and check to make sure it is a good fit for you and your family. I strongly recommend that you help your child choose the book whenever possible, or at least make sure you know what book/ books they have chosen for the trimester. Ask frequent questions about the literature they are reading. Also, please take advantage of the independently reviewed parent and family ratings on commonsensemedia.org. On the site you will find age recommendations for individual books as well as a breakdown of what themes the book explores and any potential red flags for parents.

### **Achievement Points- 15%**

Some students excel in certain areas of Language arts. Without fail, some projects will appeal to your student more than others. This category lets them have a say in the design of their own curriculum. Many projects will have additional components, which will allow a student to earn achievement points. Additional blogs can earn achievement points for students who love writing and online collaborating, and independent readers can earn points in this category by reading extra books. Throughout the trimester, students must earn 15 APs. No less than 30 points will be offered. They are responsible for keeping track of, tallying, and submitting their final document on or before the deadline.

### **Projects- 30%-**

Every major unit will end in a final project, not a test. Students will be free to choose from a number of creative, or research-based options that suit their talents, interests, and understanding of a novel or concept.

### **Essays/ Formal Writing- 15%**

Students will be responsible for several essays this year. A grade will be given for pre-writing, rough drafts, and final drafts. ALL FINAL DRAFTS MUST BE TYPED. As students approach High School in the information age, it is critical that they demonstrate and practice basic word-processing skills. If you do not have a computer at home, consider asking friends and family members if you may use theirs. There are also computers available at all county libraries, the Boys and Girls Club, and Santee Teen Center. As always, your student will have class time they may use at their discretion to type their essays on the class computers.

### **Blogs/ Informal Writing- 20%**

Students will have a blog topic 2-4 days each week. Class time will be given each day, but students are free to use the class time for other language arts practice, if they prefer to blog from home. Your student's creative and critical writing will be done in this format as well as in their Writer's Notebooks. Formal writing will take place in the essays. Bloggers should aim for expressing unique thoughts, and asking probing questions. Some writing samples are meant to be a more casual, expressive form of writing. For these tasks, I will not be focusing directly on spelling and grammar, but rather originality and completeness of thought. Students may be asked to select their best work and submit for grading, or I may randomly choose a blog for the week and score in-depth. Either way, missing even a few blogs can significantly impact a student's grade.

### **Daily Classwork/ Participation- 10%**

This category will include all daily class assignments, quizzes, and discussion participation.

# Back to School Checklist

Monica Roque  
Hill Creek 2018-2019

Initial below that you have seen these 2 items: (please keep the original for YOUR records)

Welcome back letter \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial here, but keep the info for your records)

Grading Policy \_\_\_\_\_ Initial here, copies are available online

Sign and return:

*Movie Permission slip/ Literature Permission Slip (Front and back of one page)*

*This Checklist Sheet (with 2 sets of initials above)*

**I have received, read and understand the information in the Back to School Packet. I have no questions at this time and will contact the teacher if questions or concerns should arise throughout the school year. (Please contact me right away if you'd like to discuss this packet).**

**I will do my best to make sure my child understands the consequences of poor behavior, missing assignments and poor attendance at school.**

**I understand that my child will be using iPads and/or computers frequently this year and I will do my best to help them gain access to the internet.**

**I understand that my child's AR grade is 10% of their trimester grade, and that they should be reading independently each night.**

**I am aware Miss Roque uses Google Classroom and has a class website that will keep me up-to-date on my student's activities and homework, and that her contact information is on that site as well as in my copy of this packet.**

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Parent email address(es): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Yes,

\*Please include at least 1 working email address. If I do not have an email address on file, you may not receive important class updates.

Dear Parent: (7th - 8th graders)

The trend in current pre-teen and “Young Adult” literature often includes strong language, abusive situations or mild sexual content (kissing, innuendo). Many are well written and explore the issues young teens face in today’s environments. Many of these popular books are enjoyable reading and are inviting to all students, including reluctant readers.

As students approach High School, it is important that their exposure to different styles and settings of literature begins to evolve. The books we read in class may contain language that is more aggressive than what your student has experienced at school in the past, however, we will not include core curriculum with excessive language or sexual content. Our books are pre-read and the *American Association of School Libraries*, as well as the widely respected *CommonSenseMedia.org* are consulted before we place any literature into the curriculum.

All 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be participating in an independent reading program. One of the most powerful aspects of this program is that students are allowed to choose their own books based on their interest and reading level. If you would like your child to be able to use “Young Adult” literature, which is more likely to contain mature material, for these assignments, they will need to have a permission slip on file. The permission slip is NOT required for your student to receive full credit for their AR grade, it simply opens up a wider portion of our MS library to them.

Additionally, please note that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students will be introduced to some of the events of the Holocaust as we may read “The Diary of Anne Frank,” and/or “Night”.

While I am familiar with the content of most popular teen novels and series, it would be impossible for me to know them all, or to monitor each student’s book selection individually. I encourage all parents to be aware of what their children are reading at all times. If you have concern or want more information about your child’s book, please visit [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org) for an in-depth exploration of the themes, language, and settings in many popular books, video games, songs, and movies. In addition to your student’s personal choice, independent reading, we will be doing multiple novel studies in class. A list of novels that we will be reading this year will be posted on my website in the next week or so.

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**My child has permission to read Young-Adult literature for his/ her IR goals.**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## PG Movie Permission Slip

In Middle School, we often have cause to share PG rated material with our students. This can range from films to Youtube content. Many teachers use historical and informational films to give students alternate perspectives or supporting interpretations of the classroom content being discussed. Because the Common Core State Standards involve concepts that are more advanced for Middle School students, it follows that many of the supporting materials also contain more advanced or mature content.

Throughout the year, we also host reward days for the students, in which a movie room is a choice option. Furthermore, on Rainy or “High-Heat” days, we often keep students inside during lunch and P.E., and movies are sometimes shown in these situations.

This permission slip will allow your student to watch PG movies in any of their classes during the rest of the school year. Most of the films are rated PG for mild-language, action, or scenes of peril. Students may also be viewing other materials that are “G” rated.

PG Movies to be viewed this year for curriculum or reward day purposes **may** include, among others: The Outsiders, Tex, Up! Star Wars (Language Arts Hero Myth), Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone (Language Arts Hero Myth), The City of Ember, The Hunger Games, and Spirited Away.

Students who do not have this permission slip on file will be given an alternate assignment or may be excluded from the movie choice on reward days.

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My Middle School student has permission to view any G or PG movies during the 2018-2019 school year.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_

