

LITERATURE

DEPARTMENT MISSION & VISION

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, in his 1970 Literary Nobel Prize speech, asserts that “literature, together with language, protects the soul of a nation.” At Santa Fe Christian Schools, we believe that literature and language not only “protects the soul of a nation,” but allows us to search our own soul. Reading should involve actively seeking a deeper understanding of the multiple layers within a text by exploring the language the author uses. It is a collaboration between the reader, the text, and the author to create meaning. The beauty of language, the emotional and moral complexity - these are facets of literature that we must celebrate and upon which we must reflect.

An essential part of developing the Christian leaders of tomorrow is teaching students how to use a Biblical Worldview to discern truth, to think clearly, and to impact those around them in a way that glorifies God. Students will read, analyze, discuss, and write about a variety of literature in order to develop a broader understanding of the Human Condition, including our intricate design, fallen nature, capacity for the fruits of the Spirit, and ultimately the need for salvation and the desire for reconciliation with God. For example, if read with a critical lens, we see that Gatsby’s life was empty not because of his tainted American Dream, but rather, because his purpose was misguided, flawed, and self-seeking. We witness Frankenstein’s monster become lost because his creator failed him – void of both meaning and purpose – a successful, ill-advised experiment. We experience the society of Guy Montag; one in which the Sea of Faith was “retreating, to the breath of the night-wind, down the vast edges...and naked shingles of the world” – a society filled with ignorance and human misery. For, when left to ourselves, we often will choose ethical standards that are personal, relative, experiential, popular, or situational. Each of these pieces of literature, as well as others within our curriculum, point back to our need for God’s grace and His absolute Truth.

MISSION

To partner with Christian parents within a Bible-based community, in order to disciple students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches, and communities for Christ.

CONVICTIONS

Statement of Faith and Declaration of Ethical and Moral Integrity

VALUES

“The Santa Fe Way Prayer Journal”

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Living Truth in Christ

APOLOGIAS

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

INSTRUCTION

APOLOGIAS

As students learn to recognize the impact of literature and language on nearly every aspect of life, they will increase their ability to think critically, speak thoughtfully, and write effectively. Ultimately, the combination of what students read, write, question, and consider will help them have a stronger hold on their Faith and make them bold witnesses for Christ in the World.

PHILOSOPHY ON TEXT SELECTION & SUPPLEMENTARY RESOURCES

Being exposed to multiple styles of both nonfictional and fictional texts helps us to develop a higher level of critical thinking, vocabulary, and writing skills as each genre has a different form, convention, and purpose. Often, we limit ourselves to what will provide comfort, with what we know we will enjoy. It is understandable, then, that students are hesitant to read and study a variety of genres, some of which may be new to them or may not pique their immediate interest. However, our task, as an English department, is to provide students with a range of texts that will foster opportunities for intellectual growth and development as they widen their view of our world and deepen their faith.

While contemporary literature may tell a compelling story, one that entertains or helps the reader to escape their world, the emphasis tends to be on an over-sensationalized plot, moving from one shocking moment to the next. The success of the text is grounded in our emotional response, and how the text makes us feel in the moment. Classical literature, texts found within the literary canon, on the other hand, present a nuanced portrait of humanity through its characters, encouraging the reader to adopt an attitude of reflection. With a style of writing intended for careful examination, its complex plot lines encourage the reader to consider something that may be outside of their current cultural context, yet is timeless and universal. For classical literature, how the reader feels in the moment is not the end goal; it is the beginning of a process that promotes growth and elevates virtues of truth, goodness, and beauty.

AXIOMS FOR SELECTING LITERATURE

When evaluating a literary text for the classroom, please consider whether the text is consistent with the beliefs and core values of Santa Fe Christian Schools, in addition to the text's quality, complexity, and utility.

A text chosen for **teaching purposes** should:

- Demonstrate a style of writing which elicits careful examination
- Contain an appropriate level of complexity regarding structure and thematic concept
- Encourage the reader to adopt an attitude of reflection as they consider something timeless, something universal, and/or something outside of their current cultural context
- Present a nuanced portrait of humanity - one which allows for an examination of multiple facets regarding the intricacies of mankind
- Foster opportunities for intellectual growth and development as students widen their view of our world and deepen their faith

A text chosen for **classroom libraries** should:

- Contain appropriate narrative content (consider elements such as explicit language, violence, etc.) when considering the maturity and age of students
- Attempt to provide a level of entertainment and/or interest
- Only contain societal ideologies and thematic aspects of pop culture which have been critically examined in light of the beliefs and core values of Santa Fe Christian Schools (As our students are still developing an understanding of their own identity, the text chosen should avoid controversial and traumatic descriptions or topics that may be more appropriate for young adults of at least college age.)

RATIONALE FOR SUMMER READING

C.S. Lewis claims that "literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality...in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself." As an English Department, we believe that studying influential books from past literary minds should be a habitual practice throughout the calendar year. While the summer months are a much-needed break

from early morning alarms and busy schedules, they should not be a break from reading and thinking critically. The summer assignment is integral for maintaining student growth and development as it provides a chance for students to continue in this practice of studying a variety of texts, exploring ideas, and responding to the complexities of great literature. We don't simply want our

students to be entertained; we desire for our students to be engaged with meaningful stories that reflect the nuance of life. Therefore, the literature we have chosen to assign, if looked at closely and intentionally, should deepen a student's understanding in connection to their world, their individuality, and their faith.