



Language Arts at Deerstream

Language is a gift of God. Jesus himself is called the “Word” of God; something about language encapsulates the very nature of who God is. Language is powerful. Scripture tells us that words have the ability to build up and to tear down (Ephesians 4:29). Works of literature can contain great beauty, and, of course, the greatest literature is the written account of our faith, the Bible. It is a gift to be able to study works of literature, to learn to read thoughtfully, generously, and critically, and to be able to communicate our own thoughts through clear and effective writing.

At Deerstream, we seek to nurture thoughtful readers and compelling writers. As in all our studies, we believe that “all truth is God’s truth,” so we help students to identify God’s truth in secular texts as well as Christian literature. Each year, students read and discuss a variety of age-appropriate, excellent works of literature: novels, biographies, poetry, speeches, drama, essays, and the like. Scripture and hymns are studied as literature and in reference to literature. Vocabulary work is ongoing.

In writing assignments, over the middle and high school years, students progress from writing clear, well-structured paragraphs to developing complex, well-argued essays. They learn to choose an appropriate voice and tone for different kinds of writing: letters, essays, research, poetry, and fiction. Students learn to cite their sources in research writing and how to use MLA format. Grammar and mechanics lessons are interspersed within writing instruction.

Middle and high school students in Deerstream’s Language Arts program should expect to complete reading and writing assignments at home throughout the week. Quizzes, tests, projects, and oral reports will be assigned.

The following represents a scope and sequence of skills emphasized in each of our language arts classes. Specific literature selections and writing projects are subject to change as the teacher responds to the needs of the students.

Junior Division Prep (11/12 year olds)

At Deerstream, we believe this is a special and important year in the life of our students. Academically, they are beginning the transition from the elementary years toward higher education. They are learning to organize their time, prioritize their work, and take more individual responsibility for their academics. They need support, instruction, and grace in the midst of all this transition, and they still need opportunities for plenty of fun and joy in their learning!

This is a year to lay the foundation for strong academic and organizational skills. Therefore, students will be required to keep an organized notebook. They will complete daily homework, but not excessive amounts. They will practice appropriate participation in class discussions and group assignments. They will practice time management in completing assignments and projects. Finally, their teachers will help them learn a variety of study strategies to prepare for tests and quizzes.

Writing Objectives

- To employ a process of writing including gathering and organizing ideas, drafting, revising, editing, and sharing
- To write in clear and complete sentences of varied lengths and construction
- To choose varied and precise vocabulary
- To craft paragraphs of increasing complexity, including a thesis and closing statement as well as organized and detailed supporting sentences.
- To employ transitions
- To practice different forms of writing (ie narrative, persuasive, informative) and vary the tone and structure appropriately
- To be introduced to a five paragraph essay format
- To use appropriate conventions of mechanics and grammar in writing

Literature Objectives

- To read a variety of works of excellent literature
- To understand and be able to identify the parts of a typical plot: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution
- To identify different types of conflict in literature
- To become familiar with common literary devices such as allusions, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, flashbacks, and irony
- To identify themes in literature
- To reference the text to make a conclusion
- To listen and contribute to class discussions about a text
- To compare and contrast literature

Junior Division: 7th and 8th Grade

Building on the skills developed in the Jr. Division Prep year, Jr. Division students will continue to become stronger readers and writers.

Writing Objectives

- To improve upon the students' current writing ability by assessing strengths and weaknesses in grammar and style
- To craft (edit and reword) writing for better readability and clarity
- To distinguish between academic and casual writing
- To explore various avenues of writing techniques and styles
- To practice composing an academic essay
- To learn to write to an audience
- To analyze their own writing in the same way they analyze other literature in class
- To add literary elements to stories and poetry
- To cite sources correctly when using information from others

Literature Objectives

- To read a variety of works of excellent literature
- To independently identify literary devices in literature
- To develop a deeper understanding of underlying themes, purposes, and symbolism in literature through class discussion and independent analysis
- To compare and contrast different works of literature
- To recognize Biblical themes in literature
- To develop vocabulary fluency through the study of Greek and Latin roots

High School: 9th and 10th Grade

High school students will emerge from our program fully prepared for academic reading and writing across the disciplines.

Writing Objectives

- To respond to literature with clarity, thoughtfulness, organization, and style in writing
- To construct various types of essays, including narrative, comparative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive
- To use grammar, punctuation, word choice, and tone appropriate for various styles of essay
- To use MLA format to correctly cite sources and quotations when constructing essays

Reading Objectives

- To read a variety of excellent high-school level literature
- To recognize and define literary genres and concepts
- To prepare for and participate in discussions of a literary work in a respectful and engaged manner
- To deepen knowledge of vocabulary and literary language