

## English Department

### ENGLISH 9

*Who am I? What does it mean to belong? Who am I in relation to others?* English 9 looks at journeys characters undertake both in the world and within the self. Students use analytical, personal, and creative writing to develop critical thinking skills, discover connections, and consider their own identities. Starting with *The Odyssey* and *The Leavers* and complemented by texts such as *Persepolis* and *Black Ice*, students work on the foundational skills of BB&N English students: how to ask a meaningful question, how to annotate a text, how to be part of a classroom community, and how to develop and express authentic ideas. Students also continue their study of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, syntax, and grammar.

### ENGLISH 10

English 10 focuses on texts by a diverse range of authors that encourage students to evaluate their place in the world. Combining American texts, such as *The Great Gatsby* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, with world literature, such as *We Need New Names* and “*Master Harold*”... *and the boys*, students explore their own identity development as well as their relationship to communities both familiar and other. In addition to using the classroom as a space for inquiry and exploration of ideas both personal and analytical, students continue to hone their skills as writers. With particular emphasis placed upon crafting and proving an analytical argument, teachers build upon the skills discussed and practiced in English 9. Class-wide debates in the winter term provide practice in research as well as valuable experience in collaboration and public speaking. Students also continue the study of vocabulary, usage, and grammar.

### ENGLISH 11

#### Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition

All Grade 11 English courses focus on developing analytical thinking, reading, and writing skills to a more sophisticated level. The third trimester’s work includes the writing of an eight- to ten-page profile about an interesting person at work. While all juniors are enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) English Literature and Composition course, each course prepares students to take either/both the AP English Language and Composition exam and/or AP English Literature and Composition exam.

#### African American Literature: Race and Identity

This course presents an introduction to the development and evolution of African American life and culture through literature. Students will read works spanning four centuries, focusing on the underlying historical context, cultural values, and modes of expression. Beginning with poetry written during the 1700s and the slave narrative of Douglass, students will examine the primary issues facing African Americans during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They will address the complex issues and divergent perspectives in major representative texts, such as Chesnut’s *The House Behind the Cedars*, Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*, Wright’s *Native Son*, and Ellison’s *Invisible Man*. Students will also read selected short stories, essays, and poetry by various authors to deepen their understanding of how African Americans constructed racial and cultural identities. Through reading, writing, and student-centered discussion, we will explore and redefine concepts of freedom, citizenship, class, color, and gender within the black community.

Students who enroll in the African American Literature: Race and Identity course simultaneously enroll in the United States History (Honors): African American History course offered through the History and Social Sciences Department. Participation in this African American Studies Program is noted on a student’s transcript.

#### Aliens

Sometimes people feel like aliens even in their own lives. Consider, for example, ordinary Japanese Americans suddenly imprisoned during WWII, some young adults who discover the dizzying truth of their childhood identities, a young man distressed by the death of his father and remarriage of his mother.

Alienated by choice or not, these individuals experience a disconnection from the larger entity—a family, nation, race, culture—with which they once identified and confront what it is to be a member of that larger entity as well as an individual. Students will have the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences, too, in writing. Main texts will include both classic and contemporary works that may include James Baldwin’s *The Fire Next Time*, Otsuka’s *When the Emperor Was Divine*, Nella Larsen’s *Passing*, Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*, and Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, as well as stories and poems by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Toni Cade Bambara, Alice Munro, Ernest Hemingway, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Robert Frost, Gwendolyn Brooks, and others. The summer reading text is Trevor Noah’s *Born a Crime*.

### **British Literature**

For over a thousand years, lovers and rogues, heroes and traitors, serious souls, irreverent fools, royal figures, and common folk have all come to life in the literature of this little corner of Europe, Britain. Discover how hilarious and harrowing these works can be—and how they continue to shape our understanding of ourselves and others from centuries past to the modern day. Works may include the first English epic, *Beowulf*; the witty character sketches in *The Canterbury Tales*; a play about our most famous tragic hero, Hamlet; a novel depicting the perils that beset well- and ill-behaved women in *Pride and Prejudice*; the complex social tensions of Smith’s *White Teeth*; and poems by writers such as Donne, Milton, Pope, Keats, and many others. Written assignments primarily address analytical approaches to literature, though students will have opportunities to write creatively as well.

### **Dynamic Duos**

Sometimes an idea, story, or character can only best be known through its opposite, or its double, or its retelling. This course will explore individual works of literature through specific pairings: the depiction of slavery deepens once you’ve read both the autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and then the novel *Beloved*; *Heart of Darkness* benefits from a shift in gender, century, and continent in *State of Wonder*, and *Hamlet* broadens its concerns through its modern retelling in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*. Smaller pairings of short stories and poems will also appear throughout the year before we turn to the Junior Profile and the Advanced Placement exam in the spring.

### **Ethics and Literature**

Can literature help us understand how to act and live ethically? Is it possible today to make meaningful statements about “right” and “wrong,” and what do we mean when we use these terms? In this class, students will study works of literature and explore the ethical difficulties they present. We will ground our readings in foundational ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism, deontological ethics, virtue ethics, and rights ethics. We will read *Frankenstein*, *In Cold Blood*, *Hamlet*, and *Beloved*. We’ll also read excerpts from *The Philosopher’s Way*, a few short stories, and other supplementary readings. This is a project-based course that emphasizes close reading and clear writing (including the Junior Profile). Students will also demonstrate their learning by completing multi-step, extended projects, including working with a local non-profit organization (and other community members and entities) to gain a deeper understanding of an issue of their choosing.

### **Gender and Sexuality in American Literature**

To what extent are our lives and sense of self rooted in American notions of gender and sexuality? How do these notions set expectations, create limitations, and secure privileges in our lives? In our study of literature set in America, we will explore how and when male and female voices are amplified, normalized, shamed, or silenced. We will also study the intersection of gender, sexuality, and other aspects of individual identity to develop a fuller and more complex understanding of life in America. Readings may include Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*, Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, Frances Cha’s *If I Had Your Face*, Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room*, and Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home*. We will also read from a selection of short stories, poetry, memoirs, articles, and essays. Throughout the year,

students will continue to develop their expository and creative writing skills in preparation for the year's major project, the Junior Profile.

Students who enroll in the Gender and Sexuality in American Literature course simultaneously enroll in the United States History (Honors): Gender and Sexuality Studies course offered through the History and Social Sciences Department. Participation in this Gender and Sexuality Studies Program is noted on a student's transcript.

### **Irish Literature**

Ireland is a small nation that has given the world a large number of extraordinary writers—James Joyce, Sean O'Casey, J.M. Synge, Lady Augusta Gregory, Eavan Boland, Oscar Wilde, to name a few—four of them winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature. The twentieth century was a time of intense political and literary activity in Ireland as the nation and its writers struggled with issues of colonial oppression and independence, emigration and warfare (open and guerrilla), identity (national and personal), and the intersections of myth and history. This course will focus on the novels, tragicomic plays, short stories, speeches, and poems of this “Irish Renaissance,” which may include Joyce's *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, Friel's *Translations*, and coming-of-age novels by Ross, Edna O'Brien, and Seumas Deane. Throughout the year we will view some contemporary films coming out of Ireland and discuss some of the island's rich culture and complex history. Students will write critical essays as well as fiction and personal narratives—all in preparation for a major assignment of the year: the Junior Profile.

### **Magical Realities**

A magical island with spirits, monsters, and a wizard-king. An old house haunted by restless, spiteful ghosts. A man who discovers that his dreams can alter reality. Another who wakes to find he has transformed into a large insect. For centuries, writers have incorporated elements of fantasy, magic, and unreality into their narratives to introduce suspense and mystery—but also to explore the unseen forces of their worlds and of the human mind. In this class, we will explore a diverse selection of literature that mixes realism with magic, the everyday with the fantastical. In so doing, we might just better understand ourselves and the worlds we inhabit. Main texts for the course will likely include Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, Morrison's *Beloved*, Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, and LeGuin's *The Lathe of Heaven*. In addition, we will read a variety of short stories and poems from writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, John Cheever, and Ursula K. LeGuin.

### **Masks**

When characters in literature and in life experience difficult circumstances, they mask themselves for all sorts of reasons—to disguise, to deceive, to disrupt or revenge; to flirt, to critique, to conform, or defend. Whether intentional or not, such masking almost always incurs some consequence to personal identity, some confusion or disfigurement with which the masked character must ultimately reckon. Masks will examine this theme and others as we read closely and write regularly in response to literature spanning four centuries. Along with a selection of poems and essays, our main texts will include Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground*, and short stories by Franz Kafka and Octavia Butler. We may also read modest proposals. Our summer reading book is Laurie Frankel's *This Is How It Always Is*.

### **Trapped Together and Alone**

What qualities and flaws emerge when people find themselves trapped together in unusual circumstances? Whether through shifting family dynamics, a hostage crisis, exile (both self-imposed or externally ordered), a writer's choice to isolate characters can serve as a way to examine the qualities that make us human, for better or worse. Through a variety of genres, students consider what traits surface in extreme conditions. In addition to novels and nonfiction works, students also consider how plays, too, present a particularly effective way of creating a sense of limited options. Texts may include Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*,

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Patchett's *Bel Canto*, Mitchell's *Black Swan Green*, excerpts from Thoreau's *Walden*, Krakauer's *Into The Wild*, and Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*.

### **Travelers and Transients**

Throughout the brief history of the United States, Americans seem to have had a simultaneous desire to settle and unsettle, to be rooted and rootless, to champion equality and unbridled competition, to consider themselves self-made and yet destined for greatness. Roads, tracks, trails, and rivers crisscross the vast expanse of this nation and lure us in many directions—toward adventure, misadventure, safety, danger, and the next potentially great opportunity. This course explores the importance of movement and motivations for moving in texts, in our own writing, and in the lives of characters and our own lives. We will consider not only literal travel but also travel through form, space, time, status, and the imagination. Sometimes when we roam, we just get lost or destroyed; sometimes we find things greater than that for which we were looking. Let's see what paths we uncover in works such as James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, and Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*.

## **ENGLISH 12**

Seniors take two trimester-long English courses, offering the opportunity to read classic and modern literature, to work on a particular form of writing, or to focus more narrowly on a text.

### **ENGLISH 12 FALL COURSES**

#### **Doppelgangers and Distorted Mirrors**

What happens when a character meets his creepy double? It is not unusual for an author to create a character to serve as a foil for the protagonist to emphasize, through contrast, traits that reveal distinctive qualities of the main character. In the texts we read for this course, characters meet and confront their distorted selves, and we will explore the consequences of these encounters. Texts may include the following: selections from *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, *Song of Solomon* by Morrison, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Stevenson, and *Richard III* by Shakespeare. Writing will include analytical essays, emulative pieces, and a personal essay.

#### **Get to Work**

In his classic oral history, *Working*, Studs Terkel explains that his book is “about a search...for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.” Because the average American will spend roughly 90,000 hours at their job, it's clearly worth our time to examine different types of work, its place in our lives, and the stories we are told and tell ourselves about it. Do our jobs lift us up or grind us down? Does everyone have the same ability to find “meaning” in work? If not, is that a problem? How much thought do you give to work and the place it will occupy in your life? In this class, students will study texts that explore work, workers, and how class, race, and gender shape one's working life. Readings will include Chang-Rae Lee's *On Such a Full Sea*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, as well as short stories and non-fiction by Barbara Ehrenreich, Studs Terkel, Herman Melville, George Saunders, Lucia Berlin and others.

#### ***Moby-Dick*: A Whale of a Work**

Though you might think that the story of a sperm whale ramming and sinking a ship in 1820 would have nothing to offer you in 2023, think again. This tale of a mad captain, his elusive prey, a tattooed harpooner, and an introspective rookie is still viewed as one of the greatest American novels. Through the many interpretations of this masterpiece, we will explore issues of race, sexuality, environmentalism, history, seamanship, science, philosophy, religion, and even modern pop culture. The opening line alone—“Call me Ishmael”—raises issues of names, culture, identity, and so much more. Come on board!

### **Prize-Winning Literature**

Immerse yourself in an inspiring pool of literature by award-winning authors. These texts are recognized for their innovation and contribution to the world of literature. We may read works such as Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, Tyehimba Jess' *Olio*, Kendrick Lamar's *DAMN*, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, Jericho Brown's *The Tradition*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. As we read, we will explore what makes a text excellent and discuss how its impact on the reading audience has earned it a place in literary history. Additionally, we will interrogate prize-bestowing bodies such as the National Book Awards, American Book Awards, the National Medal of Arts, and the Pulitzer Prize and their historical role in determining what writing is deemed exemplary. Get to know the literature that has gained widespread attention and respected accolades, and enter the discussions of readers everywhere.

### **Rebel Writers**

What does it mean to break with tradition? How can an author question their readers' assumptions about nation, identity, and literature? In this course, we will focus on established authors who in their own times were considered rebels, as well as contemporary authors who are currently challenging the status quo and broadening the literary canon. Readings may include major works by Flannery O'Connor, Sinclair Lewis, Assata Shakur, and John Steinbeck, as well as shorter works by James Baldwin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ernest Hemingway, Kate Chopin, Emily Dickinson, and Walt Whitman.

### **Redeeming the Past**

Stories have the power to heal wounds and transform individual, communal, and national identity. In this course, students will explore the restorative power of stories by reading literature in which characters, as well as authors, strive to make sense of war, family dysfunction, or personal rejection to move forward with their lives. Our ultimate concern will be to consider if and how language helps define, resolve, distort, or redeem human experience. Our readings may include Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, Rebecca Makkai's *The Great Believers*, Toni Morrison's *The Song of Solomon*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day*, along with selected poems and essays. Students will continue to hone their writing skills through analytical, personal, and creative writing.

### **Shakespearean Power, Shakespearean Hierarchies**

The outsider becomes the Outsider, the one whom power structures repress, the one who pushes back. On the Elizabethan stage, stories enacted again and again the fierce tensions that emerge when Outsiders seek power—whether that is political, social, or personal—or seek merely to maintain their own place in the world. And again and again we see the cost of that desire for power. What then happens to the people outside of the small circles of power, to the women, people of color, and other disenfranchised characters? How rigid is the hierarchy? To explore this question, we will immerse ourselves in a number of ageless works, which may include texts such as the dark and bleak tragedies *King Lear* and *Othello*, the startling and delightful comedies *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, a history play from the Henry tetralogy, as well as many of Shakespeare's sonnets. We will also examine how these plays are represented in modern culture.

### **Sibling Bonds and Rivalries**

"Blood is thicker than water." "Am I my brother's keeper?" "Mom always liked you best." From Cain and Abel to Cinderella and her stepsisters to the Simpsons' children, the interactions of siblings have been a recurrent theme of storytellers. Through the readings, in this course we will explore the complexities of sibling relationships, such as the demands of family honor in Ian McEwan's *Atonement*, the fierce rivalries in *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson, and the life-saving bonds in Jesmyn Ward's *Salvage the Bones*. In addition to those previously mentioned, other main texts may include Shakespeare's *As You Like It* or Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. We will also read poetry and scientific literature related to our theme, and course assignments will include opportunities for creative emulation and personal writing as well as critical analysis.

### **Sound and Song**

In the juxtaposition of two powerful 20th-century American masterpieces by Nobel Prize-winning authors, Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, we examine the lives of complex families—one Black, one white—that are inextricably entwined with place, culture, and the profound legacy of slavery in America. As the characters struggle with issues pertaining to their identities and heritages, they prompt in us questions about who we *are* and who we *want* to be as individuals and as a society. The Flying Africans mythology and excerpts from *The New York Times'* recent *1619 Project* will supplement our work with the two novels. Linking those works with the present day, Jocelyn Nicole Johnson's *My Monticello*, a dystopian tale stemming from the 2017 Charlottesville conflict between white nationalists and anti-racist counter-protestors, will be the summer reading book to prime our thinking.

### **True Stories and the Personal Essay**

Truth can be stranger and more fascinating than fiction. In this course students will read short personal narratives, memoir excerpts, and expository essays to experience how literary voices that speak individual truths and reflect openly on the world can be as compelling as fiction's best-loved narrators. Students will also cultivate their own voices, sometimes playfully imitating the writers we read and other times creating original pieces about the people, places, and experiences significant to them. Together we will discuss how to recognize good material, manage memory, and dig down for truths that are unaffected and satisfying. In weekly writing workshops during the long block, the class will review each other's work with an eye toward finishing the course with individual writing portfolios worthy of submission to contests. Readings will include essays from Joan Didion, Annie Dillard, Langston Hughes, and George Orwell, as well as excerpts from Richard Rodriguez's *Hunger for Memory*; Elizabeth Gilbert's *Eat, Pray, Love*; Alice Sebold's *Lucky*; David Sedaris' *When You Are Engulfed in Flames*; Anne Lamott's *Grace (Eventually)*, and Bryan Stevenson's *Just Mercy*.

## **ENGLISH 12 WINTER COURSES**

### **Fiction Writing**

In this writing-intensive workshop, students will consider published short stories by twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors, write and rewrite their own short stories, and review their classmates' short stories, preparing online commentary and participating in robust group discussions aimed at productive revision. Most weeks we'll talk craft and do practice exercises, but at least half of our meetings will be full-group workshops, the majority of our texts being stories written by and for the class. Good time management, a desire to write regularly, and a willingness to give and receive thoughtful, constructive feedback are a must for those who enroll. In addition to studying essential plot components, characterization, escalation, and the art of dialogue, we'll explore how to activate setting, how to manage narrative distance and point of view, when to use scene versus summary, where to begin and end a story, and how to slow and speed up time.

### **Four Centuries of Wit**

Like a quick wit? Every century offers works of literature that wield wit wondrously well—but what does *that* mean for *us* as twenty-first century readers? Some works seem to speak only to their era, some works appeal even now. We'll ask why this dichotomy exists and then go about the joyful task of looking for answers. We take as our core wits John Donne, Alexander Pope, and Jane Austen, from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries respectively—each author famous for wit and satire. In reading their challenging and sophisticated work, we will come to understand how authors construct wit and to see the socio-historical contexts in which their wit thrived. This course will also explore how twentieth-century wit embodies a bleakness suitable to its own historical context, and finally we will consider the very present now when students become the curators of today's wit.

## **Imagine a World**

Speculative fiction transports us to both believable and fantastical worlds in which we can explore the complexities of the human experience. Rather than writing simple settings, science fiction and fantasy authors craft worlds in which the familiar challenges our preconceived notions of what will unfold in the future; whether caused by a natural disaster, disease, societal conflict, and other phenomena, world shifts call upon readers to question what they have known and imagine what could be. Science fiction and fantasy allow us to bend space-time so that we can re-examine our past and reflect on what makes us who we are. Students in this course will study how authors create characters shaped by their unique worlds and will explore how our world has shaped us as we examine our own core values and beliefs through traditional and new-age works. Readings may include selections from Adams, Asimov, Atwood, Bradbury, Butler, Clarke, Collins, Crichton, Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, Huxley, Jemisin, Jordan, L'Engle, Le Guin, Liu, Martin, McCaffrey Muir, Roth, Sanderson, Shelley, Staveley, Tolkien, Vonnegut, and Wells.

## **Latin American Literature**

Over the past century, our neighbors to the south in Latin America have produced some of the boldest, most inventive fiction in the world. From the wondrous magical realism of Gabriel García Márquez, Isabel Allende, and others, to the stylistic innovations of Jorge Luis Borges and Julio Cortázar, Latin American writers have been pushing the boundaries of what novels, short stories, and poems can be. In this course, we will read a selection of works in translation from such countries as Colombia, Chile, Argentina, and Mexico. As we read, we will also investigate social and cultural trends that influenced these writers and their work. Main texts for the course will likely include García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Ariel Dorman's *Death and the Maiden*, and Juan Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, with short stories and poetry by Jorge Luis Borges, Rosario Castellanos, Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda, and others.

## **Poetry Writing**

This poetry workshop will require the original composition of a significant body of work by each student. Each week we will focus on a different form or element of poetry. We will likely compose sonnets; flash fiction; ars poeticas; sestinas, ghazals, or villanelles; and poems based on our dreams. Each week we will read samples of the types of poems we're writing, short critical pieces about form and composition, and a packet of our own poetry that we will workshop together in class. We will read works such as weekly poetry and criticism packets, *Blood Dazzler* by Patricia Smith, *Night Sky With Exit Wounds* by Ocean Vuong, *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine, and *The Essential Poet's Glossary* by Edward Hirsch.

## **The Short Story**

At its most basic definition, a short story is a prose piece that can be read in one sitting. Yet, within that span, each tale strives to find unity, totality, truth, or at the very least a single effect. Edgar Allan Poe knew how these limitations can daunt an author: "If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step." Similarly, John Cheever insists, "With a short story, you have to be in there on every word; every verb has to be lambent and strong. It's a fairly exhausting task." We will see how a range of contemporary writers takes on this task through the individual pieces selected for the 2022 and 2023 editions of *The Best American Short Stories*.

## **To Hell and Back**

This course focuses on Dante's *Inferno*, the first and probably most widely read of *The Divine Comedy's* three volumes. Full of colorful characters, imaginatively conceived beasts, and grotesque punishments, this epic poem depicts man's physical and spiritual journey through darkness toward the light. We will also examine some art inspired by the *Inferno*, one of the texts that artists have most frequently depicted throughout the ages. After a quick glance at Dante's *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, we will look at some modern poems his work inspired, including T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," before moving on to another view of

Hell in Jean Paul Sartre’s existential play *No Exit*. Students’ work will include a couple of short critical papers and the creation of their very own three circles of Hell, detailed in a written narrative and in a piece of artwork.

### **Winning Arguments**

In 2005, comedian Stephen Colbert popularized the term “truthiness” in a satire of the Bush administration’s appeals to emotions over fact, telling his viewers, “The truthiness is, anyone can read the news to you. I promise to feel the news at you.” In our post-truth era of politics, what constitutes a persuasive argument? Are we more compelled by emotion or logic, stories or statistics? How do you identify bias and pick it apart? What media sources should you trust? This course aims to help students build the critical thinking skills and rhetorical know-how to become informed citizens of the world. Students will examine speeches and essays ranging from the classic to the present day on topics including racism and racial justice; climate change and the environment; gender identity, feminism, and LGBTQ rights; class structure and the economy; and the use of language in politics and government. Readings may include texts by civil rights leaders Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, environmentalists Rachel Carson and Greta Thunberg, American presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Barack Obama, and writers ranging from 18th-century satirist Jonathan Swift to contemporary feminist Roxane Gay. In addition to analyzing the techniques of these writers, students will learn to hone their own argumentative voice and focus on a current topic of their choice for a culminating project.

### **Word to Ya Motha**

From graffiti to rap, Hip-Hop breathes new life into English languages. Hip-Hop is an umbrella term for art, music, dance, literature, identity, style, and politics. This course will focus on the diverse social, political, cultural, and spiritual elements represented within the various genres of Hip-Hop music through an analysis of song lyrics. Through the elements of Hip-Hop – Graffiti, MCing, DJing, and Breakdancing – we’ll explore in detail how they pertain to the culture and its overall importance. In addition, various societal issues within Hip-Hop will be thoroughly examined: race, sexuality, class, authenticity, violence, gender, and censorship. Students will conduct these examinations through argumentative essays, music reviews, raps, poetry, and narrative writing. Artists explored may include KRS-One, Grandmaster Flash, DJ Kool Herc, Sugarhill Gang, OUTKAST, Queen Latifah, Jay-Z, Nas, Kendrick Lamar, Dr. Dre, Lil Kim, Tupac Shakur, and others. Authors explored may include H. Samy Alim, Jeff Chang, Geneva “Docta G” Smitherman, Joycelyn A. Wilson, Bettina Love, Elaine Richardson, and others.

### **Writing Life Stories**

In this course, a writing workshop, students draw from their own experience to craft nonfiction stories. Students will read short personal narratives that will serve as models, both in terms of style and content, for their weekly writing assignments. Their own stories will focus on experiences that they find resonant and significant. In addition to the shorter readings, students will read two full-length memoirs, one chosen from a list of suggested texts and one of the student’s own choosing. Students will work from memoir prompts and experiment with some poetry exercises as a way of finding their topics. They will put their writing through the drafting, revision, and proofreading process to work on producing pieces that are clear, well written, and compelling. The authors we will use as models include E.B. White, Joan Didion, Tim O’Brien, Amy Tan, Edward Abbey, Sarah Vowell, David Sedaris, and Leslie Jamison.