

August 31, 2017

Dear Family,

**Welcome to SpringBoard English Language Arts** ***Grade 8, Unit 1: The Challenge of Heroism.***

**Overview**

In this unit,students explore and define the concept of heroism and analyze and apply the archetype of the Hero’s Journey. Two **essential questions** focus their attention on the skills and knowledge presented and assessed in the unit:

* *What defines a hero?*
* *How does the Hero’s Journey archetype appear in stories throughout time?*

Students answer these questions through the activities and assessments in the unit.

**Assessments**

Twoperformance-based tasks, called **Embedded Assessments**, give students an opportunity to demonstrate their new learning in the skills of narration and exposition. Specifically,

* **Embedded Assessment 1** asks students to write an illustrated narrative following the structure of the Hero’s Journey archetype.
* **Embedded Assessment 2** asks students to defineheroism in a multi-paragraph expository essay.

In both cases, students demonstrate their ability to organize ideas, develop key details, and maintain a formal style. **We will complete Embedded Assessment 2 first.**

**Developing Skills and Knowledge for the Assessments**

Throughout the unit, students engage in activities in which they use **strategies** such as *TP-CASTT, graphic organizers* and *peer editing* to practice the important **skills** of analyzing texts, organizing ideas and details, and working with others to improve written texts. Students analyze and discuss a variety of texts such as an excerpt from Homer’s epic narrative poem *The Odyssey* and an excerpt from Frederick Douglass’s autobiography *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*. Throughout the unit, discussion and analysis are promoted as ways to improve students’ understanding of texts and as a component of the writing process.

Students’ **vocabulary study** concentrates on **academic vocabulary** of exposition, such as *context*, *function*, and *negation*, and **vocabulary specific to literary study** such as *archetype, plot,* and *diction*.

**Helping Your Child**

Students should be practicing every day in class for their upcoming performance on the Embedded Assessment. Help your child reflect on and focus his or her learning by asking the following questions:

* What did you learn today? What **texts** did you read, discuss, and respond to in writing or speaking? What **strategies** did you use during your reading, discussing, and writing?
* What did you learn today that will help you succeed on the upcoming Embedded Assessment? What do you still need to practice?

You may also find it helpful to read through the **Embedded Assessments** (particularly the **Scoring Guides**) and to note the **Learning Targets** that are located at the beginning of each unit activity.

Sincerely,

Ms. Kernan