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English 9: Identity, Voice, and the Human Experience

Skills-based, literature-rich course framework for secondary schools

Course Purpose & Structure

This full-year English Language Arts course is designed for Grade 9 students and emphasizes the development of transferable literacy skills through sustained engagement with literary, informational, and media texts. Rather than organizing learning around isolated genres or a fixed reading list, the course is structured around enduring questions related to identity, voice, power, and the human experience.

The course is organized into four coherent units, each culminating in a major performance task. Across the year, expectations for independence, analytical depth, and synthesis increase deliberately, supporting students in moving from supported interpretation toward more self-directed and critical use of language.

The framework is intended to support schools seeking clarity, coherence, and adaptability in their English programs. It provides a shared structure while allowing teachers professional discretion in text selection, pacing, and instructional approach.

Learner Profile

This course is designed for heterogeneous Grade 9 classrooms and assumes a mixed-ability cohort. Students may enter with uneven reading stamina, developing confidence in analytical writing, and varying experience participating in academic discussion.

Support and challenge are embedded through task design rather than separate streams or parallel materials. Differentiation is achieved through tiered complexity, flexible text selection, scaffolded success criteria, and opportunities for extension through synthesis and inquiry. The course is equally appropriate for students requiring structured support and for those ready to engage with more complex analytical demands.

Design Principles

- **Skill progression over content coverage**
Texts and genres function as vehicles for deliberate skill development, with clear progression in complexity, precision, and independence across the year.
- **Assessment as demonstration of understanding**
Major assessments are designed as performance tasks that require students to apply reading, writing, and thinking skills in authentic and transferable ways.
- **Structure with professional autonomy**
The framework establishes coherence at the course level while protecting teacher judgment in text choice, pacing, and instructional strategies.

End-of-Course

By the end of the course, students will be able to

Capacities

- read a range of literary and informational texts with increasing independence and critical awareness
- analyze how authors use language, structure, and perspective to shape meaning
- communicate ideas clearly and coherently in written, oral, and multimodal forms
- support interpretations and arguments using relevant, well-integrated evidence
- reflect on their growth as readers, writers, and communicators across contexts

CONTENT SNAPSHOT	
Course Level	Grade 9
Course Length	Full academic year
Units	4 thematic units
Assessment Model	Performance-task based
Text Selection	Teacher-selected within framework

YEAR AT A GLANCE

Unit	Central Focus	Core Skills Emphasized	Major Performance Task
Unit 1: Stories That Shape Us	How narratives shape identity and understanding	Close reading, inference, use of textual evidence, paragraph structure, narrative analysis	Analytical response to a short story, memoir, or narrative nonfiction text
Unit 2: Voice, Power, and Perspective	How voice and perspective influence meaning and power	Author's choices, point of view, rhetoric, discussion skills, comparative thinking	Interpretive analysis (written or multimodal) examining perspective and voice
Unit 3: Ideas Worth Arguing	How ideas are developed, challenged, and defended	Claims and counterclaims, evidence evaluation, argument structure, synthesis	Structured argumentative piece addressing a debatable question
Unit 4: Independent Inquiry – The Human Question	How individuals investigate and communicate complex questions	Research skills, source integration, synthesis, reflection, independent planning	Independent inquiry project with written, oral, or multimodal component

Executive Overview: What This Course Does and Why It Matters

The Problem This Course Solves

Most secondary English programs oscillate between content coverage and isolated skill practice. Students complete texts and essays, but skill progression is often implicit rather than deliberately structured. As a result, independence, argumentation, and inquiry are uneven by the end of the year.

This course addresses that gap by designing a deliberate progression from supported interpretation to independent inquiry, ensuring that analytical depth and autonomy increase intentionally across units.

What Makes This Course Different

Coherent Skill Progression

Each unit builds deliberately toward greater independence, moving from close reading to rhetorical analysis, structured argument, and independent inquiry.

Performance-Based Assessment

Major assessments require application and transfer, not recall. Students demonstrate understanding through analytical, argumentative, and inquiry-driven tasks.

Structured Flexibility

The framework provides clarity and coherence while allowing teachers professional discretion in text selection and pacing.

Emphasis on Transfer

Students learn to apply reading, writing, and research skills across genres and contexts rather than within isolated assignments.

Adaptability and Context Alignment

The framework is designed to align with a school’s mission, learner profile, and text preferences. Schools may retain existing core texts or adopt new ones within the structure. The emphasis remains on skill progression and assessment clarity rather than prescribed reading lists.

What Implementation Can Look Like

Full-Year Course Adoption

Complete implementation of the four-unit framework, adapted to local texts and scheduling.

Unit Integration

Adoption of one or two units within an existing program to strengthen progression and assessment alignment.

Department Redesign Support

Collaborative consultation to align existing courses with skills progression, performance tasks, and clearer assessment structures.

What Schools Gain

- Clearer progression across grade levels
- Greater coherence in assessment design
- Increased student independence and depth of thinking
- A flexible framework aligned with contemporary literacy research

This course framework is intended to support sustained literacy development while preserving teacher autonomy. Detailed course documentation and implementation consultation are available upon request.

Unit 1: Stories That Shape Us

UNIT SNAPSHOT	
Duration	~6–8 weeks
Central Question	How do stories shape identity and understanding?
Culminating Task	Analytical response to a narrative text

Rationale

This opening unit establishes the foundational reading and analytical skills that will support learning throughout the course. Through short fiction, memoir, and narrative nonfiction, students explore how stories shape identity and meaning while developing close reading habits, inference skills, and evidence-based thinking. The unit provides structured support as students transition into secondary-level English expectations.

UNIT 1: STORIES THAT SHAPE US

Learning Experiences

- Reading narrative texts closely in order to determine explicit meaning, draw logical inferences, and support interpretations with relevant textual evidence in both discussion and writing.
- Analyzing how authors use narrative elements such as character, setting, conflict, structure, and detail to shape meaning and influence reader understanding.
- Practicing analytical writing through short, focused responses that emphasize clarity of interpretation, purposeful evidence selection, and coherent paragraph structure.
- Participating in structured discussions that require students to articulate ideas, respond to differing interpretations, and reference specific moments from the text.
- Revising written work based on feedback, with attention to strengthening interpretation, integrating evidence more effectively, and improving organization and sentence clarity.
- Expanding academic and domain-specific vocabulary through reading, discussion, and writing, and applying new language accurately in analytical contexts.

Essential Questions

- How do stories shape the way individuals understand themselves and others?
- What makes a story feel truthful, meaningful, or powerful to a reader?
- How do authors use narrative choices to influence interpretation and response?

Core Skills

- close reading and annotation to identify key ideas and details
- making inferences supported by relevant textual evidence
- distinguishing between summary and interpretation
- writing clear, coherent analytical paragraphs
- participating in academic discussion using textual support

Major Performance Task

Students will produce an analytical response to a narrative text examining how the author uses storytelling elements to shape meaning and influence the reader’s understanding of identity and experience. The task requires students to present a clear interpretation supported by relevant textual evidence and to demonstrate control over analytical paragraph structure and academic language.

The task may be adapted through text complexity, response length, or scaffolding to meet diverse learner needs while maintaining shared expectations for interpretation, evidence use, and clarity of reasoning.

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Focus

Assessment in this unit emphasizes students’ ability to move beyond summary toward interpretation. Priority is given to clarity of ideas, effective selection and integration of textual evidence, and the development of coherent analytical paragraphs. Feedback is used to support growth and establish shared expectations for academic writing early in the course.

Evidence of Learning

Evidence of learning includes analytical writing, participation in text-based discussion, and revision of written work in response to feedback. These forms of evidence are used formatively to inform instruction and support student progress throughout the unit.

DIFFERENTIATION

Access & Challenge

Differentiation and extension are built into the unit through task design and text choice, allowing common expectations while responding to varied readiness.

Differentiation

- Flexible text selection (varying length/complexity) while keeping shared questions and skills
- Scaffolded analysis supports (annotation prompts, evidence stems, paragraph frames as needed)
- Adjusted task expectations through response length or guided steps, without lowering core criteria for interpretation and evidence

Extension

- Comparative analysis across two narratives or perspectives (theme, voice, or authorial choices)
- Independent text selection aligned with unit themes, leading to a deeper or more sustained analytical response