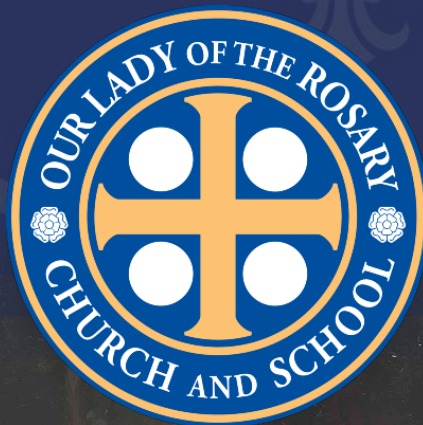




English I Curriculum

Grade 09



Course Overview

Course Description

This course traces the development of English literature from ancient epic to medieval poetry, examining how ideals of glory, honor, and heroism evolve from pagan fatalism to Christian virtue. Students study foundational texts such as *The Iliad*, *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *The Canterbury Tales*, exploring key concepts like free will, natural and divine law, the problem of evil, and stoicism. Emphasis is placed on classical rhetoric (including anaphora), poetic devices (such as rhyme, meter, epithet, kenning, caesura, and alliteration), and historical context—from the Trojan War and Rome’s conquest of Britain to the Viking and Norman invasions. Assessments include annotated readings, essays, recitations, and in-class tests, all aimed at cultivating rhetorical skill, moral imagination, and literary insight.










Why We Teach It...

We teach Ancient and Medieval English Literature to immerse students in the origins of the Western literary and moral tradition. These texts do more than tell stories—they raise enduring questions about fate and freedom, justice and suffering, virtue and vice. By encountering heroes from Homer to Chaucer, students witness the transformation of heroism from the glory of battle to the pursuit of holiness. Studying these works deepens students’ understanding of natural and divine law, awakens moral imagination, and trains them to read closely, think critically, and speak persuasively. These stories, shaped by the rise and fall of empires and the conversion of cultures, offer students a vision of the good life rooted in honor, truth, and sacrifice—virtues urgently needed in our own age.



Course Objectives

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

-  Learn the key historical and literary developments shaping ancient and medieval English literature.
-  Analyze the causes and consequences of major events such as the Crusades, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution.
-  Analyze epic and medieval texts for enduring themes like honor, fate, and the problem of evil.
-  Identify and interpret poetic devices such as meter, alliteration, kenning, and caesura.
-  Practice active annotation to cultivate close, thoughtful reading.
-  Write persuasive essays mastering the classical oration.
-  Develop rhetorical skill through imitation, memorization, and structured composition.
-  Form moral imagination by reflecting on natural law, divine law, and heroic virtue.
-  Seek truth, love goodness, and behold beauty through the study of great literature.

Source Material

Antigone, Sophocles

The Illiad, Homer











Old English Poems (selections)

Beowulf

Sir Gawain & the Green Knight



Central Themes

-  **Fate and Free Will:** Human beings strive for control in a world governed by forces beyond them.
-  **Honor and Heroism:** True heroism requires more than strength—it demands virtue and sacrifice.
-  **Pride and the Fall:** Pride blinds the noble, leading even the great to ruin.
-  **Divine and Natural Law:** Moral order is higher than the laws of kings.
-  **The Fragility of Power:** All earthly kingdoms fall, even those built by heroes.
-  **Wisdom Through Suffering:** Suffering is the beginning of self-knowledge.
-  **Death and Glory:** How one dies reveals how one has lived.
-  **Loyalty and Betrayal:** Allegiance to truth is often tested by friendship or fear.
-  **Virtue and Temptation:** Every trial of the body is a trial of the soul.
-  **The Power of Speech:** Words reveal, persuade, and destroy.



Key Concepts

Ancient Literature

Epic poetry

Rhyme and meter

Glory

Honor

Fatalism

The Problem of Free Will

Natural Law

Divine Law

Epithet

The Problem of Evil

Stoicism

Ends and Means

Classical Rhetoric

Anaphora

Medieval Literature

Anglo-Saxon

Old English

Alliteration

Kenning

Caesura

The Viking Age

Norman

Middle English

The Viking Age

On Writing

All written work in this course integrates Our Lady's Writing Curriculum, a program rooted in the tradition of the classical oration and the progymnasmata—the ancient exercises that trained students in the art of eloquence, clarity, and persuasion. Students will be guided through structured stages of composition, learning to narrate, describe, argue, and exhort with both precision and grace.

Writing is not treated as a mere skill, but as a moral and intellectual discipline—a means of pursuing truth and communicating it rightly. In keeping with the classical model, students will imitate excellent forms, internalize timeless principles, and ultimately express their own judgments with charity, courage, and rhetorical power.



Assessments

Summative: 45%

- Major Recitations
- Tests
- Essays (Expository & Persuasive)
- Quizzes

Formative: 35%

- Reading Annotation
- Essay Process
- Quizzes

Conscientiousness 20%

- Homework
- Classwork
- Pop Quizzes
- Participation



Scope & Sequence

Unit 1 | The Road to Wisdom

2 Weeks

Week 1-2 Overview: Ancient Greece (Antigone)

Through *Antigone* and Fagles' "Why Study the Pagan Classics," students explore how suffering becomes the gateway to moral insight, and how ancient voices continue to shape the pursuit of truth.

Theme

Wisdom comes from suffering.

Central-One-Idea

Suffering, when faced with reverence for divine law, becomes the means by which man discerns truth and gains moral clarity.

Key Concepts & Figures

Tragedy; Divine Law; Hubris; Catharsis; Death of Sophocles (406 BC); Burial Conflict in *Antigone*; *Antigone*; Creon

Sources: *Antigone*, Robert Fagles; *Why Study the Pagan Classics*, Cheryl Lowe



Unit 2

Wrath and the Ruin of Men

12 Weeks

Week 3-15 Overview: Ancient Greece (The Iliad)

In Homer's Iliad, students examine the destructive power of wrath and the heroic code, while confronting timeless questions about fate, honor, and what it means to die well.

Theme

Prayers are as daughters to Great Zeus.

Battle with your pride, cherish not your anger.

There is one duty only, that a man fight for his country.

Central-One-Idea

Unchecked wrath shatters human fellowship, and honor, pity, and prayer begin to restore what war and pride destroy.

Key Terms, Events, & People

Kleos (glory); Xenia (guest-friendship); Epic Simile; Fatalism; Trojan War (traditional date: 1194–1184 BC); Composition of The Iliad (c. 750 BC); Duel between; Achilles and Hector; Death of Patroclus; Achilles; Hector; Priam; Agamemnon

Sources: *The Iliad*, Homer; *Intro to the Seven Last Words of Christ*, Ven. Fulton J. Sheen

Unit 3

Of Monsters & Men

9 Weeks

Week 16-20 Overview: Middle Ages

Beowulf is an Old English heroic epic that tells the story of a noble warrior who defeats monstrous foes and faces death with honor, portraying the ideal of loyalty, courage, and the tragic nobility of man's struggle against evil and fate.



Unit 3 | Of Monsters & Men (Continued...) 9 Weeks

Week 16-20

Theme

To die well, one must live with honor.

Central-One-Idea

In a world haunted by evil and shaped by fate, the heroic life is a life marked by loyalty, sacrificial courage, and a readiness to die in defense of the good.

Key Terms, Events, & People

Epic; Anglo-Saxon; Kenning; Wyrd; Thane; Beowulf; Hrothgar; Grendel; Grendel's Mother; The Dragon; Beowulf Battles Grendel; Hero's Noble Death

Sources: *British Tradition I; Beowulf, Serallier*

Unit 4 | The Hidden Heart 7 Weeks

Week 21-27

Overview: Late Middle Ages

Middle English Poems and Sir Gawain & the Green Knight

Theme

Rend your hearts, not your garments.

Central-One-Idea

true honor lies not in outward appearances or courtly deeds, but in a contrite heart that acknowledges failure and seeks grace.

Key Terms, Events, & People

Chivalry, Courtly Love, Contrition, Pentangle, Temptation, Sir Gawain, the Green Knight, Lady Bertilak, Lord Bertilak, King Arthur,

Sources: *British Tradition I, Memoria Press; Sir Gawain & the Green Knight, Brian Stone*



Course Catechism

This section is structured as a series of questions and answers—intended to cultivate wisdom, virtue, and a love of tradition in the soul of the reader. Drawing from classical education, Christian orthodoxy, and the accumulated insights of Western civilization, this catechism aims to form not only the mind but the moral imagination.



Each question is crafted to provoke contemplation, and each answer is more than mere information—it is a small liturgy of truth, designed to be memorized, internalized, and lived. In the tradition of ancient catechisms, this section assumes that learning is not just for passing tests, but for becoming someone.

Section I | The Soul of the West

Q: What is the purpose of literature?

A: *To seek wisdom through the stories of men, discovering what is true, noble, and eternal.*

Q: Why study ancient and medieval literature?

A: *Because these works reveal what has always been true about man, suffering, greatness, and God.*

Q: What must the student bring to each text?

A: *Humility, memory, courage, and the willingness to be changed.*

Q: What does it mean to read classically?

A: *To read slowly, with reverence, seeing not only what a story says, but what it loves.*

Q: What is the goal of this course?

A: *To train the affections of the student toward the good through stories that endure.*



Section II | The Road to Wisdom

Q: What are we studying?

A: *Greek tragedy and the role of suffering in gaining moral insight.*

Q: What is tragedy?

A: *Tragedy is a story in which man learns wisdom through suffering.*

Q: What law governs tragedy?

A: *Divine Law—a higher order that humbles even kings.*

Q: Why do we begin with Antigone?

A: *Because she chooses what is right even when it costs her everything.*

Q: What does Antigone teach us about law?

A: *That no human law is higher than the law of the gods.*

Section III | Wrath & Ruin of Men

Q: What are we studying?

A: *Homer's Iliad, the destructive power of wrath, and the cost of honor.*

Q: What is the central conflict in the Iliad?

A: *The wrath of Achilles and the tragedy it brings to Greeks and Trojans alike.*

Q: What is a hero in Homer's world?

A: *A man who chooses glory and honor, even at the cost of peace.*

Q: What does Homer teach about the gods?

A: *That the gods are powerful but not always just; man must choose wisely.*

Q: What ruins great men?

A: *Pride, when it refuses to forgive or yield.*



Section IV | Of Monsters & Men

Q: What are we studying?

A: *The epic Beowulf, a tale of courage, loyalty, and sacrificial leadership.*

Q: What is Beowulf's great strength?

A: *Not only his might, but his willingness to die for others.*

Q: Who are the monsters Beowulf fights?

A: *Grendel, Grendel's mother, and the dragon—each representing different evils.*

Q: What does Beowulf teach about kingship?

A: *That true greatness lies in self-sacrifice, not self-preservation.*

Q: What is the greatest monster?

A: *Fear of death, which makes cowards of those called to courage.*

Section V | The Hidden Heart

Q: What are we studying?

A: *Middle English poetry and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a tale of temptation and repentance.*

Q: What test does Gawain face?

A: *The test of the hidden heart—whether he will be honest, pure, and faithful when it costs him.*

Q: What does the Green Knight represent?

A: *Divine testing and the call to inner repentance, not mere external obedience.*

Q: What does Gawain learn in the end?

A: *That even the best men fail, and true honor is found in humility.*

Q: Why does Gawain wear the green girdle?

A: *As a sign of his failure—and his honesty in admitting it.*



Section VI | Recitations

Q: What does the poet seek at the journey's end?

A: *He enters the cathedral with weary steps,
and stands in stillness as shadows fall.
He has labored long,
but at last his labor turns to prayer:*

*“Oft have I seen at some cathedral door
A laborer, pausing in the dust and heat,
Lay down his burden, and with reverent feet
Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor
Kneel to repeat his pater-noster o’er;
Far off the noises of the world retreat;
The loud vociferations of the street
Become an undistinguishable roar.*

*So, as I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate,
Kneeling in prayer, and not ashamed to pray,
The tumult of the time disconsolate
To inarticulate murmurs dies away,
While the eternal ages watch and wait.”*

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Q: What beauty is hidden in the stillness of the night?

A: *Was this His coming! I had hoped to see
A scene of marvelous glory, as was told
Of old, when God came down in wrath to free
His chosen people from the Egyptian fold;
A scene of darkness riven by the gold
Of lightning, and wild thunders hovering dim:
But this was gentle: in the courts of gold
I saw Him kneel with her and call on Him.*

*And at the marriage feast, upon her head
He poured the mystic water, and she wore*



Section VI | Recitations (Continued...)

*His crown of thorns, and, lo! she was not dead,
But walked with Him beside the sunlit shore;
I saw her come from out the garden close,
And yet He wore no crown of thorns, no scar of those.*

Q: Whose voice begins the song of wrath and ruin?

*A: Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans countless losses,
hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,
great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,
feasts for the dogs and birds,
and the will of Zeus was moving toward its end.*

*Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,
Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.*

Q: What wisdom does the old man offer the young warrior?

*A: Even the gods can bend.
Superior as they are in honor, power, and every virtue,
still they can be swayed by prayers.
And prayers are daughters of almighty Zeus,
lamed and wrinkled, who follow behind
Folly, the reckless spirit that blinds men.
But those who honor them,
the gods hear and grant requests.*

*Achilles, be moved.
Turn from this heart-devouring wrath.
The gifts Agamemnon offers are rich—
honor awaits you from all the Achaeans.*

*Don't wait till it's too late.
Even Hector draws near—tomorrow may be the burning of our ships.*



Section VI | Recitations (Continued...)

Q: How does the hero return from the deep?

A: *They came to the place,
following the trail, the marks of the monster's desperate flight,
blood spattered and gory. Then the lake boiled,
surged and stained with sword-blood.*

*He leapt in the water.
And when the waves settled,
they saw him, strong-armed and triumphant,
carrying the hilt of the giants' sword.*

*So the hero came back from the deeps,
Beowulf, beloved of the Geats,
the hall bright again with hope,
the arm of Grendel nailed to the wall.*

Q: How does the knight meet the hour of judgment?

A: *Beneath a mound, on the brink of a brook,
he found a hollow—a cave in the hill,
overgrown with grass—and it seemed the chapel.*

*"Who dwells in this place?" cried Gawain aloud.
"Is this God's house, or a haunt of fiends?"*

*Then came the grind of a blade on a whetstone,
echoing in the gorge like a grim blacksmith.*

*The Green Knight appeared, axe in hand.
Gawain bent his neck, baring it for the blow.*

*The axe fell—but spared his life.
"You kept your pact, knight," said the Green Man,
"though not without fault. Take the girdle.
Remember your weakness—and grow in grace."*

*And so Gawain returned to Camelot,
shamed but wiser, the green sash at his side,
and the court rejoiced—not in perfection,
but in honesty made humble.*



Week 1

Weekly Logos

What is a Civilization?

Students will be introduced to the genre of classical tragedy through a close reading of Sophocles' *Antigone*, focusing on the conflict between divine law and human authority. They will examine how *Antigone*'s suffering reveals the moral clarity that comes from obedience to a higher, eternal law. Through discussion and reflection, students will consider how pride blinds rulers and how suffering, rightly endured, can awaken the conscience. By the end of the week, students will be able to articulate why true justice is not determined by power, but by alignment with the divine order.

What Are We Assessing?

The Facts

- ▣ The play follows the structure of classical tragedy: prologue, parodos, episodes, stasimon (choral odes), and exodus.
- ▣ The tragic conflict centers on divine law (*Antigone*) versus human law (Creon).

- ▣ *Antigone* is considered a tragic heroine because she chooses to suffer and die for a moral law higher than the king's command.
- ▣ *Antigone* is a Greek tragedy written in verse and performed as part of a religious festival in 5th-century BC Athens.

What Are We Assessing?

The Skills

- ▣ Identify key features of Greek tragedy.
- ▣ Summarize *Antigone*'s moral argument.
- ▣ Explain the conflict between divine and human law.
- ▣ Cite textual evidence in discussion.
- ▣ Compose a thoughtful written response.



What Are We Assessing? | The Truths

When man defies eternal law, his power collapses; but when he suffers for what is right, he becomes truly free.

These truths unify every element of the lesson:

Human law collapses when it defies the divine.

Suffering is not meaningless—it awakens the conscience and reveals the soul.

True justice belongs not to kings, but to the eternal law written by God.

Assessments | Suggested Types

Written Self-Examination

Prompt: Have I ever obeyed what is right even when it cost me? Students write a one-paragraph reflection drawing connections between Antigone’s courage and their own experience of moral choice.

Choral Reading & Reflection

Students read selected lines of the Chorus aloud, then write a short paragraph explaining how the Chorus functions as moral commentary in the play.

Virtue Journal

Throughout the week, students record examples of pride and humility from the text—and from their daily lives—culminating in a short response: Which character do I most resemble today, and why?

Structured Socratic Discussion:

Students participate in a guided discussion analyzing Antigone’s choice: Is she right to disobey Creon? Students must cite the text and distinguish between human and divine law.



Pacing | By Week

| <i>Day</i> | <i>Focus</i> | <i>Homework</i> |
|------------|---|---|
| Monday | What is tragedy? What is the conflict between divine and human law? | Read Antigone, lines 1–331 (Prologue through Ode I); annotate lines of moral conflict. |
| Tuesday | Who is Antigone? Why does she act? Who holds true authority? | <i>Read lines 332–675 (Episode I–II); write: “Is Antigone right to disobey Creon?”</i> |
| Wednesday | What blinds Creon? What awakens conscience? | Read lines 676–1090 (Episode III–Ode IV); write a brief summary of Creon’s downfall. |
| Thursday | What is the role of the Chorus? What does suffering reveal? | Finish Antigone; complete Choral Reading & Reflection paragraph. |
| Friday | Seminar & Reflection: What is justice? What is freedom? | Review key terms & characters; write Virtue Journal entry + Self-Examination paragraph. |



Teacher Tips

Open with Drama: Read the opening lines aloud with reverence and pacing; let students feel the tension of Antigone's defiance before explaining it.

Frame the Law: Post the distinction between Divine Law and Human Law visibly in the classroom—return to it often as characters speak and fall.

Ask Moral Questions: Is obedience always good? What makes a law just? Would you die for truth if no one applauded you?

Use the Chorus: Treat the Chorus as a teacher—not just a speaker. Ask: What wisdom do they see that the characters cannot?

Connect Tragedy to Life: Discuss: When have we learned something true only after suffering? What does suffering reveal that comfort hides?

Appendix

Essays In This Course...

Each of the three major essays in this course will follow the structure and spirit of our Classical Writing Curriculum at Our Lady of the Rosary. Students are expected to write with clarity, order, and persuasive force, employing the Classical Oration form:

- Exordium – The introduction that gains attention and builds ethos
- Narratio – Background/context, statement of facts/narration of events
- Divisio – Outline of major arguments
- Confirmatio – 3 Proofs & Sub-Proofs (body paragraphs)
- Refutatio – Address and refute opposing arguments
- Peroratio – The conclusion: moving the heart, restating the truth

Each essay must be a minimum of 3 full pages.

Prompt I

*According to the authors of antiquity we have studied so far,
how should we respond to suffering?*

Objective: Students will analyze how ancient authors portray suffering and what response they commend—whether as punishment, purification, or a path to wisdom. Using textual evidence, students will craft a clear, well-reasoned essay defending a thesis on the proper response

Sources: Antigone, The Iliad



Prompt II

Who is the greatest hero of The Iliad?

Objective: Students will evaluate competing models of heroism in The Iliad, considering figures such as Achilles, Hector, and others. They will defend a thesis identifying the greatest hero based on the text's portrayal of virtue, honor, and sacrifice.

Sources: The Iliad

Prompt III

From classical paganism to medieval Christianity, how does the vision of heroism evolve?

Objective: Students will examine how the concept of heroism transforms from classical pagan texts to medieval Christian literature. They will defend a thesis tracing this development through key figures, values, and moral ideals presented in the works studied.

Sources: Antigone, The Iliad, & Beowulf, British Tradition I

Prompt IV

Compare and contrast the central ideas of Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.

Objective: Students will compare and contrast the central ideas of Beowulf and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, focusing on their portrayals of heroism, virtue, and moral testing. They will defend a thesis that articulates both the shared foundations and key differences in the heroic ideals of these two medieval works.

Sources: Antigone, The Iliad, & Beowulf, British Tradition I

