English at Burke

We teach the insightful analysis of literature and the skills of self-expression, including both creative and analytical writing. Students study a wide range of classic and contemporary works of world literature in all major genres and develop the skills to analyze literature within its historical and artistic contexts. To teach writing, we begin with close reading and classroom discussion and then move to drafting, editing and revision. Students learn the fundamental components of composition, grammar and vocabulary sequentially from middle school through high school.

Middle School

Our younger students focus on developing the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills required to grapple deeply with the engaging texts they’ll encounter. The literature in each grade is centered on an essential question. Middle school students study the parts of speech and sentence structures, and then practice using them while developing their own critical and creative voices.

In 6th grade, students focus on “Who am I?” as an individual living in an ever-expanding community. They explore that question in an integrated Core curriculum that brings together English, Geography, History and Values.

In 7th grade, the question becomes “Who are they?” as students engage with texts set in parts of the world studied in Geography class. In these books they meet fascinating characters whose lives, which seem so different on the surface, ultimately reveal the commonality of our shared experiences.

In 8th grade, students return to the question of “Who am I?” in a more personal sense, and using the example of classic American novels, they begin to develop a deeper understanding of themselves as writers and thinkers.
High School

**Beginning with the 9th grade** Genres course, we teach our students to appreciate a breadth of literature, from acknowledged classics to contemporary, emerging styles.

**In 10th grade**, Burke students encounter works from the British Isles to the Commonwealth in their exploration of the roots of English literature’s developing moral worldview.

**In 11th grade**, Burke students engage with units designed around skills and competencies, and choose their own texts from a recommended list as they read and write their way through classic and contemporary American Literature.

**In 12th grade**, students can choose from a host of exciting electives, including the Graphic Novel, Horror and Supernatural Literature, Existentialism, and various Creative Writing Workshops, among others. Burke also offers seniors AP Literature & Composition as well as any number of Independent Studies on a wide array of topics.

*Our English program is designed so that a graduating Burke senior will:*

In writing:
- understand the parts of speech and types of sentences
- express him or herself clearly, with skill and precision, in sentences, paragraphs, and essays
- be conscious of his or her own style and purposefully develop his or her own writing voice
- choose words with a mature diction and wide vocabulary
- understand and embrace the pre-writing, drafting, and revision processes
- write personal essays and short pieces of fiction with enjoyment and confidence

In reading:
- think critically about what they read
- distinguish a writer’s particular voice and analyze why they’ve made certain choices
- build a vision, even while reading, of what he or she would say about a work in a discussion.