

PSAT Reading and Writing

Literature, Grammar and Academic Writing

This Grade 9 course integrates thematic literature, PSAT Reading and Writing practice, systematic grammar, and academic essays. Students develop reading comprehension and vocabulary, then apply close reading and evidence-based reasoning to test questions and original writing.

Course Theme

Identity and Responsibility in Society

Three connected themes guide the course: identity and belonging; power and fairness; knowledge and human dignity. Guided reading explores how social pressures shape choices and responsibilities.

Novels

Reading and Author	Thematic Focus
A Separate Peace John Knowles	Identity and belonging: friendship, rivalry, self-deception, and responsibility.
Lord of the Flies William Golding	Power and fairness: leadership, group pressure, fear, and the fragility of social order.

Short Stories

Reading and Author	Thematic Focus
Harrison Bergeron Kurt Vonnegut	Equality, individual freedom, and the misuse of authority.
Flowers for Algernon Daniel Keyes	The original short story: intelligence, empathy, exclusion, and ethical responsibility.

Poetry

Poem and Poet	Connection and Literary Focus
We Wear the Mask Paul Laurence Dunbar	Concealment and identity; metaphor and irony. Pair with A Separate Peace, noting different historical contexts.
I, Too Langston Hughes	Exclusion and dignity; voice and tone. Contrast with unequal treatment in Harrison Bergeron.
When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer Walt Whitman	Knowledge and experience; repetition and contrast. Pair with Flowers for Algernon.

Reading scope: One core novel with comparative excerpts from the other; pacing follows course length and student readiness.

PSAT Test Prep

Instruction begins with PSAT 8/9 level skills and builds toward PSAT 10 and PSAT/NMSQT readiness. Short passages in literature, history, social science, and science complement the sustained reading program. Practice includes paired texts and information presented in tables and graphs.

Content Domain	Question Types and Practice
Information and Ideas	Central ideas and details; inferences; textual and quantitative evidence. Separate what a passage states from what the evidence supports.
Craft and Structure	Words in context; text structure and purpose; connections between texts. Analyze a sentence's role, a writer's purpose, and agreements or differences in perspective.
Standard English Conventions	Sentence boundaries and grammatical form, structure, and sense. Identify the sentence core before choosing a correction.
Expression of Ideas	Transitions and rhetorical synthesis. Select information and wording that meet a stated writing goal.

Practice and Review

Move from untimed skill sets to mixed practice and timed modules. A standard digital Reading and Writing section has 54 questions across two 32-minute modules. Review requires students to explain the correct answer, reject distractors, and record the evidence or rule they missed. Official Bluebook practice introduces the adaptive test experience.

Reading Comprehension and Problem Solving

Identify the topic and main idea, then summarize the passage in one sentence. Mark keywords, repeated concepts, contrast and cause-and-effect signals, and limiting words. Label each sentence's role: claim, evidence, example, contrast, or conclusion. Use these relationships to locate support for an inference and distinguish central points from details.

For each question, identify the task, predict the needed answer, and compare choices against the text. Explain why distractors distort the passage, overstate a claim, reverse a relationship, or add unsupported information. Keyword matches alone are not evidence. Review errors by skill and repeat related questions.

Vocabulary and Literary Devices

Vocabulary study covers context clues, roots and affixes, word families, synonyms, antonyms, and connotation. Cumulative quizzes combine meanings, words in context, and original sentences. Literary analysis applies metaphor, symbolism, imagery, irony, satire, allegory, narrative reliability, and tone.

Connecting Themes to Skills

Each unit links close reading, PSAT practice, grammar application, and a written response.

Identity and belonging connects inference and perspective to character analysis. Power and fairness links textual evidence and cross-text comparison to argument writing. Knowledge and human dignity connects purpose, synthesis, and science passages to comparative essays. Grammar practice supports each written response.

Systematic Grammar

Grammar progresses from sentence structure to punctuation, usage, and revision. Each stage combines explicit instruction, PSAT-style editing, and application to the student's own writing.

Stage	Grammar Focus	Writing Application
1 Sentence Structure	Subjects and finite verbs; phrases; independent and dependent clauses.	Identify sentence cores and build complete sentences.
2 Sentence Boundaries	Fragments, run-ons, comma splices; coordination and subordination.	Combine ideas without creating sentence errors.
3 Punctuation	Commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, apostrophes; essential and nonessential information.	Punctuate explanations, quotations, and added detail.
4 Verbs and Pronouns	Subject-verb agreement; tense and verb forms; pronoun agreement, case, and reference.	Maintain consistency and clear references.
5 Modifiers and Structure	Modifier placement; parallel structure; logical comparisons.	Clarify relationships and balance ideas.
6 Cohesion and Precision	Transitions, concision, word choice, and rhetorical goals.	Revise paragraphs for logic, flow, and purpose.

Test framework: College Board, PSAT 8/9 Reading and Writing; PSAT/NMSQT Reading and Writing. Academic essays are a separate course component; the PSAT does not include an essay task.

Academic Writing

Writing Form	Instruction and Expected Work
Analytical Paragraphs	Develop a focused claim, integrate a quotation or paraphrase, and explain how the evidence supports the interpretation.
Literary Analysis	Construct a thesis about theme, characterization, or authorial choices. Organize body paragraphs around a sustained line of reasoning.
Comparative Essays	Use a shared question to compare two texts. Explain meaningful differences in perspective, form, or historical context.
Argument and Synthesis	Build a defensible position from literary and nonfiction sources. Address a counterargument and revise for evidence, logic, and clarity.

Progress and Assessment

A diagnostic sets priorities. Cumulative vocabulary quizzes, reading annotations, grammar checks, timed question sets, and revised essays track progress. Feedback identifies recurring errors and next steps.