

Ivy College Guru

Dr. Gavin Wittje

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2026 Summer Session English Fundamentals Class Syllabus **An 11-week summer session; one meeting per week**

Saturday 3-5 pm (PST) from 6/6 – 8/15/2026

or

Sunday 2pm-4pm (PST) from 6/7 – 8/16/2026

I. Purpose of the program

Dr. Gavin Wittje has designed the following English enhancement program specifically for talented middle school students with the following overall goals:

1. Increasing students' skills in English vocabulary, reading, writing, and grammar
2. Practicing SSAT/ISEE/HSPT for High School Entrance Exams or just for enhancing your test skills
3. Getting an early start in PSAT/SAT tests and college preparations
4. Heightening students' capability to understand and enjoy life
5. Deepening students' all-round knowledge about humanities and social sciences
6. Enriching students' educational experience overall

II. Major Contents of the program

The class will consist of the following specific contents and learning objectives:

1. Massive vocabulary-building in 11 weeks
2. Guided classic English reading: read three classic novels and 11 classic poems
3. Guided and graded writing assignments
4. Feedback on each writing assignment for each student
5. Multiple exercises and assignments related to SSAT/ISEE/HSPT tests

III. Textbooks and Study Materials

The class requires a number of books and other materials, most of which can be purchased online:

1. *English Fundamentals Study Guide* (Summer 2026)
2. *Sixth Edition, The Ultimate Guide to SAT Grammar* by Erica Meltzer (digital version)
3. *Vocabulary Workshop: Level B* (ISBN: 978-0821580073)
4. Three classic literature books:
 - *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula K. Le Guin (ISBN: 978-0547773742)
 - *The Martian Chronicles* by Ray Bradbury (ISBN: 978-1451678192)
 - *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White (ISBN: 9780441627400)

4. Various Instructor Handouts

IV. Schedule of the English Fundamentals Program

Class	Dates	Reading/Literature/Poems	Writing	VocabWorkshop Level B	HSPT Practice Tests
1	6/6, 6/7	“The Old Pond” and “A Caterpillar” by Matsuo Basho <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> by Ursula K. Le Guin	Haiku Writing	Introduction Unit 1, Unit2	Verbal Skills: Synonyms
2	6/13, 14	“Rain” by Francis Ponge <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> by Ursula K. Le Guin	Review of Essay Structure	Unit 3, Unit4	English Usage /Verbal Skills
3	6/20, 21	“XIV” by Derek Walcott <i>A Wizard of Earthsea</i> by Ursula K. Le Guin	Country Music Humor Writing	Unit 5	English Usage /Verbal Skills
4	6/28, 29	“The Stones of Chile” by Pablo Neruda <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> by Ray Bradbury	Stone Poems	Unit 6, Unit7	Language Composition & Expression
5	7/5, 6	“The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter” by Ezra Pound <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> by Ray Bradbury	Writing Activity: Machinery Magic	Unit 8, Unit9	Punctuation & Capitalization
6	7/12, 13	Three Poems by Paul Celan: “Your Hand”, “Night Ray” and “Flower” <i>The Martian Chronicles</i> by Ray Bradbury	Creative Writing: The Put-Down Poem	Unit 10	Verbal Skills/Spelling
7	7/19, 20	“Drinking Alone by Moonlight” by Li Bai <i>The Once and Future King</i> by T. H. White	Creative Writing: Cinquain	Unit 11, Unit12	Verbal Skills: Reading
8	7/26, 27	Sonnet Number 1 from <i>Sonnets for Orpheus</i> by Rainer Maria Rilke <i>The Once and Future King</i> by T. H. White	Creative Writing: Online Dating	Unit 13, Unit14	Verbal Logic
9	8/2, 3	“See Him Again” by Gabriela Mistral <i>The Once and Future King</i> by T. H. White	Creative Writing: Write a Mystery	Unit 15	Verbal Skills: Antonyms
10	8/9, 10	“No More Clichés” by Octavio Paz <i>The Once and Future King</i> by T. H. White	Creative Advertising Copy	Review Units 1-7	Verbal Skills: Analogies
11	8/16, 17	“Sunstone” by Octavio Paz <i>The Once and Future King</i> by T. H. White	Free Write	Review Units 8-15	Review