



## ANOTHER FRESH START



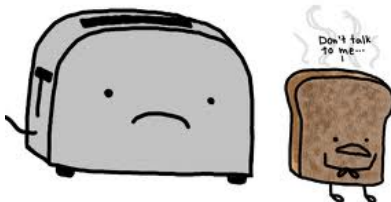
The fourth quarter begins. Everyone has a fresh start. It is a time to cast off the old, and start with something new...a new attitude (hopefully, a good one), a new energy, and a new purpose.

It is a long push to the end with only Memorial Day to break up the journey. This is the time of year when apathy and procrastination take hold. Keep your heads up. Although it is a long push, it goes by incredibly fast. The sheer multiplicity of events, shows, testing, etc., wreaks havoc and mayhem on our schedule and student organization.

Use the Google calendar, planner, Synergy, and time management skills to keep track of work and plan ahead. Use a reward system, take things away, etc. to motivate students. Communicate any issues or concerns.

## GRADES

I have been receiving a lot of emails, phone calls, and other communications regarding grades. Please allow me time and space to offer global comments.



My first recommendation is to have a **conversation** with your student. Communication with a middle-school student can be difficult (to put it mildly). It is the best starting point. I ask the students to do the same thing—communicate with their parents. Going around people, asking not to tell “so-and-so”, and other tactics do not support good communication. Please do not ask me to do something I would not do with my children. Communicate...communicate...communicate. If at first you do not succeed, try again, but use a different approach.

My second recommendation is to use **Synergy**. I spend a lot of time entering grades and comments in a timely manner. Please read the assignment description (the narrative explaining the assignment) and any comments I entered regarding the assignment of the student. In most cases, if the grade is 79% or below I enter specific comments about the student's performance. If the assignment was a multiple-choice quiz, however, I just enter the score. There is little comment necessary.

Part of this, however, is reviewing the assignment with the student. What did they complete, or in some cases—not

complete? Did they read and follow the directions? Did they give themselves enough time to complete the assignment well? Did they review the assignment for errors in conventions? Etc...etc...etc.

Synergy will provide a sensible and appropriate **snapshot** of the student's grade. At the beginning of a new grading period it is a little skewed, however, owing to the lack of assignments. A poor performance on one of the two assignments at the beginning of the grading period will have a large influence on the grade at the time. If you do not have access to Synergy, check with the office for instructions on how to access the system.



Third, and final suggestion is to communicate with me. Please do your homework before contacting me (the first and second recommendations) so that we can discuss grades from an enlightened position. You will have to complete the first two step anyways, so you might as well get them over with before communicating with me.

I have met and had fantastic conversations with a good number of parents and students in the past several weeks. It is wonderful to sit down and make sure everyone is on the same page and to hash out any issues. Please let me know if you would like to have a conversation, but please do so sooner than later. My schedule is a bit hectic and I want to work with you to schedule meaningful time together.

## ASHLAND UPDATES

We are traveling and will be in Ashland **April 28-30th**. We will attend “Much Ado About Nothing,” “Guys and Dolls,” and “Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land.”



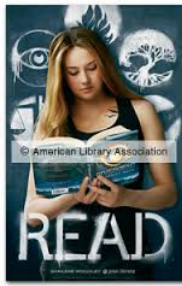
Over the next several weeks we will finalize group and room assignments and connect regarding any medical or homesickness issues. I am very excited for the trip and cannot wait.

## READING DISCUSSION #5

Thank you again to the fantastic adults who volunteered their time to help facilitate during the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter. There were numerous terrific discussions because of your time and



During the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, much like the third quarter, students have twenty minutes each day to read their discussion novel. Additionally, students should use whatever time **at home** necessary to fulfill the number of pages or chapters required for each discussion. Each student has a bookmark listing the dates of each discussion and the assigned pages. The bookmarks are also available via the “Reading” page of my web page.



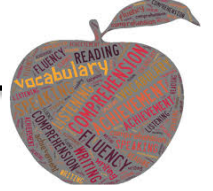
4th quarter discussion meetings will be 4/17, 5/1, 5/15, and 5/29. The assignments have changed, slightly, and students have been forewarned.

The assignment for the discussion, #5, is due Thursday (4/16) and the discussion is Friday (4/17). The assignment is due a day **before** the discussion so that I have time to evaluate and provide feedback on the assignment. It is something that I have learned over the years and it has generated better discussions. The post-discussion reflection is due **after** the discussion.

Each group member has the same "back side" to their reading assignment. Each group member must come up with 2 generic and 2 specific questions; as well as list, explain, and evaluate 2 quotes from the assigned section of reading.

- **Summarizer**—summarizes the assigned section of reading and in written or cartoon panel form
- **Wordsmith**—lists and defines 10 meaningful words or phrase from the assigned section and reading and evaluates the word choice of the novel
- **Reflector**—lists and explains 3 connection for the novel: a text to self, text to text, and text to world
- **Story Mapper Map & Quotes and Questions**—provides a visual mapping of the settings for the assigned section of reading (sorry, due to page layout issues it saves it as two separate pages, but they are part of the same assignment)
- **Data Digger**—researches topics brought up in the assigned section of reading and presents the

- **Illustrator**—creates 3 drawings with captions for the assigned section of reading (one from the beginning, another from the middle, and the third from the end of the section)



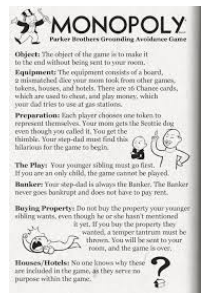
# WRITING

## VOCABULARY #13

Students will work on the sentences and list (flashcards) for vocabulary #13 Monday and Tuesday (4/13-14). As usual, the class will review several of the trickier sentences prior to the assignments being due at the beginning of class on Friday (4/17). The quiz is the following **Thursday** (4/23).

# CREATE-A-BOARD-GAME

Students will research, design, and create a game board. The board game can be a card game, but the cards cannot be a standard 52 card (54 with Jokers) deck.



1. Design and make a board game.
  - a. Use cardboard, tag board, construction paper, legal sized file folders, augment an older board game, etc.
  - b. Decorate the board and box with art that relates to the game.
  - c. There should be a START and FINISH box connected by at least a 50-space path (or at least 50 cards [depending on the game] if it is a card-based game\_.
  - d. Create playing pieces that relate to the game (a minimum of 4).
2. Make up and write the rules for the game.
3. Playtest the game in various draft forms. Adjust (correct) parts of your game as needed.
4. Exchange and play the games of other students.
5. Complete an evaluation form for each game played.

Students will research board games and submitted a premise of their idea for their board game projects over the next several weeks. We will have time after that to draft rulebooks. However, students should be prepared to work on rulebook rough drafts and all other aspects of the project at



home if they don't use their class time wisely.

Here is the last due date to keep in mind:

- Final project due: **Wednesday, April 15**



## HISTORY MIDDLE AGES (7<sup>th</sup>)

In European history, the Middle Ages, or Medieval period, lasted from the 5th to the 15th century. It began with the **collapse** of the Western Roman Empire and merged into the **Renaissance** and the Age of Discovery. The Medieval period is subdivided into the Early, the High, and the Late Middle Ages.

Depopulation, deurbanization, invasion, and movement of peoples, which had begun at the end of the Roman Empire, continued in the Early Middle Ages. The barbarian invaders, including various Germanic peoples, formed new kingdoms in what remained of the Western Roman Empire.

Although there were substantial changes in society and political structures, the break with antiquity was not complete. The still-sizeable Byzantine Empire survived in the east and remained a major power. In the West, most kingdoms incorporated the few extant Roman institutions. Monasteries were founded as campaigns to Christianize pagan Europe continued.

The Franks, under the Carolingian dynasty, briefly established an empire covering much of Western Europe; the Carolingian Empire during the later 8th and early 9th century, but it later succumbed to the pressures of internal civil wars combined with external invasions—Vikings from the north, Magyars from the east, and Saracens from the south.

During the High Middle Ages, which began after AD 1000, the population of Europe increased greatly as technological and agricultural innovations allowed trade to flourish and the climate change allowed crop yields to increase. Manorialism, the organization of peasants into villages that owed rent and labor services to the nobles, and feudalism, the political structure whereby knights and lower-status nobles owed military service to their overlords in return for the right to rent from lands and manors, were two of the ways society was organized in the Middle Ages.

The Crusades, first preached in 1095, were military attempts by Western European Christians to regain control of the Holy Land from the Muslims. Kings became the heads of centralized nation states, reducing crime and violence but making the ideal of a unified Christendom more distant. Intellectual life was marked by scholasticism, a philosophy that emphasized joining faith to reason, and by the founding of universities. The theology of Thomas Aquinas, the paintings of Giotto, the poetry of Dante and Chaucer, the travels of Marco Polo, and the architecture of Gothic cathedrals such as Chartres are among the outstanding achievements of this



period.

The Late Middle Ages was marked by difficulties and calamities including famine, plague, and war, which much diminished the population of Western Europe; between 1347 and 1350, the Black Death killed about a third of Europeans. Controversy, heresy, and schism within the Church paralleled the interstate conflict, civil strife, and peasant revolts that occurred in the kingdoms. Cultural and technological developments transformed European society, concluding the Late Middle Ages and beginning the early modern period.

## MANIFEST DESTINY (8<sup>TH</sup>)

Expansion westward seemed perfectly natural to many Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. Like the Massachusetts Puritans who hoped to build a "city upon a hill," courageous pioneers believed that America had a divine obligation to stretch the boundaries of their noble republic to the Pacific Ocean. Independence had been won in the Revolution and reaffirmed in the War of 1812. The spirit of nationalism that swept the nation in the next two decades demanded more territory. The "every man is equal" mentality of the Jacksonian Era fueled this optimism. Now, with territory up to the Mississippi River claimed and settled and the Louisiana Purchase explored, Americans headed west in droves. Newspaper editor John O'Sullivan coined the term "manifest destiny" in 1845 to describe the essence of this mindset.

The religious fervor spawned by the Second Great Awakening created another incentive for the drive west. Indeed, many settlers believed that God himself blessed the growth of the American nation. The Native Americans were considered heathens. By Christianizing the tribes, American missionaries believed they could save souls and they became among the first to cross the Mississippi River.

Economic motives were paramount for others. The fur trade had been dominated by European trading companies since colonial times. German immigrant John Jacob Astor was one of the first American entrepreneurs to challenge the Europeans. He became a millionaire in the process. The desire for more land brought aspiring homesteaders to the frontier. When gold was discovered in California in 1848, the number of migrants increased even more.

At the heart of manifest destiny was the pervasive belief in American cultural and racial superiority. Native Americans had long been perceived as inferior, and efforts to "civilize" them had been widespread since the days of John Smith and Miles Standish. The Hispanics who ruled Texas and the lucrative ports of California were also seen as "backward."

In 1840, the entire southwestern corner of the United States was controlled by foreign powers (shown in orange), and the territorial dispute over the Oregon Territory (light green) had not been settled. By 1850 the U.S. had control of lands from the Atlantic to the Pacific, covering almost all of today's continental





United States.

Expanding the boundaries of the United States was in many ways a cultural war as well. The desire of southerners to find more lands suitable for cotton cultivation would eventually spread slavery to these regions. North of the Mason-Dixon line, many citizens were deeply concerned about adding any more slave states. Manifest destiny touched on issues of religion, money, race, patriotism, and morality. These clashed in the 1840s as a truly great drama of regional conflict began to unfold.

(<http://www.ushistory.org/us/29.asp>)

## STORYLINE (7<sup>TH</sup> & 8<sup>TH</sup>)

Storyline portraits adorn the walls. It is a bit creepy to look out across the room to have not 60 eyes staring back, but 180 eyes on you.



Each week students have four prompts for written entries. Entries should be a minimum of 18 (or more) purposeful and thoughtful sentences from their storyline character's perspective. Three of the four weekly entries should be accurate—in a historical fiction sense. One of the four entries is unstructured—in the sense that students can spice up their writing with ridiculousness.

While we continue to delve further and further into the timeline of the characters, students will continue to add entries, learn about significant events and advancements, and add to our mural. Both storylines will culminate in food and festivities of the time period.

I have been and will continue to add links in the "History" page of my website to assist with the research. Please let me know if you stumble across any gems.

## CURRENT EVENT

### #13: ASIA

Current event #13 focuses on articles and news items from Asia. In addition to the group news quiz on Thursday, April 24, students will take an individual quiz on the nations of Asia.



Presentations take place (4/13-17). Make-up and missing presentations occur Monday (4/20), and we will update and review the most interesting and significant on Tuesday (4/21).

## 90 SECOND FILMS

We have not had sufficient time to create a thoughtful project. Thus, we have "postponed" the project until the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. If I have time, we will provide work time to complete projects **at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter** (or drop it entirely). Students will have the option to complete a film project for their 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarter novels.



The rules:

1. Your video should be 90 seconds or less. (Okay, okay: if it's two minutes long but absolute genius, we'll bend the rules for you. But let's try to keep them short.)
2. No book trailers! No video book reports! We're looking for full-on dramatizations, with mostly child actors, which manage to tell the entire story of the book in 90 seconds.
3. Upload your videos to YouTube or Vimeo or whatever and send Binder the link at [pbinder@pps.net](mailto:pbinder@pps.net). Make the subject line be "90 SECOND NEWBERY" and please tell me the names of everyone in the group.



"THEY SAY THEY'RE BUILDING A WALL BECAUSE TOO MANY OF US ENTER ILLEGALLY AND WON'T LEARN THEIR LANGUAGE OR ASSIMILATE INTO THEIR CULTURE..."

