



ASHLAND UPDATES

We are in Ashland

April 28-30th. We will

attend "Much Ado About Nothing," "Guys and Dolls," and "Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land."

Students will be put into groups this week. There are several layers of groups: dorm assignments, chaperone groups, and workshop groups. Students will have the ability to provide a list of people who they would and would not work well with, but please let me know of any possible troublesome pairings.



READING

DISCUSSION #6

Thank you again to the wonderful adults who volunteered their time to help facilitate during the 4th quarter. Last week's discussions went smoothly and students were excited to talk about their novel. Thank you for your time and efforts.

During the 4th 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.

The assignment sheets for the discussions are also available via the "READING" page of my web page. You will have to access the bookmarks (or ask the student) to determine what assignment the student must complete. Students are given the new assignment sheet two weeks (ish) ahead of time. I recommend using the assignment sheet as a second bookmark and completing the assignment as the novel is read. Directions are on each sheet, but the "post discussion" part is completed after the discussion.

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

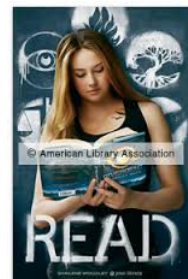
The assignment for the discussion, #6, is due **Tuesday (4/28)**. This is the day



we leave for Ashland. It is better to get the work done before we go then to have the unrealistic expectation that students will complete it while we are on our trip. The discussion is Friday (5/1). The post-discussion reflection is due **after** the discussion.

4th QUARTER JOBS:

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 information to the group to help provide a context for the reading
- **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)

BODY BIOGRAPHY

The culminating activity for the fourth quarter discussion novel is a body biography for a significant character in the novel. Discussion groups will apportion themselves into two groups: one group for the protagonist and one group for the antagonist. Students are constantly and continually reminded (which, of course, means that most of them have forgotten) to take notes and document information on their character as they read. It is too difficult to comb through a 200+ page novel after reading to cull information on a character. It can be done, but it is much more difficult.



For the chosen character, students will be creating a **body biography**—a visual and written portrait illustrating several aspects of the character's life within the novel.

There are many possibilities for filling up the giant sheet of paper. I have listed several, but students are free to come up with their own creations. As always, the choices they make should be based on the text, for they will be verbally explaining (and thus, in a sense, defending) them at a showing of their work. Above all, their choices should be creative, analytical, and accurate.

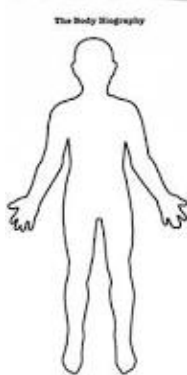
After completing the portrait, students will participate in a showing in which they will present their masterpiece to the class. This showing should accomplish these objectives:

- review significant events, choices, and changes involving your character
- communicate to others the full essence of your character by emphasizing the traits that comprise that person
- promote discussion of the character

Although I expect the biography to contain additional dimensions, the portrait **must** contain the following:

- a review of significant happenings in the novel (with regards to the character)
- visual symbols that represent meaningful images, objects, etc. for the character in the novel
- an original text presenting your view/interpretation of the character and his/her/its role in the novel
- the character's three most important lines/scenes from the novel.

The project is due on Monday, June 8. The final discussion takes place the Friday, May 29. Students will have a little over a week to finish putting on the butcher paper words, imagery, and so forth.



WRITING

VOCABULARY #13

Students should be reviewing the lists for **five minutes each day**. Repeated exposure to the words or stems will help in the long-term retention of the meaning and lead to greater success. Students should also be organizing the stems into antonyms, synonyms, and similar groupings (body parts, numbers, etc.).

The quiz is **Thursday** (4/23).

FLASH FICTION

Upon the conclusion of testing, students will be creating flash fiction stories.

Flash fiction is a style of fictional literature or fiction of extreme brevity.

There is no widely accepted definition of the length of the category. Some self-described markets for flash fiction impose caps as low as fifty or three hundred words, while others consider stories as long as a thousand words to be flash fiction.

One of the first known usages of the term "flash fiction" in reference to the literary style was the 1992 anthology *Flash Fiction: Seventy-Two Very Short Stories*. Editor James Thomas stated that the editors' definition of a "flash fiction" was a story that would fit on two facing pages of a typical digest-sized literary magazine. In China the style is frequently called a "smoke long" or "palm-sized" story, with the comparison being that the story should be finished before the reader could finish smoking a cigarette.

Other names for flash fiction include *micro fiction*, *micro narrative*, *micro-story*, *postcard fiction*, *short short*, *short short story*, and *sudden fiction*, though distinctions are sometimes drawn among some of these terms; for example, sometimes 1000 words is considered the cutoff between "flash fiction" and the slightly longer short story "sudden fiction". The terms "micro fiction" and "micro narrative" are sometimes defined as below 300 words. The term "short short story" was the most common term until about 2000, when it was overtaken by "flash fiction".

Access to the Internet has enhanced an awareness of flash fiction, with websites and zines such as *Flash Fiction Online* being devoted entirely to the style.

Unlike a vignette, flash fiction often contains the classic story elements: protagonist, conflict, obstacles or complications, and resolution. However, unlike a traditional short story, the limited word length often forces some of these elements to remain unwritten – that is, hinted at or implied in the written storyline. Different readers thus may have different interpretations. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flash_fiction)



HISTORY

MIDDLE AGES (7th)

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 (8TH)

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 (7TH & 8TH)

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" pages (7th and 8th) 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.

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



SMARTER BALANCED TESTING

"The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium is developing a system of valid, reliable, and fair next-generation assessments aligned to the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** in English language arts/literacy (ELA/literacy) and mathematics for grades 3-8 and 11.

The system—which includes both summative assessments for accountability purposes and optional interim assessments for instructional use—will use **computer adaptive testing** technologies to the greatest extent possible to provide meaningful feedback and actionable data that teachers and other educators can use to help students succeed (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>).

Students started the Computer Adaptive Testing (CAT) portion of the testing last week. The CAT is similar to the OAKS testing used in previous years, with the exception that students are not limited to selecting a multiple-choice response. Students might be asked to highlight a sentence(s) that support an author's thesis or provide evidence of support, or write a response summarizing an article or supporting a statement with evidence.

This week there is an in-class lesson in preparation for the performance task.

Performance tasks challenge students to apply their knowledge and skills to respond to complex real-world problems. They can best be described as collections of questions and activities that are coherently connected to a single theme or scenario. These activities are meant to measure capacities such as depth of understanding, writing and research skills, and complex analysis, which cannot be adequately assessed with traditional assessment questions. The performance tasks will be taken on a computer (but will not be computer adaptive) (<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/smarter-balanced-assessments/>).

The students will use one of the two block periods for testing each day for the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) testing. The other block period will be used for reading, writing, and history. My intention is to provide more hands-on and active lessons during SBAC testing to help alleviate and ease any stress.

The CAT is anticipated to use 2-3 class periods, 1 period for the in-class lesson preparing students for the PT, and 4-5 periods for the PT. Students will be given as much time as they need to complete the testing.

I have emphasized that students should do their best, but that this year is to work out the wrinkles in the testing and provide a baseline for future testing. Please communicate any questions, concerns, or comments.

