



ASHLAND UPDATES [repeated]

We are confirmed for **April 28-30th**. We will attend "Much Ado About Nothing," "Guys and Dolls," and "Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land."

I still need, however, many of the **permission slips** and down payments of **\$30** to secure spots. Please submit the necessary paperwork and payments if you have not. Copies of the permission forms are available via my website (<http://733257565503770808.weebly.com/>).

We are in the process of working on a budget, but a similar trip last year (including travel, food, lodging for two nights, three play tickets, several workshops, and educational materials) was approximately \$325 per person.

Now, we all know that this is a substantial "chunk of change." Nevertheless, we are hopeful that the majority of you will be able to pay most, if not all, of the trip's cost. To assist in this task we need parent volunteers (you!) to organize fundraising events and activities.

Families unable to afford the full cost will be subsidized. It is important that all students have this opportunity. We would ask you to let us know confidentially how much of the cost, if any, your family can afford.

Not surprisingly, we'll need your help to make this trip work! We would need several adult chaperones (men & women) driving down in separate vehicles. We would also need MANY volunteers to help us get ready for the trip.

To make this exciting trip happen, we need a team of dedicated parents. Please let us know as soon as possible if you can help; we need to make the decision and get the ball rolling!

Fees will cover:

- Transportation to and from Ashland via coach bus (includes bus drivers' room and board)
- Room and Board at the Southern Oregon College Campus (all meals provided except during travel)
- Tickets to three plays: *Much Ado about Nothing*, *Guys and Dolls*, and *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*
- One workshop produced by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (with the actors!)
- Two workshops at Southern Oregon University
- Snacks & other travel goodies



READING BOOKMARKS

Students will have to create several bookmarks for a novel or to represent 250 pages of reading. The front of each bookmark will be similar, but the back of the bookmark will be different in its focus. Each bookmark needs to contain the number of pages read in the novel. The size of the bookmarks is irrelevant, but they should look proportionately like a bookmark. The best advice I can give is to fold an 8.5 x 11 piece of paper in half lengthwise and "voila" you have what resembles a bookmark.

The front of each bookmark is a variance on a cover. The front needs to contain the author, and title. That will not differ for the four bookmarks. What will differ on the front is the image and tag line used. Each of the four bookmarks must contain a unique and original image(s) and tag line for the novel. Images and tag lines cannot be subtle variations of an actual cover. Students can use a significant scene from the plot, a character, the setting, etc.

Tag lines are catchy, enticing short phrases used by marketers to advertise and sell a book, movie, etc. (create "buzz"), and to sum up the plot, tone or themes of a literary or cinematic work. In 2008, according to www.taglineguru.com in its polling resulting in the Top 100 American Movie Taglines, *Alien (1979)* was at the pinnacle of their list: "In space, no one can hear you scream."

The back of the bookmarks include the literary "basics", back jacket teaser paragraphs, a significant character, and one of student choice.

The back of bookmark #1 is a summary of the novel. Students need to include the setting (time, place, and significant weather [if there is any]), characters (protagonists, antagonists, and "others"), plot (including aspects of the exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution). The plot summary should be eight to ten good sentences.

The back of bookmark #2 is comparable to the book's back cover/jacket. Students need to write two (or more) teaser paragraphs for the novel. Teaser paragraphs on a back cover provide text or a teaser that gives a hint of the story in an attractive way. Students should summarize the most important part of the plot. They can include the names of important characters, briefly describe the setting and/or identify the main conflict of the plot. Don't spoil the ending or major plot twists for the reader. Limit your initial word count to 50 words. Include a detail that gives away something suspenseful, mysterious or intriguing about the plot. Whet the reader's appetite for the book by hinting at a scandal, unique twist or original conflict included in the plot. Ask yourself, "What makes this story different from others in this genre?"

As an extra, but it is not required, students can include



"created" quotes and those who made the quote for the novel to include with the teaser paragraphs.

The back of bookmark #3 focuses on a significant character from the novel. Students need to include the character's name, a sketch/collage of the character, a biography (minimum one paragraph), and at least two meaningful quotes from the character (including page number).

The sketch/collage needs to visually represent the chosen character. It can be a literal, metaphorical, or symbolic depiction of the chosen character. Those who have the gift of visual artistry can create an original portrayal of the character through pencil, pen, marker (do not let it bleed through), or brush. Those of us, including myself, who continue to struggle with stick figures should focus on making a collaged representation of the character. Use the eyes, nose, lips, ears, etc from different images to create a collaged character.

A character biography should at the very least contain a physical description of the character. It also should contain some details of the character's life. In addition to the physical and factual information, it should also contain aspects of the character's personality and how he or she feels about his or her life or situation. Some of the information can be culled directly from the text, other information might be an inference or extension of the reading.

The back of bookmark #4 is up to the student. They have a choice. It could be a diary entry from a character, a newspaper article based on the book, an interview with the author/character, etc. The choice should represent time, effort, and a basic understanding of the novel.

The bookmarks are due at the beginning of class on **Friday, January 16**. Student have or will create rough drafts of each bookmark before finalizing—a draft of bookmark #1 (1/6), bookmark #2 (1/8), bookmark #3 (1/12), and bookmark #4 (1/14). Bookmarks should be edited and revised. They should not be first drafts.

SHORT STORIES

Our next short story comes from one of my favorite authors, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. We will be reading Vonnegut's, "The Big Trip Up Yonder" (released subsequently as, "Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow"). It is a short story by Vonnegut written in 1953, and first published in Galaxy Science Fiction magazine in January, 1954. The title comes from Shakespeare's famous line from the play *Macbeth* "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow." The name "Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow" appears in Vonnegut's collection of short stories, *Welcome to the Monkey House*. The story was originally titled "The Big Trip Up Yonder" when published in Galaxy Science Fiction magazine.

The story is set in 2158 A.D., after the invention of a medicine called Anti-Gerasone, which is made from sawdust and dandelions and is, thus, inexpensive and widely available. Anti-Gerasone halts the aging process and prevents people from dying of old age as long as they keep taking it; as a result, America now suffers from severe



overpopulation and shortages of food and resources. With the exception of the very wealthy, most of the population appears to survive on a diet of foods made from processed seaweed and sawdust.

The Schwartz family, headed by 172-year-old Harold ("Gramps"), lives in a three-room New York City apartment located in what once was southern Connecticut. Gramps' grandson Louis, his wife Emerald, and 22 other descendants are crowded into the space, perpetually jockeying for Gramps' favor. Gramps gets the best food and the only private bedroom. He also controls everyone's life by constantly revising his will to disinherit anyone who earns his dislike.

What, however, will tomorrow bring?



WRITING VOCABULARY #7



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 (1/15).

THIS I BELIEVE

Students are invited to contribute to this project by writing and submitting their own statement of personal belief. I understand how challenging this is—it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for them. To guide you through this process, I offer these suggestions:



Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be real. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. That's about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

Name your belief: If you can't name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list, consider focusing on one core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.

Be positive: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don't believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial "we." Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

Be personal: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your

essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

Students will work on choosing a topic and creating an introduction during the week. We will be listening to several examples in class to help guide and direct the students. Please ask them about their topic.

This is a much shorter, sweeter, and simpler written piece than the historical fiction narrative. It is, however, no less of a demand on the students. I am asking them to talk about something they believe it—a topic most adults would consider cringe-worthy. It is essential, however, to examine what it is that we do believe and why. I am excited to see what they write.



HISTORY WEST AFRICA (7th)

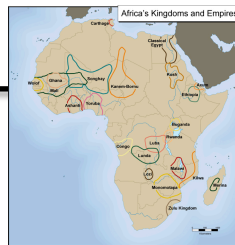
We begin our journey through West Africa. This week we will be reading "Early Societies in West Africa" (chapter 12: pages 132-143) and "Ghana: A West African Trading Empire" (chapter 13: pages 144-153). As we progress through the chapters students will be creating a mobile with significant people, ideas, events, geography, etc. pertaining to West Africa. Essentially, students need to select, visually represent, and summarize in writing 3 key geographic features, 3 essential people (or groups of people), 3 important events, and 3 vital ideas or effects. The project is due Monday, January 26.

The region of western Africa was formed from the ancient craton Atlantica approximately 2 billion years ago when the Earth was beginning to form. Studies have found that early human settlers arrived in West Africa around 12,000 BCE. Microlithic stone industries have been found primarily in the region of the Savannah where pastoral tribes existed using chiseled stone blades and spears. The tribesmen of Guinea and the forested regions of the coast were without small stone tools for thousands of years, but prospered using bone tools and other means.

In the fifth millennium, as the ancestors of modern West Africans began entering the area, the development of sedentary farming began to take place in West Africa, with evidences of domesticated cattle having been found for this period, along with limited cereal crops.

A major migration of Sahel cattle farmers took place in the third millennium BCE, and the pastoralists encountered the developed hunter-gatherers of the Guinea region. The migration of the Sahel farmers was probably caused by the final desiccation of the Sahara desert in this millennium, which contributed greatly to West Africa's isolation from cultural and technological phenomena in Europe and the Mediterranean Coast of Africa.

Symbiotic trade relations developed before the trans-Saharan trade, in response to the opportunities afforded by north-south diversity in ecosystems across deserts, grasslands, and forests. The agriculturists received salt from the desert nomads. The desert nomads acquired meat and other foods from pastoralists and



farmers of the grasslands and from fishermen on the Niger River. The forest dwellers provided furs and meat.

The Ghana Empire may have been an established kingdom as early as the 4th century CE. After 800, the empire expanded rapidly, coming to dominate the entire western Sudan; at its height, the empire could field an army of 200,000 soldiers.

Ghana was inhabited by urban dwellers and rural farmers. The urban dwellers were the administrators of the empire, who were Muslims, and the *Ghana* (king), who practiced traditional religion. Two towns existed, one where the Muslim administrators and Berber-Arabs lived, which was connected by a stone-paved road to the king's residence. The rural dwellers lived in villages, which joined together into broader polities that pledged loyalty to the *Ghana*. The *Ghana* was viewed as divine, and his physical well-being reflected on the whole society. Ghana converted to Islam around 1050.

The Ghana Empire grew wealthy by taxing the trans-Saharan trade. A percentage of salt and gold going through its territory was taken. The empire was not involved in production.

By the 11th century, Ghana was in decline. One important reason is the transfer of the gold trade east to the Niger River and the Taghaza Trail, and Ghana's consequent economic decline. Another reason cited is political instability through rivalry among the different hereditary polities.

The Mali Empire began in the 13th century CE, eventually creating a centralized state including most of West Africa. Although the salt and gold trade continued to be important to the Mali Empire, agriculture and pastoralism were also critical. The growing of sorghum, millet, and rice was a vital function. On the northern borders of the Sahel, grazing cattle, sheep, goats, and camels were major activities. Society was organized around the village and land. A cluster of villages was called a *kafu*, ruled by a *farma*. The *farma* paid tribute to the *mansa* (emperor). A dedicated army of elite cavalry and infantry maintained order, commanded by the royal court. A formidable force could be raised from tributary regions, if necessary.

Conversion to Islam was a gradual process. The power of the *mansa* depended on upholding traditional beliefs and a spiritual foundation of power.

Mali reached the peak of its power and extent in the 14th century, when *Mansa Musa* (1312–1337) made his famous *hajj* to Mecca with 500 slaves, each holding a bar of gold worth 500 mithqal (4.25 grams). *Mansa Musa's hajj* devalued gold in Egypt for a decade. He made a great impression on the minds of the Muslim and European world.

The Mali Empire saw an expansion of learning and literacy. In 1285, a freed slave, usurped the throne. This *mansa* established Timbuktu as a center of learning and commerce. The book trade increased, and book copying became a very respectable and profitable profession. A university at Timbuktu instituted a program of free health care and education for Malian citizens with the help of doctors and scholars brought back from his legendary *hajj*. Timbuktu became an important center of learning within



the Muslim world.

After the mid fourteenth century, Mali began its spiral downward. Rival cavalry raided the exposed southern



border. Others harassed the northern border to retake Timbuktu. A competing kingdom eroded Mali's authority in the west by establishing an independent kingdom. Alliances were broken. After 1599, the empire lost the Bambouk goldfields and disintegrated into petty politics.

AMERICAN REVOLUTION (8th)

We begin our journey in the American Revolution. This week we will be reading "Toward Independence" (chapter 5: pages 62-77) and "The Declaration of Independence" (chapter 6: pages 78-85). As we progress through the chapters students will be creating a mobile with significant people, ideas, events, etc. pertaining to the American Revolution. Essentially, students need to select, visually represent, and summarize in writing 3 key battles, 3 essential people (or groups of people), 3 important events, and 3 vital ideas or effects. The project is due Monday, January 26.



Before and during the French and Indian War, from about 1650 to 1763, Britain essentially left its American colonies to run themselves in an age of salutary neglect. Given relative freedom to do as they pleased, the North American settlers turned to unique forms of government to match their developing new identity as Americans. They established representative legislatures and democratic town meetings. They also enjoyed such rights as local judiciaries and trials by jury in which defendants were assumed innocent until proven guilty. American shipping, although theoretically regulated by the Navigation Act, functioned apart from the mighty British fleet for more than a hundred years. Finally, the promise of an expansive, untamed continent gave all settlers a sense of freedom and the ability to start fresh in the New World.

After the French and Indian War, the age of salutary neglect was finished. Britain, wanting to replenish its drained treasury, placed a larger tax burden on America and tightened regulations in the colonies. Over the years, Americans were forbidden to circulate local printed currencies, ordered to house British troops, made to comply with restrictive shipping policies, and forced to pay unpopular taxes. Furthermore, many of those failing to comply with the new rules found themselves facing a British judge without jury. Americans were shocked and offended by what they regarded as violations of their liberties. Over time, this shock turned to indignation, which ultimately grew into desire for rebellion. In a mere twelve years—between the end of the French and Indian War in 1763 and the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in 1775—the colonists moved from offering nightly toasts to King George III's health to demonstrations of outright hostility toward the British Crown.

The American Revolution had profound consequences, not only for the American colonists but for the rest of the world as well. Never before had a body of colonists so boldly declared their monarch and government incapable of governing a free people. The Thomas Jefferson–penned Declaration of Independence was

as unique as it was reasonable, presenting a strong, concise case for American rebellion against a tyrannical government. Since then, his declaration has been a model for many groups and peoples fighting their own uphill battles.

Essentially, students need to select, visually represent, and summarize in writing 3 key battles, 3 essential people (or groups of people), 3 important events, and 3 vital ideas or effects. The project is due next Thursday (1/23).



2ND SEMESTER NOVELS

The second semester will focus on reading and discussing novels within small groups. Students will read a novel for 3rd quarter with one group, and then a different novel during 4th quarter with a different group. Third quarter novels need to be [Newbery Medal winners](#) owing to the fact that the novel project is a "90 Second Newbery Film." 4th quarter novels have no requirement other than good literature.

Students need to start gathering ideas for discussion novels. Ask peers, parents, librarians, use web site recommendations, etc. The more variety the group has the better the choice they can make. The only rule is that you cannot use a novel for your discussion that you have already read. You can recommend the novel for other groups, but no rereads.

Start with input from peers. What are they reading and what would they recommend for a good discussion book? There is a critical distinction between good literature and what makes a good discussion novel. Not all literature creates dynamic conversations. Conversations and differing opinions are, however, essential to a good discussion. The book might be a "page turner," but if it does not prompt conversation then it is a dud as a discussion choice.

Seek input from parents, relatives, librarians, and teachers. Once you have a list—research. Many online sites have a synopsis, ratings, and level recommendations for novels. I often use Amazon's site to gather additional information on novels, but theirs is not the only source. The key is to be prepared...much like the goat in [Hoodwinked](#).

We will gather and go through the recommendations in class after winter break. Students will list their top choices and I will organize groups based on choices. Students (and parental units) will have a little time and wiggle room to alter choices and groupings, but by Tuesday, January 20th students need to have a copy of the novel they will be reading. Students who cannot obtain a copy or reserve a copy for check-out or purchase will be corralled into a group and select a novel from West Sylvan's library.

The choice of a novel is often a contentious and touchy issue. I do not wish to step on any toes or push a student into reading a subject matter they are not ready for or comfortable with. Your help, respect, communication, and diligence are appreciated.

