



QUARTER'S END

The 1st quarter ended last Friday (11/7). We are $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way through the academic year, but the easiest part of the schedule is behind us. The task is to stay on target.



My hope is that students who struggled in transition at the beginning of the year have had time to reflect, set goals, try something new, and have both feet under them as we gallop into the second quarter. Those students who only needed to make minor adjustments to their processes have hopefully made those tweaks.

With the start of each new quarter students get a chance to start over. Breathe deeply, relax, and like a phoenix from the ashes we shall begin anew.

Monday (11/10), is a teacher work day to finish grades—students do not have classes. Tuesday (11/11) is a holiday (Veterans Day). We resume our regularly scheduled academic programming Wednesday (11/12).

END OF 1ST QUARTER

I have received a lot of emails, phone calls, and other communications regarding grades. Allow me a little time and space to offer global comments.

My first recommendation is to have a conversation with your student(s). 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 the 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.

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 steps 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.



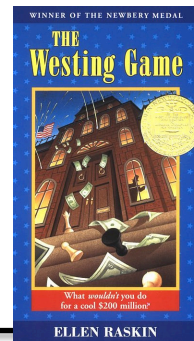
READING THE WESTING GAME

Ms. G, our wonderful cooperating teacher, continues to guide students through a read-aloud novel focusing on character development. Over the next couple of weeks students will be comparing and contrasting character change within the text, describing character development, and identifying and explaining the purpose of literary devices.

Students, in table groups, are keeping track of pairs of heirs (nice assonance). Individually, however, they will be creating a character detective log of six of the significant characters from *The Westing Game*. Students may choose any of the 16 characters.

The character detective log will include illustrations and information related to the characters in the book. Students have been given a handout and the project guidelines are online.

The revised due date for the project is next Monday (11/17). Let the game begin...



WRITING

VOCABULARY #5 & REVIEW OF #1-5

All vocabulary students should be reviewing their 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 who cram the night before or day of generally do not score as well, nor do they remember the meanings down the road. I keep repeating this paragraph for a reason...hopefully it creates a movement that sweeps the nation.

The vocabulary #5 quiz is Thursday (11/13).

After finishing list #5, we will take a week to review lists #1-5 and students will take a trimester test of lists #1-5. The test will be Thurs and Friday (11/20-21). It will include 100 stems, 10 mystery questions, and "other" sections (could be antonyms, synonyms, labeling a cartoon, "math", etc.).

FAIRYTALE NEWSPAPER

Students are in the midst of their "Fairytale Newspaper" project. In small groups, students are taking on the roles and responsibilities to complete a newspaper.

The task is a "fairytale" newspaper, but groups need to focus their articles, images, advertising, etc. on the theme selected by the group. As with all group work in Binder Block, students are scored individually.

This week, students will continue drafting their article. The detail paragraphs are due at the beginning of class and we will workshop the draft on Friday (11/14). The detail paragraphs should:

- Give the reader the details.
- Tell the really interesting info first!
- Include one or two quotes from people "interviewed."
- Write in the third person (he, she, it, they).
- Be objective -- never state your opinion.
- Use quotes to express others' opinions.
- Use active words (verbs that show what's really happening.)

After workshoping the detail paragraphs, students should begin drafting the end of the article. The last paragraph(s) is (are) due at the beginning of class and we will workshop the draft on Monday (11/17). The last paragraphs should:

- Wrap it up somehow (don't leave the reader hanging).
- Please don't say...."In conclusion" or "To finish..." (yawn!)
- Try ending with a quote or a catchy phrase.



At minimum each student will be responsible for one article and one visual. Beyond that, the tasks and complexity will vary.

There are several smaller tasks due throughout the project (as noted in the planner). The overall project is due before winter break (12/17). If you are planning on vacationing early please plan accordingly. The groups, and I, need the articles, images, and other aspects before the vacation is taken. As always, if a student is absent or "forgets" about an assignment, please use the planner to see what s/he has missed or what needs to be submitted for the project.

We will also be looking at examples of newspapers and set the groundwork for the vernacular of the newspaper this week. NIBs, NAGs, mastheads, subtitles, bylines "oh my".



HISTORY CURRENT EVENT #5

All missing or make-up current event #5 presentations will take place Wednesday (11/12), due to the shortened week. The current event review will also be on the Thursday (11/13). The group quiz will be taken at the beginning of class Friday (11/14).

A major concern is that many students need help paraphrasing. Students can copy the "who, when, and where" directly from the article. It is fairly impossible to restate Portland, Oregon in any other comprehensible way. The summary of these should be short and sweet, and not an extended part of the "what" summary

The "what", however, needs to be in the words of the student. This aspect is not getting better, but simply rearranging the words or substituting one word is not using one's own form of expression (termed "cutting and pasting"). It is still plagiarism.

I have been highlighting, underlining, circling, etc. the offending "paraphrasing" and lines from the actual article. I have had a lot of individual and class conversations. I reinforce, reteach, and offer my services to help summarize the article in one's authentic phrasing. After this, students will receive a "0" for the summary. Plagiarism is not allowed.

You can help by working with the student and checking their wording. I do take this seriously and students can have class time to complete this work, but ask to see their summary if you have concerns or questions. Read the article with your student and guide them through, not provide them with, their summary. It is their work.



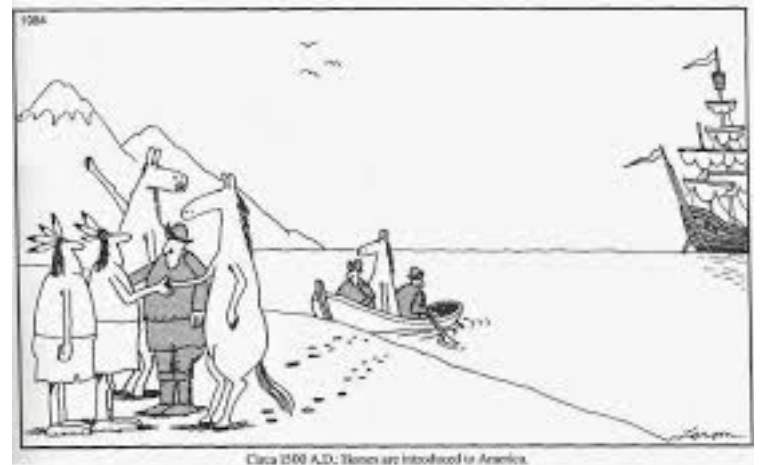
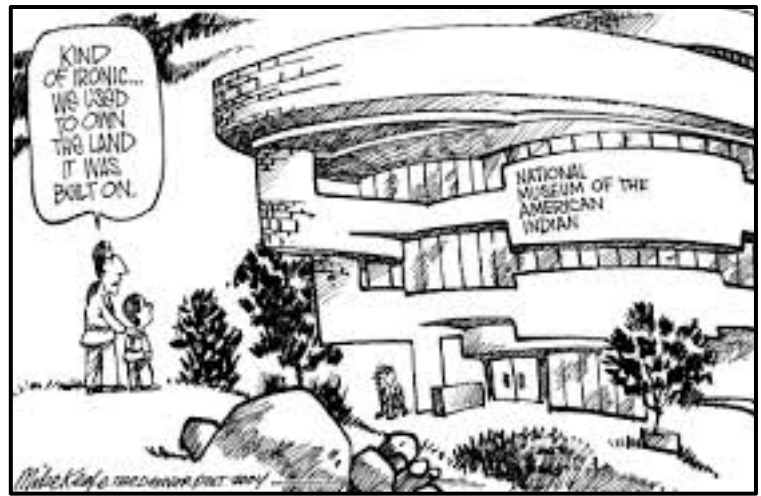
BARBARIANS (7th)

Please review the research paper and historical fiction paper guidelines that were distributed to students or access it online at my [HISTORY](#) web page.

Students have completed research; submitted 50 organized notes from 5 different sources. They have also created a fictional historical persona. This persona is the perspective from which they will write their historical fiction narrative.

Students will create a title page, bibliography page, and a 3-5 page diary of their own work. The diary needs to vividly and accurately describe the exploits of the barbarians, rather than a vague listing of the entirety. The diary can cover several hours, but no longer than two to three powerful days of a journey.

This week students are workshoping a revised exposition and the first page (+) of their diary. The rest of the week and the beginning of next week will be editing and revising what has been written, and finalizing it all. On Tuesday (11/18), student will workshop the entire "diary" and accompanying visuals.



EXPLORERS (8th)

Please review the research paper and historical fiction paper guidelines that were distributed to students or access it online at my [HISTORY](#) web page.

Students have completed research; submitted 50 organized notes from 5 different sources. They have also created a fictional historical persona. This persona is the perspective from which they will write their historical fiction narrative.

Students will create a title page, bibliography page, and a 3-5 page diary of their own work. The diary needs to vividly and accurately describe the exploits of the explorer, rather than a vague listing of the entire journey. The diary can cover several hours, but no longer than two to three powerful days of the journey.

This week students are workshoping a revised exposition and the first page (+) of their diary. The rest of the week and the beginning of next week will be editing and revising what has been written, and finalizing it all. On Tuesday (11/18), student will workshop the entire "diary" and accompanying visuals.

