



GRADES [repeated]

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. 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. 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 weeks before, during, and after conferences. 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.



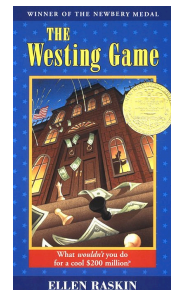
READING

THE WESTING GAME

We wrapped up our reading of *The Westing Game* last week. Individually, however, students should be finishing 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. One update is that the "newspaper" article has been eliminated in deference to the lack of work time and guidance afforded by the frazzled schedule last week (11/10-14).

Let the game end...



SHORT STORIES

As I read stories aloud we stop for comprehension, anticipation, interpretation, analysis, and synthesis. I am teaching and encouraging intonation, pacing, and the subtlety of language. Considering all of the projects and other assignments, I determined that this is the best course for now.

This week students will be reading Roald Dahl's short story, "The Man From the South." "Man from the South" is a short story by Roald Dahl adapted several times for television and film. In 1949, the Dahl story was adapted by June Thomson for an episode of Radio City Playhouse. The adaptation, titled "Collector's Item", split the 30 minute run time with an adaptation of a Ray Bradbury story, titled "The Lake". Shortly after meeting in the bar, Carlos offers the gambler his green 1948 Cadillac parked outside. Due to the tastes of the time, some of the details were omitted from the presentation. The independent observer (the "referee") character realizes the female is a victim of the gambler, but we do not learn the exact details of the gambler's previous bets.

This short story was filmed as a memorable 1960 episode of "Alfred Hitchcock Presents" starring Steve McQueen as the reluctant young gambler, Peter Lorre as Carlos, the man who bets his car, and Neile Adams (McQueen's wife) as a woman McQueen's character meets. The episode was remade in 1979 as the first episode of Dahl's television anthology series "Tales of the Unexpected." The episode was remade again for the 1985 series Alfred Hitchcock Presents with Steven Bauer in McQueen's role, John Huston as Carlos, and Melanie



Griffith (Bauer's wife at the time), Kim Novak, and Tippi Hedren (Griffith's mother).

Dahl's story was adapted for a scene from the 1980 Tamil movie *Ninaithale Inikkum*, which involved a wager by a millionaire that a young man could not flick a cigarette into his lips ten times in a row without dropping it. The story was also the basis for "The Man From Hollywood", the Quentin Tarantino-directed segment of the 1995 film *Four Rooms*. The characters in this segment actually refer to the 1960 Hitchcock episode as their inspiration.

In 2009, it was dramatized on BBC Radio Four with Andrew Sachs playing the sinister old man. The scene is also parodied in an episode of *American Dad*, "Stan's Night Out". Stan Smith wagers his life and the lives of three men against starting a lawn mower ten times, believing he would be able to do it as he had seen a television show which instructed him how to start a lawn mower "the first time, every time". Despite this, he fails on his first go.

In this story, an elderly man named Carlos offers a boastful American boy his green Cadillac (in Alfred Hitchcock's version there is no mention of brand of car, just a "convertible") if the boy can strike his lighter ten times in a row. The catch is that if the lighter does not light ten times in a row, Carlos will cut off the man's left pinky finger.



WRITING

VOCABULARY #1-5

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.

We will spend the first part of this week reviewing lists #1-5 and students will take a trimester test of lists #1-5. The test will be Thursday and Friday (11/20-21). It will include 100 stems, 10 mystery questions, and "other" sections (synonyms and "math").



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.

Until then, the "Star Wars Main Theme" shall hum in the background in the dim recesses of my dorsolateral, medial, and orbitofrontal cortex.

This week, students will continue drafting the "detail" paragraphs of their article. The detail paragraphs are due at the beginning of class on Thursday (11/20) and we will workshop the draft.

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 workshopping 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 (11/24).

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 #6

We are taking a little time off from current events so that students can focus on finishing a few projects. We will resume presentations in December (12/1-5).

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 the entire diary, finalizing the cover of their project, and complete a bibliography.

A complete draft of the diary is due and will be workshoped on Tuesday (11/18). It should include an edited and revised exposition and rising action. The rest of the rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution will be in draft form. The overall project is due at the beginning of class Wednesday (11/19).



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 the entire diary, finalizing the cover of their project, and complete a bibliography.

A complete draft of the diary is due and will be workshoped on Tuesday (11/18). It should include an edited and revised exposition and rising action. The rest of the rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution will be in draft form. The overall project is due at the beginning of class Wednesday (11/19).



ASHLAND UPDATES

I am sorry that I am late in getting out information and contacting chaperones and volunteers, the "snow" days threw a wrench in my plans. I will get the information out this week.

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

I still need, however, over half 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 would be subsidized. It is very important that all students have this wonderful 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
- Tickets to Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, as well as *Guys and Dolls* and *Secret Love in Peach Blossom Land*
- Workshops produced by Southern Oregon College faculty and students
- Snacks & other travel goodies

