



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, 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 (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



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.



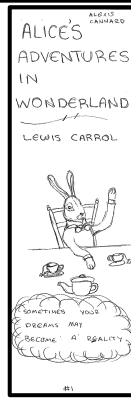
READING

BOOKMARKS

Students are still required to read at least ten pages per day (on average). The project for the second quarter will be bookmarks for their current reading, or recently finished novel. It cannot be the same novel used for the cereal box project.

Students will have to create several bookmarks for each novel. Bookmarks will focus on characters, setting, plot, vocabulary, literary devices, and theme. Each bookmark needs to contain the author, title, and number of pages read in the novel.

I will review and practice the new assignment with the students in the upcoming weeks, as well as provide handouts and upload items to the website.



SHORT STORIES

We are taking a week off from short stories. We are using the time to focus on finishing projects, taking some time to read, and other aspects and demands of Binder Block and West Sylvan.

DAHL ON TRIAL

Now that we've read "Lamb to the Slaughter," and "Man From The South," students will pretend that they are the defense attorney for Mary Maloney in "Lamb To The Slaughter," **or** for Carlos in "Man From The South." The character you choose has been put on trial for their terrible actions.



You will write a closing argument as a persuasive essay to be delivered to the judge and jury in the case. Your defense is that the character you chose is NOT guilty by reason of insanity. You must include evidence drawn from the story to support your argument.

Requirements:

- Must include **at least three** pieces of evidence from the text to support your argument.
- Choose only **ONE** character to defend.

Notes:

- Answer the following questions about your writing before submitting the final.
 - Did my introduction hook my reader?
 - Are my transitions more interesting than words like "and" and "then"?
 - Is there a clear beginning, middle, and end?
 - Does my conclusion wrap up my argument in an effective way?
 - Did I divide the body of the essay into coherently organized paragraphs?

There will be an artistic portion as well. For the visual side, students will choose **ONE** of the following:

- A. The court has a substantial amount of physical evidence to convict Mary Maloney **or** Carlos of their myriad crimes in either story. Draw and carefully label each article of evidence that the court is holding in this case.
- B. The court is filled with tension as the trial of Mary Maloney/Carlos is taking place. Take the perspective of a courtroom artist and render the scene for us.



Consider the space that you use and how the image you create suits it as you are drawing. The finalized written and artistic responses are due at the beginning of class on Tuesday (11/25).



WRITING

VOCABULARY #6

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 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 take this week off and resume vocabulary next week. The assignments are due next Friday (12/5). The quiz will be the following Thursday (12/11), and then we will take another break from vocabulary over winter break.

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.



This week, students will finish drafting the "ending" paragraph(s) of their article. A revised exposition and detail paragraphs, along with the ending paragraph(s) are due at the beginning of class on Monday (11/24). We will workshop the draft on that day as well.

The end paragraph(s) 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.

After workshoping the ending paragraphs, students should type the article. An electronic version of the article and visual (with caption) are due at the beginning of class and we will workshop them on Thursday (12/4).

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).



ISLAM (7th)

History returns to the book.

For the next several weeks we will be exploring Islam. We begin with a study of the geography of the Arabian Peninsula. Students will be reading chapter 7 in their history books as well as completing a map and chapter assignment—due at the beginning of class on Wednesday (11/26).



Next week, and subsequent weeks, we will read chapters 8-11 and focus on how to take notes. Eventually, students will take a test on Thursday, December 18th. It will have multiple choice questions, a map, and an essay.

COLONIAL LIFE (8th)

History returns to the book.

For the next several weeks we will be exploring Colonial America. We begin with a chapter on the English colonies. Students will be reading chapter 3 in their history books as well as completing a chapter assignment—due at the beginning of class on Wednesday (11/26).



Next week, and subsequent weeks, we will read chapter 4 in the history book and chapter 2-3 in Zinn's *A Young People's History of the United States* and focus on how to take notes. Eventually, students will take a test on Thursday, December 18th. It will have multiple choice questions, a map, and an essay.

