



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 [repeated]

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.

Students will be provided time in class to complete and submit drafts, and the overall project is due January 16.

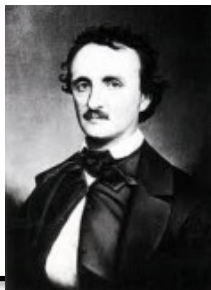
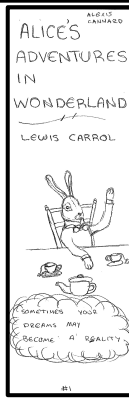
I will review and practice the new assignment with the students in the upcoming weeks, as well as provide handouts and upload items to the website.

SHORT STORIES

This week students will be reading an Edgar Allan Poe short story, "The Telltale Heart." "The Tell-Tale Heart" is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe first published in 1843. An unnamed narrator endeavors to convince the reader of his sanity, while describing a murder he committed. (The victim was an old man with a blind "vulture eye", as the narrator calls it.) The murder is carefully calculated, and the murderer hides the body by dismembering it and hiding it under the floorboards. Ultimately the narrator's guilt manifests itself in an auditory hallucination: The narrator hears the man's heart still beating under the floorboards.

It is unclear what relationship, if any, the old man and his murderer share. The narrator denies having any feelings of hatred or resentment for the man. He tells us: 'I loved the old man! He had never wronged me! He had never given me insult!'. He also denies the assumption that he killed for greed: 'Object there was none.', 'For his gold I had no desire.' It has been suggested that the old man is a father figure, the narrator's landlord, or that the narrator works for the old man as a servant, and that perhaps his "vulture eye" represents some sort of veiled secret, or power. The ambiguity and lack of details about the two main characters stand in stark contrast to the specific plot details leading up to the murder.

The story was first published in James Russell Lowell's The Pioneer in January, 1843. "The Tell-Tale Heart" is widely considered a classic of the Gothic fiction genre and is one of Poe's most famous short stories.



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 should also be organizing the stems into antonyms, synonyms, and similar groupings (body parts, numbers, etc.).

The assignments (list, sentences, and analogies) are due 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

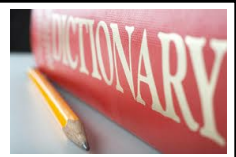
Students are in the midst of their "Fairytale Newspaper" project. In small groups, students are taking on the roles and responsibilities to complete a newspaper.

Students should type their 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 continue the groundwork for the vernacular of the newspaper this week. NIBs, NAGs, mastheads, subtitles, bylines "oh my".



HISTORY

CURRENT EVENT #6

Students should be presenting current events all week (12/1-5). Make-up and missing presentations proceed on Monday (12/8). We will review the 15 most significant and interesting current events on Tuesday (12/9), and students will complete an individual quiz on Friday (12/12).

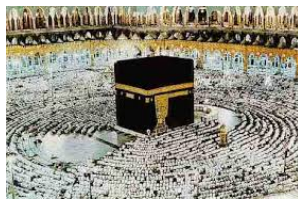
The two issues of continued concern are putting the "what" of the article in one's words and the proper format for citation. We have reviewed the expectations, help has been offered, and examples for the citation are on the assignment sheet.

ISLAM (7th)

History returns to the book.

For the next several weeks we will be exploring Islam. We continue with a study of the Muhammad and the teachings of Islam. Students will be reading chapters 8-9 in their history books as well as completing chapter assignments—the chapter 8 reading notes are due at the beginning of class on Friday (12/5).

Next week, and subsequent weeks, we will read chapters 10-11 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 continue with chapters on the life in the colonies and a chapter in Zinn's book on the racial reality of the colonies. Students will be reading chapter 4 in their history books as well as completing a chapter assignment for the Zinn chapter—due at the beginning of class on Friday (12/5).

Next week, and subsequent weeks, we will read chapter 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.



2ND QUARTER WORK

Any and all work students want and need to submit towards midterms needs to be submitted by Friday, December 12th. I cannot and will not promise that work submitted after that will be evaluated in time to affect midterm grades. Be forewarned and plan accordingly.

Secondly, all work from 2nd quarter prior to Winter Break is due by Friday, December 19th. I want the break to be a break—not a massive academic undertaking to supplant weeks of mental sloth. If you are leaving early, work must be submitted prior to your departure. If you are ill or prone to illness, use the planner and communicate. Again, be forewarned and plan accordingly.

