



## ASHLAND UPDATES [repeated]

We are confirmed for **April 28-30<sup>th</sup>**. 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



## 2<sup>ND</sup> QUARTER WORK

All work from 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter prior to Winter Break is due by **Friday, December 19<sup>th</sup>**. 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.



## 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.

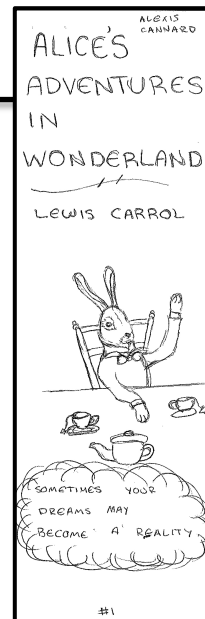
I will review and practice the new assignment with the students in the upcoming weeks, as well as provide handouts and upload items to the website.

### SHORT STORIES

This week students will be reading O. Henry's short story, "The Last Leaf." Set in Greenwich Village, it depicts characters and themes typical of O. Henry's works.

Johnsy has fallen ill and is dying of pneumonia. She watches the leaves fall from a vine outside the window of her room, and decides that when the last leaf drops, she too will die. While Sue tries to tell her to stop thinking like that, Johnsy is determined to die when the last leaf falls.

An old, frustrated artist named Behrman lives below Johnsy and Sue. He has been claiming that he will paint a masterpiece, even though he has never even attempted to start. Sue goes to him, and tells him that Johnsy is dying of pneumonia, and that Johnsy claims that when the last leaf



falls off of a vine outside her window, she will die. Behrman scoffs at this as foolishness, but—as he is protective of the two young artists—he decides to see Johnsy and the vine.

In the night, a very bad storm comes and wind is howling and rain is splattering against the window. Sue closes the curtains and tells Johnsy to go to sleep, even though there were still four leaves left on the vine. Johnsy protests but Sue insists on doing so because doesn't want Johnsy to see the last leaf fall. In the morning, Johnsy wants to see the vine, to be sure that all the leaves are gone, but to their surprise, there is still one leaf left.

While Johnsy is surprised that it is still there, she insists it will fall that day...but will it?



## WRITING

### FAIRYTALE NEWSPAPER

Students are in the final stages of their “Fairytale Newspaper” project. In small groups, students have taken on the roles and responsibilities to complete a newspaper.

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

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.

This week, students will be submitting the electronic versions of their “other” portions of the newspaper on Monday (12/15). Groups will be submitting an electronic draft of the entire newspaper on Tuesday (12/16). Groups will have a bit of time to edit and review before submitting both an electronic and printed copy of the finalized newspaper on Wednesday (12/17). We will be sharing aspects of the newspaper with the class as well.

### 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

### READING TEXT

A lot of our focus will be how to read and take good, but brief notes from textbooks. Many students know the SQRR (Survey, Question, Read, & Review) strategy for reading informational text, but most do not apply it. They simply read the chapter to be done with it.

Students should **survey** the chapter before reading. Look at the chapter and section titles. Look at the pictures and graphic images. Scan for bold words. This “survey” of the chapter activates the centers of the brain that focus on anticipation. If a student is “aware” of what s/he will be reading then their brain can process and store the information more readily and easily. It also activates any prior knowledge with which the students can make connections to other text/sources.

Students should then make **questions** out of the titles, images, and bold words. By





turning the title, "Prophet Muhammad," into a question—Who was Muhammad?—students should be able to focus on reading to answer the question. This helps to eliminate the extraneous, but interesting, information. Students can concentrate on finding the information that answers the questions.

The third part of the strategy is the easiest...**read**. Students need to actually read the information.

The fourth and final step is to **review**. I tell the students not to wait to the end to complete this step. The chapters are divided into numbered sections. Each section begins with the number of the chapter and then has the number of the section. Chapter 8 has sections 8.1 through 8.9. Thus, there are nine different sections in chapter eight.

After each section students should **pause** and review. Chapter 8 section 2 is titled, "Arabia During Muhammad's Time." Students should be able to locate and define "Arabia". Students should be able to relate who Muhammad was and why he was important (besides being one of the Super Best Friends from South Park). After reviewing the information students might need to reread the section if they cannot answer the questions.

After all questions have been answered for the section students should write a few brief notes to help them remember the most important information—but only after completing the SQRR for the section. If students take notes as they read then their notes resemble a Xerox—almost everything that is in the textbook is in the notes. Organized notes are effective notes. Symbols, drawings, spacing, "marking", etc. all help to create meaningful notes. It is a skill that I endeavor to teach and we will work on it all year.

## ISLAM (7<sup>th</sup>)

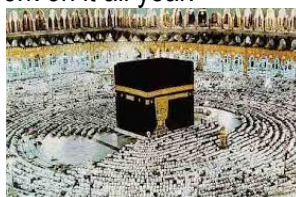
For the past several weeks we have been exploring Islam. This week, we will finish chapter 11 and focus on the map of the Arabian Peninsula. Students will take a test on Thursday (12/18). It will have multiple-choice questions, a map, and an essay.

Students who are leaving early for break need to take the test prior to vacation.

## COLONIAL LIFE (8<sup>th</sup>)

For the past several weeks we have been exploring Colonial America. This week, we will focus on the map and geographic features of the colonies. Students will take a test on Thursday (12/18). It will have multiple-choice questions, a map, and an essay.

Students who are leaving early for break need to take the test prior to vacation.



## 2<sup>ND</sup> SEMESTER NOVELS

The second semester will focus on reading and discussing novels within small groups. Students will read a novel for 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter with one group, and then a different novel during 4<sup>th</sup> 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." 4<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

