



COOPERATING TEACHER

I was a bit remiss in the "Introduction & Syllabus 2014-2015" in that I failed to introduce Ms. G., the student teacher who will be with us through November. Ms. G. comes to us from the University of Portland and she is a fantastic addition to our classroom. Please welcome her warmly.



READING

DAILY READING

I expect students to read for **twenty to thirty minutes at home** every day. Generally, we begin each core session with time to read. Students should bring reading material of their choice to class, but I do have a meager classroom library for them to peruse. Students are more than welcome to bring electronic readers to the classroom, with parental permission. They are expected to read during the provided time.

READING LOG & PROJECTS

The reading log is a simple tool to keep track of how much a student is reading. Students are expected to read 1500 pages a semester—or whatever reading goal they set. I do adjust the goal to fit the abilities of the student and I will meet with each student at least once a month to track their progress.

The "log" sheets are fairly simple. A student only needs to fill in the title, author, and genre when s/he begins to read a book. As the student reads pages, s/he "logs" how much is read. We use the logs to spark conversations, recommend (or not) books, etc.

Students will also have to complete two projects during the first semester in addition to the reading log. The first project is a "Cereal Box" reading project and it is due at the beginning of class October 15th. The second project is a "Bookmarks" project that is due shortly after Winter Break. It is due at the beginning of class on January 16th. Time will be spent in class reviewing the guidelines and producing drafts. The log and project instructions are detailed on the "READING" page of the website.

There are 149 days from the beginning to the end of the first semester. If a student averages 10 pages of reading each day s/he will receive an "A" for his/her reading log—achieving 100% of the reading log goal.

There are 42 days from the start of the semester and the first project due date ("Cereal Box" on 10/15). There are an additional 93 days from the first project's due date to the

second's ("Bookmark" 1/16). Each project should represent 250+ pages of reading. Time will be given in class to review the project expectations and produce drafts—for points and feedback.



SHORT STORIES

I will present ten (or more) short stories during the first semester. Most stories are in pairs—two stories from the same author. Author pairs are presented in successive weeks with an alternating read aloud and individual read format. There are several "stand alone" stories.

This semester we are focusing on short stories with lessons or unexpected outcomes. We began with WW Jacobs. I read, "The Monkey's Paw", aloud to the students last week (9/2-4). We reviewed and discussed the story on Friday (9/5). This is a format we will follow throughout the first semester (parsing the story into section for reading and reviewing with a final discussion towards the end of the week).

Many people have encountered the story, anthologized nearly 70 times in horror collections alone. Most do not know, however, that its author, WW Jacobs, was an immensely popular writer from the 1890s through the Second World War, selling many tens of thousands of copies of his 13 short story collections. Jacobs mostly wrote humorous short stories about humble seafaring folk, but "The Monkey's Paw" is by no means his only tale of the macabre.

Students will be asked answer a question or questions about the readings in both a written and artistic format. Written answers should be focused (not rambling) and clearly explained. The written answers should not be first drafts. Students should revise, edit, process, and proofread their answers. Artistic responses should demonstrate effort but not hours of work. The artistic side should employ a draft and a finalized product of the student's "best" skills. Overall, each side should take at least 30 minutes of time and effort. Please refer to upcoming newsletters for due dates of reading journals and for authors we will be reading.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

During the second semester students help select a novel for a small group discussion. Students read and complete an assignment for each discussion, which they submit the day **before** the discussion.

Discussions are held every other week, at the end of the week. In addition to answering questions and sharing their work, students work on group dynamics: listening skills, being



a good group member, contributing to the discussion, and demonstrating understanding (or asking questions to clarify).

After the discussions, students complete a reflection regarding the discussion.

WRITING VOCABULARY

We work on vocabulary twice a week. We take two weeks to work on each vocabulary list. The vocabulary program I use is called Word Within the Word—abbreviated W³ in many of my correspondences. The book that we use is \$25.

Vocabulary assignments consist of three parts: a word list, decoding stem usage in sentences, and analogies. . During the first week of a vocabulary list, I work with the students on the sentences and analogies portions of their assignment. Students can complete the list independently.

The W³ vocabulary assignments are due at the beginning of class at the end of the first week of vocabulary. On the second Thursday (of the two-week cycle), the W³ students take a quiz.

PROJECTS

We will be engaged in several writing projects this semester and next.

An example of a project is the “My Summer Movie Poster” project that was introduced last week. An upcoming project is the “Veggie Tales” that we will be starting in a few weeks. The breadth and scope of the projects varies, as does the mode of writing. They are designed to challenge students in a multitude of faculties.

We will be working on a research project in conjunction with a major historical unit, a Fairytale Newspaper, a “This I Believe” essay, Create-a-Board-Game project, and Flash Fiction.

Projects are divided into smaller, more manageable chunks. There is usually a guidelines sheet to go along with each project and due dates for the chunks. Drafts are due and feedback is provided along the way. Please pay attention to the planner pages for due dates and newsletters for expectations.

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments are the last component of the writing grade. The students will often have a daily opener. Sometimes the openers are part of an assignment/ project on which we are already working, and at times the openers are a separate task challenging their creativity, writing skills, problem-solving skills, and artistic fortitude. Additionally, any other “assignments” are lumped into this category.



HISTORY CURRENT EVENTS

Current events constitute a big part of our history curriculum. Students have chosen a day of the week to present a current event. The school day **before** their current event is due; students select and prepare an article during silent reading time. On the day that the current event is due, students present a basic summary of the article (who, what, when, where, why) and they locate the event on the world map for the class.

The “who,” “when,” and “where” should come straight from the article—there is no paraphrasing New Orleans. The “what” needs to be in the student’s words. It is difficult. I recognize this. It is imperative, however, that students learn to rephrase factual information using alternative words. Plagiarism is not permissible and will result in a zero for the assignment and a conversation with the student, parent(s), and Binder.

Students present articles during the first week of a two-week current event cycle. The first day of the following week is for any make-up or missing presentations. We spend most of the rest of the second week updating and reviewing the significant/interesting articles and on the Friday of the second week students take a quiz over the ten to fifteen most important news items. The quizzes alternate between group and individual quizzes.

Students will complete a total of eight current events this semester. They will be given a handout (which is also available on the “HISTORY” page of the Binder Block website) that explains how to complete the current event assignment and another handout with an example article completed for them.

The first current event presentations begin this week. **All students** will take a group current event quiz next Friday (9/19).

QUIZZES & PROJECTS

There will be quizzes, a test, or major project for each unit of study. This year we are studying American History (8th) and Medieval Civilizations (7th). Please pay attention to the planner for updates on readings, assignments, quizzes, projects, and tests.

Quizzes/Tests can, and often do, follow readings and lectures. I try to impress upon students that paying attention the first time (whether in reading or listening) is essential to long-term success. Being purposeful, rather than just getting the task done as soon as possible, lends itself to better understanding or, at the very least, asking good questions that can help lead to better understanding. Quizzes are normally short and sweet—ten to fifteen critical multiple-choice questions.



I try to strike a balance between quizzes and other formative assessments. I do my best to make history as “hands-on” as possible. Therefore, historical units will alternate between methods of assessment: quizzes and projects.

As stated previously, we will be working on a research paper that utilized language arts and historical skills (“Barbarian Horde” for the 7th and “Exploring America” for the 8th). I try to bring history alive and balance assessment with a variety of other projects throughout the year; a mobile, children’s storybook, etc.

ASSIGNMENTS

We will be doing a lot of map work, some note taking, answer reflective questions, and a host of other various tasks. The shape, form, and due date of the assignments is wide-ranging, so please pay close attention to the planner sheet.

Additionally, the quantity, breadth, and depth of assignments vary from unit to unit. During the Geography of the Americas unit students will complete several assignments and a test. During the Civil War unit, however, we will be doing a lot of reflective questioning and completing a few larger projects. Student diligence in the completion of the assignments in a timely manner will help their grade immensely.



CLASSROOM ITEMS NEEDED

- art supplies
 - colored paper
 - cloth scraps
 - scissors
 - pencil sharpeners
 - rulers
 - watercolors
 - paintbrushes
 - other?
- word games—Scrabble isn’t the only one
- Brita water **filters**—the pitchers and the replacement filters
- plants
- technology?
- other?



BACK-TO-SCHOOL

**7th Grade = Tuesday,
September 16 from 6:30-
8:00pm**

Tips

**8th Grade = Wednesday,
September 17 from 6:30-
8:00pm**