



# THE FACULTY CORNER

FROM THE ANACAPA SCHOOL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT. . .

## UPPER SCHOOL BRITISH LITERATURE

This year Upper School students are studying British Literature, a particular favorite of Beth's and Peggy's. The course is a basic survey of British Literature, starting with *Beowulf*, originally written in Old English about 775 A.D. It has been interesting for students to know the authentic story, especially with the recently released *Beowulf* movie in the theaters. We then read *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and a selection from *The Canterbury Tales*. Beth's classes have also read some poetry from the Romantic Period to complement the summer reading, *Frankenstein*.

Upper School students can tell you that they have been doing a lot of writing. Beth and Peggy are helping students produce writing that is relatively free of mechanical errors. Emphasis is placed throughout the writing and revising process on learning to use vocabulary precisely, constructing sophisticated sentences that vary in structure, and using subordination and coordination. Students are encouraged to work for clear articulation of ideas and logical organization of the material, complemented by use of supportive details including gracefully integrated quotations. Students also experiment with creative writing, such as writing their own version of a Canterbury Tale.

## PEGGY'S LOWER SCHOOL ENGLISH

My seventh grade students are working hard on recognizing and enjoying figurative writing in the novels we are reading. *Soldier's Heart*, a Civil War story based on true events, is rich in compelling images of the battles. We wrote "Civil War letters" and incorporated metaphors, similes, personification, hyperbole, and onomatopoeia into our creative writing. When the letters were finished, we had fun antiquing them to make them appear authentic. *Shabanu*, the story of a young girl growing up in the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan, is also rich in figurative language, particularly in its descriptions of the desert. Students are experimenting with writing poetry about the desert. We have also been talking about cultural differences and the roles men and women play in an Islamic society. To kick off the new year, we will be reading August Wilson's play, *The Piano Lesson*.

My eighth grade students recently read the novel *Speak*, the story of a high school freshman who is ostracized because of something that happened to her the previous summer. We explored how the author drew her characters and the techniques she used to make us particularly sympathetic to the protagonist. We also enjoyed the author's ability to incorporate humor into a serious story through the use of a first person narrator. After that, we read *Lord of the Flies* and took special notice of the various symbols and related them to the themes of the story. In our writing, we have been working on finding errors and editing our compositions. After the holidays, we will be reading *Bless Me, Última* and *Walk Two Moons*.

~ ~ Peggy Lauer

## BETH'S LOWER SCHOOL ENGLISH

We are having a wonderful year in Lower School English. We started by reading *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. All of the students were engaged and surprised by Alice's stumbling through Wonderland. They had wonderful observations of Alice's fearless attitude as she encountered the strange inhabitants of Wonderland. After finishing *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, we committed some in-class time to composing a five-paragraph essay. We brainstormed, outlined, drafted, and proofed together. It is exciting to see these students hone their writing skills throughout this process.

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Next, we read *Bless Me, Última*, by Rudolfo Anaya. This story is about Antonio, who is living in New Mexico as World War II ends. Antonio is under a lot of pressure to be a priest, but he is drawn to the healing powers of Ultima, a *Cuarandera*, who is living with his family. He is faced with many challenging situations, and he confronts some choices throughout the story. I am so impressed by how well the students have read this story and how fully they have engaged in Antonio's trials.

In addition, the students have been working hard studying for their weekly vocabulary and grammar quizzes. They have put a lot of time into these, which will serve them well for the upcoming final. I am excited for the rest of the year with these students!

## **CREATIVE WRITING**

This is my third semester teaching Creative Writing, and it is a joy to see how each semester takes on a life of its own. This semester students are composing memoirs, lyrics, poetry (some in verse!), fantasies, and comedies. Their imaginations inspire me in my own writing. One of the most rewarding parts of this course is providing structure for students to give feedback to one another. Through this activity, we all sit around the table and read each other's work. We give affirmations, constructive criticism, and suggestions. In the end, it is up to the author, but I think everyone walks away with a clearer vision of where their story, poem, or song is headed.

I also enjoy meeting one-on-one with students to discuss their work. It gives me an opportunity to address some grammatical issues, and I also get to know my students in a different setting. When we return from break, these creative writers will be putting a lot of energy into revising their stories and composing the final portfolio of their best work. I can't wait to read the final products!

~ ~ Beth Wirth

## **AND FROM THE ANACAPA SCHOOL MUSIC DEPARTMENT. . .**

### **ENSEMBLE MUSIC ELECTIVE**

It is great to be teaching music at Anacapa School, but it is even more gratifying to see the students getting together on their own to play beautiful music. The ensemble music class has grown this year, and everyone's experience has been enriched by the presence of more talented musicians. In addition to guitar, drums, bass, and piano, a saxophone and a trumpet have enhanced our class, allowing the students to explore other music genres such as Jazz and Latin.

At the beginning of the semester, the students started to learn how to play as a small combo group. The students have been playing different tunes while they improve their reading and improvisation skills. It is very rewarding to watch their progress, and it is amazing the effort they put into learning the songs.

Music class is an important way of sharing feelings, emotions, and culture. Music also brings together different personalities and talents where all collectively accomplish a common goal. Music is more than just playing songs; it gives us the opportunity to understand each other.

Students are excited about their upcoming performances for Grassroots Theater (January 11 and 12), the Auction (March 16), and our Cinco De Mayo Festival (May 2). We hope you have a chance to enjoy their music-making at some of these events!

### **LOWER SCHOOL MUSIC**

The eighth graders in my Lower School music class have been learning the fundamentals of music with the guitar. They started by learning the notes of simple melodies and gradually moved on to more challenging pieces. In the middle of December, they learned how to play a couple of Christmas songs; they were very happy and enthusiastic about this accomplishment.

So far, this has been a great year, and it promises to be even better. I'm looking forward to seeing these talented students grow up not only as musicians but also as human beings.

~ ~ Hugo Macario