



# THE FACULTY CORNER

FROM THE ANACAPA SCHOOL ENGLISH DEPARTMENT . . .

## UPPER SCHOOL – AMERICAN LITERATURE

In their English classes, Upper School students began their study of American Literature by discussing their summer reading assignment, *The Chosen*. It is clear that the students learned a lot about Jewish religious traditions and culture, a topic many of them knew little about. They came to classes full of questions and enthusiasm about this memorable and engrossing novel. I was impressed by their intelligent and thoughtful responses. It is certainly a novel that they won't forget soon. Juniors and seniors taking the Advanced Placement option also read *The Color Purple* during the summer.

Upper School students are currently involved in writing personal narratives about an experience or event on the recent school trip that has special significance for them. They have all written first drafts and edited each other's papers. I am enjoying reading through these drafts and experiencing vicariously the fun, learning, and challenges they met on the trip. Here are some excerpts from their papers.

*After what felt like hours and miles of walking, we came to a lake. The lake was amazing; it looked like it had water from a tropical island because it had a beautiful turquoise color to it. (Note the sophisticated use of the semicolon!)*

*When we walked past the Jeffery pines, we could smell the essence of vanilla they gave off. When I picked off some of the sage and rubbed it into my hand, I could smell its strong aroma. While we kept zigzagging up the hill, we were able to see increasingly more of the canyon and all of its prettiness.*

*On the fourth day of the trip, a scientist from CARMA came to give us an astronomy lecture. . . . The slideshow started with a stop-motion film about how the CARMA telescopes moved. I was uninterested at first, that is, until he switched topic and started talking about the expansion of the universe. I couldn't have been more surprised than if he had said that the moon was made of cheese and he had evidence to prove it. It had never even occurred to me that the universe was growing and getting bigger.*

*It took a while for the dessert to get to our table, and it wasn't what we were expecting, either. What we got was pistachio ice cream, which nobody wanted. I, however, decided to try it, and I discovered something that I never knew about myself: I love pistachio ice cream!*

## LOWER SCHOOL LITERATURE

Lower School Literature students began the year by discussing their summer reading, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. In Peggy's seventh grade class, the discourse about the novel revealed that the students thoroughly enjoyed it and were excited to revisit some of their favorite scenes such as when Tom gives Peter the cat "pain-killer" or the frightening episode where Tom and Becky are lost in the cave. As a complement to our discussions, we learned vocabulary we can use all year as we discuss literature, such as foreshadowing, point of view, and theme. The seventh graders earned all A's and B's on a test of these terms! The students wrote briefly about the narrative style of the novel and the turning point.

Lower School students are also writing personal narratives of an experience on the trip. Seventh graders recently read an example of a narrative, "Drowning 1954," by Garrison Keillor, first published in *The New Yorker Magazine* in 1976. While working on their own narratives, the students are proceeding through all

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the steps necessary for good writing. They started by doing brainstorming webs, worked on an organizing table, and have just finished writing their first drafts. After peer editing and a review by Peggy, they will be ready to write their final drafts. This will be the first paper to go into their writing portfolios.

The seventh grade class is delightfully enthusiastic and eager to learn. I am enjoying teaching them very much.

In Alison's eighth grade class, the students have used the summer reading of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* as the focal point for their studies. We've gleaned some useful vocabulary from the book, studied descriptive devices, and the students have worked on their note taking skills while learning of historical events that took place in Mark Twain's time. Like the seventh graders, the eighth grade students are crafting personal narratives of a specific event of their choosing from the recent trip. This class delights in their sense of humor, and Alison is seeing some amusing pieces as a result. In the next week, they will study tools used in the creation of characters and will write a point-of-view piece as one of the characters from *Tom Sawyer*. We will hone the pieces and then shoot a talk show in which the characters are interviewed regarding their experience of an event from the book. We hope to share this show with the parents when they attend Anacapa's Parent Academic Morning!

It's been wonderful to get to know these students and to have the opportunity to work with them.

~ **Peggy Lauer (Upper School and 7<sup>th</sup> Grade)**  
~ **Alison Nigh Strellich (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)**

**P.S.** I hope all parents will be able to join us for Parent Academic Morning on Saturday, October 13 to learn more about our academic program this year.