



THE FACULTY CORNER

FROM THE ANACAPA SCHOOL FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT. . .

Beyond Verb Tenses and Vocabulary Lists—Learning a Language at Anacapa

It is very gratifying to teach foreign language at Anacapa. The TPRS method that we use helps students reach fluency rapidly, and with our small classes, students have lots of opportunities to practice, and we are able to tailor the learning experience to best serve our students. However learning a language at Anacapa is not an isolated exercise. It is very important for our students to go beyond grammar and vocabulary to learning about current issues, customs, and traditions of the countries where the target language is spoken. In this month's *Faculty Corner*, we would like to share a few examples of how we do this regularly in our classes.

Spanish IV students this year have read two books which touch on cultural issues. *Vida y Muerte en la Mara Salvatrucha* describes the life of a former gang member in Los Angeles and how he coped with his situation. The book examines this very current concern in depth, including its effects on the Spanish speakers and the Latino communities in the United States. Students in Hugo's class were really engaged in the compelling story, and they also made the connection with last year's Anacapa field trip to Los Angeles to visit Homeboy Industries, Father Greg Boyle's organization to support former gang members to become successful outside of gangs. The second book, *Casi se Muere*, was about a student who goes to study in Chile for three months, and her challenges learning about new customs and how to adapt to her temporary home and family.

Music is an important component in Italian life, and most Italians know the story lines of the major Italian operas in the way that Americans know the story of George Washington and the cherry tree. In October, Italian students of all levels had the opportunity to attend the dress rehearsal of Puccini's *La Boheme* at the Granada. In preparation, the classes read the libretto and listened to different arias. There was also a special assembly for the whole school with a troupe from Santa Barbara Opera which did a great job of explaining the different voice ranges and the wonderfully dramatic flourishes in plot, costume, and musical arrangements that make opera so engaging. From this experience, Anacapa Italian students are now quite knowledgeable about the tragic end of Mimi in *La Boheme*—they are more culturally literate.

It is also important for students learning a second language to be informed about particular traditions. *Mac Pi 100* is a uniquely Italian school ritual to commemorate 100 days before the end of school. Students write about what has been memorable so far in the school year and what they would like to accomplish before it finishes; at Anacapa, we even celebrated with traditional cookies we made. Each year, students in our Spanish classes study and make posters about *El día de los muertos*. In this way, they can understand the impact the customs associated with this day have had on Spanish-speaking communities and how *El día de los muertos* has become a Latin tradition that is also celebrated here in America.

Italian students also regularly follow news stories involving Italy. This year, the topics recurring most often have been the political changes, the economic challenges, and the sinking of the cruise ship, the *Concordia*. There were also articles about snow falling in Rome and scientists on trial for not predicting an earthquake!

Learning a second language makes students more aware of the possibilities of communicating with other cultures. By going beyond grammar and vocabulary to understanding the cultures, we hope to raise awareness and appreciation for the rich diversity of human activities on our planet, and thus help our students become positive contributors to the world community.

~ ~ Suzie Sichi and Hugo Macario