

# Mr. Howe's Quarterly News

## What we've been up to...

It's hard to believe that we are already moving into the fourth quarter of the school year. Our classes will continue to wrest the best from your children as we struggle mightily to use the time left to open our minds to the best writing that the world has to offer.

## English Language Arts

In language arts, at all levels, students are working on using the many terms learned in previous classes to enhance, extend, and specify what students want to express in their writing. They will be writing in-depth responses to the readings listed below. Last quarter's work was consistently better than their efforts in the first quarter, so I have high hopes that their ongoing written expression will continue to be strengthened and clarified.

## Literature

In the 7th and 8th grades, we have begun a serious and difficult exploration of life as lived in a very different culture and the consequences of bucking the established regime during a turbulent time, namely *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai. In the 6th grade, we have also begun a similar exploration of culture, but in a very different place and time, in *The Double Life of Pocahontas*. In the 5th grade, we have been reading an entertaining collection of short stories as we explore that unique genre.

## Writing/Vocabulary

Students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grades have become adept at preparing for the very rigorous demands of the *Vocabulary Workbook* quizzes. In the 5th grade, the similar challenge of studying 50 spelling words has also been accepted and, for the most part, conquered.

We have now expanded the journal prompts from inspirational quotes and story starters to include picture prompts for poetic, historical or fictional responses.

## Newsworthy Notes...

Please check your child's ongoing grades in the Facts portal. In addition, please encourage your child to take responsibility for their own learning by keeping track of their assignments in their planners.

Students are required to bring a whole host of items to each class. I am now checking, and grading, their preparation for class. For all my classes, these include six items, as follows: a writing utensil, lined paper, a reading book, their textbook, their planner, and their charged ChromeBooks. Of course, they would also bring their journals (for ELA) and any other outside book we are reading (for Literature/Reading). When students take their journals or their workbooks home, they should develop a routine that ensures that those items return to class.

We are having spelling (5th) and vocabulary (6th, 7th, and 8th) quizzes every other week. The words are challenging; advance study is needed.

Please make sure that Chromebooks come home on weekends and are charged and ready to go for the week.