

FIFTH GRADE CHRONICLES

Superstars, One and All!

Congratulations to the fifth-grade students on their amazing play, *Treasure Island*, which delighted the audience on February 22! They were charming and engaging, and all of their hard work in rehearsals definitely paid off!

On the topic of hard work, the fifth-grade students did an excellent job in their study of the history of the Roman Empire until 192 AD. This knowledge served as a foundation for the next area of inquiry: exploring just why the Empire mattered. These studies culminated in oral presentations by the students on a topic of choice, stretching all the way back to the beginning of the year. However, these topics led up to the real fun—the study of the civilization of Rome. First, students learned about the family lives of ancient Romans, including the role of children in the house. Then, they examined the various styles of Roman house construction, furthering the discussion of socio-economic class in the ancient world. Next up was the final preparation for the National Mythology Exam, a high point in the history curriculum for Westminster students, and a real chance to show off the knowledge that they have gained over the past eighteen months.

Yet it is not only the remaining subjects of the classical studies portion of the curriculum that awaits the fifth grade. Roman Day is approaching quickly, with at least one surprise that the students literally can't help but put their nose against (and regret very quickly thereafter!). Also, history projects are on the horizon. No doubt, the ever-persuasive fifth graders will be able to convince fellow ancient Roman citizens to visit their province over all others.

In another part of the world, the fifth-grade students have reviewed French vocabulary associated with school, the family, and going to a restaurant, including practicing a French conversation that takes place at an imaginary restaurant. In January, the class was able to celebrate *La Fête des Rois* with the traditional galette. The lucky student who found the fève, or prize, was crowned king or queen for the day. The rest of the class shouted “*Vive le roi! Vive la reine!*” i.e., “Long live the king! Long live the queen!” *Merci* to M Couraud for the delicious galettes! The class also learned about many different monuments in France during Language Weeks. To top it off, M Fleming demonstrated how to make *quiche* in preparation for the upcoming 5th grade French café.

To further highlight French culture and tradition, the entire school celebrated the 19th annual Hat Day or *La Sainte Catherine*. This traditional French holiday is based on a French custom associated with Saint Catherine's Day, when unmarried women reaching twenty-five years of age would decorate an elaborate hat illustrating their fine qualities in order to attract suitors. The entire school showed off their creativity in class and at an assembly on Tuesday, November 20.

Are all sunflower seeds the same? The answer may seem like an obvious “yes,” but the fifth-graders have found out through a recent lab that this is far from the truth. The children discovered that sunflower seeds vary in the number of stripes they have on their side, and made a bar graph showing the results. The fifth-grade has also been studying the classification system of living things as well as variation among species. They have found that, as with sunflower seeds, there are many differences among organisms of the same species. This is food for thought when you are tempted to judge things by their looks!

Clearly, the fifth-grade students were treated to generous holiday celebrations during winter break, and if parents need any help getting the family budget back in order for 2013, ask a fifth-grader to help! Students “shopped” on a budget of \$200 for a family of four in the classroom store this past holiday season. Applying their knowledge of percents, students calculated tax and discount in order to buy gifts for friends and family. Taking a break from percents and applied consumer mathematics, students enjoyed a foray into geometry as they explored the use of tangrams and geometric figures in the art of ancient Chinese storytelling. Calling on impressive levels of creativity, fifth-graders wrote and illustrated their own short stories using original tangram designs. The students started the new year by refreshing the ever-important fraction skills, and the math experts will continue to have opportunities to apply fraction sense to their lives. Third quarter brings the highly anticipated studies of proportion and ratio, when students will explore probability and have yet another chance to see how many wonderful ways math is all around us!



Interactive bulletin boards keep students busy.

After their in-depth consideration of plot and characters in *Where the Red Fern Grows*, fifth-grade students are well-prepared to sink their teeth into deeper literary topics. They've recently delighted in the sheer joy of words through Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*. Students had the opportunity to create their own stories behind these rich characters through individual projects. After close readings meant to unpack Kipling's prose and analyze what techniques make his writing so lively, the fifth-graders put this newfound literary skill to use creating word wonders of their own.

In writing class, students are learning how to paint pictures with language by using words that show instead of tell. They have had wonderful opportunities to savor rich descriptive scenes in children's literature and implement such skills in assignments designed to capture the world in words.



Treasure Island was captivating!

**“Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap
but by the seeds that you plant.” ~ Robert Louis Stevenson**