



Head's Newsletter

Dear Parents,

Pilots often talk of “ground rush” – the optical illusion that the ground is rushing up to meet you as you get close to landing. There has definitely been a sense of “ground rush” in recent days as half-term rapidly and suddenly approaches. It has been a very successful few weeks. Final Assessments and the collation process for Teacher Assessed Grades are well underway, sporting fixtures are back in earnest, we are rehearsing for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and even planning for our Summer Celebration, Speech Day and the end of term. This week I thought you might enjoy a snapshot of the excellent work going on in academic departments.

English

Study leave notwithstanding, it has been a busy week in English. Upper Sixth students have made the most of pre-assessment tutorials to consider the content and style their own practice essays, test their knowledge of contextual factors - gender, witchcraft, the English Civil War, antinomianism (to identify but a few) - relevant to John Milton and Webster and to hone their critical gazes in preparation for their deconstruction of unseen American prose. Upper Fifth pupils sat their Language assessment and will, I know, be revising for their 'Macbeth' and poetry paper (for which recordings of recent clinics are available). Three GCSE students are also looking forward to their AS English Language assessment next week, when they will showcase their grasp of the theoretical aspects of language as they respond to tasks on gender and power.

Lower Sixth pupils continue to enjoy extremes of style as students analyse the genteel, Jamesian density of Edith Wharton's 'Age of Innocence' and the abrasive, Juvenalian satire of Caryl Churchill's 'Serious Money'. Middle Fifth continues its study of Macbeth's tragic downfall, with a clear, sharp focus on the generic features of the play and Shakespeare's rich brand of early modern English. Lower Fifth pupils began recently the final unit of the course, which develops further the skills emphasized throughout the year and prepares them for their GCSE years, the beginning of which we all hope coincides with a return to normality.

Before turning their attention to the GCSE preparation work, Lower Fifth pupils completed their reading of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest'. Mrs Wakefield's pupils composed their own versions of Caliban's poetic description of the island, venturing out of the classroom to gather raw sense data for their compositions:



Tom:

As I write, sounds and emotions fall onto the
page.

As I gaze upwards, past the trees and into the
clouds,

I can see how small we really are.

Time has become a meaningless dimension.

Much is to be learned from the birds,

Unseen to the eye yet their music is carried with
the shifting winds.

Their worries are parallel to the events of
Mother Nature.

Willows rustle together, commanded by the
wind, moving like the breath falling and rising.

Patterns, intertwined with un-ordered mess, are
a perfect combination.

Will:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and
hurt not.

Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices

That, if I then had wak'd after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then, in
dreaming,

The clouds methought would open and show
riches

Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak'd
I cried to dream again.

Hani:

Bird song pierces through the chilly spring morning air.

Viridescent grass whispers as my feet brush against the thick emerald blanket that lays itself on the
sloped pastureland.

Cars rush past the nearby road – their engines roaring obtrusively, almost drowning out the early
morning bird-tune.

Shouts of distant classmates occasionally ring out across the peaceful grassland.



Modern Foreign Languages

The languages rotation in Form 7-8 has been going very well this year too, and encouragingly, the uptake of MFL in L5 and for GCSE options is higher than in previous years.

In Spanish the M5 have been focussing on the topic 'Day of the Dead'. They have been learning set vocabulary to describe and explain what they do during this yearly festival in Mexico. They have been practising their spoken Spanish using phrases and words to describe images of the festival as well as listening to a very catchy song to help remember the vocabulary!



In L6 French, students have been playing vocab games using Blooket.com and discussing the complexities of music and culture in the Francophone world.

The L6 French and Spanish courses have also allowed us access to French cinema, taking us on a journey from the Lumiere brothers, via La Nouvelle Vague to 5D film experiences. As part of the current unit on Spanish gastronomy, the team are also planning to use the facilities to make a traditional Tortilla Española after half term!

Pinhole Photography

Following on from the experience of the Camera Obscura workshop experience, the L6 photographers produced their own pinhole photographs. They produced a series of photographs within the school grounds exposing light sensitive paper that was stuck inside the box using projected light through the pinhole at the other end. The process is highly experimental and involves adjustments of the aperture (pinhole) and exposure times depending on the situation.

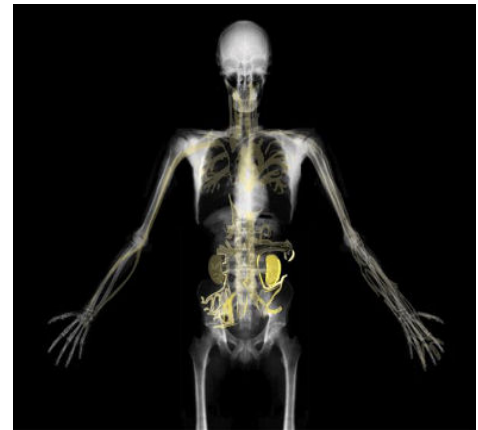


Once the exposure had been taken (often approximately 30-40 seconds), the photographers had to then develop the paper through a chemical process in the photographic darkroom. Here are some of the results - the positive image was inverted using Photoshop.



Physics

This week M5/1 have been looking at the use of nuclear radiation in medicine. We have looked at how radioactive isotopes are used in tracing and in cancer treatment and learnt about how to choose appropriate isotopes for different purposes.



Hip Hop Dance Workshop

Last Monday our M5 GCSE Dance pupils, assisted by Drama Assistant, Lottie-Lou Smith, took part in an amazing, high energy two hour dance class led by renowned hip hop guest choreographer, Lorna Thomas. Studying Hip Hop styles and techniques as part of the GCSE Dance Anthology, the performers were put through their paces, learning several high-octane routines that demanded extraordinary stamina and technique. It was a fabulous experience for the girls, who all worked so hard and embraced every move! Everybody had a wonderful time and learned a great deal about this modern dance genre.



Sport News

The M5 boys enjoyed an afternoon of basketball and badminton on Tuesday, organising and refereeing their own tournaments. They showed maturity and respected decisions made by their peers. Fantastic basketball skills were also evident with some “3 pointers” sinking into the basket. Our Chelsea FC Foundation sessions continue on a Thursday evening after school for L5. Close control of the ball was the focus of this week’s session and the boys rose to the challenge brilliantly, keeping the ball close and keeping the ball moving.



COVID-19 Protocols

As per my email last week, the school has updated its COVID-19 Risk Assessment in line with government guidance. The only significant change relates to face masks. All of our other COVID-secure protocols remain in place. The updated Risk Assessment can be found here:

<https://www.stedmunds.org.uk/about-us/policies-inspection-reports/>

I am hugely grateful to staff, pupils and parents for getting the school back up to full throttle so smoothly and effectively since April.

And now half term rushes up to meet us on Friday.

Have a great week!

Edward O'Connor
Head