

Making Shakespeare Characters from the 1500s Relevant to 9th Graders in the 21st Century

It is a timeless scenario, boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy and girl live happily ever after. Or does it work that way for the characters in Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*? The ninth grade students at Sun Valley High School uncover the truth as they read perhaps the most difficult literature in the ninth grade curriculum.



The Sun Valley Language Arts Department has created a ladder of success that can provide ongoing, support before,

during, and after reading the play. For this reason, they have developed a method of instruction designed to increase the knowledge and skills they need to understand the play, even if they struggle with the Shakespearean language.

The key to making this classic meaningful to students is to help them make personal connections to the play. Throughout the course, they are taught to understand significant themes. They also gain in-depth knowledge of plot details and explore Shakespearean Language and theatre. Students re-write the famous Balcony Scene using their own language, then present to the class in order to hear the differences and similarities between Shakespearean language and modern language.

Several film versions of the tragedy are also reviewed to help students visualize the Elizabethan Theatre and Shakespeare's world during the 1600's, as well as provide a modern interpretation. As the final piece of the unit, students are able to experience William Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* performed live in a theatre, making the final connection between their lives and Shakespeare's time period.

Students have responded well to the way *Romeo and Juliet* is presented. Despite the difficulty of the language, the faculty has found that year after year students at all academic levels are engaged and invested in the play.

"As an experienced teacher, it is extremely exciting and invigorating to witness students becoming passionate about traditional literature," stated Language Arts Department Head Mrs. Lauren Schneider.

"Seeing their genuine interest over the storyline and characters, including their emotional involvement in the play's last tragic scene, reminds me why *Romeo and Juliet* has remained a crucial part of the curriculum for so many years," stated English teacher Ms. Kathryn O'Mara.



300!!!

In bowling, it's a perfect score. In history, it's the number of Spartans who fought at the Battle of Thermopylae. But to Sun Valley Girls basketball coach Frank Ridpath, the number 300 has a meaning all its own...victories.

Mr. Ridpath recorded his 300th career victory on January 15th. Amassing an average record of 16-6 over the past 18 years, he has been at the helm of the Sun Valley squad for 10 years.

"I think this record and my success is a tribute to the talented girls I've had playing for me over the years," stated a modest Coach Ridpath.

"Frank puts in the time to be successful and his teams over the year have shown how the work pays off," stated Sun Valley Athletic Director Mr. Brian Trotter. "Frank has coached both boys and girls on the high school level, which further shows how much of an impact he has had on his student-athletes."



Coach Frank Ridpath (photographed with the Sun Valley Girls Varsity Basketball Team) recorded his 300th career victory on January 15th.

It's Alive!!

History Alive! Pursuing American Ideals centers on the five founding ideals sewn into the fabric of the Declaration of Independence: equality, rights, liberty, opportunity, and democracy. This social studies program invites students to become engaged in the development of our nation, from establishing an American republic to the making of modern America.

The instructional practices of *History Alive* help students of all abilities to master key social studies concepts. Along with a variety of sources that compliment the scope and sequence of the program, the faculty provide students with engaging and substantive material. The program is used in the social studies curriculum from 6th grade through an American Government course offered at the high school.

“The activities along, with the computers in the classroom, made it more of a hands-on classroom. We role played and became a part of the process rather than listening and taking notes every day,” stated Senior Pete Papageorge. Added Freshman Haley Turner, “We are able to feel like we are part of what happened, even though we were in class.”

This Is Not Your Father's Drafting Class

Sun Valley offers three levels of popular Digital Design courses, as well as a fourth level that is run as an independent study. These courses expose each student to the many facets of digital design, including computer-aided drawing (CAD), architectural instruction, page layout, graphic and motion graphic design.

In addition to working with real world problems and projects, Sun Valley students utilize industry standard software. Adobe Creative Suite 4, AutoCAD, SolidWorks and Blender programs help facilitate a range of learning activities including architectural floor plans, still imaging, 3D modeling and animation.



The courses provide second year Sun Valley teacher Mr. Thomas Hensler with the opportunity to work in a field he is passionate about. “I love working with students in the environment that is very much a part of their modern lives. It is important to teach that digital technology is not just entertainment,” stated Mr. Hensler. “These classes examine the societal impacts that digital technologies have had.”

Mr. Hensler attended Millersville University for Technology Education. He has engaged in freelance motion graphic

design work for the past ten years and is currently the Director of the Digital Media Academy at Drexel University and Swarthmore College.

“At an introductory level, it is almost like an exploratory survey course where the student is exposed to the many worlds of digital design,” added Mr. Hensler. “By the end of the 3rd year, the student will be very skilled in a given area of digital design and have a very good head start in whatever related field they will be pursuing in college.”

Some of the professional fields students of digital design enter after college are architecture, mechanical engineering, video game design, animation, video editing, graphic/motion graphic design and 3D model/animation.



All About Achievement

Students Receive a Helpful Push

Sun Valley began a new initiative this past September designed to provide students with additional assistance in math. “Push In” refers to the practice of placing a second math teacher in an existing classroom to assist students who may have difficulty finding success in math.

By identifying and assisting these students at the beginning of the school year, Sun Valley believes the extra attention is provided early enough to positively impact math performance.

“I think the success is seen in the classroom,” stated Sun Valley math teacher John Swainson. “Teachers are giving our students extra one-on-one attention to help them stay focused.”

Following the completion of the school year, Sun Valley will determine how effective this new initiative has been. Mr. Swainson noted, “When you try new things, you learn from them and improve on the idea in the future.”

For more details about the information in this issue or any of our programs, please contact Mr. Jakubczyk at tjakubczyk@pdsd.org.