

SIXTH GRADE SENTINEL

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THIRD QUARTER, 2004-2005

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**Spring Has Sprung ...
(in Mrs. Laughlin's
Classes)**

Spring is a time of new growth and rejuvenation, and my reading classes are attacking The Call of the Wild with eagerness and gusto! We began with a short biographical sketch of the author, Jack London, and then I shared some interesting and thought provoking background information. We are now getting to know Buck, and John Thornton will soon enter the picture. The reading of a classic novel such as this is a long and arduous process, but I am certain that our students will reap the benefits of their efforts. As always, there will be vocabulary and character studies as well as quizzes and tests.

Your sixth grader is currently reading a book of his/her choice, and the method of reporting will likewise be determined by individual choice. Approximately four weeks ago, I distributed an instruction sheet that listed several possible projects, among which were dioramas, posters,

commercials, PowerPoint presentations and skits. Students were also encouraged to be creative by suggesting additional means of reporting. The due date for blocks 2 and 4 is April 18th, and for blocks 3 and 7 it is April 19th.

Our reading text continues to supply us with some compelling short stories and with opportunities to stimulate comprehension skills. Vocabulary enhancement is also an integral part of our reading program.

In language, we have almost finished all parts of speech. Feel free to quiz your son/daughter on nouns, verbs, adjectives, interjections, conjunctions, and pronouns. By the end of the year they will be able to add adverbs and prepositions to their conquests. They have worked very hard to become the grammarians they are today. Along with formal writing assignments, we will continue to share our thoughts with our journals on a daily basis, and soon we will experiment with different forms of poetry writing.

Finally, during the fourth quarter the sixth grade team will be planning our annual "A Step Back in Time". This unique program will take place during the latter part of May or the first week in June.

Through various activities we will help the sixth graders to experience life in Itasca in the 1890's. Special guests, crafts, a one-room schoolhouse (complete with quill pens and a dunce cap), and a walking tour of Itasca's Historic District are some of the components of this enjoyable unit. We are

looking forward to sharing this valuable week with our current sixth grade class.

I anticipate a stimulating and fun-filled quarter with your son/daughter. HAPPY SPRING!!!!

**Mr. Koenig's Science
Classes**

The students this quarter were studying wildlife conservation. They learned that every species has a place for itself in the environment. They saw how things like climate change and man's activities can change the environment for better or worse. They studied how killing species or changing the habitat such as cutting down forests, pollution, and wetland destruction can all change things for the worse for many plants and animals. One of the activities that the students did was to research an extinct species and write a paper. They learned about the plant or animal, where it lived, and why it became extinct. The students turned in many excellent, well-researched papers.

**Learning from Other
Cultures**

The first human cultures began developing about two million years ago. One of the first accomplishments of these cultures was learning to make and use stone tools. With simple tools people could hunt animals for food. They also learned to work together to go after large animals. Rules of behavior were then developed for groups to obey.

Another important accomplishment of early cultures was learning to

farm. About 9000 B.C., people began to settle down in one place for long periods and produce their own food. Once farmers could produce enough crops to feed other people, they had time to develop other skills, such as pottery making or weaving.

Another significant development was the rise of cities in some parts of the world. As larger groups of people gathered together in cities, more opportunities for specialization were created. In addition, city life resulted in the need for more comprehensive systems of government. And bringing people together also meant a greater exchange of ideas.

What causes culture to change? New ideas and inventions often lead people to develop new ways of doing things. For example, the invention of writing systems allowed people to record their thoughts and discoveries and to communicate them to others.

Changes in the environment cause cultures to change. Over time, the climate in an area can change. Also, natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes can alter the landscape. People must move or learn to adjust to new living conditions.

Another major source of change is contact with other cultures. When people from other cultures meet, they are exposed to the ways of life of each culture.

Cultures change from within as well. Factors such as population growth and conflicts between groups can bring about new ways of doing things.

Today we live in a world of many cultures - a multicultural world. We

have learned from cultures of all parts of the world, and we continue to interact with other cultures. We are linked to the cultures of the past, just as cultures of the future will be linked to us.

Please ask your child to share information with you on the cultures that they have studied and researched.

Math Wrap Up

During this last quarter of the school year, we will be doing some of the most important math of our time together. The regular math classes will begin the quarter studying percents and their applications, integers, and the geometry of area, volume, and surface area. The advanced classes are just finishing a unit on percents, and they will be studying integers, three-dimensional geometry, the Pythagorean Theorem, similar triangles, and a finishing unit on solving more complicated algebraic equations.

One change you will notice this quarter is the more frequent use of calculators. Now that we have studied fractions, decimals, and percents, students will be able to use calculators on most of their class work and homework this quarter, with the exception of the chapter on integers. It is important for your child to bring a calculator, because doing the computations on a calculator allows us to move ahead at a slightly quicker pace, doing some more complicated problems.

One final request: as spring weather finally arrives, it becomes tougher for students to focus on staying inside and doing homework. Please work with your child to find a

balance between the fresh air outside and the responsibilities of completing this school year successfully. It is a good idea to occasionally look at your child's assignment book to have an idea of when tests are coming and if assignments have been missed. I am looking forward to a great finish to the year.