



**In The Headlines...**

**Never the First To Finish**

I am sure most parents have experienced the frustration of a child who feels as he or she can never keep up. As teachers face increased pressure to teach students more and more, the pace of many classrooms have sped up.

In a guest post on the *Getting Smart* blog, Sarah Schaaf (a parent) describes her efforts to help her daughter "keep up."

**Inspirational Quote**

You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, and to work by working. All those who think to learn in any other way deceive themselves.

- Francis de Sales



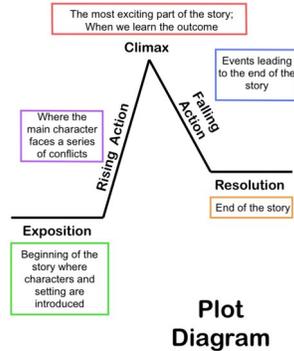
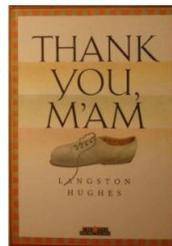
**Language Arts Lessons: Plot and Conflict**

Students learned about the [stages of plot](#). Then, students looked at how the [different forms of conflict](#) are central to the plot.

Yet learning names, charts, and definitions does not make a person ready for true [literary analysis](#). To put the new skills into practice, students read "[Thank You, Ma'am](#)," a short story by Langston Hughes. The students had to complete a [plot diagram](#) and a [conflict chart](#) to show their understanding of the LEQs.

Hughes' story is a classic. In a few short pages, he draws the audience by building several overlapping conflicts into the plot. Beyond being a powerful example of plot and conflict, Hughes' writing also presents a meaningful theme.

Parents are welcome to use the link (see middle column) to access an e-version of the text. After reading the story, you may find it helpful to ask your son or daughter to explain the plot and conflicts of the story. More importantly, you can then talk about what lessons the audience can learn from the story.



As we started the [Interpreting Literature](#), unit we examined two of the basic tools of [literary analysis](#): [plot](#) and [conflict](#). The first [LEQs](#) of the unit were:

- How do the parts of plot work together to create an effective story?
- How does the conflict drive the plot?

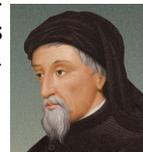
**Daily Life in the Middle Ages**



The first images that appear in most of our minds when thinking of the Middle Ages is King Arthur: knights, chivalry, and castles. Yet the large majority of people were not of noble birth but were the "common folk." Far too often, these everyday people and their lives are overlooked in history books.

We began by [summarizing the roles played by different social classes](#) on the manor. Yet the summaries give students only a brief, secondary description of the types of people alive a thousand years ago. To get a true vision of people and their lives, we needed to examine a primary source.

We looked to Geoffrey Chaucer, one of the first true greats of modern English literature.



In his *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer describes several different medieval figures on a journey. Chaucer infuses his writing with his own personal feelings for each of the social classes. His opinions let us see inside a medieval mind. We do not just get facts, we also get judgments on the people of the day.

Although we discussed a few example descriptions and their meanings in class, you can use [this source](#) to revisit the text with your child.

## Upcoming Dates

Monday, February 2nd:  
Plot/Conflict LEQ Writing Due  
Wednesday, February 4th:  
7:45am—Spring Sports Meetings  
January Reading Calendars Due  
Sunday, February 8th:  
Buffalo Wild Wings Fundraiser  
Tuesday, February 10th:  
U4 Social Studies Exam

## Stay on the Scores!

Use [this link](#) to access the Parent Portal of MMS to stay on top of student grades. Students have access as well, so they should always know their scores. MMS is “Live” - meaning as soon as I put the grades in, you can see them!

## Upcoming Events

### Spring Sports Meetings

During WIT on Wednesday, students who are interested in Spring Sports are invited to informational meetings with coaches and other school staff.

- Track in the Cafeteria
- Boys soccer in the LGIA
- Girls soccer in the Faculty Dining Room
- Girls volleyball in the MS Lobby

### Unit Four Social Studies Exam

The test on *The Society in Middle Ages* is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, February 10th. Once we get past the next snow storm, I will provide students with review materials and the exact date.

Assuming there are no changes, I will host an after-school study session on Monday, February 9th. Since we have had so many short weeks, I think the review session will really help refresh students' memories.



New Oxford Middle School

"Doing the Right Things, at the Right Time, for the Right Reasons!"

## Something to be Proud of...

January was a strange month. Despite having 31 calendar days, we only had 12 full days of school. Students and teachers both had trouble settling into a regular routine.



In the face of these difficulties, the teachers of **Team Discovery** chose a **Student of the Month** who never lets any outside influence distract her focus on learning. **Morgan Hostetter** is a quiet presence in the classroom, but she is a model of **OxSTRONG's 5Ps**.

**Morgan** displays **politeness** through her patience with classmates. Her careful work shows both **perseverance** and a striving to **participate in learning**. Despite dedicating much of her time to success on the basketball court, **Morgan** is still always **prepared** for class.

All three of **Morgan's** teachers highlighted the careful detail she gives to her work. Once **Morgan** learns a strategy, such as citing evidence in text or constructing pre-writing strategies, she always puts it into practice.

## Books and Reading Update



Over the weekend, students should be gathering final signatures on the **January Reading Calendar**. Monday will bring the newest blank calendar for students to begin to fill.

Although I will continue to [grade students on reading](#) 45 minutes each week, I **plan to challenge students to reach for 60 minutes**.

Please be sure that you are signing calendars regularly. Students should be sharing their log with you at least once each week.

I have spent the weekend on books as well. I updated the **Book Board** in my room to display three texts that I wrote about in a [recent AngelBlog post](#). In the post, I shared reflections on the role reading needs to play in a young person's life today.

The three books placed on the Board include:

- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*
- *Brown Girl Dreaming*
- *The Young Elites*

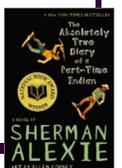
You can find detailed descriptions of each on my ["Reading List."](#)



In place of our usual "Book Review" writing, February will be wrapped up with a set of *Book Club* activities.

At the month's end, students will discuss their reading in groups. We will then complete a discussion forum similar to when we read *Down the Rabbit Hole*.

Since we are in the middle of our "Interpreting Literature" unit, much of the discussion will be built around the literary analysis terms we are using. As you sign your child's calendar, considering using [the SLM](#) to pose questions.



Have you been on the AngelHub yet today?  
[Check in now!](#)

Colonials

