

## Outdoor Education Series—Ashland 7th Grade

Outdoor Education is fundamental to the school's goal of making knowledge come alive for its students, and is artfully integrated into each grade's curriculum starting in the 3rd Grade.

Parents' contributions to the Class Fund make these rich experiences possible:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Curriculum</u>
3rd	Emandal Farm	Practical Life
4th	Gold Country	California History
5th	Yosemite	Botany
6th	Mt. Lassen	Geology
7th	Shakespeare Festival	Renaissance
8th	Open	

We continue our Outdoor Education Series with Steve Kinney's look at the recent five-day visit to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival by the 7th Grade.

*"If it be true that good wine needs no bush,  
'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue;  
yet to good wine they do use good bushes,  
and good plays prove the better  
by the help of good epilogues."*

— William Shakespeare, As You Like It

And so I would like to begin the epilogue of our class trip to Ashland, Oregon.

The 7th grade students learned that Shakespeare's 37 plays, 154 sonnets, and 2 long narrative poems, truly capture the full range of human emotions. Perhaps this is one reason Rudolf Steiner designed the upper grade's curriculum with Shakespeare in mind, to appeal to the range of emotions present in the adolescent.

Romantic love and the often insurmountable complexities that result from it are certainly a theme on the minds of our students and both of the plays we saw in Ashland: the tragedy Romeo and Juliet and the comedy As You Like It, dealt with this topic in very different ways. Appropriately, the main character of Juliet is believed to be 13 years old in Shakespeare's adaptation of this classic tale.

The annual 7th grade class trip to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) in Ashland, Oregon, is unlike the other class trips in that it is not an outdoor educational trip, although we do try to squeeze in outdoor activities as well. We typically receive the highest number of chaperone applications for this trip, as the activities are often just as fun (if not more) for the

parent volunteers. The Renaissance History curriculum in 7th grade is the impetus for the trip, and typically 7th grade will perform one of the Shakespeare plays that are seen at the festival.



Ashland is a six-hour drive up Highway 5 that passes through Shasta County and across the Oregon border. Our class chose to make extended stops at Lake Shasta on both the way up and back

to break up the long drive. On the way up we stopped at Shasta Caverns and revisited some of the geology curriculum from the 6th grade. It was a short ferry ride across the lake, followed by a steep shuttle ride up the Klamath Mountain Range where a local fish hatchery employee discovered the caves in 1878. We were given a tour of the caves that was both entertaining and educational. On the return from Ashland, we stopped a few miles down the road to visit Shasta Dam, one of the largest dams in North America, to preview some of the 7th grade physics curriculum students will study later in the year.



Upon arriving in Ashland, we checked into our dormitory on the campus of Southern Oregon University. In addition to serving their own students, the college regularly houses middle and high school groups in a dedicated residence hall for visiting groups, and we shared the dining commons with college students, allowing charter students to glimpse college life. Our boys and girls were located on separate floors with a shared common area for gatherings.



A major focus of the trip is experiencing live theater. Classes typically see two or three plays in one or more of the festival's venues. We saw three evening plays, two in the indoor Angus Bowmer

Theater (Romeo and Juliet, Animal Crackers), and one in the outdoor Elizabethan Theater (As You Like It). The Shakespeare plays are unabridged, typically lasting 2.5 – 3 hours. Our class chose to dress formally for the indoor theater, making their first experience to the theater even more memorable.

With all evening performances, the class had plenty of time during the day. We attended workshops, prologues, and tours, all conducted by the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) team. The first day we attended a backstage tour of both the indoor (Bowmer) and outdoor (Elizabethan) stages. In this tour we learned about all aspects of the theater, besides acting, such as set construction, lighting, makeup and hair, the “green room”, and the history of the festival. For each of the Shakespeare plays we attended “prologues”, which are 30-minute briefings on the plays designed to improve students’ understanding and enjoyment. Lastly, OSF actors conducted a workshop to teach introductory acting skills to the class. This was my personal favorite, as the students improvised and created their own interpretations to scenarios presented by the OSF actors. Later, for creative writing, the students imagined they were theater critics and wrote a critical review of Romeo and Juliet in the SOU library.



Besides the theater activities, some other highlights of the trip were a half-day rafting trip on the Rogue River, swimming at the local YMCA, hanging out in beautiful Lithia Park, an afternoon of lunch and shopping in downtown Ashland, and, of course, hanging out in the dorms as they played cards and other games together.

In many ways, these “non-academic” parts of the trip will be what the students remember most, but the experience of learning about live theater in Ashland will be something they will appreciate for the rest of their lives.



### Students’ Reminiscences

*“On this trip we saw Shakespeare play such as Romeo and Juliet and As You Like It, along with one play not written by him called Animal Crackers, which was a very humorous play. From the plays we watched, I learned the style of the writing and how people acted around each other back in the Renaissance period, which was very different from now. Along with plays we went river rafting which I had a blast at doing, and we went shopping in downtown Ashland and got to pick out cool souvenirs. Overall I think Ashland was a very fun field trip and one of my favorites, and in a way it brought me closer to understanding classmates I was not very close with because I was around them so much.”*

*“On our 7th grade trip to Ashland we attended 3 plays, went to prologues for each play, and were able to enjoy many other activities such as visiting the Shasta caverns, going rafting on the Rogue River, and going to the YMCA to swim. One of my favorite parts of our trip were the workshops. We went through acting exercises and acted out scenes from plays. We even got to write scenes of our own. It was a great experience and I learned a lot. My favorite activity was rafting. We each got into groups and canoed through the calms and rapids of the beautiful Rogue River.”*

*“I enjoyed the workshops to see how the theater works and how quickly costumes and the sets change.”*

*“I really had fun at the workshops. They were very engaging and brought out some of the actor in me.”*

*“Ashland was a fun experience. Between rafting, shopping, and seeing plays, there was never a dull moment.”*

*“Of all the activities we did that were considered educational, the play Animal Crackers was by far the best. Animal Crackers was a masterpiece with excellent humor and an amazing was of engaging the audience. Of the other activities there were, all were neat. Many of them I had never done. My favorites were rafting and staying in dorms. I am thankful to have been able to go on this trip.”*

*“I enjoyed the workshops because we were able to have fun while we learned about Shakespeare and the plays that we were going to see. Out of the other activities that we did, I enjoyed rafting because it was so awesome that we were able to do something like that.”*