

A PUBLICATION OF THE
GREAT OAK WALDORF SCHOOL
 7TH/8TH GRADE JOURNALISM CLASS

2024 -2025

DIWALI - FESTIVAL OF LIGHT

by Shree.O.Krishna

This year on November 8th, grades two through eight invited their families and community to celebrate Diwali, a festival new to Great Oak Waldorf School. The students worked hard on the preparations, helping to create the magic of all the festivals hosted here at Great Oak.

Diwali is a festival that originated in India, and is celebrated across several South Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and many more.

Diwali is celebrated on the darkest night of the year and is about light overcoming darkness, about good triumphing over bad; it is similar to the traditional Waldorf festivals of Michaelmas and Martinmas. It celebrates the return of Prince Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman after a 14-year exile. This year, Great Oak Waldorf School decided to celebrate Diwali, in addition to Martinmas.

Traditionally during Diwali, we make beautiful colorful sand mandalas called Rangolies, as well as mandalas made out of rice flour called Kolams. Families start deep cleaning and

decorating their homes and making traditional snacks, foods, and sweets a few days before the festival. Making the mandalas is my favorite part.

At night, everyone lights small clay oil lamps, called Diyas or Deepams, and places them around the house. Many times, children will paint the diyas; this is something I loved to do when I was younger.

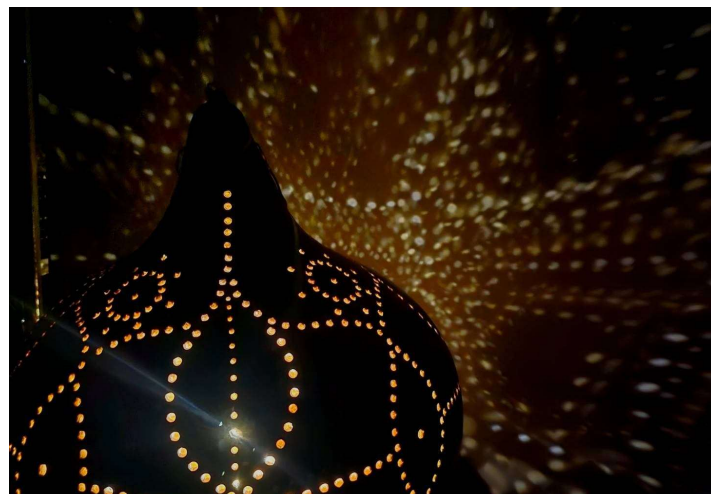


Photo by Ms. Kay

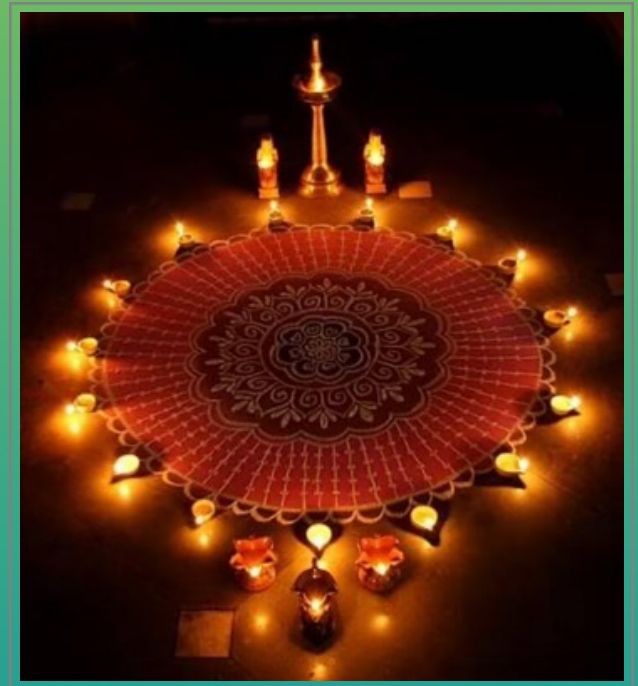
Continued on page 2

In many parts of India the day after Diwali is also the start of the new year, so the celebrations are also about ending the year on a happy note and taking a break for the next few days to celebrate with friends and family.

Each part of India has slightly different traditions; but overall, the celebrations are the same.

In India and parts of Asia, Diwali is like Christmas in regards to festivities. It is the biggest festival of the year. Families start deep cleaning and decorating their homes with garlands, made with flowers and mango leaves, and at night there are fireworks. It is also a time to gather and visit with family and friends to celebrate.

Diwali is a new festival to Great Oak Waldorf School, and I hope that everyone enjoyed the festivities and joins us again next year.



Photos courtesy of Shree.O.Krishna



Photo courtesy of Great Oak Waldorf School

MICHAELMAS

by Isaac Stewart

Michaelmas is a worldwide celebrated festival. It is about the day that Saint Michael saved a town from the wrath of a dragon. The celebration started in the Middle Ages in the twelfth century to honor Saint Michael, who killed a dragon to save a town that regularly had to sacrifice something living to the dragon to eat. If they didn't, the dragon would burn their town down. Then it came time to sacrifice their princess. This is where St. Michael came into the story. He slaughtered the dragon just in time to save their princess from a horrible fate. Every year, Great Oak Waldorf School celebrates Michaelmas by performing a play that all the grades participate in.

On September 27, 2024, Great Oak Waldorf School performed their play for Michaelmas. First grade performed the gnomes, who gave the knights iron. Second grade performed the blacksmiths, who made the swords out of the iron from the gnomes. Third grade students were the villagers, who complained to the king about the dragon. Fourth graders were the knights, who helped fight the dragon alongside Michael. The fifth grade class played the royal family, who sacrificed their princess, their guards, who tied the princess up and accompanied the king, and St. Michael, who killed the dragon. Sixth and eighth grades were the dragon. This year, seventh grade provided music and sound effects.

All of the students' families came to watch the play. Afterwards, everyone enjoyed dragon bread, apples, and refreshing drinks. Middle school and older siblings helped run games including balance beams, tunnels, etc. Parents, teachers, and students enjoyed the festivities for about an hour and a half.



Art by Jackson Williams

THE ENCHANTED FOREST

by Curren Beatty

This Halloween, as they do each year, the Grades students of Great Oak Waldorf School set up the Enchanted Forest for our early childhood and first grade students. Thirteen years ago, it was created by Frau Fleming, our Deutsch and flute teacher. It is hosted in the forest by the campus. The preschoolers, kindergartners, and first graders walk through the forest and receive toys from the older grades.

The projects are usually little trinkets made for the younger students. This year, 8th and 7th grades made stickers, 6th grade made notebooks and gave out pencils, 5th grade gave out clay dragon eyes, 4th grade made wooden robots, 3rd grade made painted wooden blocks, and 2nd grade made bookmarks. First grade made pipe cleaner pumpkins.

This celebration is a brilliant spin on the holiday like giving out homemade toys instead of candy.

When it rains, sometimes we go inside and it's called Enchanted Classrooms. I would love to see you in the next Enchanted Forest!

Local News Con't, pages 5-8

DAY OF THE DEAD AT GREAT OAK WALDORF SCHOOL

by Sophie Petty

Students at Great Oak Waldorf School celebrated Day of the Dead on November 5, 2024. They have celebrated this tradition for many years. This celebration is a special time to celebrate Mexican culture and honor ancestors.

The Day of the Dead, or El Día de los Muertos celebration, was started by the Aztec empire in Mexico. There they set out altars, called *ofrendas*, with food and water and tools to help their loved ones who had died make the difficult journey to their final resting place: the Land of the Dead.

Now, the people of Mexico celebrate Day of the Dead and believe that the souls of their ancestors awaken and return to their home to eat and drink and dance with their families. The families put their loved one's favorite foods and other offerings at gravesites or home *ofrendas*.

Great Oak Waldorf School students celebrate Day of the Dead every November. In Spanish class, we eat "pan de muerto" bread. The round bread symbolizes the cycle of life and death because of its circular shape.

We also make red and yellow marigold flowers out of paper and we use nail polish to paint butterflies. We have an altar in our room that we put the butterflies and flowers on.

We also have a large altar in Bailliet Hall that we divide into sections. Each grade has its own section. We bring pictures of our beloved relatives or pets who have died, and we put flowers and candles near the pictures.

Salt is also put out to represent purification. For the Day of the Dead celebration, students sing and dance. Each grade performs. Last year the fifth grade sang a song called: Un Poquito Cantas. The lyrics go: "Un poquito cantas, un poquito bailas, un poquito lelola, com'un canario." Translated it says, "Take a little singing, and a little dancing, add a little 'le-lo-la' Like a canary."

Great Oak celebrates many traditions and holds many festivals. The students can learn about customs and cultures around the world.

Celebrating Day of the Dead helps the community remember their ancestors. As one parent, Jimma Navarro said, "The act of building an altar for a loved one, therefore remembering their life, is an act of healing and love. As a family it helps us remember and hold space for our loved ones that no longer live earthside."

Besides that, festivals like Day of the Dead help bring the school together and have a good time.



Photo by Mrs. Badot

SEVENTH GRADE VISITS REN FEST

by Nithya Balaji

The Texas Renaissance Festival is held on weekends in the fall from October 12th through December 1st and “Thanksgiving Friday” in 2024. To go along with that, 7th grade students studied the European Renaissance as a block with Ms. Kay.

To start off the day, the 7th graders, along with their family members, met up near the front gate to see the unloaded cannon fire and then headed inside the festival. They walked around for a little while and Ms. Kay introduced the class to some of her friends that work at the Renaissance Festival.

Ms. Kay then took the group behind the pretzel workshop, where 7th graders and their parents ate fresh pretzels. To pass the time, they walked around a few gift shops before watching a blacksmith demonstration, as well as a glass blowing show.

In the afternoon, 7th grade ate lunch while watching a jousting show in the arena, which is located in the heart of Ren Fest. Then they watched another show with trained birds, some of which flew over people’s heads. They played a few games like a 3D maze and then sat down for a concert on a ship-like stage with pirate singers.

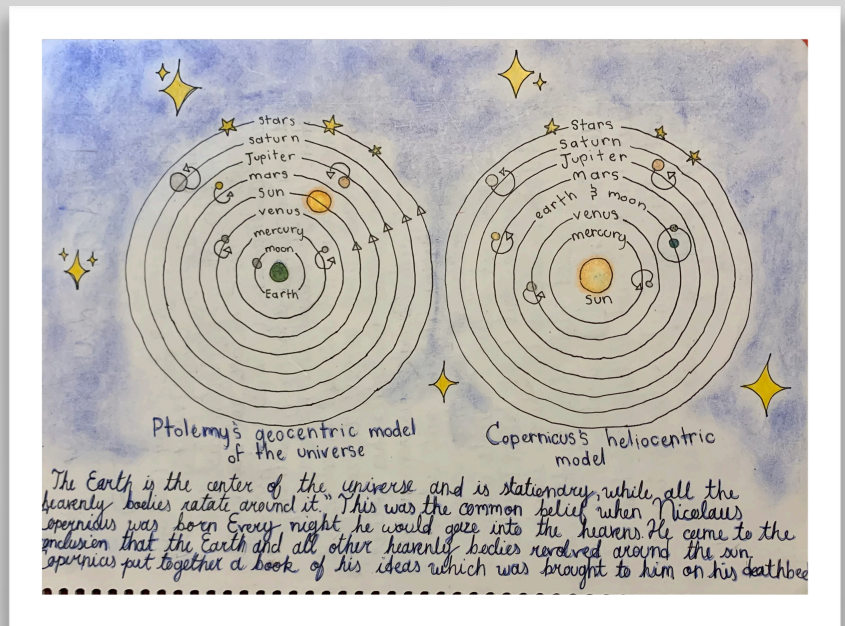
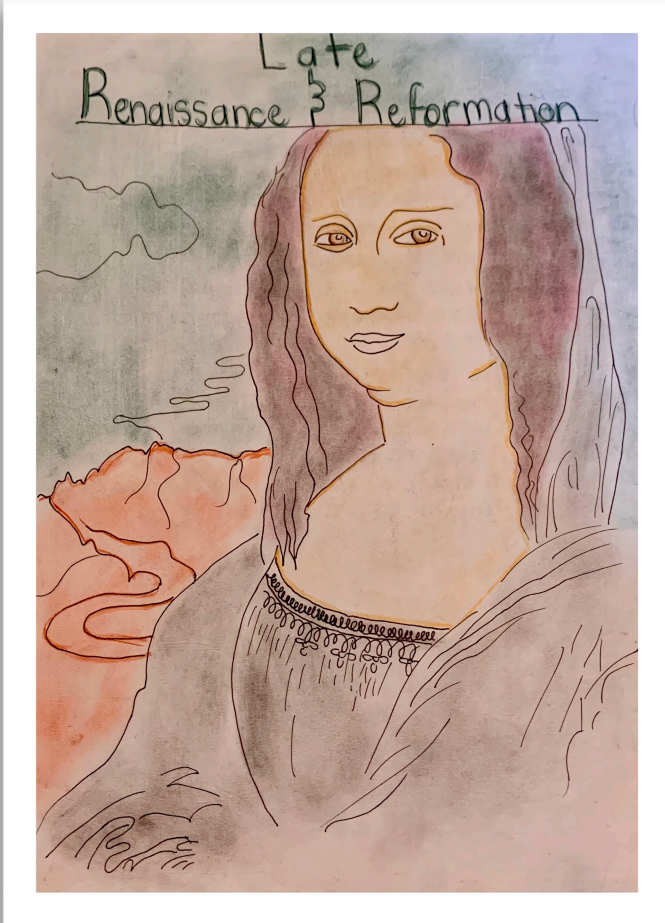
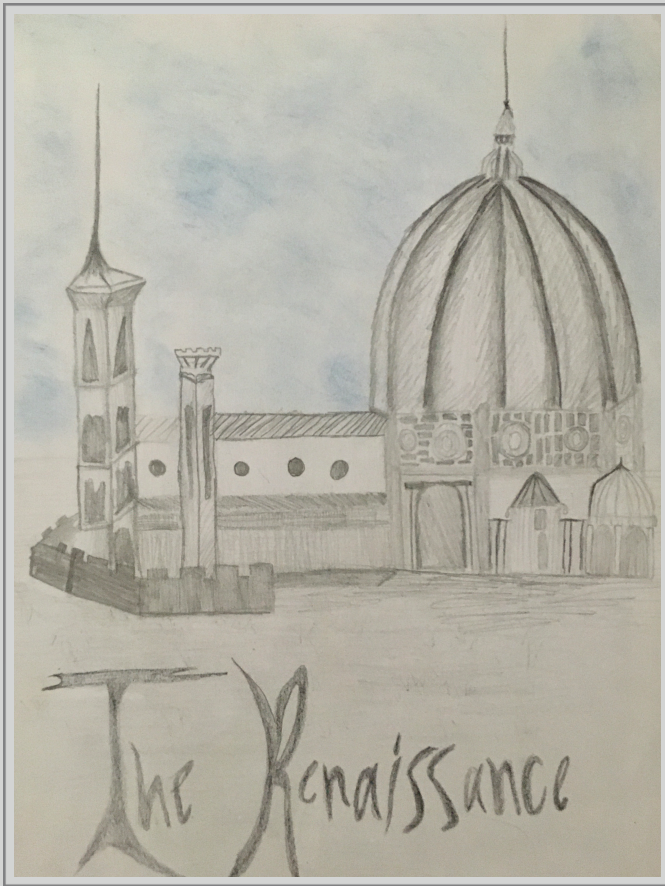
To wrap up the day, everyone gathered in the arena to watch an amazing fire show in the dark where they performed stunts like juggling with fire on metal and then stayed for an amazing fireworks show. Going to Texas Ren Fest is an exciting experience and makes you feel like you just traveled back in time to the Renaissance era.



Photos courtesy Nithya Balaji



Waldorf students study the Renaissance and Reformation eras in the Seventh Grade.



LOCAL FAVORITE SHAKESPEARE PLAY COMING TO YOU ...

by Jack Buswell

A wealthy family living peacefully in harmony in a castle, enjoying the beauty of this world and its many luxuries. Soldiers from the “Army of Don Pedro of Aragon” seeking a place of refuge from War. Don Pedro's sinister brother Don John leaping from the shadows to stir up trouble and turn people against each other.

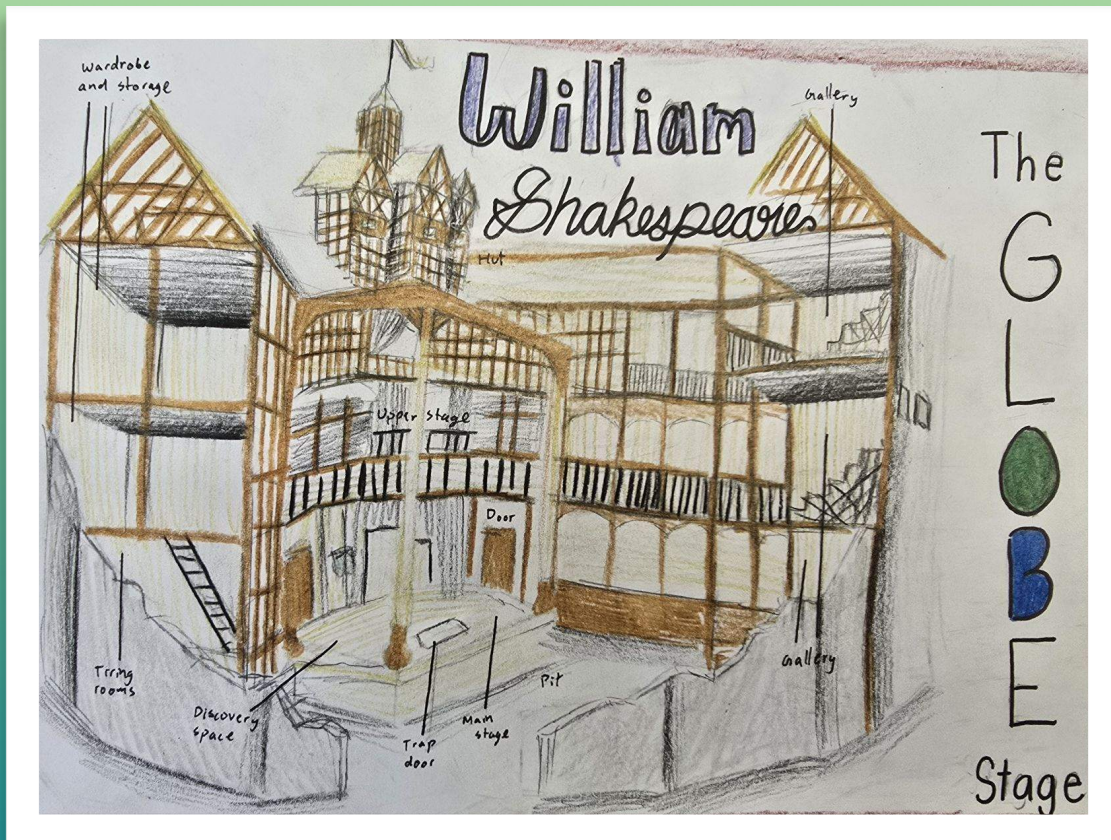
All this and more will be revealed in Great Oak Waldorf middle school’s rendition of Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*. Grades Six, Seven, and Eight will present three, 90-minute performances before Thanksgiving break.

Watch as drama unfolds in this extraordinary and mouth-dropping play. Love is in the air, but deception and danger lurks just under the surface with characters like Benedick, known for his sharp tongue and quick wit, and Beatrice, a woman with an independent mind, but living in a world where women have very few rights.

A love story for the ages, you don’t want to miss it.

Join us for some “Hey, Nonny, Nonny” at 4pm on November 21st and/or 1 pm on November 22nd.

The November 22nd performance will follow Friends and Family Day, which is a noon release.



NATIONAL NEWS

Hurricane Milton

by Fenix Godfrey

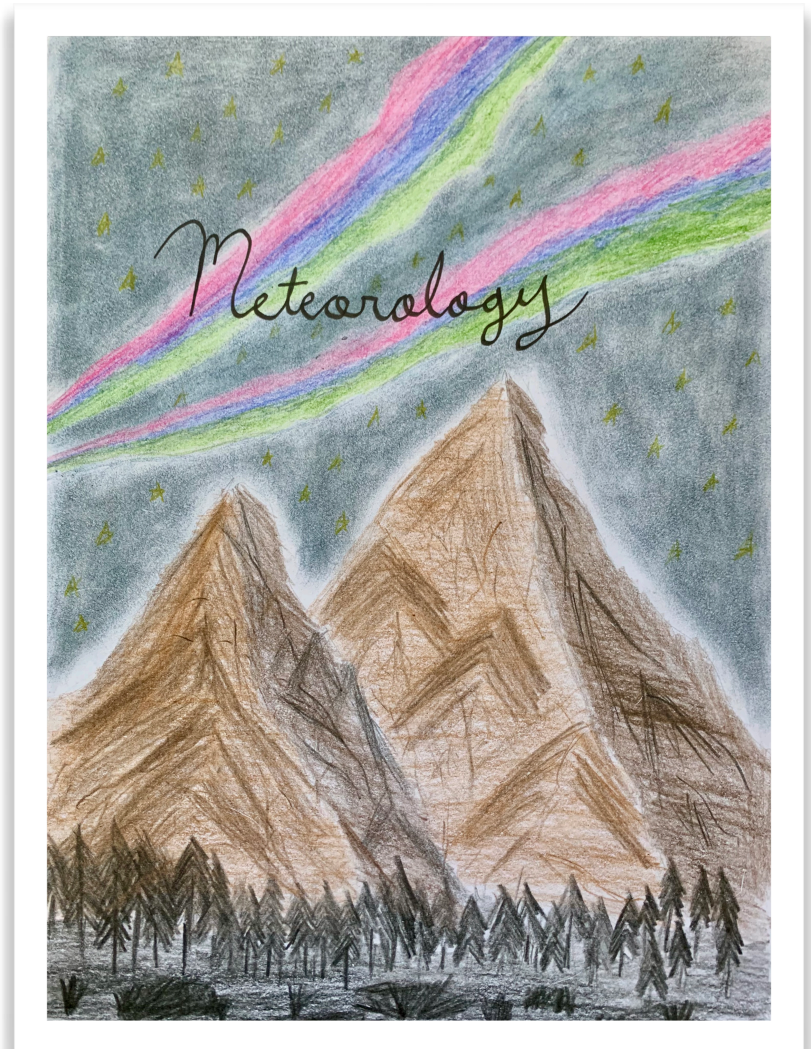
Hurricane Milton began forming in the Caribbean on October 5th, gradually moving further up north, as well as intensifying, slowly building into a massive category 3 hurricane.

Milton made landfall in Florida on October 9th. The devastating hurricane swept through the central regions of Florida, hitting cities such as Sarasota and Tampa Bay, and knocking out power to over 2.8 million people. The hurricane sustained winds of 60-120 mph, easily strong enough to cause over 50 billion dollars in major damages. Thirty-two people were declared dead as a result of Milton and 6 million people were ordered to evacuate.

Milton was thought to be much worse than it came to be; estimations stated that there was a probability of it being a massive category 5 hurricane.

After about three days to three weeks after Milton passed, most of Florida had regained their power supply.

As of November 2nd, Florida has sustained itself for the time being.



All 8th Graders study Meteorology before they graduate.



Photo by Paul Ellis/AFP via Getty Images

WORLD NEWS

U.S. Men's Artistic Gymnastics Team Wins Historic Team Bronze Medal at 2024 Olympic Games

By Damon Galimov

The United States men's artistic gymnastics team delivered an outstanding performance at the Paris Olympics this past summer, executing every routine flawlessly and securing an historic team bronze medal.

The US team consisted of the following athletes: Asher Hong from our hometown of Tomball, Texas; Paul Juda, Frederick Richard, Stephen Nedoroscik, and Brody Malone.

The US team started on rings while their biggest rivals, China and Japan, started on floor. Asher Hong hit a great routine on rings, pushing the team into third place after the first rotation.

The second and third events went well for the US team with no falls.

The fourth event was high bar and was the most brutal event in the competition. Félix Dolci from Canada, Zhang Boheng from China, and many more gymnasts fell on this event. But the US team hit all their routines with no falls and put them into first place after the fourth event.

The fifth event went well, but there was one more event, the pommel horse. It was all up to Stephen Nedoroscik; he was a one-event specialist and only competed on pommel horse. After his teammates had completed their routines, it was all up to him for the USA to win bronze.

The crowd cheered as Stephen started his routine; his teammates were getting louder and louder as he got to the end of his routine. There was only the dismount left, and Stephen hit the dismount perfectly, scoring a huge 14.8 and guaranteeing the USA a bronze medal.

This was the first team medal the US had won since the 2008 Olympic Games and was a big deal for the USA.

FEATURE ARTICLE

A Drink With Turkey

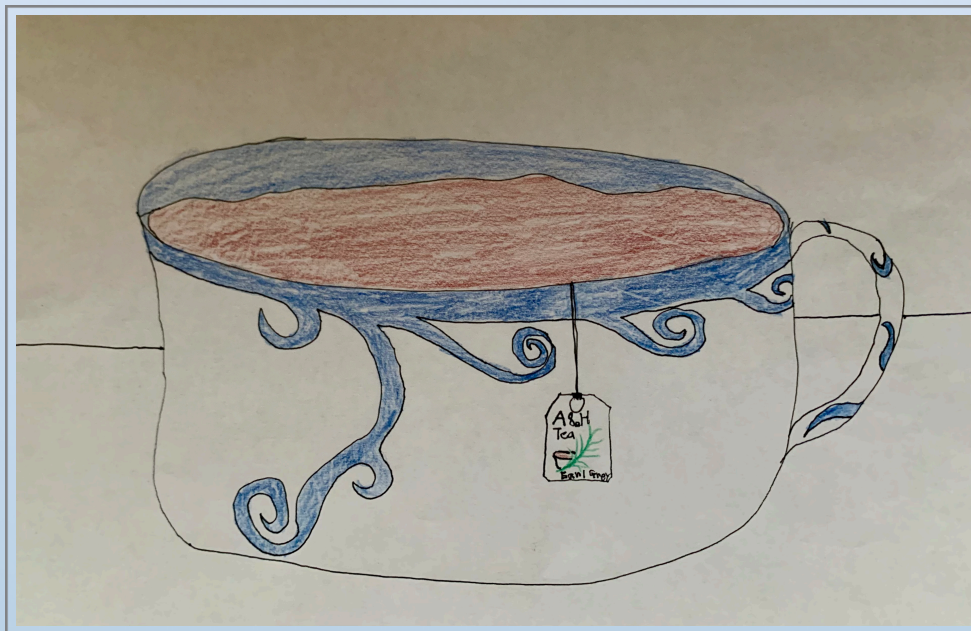
by Sylvia Schnell with Fisher Allen

From Russia's cozy gatherings to Japan's mindful ceremonies, every place in the world observes special tea drinking traditions. Russia's chilly weather is easily warmed by the steam from shared pots. Meanwhile, across the globe in Japan, tea drinking is an experience filled with the essence of Zen and with snacks like pickled foods, rice crackers, and sweet desserts.

But now let's travel back to the Ottoman Empire and see how 'Cay' (or tea) has evolved in Turkey from the middle ages to modern times. We will journey through centuries to discover how this drink transformed from a beverage for royalty to an everyday drink. Starting in the 15th century, tea was introduced to the Ottoman Empire by China. In the late 15th century, it became more a part of their society; the Turkish people would share tea over gatherings or important meetings. Tea in Turkey came to mean friendship and strong bonds between two different social classes.

In the late 19th to 20th centuries, the Ottoman Empire experienced a dramatic transformation in their tea culture. The Turkey republic was founded in 1923, and even then, tea played a huge role in Turkey's social culture. It became a source of great pride in Turkey.

As our journey comes to a stop, we notice tea has still managed to keep its place in Turkish society. In a modern household, it is traditional to have a large family in a smaller space. The modern lifestyle has brought changes to the Turkish tea culture, but the rituals and traditions will always remain a part of its society. From Istanbul tea houses of old, to the new modern cafés, tea continues to grow and maintain social bonds, gives moments of reflection upon the history of tea, and keeps memories rooted in the country's culture: memories of the beverage Cay.



Art by Jack Batek

ADVICE by Elena Stokes

Question 1. What is a good way to make friends?

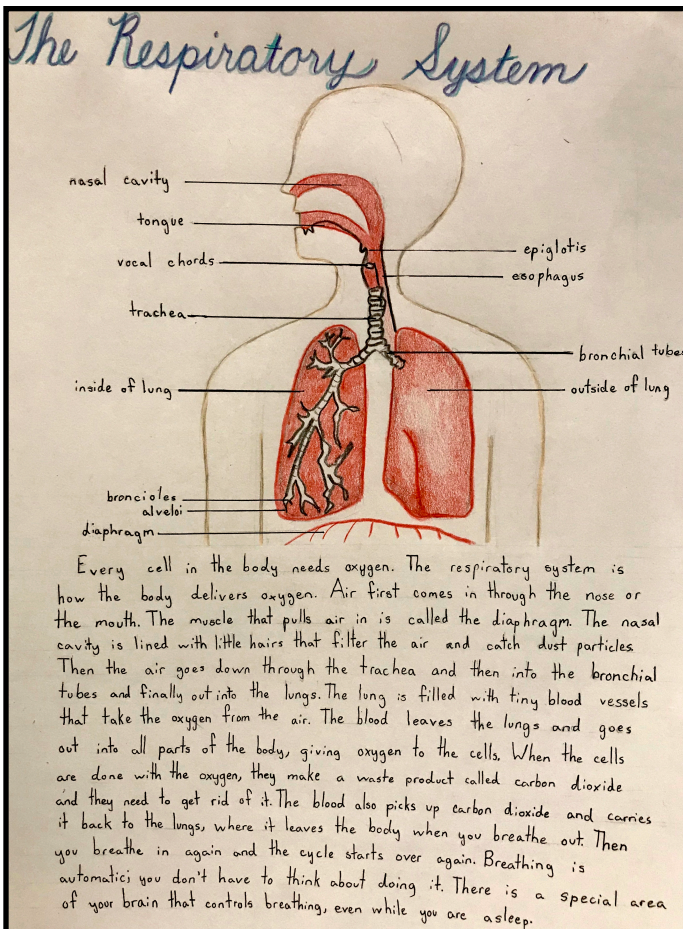
My Answer. If I was trying to make friends I would find people that like the same things I like and then talk to them about it.

Question 2. What do I do if I'm caught in a giant spider web with a giant spider and all I have is my clothes and flip flops?

My Answer. Ask a mom to slap the spider and talk some sense into it.

Question 3. What do I do if someone steals my lungs?

My Answer. Steal the lungs back!



ABOVE THE OAKS

Mrs. Harris, Editor

Feature Writers

Sylvia Schnell

Fisher Allen

World News

Damon Galimov

National News

Fenix Godfrey

Local News

Nithya Balaji

Curren Beatty

Jack Buswell

Shree.O.Krishna

Sophie Petty

Isaac Stewart

Art

Jack Batek

Jackson Williams

Advice

Elena Stokes