How do we understand the humanities? For Barry Mansfield, Secondary School Principal, “human sciences” form “a bridge between the traditional notions of science and art.” For Richard Harrold, Primary School Principal, the humanities are tied up in how we, as humans, understand and construct what defines our culture. While the sciences are perceived as universal truths, “literature and the arts can only be created...by humans.”

For their power to provoke and excite, their multidisciplinary nature and their role in helping us understand the world around us, the humanities are an essential part of life at ISP. Whether through historical walking tours, International Days or history classes in which controversial subjects are explored and debated, at ISP we encourage our students to embrace the humanities and discover what excites them individually.

In this issue of the Tribune, we invite you to learn about the many ways in which the humanities are taught, explored, lived and embraced at ISP.
The Humanities: Exciting our Passions!

Richard Harrold, Primary School Principal

The Concise Oxford English Dictionary defines humanities as “learning concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music and philosophy.” Where mathematics and the sciences are presumed to be universal truths disconnected from human involvement, literature and the arts can only be created – or, if we are to agree with the Greek philosopher Protagoras, even perceived – by humans. Humanities can be a volatile concoction. Earlier this year a BBC news story about William Shakespeare caused quite a stir. It was reported that archaeologists digging at New Place, Shakespeare’s home in Stratford-upon-Avon, had discovered a brooch with an inscription suggesting it was a gift to Shakespeare by his mother Mary Arden. However, the brooch was inscribed in French and Mary’s name was spelled Ardennes. Shakespeare was addressed as “mon fils, Guillaume.”

The revelation that Shakespeare’s mother was French and therefore that the bard himself was half-French, caused consternation and delight across both sides of the Channel. The blogosphere quickly filled with debates about whether French literary giants such as Hugo, Mollière and Racine would now have to make room for Shakespeare to join them. It was only when the BBC drew people’s attention to the fact that the news story broke on April 1st that the truth dawned on many. The whole thing was made up.

What this story shows is the power of the humanities to excite passions. They provoke us, stimulate us, engage us, challenge us and occasionally infuriate us more consistently than any part of the school curriculum – even sports. In the 1989 film, Dead Poets Society, starring Robin Williams, teacher John Keating (Williams) tells his teenage students, “And the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for.”

Dead Poets Society is set a decade before the IB began, but I have a feeling Keating’s passion would have gone down well in an IB school. Certainly, there is no shortage of passion in ISP’s approach to the humanities. Our students create and recite poetry with feeling and power. They debate philosophical questions with maturity and earnestness. They draw on their cultural diversity to inform historical inquiry. They compose music and art with uninhibited passion. And that’s just the Primary School!

This edition of the Tribune is a testament to the enduring power of the humanities at ISP. I hope you are inspired by it, and that you applaud as I do the celebration of the humanities that is a daily classroom experience. Happy reading, or as Shakespeare’s mother might have said, “Venez vous amuser et apprécier l’édition!”

From the Head of School
Audrey Peverelli

“Humanities” evokes human development and the impact that we have on our world. Human behavior is of particular interest to me as I studied Psychology and Political Science at university. In addition, education, my lifelong passion, would not exist without humans.

For me, the most convincing educational theories are “constructivism” and “inquiry-based learning.” “Constructivism” asserts that learners need to construct meaning based on personal knowledge and experience. “Inquiry-based learning,” affirms that students need to develop a personal interest in the subject in order to “connect” with it.

The IB has two formidable ways to sum up these experiences: the grade 5 Exhibition and the grade 10 Personal Project. This year, Personal Projects ranged from “Theory of Life in the Universe” to “Maison Saint Esprit, an orphanage of the Fondation d’Auteuil in Orly, France.

The quilt delivery was the culmination of a 15-month Learner Profile pilot project initiated by Molly Lou Freeman, Learner Profile Coordinator in the Primary School. The Learner Profile embodies the IB philosophy of knowledge and values that cultivate global citizenship in students of all ages.

The “Caring and Sharing Quilts for Charity” initiative began in 2009 when the children were in grade 4. The project strived to model for students, teachers and parents how they could collaborate and build bridges to learn, share, create and take community action. Inspiration for the project originally came when Julia Ohly and Emily Ashley, two grade 4 teachers last year, did some work in the classroom on tessellating shapes and patterns, and the children made some paper designs for quilts.

Each week of the quilting project, students used math, art and design skills and worked in small groups to create individual blocks that were later joined into one-meter square quilts. Students acquired basic sewing techniques, gained confidence in their abilities to create a work of art and broadened their understanding of what a group effort could accomplish.

On the drive home from delivering the quilts to the orphanage this spring, a double rainbow spread across the Paris skyline. Truly, a community bridge has been built.

A special thanks to the current grade 4 and 5 students for their generous participation; to grade 4 teachers this year and last, including Michelle Metcal, Daniel Barker, Emily Ashley and Julia Ohly; and to participating parent project leaders and the PSA for underwriting the purchase of cloth, an iron and sewing machine.

Quilts for Children in Need
Elizabeth Woolsey, ISP parent, & Molly Lou Freeman, Learner Profile Coordinator

In March, grade 4 and 5 students donated nine handmade children’s quilts to the Maison Saint Esprit, an orphanage of the Fondation d’Auteuil in Orly, France.

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Another International Day Success!

On March 20th, the Primary School community came together to learn about each other at ISP’s annual International Day celebration. Parents, children and teachers honored the world’s cultures in a day-long festivity of fun, food and discovery.

Upon arrival, students were given a “passport” to “travel” to all countries present that day. Every time students successfully answered a question correctly about a country, they received a stamp in their passport.

All who attended International Day appreciated the event. Marianne Frene, Cross Cultural Coordinator at ISP, commented, “On Saturday we all came together to share and learn about each other.... I whole-heartedly believe that we can and will make a more peaceful world by working together to understand each other. This begins with our children learning to love their own culture while also embracing that of their friends.”

Celebrations like this highlight the diversity of the ISP community and encourage us all to be open-minded and caring inquirers.
Grade 2 Decision-Makers Tackle Economics
Julia Luu, Intern in the Office of External Affairs & Sean Walker, Grade 2 Teacher

What choices do you make in your daily life? Do others make choices for you? These are some of the questions grade 2 asked themselves in their last Unit of Inquiry dealing with “choices.” Students recognized that they are consumers in this world, and as consumers, they have the option to choose what to consume. But what factors affect their choices?

Grade 2 students learned that sometimes what they consume is a want and not a need, and those wants are most often propagated by media, friends and family. This unit was trans-disciplinary, meaning it related to other areas of the curriculum. For instance, students discovered a link between the concept of choice, language and art by noticing that advertisements could influence a person’s choice by using different fonts, colors, text sizes and word choices. This led to a field trip to the surrounding area where students looked for persuasive texts right in their own neighborhood.

Connecting the Unit with economics, students gained first-hand experience in differentiating between goods and services by finding local businesses in the Ranelagh area and mapping them. Next, they focused on how people fund what they consume and they came up with creative and practical ideas from being given money to working and having a savings account. This led to an insightful discussion on how banks operate, which surprised many students who thought banking was a free service! In order for students to properly understand the value of money, they were then asked to pick a good or service that was available in the area and estimate its cost. Afterwards, grade 2 students closed their Unit with a field trip back to the stores to compare student estimates with the actual cost of items, finding disparities in the pricing of similar items in different stores and leading to even more questions!

Bridging Science and Art
Barry Mansfield, Secondary School Principal

The subjects that comprise the humanities are sometimes called the ‘human sciences,’ suggesting that these disciplines form a bridge between the traditional notions of science and art. In this way, historians find their undergraduate studies with a B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) and geographers a B.Sc (Bachelor of Science). However, this distinction was not always here: to the ancient Greeks historia meant to gain knowledge through inquiry, and this included studying the natural world as well as deconstructing social, political and economic problems.

The modern division between art and science has its origins with the Black Death, a ravenous plague that swept the known world in the 14th century, undermining the social, political and economic assumptions of the day. Humanism, and the ideas of the Enlightenment, grew out of the psychic and spiritual uncertainty that the Plague fostered – and the seeds of the Reformations lay in the cataclysmic social breakdown that the disease caused. Economics changed to meet the new reality of demographic disaster, and political systems adapted to a different world. This maestro prepared the ground for the emergence of the modern world and its handmaidens — scientific inquiry, a force so powerful that today many human sciences that would, not so long ago, have stood on the arts side of the bridge have now migrated to the science shore; to study economic history or politics or political science is now to engage in a B.Sc undergraduate program.

The science side of our bridge is lit up so brightly that the arts shore can now seem somewhat dim and old fashioned, a quiet sanctuary for the imagination; nevertheless, like the Greeks, we are all historians at heart. The pursuit of knowledge is the pursuit of identity by another name: we are the sum of what we know and what we choose to know will shape who we are. The humanities tell us where we came from, where our ancestors lived, loved, and died, how they worked and played, and how they shaped their world, literally and metaphorically. Ancestors like Giovanni Boccaccio lived, loved, and died, how they worked and played, and how they shaped their world, literally and metaphorically. Ancestors like Giovanni Boccaccio who, in his allegory The Decameron, described the Plague firsthand as it swept through Florence. Fortunately, he survived and went on to tell us wonderful stories that continue to illuminate our experience of the world.

The humanities link every discipline together, using the mathematics of statistics in economics, or the science of tectonics in geography, or the language of poets to unravel the past: the bridge between science and art unites our various and different forms of inquiry. The human sciences ensure that, whatever other knowledge we acquire, we will know enough to realize that it is good to walk from shore to shore from time to time.

Time Detectives: Investigations into History
Eileen McAteer, Grade 5 Teacher

As “Time Detectives,” grade 5 students investigated the central theme of “throughout history, certain individuals or groups, through their actions, have made significant changes to society.” Together students identified and compiled a list of important historical events. Then, independently, they selected an event in which they were particularly interested and researched it, gathering information about how and why it happened, who and what contributed to it, how it has affected our lives and what changed as a result of it.

Next, they created a timeline placing their event in relation to what was happening in the world before, during and afterwards. Finally, students wrote their investigation in the form of articles which will be compiled and published in an article project illustrating global pollution.

Charles Dickens Saved Poor Children With His Words by Raeven

During the 1800’s, poor children had extremely hard lives. Many of them were either working in factories, begging in the streets, or bringing in a housework. A workhouse was a government-run facility for the poor. Life was made hard there so that people only went there as a last resort. If you said yes to a job in a workhouse, Charles Dickens writes about the consequences they feared. If they said no, they could be sent to the workhouse. He had a huge impact on poor families that still remains today.

Honing Skills for the MYP
Julia Luu, Intern in the Office of External Affairs

The humanities are an integral part of the curriculum in the Middle Years Programme (MYP). In grades 6-9, they are taught as an integrated course with an emphasis on how each subject is connected. In grades 10-12, the courses are taught as specialized subjects of history, geography and economics. The skills that students gain in these classes prepare them for the IB by helping them develop research, presentation, and communication skills as well as analytical and interpretive thinking and conceptual understanding.

Students learn about respecting the world and one another by looking at different cultures, and intercultural awareness is encouraged throughout the whole IB curriculum. According to Paul Churchill, Head of the Social Sciences Department, “Our students learn to be analytical, structured and well-organized; they also learn how to research. Students focus on how to look for information beyond simple search strategies, so they are the historians of the future.” The humanities are a language-rich subject area where students learn to write in a logical and structured way, presenting their own perspectives, beliefs and opinions.

The humanities at ISP teach students not only about the different subjects that comprise the field but also how to learn, preparing them to be life-long learners and true inquirers.
Controversy and Emotions: Lessons from the Past
Helen Wenham, Secondary School History Teacher

Students interested in humanities will ask a range of questions during their time at ISP and demonstrate a desire to know more and to become true inquirers. This is where the humanities classroom becomes a safe place for students to ask questions about the world around them and discuss their responses without prejudice. In a multicultural environment, students bring multiple preconceptions and perspectives, creating an amazing resource for exploring emotional and controversial topics. “One person’s acceptance might be another’s controversy,” notes all too aptly a report on the subject by the UK Historical Association. The IB Learner Profile, which forms the philosophical basis of the IB, encourages students to be open-minded, principled and balanced. Exploring controversial subjects in history provides students space to develop these qualities.

Two examples from the humanities classroom serve to illustrate ISP’s approach to controversial historical events:

Grade 10: The Holocaust

Grade 10 examined human rights abuses during the Holocaust, including Hitler’s initial laws and actions during the 1930s and the horrors of the Final Solution. Using first-hand sources, students researched how the Holocaust affected individuals, how it happened and why it is so controversial today. Students examined a range of evidence, including recent historical writing like Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust, and the Milgram Experiments on obedience to authority figures in the 1960s.

The initial question of how individuals could have allowed the Holocaust to happen turned into a question about who was complicit in the activities and why. It also brought the class back to why the Holocaust is still in the news today, looking at the arrest of David Irving for Holocaust denial in 2005, as well as the significance of the French film La Rafle.

Students reflected on their learning by producing a cover and title of a Holocaust book they would choose to write. They chose their own themes but were asked to be aware of the reaction of different cultures and communities towards their book, explain their choice of theme and discuss why the Holocaust is still a sensitive and much-talked-about issue. Students were also asked to argue for or against the use of disturbing images to get their message across.

Grade 11: Remembering the 1948 Arab-Israeli War

The new IB history syllabus explores the Arab-Israeli conflict between 1945 and 1979. ISP is privileged to study this topic as it cannot be studied in many parts of the world because debate and discussion on the key issues surrounding the conflict are not allowed. Historians need to be aware of the reaction of different places at different times through issues and why for many they are so emotional.

Grade 11 students looked at the different ways the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948 is remembered. This event is connected to many different controversial issues—such as the passing of the UN recommendations of partition, the attack at Deir Yassin, the declaration of the State of Israel, and the invasion by surrounding Arab states—making it particularly difficult to comprehend. The goal of the historian here is not to apportion blame for these events but rather to understand them, exploring questions like: What caused them to happen? What led to the responses of those involved? How have they been recorded, taught and remembered in different places at different times throughout history?

Grade 11 students represented different views of the war that were not necessarily their own. Speaking as a representative of the Israeli government, a member of the UN, a Palestinian leader, a U.S. journalist or a Palestinian refugee, they presented and explained the reasons for their characters’ points of view based on historical research. Why was the war a “War of Independence” for the Israelis or al Nakba, “the day of catastrophe”, for the Palestinians?

At the end of the day, students are encouraged to make up their own minds about this and other controversial issues, and, to an extent, what they decide is immaterial. What is vital, however, is that they understand the reasons for both sides’ points of view. Only through increased understanding and a ‘de-othering’ of the other will any move towards compromise and progression occur. Through discussions like this, and many others, ISP is preparing its students to become global citizens and future world leaders.

The International Holocaust
Isabella Borgers, Grade 10 Student

Theme: “The other victims and their experiences” including “the Polish, Slavs, Soviets, Romani people [gypsies], Africans and Asians… the mentally ill, physically disabled, homosexual and transsexual people… those who supported opposing political parties and Jehovah’s Witnesses…”

Cover: A photograph of Menashe Kadishman’s ‘Shalechet’ (Fallen Leaves) installation at the Jewish Museum in Berlin. This installation features more than 10,000 iron faces and is meant to serve as an architectural expression of the victims of the Holocaust.

Why? “I preferred a literal representation of the victims, such as gravestones or other disturbing images of the concentration camps or corpses because I felt that that would represent a rather insensitive and much too personal visual.”

For Isabella, studying the Holocaust today is critical: “As an international community, we are still faced with issues of justice and racism, from a spectrum of extremities from one end to the next… I believe that the worldwide studies of the Holocaust are bringing us, as the human population, closer to achieving justice and peace.”
Putting the “Personal” in Personal Project: Bringing Healthcare to India

Elizabeth Farabee, Communications Coordinator, Office of External Affairs

Grade 10 student, Ayushi Gupta, deserves praise for her Personal Project on increasing primary healthcare awareness in rural India. Her goal was “to develop a communication tool that would educate people on leading healthier lives.” Ayushi created a 17-page guidebook designed to educate villagers in the Kacchighati village near Mumbai about basic health care issues that include childcare, pregnancy and immunization.

To ensure that she targeted the needs of the Kacchighati villagers, she conducted several on-site interviews with locals. She analyzed official documents, identified problems in the health department, interviewed the village head, medical officers and nurses, reviewed vaccination cards used by pregnant women and learned more about the history of the village.

“Ayushi’s essay on the project is an articulate description of how the MYP’s Approaches to Learning and Areas of Interaction can be used to create something practical and meaningful for a wider community,” commented Stéphanie Feo, Ayushi’s supervisor. “The guidebook that she produced is excellent.”

For her efforts, Ayushi received a hand-written letter from the local village head, thanking her personally for her work. “This was a personal project in every sense of the word,” Ayushi said reflecting on her choice of theme. “I felt a moral obligation towards educating people on various health issues because I belong to a part of society that has the advantage of exploiting this knowledge.” Although she designed this guidebook to meet the particular needs of the Kacchighati villagers, she hopes to eventually distribute it on a larger scale and plans to study medicine in the future.

Economics: Promoting Cooperation

Petra Seghers, Economics Teacher and MUN Coordinator

Economics at ISP is a dynamic social science, which studies the concept of scarcity and the problem of resource allocation. It is not a purely theoretical subject, however, as students need to apply their knowledge to real-world examples. The course encourages students to think critically and promotes an awareness of internationalism.

According to the IBO, economics has an important role to play in promoting international cooperation and mutual understanding because of its focus on global issues. Students are made aware of how economic behavior can both improve cooperation and understanding between countries but also cause damage. If all participants in the global economy are to achieve a higher standard of living, economic cooperation between all countries is necessary. To help students understand this, they are taught to consider economic theories, ideas and events from the points of view of different countries.

ISP students participating at a MUN conference.

Economics Made Real:

Junior MUN is open to students in grades 6 – 8 and MUN is open to students in grades 9 – 12. We hope that many students will again enthusiastically participate in this exciting extended curriculum activity next school year. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the generous support of the PTA, which provides scholarships and funds for our activities each year.
Exploring Paris with History’s Most Colorful Characters

Sarah Towle, ISP Parent & Trustee

On Thursday, April 1st, some grade 8 students took a guided walking tour led by historical heroine Charlotte Corday as part of their study of the French Revolution. Corday is known for having assassinated Jean-Paul Marat, radical journalist and proponent of the Reign of Terror. She blamed Marat for destroying the true Revolution and believed that his death would bring an end to the fear and bloodshed tearing her country apart.

Her tour, Beware Madame La Guillotine, recounts her journey to end Marat’s life, and her eventual execution by the guillotine. She narrates the last days of her life, from July 9, 1793, when she left her home in Normandy, until her execution on July 17th. ISP students followed her every movement from the Palais Royal, birthplace of the French Revolution and where Corday bought her weapon, to Marat’s home near the revolutionary hot spot, Le Café Procope, where she stabbed him through the heart as he soaked in the bathtub; to the Conciergerie, where she was imprisoned, tried and labeled an “enemy of the revolution.” Corday was guillotined at the Place de la Revolution (now the Place de la Concorde) six months after Louis XVI and three months before Marie-Antoinette.

One 8th grader commented that it was “very compelling [to view the Revolution] from the perspective of the characters” who lived it. Another said that it was “cool to learn more specifically about (the Revolution), and to get to know the places that related to Charlotte.”

This guided historical walking tour is just an example of the ways in which ISP takes advantage of the rich cultural and historical treasures that Paris has to offer.

Grade 6 & World Water Day

Nathalie Pierre, MYP Humanities Teacher

World Water Day, an international observance of fresh water whose themes vary annually, was celebrated on March 22nd. This year’s theme was water quality. At ISP, World Water Day coincided with a 10-week grade 6 unit on water. Students learned about lack of access to water in the developing world and examined how this particularly impacts young girls and women in the countries where.

As part of this unit, the students organized an awareness campaign which they presented to grades 7 and 8 at an assembly. They performed their own sketches to educate their peers about water issues in developing countries and its impact on children’s health and education.

Students also became familiar with Water Aid, an international organization whose mission is to provide safe water, effective sanitation and hygiene education to the world’s poor in both urban and rural communities around the world.

The unit culminated with the students organizing a fundraising drive in which they collected 280 euros, which will be used to purchase water pumps for water-deprived villages in Bangladesh.

As a MYP humanities teacher at ISP, I am very impressed with the enthusiasm students showed for this kind of event. It seems to be an effective way to teach students about the topic.
The ISP Humanitarian Team travelled to Namibia for the fourth time this spring to continue renovation work at the Omuhaturua Primary School in the village of Otjimanangombe.

After several days of hard work, a group of 20 students and 4 faculty members successfully sanded and painted three rooms at the school. Thanks to a busy year of fund raising, the team purchased enough supplies to sand, paint and re-tile the rooms. "Everyone was very proud looking at all the work we had done and also looking at the reaction of the children when they saw their new classroom," commented one team member in a recorded message. "It was amazing. I don’t think I can describe the feeling...." On their last night at the school, local Namibians killed and prepared a goat to thank them for their hard work.

Because of a delayed departure due to an untimely volcanic eruption in Iceland, the team was unable to complete all the work originally planned at the school, notably the tiling of the three classrooms. To ensure the work would be completed, ISP developed a partnership with the International School of Windhoek, which agreed to do the tiling at the primary school later this summer.

"It was a life-changing experience," said another student, a few days after the team’s return to Paris. "Basically, you feel how lucky you are. For example, the children only eat porridge and 12-year-olds look like they are 5.”

"The trip to Namibia will make me think more about what I do," she continued. "I will think twice now about wasting water and will always keep in the back of my mind that those kids might not have what I am wasting.”

Lessons from Namibia

Elizabeth Farabee, Communications Coordinator, Office of External Affairs

“Basically, you feel how lucky you are. For example, the children only eat porridge and 12-year-olds look like they are 5.”