

Honors Humanities night explores imagination

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What is the reality of imagination? This was the question posed and answered by students during Honors Humanities night May 10. The 22 projects ranged from original musical scores, such as a piece titled "Divina Speranza" composed by Michael Biancardi, senior, to movies, art and performance pieces. This is the seventh and final year that Barbara Murray, the honors humanities creator and teacher, will lead the class.

"I am so lucky to have the privilege of listening to these kids talk about and share their views on the questions and topics we focus on," Murray said. "Everyone is so respectful of the opinions and views of others in the class. It makes for very interesting discussion."

Students shared the work they've spent a total of six months on. They first introduced the question and then gave a reading of different quotes about imagination. After a few words from Murray, Biancardi conducted his original score performed

by the Symphonic Orchestra for the audience of students, teachers, friends and family. Then, people had to decide which track to attend during each session.

"I really enjoyed seeing all of the hard work and passion the other students put into their work. The end products for all of them were stunning," Georgia Muggli, junior, said. "I only wish that I could have seen more of them."

There were many different interpretations of the question and the creativity of the students was evident through the answers they formed in response to the question.

"For me, imagination is perspective. There are three ways we imagine reality: with truth, optimism, and pessimism," Alexandra Mink, senior, said. She spent 33 hours on hand drawn photos for her project, which was a video.

Along with Mink's project, Tommy Pittenger and Neelou Etesami, seniors, also created videos to express their answer to the question. Etesami took at least 1,000 photos for her stop-motion animation film.

"Reality and imagination share a mutual relationship in our world. What we perceive

feeds our imaginations, which in turn, give back to the real world in the form of arts, sciences, ethics and just about everything else," Etesami said.

Biancardi's idea for the music began with notes that he recorded into his cell phone during a waking period in the middle of the night. His original score was the only project to be viewed by everyone who attended.

"It took me about 60 hours in front of a computer to create the score, a few hours to practice conducting, a few hours to rehearse with the orchestra and probably another 10 hours spent on random stuff for when things went wrong," Biancardi said.

The class itself is rigorous in that it calls for comprehension of the complex ideas of philosophers, such as what their views of life were and their schools of thought. Students must delve deeper to understand their opinions on the subjects they discuss.

In order to incorporate what they've learned in class into their projects, the students have to comprehend why they believe what they do so that they can fully answer the question.

"I've thought for a long time that there are students ready to tackle the big questions of life. The highest level of thinking is to synthesize," Murray said, "to be able to incorporate such deep ideas into one's own ideas and understand these ideas."

In preparation for Honors Humanities night, students spent three weeks deciding on the focus question. According to Murray, the questions that are chosen often involve a great deal of thought and creativity in order for the student to be able to develop a thorough response to the question.

"At first I really disliked the question and thought it was dumb, but the more we talked about it, the more it grew on me," Colleen Douglas, senior, said. "It was also good that it allowed everyone to have their own interpretation that was unique."

The class is designed differently from the traditional system of learning a topic and then taking a test on the topic. Students spend practically the whole year on a single culminating project. They are required to come up with a medium to

portray their answer to or interpretation of the question. For many, this takes much thinking and debate.

"It was really difficult and took a lot of time for me to decide on the concept for my project," Douglas said. "I went with the one that would challenge me the most, but also allow me to answer the question fully."

When Murray created the class seven years ago, she had no idea as to whether the class would be a success or not.

"I hope that the students take many different lessons from their experience in this class. Of course I want them to feel a deep sense of pride in the work they've done. I want them to be able to walk out firm-footed on what they believe because, hopefully, after taking this class, they understand why they believe what they do," Murray said.

The Honors Humanities class is an outlet for students to express their deep level of thinking and examine their own beliefs and morals. The class was designed to challenge students and make them question why they believe what they do and according to Murray, it has achieved this goal.

1 Avery Breyne-Cartwright, senior, discusses her piece, "Reves de Cine." Along with her art pieces, she, Alish Duff and Emily Axelrod, sophomores, and Peter Bonoff, junior, performed found poetry she created for four voices.

2 Stephanie Kruger, senior, answers questions from Karen Bonoff, a parent, about her art pieces which were created using only natural materials. While people viewed her pieces, she inquired about their interpretations of a piece that was made out of plants and flowers.

3 Hannah Stout, senior, shares a laugh while sharing her photo project about secrets. She took two photos of each person she photographed and one photo revealed something that she already knew about the person and the other revealed something unknown.

4 Michael Biancardi, senior, directs the Symphonic Orchestra in a song that he composed, "Divina Speranza." His idea of an original composition came from a tune he sang into his cell phone in the middle of the night.

5 Lucy Walker, senior, performs "Welcome to my World," a skit she wrote about imaginary friends who have been a part of her life. The characters represented problems she dealt with during different times in her life.

Photos by Ann Breyne

