

# Decking the Halls

Art students spread Christmas cheer with annual Christmas projects

**Lauren Ummel**  
*Staff Writer*

Besides Summer Vacation, Christmas Break has to be a time during the year every student longs for. One of the many traditions White Oak has is the Christmas art projects that line each side of the main hall. Art teacher Kim Taylor instructs, a usual group of two students, to design a poster board that reflects the American Gothic (painted by Grant Wood) painting, by replacing the original characters with any of their choice, and incorporating their own Christmas-themed twist.

"I like the Christmas projects because they bring me joy, and it means that it's getting closer to Christmas Break," junior Alexis Herrera said. "I like to stop and look at all of them in the hall."

Starting in the Plato Lab, students choose a male and female character to represent the farmer and the woman in the original painting. Mrs. Taylor's few instructions include: the girl character to be on the left side of the poster and the boy on the right and must be holding an object in his hand, the project can either be gridded to scale or free-handed, and the project must be colored by either

marker, colored pencil, or most commonly used, paint.

"I feel more confident when I free hand it so I don't have to follow the rules that you do when gridding," sophomore Emma Rolland said.

In addition to the characters, students are instructed to include a house [or house related] subject in their background that relates to the characters they chose. For example, Simba and Nala could be standing in front of Pride Rock, or Belle and the Beast standing in front of their castle.

"Me and Tanner Croft chose to do Melman and Gloria from Madagascar. I really liked the movie as a kid," freshman Jalen Barr said. "We used Marty's Party Hut, from the first movie, for the background."

After sketching, erasing, re-sketching and erasing some more, it's time to slather on some color. More often than not, partners stick with their character's original costumes. However, some decide to incorporate a holiday twist, whether it be snow falling in the background, added mittens and earmuffs, or a traditional Christmas tree.

"I like to paint it because it's fun unless it get's on me, then I get mad," sophomore Victoria

Babineaux said. "Addie Roling and I wanted to add Christmas lights on the border of our picture."

When coloring is completed, posters are glued onto red or green construction paper, are decorated with a Christmas or New Year's title and signed with the group participants names.

"Tanner Davis and I put our project on red construction paper," sophomore Maxwell Lamana said. "We put Happy Christmas on ours because I like being politically incorrect," senior Tanner Davis said.

With another year of Christmas art projects in the books and Mrs. Taylor cleans and regrets offering glitter as an additional decoration to the construction paper, students slow down their paces in the main hallway to study each group's displayed pieces of art.

"Glitter is my least favorite item to work with you can never get rid of it and you find it months after in the classroom. It will be on you even if you didn't use it," Mrs. Taylor said. "I love the end results because everyone in the community and the other students love seeing the artwork."



photo by Lauren Ummel

With the intent to finish, junior Sara Robinson focuses on her steady hand while she paints the intricate details on her art project. After Thanksgiving Break, groups were required to put the finishing touches on their projects and glue them to the banners. "Our project had a lot of details, and while most of the other groups were gluing theirs to banners, we were still painting," Robinson said.

# The Fun in Funeral



photo by Zach Emswiler

Running a scene in the "Dearly Departed," freshman Andrea Carter, playing Delightful, munches on potato chips while senior Kenda Fairbank pours herself a drink and junior Dusty White converses with Carter. Carter ate during the majority of the play and spoke very little, but still enjoyed her role. "Being in the fall play as a freshman was a new, fun and exciting experience for me," Carter said. "It's something I look forward to doing again in the future."

**Sabrina Smith**  
*Assistant Editor-in-Chief*

The crowd rises to their feet in applause, many in the audience still laughing because of the play. Their hard work paid off. Working lights and sets for weeks in practice, memorizing lines and focusing on really making the serious moments funny, the actors and crew of fall play rallied and took to the stage for a presentation of "Dearly Departed," performing four times November 19, 21, 22, and 23.

"It was a fun experience for me and I hope it will be one that the students look back on with a smile and a hearty laugh," theatre teacher and director Rick Higginbotham said. "I continually laughed out loud at some of the lines from this very funny, human play. And it didn't matter that I had heard the lines so often. I quite simply could

could not restrain the laughter. It never got old for me."

Many students in Higginbotham's speech and theatre classes were forced to try out for the play as a grade, many of them actually getting a role in the play. Though they reluctantly tried for a spot, actors and crew always made sure to have a good time, finding fun in practice and their characters.

"To be honest, my favorite part about the play would probably be my character Delightful," freshman Andrea Carter said. "My character was different, and although she didn't have a big role, she made the play a little bit funnier with her quietness and love for food. The only problem is that eating potato chips in practice everyday gets old pretty fast."

The play repeated it's audience-inclusive setup, where the spectators took seats on the stage for a more personal

feel. This setup was derived from a trial during last year's fall play, "Twelve Angry Jurors," which proved to be a big hit among the audience. However, this limited seating to about 80 patrons per performance.

"It helped create a more robust energy for the play," Higginbotham said. "The close proximity of the audience, and their reactions, helped add life to the performance because it both informed and encouraged the actors. It's also great training for the performers in helping them develop concentration, as well as allowing them to work in a space they are likely to encounter in bigger colleges, if they continue their theatre studies. From the audience perspective, being seated onstage creates an intimate, memorable experience and allows them to see and enjoy moments that would have been more difficult if they had sat traditional auditorium seating."

"Dearly Departed" dominates stage after weeks of practice

"I'm never going to do this again in my life, and I'm going to leave all these talented people behind, ones whom I call friends, no more like family," senior Cody Presson said. "It was mainly the fact that it would be my last. We made the most of it, though."

There were so many actors in the play that Higginbotham made the decision to have dual casting, when one actor performs one night and a second actor performs the same role the next night. As complicated as that was, this was many actor's last year to perform in the fall play, but they still made the most out of the moment, leaving everything they had on the stage.

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The play, putting a humorous and cynical spin on what was supposed to be a serious and grieving event, took many in the audience by surprise, but they still laughed along with the performance.

"My favorite part was the final scene of the second act: the funeral," sophomore Jessica

Ronning said. "It was so funny to see this family together and get a better understanding of their relationships and personalities. The preacher was having 'intestinal difficulty,' Suzanne couldn't sing, and Merlene the organist continually stole the spotlight."

Through grueling practices held three to five times a week, students ran lines and worked lights. Attendance was vital to insure the play ran smoothly and all actors had their lines memory. According to Higginbotham, he feels proud of what the students pulled together.

"I want to commend all of my actors on a job well done, and to my crew as well, for all of the hard work and talents they brought to the production," Higginbotham said. "The 'techies' are often overlooked, but anyone who knows theatre can tell you that a good props person, and those running lights, sound, costumes and more, are so vitally important and something a production cannot live without."