

# Parzival – a main lesson block

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“*What ails thee?*” – the question Parzival had to ask to heal the Grail King

We have just finished an intense and meaningful main lesson: Parzival. As we let the rich imagery of this medieval story unfold, the students and I gradually discovered many facets of ourselves. Questions, doubts, realisations, discoveries and changes in our thinking surfaced. It was not difficult for the class to see themselves mirrored in the experiences of Parzival through his transformation from being a fool to an outcast to becoming the Grail King. The students also delved deeply into their own thoughts in their philosophical essays: *Why is there pain? How can I tell if I am truly learning? What is compassion? Why do I feel alone, even if I have my family and friends around me? What is destiny—will I ever fulfil mine?*

The class worked hard. They were made aware that their marks and achievements were their responsibility. They picked their own topics to write about—not an easy feat! This challenged the capacity for independent and analytical thinking. We analysed the characters and scenes from the book and discussed symbolism in the story and the metaphors embedded in Parzival’s life. Our days were filled with creative tasks: drawing, painting a personal coat of arms, poetry writing, a tableau and drama exercise, singing the Grail song as well as daily speech exercises. The students worked in groups and individually. It was a joy to hear some of them say that the block was not stressful and yet they were doing so much work!

As the days passed, I started to sense a different mood and attitude among the students; they became more contemplative, tolerant of themselves and of each other, forward looking, hard working and courageous. I believe they saw



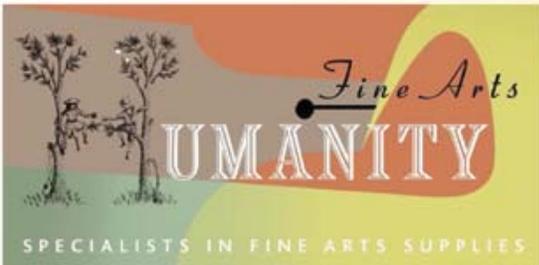
in Parzival the picture of who they can become if they strive toward their goals and keep true to themselves. Despite the fears and doubts these adolescents undoubtedly carry, they hold within them the hope of finding the Holy Grail.

Teaching this main lesson has always been a privilege, but now more so as I have witnessed the transformation of these young people for four years already. I am humbled by the process that the students are going through on this journey. It is an honour to be with them.



These lines are from poems by students. They were written one cool morning, after a lecture on Parzival’s trials. Some students went down to the gym where they lay on a mat to write; some stayed in the room, quietly pondering; one sat on the balcony overlooking the campus and the cityscape.

- ... I'm lost within a maze, no exits to be found as time catches up. The glimpses of hope dissolve. It's time to start running. I'll burrow through this somehow ...
- ... My road-trip on this barren wasteland we call life...I still have no clue about where my destination is, wasting gas in this pursuit of purpose. ... Although I have company in this adventure, I will eventually have to drop them off, for I have to journey on, on my own.
- Now I can breathe. Now I know that I am not lost, that pain is indeed inevitable. That I seek peace inside myself, so that I may exude it ...
- But wait! I see a light! A light leading me out of the hole, rebuilding everything I lost, everything I shall gain!
- I realise that I may be capable of being left alone in the dark and finding the light by myself. Right now, I'm slowly letting go of fingertips pulling me back into the familiar ...
- I try to survive, and I will survive. It's only a matter of time till I break free.
- The world around me is new and this journey I am about to embark on will become my legacy...
- I have walked far and still I am walking. My path has taken me through sweet meadows, rolling hills, merry streams and [up] steep mountains hidden in clouds which I thought I'd never climb ...
- As I look up [to] the sky, I see flocks of birds. Where have they been? Where are they going? How does it feel flying up there so high? I want to soar, too, not just sit here and wait for the rain or bask in the sun ...
- There is the sound that whispers to me. The one my heart sings, the word my soul speaks. A voice I must listen to.
- And in my hand, the key. In my hand, the key. ♦



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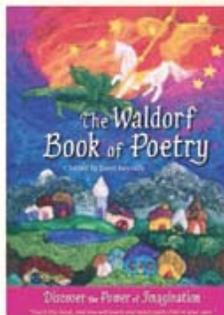
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