

### THE PROJECT

Interdisciplinary Independent Study on Mid-19th Century North Texas

### THE CLASS

Junior English and History Classes

### THE DETAILS

Students in the Class of 2015 were hard at work this fall brainstorming, researching, developing, and presenting their Wolf Run projects to their teachers and peers. A curriculum staple since 1997, this inquiry-driven project allows students to create their own projects without any concrete guidelines set in place to hamper their curiosity. The process includes a Lewis and Clark-style sketch book and five sketches of the barn, the archeological site or artifact, the house, the hike, and one other observed aspect. These drawn, photographed, and written sketches often spark the genesis of the student's project, in which they must incorporate historical fiction or creative non-fiction, along with in-depth research, to support their written argument, as well as their final piece and oral presentation.

"The only real requirement is that the topic must be grounded in mid-19th Century Texas with specific connection with the land on which the David Shields family settled in 1854 – what

# SHOW YOUR WORK

we now call Wolf Run," Greg Randall, Upper School English teacher, explained. "Students are challenged to develop a relevant argument that juxtaposes a lifestyle in the 1850s in North Texas to one in today's society. Then they must examine what we have gained, as well as what we have lost as a society."

Some of this year's pieces included musical interpretations of old folk songs, a 3D model of the effects of a drought on rangeland, caramel made with ingredients and utensils available in the mid-19th century, a 3D printer-created replica of a windmill, hand-made dolls, and charcoal sketches of nature and wildlife.



**The Barn:**  
A circular piece of tin is camouflaged in an unfit corner. Polished to shine, dangling for decoration. The light that shoots through the barn's crevices reflects off the polished tin and dances back out through the fissures and into the fields. The wooden rim circumscribes the engraved flowers that bloom along the edges of the tin. Faded bronzed leaves pompously fill the circumference before the ivory flowers have a chance to prosper. When we look at our reflection in the elegantly crafted wall piece, we remember our poverty. We remember that we cannot afford glass. We will have to cope with a polished chunk of tin to braid our hair or to witness our smiles sparkle before a long day of drudgery. The dark corner contains a beautiful treasure, encompassed by strings of light and uplifting floral decorations. If only it didn't symbolize our destitution. ("light" vs. "dark" and "glass" vs. "tin" / In the corner of the side barn, a vintage mirror caught my eye. Mr. Oglesby told me that since the Shields most likely could not have afforded glass, they would have polished tin to make it look like glass.)

**PERSIMMONS**  
*Disopyros virginiana* precariously hung from the deciduous verdant tree. The weight of the orange-red globes burdened the thin branches, and the boughs dipped toward the earth and my outstretched fingertips.  
My hands flew from branch to branch, testing the softness of each fruit. The American persimmon is ripest and most desirable when supple, due to the otherworldly high astringency. The stiffer the fruit, the drier the aftertaste through age.  
Persimmons are sweet,  
Only on the inside, though.  
Outside, they cover themselves  
With sheer slick armor  
Bitter enough to scrunch up your face  
Tighter than the brand new scuba mask  
But underneath,  
Persimmons taste just fine  
Like carrots and peaches packaged  
As one ripe golden  
The juicy bite  
Forever embedded into your yearning taste buds  
Tenderly soft and perfect.  
Perhaps we are all persimmons,  
Waiting to be discovered  
And plucked from the hidden branches.

with "good" morals.  
My being is one of trickery and deceit. I sell my patented medicine to fools and settlers who think that it will make them better. I make profit on the foolishness of others. The "medicine" that I sell is almost 70% alcohol and the rest is a mix of ingredients that change the color to a deep black and alter the taste enough for people to believe that the proxy liquid is actually medicine. I unfortunately test each one of my batches that I make. The feel of the liquid going down my throat feels like I'm swallowing burning tar. I travel around from town to town selling this concoction to the townsfolk. In my demonstrations of my "medicine" I invite the people to drink it, and of course they instantly feel better because of the alcohol in the mixture, but does not have lasting effects. After selling this to many of the people I must leave town quickly before they realize that the medicine they just bought for a hefty price is actually a fraud. My life

**WR**  
**WOLF RUN**

Landscape a pioneer wife would have seen in the yard that reflected her own feelings. I used Julia Shields and her daughter, Mollie as the primary characters for this sketch

**EVERYTHING WAS GONE**  
The story of a woman telling her story, and it all began with the concept of struggle. What would be a universal struggle? I pushed myself to come up with an idea that no one could easily become familiar with, regardless of time or location. Disaster precedes struggle, which allows growth and humility. The curiosity of a young boy at the Texas School for the Deaf towards the wren seen on his elderly teacher's ear leads him to question it. She explains her past, 60 years prior, in sign language to her student.  
As I watched her, I realized she was just like me but nothing like me at all. I secretly admired her while she curled her fingers and spitted her beads expressively. Unlike me, she was born into the world with perfectly functioning senses. She knew the sounds when pellets of seed poured down on her cabin's corrugated steel roof in early August. She once would fall gently to sleep to the delicate mother's sweet voice singing, "All the Peatty Little Horses". She rhythm of her fireplace when wood embers crackled into the tall, narrow chimney. Her world once had a soundtrack. I watched the way her mouth moved to help me grasp the best ancient hands seemed simple but profound.  
The glow in her smile and the color of her skin on her forehead, which she hid behind a cotton dress.

