

TIPS FOR BETTER GRADES

By ROBERT A.G. LEVINE



Our education system is not perfect. Think about it: classrooms are designed for teachers, not for the individual learning styles of each student, and we rely heavily on homework, forcing students to teach themselves by themselves. No wonder high school students struggle, particularly with our most rigorous curricula.

We have three tips for students to improve and maintain their grades.

First, students must embrace the age-old truth that "nobody is perfect." There will be times when issues arise in certain classes, and when problems occur, the student is at least part of the problem. Anyone who is part of the cause cannot be the entire solution. The answer? Ask for help! Adults have learned to swallow pride and ego, but we have conditioned young people to shoot for perfection on their own. Excellence is the goal, but the best results are seldom achieved alone. Adults are not necessarily smarter than young people, but we are more experienced. Students deserve to hear our experience so they can make their best decisions. Plus, adults have the resources to hire tutors and purchase study materials that might change grades for the better.

Unfortunately, the lifelong conflict between adults and youths – yes, we have treated the students like children, because they were children – means that students seldom approach adults for help. Although that needs to change, it can only happen when the student initiates the conversations. Why? Because no parent or teacher or consultant will ever know when things start to go wrong in class. Only the student will observe the problem. Parents cannot oversee what they cannot see. However, parents can make it a priority to change the relationship with their students from pushing the student to supporting the student. To allow your student to lead, stop taking the lead.

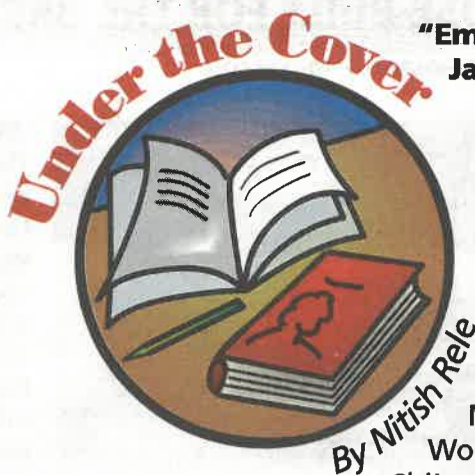
Second, students need to do a better job of prioritizing their work. Stress causes students to do the opposite of what they should: when particular subjects are more challenging than others, students delay the study of those subjects. If you don't like a topic, you will avoid the topic. By leaving their most challenging coursework for last, students unwittingly try to learn their worst subjects at a time when they are most tired. That does not work. Instead, students should work on the most challenging (and least appealing) subjects first. Attack challenges when you are most able to focus.

Third, students are untrained at time management. Their struggle is not their fault. High schools take up the entire day with classes, but none of those classes teach time management. When we push our kids to participate in after-school activities – a valuable pursuit – we forget that these take up even more time. What happens is that each day is cut into several pieces: school, activities, homework. Studying is invariably the last piece and the one that steals sleep. Not only is it harder to focus when you are tired, but it also takes more time to study when you are tired. It is both daunting and inefficient to face a large block of homework. But there is a solution....

Break up the time blocks. During the school day, and between other activities, there are periods of available time. Use them! Plan to spend 30 minutes during lunch or another break doing smaller pieces of homework. Getting some of your work done earlier provides a sense of progress and accomplishment while also shortening the large nighttime block required for homework. This significantly alleviates stress and improves the ability to think clearly and efficiently while doing the (now shorter) remaining work.

Grades are important, not just as indicators of high school learning, but also as predictors of success in college. But we must teach students how to perform, not just what to learn.

Robert A.G. Levine, president of Selective College Consulting Inc., can be reached at (813) 391-3760, email BobLeVine@SelectiveCC.com or visit www.SelectiveCollegeConsulting.com



By Nitish Rele

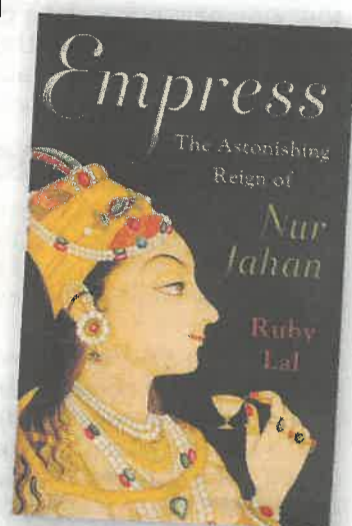
"Empress: The Astonishing Reign of Nur Jahan" (308 pages; \$27.95) by Ruby Lal; published by W.W. Norton & Co. (www.wwnorton.com)

Emperor Jahangir's 20th and final wife hunted tigers, rescued her husband in battle, designed elaborate public buildings and gardens, issued imperial orders and coins, and most important, was the only woman ruler in the Mughal dynasty. Nur Jahan or "Light of World" was a remarkable and fascinating Shi'a woman who married a Sunni king in a male-dominated world. Born Mihr un-Nisa in 1577 on a road outside Kandahar, Afghanistan, to Persian nobles, she made tremendous strides against all odds, writes Lal in this well-written biography. After the death of her first husband, she joined Jahangir's harem before marrying the emperor in 1611. When Jahangir's health began to fail, Nur Jahan took over the reign with edicts. There even were gold and silver coins with her name along with the emperor, something unheard of in those male-dominated days. After the Empress fought a hard-fought battle that restored Mughal order, poet Shirazi paid a growing tribute: "King Jahangir whose abode is exalted and elevated as the sky and who

is King through the wise advice of the Queen ...

Never was witnessed in the region of my King such a fortified system

(refuge for the kingdom as the Queen." Kudos to Lal for a well-researched biography of Nur Jahan. It is obvious that piecing together this vital chapter in the Mughal Empire required patience, dedication with painstaking attention to detail. And it shows in the commendable results.



"Monsoon on the Fingers of God" (106 pages; \$19.95) by Sasenarine Persaud; published by Mawenzi House (www.mawenzihouse.com)

Monsoon on the Fingers of God (Ravi Shankar 1920-2012)

"Forgetting the guru's daughter or the first or second loves—reporters seeking out sex and scandal—third or fifth affairs or ragas; Monterey Or Woodstock hippies, not crazies, now, setting an instrument on fire burning a hand of god, forget

Estranged and unestranged offspring loved unloved, forget all but this thing

lotused from Saraswattie's vina* teardrops or raindrops

Monsoon on the fingers of god."

The book and poem title is an appropriate tribute by an endowed poet to the sitar maestro Ravi Shankar who performed at both Monterrey and Woodstock. Like his previous "Love in a time of Technology" poem book, Sasenarine Persaud takes us on a United Kingdom tour, mainly Scotland, England, Wales and Ireland, as well as of course India and Sri Lanka.

Another poem that grabbed our attention was "To a Kashmiri Child in a Hindu Refugee Camp in Delhi." (Shown at right)

A native of Guyana, Persaud of New Tampa is an author of 14 books of fiction and poetry. He worked as a writer in Canada before moving to the United States. Among his awards include the K M Hunter Foundation Award, the Arthur Schomburg Award and fellowships/scholarships from the University of Miami and Boston University.

Like his previous books, you don't want to miss out on another fine piece of work by Persaud.

"I would tell you— Do not be so hasty To join me—as if you have a choice

As if you have a voice in this New Delhi tent city Where are your toys? Not even a paper boat to float in a puddle?

Your lakes are green— grass or reeds or lilies. Your birthright stolen like the Tejo Mahalya and the thinkers urge:

What is this sanitation or cleansing in India or upsetting balances!

You cannot go home again, Yet, I would tell you: Do not be so hasty to join me

Keeper of many homes owner of none."