

TFS NEWS



December 5, 2011

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MOROCCAN TRIO BRINGS MELODIES, BEATS, AND ANIMAL NOISES

KINDERGARTENER SONIA OULAMINE, BORN IN MOROCCO, WELCOMES THE TRIO

Tumble Books

SLLIS has purchased an online book subscription that includes books in French, Spanish, AND English! With this subscription, you are able to view these books on computers at school AND at home. Please use the following login information:

-<http://www.tumblebooklibrary.com>
- Username: sllis Password: books

Explore the following options:
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This is a wonderful resource, containing high-quality, literature-based books combined with the use of audio and animation to keep your child focused and entertained. Some books are even viewable on the iPad! Contact Sara Schmittgens with questions and feedback at sara2@sllis.org.

Happy reading!

Beujolais Nouveau

Merci beaucoup to all the parents who volunteered their time to plan this fantastic evening, those who contributed a dish, and everyone who came and supported the event. *Cheers!*

We want YOUR KIDS... at school!

Good attendance is extremely important for your child's intellectual and social development. As per SLLIS school policy, parents of students who are absent **eleven days** or more will be contacted by their Head of School. Students may be required to make up missed contact hours by repeating a grade. The Head of School may also report excessive absences to the Department of Family Services and Truancy Officers. Please remember that excused doctor visits require doctors notes.

If you are in need of *transportation assistance*, please contact Emilie Lytton at emilie@sllis.org.

Fete D'Hiver:

Winter Learning Celebration

Join TFS students and staff on *Thursday December 15* from 6pm-8pm to celebrate learning and the winter holidays with song, dance, and dessert.

Coffee With Conrad

The next Coffee With Conrad will be on *Wednesday, December 14* at 9a.m. in the Parents' Lounge. Please bring your own coffee mug! **Mark Your Calendars:** TFS School Advisory Committee (SAC) meeting on January 10 at 6pm.

The Peace Museum comes to SLLIS

Gateway to Peace is a traveling museum that teaches concepts of peace to children in kindergarten through fifth grade. French School students will participate in Peace Museum activities next *Wednesday, December 14* throughout the day. To volunteer, please contact Lisa Berman at: clubslis@sllis.org.

Mooncakes à la Mode

by Madame Sonia

February, 2011

A funny thing happened on the way to my favorite *salon de thé*.

I had just poured a steaming cup of honey-chestnut-flavored oolong tea into a small, handle-less tea cup, and was daintily lifting it to my lips, when the server approached the table carrying a small tray. On the tray were two little plastic packages.

Eh ben, qu'est ce que c'est? What's this? I asked the server. Free treats! is what I was thinking.

She pointed to the plastic packages. These are *gâteaux* (can mean cake or cookies) for the Chinese New Year, she told us. I noticed the shiny red and gold wrappers covered in Chinese lettering. *C'est pour ça*. Ok, that explains that.

The explanation continued.

Each *gâteau* has some paper inside, she said, and you must be VERY careful not to eat this paper. Your task, should you choose to accept it, is to open the plastic wrapper, carefully extract the paper from the *gâteau*, and then eat the *gâteau*. Repeat: the paper is NOT edible.

Maybe it was because she was speaking quickly, or because I couldn't conceive of a pastry that required such a thorough explanation, but her words didn't resonate with any *gâteau* experience in my memory. I shrugged and accepted the plastic package that apparently contained a toxic paper-filled cake, straight from China.

I inspected the specimen before me. The wrapper said *biscuit de porte-bonheur*, which at the time I thought meant "cookie that brings happiness." (I later learned that a *porte-bonheur* is a lucky charm.) On the back, the ingredients were listed in French and English: wheat flour, egg white, sugar, water, rapeseed oil, palm oil, butter, flavoring (what does that really mean?), and no preservatives. Nothing struck me as out of the ordinary. I expected to find either a gelatinous blob or a copiously gooey pastry – something requiring nimble fingers, an alert mind, and great patience, to extract the paper inside. I braced myself for the ticking cookie-bomb.

Ladies and gentlemen, I opened the wrapper and found ... a fortune cookie.

Nothing more, nothing less – exactly what you'd find in the paper sack with your Chinese take-out, or on a silver platter with the check at a Chinese restaurant. I threw my head back and let out a resounding *HA!*

Arianna, my Italian friend, was looking quizzically back and forth between me and the cookie. Haven't you had one of these before? I asked her. No, she replied. I explained that in the U.S., fortune cookies are a dime a dozen and don't come with instructions. The paper fortune is an indispensable yet unmistakably inedible part of the fortune cookie experience. She smiled but didn't seem half as amused as I was.

I broke the cookie in two and extracted my paper fortune. Tell me my destiny, *le* cookie.

En humour, mieux vaut jamais que trop tard. In humor, better never than late. It's better not to tell a joke at all than to deliver a badly-timed punch line? Disappointing. This was no fortune, nor did it bring me happiness. But then do they ever?

Back at the ranch, I did some quick research into the fortune cookie's origins. Its exact provenance is unknown, but modern-day fortune cookies started appearing in California in the early 1900's. As for the inspiration, there are a number of charming legends such as how, in the fourteenth century, the Chinese threw off their Mongol oppressors by hiding messages in rice "mooncakes," which the Mongols did not like to eat. And how during the American railway boom of the 1850's, Chinese railway workers came up with a substitute for the mooncakes they couldn't buy in the US: homemade biscuits with good luck messages inside.

Long story short, there is ample evidence that it was actually Japanese immigrants in California who invented today's crescent-shaped fortune cookies, Chinese immigrants who marketed them in their restaurants, and Americans (in its broadest

definition) who tasted them, loved them, and would be utterly lost without them.

Our humble crescent cookie got me thinking about identity. First, I associate fortune cookies with Chinese food, but they're actually a Japanese-American creation. Second, I was surprised to learn that the French give dissertation-length explanations prior to fortune cookie consumption. Third, conversations with friends have alerted me to the fact that American multi-culturalism is something I take for granted. Immigrants have trouble integrating – melting, if you will – into French society because France is an old man compared to an infant United States; French identity is less flexible, less fluid, less *flo*u (blurry, fuzzy). In the U.S., a fortune cookie is an essential Chinese-Japanese-American treat. In France, it comes stamped with an OTHER label.

I don't think we're all holding hands and singing Kumbaya in the Promised Land. Amy Chua had Americans up in arms with her depiction of Chinese child-rearing traditions and her rejection of American parents' unnecessary coddling and self-esteem boosting. *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* and its rocky reception suggest cultural tension and US and THEM labeling on both sides. And it's not as though we're welcoming our southern neighbors with open arms. But on the whole, it's easier to melt into the American pot.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks, as the saying goes. (Or the French equivalent: *Ce n'est pas à un vieux singe qu'on apprend à faire des grimaces*. You don't teach an old monkey to frown). Just as I'd like to think you *can* teach an old dog new tricks, I'd like to say that France is slowly turning that frown upside down concerning immigrant integration. Many French seem to think otherwise.

Maybe a fortune cookie is what the old monkey needs -- just make sure he doesn't eat the paper.

Have a great week!
- Conrad, Sonia, & TFS Staff

IMPORTANT INFO

- Doors open at 8:15am; school begins at 8:40am.
- After 8:40am, students are considered *tardy* and must be signed in at the front desk.
- Eleven absences merits a call from the HOS.
- Dismissal changes must be made before 2:00pm.
- Parking IS allowed on Papin St. during arrival and dismissal while the Commerce Bank lot is unavailable for SLLIS parking.
- Please refrain from *double parking* on Papin Street.

IMPORTANT DATES

- 12/8 Parent French Class, 5pm
- 12/14 Coffee With Conrad, 9am
- 12/14 Gateway to Peace Museum at SLLIS
- 12/15 Fete d'Hiver, 6-8pm
- 12/16 Circus Club performance, 9am
- 12/21 Last day of school in 2011; class celebrations