



# The Worldly Mind

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*A Gift from Virtual High School*



# What VHS Did for Me

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- In my VHS class, "Cultural Identity Through Literature JM," we were tasked with selecting any foreign country that we knew nothing about to research
- I chose to research Iceland, and thereby discovered a culture that captured my fascination
- "VHS has provided Olivia with a wonderful opportunity to gain a greater global perspective," says West Boylston Middle/High School Site Coordinator Tina Petrone Avery. "Through her course in Cultural Identity Through Literature she learned about a country that she formerly had no knowledge about. I have wall sized maps in my classroom of the United States and of the world. We use these maps to mark out the VHS students' classmates. Olivia used the world map to choose Iceland to study. She was extremely excited about this undertaking. She learned that the country's capital is Reykjavik, and that 80% of Icelanders believe in fairies; that they are the greatest international chess players, and they have a greater ratio of bookshelves to people than anywhere else in the world. These facts were thrilling, revealing tidbits of information into the culture of Icelanders. Olivia thoroughly enjoyed this chance to explore and discover more about our world."





# “The Project”

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- After completing a PowerPoint Presentation, extended fact sheet, and analysis of Jonas Hallgrimson’s poem *Island* to complete the requirements of the final project, I went further with my research
- Because my intended college major is Creative Writing, I am fascinated by folktale literature, and decided to research Scandinavian fairy tales
- Because VHS forced me to find personal importance in the material, I found reasons to continue research on Scandinavian culture
- “Your project was terrific!” reports Cultural Identity Through Literature teacher Jenn McGorman. “You had a beautiful powerpoint about Iceland and your study of the poem, *Island*, by Jonas Hallgrimson was very thorough and relevant to the task, about ‘taking your roots and homeland for granted.’ It really summed up what the course was all about, finding cultural identity through reading and experiencing literature.”





# What Makes VHS Different?

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- VHS teaches you how to direct your education by requiring you to manage your own time and stay organized without anyone to guide you—if you are not motivated by the subject material, you will not be able to keep up with the personally taxing work
- You have to get emotionally involved with your subject material to experience the full rewards of a VHS course





# Then and Now

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- Before, Iceland was just a name to me—now, I usually know more about it than anyone else who brings up the topic; I now feel a strange personal connection with the country, and can't wait for the day I get to travel there in person
- The chance that VHS gives students to make their education a personally motivated journey changes school from a place where you complete difficult tasks or pass tests to an opportunity to improve yourself in ways that matter to you





# A Lasting Effect

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- Not only do I now want to visit Iceland, but I can't wait to spread my research to other cultures; I had no idea that Iceland would be so interesting to me, and now I wonder what other cultures or people I might meet who could tell me more about what my own interests
- During my research of Scandinavian folk tales, I discovered a fairy tale called "East of the Sun and West of the Moon." It immediately became my new favorite fairy tale, and, after borrowing and reading multiple picture book versions from the local library, I used the tale as the basis for a website I built for a school project





# The Value of VHS

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- The most significant global perspective that VHS has given me is to me that learning is not about tests and grades—it's about passion, hard work, and a thirst to understand and discover oneself
- Virtual High School takes a typical education and turns it into a personal mission of self-betterment and intellectual discovery
- By learning to use their education independently, managing their own time and setting personal intellectual goals that are emotionally significant to them, students can use VHS to educate themselves in ways that matter more than a number written on a test

