

Fifth Annual Panel Discussion with Parents of “The Namesake”

A few years ago, in order to broaden and deepen the 10th grade experience, we began supporting our English curriculum with a community-wide event.

This year, we are thrilled to again invite parents to join a panel discussion addressing issues related to immigration, culture and identity, and issues that appear in the 10th grade English class capstone text, Jhumpa Lahiri’s “The Namesake.”

Below you will find details about the panel and a short [questionnaire](#) you can use to express interest. Before walking you through the particulars, we would like to take a moment to say how excited we are about this program that seeks to bring us together in service of our goal to engage students’ hearts and minds.

As part of their English class, all 10th graders will read a number of postcolonial texts. The capstone text, “The Namesake,” was written by Jhumpa Lahiri, who was born in England to Bengali parents and now lives and writes in the U.S. She is also the director of the creative writing program at Princeton University. Her work serves as the bridge between the postcolonial unit in the sophomore year and the American literature course in the junior year.

To help students understand the novel’s themes of identity, diaspora, and the immigrant experience and to bring the Seven Hills community closer together through a meaningful, cultural conversation, we are inviting parents to discuss their experience, strength, and hope as first- and second-generation immigrants in the United States.

As we have in past years, we will finalize the panel discussion with input from the panel members, but, in broad brushstrokes, here is the plan. We will ...

- Hold the session during the school day, Friday, May 3
- Hold the session during Upper School lunch so all the sophomore students can attend
- Serve students lunch early at 10:45 a.m. and then run the panel discussion until 12 p.m.
- Empower students to engage in the event by having them moderate the discussion

In past years, the event has been a huge success, and we know that, with your help, it will again be a highlight of the year. This year, we would again like to open up the program to parents who simply want to join the student audience in order to better understand and support our diverse community. If you are interested in attending as an audience member or participating in the panel itself please fill out this short [questionnaire](#). If you have any questions, email [Mark Beyreis](#).

Here is a link to the version of “[The Namesake](#)” students will read in class. The movie is available on Prime Video, Vudu, or Apple TV on Roku devices. You can participate in the discussion even if you do not have time to read the book or view the film based on it. We are reading the book in class. We want to understand your experience in the discussion.

One final update: we had hoped to arrange a student trip to India as part of this program. We were not able to finalize that in time, but we continue to explore options. Stay tuned.

In closing, our commitment to diversity states, “Guided by our mission and values, The Seven Hills School is committed to preparing its students to play an active role in making the world a more just and equitable place.” We believe events such as these demonstrate that we are bringing that commitment to life in ways that engage the hearts and minds of our students and gather us together as a larger community.

Best regards, Mark Beyreis, chair of the English department, and Matt Bolton, Head of Upper School.