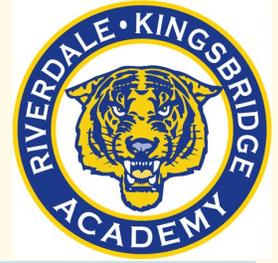


November 2015

High School ELA Family Newsletter



Curriculum News from our Classes

Welcome to Marking Period 2

This marking period, all grades will continue to build upon the literacy strategies we worked on in our skills-based unit. Students are now expected to use strategies such as rereading, annotating, and actively engaging with a text in order to maximize their understanding.

9th Grade Literature

From the desk of ...
Ms. Briscoe and
Ms. Henry

The Kite Runner

9th Grade ELA classes have demonstrated great emotional investment in reading Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. We have been analyzing conflict in the novel thus far, particularly in

regard to the main character, Amir. Amir does not feel the affection he desires from his father, and becomes resentful of the attention that his best friend receives. The themes of friendship, loyalty, and power have all been great topics for discussion during class. Students have also been demonstrating their ability to locate textual evidence to support their analysis and comprehension of the text, and will continue to use this skill throughout the unit.

10th Grade Literature

From the desk of...
Ms. Hope

In our two Grade Ten classes students are introduced to mythology by a student performance of Plato's *Allegory of the Cave*. We use the Socratic Method of questioning to help the class deconstruct the play

and to decipher the lessons from this 2400-year-old work. We will then read and compare "Origin Myths" from various cultures and will then work in small groups researching from a culture they have chosen to investigate and creating a diorama of an origin myth from that culture. Later in the unit we will focus on the Hero Myths of the Greeks.

10th Grade Literature

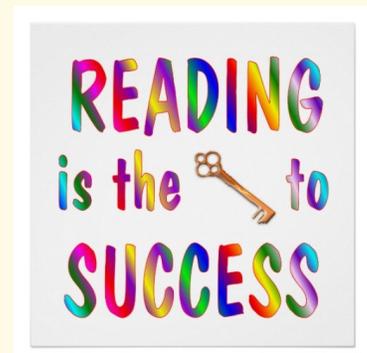
From the desk of...
Mr. McGee

A Long Way Gone

Our new unit will focus on a memoir whose main character is truly heroic. It is about a former child soldier from Sierra Leone who has overcome a seemingly impossible ordeal. While this book is emotionally difficult to read, it is also a good lesson about the strength of the human spirit. By reading this memoir, students become more aware of

IMPORTANT DATES

11/11	Veteran's Day No School
11/16 & 11/17	High School Open House
11/19	Parent Teacher Conferences Half day of school
11/26 & 11/27	Thanksgiving Break





TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Mr. McGee

Mr. McGee is a veteran teacher with 14 years of teaching experience. He has taught AP English, and here at RKA he teaches 10th grade Honors English and 11th grade General Education. He earned his graduate degree in teaching from Pace University and his Bachelor's degree in English Literature from LaSalle University in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Mr. McGee is also a member of the Riverdale community, residing in North Riverdale. When he is not spending time with his wife and two children, he can often be found in the gym or at Chelsea Piers playing ice hockey. He learned to play hockey at the age of 40 and is proof that if the desire is there to learn something new, you can do it. He often compares reading and writing to athletics by saying that one needs to practice every day in order to improve. So, with a lot of practice this year, his students will be in great shape to achieve academically!

Curriculum News (continued)

the world in which they live and become more informed about other cultures.

11th Grade Literature

From the desk of ...

**Ms. Hope, Mr. Archer
and Mr. McGee**

The entire eleventh grade is now reading *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller's play, which is set during the Salem Witch Trials but was written as a response to the McCarthy Trials of the 1950s. We are using in-class performance to understand how Miller builds drama through the actions of characters in conflict. All six classes will congregate in the school auditorium to partici-

pate in a staged reading of the play in December. Look for your invitation!

12th Grade

From the desk of ...

Mr. Archer

Don't Read This Book!

"Don't Read This Book" is a new elective. We try to take on books that challenge our ideas and maybe even push the boundaries.

We just finished *A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini. We'll be considering the role of women in the novel as we explore writing topics.

Next, we move on to *Jesus' Son* by Denis Johnson. These stories tell of spiraling grief and transcendence, of hitting rock bottom and redemption, of getting lost and found and lost again. Should be a great ride.

AP English

From the desk of ...

Mr. Archer

In AP Literature we have just begun *Native Son* by Richard Wright. We'll be concentrating on Wright's use of symbolism while he explores the idea of systemic racism in America—75 years ago! Just a little ahead of his time. It will be a good comparison to the ideas and style that we experienced in James Baldwin's *Sonny's Blues*.

Reach us any time via Jupiter Grades or via the email addresses posted @RKA141.org

STUDENT CELEBRATION

The following excerpts are from student writings in Ms. Andre's Women's Studies class where students are analyzing the lives of American women in the 1800's. Here is Alana Brown's description of women's lives at that time:

"For women in the 1800's, life was planned out for them before they were born. Women in the 1800's had very few choices and many obligations. Women were controlled by the men in their lives. Husbands had complete control of money and power. Women's purpose in life was to have children, get married and be a stereotypical housewife. Women would have to stay at home with the kids and cook and clean all day for the family. The husband of a woman also had the right to her body. Women had no rights to anything at all. According to Historical Brief-Lives of Women in the Early 1800's, "women vowed to obey their husbands. This was supported by both the law as well as the marriage vows." Written into the marriage ceremony was a vow to obey her husband...marriage was more than a lifetime commitment. This quote explains how women were virtually tied to their husbands once they were married. They couldn't get a divorce or escape. If they tried to they would be punished."

Hassan Beydoun analyzes major themes in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story, *If I Were A Man*, written in 1914.

"The main character, Mollie, experiences what it is like to be a man. Mollie is fed up with being a woman due to the limitations. It began one day when her husband Gerald refused to do something for her. As a man, the main observations Mollie had was how men spoke wrongfully about women. "As they talked with this new memory and new understanding which seemed to include all men's minds, there poured in on her submerged consciousness a new startling knowledge - what men really think about women." Here the character discovers what men naturally thought about women and how society had this traditional view of women as housewives and mothers. In the text Mollie defends women by arguing how men also have imperfections and faulty characteristics. Gilman makes a strong case of the differences between men and women....not only physically, but in political and social issues as well."

Recommended Reads

Recommended Books for Parents

***A Long Way Gone* - by Ishmael Beah**

***The Penelopiad* -by Margaret Atwood**

***The Lost Books of the Odyssey* - by Zachary Mason**

***Praying Drunk-Short Stories* -by Kyle Minor**

Events Outside of RKA

92nd Street Y Writing Workshop for RKA High School Students

When? Every Tuesday 4:15 pm - 5:45 pm
Where? 1395 Lexington Ave, NYC (@ 92nd Street)
Contact: Wendy Salinger, Coordinator
The Poetry Center Schools Project
92nd Street Y
Phone: (212) 415-5500

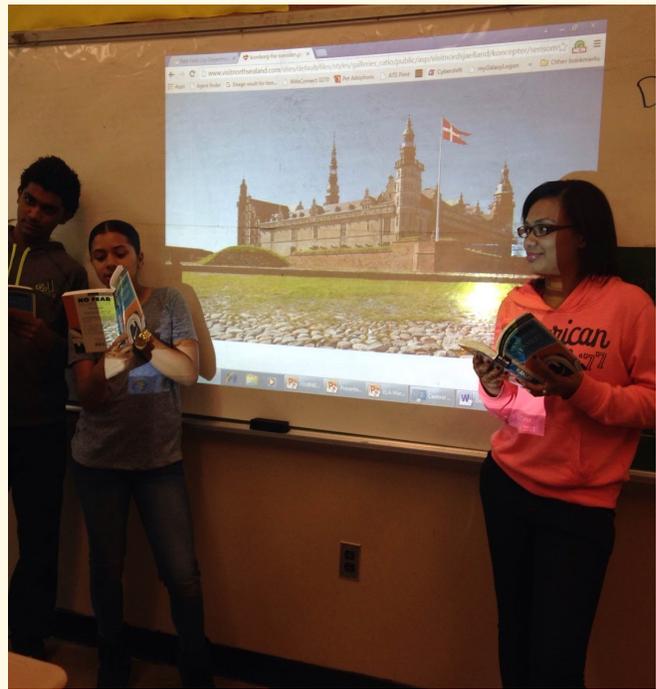
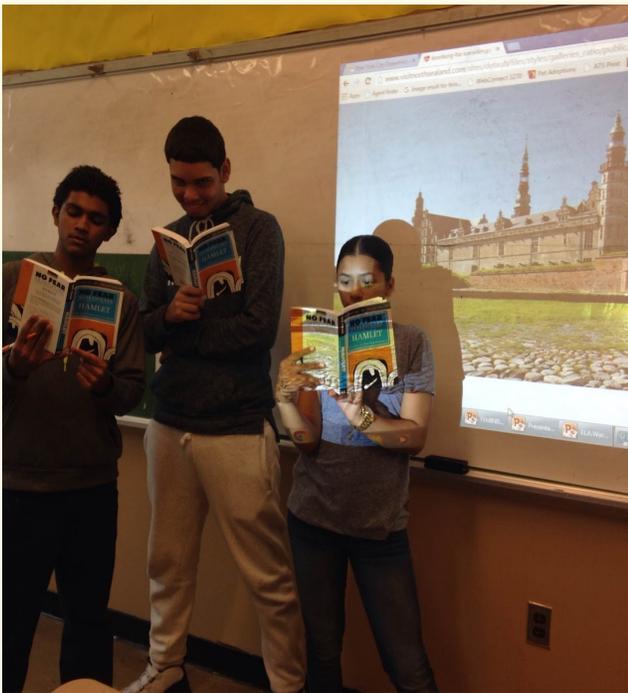
92nd Street Y meet the author for RKA High School Students

On December 14th, the first authors we will meet are Salman Rushdie and Laszlo Krasznahorkai.

Classroom Corner

What's happening in **Ms. Andre's** class...

This marking period, Ms. Andre's two self-contained ELA classes are reading and analyzing Shakespeare's, Hamlet. For many of the young scholars, it is the first time they have seriously reviewed a Shakespearean work. We are using the "No Fear, Shakespeare" series, which transposes Shakespeare's language into more readable and student-friendly language. Hamlet has all the makings of a great drama. The students love the themes of revenge, betrayal, and the continued torment that Hamlet faces. In fact, at the close of Scene 1: Act 2, Hamlet says, *"But my heart must break in silence, since I can't mention my feelings aloud."* Already the young scholars are making connections to their own lives when they too, had to endure heartbreaks and disappointments in silence! We look forward to the ongoing text study.



Students in action:

Matthew Mathura, Raymond Martinez, Alyssa Rodriguez, and Pilar Tineo reading Hamlet