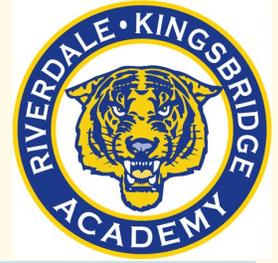


October 2015

High School ELA Family Newsletter



Curriculum News from our Classes

Welcome to the English Language Arts Department

Under the guidance of Tom Sullivan, AP of Supervision, all English classes kicked off the return to school with a skill-based unit. These units were designed to provide a foundation for ELA students by providing explicit instruction in two key domains: (1) grade appropriate literacy skills and (2) the habits and practices of the intellectually engaged, successful student. The skills: speaking and listening, close reading, and evidence-based writing, will assist students throughout the year. We designed this unit with input from various departments to support student learning in all

courses.

Looking ahead, each grade will begin a new unit of study in October, having already been introduced to the topic through short readings in their skill-based units.

9th Grade Literature

From Ms. Briscoe and Ms. Henry's desk.....

Ninth Grade students committed **acts of kindness** all around the community in honor of the selfless sacrifices various citizens made on September 11, 2001. To demonstrate their understanding of essential oral presentation skills, students presented their good deeds to the class earlier in September. This was a fun way to practice oral presenta-

tion skills and work collaboratively in groups to make google slideshows or write evidence-based paragraphs.

10th Grade Literature

From Mr. McGee and Ms. Hope's desk.....

Students are concentrating on texts that explain the hero's journey. They will explore essential questions such as: What makes one a hero? and What are the consequences of the choices we make in life?

Initial nonfiction readings include articles from The New York Times, National Public Radio's website, and The New Yorker about contemporary, real life heroes. We will progress to Joseph Campbell's book, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, which outlines the stages of a hero's journey in literature. Then, students

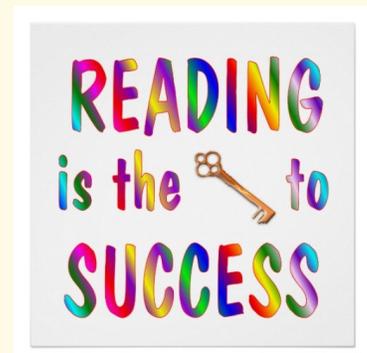
IMPORTANT DATES

Oct. 14: PSAT day, free at RKA for all 11th graders

In the evening there will be an RKA College Fair open to all parents and students. [6:30 –8:00 PM]. Over 60 colleges and universities will be attending. A great opportunity not to be missed!

Oct 16: End of the 1st Marking Period.

Parents check JupiterGrades





TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Welcome to Ms. Henry .

Ms. Henry is excited to be a new member of the RKA High School English team! A Manhattan College graduate, she feels at home in her new classroom, where she teaches 9th and 12th grade. When asked about how she feels about her experience so far, she said, "I could not be happier here. The faculty is so supportive and the students display such a strong sense of community and amiability inside and outside of the classroom."

When Ms. Henry is outside of the classroom, she is actively involved in music. She sings, plays piano, and anticipates involvement in music extra-curriculars at RKA. She incorporates musical understanding to enhance understanding in her English classes. As an example, she explains, "My college writing class was struggling with understanding how thesis statements operate in accordance with the rest of their essay. To help clear confusion, I explained how a thesis statement, like the chorus of a song, is the foundation for the essay. Each body paragraph should support the thesis statement, in the same way that each verse should support a song's chorus." Her unique perspective is a great addition to our department, and we look forward to what her year will bring!

Curriculum News (continued)

will read heroic myths such as Perseus and Theseus and Epic poetry such as The Odyssey that portray heroic archetypes. These stories will be used as a lens to analyze more contemporary narratives throughout the school year. One goal is that students will understand the basic structure of a story, thus improving their analytical abilities.

11th Grade Literature From Mr. Archer's desk.....

Throughout our opening unit, the 11th grade ELA classes will be reacquainting themselves with the writing skills that are

integral to a year filled with big tests: New York State ELA Regents, PSATs, and the SATs. Right now we are using smaller pieces in the form of poems, essays, stories, and articles in order to generate enough writing to recognize our strengths and where we may need improvement. From there, the students can begin to individualize their approach to their work.

After this unit, we will move on to Arthur Miller's 1951 play, The Crucible, about the Salem witch trials--a great play for the fall season. We will be responding to some of the ideas Miller suggests in the play as well as learning about the actual events of 1692 Puritan New England that led to these trials.

Women's Studies From Ms. Andre's desk.....

We are welcoming a new elective course at RKA, Women's Studies. The goal of this course is to explore the role of women in society, through the lens of literature and non-fiction texts using a multi-media approach to learning. Students will begin to ask of themselves through examination of various resources, "What are the different roles women play throughout history?" "What are women's contributions and what impact has the women's movement had on the lives of all people?" Students will be able to identify universal themes, discuss, write about, analyze, evaluate and come to their own conclusions about what is the "Woman's Voice."

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

STUDENT CELEBRATION

This is an excerpt from a short story written by **Henry Mandel**, for Ms. Hope's Honor's English 11 Class. It was written to fulfill an assignment for students to write about a metaphysical topic. Ms. Hope chose it for its consistently gritty mood and the complex characterization Henry achieved. It addresses the complexity of evil.

"John was a gangster. He'd been committing crimes for as long as he could remember; from being an eight-year-old doing petty shoplifting to now as a thirty-three-year-old, responsible for dozens of murders, armed robberies, massive drug deals, and all other sorts of crimes. He lived every day in constant risk of being gunned down or arrested. It didn't bother him, though; the way he saw it, no person alive could judge him. He'll answer to a higher power when he's dead and gone. Yes, for someone so violent and fear inducing, John was a highly religious, superstitious, and god-fearing man."

Recommended Reads

Chopin, Kate - considered one of the early feminist writers of the 19th century who challenged the stereotypical roles of women at that time. [Good reads are: **The Story of an Hour and The Storm**]

Dubus, Andre, The Broken Vessel. These are essays by one of the real life heroes that 10th grade students are reading about.

Miller, Arthur, The Crucible. The play takes place amidst the setting of the infamous Witch Trials in Salem, Massachusetts.

Parry, Leslie, Church of Marvels A mystery with freak show people, insane asylums, and late 19th century NYC. [Recommended by Mr. Archer.]

Events In & Outside of RKA

Auditions are now in progress for the RKA teen theatre presentation, Auditions are open to all RKA students.

The Spuyten Duyvil Library here in Riverdale offers workshops, events, and has computer stations open to RKA students and the public.

They are located at:

650 W. 235th St., Bronx, NY, 10463

Phone: 718.796.1202

- [Finding Your Poetic Voice: A Writing Workshop](#). Saturday, October 10, 2015, 10:00AM Under the guidance of John Maney, Jr. participants for 8 Saturday mornings will explore and develop writing skills in poetry. Registration required .

Special ELA Events

These photos highlight the April 2015 Poetry Jam held in the RKA Library under the guidance of our librarian Ms. Loving. Students from Ms. Andre's 9th grade ELA class shared their emotions and heart through their poetry. Several classes, students, teachers, and parents attended. Be on the lookout for the Poetry Jam, April 2016.



Poetry Café 2015– 9h grader Jean Carlos Alba shared his love poems to a captivated crowd.

Victoria: Drawers

On the same day that we were given this assignment, I had to go to IKEA with my mom. I had assumed we just needed to get some plates for the nursery school my mom works at. We got a desk. A large, complicated desk. I spent the rest of the night helping my mom and her boyfriend put this IKEA desk together so that the preschoolers could have a place to put their glue sticks. I can't tell you why I planned this because it just sort of happened, but I'm still glad it did.



My Act of kindness (Jeremy)

On the morning of this past Monday (September 24), I woke up and noticed my mom already up and working around the house. I decided that since my mom has always been hardworking all my life, she should have a break. So I made breakfast for the day. That was my act of kindness.



Blerta: Chores

On Saturday I helped my mom with her chores. The house was a mess and there was dishes and clothes that needed to be washed. I cleaned the whole house, washed, dried and folded some clothes and washed dishes. I chose to do this because the house was a mess and my mom seemed tired that day and I wanted her to relax. I finished everything and the house was spotless. I was really happy because my mom does everything for me so I did her a big favor.



My Act Of Kindness(Gabriel)

My act of kindness over the weekend was doing the laundry for the week. I took the laundry down to the washing machines and put the clothes in the washing machine. I then waited and took the clothes out. Then put them to dry. After it was done I took the clothes and I folded them. That was my act of kindness.



Here are some slides from Ms. Briscoe's 9th grade ELA presentations during the Sept. 11 memorial called: Random Acts of Kindness. **Coming Soon: Dioramas of Heroes**