

National Writing Day Sparks Creativity at Rahway High School

Because of the importance of writing in our national life and in order to help writers from all walks of life recognize how important writing is to their lives, the National Council of Teachers of English has established **October 20** as The National Day on Writing.

Why? People in every kind of work and at every age communicate more than ever before for personal, professional, and civic purposes, through text messages, instant messages, twitter, video cameras, and even traditional pen and paper. New technologies expand the possibilities for composing in multiple media and for speaking to wider audiences and at a faster pace than ever before in our history. Writers continue to learn how to write for different purposes, audiences, and occasions throughout their lifetimes.

Each year, Rahway High School teachers in all disciplines celebrate the National Day on Writing by having their classes engage in creative writing assignments. This year, Mrs. Jessica DeRose's Biology students used their understanding of the characteristics of living beings to write essays as prosecutor or defense of a Martian who had come to earth and returned to his planet, stating that automobiles were living things. In Mr. Jeffrey Romano's English I class, after studying Edgar Allen Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," students used what they had learned to write a scary story. Spanish II students of Mrs. Carmen Sierra created Facebook profiles for themselves, including writing their own personal bio in Spanish. Her other students wrote letters in Spanish to penpals from other classes. Also, Mrs. Patricia Peloso's American History students discussed Randy Pausch's speech, "The Last Lecture," and wrote about their own attitudes and dreams. Mr. David Brighthouse's history students challenged themselves to follow Hemingway's example of creating a short, short story, using only 6 words, shades of Twitter or texting. Food critics were the order of the day in Mrs. Patricia Williams' math classes. Ms. Christine McNicholas' students drew a random household object out of a container and had to persuade classmates why this item should exist. Students later read their essays for the class and were videotaped. Drama students of Mrs. Alison Dooley created scripts of events occurring before and after a given scenario, while dance students wrote detailed letters to administrators explaining their gratitude for the dance program. Mr. Radler's history students dealt with a situation after a nuclear war, where certain hypothetical persons were in a shelter with limited resources and too many people. Students had a timed writing assignment about the process of determining who would be allowed to stay and why.

Many English classes composed creative pieces that may become part of the *Ex Animo*, the Rahway District literary journal, published each spring. Last year's journal may be viewed on the school website at <http://www.rahway.net/rhs/Literary%20Magazine/Lit%20Mag%20Kim20114.pdf>. The National Day on Writing celebration is always an exciting opportunity for faculty and student creativity and is organized by School Coordinator Kim Kiefer.

Photo Captions:

Rahway High School freshmen compose scary stories after reading Poe's "House of Usher."

Rahway High School history teacher Patricia Peloso encourages student reflection on how attitude and outlook affect living your dream.

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