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A LOOK AT LITERACY AND LITERATURE IN HIGH SCHOOL

RKYHS students are settling into the rigors of high school. English classes have discussed the summer reading novels and students crafted in-class essays on one of their reading choices. The assignment is exploratory because teachers want students to sample their writing skills, knowing that there will be time for improvement over the course of the year.

All English classes have begun a literature unit sparking interest in not only the selected novel but also the ability to make connections to the real world. For example, in grade nine students are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* and discussions led to a comparison to the Kavanaugh interviews and how the tenet of due process must be an integral part of our judicial system. Eleventh grade students are beginning the play, *Inherit the Wind*, while looking at the historical Scopes Monkey Trial and the ongoing conflict of evolution versus creationism. Literature opens our eyes to “walking in someone’s else’s shoes.” It is truly remarkable how reading a work of literature can open our eyes to new understandings of cultures and people with different life experiences.

There are more benefits to the study of literature. Understanding a story through the experiences of a character enables us to feel what it could have been like and helps us consider the impact of events, significant or otherwise, on ordinary people. Gaining a broad view of society, through the eyes of another, fosters understanding, tolerance and empathy and the value of these capacities cannot be underestimated in today’s complicated world.