CRUMBLED

Creativity:

The standardization of the student in a high school English classroom

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* All names used in this piece are pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality
Extra, Extra, Read All About It

CRUMBLE CREATIVITY

THE WORLD’S FAVORITE EDUCATIONAL NEWSPAPER

THOMAS NEWKIRK ON STANDARDIZATION

“Standardization
only leads to
sameness, not
necessarily quality,
and rarely to
excellence.”

Field Notes: November 5th, 2012

I don’t understand why all of these questions on
the student’s Of Mice and Men study guide have only
one “correct answer”. There are no extended
responses or any questions that require the
students to do more than go onto SparkNotes. It’s
only the first day and I’m starting to get
frustrated with the lack of creativity and
overuse of standards.

Day 1: Student Statement: Rachel
*I believe that you should act dumb if you are smart. That way, you’re on
the same level as everyone and no one knows that you are different.”
Day 2: Mrs. B* Says:
To an opinionated student: “Why do you always have to challenge me? The answers are right there in the book. That’s all you need to know.”
A Day in the Life of an 11th Grader
By: A lost in the shuffle 11th grader


Same things, different day.

I do what the teacher says,
To get an A.

I’m just like all the other kids,
Same grades, same life.

We aren’t different.

You can’t be UNIQUE here.

Obituary: November 5th, 2012

Deceased: Creativity
Cause of Death: Standard

Creativity was found on Monday afternoon, buried beneath the ACT prep test textbook. He suffered a massive blow to the head, for his brain was bleeding and there was also a bullet in his heart. When authorities arrived after a 911 call, it was too late to revive Creativity and he died later at the Standard Life Hospital.

An eyewitness states that they saw Standard hit Creativity in the head with the ACT textbook when he was trying to take students out of the box they have been put in through writing. Standard then shot him in the heart with a snapped in half pencil. Standard was arrested for the murder of Creativity later that day. There are many lessons to be learned from this but most importantly that standards don’t lead to creativity, only students without their own minds.
Extra, Extra, Read All About It

CRUMBLING CREATIVITY

SIR KEN ROBINSON ON STANDARDIZATION

“The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn’t need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education but to personalize it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.”

Why Does Creativity Get CRUMBLED?

Mrs. B: “Beth, this is the 5th time that you’ve asked for help. Just follow the directions and answer the multiple choice questions.”

Beth: “Mrs. B, I just don’t get why we have to do this. We have taken this same test twice. The other English class does fun writing activities. Why can’t we do that?”

Mrs. B: “We don’t do that in here. I told you guys from the start that we are trying to get you guys prepared for the ACT/SAT and the graduation test you have to take. That means we have to do real life writing, no frills.”

Beth: “Okay, well can we at least talk about the test question? I think that along with Slim, Candy also feels sympathy for George after killing Lennie because he knows the feeling because he regretted not killing his own dog instead of Carlson.”

Mrs. B: “No, only Slim feels sympathy. Just admit that I am right.”
Character Profile: **STANDARDIZATION**

Standardization has grey walls with no character. He keeps you within these walls and leaves you begging to get out. He argues with Creativity and tries to keep her out of his way. Standardization gives you the “right” answer and keeps you in line. Standardization makes the school days longer and the attention spans shorter. He sits at the edge of your bed at night, reminding you of all that did wrong that day. He whispers in your ear, “No, that’s not right. Pick the right answer and follow the rules. Be like everyone else.” He is a never-ending reminder that in today’s schools you must fit a mold to pass the tests. Your scores aren’t acceptable to him, which makes you sink further down into the depths of what is “correct”. Standardization pushes you out of the group and leaves your mind blank; no color or life. Those grey walls start to become your reality and before you know it, you are stuck within the musky, dark barriers. Creativity will try to save you, but it might be too late.

**A Day in the Life of A Student Observer**

By: A shocked Miami Student

I’m back at these familiar, fake wood desks, which I though I had escaped three years ago. They scream at me, “We are the same, we never change, we are the same, we never change.” The words stick with me and I find myself listening to “What day did Lennie die on?” And “Answer the multiple choice questions to the best of your ability because you’ll have to do this on the graduation test.” No questioning, no interpretations, no insight, no creativity; just the right answers coming from blank, programmed faces.
Extra, Extra, Read All About It

CRUMBLED CREATIVITY
THE WORLD’S FAVORITE EDUCATIONAL NEWSPAPER - Since 1899

ALFIE Kohn on Standardization

“Every hour spent on such exam preparation is an hour not spent helping students to become critical, creative, curious learners.”

Standardization inside the Classroom Walls

* The classroom has no pictures, art, quotes or any decorative qualities. The students aren’t allowed to pick their own seats and are required to sit in alphabetical order, like an assembly line.
Field Notes: November 12th, 2012

Today, I talked to my teacher about what kind of lesson I would do for tomorrow with the CP and SP classes. She told me that I could do whatever. I told her that I wanted to do something with writing because I wanted to get them to open up a little and express their creative and personal side. My teacher then said, “You can try, but we don’t write in here. The only kind of writing that we do are research papers.” I don’t think they will know how to write personally, but good luck.” How can she have such little faith in her students? This lack of expectations and hope is shocking to me. How does she know if the students don’t know how to write personally if she has never given them the opportunity? I believe in these kids and I believe that I can bring out that expressive side. Here goes nothing.
“This I Believe” Writing Assignment: Sarah*

In this world, judgment is handed out all too easily. I feel as though we, as people, are too quick to judge anyone who is not what we see as normal. Through the eyes of a child, everything is pure. While childhood never lasted long enough, we never looked at anyone differently than we had looked at our parents or friends. This world has made it somewhat of a goal to judge anyone and everyone who is not like us. But what are we? We are all but human and have the same body parts and organs, but many people were brought up to believe anyone different was a threat. I have been judged most of my life. I am the product of an interracial marriage. I have body modifications, and I am, as some people would call it, diseased with homosexuality. As a high school girl, being judged on appearance often results in drastic measures. As young girls and boys, we always saw the perfect man and woman to be somewhat like Ken and Barbie. Though most of us grew out of that, becoming our own people no matter the appearance, some sadly did now. Many girls and even women will do anything to look perfect. The image of perfection is pounded into the minds of young children before they can even learn the alphabet. The exact definition of judgment is the formation of an opinion after consideration or deliberation. It is an opinion on whether those flowers smell good or not. It is an opinion as to whether or not it is hot or cold. An opinion shouldn’t determine a death, or discrimination. I believe that judgment is one of the reasons our world has crumbled to nearly nothing at this point. We all judge, maybe not others but ourselves as well. We judge all too easily, not giving anyone a chance to prove they are better than the labels we may give them. I believe someday, hopefully in the near future, we will all realize that everyone is human and there is no reason to judge.’

Day 6: Student Statement: Sarah*

“Doing the This I Believe assignment was the first time in my high school career where I felt like I could break free. Free from the labels and free from what we are expected to be. You let me write for me and not for you or a test. That’s never happened to me before.”

Day 7: Mrs. B* Says:

“Thanks for trying to get them to write. It was nice for them to have a day off from the real work that is more important that they do.”
A Day in the Life of Mrs. B*
By: A broken teacher

Today, I am going to change my students; mold them into the products that will score high and secure my job.

I went into teaching for my love of writing and literature. The Great Gatsby, To Kill A Mockingbird, Huck Finn, you name it, I know it.

But now things have changed. Standardize this and standardize that are all I hear from my school boards mouths during every wretched meeting.

If I hear, “You’re job depends on these test scores” one more time

I might EXPLODE!

Greetings from the desk of Mrs. B...

Katie,

I appreciate all of your help throughout the past two weeks. It has been a pleasure to have you observing and I hope that you learned a lot from my classroom. Although you are getting into teaching at a time where only the scores matter, try to remember the real reason for why you got into teaching because sometimes I forget mine. Creativity has been crumbled for now, but hopefully the system will change in time for fresh minds like you. I hope you have a long and fulfilling teaching career and let me know if there is anything I can do to help you.

Sincerely,
Mrs. B

Final Food for Thought

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.” - Albert Einstein
Extra, Extra, Read All About It: Repetend
This genre is one that I decided to repeat throughout my piece on pages 2, 5 and 7. The quotes from Thomas Newkirk, Sir Ken Robinson and Alfie Kohn are all quotes that I saw come to life throughout my field experience. All three of the authors of the quotes are educational allies of mine and have helped me through this multi genre experience in deciding what were the most important things that I saw in my school. All three quotes refer to the standardization of the student and how creativity in schools is lost, which is what I saw repeatedly throughout my field experience. These educational allies support my findings of how students are being standardized.

Class Syllabus: Standard English 11: Pg 3
This genre pulls everything together and shows how standard my classroom really was. I saw so many rules and methods to keep the students at a standard level in which they could pass tests. I wanted to make a syllabus to show how the students in my classroom from day one of the school year were told that creativity and personal reflection weren’t important and how test scores and technical writing were all that they would be doing.

Student Statements & Mrs. B* Says: Repetend: Pgs 2,3,9:
Throughout field, I was very interested in the comments that both the students and my cooperating teacher were making. I was constantly copying down quotes that I would hear and I picked the most impactful ones to put throughout this multi genre. Each of the student statements show how beaten down the students are from the system of standardization that is being put upon them. The quotes from my teacher also show how she was stuck in the rut of standardization as well.

A Day in the Life of an 11th Grader/ Student Observer/ Mrs. B*: Repetend
Pgs 4, 6 & 10
This genre was my favorite throughout my whole multi genre. Sitting in field, I kept thinking about what was going through the student’s minds as well as my teacher’s. I thought that by writing “A Day in the Life” poem for myself, an 11th grader and my teacher that it would portray the different kinds of standardization that affect each person. Standardization affects students differently than their teacher or differently from me as a college
observer. Each poem expresses the monotony and frustration with standardization.

Standardization Inside the Classroom Walls: Pg 7
This genre is a map of the classroom including where the desks are located, what kind of decorations there are in the room as well as the seating chart. I did this genre to show that the students had to sit in alphabetical order, like an assembly line. This also shows that every piece of furniture was in order and that there weren’t many decorations, which gave a very standard and factory like vibe. I think this genre was an original way to show the standardization within the classroom and to illustrate the factory like classroom environment.

Recipe for a Standard Student: Pg 8
This is a recipe for a standard student. Each ingredient listed was a quality that I saw in either the students or the teacher. I think this recipe is a creative way, ironically enough, to show all of the qualities and ideas that go into standardizing a student. This recipe shows all of the ingredients that the students in classroom had that made them into standard students who lacked creativity.

“This I Believe” Writing Assignment: Sarah* Pg 9
This genre was an excerpt from a piece of student writing based off of the “The I Believe” essays. This was the first lesson that I taught the students and Mrs. B* was apprehensive and didn’t think that the students could do the assignment. I had the students write their own “This I Believe” piece and this excerpt was exceptionally good. Through reading this piece from Sarah* about being different and accepting people’s uniqueness, it was the first time that I saw any glimmer of creativity throughout my whole field experience, which gave me hope.

“Greetings from the Desk of Mrs. B*” Pg 10
This genre is a note that my teacher gave me to on the last day of field. I was surprised by her honesty and acknowledgement of the fact that the creativity in her classroom was crumbling. I appreciated her words of wisdom and the card made me realize that although classrooms right now are being standardized, I have the opportunity to change that in my own classroom by having faith in not only myself as a teacher but also in my future students.
Work Cited


