

My class hits right notes, if not the right answers

My day as an 11th-grader:

7:27: I'm in honors English with Lisa Cantave, a junior at North Miami High, 800 NE 137th St. Classmate Tawana Glenn drops her book bag on the floor and points to her



GRACE LIM

perfectly coiffed hair, exclaiming, "I'm having a bad hair day! You can tell, can't you?"

Ms. Clifton gives us a scenario for our writing assignment: We skipped fifth-period history class and the history test because we wanted a longer lunch period. On the way back to school, we are caught by the history teacher who called our parents. The teacher also has a policy of no makeup tests for those who skip. Our job is to write notes to our parents, the history teacher and a close friend explaining the day's events.

Evrose Phillias wrote in the note to her parents that she missed the test because she was helping a little old lady across the street. But the lady fell and was run over by a truck. Evrose felt compelled to go to the hospital with the victim.

8:35: There is an algebra test tomorrow. Mr. Jones pulls out a

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copy of the test from his briefcase and tells a student to pass it around. He's only joking. "I can't be bought," Mr. Jones says. We take a homework test — questions taken from homework assignments. Students who do homework diligently and are organized rip right through the test. Others look pathetic and bewildered.

9:45: We're in Mr. D'Alessio's American history class, where he is handing out tests. Keith Iton kicks me out of his seat. James Braddy generously offers me the empty seat right behind his and says, "I'm gonna pass. I'm gonna pass." Keith tells James, "She's a reporter. She don't have answers." The true-false test is on Reconstruction. Statement No. 2: "The Ku Klux Klan was a society that helped freed slaves by providing needed food and shelter." Lisa later says, "I studied too much for the test."

10:50: In chemistry class, Mr. Michel teaches us about atomic mass and weight. He passes back the first test. Most received dismal scores. He tells the class, "I know you didn't do well this time. Next time will be better."

11:50: Lisa and I eat in the cafeteria with Safa Ali, Marsha Polynice and Betty Toussaint. I get chicken wings, yellow rice and a peach-flavored drink for \$2.

12:22: I lose Lisa in the lunch crowd. She knows when to jump in the mass of moving people and when to stand out of the way. An impatient student stiff-arms me and shoves me against the wall. Another elbows me in the chest. Lisa explains, "They think you're a student."

12:25: The chorus room is a haven from the chaos of student activity. Mrs. Alexander only needs to move her index finger a fraction and the 17 students respond by changing notes or octaves. Student conductor Jean Anglade leads the group in warm-up exercises. They sing *O Eyes of My Beloved* acappella. As the last note drifts softly into silence, visitors applaud enthusiastically, and the singers give each other high-fives.

1:30: Mr. Guerra is teaching us how to write the days of the week and months in Spanish.



ALBERT COYA / Miami Herald Staff

BELTING IT OUT: Lisa Cantave sings in chorus at North Miami High.

1:42: Mr. Guerra tries and fails to wake up a sleeping student who is sprawled on the desk.

2:27: Three minutes before the final bell, the student who slept during most of the period stands up and stretches. Mr. Guerra says, "Ah, chico, are you with us now?"

The answer to the history

question is false. This the third and last installment of the "My Day as..." series. If you have a tip about what's happening in your school, mail it to Grace Lim, School Days, Miami Herald Neighbors, 16855 NE Second Ave., North Miami Beach, Fla. 33162. Please include a phone number where you can be reached.