



Dear Al Zuhour students,

I'm so pleased to be sending you this letter. Your school reached out to me, letting me know that Al Zuhour is organizing a literacy week. How exciting! Reading and writing have been one of the biggest gifts in my life, and I am happy to know that your school shares my love of books.

Being the author of two book series for young people (*Dork Diaries* and *The Misadventures of Max Crumbly*) has been a truly rewarding experience, but it also means a lot of time spent alone, just me and my computer. (And my very spoiled Yorkshire terrier dog, who I like to call the Dorky Yorkie.) Hearing about readers and learning about their lives makes my day!

I think reading books is the same—you do it alone, but it helps you connect with the rest of the world. Stories help expose readers to all types of diverse cultures, adventures, and experiences, but they also help to emphasize the similarities in humanity—despite any differences, we all share emotions. Whether you're reading to laugh, to learn, or simply to connect to a character's journey, I truly believe that books help shape us into more well-rounded people.

When I was a kid, I escaped into books (my favorites were *Harriet the Spy* and *The Phantom Tollbooth*) and I kept a diary like my Dork Diaries character, Nikki Maxwell does. Have you ever thought about keeping a diary like Nikki does? You could write or draw—or both! It's a fun way to remember things that happen to you or express your feelings. You should try it!

In the spirit of your literacy week, I want to encourage you to read all kinds of books. Not every book will be the right fit for every person, but when you find books that you love, you will have found friends for life. So remember: there are a lot of book friends in the world waiting to meet you! Keep reading, Al Zuhour students!

Thank you for being fans of my writing, and always remember to let your inner DORK shine through!

Sincerely,

Rachel Renée Russell

Author of Dork Diaries

