

First letter: school's organization**venerdì 19/10/2018 05:21**

Good morning class,

I hope all of you started school in the best way possible.

During my exchange year, I'm going to write letters to you where I will explain my daily routine.

In my first mail, I decided to illustrate you how school works.

You know, in Italy, there are many kinds of high schools that offer different ways of learning: in our school Math, Physics and Sciences are the most important courses; in others, they are languages, sports or there are some schools that train students to learn a specific profession in order to find a job, so they do not need to attend college.

Where I live in California, there are big schools that are attended by all students. Everyone has to choose the courses they want to attend during the year. In my school, there are eight periods, four each day. Each schedule is divided in two days: blue day that includes odd periods (1,3,5,7) and silver day with even periods (2,4,6,8).

I go to school from Monday to Friday. Lessons always start at 7:45 a.m. and finish at 2:40 p.m., except Monday's classes which finish at 1:00 p.m. because there is no lunch at school. At the beginning, I tried to buy lunch at school, but after a week, I discovered it was better to bring it from home. School lunch is based on pizza, cheeseburgers and corndogs..

Not really healthy.

In any case, I have enjoyed America a lot so far. I am going to tell you more in the next letter.

Have a happy weekend!

Love

Chiara

Mail #2: Halloween

Good morning class,
Initially, I thought to tell you about the events that represent american school spirit we see in the movies all the time. But Halloween came and how can I not talk about this amazing period, that here is celebrated with so much enthusiasm? I did a lot of things these week. Starting from Saturday, my friend's family and I went to see the movie Halloween in drive-in cinema. If you don't know what drive-in is, it is a place where people meet and watch a movie outside in their cars or they can bring some chairs from home. The movie goes on in a big screen and the sound comes out from your car's radio. Because the event is outside, it starts after sunset.

It was really fun. We went a little bit earlier so we could keep a spot in the front. We parked in a field that was not straight but it looked like rolling waves in the ocean. I think there were five cinemas that were creating a circle. In the center, there was a shop where we bought popcorn and m&ms. While my friend's host mother, host brother and his friends were sitting in the trunk, we were on the roof with pillows and blankets.

At the beginning I wasn't sure about the movie's choice, because only seeing the trailer, I screamed. It wasn't too scary, all the frightful scenes were in the trailer.

On Tuesday, I went to a haunted house. Each year, groups of people rent a field where they can set up scary place. The girl I went to watch the movie with, my host father and I went to one of them at night. We hung out for dinner in a fast food place on our way. We went to a place called "Cemeterium". We bought a full scary ticket. While we were in the line, two people dressed up came. The juggler had three bright, red bowling pins which were spinning. He did his makeup painting his nose and cheeks red and black bags under the eyes that were extending around all the eye, creating a gaze full of obscurity. There was a girl who was walking on stilts and holding a whip which she was hitting against the ground, making a loud and frightful noise. She was wearing white contacts. With her platinum blond hair and her makeup, it was easy she could scare you while she was looking at you turning her head side to side, as we were in a horror movie.

We stayed in the line for half/three fourth of hour. While we were waiting, two other men joined the couple. There was a little closed yard, where the first couple didn't come inside of the closed area, but the second one did. There was a big man who was wearing a orange prisoner costume and a mask like military gas mask. A few times, he walked near a group of people in the line and he heavily breathed, looking at them through the mask. The last one was a Joker. He had green hair, big yellow contacts and white makeup covered all his face. He was holding a cudgel. He was really scary.

Suddenly he started to walk in my direction without looking away. He stopped when he was really close to me. He pretended to walk away, and he quickly came back making the sound of a crazy pig, as he wanted to eat me! It was terribly scary. It was the perfect beginning of the visit to the haunted house.

Finally it was our turn, a girl explained to us the rules of the house, and then we were free to go. We went in and it was so dark. We kept going on and a guy, dressed up like zombie, jumped out and started to yell at us. We ran faster and another one appeared from the front, we tried to go back but they surrounded us. Fortunately, we could not stay too long inside because there were other people waiting to enter, so the guys stopped and pointed us the direction, which we couldn't initially see.

After that, when another couple of zombie guys appeared, I was sure that my friend and my host father were behind me, I kept walking fast, but then I slightly turned and I figured out that two zombie guys were standing right behind me and my people fell behind. I was so scared. I quickly came back to finally rejoin my group. The way was pretty long. The

most scary people were the ones who we met when we turned the corners, they were coming slithering on the dirty ground. It was really impressive, because the place was poorly illuminated.

After I screamed and shouted and I almost had a heart attack, we exited. While we were serenely walking to our car, a clown, who seemed so real with white face, red nose and wig, started madly to run after us, making a disturbing noise with his castanets. He didn't want to leave us alone. It was too fun, also if in a really weird way.

On Wednesday, I hung out with some friends. It was an easy night. We talked, ate pizza and watched a scary movie. I really enjoyed the time. Unfortunately, I got a cold so the evening was pretty fun but I couldn't completely enjoy it. The two days after I didn't go to school, because I was sick. I also couldn't go to my friend's party on Saturday, which, I'm sure, could have been really fun.

Anyway, I hope all of you enjoyed Halloween, and if you didn't to anything, I hope it was a relax evening.

Miss you all

Love

Chiara

Mail #3: Thanksgiving

sabato 01/12/2018 19:33

Good morning class,

Thanksgiving week is finished. It had been really fun and a good way to understand American culture.

Thanksgiving break lasts for a week, but this year it started on Friday because the quality of the air was too unhealthy due to the fire in Paradise.

On Friday my family and I left town to go to Lake Tahoe, a popular vacation destination in the mountains, where the air was a way better.

We came back on Tuesday to get ready for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving was on Thursday. I got up at 10:30 a.m., I had breakfast and Steve, who is my host dad, and I walked the dogs for almost an hour. When we came home, it was 2 p.m. Grandma arrived a few minutes after. We had an aperitiz of crackers and cheese; we put the turkey in the oven, it has to cook three hours, and Tyler, who is my host brother, Steve and I went out to play football. After this, we started to make dinner. Everybody helped, I felt in a real family atmosphere. As tradition says, the meal consisted of mash potatoes, green beans, turkey and a dressing. Everything was really good, I obviously had second serving. For dessert, we had a pumpkin pie and a pecan pie both made by grandma, but they were too sweet for me.

We started dinner at 5:30 p.m. and we finished at 7 p.m. Usually we don't have dinner so early, but at Thanksgiving people use to have a one big meal for all the day, except for breakfast. There are families who has Thanksgiving dinner at 3 p.m., fortunately this is not my family's tradition.

After dinner, I played with the puppies for a little bit and later all of us played some games. The first one was "Match phrases". It is really similar to "Taboo". There are two teams, everyone has to sit in a circle, possibly not near someone of their own group. There is a clicker that shows one word, the person who has it, has to make his team mates guess the word. After they guess right, the clicker moves to the person on the right. When the time finishes, the team of the person who holds the tool loses and the other team moves forward. In the first round, I was awful: the sound of the timer was really loud, so I wasn't able to focus. It was driving me crazy. We played women versus men and we won.

The second game was "Clue". After a murder, you basically have to guess the murderer, where he or she killed a person and with which tool. It was very fun. My host brother guessed right.

The last part of the day was pretty relaxing, we hung out in the living room and then we went to bed.

In the last six years, a new piece of the tradition has been going on, this is "Giving Tuesday". After "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday", on the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, people give back and help charities they care about. This new tradition began on 2012. It became bigger and bigger, and last year it raised estimated \$274 million Nonprofits.

My host family asked me to choose one charity to which giving back. I chose women escaping a violent environment (WEAVE).

I loved Thanksgiving. I hope I was able to create the idea, so you could image it.

Love

Chiara

Mail #4: spirit week

domenica 20/01/2019 21:30

Good morning class,

As you did, I just came back from the winter break. It had been really fun. I travelled a lot with my american family: we went to Lake Tahoe and Las Vegas. I really enjoyed both vacations.

Here the first week after holidays is really special. It is called spirit week. Every day has a special theme. It isn't the first spirit week of the year and I think the last one had a better theme. This one has cereal. Monday was a classic: pajamas day. Starting school after more than two weeks of vacation is hard, but it gets better if you wear your comfortable and soft pajamas.

From Tuesday to Thursday you have two choices: Tuesday is animal day, but you can simply wear black clothes; Wednesday is snowball or white and Thursday is throwback or grey.

In these three days, there was a basketball tournament three on three in the main gym. It was during lunch and two students could ask a teacher to participate. It was really fun.

Friday was the special day, when school spirit was most present. It was blue day, the color of the school. Lessons lasted less than the usual because at the end of the day there was the Rally.

In the first months of the school year, there was a Rally every month because of football games played at home.

Rally is organized by the school. Students meet in the big gym, where they are divided by grades (freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors). Each grade competes in games where it gains points. Points are also counted during the week: every day teachers take note of students who are dressed up and the grade which participated more, gets more points. The winning class was announced at the end of the Rally on Friday.

Also dance team and cheerleaders did a performance. Furthermore there was a series of skits put on by small groups of students based on the theme of the week. For example, in the last Rally before Christmas the theme was Doctor Suess, Who-ville and the Grinch.

Rallies are really fun. Everyone cheers for their own grade; music is played and at the beginning we sing all together the school's Fight Song.

Friday ended with a basketball game and Runaway dance.

I hope you enjoyed my letter.

Love

Chiara