



Tips for Teachers

A Guide for Using *New Youth Connections*
in the Classroom

April 2007

IN THIS ISSUE

Writing Contests—Cash Prizes

We have two writing contests in this issue.

If you submit a class set, be sure each essay has the student's name, address, school, age, phone number, email, etc. on it so we can contact them. (Students can e-mail essays to hvanderberg@youthcomm.org but they must include all of the above information.)

Writing Contest #1—Letter to Parents

"Write a letter to your parents telling them what's going on in your life that they should know about—but don't."

Deadline for entries: May 7, 2007

Tips for Teachers is written for the bulk subscribers to *New Youth Connections* to help them use the magazine more effectively with teens in their classes and programs.

For more information, contact:

Youth Communication
224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl.,
New York, NY 10001
212-279-0708 ext.100
youthcomm.org

Tips for Teachers is also available on our website at:
www.youthcomm.org

This contest generates more enthusiasm (and essays) than any other. Your students will enjoy writing these letters—and you'll learn a lot about them.

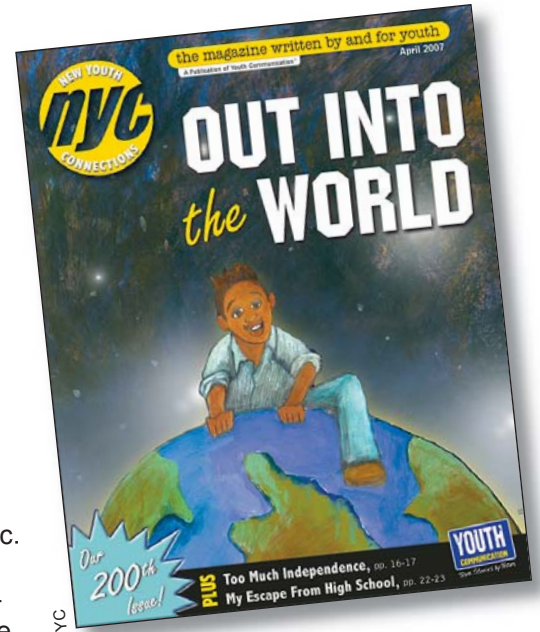
They can write about anything, and over the years they have written about everything: cutting school, falling in love, taking drugs, etc. They have written about feelings of love and hatred toward their parents, challenges they face, hopes for the future, etc.

Please tell your students that the letters need not be about dramatic or sensational situations like contracting AIDS or contemplating suicide. Any situation or feeling can produce a letter that's likely to be published: breaking a plate, anger about not getting a gift, cutting a class, unspoken love for the parent or a sibling. On a humorous note, one year we published a letter from a son confessing that he was a Martian. (NOTE: Some of the young people in your class or group may not be living with their biological parents. Remind everyone that they can write a letter to a guardian, or to an absent parent, or even a parent who has died.)

Remind your students that because many of the letters reveal very private information the essays will be published anonymously, and we might change details to conceal the writer's identity. The winners' names will be chosen at random to preserve anonymity.

Pre-writing activity for Letter to Parents Contest

Help your students get started on this contest by writing some of the opening lines from previous letters on



the board:

- I'm writing you this letter to confront you about how I am feeling.
- This is something that you never knew.
- There is something I would like to tell you.
- Ma, I am writing this letter to let you know all the things I did that you didn't know about.
- First of all, I want to say "I love you."
- I have been more or less honest with you all my life.
- I guess I'd like to think that I tell you everything but that's not true.

Reading activity for Letter to Parents Contest

Have your group read a story before they start writing. This can give them ideas about what to write. Assign them to read "Too Much Independence" on page 16. The author describes how her mother instilled a sense of independence in

Summer Writing Workshops—Coming Soon

See page 24 for information about our 28th annual summer writing workshop for teens. You can print an application from youthcomm.org.

The workshop will run five hours a day (6 on Mondays), four days a week, from July 2 through August 10. Participants will receive intensive writing and research

training from our experienced, full-time instructional staff. The summer groups will write stories for the fall 2007 issues of *New Youth Connections*.

This is an incredible opportunity for teens to improve their writing skills and to write stories that will help their peers.

her but failed to provide the discipline and outward expressions of love the author needed. If you read the story with a group, ask students to imagine what kind of letter the author would write to her mother.

Writing Contest #2—What is your favorite place and why?



Deadline: June 29, 2007

Prewriting activity #1: Reading examples of good writing

a) Mention to your group that sometimes we like a place for the way it looks or smells or sounds. Then read the first four paragraphs of April Daley's story "Transported by Books" on page 13 with your group. Ask them to notice how she writes about the smells and sounds of libraries. Ask your group if they like what she wrote.

If you haven't already you can introduce the word "onomatopoeia," a type of word that sounds like the action it is describing. "Snap, crackle and pop" is perhaps the most famous example from advertising (Do young

people eat Rice Krispies anymore? Ask for a show of hands.) How does April use onomatopoeia to make her description more interesting?

Ask them to think about some of their favorite places. Are there any sounds, smells, tastes, colors or other sensual details they associate with the places? Can they use onomatopoeia to describe their favorite place? You can give them examples: bang, crash, tinkle, buzz, etc.

b) Sometimes a place attracts us because of what happens there and the people who are there. Read "Inside the Airport" by Kanwal Javid on page 12. Ask your group what's important to Kanwal about her job site. Does it remind them of any place in their lives?

Prewriting activity #2

- Hand out index cards and ask each member of the group to write their favorite place on his/her card. Collect the cards, read each place name out loud, and ask the group what they like about each place.

(END OF ACTIVITY)

CONTEST \$150 PRIZE

Rename New Youth Connections!
DEADLINE: May 4, 2007

New Youth Connections is changing its name and asking its readers to help.

See the ad on page 8 for details.

ROLE MODELS FOR YOUR STUDENTS

This issue contains several pieces by young people who are doing great things for themselves and for others.

Activity #1

Step A: Hand out *NYC* to the group and ask them to look for a story by a teenager that describes how he or she is accomplishing positive things. You should read these stories beforehand. Here's a list of some of these stories:

"Balancing Mind and Spirit" on page 6

"A Black Woman in Mongolia" on page 7 (This story differs from the rest. It is a profile of a young woman, not a first person description of an experience.)

"My Summer in Politics" on page 14

"Going Back to Preschool" on page 15

"My Escape from High School" on page 22

(ALTERNATIVE: You can assign stories for members to read; this ensures each story is read and dis-



Send us your email and get advance notice of writing contests and more!

Sign up to receive Tips for Teachers, sneak previews of each issue's essay contest question, delivery schedule updates, and other information about *New Youth Connections* via email. Send an e-mail to lchan@youthcomm.org and put "NYC subscriber" in the subject line.



Teodoro Romero

cussed. It also lets you be strategic in linking students to stories. For example, you can assign Gamal Jones's story on working in a preschool to one or more guys in the group to get them thinking about stereotypes and gender roles.)

Step B: Once they find a story have them read it silently.

When they are done ask for volunteers to sum up their story. (You can ask for volunteers by prompting "Who read "title of story?" or by calling on students individually.)

As part of their summary ask them to state what the teen is doing that impresses them or does not impress them. And ask them if there was any part of the story that stood out for them because it was funny or realistic or unrealistic or described something they are interested in doing.

After each summary ask the rest of the group what they think of the writer and the writer's experiences. If they could ask the writer one question about their experience what would it be? (You can fortify this last question with some sample questions. "Does anyone ever tease Gamal for working in a preschool? Did Desiree ever get bored working in a politician's office? Did the young woman profiled in the Peace Corps ever feel afraid in Mongolia?")

(END OF ACTIVITY)

Here are the answers to the multiple choice questions from page 4:

1) b 2) c 3) d 4) d 5) a

COMFORT ZONES ACTIVITY

Step A) Read the speak out on comfort zones on page 11. Then read the five short stories on leaving comfort zones on pages 12 and 13.

Step B) Have ready slips of paper with examples of people doing things that make them uncomfortable and nervous. Put the slips of paper in a box. Here are some examples of leaving a comfort zone:

- Asking someone for a date
- Giving an oral presentation
- Transferring to a new school
- Getting a medical checkup
- Traveling abroad
- Applying for a job or internship
- Trying out for a team, band, chorus or other activity
- Starting a job or internship
- Telling your parents what you really think about something
- Telling your best friend that he or she has been a jerk about something
- Coming to a new country
- Taking lessons (music, dance, martial arts)

Step C) Ask the students pick out a slip of paper from the box and read the situation out loud. Ask them to state the worst possible thing that can happen. Then ask them to envision a more positive and more realistic scenario. Then ask the group if they ever faced this situation and how they reacted to it.

(END OF ACTIVITY)

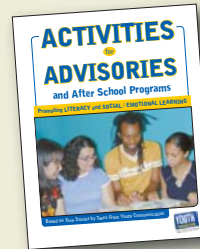


Matty DeLuna

Resources from Youth Communication

NEW: Lessons for Advisories!

Activities for Advisories includes 24 stories and lessons in a three-ring binder for easy copying. They include role plays, mock trials, debates, Bingo games, freewriting, creating timelines and more. These active and engaging lessons encourage students to think about trust, betrayal, anger management and being true to oneself. Themes include friendship, relations with family, careers, AIDS/HIV and others. The 160-page manual is only \$24.95. and comes with copying privileges for classroom use. Go to the Youth Communication Web store at www.youthcomm.org to order copies, or send \$24.95 plus \$5 for



shipping and handling to Youth Communication, 224 W. 29th St., 2nd fl., NYC 10001.

Send us your email and get advance notice of writing contests and more

Sign up to receive Tips for Teachers, sneak previews of each issue's essay contest question, delivery schedule updates and other information about *New Youth Connections* via email. Send an e-mail to lchan@youthcomm.org and put "NYC subscriber" in the comment line. (If you'd like to add a note about how you use NYC, or how we could make it more helpful to you, we'd love to hear from you.)

Practice Lesson for Regents Exam Listening Section

Use part of the story: “A Black Woman in Mongolia” on p. 7

What the teacher needs to know to use this lesson: The Regents English exam has a listening section. A proctor reads the students an Overview (see below). The proctor then reads a passage to the students, *twice*, during which time the students can take notes. The students then answer some multiple choice questions.

Step One: Read the Overview

(Note: During the real test the students have a printed version of the Overview in front of them as the proctor reads the story. If you can't make copies of the overview consider writing it on the board or just reading it to them.)

Read this to your students:

Overview: You will listen to an article written by a teenager about a young woman named Dara who volunteered to live in Mongolia for two

years and help the people there. You will then answer some multiple choice questions. You will hear the article twice. You may take notes.

NOTE: Do not read the whole story. Skip the second and third paragraphs and stop reading at the end of the third column (the column that ends “...her gir was flooded by concerned neighbors who wanted to help her.”

Step Two Tell your students, “Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

After reading the story once, say:

“You make take a few minutes to look over your notes. (Pause) Now I will read the story again.”

Step Three: Multiple Choice Questions

After reading the article for the second time give them the questions below.



NOTE: Answers to the multiple choice questions are on the bottom of page 3.

Multiple Choice Questions

Directions: Use your notes to answer the questions about the story read to you.

1) Which one of Dara’s habits or behaviors did the Mongolians think was odd?

- a) She listened to rap music.
- b) She locked her door at night.
- c) She didn’t speak fluent Mongolian.
- d) She was always in a rush.

2) In Mongolia a four-hour car trip can sometimes take eight hours. This is an example of

- a) Mongolia’s poor road conditions.
- b) Peace Corps volunteers not knowing how to speak Mongolian.
- c) Mongolians’ love of visiting their friends and relatives.
- d) The passage doesn’t explain this.

3) What topic would you expect to study in Dara’s class?

- a) How to grow better crops.
- b) How to avoid getting AIDS
- c) African-American culture
- d) How to speak English

4) Why did Dara volunteer to go to Mongolia?

- a) She knew the people were not racist.
- b) She could speak Mongolian.
- c) No one else volunteered to go.
- d) She didn’t know anything about Mongolia.

5) The phrase “a concept that is alien to most Americans” refers to:

- a) Waiting patiently
- b) Living in a non-racist society
- c) Living with aunts and uncles
- d) Not watching television