

## ***New Youth Connections Lesson Guide—Dec '09/Jan '10***

(For more information about *NYC* go to the end of this file.)

### **Lessons in This Month's Guide**

- 1. Writing Contest #199 (Loyalty in relationships?): Win \$150!**
- 2. Writing Contest #200 (Letter to parents): Win \$150!**
- 3. Practice for *Regents Listening Exam*: Sex Ed in the Schools**
- 4. Discussion and Reading Activity: Teens and Independence**
- 5. Discussion and Reading Activity: Family Secrets**
- 6. Reading and Summarizing Activity: A Loved One in Danger**  
(includes worksheet)

***Health Teachers:* Lessons 4 and 5 deal with family issues that may be appropriate for health class discussions.**

### **1. Lesson: Writing Contest #199—Win \$150**

**Objectives:** Students will learn about using the five W's to help them start a writing assignment. Students will explore the ethical dilemmas (explicit and implicit) involved in keeping and breaking promises

**Contest question (p. 2):**

**Have you ever cheated in a relationship? If so, what happened? Would you do it again? If not, what keeps you faithful?**

*NOTE: This question may not be relevant to some of your students. If that is the case, students may use this alternative question: "Have you ever done something that broke an agreement or understanding you had with an important person in your life (parent, sibling, friend, girl or boyfriend? Would you do it again? If you haven't, what made you keep your promises to that person?"*

**Deadline:** February 1, 2010

**Before the lesson:** Write the five W's on the board: Who, What, When, Where, Why. If necessary, write the alternative question above on the board.

**Part 1: Writing down notes to develop ideas about what to put in the essay.**

a) Hand out copies of the December issue of *New Youth Connections*. Tell your group that they can win up to \$150 by entering the writing contest on page 2. Tell them that most entries we receive run about 300 words or about one double-spaced page.

b) Tell them that even professional writers sometimes struggle to put those first words on paper. One way to get started is to use the "five W's" to help you think of what to write about.

Ask them to copy the W's and tell them they are going to make brief notes about each question. Tell them the notes can be lists, words, incomplete sentences, etc. The idea is just to get some thoughts on paper.

Ask them **who** was involved in their decisions to remain loyal or to lie or cheat. Read off these suggestions: friends, siblings, parents, uncles, aunts, teachers. Tell them to write names down.

Tell them to write notes about **what** events took place by writing down the word "I" followed by a verb. Read off these examples: "I said" "I walked" "I took the train" "I sat down" "I stood up" "I cried" "I laughed" "I gave up" "I stayed." Give them two minutes to write down as many "I \_\_\_\_" as they can.

Then tell them to do the same for the most important other person in the story and read these prompts: "She slapped" "He turned away" "She ate." Give them two minutes.

**When** did this happen? Give them these prompts:

"I was \_\_\_\_ years old when I \_\_\_\_"

"The weather was \_\_\_\_"

"It was during \_\_\_\_" (summer vacation, winter break, etc.)

**Where?** Ask them to list two or three places where something happened related to their story: classroom, park, church, home, street, swimming pool, store. Write them all down.

Then ask them to look at **why**. Tell them to fill in these blank prompts:

"I did it (or didn't do it) because I wanted to \_\_\_\_"

"I did it (or didn't do it) because I thought it would make me feel \_\_\_\_"

"I did it because I hoped that \_\_\_\_"

"I did it because I thought that \_\_\_\_"

AGAIN: they have to write for two minutes without stopping.

**Part 2:** Tell students to review their notes and use them to write their essays. This pre-writing activity should have helped them recall enough information to write a 300-word essay (or longer, if they choose).

## **2. Lesson: Writing Contest #200—Win \$150**

**Contest question (p. 2):**

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

**Deadline:** March 15, 2010

**Objectives:** Students will use writing to reflect on how they relate to their parents. Students will see the value of using pre-writing activities to get started on a writing assignment.

**Introduction:** Each year we invite *NYC* readers to write letters to their parents about something they have been reluctant to tell them. 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.

Please tell your students that the letters need not be about dramatic or sensational situations like contracting an STD or dropping out of school. Any situation or feeling can produce a letter that’s likely to be published: missing a parent who has to work long hours, anger about special treatment for a sibling, unspoken love for the parent, etc. 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 a missing parent, if they like.)

Remind your students that because many of the letters reveal private information the essays will be published anonymously, and we’ll change a few details if necessary to conceal the writer’s identity. We will choose the winners at random. If you send a class set please make sure each entry has a name and address. (If possible, we prefer that students write their names and addresses on a separate piece of paper so we can place them in a hat from which we draw the winners.)

**Before the lesson,** write these prompts on the board:

The most difficult thing I ever told my parents or guardian was \_\_\_\_\_.  
The one thing I will never, ever tell my parents or guardian is about the time I \_\_\_\_\_.

Then write all or some of these 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...
- You don’t know that I know this, but...

### **The Lesson**

Read the story “Left in the Dark,” on page 3. It is a story about a father who reenters his daughter’s life after years of drug rehab and how they try to communicate with each other. Pay special attention to the part of the story where the author admits to her father that she is not a virgin. That part begins with the subhead “Still No Answers” and ends before the subhead “A Long-Awaited Confession.”

**Part 1:** Hand out copies of the December/January issue. Tell the group they can win up to \$150 by entering the writing contest. Ask them to turn to page 2 and ask for a volunteer to read the contest question out loud. Tell the group that whatever they write for the contest will be sent in

anonymously and be confidential. Depending on your situation, you can tell them to write the essays without putting their names on them and you will collect them but not read them. At the time you collect them, you will have them put their names and addresses on index cards that you will send in but will not attach to the essays. No one will link their names to their letters.

Tell them you want to do two things to help them get started on the assignment. One is to read a passage from a story. Ask them to turn to page 3, to the story “Left in the Dark.” Tell them what the story is about and ask them to read the part that starts under the subhead “Still No Answers” and ends before the subhead “A Long-Awaited Confession.”

**Part 2:** After they finish reading the passage, ask them to look at the first set of prompts on the board and complete the sentences. Then ask them to look at the first sentences and see if they can use any of them as a first sentence for their letter.

Depending on your situation, you can ask them to start writing in class or do it at home for collection later.

### 3. Lesson: Practice for Regents Exam Listening Section

**Story:** “The Talk: Is Your School Doing It Right?” p.11

**Objective:** Students will improve skills needed to pass the Regents Listening Section. Students will learn about the Department of Education’s sex education policies.

**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 how sex education is taught in school. You will then answer some multiple choice questions. You will hear the article twice. You may take notes.

**Step Two:** Tell your students, “Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.” Read “The Talk: Is Your School Doing It Right?” on page 5.

**Step Three:** After the first reading, tell your students “You make take a few minutes to look over your notes. (Pause.) Now I will read the story again.”

**Step Four: Multiple Choice Questions**

After reading the article for the second time give them the questions on the next page.

Here are the answers to the multiple-choice questions:

1) d 2) d 3) c 4) a 5) b 6) c 7) d 8) a

## **‘The Talk/Sex Education’ Test**

### Multiple Choice Questions

**Directions:** Use your notes to answer these questions about the story that’s just been read to you.

**1) What impact did seeing pictures of people with sexually transmitted diseases have on the writer?**

- a) It made him think about how bad sex education is in New York City schools.
- b) It had no effect.
- c) It made him curious about having sex.
- d) It made him more cautious about having sex.

**2) What is New York State’s policy on educating students about sex?**

- a) Every student is supposed to take sex education classes.
- b) Parents should educate their own children about sex.
- c) Students can choose to take sex education or not.
- d) Each school decides whether to have sex ed classes or not.

**3) Why does the writer think he had “a thorough sex education?”**

- a) He went to a New York City school with a good program.
- b) His parents taught him about sex.
- c) He went to school outside New York State for a while.
- d) He talked to people at Planned Parenthood about sex.

**4) What is one reason some schools don’t offer sex education?**

- a) Preparing for tests takes a lot of time.
- b) Principals think it will encourage teens to have sex.

- c) No one is trained to teach sex education.
- d) Principals don’t want to interfere with parents.

**5) According to the woman from Planned Parenthood, what is a good way to get sex education taught in more schools?**

- a) Spend more money on training teachers.
- b) Have teens and parents talk to principals about the problem.
- c) Reduce time spent on preparing for tests.
- d) Tell lawmakers to pass laws requiring sex education in all schools.

**6) In the expression “state mandated lessons on HIV/AIDS,” what does mandated mean?**

- a) Forbidden by law.
- b) Discouraged by law.
- c) Required by law.
- d) Recommended by law.

**7) Which of these titles would best fit this story?**

- a) It’s Up To You to Teach Yourself About Sex.
- b) Talk to Your Parents About Sex.
- c) Learning About Sex.
- d) What You Know About Sex Might Depend on Where You Go to School.

**8) According to the woman from Planned Parenthood, what do teens think about having sex education in their schools?**

- a) They think it’s a great idea.
- b) They think it’s a waste of time.
- c) They don’t care about it one way or another.
- d) They think it’s too personal.

## 4. Parental Expectations/Demands (discussion activity)

**Story:** “Rookie Mistake,” by Mohammed Hussain, p.22

**Objectives:** To help students see that it’s OK to search for their own balance between respect for family expectations on the one hand, and their desires to be their own person on the other hand.

**Part 1, Warm Up:** Tell your group that they are going to read a story about a young man who defies his Bengali family’s expectations and what happens afterward. First they will do a warm-up activity.

Split the group into teams and give them 2-3 minutes to make a list of things that teens do or want that their parents don’t approve of. When time is up, go around and have each team read their lists.

Ask students these questions and let them discuss these issues for 5-7 minutes:

“Why do parents disapprove of those things?”

“Why do teens want to do them?”

“Who should have the final say?”

**Part 2, Reading the Story:** Take turns reading the story aloud. When you come to these sentences in the story stop the reading and ask a discussion question.

*Near the end of column 2:* “I used to imagine what it would be like to be a typical American teenager, who did whatever he wanted—going home late, always hanging out with friends, indulging in materialistic desires.”

Ask the group if this is an accurate picture of American teens. Does it describe their lives? Where do they think Mohammed got this idea of the “typical American teenager?”

*Near the end of the third column:* “I knew I shouldn’t be here and lying to my mother was immoral.”

Why did he start feeling guilty? Was it wrong to lie in order to do something that was harmless and gave him so much enjoyment?

*Near the end of the fifth column:* “I had expected anger, but my mother’s face surprised me.”

What do you think the mother’s reaction will be?

*Near middle of second column on page 23:* “I may crave the freedom that American teens have, but I’ve also seen how freedom can cause problems.”

What problems do you think he will mention as we read on? Do you agree that too much independence can be a bad thing?

*Last sentence of the article:* “Had my parents not been so strict, I might not have learned how to take good care of myself.”

When is it good for parents to be strict? Have you ever thanked your parents for being strict or bossy or demanding?

**Part 3 (if you have time):** Hand out blank pieces of paper. Ask each teen to write one thing they have considered doing—or might consider doing in the future—that they think their family would disapprove of. They should not put their names on the paper.

Then, underneath the thing they have written, they have to write one *benefit* of taking the action (such as greater independence), and one *negative consequence* (such as anger from parents) that might result from taking that action.

Collect the comments and read them out loud. Ask for reactions from the group to the kinds of things that teens may do. Do the benefits outweigh the costs? (The goal of this activity is to help the students think about how they want to respond when two important values are in conflict —*personal integrity* and *approval of family*.)

## 5. Family Secrets (discussion and reading activity)

**Story:** “Left in the Dark,” by Kenya Clark, p. 3

### **Objectives:**

- To help students gain a better understanding of the consequences of keeping or revealing secrets.
- To help students see that keeping secrets can be a barrier to intimacy
- To help students see that how or whether one reveals a secret is an important question.

**Part 1:** Tell your group they are going to read a story about a family that kept a secret from the writer for ten years.

Read this sentence from the story to get their interest: “When I got home, I called my dad and told him that, actually, I wasn’t a virgin.”

Then read this prompt slowly so the group has a chance to start thinking about secrets:

“Every family has secrets. Sometimes there are secrets that family members keep from each other. Sometimes they are secrets they keep from the outside world. Many times, these aren’t even really secrets: people know them, but they never talk about them.”

Then ask these questions and allow 1-2 minute responses from the group:

“Why do you think families keep secrets?”

“Why do friends sometimes keep secrets from each other?”

“Are secrets sometimes necessary?”

“What’s a good reason to keep a secret?”

“Are secrets sometimes harmful? How?”

“If you’re keeping an important secret from someone, can you be close to them?”

**Part 2:** Read the story and talk about it

Take turns reading the story aloud. Stop at the points below and ask discussion questions.

Near the end of the first column: “No one in my family would ever give me a straight answer when I asked where he went or why he was gone.”

How do you think she felt? Why did her family remain silent? Were they right not to tell her?

In the second column, under the subhead ‘Why Did He Leave?: “It had been my first question for him (why did he leave) but when I didn’t get an answer, I lost resolve.”

Why do you think he didn’t answer her? Can you think of something so terrible that she shouldn’t know about it? Is it right sometimes to protect people from the truth?

Fourth column near top: “I felt like I had shared so much and he still hadn’t answered by buried question.”

Why does she feel that telling him her secrets means that he should tell her his? Does confiding in someone mean that you should expect that person to confide in you?

Fifth column, next to last paragraph: “Plus he is the only person I know who really will never lie to me, which makes telling him things easier.”

Have you ever felt this way about someone?

**Part 3:** Ask the group to finish these two prompts with two or three sentences.

“When I keep a secret from someone, I feel....”

“When I find out people have kept secrets from me, I feel....”

## 6. A Loved One in Danger (reading/summarizing lesson)

**Story:** “Brother at War, Worry at Home,” by Annmarie Turton, p. 4

**Objective:** Students will strengthen skills in reading, summarizing, and answering questions about a text.

**Before the lesson:** Print out the question sheet below and have it ready to give to your students.

**Activity:** Hand out copies of the December/January issue of *New Youth Connections* magazine or a printed version of the story downloaded from the Youth Communication website (youthcomm.org). Tell your students they are going to read a story by a young woman about life at home during the time her brother was fighting in Iraq. They will then answer some questions about the story in writing.

First, read them this sentence from the story to get them interested in reading it: “My mom’s greatest fear was getting that dreaded knock on the door from a member of the military to tell her that her son Mark had been injured or killed.”

Depending on the vocabulary skills of your class, you may want to review the meaning of the following words before having students read the story:

Adjacent  
Deployed  
Pervaded  
Dreaded

Notorious  
Militants  
Irreparable  
Magnitude

Stoic  
Vow  
Abreast

NOTE: The last question asks your group to write letters to the author of this article. We are eager to publish student letters in *New Youth Connections* magazine. Feel free to send your students’ letters to us.

**Worksheet: A Loved One in Danger**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: Answer the questions below in essay answer format. This means you should use parts of the question to start your answer. Write 3-6 complete sentences for each question. The answer for the first question has been started for you.

1. What is the full title of this story? Who wrote the story?

(Example: *The full title of the story is...*)

2. Many stories and books describe problems that someone tries to solve, or a challenge that a character has to face. What *characters* are involved in the situation in the story? What is the *main struggle* or challenge faced by the writer in this story? How does she try to face the situation? Does she succeed? (Remember, start your answer by using part of the question. For example, "The main characters in the story are...")

3. How would you describe the author? Use adjectives and refer to specific events in the story to show what kind of person she is. (For example, you can write, "Annmarie is *curious* because she plans to ask her brother all about war when she can.") Come up with three adjectives to describe the author and three references in the story that show what she's like.

4. What are some of the bad things that can happen to her brother that Annmarie worries about?

5. On the back of this paper (or a separate sheet of paper), write a five-sentence letter to Annmarie telling her how you think she handled her situation. Here are some ideas on how to start the letter:

"I admire how you tried to..."

"I think you showed a lot of \_\_\_\_\_ when facing your situation."

"If I was in your situation I would have..."

## **ABOUT NYC AND YOUTH COMMUNICATION**

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