

New Youth Connections Lesson Guide—Feb/March 2010

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

Lessons in This Month's Guide

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1. 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

Introduction to teachers: 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.

Objectives: Students will use writing to reflect on how they relate to their parents. Students will practice using pre-writing activities to get started on a writing assignment.

Before the lesson: Write these two prompts on the board:

The one thing I will never, ever tell my parents or guardians is about the time I _____.
The one thing I always wanted to tell my parents or guardians but never have is
_____.

Then write down these lists side by side:

Dating
School work
Chores
Friends

Anger
Embarrassment
Love
Gratitude

Relatives
Control/Independence
Fashion/hair/appearance
Expectations

Bewilderment
Sadness
Cheerfulness
Fear

Optional: Hand out some of these opening lines from previous letters:

- This is something that you never knew but I can't stand_____.
- First of all, I want to say, "I love you" and then I want to say _____.
- I try to be honest all the time but once I _____.
- I never told you this before but I feel really _____ about _____.
- I guess I'd like to think that I tell you everything but there's one thing_____.
- You don't know that I know this, but_____.

Introduce the lesson: Tell your group that even professional writers sometimes have problems with starting their assignments. Tell them that one way they get started is to make lists of possible opening sentences and topics.

Show them page 2 of the February/March issue of *New Youth Connections* and tell them you want them to enter a writing contest that awards cash prizes. They will write a letter to their parents about something they have never told them. You will collect the letters but their names will not be on them. If their letters are published, it will be anonymously and we'll change a few details if necessary to conceal the writer's identity. The letter doesn't have to be long: one hand written or printed page is a good length.

Please tell your students that the letters need not be about dramatic or sensational situations like missing a lot of school or committing a crime. They can write about missing a parent who has to work long hours, anger toward a sibling, etc. The letters can also be positive: unspoken love for the parent, expressions of gratitude, etc.

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.

Activity: Ask them to copy down the first two prompts on the board. Then ask them to look at the list of topics. Ask them: "What other parts of your lives cause conflict or good feelings in your family?" Add their suggestions and then ask them to complete both sentences. After two minutes ask them to look at the list of opening lines and see if they can use any of them.

Depending on your time situation you can have them write the letters in class or group or ask them to do it at home and bring it in for your next session. Again, tell them not to put their names on the letter. If you collect them to send to us then ask them to also hand in a slip of paper with their names and addresses so we know where to send the check. If they enter the contest on their own remind them to fill out that separate slip of paper.

2. Lesson: Writing Contest #201—Win \$150

Contest question (p. 2):

If money was not an issue, what would your dream job be? What would your title be? Describe your average work day.

Deadline: April 26, 2010

Objectives: Students will explore their career goals. They will recognize that different jobs require different *personal characteristics*. For example, outgoing people may be better suited for fast-paced jobs and working with lots of people. Other people may prefer jobs in which they work mostly by themselves. Some people prefer new challenges each day; others prefer routine. This exercise will help your students think about what kinds of jobs may fit their personality.

Introduce the lesson: Show them page 2 of the February/March issue of *New Youth Connections* and tell them you want them to enter a writing contest that awards cash prizes.

Say, “Before you start to write we are going to do a group exercise to get you thinking about what might be your ideal job.”

Copy the Job Satisfaction Handout on the next page of this Lesson Guide and pass it out.

It has a series of questions at the top that ask students to think about what kind of job would feel right to them. Students should pick a few jobs that appeal to them and fill in the row in the chart for those jobs. (The first job is done for them. You may want to walk them through it to be sure they see the pattern. Give students about 10 minutes to pick a few jobs and complete the chart.)

Discussion: Ask for volunteers to tell which job they picked. Have them go across the row in the chart and explain how they answered each question. Then have them briefly explain what they like most about that job. Note: Students may disagree about the whether a job is “steady” or “flexible,” and that’s fine. For example, “teaching” is steady if you’re a public school teacher, but flexible if you are a tutor. Point out to students that if they have a passion for a job there may be more than one setting in which they can do that job—one that better suits their personality.

As a postscript to the conversation, you can point out to students that education and other preparation are just as important as the “personal fit” with a job. You can love everything about teaching, but if you don’t get a college degree, you can’t get a teacher job—period.

Writing Activity: Tell students to pick a job that they imagine they would enjoy—either from the chart or any job they can think of. Tell them to write an essay describing why they would enjoy that job and would be good at it, including their description of an average work day. Give students two options for starting the essay:

Option 1: The first sentence will mention the *name of the job* and a bit more detail, e.g., “My ideal job would be to work as a nurse in an emergency room.”

Option 2: The first sentence will refer to a *personal quality*: “I’m a person who loves a lot of excitement and drama.”

3. The Census Form

As you know, many New York City programs are funded based on the population recorded in the census. It is very important that *every* New Yorker be counted, including undocumented immigrants, families that do not speak English at home, and anyone else who may not feel comfortable completing the form.

Teenagers can make a big difference—because in many families they are the ambassadors to the world of official forms and rules.

Please show your students the form on page 7 of this issue. If possible, walk through it with them to show them how easy it is for their parents to complete. And emphasize that personal census information is not shared with any other agency. *Undocumented immigrants, people with warrants, people who haven't paid their taxes—can all complete the census form without fear that the information will be used to track them down.*

And remind them that the more people who complete the form, the more money New York City will get from the federal government for services that help improve health, transportation, housing, education, and other things that will increase their opportunities to live a good life.

4. Lesson: Practice for Regents Exam Reading Section

Story: “\$4 Trillion? Count Me In,” p. 6

Objective: Students will improve skills needed to do well on the Regents Reading Section.

What the teacher needs to know to use this lesson: The Regents English exam has a reading section that requires students to read a passage, answer 8-10 multiple choice questions and then write an essay based on the passage. (Note on time allowed: Students have three hours to do session one of the Regents. This reading and writing exercise should take them 1.5 hours on the day of test. You could divide this lesson in two parts: answering the multiple-choice questions and then doing the writing part on another day.)

Step One: Give Your Students Directions

Put these directions on the board or read them slowly:

Read the story on page 6, answer the multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below.

The Situation: Your social studies class has been asked to write an article that will encourage people to fill out the upcoming 2010 United States Census. Each student in your school or program will bring your article home for his or her parents to read and learn about the Census.

Your task: Using information from the story, write an article in which you discuss the importance of the Census and urge people to complete the Census form.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Tell your audience what they need to know to understand why the Census is important.
- Use specific and accurate information from the text to support your discussion.
- Use a tone and level of language suitable for something or parents.
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner.
- Indicate any words taken directly from the text by using quotation marks or referring to the author.
- Follow the conventions of standard written English.

Step Two: Hand Out the Magazine, and the Multiple Choice Test on the next page

[Here are the answers to the multiple-choice questions: 1) b 2) a 3) d 4) c 5) d 6) b 7) c 8) a]

Directions: Select the best suggested answers. The questions may help you think about ideas and information you might want to use in writing your article.

'Census' Quiz

Multiple Choice Questions

1) What happens if you don't return the census form by April 1?

- a) You won't be counted
- b) A census official might come by your house to get your info
- c) You can mail it later
- d) You will be fined

2) Who does the census try to count?

- a) Everyone in the country
- b) Everyone living in a house
- c) Every citizen
- d) Everyone over 5 years of age

3) What will probably happen if New York City is undercounted?

- a) New Yorkers will have to fill out forms again
- b) Census workers will lose their jobs
- c) There will be no impact
- d) City schools will get less money than they might have

4) What was the city's census return rate in 2000 compared to the rest of the country?

- a) About the same
- b) Slightly smaller
- c) Significantly smaller
- d) Slightly larger

5) Which of these should be counted in your household?

- a) Students living away at college
- b) Visitors
- c) Anyone related to the head of the household
- d) Anyone who lives at the address but is away on a trip

6) Why might some people be afraid to fill out the form?

- a) They might complete it incorrectly
- b) They are afraid the government will share the information
- c) The form is too complicated
- d) They are Republicans

7) What political impact does the census have?

- a) It determines who can vote
- b) It determines who can run for office
- c) It determines how many House members are elected from each state
- d) It can change the Constitution

8) What is probably the easiest thing to do if you have a question about the census?

- a) Call 311
- b) Go online
- c) Call the Department of City Planning
- d) Call the Census Bureau

5. Vocabulary/dictionary lesson: *One man is an island*

Story: “Not the Loneliest Number,” p. 3

Objectives: Dictionary practice, vocabulary development, close reading of a story, small group work.

Before the lesson: You will need paper, pencil dictionaries, black board or easel pad, chalk or marker. Write the words from the list below on the pad or board

Loquacious	Dour
Adventuresome	Introverted
Spontaneous	Extroverted
Abrasive	Gregarious
Frugal	Steadfast
Amiable	Ebullient
Volatile	Taciturn
Duplicitous	Veracious
Insular	Voluble

Activity: Divide your group into subgroups of three students each.

Give each teen a copy of the February/March 2010 issue of *New Youth Connections* magazine. The story is on page 3. Or you can print the story from our web site [LINK]

Have each group read the story. When they are done ask them what they thought of the writer/main character. Ask each group to volunteer a one or two adjectives describing Matthew. What did they like about him? Dislike?

Then point to the list of words. Each group’s job is to see which words may describe Matthew and which ones don’t. They will need a dictionary to look up many of the words. Give them a 10-15 minute deadline depending on your schedule.

When time is up, read off the first word and ask one of the groups if that word describes the author’s behavior. Ask the other groups if they agree. If there is any disagreement ask someone to point to the place in the story that supports his or her view of the author’s behavior and attitudes.

6. Condom Quiz—for Health Classes

Test your students’ condom knowledge, using the story on page p. 15, “The Talk: Tackling the Rumors About Free NYC Condoms.” Note: all answers are T, except 3 & 8. Discuss the quiz with students. Emphasize that *NYC condoms are effective*, but that teens who choose to be sexually active should always use another birth control method *along with* condoms. (Tell them if they fail the quiz they definitely should avoid sex!)

Condom Quiz Handout

Name _____ Date _____

Based on reading the article and sidebar on page 15, The Talk: Tackling the Rumors About Free NYC Condoms, mark the following statements True or False.

1) “NYC” brand condoms are made by the same companies that make the condoms you buy at the store T F

2) Consumer Reports gives a high rating to the NYC condoms T F

3) According to Consumer Reports, glow-in-the-dark condoms are best T F

4) New York City has been giving out free condoms for nearly 30 years T F

5) Rumors about supposedly poor quality in NYC condoms come primarily from unreliable website comments. T F

6) With perfect use, 2 out of 100 women will get pregnant during a year of condom use. T F

7) With “typical use” (e.g., not putting the condom on right at the beginning, or not putting it on all the way so it comes off), 15 out of 100 women will become pregnant in a year of use. T F

8) Two condoms are better than one T F

9) To be extra safe about preventing pregnancy, condoms should always be used with another form of birth control, like the pill. T F

10) Condoms make good balloons. T F

Extra Credit:

NYC-brand condoms come in wrappers designed like subway lines. T F

7. Reading and summarizing lesson

Story: “Saved from Solitude,” by Anonymous p. 16

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. Read the story yourself.

Activity: Hand out copies of the February/March 2010 issue of *New Youth Connections* magazine or a printed version of the story from the website [LINK]. Tell your students they are going to read a story by a girl living in an abusive home who makes a strong connection with a caring teacher. They will then answer some questions in writing about the story.

First, ask them to look at the title and the picture. Ask them, “What do you think the story might be about?” Let the discussion go for a few minutes.

Give them as much time as you think they need to read the story silently. Then hand out the question sheet on the next page, and a piece of loose-leaf paper. 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.

Follow up activity: Tell your group to take the magazine home and read the two companion stories on pages 16 and 17: “What Friend Are For” and “Mom Knows Me Best.”

Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Answer the questions about *Saved From Solitude* in essay answer format. This means you should use parts of the question to start your answer. Write 2-5 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? What does anonymous mean? Why do you think the writer didn't want her name on the story?

Answer: The full title of the story is...

2. Many stories and books describe problems that someone tries to solve or a conflict that has to be worked out. What is the main problem or conflict described in this story? Is the problem solved?

3. Why is the writer afraid of telling her teacher more about her home life?

4. Why was the writer disappointed at her graduation? What was her mother's reaction?

5. In the first paragraph, the author wrote: "I hid my abuse behind the façade of a stoic personality." What do you think she meant by that?

6. On the reverse, list the three characters in the story. Write a five-sentence letter to one of them telling her what you think about her behavior.

8. Discussion: Haiti on Our Minds

Note to staff: Your students have heard about the Haitian earthquake and its aftermath, and most probably know Haiti as a very poor country. Cassandra Charles' story, "My Family's Loss," p. 22, is a poignant teen view of the catastrophe that your students will find very compelling.

However, there's more to Haiti than poverty and destruction. To help remind readers that Haitian teens also have regular lives and concerns--about love, family, acceptance, and, and homesickness--we have included excerpts from several previous *NYC* stories. The following lessons give you an opportunity to help students strengthen their English skills while making a connection with their Haitian peers.

Objectives: Give students practice in:

- reading;
- understanding two ways of telling a story;
- identifying important events and key emotions in a story;
- recognizing metaphors and similies;
- writing a story based on a story they've read.

Stories: Haitian stories on pages 22-23

Before the lesson: You will be leading a discussion based on reading five excerpts and asking the group to talk about the main events and emotions in the stories. You will also stress the important of using concrete nouns in descriptive writing (nouns you can touch, not abstract nouns like liberty, fear, etc.)

You will also discuss two ways of telling a story. One way is by describing a particular, specific event. For example, Raelle describes dancing with her father at her first Communion party.

Another way is to write about events in general. In her story, Raelle also writes about dancing at birthdays, Christmas festivities and carnivals but does not write about any particular occasion.

Here is a very rough "events/emotions/metaphor-simile/nouns" guide for you to consider as you read the stories yourself before the session. The story titles appear at the end of the story.

(Note: see the definitions of a metaphor and a simile on page 16 of this Tips.)

Letting Haiti Go

Main events: Kaela's mother tells her that they are moving to America. She spends her last two weeks there on a food and friendship binge.

Main emotions: Loss, helplessness, disbelief, sadness.

Simile/metaphor: She feels like a fish in the last sentence.

Nouns: coffee, sugarcane, mangoes, dolls, teddy bear

A New World Full of Strangers

Main events: None

Main emotions: Shame, uneasiness, hope, helplessness

Simile/metaphor: None

Nouns: None

Dream Girl

Main events: David courts a childhood friend but loses her when she moves away and then he moves to America.

Main emotions: Shyness, attachment, sadness, loss, distance

Simile/metaphor: Loss of his friend leaves an “empty space” in him. His connectedness to his friend is like being on the same page in different books.

Nouns: Hair, letter, mangoes, farm, avocados, bread, tree.

Moving to the Music

Main events: Dancing with her father

Main emotions: joy, attachment, religious feeling

Simile/metaphor: Dancing is compared to experiencing a slow ocean wave.

Nouns: feet, wave, sea.

Finding My Haitian Pride

Main events: Classroom discussion of students’ cultures

Main emotions: Pride, excitement, satisfaction

Simile/metaphor: She compares her connection to Haiti as being like breathing air or drinking water.

Nouns: Plate, beans, tongue, and many more.

Activity #1: Reading and discussion

Tell the group they are going to read short passages written by Haitian teens about growing up in Haiti and coming to America. (You can ask them to read all the stories or choose 2-3 depending on your group’s skills and your time constraints.) Tell them to focus on finding the main event in the story and the most important emotions expressed.

After they are finished each story ask them about the main events and emotions. Do they agree with each other? Did they miss any mentioned in the above guide?

Then ask them if they noticed any metaphors or similes in the passages. Be prepared to give them the definitions.

Activity #2: Writing

Tell the group you want them to write a short passage on an important event in their childhood. It should be about 300 words.

Tell them to read “Letting Haiti Go” if they haven’t already done so.

Ask them to notice that Kaela uses two ways of telling a story. One way is to describe a particular event. Tell them an example of that is when she opens the story with her mother telling her that they are moving. Then tell them that Kaela also describes her life in a general way without describing a specific event. Point out the fourth paragraph: “I lived in an apartment with...”

Tell them their passage must contain a description of one specific event in their childhood and some general information about their lives. You can give them an example: “I remember my mother taking me to different place in the city: parks, zoos, museums, etc. We lived in Brooklyn and would sometimes take the train into Manhattan. My favorite time with her was that cold day she took me to Times Square where we...”

Tell them that they should use concrete nouns to give the reader a real sense on why that event is important to them.

9. Metaphor/Image Hunt

Objectives: Give students practice in:

- Recognizing similes and metaphors;
- locating information in texts;
- taking notes;
- working cooperatively in small groups.

Story: “Books: Friends Forever,” pp. 10-11

Before the lesson: This lesson involves you reading metaphorical phrases from the story and asking the group to identify what things in the story the phrases describe. Here are the images as they appear in the story:

IMAGES	WHAT THEY REFER TO	Metaphor/Simile/Other?
Herding	Getting students to class	
Whistle blowing	Sound of principal’s voice	
Lost ant	Writer’s self-image	
Chain around legs	How the writer felt when approaching the group	
Body froze	Feeling when approached by angry girls	
Monkeys	Boys in cafeteria	
Cats	Girls in cafeteria	
Zoo	Cafeteria	
Street market	Cafeteria	
Captured my heart	Impact of poetry on the writer	
Mountains	Life’s challenges	
Walking into ocean	Author discovering the library	
Heart melting	Author’s reaction to books	

Activity: Hand out the February/March issue of *New Youth Connections*. Split your group into smaller ones. Tell them to open up to page 10. Tell them each group will have 15 minutes to read the story.

While reading the story they should circle as many metaphors and similes as they can find and then write them in left hand column of the chart on the next page.

When students are done, go around the room asking students to shout out the metaphors and similes they have found in the story. As they do identify them, ask them what the metaphor or simile refers to. They should put that information in the right hand column.

