



# Tips for Teachers

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

March 2003

## Writing Contest— \$175 in Prizes

Writing Contest, p. 2: Encourage your students to enter this month's Writing Contest, which offers \$175 in prizes. The topic is:

**“What’s a Mistake  
That You’ve Made  
That You *Don’t*  
Regret? Explain.”**

You may want to devote part of your class to discussing this topic, before turning to the writing.

**Deadline: March 24**

**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. 29<sup>th</sup> St., 2<sup>nd</sup> fl.,  
New York, NY 10001  
212-279-0708 ext.100

[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)



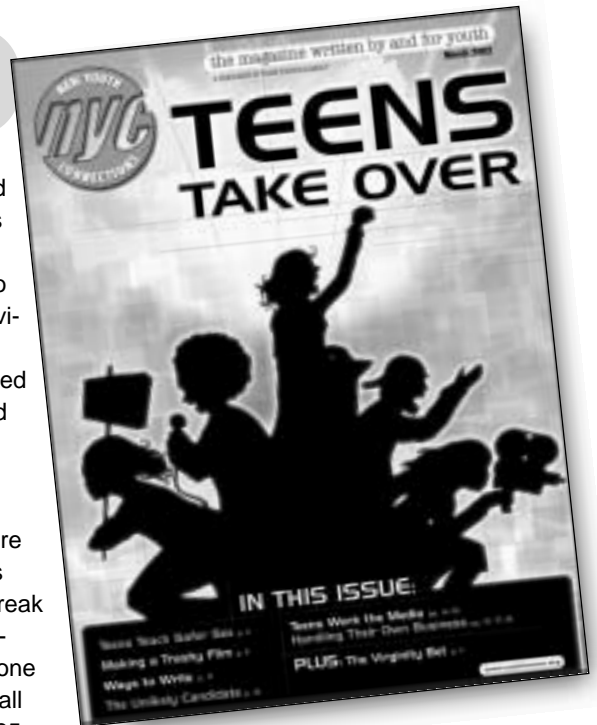
## This Issue's Theme: Teens Take Control

There is a stereotype that all teens do is sleep, eat, watch TV, and play video games. The stories in this issue contradict that stereotype and, we hope, will inspire your students to get more involved in issues and activities that are important to them.

The following exercise is designed to help students practice reading and oral presentation skills, and find the main idea in an essay. At the same time, it will showcase for the class a wide range of teen involvement. There are more than a dozen stories in this issue about teens “taking control.” Break your class into small groups (2-3 students each) and assign each group one story to read (you don't have to use all the stories). Tell them they have 20-25 minutes to read the story, take notes on it, and prepare to report back to the large group, describing in just a few sentences the most important information in their story. (If students finish early, ask them to rehearse their oral presentations. Tell them that each member of the group should be prepared to be called on to present.)

You may want to suggest they use a two-step process: First, write the answers to the questions listed below [the sample answers given here are what you would expect after reading the TORCH story on p. 5]. (Note: You may want to hand out a worksheet with the following six words, and space at the end for students to write the summary they will present—or write this information on the board.)

Who? (Latasha, Jasmine, Daphne,



members of TORCH)

What? (peer sex educators)

Where? (they go around to schools)

When? (after they are trained, in March)

How? (speaking, asking questions, doing role plays, playing games)

Why? (because teens need to know more about relationships, sex, birth control, and they are more likely to listen to other teens than to adults)

Tell the students that when they've identified as many of the key facts as possible, they should then prepare a *written* summary of not more than 10 sentences that they will read to the class to describe the story. Furthermore, their *last* sentence



Marianna Rybak

*Passing the TORCH: Peer educators Latasha, Jasmine, and Daphne talk to trainees.*

## My Sex Story

F. Scott Fitzgerald said that, “The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function.” By that standard, the writer of “My Sex Story: I Was Scared to Do It, But I Wanted the Experience” (p. 3) is an intelligent young woman. This story is about her struggle to manage mixed motivations and mixed feelings. The writer wants to get married as a virgin, but she also feels immature because she hasn’t had sex yet. The writer wants to meet someone, fall in love, and then have an intimate relationship, but she has sex first, and the love follows. The writer wants to be loyal to her mother, but she also wants to grow up and assert her independence. This story embodies many of the conflicting emotions and contradictory messages that young women face as they individuate, seek intimate relationships, and decide how to explore and express their sexuality.

That makes it a wonderful piece to teach because almost any girl can find a part of herself in the story (and boys can learn what girls are thinking and feeling). The fear of sex. The desire for sex. The desire for intimacy, and confusion about how sex fits in. The comfort and security of being a child. The lure of becoming an adult. Boldness and insecurity.

Following are two lessons you could use with this story:

1. Reading and discussion: Students respond to the major themes.
2. Essay writing: Using the story as a catalyst to have students enter this month’s writing contest.

### Reading and Discussion Exercise

The multiple themes make it easy to use this article as a catalyst for discussion with one question: *What stands out for you in the story?*

If you have teens read this story silently, or read it aloud as a class, and ask that single question, you will prompt a vigorous discussion, in which the teens

themselves will debate many issues related to sex and relationships. You (and they) will be surprised to see the range of views in the classroom.

In thinking about the story, you may want to note a few things. For example, despite the seeming recklessness of “the bet,” about who among her best friends will have sex first, the writer is actually quite cautious. The first time she arranges to have sex, she sets things up so that she can easily back out, and she does. An entire year goes by before she tries again, at age 17. And, in the end, she actually wins the bet, so her friends are even more cautious than she is. While this story is about having sex, it clearly affirms the choice of waiting. You might ask the class, “When Sasha and Jasmine heard about the writer’s experience, do you think they are glad they have waited?”

Other questions you might ask your students:

—What do the students think is the *main* reason the writer decides to have sex? (E.g., Does she feel peer pressure? Does she want to feel grown up? Does she want to get a guy? Does she want the physical pleasure?)

—Near the end of the story, the writer says she thinks she and her boyfriend would have had a better relationship if they had just kissed that first night, instead of having sex. Do you agree? Why or why not?

—Some people (adults especially)



Shaun Shishido

should offer an *opinion* about what the teens are doing. The TORCH summary might read like this: “There is a program called TORCH, which stands for Teen Outreach Reproductive Challenge. Teens in the program are trained to give presentations on sex and relationships to other teens. The teens, who are called peer educators, go to classrooms and lead discussions and role plays about sex. They even give out condoms. We think this is a good program because teens need this information and they are more likely to listen when other teens tell them than in family life classes.”

Here are 11 stories you can assign:

- p. 5: TORCH (teen peer sex educators)
- p. 8: Fighting for the Poor (teens travel to Albany to lobby on behalf of poor people)
- p. 9: Show Me That Funky Stuff (teens make a documentary film about how New York disposes of its trash)
- p. 14: Flipping the Script (a teen gets her script about betrayal turned into a film)
- p. 14: Poetry Slam Central (a teen participates in poetry slams)
- p. 15: On the Radio (teens write radio documentaries)
- p. 16: WNYE Has Teen TV (teens produce television shows)
- p. 16: Minding Their Own Business (profiles of several teens who started their own businesses)
- p. 18: Finding My World at GLOBE (a teen starts a gay support group in Bushwick)
- p. 26: Birth of a Saleswoman (a teen starts her own business)
- p. 28: Time for Some Action (profile of a teen political activist)

would say the writer was stupid and reckless to make the bet. Do you think the writer is reckless? Cautious? Both? Why?

—In the middle column, page 3, the writer says, “Having sex just for the experience seemed easier than trying to get into a relationship. I thought that maybe I could detach myself from the emotional part of sex so I wouldn’t get hurt if we broke up.” What do you students think of this approach toward sex? Can it be separated from emotions? Should it be?

—With Ralph, the writer starts out kissing, and was on the brink of sex when she was saved by the bell. With Chris, kissing leads straight to sex. Is kissing an invitation to have sex? Should it lead straight to sex in a relationship? Or should there be something in between?

—Ask students to look at the illustration. What does it say about the story?

### Essay Writing

The writer thinks that having sex, instead of stopping after kissing, was a mistake. At the same time, she doesn’t regret it, because she grew from the experience in ways that are important to her.

We’ve all made mistakes that we later don’t regret, because the mistake helped us learn something new about ourselves, opened up new opportunities, etc. For example, you could sign up for the wrong class, but end up loving it, or meeting a new best friend. You could get in a fight, and learn that you’re not as weak or afraid as you think. You could blurt out something embarrassing at a family gathering, but then feel relieved that you don’t have to keep it a secret anymore.

This month’s writing contest (p. 2) asks students to think of mistake they’ve made that they *don’t* regret, and to write a short essay about it. (This can be as short as five paragraphs, or as long and detailed as they like.) Tell the students they need at least the following information in their essay. They can use this list to structure their essay.

1. What the mistake was. Describe where and when it happened. Give as much relevant detail as possible.
2. Describe the bad consequence that they expected to happen, or that did happen. How did they react? How did other people react? How did they feel about it then?
3. Describe how they came to realize that there was a good side to the mistake. How do they feel about it now.
4. Give details about the good side: What did they learn about themselves or others? How did their life change for the better. (Note: The change can even be something they’ve learned, like “I’ll never have sex without a condom again....”)
5. Summarize: The students can use the last four paragraphs of “My Sex Story” as a model of how to end their piece. They can acknowledge that they don’t regret making the mistake, while also wondering what might have been different if they had acted in another way.

**Using Anecdotes:** You can use these essay to teach the importance of using anecdotes in an essay. The first step, above, should be an anecdote, a little story, about what happened. Step two, the consequence, should also be an anecdote. You may want to introduce the idea of anecdotes, and require the students to include two of them in the essay.

## Practice Lesson for Regents Exam Listening Section

**Use story:** “Show Me That Funky Stuff” on p. 9

### 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) and **The Situation** (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 and write a report based on the **Situation**.

### Step One: Read the Overview and the Situation

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

Read this to your students:

**Overview:** You will listen to an article written by a teenager about how New York City disposes of its garbage. You will then answer some multiple choice questions and write a report on the situation described below. You will hear the article twice. You may take notes.

**The Situation:** Your class is making a movie about New York City’s waste disposal process. You must write a position paper with recommendations on improving the disposal process. Listen to this story and then use information from the story to write your position paper.

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

**Read the story—Special Note for this Story:** Do not read the whole story aloud. It’s too long for a Regents selection. Instead, start from the subhead called “Looks Pretty, Smells Nasty” (in the first column). Read up until but do not include the text followed by the subhead “I Demanded Answers.”

After reading the story once, say:

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

### Step Three: Multiple Choice Questions and Report

After reading the article for the second time give them the questions on the next page. The next page also contains guidelines for writing the report. (Photocopy them at your school.)

Here are the answers to the multiple choice questions:

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

# Show Me That **Funky** Stuff

## Multiple Choice Questions

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

**1) According to the writer, Mayor Giuliani shut down the Fresh Kills garbage dump because**

- a) it was too full
- b) it was an environmental hazard
- c) there were cheaper ways of getting rid of the garbage
- d) he wanted people on Staten Island to vote for him

**2) How does the city get rid of most of its garbage now?**

- a) by incineration
- b) by recycling
- c) by shipping it to other states
- d) by putting it in local dumps

**3) What way of solving the garbage problem is associated with the phrase “waste to energy?”**

- a) incineration
- b) recycling
- c) waste prevention
- d) shipping garbage to other states

**4) What problem is not associated with shipping garbage to other states?**

- a) it is expensive
- b) it takes a lot of time to ship
- c) it pollutes the areas it is shipped to
- d) it must be sent to local transfer stations before it is shipped out of town

**5) Which solution to the waste problem do you think the author might favor?**

- a) reopening the city’s main dump in Staten Island
- b) making less garbage in the first place
- c) burning garbage in newer, cleaner incinerators
- d) finding more states to take the city’s garbage

**6) In the sentence, “Marine transfer stations can compact the garbage before it’s shipped out,” the word “compact” means**

- a) wash
- b) burn
- c) reduce in size
- d) make safe for shipping

**7) According to the article, what is one problem associated with recycling?**

- a) People don’t want to sort their garbage.
- b) It can be too expensive.
- c) It doesn’t reduce the volume of garbage enough.
- d) It pollutes poor neighborhoods.

NOTE: Below are the written instructions which accompany the test about writing the report. You may want to hand these out or write them on the board.

### Writing the Report

**Your task:** Write a report for a class of sophomores in which you inform them about choosing a college and what college admissions staff look at when they consider applications. Use specific and relevant information from the article you heard.

Here are the guidelines based on the actual Regents exam:

- Tell your audience what they need to know about choosing a college and what admissions staff look for.
- Use specific, accurate, and relevant information from the article to support your discussion.
- Use a tone and level of language appropriate for the high school sophomores who will read your paper.
- Organize your ideas in a logical and coherent manner.
- Indicate any words taken directly from the article by using quotation marks or referring to the writer.
- Follow the conventions of standard written English.