



Tips for Teachers

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

May/June 2005

Street Connections: Abortion—Should Teens or Parents Decide?

Page 2: This issue's Street Connections question is "Should girls under 18 have to get a parent's permission before getting an abortion?"

This provocative question has sparked lots of debate and legislation around the country. If possible, introduce the question *before students read the responses*, as a free writing exercise. Their initial reactions, which are likely to reflect many points of view and kinds of reasoning, will provide a good basis for a stimulating conversation. To do the free write, have everyone take out pencil and paper. Tell them they will have two minutes to respond to the prompt you will read. Also tell them that you won't be collecting this (if you won't) and that grammar and spelling don't count. They should just quickly and freely write some ideas. The only rule is they must keep their pencils moving during the entire two minutes (even if they're writing, "I don't know.") Check your watch, and read the prompt. (P.S. If you write along with the students, you're likely to get greater participation.)

After students finish free writing, but before you have them share their thoughts, ask them to read the responses on page 2. Which ones match their own feelings? Did any of the responses prompt them to rethink their own? Do any seem very unconvincing or very per-

suasive? Do they agree or disagree with some of the reasons in the responses, for example:

—Parents would not understand the situation and would punish the girl.

—Girls under 18 are not responsible about sex.

—Parents can make better and more reasonable decisions about something like this.

—Parents and teens don't like to talk about sex with each other.

—Girls would get illegal abortions if forced to get parental permission.



Send Us Your Writers

We are still accepting applications to our summer writing workshop. You can get the application at www.youthcomm.org. The deadline is May 27th.

Send Us Your Illustrators

Students interested in drawing for *New Youth Connections* and our other publications should see the ad on page 9.

Send Teens to the Web Survey—They Might Win \$100

Your students can fill out a survey about *New Youth Connections* (and have a chance to win \$100) by going online at www.surveymonkey.com/NYC/reader. (Note: We used to print this survey in *NYC*. This year we're trying an online survey, which we hope is easier and more fun (for teens who have Internet access). Please encourage them to complete it from home or the library or wherever they go online.

Send Us Your Surveys

We recently mailed subscribers a survey form asking for comments about *New Youth Connections*. If you didn't get one, you can fill out a survey online at www.surveymonkey.com/NYC.

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Youth Communication has published over 70 books and booklets written by teens. These anthologies inspire teens to read and help teachers start discussions and improve their students' writing skills. And they have unmatched authenticity and credibility because they are written by and for New York City public high school students.

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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.

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—Parent input would make the situation worse.

You can expand the discussion by throwing out different versions of the prompt. For example, “Should girls under 18 have to get permission to have a baby/to have sex/to go to college?” *At what age* should it be necessary to get parental permission for an abortion? Or, just for fun, “Should parents have to get their children’s permission to get divorced/to have another baby?”

You can finish this discussion by asking them if they have ever done anything in the face of parental opposition. Did they regret it or were they glad they defied their parents or do they have mixed feelings?

Father’s Day Essays

Intro: Father’s Day can be an awkward holiday because so many young people don’t live with their fathers, or have difficult relationships with them. Elementary schools that spend days having kids make Mother’s Day cards often ignore Father’s Day for that reason. But even an absent father can loom large in a



Whitney Harris

young person’s life. And even teens have strong feelings about their fathers.

Three teens this month write about their fathers. Each of the three feels abandoned in some way. Athena Karoutsos (“Meeting the Invisible Man,” p. 3) would like to have a father, and swallows her pride and her hurt to forgive him for ignoring her for most of her life. She tries to reestablish a relationship at age 15, but her father can’t be bothered. May Mai loves spending time with her father in China (“The Stranger in My House,” p. 10). She’s heartbroken when he moves to America, and elated when she is able to move here too. But when she realizes he’s so exhausted from work that

he no longer has much energy for her, she’s bitterly disappointed. Antwaun Garcia writes about the POPS program, which helps dads reconnect with their children (“The Dad Stays in the Picture,” p. 6).

Teens tell us that reading *NYC* makes them feel less alone. Teens who miss their fathers (that’s a pretty large group) will certainly feel that others share their experiences after reading these stories. And for teens who are close to their fathers, these stories will probably give them greater appreciation for their relationship.

Lesson: Write a Letter To Your Father

1. Free write. See free writing instructions with the Street Connections lesson, above. Tell students they will write for two minutes on these prompts: “My father...”; “I wish my father would...” “I wish my father wouldn’t...” Explain to the teens that their free write should be whatever comes to mind. It doesn’t matter whether they saw their father last night, or have never met him. Just write whatever comes to mind.

2. Describe the three father stories in this issue (see above). Tell students they have to pick one to read (their choice, unless you want to make assignments). While reading, they have one assignment: they should circle anything that stands out for them (a sentence, an experience, an emotion, etc.).

3. Give students 10-15 minutes to read stories silently. (For those who finish early, ask them to read one of the other stories.)

4. When students are done, ask if everyone has circled something. If not, tell them to quickly go back and circle something.

5. Go around the room, having students read aloud something they’ve circled. No comments or discussion. (This can be a sensitive topic. The silent reading and the read-aloud will help the teens feel safer and see that many of their feelings are shared by other members of the group.)

6. Tell students to write a letter to their father. They will hand in these letters, and you’ll give them back—in case they want to actually give the letter to their father (but they don’t have to).

Before students start writing, put these words on the board and talk about how a story might use each one as a theme:

—An appreciation (of love, support, etc.)

—An attack (for not being there, or doing something)

—An explanation (of why the teen feels a certain way, or did something)

—A reflection (the teen could reflect on a few key incidents that symbolize their relationship)

Writing Contest

page 2 \$175 in Prizes
Deadline: June 27, 2005

“Who’s your most memorable teacher? Why does he or she stand out? Explain.”

Before they start to write have your students read the first and second prize-winning submissions from last issue’s contest on page 18. Do they like the pieces? What makes them interesting or boring? Do they have any ideas on how to improve them?

Point out that both authors use concrete examples to flesh out their opinions about the question. Mia Giardina describes one event—a Seder—to illustrate her point. She sprinkles her piece with details about who was there, the topics of conversation, her friends’ reactions, etc. In the second piece, Anonymous presents a series of specific examples of how his mother expressed her dissatisfaction with his accomplishments, his appearance and his dreams for the future. (You may point out that

Anonymous offers plenty of examples of how his family puts him down but tends to be vaguer about how his friends support him. Could the piece have been improved by one adding one example of how his friends demonstrated their support of his sexuality?)

After they read and discuss the submissions, urge them to consider trying one of these approaches. They can choose one event to show how a teacher made a difference in their lives. Or they can choose to relate a series of events or situations which demonstrate why the teacher made such an impression. In either case they should try to be specific about what happened, who did what, where events took place, etc.

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www.youthcomm.org

- A question (why did you do such-and-such...?)
- A declaration (of love, of hate, of independence, etc.)
- An apology (for something the teen did...)
- A plea (for the father to change in some way)

Remind students that their letter should have the building blocks of interesting writing: specific examples (anecdotes); dialogue (recreation of conversations they've had) and scenes, ("Remember when we were in the kitchen at grandma's, and the turkey was cooking..."). Most importantly, the letter should have an objective. It can be directed inward for the teen (I want to get this off my chest), or outward toward the father (I want you to know, to change, etc.).

Deadline: Plan to get the essays back to the teens before Father's Day, June 19, in case they want to give them to their fathers.

QUICK READS and DISCUSSION STARTERS

Letters to the Editor

Teen Shoplifting, p. 11: Our readers sent in several letters about two stories from the April issue. A story on shoplifting, teens, and race prompted mostly sympathy from letter writers. Before your students read the letters, ask them if they think teens—particularly black teens—receive unfair scrutiny from store

employees worried about theft. Tell them that in the last issue a young black woman wrote an article about being singled out as a possible shoplifter by store staff. Then tell them they are going to read some letters about the article and have a discussion about the issue.

Dirty Dancing, p. 17: In the April issue, a writer objected to the writhing and rubbing she's observed at school dances. Some readers think she went too far and should relax. Some agreed with her.

"Do Teens Care About Free Speech?" page 7:

Summary: Writer Janill Briones was surprised when many teens in a national survey said the First Amendment to the United States Constitution "goes too far in the rights it guarantees" and also agreed that the American press has "too much freedom to do what it wants." This story describes how she doubted the validity of the survey and how she questioned her classmates about their attitudes toward the amendment in an attempt to challenge the survey's results.

Are your students familiar with the First Amendment? Do they agree with the teens who thought it was too radical? You might want to read the amendment to them to give them a basic sense of what it prohibits Congress from doing:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free

exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peacefully to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

Note on this story: More than half of the story, "Do Teens Care About Free Speech?" concerns Janill's questions about how the survey was conducted. If you want to focus a discussion on the importance of the First Amendment and how teens view the rights mentioned in it you can have your students read up until the subhead "What Do Freshmen Know?" and then read the last column under the subhead "Know Your Rights." You also should have them read "Rights Questioned in School Scandal" on the same page which presents an interesting test of Janill's commitment to freedom of the press.

National Awards for NYC

"On the Razor's Edge," a story by an anonymous writer about cutting that appeared in the March 2004 issue of NYC, is the first prize winner in the annual journalism contest of the National Mental Health Association in the Best Local/Regional magazine category.

The special issue on HIV and AIDS (April 2004) is a finalist for Best Single Issue in the annual contest sponsored by the Educational Publisher's Association.

Practice Lesson for Regents Exam Listening Section

Use story: "Rights Questioned in School Scandal," 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.

NOTE: This lesson omits the report writing section of the Regents exam. It only contains the listening part.

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 her school paper published a satirical article about a serious topic and how students reacted to the article. 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."

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 on the next page.

Here are the answers to the multiple choice questions:

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

Rights Questioned in School Scandal

Multiple Choice Questions

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

1) What does the author think about how journalists should act?

- a) You can publish the truth no matter how harmful or insulting it might be.
- b) Journalists shouldn't put down people in their articles.
- c) Journalists should be reliable.
- d) Journalists shouldn't write negative things about gay teens.

2) What is the relationship between the survey the author took of her classmates and the false story in the school paper?

- a) The story helped her get more accurate responses.
- b) More people than she expected responded to her survey.
- c) Fewer people responded to the survey.
- d) More people than she expected expressed disapproval of freedom of the press.

3) Who was upset by the story in the school newspaper?

- a) The editor of the newspaper
- b) Only the gay students at the school
- c) Many students and teachers
- d) Only the gay teachers at the school

4) Why was the author at first upset by the story?

- a) It undermined the First Amendment.
- b) It ruined her survey.
- c) It was written under a false name.
- d) It insulted gay people.

5) What was the reaction of the paper's editor to the controversy about the article?

- a) She apologized for printing the story.
- b) She thought people had no reason to be so upset.
- c) She said the First Amendment protected the writer.
- d) She was angry that people didn't realize the article was a satire.

6) What could have been a good title for the story printed in the paper?

- a) Gays and Our School
- b) The History of Gay People
- c) Gays Have Rights Too
- d) My Survey of Gay Students

7) What statement best summarizes the author's reaction to the incident?

- a) The editor of the paper should have made it clear that the story was a put-on.
- b) The editor of the paper should be fired.
- c) The student who wrote the story in the school newspaper should have used his real name.
- d) The student who wrote the false story should be suspended.