



Tips for Teachers

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

November 2007

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Writing Contests—Cash Prizes

Reminder: Your students can enter the contest by going to our website and clicking on the “enter contest” buttons. Our web address is youth-comm.org

Writing contest #185:

If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be and why?

Deadline: December 31, 2007

Lesson idea #1: *Changes You Could Make*

Tell your students that they will read a short essay about changes in a young woman’s life. Tell them that reading a story can give them ideas about writing for the contest. Maybe this story will get them thinking about what changes they would like to make in their lives.

Have your group read the second prize contest entry (p. 18), “Not the Enemy After All.” It is very short—you and your group can read it aloud in a few minutes. You may have to define a few words for your group as you read along: extermination, antagonist, naïve, refuge, deception.

After the reading ask your students what changed for the writer. Ask them to read aloud the sentences in the story that touch on those changes. They should be able to talk about two changes: 1) she is terribly hurt after her boyfriend deserts her and 2) she begins to see her mother as a warm, loving person rather than a nagging hag.

Ask them if there is anything they would like to change about their rela-

tionships with their mothers or fathers. Is there something they would like to change about other relationships?

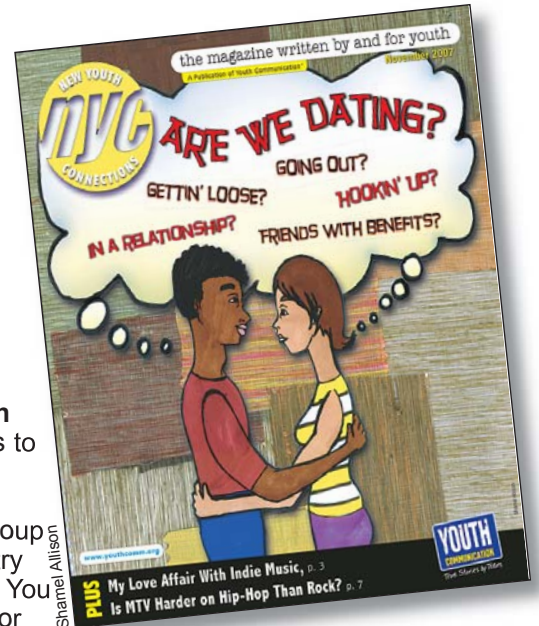
Lesson Idea #2 (a variation on the previous lesson)

1. Draw the chart (below) on the blackboard. Ask the students to copy the chart on paper.

2. Read essay: Have your group read the second prize contest entry (p. 18), “Not the Enemy After All.” You may have to define a few words for your group as you read along: extermination, antagonist, naïve, refuge, deception.

3. Discussion: After the reading ask your students, “What changed for the writer?” You are fishing for two responses: her change in behavior toward her mother and her change in attitude toward her mother. When you get them (or supply them yourself) write the answers in the chart on the board, for example, under attitude you can write “appreciates mom more” and under behavior you can write “hugs mom.”

Then ask students to suggest a typical change that someone would like to make for each of the four categories. Write them on the board as they name them.



4. Complete charts: Tell students to imagine changes they’d like to make in their own lives. Give them 5 minutes to fill in as many items as possible in their charts.

5. Share: Set aside 5 minutes for a discussion. Ask for volunteers to read some of their changes out loud. You may want to note that some changes are realistic (I want to lose 5 pounds, or improve my grades), while others will surely be fantastical (I want to win the lottery).

6. Writing assignment: For homework, or for an in-class writing assignment, tell students to use the information in their chart as the basis for an essay to submit to the contest.

CHART: Types of changes

Appearance	Attitude	Behavior	Circumstances

Suggest some opening sentences:

Writing contest #184:

Describe a childhood memory that means a lot to you. Why is it important to you?

Deadline: November 12, 2007

Lesson idea: Use closure statements to help your students get started. Here are examples:

• “_____ was my best friend back then and I will never forget the day we _____”

• “The happiest I ever saw my mother was the time we _____”

• “My parents were so proud of me when I _____”

• “The best part of summer when I was kid was _____”

• “My favorite place as a kid (or growing up) was _____”

If you submit a class set, be sure each essay has the student's name, address, school, age, 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.)

(They can request it be published anonymously.)

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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Tips for Teachers is also available on our website at:

www.youthcomm.org

Abusive Relationships: Discussion Activity

“My Abusive Boyfriend,” p. 14, by Anonymous

Goal: Students will learn about how to recognize an abusive relationship and how to get help.

Activities: reading and discussion. Optional: worksheet, skit, letter writing.

The author describes an abusive relationship that began with a seemingly innocent tug on her ponytail.

Note on discussing this story: It is easy to condemn the author for staying in an abusive relationship but in order to understand why this happens the readers should see that the relationship fulfilled some of her needs.

1. Read first column aloud/ speculate about end of story: To get your group interested in reading the story, read the first column to them (or have students read it). Then ask them how they think the relationship will end. You could record their votes and refer to them after they've read the whole story. (Below are some ideas that students are likely to suggest; if they're stuck you can help elicit some of these.)

- Anonymous decides on her own to end the relationship with Danny.
- They stay together after Danny gets counseling and stops abusing her.
- They stay together even though Danny continues to abuse her.
- They stay together after anonymous tells her friends and family about the abuse and they force Danny to stop terrorizing her.
- Anonymous ends the relationship by reporting Danny to the police.
- The relationship ends when Danny moves away. (This is the correct answer)

2. Discussion and/or

Worksheet: Lead a discussion about the story that helps students get a better understanding of the dynamics of abusive relationships. Here are some suggested questions. (Note: You could also put these questions on a worksheet and have students write brief answers before you have a

discussion. Having students write their answers first often leads to a richer discussion.)

Where in the story does Anonymous describe why she was attracted to Danny? What was important to her about the relationship in the beginning?

[He helped her forget problems at home. At first, his control felt like caring.]

Why does Anonymous continue to let Danny abuse her? In other words, what do you think she gets out of the relationship?

[She felt secure “as long as his arms were tightly around me.”]



Why do you think Danny treats Anonymous so badly?

[He grew up seeing his dad hit his mom, according to his cousin.]

Who does she talk to about her problem? Who could she go to?

[She's estranged from her mom. She isolates herself by dumping her friends. However, Danny's mom was abused and she got out of the situation. Danny's cousin sounds like she cares. The friends she dumped might still be willing to talk with her. Anonymous felt very isolated, but she probably had more people who would help her than she thought.]

Where in the story does she tell the reader how the situation was finally resolved? What do you think about this resolution?

[His mother sent him away. She reunites with her friends and meets Greg.]

Conclusion—Where to get help:

Refer your group to “What Is Dating Violence,” p. 16. This question and answer article highlights the work of Safe Horizon, an organization that teens can reach out to if they think they are being abused or if they feel uncomfortable in a relationship. The answers have some practical information about what to do if you or a friend is in a bad relationship.

Skit

See page 4 of Tips for Teachers for a short skit your students can perform, with discussion questions that will help them think about abusive relationships and how to get help.

Writing activity

Write a letter to Anonymous or to Danny telling them your reaction to hearing their story. Give them advice about what they could do to get help. (Not help on their relationship; help with their individual problems.)

Role Play: Should Leneli Date Jeremy?

“Ignoring the Stares,” p. 6, by Leneli Liggay

Goal: Students will explore the pros and cons of interracial dating. Student will also think about balancing parents’ wishes against their own desires.

The following role play will encourage your students to do a close reading of the story and explore the issues involved in interracial dating.

Activities: reading, small group discussion, role play

Prepare students to participate in the role play:

1. Divide the class in half. Tell them this summary of the story:

Leneli, who is Filipina, meets Jeremy, who is black, on the first day of high school. It takes two years of persistence on his part, but eventually they begin dating. However, her parents are opposed to her having any boyfriend at all, but especially one who is not Filipino.

Tell half of the class that they will be asked to play the parents. The other half of the class will get to play a psychologist. They will use their own knowledge of the kinds of arguments parents make, plus facts from Leneli’s story, to enact the role play.

2. Ask students in each group to read the story. Then give them this background for the role play:

Leneli’s parents have discovered that she is dating a non-Filipino boy. They’ve talked to her and learned pretty much everything that Leneli writes in the article, but they are still

strongly opposed to the relationship. Her parents asked Leneli to talk to a psychologist, which she did. She described her relationship to the psychologist as she does in the story.

Leneli’s parents have a meeting with the psychologist. They think that the psychologist is going to tell them how to convince Leneli to break off the relationship. The psychologist wants to convince the parents that the relationship is normal and healthy.



3. Students should talk briefly in their groups about their arguments.

They should think about the role they will play and circle facts and make notes that will support their argument. If you need to prompt the students a bit, arguments could include the following.

For the parents:

—She’s too young for a serious relationship with anyone, much less one with the complications of being interracial.

—It’s generally better to date within your own race (you share background, culture, etc.)

—Even if she and Jeremy are in love, the negative opinions of others will make it hard for them. (She’ll often be in neighborhoods where she might

get mean comments or stares.)

—Jeremy says race is not an issue. That shows how naïve he is. It’s always an issue.

—Even if she wants to date, and date interracial, her respect for her parents should come first.

For the psychologist:

—A good boyfriend is hard to find, and she seems to have found someone who is really interested in her.

—Jeremy also has goals for his own life.

—Jeremy introduced her to his parents just a month into the relationship, and his mom was very supportive.

—They have fun together (going to the mall, going out to eat, etc).

—They didn’t just jump into the relationship (they knew each other for two years).

—The relationship has passed the test of time (they’ve been together for two years).

—Her parents need to realize that she’s growing up and that dating boys (of any race) is part of that process.

4. Then select one student from each group to play the psychologist and one to play the parent. The parent must try to convince the psychologist that Leneli should not date Jeremy. The psychologist must try to convince the parent that dating Jeremy is fine for Leneli.

5. After the role play, ask students to comment. Who was more convincing—the parent or the psychologist? Why?

Abusive Relationships Skit: How to help a friend get help

This skit is another way to help students understand abusive relationships, after reading "My Abusive Boyfriend," p. 14.

Ask students to read the skit to themselves. Then pick two volunteers to read it aloud. (Sandy, the friend, can also be played by a girl or a boy.) Lead a discussion after the skit, using the follow-up questions at the end.

Two teenagers are walking home from school.

Sandy: Hey girl, what's up?

Karen: (Sighs) Oh, nothing.

Sandy: Karen, are you OK?

Karen: Yeah I'm cool. It's just that Jeff and I have been arguing a lot lately.

Sandy: Well, he is a lot older than you.

Karen: Sandy, it's only four years. Big deal.

Sandy: Yeah, but you're a junior in high school and he's a junior in college.

Karen: What does age have to do with anything when two people love each other?

Sandy: Because he's more experi-

enced than you and tries to control you.

Karen: No he doesn't. He's showing me that he loves and cares about me.

Sandy: But doesn't he threaten to leave you when you wanna hang out with your friends and family?

Karen: Yeah, but it's because he just wants to spend all his time with me.

Sandy: So why does he get upset and put you down when you try to make your own decisions?

Karen: (Starts to get defensive) Because he's just looking out for me? Sandy, do you have a problem with Jeff?

Sandy: I have a problem with the way he's treating you.

Karen: What are you talking about? Jeff loves me and treats me well.

Sandy: Well, if he does why is he always checking up on you and talking down to you?

Karen: It's my fault. Sometimes I say and do stupid things.

Sandy: Listen to you. When it comes to Jeff, everything is always your fault.

Karen: But I love him and he loves me. Did you know he wants to marry

me?

Sandy: Well, if he's jealous now, what do you think will happen if you guys get married? Didn't you tell me that the last time he saw you walking with your friend David he embarrassed you and slapped you?

Karen: But Sandy, he thought I was cheating on him.

Sandy: So what? Karen, there is no excuse for hitting. Jeff is abusive.

Karen: (Crying) I just wish he wasn't so angry.

Sandy: Jeff has a problem and as your friend I suggest you break up with him.

Karen: I'm scared to leave him and I don't know what to do or who to talk to.

Sandy: Well, I heard of a place called Safe Horizon where they help people in abusive relationships. If you want I will go with you.

Karen: Ok. I will go. But I don't think it will make any difference. Jeff loves me.

Sandy: (Hugs Karen) We'll see. The important thing is that you'll get a chance to talk about what you want out of your relationship with someone who can help.

Follow-up Questions

- Is Jeff being loving or controlling? How do you know the difference?
- Is Jeff "too old" for Karen? Do you think their age difference has anything to do with the power difference in the relationship?
- Should Karen go to Safe Horizon?
- What do you think she'll learn there?
- Did Karen do the right thing in suggesting it? Or should she keep out of her friend's business?

Get More Teaching Resources at the Youth Communication Website (www.youthcomm.org)

- You can order dozens of books and teacher guides on topics your students are interested in.

- You can download over 250 stories from past issues of *New Youth Connections* and *Represent: The Voice of Youth in Foster Care*.

- You can download lesson ideas from past issues of "Tips for Teachers."



- You can find out about writing workshops for young people in foster care.

- You can browse our book and DVD catalog and order from our e-store.

- You can have your students enter our writing contests.

Thanks to John O'Connor and his colleagues at Boys & Girls High School for this skit.