



# Tips for Teachers

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

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### Writing Contests—Cash Prizes

Writing contest #1: What is something your parents did right?

Deadline: October 5, 2007

### Lesson idea for Writing Contest

#### Write the following on the board:

- Encouraged an interest (sports, music, reading)
- Helped you break a bad habit (eating junk food, smoking)
- Did something that made you feel loved and special (surprise outing to a place you like, an unexpected gift,

**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.

John O'Connor wrote the extensive lesson plans based on the stories "The Daily News Taught Me English" and "Starbury: The New Status Symbol." John is a speech teacher at Boys and Girls High School in Brooklyn.

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told you how great you are)

- Trusted you to do something you wanted to do but they were unsure would be good for you. (Or didn't let you do something that you later realized was indeed a bad idea.)

- Helped solve a problem or overcome a challenge at school or in your personal life

Hand out slips of paper or index cards and ask the group to write down one or two sentences about one time their parents helped them in some way. What did the parents do and how did it make the young person feel? The examples on the board should jog their memories. NOTE: You should also participate in this exercise.

Read your own sentences then ask for volunteers to read theirs out loud. Ask the groups if they've had similar experiences.

Then give the group 2-3 minutes to write down an opening sentence to their essay. (You do it too.) They must include two nouns in the sentence, not including the words "father," "mother," or their equivalents.

End the session by urging them to write a contest submission based on the opening sentence and the discussion you just led. If you can, offer to collect the essays the next day and send them to us. (If you think it's a good idea also encourage them to share their pieces with their parents.)



### Writing contest #2:

Describe a childhood memory that means a lot to you.

Deadline: November 12, 2007

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

"\_\_\_\_\_ was my best friend in the fourth grade and I will never forget the day we \_\_\_\_\_"

The happiest I ever saw my mother was the time we \_\_\_\_\_"

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.)

Tips for Teachers is also available on our website at:  
[www.youthcomm.org](http://www.youthcomm.org)

## Write a Short Essay—A Step-by-Step Approach for Struggling Writers based on “The Daily News Taught Me English” by Angel Ortiz, p. 16.

Lesson written by John O’Connor

**Goal:** Help students analyze a story and then write an essay about it.

Ok, students usually hate writing essays so there is only one thing to do. Don’t tell them they are writing one! By the time they figure it out they are usually having some success.

The students need to develop 3 skills:

1. Finding text is a skill used across the curriculum.
2. Extracting information from that text and paraphrasing it is a more complex skill.
3. Taking that information and arranging it logically is the most elusive goal.

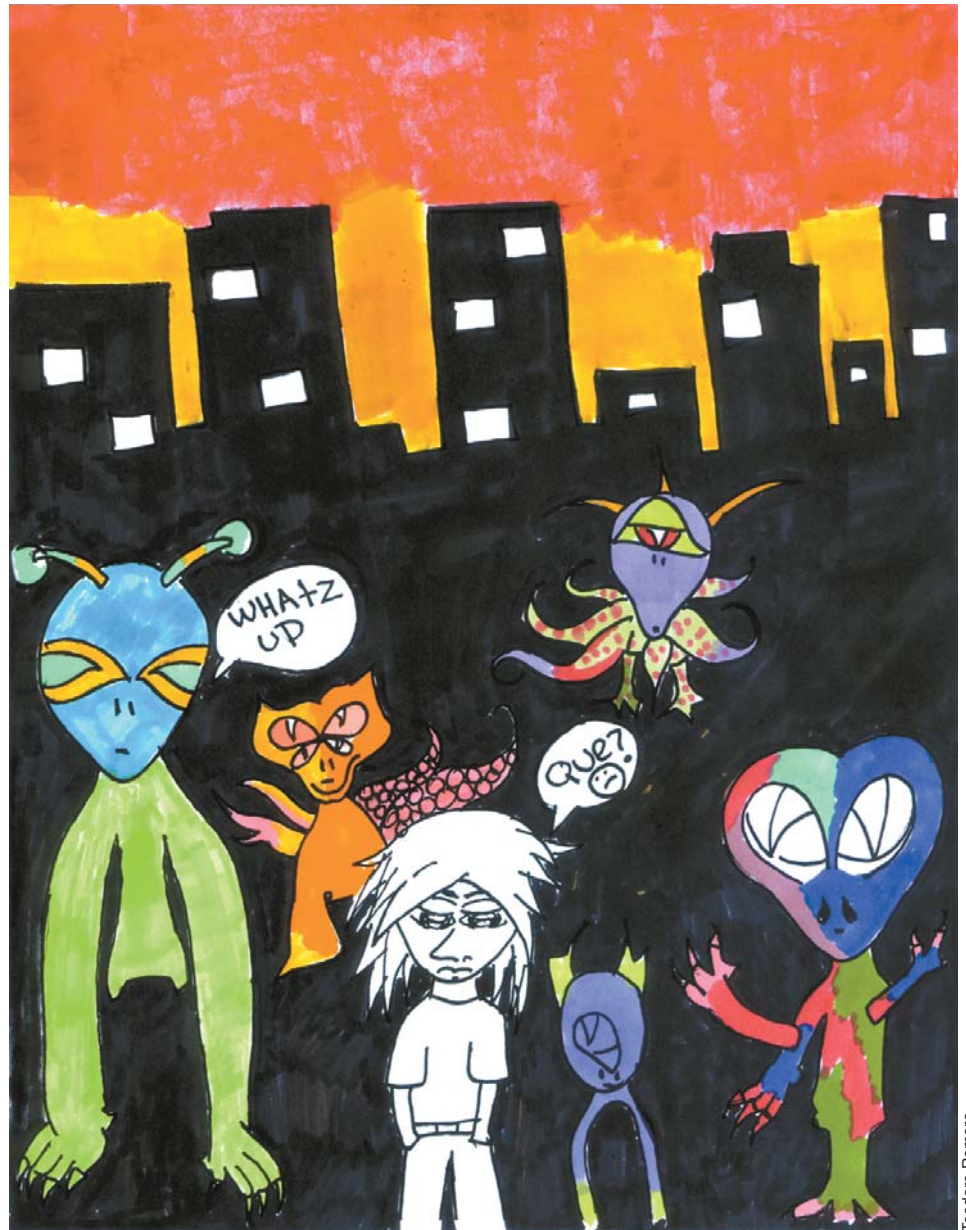
**First step:** Distribute *NYC* a few days ahead of time and assign specific passages to students so that they can practice before reading aloud in class. They should also read the whole story. (Have teacher fill in for absent students or cover difficult passages.)

**Second step:** Ask the students “Who is Angel Ortiz and what is his story about?”

Ask them to write a one or two sentence response. (This question is the most important because, like the lead in a newspaper story, it sets up the rest of the article. As such, it should be fairly broad.)

**Sample answer:** “Angel Ortiz is a teenage boy who wrote a story about his move from Mexico to New York City and how his life changed because of that move.”

**Third step:** Ask students some guiding questions. After each question ask students to *locate the passages* that answer the question and underline the



passage with a pen. Then ask the students to write a response to the question. Explain paraphrasing to them. Here are some guiding questions and sample responses.

1. In what grade did Angel come to New York and was he a serious student?

(Students should now underline any part of the text that will help them answer this question. In this case, paragraphs 1, 5, and perhaps paragraph 7 should be highlighted. Then a big number “1” should be written in the left margin next to that text). Now they extract the information from the highlighted text that they will use in their answer.

**Possible student answer:** He came to this country in the 8th grade, and he was not a serious student. He says he only went to school to “play and bully people.” After school he only played video games.

2. What were teachers like in Mexico? (Continue finding text, highlighting, and extracting pertinent information. Paragraph 6 would be underlined. This text would be designated with a big number “2” and so on).

**Possible student answer:** In Mexico the teachers didn’t care what kind of work he did and neither did he.

3. What was school like in New York City? (Underline paragraph 12)

*Possible student answer:* **When he arrived in NYC he found that school was taken very seriously. Teachers were always watching him and he could not be the clown. They also made him do work.**

4. What other major problem did Angel have? (Paragraph 11)

**Angel had another major problem. He didn't speak English. He had assumed that he would pick it up in a few weeks. It was harder than he thought and because he couldn't understand what anyone was saying, he felt surrounded by aliens.**

5. Eventually, what did he realize? (Paragraph 13)

**After months of complaining, Angel eventually realized that complaining didn't change things.**

6. What did he do at that point? (Paragraphs 15 and 17)

**He began to take the advice of his ESL teacher and read the newspaper. At that point, he not only started to understand English but also became more informed about the world.**

7. Now that he is in high school, how does he feel about his teacher and New York? (Paragraph 26)

**Now that he is in high school, he thanks his teacher for forcing him to live up to his abilities. He sometimes wonders what his life would have been like if he had stayed in Mexico. But mostly he appreciates New York City for making him a more caring and worldly person.**

**Final step:** Most of the work is done. By combining the answers to questions 1–7, and adding some transition words (*italicized* below) the students should be able to put together a logical summary of this story. Also have the students notice that some of the transitions are buried in the questions, so by borrowing from the question they have helped themselves.

*Sample student essay:* Angel Ortiz is a teenage boy who wrote a story about his move from Mexico to New York City and how his life changed because of that move. *When* he came to this country in the 8th grade, Angel was not a serious student. *In fact* he says he only went to school to “play and bully people.” *After* school he only played video games.

In Mexico the teachers didn't care what kind of work he did and neither did he.

*However*, when he arrived in New York City, he found that school was taken very seriously. Teachers were always watching him and he could not be the clown. *Additionally* they made him do schoolwork.

Angel had another major problem. He didn't speak English. He had assumed that he would pick it up in a few weeks. *However*, it was harder than he thought and *because* he couldn't understand what anyone was saying, he felt like he was surrounded by aliens.

After months of complaining, Angel *eventually* realized that complaining didn't change things. He began to take the advice of his ESL teacher and read the newspaper. *At that point*, he not only started to understand English but also became more informed about the world.

Now that he is in high school, he thanks his teacher for forcing him to live up to his abilities. He sometimes wonders what his life would have been like if he had stayed in Mexico. But mostly he appreciates New York City for making him a more caring and worldly person.

(END OF LESSON)

**Attention college counselors:**

Your students will find basic information on the college application process along with a peer's cautionary tale starting on page 21.

**Attention health educators:**

If you do an anti-smoking class be sure to see the article on page 6.

## What Do You Value? Discussion Lesson/Short Math Lesson based on “Starbury: The New Status Symbol?” by Donald Moore, p. 4.

**Lesson written by John O'Connor**

This article asks some interesting questions about value and values in our culture.

### Discussion

Before distributing the article present the following scenario to students:

You have to choose between 2 computer printers. They look slightly different but otherwise print the same quality text at the same speed. One costs \$15 and the other costs \$125. Which one do you choose and why?

Now distribute the “Starbury” article and present the same scenario except substitute sneakers for printers and make the choice Starburys vs. Nikes. Discuss.

### Vocabulary alert for “Starbury” story.

Before you read the story together aloud tell your students that there are several words and expressions in this story they may not understand. You can list them on the board or note them as they appear in the story. Here's a list:

status symbol	indigo
measly	apparel
coveted	monitors
butt of jokes	materialistic
exclusively	exorbitant
insignificant	endorse
stylized	generic
reap	

Read article together and discuss along the way, taking into consideration the information and opinions the author is providing. Does anyone change or modify his or her viewpoint based on this new information?

### Listening

Even though the students will

have read the story by now, it can still be used for a listening exercise. In fact, it may work better now that they are familiar with the article.

Ask the students to focus and clear their minds.

Read each section aloud.

At the end of each section, ask questions going from easy to difficult.

For instance the first passage questions could be:

- 1) What reasons did the author give his mother for not wearing the sneakers she had bought him?
- 2) What were the real reasons?
- 3) Why was he surprised that people "were lining up" to buy Starburys?

Continue questioning through each section.

### Math activities

There are some word problems that students can solve by digging through the text.

Even students who can do arithmetic often struggle with problems like this because they have language difficulties and they don't know what operations to use.

Direct the students to the heading "Ripped off by Nike."

- 1) What is the difference between the cost of a pair of Starburys and a



Byron Fabon

## YOUTH COMMUNICATION'S WEB SITE

Here's what you can find at [youthcomm.org](http://youthcomm.org).

- 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 and independent living 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.

pair of Nikes?  
(\$125-\$15=\$110)

2) If you were paying for your own sneakers and had a job making \$5.00 an hour, how many extra hours would you have to work to buy the Nikes instead of the Starburys? (You need to make an extra \$110 to buy Nikes. Divide the \$110 by what you make an hour,  $\$5. 110/5= 22.$ )

3) If you worked 5 hours a day, how many days would it take to work 22 hours?  
(22 divided by 5 = 4.4days)

4) Is it worth almost 4 and a half

days of extra work to buy the Nikes?

### Role play

Ask one student to play a parent and one student to play her or his teenager. The teenager asks her to buy a pair of \$125 sneakers. The parent wants to buy the \$15 Starburys. Let the conversation/argument go on for 3-5 minutes and then ask the class what they would do if they were the parent. (You can play the parent if no one volunteers.)

(END OF LESSON)

## STORIES WITH STRONG ROLE MODELS

Your students will find positive, achieving peers in these stories who will validate their better instincts and show how to put them into practice.

"I Keep My Bling in the Bank," p. 8 features a hard working young man who realizes the value of saving some money.

"Falling in Love With Spanish," p. 15 describes how good it feels to learn another language.

"The *Daily News* Taught Me English," p. 16 depicts how a young immigrant went from shirker to learner.

"Buying Brand Names to Fit In," p. 24 is about a young woman who finds out that friendships don't have to be based on wearing the "right" clothes.