



Tips for Teachers

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

December 2002

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:

**"If I Ruled the
World..."**

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

Deadline: December 30

(Last day of school: 12/20)

A note on the lessons

The following lessons are designed to promote reflection on issues raised by the stories in *NYC*. Each story is summarized briefly, followed by prompts that can be used to initiate discussion and/or brief writing assignments. In some cases, where we think a question is particularly suited for writing, we indicate that. In addition, role plays and group exercises are sometimes suggested for more active learning experiences.

A note on the roleplays

You will need two or three teens to act out the suggested roleplays in front of class. Make sure the young people understand their roles by briefly reviewing the characters in the stories. Each participant has to try to convince the other of her point of view as described in the roleplay. Let the roleplay go on for about five minutes. Then have the class discuss what they've seen and relate it back to the themes in the story.

A note on the group exercises

These activities are designed to have students work together in pairs or small groups. They can then share their work with the larger group in a general discussion.

THIS ISSUE'S THEME:

The Ups And Downs Of Dating

In this issue of *NYC*, several writers examine the trials and tribulations of dating, from first date jitters, to dating on-line, to dealing with parents' objections to their objects of affection. Use these stories to stimulate discussion about what teens want from relationships, and what makes a good one hard to find.

A Difficult First Date

In "Analyze This," p. 3, Lucas Mann describes his anxiety during a first date. An allergy attack causes his nose to run during a crucial moment at the movies, but the young woman is forgiving and goes out with him again.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—What was your worst moment during a first date? What was the worst thing you said or did (or that the other person said or did)?

—What's your favorite activity for a first date? Why?

—Writing assignment. Of awkward dating moments, Lucas writes, "Things can't possibly be as bad as the gruesome battle scene going on in your head." Write out some of the "gruesome battle scenes" you've had in your head during a date. Compare them to what actually happened during the date.

She's More Cautious Now

In "Rush to Love," p. 4, Jennifer Ramos describes how she rushed into a relationship



Shaun Shishido

too quickly with a boy named Dan. She thinks it's love, but then gets turned off by his gang activity and breaks up with him. She's more cautious now. In sidebars, she discusses the kinds of boys that attract her and how she was once torn between friendship and love with a male companion.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—After watching films like *Pretty Woman* and *While You Were Sleeping*, Jennifer feels like love can "change everything." Where did you get your ideas about love and relationships from? Movies? TV? Family? Friends? From actually going out with people? Have those ideas changed? How?

—With Jennifer's first boyfriend, Eddy, the connection just isn't there. What was your first boyfriend/girlfriend like? What was the connection based on?

—Jennifer falls in love with Dan and believes that love will "overpower the bad

Tips for Teachers is also available on our web site at:
www.youthcomm.org

things” she doesn’t like about him. Have you been in a similar situation, where you thought love would overcome the bad things about a person? What eventually happened? Was love enough to overcome the bad things?

—After her experience with Dan, Jennifer says she’s learned it isn’t healthy “to have such a big need for love.” What does Jennifer mean by this? How does it apply to your own life?

—Jennifer says she now takes it slow and doesn’t rush into relationships. Are you someone who takes it slow or rushes into things? Why?

—Jennifer says many people are attracted to “thuggish types” because they are exciting people to go out with. Do you agree or disagree?

—Instead of “thuggish types,” Jennifer now prefers “thuggish nice types.” According to Jennifer, what’s the difference between the two? Do you agree? What type of person do you prefer to go out with?

—Jennifer has a close male friend named



Kerly Dillard

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Amy has conflicts with her parents because they have “traditional values” and don’t even approve of friendships with boys. What conflicts do you have with your parents over dating? How do their values conflict with your own? How are they similar?

—Amy’s parents believe that a 14-year-old child does not have the emotional maturity to date. Do you agree or disagree with this view? Why?

—Writing. Amy says, “Dating is different for everyone and really depends on how fast a person matures. It’s not someone’s age that determines whether he or she is ready to date; it has more to do with how that person feels.” Write a reaction to this statement, explaining why you agree or disagree with what Amy says, and why.

—The anonymous writer has been told she can’t date Black or Latino men.

Have your parents ever forbidden you to date people of a certain race or ethnic group? What reasons did they give? How did this affect your relationship with your parents? Your dating life?

—Can you be completely open with your parents about whom you date? Or do you have to hide things? If so, what do you have to hide, and why?

Internet Dating

In “Online Love,” p. 9, the anonymous writer meets a boy through an Internet chat room and ends up going out with him. They have a very good relationship, but the writer doesn’t tell people how they met. An accompanying article on p. 8 describes the hazards of dating online and how to protect yourself.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—Does the Internet appeal to you as a way of meeting people? If so, what is appealing about it? If not, what don’t you like about it?

—Would you date someone you met through the Internet? Why or why not?

—Was the writer taking a big risk by meeting the boy in person? Why or why not?

—If you went out with someone you met through the Internet, would you tell people how you met? Why or why not?

Problems with Parents

In “Mom Says, ‘No Boys,’” p. 10, Amy Huang describes how even a casual friendship with a boy causes tension with her conservative, Chinese-born parents. And in “Papa, Don’t Preach,” p. 11, the anonymous writer, who is a Filipina, dates Black and Latino boys in defiance of her parents’ wishes.



Cezary Ladocha

Jo. She doesn’t tell him she’s interested in more than friendship for fear of ruining the friendship. Have you ever been in a similar situation? Did you tell your friend about your attraction? What eventually happened? Would you do the same thing again? Why or why not?



Cezary Ladocha



Stephanie Wilson

Obsessed and Distressed

In “Him Fan,” p. 12, Keshia Harrell writes about how her attraction to a boy named Jamel became an obsession. Despite warning signs that he was not an ideal person, she finds herself spending almost a year thinking about someone she hardly knows. Eventually she realizes he’s a jerk and is a little wiser about falling in love.

A Quick Way to Get Everyone Writing

Letters to the Editor: We welcome letters to the editor and publish most of them. This is an easy way to involve everyone in a short writing assignment (and they will get the satisfaction of seeing their names in print). Writing letters can be an ideal “Do Now” exercise after your students finish reading articles in *NYC*. Use these prompts to get your students started (a few sentences on one or more of these points will be sufficient for a letter):

- “I liked/disliked the article because...”
- “A point I really agree with in the article, based on my experience, is...”
- “A point I really disagree with, based on my experience, is...”
- “A solution to one of the problems in this article might be...”



Prompts for discussion And/or writing:

—Did you ever have a crush on someone you didn't really know, like Keshia has on Jamel? What eventually happened? Did it change, in any way, your attitude toward relationships?

—Jamel doesn't seem to be a very nice person. He insults people and once exposed himself to a friend of Keshia's. Why do you think she has a crush on him, despite such obvious warning signs that he's someone to avoid? Or do you think Keshia is attracted to him because of that behavior?

—Keshia writes, “I used Jamel to escape my day-to-day routine and enter a fantasy land. He was a mystery, so I could imagine whatever I wanted.” Have you ever used someone in that way? What's the difference between a relationship based on fantasy and one based on reality? Which do you prefer?

—Keshia gets over her obsession when she realizes she doesn't really like Jamel. Now she doesn't use guys as a distraction any more. Have you had a

relationship that changed your views on dating? What was the relationship, and why did it have that impact on you?

Those Three Little Words

Antwaun Garcia, in “Confessions of a Reformed Player,” p. 20, writes about his struggle to figure out what kinds of relationships will be truly satisfying to him, emotionally, not just sexually. At first, all he wants is sex and he treats women badly. As he matures, he realizes that he wants someone who he can talk to, who understands him, who he can really fall in love with. That changes his whole attitude toward women and dating—and himself.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

—When Antwaun starts to realize he wants more than sex in a relationship, he has a problem. Every time he starts getting really close to a female, he says he can't tell her how



he really feels. Why can't he? How do you feel about expressing your real feelings to someone you care about?

—When Antwaun really falls in love for the first time, it's with a girl he's known since elementary school. Why do you think this is the person he really falls for? How does he treat her differently than the girls he didn't care about as much?

—Some teens have been let down by people who were supposed to love them. Do you think that makes it harder for them to open up in a relationship? What are they protecting? What do they gain by not opening up? What do they lose?

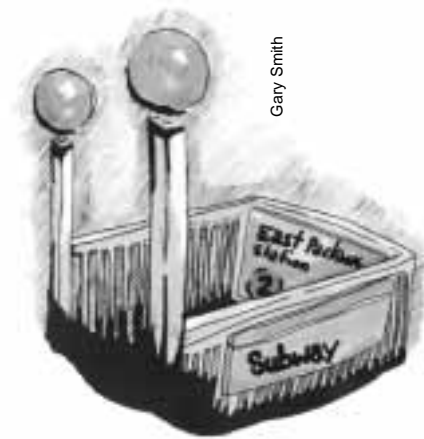
Subway Stories

In these articles, on pps. 14-16, several writers discuss odd, frightening, or entertaining moments on the subway. Use these stories to stimulate discussion and writing among your students about their own underground experiences.

Dancing, Drawing, and Danger

Keshia Harrell in “Sex Shows on the Q,” p. 14, describes an episode of sexy dancing by a “pole pro” that livened up an otherwise routine ride home on the train. Jennifer Ramos (“J-Loca on the 6,” p. 14) and Elizabeth Sanchez (“Rowdy Girls, Thieving Boys,” p. 15) write about encounters with artists and thieves. And Stephanie Nolasco (“A Scary Ride,” p. 16) has a frightening moment with a violent man.





Gary Smith

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

- What do you like most about the subway? What do you like least?
- Have you ever had an experience similar to what these writers describe? What was it?
- Write about your most scary/funny/memorable moment on the subway. (Be descriptive in your writing and use dialogue if you can.)

Other Stories

Senior Stories

On pps. 6-7, three writers describe the challenges they face as high school seniors. Nell Becker in "Together, but Alone, at the SAT," writes about how the test brings her together with similarly stressed-out peers. Elizabeth Sanchez in "Media for My People" focuses on her dream of creating a media organization for young people. And Keshia Harrell describes her fear of making college-related decisions.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

- What is most stressful about being a senior? How do you try to deal with that stress?



Cezary Ladocha

—Nell says her "definition" is 1270—her score on the SAT. Do you think the SAT unfairly labels young people, according to the score they get? Why or why not?

—Keshia can't study for the SAT because she feels too much pressure. How is pressure affecting your ability to plan for life after high school?

—Because she's grown up in poverty, Elizabeth dreams of establishing a media center for underprivileged youth. What goals or dreams do you have for the future? How are they related to the way you grew up?

Group activity: Students can work in pairs or small groups. Tell the groups they are in charge of coming up with ideas for replacing the SAT with a better way of evaluating student performance. In other words, aside from testing, how can colleges tell if a student is motivated and will do well in college? Have the groups share and compare their ideas in a general discussion with the class.

Kids vs. Parents

Some parents scream when their children break curfew. Others turn into quiet but methodical detectives. Lucas Mann, in "The Parent Trap" (p. 21), describes the many ways that kids and parents fail to understand each other.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

- When you break curfew (or break other rules) how do your parents react? What is their "style" of reacting?
- What major conflicts do you have with your parents? Are you able to resolve them? Why or why not?
- Do you want your parents to more strict or less strict? Why?
- How could you and your parents work together to resolve your conflicts? What could you do on your end? What could they do on theirs?



Gary Smith

Roleplay: Two teens, playing a youth and a parent. Ask teen volunteers to act out the various ways that parents and kids react to conflicts. Use the roleplays for a discussion about how communication can be improved.

Dinosaur Music

In "From Nirvana to 'Heaven'," p. 17, Matt Lehrer is turned off by rap music and finds an odd source for music he learns to love: his father's record collection of ancient stars, like The Beatles and Jimi Hendrix.

Prompts for discussion and/or writing:

- Can you relate to the music your parents like (or of their generation)? Why or why not?
- In your mind, how far back does "old school" go? Where do you draw the line?
- Do you have any musical tastes that conflict with what your peers like? In what ways? Do you try to keep these tastes a secret? Why or why not?



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. 29th St., 2nd fl.,
 New York, NY 10001
 212-279-0708 ext.100

www.youthcomm.org

Additional copies may be downloaded at our website, under "Teacher Resources."