



Regents Practice #2

Using *New Youth Connections*

Use the following *New Youth Connections* story and practice lesson to help your students prepare for the New York State English Regents exam. (Not prepping for the Regents? This is a good story and the lesson will help your students become more careful readers or listeners.)

Rights Questioned in School Scandal

By Janill Briones

I believe that we Americans have it good with our right to freedom of speech and of the press. I also believe that we should use that right responsibly.

I was shocked that in a recent nationwide survey of teens' opinions of our First Amendment rights, a third said they believe that the press (newspapers, magazines and other media) has "too much freedom to do what it wants." It surprised me that the number was so large.

Then when I conducted my own version of the survey in my school, Science Skills Center HS, 42% also said the press has too much freedom. I wondered why they thought that.

School in a Frenzy

By then, I'd discovered that the questions were confusing (see above story). But I also realized that right before I conducted the survey, our school paper had published an article that had the whole school in a frenzy. It might have soured

my classmates' view of the press and made them feel that people who exercise their right to freedom of speech do so irresponsibly.

Written by "Jean Don R.B.," a pen name, the article said the school had a lot of people coming out as gay, and how that must be stopped. The article quoted a psychologist saying, "Sometimes it helps a teen when others discriminate against them. It helps or forces them to act or try to be straight." The article ends by warning us to make sure that gay people don't convince us to become gay as well.

I couldn't believe someone would write something so cruel and insulting. It seemed like a total put-down of gay people.

Then I realized that all of the sources quoted were fake. The whole thing was made up—it wasn't a reported story at all. I felt that it gave journalists a bad name and I thought to myself, "No wonder so many people hate the press so much."

So many students and teachers were upset about the story that we had an assembly about it that following Monday.

The editor of the paper, a teacher, said the article was supposed to be a satire, making fun of those intolerant of gay people.

That's Not Funny

Most students and teachers still found it offensive and said that if it were meant to be a joke, then the writer should've made that clear and not make it seem as if it were a real story.

Several students and teachers asked the editor to apologize for the article. Defending herself, she argued that the writer had the right to freedom of speech, and that she wasn't going to apologize for that.

I agree that the article's writer had every right to speak what was on his mind, but I believe that he should have been more responsible about it. Making up facts and presenting them as truths undermines the overall reliability and trustworthiness of a publication or news show.

In order for people to trust the press, the press must act responsibly with their right. ☒

Practice Lesson for Regents Exam Listening Section

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.

Regents Practice 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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