

# Ycteen

March/April 2012

## LESSON GUIDE

### Note to Educators:

You may have noticed that the reading level of our stories has increased recently. This reflects our ongoing effort to provide high-quality, Common Core-aligned materials and lessons that challenge students while maintaining high-interest content that is relevant and relatable to our teen readers. Our lessons are designed to support students in developing the skills they need to meet Common Core standards. However, depending on your students' skill levels, we encourage you to supplement our lessons with additional pre-reading activities to support optimal comprehension.

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## **Announcements**

### ***YCteen* Writing Contests**

Apply online at [ycteen.org](http://ycteen.org)

#### **Contest #212: Due April 16, 2012**

Describe a time when you got good advice from an adult but didn't take it. Why didn't you follow the advice? When did you realize you should have? How do you think things would have turned out differently if you'd taken the advice?

#### **Contest #213: Due June 29, 2012**

Have you ever had a dream that you considered especially significant? What happened in the dream? How did you interpret it, and why did you consider it insightful or important?

### **Annual Youth Communication Summer Writing Workshop: Deadline: May 11, 2012**

Now seeking applications from New York City students ages 15-20 for our writing and multimedia workshop, which will be held July 9-August 16 in our Manhattan office. Working with professional editors, students will have the opportunity to collaborate with a team and learn interviewing, research, writing, and multimedia skills. Thousands of people will read their stories in our magazines and on our websites; selected stories may also appear on the *Huffington Post* and in books. [Download an application here](#) or call 212-279-0708, ext. 112 to request one by mail. Top candidates will be invited in for interviews in mid-May.

### **Special Issue of *Represent* about School**

[Represent](#) is *YCteen's* sister magazine. It is written by and for youth in foster care, and reflects the difficult lives of children who have been separated from their birth families.

In the current issue of *Represent*, teens write about their struggles to get through both high school and college, and how school can be a haven from the chaos in their lives. To read the stories from this issue, visit [bit.ly/Represent108](http://bit.ly/Represent108)

## **Issue Review**

This issue focuses on teens dealing with their insecurities, and also includes stories about family relationships and health.

### **Stories English teachers can use:**

#### **Would a Skin Condition Ruin My Sweet 16? p. 3**

It's a month before Allison's big bash, and her skin has suddenly erupted in itchy red spots that won't go away. She's so self-conscious that she contemplates not attending her own party.

#### **Dealing With Self-Doubt, p. 5**

Some teens deal with their insecurities by bullying others, but there are kinder, gentler ways to make ourselves feel more confident.

#### **Lonely Girl, p. 6**

Neha becomes fast friends with Ali, bonding over their shared Nepali heritage. Soon, Neha realizes that Ali is lonely and wants to do something, but her attempt to help creates in a rift in the friendship.

#### **Mom Knows Best, p. 7**

Sherilyn watches her older sister Carmen go from a success-in-the-making to a runaway with a bad news boyfriend. When Carmen asks to come home, Sherilyn agrees with their mom's tough love response.

#### **Bittersweet 15, p. 9**

Nicole's beloved grandmother dies shortly before her *quinceañera*, and the celebration is tinged with sadness. Still, the family finds ways to comfort one another and remember the good times.

#### **The House That Built Our Family, p. 10**

Rosie's house—where her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins have all lived—is a symbol of her family's unity and closeness. When the matriarch of the family dies, the house feels like a memorial to her.

#### **Perfectionista: My Inner Critic Almost Stopped the Music, p. 12**

Playing the piano is an escape from the pressure Linda puts on herself to be a perfect student. When her constant self-criticism starts affecting her music, she realizes she needs to ease up on herself. *See lesson*

#### **Fake It Till You Make It, p. 15**

Emmanuel is intimidated by the competition at his first speech tournament. When he makes the judges laugh, he realizes that acting confident is part of a winning strategy. *See lesson*

**Freed From the Herd, p. 16**

Malik cuts school to go to the park with a new group of friends. There, the friends have a run-in with the police, and Malik wonders if he's hanging out with the wrong crowd.

**Standing Up to the Haters, p. 17**

Breanna's not happy when she's teamed up with Amani, a quiet, poorly-dressed girl, for a class project. But when another student makes fun of Amani, Breanna decides to defend her.

**Speak Out on Breaking Up, p. 21**

*YCteen* reporters ask their peers about the dos and don'ts of ending a relationship

**Stories that guidance counselors, college advisors, transfer school staff, GED instructors, and others can use:**

**Is College for Me? p. 14**

In her senior year, Breanna realizes that she needs to get her grades up if she wants to get into college. Looming deadlines and mixed messages from her family contribute to her anxiety about the future. *See lesson and video*

**Stories health educators can use:**

**Stay STD-Free With Self-Serve Sex, p. 4**

When *YCteen* reporters interview three health clinic workers, they learn that you can catch STDs from oral sex and that a condom may not protect against diseases that spread by skin-to-skin contact. The only kind of safe sex, one nurse tells them, is "self-serve."  
*See lesson*

**Secret Sorrow, p. 22**

The author is haunted by the sexual abuse she suffered as a child. When she finally tells her parents, their response makes her feel worse. The only person who seems to understand is her boyfriend.

## Lesson 1. Preparing for College—Reading Comprehension and Written Response

**Story to use:** “Is College for Me?”

**Objectives:**

- Students will identify common road blocks to college admission and academic success and develop several concrete strategies for overcoming such obstacles.
- Students will use the reading strategy of text marking to support their comprehension of a short story.
- Students will write a four-paragraph letter stating common obstacles and solutions to college preparation.
- Students will write with a tone appropriate to audience.

**Standards:** This lesson meets Common Core Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. (See end of lesson for a complete list.)

**Introduction:** Write this quote on the board: “Better late than never.” Ask the students: Have you ever procrastinated about doing something important? What made you procrastinate? How did it turn out?

Some students will say they work better under pressure. If you receive this response, ask whether it is always possible to make procrastination work for you; for example, does procrastination work well when your task has a lot of complicated steps that require input from other people?

Tell students that college is a good example of a complicated process that has multiple steps and strict deadlines. Point out that many students have doubts about whether they are prepared for college. Some question whether college is a “good fit,” for example if their grades aren’t great or if they don’t have many financial resources. Some are intimidated by all the steps involved in applying to college and may doubt whether they have the self-discipline or skills to succeed once they’re there. Ask the students whether any of them have felt that way about college.

**Reading:** Tell students that they’re going to read a story about a girl facing those kinds of doubts about college. Her doubts cause her to procrastinate until her senior year, when she must finally face her doubts—and the reality of life after high school. Have students take turns reading aloud the story “Is College for Me?” (Alternatively, you can divide them into partners or small groups for this activity.)

Before they read, instruct students to underline obstacles that prevent the author from feeling prepared for college. Point out that this kind of text marking is a strategy that can support reading comprehension if they practice it regularly.

After reading, lead a group discussion about these obstacles, and what kinds of solutions the author came up with to eliminate the obstacles. You may wish to make a chart with problems and solutions, like this:

*Obstacle:* Family didn't communicate much about her goals and the specifics of college

*Solution:* Share specific goals with parents or other trusted adults to gain support in making specific plans to pursue goals

*Obstacle:* Procrastinated about making decisions about which college might be a good fit for her

*Solution:* Visited college campuses to get a "feel" for college life; talked to cousin and roommates about how they handled the pressures of academics and life on their own; could have done more research about what different colleges offered (in terms of academics, financially, student life) to identify colleges where she'd have the best chance of success

*Obstacle:* Limited finances

*Solution:* Devised a plan to work part time while going to a community college to save money, then transferring after a year.

*Obstacle:* Fear of continuing bad study habits she'd developed in high school

*Solution:* Social support: Take the initiative to form study groups with college classmates; meet with professor to keep herself accountable; get mom/other family members to help her study. Turn off all electronic devices during study time.

**Writing:** Tell students they are going to use this list to write a four-paragraph letter to an incoming freshman who is not feeling so confident about whether college should be in his/her future. The purpose of the letter is to encourage him/her to begin preparing for college, giving specific suggestions. Remind students that the single biggest obstacle is usually self-doubt: a lack of confidence in one's own abilities. Therefore, writing with an encouraging *tone* is as important as giving realistic, concrete suggestions. (Note: you may need to review the meanings of tone and audience.)

Instruct students that the letter should include an introduction asserting that college is within reach, but requires concrete steps to get there. The next two paragraphs should anticipate common obstacles, and pose solutions they can pursue to get on track for college. (Remind students to draw on the Obstacles/Solutions chart they created in Activity #1 for content.) The fourth paragraph should be a conclusion that will motivate the reader to want to implement those suggestions.

Note: Depending on the skill level of your students, you may wish to add a mini-lesson to this activity about the purpose of a thesis statement, topic sentence, and supporting sentences.

***Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:***

Key Ideas and details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

#### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

### ***Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing***

#### Text types and Purposes

- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Range of Writing

- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### ***Common Core Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening***

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**For more stories about college admissions, see our book *Finding My Place: Minority Teens About College* at [bit.ly/collegeforme](http://bit.ly/collegeforme)**

## Lesson 2. Confidence Under Pressure

**Story to use:** “Fake It Till you Make It,” p. 15

**Objectives:**

- Students will demonstrate comprehension of a short story and articulate its plot and theme.
- Students will reflect on the traits necessary to feel confidence under pressure, and connect it to challenges they’ve faced in their own lives.
- Students will write a brief personal narrative that draws parallels to the theme developed in the short story.

**Standards:** This lesson meets Common Core Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. (See end of lesson for a complete list.)

**Introduction:** Ask the students to volunteer responses to the following questions. Then, write responses on the board.

- What are the qualities you need to succeed in a competition?
- (Possible responses: talent, hard work, practice, confidence/belief in self, encouragement)
- Among the responses, which do students think is the most important (students may disagree; that is fine—encourage them to defend their point of view.)

Tell students they are going to read a story about a national speech competition. The author is facing a lot of pressure and self-doubt. Will he be successful?

**Reading:** Have students take turns reading the story aloud in pairs, small groups or as a class. Pause periodically to check for understanding. Next, have students answer the following questions in their groups, then discuss their responses as a class.

- In five sentences or less, describe the plot of this story.
- Why was the author anxious about the competition?
- What happened in the first round to change his confidence level?
- To what does the author attribute their loss in the final round? How does he feel about it?
- What do you think is the theme of this story? Why?
- The author begins the story with a quote: “It’s not who you are that holds you back, it’s who you think you’re not.” What do you think the quote means?

**Writing:** Write about a time that you were involved in a competition or challenge that made you doubt your own abilities. Describe the situation and why you felt a lack of confidence. Then, describe the steps you took to improve your performance. Or, if you don’t feel like you were successful in handling the challenge, what might you have done to increase your confidence and handle the situation more successfully? Whether you think you were successful or not, what did you learn from that experience that you can apply to future challenges? How?



***Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:***

## Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
- Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

***Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing:***

## Text types and Purposes

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

## Production and Distribution of Writing

- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## Range of Writing

- Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

***Common Core Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening:***

## Comprehension and Collaboration

- Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### Lesson 3. Media Literacy: How Do You Know That's True?—Reading, Discussion, Short Writing Responses

**Story to use:** “Dealing With Self-Doubt?” p. 5

**Objectives:**

- Students will think critically about the information they gather from news items, the Internet, and other sources.
- Students will learn about how other teens have dealt with their insecurities and self-doubts.

**Introduction:** Write this phrase on the board or an easel pad: “Almost everybody is insecure about something.” Then write this list on the board or pad:

Sources of information:

Experts

Eyewitnesses

People affected by events or situations

Information found in reputable or well-known publications or web sites

Surveys of people’s opinions or behaviors

Personal connections

Tell the group they are going to read a story about people’s self-doubts and insecurities, discuss whether the article is convincing, and then write a short response to the article. Ask them to take one minute to reflect silently on times when they doubted their abilities to do well in school, sports or other extracurricular activities, and social situations. Also ask them to consider if they ever felt insecure about a personal quality or trait: their intelligence, weight, height, speaking abilities, etc.

**Reading:** Say to the group, “We are going to read a story about how many people have doubts about their self-worth. The writer uses certain evidence to back up her claim that most people feel insecure about something. As you read the story, look for the sources she uses.”

You can have them read the article silently or ask for volunteers to take turns reading it aloud.

When they are finished reading, ask them to look at the sources of information list on the board. Ask for volunteers to name the sources she used. The group should identify the web site mentioned, the three interviews or profiles of the teens, and the *Psychology Today* magazine blog.

Ask the group if the sources used helped convince them that most people have insecurities. Had they ever heard of the web site [livestrong.com](http://livestrong.com) or *Psychology Today* magazine? Would using other web sites or publications have been more convincing to

them? Ask them what other sources from the board the writer might have used to make her story more convincing.

**Writing:** After reading the story, you have to write five sentences. The first sentence should tell your readers what the main point or argument of the story is. The next four sentences should tell your readers why the evidence persuades you, or fails to persuade you, that the story's claim is correct.

## Lesson 4. Practice for Regents Exam Reading Section

**Story to use:** “Perfectionista,” pp. 12-13

### Objectives:

- Students will improve skills needed to do well on the Regents reading section: Making inferences, recognizing key facts and the main point in a text, understanding the purpose of individual sentences, etc.

**Standards:** This lesson meets Common Core Standards for Reading. (See end of lesson for a complete list.)

**Note:** The Regents English exam has a section that requires students to read a passage between 400 and 600 words long, and answer six multiple-choice questions. The passage here is slightly longer than the typical Regents passage and there are more than six questions on the practice test, which is included at the end of the lesson.

**Vocabulary:** This selection from the story contains several words your students may not be familiar with. List them on the board before they read the selection, explain the definitions aloud, and write simple definitions or synonyms on the board.

Intrigued  
Evoke  
Eclectic  
Mesmerized  
Broached  
Esoteric  
Reassurance

**Instructions:** Next, put these directions on the board or read them slowly: “Read the story up until the small headline Embracing Failure. Don’t read past this point. Below each passage, there are several multiple-choice questions. Select the best suggested answer to each question and circle the correct answers.” (Note: After the exercise, you can assign your students to read the rest of the story.)

**Answer Key: Question 1-Answer 3, 2-2, 3-4, 4-3, 5-2, 6-3, 7-1, 8-4**

### *Common Core Anchor Standards for Reading:*

Key Ideas and Details

- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**Regents Practice Question Sheet**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1) Which statement would the author agree with?**

- 1) Words can never hurt you.
- 2) Actions speak louder than words.
- 3) Words can influence how you feel.
- 4) If you are good at math then you will be good at music.

**2) What kind of writing is this piece?**

- 1) Fiction
- 2) Memoir
- 3) Editorial
- 4) History

**3) How did she take her piano lessons?**

- 1) At her high school
- 2) With a private teacher
- 3) Online
- 4) At a college

**4) What word best describes her math teacher?**

- 1) Mischievous
- 2) Smart
- 3) Insensitive
- 4) Supportive

**5) What inspired her to learn a musical instrument?**

- 1) Doing badly at math
- 2) Going to a concert
- 3) Talking with her parents
- 4) Hearing church music

## Lesson 5. Health: Sexually Transmitted Diseases - Reading, Treasure Hunt, and Discussion

**Story to use:** “Stay STD-Free With Self-Serve Sex,” p. 4

### Objectives:

- Students will identify the dangers of unprotected sex.
- Students will identify how to avoid getting STDs.
- Students will learn about the best ways get accurate information about birth control, STDs, and other sex education topics.

**Standards:** This activity aligns with the Sexual Risk Functional Knowledge standards in the Guidance Document for Achieving the New York State Standards in Health Education

**Reading:** Divide the group into sub-groups, hand out the *YCteen* issue, and ask them to turn to p 4. Tell them that each group is going to read the same article about sexually transmitted diseases (or STDs) and other sex education topics. The story is in the form of an interview with three health educators: Nancy, Carolyn, and Kristin.

Tell the students: “You will have ten minutes to read the article. I will then read a series of statements that may have been made by one of the three women in the article. Each group has to identify and write down which speaker could have made the statement based on how they are quoted in the article. For example, if I said, ‘There are over 100 kinds of human papilloma virus,’ the answer would be Nancy.”

You will have one minute to find each answer. After I read all the statements we will go over them to see how many each group got right.

Here are the statements (and answers) to read aloud after the reading period ends.

- You can get reproductive health care without your parents’ permission. Kristin.
- Oral sex can cause STDs. Nancy
- Take your friends’ advice about which doctor to use for reproductive health care. Carolyn
- It is important to talk with your health provider about your sexual activity. Kristin
- Young women should get the vaccine that prevents some kinds of human papilloma virus. Nancy
- Health care providers are required to keep your medical information private. Kristin
- You don’t have to tell the doctor everything on the first visit. Carolyn
- Chlamydia can affect a woman’s fertility. Kristin
- Masturbation can be a way to find out what makes you feel good. Nancy
- Sexually active teens should be tested regularly. Kristin

**Writing:** Repeat the statements and see which group has the most correct answers. Here are some questions you can use to wrap up the lesson.

- Was there any information in the article that surprised you?
- What is one thing you know now that you didn't know before?
- In your opinion, what is the most important piece of information in the article? Why?
- What should a teen do in response to any of the information in the article?

**For more stories to help teens make better decisions about sex, see our book *The Teen Guide to Sex Without Regrets* at [bit.ly/teenguidesex](http://bit.ly/teenguidesex)**