

Ycteen

May/June 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.

Announcements: Writing contests, free teacher training opportunity p. 2

Issue Review: Body image and youth activism p. 3

Lessons In This Guide:

1. Body Image—Reading Comprehension, Discussion, Written Response, Media Literacy p. 5
2. Social Media vs. Direct Activism—Reading Comprehension, Discussion, Written Response, Media Literacy p. 8
3. Practice for English Regents—Reading, Vocabulary, Test-taking p. 16
4. Health: Weight, Self-Esteem, and Masculinity—Reading and Discussion p. 18



Announcements

YCteen Writing Contests

Apply online at ycteen.org

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?

Contest #214: Due August 28, 2012

The 2012 presidential election is approaching. What can and should the U.S. president do to improve the lives of teens in America, and why? What's the most important promise you'd make to teens if you were a candidate?

Free Online Training for NYC High School Educators

Help students who show signs of psychological distress. Educators and other school staff can play a vital role in ensuring that students come to the attention of school support staff and receive the help they need.

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) in collaboration with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) is offering a free professional development opportunity for staff who work in DOE schools. All high school teachers and allied professionals who work with youth in a school building can access a free online training course, At-Risk for High School Educators, developed by Kognito Interactive. The training will teach you how to identify, approach, and refer students who show signs of psychological distress.

Access this free online training at: <https://highschool.kognito.com/newyork>

Issue Review

This issue focuses on teen activism and body image.

Stories English Language Arts teachers can use:

Straight Girl Stands Up for Gays, p. 3

Kelly grows up knowing several gay or bisexual people, and joins her high school's Gay-Straight Alliance to support gay rights. Despite unpleasant reactions from less open-minded peers, she participates in annual awareness-raising events.

Occupy the Classroom, p. 4

Julietta's passionate Spanish teacher inspires her to learn about Latin America, get involved in politics, and stand up for any injustice she sees in the world.

See Lesson 3

Real Women Don't Always Have Curves, p. 5

Isaura feels bad when she compares herself to the curvy popular girls, and is intimidated by her classmates' constant critique of one another's looks. She wonders if the focus on appearance is worthwhile.

See Lesson 1

Media Deceptions About Women, p. 7

YCteen writers respond to the documentary film *Miss Representation*, which shows how popular media focuses almost exclusively on women's appearance and sexuality.

See the Video [Women in the Media](#) at bit.ly/womenvideo (4:26)

See Lesson 1

Can We 'Like & Share' Our Way to a Better World?, p. 10

Julijana is horrified by "Kony 2012," a video about Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, and immediately shares the link on Facebook. However, after learning more about the viral video, she wonders if social media is an effective tool for activism.

See Lesson 2

[Steward of the Earth](#), (Web Exclusive) bit.ly/environmentstory

Sherilyn learns how her habit of littering affects sea life and begins to care about the environment.

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

Crushing Weight of College Debt, p. 8

Tuition is getting more expensive, interest rates on student loans are going up, and George's anxiety is escalating, too. He seeks advice on how to face the challenge of college costs.

Chasing the DREAM Act, p. 9

The “Dream Team,” a student group at Juana's school, lobbies for New York's DREAM Act, a bill that would help undocumented students get state financial aid for college.

Stories health educators can use:**Condom Shopping 101, p. 10**

New sex ed curriculum includes an interesting (optional) homework assignment: Students are supposed to go to a drugstore to shop for condoms. Julieta does her homework.

My Anorexic Friend, p. 12

Marci tries to be supportive when Deborah is hospitalized for anorexia, but gets the cold shoulder. As their friendship falters, Marci attempts once more to repair the friendship, this time with better results.

Bullied For Being Skinny, p. 14

Linda feels helpless when her classmates regularly make fun of her naturally thin build, calling her "anorexic." She tries her best to ignore all the mean comments, but later regrets not standing up for herself more.

How Dieting Took Me Off Track, p. 16

Jhanae wants to be the skinniest girl on the track team, but the results of her extreme diet are more dramatic—and much more embarrassing—than she counts on.

Slimming Down and Manning Up, p. 22

Luis attempts to diet, but his mom's dismissive attitude and delicious cooking make it difficult. It's not until a heart-to-heart talk with his mom that he finds the confidence and support he needs to get healthy.

See Lesson 4

Lesson 1. Body Image—Reading Comprehension, News Literacy

Story to use: “Real Women Don’t Always Have Curves,” and the video “[Women in the Media](#)” at [bit.ly/womenvideo](#) (4:26)

Objectives:

- Students will read a story and view a video to identify and analyze themes pertaining to the critical judgments we make about our bodies, and how our social networks (peers, family, community) and the media contribute to those judgments.
- Students will consider how both men and women are influenced and harmed by gender stereotypes in the media.

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

Vocabulary: Superficial, consolation, insecurity, obsession, stereotype

Introduction: Tell students to complete the following statements with as many things they can think of:

When it comes to their bodies, women feel insecure about...

When it comes to their bodies, men feel insecure about...

Ask volunteers to share their responses. Next, ask students where we get our ideas about what makes a body attractive or unattractive. (Examples may include family, friends, culture, advertisements, toys, video games, TV, movies, music, magazines, etc.)

Viewing: Screen the short Youth Communication video “[Women in the Media](#)” at [bit.ly/womenvideo](#) (4:26). Before the film, explain that it features a roundtable discussion by *YCteen* writers discussing a film, *Miss Representation*, that looks at how women are depicted and talked about in the media, often in destructive ways. (Note: If you don’t have the ability to screen the video, you can read an edited version of the roundtable discussion, entitled “Media Deceptions About Women,” on p. 7 of *YCteen*.)

Ask the students:

- What does the film tell us about how media shape our ideas of what is attractive and unattractive?
- Did the images of “ideal women” in the film match your ideas about what is attractive? Why or why not?
- How do stereotypical images of women (and men) reinforce stereotypes of gender roles? What examples do the teens in the film offer about this?

Reading: Read the story “Real Women Don’t Always Have Curves,” by Isaura Abreu. Before reading, review the vocabulary (above). Tell students they are going to read a story about a teenager who becomes insecure after her friends reach puberty and begin to

develop “curves” while she remains thin. As they read, tell students to think about where Isaura’s insecurities about her body might come from.

Writing: After the reading, have students write responses to the following questions. Then, select particular questions/responses to discuss as a class or in small groups.

- Why does Isaura feel insecure about her physical appearance? Where do her insecurities come from? Can you relate to the way Isaura feels in the first half of the story? Why or why not?
- What makes Isaura question her preoccupation with having a “perfect” appearance? What is Isaura’s turning point? How does Isaura start to change?
- What larger consequences does Isaura see at the end of the story for society’s obsession with the “perfect” female look?
- What connections can you make between Isaura’s story and the Youth Communication video “Women in the Media?”
- Are you affected by other people’s opinions about your appearance? How?
- What qualities besides appearance make people attractive?
- Think about situations in which we—or others—judge ourselves and each other based on appearance. How can these judgments affect us, not only in the moment, but over time? How can we avoid such judgments and shift to focusing on qualities that don’t pertain to physical appearance?

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.

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.

Production and Distribution 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 on this topic, see our book *Mirror, Mirror: Teen Girls Write About Body Image* at bit.ly/ycmirror.

Lesson 2. Social Media vs. Direct Activism— Reading Comprehension, Writing, Media Literacy

Note: This is a set of lessons intended to be taught over a minimum of 5 days. If you have limited time, consider adapting a shorter version of this unit using the YCteen story as the central activity.

Story to use: “Can We ‘Like & Share’ Our Way to a Better World?” p. 10

Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate comprehension of a story and articulate its main idea and supporting arguments.
- Students will use explicit reading strategies to support their comprehension.
- Students will write a five-paragraph essay stating and defending an argument.

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

Vocabulary: activism, cause, protest, demonstration, peaceful assembly, non-violence, boycott, manipulate, dialogue, legislators, morality, empathy, humanity, commitment

DAY 1: Activism: Occupy Wall Street and Civil Rights Movement Sit-Ins

Introduction (15 minutes): Ask the students to volunteer responses to the following questions. Then, write responses on the board.

- What is activism? (*Use of direct action to support/advocate for an issue or cause.*)
- What are some examples of activism? (*Possible responses: marching, boycotts, sit-ins, rallies, petitions, signs, etc. Students may also mention online forms of activism—Facebook, Twitter, etc.—if not, add them to the list and ask students to elaborate on how social media can be used to support a cause.*)
- What kinds of activism have you or your peers been involved with?

Tell students they are going to explore how the use of social media is changing the way people seek change in the world through activism, and that they will spend the week analyzing the following question by studying several examples of youth activism: Which is more effective in making lasting change: in-person forms of activism, or online/social media activism? (Students may disagree; that is fine—encourage them to defend their point of view.)

Tell students they’re first going to watch [Youth Occupy Wall Street](#), a short video (4:29) of young activists at an Occupy Wall Street protest march in fall 2011. (Go to bit.ly/youthoccupy.)

Explain that the Occupy Wall Street movement’s basic aims are to seek greater social and economic equality and raise awareness about the influence of corporations on politics and

government. After the video, ask volunteers to share which statements they connected with, and why.

Viewing (30 minutes): Introduce the idea that young people have often been a powerful force in social movements, including the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Tell students they will now view a section of the PBS series “Eyes on the Prize” about the 1960 student lunch counter sit-ins. (If you don’t have access to the series, you can easily find it on YouTube. This 14-minute clip—edited with some additional context to make it digestible for an upper elementary school audience—works well: bit.ly/pbsclip)

Before viewing, provide students with some basic background about the goals of the movement, and in particular, the immediate goals of the sit-ins. Here is a brief script you can adapt:

Young people played a powerful role during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, working to end racial segregation and discrimination. Here are three examples:

- *The Freedom Riders. In 1961, many young people—black, white, and other races—challenged Jim Crow laws and risked their safety by riding buses together into southern states that enforced segregation laws on buses.*
- *Birmingham Children’s March. In Birmingham, Alabama in 1963, African-American children and teens bravely faced high-pressure fire hoses, vicious police dogs, abusive police officers, and jail time in order to boycott school and march to call for an end to segregation and police brutality.*
- *Lunch Counter Sit-Ins. Black college students and some of their white peers staged sit-ins at segregated lunch counters across the South, refusing to abide by store rules that denied counter service to African-Americans. They simply remained at the counter until they were arrested by police. (Keep in mind that, at the time, lunch counters were roughly the equivalent of fast-food restaurants.) Tens of thousands of people participated, and 3,000 were arrested in 1960 alone.*

Today, we are going to watch a short video that shows how the student lunch counter sit-ins had an important and lasting impact on the movement.

After viewing, ask students to write responses to the following questions:

- What was the students’ immediate goal? (*end racial segregation at lunch counters*)
- What were the students’ larger goals? (*end racial segregation generally; to achieve equal rights for all Americans*)
- What strategies did they use to accomplish their goals? (*non-violent resistance; sitting at lunch counters for hours on end; marching; holding politicians accountable*)
- Although there was no Internet in the 1960s, do you think the result would have been different if the students had only used social media to achieve their goals instead of direct action? Why?

(Note: Students may disagree on the impact that the Internet and social media would have had on the movement. Some will make the obvious point that a “virtual sit-in” isn’t really a sit-in. Nudge students to explore the difference. Other students may suggest that if social media had been available in 1960 to get the word out about the sit-ins, people might have turned up in even larger numbers. You might want to remind students that the sit-ins relied heavily on rigorous training of participants in non-violence, and whether having masses of untrained people show up to participate in sit-ins might have had a different, possibly less-successful, outcome. There is no right or wrong answer here; the idea is to get students thinking about the complexity of building a social movement and educating the public about instances of injustice.)

DAY 2: Online Activism: “Kony 2012” Viewing and Critical Discussion

Introduction (10 minutes): Briefly review yesterday’s activity, focusing on the central question: whether online forms of activism or in-person forms of activism are more effective. Acknowledge that there is no absolute right or wrong answer to this question.

Ask students how many of them have heard about the Kony 2012 campaign by the group Invisible Children. Begin by providing some basic historical background (you may wish to start by locating Uganda on a map of Africa). Explain that since the 1980s Joseph Kony has led a rebel group called the Lord’s Resistance Army against the Ugandan government. The LRA has been responsible for brutal crimes against humanity such as killing innocent civilians, rape, using child soldiers, forcing girls and women into sexual servitude, and forcing people (including children) to murder family members in an effort to break down communities and increase the LRA’s power over the people.

Viewing (35 minutes): Tell students they are going to watch “[Kony 2012](#),” a 30-minute film by a nonprofit group called Invisible Children, which started a social media campaign in early 2012 to raise awareness about Joseph Kony’s atrocities, and to call for his capture and prosecution. Explain to students that Invisible Children’s “Kony 2012” video was one of the most successful social media campaigns of all time—the video was viewed by millions, who in turn spread the word about Kony through Facebook, Twitter, and other social media. You can find the video at bit.ly/konyvid

Tell students that, as they watch “Kony 2012,” they should take notes about the following questions for discussion after the film. Write these questions on the board:

- What are the goals of the film?
- Who is the film’s target audience?
- What techniques/strategies does the film use to persuade its audience? Which are more effective, and which are less effective? Why?

After viewing “Kony 2012,” give students five minutes to write out responses to the key questions for discussion in the next class session.

DAY 3: Reading *YCteen* Critique of “Kony 2012” and Critical Discussion of Online Activism

Introduction (15 minutes): Review and discuss yesterday’s key questions with the class. Emphasize that the film targeted young people, and ask students to think about how the film seemingly suggests simple, concrete actions (buy an Invisible Children “action kit;” participate in the “Cover the Night” campaign; sign a petition that Invisible Children will send to Capitol Hill), but press students to evaluate what kind of lasting change each of these actions is likely to accomplish. The goal here is to get students to critically evaluate the effectiveness of social media campaigns, and consider whether there is a lasting impact beyond “spreading the word.” Students may reach different conclusions about this, which is fine—as long as they are pressed to defend their point of view.

Reading (20 minutes): Have students take turns reading aloud Julijana Stefanovic’s *YCteen* story, “Can We ‘Like and Share’ Our Way to a Better World?” on p. 10 of the print issue. Remind students of the central question: Encourage them to use the reading strategy of text marking—underlining or circling key statements, writing questions/brief comments in the margins of the story—as they read in order to increase their comprehension. Pause periodically during the reading to summarize information and check for understanding.

Writing (10 minutes): Hand out the following key statements from the story. Tell students to choose one (alternatively, you can assign them), and write whether they agree or disagree with the statement, and why—citing evidence from the text of the story. Responses will be discussed in the following class session.

“Social media doesn’t help you do truly difficult things in the world—it just lets you hold hands with a couple of acquaintances while clicking on a button to sign a petition.”

“When you have a complicated political situation involving several independent countries, getting people riled up may not address the issue.”

“When it’s so easy to join a cause, it’s also easy to drop it—nothing is risked and nothing is sacrificed.”

“‘Kony 2012’ demonstrated how effectively technology can trigger human empathy on a stunning scale. If we can translate that kind of empathy into lasting, active commitment, we really can make a change.”

DAY 4: Pre-Writing About Online vs. In-Person Activism

Introduction (20 minutes): Ask volunteers to share their responses to the statement they wrote about at the end of the previous class.

Review the central question raised in the first session, reminding students that they will spend the next two days writing an essay that responds to the following question:

Which is more effective in making lasting change: in-person forms of activism, or online activism?

Review with students that they must take a position on this question, and defend it with evidence from the story and video clips they have viewed. Recap the examples of online vs. direct forms of activism that could support or contradict their arguments:

1. Direct action: (lunch counter sit-ins) with concrete results (desegregation of lunch counters, dialogue with people in power, and a growing movement that eventually led to major social change)
2. Online/social media (Kony 2012 campaign): Action with less-impressive results (wildly successful effort to get the message out; less-successful “Cover the Night” direct action campaign; little impact on legislators; little impact on Kony’s Ugandan victims).
3. Julijana Stefanovic’s *YCteen* article also discusses a more successful use of social media to prompt direct action: In the aftermath of unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin’s shooting death, social media helped successfully spread the word about the Million Hoodie March and other actions advocating for an investigation into the handling of the case and an end to racial profiling more generally.

Writing (25 minutes): Create an outline for students to help them organize their thesis statement, supporting and counter-arguments, and conclusion. (You can write it on the board or make a handout—an example that you can adapt is included below.) Separate students into two groups: Those who argue that social media is a more effective form of activism, and those who argue that in-person/direct action is a more effective form of activism.

Break each of these large groups down into groups of three or four students each, and have each smaller group work together to begin filling in the outline. Before they begin, explain to students that their arguments must be supported by evidence from the story and videos they have watched.

Ideally, you should model for students how to complete one argument on the outline with supporting evidence. Also, draw students’ attention to the fact that they must address at least one counter-argument that could be made by someone who holds the opposite point of view, and then give evidence explaining why they reject that argument. Explain that this is a standard feature of any persuasive/argumentative essay.

For the conclusion, remind students to creatively re-state their main idea/thesis statement (using different words), and to leave the reader with a “call to action.”

For example, those students arguing that social media can be an effective form of activism might want to use the conclusion to urge their audience that online activism means more than clicking “like” or “share” on Facebook, and urging them to further

educate themselves about the issue and share their knowledge with friends and family, or get involved with a group that is taking further action.

Those arguing that direct action is the most effective may wish to conclude by reminding the audience that multiple forms of direct action may be necessary over time in order to make change—not only attending one march, but also volunteering with petition drives, attending government meetings, participating in letter writing and phone campaigns, etc.

By the end of class, each student should have started their outline, in collaboration with their peer group. Assign them to finish the outline for homework, so they can begin writing the essay in the subsequent class session.

Example Essay Outline:

Thesis statement:

When it comes to creating lasting change, _____ is a more effective form of activism than _____.

Argument 1:

Supporting evidence:

Argument 2:

Supporting evidence:

Counter Argument Rejection:

Supporting evidence:

Conclusion

(Creatively re-state thesis statement/main idea, and suggest a course of action that readers can take):

DAY 5: Developing the Essay

Introduction (15 minutes): Direct students to review the outlines they completed yesterday; give them an additional 10 minutes if necessary to complete the outlines. Then, tell students that they will use their outlines to write a first draft of an essay arguing for or against social media as an effective tool for activism. Remind students of the importance of using transition words, phrases, and sentences to move smoothly from one argument/paragraph to the next.

Remind students that the conclusion paragraph should re-state the thesis statement (though not repeat it verbatim), and leave the reader with a memorable, thought-provoking idea or question.

Writing (30 minutes): Give students the remainder of the class to work on their essay drafts. As they work, circulate around the classroom to evaluate their progress and provide one-on-one guidance as necessary. Additional days of writing time will be necessary if you wish to incorporate lessons on revision.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Using the *YCteen* story, class discussions, and essays, have students design their own campaign to raise awareness about human rights violations in Uganda or elsewhere in the world, using some combination of social media and direct action.
- For more advanced students, consider assigning students to read Malcolm Gladwell’s 2010 *New Yorker* article, “[Small Change: Why the Revolution Will Not Be Tweeted](#),” which is referred to in Julijana Stefanovic’s *YCteen* story. This will allow for an even fuller treatment of the theme of effective forms of activism and the role of social media in social movements. It is also useful as a model for forming and defending an argument with evidence and additional sources.

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 arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge (continued)

- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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.
- Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

Lesson 3. Practice for Regents Exam Reading Section

Story to use: “Occupy the Classroom,” p. 4

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: Intrigued, Eco-friendly, Delve, Outspokenness

Instructions: Before the class, make copies of the multiple choice questions and hand them out.

Since the class will be reading only the very end of the story, you have to give them some background on the whole story. Tell them something like, “You are going to read the last part of a story written by a student about one of her teachers. The writer’s name is Julieta Velazquez and she calls the teacher ‘Ms. P’ in the story.”

Next, put these directions on the board or read them slowly: “Read the story starting from the subhead ‘The Art of Argument.’ Read until the end. Then 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 2, 2-4, 3-1, 4-3, 5-2, 6-1

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) What was the outcome of the writer's debate with her teacher?

- 1) The teacher changed her mind about Costa Rica.
- 2) The author realized she had to prepare harder for future debates.
- 3) The teacher congratulated the writer for her presentation.
- 4) The writer decided never to argue with a teacher again.

2) Why does Julieta admire her teacher?

- 1) The teacher is tolerant of her students' opinions.
- 2) She knows a lot about Costa Rica.
- 3) She is an effective debater.
- 4) She thinks her students should learn more about current events.

3) In the phrase, "Ms. P rebutted my opinion," what does rebutted mean?

- 1) Disproved
- 2) Questioned
- 3) Ignored
- 4) Restated

4) According to Julieta, why is understanding the news so important?

- 1) To get better grades
- 2) To be better at debating teachers
- 3) To participate in a democratic society
- 4) To make more money

5) Which statement would the writer agree with?

- 1) She should have kept arguing with Ms. P. about Costa Rica.
- 2) She didn't enjoy arguing with Ms. P.
- 3) You should never argue with your teachers.
- 4) Other teachers are just as forceful as Ms. P.

6) What would be the best title for this passage?

- 1) A Valuable Lesson
- 2) Don't Mess With Ms. P
- 3) My Views on Costa Rica
- 4) My Unfair Teacher

Lesson 4. Health: Weight, Self-Esteem, and Masculinity- Reading and Discussion

Story to use: “Slimming Down and Manning Up,” p. 22

Objectives:

- Students will identify the link between self-esteem and maintaining a healthy weight.
- Students will understand how other people can affect our health behaviors, both negatively and positively.
- Students will identify the link between exercise and weight control.
- Students will discuss images of masculinity.

Standards: The first three objectives of this activity align with the Physical Activity and Nutrition Functional Knowledge standards in the [Guidance Document for Achieving the New York State Standards in Health Education](#).

Introduction: Before the group reading, write this list on the board:

- The kinds of food I eat
- My portion sizes
- How often I eat
- How active am I during my daily activities (How far do I walk? Do I take the stairs sometimes? Do I have a gym class? Does my job require moving around? Am I on a sports team or do I play pick-up games?)
- My exercise habits (Do I do any kind of regular exercise at all, like running, yoga, DVD exercise workouts, or video games that have an activity component?)

Tell the group they are going to read a story by a young man who was 5 foot, 11 inches and weighed 300 pounds, and how we tried to get control of his weight.

Then ask the group to look at the board and think about their eating and exercise habits. Ask for volunteers to look at the list on the board and speak about one thing they would like to change in their own life, and why.

Depending on your group’s situation, you can read the story aloud by asking for volunteers to read portions or you can have them read silently. Stop at the “Fat Loser” subhead. Ask them if they have any questions about what they’ve read. Then assign them to read the rest of the story at home and be prepared to discuss it at the next session.

Discussion: Ask for volunteers to briefly recap what happened in the rest of the story: Luis’s talk with his mother, his change of attitude, his father’s intervention, his first day at the gym, his weight loss, his maintenance of a healthier diet and an exercise routine. Ask them how much he weighs at the end of the story. He’s still heavy at 250 pounds but that’s better than 300 pounds.

Use some of the following sets of discussion questions after your class reads the story. The lead question in each set refers the reader back to the text of the story to refresh

students' memory about what they have read.

Issue: Masculinity

- Where in the story does Luis write that being chubby is “unmanly?” (*See fifth paragraph.*) Why do you think he wrote that? Do you agree with him?
- Where in the story does Luis tell the reader where he first got his idea of what being “manly” means? (*In the fifth paragraph, he mentions watching TV, and observing girls' behavior in high school toward certain kinds of guys. You can also bring up the fact that his father left the family when Luis was five and was not around to give him a more realistic sense of what a man acts like in “real life.”*)
- Do you ever compare yourself to people on TV, in the movies, or online? Which ones? Do you compare yourself to people you know or see in school? How do you feel about these comparisons? Have these comparisons ever motivated you to take an action, like losing or gaining weight, starting an exercise routine, wearing certain clothes, starting or stopping smoking, etc.?
- Where in the story does Luis indicate that he has changed his idea of manliness or what it means to act like a man? (*See the fourth to last paragraph of the story.*) What replaced his old idea of having six-pack abs and being surrounded by girls? Do you agree that feeling good about yourself and confident are attractive qualities for both sexes?

Issue: Influences that lead to overeating and other bad health habits:

- Where in the story does Luis explain why he became and stayed overweight as a child? What people influenced him? (*The first half of the story describes how his mother contributed to his bad eating habits and his father's departure motivated him to eat more than he should.*)
- Who influenced Luis to change his attitudes about himself, eat more healthily, and start exercising? (*His mother talks to him about his self-image and agrees to cook healthier foods. His father goes to the gym with him.*)
- Have your parents or other people ever influenced your eating and exercise behaviors? For example, has a friend ever urged you to exercise or stop eating certain foods? Have you received any advice from a teacher or counselor?
- Some health care advocates criticize fast food restaurants and big food companies for marketing and selling unhealthy food that can cause people to get fat. Does Luis ever mention those as an influence on him?
- How much of his obesity resulted from his own decisions? What caused him to change his eating and exercise behaviors? (*His mother talked with him about seeing the good parts of his personality. His father motivated him to go to the gym.*)

Issue: Connection between self-esteem and healthy habits

- How did Luis feel about himself when he was eating too much and not exercising? Did thinking of himself as a “fat, disgusting monster” make it easier for him to overeat?
- Which came first: a better attitude about the kind of person he was or his decisions to take better care of himself? (*You may wish to point out that studies have shown that good eating habits and regular exercise can have a positive effect on mood. So even before Luis began to see the physical results of his efforts to change, he may have benefited from an emotional boost caused by exercise and better diet.*)

- Toward the end of the story, what reasons does Luis give for maintaining his new eating habits and daily exercises?

For more on this topic, see our book [*Healthy Living: Teens Write About Diet, Exercise, and Handling Stress*](#) at bit.ly/ychealth