Dear Educators,

Congratulations finishing the first semester! As you settle into your new course schedule, we appreciate your continued efforts to engage your students in social and emotional learning and literacy development with Youth Communication stories.

This issue of YCteen tackles an issue near to New York City’s heart: immigration. Our public schools have long been on the frontlines, offering support and connection to new immigrants, many of who arrive as unaccompanied minors and may initially feel overwhelmed and adrift.

One immediate and meaningful way to help your immigrant students feel anchored and welcome in the classroom—and in their new country—is to create a safe space where they can share their experiences with peers. The two lessons here offer a way to facilitate that, with deep readings of “Change for the Better” about a Vietnamese girl who figures out how to make friends in her new country, and “The American Dream Feels Like a Nightmare,” by a boy whose relationship with his father suffers after they emigrate from Korea.

Other stories that explore the immigrant experience are “Misconceptions About Africans” on pp. 8-9 of the magazine, in which Aissata corrects her peers’ assumptions that all Africans are poor and don’t wear shoes, and “Nowhere to Go” on pp. 12-13, a story that shows the intersectionality of the writer’s multiple experiences as an immigrant, a homeless person, a gay teen, a student, and a foster youth. There are not lessons for these stories, but we encourage you to read them with your students and to use the open-ended questions at the end of this guide to facilitate discussion.

Finally, please check out the flier and application for our intensive Summer Writing Workshop on the last two pages. If you have budding writers in your class who are between the ages of 15 and 20, please encourage them to apply!

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Johnson
Education Director
Getting Outside Your Comfort Zone

Story to Use: “Change for the Better,” by Nhi Tong, pp. 10-11

Story Summary: Nhi’s first days in the U.S. are frustrating and unnerving. When she makes an effort to be social, her willingness to step outside her comfort zone is rewarded.

Lesson Objectives and Common Core Connections:
- Students make personal connections to a text and successfully participate in story-based activities and discussions.
- Students build social awareness by being better able to empathize with others’ experiences and take on diverse perspectives.
- Students build self-awareness by being willing to reflect on their sense of self and identity.
- Students develop interpretive and evaluative questions for further exploration of the topic (CCLS R.1.a).
- Students will read and comprehend literary nonfiction proficiently (CCLS R.10).
- Students will use a variety of visual representations to express personal, social, and cultural connections and insights (CCLS W.11.a).

Before Reading the Story (15 min)
This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Introduce the concept social comfort zone to the group. When we interact with people and places, we often gravitate to ones that are familiar and that we think are like us. We feel uncomfortable with people and places we don’t know or who seem different from us. Reassure group members that feeling some discomfort with difference is natural.

2. Introduce free-drawing by explaining that students will have five minutes to respond to a prompt with drawing and words. The goal is to express their thoughts freely without worrying about writing conventions or artistic skills. The expectation is that everyone draws/writes, without stopping, for the full time.

3. Free-draw prompt: Think about some groups of people, places, and experiences that are in your social comfort zone, and some that are not. Think about why it might feel more awkward for you to be with some groups than with others. Think about when you have experienced being uncomfortable in different environments or situations.
4. **Free-draw** directions: On a blank piece of paper draw yourself in the middle, with a circle around you to show your social comfort zone. Using images and words, respond to the prompt by expressing groups of people, places, and situations that are inside and outside of your social comfort zone. Represent visually the feelings you might experience, or have experienced, when you move between these zones. (Note: your drawing is for your personal reflection, you won’t be showing it to anyone.)

5. **Large group discussion questions:**
   - Ask students to describe—without naming the groups—why it might feel more awkward to be with some groups than with others. Students might say, “Because I don’t know what to say or do,” or “I don’t want to say the wrong thing and offend someone,” or “We don’t speak the same language,” or “I don’t think they like me.” Discuss the kind of social barriers that separate people who are different from each other. Are these barriers present in school?
   - Ask students to describe how they have felt (or might feel) when they have been in situations and places that were out of their social comfort zone.
   - Ask students to consider what benefits we can experience personally by stepping outside of our social comfort zones. Why might this be worth the risk for ourselves and for others?

**During Reading** (20 min)

*By practicing active reading strategies while reading aloud and discussing as a group, students build comprehension and support fluency.*

1. Introduce the story (see the summary above).

2. Share the expectations for a group read aloud; volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the teacher, you may stop periodically to discuss or check in on active reading by asking students to share their responses to the story.

3. Tell students they will practice an active reading strategy called **text coding**. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

4. **Text coding** directions: While reading the story aloud together, notice when you make a picture in your mind. (Visualizing the text when we read supports our comprehension.) Write a “V” in the margin next to the text that you visualized.

5. While sitting in a circle, read the story aloud together. Stop to discuss periodically, supporting peer-to-peer talk and non-judgmental listening. To do this, ask for volunteers to share what they have text coded and why (“When I read ____, I saw ____.”) Alternately, you can pose an open question such as “What stands out to you in this section and why?”

6. Next, ask the group to further consider these questions:
   - At first, what about Forest Hills High was outside of Nhi’s social comfort zone?
• Why do you think Nhi changed her name to Michelle at first? Why do you think she changed back to wanting to be called Nhi?
• What did Nhi gain by stepping outside of her social comfort zone? What did her peers at school gain?

After Reading the Story (15 min)
During this post-reading activity students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.

1. **Text illustration** directions:
   • Select a moment in Nhi’s story when her writing painted a picture in your mind. Look at where you coded a “V” in the text. For example, this quote has an illustration in the magazine:

   “Moving to the United States feels like walking into a vast room with many doors labeled with lots of different choices and I am allowed to choose the one I think I’ll like the most.”

   • Using the available art supplies, draw the image that comes to your mind from the selected text. After you are done drawing, write the quote from the text as a caption with your drawing.

2. After students have written their quotes and completed their illustrations, ask them to craft an open-ended question that further explores the main idea from the text they represented. They can start by writing on the back the prompt “I wonder….?” As time allows, have students share their questions in a group discussion.

3. Finally, invite students to place themselves in the picture. On the back of their paper, ask students to imagine they are in the scene and have them write to this prompt: “If I was in this picture, I would wonder/feel/think/ask/say/do…” (Alternatively, they could represent this visually.)
Before Reading the Story (15 min)
This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Share the following quote from the story: “These days my dad is short-tempered and angry all the time. He fights about almost everything. When he thinks someone is being disrespectful to him, he yells in their face.”

2. Ask students in your group to identify the strong emotion that the dad is feeling (anger). Next, introduce (and write up on the board) other strong emotions all people feel, and can sometimes struggle to manage: depression, inadequacy, fear, confusion, hurt, anger, loneliness, remorse.

3. Pair Share directions: Ask students to think of a person in their life who struggles with a strong emotion. What is the emotion? How does it affect him/her? How does s/he express it? How does this affect the people in his/her life? Without naming that person, have students share their responses to the questions with a partner.
4. Introduce the concept of unmet needs. As humans, we all have essential underlying needs that we try to meet, such as the need for connection with others, physical well-being, and meaning in our lives. Everyone’s feelings and actions are the result of their own unmet needs and their choices in how to meet them. Strong emotions, at their root, come from these unmet needs, so understanding them in ourselves and others can help us in our self-awareness, interpersonal communication, and relationships.

During Reading (20 min)
*By practicing active reading strategies while reading aloud and discussing as a group, students build comprehension and support fluency.*

1. Introduce the story (see the summary above).

2. Share the expectations for a group read aloud; volunteers take turns reading aloud as much or as little as they would like. As the teacher, you may stop periodically to discuss or check in by asking students to share their responses to the story.

3. Tell students they will be practicing an active reading strategy called reading for a purpose. This will help them locate specific information they will need for later.

4. **Reading for a Purpose** directions: While reading aloud students are going to identify the strong emotions felt by the son and the father. Afterwards, they will try to identify the unmet needs that might be at the root of these feelings. Students will divide this work up as follows:
   - The LEFT side of the room will read for the WRITER’S (the son) emotions. Students should draw a star in the margins of the story when they think the writer is feeling strong emotions.
   - The RIGHT side of the room will read for the FATHER’S emotions. Likewise, they should draw a start in the margins of the story when they think the father is feeling strong emotions.

5. While still sitting in a circle, have volunteers read the story aloud and support students in their task of reading for a purpose.

After Reading the Story (30 min)
*During this post-reading activity students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.*

1. **Text Based Discussion** directions:
   - Beginning with the LEFT side of the room, have students share out examples from the text of the Writer’s emotions (support the group in how to infer from the

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1 Understanding our feelings and how to regulate them, as well as understanding others’ emotional experiences, is a cornerstone of social and emotional learning. The principles of underlying human needs, as referenced in this lesson, is essential to non-violent, or compassionate, communication. If you are interested in learning more about this approach, we recommend you visit [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org), the Center for Nonviolent Communication, and explore the work of Marshall Rosenberg, PhD.
text when it is not explicit). Write these as a list on the board under the heading “Writer/Son’s Emotions.”

- Repeat with the RIGHT side of the room, having students share out examples from the text of the FATHER’S emotions (support the group in how to infer from the text when it is not explicit). Write these as a list on the board under the heading “Father’s Emotions.”

- Return to the concept of unmet needs. Explain to the group that most underlying human needs fall into these categories (write up on the board):
  - **Autonomy**: For example: freedom, independence, choice, choosing and following one’s dreams, goals, and values.
  - **Connection**: Acceptance, affection, appreciation, emotional safety, belonging, respect, love, support, trust, understanding.
  - **Meaning**: Challenge, contribution, competence, efficacy, growth, learning, purpose, self-expression.
  - **Physical Well-Being**: Air, food, water, movement, physical safety, shelter, rest/sleep, touch.

- Next, break students into the two groups (Father, Son/Writer). Have each small group gather in a circle or around a table.

- Ask each group to work together to try and identify what their person’s unmet needs might be. Instruct them to refer specifically to the text in their discussion and to look at the lists on the board for vocabulary. Confer with the groups to support their discussion.

- Have one person from each group report back the unmet needs they identified. Write these on the board under the Writer/Son and Father lists.

2. **Role Play** directions:

- Introduce the guidelines for an improv role play. The prompt will present a dramatic conflict to the two players who respond on their feet (no scripting or rehearsing), using what they have learned about the writer and his father from the story. If the players get stuck, they can call a “freeze” in the dramatic action and ask the audience for suggestions. Role play should be fun and safe, so no physical contact and the audience shows support through active listening.

- **Role Play** prompt:
  “Since moving to the U.S. this father and son have been in conflict. The son wants his father to understand what he is feeling and what he needs. The father has his own feelings and needs. They need to try to understand each other.”

- Next, ask for two volunteers to try the role play. Help the audience be supportive. Afterwards, ask for additional volunteers to role play, as time allows.

- (Important note to facilitator: Find a moment to be clear with the group that a parent hitting a child is never OK. Trying to understand the father, as the writer does in his story, does not mean we excuse or condone his abusive behavior.)

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2 It is helpful to remember that many teens have a limited emotional vocabulary. There are many “Feelings/Emotional Vocabulary” lists available online for your reference and/or to share with students.
3. Activity De-brief: After thanking the actors for participating in the role play, bring the group together for a discussion. Consider the following questions:

- How might understanding unmet needs help the father and son regulate their own emotions? Based on this understanding, what requests might they make of each other to improve their relationship?
- While many parents and children have similar conflicts, for this father and son their relationship is impacted by their immigration experience. In what ways do immigrant parents and children sometimes struggle? What kinds of conflicts might occur between immigrant parents and their U.S.-born children?
- What personal connections can anyone make to this story? What personal takeaways do students have from the activities?
Open-ended questions you can use with any story in YCteen:

1. What main problem or challenge did the writer face?
2. What choices did the teen have in trying to deal with the problem?
3. Which way of dealing with the problem was most effective for the teen? Why?
4. What strengths, skills, or resources did the teen use to address the challenge?
5. If you were in the writer’s shoes what would you have done?
6. What could adults have done better to help this teen?
7. What have you learned from reading this story that you didn’t know before?
8. What connections from your own life, the world, or other text you have read, can you make to this story? This reminds me of…. (text-to-self, text-to-world, text-to-text)
9. What surprised you in this story?
10. Do you have a different view of this issue, or see a different way of dealing with it, after reading this story? Why or why not?
$150 First Prize | $75 Second Prize | $50 Third Prize
Enter online at bit.ly/ycteenwritingcontest

Contest # 227
Write a letter to your parents telling them what's going on in your life that they should know about—and don’t. [Note: The cash prize winners for our “Letters to Parents” contest are picked at random. To protect the identities of the writers, we won't publish any real names or list honorable mentions. All names and some details in the letters may be changed.]
Deadline: Friday, March 27, 2015

Contest #228
How has living among people from diverse cultures enriched your life? Every year thousands of immigrants move to New York City. Describe a time when you learned something new from a friend, family member, or acquaintance about another culture’s customs, music, food, beliefs, or traditions. What did you learn? Did it make you think about the world in a new way? Did it make you think differently about your own culture? How?
Deadline: Friday, July 24, 2015
Be a voice for teens. Tell your stories. Get published!

July 6 - August 13, 2015
FOR NEW YORK CITY RESIDENTS AGES 15-20

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Mon. – Thurs.

Be part of Youth Communication’s 36th annual intensive summer writing workshop. You will get one-on-one mentoring from a professional editor, write and revise personal stories about your life, go on field trips, and make friends with other writers. You will also participate in writing lessons and group activities exploring what it means to be a modern young man or young woman, as well as other topics. No prior experience is required, but you must be able to attend every day. Thousands of people will read your stories in our magazines and on our websites. Workshop alumni have gone on to attend colleges from Hunter to Harvard.

“The writing for Youth Communication, I grew as a young man. I no longer hold back what I feel. Now I put my true thoughts in ink.”
—Melvin, 19

The workshop is free because our funders cover the $3,000 cost for each participant. All participants get a MetroCard and $5 for lunch each day. (Additionally, youth in foster care will receive a $600 stipend upon successful completion of the workshop.)

APPLY ONLINE BY MAY 22, 2015:
bit.ly/ycteenwrite

Top candidates will be contacted by June 5
Application for the 36th Annual Youth Communication Summer Writing Workshop

Youth Communication publishes personal narratives by teens in two award-winning magazines: YCteen, by and for New York City high school students, and Represent, by and for young people in foster care. This is a competitive program—there will be a maximum of 15 students—so start working on your application essays now!

Dates and Times: The workshop runs Monday through Thursday from July 6 to August 13. The hours are from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. You must be able to attend every day.

Cost: The workshop is free because our funders cover the $3,000 cost for each participant.

Stipend: We provide MetroCards and $5 for lunch each day. (Youth in foster care will also receive a $600 stipend upon successful completion of the workshop.)

Facilities: The workshop will be taught at the Youth Communication office in mid-town Manhattan. The office is easily accessible by many subway lines.

Staff: Writers will be taught by Youth Communication editors who have substantial experience working in journalism and youth development.

Eligibility: Anyone ages 15 to 20 who lives within commuting distance is eligible to apply. We’re interested in your writing skills, but when we judge your essays we will also look for your ideas and willingness to write deeply personal stories. Youth Communication’s most essential job is to convey important information to teens in an interesting way.

History: This is the 36th year we have run the summer program. Workshop alumni have gone on to attend colleges from Hunter to Harvard, and they include reporters, lawyers, teachers, and authors.

Today’s date________________ Your age________
Name________________________
Address_______________________ Apt.______
City__________________________ Zip________
School________________________ Grade____
Phone (____)________ Date of birth________
E-mail __________________________ @
Male _____ Female _____ Other _______

Race/ethnicity (check all that apply)
_____Black  _____Latino  _____White  _____Asian
_____Other____________________

Where did you hear about the workshop? (e.g., teacher, ad in YCteen or Represent, website, foster care agency, social worker, etc.)
________________________________________________________________________

If you’re in foster care, what is your agency?
________________________________________________________________________

On separate pieces of paper, answer each of the three following questions, and attach it to this application. Please be thorough, but try to keep each answer to one page. Do not write more than two pages on any one answer. Print neatly or type.

1) Youth Communication publishes personal stories. Come up with two or three story ideas about your life and write one paragraph about each of them.

2) The summer workshop requires writers who are mature and focused. Writers must both participate in group lessons and work quietly at their computers on their stories, sometimes several hours at a time without a break. You must be open to working with an editor, who often suggests big changes to what you’ve written. Tell us in a paragraph why you’d be good at the group activities, at working alone, and at incorporating edits into your story. Also tell us why this appeals to you.

3) This summer’s theme is gender. Have you felt pressured—by friends, family, or the media—to be a certain way because of your gender, e.g. to “act like a lady” or “man up”? How have you responded to these expectations? Write an essay describing a time you felt that pressure and how it shaped your understanding of what it means to be male or female.

Questions? Call Virginia Vitzthum at 212-279-0708, extension 112.