Dear Educators and Counselors,

The November 2016 presidential election was momentous. Your students surely have a wide range of opinions on the election of Donald Trump... from not caring much either way to passionate support or opposition. Unfortunately, based on some of Mr. Trump’s more inflammatory comments and actions around Muslims, women, immigrants, and the disabled, many students may also feel anxious about how they and their families may fare under the new administration.

Regardless of students’ political preferences, all of us in education agree that bias and discrimination can undermine the feelings of safety and inclusion that support student learning.

All of the stories in this issue can help you nurture a supportive climate in your classroom. Topics include anti-Muslim stereotyping (see lesson here), being gay and coming out to parents and friends, living in a homeless shelter, immigrating to the United States, and feminism and body image. One teen writes a sophisticated call for the elimination of the Electoral College, which is an ideal story for social studies or American History classes. And the story on “dreadlocks and dashikis” is especially insightful and well-written. It’s a good model for showing students effective writing elements.

Thank you for using YCteen with your students. We deeply appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Keith Hefner
Executive Director

P.S. NEW WRITING CONTEST: We ask readers to write a letter to one of the writers. This will encourage close reading and writing! See the lesson in this guide.
ELA Literacy & Social and Emotional Learning

Write a Letter to the Writer (Writing Contest—cash prizes!)
(See p. 2 of YCteen or the inside back cover of this lesson guide for how to enter.)

Story to Use: Assign a story for which students will write a letter to the writer essay.

(Note: If you have time, you may also hand out copies of YCteen to students and give them time to browse the magazine to select a story to read silently on their own. If you take this route, you will have to modify this lesson.)

Lesson Objectives and Common Core Connections:
- Students make personal connections to a text and successfully participate in story-based activities and discussions.
- Students increase empathy with other youths’ experiences.
- Students will initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1).
- Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4).
- Students will write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence (CCS-Literacy.W.9-10.1).

NOTE 1: This lesson takes two class periods. In the first period, students read a story and complete Worksheet #1. In the second period, students complete Worksheet #2 to outline their letter. Then they write their letter.

NOTE 2: This lesson is on writing a short, persuasive essay. (Feel free to use your own persuasive writing lessons too.)

Preparation
1. Before class, read through YCteen and select a story that is engaging and appropriate for the students in your class.
2. Make one copy of the story for each student. (Alternatively, you can have students read from the printed magazine.)
3. Make one copy of both worksheets for each student.
4. Prepare the example of your prediction of the story, based on the headline.
Before Reading the Story (10 min)
This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Welcome students to the group. Introduce the lesson by telling them you will be reading a true story by a teen called [read the title of the story you have selected].

2. Introduce the **whole group brainstorming** activity by explaining that students will write one sentence predicting something that the story will be about or that will occur in the story. (Remind them that we don’t know yet, but we’re going to guess from the headline.)

   NOTE: Before students begin writing, you should model the activity by providing an example of your own prediction.

3. After each student has written a sentence, go around the room asking for volunteers to read what they have predicted.

4. Then facilitate a brief discussion with the following questions:
   - What stands out to you about your classmates’ responses? Are students’ predictions similar, or do they vary widely? Why?

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 by repeating the headline.

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 group leader, 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 **reading for a purpose**. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

4. **Reading for a purpose** directions: Ask students to read for moments in the text when they connect to or agree with the writer’s feelings or experiences. When this occurs in the text, students should place a “Y” (for yes!) in the margins of the story. Then ask them to read for moments when they disagree or have questions about the writer’s experiences or argument. When this occurs in the text, students should place an “N” (for no!) or a “?” for something they question or don’t understand in the margins of the story.

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 where they wrote a “Y” an “N” or a “?” and why. Or, you can pose an open question such as “What stands out to you in this section and why?”
After Reading the Story (15 min)
During this post-reading activity, students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.

1. Introduce the Letter to the Writer writing activity by explaining to the group that the teen who wrote the story they just read is eager to hear responses from other teens—especially to learn what you liked about their story, but also to hear what you didn’t like, or what you thought was missing. (Remind them it’s a contest; the three best entrants—from all entries received—will win cash prizes.)

2. Tell the students they will have the opportunity to write Letter to the Writer, but first they will complete a worksheet to help organize their ideas.

3. Have students complete Worksheet #1.

4. Walk around the room coaching students and responding to questions while students complete the worksheet. Encourage students to help each other with ideas, when appropriate.

At the end of the class, collect the worksheets and the copies of the story (or the magazines). Make sure students put their names on the worksheets and their copy of the story.

NEXT CLASS

Before handing back Worksheet #1:
Welcome students to the group. Introduce today’s lesson by reminding them of the story you read in the previous class and the worksheet they completed about it. Tell them that today they will be writing a short outline for a letter to the writer. Then they will write their letter.

Students complete Worksheet #2 (20 min.)
1. Hand back Worksheet #1 and the story from the last class.
2. Hand out Worksheet #2. Review it with them so everyone knows how to complete it.

Walk around the room as students complete Worksheet #2, helping them link their examples to their main idea by asking them questions.

Students write their letter to the writer (20 min.)
1. Tell students to get out a fresh sheet of paper on which they will write their letter.
2. Start your letter with “Dear Writer” and reference the article by the title, and the writer’s name. End it with “Sincerely” and your name, address, high school, and age.
3. Congratulate the students on completing the worksheet that is an outline for their letter. Point them to the instructions at the bottom of the worksheet.
4. Walk around the room helping students who are stuck as they write their letter—especially helping them turn their “3 points” into clear sentences.
5. At the end of class, collect the student letters. Send the best ones to YCteen!
Letter to the Writer—prep

1. Title of story: _______________________________________________________________

2. Name of writer: _____________________________________________________________

3. What is the most important point of the story to you?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

4. What are the main points the writer makes or examples the writer shows that support the main idea?

Main point or example 1

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Main point or example 2

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Main point or example 3

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Other good points, or anything you thought was missing or unclear?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Do you relate to the writer’s story or argument? Why or why not?

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________

Write the first sentence of a letter to the writer that states your main reaction to his or her story:

____________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________
Worksheet #2—Outline Your Letter

Your name_________________________

Letter to the Writer—outline

1. Repeat the first sentence of your letter from the previous worksheet (this is your main point or idea).

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

2. Give three examples that support your main idea. These can be examples from the original story. For example, if the writer made an especially good point, tell her why you thought it was so good. These can also be examples from your own life or things you know. For example, you could explain how your experiences support, or contradict, the writer's point.

Example 1:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Example 2:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

Example 3:

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

3. Now, write a sentence that concludes your letter. For example, you can summarize your argument. Or you can write something personal to the writer.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________

You're almost done! Now, write your letter. You already have your first sentence and your last sentence. Write your examples as full sentences or paragraphs. Then:

1. String the whole thing together.
2. Read it aloud or have someone next to you read it.
3. Make any necessary changes in your argument or your spelling or grammar.
4. Hand it in. (The writer will be thrilled to hear from you!)
Story to Use: “View Me as a Human Being, Not a Terrorist,” by Yousef El Emamy, p.3

Story Summary: A Muslim student faces ignorant and stereotyping comments from peers (and even from a teacher). He speaks up and gets positive reactions from peers. An experience with airport security, however, makes him anxious and causes him to question whether he should hide his faith. Donald Trump’s anti-Muslim rhetoric further stokes his anxiety.

Lesson Objectives and Common Core Connections:
- Students make personal connections to a text and successfully participate in story-based activities and discussions.
- Students increase empathy with other youths’ experiences.
- Students will initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1).
- Students will produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.4).

Before Reading the Story (10 min)
This opening activity will activate background knowledge to boost reading comprehension and set the emotional tone for the story.

1. Welcome students to the group. Introduce the lesson by telling them you will be reading a true story by a teen who is stereotyped by friends at school and profiled at the airport based on his appearance.

2. Introduce Concentric Circle activity by explaining to the group they will be getting to know one another by sharing and listening. Divide students into two groups: one group forms an inner circle; the other forms an outer circle. Inner circle shares first with their partner from the outer circle who practices active listening. After a minute; switch so that the outer circle shares with their partner from the inner circle. Outer circle then takes one step to their left, enabling them to face a new partner for the second prompt. Repeat three rounds using the following prompts:

   Prompt 1: Think about a time when you felt like you didn’t fit in with a person or group. [Pause to give students a chance to reflect a moment.] What were the circumstances? How did you feel?

   After both partners have had a chance to share, the outer circle members move one step to the left to face new partner.
Prompt 2: Think about a time you either stood up for something you believed, or didn’t stand up, even though you thought you should. What was the situation? How do you feel about it now?

*Outer circle members take another step to the left, so each person has a new partner.*

Prompt 3: Talk about a time you felt you had to hide part of yourself or your identity in order to fit in or to protect yourself from prejudice or discrimination. What was the situation? How did you feel?

3. Large group debrief: Bring pairs back into the large group and ask the following questions:
   - What did you discover about yourself and/or your partner(s) during the activity?
   - Why is it sometimes difficult to stand up for what you believe?
   - What’s it like to be (or to witness someone else being) the target of discrimination?

**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 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 **reading for a purpose**. This will help them read for a purpose and be prepared to use the text in later activities.

4. **Reading for a purpose** directions: When you notice Yousef **struggle** with feeling comfortable with who he is and what he believes, put an S in the margin of the story. When you notice Yousef **practice** standing up for himself and his beliefs put a P in the margin of the story.

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 wrote S or P next to the text and why. 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:
   - What did Yousef learn about his religion in school?
   - What did Yousef learn about his religion at home?
   - In what way does Yousef counteract stereotypes of Muslims?
   - Yousef decides not to hide the necklace that represents his faith while at the airport, in spite of feeling uncertain about doing so. What informs his decision? What are the consequences?
   - Does anyone connect with Yousef’s story? Why?
After Reading the Story (15 min)
During this post-reading activity, students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors.

1. Introduce the social media post activity by explaining to the group that they will be using their imaginations to create a social media post that shares their reason for standing up to stereotyping/discrimination.

2. Social media post directions:
   Using what you learned from Yousef’s story, and drawing on your own experiences or connections to the story, write/draw a Facebook-type post where you take a stand against stereotyping. Try to use language that would make your post go viral!
   • You may include: how stereotyping other people affects its targets, the school community, or society as a whole, as well as ideas on how to prevent stereotyping/discrimination.
   • You should include a reason why you are sharing your post.
   • Optional: include a hashtag in your post to spread awareness about stereotyping/discrimination.

3. Have students create their social media post on blank sheets of paper.

4. Once most students have complete their writing/drawing, have students begin to pass around their posts to peers and have them “like” them by responding with at least one positive comment that adds to the discussion. Try to have as many students comment on one another’s posts as possible in the time allotted.

5. Thank students for being thoughtful members of the group, working to make connections to Yousef’s story, reflecting on their own lives, and sharing with one another.

Optional: If your class enjoyed sharing their posts with one another, let them know they can also share them with us by sending a message to our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/youthcomm) or sending a tweet to @youthcomm!
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?
Enter online: bit.ly/yctcontest

Do you have a strong feeling about an article you read in YCteen? We’d like to hear about it.

YCteen is written by a staff of teen writers who work in our New York City newsroom. But writing is a form of conversation, and we want you to join in.

We invite you to submit an essay in the form of a letter to the writer, responding to their story. This is an opportunity to express your opinion or present your own point of view on a story you’ve read.

Start your letter with “Dear Writer” and reference the article by the title, and the writer’s name. End it with “Sincerely” and your name, address, high school, and age.

CONTEST RULES:

- You must be between the ages of 14 and 19.
- Essays should be no more than 300 words.
- If you win, your essay will be published on our website and in our print issue. Tell us if you want it to be printed anonymously—but you should still type in your full name and complete address so we know where to mail your check if you win.
- Current YCteen or Represent writers may not enter the essay contest.
- Essays may be edited by Youth Communication editors for brevity and clarity. All entries become property of Youth Communication.

Here are some prompts to inspire you:

- What stood out to you about the story you chose?
- Can you relate to what the writer experienced? How is your own experience similar, or different?
- If you disagree with the writer, explain why you think differently or how you might have handled the situation.
- Did the story change your opinion or influence your actions?
- Are there aspects that the writer has not considered?
TEACHERS: ATTEND A LEADERS TRAINING*

A new resource from Youth Communication to support girls’ empowerment

Real As Me

- Build resilience, self-worth, and agency
- Strengthen SEL and literacy skills
- Fun and youth-centered

Real As Me includes an Anthology of real teen stories, Curriculum Guide, and Professional Development

* Educators and counselors can join us for our Real As Me Leaders Training on Friday, February 10, 2017 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Youth Communication in New York City. Registration is required.

A new career readiness resource from Youth Communication

On My Way

- Prepares youth ages 12-24 for success in the workplace
- Strengthen communication, self-awareness and decision-making skills
- Tested approach, easy-to-use

On My Way includes an Anthology of real teen stories, Curriculum Guide, and Professional Development

* Educators and counselors can join us for our On My Way Leaders Training on Wednesday, February 15, 2017 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Youth Communication in New York City. Registration is required.

Contact Anthony Buissereth for more information at 212-279-0708 x114 or abuissereth@youthcomm.org