Dear Educators and Counselors,

We hope that your work in the classroom continues to be meaningful and productive as winter approaches.

A thread running through many of the stories in this issue of YCteen relates to a critical developmental task that educators are all too often ill-equipped to support: students’ need to fit in and gain acceptance from peers. You’ll hear from teens who recount experiences of overcoming shyness and finding ways to connect with others. The stories incorporate this theme in a variety of contexts, including the overuse of social media, the healing power of art, and living in shelter.

Through the lessons in this activity guide, your students will explore healthy models of relationship building and social engagement. For example, while reading “Helped Through Homelessness,” students learn how working with a counselor helps the writer open up and confront her feelings of shame about her family’s living situation. In “Dismissed and Excluded,” students see how a teen writer productively deals with sexism and ostracism in a school club.

Whether you’re a long-time user of YCteen or coming to it for the first time, we hope that the stories in this issue, and the activities in this guide, will support your work of getting to know your students and establishing a productive and safe classroom climate.

If you have feedback, please let me know via email about your experiences using the lesson guide and how we can improve it. Our goal is that the stories and activities support your important work. Let us know if this is, or isn’t, the case!

Sincerely,

David Heller
Education Director

WRITING CONTEST
We ask readers to write a letter to one of the writers. This will encourage close reading and writing.
ELA Literacy & Social and Emotional Learning

Without a Home—Not Without Hope

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 lives in a homeless shelter with her family for a few years.

2. Introduce the **brainstorming** activity by explaining that in the 2016-2017 school year, one in every 10 public school students in New York City was homeless at some point.

3. Ask students (or post on the board) the question, “What are some common stereotypes you’ve heard about homeless students?” Explain to students that they themselves do not have to believe these views, but just be aware that some people might have them.

4. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils. Give students one-two minutes to brainstorm ideas on paper independently.

5. After time is up, explain to the group that they will be doing a Pair Share. Ask them to turn to a person next to them and take turns sharing their responses to the question.

6. Each member of the pair should take about a minute to share. Cue partners to switch roles after the first minute. Use a timer or wait until the hum of conversation dies down before re-gaining students’ attention.
7. Call on each pair one to share one stereotype that they discussed. Record their ideas on chart paper or a white board. Continue asking for volunteers until you have a good list of stereotypes.

8. Lead a discussion by asking group members the following question:
   - “How do you think being homeless would affect a student’s life in and out of school?”

9. Thank students for sharing.

**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 story 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 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 the writer’s behavior or words contradict, or go against, a stereotype the class listed as being associated with youth homelessness. When this occurs in the text, students should write an “X”.

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 an “X” next to 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:
   - How did Amber’s story contradict some of the stereotypes about homeless students we brainstormed earlier?
   - What does Amber do to get through this tough time in her life?
   - Do you personally connect with Amber’s story? How?

**After Reading the Story (15 min)**

_During this post-reading activity, students will make connections, build understanding, and rehearse positive behaviors._

1. Introduce the **Dear Teen Writer** activity by explaining to the group that they will write a letter to Amber that shares some of their reactions to her story.
2. Tell the group that if they want, it’ll be possible to mail in their letters to the Youth Communication office and to potentially get published in an upcoming issue in our “Letter to the Editor” section.

3. Write the **Dear Teen Writer** guidelines on the board, or read them to the class:
   - Begin with the Greeting: “Dear Amber,”
   - Describe what you learned about student homelessness from her story.
   - Share any personal reactions or connections you had with her story.
   - Describe the strategies that you think helped Amber get through this time, and how those strategies could help you as well.
   - Ask Amber a question or two based on her story.
   - End with a Closing: “Sincerely, (Your Name)”

4. Thank students for being thoughtful members of the group and working to make connections to Amber’s story, reflect on their own lives, and share with one another.
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 titled “Dismissed and Excluded.” Tell the class that the writer is upset about the mansplaining that happens to her. If they have not heard of the term “mansplained,” it is when a man explains something to a woman in a condescending or patronizing way.

2. Check for students’ understanding of this term.

3. Review the Concentric Circles activity procedure. Tell the class:
   - “We will form two standing circles, one inside the other.”
   - “Each person will face a partner.”
   - “I will read questions aloud and everyone will have a chance to respond while their partner listens.”

4. Divide the class into two. One way to do this is to have students count off 1-2. (If you don’t have two equal groups, you can join one.)

5. Clear a space in the middle of the room and have the 1s stand and form a circle facing outward.
6. Have the 2s stand and form a second circle around the first one, facing inward.

7. Explain to the class that the person they’re facing will be their first partner.

8. Tell them:
   - “Partners will take turns responding to a question that I ask.”
   - “When one person speaks, the other listens.”
   - “Each person should speak for about one minute. Make sure both of you get a chance to talk.”
   - “When time is up, I will ask one circle to rotate and everyone will have a new partner.”

9. Pose this question to the class:
   “When you think about mansplaining, what is an example that comes to mind? Have you witnessed it or been mansplained yourself?”

10. After two minutes are up (you might want to use a timer to keep track), ask the inside circle to move two people to the right while the outside circle stands still. There should be new pairs formed.

11. Repeat the process using these other questions:
    “Why do you think mansplaining happens?”
    “When you come across mansplaining, what do you think you should do?”

12. Have everyone return to their seats.

13. Time permitting, lead a discussion by asking students to describe some of the good points that were made during their conversations. They can also share times they agreed or disagreed with their partner, new ideas that their partner gave them, or questions they still have about the topic.

14. Thank students for sharing.

**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 story 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 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 the writer acts positively despite being mistreated by boys in her club. When this occurs in the text, students should write a “✓” in the margin.
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 a “✓” next to 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 do you think of the way the writer handled her situation? If you were the writer’s friend, what advice would you give her?
   - What are some of the ways the writer is mistreated by the boys in her group?
   - Why do you think this mistreatment occurs?
   - What are some connections you made with this story?

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

1. Introduce the *Silent Conversation* activity by explaining to the group that they will do an activity where they learn more about each other and find ways to connect.

2. Review the directions with the group. Tell them:
   - “Everyone will sit with a partner.”
   - “You will write independently in response to a prompt. Try to end with a question.”
   - “Then you will exchange papers and respond to your partner's writing by answering their questions, sharing your own ideas, and by posing a new question.”
   - “You will pass notes back and forth to build a silent, written conversation with your partner.”

3. Have group members find a partner and sit beside each other.

4. Pass out journals or notebook paper and pencils.

5. Read the prompt aloud (or write it where students can see):
   - **The writer ends her story by saying, “Women and men both need to take a stand to defeat sexism... everywhere.”**
   - What do you think ‘taking a stand’ should look like?
   - How do you see yourself engaging in this fight?
   - What will it take—from you and from others—to do it?

6. Have everyone quietly write for one or two minutes. Then, ask partners to pass their notes and respond to each other’s writing. Move around the room to quietly check-in with group members and offer support.

7. Continue this process by directing partners to finish writing and pass their notes about every two minutes. Remind them to include questions that engage their partner and contribute to the conversation.
8. After about 10 minutes of silent conversation, ask group members to finish their last
thoughts on paper. Then ask them to share with the whole group some of the highlights
from their silent conversation. They can share points of agreement or disagreement, new
ideas, or questions.

9. Thank students for being thoughtful members of the group and working to make
connections to the writer’s story, reflect on their own lives, and share with one another.

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 the current issue of 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 letter 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’s name]” and reference the article by the title. End it with “Sincerely” and your name, address, high school, and age.

CONTEST RULES:

- You must be between the ages of 14 and 19.
- Your letter must respond to a story in our current issue only.
- Letters should be no more than 300 words.
- If you win, your letter 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 letter contest.
- Letters 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?
ATTEND OUR LEADERS WORKSHOP*

The Struggle To Be Strong

Help teens recognize and name their strengths, and discover they’re not alone in facing life’s most difficult challenges.

* Educators and youth service professionals can join us for our Leaders Workshop on:

December 5, 2017

at Youth Communication’s office in New York City

Registration is required. For more information (including fee structure) visit: youthcomm.org/struggle-workshop
EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE STUDENTS WITH YCteen STORIES

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018
10:00 AM - 12:30 PM
at Youth Communication, New York City

This free Youth Communication workshop provides concrete strategies for effectively using YCteen magazine’s award-winning true stories in the classroom.

You’ll learn how to use Circle protocols and open-ended questions to target students’ reading comprehension in a way that’s both successful and engaging. Our Story-Based Approach bolsters social and emotional learning, enhances literacy engagement, and builds trust and community in the classroom setting. You’ll also learn more about ways Circle creates a safe and comfortable space for students to share their personal connections to and questions about the stories they read.

Registration is required: youthcomm.org/ycteenpd

Participants in this workshop are eligible to receive a free YCteen group subscription for their school or youth program.
Do you love to write personal stories and want to be a voice for teens? Apply for our writing internship. YCteen is an award-winning, teen-written magazine that’s read by thousands of teens in print and online. YCteen articles republished in curricula, where teachers and teens use them for years into the future, and on the New York Times Learning Network and Huffington Post. Writers are guided and supported by a professional editor as they learn memoir-writing and journalism skills.

**OUR REQUIREMENTS ARE:**

- Writers must be between the ages of 15 and 20.
- We’re open to writers from 1-6 p.m., Mon.-Thurs. Within that time frame, writers must commit to a minimum of two days a week, two hours a day (for a total of at least 4 hours per week).
- Writers must commit to participating for a minimum of 3 months.

For more info: youthcomm.org/ycteenwrite

Questions? Contact YCteen editor Holly St. Lifer at 212-279-0708 ext. 116 or hstlifer@youthcomm.org