



High School Teachers: use BOSTON TEENS IN PRINT in class!

CURRICULUM GUIDE

for May 2010 issue

How to survive high school

Ask students to read “Graduation goodbyes: Survival advice from our senior class” written by graduating TiPsters.

1. Students should identify the best advice in these letters. What was the most useful information they got from them? Write these on the board.
2. Then have students brainstorm some other information they wish they had known when they started high school. When they have brainstormed ideas, you might ask them to identify categories of ideas like “academics,” “social life,” etc.
3. Using the brainstormed ideas and categories and the ideas they liked from the TiP story, students should write letters to next fall’s incoming ninth graders. What advice would they give them? What survival strategies would they recommend?
 - a. It’s always good to start with a little story to capture the readers’ attention and pull them into the topic. When students don’t know how to start, a story often helps them get going. Students who need help getting started might benefit from a sentence stem like, “If only I had known _____ when I started high school...”
4. If students have a lot of specific suggestions for incoming students, they can make a bulleted list in the letter.
5. Completed letters could be compiled into a simple bound book and given to freshmen at orientation in September. Maybe students could submit drawings to go with the letters as well. Encourage students to submit their letter to *Teens in Print* as well. We might have room in our September issue!

Where in the world is...?

This lesson is intended for English Language Learners.

Students should read “Topic: West Indies: Teens flunk geography.”

1. Ask students to identify the AUDIENCE and PURPOSE of this story.
2. Then, ask students to write an article for their American peers along the lines of “What you should know about my country.” They might start by making a list of interesting facts and details about their country. They might do a “myth vs. fact” format. They can create categories of different kinds of information they want to share. Each category can become its own paragraph or section.
3. Encourage students to add pictures, maps, and artifacts to their article—especially maps! For the finished product, they could set up a page to look like a magazine feature with visual and text elements. They could have a main article, a map, and a couple of sidebars. Use TiP as an example. Students can also check out www.glogster.com for making electronic posters.
4. If possible, find an audience for the students to present their finished articles: a World History class perhaps.

Let me play!

Ask students to read “Playing hardball with softball” by Gena White. Then have them write about a time when they were excluded.

This is an opportunity for students to practice writing that shows rather than tells. They can write this moment as a narrative and work on bringing readers into the scene.

Here are some areas to focus on with students as they tell their story:

1. What was the scenario? Students can practice **scene setting** and **descriptive writing**. They can look at stories and video clips for how a writer or director pulls people into a scene.
2. What happened? Students should try to capture the **action** and **people** in the moment they were excluded. They should think of it as a film and make it as visual as possible.
3. How did you feel? Instead of saying, “I felt bad” or “My feelings were hurt,” encourage students to capture their feelings in other ways. They can describe their actions or physical state. They can describe things they noticed in the moments after. An excellent example of some

unsentimental writing that manages to evoke a lot of emotion is the short story “Eleven” by Sandra Cisneros.

- a. Example: “My stomach twisted. I threw down my mitt and walked off the field. The shoelaces on my right cleat were untied, but I didn’t stop to tie them. I just let them flop in the dirt.”
4. How did you respond to being excluded? What did you do? Again, students should show rather than tell—write the moment the way they see it in their memory. Tell students: “Make a scene.”
5. If you could replay the moment, would you do anything differently? Why or why not? Again, though they might be writing a hypothetical situation, students can still create a scene. This is their chance to re-write (or re-shoot) the moment. How could it have played out differently?

Life of the Patty?

Students should read “Meet Patty” by Tom Leu and try writing a piece of extended personification the way he did in the opening paragraph. Their backpack, ipod, sneakers or favorite pair of jeans can come to life on the page.

Students start by choosing an item. (They could brainstorm possibilities together first: baseball hat, purse, skateboard, the belt that holds up their jeans?) Then, they should brainstorm characteristics for the item they choose.

For example, ask students: What character traits would your purse have? Is she put-upon, carrying all that weight? Is she tired? Stretched to her limits? What is her point of view, hanging there on your shoulder? Is she tired of never being able to see what’s ahead of you? How does she feel about being bumped against doorways and dropped on dirty floors?

Once they have sketched out the right “personality” for the object, they can decide whether they want to write in first person or third (Leu wrote about Patty in third person). Ask students to produce at least three paragraphs personifying their chosen object.

For added challenge, ask students to write without ever identifying in the prose *what the object is*. Then students can pass their papers to a peer and see if the partner can guess the object’s identity. Or, multiple readers can get involved. Use Post-its so more than one reader can read and write down their guess. Each student can fold it to conceal their guess from the next reader. The guesses will let the writer know how clear she was in her extended personification.

We welcome your feedback about TiP. We also love to hear how you use it in your classroom.

Thanks for reading,

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