



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

## **CURRICULUM GUIDE**

for November 2009 issue

**Do the stories in “Frustration Nation” feel familiar to your students?**

### **Write a Letter**

Have your students witnessed immigrant students being harassed at school? Have they experienced such harassment themselves? Have they noticed that immigrant and US-born students don't sit together at lunch? Or does your school do a good job of helping all students blend?

Have students create a “T” chart. They should list problems (in general terms) at their own school on the left. Then, ask them to brainstorm solutions on the right.

Ask students to write a letter to the headmaster or an open letter to the school suggesting solutions to the problems described in “Frustration Nation.” Or, if you feel that students at your school mix and get along well, have students write a letter to TiP explaining why; share the secrets of your school's success.

A good format for this type of letter is:

### ***Opening***

Students should spend the first paragraph or two telling a brief story that illustrates the problem (or the success). For example, they might start by describing something that happened to them or something that they witnessed. The point is to be specific, to give examples.

### ***Middle***

After they have set the scene with an opening story or examples, they should transition to suggestions. They might start this way: “To improve relations between students at my school, I suggest we try a few new things.”

Next, students should list two or three suggestions. Then, one by one, they can explain them in more detail. So if a student writes, “I would like to see my school create a buddy system where each ESL or recent immigrant student is paired with a native English speaking student. Our school should also host an annual international night,” then, she should take one paragraph to explain the first suggestion, and one paragraph to explain the second.

For each suggestion, students should be sure to explain HOW the suggested action would help address the larger problem.

### ***Closing***

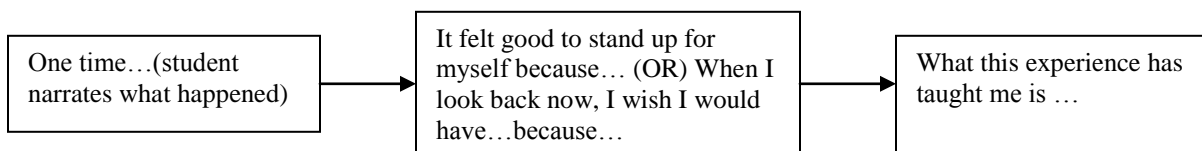
Here students should remind their audience *why* they are writing about this situation and *what* they hope will change. Remind them that it always helps to personalize the letter and explain what the larger situation means to them. For example:

- *I know that if I were a new student at this school, I would appreciate being assigned a “buddy” to show me around.*
- *I think what we study in World History would mean more if the international students in our school took a leading role in sharing their stories from their home countries.*

Explaining how they feel about the problem is a better way to go than to blame people. They are more likely to have their message heard and taken seriously if they don’t point fingers.

Remind students to thank their audience for taking the time to consider the suggestions. They can also ask politely for a response and even suggest what type of response they expect.

An Alternative Assignment for “Frustration Nation”: the writer of this story expresses his feelings of helplessness when other immigrant students are being harassed. Have students write an essay about a time they stood up for themselves or wished they had stood up for themselves. Guide students with a kernel essay format like this:



## Did your students enjoy reading “Rewriting the book on a neighborhood’s rep”?

### Describe a Misunderstood Place

Can your students relate to this writer’s experience? What are the broad impressions of Roxbury and Dorchester the writer points to? What are the specific details that she uses to combat these stereotypes? Call students’ attention to this process of separating general impressions from specific “on the ground” details.

Invite students to take a closer look at the places they frequent in Boston every day. Then ask them to do the following:

*Rewrite the story of some corner of Boston that you know well and that outsiders might not appreciate the way you do. It could be your street or block. It might be your favorite park, playground, or store. It could be a church, library, or restaurant.*

Describe the place in detail. Include sensory details like smells, sounds, textures, visuals, even tastes. *Show* the place to readers rather than *tell* them about it.

### ***Organizing a description of place***

One way to organize a description is to close your eyes and imagine that you are looking at it through a camera lens. Pan the scene from start to finish. This method goes something like this:

*When I push open the door of my uncle’s market, a little bell on the door jingles to announce my arrival. To my right, newspapers are stacked neatly next to the candy and gum that line the shelves in front of the register. Goya beans are on sale, the cans stacked in a pyramid straight ahead of me, and to the left, I see my uncle arranging red and green peppers in a colorful heap. Reggae music fills the shop, and ...*

Another way to organize a description is by grouping similar objects, so if you are describing a park, you might describe the trees and flowers first, then the playground features, and then the people who are there.

You might also describe a place with a series of dreamy impressions: “When I think of my grandma’s house, I immediately smell...I hear the sounds of my aunties gossiping in the kitchen....My baby cousin is rattling a shaker and the TV is blasting a baseball game.”

### ***Ending***

Students pile up all the “showing” details they can gather, and then share the description with the teacher or a peer, asking, “What does it seem like I am trying to say about this place?” The teacher or partner reads, and then answers with one sentence at the bottom of the page. “It seems like you are saying that this place is...”

If the reader doesn't get what the writer was trying to achieve with the description, the writer needs to revisit the description to see where it led the reader to the wrong conclusion. If the reader does "get it," the writer can use this sentence to guide her in finishing her description.

For example, if the writer has been focusing on the people that hang out at her favorite park—the various characters there—she can write a closing sentence that sums up that sentiment: "This park is a little world. I am never alone here." If the writer shows, shows, shows, then her last line can tell, and the telling will mean more because of the picture she has created.

**Let students rewrite an historical document: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men – and women, yo! – are created equal..."**

### **Write an original Declaration of Independence**

Give your students a copy of the original Declaration and this assignment:

What would you like to liberate yourself from? Stereotypes? Homework? An annoying younger sibling? Skinny jeans? Write your own Declaration of Independence. Borrow the language and *spirit* of the original document but change up the content. Focus on something from today's world. Make it timely and relevant so your peers will feel the power of its truth. Publish your Declaration as a flyer or brochure. Post it, present it, or hand it out.

### **UPCOMING SUBMISSION DEADLINES**

**For the January 2010 paper:** November 30, 2009

*See submission guidelines in* Teens in Print.

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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