

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Prologue

MISSION 4: "City of Immigrants"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all, and ask students to choose one to respond to. You may assign one or more to the entire group. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Where there are multiple questions in a single prompt, choose the question or questions that best suit your students. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intention of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions, and are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history or in historical events. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of the prompts before students encounter the history, because thinking about them sets the students up to understand and relate to the material better.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and writing skill, you should decide when and how much students should write. We suggest that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you should encourage them to focus on content rather than mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared formally, such as on a bulletin board or in a newsletter.

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Read through all the topics first, and then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

IMMIGRATION STORY. Nearly every American family has an immigration story. What is Lena's family's story? What caused her brother and her to immigrate to America? Does your family have an immigration story? Talk to your family and find out how they came to live in America. Write your family's story describing where they came from and what events caused them to embark on their immigrant journey.

JOURNEYS. The prologue provides the background to Lena's journey from Minsk to New York City. Have you ever made a journey on your own? Even if you haven't traveled halfway around the world like Lena, you have probably journeyed somewhere. Write about a time when you had to make a journey. Describe how you felt, your destination, and what you learned along the way.

EXAM PRESSURE. When the prologue begins, we meet Lena as she nervously studies and prepares for the questions she will be asked at immigration processing. What strategies does Lena use to prepare for her immigration test? Have you ever felt pressure when studying for an exam? Describe the strategies you use to prepare for a stressful test. What were the consequences of failure?

FAMILY DYNAMICS. Every member of a family plays an important role. Who are the members of Lena's family? Consider your own family and how each member contributes to your family's survival. Describe the different roles each person plays. Do you feel responsibility towards your family? What are you willing to do to help? What wouldn't you be willing to take on?