

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part 2: Family First

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.

MORNING ROUTINE. Lena starts each day at 5:30am. Describe her morning routine and compare it to your own. In what ways is her morning routine similar or different from your daily habits?

MEDICAL SCARE. After meeting with the nurse from Henry Street Settlement, Sonya has a medical scare and is worried about her baby's health. Have you ever been scared about going to the doctor? Write about a time you experienced a medical scare and how your family helped you to get through it.

BEING AMERICAN. Isaac tells Lena that she is starting to sound like a real American. What do you think Isaac means? Can you describe what an American sounds like?

SHOP TILL YOU DROP. Lena needs to make careful decisions about what to purchase and how to spend Sonya's shopping money. Consider your own financial habits. How do you make decisions about what to spend your money on and how much of it to save? What is something that you are currently saving for?

BUDGET BEHAVIOR. Sonya keeps a ledger to track the family's finances. What are some of their expenses? What are they saving for? If you were to make a ledger for your family, what would you include?

FAMILY CHORES. Throughout Part 2, Lena is busy doing many chores, including the laundry and shopping. How does Lena feel about doing the chores? How do you think she would prefer to spend her time? Write about the chores you do and how they contribute to your family. Make sure to also include how doing the chores makes you feel.

KVETCH. Kvetch is a Yiddish word meaning to complain. What are some of the things that Lena and Sonya kvetch about in Part 2? Have you ever complained about similar things? Record some of your own kvetches. How would you want someone to respond to your kvetches?