

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Writing Prompts

### Part 1: Finding Home

#### MISSION 4: "City of Immigrants"

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#### 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.

**NEW EXPERIENCES.** When Lena's family makes the choice to send her to New York City in place of her brother, her life drastically changes. Do you think Lena wanted to leave her friends and family in Minsk? How do you think she felt about traveling alone to a foreign country? Describe a time that you had a new experience; for example, moving to a new school or traveling to a new place. How did you prepare yourself for the new experience?

**PACKING DILEMMAS.** If you were going to travel around the world, what would you want to take with you? Consider Lena's packing choices and how they would compare to your own. Select five items that you would pack in your suitcase. For each item, describe how you selected it and what makes it important enough to pack.

**STRANGER DANGER.** Throughout Part 1, Lena encounters a variety of strangers. Consider all the people she met in Ellis Island and in the Lower East Side. How does she decide who to talk to and who to trust? How would you describe the different encounters? Have you ever been in a situation in which you needed to decide whether or not you could trust a stranger? How did you determine who was trustworthy?

**HOME SWEET HOME.** Isaac and Sonya live in a tenement apartment located at 47 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side. Describe their neighborhood and compare and contrast its appearance to your own. Consider the buildings, transportation, and people within your answer. What is the same? What is different?

**LENA'S DIARY.** Through Lena's eyes, think about your circumstances from the beginning to the end of this part of "City of Immigrants." Share your emotions and feelings about each step of the journey. Think about the people with whom you interacted, and what you learned from them. Think about the choices you made and the consequences of those choices. Now write a diary entry from Lena's point-of-view summarizing what happened to you in Part 1. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.