

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part 3: A Night to Remember

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.

SINK OR SWIM. When Part 3 begins, Lena takes over for her brother as a peddler at the Hester Street Market. How do you imagine she felt taking on this new responsibility? Have you ever had to take on a new task without training? Describe what you think is the best way to learn something new. Is it best to jump in and try it or to learn from or watch someone else?

MAKING FRIENDS. At the settlement house Lena becomes friends with Rosa, an Italian immigrant who is also learning English. Think about how you made your friends. What are some tips you have for someone who is new to place and doesn't yet have any friends?

NEW FOODS. Lena and Rosa tell each other about some of their favorite foods while practicing their English in class. Have you ever tried Rosa's favorite of olives or Lena's favorite of babke? If you were going to share a food with a new friend, what kind of food would you select for them to try? Why?

FAMILY FIRST. Throughout Part 3, Lena needs to decide if she should put her family first or her own personal wishes. Do you think she should help Sonya and Isaac or should she enjoy some free time? Should she buy herself something or save all of her money to help pay the rent? Have you ever had to make a decision between your own interests and your family's? How would you decide when to put yourself first or your family first?

DEAR MAMA. Lena wants to write a letter to her Mama back in Minsk, but doesn't know where to start. Think carefully about everything that has happened to Lena since she arrived in America. What events do you think are important for her to share with her mother? Now write a letter from Lena's point-of-view summarizing her experiences.

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 3. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.