



September 2008

Tips for Teachers

Hey Teachers,

Thank you for supporting VOX at your school! We're excited to kick off the school year with a theme celebrating diversity. VOX would not be possible without the rich and unique perspectives teens from various backgrounds bring to each issue. This month some of these teens reflect on their roots and embrace their heritage while others write about important issues concerning them and your students.

There are plenty of opportunities below to get your students' voices in our next issue or on our Web site, www.VoxRox.org.

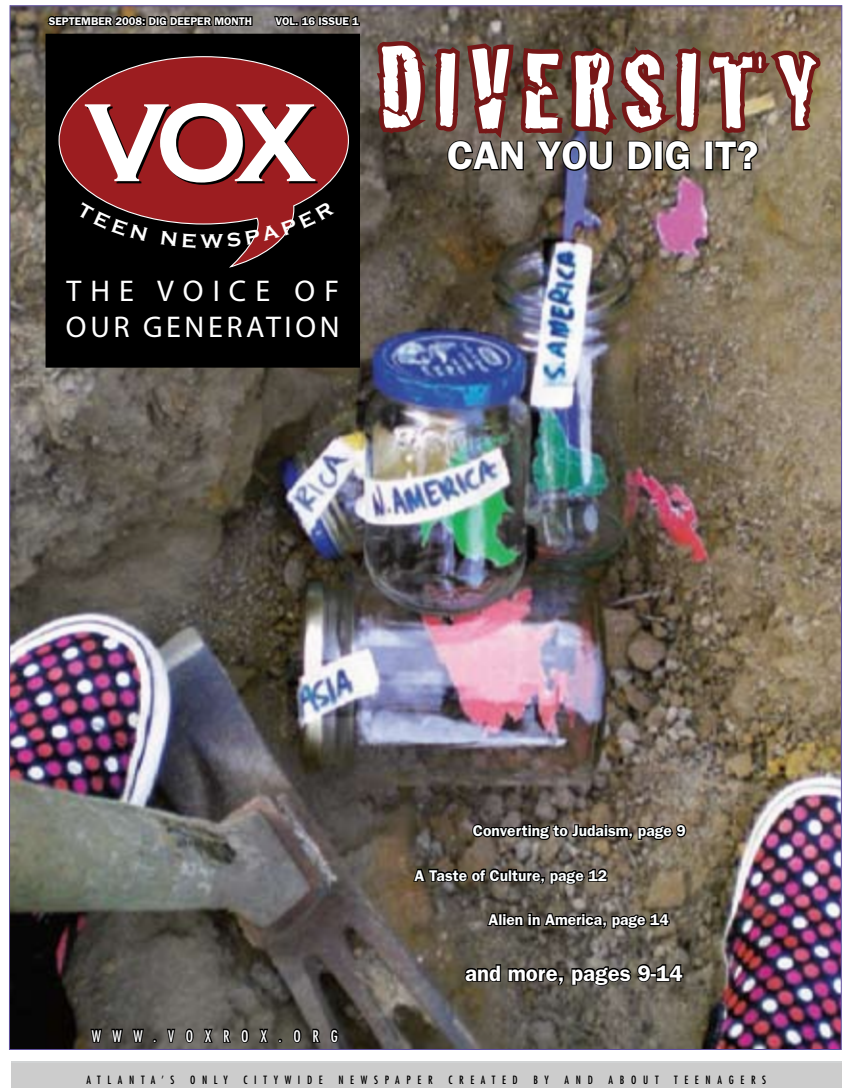
Target Skills: Reading, Persuasive/Essay Writing, Letter/Poetry Writing, Analytical Thinking, Research, Group Work, Interviewing, Public Speaking/Debate

LETTER WRITING

Have your students each find a story that stands out to them in this issue and craft a letter to the author with their thoughts. Send the letters to VOX, and we'll publish the best ones in the next issue! We always welcome class sets.

POETRY WRITING & ART

Every issue of VOX offers readers a chance to share their original poetry and art with VOX's 80,000 readers on "The Wall" (p. 23). Have your students write a poem on any topic they or you choose, then mail their poems to VOX. We also invite and encourage original art. We publish the best submissions each month.



Converting to Judaism, page 9

A Taste of Culture, page 12

Allen in America, page 14

and more, pages 9-14

Weezy: The Best Rapper?, page 6 | Is Technology Making Us Dumb?, page 5 | Lessons in Self Love, page 15

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY MACHELLE TRAN | VOX STAFF

SUBMISSIONS

Please send any exceptional writing resulting from "Tips for Teachers" to VOX, 229 Peachtree St., Ste. 725, Atlanta, GA 30303 or to vox@VoxRox.org for potential publishing in the newspaper or Web site. Please write Tips for Teacher on the envelope or subject line. And include each student's name, age, school, and contact information (including e-mail address) for verification and follow up.

You'll find more tips for using VOX in the classroom on the back of this page. Please let us know what works for you!

Reading, Research, Essay Writing, Analytical Thinking, Public Speaking/Debate

In “Is Technology Making Us Dumb?” on page 5, Roswell sophomore Chad White explores his generation’s fascination with technology and agrees with author Mark Bauerlein’s criticism that teens’ growing dependency on technology can be handicapping. Chad writes, “In class, our attention is divided between our textbooks and texting ... Obviously many of us who text in class really don’t understand how technology competes for our attention when we should be learning.” Have students write an essay about how technology affects their generation and them personally. Alternately, students could hold an in-class debate about the pros and cons of technology.

Analytical Thinking, Research, Group Work, Debate

In “Condoms = First Aid” on page 7, Washington High junior Chernail Arnold thoughtfully crafts her argument for why condoms should be available in schools. You may not want to discuss this particular topic in your classroom, but the story still serves as an excellent reference for persuasive writing and sourcing. As a class, have your students brainstorm their own topic for debate. Then split the class in half, with half the students arguing for the chosen topic and the other half against it. Have students research their topic for homework, writing down every reference used. Then give them class time to construct their arguments as a group before holding a debate incorporating their research. Each group should present at least three supporting reasons for their position and be prepared to counter opposing arguments.

Reading, Public Speaking, Narrative Essay Writing, Critical Thinking

Yasmeen Malik, a senior at The Weber School, grew up practicing Islam at home with her father, who later married her Jewish stepmother. Introduced to Jewish customs at an early age, Yasmeen’s interest in Judaism came naturally. Five years ago, she converted to the Jewish faith. “I didn’t convert because I felt something absent. I just needed something more,” she writes poignantly in “My Path to Judaism” on page 9. Not every teen will relate to Yasmeen’s religious conversion, but they might relate to her courage as she shares about following her heart and choosing her own path. After reading and discussing Yasmeen’s story, have students write a narrative essay about a time they did something that took a lot of nerve, a time when they didn’t follow the crowd, a time when they stood up for their beliefs.

Reading, Critical Thinking, Writing

In “A Taste of Culture” on page 12, Tech High senior Mooni Abdus-Salam writes that food is the glue that keeps her family together. Have teens read Mooni’s story and then write about who or what represents the glue that keeps their family members connected. Have students write a story about a time that glue impacted their family life.

Reading, Group Work, Public Speaking

Immigrating and settling into another country can be a challenging transition. On pages 13 and 14, Stephenson High sophomore Modupe Alabi and Clarkston High senior Lynda Bourne share personal experiences about adjusting to American culture. After reading and discussing the stories, break students into groups. Have each group come up with ways to help teens from other cultures feel welcome into the classroom and school. Have groups present their ideas to the class.

Analytical Thinking, Public Speaking

Beauty may be skin deep, but many people fail to go any deeper. In “Loving the Skin I’m In” on page 16, Cedar Grove senior Fenell Wilkins writes, “In the black community, we look down on our own people by judging others by skin complexion... so at the end of the day a dark-skinned girl may look at her own people as the enemy for rejecting her.” Read the story together, then have students write about a time they’ve witnessed or experienced something similar. If they’ve never heard of anything like this before, ask students to write what they think about it. Ask each student to brainstorm five ways to break the cycle. Then invite students to share and discuss their thoughts and ideas with the class.

Reading, Analytical Thinking

On page 17, Towers High senior Octavia Fugerson writes, “I used defense mechanisms so much, I wasn’t able to distinguish the truth from the lies.” We’ve all lied at some point in our lives. After reading Octavia’s story together, have students write about one time they lied, what the consequences were and what they would do differently.

Analytical Thinking, Letter Writing

In “No Sticks. No Stones.” on page 20, various VOX teen staff members write about the roles they’ve played in bullying, be it as a perpetrator, ally, victim or bystander. Have students reflect on a time they’ve faced bullying. Then have them write a letter to their former selves about what they wished they would have done and what they’ve learned since that experience.