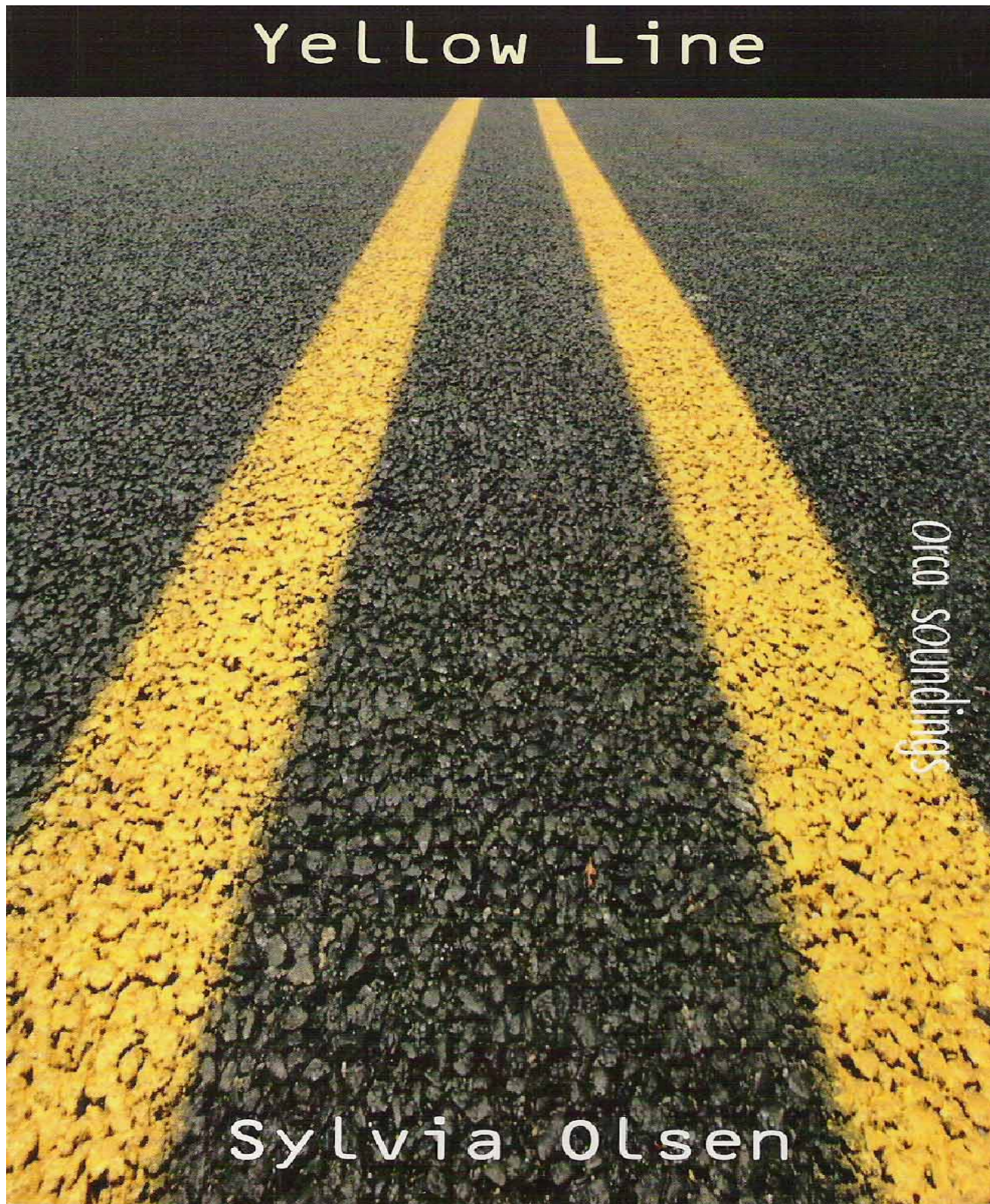


# NOVEL STUDY

Yellow Line



*Orca Soundings*

Sylvia Olsen

## **Novel Study Project**

This novel study project was developed by the Regional Vancouver Island Aboriginal Circle with the help of the Aboriginal Education Branch at the Ministry of Education.

Special thanks to Louise Spencer for her contributions.

The goal of the novel study project was to create lessons incorporating Aboriginal literature and/or Aboriginal authors, while keeping in mind, the Aboriginal learner.

In order to best meet these goals the lessons were designed to:

- Respect the cultures of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who may read and participate in these lessons.
- To use a non-linear approach
- To provide mix and match strategies that may be applied to many texts
- To use graphic organizers whenever possible to accommodate the inclusion of a diversity of learners
- To provide opportunities to integrate English and Social Studies
- To include elements of writing, inquiry , collaboration and reading in each lesson
- To provide a set of question that can be used as prompts for discussion groups, journaling activities, comprehension or evaluation

# Yellow Line

A Novel By: Sylvia Olsen

ISBN: 1-55143-462-8

## NOVEL SUMMARY

*Where I come from, kids are divided into two groups. White kids on one side, Indians, or First Nations, on the other. Sides of the room, sides of the field, the smoking pit, the hallway, the washrooms; you name it. We're on one side and they're on the other. They live on one side of the Forks River bridge, and we live on the other side. They hang out in their village, and we hang out in ours. In the city they are called First Nations; out here, they've always been called Indians, and we don't change stuff like that in a hurry.*

Like the solid double lines that divide highways, these invisible barriers mark the social and ethno-cultural realities of the village in which 16-year-old Vince and his family live. Vince's parents live "by the rule of the yellow line"; his dad is forthright about his prejudices, while his mom talks tolerance but walks the yellow line, too. And everyone else on their side of the line seems to think and behave the same way. Then, one morning during the 90 minute bus ride to school, Steve, a cool, popular, grade 12 student gives Sherry "the look" - and Sherry looks back at Steve. So, what's the problem? Steve is an Indian, and Sherry, daughter of Vince's parents' closest friends, isn't. They have challenged an entire village, a place where the most important unwritten rule of conduct is "Date your own kind." Soon, Rocky View High School becomes a minefield of taunts, threats, and insults. Caught in the thick of it all, Vince finds himself questioning all sorts of things: Sherry's rejection of him, his friends' tough-guy swaggering and spoiling for a fight, his fears of being beaten to a pulp by some of the Indian guys, and his attraction to another bus rider, Raedawn - Steve's cousin.

This novel is recommended for struggling readers or as a quick read aloud for grades 7-9. There is a rape incident that is discussed which needs to be handled with sensitivity and some students may require extra support to handle the discussion. This very 'real' novel contains some swearing but what will really make students cringe is the name calling and the racist behaviours.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sylvia Olsen was born and raised in Victoria. When she was seventeen, she married a member of the Tsartlip First Nations. Olsen has raised her four children within the Tsartlip community.

Olsen obtained a Master's degree in History. She now works in first nations community management. She is conducting research with teen parents from the Saanich First Nation, to increase the community's support network for young parents.

**RECOMMENDED GRADE LEVEL: 7-9**

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 1 – Word Splash

Noting similarities and differences is one of the most powerful ways to have students connect to what they are learning and to what they already know about a topic. “Word splash” is a learning strategy that asks students to sort and classify words, while explaining the connections and the relationships between the words or concepts. Graphics can be substituted for words and metaphors and analogies can also be used to promote comprehension.

### Directions

1. Have students cut out the words on the following page
2. Ask students to think about how the words sound.
3. Ask them to decide whether they have positive or negative connotations and sort them accordingly.
4. Finally ask them to predict what this story will be about given the words in the word splash.

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 1 - Word Splash

Indians	separation	reserve	First Nations
white	equality	sins	pathetic
massive	joints	barbecue	crazies
smoking pit	sober	racist	annihilated
chicken-legs	miscellaneous	Provincial	basketball

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 2 – Gallery Walk

### Agree or Disagree

Gallery Walks enable students to rank order their preferences given a selection of variables to choose from. It is important to have students recognize and acknowledge their preferences and to have the opportunity to see how these compare with those of the other students. Students should be encouraged to recognize that a preference for one thing does not discount the next thing. Agree & disagree gallery walks, allow students to rank order on a scale whether they believe strongly or not about a given topic.

Using the dominant traits of characters, or recurring beliefs or themes in novels is a good way to help students prioritize their thinking about the importance of various aspects of the novel.

### DIRECTIONS

1. In small groups have each student circle on the scale of 1 to 4 whether they agree or disagree with the statements.
2. Ask everyone to discuss their answers in their groups and have one person who records the discussion and another who reports out to the class as a whole.
3. Each student then chooses one statement to write a paragraph about using ideas from the group discussion.

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 2 - Gallery Walk

1) **Trust is earned.**

Disagree

Agree

1

2

3

4

2) **Kids trust their parents instinctively.**

Disagree

Agree

1

2

3

4

3) **It's better not to trust people right off the bat.**

Disagree

Agree

1

2

3

4

4) **People in small communities trust one another.**

Disagree

Agree

1

2

3

4

5) **Canadians are not racist.**

Disagree

Agree

1

2

3

4

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 3 - Circle of Trust

### *Who is in your Circle of Trust?*

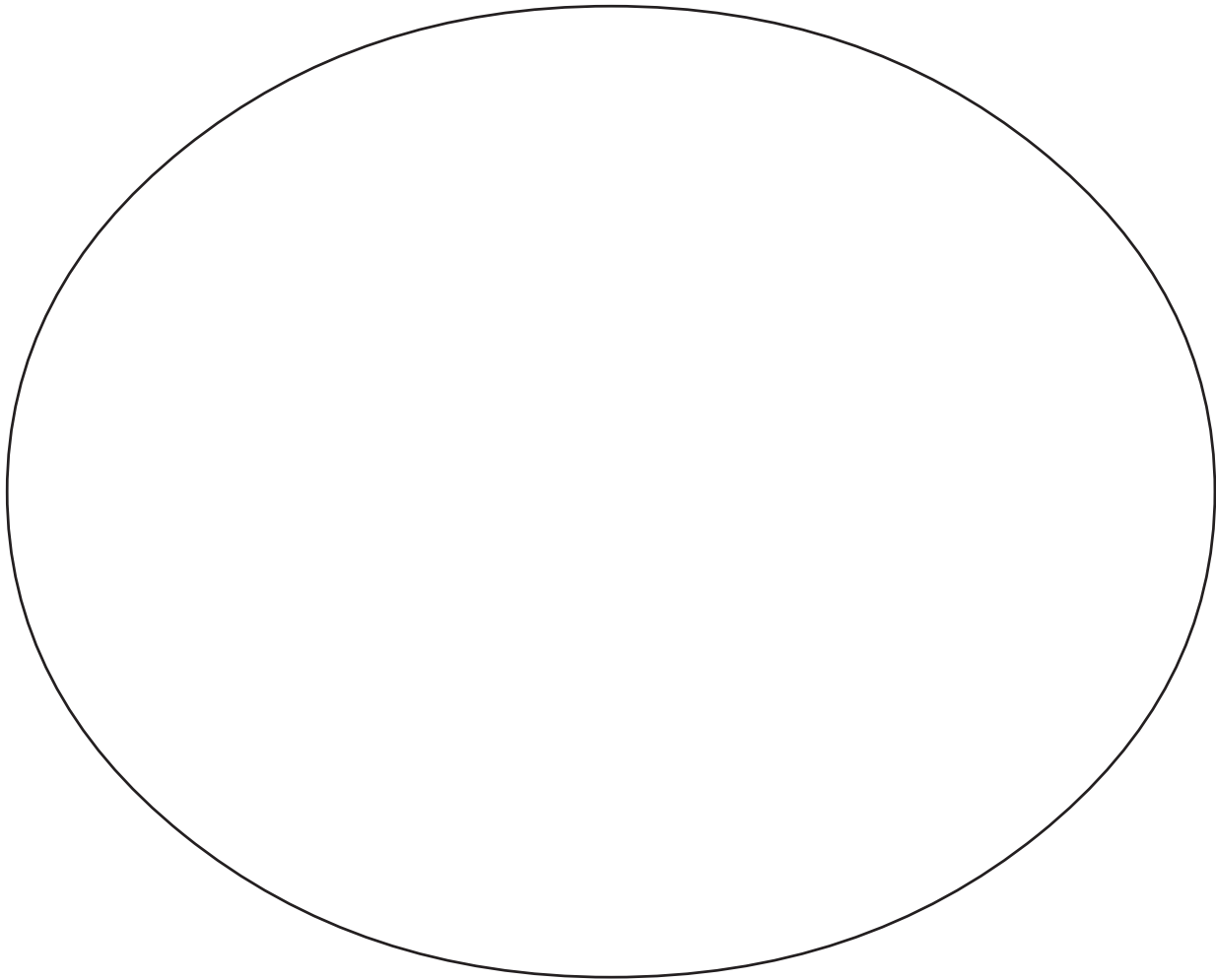
Put your name in the middle of your circle.

Put those people who you can tell your secrets to , closest to you.

Put those people you can 'count on' in your circle too, just not as close to you.

This is a private activity.

### Circle of Trust





## STUDENT ACTIVITY 3 - Circle of Trust for a Character

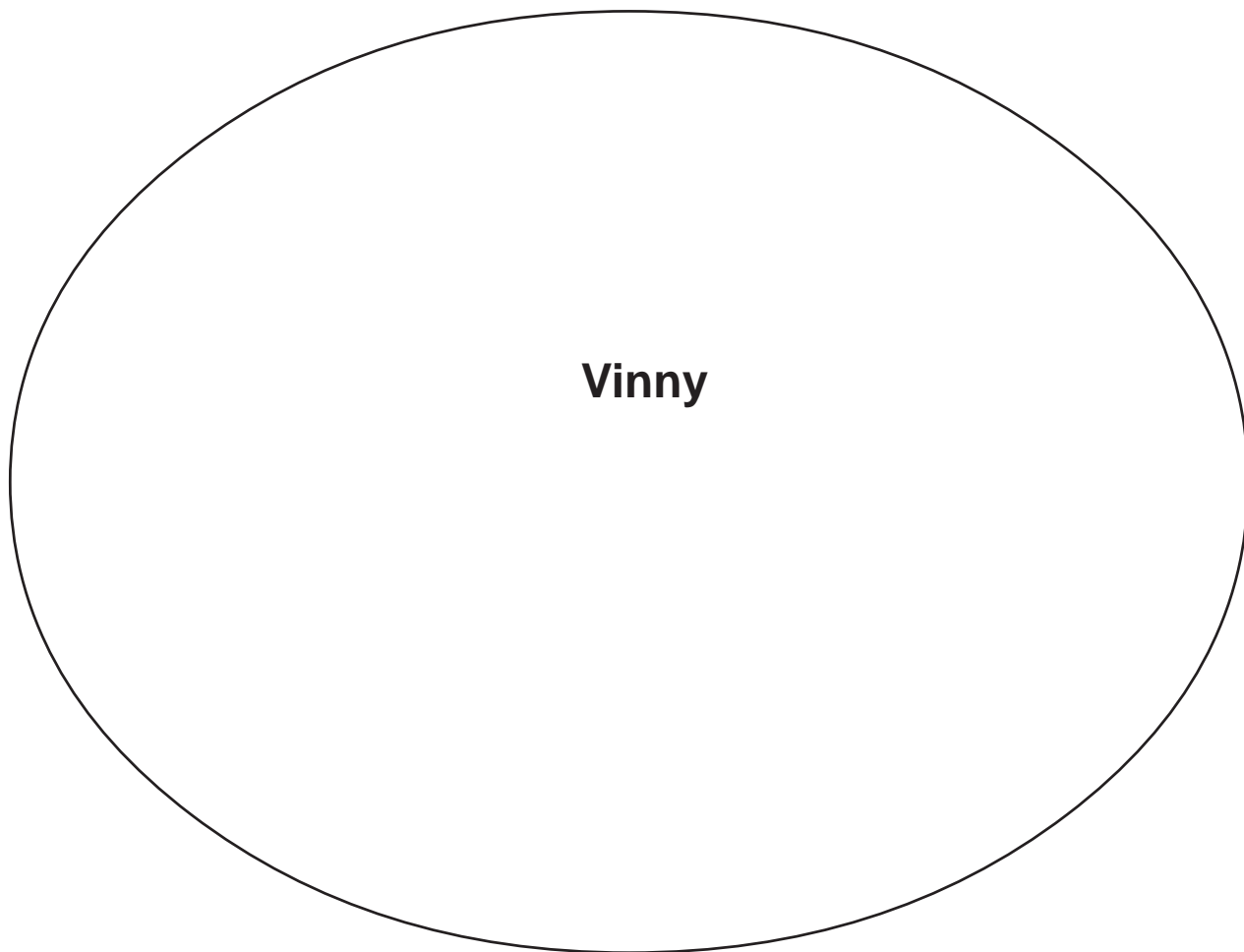
In groups, draw a circle of trust for Vinny.

Find quotes that support your name choices and their placement.

If you find characters out of Vinny's circle, put those names there.

Then, in groups answer these questions:

- 1 Why does Vinny trust or distrust the people he does? What is this trust based on?
- 2 What do people in your group base trust on? **Why** do people trust, not **who** do they trust.
- 3 Keep notes on the group discussion to help you write a paragraph.
- 4 Individually, write a paragraph about Vinny's circle of trust.



## STUDENT ACTIVITY 4 - Attitudes

### Finding evidence in text.

What does the character think, do and say? What does that tell you about their character? Look for evidence of character traits such as in the examples below.

#### Character's thoughts or beliefs

#### Evidence or proof

<p><b>Cautious of others...</b> Character's Thinking... Vinny acts cautiously towards Sherry when she comes home during the summer.</p>	<p>"With Sherry acting so weird, I figure I better keep one eye open."</p>
<p><b>Physical size means something...</b> Vinny believes that size matters. He seems to be proud of the fact that he is not small. Vinny seems to be intimidated by Steve's size.</p>	<p>"At six three, I'm the tallest guy in the school. But there's no doubt that Steve is the biggest guy at Rocky View High School. He has forty or fifty pounds on me."</p>

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 5 - Metaphors and Similes

1) "She's been looking grown up lately, and now they're following her around \_\_\_\_\_ ." page 34

2) "He looks \_\_\_\_\_."  
page 19

3) "He's got \_\_\_\_\_ with black hairs! Yuck." page 21

4) " \_\_\_\_\_, they step onto the basketball court." page 21

5) I'm pumping with a crapload of energy \_\_\_\_\_."  
page 21

6) "My nose feels \_\_\_\_\_."

7) " We all lived by the rule of the \_\_\_\_\_. Us and them. Them and us." page 5

8) " He's shoveling spaghetti in his mouth \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ ." page 33

9) " They are laughing \_\_\_\_\_..." page 19

## **STUDENT ACTIVITY 5 - Metaphor and Similes**

In groups or partners, fill in the blanks on the previous page with these phrases:

- **just stepped out of a cave**
- **chicken-legs**
- **yellow line**
- **like a choreographed dance group**
- **their guts out**
- **the size of a grapefruit**
- **like a pack of dogs.**
- **like he's a garbage disposal.**
- **like a freaking maniac.**

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 6 - Literary Report Card for Characters

Fill in a Literary Report Card application for one character in the story. Some information you may have to guess at, keeping in mind what the character might think or feel.

### Example:

Name: Harry Potter Grade: 8 Teacher: Professor Dumbledore Professor: Snapes		
<b>Personality</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Comments:</b>
Loyalty:	A	Harry takes the blame for things for his friends. He never rats them out.
Feeling loved:	F	Harry lives with his aunt, uncle and cousin, all who don't care about him; yet he hasn't lost his gentle nature.

# STUDENT ACTIVITY 6 - Literary Report Card for Characters

**Name:**  
**Grade:**  
**Teacher:**  
**Professor:**

**Personality**

**Score**

**Comments**

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 7 - Emotionally Provoking Words

Sometimes ideas in a book make the reader feel a certain way. A book is meant to provoke emotions in a reader.

Which words, quotes or ideas make you have an emotional reaction when you read them? Positive or negative. Any emotion is acceptable. Talk about these examples with a partner. Fill in the missing response

<b>Quote:</b>	<b>Response:</b>
1) "In the city they are called First Nations; out here they've always been called Indians...."	I am uncomfortable using the word Indian. I have learned it is a derogatory label. Why do Aboriginal people still use this word?
2)"Chicken legs." I can still hear the girl."	Why are people so cruel to each other? Don't they know how much name-calling can damage a person's heart for good?
3) "They walk on one side of the road. We walk on the other. It's like there's a solid yellow line down the middle."Page3	

***Quote:***

***Response:***



## STUDENT ACTIVITY 8 - Problem Solving

On page 57 of The Yellow Line Vince is thinking about his worries.  
Read the top paragraph of page 57.

What does your group think Vince should do?  
Survey your group and put a tally mark under the heading that you each choose. Discuss and resurvey. Find two more conflicts for numbers 3 and 4.

### Conflict #1:

Vince is worried that he's going to get beaten up. What should he do?

Do Nothing                      Get even                      Educate

### Conflict #2:

Vince's dad is so racist. What should he do?

Do nothing                      Get even                      Educate

### Conflict # 3:

Do Nothing                      Get even                      Educate

### Conflict #4:

Do Nothing                      Get even                      Educate

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 9 - Writing Silently

Use the information from your discussions about problem solving, to write a letter to one of the characters to help them resolve their conflict. Remember to write from a position of helper not dictator. Use this as an opportunity to **educate** that character.

## STUDENT ACTIVITY 9 - Sample Letter

Lincoln High School  
2909 Main Street  
Anytown, CA 09999  
March 28, 2006

Ms. Gomes  
Lincoln High School  
2909 Main Street  
Anytown, CA 90000

Dear Ms. Gomes:

As a student at Lincoln High School, I would like to say thank you for listening to our speeches. You were generous to spend your time with our class. I know that you had to come to our class early to listen to our speeches. Moreover, you shared your good thoughts to help us practice how we speak English. It is also important for us to have the best audience, and someone different from our teacher. Now, we can have self-confidence when we talk in a crowd. Also, we can learn how English, which is our second language, sounds to a listener who is different from us. Especially, your assessment gave us valuable information about our language skills. We can improve how we study and practice this language. Also, you gave us advice with our troubles and taught us to correct mistakes to attain good grades and good goals. Thank you with my heart! You are a wonderful teacher who shared a good time with our class. Thank you again for coming to listen to our speeches, for giving us some ideas, and for exhorting us on the right language.

Sincerely,

(Student's Name)

## **STUDENT ACTIVITY 10 - Who-What-Where-When-Why Poetry**

### **Instructions**

Who-What-Where-When-Why Poetry invites students to learn to write current event stories or expository stories on historical social science. These poems may be added to visual displays. This creative expression may have illustrations, symbols, or pictures. Most importantly the student needs to think critically about the importance of the event or person.

### **(After watching and discussing a videotape on the life of Susan B. Anthony) Student Example**

Who: Susan B. Anthony, political activist  
What: Fought for women's suffrage  
Where: In the "New Nation"  
When: When the oligarchy of sex ruled  
Why: To determine "Are Women Persons?"

### **(From world history while studying about the Byzantine Emperor) Student Example**

Who: Justinian, Byzantine Emperor  
What: Well-organized legal system  
Where: Byzantine Empire  
When: Early 500's A.D.  
Why: To extend the rights of women, children and slaves.

# STUDENT ACTIVITY 10 - Who-What-Where-When-Why Poetry

**Who:**

**What:**

**Where:**

**When:**

**Why:**

## Literature Circle Discussion Questions

### **Chapters 1-2**

1. Do you see a separation of cultures in your school? In your community?
2. Do you suppose the author chose the name Dune for a reason? What connotations does it have to you?
3. Why is there such an obvious distinction between the Aboriginal and non-aboriginal in this town? Is that common?
4. Why do you think Vince's dad is so racist?
5. Why do you think Sherry's attitude changes?
6. How do you feel when you read the words such as "Indian" in the novel?
7. Why have the names for our Aboriginal People changed so much?
8. How do you think it might feel to live in Vince's house? How about Steve's?
9. What do you think about the girls who heckle Vince from the side of the basketball court?

### **Chapters 3-4**

1. How often do you think teenagers think about their body image? How about adults? How about kids and the elderly?
2. Do you think Jack, Vince's dad, is a realistic character? How about his mom? Why or why not?
3. What should he do about his situation with Nick and Justin?
4. Why do you suppose Vince is afraid of his feelings towards Raedawn?

### **Chapter 5**

1. Do you suppose Vince should have told his parents everything in this situation.
2. Do you suppose Vince's dad almost "busts an artery" when he hears that Sherri and Steve are "getting it on?"
3. Do you think Vince's parents can 'help', as his mom says they can?
4. Why is it so difficult for so many teens and parents to communicate?

### **Chapter 6**

1. Why does Vinnie's stomach feel as if he "swallowed an orange," when Raedawn says hi. Define and describe his emotion.
2. What does Charlie have against Vinnie anyway? Is this problem about Charlie? Steve? Sherri? Why is there so much animosity?
3. What do you think about organized fights? Have you ever seen a fight solve a problem?

## Chapter 6 continued

4. Does Vinnie do the 'right' thing or the 'chicken' thing in not going to the bridge?
5. Why do you suppose Nick and Justin are getting so mad about Vince's behaviour with regards to the bridge fight?
6. Why do you think Justin thinks Vince should drink before the fight? What advantages and disadvantages are there to drinking before facing danger?

## Chapter 7

1. What do you think really happened between Justin, Nick and Raedawn?
2. Do you think girls and boys view sex that much differently?
3. Why do the boys act proud of what they did to Raedawn? Do you think they really felt proud?
4. Do you think Vince should tell his parents about all of his problems and concerns? Which if any?

## Chapter 8

1. If you had a teenager, would you have a curfew? Why or why not?
2. What rules would you have for your teens?
3. What do you think of how Vince's dad speaks to him?
4. Whose fault is it that Sherri allegedly smelled "like marijuana"?
5. What rules would you have for your teens around drug use?

## Chapter 9

1. What is so special about childhood friendships such as Sherri's and Vinnie's? Did you think they'd be friends again? Could you be?
2. Do you think Sherri will marry Steve in later years? Do you think most people marry their first love?
3. What kind of guy is Steve do you think?

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