

# Educator's Guide *The Best Teen Writing of 2016*

created in partnership with the National Writing Project

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*The Best Teen Writing* is an annual publication featuring a selection of Scholastic Awards' National Medalist work. The 2016 edition is available for purchase on **Amazon.com**.

Use works from teen writers to inspire discussion and guide writing exercises with your students.



## In Their Shoes

**Short Story—Discussion on characterization and voice—35 minutes**

**Goal:** Students explain how authors establish the voice of a narrator to create distinct characters who inform a reader of time, place, and mood.

**Activity:** Introduce the concept of a story's "voice" by having students discuss compelling first-person and close third-person narratives. Next, read out loud a piece with highly-engaging character voice(s). Have students mark any points in the text where we notice specific character establishment through the tone of the prose, dialects, slang, humor, and other details. Discuss the following:

- What does the author want us to know, or understand, about the narrator of this story?
- How does the separation of character voices establish a reliable—or unreliable—narrator?

In partners or groups, have students select a narrator and describe his or her personality. Then have them return to the text and find specific details (speech, thought, and interaction with others) to illustrate the narrator's personality and how it informs and shapes the narrative. Share student responses.

## Tell Your Story

**Personal Essay/Memoir—Writing with a focus on structure and pacing—45 minutes**

**Goal:** Students will write an organized and coherent memoir imitating the format of a *Best Teen Writing* piece.

**Activity:** Select a personal essay/memoir from the anthology to read out loud with your students. Talk about the format in which the memoir is written. Discuss the choices made and how those choices are inherently personal, and therefore are inherently suited to convey a personal essay.

Ask your students to write their own memoir modeled after the memoir you have selected. In a group, have the students share their work and discuss unique choices that each student makes, including how those choices convey something personal to the reader.

## Change it Up!

**Genre-shifting Exercise—40 minutes**

**Goal:** Students will explore form's relationship to function by converting a piece in the anthology to another genre. For example, they will reimagine a play as a poem; a personal essay/memoir as a science fiction/fantasy piece; or a short story as a piece of journalism, reporting on the events therein.

**Activity:** Have the students choose a favorite piece in *The Best Teen Writing*, then have them reinterpret that work in another genre. Afterward, have the students compare the original to the genre-shifted piece, and discuss how the same information is relayed through contrasting forms.

Continue the discussion! Explore even more ways *The Best Teen Writing* can inspire students in your classroom. Visit the Vision and Voice website, presented by the National Writing Project, at **visionandvoice.nwp.org** to learn more.

Free downloads of past volumes of *The Best Teen Writing* are available at **artandwriting.org/publications**.

# Be Heard!

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