

raising the bar 5

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Teacher's Annotated Edition

PEARSON

Montréal

Perceptions of Teens

How can society's perception of teens change?



Teaching Tip:

- Have students complete the infographic by including a new column representing the current decade.

A Look at Teens over Time

1960s

1980s

2000s



Music

The Beatles
Elvis Presley
The Rolling Stones

Prince
Madonna
U2



Eminem
Britney Spears
Coldplay

Movies

The Sound of Music
101 Dalmatians
The Jungle Book

ET
Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back
Star Wars: Return of the Jedi

Avatar
The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King
Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

Video games

First video games were in development but not commercialized.

Nintendo Entertainment System

Xbox
PlayStation Portable



Salary*

\$0,90 per hour (1966)

\$4,35 per hour (1986)

\$7,75 per hour (2006)

*Minimum wage in Québec

College/University**

Approximately 180 000 students (1965)

Approximately 400 000 students (1985)

Approximately 700 000 students (2005)

**Post-secondary undergraduate full-time enrolment in Canada

Do you think adults have a negative or positive perception of teens? How are teens presented in the media? This unit explores perceptions people have of teens today and the factors that influence these perceptions.

- ▶ Look at the infographic on page 2 and answer these questions.
- ▶ When you have finished, form groups and share answers.

1. What two words do you associate with the sixties?

Answers will vary and may include: peace and love, hippies, Beatlemania.

2. What two words do you associate with the eighties?

Answers will vary and may include: specific musical groups that were popular at the time, big hair, neon.

3. What other categories could you add to the infographic that reveal more about teens in each decade?

Answers will vary and may include: television shows, fashion, current events for that decade.

4. If a teen from the sixties visited your school, what perception of teens today would he or she have?

Answers will vary.

- ▶ As a group, brainstorm about TV shows, song lyrics and fashion to create a portrait of teens now. Write your ideas in the chart below.
- ▶ When you have completed your portrait, form new, mixed groups and present your team's portrait of a teen today. Explain why you chose this information and what perception it gives of a modern-day teen.
- ▶ While you listen to the other presentations, think about how accurate each portrait is.

Teens Today

TV Shows	Song Lyrics	Fashion
<i>Gossip Girl</i>		Neon, sequins



Evaluation Option:

- C1: participation in oral interaction and/or articulation of the message

Teaching Tip:

- Do a quick Internet search to find up-to-date information on popular TV shows, song lyrics and fashion. Prepare examples that students can relate to before starting this unit.

C2 1. Teens and the Media

Evaluation Option:

- C2: evidence of understanding of texts through the response process

Teaching Tip:

- Remind students to look at the information in the warm-up activity to help them answer the questions.

Media plays a large role in forming the public's opinion. What impression of teens do you think the general public gets through TV shows, music videos and magazines? How does the media present teens today? You will read a survey in which teens from the Montréal, Québec area respond to the question: "Are teens portrayed accurately in the media?"

BEFORE YOU READ

- ▶ Choose a TV show which has a teen character in it. How is the teen portrayed in this show? Can you relate to the character? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. For teens who are struggling to find a TV show with a teen, you may suggest shows such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, *Awkward* or *Gossip Girl*.

- ▶ Do you feel that this show fairly represents teens today? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

- ▶ Locate the following expression in the text (line 13): *hormonal roller coasters*. Read it in context. What do you think it means?

Answers will vary and may include that hormones at this age make teens' emotions go up and down and they can act impulsively.

WHILE YOU READ

- ▶ Write a check mark in the margin beside the opinions that answer the question: "Are teens portrayed accurately in the media?" A good opinion paragraph answers the question using examples to explain the author's opinion.

Teaching Tip:

- If students are unfamiliar with using examples to explain and support an opinion, read the second opinion in the article as a class. Have students identify the author's opinion and the supports given. You may also want to deconstruct an example that is off-topic or not well supported to illustrate the difference.

Does the **Media** Portray **Teens** As They Really Are?



1 We recently asked students from the Montréal area to answer the following question: “Are teens portrayed accurately in the media?” We were surprised by what they had to say.

In my opinion, this topic leads to a vicious circle. What the media shows on television and in newspapers is what a minority of teens do, the stupid things. All the other aspects that define a teenager nowadays are never mentioned in the media. This gives a negative impression of teens, which makes the portrayal inaccurate. On the contrary, I believe that teens, by watching other people of the same age do stupid things on television, are influenced by these actions. This would explain the increase of such behaviour in the teenage years, and in this case, the media portrays teenagers pretty accurately.

b

10 Anthony, 17

What I see in the media are kids who have an easy life and always get what they want. We have to deal with peer pressure, drugs, alcohol and sex, while also trying to figure out who we are as people. We do all of this, and we are on **hormonal roller coasters** as well. I never see the media portraying a teen as someone who has to deal with these kinds of problems.

✓

15 Sofia, 16

I think that teens are portrayed in the media quite well.

a, b

Felix, 16

The media wants to decide what teens are like. The media is funded by companies that want to sell us something, so they just try to show us their products and get us to buy them. I think the media needs to separate themselves from companies so that they can accurately portray us. They are blinded by money.

c

Sloan, 16

Magazines portray teenage girls as cliquy and boy-crazy, and movies portray teens as slackers. I do like clothes and shopping, but I am also interested in world issues, different cultures and the environment. I feel that the media creates a false image of teenagers.

✓

Dominique, 16

I wish the media would treat us like we have minds and respect us for our own ideas. We aren't toddlers. We are almost adults.

d

Luca, 16

The media only shows the extremes when it comes to teens. High-achieving teens who are out rescuing the world or striving for greatness often get a warm feature segment at the end of the news. The other extreme is teens who are getting into trouble, bullying, stealing, fighting and intimidating people. These teens aren't my friends; they aren't like me. Everyone knows the majority of teenagers in society today are not like anyone you see on TV. We're good kids. Show us in the media for once.

✓

Celia, 16

d

Teens are mainly in the middle. They are not at the two ends of the spectrum, the overachiever or the underachiever.

Emeline, 16

✓

40 I think that the media does, in most cases, accurately represent teens. First of all, the media has access to many sources and can therefore cross-check information. They call upon specialists whose careers involve studying adolescent behaviour. These professionals interact with teens through individual sessions or studies. The media can ask these specialists to inform viewers of their findings and to present accurate representations of teenagers. Journalists also often
45 interview teenagers and learn a great many things about teens and their interactions. However, this is not always the case. When I watch TV and I hear journalists and other people talking about my generation, I sometimes think that they don't understand us at all. The media is never 100 percent accurate on any subject and can't be expected to be perfect. I think that, on the whole, the media does its best to present the facts, without bias or prejudice. I believe this
50 applies to the portrayal of teens as well.

Griffin, 16

✓

The media presents teens as being disobedient, disrespectful, sleazy people who don't care about anyone else. It makes me sad when I turn on the TV and I see this image the media sends out to teens. The media makes it look like teens think about nothing but sex. It presents
55 us as self-centered and vain. All it does is lower our self-esteem and self-worth. The media's portrayal of teens today makes me afraid for the future.

Marco, 15

(690 words)

AFTER YOU READ

► Reread the survey on pages 4–6 and answer the following questions.

1. Look at the paragraphs that do not have a check mark in the margin. Decide which of the reasons below best describes why each paragraph is not a good example of an opinion paragraph. Add the correct letter beside the paragraph.
 - a. not a paragraph
 - b. no explanation or examples given
 - c. not on topic and/or doesn't answer the question
 - d. all of the above
2. Which of the opinion paragraphs do you agree with most? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary.

3. On what factors, other than media, do people base their perceptions of teens?

Answers will vary and may include: personal experience of being a teen; personal relationships with teens; contact with teens in public transit or other places where teens hang out, as in movie theatres or community centres; the way teens look, dress and act in public.

4. Have you ever felt wrongfully judged by the adults around you? Explain the situation and how you felt at the time.

Answers will vary.

► Add your answer to the question: “Are teens portrayed accurately in the media?” Make sure you answer the question and explain your opinion using examples.

1. Choose which side of the debate you will represent (yes or no). Write an opening sentence.

2. Give two reasons or examples to explain and support your opinion.

3. Write your paragraph below.



Evaluation Option:

- C3: content of the message and/or formulation of the message

AFTER YOU READ: Discussion

► List the top five perceptions of teens that the media focuses on.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Teaching Tip:

- Create a resource wall dedicated to the unit theme. Post important ideas and concepts that emerge from class discussions. Encourage students to add relevant articles or images.

- ▶ Form groups and share your lists. Circle the positive perceptions of teens.
- ▶ Discuss the negative perceptions. Find three suggestions to change the negative perceptions of teens in the media.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- ▶ Make a list of three people, events or activities happening in your school or community that portray teens in a positive light, and that you would like to see the media cover.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Teaching Tip:

- Have students review their writing assignments throughout the unit for subject-verb agreement and correct this specific grammar point.

Focus on Accuracy

Subject-Verb Agreement

The subject and verb in a sentence must agree in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second or third person). Pay special attention to collective nouns and indefinite pronouns. See page 225 in the Reference Section for more information.

- ▶ Look at these examples from the survey and notice the subject-verb agreement.

Most collective nouns refer to a single group of people and are treated as singular.

Example 1: **The media wants** to decide what teens are like. (line 18)

Indefinite pronouns are treated as singular.

Example 2: **Everyone knows** the majority of teenagers in society today are nothing like anyone you see on TV. (line 33)

- ▶ Highlight the subjects and underline the verbs in the sentences below.
- ▶ Rewrite the sentences correctly. Make any necessary changes to verb conjugation.

1. When **everybody** arrive at the camp, **someone** can help us set up our tent.

When everybody **arrives** at the camp, someone can help us set up our tent.

2. **The team**, following a very difficult and controversial defeat, were disappointed by the negative article in the local newspaper.

The team, following a very difficult and controversial defeat, **was** disappointed by the negative article in the local newspaper.

- ▶ Highlight all the subjects and underline the verbs in the opinion paragraph you wrote in After You Read on page 7.
- ▶ Check if the subject-verb agreement is correct and make any necessary changes.

For more information on Subject-Verb Agreement and practice, see the Accuracy Workshop on page 26.

Evaluation Option:

- C2: evidence of understanding of texts through the response process

C2 2. A Spotlight on Britain's Boys

Not everyone bases their opinions on what they read or hear. Author Simon Hattenstone decided to hang out with a group of boys to experience firsthand what their lives are like, how they are perceived in public and to decide if there was any truth to the negative perception people seem to have of teen boys in Britain. What do you think his feature article will reveal about the boys of Britain?

BEFORE YOU READ: Analyze the Features of a Text

The purpose of a feature article is to provide more information about an important issue, to spotlight a person of particular importance, or to provide a humorous perspective on modern-day life. Unlike news reports that can date quickly, feature articles usually have a more general focus.

- ▶ Skim the first and second paragraphs of the feature article on page 11 and identify its purpose.

To inform and share a personal experience

- ▶ Read about the text components of a feature article below.

Headline: The purpose of the headline is to get the audience's attention. It can be a word, a phrase, a quote or even a sentence. The best headlines give an image or a feeling about the angle of the article.

Secondary headline: It reveals the topic and angle of the article, and presents the controlling idea. The secondary headline is usually written in smaller font than the headline. The headline and the secondary headline together clearly indicate to the audience the direction the article will take.

- ▶ Identify the headline and the secondary headline in the margin of the article on pages 11–12.

1. Write the headline below.

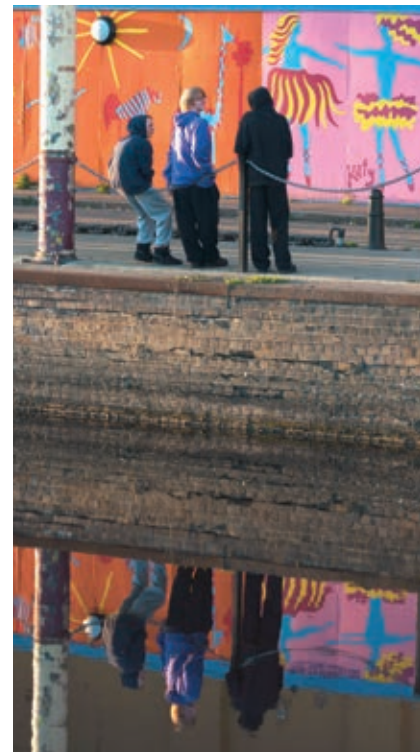
Teen Spirit: The Secret Life of Britain's Teenage Boys

2. Do you think this is an effective headline? Why or why not?

Answers will vary and may include that "teen spirit" has a positive connotation and "secret life" catches the reader's curiosity.

Angle: The angle is the point of view or slant from which the article is written. There are many things that the author could say about the topic "Britain's Boys," and it is the angle that tells the reader what will be covered.

Controlling idea: The controlling idea is the message that the author wants to deliver to the audience based on the angle of the article. It is more specific than the angle, and must be clearly written and presented early on in the article. It may be one sentence or a few sentences, and it acts as a guide for the audience. The controlling idea is usually found in the secondary headline or in the lead, which is the first paragraph of a feature article. In the article on page 11, it is found in the lead.



Teenage boys hanging out at Wet Quay, Ipswich Marina, Suffolk, England

Teaching Tip:

- Explore answers like Nirvana's album "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and the image of grungy rebel teens, or pep rallies and team or school spirit. You may also want to discuss the use of the word "secret" and how it entices readers.

- ▶ Look at the following example.

Topic: First impressions

Angle: Making a good impression on a first date

Controlling idea: Manners are the most important factor for a successful first date.

- ▶ Practise writing the angle and the controlling idea for another feature article on first impressions. Brainstorm to help you find ideas, then choose an angle.

Topic: First impressions

Angle: Answers will vary.

Controlling idea: Answers will vary.

Visual components: A feature article also includes visual elements, such as photos, to emphasize information in the text. Here are common visual components in a feature article.

- a. Image and caption:** Images in a feature article aren't there to make the article look nice. Images help to explain the ideas covered in the article by adding visual support. The caption explains an image and is located under the photograph along with its source.
- b. Pull-quote:** The purpose of a pull-quote is to draw the audience's attention to a specific point. One or two sentences from the article are rewritten in large font, often in a frame or box. The pull-quote is located within the article, and the text quoted is enclosed in quotation marks.
- c. Sidebar:** Sidebars are boxes that present useful facts, statistics or a related story to enhance understanding of the article.

- ▶ Identify all of the visual components in the margin of the article on pages 11–12.

Teaching Tips:

- If you have a resource wall, add an example of a feature article and have students identify the features. Write the features on large pieces of card stock and post them around the article. Use a highlighter to identify the examples of each feature in the article as well.
- Draw students' attention to the British vocabulary used in the text.

WHILE YOU READ

- ▶ Pay special attention to the tone of the writing. Is it formal, friendly or informal?

Friendly

- ▶ State the angle of the article.

To learn, through firsthand experience, what Britain's boys are really like, rather than through the media's perception of them

- ▶ Identify the controlling idea in the margin of the article and underline it.
- ▶ Find another quote that would be effective as a pull-quote.

Answers will vary.

Teen Spirit: The Secret Life of Britain's Teenage Boys

By Simon Hattenstone

Beyond all the negative headlines, what do we really know about Britain's teen boys? Simon Hattenstone takes a trip deep into boy world and finds that it's very different from what you might expect ...

1 What is a typical teenage boy like? In a way, it's a **daft** question—there is no typical. But speak to enough **lads**, immerse yourself in their world, and patterns start to emerge. It's
5 thirty years since I was their age. In my era, the 1970s, many teens went to football to start **scraps** rather than watch the match, and yet somehow they were not demonized as they are today. There were "**hoolies**," but we knew
10 they were the minority. Back then, the only time we heard the word **feral** was on wildlife programs; the idea of "hoodies" hadn't been invented. I've read all the stereotypes about today's teenage boys, but my experience of
15 them is virtually nonexistent—I have two teenage daughters, who don't play Xbox, let alone roam the streets in a manner likely to unnerve Middle Britain. So I decide to immerse myself in Planet Teen Boy.
20 Nasif Mugisha lives down the road from me. I see him most days in passing. He's full of life, seems kind, likes to run and looks a little scary in his super-spruced cadet's uniform. But what do I really know about Nasif's life?
25 Nothing.
Nas does want to join the forces. He's wanted to be a pilot since he was four and first flew in a plane. At fifteen, he's already thinking ahead to **A-levels**, then, if things work out,
30 a degree and career. All the boys talk of the pressure of exams—at fourteen there is coursework, at fifteen **GCSEs**, then, for many, it's straight into **AS-levels**. It's unrelenting: much more so than when I was their age.



Teen boys remain positive, despite negative societal stereotypes

35 In the early evening, after Nas's mum, Sophia, has made some delicious noodles, we wander to the park. Me and ten boys. Adults move out of the way, often giving us hostile looks. It feels weirdly empowering, but also annoying.
40 What's wrong with them? Why stare at us when we're not bothering them?
Nas's mother was born in Uganda, his father Rwanda. They divorced when he was three, and even here he considers himself fortunate—
45 both parents remarried and now he's got two great sets of families. "These days my mum treats me like a **sixth-former**. She confides in me. Beforehand, certain things happened and mum would say, 'Ah, you're too young to
50 know.' Now, she tells me."
Nas talks more formally than most of his friends—full sentences, little slang, no swearing. There are expectations of how a teenage boy will talk and act—especially
55 a black teenage boy, he says. But he's not

Headline

Secondary headline

Controlling idea

daft: foolish, crazy

lad: boy or young man

scrap: fight

hoolie: someone who starts fights; bully (short for *hooligan*)

feral: wild

Image and caption

sixth-former: senior student at the high school level

A-level: Advanced Level General Certificate of Education

GCSE: General Certificate of Secondary Education

AS-level: Academically focused high-school course valued by universities

AFTER YOU READ

- ▶ Complete the chart below with information from the article on pages 11–12.
 1. List four perceptions that Britons or the media have of teenage boys.
 2. List four details about Nasif Mugisha’s life that contradict these perceptions. *Answers will vary.*

Perceptions of Teens	Details about Nasif Mugisha’s Life
1. <u>hoodies perceived negatively</u>	1. <u>full of life</u>
2. <u>words used in the media for teen boys: yobs, thugs, feral, louts, hoodies, evil, frightening, monsters, scum, heartless</u>	2. <u>cadet</u>
3. <u>60% of stories about teen boys concerned crime</u>	3. <u>wants to be a pilot</u>
4. <u>90% of stories showed teen boys in a bad light</u>	4. <u>happy with his family life</u>
5. <u>85% of a sample of 1000 boys thought the media portrayed them negatively</u>	5. <u>speaks formally, doesn’t use slang</u>

- ▶ Practise writing the text components for a feature article about the perception of teenage boys in Québec.

Differentiation:

- Encourage students who are visual or artistic to create the visual component for their article rather than describe it.

Topic: Perceptions of Teenage Boys in Québec

Angle: _____

Controlling idea: _____

Visual component: Describe the image you would use at the beginning of your text.

Headline: _____

Secondary headline: _____



3. I Am Trayvon Martin.



Try an extra watching activity using this text on the Companion Website.

Evaluation Option:

- C2: evidence of understanding of texts through the response process



Britain isn't the only country that stereotypes young men who wear black hoodies. On the night of February 26, 2012, Trayvon Martin was shot and killed by George Zimmerman in the gated community (houses that are surrounded by a gate) where they both lived. Trayvon was seventeen years old, black and wearing a dark hoodie. George Zimmerman was armed and followed the teen, even after the 911 dispatcher told him not to and that police were on the way. Through this tragic event, the black hoodie and Trayvon Martin have been used as a symbol to change these kinds of stereotypes.

BEFORE YOU WATCH

- ▶ According to the 911 transcript of the events leading up to Trayvon's death, Zimmerman described the teen's behaviour as "suspicious" because he was walking in between houses, strolling leisurely in the rain and looking at all the houses. Think of two reasons why Trayvon might have been doing this and write them below. *Answers will vary but may include:*

1. He was taking a shortcut home from a friend's house or from an extra-curricular activity.
2. At night, it is easy to see inside homes and it can be interesting to see how others live.

Differentiation:

- For extra support, watch the video as many times as necessary.
- For an extra challenge, have students try to answer the questions after just one viewing.

WHILE YOU WATCH

- ▶ Answer the following questions with information from the text.
 1. Why did Congressman Bobby Rush wear a hoodie and dark glasses in the House of Representatives?
The Congressman was proving a point that there is a potentially deadly perception in society of men who dress in a hoodie and dark glasses.

2. What were the two main purposes of the Million Hoodie March?

1) To change society's perception and 2) To fight a stereotype

- Pay special attention to “the talk” African American parents have with their pre-teenage kids, particularly the boys.

1. What is “the talk” about?

“The talk” is to tell boys what they need to know about being black in America.

2. What are some of the possible perceptions that Donna Britt mentions?

That young black men are dangerous, threatening or criminal

WATCH AGAIN

3. Name five topics covered in “the talk.”

Answers will vary and may include: how to look at people; where to put your hands; when just running can be dangerous; how to behave with a policeman; how to handle yourself in public; how to carry yourself in ways that project confidence and security, but that don't draw undue attention to you or make you seem like someone who could hurt somebody.

AFTER YOU WATCH

1. Have your parents had a talk with you about some of the topics that were discussed in the video? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

2. Do you think girls are perceived as dangerous, threatening or criminal? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

3. When the media does report on negative or criminal behaviour involving teen girls, what is it usually associated with?

Bullying

4. Do you think it's possible to change this perception of teen boys? Why or why not?

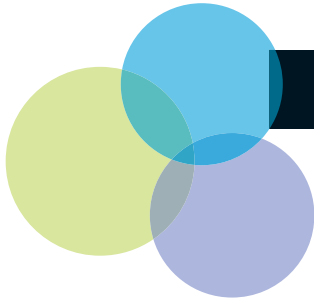
Answers will vary.

5. What does the slogan “I am Trayvon Martin” mean to you?

Answers will vary.

Teaching Tip:

- Have students share their answers to the questions in After You Watch. Encourage class discussion on issues raised in the video.



Synthesis

Teaching Tip:

- If you have a resource wall and students have posted relevant articles that could be included in the synthesis, ask students to add the information from at least one article to their synthesis.

Use an idea cluster to examine the different perceptions of teens presented in the reading and watching texts in the unit.

- ▶ Review the reading and watching texts. In the idea cluster, summarize the negative perception of teens and the reality of teens presented in each text.
- ▶ Survey people from your class and school to find out how Québec teens feel they are perceived by the public and the media. Once again, write the perception and the reality in the idea cluster.
- ▶ Refer to this idea cluster when you do the final writing task.

Answers will vary.

Does the Media Portray Teens As They Really Are?

Negative perception: Teens feel that the media portrays them as ... lazy, unfocused, anti-social, rude, vain and driven by hormones. They believe that they are stereotyped by the few bad seeds who do make the evening news.

Reality: The perceptions presented of teens in the media are the extreme. Most teens are somewhere in the middle: making mistakes, but in general, trying to be good people, to find their voice and to figure out who they are and who they want to be while having fun.

Britain's Teenage Boys: Nasif Mugisha

Negative perception: Britain's boys are perceived as wild and dangerous. Nasif, on the outside, fits the perception that the media is portraying of boys his age.

Reality: The reality is that Nasif is focused on school because he has a plan for his life. His parents are divorced, but this has been a positive thing for him. His family cares for him and demands a certain level of self-respect and hard work.

Perceptions of Teens

I Am Trayvon Martin.

Negative perception: Because of the negative perception of black teen males in America, Trayvon was a victim of racial profiling. His death brought this stereotype to the world's attention.

Reality: Trayvon was a good kid who had a right to be in the private community that night. He was a victim, and this situation could happen to anyone in the wrong place at the wrong time wearing the wrong clothing.

Québec Teens: Survey

Negative perception: Answers will vary.

Reality: Answers will vary.

C1 4. Agree to Disagree

In this activity, you will participate in short debates in small groups. You will debate statements related to the topic of the perceptions of teens.

- ▶ Prepare each debate topic:
 1. Review the articles and activities in the unit, as well as Synthesis on page 16.
 2. If possible, research the topic further on the Internet.
 3. Take notes and write quotes that you could use during your debating challenge. It is important to note both sides of the argument, because you won't know which side you will be debating until right before you begin.
- ▶ Form teams of four. You will take turns debating in pairs, and the people in your group who are acting as the audience will decide who had the strongest arguments and won the debate.
- ▶ Each student will take turns presenting his or her side of the debate.
- ▶ When everyone has had a chance to debate the statements, determine who was the best debater in each group, based on who had the strongest supporting arguments and presented them most effectively.

Evaluation Option:

- C1: content of the message and/or articulation of the message

Statement 1

The media either portrays teens as criminals, lazy or driven by hormones.

For: Media portrays teens negatively.	Against: Media portrays teens negatively.

Statement 2

George Zimmerman accurately perceived Trayvon Martin as a danger and a threat to his community.

For: Zimmerman's perception of Trayvon Martin was accurate.	Against: Zimmerman's perception of Trayvon Martin was accurate.

C2 5. Memoirs of a Teen

Evaluation Option:

- C2: evidence of understanding of texts through the response process

Even though people grow up in situations where they are stereotyped or perceived in a negative way, many overcome this and go on to do great things with their lives. You will read a memoir written by Canadian author Heather O’Neill. Heather grew up poor in Montréal, and went on to beat the odds and become an award-winning author.

BEFORE YOU READ

Teaching Tip:

- Create a word wall in the classroom and have students post word webs that demonstrate levels of meaning. Throughout the unit and year, encourage students to add to the wall. Remind students to use this resource for inspiration when they are writing.

- ▶ Look at the title of the text on page 19. The term “white trash” is an unfavourable term that refers to a group of people who are poor, white and usually considered uneducated. Describe the image that comes to mind when you read this expression.

Answers will vary.

Focus on Language

Levels of Meaning

Heather O’Neill is an artist who uses vivid language to create images for the reader. One way she achieves this is through levels of meaning.

Even though synonyms have similar meanings, there are slight differences between the words that can change the meaning of a sentence or text. Look at this example taken from “On Growing Up White Trash.”

Example: trash

Synonyms: garbage, waste, rubbish, refuse, litter, junk, scrap, debris

When you read these synonyms for *trash*, images are created in your mind. The most common of all these terms, *garbage*, might make you picture your garbage can at home. For *litter*, you might picture paper and plastic outside on the street. For *debris* and *scrap*, you might picture a construction site.

- ▶ Look up the word *tiny* in a dictionary or thesaurus.

Find at least four synonyms. Put *tiny* and the four synonyms you found in order from small to smallest.

Answers will vary and may include: small, little, miniature, tiny, itty-bitty, minute, minuscule.

- ▶ Now look at the word *tiny* in this sentence from the memoir (line 2).

*When I was brought home from the hospital, I looked around the **tiny** lobby of our building and saw the dirty walls, the broken mailboxes and the missing tiles on the floor.*

Why do you think Heather O’Neill chose this word rather than *small*?

Probably to draw the reader’s attention to the poor living conditions

- ▶ Look up the definitions of these words from the text and answer the questions below.

wail: express intense sadness or grief through tears and high-pitched crying

cry: shed tears as the result of a strong feeling or emotion

1. Which of these two words is more common? cry
2. Which of them expresses more emotion? wail
3. Write a sentence that shows you understand the meaning of the word *wail*.

Answers will vary.

WHILE YOU READ

- ▶ Pay attention to how the author grew up.
- ▶ Underline all the things she does to change people’s perceptions of her as she gets older.

On Growing Up White Trash

By Heather O’Neill



1 I’m not white trash. I grew up white trash, though. When I was brought home from the hospital, I looked around the **tiny** lobby of our building and saw the dirty walls, the
5 broken mailboxes and the missing tiles on the floor. German shepherds wandered on the landings, and a beautiful girl **wailed** at a locked door to be taken back. I heard the radios blaring rock ballads from open
10 apartment doors and the men standing in the doorways in their underwear, and I thought, great, I’ve been born into a poor family. But it didn’t seem so bad.

15 Growing up, all our furniture came from the garbage. We never threw anything out. How could you know what was garbage when our whole building looked like it was made from trash? The clock on the wall was a gangster that shot out machine gun noises on the hour. We had fake stained glass unicorns hanging from little suction cup hooks on the living-room window. We had **stacks** of old telephone books and a fish tank with no fish in it. It was typical white trash decor, shocking to no one. We weren’t exactly entertaining guests from other neighbourhoods.

20 By the time I was eleven, many of my friends were always being taken off to foster care when their moms had breakdowns or got arrested or had particularly shitty new boyfriends. Everybody had regular visits with social workers. In the summer, they gave us free passes to the amusement park. The Ferris wheel would turn around and around, filled with scared white trash children with their eyes closed—a little white trash solar system.

25 The white trash girls wore cut-off jean shorts and high heels over gym socks, and tied shoelaces around their wrists. The boys wore T-shirts with heavy metal bands, and jean jackets with silver-studded sleeves. All of the kids had bangs down to their noses. We never saw each other's eyes. This was good for looking **tough**, and for hiding when you were **crying**. All of the kids had potty mouths. The only word not spoken out loud was "welfare." A person could get
30 stuck on it for years. You could be three generations on welfare.

When I turned thirteen and started noticing boys, I decided that my type was Judd Nelson as the teenage delinquent in *The Breakfast Club*. There weren't any jocks or nerds around. I had a boyfriend named Shaun who wore a porkpie hat he had stolen off a snowman. He wrote the worst poetry on earth. He was in grade seven math for three years straight. He tried to sell
35 photocopies of his drawings of ninjas on the street corner. Afterward, I dated Derek, who had a pet pigeon named Homer. He lived with his dad and slept on the couch. His dad kicked both of them out one day. Derek was sent to live in a foster home. I don't know what happened to the pigeon.

When I was fifteen, I had a crush on a boy named Lionel who had a long scar on his arm where
40 his dad had stabbed him when he was nine. He was known for having the high score on the Donkey Kong machine at the back of the corner store. He held up a gas station one night with his older brother. He came over with a suitcase full of stolen cigarettes and Reese's Peanut Butter Cups.

I went on a date with a boy named Paul. His grandmother was raising him. She wore a winter
45 coat all year long, even in the house. The **peeling** wallpaper of their apartment was covered in cherry trees. There were cockroaches in the teacups that you had to shake out into the sink.

We didn't judge each other because we were poor. It would be like yelling at someone because it was raining. I just felt pretty and light-headed when those boys were around. They thought I was a **genius** because I was the only kid from our circle who did really well at school.

50 When you're a child, you become best friends with whoever lives across the street. But when I started high school, I was placed in all the advanced classes, and I joined extracurricular activities like the chess club. I started to make friends from different backgrounds. We had more in common, like books and alternative movies, and they opened up different worlds to me.

When I was fifteen, I was walking down the street with a boy I had recently made friends with
55 and sort of liked. He was middle class and very nerdy. I had always wanted to be friends with a nerd. According to all the movies, they liked and accepted everyone. Out of nowhere, he said, "My mother says you're not going to do anything with your life."

"What, is the woman a fortune teller? How could she possibly know something like that?" "She says you're white trash, like the rest of your family."

60 The boy said it as if it shouldn't even bother me. He said it in the way that you tell a dog it can't sit at the table because it is a dog. He said it as if everyone knew my place in the world, so I must know it, too. I just stood there on the sidewalk, not making eye contact. I suddenly realized that my new friends had been looking down on me.

I changed the way I dressed. I started making new friends who hadn't known me when I was
65 little. If they asked about my family, I would tell them things I had read in Edwardian novels about aristocrats. My father was a barrister. My mother played the clarinet for Prague's People's Community Orchestra. I would even lie about my dog. It was from Paris. Its mother was killed by a gendarme's car.

I tried really, really hard. I went to university. I wanted to be a writer. I lost touch with everyone
70 I knew from childhood. But I always felt as if I didn't fit in and dreaded people finding out my
history. Finally, I started dating someone with a different background. He hailed from the suburbs,
from a two-storey house with wall-to-wall carpeting, prints of Renoir on the wall and a plastic
cover on the sofa. I thought dating him would mean that I was from another class, too.

We stayed together for years, but he had a **nasty** streak. He had a way of saying the meanest
75 things possible out of the blue when we were alone. One day, I was flipping through a magazine,
and I saw a photograph of children in a field filled with daisies. I asked him whether he saw us
having a baby one day. He went quiet for a moment, and then he started looking angry. He said
he couldn't see himself having a child with someone from a white trash background.

I was startled. It didn't matter to him that I was educated and had a respectable career.
80 He seemed to believe white trash was in my blood. It was something I would pass on to my
children. And who wants a baby with a mullet in a little acid-washed jumper?

By then, I had started writing the truth about my background. I wrote about how the basement
walls of my building were covered in licence plates and hubcaps. I thought it was beautiful,
like Aladdin's cave. I wrote about eating pork chops while sitting on the sidewalk and watching
85 a television plugged into an extension cord that ran through a window. I wrote how we collected
bottles in a suitcase after festivals in the park. As I started telling the truth, beautiful things
began to emerge. And I began to be proud of my heritage.

So my reaction was different this time. His insult changed how I regarded him. While he had
once seemed educated and clever, he now looked unattractive, ignorant and small minded. For
90 all his supposed refinements, he didn't understand that being white trash wasn't a genetic
disorder. It was a culture, just like his.

(1348 words)

Source: Heather O'Neill, "On Growing Up White Trash," *The Walrus* website, The Walrus Foundation, May 2012.

Teaching Tip:

- Ask students to define *mullet* and to find synonyms for this term. Possible answers are: *hockey-head, helmet-head, none-ton* (as in none on top and a ton of hair down the back). Discuss the perception they have of people with this kind of haircut.

AFTER YOU READ

► Answer the following questions.

1. What happened to Heather O'Neill after all that she did to get away from her "white trash" upbringing?

Answers will vary and may include that her boyfriend didn't accept her anyway, and that she couldn't really escape her upbringing because it made her who she was.

2. What did growing up as "white trash" finally do for Heather O'Neill?

Answers will vary and may include that it helped her to find her writing voice. Writing from her "white trash" experience boosted her professional career as a writer.

3. What lesson can you learn from Heather O'Neill's memoir?

Answers will vary and may include that your upbringing makes you who you are, and that it's up to you what you make of it.



Try an extra comprehension activity using this text on the Companion Website.

4. If you could meet Heather O'Neill face to face, what would you ask her or say to her after reading this very candid memoir?

Answers will vary.

COMPANION
WEB+ Try an extra vocabulary activity on the Companion Website.

Focus on Vocabulary

- ▶ Find the following five vocabulary words in bold in the text on pages 19–21.
- ▶ Look up these words in a thesaurus or an online dictionary. Write the definition and a synonym for each word below.
- ▶ Then write a definition for the synonym which shows how its meaning differs from the vocabulary word. *Answers will vary.*

1. **stack:** great number of objects placed one on top of the other, in a way that feels overwhelming

Synonym: pile—objects placed on top of each other

2. **tough:** physically strong and dangerous

Synonym: hard—showing little compassion, sympathy or emotion

3. **peel:** pull off or come away in layers

Synonym: detach—separate

4. **genius:** exceptionally intelligent

Synonym: brilliant—very intelligent

5. **nasty:** unpleasant to the point of doing harm

Synonym: mean—unpleasant, not nice, unkind

- ▶ Choose a vocabulary word and its synonym above. Write a sentence with each word. How do the sentences differ?

Answers will vary.



Writing Task

C3 6. Teenage Takeover

It's your turn to help change the perceptions of teens in your neighbourhood or your school. You will write a feature article for the school newspaper, exposing how a group of teens is unfairly perceived, and revealing that these teens are in reality nice, smart or ambitious.

Criteria:

- ▶ Write a feature article of 400 to 500 words.
- ▶ Include these components of a feature article and clearly identify them: headline, secondary headline, angle, controlling idea and two different visual components.
- ▶ Include quotes and research from this unit, and other resources that support your article.
- ▶ Include five synonyms of vocabulary words that demonstrate a deeper level of meaning. Write them in the chart below.



Vocabulary Word	Synonym
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Step 1 PREPARE

- ▶ Choose the topic and write the angle for your feature article.

- ▶ Identify your target audience.

- ▶ Research your topic and write in point form all the important ideas and facts you want to include. Make sure they support the angle and topic.

- ▶ Write the controlling idea of your feature article. Decide whether it will come in the secondary headline or in the lead.

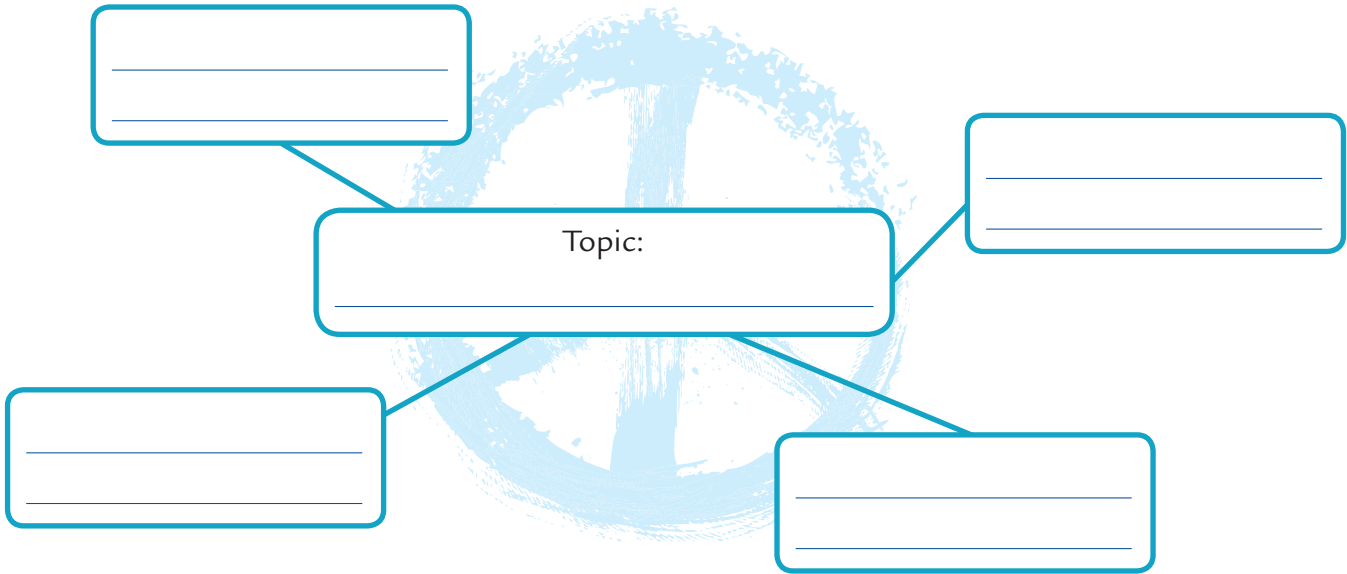
Evaluation Options:

- C3: content of the message and/or formulation of the message
- C2: use of knowledge from texts in a reinvestment task

Teaching Tip:

- If you have created a resource wall related to the unit theme, remind students to look there first for information to use in the final task.

► Organize your ideas using an idea web.



Step 2 WRITE

► Write a draft of your feature article.

Headline: _____

Secondary headline: _____

Lead: _____

Body: _____

Accuracy Workshop

Teaching Tip:

- Have students create a grammar reference notebook and divide it into sections based on the common errors featured throughout the book. Encourage them to create lists of adjectives, adverbs, verbs and vocabulary.
- Use the blackboard to point out important information. Have students write the errors that they find the most difficult, along with relevant notes, in their notebook.

Subject-Verb Agreement

In this workshop, you will look at common errors with subject-verb agreement and how to correct these errors. The subject and the verb in a sentence must agree in number (singular or plural) and in person (first, second or third).

Subject-Verb Agreement Tips:

1. Determine the subject of the sentence (the person or thing doing the action of the main verb).
2. Clearly identify the subject in number and in person.
3. For the third person singular, add an *s* to the end of the verb in the simple present tense.

Common Error 1: Indefinite Pronouns and Collective Nouns

Be careful when identifying indefinite pronouns and collective nouns as singular or plural subjects. See page 225 in the Reference Section for indefinite pronouns and collective nouns.

Collective nouns:

Collective nouns are considered singular.

Incorrect The **public need** to change its negative perception of teens.

Correct The **public needs** to change its negative perception of teens.

Indefinite pronouns:

Indefinite pronouns are usually considered singular.

Incorrect **Everybody want** to be perceived in a positive way.
Nobody like to be incorrectly judged.

Correct **Everybody wants** to be perceived in a positive way.
Nobody likes to be incorrectly judged.

Exceptions:

Some indefinite pronouns are considered plural; for example: *few, many, both, several, others*.

Incorrect **Many believes** that **both** the public and the media **needs** to help change stereotypes of teens today.

Correct **Many believe** that **both** the public and the media **need** to help change stereotypes of teens today.

Common Error 2: Gerunds

Sometimes a gerund (the *-ing* form of the verb) can be used as the subject. In this case, the gerund is always considered singular.

Incorrect Believing perceptions **help** to spread them.

Correct Believing perceptions **helps** to spread them.

- ▶ Read the paragraphs and underline the indefinite pronouns, collective nouns, gerunds or other nouns which act as main subjects in each sentence.
- ▶ Check the corresponding verb to see if it agrees with the subject.
- ▶ Highlight any verbs that do not agree with their subject.
- ▶ Write the correct verb above.

Believing everything you read or hear in the media is naive. The only way one can truly have a sense of what today's teens are like are by spending time with them. Many negative perceptions have been presented in the media that reflect negatively on all teens.

Several studies has shown that when the media publishes a story that presents a teen in a negative way, the general public are more likely to have a negative perception of all teens. Publishing positive stories about teens has a positive effect on the public as well.

Publishing stories about teens acting out in violent ways can negatively influence a teen who reads them. While it is important that the general public be made aware of what are happening in the world around them, sensationalizing stories where teens have acted out in a negative way can, in some cases, glamorize the actions of the people involved.

Differentiation:

- For extra support, correct an example paragraph with similar errors as a class.
- For an extra challenge, provide students with more paragraphs containing errors. Ask students to point out the errors and to correct them as a class or in small groups.

Common Error 3: Compound Subjects

When two or more singular subjects are joined by the conjunction **or** or **nor**, they act as a singular compound subject and take a singular verb.

Incorrect Neither a winning **smile nor** a charming **personality guarantee** a good first impression.

Correct Neither a winning **smile nor** a charming **personality guarantees** a good first impression.

When one of the subjects is singular and the other is plural, the verb agrees with the subject that it is closest to.

Incorrect Either the stylish **lady or** the fast-talking **boys wins** this round of the talent show.

Correct Either the stylish **lady or** the fast-talking **boys win** this round of the talent show.

- ▶ Decide if the subject and verb agree in each of these sentences.
- ▶ If the verb is incorrect, write its correct form.

Teaching Tip:

- To make sure students understand the errors and how to correct them, write examples on the board and have students correct the errors as a class.

1. Either Phil or Richard are responsible for speaking to the newspaper about the incident.
Correct: Incorrect: **is** _____
2. Neither the journalist who wrote the story nor the magazine editor has called us back about the story.
Correct: Incorrect: _____
3. Neither the driver of the car nor the couple jaywalking admits they were at fault.
Correct: Incorrect: **admit** _____
4. Either Anne Marie, Simon or Donivan presents next. They are the only ones left.
Correct: Incorrect: _____
5. Neither the girls nor the boys wants to finish watching the video.
Correct: Incorrect: **want** _____
6. Either the students or the teacher decides where everyone sits in the classroom.
Correct: Incorrect: _____
7. Neither the provincial nor the federal government anticipates greater spending to improve the perception of Canadian teens around the world.
Correct: Incorrect: _____
8. Neither the news article nor the video reports correctly portrays who Thomas really is.
Correct: Incorrect: **portray** _____

Common Error 4: Agreement with Clauses

Pay special attention to subject-verb agreement when the subject is separated from the verb by a clause or prepositional phrase.

Incorrect **One of the hardest things** I've had to do in my life **are** to overcome my shyness, which **society** often **perceive** as a weakness.

Correct **One of the hardest things** I've had to do in my life **is** to overcome my shyness, which **society** often **perceives** as a weakness.

- ▶ Read the paragraph and highlight any verbs that do not agree with their subject.
- ▶ Write the correct verb above.

As one of those people who **is** quick to judge others based on how they look and present themselves, I have to remind myself to keep an open mind.

There is more to a person than meets the eye. One of the most difficult

lessons people have to learn in life **is** that they are often judged solely on

how they look. Anticipating the outcome of a first meeting, especially in a

social setting or in a job interview, **is** terrifying. Just remember to relax and

be your most open and inviting self.

Common Error 5: Expressions of Quantity

Be careful of subject-verb agreement when using expressions of quantity. With percentages, fractions and indefinite quantifiers, such as *few*, *many*, *all*, *some* and *such*, the verb agrees with the noun.

Singular nouns:

Incorrect Seventy-five percent of this newspaper **article present** teens negatively.

Correct Seventy-five percent of this newspaper **article presents** teens negatively.

Incorrect All the **information are** current and up to date.

Correct All the **information is** current and up to date.

Plural nouns:

Incorrect **Some teens** who read the article **has** a negative perception about themselves, while approximately **two-thirds knows** that the article is a generalization about how teens really are.

Correct **Some teens** who read the article **have** a negative perception about themselves, while approximately **two-thirds know** that the article is a generalization about how teens really are.

- ▶ Read the paragraph and underline the subject or subjects in each sentence.
- ▶ Check the corresponding verb to see if it agrees with the subject.
- ▶ Highlight any verbs that do not agree with their subject. Write the correct verb above.

This group of news articles, collected over the past six months, show that on average, about one-third of the teens surveyed has felt misjudged. Students from our class worked together to collect news articles about teens. In the pile that my group collected, 68 percent of the articles depicts teens acting out in a dangerous way towards themselves or others. Thirty-five percent of these articles reveals that this dangerous behaviour could have been stopped.

Common Error 6: Special Cases

The following two special cases are important to remember for subject-verb agreement.

1. The name of a language can also refer to the nationality of a person: Chinese, English, French, etc. When referring to the language, use the singular form. When referring to the nationality, use the plural form.
2. *Every* and *each* are always followed by a singular noun.

Incorrect **Portuguese are** his first language even though he is French.

Correct **Portuguese is** his first language even though he is French.

Incorrect **The Vietnamese has** an interesting history. **Each historical fact** I read **are** more interesting than the next.

Correct **The Vietnamese have** an interesting history. **Each historical fact** I read **is** more interesting than the next.

Final Practice

Now that you can identify and correct subject-verb agreement errors more easily, try an activity that incorporates the different errors that were covered in this workshop.

- ▶ Read the paragraphs and underline the subject or subjects in each sentence.
- ▶ Check the corresponding verb to see if it agrees with the subject.
- ▶ Highlight any verbs that do not agree with their subject. Write the correct verb above.

My best quality, and incidentally my biggest flaw as well, are that I talk too much. Half of my girlfriends feels that I need to take a breath and listen to what others have to say. It's not that I want to be inconsiderate of others. Nobody likes like to be perceived as self-centered; it's just that when I get nervous, I tend to talk and talk and talk. Fifty percent of the time friends stops listening to me when I start to nervously chatter.

Stopping bad habits are incredibly difficult. Each of my pals have permission to tell me to slow down, a signal for me to stop talking. One-third of the time, this signal works. Having understanding people to support you when you are trying to break a habit are key. Making me feel uncomfortable only makes make me more nervous, and nobody wants want me to start talking more. You may have a perception about someone you know. Take a moment to think about why you have this perception. Maybe there are some other underlying factor, like nerves.



Try extra grammar exercises for subject-verb agreement problems on the Companion Website.