



Tap into teens’ natural interest in self-determination and impacting the world with a theme that invites them to look inward and to reach out with their unique talents and interests.

## SETTING THE SCENE

**Personal Reading/Writing Corner.** Provide a space for teens seeking relative solitude for reflection, reading, and writing. Face a comfortable chair or beanbag into a corner. Place an end table next to the chair that is stocked with writing paper and pens. Add a lap desk, and perhaps a CD player with headphones. A “My Life, My Story.” theme poster helps set the mood.

**Anywhere But Here?** Teens sometimes feel restless and long for travel or adventure. Create a display featuring a globe or world map and books or movies about teens traveling the world. Invite young readers to mark their dream destinations on the globe or map and to write short statements about where they would like to go, why, and what they would do there. Extend this idea into a special event at which teens meet and hear from international high school exchange students living in the area, or share their own experiences of exploring other countries and cultures.

**Flashcards Bulletin Board.** Create a changing display of journaling prompts and responses for and by your teen readers. Check out the book *Flashcards of My Life* by Charise Mericle Harper and the writing activity by the same name below for ideas. Post a prompt on the board and supply index cards or journaling cards (see above) and pens for kids to write responses. Change the prompt frequently, and with it the background or border, using different colors or patterns to reflect the tone of the prompt. For example, a “Friends” prompt might call for a background of brightly colored stars, while “Things That Make Me Sad” suggests a subdued background. Display books from your collection that relate to each prompt.

**“My Maxims” Display.** In a variation of the previous idea, set up a display titled “My Maxims,” perhaps on a background of black and white patterned paper or cloth. Under the title, show a dictionary definition of “maxim.” Let teens add to the display with colored index cards featuring brief statements of life rules, wisdom, or experience they’ve gained along the way. They may sign

their maxims or not, as they choose. This could also be effectively done with colored chalk on a blackboard or markers on a white board.

**Incentive Prizes.** Stock up on small items to use as rewards for achieving reading goals, winning contests, or participating in programs. You might include pocket mirrors, “My Life. My Story.” theme bookmarks, decorated pens or pencils, or blank CDs. Gift cards for iTunes or a local bookstore are good choices for more substantial prizes. You’ll find lots of ideas at [www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com).



## GAMES/CONTESTS

**Wanna-Be Charades.** Gather a group of teens and play an old-fashioned game of charades, with a difference: Kids will act out the names of well-known historical figures or contemporary celebrities. Participants will choose someone they admire or aspire to be like. When the group guesses, they will explain why they chose that person. You might give small prizes to all participants.

**Pocket UNGAME: Teen Version.** This cooperative card game is a good vehicle for fun sharing and self-expression. It’s available online from [www.EducationalLearningGames.com](http://www.EducationalLearningGames.com) and other sources.

**Dramatic Reading.** Invite kids to show off their expressive natures in a dramatic reading contest. They should find a two- or three-page passage in a book that conveys an event or emotion related to their lives. Here are some ideas:

- Dialogue between fictional friends that reminds them of their own conversations
- Description of someone practicing a sport or performing art which the teen also does, with a similar attitude of enjoyment or dedication

- Narrative about a young person involved in a volunteer job or social issue which is also important to the teen
- A funny description of family life that “feels like” the teen’s own family
- A passage expressing a wish or dream for the future shared by the teen

Kids will prepare to read their passages aloud as expressively as possible. Have fun with this, and be sensitive to discussion that may spontaneously arise. Choose an award-winning performance and perhaps an honorable mention or two.

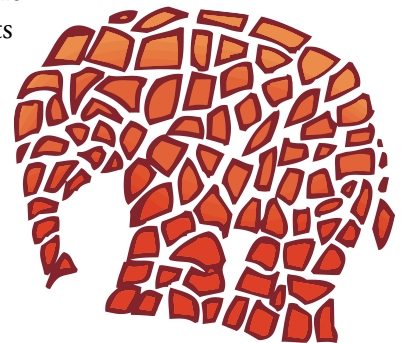
## TREATS

**Teen Favorites.** Serve tried-and-true teen favorites like pizza, popcorn, cookies, chips and dip, chicken nuggets, shakes or smoothies, etc.

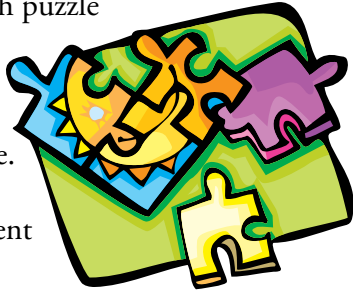
## ARTS/CRAFTS

**Self-Portraits.** Display the book *Here’s Looking at Me: How Artists See Themselves* at a table with a variety of art materials. Have teens create self-portraits to display in the library.

**My Life in Mosaic.** Offer a variety of supplies for creating mosaic art. Mosaics can be made from bits of colored paper or craft foam, from ceramic or plastic mosaic tiles, or from found objects like small stones or shells. The individual objects, called “tesserae,” are glued onto a backing surface in patterns that make pictures. You’ll find interesting materials at a local craft store. Encourage teens to create mosaic art that uses individual pieces and overall design to express something about their lives. Display the results, and invite the artists to provide brief “wall text” on index cards that explain the significance of their work. Inspire young artists by showing examples of mosaic art at <http://mosaicartists.org/artist>.



**Photo Puzzles: “The Puzzle that is Me.”** Start by taking digital photos of each participant. Make large prints on 8.5 X 11 paper or card stock. Invite kids to consider the various roles they fill in their lives—as a son or daughter, sibling, friend, student, musician, athlete, artist, employee, etc. They will list from six to twelve roles and cut their photos into that number of interlocking shapes. On the back of each puzzle piece, have them write one of their roles, and a brief idea, memory, goal, or poem related to that role. This is a tool for personal reflection, and should be sent home with participants.



**Time Capsule.** Provide a supply of plastic containers with tight seals for each participant or have kids bring their own. Something the approximate size of a two-liter soda bottle works well, but a larger mouth allows more creativity in choosing items. Introduce the concept of time capsules as containers filled with items carefully chosen to represent the lives of the people making them and then hidden or buried to be discovered at a future date. Invite teens to use permanent markers or paint that will withstand moisture to decorate their containers. They will take them home to fill with objects that express something important about them. Reconvene and have kids show and explain their containers and choices; encourage them to find appropriate hiding places for later discovery.

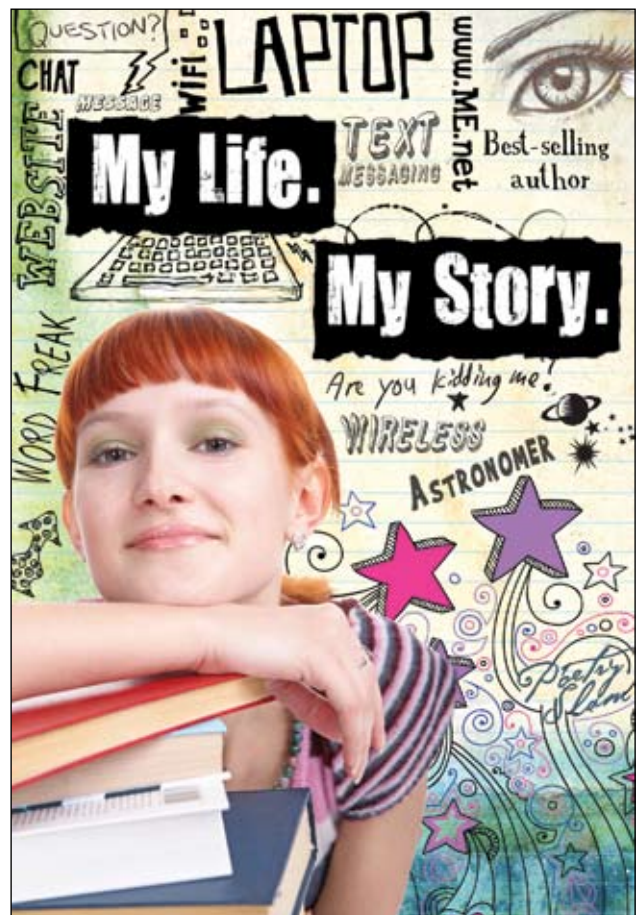
## SPECIAL EVENTS

**Journaling Workshop.** Combine a craft activity of personalized journal design with brainstorming ideas for journaling prompts, a presentation of journaling tips by a qualified resource person, and booktalks about fiction and nonfiction books in journal format (*The Princess Diaries*, *What I Believe*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, etc.). Oriental Trading ([www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com)) has affordable sets of journal cards in attractive designs. They also carry craft kits for designing personal journals, or you can use ordinary spiral notebooks in solid colors that invite customizing.

**Variety Show: “Scenes from My Life.”** Invite teens to share their views, experiences, and talents in a variety show. Invite families or publicize the event for the whole community. Young people might share a favorite song, an original poem, a short comedy routine, a dance of their own creation, a reflective monologue, etc. Be sure to pre-screen acts for appropriateness.

**Movie Night.** Invite teens to suggest their favorite movies about teen life. Then do your homework or prescreen for appropriateness, and plan an old-fashioned movie night, complete with popcorn. To get more “reading bang for your buck,” choose movies adapted from books, have kids read the books, and follow the viewing with a discussion exploring the story and comparing the versions.

**Volunteer Job Fair.** Volunteering gives teens personal satisfaction, a sense of investment in their communities, and often valuable workplace experience, as well as

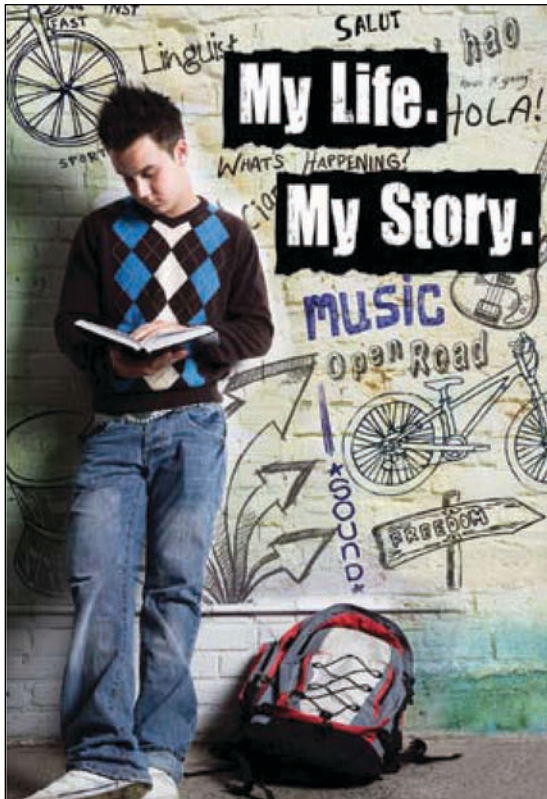




a chance to support an issue or cause they believe in. Invite representatives of local organizations that use teen volunteers to set up table displays and pitch their opportunities. Promote the event in local schools and youth-focused organizations as well as through normal library channels, and see what meaningful connections you can facilitate.

**Autobiographies Book Discussion.** Create a list of autobiographies likely to interest your teen readers. Stock multiple copies as needed. Invite kids to read from your list and lead discussion sessions on individual titles or on autobiographies in general, comparing features of the different titles read. Here are some general questions to kick off discussions:

- What motivates people to write autobiographies? What makes us think our life stories will be of interest to others?
- Is the subject of your autobiography an ordinary person, or exceptional in some way? What about him or her interests you?
- How is your subject's life like yours? How is it different?



- What is the main theme or ruling passion of the life of your subject? What main theme or ruling passion would come through if you wrote your own life story?
- Do you think you would like the subject of your autobiography if you met in person? What would you want to say to him or her? What questions would you ask?
- What surprising things did you learn by reading about this person's life?

## WRITING ACTIVITIES

**Autobiography Workshop.** Involve teens in reflecting on and sharing events from their lives through an autobiography workshop. Bring in a resource person to guide the process. Share teen autobiographical writing in various forms, like poetry (*Paint Me Like I Am*), short stories (*Guts*), journal entries (*The Diary of Anne Frank*), photobiography (*Knucklehead*), etc. You might provide “blank books” like those available from Edupress ([www.highsmith.com/edupress](http://www.highsmith.com/edupress)). If you hold the workshop early in your use of this theme, you can give kids time to work on their own and bring in their autobiographical writing as you wind down the theme. Give participants the option of keeping their autobiographical writing private.



**Personal Poetry.** Introduce *Love That Dog* by Sharon Creech, *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes, and/or *I Can't Keep My Own Secrets* from Smith Magazine. Have teens try their hands at writing poems that reveal things about their lives, their feelings, their achievements, or their dreams. You might introduce some structured poetic forms, like the sestina or villanelle from *What I Believe*, or the simpler haiku or concrete forms. Invite brave young poets to share their work in an “open-mike” event, as in *Bronx Masquerade*.

**Thank You!** Invite teens to think about the people who help and support them most in their lives, and to write thank-you notes by hand—no computers! Encourage

them to be specific about what they appreciate in their supporter's words and actions. Provide blank note cards or materials for kids to design their own.

**Flashcards of My Life.** Booktalk the book with that title by Charise Mericle Harper. Challenge kids to come up with four journaling prompts like those on Emily's flashcards, designed to spark creative, personal, written reflections. Compile the prompts and make a set of flashcards for each participant to take home.

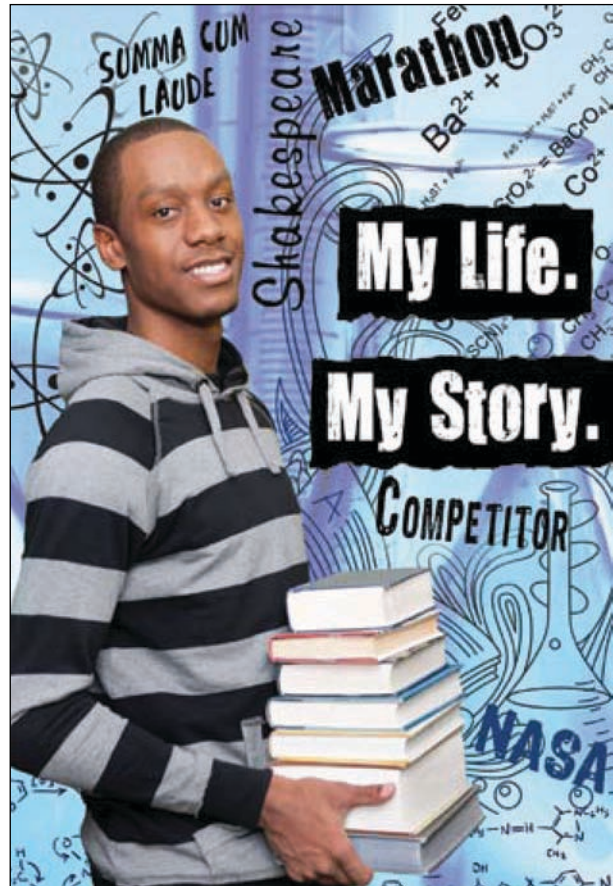
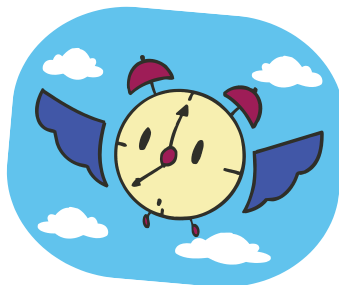
**Chicken Soup Ingredients.** Introduce one or more volumes of the Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul series. Read a few short entries. Set the books at a table with paper and pencils and invite teens to write their own entries for a local version of the books. Compile the entries into an anthology that you can display proudly and keep in your permanent collection.

**Play Script.** Feature Paul Fleischman's *Seek* and/or Walter Dean Myers' *Monster* in booktalks. Point out the radio play or screenplay format of the novel, and invite teens to write short play scripts depicting events in their lives. Have some scripts available to show appropriate format. Invite young playwrights to recruit friends and present their plays. For added interest, have kids include suggestions for the casting director about what contemporary actors or celebrities should play different characters in their plays.

## MATH ACTIVITIES

**Minutes, Hours, Days.** Challenge teens to keep track of how many minutes they spend each day doing each of the following things (some of these may not be daily activities, but encourage kids to record times for several days or a week and average or estimate the number of minutes or hours):

- Talk/text on cell phones
- Watch TV
- Read
- Play computer games
- Do homework



- Work on personal grooming (bath, hair, make-up, getting dressed, etc.)
- Shop
- Sleep
- Practice a hobby (sport, music, dance, chess, club, etc.)

Once kids have gathered the data, have them use the survey worksheet on page 8 to calculate and reflect on how they spend the minutes, hours, and days of their lives.

**Money Management.** Most teens' true "needs" are met by parents or guardians. But they may have many "wants," and different ways of financing them. Invite kids to move toward realistic financial goals and sound money management by displaying books on money management for teens (include *Prepare to Be a Teen Millionaire*) and by making available a computer station with this site bookmarked: [www.moneyandstuff.info/pdfs/SampleBudgetforTeens.pdf](http://www.moneyandstuff.info/pdfs/SampleBudgetforTeens.pdf). Provide printed copies of the worksheet you'll find there.

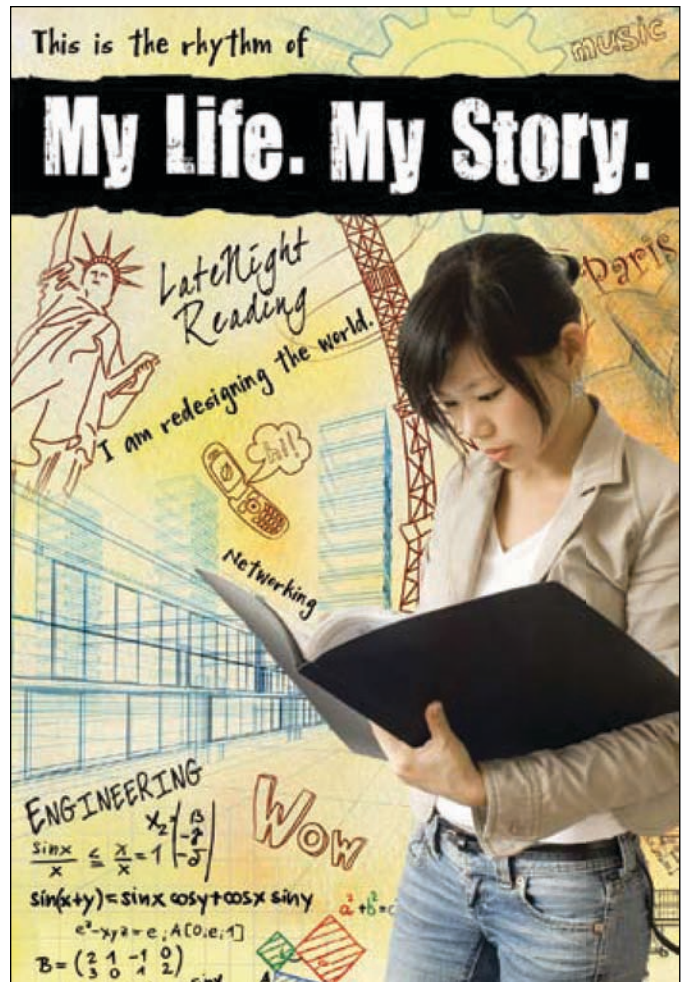
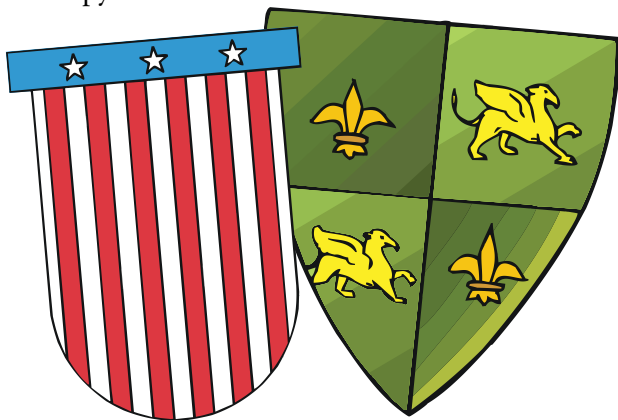
## SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITY

**Just What I Need!** Have kids identify a problem or a need in their lives and design an invention to solve that problem or meet that need—a robot to clean their room? A multipurpose clothes hanger to hold every piece of tomorrow’s outfit, from underwear to earrings? They should make detailed drawings or models that show how their inventions would work. Display the inventions or have inventors present their work to each other. Who knows—maybe one of your readers will come up with that elusive better mousetrap!

## INTERNET ACTIVITIES

**PBS Kids Go! It’s My Life.** Bookmark <http://pbskids.org/itsmylife> for tweens and young teens to explore. It’s full of information, quizzes, games, advice, videos, e-bulletin boards, and blogs touching on all aspects of kids’ lives. Spanish language option.

**Personal Coat-of-Arms.** Place a few books about heraldry at a computer station. You might prepare a laminated activity prompt sheet with a brief introduction to heraldry in general, and to coats-of-arms in particular. For detailed information on coats-of-arms, bookmark and refer kids to [www.storyboardtoys.com/gallery/coat-of-arms-lesson-plan.htm](http://www.storyboardtoys.com/gallery/coat-of-arms-lesson-plan.htm). On the prompt sheet, direct teens to the Make Your Coat of Arms Web site at [www.makeyourcoatofarms.com](http://www.makeyourcoatofarms.com), where they can create a personal coat-of-arms and print the final product. Have them work through the steps in turn. Not everything they enter shows on the screen; it will all show on the printed copy.



**Nerd Power!** Teens might enjoy this quiz at [www.nerdtests.com/ft\\_nq.php](http://www.nerdtests.com/ft_nq.php) that gives them a nerdiness score. After all, many of the world’s most brilliant, constructive thinkers are or were total nerds!

**Readergirlz,** [www.readergirlz.com](http://www.readergirlz.com). Bookmark this site and invite girls to explore an online magazine dedicated to helping them understand themselves better through reading and talking about books online with authors and other readers.

**Making a Change.** Teens are taking increasing responsibility for their own decisions and choices. Bookmark [http://kidshealth.org/teen/school\\_jobs/school/make\\_change.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/school/make_change.html) on the TeensHealth Web site, and have kids click on the “Making a Change” planning tool. It’s a helpful, appealing exercise in setting and achieving goals. They can print their personalized goals sheets at the end.



## "MY LIFE. MY STORY." BOOKS

- *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes. Speak, 2003. ISBN 0142501891. 7+.
- *Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul IV: More Stories of Life, Love and Learning* by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Kimberly Kirberger. HCI Teens, 2004. ISBN 0757302335. 7-12.
- *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank. Longman, 1989. ISBN 058201736X. 7+.
- *Elsewhere* by Gabrielle Zevin. Square Fish, 2007. ISBN 0312367465. 7-12.
- *Flashcards of My Life* by Charise Mericle Harper. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2007. ISBN 0316166766. 5-8.
- *Guts: The True Stories behind Hatchet and the Brian Books* by Gary Paulsen. Laurel Leaf, 2002. ISBN 0440407125. 6+.
- *Here's Looking at Me: How Artists See Themselves* by Bob Raczka. Millbrook Press, 2006. ISBN 0822573059. All ages.
- *Hope Was Here* by Joan Bauer. Penguin Group, 2005. ISBN 0142404241. 6+.
- *I Can't Keep My Own Secrets: Six-word Memoirs by Teens Famous & Obscure: From Smith Magazine* edited by Rachel Fershleiser and Larry Smith. HarperTeen, 2009. ISBN 0061726842. 6-10.
- *Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories about Growing up Scieszka* by Jon Scieszka. Viking Juvenile, 2008. ISBN 067001138X. 5-8.
- *Love that Dog* by Sharon Creech. Perfection Learning, 2003. ISBN 0756913802. 5-9.
- *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers. Amistad, 2001. ISBN 0064407314. 7+.
- *A Northern Light* by Jennifer Donnelly. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004. ISBN 0152053107. 8+.
- *Open Your Eyes: Extraordinary Experiences in Faraway Places* edited by Jill Davis. Viking Juvenile, 2003. ISBN 0670036161. 7+.
- *The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton. Puffin, 2006. ISBN 014240733X. 7-10.
- *Paint Me Like I Am: Teen Poems from Writerscorps*. HarperTeen, 2003. ISBN 0064472647. 7-12.
- *Prepare to be a Teen Millionaire* by Kimberly Burleson Spinks and Robyn Collins. HCI, 2008. ISBN 075730723X. 8-12.
- *Prince of Tennis* by Takeshi Konomi. VIZ Media LLC, 2004. ISBN 1591164354. 5-8. (Also available on DVD from VIZ Video)
- *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot. HarperTeen, 2008. ISBN 0061479934. 5-9.
- *Seek* by Paul Fleischman. Simon Pulse, 2003. ISBN 0689854021. 6-10.
- *Shakespeare Bats Cleanup* by Ron Koertge. Candlewick Press, 2006. ISBN 0763629391. 6-10.
- *Surviving the Applewhites* by Stephanie S. Tolan. HarperCollins, 2003. ISBN 0064410447. 5-9.
- *The Teen Guide to Global Action: How to Connect with Others (Near & Far) to Create Social Change* by Barbara A. Lewis. Free Spirit Publications, 2008. ISBN 1575422662. 7-12.
- *Teen Manners: From Malls to Meals to Messaging and Beyond* by Cindy Post Senning and Peggy Post. HarperTeen, 2007. ISBN 0060881984. 6-12.
- *Wee Free Men* by Terry Pratchett. HarperCollins, 2004. ISBN 0060012382. 6-10.
- *What I Believe* by Norma Fox Mazer. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2007. ISBN 0152062831. 6-9.



# “My Life. My Story.” Minutes, Hours, Days Survey

How do you spend the minutes, hours, and days of your life? Keep track of the minutes you spend each day doing each of the following activities. Some may not be daily activities; in those cases, average or estimate the number of minutes. Enter the times below; then complete the rest of the survey.

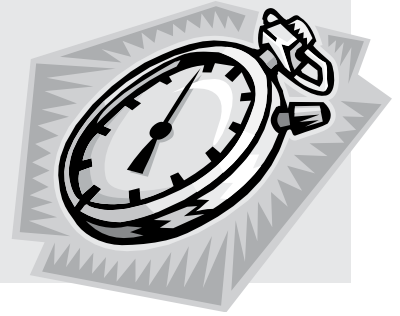
Phone talk/text	Watch TV	Read	Computer games	Homework	Personal care/hygiene (bath, hair, etc.)	Shop	Sleep	Hobby (sport, music, club, etc.)

- List these nine activities below, in order based on the time you spend on them each day, from most to least.

#1 \_\_\_\_\_ #4 \_\_\_\_\_ #7 \_\_\_\_\_  
 #2 \_\_\_\_\_ #5 \_\_\_\_\_ #8 \_\_\_\_\_  
 #3 \_\_\_\_\_ #6 \_\_\_\_\_ #9 \_\_\_\_\_

**For your top two time-consuming activities, calculate how much time you spend on each per week, per month, and per year.**

#1: \_\_\_\_\_ per week, \_\_\_\_\_ per month, \_\_\_\_\_ per year  
 #2: \_\_\_\_\_ per week, \_\_\_\_\_ per month, \_\_\_\_\_ per year  
 Do the same for your bottom two activities.  
 #8: \_\_\_\_\_ per week, \_\_\_\_\_ per month, \_\_\_\_\_ per year  
 #9: \_\_\_\_\_ per week, \_\_\_\_\_ per month, \_\_\_\_\_ per year



- Which numbers surprise you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do you spend too much time on some activities? Which ones?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Do you spend too little time on some activities? Which ones?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If you could give up one activity and transfer all its time to another, which would you give up? Which activity would get that extra time?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What other activities, not included on the chart, fill large quantities of your time?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Write a goal statement for yourself about what changes you want to make in how you use your time each day. Use the back of this sheet.