**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts

**Grade level/band**: 10

**Task source**: Inquiry by Design; Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity; Author: Dennie Wolf

**Growing up in New York City**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

1. **Task overview**:

Students will have the opportunity to explore historical photos and documents that depict life in New York City for young people in the late 1800s. Students will compare the plight of children from that time period to current-day information on the lives of young people in the city. Finally, students will write an argumentative essay in which they will take a position on the relative wellbeing of today’s young people who live in New York City.

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/9-10/5/) RI9.10.5 Analyze in detail how an author's ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY- 11-12 Write argument to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2aIntroduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information so that each new element builds on that which precedes it to create a unified whole.

1. **Secondary Common Core State Standards (optional)**

CCSS ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7Conduct short, as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (thesis-a self-generating question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.CUse words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.1.D Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

1. **Critical abilities**

Analysis of Information:Integrate and synthesize multiple sources of information (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to address a question, make informed decisions, understand a process, phenomenon, or concept, and solve problems while evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Communication in Many Forms:Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

1. **Time/schedule requirements:**

Including the introduction to the subject of historical wellbeing of children, this task may take up to 10 class periods.

1. **Materials/resources:**

* Access to library and/or computer lab to conduct research and type final paper
* Historical photos of life in New York, late 1800s.
  + Museum of the City of New York, Jacob A. Riis collection: <http://collections.mcny.org/Explore/Highlights/Jacob%20A.%20Riis/>
* Printed copies of “Chapter 1: A Mood of Resignation,” from the following book on homelessness: Kozol, Jonathon. *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America*. New York: Crown Publishers, 1988. Print.
* Colored pens or highlighters for a close reading of the text (Day 2).
* An article about education:
  + Monahan, Rachel, Edgar Sandoval, and Meredith Kolodner. “New York City High School Graduation Rates on the Rise - but Minorities Lag.” *The NY Daily News*. NYDailyNews.com. 9 Mar. 2010. Web. 23 Feb. 2015.
* Children’s Defense Fund website ([www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)) for information about poverty

1. **Prior knowledge:**

Students should know how to:

* Research information in a variety of media
* Cite sources using a format selected by the teacher for the Works Cited page

1. **Connection to curriculum:**

None listed.

1. **Teacher instructions:**

**Day 1: Introducing the task and opening activity**

Introduction

Over one hundred years ago, a New York newspaper reporter named Jacob Riis took up photography in order to record “how the other half lived.” He wanted his pictures to make comfortable, middle class, and wealthy New Yorkers understand how the poor families and children throughout the city lived. (Students will be “reading” the Riis photographs.)

Almost one hundred years after Riis chronicled the lives of people in New York City, an author named Jonathan Kozol raised many of the same questions in his book *Rachel and Her Children*. In his book, Kozol described the lives of some of the poorest families and children in New York – those who lived in the city’s welfare hotels. Similar to Riis’ use of his photographs, Kozol used his skills as a writer to render the situation of the city’s poorest residents visible and sympathetic to his readers. Through his writing, Kozol made the argument that the city wasn’t doing all that it could (and should) to protect its most vulnerable inhabitants.

How well are New York’s children doing today?

Some people would argue that the need for concern is behind us. There are now child labor laws that keep young people in school and out of dangerous and exhausting factory work. Today, all children are offered 12 years of public education and the chance to prepare for college and a career. The city has built supports like public housing and health services for those who are in distress. But how well are New York’s children truly doing today?

In this task, students will have the opportunity to explore examples of work in this tradition and to participate in it themselves as they take on a “micro-reporting” project. This task is designed so that before they begin work on their own reporting project, they will have a chance to investigate examples of others’ work in this tradition.

Opening Activity

Write the following statement on the board: To make your point, you have to choose the right information.

Option 1: Show students several of Jacob Riis’ photographs of life in New York tenements. He shot his photos (and titled his book *How the Other Half Lives*) to make a point: large numbers of New York City children and families lived a life of poverty that very few people even saw. Ask students to write down notes about how Riis made choices in his photographs that helped him to make his point.

Option 2: Ask students to take 3-4 minutes to recall an important event as they were growing up. Ask them to write down notes about this experience in response to the following questions:

* What do you want your audience to understand about that event?
* What will you *choose* to include or emphasize in your account?
* What will you choose to leave out or downplay?

Call on several students to share their “growing up” experiences with the class. Ask them to include their reflections on what they chose to highlight and downplay.

**Day 2: Introducing the task and reading critically (Kozol selection)**

Distribute the student directions to the “Growing up in New York City” task. Read through the directions as a class and clarify any parts of the task that are unclear to students.

In building an argument, one possible source of evidence is personal experience such as comes from close observation or interviews. This kind of evidence is at the heart of Jonathan Kozol’s books on the lives of America’s most vulnerable young people. Like Riis, Kozol selects and portrays his evidence very carefully in order to make his points.

Read a selection from Kozol’s book *Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America* with your class. Ask them to follow along and to mark anything they find confusing. Discuss and address those confusions. Ask them to read the text a second time and divide it into two to three major sections. For each section, ask students to write down the point Kozol seems to be making. Students may find that Kozol is commenting on the following, among other interpretations:

* The basic humanity of people no matter how poor or down on their luck
* The ways in which children and youth are especially vulnerable to the effects of poverty and injustice
* The ways in which, despite our wealth, the U.S. has often failed to build systems that would help people get back on their feet

Have students choose the section that interests them the most and mark up the text to show how Kozol selected key details from what he saw and heard in order to make his point effectively.

A graphic organizer such as the following could be helpful to show how different choices each help to build the major point of the selection:

**Kozol’s point**

Choice Choice Choice Choice

Following this work, ask each student to write a short (5-7 sentence) paragraph in response to this prompt: *What is Kozol trying to convince you of? How does he select information and use language to persuade you to adopt his point of view?*

**Day 3: Topic selection and brainstorming**

Remind students that they will be researching and writing in ways that are similar to what Riis and Kozol tried. They will be adding a contemporary answer to the question “How well are New York’s children doing?”

Students may choose to examine one of three key factors that affect the lives of many New York City students:

* Poverty
* Safety
* Education

In each case, they will research current indicators on the welfare of children in New York City. They may choose to compare the information they find to the impressions they have of life in the late 1800s.

Students can either select one of the three proposed topics, or you can decide to have the entire class dig deep into one of these areas, adding readings in that area. Additionally, you could also allow students to choose another research area, such as nutrition and health.

As stated in the student directions, students will most likely adopt one of the following three thesis statements:

* Young people in New York City are doing well.
* Young people in New York City are struggling.
* The picture is mixed. In some ways New Yorkers are doing well; in other ways they are struggling.

Once students and teachers have decided on who will be working on what area, ask students to form themed groups of 3-4 students to brainstorm the types of information they will need to gather in order to create a persuasive paper. Students should practice:

* Thinking about what would be relevant information
* Developing strategies to get at that information
* Extracting key points from articles and web sites

**Day 4: Reading research as a support for an argumentative essay**

Remind students that they are going to write a short argumentative essay about how well New York City youth are doing in the area where they have been focusing (poverty, safety, education, etc.). Their essay will draw on their research and any additional readings you provide.

Provide practice for students by giving them readings similar to the articles cited in the *Materials/resources* section above. This is the opportunity for students to see some current research and data that are relevant to one of the three areas they have been considering (poverty, safety, and education).

Divide students into small groups so that they can read these materials together, highlighting key points or facts they might want to quote in their essays. They may also want to raise questions, or even begin to look for additional information if they have access to computers.

**Days 5-6: Individual research** (could be done as out-of-class assignment)

Students should have access to the library and/or a computer lab in order to conduct research on their topic.

As an exit ticket from class, students can quickly form small group huddles and share one or two things that they have found in their research that day. Small group members should give constructive feedback on the power of the research facts that are shared.

**Days 7-8: Writing**

Students use class time to construct their final essays. Remind students of their original thesis and the need to support that thesis with evidence in the final product.

1. **Student support:**

Students who need more help with this assignment might benefit from using a graphic organizer that they have previously used to organize argumentative writing. Likewise, students could decide on effective means of organizing their research, whether using note cards, recording citation information for a source (especially web sites) as soon as they think it will be useful for their final product, etc.

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* The task can be adapted for other cities/other areas by varying the additional information given to students. Information can focus on the current situation in the individual area where the school is located.
* Given the above, the task could be refigured as a compare/contrast paper, comparing New York City to the local area.
* The task can be extended by asking students to do more primary research on their own. This extension may work particularly well with areas outside of New York City.
* The task can be enhanced by requiring a paper of at least 500 words that requires the full writing process.
* Students can be asked to provide a final section or a follow-up on what further information they would like to research to develop their ideas and what sources would be likely to carry that information.
* Students can present their ideas in an additional/alternate form, such as a Power Point presentation, a poster board, or an oral report.
* Students can either select one of the three proposed topics, or you can decide to have the entire class dig deep into one of these areas, adding readings in that area. Additionally, you could also allow students to choose another research area, such as nutrition and health.

1. **Scoring:**

Student work can be scored using the SCALE ELA Research or Argumentation Rubric (Gr 10).