



## English 8: Writing: Module 3: Lesson 6: Section 6

Punctuation

### Proofreading Exercise

**Instructions:** Read the passage below. Return to the lesson when you are finished.

#### Nice Girls

By John Moe

My daughter Kate loves horses, her violin and, above all else, her friends. She also happens to have been born with dwarfism, a condition that makes her smaller than other kids. She will always be smaller. Kate's fine with that. She doesn't give it much thought, really. But I've become increasingly full of dread that her generation of mean girls will eventually stop accepting her for who she is, seize upon her obvious difference and just destroy her.

Next afternoon, I was riding the No. 63 bus home from work. At the stop after mine, five pretty, well-dressed teenage girls got on and sat right behind me. I wished I hadn't forgotten my headphones that day because I didn't want to hear the horrible things these girls were inevitably about to say. They talked nonstop.

"Hey, is it O.K. if Rachel comes with us on Friday?"

"O.K. But I don't think I know her. Do I?"

"She's my friend from that summer program. She's really funny, I think you'd like her."

"Great! I'm looking forward to meeting her!"

It seemed to me they actually talked like this. Flattering descriptions and anecdotes about Rachel followed. Miraculously, this conversation was conducted without sarcasm. Was I missing something? Wasn't Rachel going to be ripped for being five pounds overweight or wearing the wrong shoes? I didn't turn around, but I leaned back and listened closer.

"Sometimes I don't think I'm as racially sensitive as I should be."

"Well, we all have to work on that. But it's a huge step to recognize it."

"Thanks!"

Down North Smith we rode, past the hospital, up Grand. The girls talked in overlapping bursts and lots of sentence fragments, a little too loudly, but everything was friendly and positive. These weren't mean girls. These were nice girls. As we passed over the freeway, I capitalized the Nice Girls in my mind to give them a title, to make them a team in the hope they would stay together. I needed them around when Kate got older. Maybe she could join them! Maybe they could get jackets made!



Source: Finished Rainbow Girls, Wendi Gratz, Flickr



"I was so awkward in eighth grade. I didn't have ANY friends."

"Oh, I felt that way, too. I still do sometimes."

"Me, too, but you have to reach out to people and get to know them. And then they're really great!"



Source: Party girls, TCL 1961, Flickr

Here I was on the bus, moved almost to tears by the Nice Girls. I wanted to turn around and thank them, tell them how much hope they had given me, tell them how wonderful I thought they were. But I'm 42. I look like Michael Douglas in "Falling Down" but with less hair and a few extra pounds. There is no conceivable scenario in which a guy like me on a bus can talk to girls like that and not have it be creepy, if not directly prosecutable. Especially with tears in my eyes. It's just not done. So I sat staring straight ahead telling myself: Don't turn around. Read something on your iPhone. You want to look at them, you want to just smile, but DON'T. IT'S JUST NOT DONE.

"Ohmygodyouguys! We just missed our stop! We have to get off here and walk back!"

"Oh, no! We were having too much fun!"

There's a door midway back on the bus, and I was sitting right behind it. The Nice Girls exited directly in front of me through that side door. I watched them go, pretending just to be staring into the middle distance. As the last of them departed, she turned and smiled at me.

I did not say what I wanted to say: "I think you're really great because you give me hope that people will be nice to my daughter later on, and so this is a completely platonic thing and it's O.K.!"

And I did not become a stalker of teenage girls around downtown St. Paul. But the Nice Girls are on my mind whenever I ride that bus, which is nightly. I've wanted to hear them talk.

I've never seen them all together again, though I've seen a few of them a handful of times. I might secretly turn down the volume on my headphones, catch a few words and feel ashamed for listening (even though it is a bus). But it's just never the same.