

**Teacher's Answer Key for
Listening/Note-taking Activity for J. Ulrich's interview at FavoritePoem.org
and Gwendolyn Brooks poem, "We Real Cool"
<http://www.favoritepoem.org/thevideos/ulrich.html>**

A. How Good is Your Memory? - How Well Do You Listen?

First Listening: Listen and watch then answer these questions:

1. What's the teenager's name? John Ulrich
2. Where is he from? South Boston
3. How old is he? 20 years
4. Where does he go to school? "Mass (Massachusetts) College of Art"
5. How did he describe his family?
It's a "big loving family", "they're amazing people", a "really tight, close family".
6. How many members (he means total siblings) are there in his family? 8
7. How many sisters? 4 sisters
8. How many brothers? 3 brothers
9. How many years are there between each of them (age-wise)? "A year apart" = 1 year difference

B. Note-Taking Exercise/Post-Listening Questions

Second Listening: Take notes, then answer the following the questions from your notes.

1. What kind of love does he receive from his family? Unconditional love.
2. How old was he in 1997? About 17 or 18 years old.
3. How many of his friends and neighbors did he say tried to commit suicide? Around 250.
4. How many succeeded? How old were they? 6, all under 25 years old.
5. What is the TOTAL number of John's friends and neighbors who died between 1996 and the time of this interview (2000)? 11
6. What was/is the main cause of death for young people in John's neighborhood?
Heroin overdose/suicide
7. Why does John say his neighborhood is "so desperate"? A "cluster of death".
8. What saved John from becoming desperate like his friends? His family -- their love.
9. What's the name of his group and who helped him to create it?
South Boston Survivors; his girlfriend and his little sister.
10. What's the purpose of this group? To start programs to distract young people from depression; to get their minds focused somewhere else using art and creativity. To redirect them from the despair flooding the streets of Boston.
11. Where and when did he first hear this poem by Gwendolyn Brooks?
In poetry class in high school, during the cluster of suicides.
12. How does he relate to this poem?
The poem made sense to him because it depicts/depicted the kind of life that he has/had. He felt it "was telling his story" about how things got "so drastic so quick".
13. Explain the kind of "change" that John talks about?
About the "loss of innocence" of going from a high school teenager (carefree) to the burdens and disappointments (poverty, despair and depression) of adulthood.
14. Does John think he and his friends are (or were) "real cool"? No.

Some questions and answers adapted from Aiden Yeh ©2003, <http://dcyeh.com/>