

Letter Writing

One class meeting (2 hours)

Lesson at a Glance

SUMMARY

Letter writing is an essential component of any writing unit because of its utility and potential power. Given a purposeful context, even the most reluctant student can see the value of writing a letter. In this lesson, students meet a young man attempting to reconcile with his father by writing a letter. Students also learn about the format of a letter, read about the steps in the writing process, and draft, revise, and edit their own letters.

GOAL

To write effective letters

LEARNER OUTCOMES

- Students will be able to list, describe, and use the essential parts of a letter: salutation, date, body, and closing.
- Students will be able to list and explain the four main stages of the writing process: determine purpose, draft, revise, and edit.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to describe tone and, through revision, alter the tone of a letter.

MATERIALS

VIDEO:

Lifelines: Writing a Letter to a Relative: Episode 14:
Length 5:44, start time 1:24

PRINT:

Super Models: Writing Personal Letters: Issue 4,
pages 2 and 3

Good Reading/ Good Writing: Writing a Tough Letter: Issue 14, pages 4 and 5

ACTIVITIES

- View one segment of a TV411 video
- Complete two TV411 workbook sections
- Review 6 vocabulary words or terms
- Brainstorm about the reasons to write a letter
- Discuss strategies for writing a letter (the writing process)
- Draft a letter
- Revise the letter
- Edit the letter

“A phone call would have been uncomfortable, but a letter didn’t seem like such a bad idea. . . . Now that this letter has opened the door, a phone call doesn’t seem that weird at all.”

Step by Step

1. INTRODUCING THE CONTENT

Pre-Viewing Activities

Brainstorm

What are some of the reasons you might write a letter? List responses on the board.

Possible responses:

- To communicate with a friend or family member who lives far away
- To get some information
- To make a complaint
- To explain why you want a job (cover letter)

Teacher Talk

Ideally, the notion of a personal letter has come up in the brainstorming session. If not, elicit or introduce it.

As we can see, there are many reasons to write letters. Most letters have a similar format. Today, we are going to focus on writing personal letters to friends and family.

Workbook Activities

Working in small groups, students read and complete *Super Models: Writing Personal Letters: Issue 4*, pages 2 and 3.

Note: Students do not complete the portfolio section, which asks them to write a personal letter. They will do this later in the lesson.

Students read about the various styles or tones a personal letter can take—friendly, dramatic, expressing sorrow, or as a means to talk over an issue with a friend. Students also read tips on using the writing process to write a personal letter: write a rough draft, leave it alone for a while, revise, and edit, paying special attention to tone. They also learn about the parts of a letter: date, salutation, body, closing and post-scripts (PS). Students will then draft their own letter using the template provided on page 3.



Step by Step (cont.)

2. MODELING THE STRATEGY

View Video

Lifelines:

Writing A Letter:

Episode 14: Length 5:44,
start time 1:24



Before his wedding, a young man reconnects with his estranged father. With the help of a friend the young man writes a first draft, thinks about the tone of the letter and his choice of words, and revises the letter.

VOCABULARY REVIEW

(listed as they appear in the video)

family crest

eldest

aggressive

heirloom

reconcile

tone

(Reconcile is the “Buzzword” for Episode 14)

3. MINING THE STRATEGY

Post-Viewing Activities

Discuss

- Why did Shawn decide to write a letter to his father?

Possible responses:

- To get the pocket watch
- To tell him about his wedding
- He wasn't comfortable calling his father on the phone

- What are some of the things Shawn did to help him write an effective letter?

Possible responses:

- Asked his friend for help
- Wrote a first draft
- Got all of his feelings of anger out on paper first
- Thought about how his father would feel receiving this letter
- Paid attention to the tone of the letter
- Rewrote the letter

4. EXTENDING AND PRACTICING STRATEGY

Draft

Students write a first draft of a letter to someone.

- Is there someone you have been meaning to get in touch with?
- Is there something hard that you need to tell or ask someone?
- Is there any exciting news in your life that you want to share?

Step by Step (cont.)

Workbook Activities

Working in small groups, students read and complete *Good Reading/ Good Writing: Writing a Tough Letter: Issue 14*, pages 4 and 5, except the *Fine-Tune Your Writing* section.

Students read about the key steps to writing an effective letter: know the reason for the letter, write a first draft to get your feelings and thoughts out, reread and revise, and edit and proofread. Students also read about the importance of tone and complete four multiple-choice questions and three short-answer questions dealing with tone.

Revise

Students reread and revise their letters.

Note: You may have students read each other's writing and give feedback. The nature of this writing may lend itself to sensitive writing; therefore, if you are going to ask students to share, you need to let them know before they write their first drafts.

Questions to keep in mind while rereading and revising

- What is my purpose for writing this letter?
- Do I clearly convey this purpose?
- How would I feel if I received this letter?
- Does the way in which I expressed myself reflect the way I am feeling and the way I want to be perceived?
- Is the tone correct?



Step by Step (cont.)

Edit

Students edit their writing using the editing checklist.

Note: This activity presupposes some knowledge of editing and mechanics on the part of students. An alternative or addition to self-editing is for the teacher and the student to edit the piece together in a one-on-one conference situation while other students are revising or editing.

Editing Checklist

- Do I have the right model for a letter?
- Do all of my sentences begin with a capital letter?
- Do all of my sentences end with a period? (Or question mark or exclamation point)
- Are all of my verb tenses correct?
- Do my subjects and verbs agree?
- Have I read it aloud and made some changes?



RELATED VIDEO AND PRINT

Personal Letters

VIDEO:

Milestones: Hilda Armendariz: Episode 11: Length 5:00, start time 7:10

Cover Letters

VIDEO:

Personal Portfolio: The Cover Letter: Episode 8: Length 2:58, start time 13:48

PRINT:

Super Models: Three Types of Business Letters: Issue 13, pages 2 and 3

Letters for Social Action

VIDEO:

Milestones: Resonja Willoughby: Episode 13: Length 3:39, start time 6:36



PRINT:

People: Resonja Willoughby: Issue 13, page 11.

Starting a Piece of Writing

VIDEO:

Write Now: Getting Started : Episode 2: Length 2:36, start time 22:31

PRINT:

Super Models: Writing First Drafts: Issue 2, pages 2 and 3

Step by Step (cont.)

PORTFOLIO

Students save workbook activities, drafts, and revisions of their letters in their portfolios.

HOMEWORK

1. Students rewrite or type their final edited letters in the correct format for the next class.
2. Students complete one of these statements:
 - I am not going to mail this letter because . . .
 - I am going to mail this letter because . . .



RELATED VIDEO AND PRINT (CONT.)

Revision

VIDEO:

Write Now: Images and Details:
 Episode 4: Length 2:34, start time 13:09

Laverne: Greeting Cards:
 Episode 12: Length 4:18, start time 14:51



PRINT:

How To: Make Revisions: Issue 13, pages 4 and 5

Word Choice

PRINT:

Brush Up: Get The Connotation:
 Issue 7, page 10

Editing

PRINT:

How To: Make An Editing Checklist: Issue 2, page 4 and 5