

Lesson Plan: Persuasive Letter Writing for Human Rights

in Amnesty International's Write for Rights Global Write-a-thon (50 minutes)

[The following lesson plan has been created using the NCTE/IRA standards for English Language Arts. It is designed to be implemented in one 50 minute class session, but there are many ways you can expand and make this effort a more in-depth lesson depending on the needs and time available at your school site.]

Overarching Questions

- How can our roles as writers help others?
- How can persuasive letters be most effective?

Objectives

- To expose students to the real-life applications of effective letter writing.
- To provide students opportunities to write letters that contribute to a desired impact.
- To review parts of a letter and their purpose.

Students will be able to:

- Analyze a sample letter and identify key components of a letter.
- Develop and support a position on a particular human rights case and write a letter of support.
- Organize ideas so they are expressed in a clear, logical sequence in order to make it easier for the reader to follow.
- Publish their letter and mail it to the appropriate entity.

Materials:	Provided by Amnesty International: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on each case study [you can also focus on a particular case study for the whole class if you feel one is more appropriate or convenient to the particular confines of your classroom situation.] • Sample letters [Students can use the sample letters to acquire basic information and supportive evidence. Also, depending on time and teacher permission, they may choose to utilize sentences/phrases and incorporate these into their own letters.] Provided by Teacher or Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper and writing utensils (If hand written) OR, Computers/Printers (If students will type letters) • Envelopes* Stamps * <p>[*Teachers can collect letters and mail them in one package to AIUSA for delivery to their final destination. Otherwise, you can ask students to bring in an envelope and/or stamp and have students prepare their letters themselves. The teacher then can deposit these in the mailbox.]</p>	
Activity	Time	Process

Warm-Up	5 minutes	<p>Ask students, “Why do we write letters?”</p> <p>Allow students to share their answers with their neighbor, then ask: “When might we want to write a persuasive letter?”</p> <p>Provide students with time to think with their partners then write their examples on the board.</p>
Introduce Global Write-A-Thon Campaign	5 minutes	<p>Inform students about Amnesty International’s letter writing campaign. “The Write-a-thon is the world’s largest letter-writing event. Each year in the weeks around international Human rights Day (December 10), tens of thousands of Write-a-thon participants in more than 50 countries bring concentrated pressure to help human rights defenders, prisoners of conscience, and other people at risk of human rights abuses.”</p> <p>[At this point, students might have questions about human rights and human rights violations. Explain that students will read about a particular case that may help shed light on this.]</p>
Read about a Case and Sample Letter	10 minutes	<p>Provide students with a copy of one case study and its accompanying letter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the case study aloud Ask, “What is seen as the problem?” • Read the sample letter aloud Ask, “What is the desired solution? What are the justifications provided in the letter?”
Identify Parts of a Letter	10 minutes	<p>Discuss the technical aspects of the letter.</p> <p>“AIUSA makes sure to utilize proper lesson-writing format. What are the parts of this sample letter and their respective purpose?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students locate the Inside Address, Salutation, Body, Closing, and Signature. • Help them determine the function of each part.
Write-A-Letter	15 minutes	<p>Provide students with time to draft their own letters.</p> <p>Encourage students to include a main point (action they want taken) and support this with their reasons.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If students have computer access they can utilize this handy letter generator, provided by readwritethink.org: http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/letter_generator/ • Readwritethink.org also provides a useful rubric for persuasive letters http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson875/PersuasiveLetterRubric.pdf • Have students practice labeling their respective envelopes correctly, reviewing proper placement of sender and receiver addresses (if sending out individually). <p>[Given time constraints, students may or may not have time to peer-edit or revise. If appropriate, students may finish their letters for homework. If teachers want to keep this as a one-day activity, however, we kindly ask that teachers look over the drafts before sending.]</p>
Close	5 minutes	<p>Provide this reflection question to the group:</p> <p>“What is something new that you learned about letter writing today?”</p>

	<p>Allow students to share their thoughts on the process of letter-writing and /or the individual cases they tackled.</p> <p><i>“Are there other instances in which you would want to practice persuasive letter-writing?”</i></p> <p>Allow students to share their own thoughts, issues, or experiences.</p>
<p>Further Study</p>	<p>These are additional resources (websites, handouts from AIUSA, information on Human Rights) that can be given to students. Teachers may also want to use these to delve deeper into Human Rights topics.</p> <p>Links: More information on the purpose and impact of the Write-a-thon as well as resources: http://www.amnestyusa.org/writeathon/ Information on individuals at risk around the globe: http://www.amnestyusa.org/our-work/campaigns/individuals-at-risk The plain language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights can be found at: http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/humanrights/resources/plain.asp</p>

NCTE/IRA NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

<http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Books/Sample/StandardsDoc.pdf>

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and **genre** to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, **persuasion**, and the exchange of information).