

Letter Writing

Classroom Applications & Ideas

Below is a list drafted by the education department on possible extensions and classroom use for the letter writing resources. It is a highly flexible list and is meant as a starting point for you and your students. If you develop or create other ideas, let us know!

Historical Figures & Scenarios

- Research and adopt the persona of a historical figure and write a letter or response to one of the mad lib templates.
- Pick a scenario related to a historic moment. Have students write letters based on these scenarios.

Professional Scenario

- Imagine a professional scenario, like conducting an informational interview. Have students write letters or emails based on these scenarios.

Descriptive Writing & Recaps/Reviews

- Come up with an imagined scene to describe in detail, have students write a letter detailing this scene to someone else. Combine this with the historic scenarios prompt for a possible added challenge!
- As a concluding activity or assignment, have students write a letter to review or recap a historic event or era.

Incorporating Social Emotional Learning

- Pick a scene, scenario, or historic moment with emotional weight. Have students write a letter to process, identify, and/or describe emotions that go along with that moment.
- This exercise can also be used for personal moments to help process emotions.

Different Scenarios, Different Media

- Pick one scenario and have students adapt a letter or response to fit across certain media. For example, a thank you note to a friend using email, text, and a handwritten letter. Ask students how each medium is different.
- Pick three media and have students draft ideas and contexts that make the most sense based on the chosen media. For example, what're the best uses of email, text, and a phone call?

Parts of Speech

- Use the mad libs to review or introduce parts of speech and grammar.

Vocabulary Builder

- Instead of using one word for the mad lib, have students generate word lists for each slot
- Underline certain words in a letter instead of making blank spaces. Task students with developing synonyms, antonyms, homophones, or other types of words to replace the underlined one.

Context Clues

- Instead of being wacky and fun with the mad libs, have students closely read the letter. Using context clues and historical thinking skills, have them place the word they think actually would have gone into the slot

Fill in the Blank Historical Scenarios

- Similar to context clues, use mad libs as a recap of teach historic events. Write your own description, choose key words and phrases to remove and have students fill them back in. For example, "In _____, the Declaration of Independence was signed by the _____ in _____." For fun, do a second, goofy round.

Manners and Etiquette in History

- These letters all give good context for how people behaved in a certain era. Use the letters to teach about manners and etiquette, to give a concrete sense to a history lesson. The examination of manners and etiquette can also give clues for how to examine primary sources in the future!

Sending Thank You Notes

- Have students send thank you notes of their own. If you breakdown the essential skills needed for this, this is a great activity for early learners

Sending Holiday Letters

- After a lesson on a certain holiday, have students send holiday letters to explain their own traditions or wish others well.

Handwriting Skills and Fine Motor Development

- At the core of writing letters are writing and reading comprehension. Use any of these activities or letter writing to teach these basics.

Responding Through Summary

- Beyond writing and reading comprehension, letters rely on the ability to summarize. Have student summarize a day in the form of a letter as an exit ticket
- Use letters for other summary opportunities, for example have students send a letter to a friend summarizing a book they read.

Pen Pals

- Develop cultural competency by getting pen pals from near or far. Teach the geography and culture of that location before writing and have students ask questions that can develop their competency. The pen pals are encouraged to do the same to help students analyze their own culture. Great to pair this with teaching holidays and other traditions!

Analyzing Primary Source Documents

- You can use any of the letters here as a way to analyze primary source documents and teach essential skills in how to do so (reading cursive, analyzing context, content, and medium, and more).