

Writing Fundamentals

Generating Ideas V: Write Your Reasons



Rationale:

Writers write for many reasons and in many different ways, depending on the purpose and intended audience. Students examine the decision-making of writers they read and consider the purpose and audience for their own writings.

Preparation:

- *Dear Mr. Blueberry* by Simon James
- “Dear _____” (see Appendix)
- Different writing papers (e.g., postcards, envelopes, stationery)

Teaching:

Inform

Every day I do different kinds of writing for many different reasons. I make lists to remember things to buy; I write notes to remind myself of appointments; I write ideas for writing in my folder; I send e-mails to say hi to my friends. I also write for special occasions, like inviting friends to a party or recording memories from a trip. When I travel, I send postcards and letters. How many of you have ever sent a postcard or a letter? Have you ever gotten one?

Present

I love to send letters and I love to get letters. How about you? **Hold up *Dear Mr. Blueberry*.** One thing I really like about this book is how it is written like letters between two people. Even the cover looks like a letter! Discuss how the title mirrors the salutation line of a letter; the cover design suggests a postmarked envelope from Nantucket, Massachusetts and even gives a date; and the stamp shows the narrator, Emily, in the process of writing one of her letters to Mr. Blueberry. Picture walk through the book with the class, highlighting some of the many other pictures of Emily engaged in the act of writing (and reading) a letter (e.g., title page, pp. 4, 8, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20). Consider how the pictures convey Emily’s excitement upon receiving the letters (she sits on the stairs and reads it, ignoring the other mail in the slot; she reads one on the way home from school as if she can’t wait). Point out the different parts of letters as you go (e.g., the opening salutation lines [Dear Mr. Blueberry or Dear Emily]; the body [asking or answering a question]; the closing [Yours sincerely, Love Emily, Your teacher, and so on]). Why do you think Simon chose to write this story this way, like a letter exchange between Emily and her teacher, instead of just presenting facts about whales?

Help students see how the letters reveal two totally different characters or voices: the practical adult, Mr. Blueberry, and the imaginative child, Emily.

Engage

Emily writes to her teacher because she wants to share with him the remarkable event in her backyard. She also probably chose Mr. Blueberry to write to because she wants to learn more about whales, Arthur is important to her, and she knows her teacher is a good source of information on whales. Mr. Blueberry writes back because he has information to share, and he wants to make sure that Emily is doing the right things for Arthur even though he may not really believe there is a blue whale living in her pond. Have you ever gotten a letter from someone? Who? Why? **Have students share with partners some occasions on which they have sent or received letters or cards. Share as a class the different purposes and audiences for the occasions student pairs came up with.**

Reiterate

Writing takes many forms, and writers write for many reasons. Letters are usually written between two people, and they give the reader and writer a chance to exchange information and share what’s going on in their lives. Can you think of someone to write a letter to? Let’s write one now! **Distribute copies of the Appendix for students to fill in, or pass out different types of fun stationery, markers, stickers, and so on, so students can personalize and decorate their letters.**

Conference Questions:

- Have you ever gotten a letter or postcard from someone? Who?
- How did the letters in *Dear Mr. Blueberry* help you write today?

Extensions:

Use *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin to discuss how writers keep diaries and journals for the same reasons students use a Writing Folder (to record thoughts, emotions, observations, and impressions).

Appendix: “Dear _____”



Name _____

Date _____

Dear _____



Generating Ideas V: Write Your Reasons Appendix: "Dear _____"