

ELA GEE FOCUSED LEARNING LESSON 10: Basic Letter Response To a Writing Prompt

Assessment Component: Composition and Proofreading

STANDARD TWO: Students write competently for a variety of purposes and audiences.

STANDARD THREE: Students communicate using standard English grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, and handwriting.

PRIMARY BENCHMARKS ADDRESSED:

ELA-2-H2 using language, concepts, and ideas that show an awareness of the intended audience and / or purpose in developing complex compositions

ELA-2-H6 applying the steps of the writing process, emphasizing revising and editing in final drafts

ELA-3-H1 writing legibly

ELA-3-H2 using the grammatical and mechanical conventions of standard English

GRADE 9 GLEs ADDRESSED:

17. Develop complex compositions on student- or teacher-selected topics that are suited to an identified audience and purpose and that include the following:

- word choices appropriate to the identified audience and/or purpose
- vocabulary selected to clarify meaning, create images, and set a tone
- information/ideas selected to engage the interest of the reader
- clear voice (individual personality) (ELA-2-H2)

21. Write for various purposes, including:

- formal and business letters, such as letters of complaint and requests for information
- letters to the editor
- job applications
- text-supported interpretations that connect life experiences to works of literature (ELA-2-H6)

22. Apply standard rules of sentence formation, avoiding common errors, such as:

- fragments
- run-on sentences
- syntax problems (ELA-3-H2)

LESSON FOCUS: Students will respond to a writing prompt using the appropriate letter format.

I. Translating Standards Into Instruction

A. As a focus activity for this lesson, tell students they will write a letter from one of their parents to you as a teacher.

1. Direct them to use a format that includes the date and a respectful greeting with your name.
2. Note these qualities for good communication:
 - a) **Legibility**- writing clearly
 - b) **Clarity**- correct word usage and clear meaning with well connected thoughts
 - c) **Tone**- this refers to the attitude of your letter, which should be polite and respectful. Wording may be direct but never offensive.
3. Put the assignment in the form of a writing prompt and evaluate as a journal entry on topic, length, and clarity.

Example: At the beginning of the school year, your parent or guardian would like to give your English teacher some information about you as a student. Write this information in the form of a letter. The letter should describe your classroom and study habits and areas where you may need some extra help. It should also discuss those parts of school you are good at and enjoy.

B. Remind students that a letter is one type of essay response directed to a particular individual or representative of a company or institution. Like an essay, it is used to express your attitude, thoughts, or position regarding an issue or problem. Ask students for ways in which the letter they have just written accomplishes these purposes.

C. Provide students with a copy of the blank letter format for Block form and display a blank sample on the overhead. Have students fill in their copies as you fill in the sample transparency.

1. **Heading:** Place your complete address and the full date on the first three lines of your letter.
2. **Inside address:** If this information is not provided on the essay prompt, students may omit this part of the letter or create an appropriate one using their own imagination. If the name of the person being written is provided in the essay prompt, include it on the first line of the inside address. For this exercise use:

Mr. David Howard, Superintendent
Cooper High School
Cooper, Texas 80933

3. **Salutation:** This greeting is placed two line spaces below the inside address. Remind students that if they do not insert an inside address, the

salutation should go two line spaces below the date. If the name of the individual to receive the letter is known, your salutation should the name followed by a comma.

Example: Dear Mr. Howard,

If you do not know the name of the individual but know his title, a colon should follow the title.

Example: Dear Superintendent:

If you do not know the name of the person being greeted or the title, use a generic term followed by a colon.

Example: Dear Sir:

4. **Body:** Review the basic elements of writing an essay (brainstorming, clustering, topic sentence, supporting sentences, conclusion, mechanics, proofreading, editing) and remind them that a response letter is still an essay. Tell students that the essay portion of the letter would be written here in paragraph form.

5. **Closing:** After concluding the body, begin a new line for the closing. Provide examples of good closings to letters and remind students to capitalize the first word and place a comma after the closing.

Examples: Respectfully yours,
Sincerely,

6. **Signature:** On the line below the closing, sign your full name. Stress that students should not use Mr. or Miss before writing their signatures.

D. Have students complete an essay using the following prompt. Have them use a blank sheet of paper for a prewriting activities and possible rough draft, and then rewrite the edited version to hand in.

1. There is a contest being hosted by your school newspaper that is going to recognize a teacher who has made a positive impact upon the students in your school. Students have been asked to write a brief letter recommending the teacher of their choice for this special award. Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper recommending the teacher of your choice and include why you believe this teacher is worthy of the honor.

2. Use the following rubric to evaluate the essays.

Sample Rubric:

Addresses the assigned topic	15
Presents a clear main idea	10
Gives detail and support for the main idea	15
Presents the ideas in logical order	10
Uses appropriate word choice and tone	10
Uses complete sentences in a variety of sentence patterns	10
Has few errors in usage and mechanics	8
Uses correct spelling	7

II. Sources of Evidence of Student Learning

A. Students complete the letter from a parent in the focus exercise based on the prompt.

- B. Students complete the blank letter format during class discussion for future reference.
- C. Students write a letter to the editor of the school newspaper based on the prompt.

III. Attributes of Student Work at the “Got-It” Level

- A. The student recognizes the basic format and techniques of letter writing.
- B. The student demonstrates the ability to incorporate the essay process in the development of a letter.
- C. The student writes a letter that addresses the topic in an organized way with proper tone, varied sentence structure, and few errors.

IV. Gee 21 Connection

Session I Writing students must write a composition based on a prompt. The mode may be expository or persuasive. Students must plan for a central idea with sufficient support and elaboration that displays unity and organization.

VI. Recommended Materials

- A. Overhead projector with letter form transparency
- B. Student handouts with letter form
- C. Rubric for grading independent essays

BLOCK FORM

