

RAFT

The most common assignment (a student Writing an essay for a teacher to explain something,) particularly in the content areas, typically produces a bland essay. There's little motivation to compose with vivid voice, imagination and detail when writing for the teacher and in addition many of our content assignments lack focus and are too broad in scope for students to wrap their brains around. RAFT assignment shift students out of their familiar roles and inspired them to write for different audiences using formats other than the essay.

RAFT is an acronym for:

R	ROLE	Who are you? A soldier, Abraham Lincoln, and igneous rock, a mathematical operation
A	AUDIENCE	To/for whom is this written /created? A mother, the President, an integer
F	FORMAT	what format will it take? A Letter, speech, obituary, conversation, multimedia presentation, cartoon, memo, journal, etc.
T	TOPIC + Strong Verb	persuade a soldier to spare your life, demand equal pay for equal work, plead for animal rights

Introduction, modeling and reflection

1. Explain that all writers must consider the four components of every writing piece: the role of the writer, audience, format, and topic. RAFT assignments are written from a viewpoint other than that of a student, to an audience other than that of the teacher, and in a form other than the standard essay. Model for students with something simple such as this raft for the song, I

I'm A Little Teapot

*I'm a Little Teapot,
short and stout,
here is my handle (hand-on-hip)
here is my spout (other arm straight out)
when I get all steamed up,
hear me Shout
Just tip me over and pour me out!*

See if the students can come up with the RAFT components:

Role	Audience	Format	T+strong verb
Teapot	Young children	Song with movements	<i>Entertain</i> children while describing what a teapot looks like and does

Talk about the importance of using strong verbs to guide your writing. Seldom do we use the word *write* in our assignments, but instead we incorporate strong verbs such as *warn*, *urge*, and *clarify*, which focus the assignment by setting the tone of the response.

RAFT Formats

advertisement apology application art display cartoon bumper sticker
commercial complaint confession conversations eulogy graffiti interview
joke Journal diary letter to the newspaper marriage proposal new story obituary
pamphlet photo essay petition poem poster public service announcement
resume review riddle sermon script screenplay slogan wanted poster
warning

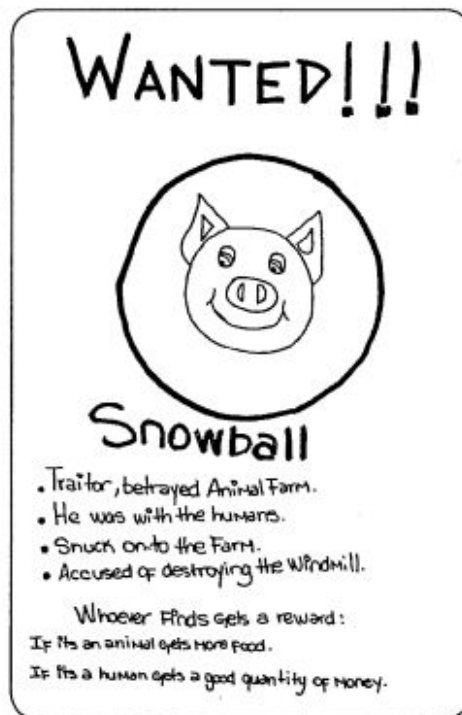
Strong Verbs

admonish accuse advise apologize attack bed blame post clarify complain
condemned confide congratulate convince Dazzle defend demand deny
disagree discourage emphasize evaluate encourage entertain excite excuse
explain flatter flaunt forbid foretell formula crumble guide harass honor
identify inquire inter Justified notify pacify Proclaim pesto plead Pride
protest question resign reward scare sell shock tattle taunt teach tease
testify urge warn welcome yield

How could you use RAFT in your grade level?

Examples:

Role	Audience	Format	Topic + Strong Verb
Snowball	Napoleon	Letter	<i>Complain</i> about your eviction from the farm and <i>convince</i> Napoleon that you should be allowed back in.
Mr. Jones	People of the town	Petition	<i>Convince</i> the other humans that they should help you in your assault on the farm to regain power.
Clover	Animals of the farm	Speech	<i>Confess</i> to the animals of the farm telling them about all of the bad things you have done.
Napoleon, Squealer, the pigs	Animals and townspeople	Wanted poster	<i>Design</i> a wanted poster to be placed around town for the capture of Snowball. List your reasons for wanting him captured.

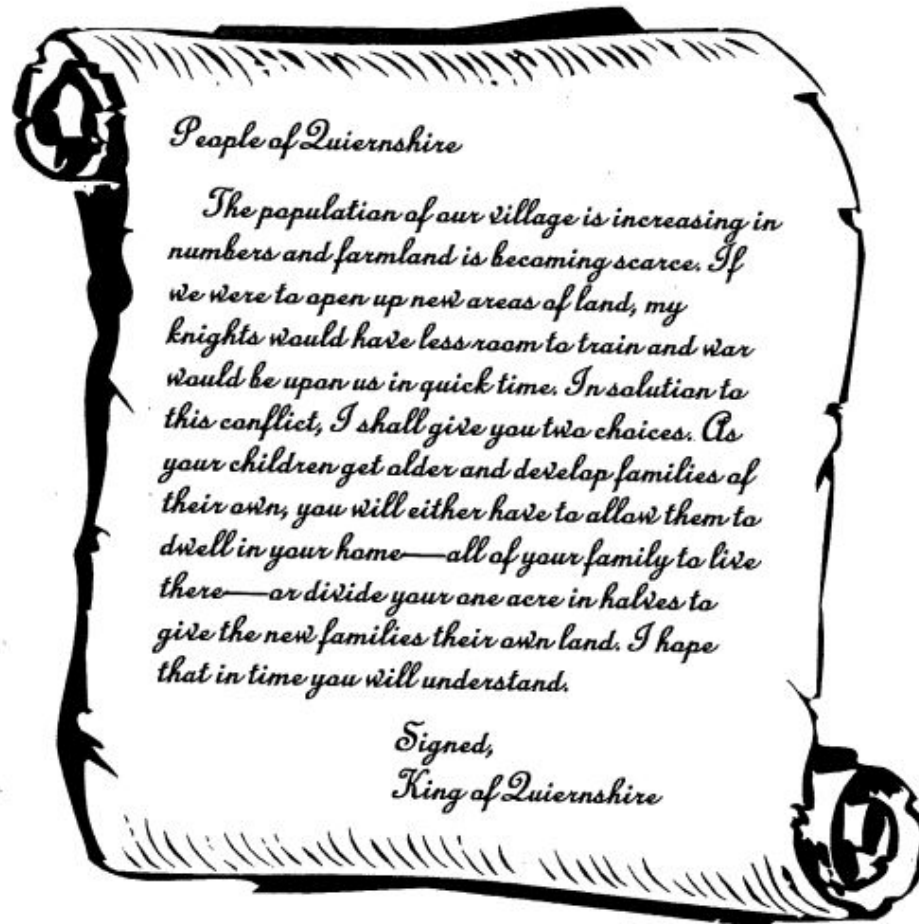


Social Studies:

Grade 6

As the culmination to a unit on Feudalism, Marc Sonderegger asked students to work in small groups and develop a chart of possible RAFT assignments for the topic—the problem of land ownership during the feudal period. After brainstorming possibilities, students circled the role, audience, format, and strong verb they would use to draft their piece. An example follows:

Role	Audience	Format	Topic + Strong Verb
Monarch Lord Knight Serf	Mother Friend Superior Subjects Church	Letter Diary Conversation Decree Poster	Blame Demand Explain Forbid Inquire Persuade Plead Proclaim



Mathematics

In this example, students in Mr. Bonham's geometry class wrote newspaper ads from a whole number quotient in need of a friend (example: 56 divided by 8 as the number of objects in each share when 56 objects are partitioned equally into 8 shares.)

Role	Audience	Format	Topic + strong verb
Quotient	News readers	Personal ad	Using key vocabulary, describe yourself, what you do and what you are looking for in a friend

Reflection

How did your writing change when composing for audiences other than the teacher? How might RAFT help you plan your own assignments? How does raft make writing more fun? How can you put yourself into the writing piece -- living your character's life or putting yourself into the scene?