

Business Letter Writing

Objectives

Using a letter written in 1799, students will learn about the different types of letter writing today and how to write their own persuasive business letter. Historical note: although the historical letter is intended to persuade territorial governor Winthrop Sargent that Natchez would be the best location for a Custom House, Mr. Rees is unsuccessful and the Custom House is built in New Orleans.

The *Business Letter Writing* lesson is adaptable for grades 6-8.

Mississippi Department of Education 2011 Curricular Connections		
Common Core Language Arts	6 th Grade	3.e.1
	7 th Grade	3.e.1
	8 th Grade	3.e.1
	Writing Standards for Grades 6-8	1a-e
	Reading Standards for Informational Text for Grades 6-8	1, 2

Business Letter Writing

Objective:

Using a letter written in 1799, students will learn about the different types of letter writing today and how write their own persuasive business letter.

Activity One: Business Letter Background

Materials: Chalk board, dry erase board, or Smartboard access; sample of business letter from your class's language arts book.

Procedures:

Background Information: Everyone has to write. How do we communicate today? Phone, text, email, letter/mail, etc. Why do people communicate in each way? Is there a difference between writing a letter and sending text or email? What is a situation where people need to communicate by phone/voice? Email?

1. Discuss the background information with your class and list the different ways we communicate today.
2. Discuss why we write letters today even though we have email, texting, and other technologies. List reasons on the board. Guide students to making two categories (informal/formal or friendly/business) of the reasons.
3. Discuss why people wrote letters in the past, 200 years ago or more. Guide them to create a list of types/ purpose of writing. List should include persuasion/argument.
4. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast letter writing in the past and present.

Activity Two: Business Letter Writing

Materials: *Ebenezer Rees* letter; sample of business letter from your class's language arts book.

Procedures:

1. Distribute the *Ebenezer Rees* letter and have students read the 1799 letter. Identify unusual vocabulary and encourage students to define new words by using contextual clues.
2. Looking at the list of writing types, students should identify what the letter's purpose is using specific examples from the letter. If using a Smartboard, students can underline evidence (ie. the claim and reasons).
3. Students will compare the primary document to the business letter following the format used in their language arts textbook.
4. Students will identify needs in the community (a new business, park, pool, etc.). Then choose one need and write a business letter to a local or state politician persuading him/her why the town should fund or build that project.

Extension Activity:

- Besides the written word, what other methods of persuasion are used to convince others? Using the community project identified in Activity Two, create a second method of persuasion to support your cause. This could be a poster, commercial, flyer, demonstration, or other creative method of your choosing.

Natchez 5th August 1799

Sir

I had the Honor to receive your Letter of the 20th Ult^o, requesting my opinion, where a suitable place should be, for placing a Custom House for this Territory.

I have taken some pains to consult with a number of respectable Characters on this subject, who, divested of every motive that might be influenced by Interest, agree with me, that the Town of Natchez is the only eligible spot for placing it at present.

In almost every Commercial Country the Custom House is in the metropolis, there, is necessarily the grand resort of business, and would be attended with great and irreparable inconvenience, was it placed in any other part. — The Landing, at the Town of Natchez is the most Central of any, in the settled part of this Territory; every Boat descending the waters of the Mississippi stop there, it is the same with those that ascend, and few or no Boats ever come from New Orleans but those, intended, and indeed unload there, & from thence have their Goods transported by Land, or in Boats to the neighbouring Creeks above, consequently the business of a Custom House would easily, and advantageously be managed there; should it be placed at any of the Landings south of the Town of Natchez, it would be attended not only with inconvenience, particularly in procuring Sureties but loss to the Territory — This would not be the case at Natchez,

The office of Collector would be acceptable
to many, I know of no person who would refuse accepting
it, but a little time will be necessary to fix on one the
most suitable, to fill that place, and who would be willing
to accept of it; - as soon as that can be done I shall
take the liberty of enclosing it to your Excellency -

I have the Honor to be

Sir

Your Excellency's

Most Obedient

Humble Servant

Edw. Keely

MDAH

Mr. Pres. Quincy 15. 1799

His Excellency

Winthrop Sargent.

TRANSCRIPT

Natchez, 5th August 1799

Sir

I had the Honor to receive your letter of the 20th requesting my opinion where a suitable place should be for placing a Custom House for this Territory.

I have taken some pain to consult with a number of respectable characters on this subject, who divested of every motive that might be influenced by interest, agree with me that the town of Natchez is the only eligible spot for placing it at present.

In almost every commercial Country the Custom House is in the metropolis, there is necessary the grand resort of business, and would be attended with great insurmountable inconvenience was it placed in any other part. The landing at the town of Natchez is the most central of any, in the settled part of this Territory; every boat descending the water of the Mississippi stop there, it is the same for those that ascend and few or no boats ever come from New Orleans, but those intended and indeed unload there, and from thence have their goods transported by land or in boats to the neighboring creeks above. Consequently the business of a custom house should easily and advantageously be managed there. Should it be placed at any of the landings south of the town of Natchez it would be attended not only with inconvenience particularly in procuring sureties but loss to the territory. This would not be the case at Natchez.

The office of collector would be acceptable to many. I know of no person who would refuse accepting it, but a little time will be necessary to fix on one the most suitable to fill that place and who would be willing to accept it as soon as that can be done. I shall take the liberty of enclosing it to your Excellency.

I have the honor to be,

Sir

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant

Ebenezer Rees

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY LESSON PLANS

TEACHER EVALUATION

COMPLETE BOTH SIDES AND PLEASE MAIL OR FAX TO THE ADDRESS ON THE NEXT PAGE. THANK YOU!

TEACHER NAME _____

SCHOOL NAME & ADDRESS _____

EMAIL (OPTIONAL) _____

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS _____ GRADE LEVEL _____

LESSON TITLE _____

1. In your opinion, did this unit elicit better than average student response; if so, how?
2. Which segments of the unit exceeded your students' attention span?
3. Will this unit be of assistance to you in developing future classroom activities; if so, how?
4. How did this unit add to your earlier teaching on the same subject?
5. Would this teaching unit be handier to use as a:
___ multi-day unit ___ multi-week unit ___ other
6. Were the activities and lessons appropriate for your students? How?

Please rate the following lesson materials and activities by circling the appropriate number.
4=excellent, 3=good, 2=average, 1=inadequate

Directions and Notes	4	3	2	1
Curricular Connections	4	3	2	1
Student Worksheets	4	3	2	1
Interactive Activities	4	3	2	1
Historic Images	4	3	2	1
References and Resources	4	3	2	1
Activity One	4	3	2	1
Activity Two	4	3	2	1
Overall Unit	4	3	2	1

We would appreciate any additional comments on this teaching unit and any suggestions for improvement. Comments may be entered in the space below.

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