

RAFT—Role/Audience/Format/Topic Strategies

The RAFT strategy (Santa, 1988) employs writing-to-learn activities to enhance understanding of informational essay explaining a concept learned, students demonstrate their understanding in a nontraditional format. This technique encourages creative thinking and motivates students to reflect in unusual ways about concepts they have read.

RAFT is an acronym that stands for

- **Role** of the writer. What is the writer's role: reporter, observer, eyewitness?
- **Audience.** Who will be reading this writing: the teacher, other students, a parent, people in the community, an editor?
- **Format.** What is the best way to present this writing: in a letter, an article, a report, a poem?
- **Topic.** Who or what is the subject of this writing: a famous mathematician, a prehistoric cave dweller, a reaction to a specific event?

The RAFT strategy forces students to process information, rather than merely write out answers to questions. Students are more motivated to undertake the writing assignment because it involves them personally and allows for more creative responses to learning the material.

How to use it:

1. Analyze the important ideas or information that you want students to learn from reading a story, a textbook passage, or other material. Consider how writing might enhance students' understanding of the topic (e.g., stages of the digestive system, or the frustrations of slaves before and after the Civil War). This focus establishes the topic for writing.
2. Brainstorm possible roles students could assume in their writing. For example, a student in an automotive class could imagine he was a spark plug and describe what occurs when an engine starts. A student studying America's involvement in Vietnam could assume the role of a farmer whose land becomes the site of a battle.
3. Next, decide who the audience will be for this communication and determine the format for the writing. For example, the spark plug could be writing in the format of a diary to be read by other spark plugs just placed in new cars. The Vietnamese farmer could be writing in the form of a petition for the war to end.
4. After students have finished reading, explain RAFT and list the role, audience, format, and topic for the writing. All students could be assigned the same role for their writing, or you could offer several different roles from which students can choose.

Examples of RAFT Assignments

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Newspaper Reporter	Readers in the 1870s	Obituary	Qualities of General Custer
Lawyer	U. S. Supreme Court	Appeal Speech	Dred Scott Decision
Abraham Lincoln	Dear Abby	Advice Column	Problems with his generals
Mike Royko	Public	News Column	Capital punishment
Frontier Woman	Self	Diary	Hardships in the West
Constituent	U. S. Senator	Letter	Gun Control
Newswriter	Public	News Release	Ozone layer has been formed
Chemist	Chemical company	Instructions	Combinations to avoid
Wheat Thin	Other Wheat Thins	Travel Guide	Journey through the digestive system
Plant	Sun	Thank-you note	Sun's role in plant's growth
Scientist	Charles Darwin	Letter	Refute a point in evolution theory
Square Root	Whole Number	Love Letter	Explain relationship
Repeating Decimal	Set of Rational Numbers	Petition	Prove you belong to this set
Cook	Other Cooks	Recipe	Alcoholism
Julia Child	TV Audience	Script	Wonders of eggs
Advertiser	TV Audience	Public Service	Importance of fruit
Lungs	Cigarettes	Complaint	Effects of smoking
Huck Finn	Jim	Letter	What I learned during the trip
Joseph Stalin	George Orwell	Letter	Reactions to <i>Animal Farm</i>
Comma	9 th grade students	Complaint	How it is misused
Trout	Self	Diary	Effects of acid rain on lake

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Source: Billmeyer, Rachel & Barton, Mary Lee. 1998. *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas: If Not Me, Then Who?, Second Edition*, Aurora, Colorado.