

What is RAFT? - <http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/strats/raft/>

The RAFTs Technique (Santa, 1988) is a system to help students understand their role as a writer, the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the expected content. It is an acronym that stands for:

- Role of the Writer - Who are you as the writer? Are you Sir John A. Macdonald? A warrior? A homeless person? An auto mechanic? The endangered snail darter?
- Audience - To whom are you writing? Is your audience the Canadian people? A friend? Your teacher? Readers of a newspaper? A local bank?
- Format - What form will the writing take? Is it a letter? A classified ad? A speech? A poem?
- Topic + strong Verb - What's the subject or the point of this piece? Is it to persuade a goddess to spare your life? To plead for a re-test? To call for stricter regulations on logging?

Almost all RAFTs writing assignments are written from a viewpoint different from the student's, to another audience rather than the teacher, and in a form different from the ordinary theme. Therefore, students are encouraged to use creative thinking and response as they connect their imagination to newly learned information.

What Is Its Purpose?

The purpose of RAFTs is to give students a fresh way to think about approaching their writing. It occupies a nice middle ground between standard, dry essays and free-for-all creative writing. RAFTs combines the best of both. It also can be the way to bring together students' understanding of main ideas, organization, elaboration, and coherence...in other words, the criteria by which compositions are most commonly judged.

How Can I Do It?

Step one: Explain to the students how all writers have to consider various aspects before every writing assignment including role, audience, format, and topic. Tell them that they are going to structure their writing around these elements. (It may be helpful to display the elements on chart paper or a bulletin board for future reference).

Step two: Display a completed RAFTs example on the overhead, and discuss the key elements as a class.

Step three: Then, demonstrate, model, and "think aloud" another sample RAFTs exercise with the aid of the class. Brainstorm additional topic ideas, and write down the suggestions listing roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs associated with each topic.

Step four: Assign students to small, heterogeneous groups of four or five or pairs and have them "put their heads together" to write about a chosen topic with one RAFTs assignment between them.

Step five: Circulate among the groups to provide assistance as needed. Then have the groups share their completed assignments with the class.

Step six: After students become more proficient in developing this style of writing, have them generate RAFTs assignments of their own based on current topics studied in class.

How Can I Adapt It?

- This strategy is great for differentiation; teachers (and students) can develop any number of possible RAFTs based on the same text that can be adjusted for skill level and rigor.
- Paula Rutherford's book, *Instruction for All Students*, offers a comprehensive list of "Products and Perspectives" from which to choose.
- The RAFTs strategy can be used as a prewriting strategy and/or as a strategy for helping students prepare for a small or large group discussion.

Desert Unit RAFT choices (3rd grade) - <http://www.somers.k12.ny.us/intranet/reading/desertassign.html>

Students have the opportunity to do the following RAFT:

Pretend that you are a saguaro cactus. Using what you have learned about this type of cactus, create an advertisement that announces that you have rooms available for rent. Your advertisement should include all the information an "animal" would need to know about the rooms for rent as well as where to contact you if interested. The voice of your advertisement is a saguaro cactus. Your audience is animals that use saguaros as their homes. Be creative and remember to sell yourself as having the best rooms in the desert! - Ms. Lovelett, Mrs. Schoenberg, Mrs. Stoll, Mrs. Sandvoss

...or to choose from the list below:

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
nomad	oasis	thank you letter	value of water
kangaroo rat	sun	complaint	sun out too long
lost student in the desert	classmates	travel guide	survival tips
saguaro cactus	animals	advertisement	rooms for rent
cook	other cooks	saguaro recipes	jams, candy, etc.
mommy & daddy bats	baby bats	instructions	how to drink nectar from a saguaro cactus
Native American	self	diary	hardships of the desert
camel	Gobi Desert	news release/interview	sand walk
desert	sun	thank you	sun's role in the desert
camel	water	love letter	water's role in the camel's existence

-Mrs. Schoenberg, Mrs. Cannata, Mrs. Hoffman, Mrs. Stoll, 3rd gr. teachers; and Mrs. Ostermann, Library Media Specialist

Examples of RAFT Assignments

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Newspaper Reporter	Readers in the 1870's	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 of the West
Constituent	U.S. Senator	Letter	Gun control
News Writer	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	9th grade students	Complaint	How it is misused
Trout	Self	Diary	Effects of acid rain on lake

RAFT Examples for Math

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Zero	Whole numbers	Campaign speech	Importance of the number 0
Scale factor	Architect	Directions for a blueprint	Scale drawings
Percent	Student	Tip sheet	Mental ways to calculate percents
Repeating decimal	Customers	Petition	Proof/check for set membership
Prime number	Rational numbers	Instructions	Rules for divisibility
Parts of a graph	TV audience	Script	How to read a graph
Exponent	Jury	Instructions to the jury	Laws of exponents
One	Whole numbers	Advice column	Perfect, abundant, deficient, amicable numbers
Variable	Equations	Letter	Role of variables
Container	Self	Diary	Comparing volume measurements
Acute triangle	Obtuse triangle	Letter	Explain differences of triangles

RAFT Examples for Science

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Water drop	Other water drops	Travel guide	Journey through water cycle
Bean	Self	Diary	Process of germination
Frog	Tadpole	Letter	Life cycle
Electron	Fourth grade students	Letter	Journey through a parallel circuit
Limestone rock	Cave visitors	Postcard	Chemical weathering process
Statue	Dear Abby readers	Advice column	Effect of acid rain
Trout	Farmers	Letter	Effects of fertilizer runoff
Duck	U.S. Senator	Letter	Effects of oil spill
Star	Self	Diary	Life cycle
Peregrine falcon	Public	News column	Effects of DDT
Red blood cell	Lungs	Thank-you note	Journey through circulatory system
Liver	Alcohol	Complaint	Effects of drinking
Lungs	Brain	Thank-you note	Quitting smoking
Rusty old car	Previous owner	Letter	Chemical change

RAFT Examples for Social Studies

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Sacajawea	Jean Baptiste	Letter	Our travels with Lewis and Clark
Newspaper Reporter	Readers in 1851	News report	Native Americans sign treaty at Ft. Laramie
Dead Confederate Soldier	Robert E. Lee	Complaint	Pickett's Charge
Bird	Wright Brothers	Complaint	New invention disrupts skies
21st Century Woman	Susan B. Anthony	Thank-you note	Women's Rights
Alexander the Great	Aristotle	Letter	What I have seen on my journeys
Ben Franklin	Dear Abby	Advice column	My son likes the British
Kaiser Wilhelm II	European Heads of State	Recipe	How we can start a World War
Kit Carson	Future tourists	Travel guide	Beautiful places in the West
Mohandas Gandhi	Martin Luther King Jr.	Letter	Nonviolent opposition/resistance
Great Wall of China	Self	Diary	Invaders I have seen and stopped
Colorado River	Rafters	Travel guide	What you will see if you travel my length
Rain Forest	Humans	Complaint	Deforestation
Constituent	Governor	Letter	State taxes
21st Century American	James Madison	Thank-you note	The Constitution