Writing a Pen Pal Letter

Grades 5/6 • Pen Pals for Water

Lesson Details	
Grades	**5-6**
Subjects	**ELA**
Topic	**How to write a water focused Pen Pal Letter**
Lesson 6	**75 minutes total** *30 minutes – Letter preparation* *45 minutes – Letter writing*
Date Taught	

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Understand the parts of a letter: heading, greeting, body, closing, signature
- Write a letter to a peer, to share their understanding and ideas about water
- Reflect on what they learned about local water sources, users, and cultural perspectives
- Practice writing clearly for an audience

MATERIALS

- Student worksheets from previous lessons
- Paper or notebooks (or digital device)
- Pen-Pal Letter Planning Worksheet
- Letter Template (optional: lines for heading, greeting, body, closing)

Lesson Flow – Quick Guide

1. **Intro and Letter Structure: Show a sample letter (15 min)**
   Purpose: Ask: "What do you notice about the greeting, closing, and addresses?" Explain parts of a letter: heading, greeting, body, closing, signature.
   Activity: Highlight that letters include the sender's and recipient's addresses.
2. **Brainstorm Ideas: (15 min)**
   Purpose: Students revisit their completed activities and worksheets from previous lessons
   Activity: Students jot down 2-3 ideas they want to include in their letter.
3. **Write the Letter: (45 min)**
   Purpose: Students write their letters, including greeting, their freshwater lesson reflections, closing and signature, sender and recipient addresses (optional if sending digitally). Optional: Students include a drawing or photo with caption E.g. (at the lake this summer, jumping off a cliff into water, at a waterfall)
   Activity: Teacher circulates to check structure, spelling, and clarity.

Assessment

- **Formative:** Observing brainstorming and drafting
- **Summative:** Completed letter includes letter parts, clear ideas about water, and addresses the recipient.
- **Self-Assessment:** "One thing I did well"/ "One thing I can improve"

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Lesson Info and Teaching Steps

Activity 1 and 2: Letter Preparation

Purpose: Introduce the structure of a letter and help students identify key ideas from their previous learning to share with their Pen Pal.

Activity Steps:

1. Show students a sample letter and review its structure as a class.
   a. Ask: **"What do you notice about the greeting, closing, and addresses?"**
   b. Identify and explain the main parts of a letter:
      - Heading
      - Greeting
      - Body
      - Closing
      - Signature
   c. Explain where the sender's and recipient's addresses are included when mailing a letter.
2. Have students use the Pen Pal Letter Planning Sheet and revisit their completed activities and worksheets from previous lessons.
3. Ask students to brainstorm 3-5 key ideas they would like to share with their Pen Pal.
   a. Encourage students to think about:
      - Something they learned about water in their community.
      - Something they found interesting or surprising.
      - A personal connection they have to water.
      - Something they would like their Pen Pal to know about their community or local water.
      - A question they would like to ask their Pen Pal.

Activity 2: Write Your Pen Pal Letter

Purpose: Give students an opportunity to communicate their freshwater learning and personal reflections with a student in another community.

Activity steps:

1. Have students use their brainstormed ideas to write their Pen Pal letter.
2. Students should include:
    a. A greeting.
    b. Two paragraphs sharing their learning, experiences, or reflections about water.
    c. At least one question for their Pen Pal.
    d. A closing and signature.
    e. Sender and recipient addresses, if required for mailing.
3. Encourage students to make their letters personal by explaining why an idea, place, experience, or piece of learning is meaningful or interesting to them.
4. **Optional:** Students can include a drawing or photo with a short caption that shows a personal connection to water. Examples could include:
    a. Visiting a lake.
    b. Swimming or playing near water.
    c. Visiting a waterfall, river, or stream.
    d. Fishing, paddling, or another water-related activity.
    e. A drawing of their local freshwater environment.
5. Circulate while students are writing and provide support as needed. Check for:
    a. Letter structure.
    b. Clear and complete ideas.
    c. Connections to freshwater learning.
    d. Spelling and grammar.
    e. Organization and readability.
    f. Appropriate language and messaging.

Before students finish, ask them to reread their letters and confirm that they have included all required components.

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Pen-Pal Letter Planning Sheet

Name: _____
Date: _____

1. Who I'm Writing To

Recipient: _____

Why I'm writing to them:

2. Brainstorm Your Ideas

Before you start writing, think about what you would like your Pen Pal to know about **you, your community, and water where you live**.

You could think about:

- Something you learned about water
- Water in your community or local area
- A freshwater place that is important or interesting to you
- How people, plants, or animals depend on water
- An experience or memory you have involving water
- Something about water that surprised you
- Something you care about or think is important
- Something you would like to know about water in your Pen Pal's community

My ideas:

3. Plan Your Letter

Greeting

Example: *Dear friend*, or *Dear Pen Pal*,

Paragraph 1

Introduce yourself and where you are from. Share some of your learning, experiences, or reflections about water.

What I want to include:

Paragraph 2

Continue sharing your ideas about water. Explain why something you learned, experienced, or chose to share is interesting or important to you.

What I want to include:

Question for Your Pen Pal

What would you like to ask your Pen Pal about themselves, their community, or water where they live?

Closing

Examples: *Your friend,* / *Sincerely,* / *From,*

Sender Address (if required):

Recipient Address (if required):

Letter Template

Your Name:
Your Street Address:
City, Province, Postal Code:

Date: _____

Recipient Name / Title:
Recipient Street Address:
City, Province, Postal Code:

Sincerely,

Grade: