



# LETTERS ALOUD

*Private letters read in public*

## *BE THE CHANGE* *Assembly Program*

---

### Educator Resource Guide

Author

Ana Maria Campoy  
(Curriculum Specialist)



LETTERS ALOUD  
*Private letters read in public*

# Thank you

for attending

## Be the Change LETTER SUMMARIES

- 1. Grace Bedell to Abraham Lincoln, 1860.**  
An 11-year-old girl tries to convince Abraham Lincoln to grow a beard.
- 2. Abraham Lincoln to Grace Bedell, 1860.**  
The Great Emancipator's honest and whisker-curious reply.
- 3. Andy Smith to Ronald Reagan, 1984.**  
A 14-year-old boy from South Carolina petitions the President for federal aid to clean his room.
- 4. Ronald Reagan to Andy Smith, 1984.**  
President Reagan's diplomatic reply.
- 5. Stan Lee to Russell Maheras, 1970.**  
The Marvel Comics legend makes good on a decades-old promise. "Practice It. Study It. Work On It."
- 6. Madison Keys to Serena Williams, 2014.**  
In 204, an eleven-year-old tennis player writes a fan letter to superstar Serena Williams. Three years later, she beat her in a tournament.
- 7. Tom Hanks to George Roy Hill, 1972.**  
Twelve years before making his Splash or growing really Big and Saving Private Ryan, a 17-year-old Tom Hanks tries to get "discovered."
- 8. Lone Star Middle School to Francis Ford Coppola, 1980**  
A group of 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders convince the Academy Award winning director to make adapt SE Hinton's classic novel "The Outsiders" into a movie.
- 9. Sophia Bailey Klugh to Barack Obama, 2012.**  
A 10-year-old girl with two dads seeks the advice of President Obama on how to deal with bullies.
- 10. George Takei to Ahmed Mohammad, 2012.**  
Civil Rights Activist/U.S.S. Enterprise Helm Officer, George Takei broadens the horizon of a racially-profiled, teenaged-inventor arrested merely for sharing his misunderstood brilliance.
- 11. Siobhan O'Dell to Duke University, 2015.**  
A high school senior rejects the rejection from her preferred university. Your move, Duke!
- 12. Mindy Kaling's Open Letter to teenagers, 2013.** The Writer/Producer/Star of "The Office," "The Mindy Project," and "Never Have I Ever" gives unsolicited advice to teenagers. Teenagers! I know, right?!
- 13. Stephen Fry to Crystal Nunn, 2006.**  
The Comedian/Actor/Writer extends a warm and candid insight on how to cope with depression. Sunny days are ahead.
- 14. Riley Morrison to Stephen Curry, 2018.**  
A 9-year-old hoopster consults the back-to-back NBA Most Valuable Player on his shoe empire.

## Pre-Show Reflection Questions: Be the Change

*These questions will help students think about some of the themes, ideas, or questions that are presented throughout the performance.*

- Who are some of the people you admire or look up to? What is something you wish you could learn from or say to them?
- Looking back on how various activists have used the open letter, what impact do you think it had on those who read it? What does the letter allow them to speak to that they couldn't accomplish in a speech or essay or other creative writing?

## Post-Show Discussion Questions & Letter Writing Prompts: Be the Change

*The following points are to help lead discussion and reflection after the students have watched the performance. Most questions relate to students' personal experiences and introspection and so there is no right or wrong answer.*

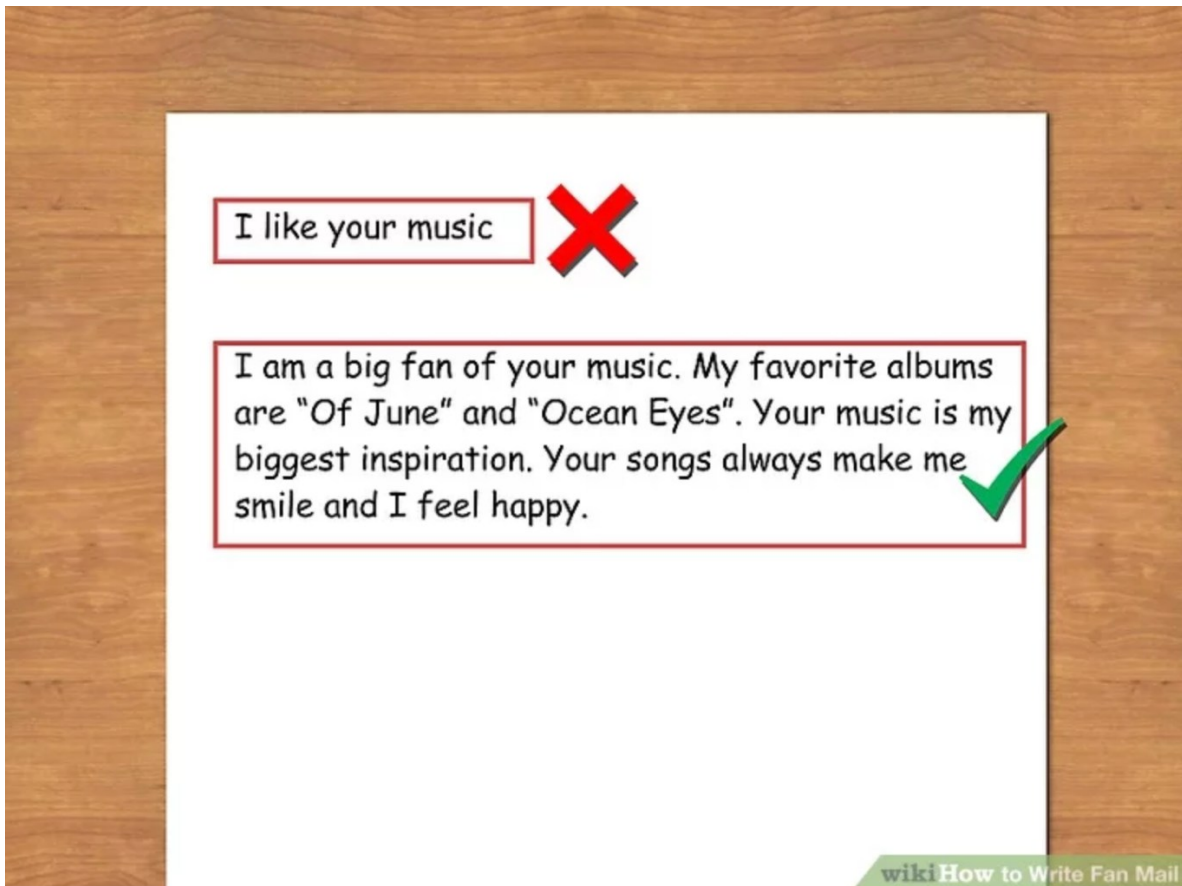
- Compare and contrast the letters written by Grace Bedell & Andy Smith to their Presidents. How are they similar? How are they different? What inspired them to write their letters? Did their letters effect change? How? How do young people reach out their representatives today? Do you think that representatives listen to their younger constituents? Why or why not?
- How do we hear about hope throughout the letters? How do you define hope? Do you find hope in any of the letters shared today?
- When asked for advice, Stan Lee uses the phrase: "Practice it. Study it. Work on it." Why? How have other letter writers in this course embraced that mindset? Give examples.
- George Takei writes to Ahmed Mohammed about his childhood experience of racism and persecution. What does he share about surviving that experience? What advice or encouragement does George give Ahmed?
- Letter writing reminds us that we are not alone. Why does writing to a personal hero (or fan letter) help us feel connected? Is it easier to write to a famous person (or stranger) about mental health or struggles?
- How does Stephen Fry's metaphor comparing depression to the weather provide clarity or comfort?

## Letter Prompts

- Write to your hero. Be specific about why you admire them and their impact on you.
- Think about an issue that you are invested in and would like to advocate on behalf of. Write to your political representative (local, county, state/providence, federal) about your issue. Be specific on why it matters and what you are asking of them, whether it's being vocal about an issue or voting for a specific law.
- What is something that you would like to be better at? Is it a skill or a practice? Think about someone you could ask advice from and write them a letter.
- Write a letter to a future generation. What is some advice that you want to share? What is something you have learned at your age that is unique to your life?
- Write to your President with a specific ask.
- Letters help those dealing with isolation by connecting them to community. Who is member of your community that might be dealing with isolation? Write them a letter.
- There are a great many essential workers that are working through this pandemic: medical professionals, emergency responders, grocery store clerks, migrant farm workers, bus drivers, truckers, and more. Write one of them a letter of gratitude.
- Participate in mail art! Decorate a letter and envelope that you intend to send.

## HOW TO WRITE A FAN LETTER LINK:

<https://www.wikihow.com/Write-Fan-Mail>



**2 Be specific.** Are you writing to compliment a specific thing they did? Are you writing a general "I love you" letter? Did the person make a positive impact on your life or inspire you? Write what you feel.<sup>[2]</sup>

- This will make your letter feel more sincere and genuine.
- For example, instead of saying "I like your music," say "I am a big fan of your music. My favorite song/album is \_\_\_\_\_. Your music helped get through \_\_\_\_\_."

## Share with Letters Aloud!

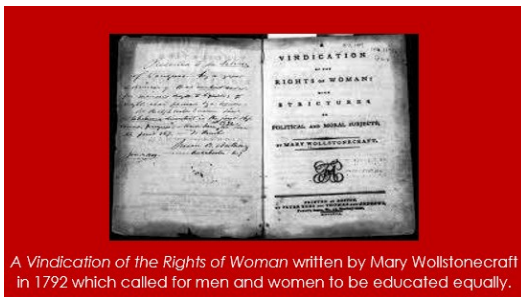
Share your letters or mail art with Letters Aloud. Take a picture of your letter (or envelope) or mail art you've created and email it to [info@lettersaloud.com](mailto:info@lettersaloud.com) to be shared on Letters Aloud's Instagram (@lettersaloud) or Facebook page.

# Brief History of Letter Writing

People have been sending letters to one another for 5,000 years. Throughout history, letters have been recorded on lead, clay bricks, stone monuments, animal skins, parchment, and tree bark. According to historians, the first handwritten letter was recorded in 500 B.C. by the powerful Persian Queen Atossa. Examples of letters span across antiquity: large portions of the Bible, historic records of battles, religious practices, local celebrations, philosophical musings, and even fan mail.



It is due to letter writing that historians have a fuller understanding of history outside of official government records. Personal letters reveal much of day-to-day life and the various details within it—fashion, recipes, personal feelings, cultural conversations, dialect, and more. Letters help fill in gaps of historical understanding and reveal insight into the lives of the individuals and the culture in which they lived.



Additionally, letter writing serves to highlight the exclusion of large population segments to formal education and literacy development, which historically have been enjoyed only by the privileged few. When considering any historical document or account, it is important to keep in mind who it was that had access to write — and thus to preserve — the historical record; whose perspective and culture have been championed.

Equally important, perhaps even more critically so, it is imperative to consider those cultures and perspectives — and the individual voices therein — that too often have been muted or silenced entirely.





# Brief History of the Postal Service

Throughout antiquity, mail-carrying primarily has been the work of individual messengers delivering a single letter to the receiver. However, civilizations of the past employed other forms of delivery, as well. The Persians, Greeks, and Romans each developed mail transportation systems that carried letters over 100 miles a day and across vast landscapes. Mounted couriers were dispatched over the Persian Empire; long-distance runners and pigeons were used by Alexander the Great; and Julius Caesar set up "post houses" along the Roman Empire that allowed mail deliverers the opportunity to rest and change horses. When the Roman Empire fell in the 5th Century, organized mail-carrying collapsed as well.

In what would later become the United States of America, letters were delivered from messengers traveling by coach or horseback and were paid by the recipient. In 1775, during the Second Continental Congress, the United States Postal Service was established, with Benjamin Franklin appointed as the first Postmaster General. The Postal Service became a cabinet-level department in 1872 and to this day continues to be an independent agency of the U.S. federal government. The official motto of the U.S. Postal Service is, *"Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds"*



In addition to mail delivery, the modern-day USPS provides banking services, marketing support for businesses; passport application and renewal services; and voter registration services. Every day, excluding well deserved national holidays, US Postal Service workers travel in trucks, boats, and even by mule to deliver mail (Yes *mules*! Mules help deliver 4,000 pounds of mail daily along the Grand Canyon village of Supai).

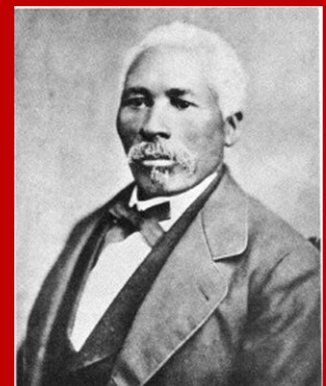


The Postal Service delivered 143 billion pieces of mail to 160 million delivery addresses in 2019 and currently handle 19.7 million mail pieces each hour.

## PONY EXPRESS

A postal delivery service that holds legendary status in American history is the Pony Express (not a part of the official US Postal Service), which existed from April 1860 to October 1861. The Pony Express boasted of crossing the rough and extensive route from Eastern US to the West Coast in ten days—twice as fast as other services. With speed the focus, riders were required to be small and the packs on the horses were kept light. Job advertisements read: *"Young, skinny, wiry fellows, not over 18. Must be expert riders. Willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred."* Upon the invention of the telegraph, the Pony Express went bankrupt, but remains being a romanticized part of American history.

Photo: William Robinson, one of two Black Pony Express Riders





# Types of Letters



*Beyond personal, government, or military communication, letter writing has served as a form of connecting people and amplifying causes.*

**Fan Letters** are letters sent to public figures — often celebrities — written by admirers in support of that person and their work. Sometimes, fans seek advice as well. Fan letters are not a new phenomenon and have been recorded throughout history, an example being the Greek philosopher Aristotle writing to his teacher, Plato.



**Political or campaign letters** are letters addressed to a government representative or person in a position of power and address a specific issue important to that individual. The strongest

letters are direct, remain factual and courteous (avoiding all threats of violence and hate speech), and are specific and personal. Often, the author writes to propose a solution or to push for a specific change. Political letters can be a part of a larger letter writing campaign for a cause, making a big impact due to their personalization.



Febb Ensminger Burns wrote a seven-page letter to her son Harry T. Burn, urging him to vote for ratification in August 1920. His vote broke the tie in the Tennessee legislature, causing Tennessee to be the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, making it the law of the land.

Another form of letter writing is the **Open Letter**, which is addressed to an individual or a group and intended for broad publication

and distribution. Open letters have a long history within non-violent protest practices, several being written from within incarceration.

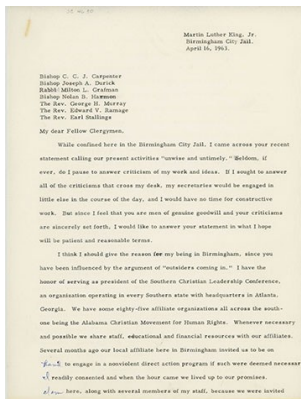
## How to write to Your Government Representative

You can find the mailing address of your government representative via <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>. This page will guide you to the mailing address of your local, county, state, and federal officials.



# Famous Open Letters

## Letter from Birmingham Jail



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested on Good Friday, April 12, 1963, having participated in a peaceful march. During his time in jail, he dealt with terrible conditions and abuse. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" is an open letter, written on April 16, 1963, in response to eight, white, Alabama clergymen who publicly decried King's actions and the disruption to daily life caused by the Civil Rights Movement. King's letter states that people have a moral responsibility to break unjust laws and to take direct action rather than waiting for justice to come naturally through the courts. Responding to being referred to as an "outsider", King writes: *"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."*

Read the letter in its entirety here:

[https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles\\_Gen/Letter\\_Birmingham.html](https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html)

## Open Letter to the Media, If/When I am Gunned Down by the Police or a Random White Person

Marlon Peterson is the host of the *Decarcerated Podcast* and an Atlantic Fellow for Racial Equity. His viral letter, in late August 2014, written as a blog post in response to police brutality in the deaths of Eric Garner in New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson. In his letter, Marlon examines at his own mortality as a Black man living in America and criticizes the use of racist language by the media in their depictions of the deaths of these men, *"I write now because as much as I hate to admit it, I know that in this system of things, black life matters little to it, and if I do not tell my story, the right story, your story will win. So, yes, even in death I resist your arrest (of my character). #yesIRESISTED #iflamgunneddown"*.

Read the letter in its entirety here:

[https://medium.com/@marlon\\_79/open-letter-to-the-media-if-when-i-am-gunned-down-by-the-police-or-a-random-white-person-65a73c4d9583](https://medium.com/@marlon_79/open-letter-to-the-media-if-when-i-am-gunned-down-by-the-police-or-a-random-white-person-65a73c4d9583)

## J'Accuse...!

### Letter to the President of the Republic

Well-known novelist and newspaper writer, Émile Zola wrote an open letter addressing anti-Semitism within the French government and society. As an example, he specifically cites the unlawful jailing of Alfred Dreyfus, a French Army General Staff officer who was sentenced to lifelong penal servitude for espionage. Zola pointed out judicial errors and the lack of credible evidence. The letter was printed on the front page of the newspaper and caused a stir both in France and abroad. Zola was prosecuted for libel and found guilty on 23 February 1898. To avoid imprisonment, he fled to England, returning home in June 1899. Dreyfus was eventually pardoned around that time, but not fully cleared of the false accusations until 1906.

Read the letter in its entirety here:

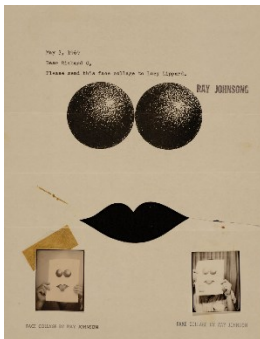
<https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/j-accuse-i-accuse>



# Mail Art



**Mail Art** (also known as postal or correspondence art) is centered around small-scale works of art that pass through the mail cycle. It arose out of the work of American artist, Ray Johnson and the New York Correspondence School in the 1960s. This grassroots practice was a way of sharing art and artistic ideas outside of the traditional barriers presented by galleries, museums, and art dealers. Mail Art celebrates misspellings, odd stamps, decorated envelopes, and more. The work exchanged among artists is often freely given (no money involved), with no judgement on what one receives, and with no expectation to receive mail art in return.



In the 1990's mail art also involved sound through tape mail, where music or conversations were recorded on cassette tape and sent through the mail.



The rise of the Internet led to a decline in postal art due to the ease of sharing images and work electronically. However, amid the quarantine lockdowns across the globe in spring 2020, Mail Art has seen a resurgence. The model of Mail Art being so democratic and celebratory allows for individuals to connect with others or community and bring the art gallery into one's home. There are various small galleries or online groups that work on sharing and sending mail art among various communities that one can easily get involved with.



## Graphic Organizer for *Be the Change* Discussion

### Lesson 1: Viewing and discussing the production

	Letter	Purpose/Aim	My Thoughts
1.	Grace Bedell to Abraham Lincoln, 1860.	An 11-year-old girl tries to convince Abraham Lincoln to grow a beard.	
2.	Abraham Lincoln to Grace Bedell, 1860.	The Great Emancipator's honest and whisker-curious reply.	
3.	Andy Smith to Ronald Reagan, 1984.	A 14-year-old boy from South Carolina petitions the President for federal aid to clean his room.	
4.	Ronald Reagan to Andy Smith, 1984.	Ronald Reagan's diplomatic reply.	
5.	Stan Lee to Russell Maheras, 1970.	The Marvel Comics legend makes good on a decades-old promise. "Practice It. Study It. Work On It."	
6.	Tom Hanks to George Roy Hill, 1972.	Twelve years before making his Splash or growing really Big and Saving Private Ryan, a 17-year-old Tom Hanks tries to get "discovered."	
9.	Sidney Poitier to President Roosevelt, 1943.	Celebrated actor Sidney Poitier wrote this touching letter to President Roosevelt when he was 17 years old asking for a personal loan of \$100.	
7.	Sophia Bailey Klugh to Barack Obama, 2012.	A 10-year-old girl with "two dads" seeks the advice of President Obama on how to deal with bullies.	
8.	Barack Obama to Sophia Bailey Klugh, 2012.	President Obama's empathetic reply.	



## LETTERS ALOUD

*Private letters read in public*

### Graphic Organizer for *Be the Change* Discussion

Lesson 1: Viewing and discussing the production (CONT.)

10.	George Takei to Ahmed Mohammad, 2012.	Civil Rights Activist/U.S.S Enterprise Helm Officer, George Takei broadens the horizon of a racially-profiled, teenaged-inventor arrested merely for sharing his misunderstood brilliance.	
11.	Emerson Weber to her Postal Carrier, 2020.	A young letter writer sends a letter of appreciation to her mail carrier, Doug. What happens next is hard to believe.	
12.	Ben's letter to Chadwick Boseman, 2019	A young "Black Panter" fan sends a letter to actor Chadwick Boseman...written entirely in the "Wakandan alphabet".	
13.	Siobhan O'Dell to Duke University, 2015.	A high school senior rejects the rejection from her preferred university. Your move, Duke!	
14.	Stephen Fry to Crystal Nunn, 2006.	The Comedian/Actor/Writer extends a warm and candid insight on how to cope with depression. Sunny days are ahead.	
15.	Riley Morrison to Stephen Curry, 2018.	A 9-year-old hoopster consults the back-to-back NBA Most Valuable Player on his shoe empire.	
16.	Stephen Curry to Riley Morrison, 2018.	The only unanimous Most Valuable Player in NBA history, Stephen Curry, not only heeds the unsolicited advice of a 9-year-old on his shoe empire, he offers her a job.	





## BE THE CHANGE

### Lesson Plan

**Curriculum Authors:**

Ana María Campoy, *Curriculum Specialist*  
Dr. Brian Eberhard, *Ph.D Black Hills State University*

Grade Level: 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>

### Lesson Description

In this 3-phased Reading/Writing/Speaking/Listening lesson, students will engage with Primary Source documents by viewing and discussing the 50-minute *BE THE CHANGE* presentation; write by hand an authentic letter, persuasively articulating a cause they are passionate about to a person they admire; and practice their vocal expression to better communicate the ideas in their writing.

**SC CCR English Language Arts Standards\***

**ELA.OE.2:** Acquire, refine, and share knowledge through a variety of multimedia literacies to include written, oral, visual, digital, and interactive texts.

**ELA.OE.3:** Make inferences to support comprehension within and across texts.

**ELA.OE.4:** Collaborate with others and use active listening skills.

**ELA.OE.6:** Create quality work by adhering to an accepted format.

**ELA.AOR.1:** Evaluate and critique key literary elements that enhance and deepen meaning.

**ELA.AOR.2:** Evaluate and critique the development of themes and central ideas within and across texts.

**ELA.AOR.3:** Evaluate how an author's choice of point of view or perspective shapes style and meaning within and across literary texts.

**ELA.AOR.5:** Evaluate and critique how an author uses words, phrases, and text structures to craft text.

**ELA.AOR.6:** Summarize and paraphrase text to support comprehension and understanding.

**ELA.AOR.8:** Analyze word relationships and nuances in word meanings within literary and informational texts.





## LETTERS ALOUD

*Private letters read in public*

**ELA.AOR.10:** Evaluate and critique multimedia presentations of a text or subject, including their impact on an audience.

**ELA.C.2:** Write informative/expository texts to analyze and explain complex ideas and information.

**ELA.C.4:** Demonstrate command of standard English grammar and conventions when writing.

**ELA.C.5:** Revise writing to improve clarity and enhance style appropriate to audience, purpose, and task.

**ELA.C.8:** Through collaboration, react and respond to information while building upon the ideas of others and respecting diverse perspectives.

**ELA.C.9:** Evaluate and critique ideas and concepts interactively through listening and speaking.

\*This section of the study guide was inserted by the Peace Center.



## **Lesson 1: Viewing and Discussing the Production**

### **BE THE CHANGE**

In this lesson, students will take notes on a graphic organizer (separate document provided) after they view the production of “**Be the Change**” and participate in a discussion about the presentation -- its content, themes, and important ideas expressed in the letters read in the performance.

#### **Learning Objective:**

After participating in a pre-show discussion and attending the production titled, **BE THE CHANGE**, students will participate in a discussion to support their developing analysis of the potential impact that a letter can have on the lives of individuals, groups, and social, political, economic, and cultural institutions.

#### **Big Idea/Overarching Understanding**

A simple letter can inspire, challenge, and enlighten individuals and groups and may even change the world.

#### **Essential Questions**

1. What types of letters may be written?
2. Why do letters have the potential to significantly impact the lives of individuals, groups, and social, political, economic, and cultural institutions?

#### **What students will know as a result of this lesson**

1. Brief history of letter writing
2. Brief history of the postal service
3. Types of letters written (personal, government/military, fan, political, open)
4. The impact that a letter can have on the lives of individuals, groups, and social, political, economic, and cultural institutions



### **What students will be able to do as a result of this lesson**

1. Analyze information presented to identify
  - a. Major themes within a presentation
  - b. Key ideas and details
  - c. Arguments made by presenters and relevant evidence supporting those arguments
2. Prepare information for a discussion on important themes and ideas
3. Engage in effective collaborative discussions on important themes and ideas

### **Key vocabulary/terms**

theme; leader; emotional journey; persistence; change; personal goals; humor; articulation; persuasion; influence; identity; empathy

### **Procedures**

1. Introduce *BE THE CHANGE*, to students (*roughly 20 minutes*).

The introduction may include individual and/or group reading (including reading aloud) of the texts provided (*Brief History of the Postal Service*; *Types of Letters*; and *Mail Art*)

Conduct a pre-show discussion to uncover prior knowledge about letter writing. Pre-show discussion questions may include:

- i. Consider how letter writing was the dominant form of communication prior to the introduction of the cell phone and the Internet. People often wrote letters to specific individuals multiple times a day, similar to how often you communicate via your devices today. If letter writing was your only form of communication, who would you write to daily/weekly/monthly?
- ii. Open letters are often written to call out an injustice. Reflect on one of the open letters provided. What injustices are they speaking about? Why can a letter be more effective than an essay?
- iii. How much of a role in daily life did the United States Postal Service play prior to the Internet? How much do you think letters contribute to daily life today? Do you know your local postal workers? What are ways one can show appreciation for postal service workers today?
- iv. Mail art celebrates misspellings, cartoons, and democracy through art. What are some overlaps between mail art and Internet creative culture? (Instagram, TikTok, etc.)



## LETTERS ALOUD

*Private letters read in public*

2. Attend the performance. Provide students with a Graphic Organizer to write down their observations of important ideas from the letters and presenters.
3. Lead a student discussion about the production. Students will add important information from this discussion to their graphic organizers (*roughly 15 minutes*).

Key discussion questions may include:

- i. What is the subject matter of the letters read?
  - ii. Did any of the letters share ideas that were related to history, culture, geography or issues that are new/unfamiliar to you? Share your thoughts.
  - iii. Did any of the letters introduce ideas or issues that were unfamiliar to you? Share your thoughts.
  - iv. Can you identify any ideas that recur in a few or in all the letters (themes)? Share your thoughts.
  - v. What is a message that the letter writers want their audience (letter recipients) to understand?
4. Conclude the lesson by asking each student to write 2-3 sentences about an important theme presented in the presentation and to explain why this theme was important to them (*roughly 5 minutes*).

## **Lesson 2: I Live and I Hope in a World**

### **BE THE CHANGE**

#### **Brief Lesson Description**

In this lesson, students will participate in a thinking and sentence writing exercise titled, “I Live and I Hope in a World.” This exercise is followed by a letter writing activity in which each student will use her/his “I live in a...” and “I hope...” statements to begin writing a formal, personal letter to an individual or group selected by the student.

#### **Learning Objective:**

Students will use their understanding of the impact that a letter can have on the lives of individuals, groups, and social, political, economic, and cultural institutions from Lesson 1 and their developing understanding of how to write a formal, personal letter to write a letter to a selected individual or group for a specific purpose/aim.

#### **Big Idea/Overarching Understanding**

A simple letter can inspire, challenge, and enlighten individuals and groups and may even change the world.

#### **Essential Questions**

1. What do you notice about the world you live in and the world others may live in?
2. How can you write a formal, personal letter to a selected individual or group that is purposeful and aims to have an impact on that individual or group?

#### **What students will know as a result of this lesson**

A standard format for writing a formal, but personal, letter

#### **What students will be able to do as a result of this lesson**

Write a formal, personal letter following a standard letter format

#### **Key vocabulary**

Formal letter; personal letter; open letter; personal interests; important causes; fighting for what's right; making a connection

#### **Procedures**

1. Introduce the thinking and writing exercise titled, “I Live and I Hope in a World.” In this exercise, students will write five statements in response to the prompts, “I live in a...” and “I hope....”





Each “I live in a” and “I hope” statement is followed by a description connecting the student to a personal perspective or experience (individual, immediate family) or community perspective or experience (friends, neighbors, school, others), or world perspective (values, laws, language, culture, religion, others).

Example 1:

I LIVE:

I live in a neighborhood where people without homes live in a park.

I HOPE:

*I hope to live in a neighborhood where there are homes for all.*

Example 2:

I LIVE:

I live in a world where the air tastes salty because of the water from Puget Sound.

I HOPE:

*I hope that others love the water too.*

2. Students will use their “I live in a...” and “I hope...” statements to brainstorm ideas for writing a formal, personal letter to an individual or group of their choice. The letter will have a specific purpose/aim and seek to have an impact on the individual or group addressed.
  - a. Possible guiding questions:
    - i. Who will you write a letter to?
    - ii. What is the theme of your letter?
    - iii. What do you want the person to walk away thinking about?
    - iv. What are you trying to make them think or feel?
    - v. What about yourself that you want to make sure to share?
3. Students will use their brainstorming ideas to begin writing their letters. The teacher will support letter writing by providing a simple letter-writing template. (Suggested template: <https://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Letter>)
4. The teacher will introduce a structure for appropriate recipient and support students as they construct their letters.
5. After completing a final draft of their letters, students will handwrite their letters on stationery of their choice.



## **Lesson 3: Hear My Words!**

### **BE THE CHANGE**

#### **Brief Lesson Description**

In this lesson, students will read their letters aloud (small groups, whole class, or other audience).

#### **Learning Objective:**

After writing their letters and practicing reading their letters aloud for effective volume, rate, pitch, pauses, articulation, and pronunciation, students will read their letters for an authentic audience (small group, whole class, or other audience).

#### **Big Idea/Overarching Understanding**

Reading a personal letter with effective vocal delivery can engage, inform, and entertain an audience.

#### **Essential Questions**

What are key elements of effective vocal delivery?

#### **What students will know as a result of this lesson**

Key elements of effective vocal delivery (volume, rate, pitch, pauses, articulation, and pronunciation)

#### **What students will be able to do as a result of this lesson**

Read a personal letter using effective vocal delivery elements.

#### **Key Vocabulary**

Projection; pronunciation; articulation; pitch; tempo; speed; expression

#### **Procedures**

*Work with your students to practice reading their letters aloud and provide feedback.*

- ❖ Guide Assessment with specific questions. Keep the statements to “stronger” or “clearer” rather than “good” or “bad” to help build constructive feedback.
  - Projection – *Can you hear them?*
  - Articulation – *Can you understand them?*
  - Expression – *Are they making artistic choices with their facial expression and/or voices?*



## LETTERS ALOUD

*Private letters read in public*

- Identify the forms of expression – *pitch, tempo/speed, and quality?*
- ❖ **Online teaching:** Students can either practice with partners or small groups within break-out rooms or have students record their letters. If you go with the second option, make sure that the students have brainstormed/experimented/played with the variety of artistic choices. It can be daunting trying artistic choices when alone.

### **Final Assignment**

Students post images of final letters to their teachers for grading. Students final step is to mail their handwritten letters to their selected recipients and document the mailing of said letters with photographs of them dropping letters in mailboxes.

### **Connect with Letters Aloud!**

With students permission, teachers are encouraged to email images of handwritten letters to **info@lettersaloud.com** or post letters on school social media site and tag Letters Aloud (@lettersaloud) on Instagram.

**Letters Aloud will try and broaden the reach of these letters in the hopes they will be seen by the recipients, and inspire responses.**

**Evaluation Rubric for open, formal & personal letters**

Lesson 2: "I Live and I Hope in a World"

Criteria	Distinguished	Proficient	Basic	Below Basic
<b>Ideas</b>	Ideas are clear and expressed in an organized fashion.	Most ideas are clear and expressed in an organized fashion.	Some ideas are clear and expressed in an organized fashion.	Ideas are unclear and were not expressed in an organized fashion.
<b>Sentences and Paragraphs</b>	Sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed, and coherent.	Most sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed, and coherent.	Some sentences and paragraphs are complete, well-constructed, and coherent.	Sentences and paragraphs were not complete, well-constructed, and coherent.
<b>Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization</b>	Writer makes no errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, or capitalization.
<b>Letter Format</b>	Writer followed the letter format learned in class.	Writer mostly followed the letter format learned in class.	Writer somewhat followed the letter format learned in class.	Writer did not follow the letter format learned in class.
<b>Neatness</b>	Handwriting is neat and easy to read.	Handwriting is mostly neat and easy to read.	Handwriting is difficult to read, at times.	Handwriting is difficult to read.

## Evaluation Checklist for reading “letters aloud”

### Lesson 3: “Hear My Words!”

Criteria	Plus/Check/Dash	Comments
<b>Volume:</b> Reader uses strong voice that is effective for all listeners to comfortably hear.		
<b>Rate:</b> Reader uses a well-paced, fluid delivery with appropriate pauses.		
<b>Personality:</b> Reader speaks in a natural voice and exhibits confidence and interest in the performance.		
<b>Pronunciation:</b> Reader's voice is highly intelligible and uses correct pronunciation.		