

Lesson Plan - Grades: 7-10

Title – Letters to Veterans

Adapted from Kevin Dooley (edited)

Primary Subject – Language Arts

Secondary Subjects – Social Studies

Subject Matter:

In this thought-provoking lesson, students write letters to Veterans who served in the military in the past and apply critical thinking.

- Students will be writing a letter to veterans, including autobiographical material, feelings, and thanks to veterans.
- This letter will be halfway between a formal letter and an informal letter. It will be friendly and semi-casual, but more information has to be included than, say, a letter to someone who knows who's writing. Good for reviewing the difference between formal and informal language .
- This lesson also applies critical thinking about the subject of war .

Procedure:

- At the start of the class, students write about:
 - When is war ever good or justified?
What reasons are there for war?
If they were President, what circumstances would there be to declare war.
Answers are put on a transparency and discussed. Voted on?
 - How does a President declare war? (Social Studies link)
 - What are the consequences of war?
(Possible answers: death of soldiers, usually youth, on both sides, death of innocent civilians, cost)
 - How do they feel about the current war(s)? Why?
I have asked students how many know someone overseas, and the hands have increased in recent semesters.
 - Students also give their opinions on:
war movies – list them and give a theme, e.g. glory, bravery, heroism: do they glorify war?
war video games – are they right?
 - (I struggle with having them draw a scene of war. I have shown them pictures of war – taking into consideration the grade level – and write about them.)
- Then we discuss the letter they are going to write:
 - They will write it twice. A first draft and the final letter.

- In the letter they will include:
 - Name and grade. (Age need not be mentioned.)
 - The date
 - School, location, and class
 - Sign the letter
 - They write their ideas or feelings about:
 - School,
 - TV/movies
 - Sports
 - Music
 - Thoughts about family or neighborhood
- Ask the class what can we thank veterans for or say to them:
(Possible answers: for their service and their sacrifice, the risk, being away from family)
- No bad words!
- Do not criticize the war in the letter! This is important. The theme of the letter is thanks, not politics.
- Then, I show them a model of a letter I have written:

Date, 2019

Dear Veteran,

My name is Mr. Dooley. I am a 7th and 8th grade teacher at Elizabeth Learning Center in Cudahy, California, which is about 10 miles south of downtown L.A.

As a writing assignment, I've had my class write to veterans to thank you and celebrate your bravery.

I am 55 years old, married, have five kids, and six grandkids. Originally, I'm from New York. As a movie fan, I am looking forward to the new James Bond movie and "Star Trek" next year.

As part of the United States armed forces, you had a big, important job. I know it must have been difficult to be so far away from your family. Thank you for the sacrifices that you made for our country. We, as a nation, support you.

Yours,

Mr. Dooley
English Teacher

Additional Comments and Suggestions:

- Students cannot write to someone specifically; they should do that on their own.

- Students will not hear back from the veterans.
- Students don't get the graphic until they have finished their draft and it is correct. They can decorate/color it.
- I do tell the students I will read every letter to make sure it is appropriate.
- Often I photocopy the letters and post them proudly on the classroom wall.
- IMPORTANT: get your Principal's and parents' permission! A student who does not get permission can still write the letter, it just won't be sent.

Lesson Follow-up:

- This lesson usually takes two days.
- At the end of it all, I have them write an essay called "A World of Peace": how to bring about world peace, how to bring a world without any wars. Major discussion and listing of solutions. It's essential, I think, to this lesson.

E-Mail [Kevin Dooley](#) !

Original version can be found here:

<http://lessonplanspage.com/lassletterstosoldiersandthetopicofwar612-hm/>