

R.A.F.T.S.

An instructional strategy designed to help students focus on writing and reasoning while coming to understand ideas essential to the topic at hand. Essentially, a RAFT asks students to take on a certain role, for a specified audience, in a particular format, in order to address a key topic.

R= Role

A= Audience

F= Format

T= Topic +

S= Strong Verbs

Role: indicates whom the student will portray

In designing writing prompts allow students to take on a variety of roles so that they may explore different points of view. The role designated in the assignment should suggest whom the writer is as well as the tone of voice and mood used to convey the point.

Suggested Roles: expert, parent, an object, enemy, a character from history or literature, critic, etc.

Audience: specifies to whom the student will address the work

Clearly identify the audience for the writer. A student will write what he or she thinks the teacher wants if that is the only audience he or she writes for. "Role and audience together give you specifics about your relationship and attitudes which must be included in your writing." (Adler)

Suggested audiences: self, peers, protester, company, a character from literature or history, etc.

Format: indicates the form the student's work will take

Be specific about the format for the assignment. Students will develop stronger writing skills if they are challenged to write in a variety of formats.

Suggested formats: essay, narrative, letter, speech, editorial, script, memo, dialogue etc.

Topic: notes the point of the work—what matters most

The topic of the assignment should be narrow enough for the writer to address without being overwhelmed. Focus the topic to include the skills you are evaluating. A well-developed topic will encourage well-written papers.

Strong Verbs: Use strong verbs to define what the writer is to do. Include the tense you expect the writer to use. Most students are more proficient in past tense so it is valuable to develop some assignments that require present tense verbs.

Suggested Strong Verbs: convince, share, assess, prove, persuade, translate, evaluate, etc.

The most critical element of a RAFT assignment is the topic on which students focus. The topic must ensure that students explore ideas absolutely essential to understanding the unit in question. The role, audience, and format can vary to address student readiness, interest, and learning preferences.

Typically, a solid set of RAFT options will enable all students to explore and apply the same essential knowledge, understanding, and skills—but at levels of readiness appropriately challenging to individual students, with emphases of interest to individual students, and in modes that work for individual students.

ELLIS ISLAND RAFT
Upper Elementary/Middle School
Social Studies

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Boy of 12 who came from Europe in steerage	Best friend back in Germany	Letter	Crossing the ocean on the ship
Ship Captain	Emigrants waiting to come to America	Booklet	How to prepare for your trip
Artist arriving from France	Graphic design firm in NYC	Picture postcard	Wish you were here
Dorothy Hargrove, NYC Sophisticate	Mayor of NYC	Editorial	We are being overrun with foreigners
Father arriving in first class from Italy	Wife and children in Italy	Letter	Don't worry, it is easy to immigrate!
Mother whose 16 year old son does not pass the medical exam and will be deported	Family in Russia	Poem	Crying my eyes out over here
Young, single woman from Ireland	Her future children	Diary	Arriving at Ellis Island
Ellis Island Interpreter	Immigration Service Employee Newspaper	Cartoon/Comic Strip	What a lot of gibberish!

ASTRONOMY RAFT

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Super Giant Star	Younger Stars	Dialog	A look back on my life
Moon	Astronauts	Advice Column	What to expect when you visit
A galaxy	Neighboring galaxies	Letter of concern	We are growing apart
A planet	Protoplanets	Motivational speaker	You too can be a strong, independent planet
Earth	Sun and other planets	Talk show	No, I am the center of the universe!
Sun Tour Guide	Sun tourists	Dialog	Add some heat to your life
Galaxy	Other galaxies	Letter to the editor	What is this redshift trying to prove?
Pluto	Other planets	Petition	Please return my status to a planet.

PLANT RAFT

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Plant parts	Plant needs	Picture	We're made for each other
Roots	Stem, leaf, flower, seeds	Letter	You'd be lost without me
Flower	Stem, leaf seeds, roots	Ad	I'm more than just a pretty face
Seeds	Flower, leaf, stem, roots	Song or poem	Here's where you got your start
Stem	Flower, leaf, seeds, roots	Chart	Why you can't do without me
Leaf	Stem, seeds, flower, roots	3 riddles	Why I'm important to you

FRACTIONS RAFT

ROLE	AUDIENCE	FORMAT	TOPIC
Improper fraction	Mixed Number	Poem	Sometimes it's okay to be improper (summarize)
Fraction	Whole Number	Song	I need to be reduced (entertain)
Decimal	Fraction	Letter	Thank you for supporting me (appreciation)
Denominator	Numerator	Rap	You can't have one without the other (entertain)
Equivalent fractions	Non-equivalent fractions	Personal ad	How to find your soul mate (explain)
Fraction	Baker	Directions	To double the recipe (direct)
Estimated sum	Fractions/mixed numbers	Advice column	To become well-rounded (persuade)
Student Choice	Student Choice	Student Choice	Student Choice

Math R.A.F.T. Lesson on Fractions

ASSIGNMENT NOTES:

For many of our math students, explaining mathematical relationships can be a challenge. For this assignment, the R.A.F.T. choices we offered gave students a way to explain the relationship between parts of a fraction in an accessible way. The student who completed the assignment below loved to write poetry and sing but detested writing paragraphs. With a differentiated assignment, he was able to demonstrate his understanding of the parts of a fraction through a rap about two inseparable brothers, delivered in the voice of a denominator talking to his little brother, the numerator. He chose the following assignment:

Role: Denominator

Audience: Numerator

Format: Rap

Topic: You can't have one without the other

Denominator Blues

I am the denominator.

It is true.

*The bottom number of a fraction,
I'm the whole—and "true blue."*

Numerator, you're on the top.

You're just a part of me, little brother.

*Because you can't have one
Without the other.*

Without either one of us

There is no fraction.

It takes both of us

To have fraction action.

I am the denominator.

Numerator, you're my brother.

*Remember, you can't have one
Without the other.*

(Adapted from Strayer, Beverly, & Strayer, Troy. (2007). Strategies for Differentiating in the Content Areas: Grades 5 and Up. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc., p. 66.)

Example 1: Mathematics RAFT Paper

R: point
A: teacher
F: letter
T: convince the teacher that you have an important function

Dear Mrs. Havens,

I am Pete, the point. I am one point of an endless number of points in space. I want to ask you if you will teach your students about us points and explain how every single geometric figure is made up of us. It is very important to me because it seems that many people think of the point as a small part of geometry since we are so little. Though we are little, we are one of the most important factors of our world of geometry. Without me and all other points, there would be no geometric figures. We are their building blocks. Though all lines are drawn with one solid mark, in reality, a line is an endless set of points going in opposite directions. A sphere is a figure with all points at an equal distance from a center point like me.

So please, tell your students all about us points. It troubles me when many think of us as unimportant specks in space. Please, spread the reality of our importance to the students you teach. My partners and I would appreciate it greatly. Thank you.

A point,

Pete

Source: Janice Strop, Wisconsin CRISS workshops.

Forms of Writing For Assignments

(An incomplete listing)

Advertisements	Expense accounts and defense	Memos
Affidavits	Explications	Menus
Analytical paragraphs/papers	Fact Sheets	Messages to/from the past/future
Anecdotes/stories	Five paragraph themes	Minutes of meetings
Announcements		Monologue
Applications	Graffiti	Mottoes
	Greeting card or text	
Bibliography annotations	Historical accounts	News stories – paper/radio/TV
Biographical sketches	Imaginative Literature: Fairy tales, myths, novels, plays	Orations
Blurbs: yearbook pictures	Indexes	Package copy
Blurbs: TV lists/book covers	Instructions	Paraphrases
Board game instructions	Internet	Parodies
Brochures	Interviews (real/imaginary)	Personalized license plates
Bumper stickers	Introduction	Persuasive: to public officials, to the editor, recommendations
	Itineraries	Placards
Captions	Job specifications	Poems:
Case studies	Journal entries	Villanelle
Children's books	Lab reports	Haiku
Commentaries	Las wills and testaments	Sonnets
Comparison paragraphs/papers	Legal briefs	Prayers
Computer Programs	Legislation	Précis
Constitution articles	Lessons plans	Prophecies and predictions
Consumer guide or report	Letters:	Proposals
Contest entries (25 words)	Advice	Psychiatrists' notes
Contrast paragraphs/papers	Application/Resignation	Public notices
	Complaint	Public Statements
Debate outlines/notes	Congratulation	
Declarations	From imaginary places	Reaction papers
Definitions	Inquiry	Requests
Dialogues	Lists	Responses and rebuttals
Dictionary entries	Math notes/observations	Resumes
Directions: Guide to places, how-to, survival manuals	Math problem solutions	Reviews:
	Math record books	Books
Editorials	Math story problems	Movies
E-mail		Outside reading
Encyclopedia entries		Radio/TV programs
Environmental impact reports		
Epitaphs		
Eulogies		

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Science fiction

Screenplays

Sermons

Specifications for reports

Speeches: expository speeches, nominating speeches

Story boards for animation

Story Continuations

Summaries

Table of contents

Telegrams

Telephone dialogues

Test questions

Thumbnail sketches:

Content idea

Famous people

Historical events

Places

Time capsule lists

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Treaties

Umpire reports

Undercover reports

Wanted posters

War communiqués

Word puzzles and games

Ship's logos

Short stories

Skits

Side show scripts

Slogans

Songs and ballads

Strong Verbs for R.A.F.T.S. Assignments

align
annotate
apply
brainstorm
cancel
carve
charge
coalesce
communicate
connect
consider
construct
contest
create
decipher
delineate
diagnose
divulge
embellish
engrave
explain
harmonize
imagine
inform
investigate
memorize mold
participate
photograph
quote
reconstruct
reflect
relate
remind
rhyme
search
shave
specify
suppress

understand
warn
amaze
announce
assess
browse
capitulate
censor
charm
collapse
compare
connive
consolidate
consume
decorate
describe
digest
edit
empathize
eradicate
express yourself
identify
immortalize
inspect
link
metamorphasize
navigate
persuade
plagiarize
recapitulate
regurgitate
remunerate
script
separate
shrink
summarize
tell
urge

winnow
analyze
annoy
assimilate
cajole
capture
characterize
clarify
combine
contemplate
count
critique
define
design
distinguish
elucidate
encourage
exemplify
fold
illuminate
improvise
melt
modify orchestrate
peruse
ponder
reconcile
record
reject
remark
review scrutinize
shrivel
trigger
visualize

Handout 60—Continued

Planning Guide

Topic for the RAFT Assignment

Duration of the RAFT Assignment

General Learning Goals to Be Achieved with the RAFT Assignment

Specific Personalized Goals for Specific Students

Will the RAFT Address Readiness? Interest? Learning Profile?

Preassessment Plans

Working Guidelines for Students

Introducing RAFT Assignment to Students

Handout 60—Continued

Assigning Students to RAFT Tasks

Giving Directions to Students for the RAFT Assignment

How Work Will Be Graded (indicators of quality work)

Monitoring Student Work and Progress (accuracy, understanding, and quality)

Planning for Teacher Coaching and for Small-Group Instruction During the RAFT

Handout 60—Continued

The Raft Assignment

As a result of the RAFT, students should

Know:

Understand:

Be Able To:

Role	Audience	Format	Topic