

Lesson Skill: Identifying audience and purpose

Strand Writing

SOL 6.7
7.7
8.7

Materials

Copies of the attached Writing Assignments strips
Chart paper
Markers

Lesson

1. Tell the students to sit back in their seats, close their eyes, and listen carefully in order to visualize the following scenario as you read it aloud:

Imagine that you are in the middle of the school cafeteria and suddenly a food fight breaks out. You turn your head just in time to be hit with a soggy blob of lumpy mashed potatoes. Without thinking, you grab your red, runny Jello and throw it. Just as it leaves your hand, you hear the cafeteria monitor yelling, and the principal's voice comes over the intercom. Suddenly there is silence, and everyone is ordered back to class. Fifteen minutes later, you are called out of class and ordered to go to the office to see the principal.
2. Divide the class into three groups. Distribute copies of the attached Writing Assignment # 1 to the members of one group, the assignment # 2 to another group, and the assignment # 3 to the third group. Take care that each group sees only their own assignment.
3. Allow students to confer in their groups and write a group response to the writing prompt. When the members of each group are satisfied with their description, they should write it on chart paper.
4. Post the three descriptions on the board, and have the groups read their descriptions to the rest of the class. Have students compare and contrast the descriptions, especially identifying ways in which they are different. Differences will undoubtedly include language, voice, tone, and selected information. Ask students why they are so different, and lead them to consider the purpose and intended audience of each piece. Have each group clearly identify the purpose and intended audience for their piece and read their original writing assignment.
5. To conclude, have students consider what their purpose would be if they were asked to write a note to the cafeteria workers and the custodial staff who had to clean up the mess after the food fight. Ask them to describe the tone and voice they would use. If there is time, have students individually write such an apology note as an exit slip, or assign it for homework.

Strategies for Differentiation

- Provide a written, and if necessary, audio version of the read aloud for students to access.
- As a prewriting strategy, allow groups to create a sketch detailing the specific information they will include in their written response.
- As a prewriting scaffold, provide students with an envelope that includes specific, selected information crafted for tone, audience and purpose. Students will select the information that matches the writing assignment they were assigned.
- As opposed to writing the response on craft paper, provide access to technology so students may type their response and project it on a screen.
- As a prewriting tool, simplify the Writer's Craft Chart to include only the following categories: intended audience, purpose, tone and selected information.
- When analyzing peer responses, allow students to move to a corner of the room (corners will be labeled) to physically indicate the intended audience and purpose. Allow the students in each corner to confer using the Writer's Craft Chart as their guide. The group will choose a spokesperson to defend their response. Following the vote, the presenting group would post the response in the appropriate corner.
- When analyzing peer responses, create a class three-ring Venn diagram to note similarities and differences due to audience and purpose.

Writing Assignments

Writing Assignment # 1

When you arrive in the office, the principal hands you a blank sheet of paper and tells you to write a description of the cafeteria incident and your role in it. Write your response to this “real-life” writing prompt.

Writing Assignment # 2

Imagine that your best friend was absent from school the day of the food fight, and you are anxious to describe the scene in the cafeteria. Write a description of the cafeteria incident and your role in it as you want to tell your best friend.

Writing Assignment # 3

You have been waiting to talk to the principal, and the dismissal begins. The principal’s secretary comes out and tells you to go ahead and board your bus; the principal will deal with you first thing in the morning. You run to your bus, worrying about what will happen tomorrow. You decide that you better tell your parents something tonight. Write a description of the cafeteria incident and your role in it as you will tell your parents.
