

DEAR MADAM PRESIDENT: LETTERS TO WORLD LEADERS #3

(Time Middle)

Proposing Trade Agreements: Persuasion via Recognizing Shared Benefits

Lesson Sketch

Skills: Students *read* articles about countries around the world; *select* a country to study; *identify* which elements of a country's economy make it a compatible trading partner with the US; *evaluate* what benefit the US and the selected country might gain by trading with each other; and *write* a formal letter *to persuade* the leader of their chosen country to pursue trade with the US.

Grades: 11–12

Time: Four 90-minute classes

Featured Resources: AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles Maps, Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, National Cuisine, Points of Interest, Economy and Trade, The Business Experience, Government, Language.

Inspirations

"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less." ~Marie Curie

"The reality today is that we are all interdependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue." ~The Dalai Lama

UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador program

Lesson Overview

Acting as goodwill ambassadors for the United States, students read about countries and cultures of the world; select a country of interest; identify areas in common and areas of difference in the selected country's economy and the US economy; determine how the selected country would benefit from increasing trade with the US; then write a formal letter to the leader of the country that persuades him or her to visit the US for the purpose of creating or increasing trade relationships between the countries.

Lesson Steps

Students make a list of countries they are curious about. Students briefly skim articles, and choose one country to focus on. Students complete a prewriting exercise in which they make some guesses and some predictions about the country they're about to study—in particular, students make predictions about the country's cultural and economic similarities to and differences from the

US. Students read a series of articles about their countries of interest in order to develop a sense of cultural and economic context, and note how the countries' realities are in line with and/or contradictory to their predictions. Students read articles about the US, and reflect on what existing points of connection and/or desirable points of connection there might be between their chosen countries and the US. Following prewriting exercises, students write a formal letter to their chosen countries' heads of state persuading them to visit the US to discuss initiating or increasing trade relationships.

Standards Met

1. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
2. **Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
3. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Reading**
 - a. Key Ideas and Details 1, 2
 - b. Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7
 - c. Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10
4. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Writing**
 - a. Text Types and Purposes 1, 2
 - b. Production and Distribution of Writing 4, 5, 6
 - c. Research to Build and Present Knowledge 7,8,9
 - d. Range of Writing 10
5. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Speaking and Listening**
 - a. Comprehension and Collaboration 1, 2
6. **Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts: College and Career Readiness Anchors for Language**
 - a. Conventions of Standard English 1, 2
 - b. Knowledge of Language 3
 - c. Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4, 6
7. **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards for the English Language Arts**
 - a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
8. **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies**
 - a. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

Supplies

- Computer access for each student

- Access to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to online language references like BBC Languages, Omniglot.com, and Forvo.com
- Dictionaries
- Notebooks, pens, etc.
- Printer access
- Envelopes and stamps

Instructional Plan

Student Objectives

Students will:

- Improve reading comprehension skills, note taking skills, abstract reasoning skills, and writing skills.
- Increase geographic knowledge and geopolitical awareness.
- Increase awareness of global interconnectedness through encountering global trade relationships.
- Begin to develop a sense of which languages are spoken in what regions, and have a brief encounter with a language other than English.
- Present evidence for a proposition in writing.
- Distinguish informal language from formal language.
- Practice the complete writing process: taking notes, prewriting, drafting, seeking peer feedback, and then incorporating these incremental steps into a fully realized formal letter.
- Become more sophisticated global citizens able to engage in dialogue with those different from themselves.

Session One

Teacher Introduction

- Introduce the concept of the goodwill ambassador, and the goal of students as goodwill ambassadors. Establish that all readings, prewritings, and discussions are notetaking/prewriting exercises toward a final writing exercise—if students complete all steps along the way, the final writing assignment will be a snap.

Student Directions

Which country would you like to visit? Select a country

- Go to AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com.
- Peruse list of countries.
- Identify three countries you are curious about. Skim materials for these countries: get a quick sense of where the country is, who lives there, and whether you are curious about the place.
- Choose one country to mentally visit for this exercise.

Teacher Introduction

- Set the stage for the series of prewriting exercises by establishing expectations. In terms appropriate to existing classroom activities and curricula, explain that these prewriting activities are to be taken seriously as generative writing practices that result in an easier time completing a formal writing assignment, but they are not formal writing assignments themselves. The idea is to get ideas flowing on the page, and for students to leave themselves notes to come back to later when they get stuck, but prewriting is not the time to worry about writing beautiful sentences or spelling everything perfectly.

Student Directions

Learn about your chosen country: Comparing expectations to reality

- Go to Maps—understand where countries are. Complete the following readings and prewriting exercises for both countries.
- Place your bets: Prewriting #1
 - Based on this country's location, what are your expectations regarding the culture? In what language/s do you guess that people greet each other? Are any of these languages spoken in the US? Do you guess that most residents have their roots in this country, or do you expect a large recent immigrant population? Do you expect that most residents are of the same ethnic background and religion, or do you expect a high degree of ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural diversity in this place? How does the degree of diversity compare to diversity in the US? What do you suppose is important to residents of this country? What would you say is important to residents of the US? Do you imagine an intricate ritual of greeting in this country, or a loose, laid-back greeting style? What role do hierarchy and social status play in the culture? Do you expect that people's experiences of living in this country vary depending upon social status, gender, ethnicity, and/or age? If so, how? How do these different experiences compare to your sense of the experiences of different kinds of people living in the US? How do you expect the cuisine is similar to and different than food in the US? What do you think of the Points of Interest and major tourist destinations? What are the major economic sectors of the country (meaning, what kinds of businesses are there, what kinds of things do people do for a living, and with what other countries does this nation have established trading relationships)? How do you think the major economic sectors compare with the major economic sectors of the US? Overall, how do you suppose this country's culture and economy are different from the mainstream culture and other cultures found in the US?
- Read the articles Country Snapshot, Cultural Overview, The People, and National Cuisine
- Place your bets: Prewriting #1A
 - So far, how do your guesses before reading compare to the lives of this country's citizens? What is as you expected, and what surprises you?
- Visit The People and Language
 - Which language/dialect would you most like to learn? Why? Which language/dialect would you least like to learn? Why? Do people in your chosen country speak a language or language/s you already speak, or that you know other people in the US already speak?
 - Which religion, if any, is practiced in this country that you also practice? Are any religions practiced in the country familiar to you, though you do not practice them yourself? Do you see religions practiced in this country that you know are practiced in the US? Overall, what seems most similar and most different about the religious landscape in your chosen country, relative to the US?

- Read The Business Experience and Economy and Trade
 - Does this country already trade with the US? If so, what is traded?
 - If not, does this country make anything that we seem to need in the US? What?
 - Do we make anything in the US that this country seems to need? What?
 - Aside from making physical goods, what sorts of professional and economic activities are common in the selected country? What sorts of services does the country provide? Banking? Tourism?
 - What sense do you get of how wealth is distributed in their country compared to the US? Meaning, how big is the gap between rich and poor? How rich are the richest, and how poor are the poorest?
 - Overall, what do you think our economic landscape has in common with theirs?
 - Overall, how does our economic landscape seem different from theirs?
 - If business leaders from your chosen country and from the US sat down together for a meeting, what do you think they would discuss? How do you think they would interact?
 - Overall, how compatible does the business style of your chosen country seem with what you perceive to the US business style? Why?

Session Two

Teacher Introduction

Invite students to share some highlights of their notes so far. Ask students to remain alert to any shifts in perspective they experience while listening to their classmates' responses to the readings—students should be making notes on their prewrite pages or scratch paper regarding any new ideas that occur to them during this discussion.

Student Directions

- Read the Cultural Overview, Country Snapshot, Economy and Trade, and The Business Experience articles for the United States. Skim over some of the other materials for the US.
- Prewrite #2: Reflecting on your own country
 - What surprises you about these articles? What did you learn about the US that you didn't know before? What do you agree with in these articles? What, if anything, do you disagree with?
 - What about your chosen country strikes you as most similar to the US? What seems most different from the US?
 - What do you perceive to be the major economic sectors of the US? What do we make, and what services do we provide?
 - Where do you see a possibility for mutual benefit for the US and your chosen country? For example, if they make cell phone technology and we need cell phone technology, a trading relationship could benefit both of us.
 - And/or, do you see any shared problems that our country and theirs both face? The US economy struggles and will struggle with the healthcare costs of its aging population; US businesses must look for ways to produce their products without destroying the environment that US citizens live in. Are these or other struggles shared by the selected country? Would the leaders of our two countries benefit from discussing these two problems together?

Teacher Introduction

Ask students to share their thoughts regarding the US readings. With what in the US articles do they agree and/or disagree? Do these articles reflect their personal experiences of living in the US? What do they notice that is similar and different in the countries they're reading about, relative to the US? What kinds of ideas do students have regarding possibilities for mutual benefit for other countries and the US? Ask the class to expand/critique some ideas that students volunteer, and make room for general brainstorming. As discussion winds down, remind students of expectations for prewriting.

Student Directions

- Prewrite #3: Why should the leader of your chosen country be interested in a trade relationship with the US?
 - How does the country's location relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does the country's landscape/environment relate the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does the country's most prominent religion or religions relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does the country's cuisine relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does the country's language relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does the country's appeal as a travel destination relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - How does your overall sense of the country's culture relate to the benefit of trade with the US?
 - Overall, what are the strongest factors in favor of this country's leader visiting the US to discuss trade?

Session Three

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that this conversation is the last stop on the way to a writing assignment. This discussion with peers is like a dry run of the contents of the letter, but shared in informal language. Remind students that as they listen to their peers' ideas, this is an opportunity to listen for ideas that they could apply to their own letters. Students should have notebooks out, and should be taking notes throughout their discussions.

Student Directions

Jot down:

- Which country's leader you are recommending should visit the US to discuss trade.
- The top three reasons you recommend this leader visit the US to discuss trade.
 - For example, a country that needs aircraft and telecommunications equipment needs items that US companies commonly export. The US needs to increase exports generally. Partnership could be fruitful for both parties.
 - For example, a country with a growing tourism sector could inquire about how to attract more tourists from the US. The US is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and thus home to much of the world's population with sufficient income for leisure travel. A country

seeking tourists would like to attract wealthy US vacationers. What does this country have that the US economy needs? is a good question to ask.

- For example, Mexico wants more water from rivers that flow through both countries—the Rio Grande, for example—to actually make it to Mexico, instead of being diverted on its way through the US for agriculture, drinking water, and/or industry. What can Mexico offer the US in exchange for friendlier water policies? is a good place to start a conversation.
- Which of your appeals are based on things in common?
 - For example, the US and Costa Rica both have ocean coastlines that are vital for tourism, industry, and overall ecological health.
- Which appeals are based on differences?
 - For example, US investors are looking to invest abroad, whereas Costa Rica seeks foreign investors.

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students that while listening to other students' ideas, they are not merely resting—they are listening for more ideas for the writing assignment that comes next.

Student Directions

- Share your plans briefly with three of your classmates. Simply speak peer to peer in informal language, and share what you've figured out so far.

Teacher Introduction

- Remind students of the role of goodwill ambassador. Prepare students to transition from presenting their visit requests and rationales to their peers in informal language, to addressing heads of state in writing via formal language. Students will begin with researching their letter recipients.

Student Directions

Letters to Leaders: Goodwill Ambassadors in Action

- Go to the Government section for your chosen country
- Look for the name and title of the head of government and/or head of state (the head of state might also be called the chief of state).
 - The head of government is a top official responsible for government administration and management—this person is in charge of the daily business of governance in the country.
 - The head of state is a country's chief public representative, and this person may or may not have actual governing powers. Heads of state serve a symbolic role in representing their nation. Heads of state often serve as goodwill ambassadors who improve their country's relationships with other nations around the world.
 - In some countries, such as the US, the roles of head of government and head of state are combined in one office: the president. In other countries, such as England, the roles of head of government and head of state are performed by the holders of two different offices: the prime minister is England's head of government, and the queen is England's head of state.
- Choose your letter recipient: Depending upon the nature of the country's government and the nature of your letter, you might want to write to the head of state, the head of government, or to the single person who is both the head of state and the head of government.

- Either way, carefully write down your recipient's official title and correct full name spelling.
- See if your recipient has a personal bio online. Using Google and a little luck, you may find that the leader you'll be writing to has a personal biography on his/her government's web pages.
 - Do you have anything in common with your letter recipient? If so, jot it down on your prewriting pages or a new piece of scratch paper. This could come in handy in your letter.
- Find your recipient's mailing address: Visit the US State Department's list of Foreign Consular Offices in the United States. For countries that have an embassy office in the US, you can address your letter to:

[Recipient's title and full name]

c/o* [Embassy name and address]

(*c/o means "care of," and is used to indicate that you are sending a letter to one person via placing it into the care of another person, who will deliver it. For example, you are sending your letter to a head of state or head of government by sending your letter to the country's embassy, and trusting that embassy staff will forward your mail to their official.)

- For countries that do not have an embassy office in the US, you'll have to do a little internet digging to find the address. Try Googling in search of your country's government Web pages, and follow your nose from there. If you need help, ask your teacher.
- Find your recipient's proper title. Try The Protocol School of Washington's guide to forms of address.

Teacher Introduction

- Review the five basic parts of a formal letter, described below. Ask students to discuss how this format is different from the conversations they have already had with their classmates.

Student Directions

Review the parts of a formal letter, listed below. Use the five parts to outline and draft your letter to the leader of your chosen country.

- Five basic parts of a letter
 - Heading: At the top of the page, place the date, your address, and the address of the person you're writing to. To see how these elements are arranged, visit the Formal Letter Writing page on Using English, and see the "Layout of a Formal Letter" segment near the top.
 - Salutation: Address your recipient as suggested by The Protocol School of Washington's guide to forms of address. If the leader you are writing to is not covered by this reference, then respectfully address your intended recipient with his or her full formal title and full name. For example, "Dear Captain Elizabeth Cady Stanton, . . ."
 - Body: The body of the letter is the letter's introductory and main paragraphs—all but the short closing paragraph at the end.
 - Closing: In the last paragraph, writers often complete the three Rs: 1) wRap it up, 2) Remind the reader of a key point or request, and 3) give Regards to the recipient.
 - Signature: Choose a formal sign off like "Most Respectfully" or "Sincerely." If a specific sign off when addressing your recipient is suggested by suggested by The Protocol School of Washington's guide to forms of address, use it.

Teacher Introduction

- Direct students to outline their letters. Suggest to students that they start with their discussion notes, and expand/adapt/rearrange these materials into the form of the formal letter. Remind students that they've already prepared most of the content of their letters via their prewriting and small group conversations. Now it's time to expand on what they shared in their conversations, and to present their ideas in writing, vs. in speech, and in more formal language.

Student Directions

- Outline the body of your letter: For a formal letter, vs. a personal letter, you need to think through ahead of time what you will say and how you will say it. Luckily, you've already prepared your thoughts a little bit through preparing your notes for your classmates.
 - Introduction: Let your recipient know right away who you are and why you are writing. This will let a busy recipient know that you appreciate his or her time. Once you've established your identity (American student) and reason for writing (to invite the leader of the country to visit your country to discuss trade), let the leader know what s/he will get out of visiting to the US. Offer at least three reasons s/he will benefit from visiting the US.
 - Evidence Paragraph 1: Explain in detail the first reason for discussing trade with the US, and how that reason benefits the country's leader.
 - Evidence Paragraph 2: Explain in detail the second reason for discussing trade with the US, and how that reason benefits the country's leader.
 - Evidence Paragraph 3: Explain in detail the third reason for discussing trade with the US, and how that reason benefits the country's leader.
 - Conclusion: Summarize your invitation to the leader to discuss trade with US leaders, and express your goodwill toward the recipient and his/her nation. The closing is a good place to include something you have in common with the person you're writing to, if you haven't done so already. Remember the conclusion's three Rs: 1) wRap it up, 2) Remind the reader of a key point or request, and 3) give Regards to the recipient.

End of Session Three and Homework

Teacher introduction

- Ask students to draft their letters using the outline suggestions above, plus their own notes from prewriting exercises and discussions with their classmates. To set the tone, in a class discussion, ask students to identify some examples of formal and informal language. You might ask one student to share a sentence that s/he would include in an e-mail to a friend, then ask another student how this sentence could be retooled to be suitable for addressing a head of state.

Student Directions

- Draft your letter to your chosen recipient using your outline and your own notes from prewriting exercises and discussions. If you get stuck, you can move past a tricky passage and come back to it later. Do the best you can, but don't agonize over making everything perfect yet—you'll have a chance to revise.

Teacher introduction

- Ask students to gather in groups of four. Students will read each other's letters and discuss the following questions, with the writer of each letter taking notes toward revising.

Student Directions

Peer Review

- As you read each person's letter in your group, make notes on the following questions, and share your responses with the writer in writing and in conversation.
- When it's your piece that's being discussed, take notes so that you can remember later what people's suggestions were—sometimes a suggestion that doesn't seem like a good idea at first becomes more appealing over time.
 - Is it clear right away who the writer is and what is the purpose in writing?
 - Is it clear what the benefits would be for the leader in discussing trade with the US? What do you understand those benefits to be? How could the writer describe these benefits so they sound even more appealing to the reader?
 - Where is the language sufficiently formal? Where does it sound too informal, and what would you suggest to the writer for elevating the tone?
 - What's your favorite part of the letter?
 - Any other suggestions for improving the letter?

Teacher introduction

- Instruct students to revise letters based on peer feedback. Discuss the challenges of making writing choices in the face of conflicting reader feedback: if one reader praises a paragraph that another reader finds problematic, how should the writer respond? Suggest that a writer doesn't have to accept a particular reader's solution to believe that there's a problem in the passage—maybe the writer just prefers another solution. And flat-out disagreeing with a particular reader's feedback is OK, too. But if multiple readers have identified a place in a draft as problematic, suggest to students that those are the places to give priority attention to during the revision process.

Student Directions

- Revise your letter based on peer feedback, your teacher's directions, and your own writerly instincts.

Teacher and Student Directions

- Send! And congratulate each other on your success as goodwill ambassadors.