

# POSTCARDS FROM AFAR #3

(Time Maximum)

## Travel Diplomacy: "Come with me on my next trip to . . . " Persuasive Writing with Evidence, Sensory Details, and Varied Sentences

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### Lesson Sketch

**Skills:** Students *read* articles about two countries; *reflect* on personal responses and discuss responses with classmates; *compare/contrast* travel possibilities in different countries; *decide* which country they would rather travel to and what friend they'd like to travel with; *select information* that is relevant to their persuasive purpose; *write a short persuasive piece* using strong evidence, sensory language, and complex sentences; *practice the complete writing process*: identify an area of curiosity, read, take notes, identify a specific audience, brainstorm, compose, seek feedback, revise, polish, publish for readers outside the classroom.

**Grades:** 11–12

**Time:** Three 90-minute classes

**Featured Resources:** AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com articles for 175 countries

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### Inspirations

*"I soon realized that no journey carries one far unless, as it extends into the world around us, it goes an equal distance into the world within." ~Lillian Smith*

*"He who wants to persuade should put his trust not in the right argument, but in the right word. The power of sound has always been greater than the power of sense." ~Joseph Conrad*

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### Lesson Overview

Students send postcards to friends and invite them to come to Latvia, Mongolia, Peru—wherever their imaginations take them. Students read at will in large collections of articles for any 2 of the 175 countries covered in AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com. Working individually and collaboratively, students encounter their own and their classmates' responses to unfamiliar places and cultures. Expanding cultural understanding, improving reading comprehension with text and tables, and sharpening research skills, students choose where they'd like their friends to join them, select the evidence that will support their arguments, and write persuasively to recruit friends to travel. Students support their preferences with concrete evidence drawn from multiple texts, entice their readers with sensory details, and wow their readers with flowing prose. Students experience the graphic design process when they create enticing photo montages for the backs of their postcards. Students experience the complete writing process, from first inspiration to final publication.

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## Lesson Steps

Working in pairs, students select 2 of the 175 countries covered in AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com. For each country, students read through large collections of articles as their interests lead them. Students take notes together regarding similarities and differences between their chosen countries. Students note for themselves and share with classmates any aspects of the two cultures that strike them as especially appealing or unappealing. Individually, imagine that they have spent two weeks touring their chosen countries, and plan to make another trip to the one that they prefer. Students choose a friend to recruit to join the trip and write their postcards (80 words) using salient facts from the articles they've read, and thinking carefully about appealing to their readers using sensory details and flowing sentence structures. Working together as peer reviewers, students offer constructive feedback on each other's drafts. Working individually, students revise and polish their evaluative texts. Using photos from AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com, students create photomontages for their postcards, add their finished texts, and enjoy their finished pieces of writing and art. Students can mail their postcards to friends—and find out whether they are convinced.

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## 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
  - b. Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas 4,6
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, 7, 8
- 8. **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies**
  - a. 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9

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## Supplies

- Computer lab access with internet connection for student use of AtoZWorldCulture.com or AtoZtheWorld.com
- Access to Microsoft Word
- Color printer access
- Blank 6x9 postcards
- Scissors, glue, colored pens/pencils/paints, other art supplies as desired
- Notebooks and pens/pencils
- Dictionaries
- Stamps (if students will physically mail postcards)
- Student access to postcard recipient/s addresses

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## Instructional Plan

### Student Objectives

#### Students will:

- Increase cultural literacy and develop as global citizens.
- Build skills in reading comprehension of text and tables.
- From varied reading materials, select the information that is potentially relevant to support their claims.
- From potentially relevant supporting information, select most compelling information for specific readers.
- Support all claims with concrete evidence.
- Support claims with vivid, compelling sensory detail.
- Support claims with flowing prose by interspersing complex, lyric sentence structures with short, percussive structures.
- Experience the complete writing process: identify an area of curiosity, read, take notes, identify a specific audience, brainstorm, compose, seek feedback, revise, polish, publish for readers outside the classroom.
- Improve media literacy. Experience the design process by exploring the relationship between text and graphic elements.
- Find motivation for ongoing engagement with print, media, and cultural literacies via the success of a finished piece that readers will enjoy.

## Teacher introduction

- Introduce the idea of travel diplomacy: learning about culture and promoting peace through travel.
- Let students know that many small classroom activities will lead to one writing exercise—if students participate in small assignments along the way, the final writing assignment will be a snap.
- Set ground rules for partners working together: respecting each other's ideas even if you don't agree, strategies for achieving consensus, etc.
- Pair students into partner working groups, and ask students to move to shared work stations.

## Student Directions

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### What countries would you like to visit? Country selection

- Go to [AtoZWorldCulture.com](http://AtoZWorldCulture.com) or [AtoZtheWorld.com](http://AtoZtheWorld.com)
- With your partner, peruse list of countries
- Identify four 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 two countries to mentally visit for this exercise.

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### What are your first impressions? Reflection and note taking

Go to Country 1, then Country 2, reading at will as your curiosity leads you.

Discuss the following questions together, and take individual notes on your answers:

- What have you read so far that is like what you expected for these countries?
- What surprises you about these countries??
- What do you notice that these countries have in common?
- How are these countries different?
- Based on what you've read so far, which of these countries would you rather spend more time in?
- On what are you basing your decision? Some travelers might consider such factors as food, music, safety, scenery, weather, language/s spoken . . . which factors are most important to you in making your decision?

## Teacher introduction

- Instruct students to discuss the questions below with their partners, and to take notes as they discuss—remind students not to get so caught up in conversation that they forget to write down their conclusions.

## Student Directions

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### Choosing a travel companion: Reflection and note taking

Discuss the following questions together, and take individual notes on your answers:

- What two friends (someone not in this class) would you possibly like to invite to join you on a trip to your preferred country?
- Which of these friends is the more compatible travel companion for you? Choose carefully—a good friend does not always a good travel companion make! Consider the answers to the following questions:
  - Do you and your friend like to get up and go to bed at around the same time?
  - Are you similar in the extent of your willingness to be adventurous eaters?
  - What about planning vs. improvising? Do you and your friend have similar preferences when it comes to planning vs. jumping in?
  - What other qualities are important to you in a travel companion?
- Now that you have identified how you and your friends are alike and different in terms of travel, identify the more compatible travel companion. That's not necessarily the person who's just like you—there is such a thing as a complimentary difference. For example, sometimes a morning person and a night person travel well by taking turns being in charge in the am and pm. Sometimes a shy planner and a gregarious improviser work well together when one of them plans the day and the other one does all the asking directions of strangers. Travel companions need a balance of complimentary strengths and weaknesses. With this in mind, choose your travel buddy.

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### Planning to persuade: Reflection and note taking

Discuss the following questions together, and take individual notes on your answers:

- Of the things you've read so far about your chosen country, which would your proposed travel companion find most appealing? Make a list.
- Of the things your proposed travel companion would find most appealing, which could you describe in most vivid physical detail? The famous green chile sauce? The music that spills out into the streets from the nightclubs? The warm turquoise water off the coast? The tropical breezes? The rare, brightly colored lizards in the jungles?
- Sketch out 3 vivid descriptions using one or more of the five physical senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch—meant to entice your friend to travel with you.

## S e s s i o n   T w o

### Teacher introduction

- Remind students that their notes and reflections from the class before will support their writing. If students get stuck, they should go back and review their own prior notes.

### Student Directions

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#### "Come with me on my next trip to . . ." Composing

- Re-read your notes on what your friend would find appealing and how to describe some of those appeals in sensory language.
- Write the first draft of your postcard to your friend (around 80 words) inviting your friend to join you for your next trip to your selected country. Include:
  - A hook sentence that gets the reader's attention: "Which South American country's cuisine includes curries from India and noodles from China? That's right: Suriname."

- A topic sentence or topic sentences that lay out the paragraph's primary subject and/or claim—such as where you want your friend to join you, and why.
- Evidence from the articles you've read that supports your preference. For example, perhaps you can point out that your chosen country is among the safest and most stable in its region, and that its people speak a language that your friend wants to learn.
- Complex sentences mixed in with short sentences for prose flow: "Mongolians' special achievements in sports include inventing their own style of archery, hunting with eagles, and racing some of the fastest, toughest horses in the world. But these traditions won't last long. See them while you can."
- A concluding statement that ends your postcard on a strong, persuasive note: "What will you regret more ten years from now: going on the trip, or missing it? Don't miss this chance at adventure."

## Teacher introduction

- Set expectations for peer review. Review the nature of constructive criticism, and review also writer strategies for choosing what changes to make when reader feedback differs.

## Student Directions

### What have you missed so far? Peer Review

Students read each other's first drafts. Partners consider the following questions, share the answers with each other, and make individual notes for revision:

- What do you and your partner have in common, in terms of what you prefer in a travel experience?
- What are the differences in your travel preferences?
- What have you and your partner done similarly, in terms of strategies to recruit your travel companions?
- Where have you and your partner made different choices in terms of persuasive strategies?
- Does reading your partner's postcard inspire you to make any changes? Not that you can steal your partner's text, obviously, but does his or her postcard jog your brain about any fun facts you've yet to include?
- Does your partner's hook sentence grab your attention? What are some other eye-catching facts about the chosen country that your partner could consider using as a hook?
- Do you see a clear connection between what you know about your partner's friend and the evidence your partner is presenting? Is there anywhere that the connection between reader and evidence is unclear to you?
- What other aspects of the chosen country would you suggest your partner mention in support of his/her case for travel?
- For clarity, ease of reading, and persuasive impact, what changes would you suggest to the order in which your partner shares his/her preferences and facts?
- Are there any places in your partner's text that confuse you? If so, where? Can you make any suggestions for clarity?
- Are there any places in your partner's text where you could help with a grammatical issue? And/or do any grammatical questions come up for you as you review your partner's text? If you are both stumped about something, request a conversation with your teacher before you revise.

- Overall, if you were your partner's friend, what would you think of this postcard? How would you respond?

## Teacher introduction

- Review with students the difference between revising and polishing—i.e., between changing content and changing punctuation. Suggest to students that they think of revising and polishing as a funnel-shaped set of tasks in which the writer starts big (improving transitions, making descriptions more vivid), then works down toward the smaller details (addressing punctuation issues and spelling errors).

## Student Directions

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### Revising

Using your partner's feedback and your own clearer perspective, make changes to your first draft in the following areas:

- Reconsider your hook. If it doesn't seem very attention catching, replace your original choice with something more exciting. Return to the articles for your country as necessary.
- Consider your topic sentence or sentences. Is it clear from the outset what you're going to be talking about? What changes would make your purpose clearer to the reader right away?
- Consider the connections between the trip you are planning and the persuasive evidence you present. What more relevant cultural facts from the country articles could you add?
- Can you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch the sensory experiences you've described? If not, add sensory components to these elements.
- Where, if anywhere, was your partner confused? How could you clarify?
- How's the balance between long and short sentences? Read your postcard aloud (perhaps silently, just by moving your lips, but at the speed you would read aloud). Where do you stumble? Go back to any rough bits and experiment with changing sentence lengths to make the prose more fluid. Read it aloud again. How does it flow?

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### Polishing

Read your postcard text through one more time. Ask yourself:

- Does this make sense? Imagine: you have found this postcard in your mailbox, and have never seen it before. Is there anything in the text that you find confusing? Make changes as necessary for clarity.
- Are you convinced? Make changes as necessary for persuasive power.
- Any pieces of punctuation missing?
- All words spelled correctly? Use [AtoZWorldCulture.com](http://AtoZWorldCulture.com) or [AtoZtheWorld.com](http://AtoZtheWorld.com) and/or a dictionary to confirm the spelling of any unfamiliar words.

## S e s s i o n T h r e e

## Teacher introduction

- According to classroom supplies and logistics, instruct students as to how they will illustrate, assemble, and mail their postcards.

- If some students will be presenting their finished postcards to the class, give instructions accordingly.

## **Student Directions**

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### **Illustrating**

- As directed by your teacher, choose, print, and cut out photos from your country articles.
  - Create a photomontage for the back of your postcard. Questions you might ask yourself as you select photos include:
    - Would your reader be more drawn to pictures of people in the chosen country, or the landscape? Cities or rural areas? Some of all of the above?
    - Would you like to show your reader more soothing images, or more startling images? Would you like your pictures to include soothing or startling colors? Should the mood of your montage match your text, or contrast with the mood of your text?
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### **Assembling**

- Affix the photos for your montage to the back of the postcard.
  - Write out the polished postcard text on the postcard, or print typed text and glue.
  - Write the postcard recipient's name and address.
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### **Presenting**

- As time allows, volunteers read their finished postcards to the class, and pass around their photomontages.
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### **Mailing**

- Add the recipient's address.
- Add a postcard stamp.
- Send!