

## Lesson Plan: Writing

### Objective:

Students become familiar with 18<sup>th</sup> century writing by reading examples and then composing their own poem and letter in the same style.

### Outcomes: Students will...

- Read an 18<sup>th</sup> century alphabet poem & samples of 18<sup>th</sup> century letters
- Write an alphabet poem and a letter
- Practice 18<sup>th</sup> century penmanship

### Common Core Standards Addressed:

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Standards:

English Language Arts: Reading: Informational Texts

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.5  
Describe the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, or information in a text or part of a text.

English Language Arts: Language

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.1  
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.4.3c  
Differentiate between contexts that call for formal English and situations where informal discourse is appropriate.



## English Language Arts → Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3  
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.a  
Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.c  
Use a variety of transitional words and phrases to manage the sequence of events.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.3.d  
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Standards:

### English Language Arts: Reading: Informational Texts

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.5  
Compare and contrast the overall structure of events, ideas, concepts, or information in two or more texts.

### English Language Arts: Language

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.1  
Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.5.3c  
Compare and contrast the varieties of English used in stories, dramas, or poems



## English Language Arts → Writing

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3  
Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.a  
Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.c  
Use a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage the sequence of events.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.5.3.d  
Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experience and events precisely.

### Items Used:

- Quill pen (for display only)
- Hornbooks
- Alphabet poem example (on disk)
- Sample letters (on disk)
- Instructions for folding a letter (on disk)
- Instructions for making quill pens out of drinking straws (*Optional*, on disk)



## Lesson:

### Optional Introductory Activity

1. Let students observe the display quill pens (either in small groups or as a full class) and hypothesize about how these pens work & what frustrations might arise from using this type of writing utensil
2. Pass out materials to create quill pens out of drinking straws & walk students through the instructions to create their own “quill pens” for use in part 1

### Part 1, Alphabet Poem

Included on the disk is an excerpt from an 18<sup>th</sup> century book, possibly the first school book published in America. The disk also contains the entire book. Its tone is very religious; the excerpt was chosen for its more general appeal.

1. Students read the alphabet poem excerpt, either aloud or quietly. Note that an “s” at the beginning or middle of a word looks like an “f.” Discuss the form and function of these poems in 18<sup>th</sup> century education.
2. Students compose their own alphabet poem using at least 5 letters of their choosing.
3. Students may write with their drinking-straw quill pens if you choose to do that activity, or they may write with their own writing materials, or type on a computer.
4. Students may compare this alphabet poem to the hornbook to see the different ways that scholars of the 1700s learned their letters.

### Part 2, Penmanship

Using the “Writing Instructions” (on disk), students practice writing in an 18<sup>th</sup> century style. This file contains excerpts from *The Young Clerk's Assistant*, printed in 1787; the full version of this book is also available on the disk.



Students may write with their drinking-straw quill pens if you choose to do that activity, or they may write with modern pencils or ball-point pens and just practice the shapes of the letters.

Note that much of the 18<sup>th</sup> century writing practice contained moral instruction as well!

### Part 3, Letter

1. Students read the sample letters (on disk). One is from Anna Green Winslow that she wrote to her parents at age 12 in 1771. (The page is excerpted from a much longer letter; if you wish to read more of her letters, she wrote them in a diary and you can find the PDF “Diary of Anna Green Winslow” on the disk.) The second page contains sample letters from instructional books of the 1700s. It is interesting to compare the sample letters with what a young scholar actually wrote! The “real” letter is much less formal, and with more errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.
2. Discuss what elements (title, date, recipient, signature line etc.) are present in the sample letters & should be included in a formal 18<sup>th</sup> century correspondence.
3. Students write their own narrative letter(s) to a person(s) of their choice: parent, friend, etc. See if they can follow the format of the sample 1700s letters to relate to their audience events from their daily life. Students may write with their drinking-straw quill pens if you choose to do that activity, or they may write with modern pencils or pens.
4. Students fold the letter so that it makes its own envelope. (See instructions on disk.) This was then sealed with sealing wax in the 1700s, but you can substitute tape or a sticker.