



Teacher Resource

Pencil Pals

Focus Questions

Discuss the BTN story as a class and record the main points of the discussion. Students will then respond to the following:

1. Summarise the BTN Pencil Pal story in three sentences.
2. What are the benefits of having a pen pal?
3. Do you think letter writing is important? Give reasons for your answer.
4. What do the students in the BTN story like about having pencil pals?
5. Have you ever written or received a letter? How did it make you feel?

Activity: See, think & wonder?

After watching the BTN Pencil Pals story hold a class discussion, using the following as discussion starters:

- What do you **THINK** about what you saw in the story?
- What does this video make you **WONDER**?
- What did you **LEARN** from the BTN story?
- Think of three **QUESTIONS** you have about the story.

Activity: Class Discussion

After watching the BTN Pencil Pals story hold a class discussion, using the following questions to start the discussion:

- What is the purpose of a letter? Why do people write letters instead of sending emails or texts?
- What are some examples of different types of letters.
- Who do we send letters to?
- What makes a letter interesting to read?
- Have you ever written a letter?
Have you ever received one? How did it feel?



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KEY LEARNING

Students will learn about letter writing and examine the difference between formal and informal letters.

CURRICULUM

English – Year 4

Plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, using visual features, relevant linked ideas, complex sentences, appropriate tense, synonyms and antonyms, correct spelling of multisyllabic words and simple punctuation.

English – Year 5

Plan, create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts whose purposes may be imaginative, informative and persuasive, developing ideas using visual features, text structure appropriate to the topic and purpose, text connectives, expanded noun groups, specialist and technical vocabulary, and punctuation including dialogue punctuation.

Activity: Letter Writing Research

Students will choose one of the questions below to explore in more detail or they can develop their own questions to research.

- What are the different parts or features of a letter? For example, date, postal address, greeting, signature.
- What type of language would you use in an informal letter to a friend or relative? Compare the language used in an informal letter to the language used in a formal letter. Give examples.
- Investigate the history of letter writing. When and why did people start writing letters?
- Why are letters useful primary sources? Investigate how letters can tell us about the writer's opinions and personality and tell us more about the past. Choose an important letter in history to research.
- How has technology changed the way we communicate? What impact has technology had on letter writing?

When you're writing formal or informal letters or emails, what should you include in it? Watch the following Everyday English videos to learn more.

Formal letters

Watch the video and respond to the following questions:

- Give 3 examples of people you would send a formal letter or email to.
- When might you need to write a formal letter or email?
- Write a short formal letter or email using the tips that Sarah and Jack talk about in the video.

Informal letters

Watch the video and respond to the following questions:

- Give 3 examples of people you would send an informal letter or email to.
- What sort of language do you use when you're writing an informal letter or email?
- Write a short informal letter or email using the tips that Sarah and Jack talk about in the video.

Activity: Practising Letter Writing

Students will practise the art of letter writing. Below are some letter writing activities.

- Connect with a class from another school - they may be in the same city or in a different state or country and ask if they would like to become pen pals with your class. Students consider the following when planning their letters to a pen pal.
 - What do you want them to know about you? What information would you like to share? Think about possible topics to write about (hobbies, family, pets, school).
 - What questions would you like to ask them? What interesting information would you add to your letter?

- How do you keep a pen pal conversation going over time?
- Design and create your own letter head or writing paper and write a letter to someone using their paper.
- Make a time capsule which includes a collection of letters handwritten by students. Students can write to future students at the school telling them what school is like for them and then make a prediction about what school will be like in the future.
- Write a letter to your future self. Include personal highlights or challenges from the past year, what you're currently interested in and any goals or ambitions you have for the future.
- Interview a friend or relative about letter writing. Has letter writing changed during their life? Do they send and/or receive letters? Do they think letter writing is important? Why or why not?

Useful Websites

- [Letter Writing Class](#) - BTN
- [Future of Letter Writing](#) – BTN
- [World Letter Writing Day](#)