



TOOLBOX OF IDEAS

The RAFTs Technique

What is it?

This is a great strategy that integrates reading and writing in a non-traditional way. It asks that students take what they have read and create a new product that illustrates their depth of understanding; it may be used with fiction or nonfiction texts. The format is incredibly flexible and offers limitless opportunities for creativity for both you and your students. The RAFTs Technique (Santa, 1988) is a system to help students understand their role as a writer, the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the expected content. It is an acronym that stands for:

- Role of the Writer – Who are you as the writer? Are you Sir John A. Macdonald? A warrior? A homeless person? An auto mechanic? The endangered snail darter?
- Audience – To whom are you writing? Is your audience the Canadian people? A friend? Your teacher? Readers of a newspaper? A local bank?
- Format – What form will the writing take? Is it a letter? A classified ad? A speech? A poem?
- Topic + strong Verb – What's the subject or the point of this piece? Is it to persuade a goddess to spare your life? To plead for a re-test? To call for stricter regulations on logging?

Almost all RAFTs writing assignments are written from a viewpoint different from the student's, to another audience rather than the teacher, and in a form different from the ordinary theme. Therefore, students are encouraged to use creative thinking and response as they connect their imagination to newly learned information.

What Is Its Purpose?

The purpose of RAFTs is to give students a fresh way to think about approaching their writing. It occupies a nice middle ground between standard, dry essays and free-for-all creative writing. RAFTs combines the best of both. It also can be the way to bring together students' understanding of main ideas, organization, elaboration, and coherence . . . in other words, the criteria by which compositions are most commonly judged.

What does it look like?

A teacher assigns (or students select) a role, audience, format, and topic from a range of possibilities. Below is a chart with a few examples in each of the categories; it is meant only as a sampling to spark new ideas and possibilities for building RAFTs:

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer • Artist • Character • Scientist • Adventurer • Inventor • Juror • Judge • Historian • Reporter • Rebel • Therapist • journalist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self • peer group • government • parents • fictional character(s) • committee • jury • judge • activists • immortality • animals or objects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journal • editorial • brochure • booklet • interview • video • song lyric • cartoon • game • primary document • critique • biographical sketch • newspaper article 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issue relevant to the text or time period • topic of personal interest or concern for the role or audience • topic related to an essential

How Can I Do It?

Step One: Explain to the students how all writers have to consider various aspects before every writing assignment including role, audience, format, and topic. Tell them that they are going to structure their writing around these elements. (It may be helpful to display the elements on chart paper or a bulletin board for future reference.)

Step Two: Display a completed RAFTs example on the overhead, and discuss the key elements as a class.

Step Three: Then, demonstrate, model, and “think aloud” another sample RAFT exercise with the aid of the class. Brainstorm additional topic ideas, and write down the suggestions listing roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs associated with each topic.

Step Four: Assign students to small, heterogeneous groups of four or five or pairs and have them “put their heads together” to write about a chosen topic with one RAFTs assignment between them. You may prefer to do this with pairs or even individually, depending on your class.

Step Five: Circulate among the groups/students to provide assistance as needed. Then have the groups/students share their completed assignments with the class.

Step Six: After students become more proficient in developing this style of writing, have them generate RAFTs assignments of their own based on current topics studied in class.

How Can I Adapt It?

- This strategy is great for differentiation; teachers and students can develop any number of possible RAFTs based on the same text/concept that can be adjusted for skill level and rigor

- Paula Rutherford's book, *Instruction for All Students*, offers a comprehension list of "Products and Perspectives" from which to choose.
- The RAFT strategy can be used as a prewriting strategy and/or as a strategy for helping students prepare for a small or large group discussion.

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