

Writing Cover Letters, Part 3

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn McGinn

SUBJECT(S): Career Development

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

Students will read and analyze a Knowledge@Wharton article about the challenges and benefits of hiring Millennials. Students will choose from sample job postings and practice writing their own cover letters, which they will share with their peers for review.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Career Development, V. School-to-Career Transition

≡ RELATED ARTICLES:

- [“How to Network Online with Influential People”](#)
- [“Career Insight: Speechwriter Sarah Hurwitz on Becoming a Strong Storyteller”](#)

Common Core Standard(s):

- ELA CCR Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- ELA CCR Reading 5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.
- ELA CCR Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- ELA CCR Writing 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
- ELA CCR Writing 10: Write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
- ELA CCR Speaking and Listening 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Objectives/Purposes:

- Students will read and analyze an article for main ideas.
- Students will learn about the purpose, content and conventions of cover letters.
- Students will work constructively with peers to evaluate cover letters.

Knowledge@Wharton Article:

- [“Millennials in the Workplace: R U Ready?”](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

- Job Postings ([Handout A](#))
- Cover Letter Checklist ([Handout B](#)) (alternatively, use checklist compiled from student suggestions in previous lesson)
- Peer Evaluation Form ([Handout C](#))

Activities:

1. Hand out “Millennials in the Workplace: R U Ready.” Tell students as members of the “Millennial” generation, it is helpful to know what reputation they have with employers. Students should read the article and complete the graphic organizer. When they are finished, go over what they found, highlighting key points:

Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals between 14 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eager and 	

<p>and 31 years old</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to lots of praise and second chances 	<p>achievement-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good with new technology • Altruistic • Need concrete feedback; don't respond well to uncertainty • They don't think cheating is wrong 	
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Students will probably have a variety of opinions regarding the accuracy of these statements.

(10 mins)

2. Tell students that while securing employment can be difficult, perhaps especially for their generation in the current economic climate, it can be done, if you have the tools! Students will work on crafting their own cover letters. For students who brought job postings in which they're interested, they may direct their cover letters to those postings. For students who don't have their own postings, hand out Sample Classifieds, and instruct students to pick one of the jobs on the handout. (There may not be a job that perfectly matches their interests, but the purpose is to practice writing a cover letter, not to find the best job.) Using their notes on cover letters and the checklists they've used the last two lessons, students each write their own cover letters. Walk around and check in with individual students to see how they are doing/if they have any questions.

(20 mins)

3. Have students exchange cover letters with each other. Students should check their peers' cover letter using the class's checklist and then complete the Peer Evaluation form. Remind students that as they read each other's cover letters, they should look for the following:

- Clear opening paragraph that states the job for which the student is applying
- Evidence that illustrates how the student's skills/talents suit the job for which he/she is applying

- Key words the author has taken from the job description to use in his/her letter
- Closing paragraph that thanks the recruiter and suggests steps for following up

(10 mins)

Tying It All Together:

Ask students what was most challenging about writing a cover letter? How is writing a cover letter different from writing a résumé?

(5 mins)

Practice Outside of the Classroom:

- Visit the University of Pennsylvania Career Services website to look at even more examples of strong cover letters.
- Look through your local newspaper (or craigslist) to see what sort of jobs are available, and begin to think about how you would draft a cover letter as part of a job application.
- Type up your cover letter and give to a trusted adult or friend to proofread.

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently:

Writing their own cover letters was a time-consuming process for students. Most students needed more than the allotted 20 minutes. In addition, students had a lot of questions as they wrote, so they found it helpful for me to walk around the room and address their individual concerns.

Peer editing also took a fair amount of time; students took their jobs as editors quite seriously and offered detailed feedback to their classmates.

This lesson may need to extend into the next day; alternatively, you could give the students the article/handout to read at home, as a way to create more in-class time for students to draft cover letters.

I also found it useful to review the conventions of writing business letters in general, as students had a lot of general formatting questions.

Finally, I tried to emphasize to students that while they were writing cover letters for fictional positions, a good cover letter can be adapted to fit different job positions. If students have a strong template, they can keep most of it and change particular details to suit the specific job.

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