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Research Basis

The more often students write, the more proficient they become as writers. RAFT is a writing strategy that helps students understand their role as a writer and how to effectively communicate their ideas and mission clearly so that the reader can easily understand everything written. Additionally, RAFT helps students focus on the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they'll be writing about. By using this strategy, teachers encourage students to write creatively, to consider a topic from multiple perspectives, and to gain the ability to write for different audiences. In the book, *Strategic Writing*, Deborah Dean explains that writing for differing purposes and audiences may require using different genres, different information, and different strategies. Developing a sense of audience and purpose in writing, in all communication, is an important part of growth as a writer.

RAFT assignments encourage students to uncover their own voices and formats for presenting their ideas about content information they are studying. Students learn to respond to writing prompts that require them to think about various perspectives:

- **Role of the Writer:** Who are you as the writer? A movie star? The President? A plant?
- **Audience:** To whom are you writing? A senator? Yourself? A company?
- **Format:** In what format are you writing? A diary entry? A newspaper? A love letter?
- **Topic:** What are you writing about?

Santa, C., Havens, L., & Valdes, B. (2004). *Project CRISS: Creating Independence through Student-owned Strategies*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

Dean, Deborah. 2006. *Strategic Writing: The Writing Process and Beyond in the Secondary English Classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Strategy in Practice

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- Explain to your students the various perspectives writers must consider when completing any writing assignment. Examples of different roles, audiences, formats, and topics can be found in a list of [Picture Book RAFTs](#) by Doug Fisher and Nancy Frey.
- Decide on an area of study currently taking place in your classroom for which you could collaborate with the students and write a class RAFT. Discuss with your students the basic premise of the content for which you'd like to write, but allow students to help you pick the role, audience, format, and topic to write about.
 - For instance, if students are reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, you may have students respond to the issues in the story as various characters to different audiences in multiple formats.
- Have a class think-aloud to come up with ideas for the piece of writing that you will create as a group. Model on a whiteboard, overhead projector, or chart paper how you would write in response to the prompt. Allow student input and creativity as you craft your piece of writing.
- Give students another writing prompt (for which you have already chosen the role, audience, format, and topic) and have students react to the prompt either individually or in small groups. It works best if all students follow the same process so the students can learn from the varied responses of their classmates.
- Choose a few students to read their RAFT aloud. Have a class discussion about how each student created their own version of the RAFT while using the same role, audience, format, and topic.
- As students become comfortable in reacting to RAFT prompts, give students a list of options for each component and let them choose their role, audience, format, and topic.
- Eventually, students may choose a role, audience, format, and topic entirely on their own. Varied prompts allow students to compare and contrast multiple perspectives, deepening their understanding of the content when shared.