

RAFTing Example

Don't Let Your Car Make a Fuel Out of You!

Objectives - Language Arts

1. Students will analyze details in existing car advertisements to determine the credibility of the ads.
2. Students will create written automobile advertisements which communicate important details needed by consumers to make informed choices.
3. Students will successfully use the RAFT writing strategy to communicate energy related content details into their writing.

Module Overview - Language Arts

The language arts portion of this unit focuses on improving students' abilities to read for important details and to write using details. The vehicle for this process will be automobile advertisements and student writing. In the first activity, students will analyze magazine advertisements for cars. The second activity involves students in creating their own advertisements for new cars. The energy efficiency and transportation theme is carried further in the final activity where students employ the RAFT writing strategy to communicate energy related content details into their writing. This approach to writing is designed to enable students to better understand their audience and their roles as writers. Their writing takes on a specific format aimed at communicating content in a more interesting fashion.

Suggested Teaching Strategies

Begin the unit by asking students if they notice car advertisements in magazines. Ask them to recall what catches their eye about some of these advertisements. Do students notice any important information about the cars in advertisements? What seems to take up most of the space in the ads?

These questions will get students thinking about advertisements before they begin analyzing the car ads. Students will probably communicate that they focus on the picture of the vehicle, disregarding any printed material that is part of the ad.

Assign students to bring in magazine advertisements for cars. Prepare a bulletin board on which students can display examples of what they believe to be good and bad automobile advertisements. This display may be referred to repeatedly during class discussions as students progress through the unit.

Auto Adventure

Teacher Notes

Objective:

Students will analyze details in existing car advertisements to determine the credibility of the ads.

Materials:

Magazine advertisements for automobiles

Several weeks prior to starting this unit, begin collecting magazine advertisements for automobiles. Ask students to bring in any advertisements they can find in magazines. Make a special effort to look through magazines from a variety of sources. You will find that the types of ads appearing in a magazine like *Sports Illustrated* are quite different than those found in *National Geographic*, *Popular Science*, or *Consumer Reports*. The greater the variety of advertisements you are able to secure, the more students will be able to get out of completing the activities. Make certain that you write the name of the magazine on the back of each advertisement.

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

In order for students to be informed consumers, it is important for them to discriminate between important and unimportant details in an advertisement. Using automobile advertisements, it will become quite evident that many advertisements feature nonessential details. What is many times considered vital information for the consumer is often times left out of advertisements.

Begin the activity by placing students into cooperative groups. Give each group 5 advertisements. Allow each group time to read and examine the ads you have given them. Ask each group to make a list of those things that appeal to them about their ads. Compile a class list of responses on the chalkboard or overhead.

Using ideas from this list, ask the students to compile a class list of the detailed information that should be included in car advertisements. Examples might include passenger size, color, fuel efficiency, price, safety features, appearance, and whether the car is foreign or domestic. If the list appears too long, ask students to focus on the information they believe is most critical for consumers wishing to purchase a new vehicle.

Challenge students to re-examine their original five car advertisements. Check the features that are included in their ads and make note of that information which is missing. They might want to set up a sample grid for recording their findings. Sample criteria are such things as safety features, foreign or domestic, passenger size, fuel efficiency, price. Students should use their own criterion in their tables.

Possible Discussion Questions:

1. Overall, how would you rate the advertisements you examined in terms of how well they communicate important information to consumers?

2. How important are magazine advertisements in terms of providing consumers with the detailed information they need to make a wise choice when buying a car?
3. If the ads are not necessarily designed to communicate important information to consumers, then what do you believe is their purpose?
4. Different magazines are directed to different audiences. For example, a person who enjoys reading *Popular Mechanics* may not regularly read *Good Housekeeping*. Compare the amount and type of information in each ad with the magazine in which it appeared. Keep in mind that you will be making broad generalizations. Which magazines provide the consumer with the most valuable information? Which magazines provide the least information to consumers?

Home/Community Connection:

View television advertisements for cars. Use a checklist to summarize the content of the ads. Make comparisons of the types of appeals and information included, the types of shows aired during, and the time of the program.

Extensions:

- Ask students to videotape television commercials for new cars or tape the ads yourself. Play the advertisements for your class, only this time leave the sound turned off. Ask students to write the script for the commercials and to describe the music. After students share their ideas, let them listen to the real thing. It may also be possible to secure videotapes of car commercials from local automobile dealerships. They are many times willing to part with outdated tapes at no cost.
- Choose one car. Write three different advertisements for that car that are aimed at appealing to three different audiences. Decide what audience you will be writing for with each ad. Draw each of the ads.

It All Ads Up!

Teacher Notes

Objective:

Students will create written automobile advertisements which communicate essential details needed by consumers to make informed choices.

Materials:

copies of *Consumer Reports* April 1994 Car Ratings

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

Challenge students to create an advertisement for a new car listed in *Consumer Reports*. Encourage them to use advertisement techniques they believe will appeal to a large audience. They must also include the following details in their ads:

fuel efficiency
safety features
passenger size
special design features
price
foreign or domestic
aerodynamics

Remind students that the ads should be designed to appear on a full page in a color-printed magazine. This means the ads should be visually pleasing as well as informative. Students may even want to develop their own slogans.

Ask students to present their completed ads to the other members of their cooperative groups. Display all of the ads around the classroom. Ask students what appeals to them about their ads.

Home/Community Connections:

- Challenge students to adapt their ads to a local auto dealership. Ask the dealership if it would be willing to choose one ad to run in the local newspaper or advertising supplement. Make arrangements to place the ads on display in the dealership's showroom. It might also be fun for students to invite representatives from several local car dealerships to discuss their advertising strategies. They could look over students' advertisements in the classroom and perhaps say what they like about them.
- Have students "shadow" a car dealer after school. Students should make a point to notice their persuasive techniques. Encourage students to present their findings to class.

Extension:

Invite a person from a local advertising agency to class to discuss procedures for developing new advertisements. Ask them to explain how a target audience can affect the nature of the advertisement. Ask students to prepare a list of questions to ask prior to the speaker's visit.

Getting Your Ideas Across on a RAFT

Teacher Notes

Objective:

Students will successfully use the RAFT writing strategy to communicate energy related content details in their writing.

Suggested Teaching Strategies:

A student page for this assignment is provided for your convenience. You may or may not choose to use it. In addition, a student sheet, following these teacher notes, contains many of the notes below. The student sheet also contains the RAFT assignment. You may choose to distribute this page to students or to forego the handout in favor of overheads.

Begin by explaining the RAFT writing system to students. RAFT is a system for making sure students understand their role as writer, their audience, the format of their work, and the expected content of their writing. These key ingredients are included in every RAFT writing assignment:

Role of a writer:

You must decide who (or what) you will be. Will you be writing as an old car? Will you be a piece of pavement? a bicycle? How about a person or even a bird continually exposed to air pollution from cars?

Audience:

To whom are you writing? Are you writing to a specific person? to Congress? to a child? to a machine? to a car? to an auto manufacturer?

Format:

What form will your writing take? Will you write a letter or a speech? Will it be an obituary, a conversation, a memo, a journal, or a diary?

Topic + strong verb:

What is your topic? What strong verb will help you present your topic? For example, persuade a congressman to vote for more ethanol in gasoline, demand that more fuel efficient cars are built, plead for a car to be driven more efficiently.

Practically all RAFT assignments are written from a viewpoint other than that of a student. They are usually written to an audience other than the teacher. They take a form other than students would write as a standard essay. Seldom is the word "write" used as a RAFT verb. Stronger verbs are used like "plead", "convince", "clarify", all of which focus the assignment by setting the tone of the response. To begin giving students the flavor of a RAFT, show them overheads of the following possible roles and audiences, topics, formats and verbs:

Possible RAFT Roles and/or Audiences

Baby/Toddler
Car (New, used, junker)
Parent
Teen
Car Dealer
Advertisement Agency
Advertisement Writer
Mechanic
Company President
Race Car Driver
Gasoline Pump
Headlights
Steering Wheel
Accelerator Pedal
Tow Truck Operator
Police Officer
Ambulance Driver
Paramedic
Environmentalist
Car Engine
Car Designer
Insect
Computer
Auto Worker
Tire
Road Kill
Conveyor Belt

Hood Ornament
Car Wash
Lawyer

Possible RAFT Formats

complaint
confession
contest entry
eulogy
farewell
journal
diary
legal brief
memo
news story
obituary
pamphlet
photo essay
recommendation
sermon
review
resume
lecture
telephone dialogue
travelogue
TV script
undercover report
wanted poster
warning
last will & testament
written debate
yearbook
poetry
wedding vows
birth announcement

Possible RAFT Topics

fuel efficiency
buying a fuel efficient car
driving practices that save fuel
pollution caused by cars
over reliance on driving
aerodynamic vehicle
tire inflation

Strong Action Verbs

reprimand
clarify
plead
convince
defend
justify
instruct
advertise
criticize
persuade
argue
expose
uncover

proclaim
implicate
incriminate
apologize
promise
scolding

After presenting the basic ideas of a RAFT to students as well as the sample roles, audiences, formats, topics and verbs, place students into cooperative groups and give them the following assignment. The assignment is also outlined on the student page):

RAFT Assignment

1. Your writing must address these four important factors:

Role

Audience

Format

Topic

2. Brainstorm ideas about a topic. The topic must be related to energy use in transportation. Narrow your ideas down to 2 or 3 possible topics.

3. Sketch a RAFT for each of your topic ideas. List possible roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs that are appropriate for each topic.

4. Decide which RAFT you would like to write about. Write your favorite RAFT.

After the assignment is given to students, read to the class the first sample RAFT shown below. This should help them gain a better picture of what is expected of them and of how a RAFT works to communicate ideas. You may wish to have this read in cooperative groups. In any event, it may be helpful for students to have a copy to follow while you read aloud.

Sample RAFT Sketch #1:

R = car in a junk yard

A = teen who destroyed the car

F = farewell letter

T = take care of your car (scolding)

Dear Claude,

I've been forced to sit in this junk yard for the past year. Every day I've had to face the loss of more and more body parts until there is almost nothing left of me. But tomorrow, my time is up; I'm scheduled to be compacted, so I have to write this letter now. It is hard for me to say this, but I think you need to know you are a real jerk!

I gave you the best years of my life, and how did you treat me? You refused to change my oil on a regular basis. (I get cranky when I have a dirty crankcase!) You always fed me the cheapest fuel, never letting me have any fuel containing detergents to help keep my parts clean. You constantly slammed on the brakes, wearing the treads from my tires. You never checked my tire pressure. I had to work extra hard to move with such low pressure in my tires. Do you know how much gas money you wasted over the years by driving on underinflated tires? You never gave me a lube job even though I was constantly screaming for one.

I tried so hard to do my best, but you did not lift a finger to help. Oh, no! Here it comes, the big crunch! I've reached the end of my road....CRUNCH!

To get students more actively involved in understanding a RAFT, present students with the second sample RAFT. This time, the RAFT sketch has been left out of the sample. The challenge for students will be to read the RAFT, then determine what the RAFT sketch should be.

Sample RAFT Sketch #2:

R =

A =

F =

T = (*action verb* =)

What? You need more gas? I just gave you your gas allowance! You cannot continue to use your gas fuelishly. Gas doesn't grow on trees, you know. Where does all your gas go anyway? If you would drive 55 miles per hour on the highway instead of putting the pedal to the metal, you would not be milking me for every bit of gas I have. If you would check the air pressure in your tires once a week, you might be able to put your extra gas in the spare bank...I mean tank. And another thing, get rid of those spoilers on the back of your car. What a drag! You would have plenty of gas and would not cause me to have a pump attack if the spoilers were gone. And while we are on the subject, why don't you ride that nice bike of yours occasionally. You are really getting lazy! You are making more and more short trips on my power rather than using your own. Why not give your car (and the environment) a brake for awhile? Go park your car in the garage. You're grounded for two weeks!

Ask students to share their RAFT sketches with the class for the above RAFT. While students may suggest equally logical RAFT sketches, the one which the writer had in mind for the above excerpt is:

Sample RAFT Sketch #2:

R = Gas Pump

A = Teenager

F = Lecture

T = Fuel Efficiency - (Reprimand)

Home/Community Connection:

Write a RAFT specifically designed to influence family members or members of your community about energy efficient driving.

Extension:

Have students create a book of their RAFT writings. These books could then be distributed to car dealerships/tire stores (generally places where people have to wait). In this way, people could read the RAFTs while sitting in the waiting area.

Getting Your Ideas Across on a RAFT

Student Page

Your teacher will explain the important aspects about writing RAFTs. You should refer to the notes below in developing your own RAFTs.

Role of a writer:

You must decide who (or what) you will be. Will you be writing as an old car? Will you be a piece of pavement? a bicycle? How about a person or even a bird continually exposed to air pollution from cars?

Audience:

To whom are you writing? Are you writing to a specific person? to Congress? to a child? to a machine? to a car? to an auto manufacturer?

Format:

What form will your writing take? Will you write a letter or a speech? Will it be an obituary, a conversation, a memo, a journal, or a diary?

Topic + strong verb:

What is your topic? What strong verb will help you present your topic? For example, persuade a congressman to vote for more ethanol in gasoline, demand that more fuel efficient cars are built, plead for a car to be driven more efficiently.

Remember, practically all RAFT assignments are written from a viewpoint other than that of a student. They are usually written to an audience other than the teacher. They take a form other than students would write as a standard essay. Seldom is the word "write" used as a RAFT verb. Stronger verbs are used like "plead", "convince", "clarify", all of which focus the assignment by setting the tone of the response. The following possible roles and audiences, topics, formats and verbs may be used in developing your RAFTs. Feel free to expand this list with your own ideas.

Possible RAFT Roles	Possible RAFT Audiences	Possible RAFT Formats	Possible RAFT Topics
Baby/Toddler	Baby/Toddler	complaint	fuel efficiency
Car (New, used, junker)	Car (New, used, junker)	confession	buying a fuel
Parent	Parent	contest entry	efficient car
Teen	Teen	eulogy	driving practices
Car Dealer	Car Dealer	farewell	that save fuel
Advertisement	Advertisement	journal	pollution caused
Agency	Agency	diary	by cars
Advertisement	Advertisement	legal brief	over reliance on
Writer	Writer	memo	driving
Mechanic	Mechanic	news story	aerodynamic
Company President	Company President	obituary	vehicle
Race Car Driver	Race Car Driver	pamphlet	tire inflation
Gasoline Pump	Gasoline Pump	photo essay	
Headlights	Headlights	recommendation	
Steering Wheel	Steering Wheel	sermon	
Accelerator Pedal	Accelerator Pedal	review	
Tow Truck Operator	Tow Truck Operator	resume	
Police Officer	Police Officer	lecture	
Ambulance Driver	Ambulance Driver	telephone dialogue	
Paramedic	Paramedic	travelogue	

Environmentalist	Paramedic	TV script	
Car Engine	Environmentalist	undercover report	
Car Designer	Car Engine	wanted poster	
Insect	Car Designer	warning	
Computer	Insect	last will &	
Auto Worker	Computer	testament	
Tire	Auto Worker	written debate	
Road Kill	Tire	yearbook	
Conveyor Belt	Road Kill	poetry	
Hood Ornament	Conveyor Belt	wedding vows	
Car Wash	Hood Ornament	birth announcement	
Lawyer	Car Wash		
	Lawyer		

Once you have become familiar with the basic ideas of a RAFT, begin working on your own RAFT. Your assignment is written below.

RAFT Assignment

1. Your writing must address these four important factors: (Choose one from each column in the table.)

Role

Audience

Format

Topic

2. Brainstorm ideas about a topic. The topic must be related to energy use in transportation. Narrow your ideas down to 2 or 3 possible topics. See options in table.

3. Sketch a RAFT for each of your topic ideas. List possible roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs that are appropriate for each topic.

Strong Action Verbs

reprimand

clarify

plead

convince

defend

justify

instruct

advertise

criticize

persuade

argue

expose

uncover

proclaim

implicate

incriminate

apologize

promise

scolding

4. Decide which RAFT you would like to write about. Write your favorite RAFT.