

RAFT + Prosocial

Twists

Adapted from sources cited and prosocial twists suggested by Beth Breneman, Ph.D., Consultant (ret.), California Department of Education; recommended for grades four through twelve.

RAFT is an engaging strategy that encourages writing across the curriculum. It enables students to assume a role (*R*), consider an audience (*A*), write in particular format (*F*), and examine a topic (*T*) beginning with a strong verb.

The suggested prosocial twists encourage students to: 1) stretch the imagination and experience empathy with things, plants, and animals as well as humans; and 2) use language that appeals to the senses and communicates what this being or thing experiences. Some good books with unusual or multiple perspectives are suggested for use with RAFT to create more intense student engagement and a deeper understanding of the power of perspective in writing.

Goals

1. Provide students with practice in writing on a well-focused topic in a given format, for a specific purpose, to an audience other

than the teacher, and in a voice different from that of the student.

2. Offer opportunities for students, including reluctant writers, to write in an engaging and creative way about information and ideas gleaned from content area reading.
3. Encourage students to adopt a mental role-playing frame of mind, develop empathy for the situations of others, and consider a topic from a different perspective.

Teacher Preparation

1. Select informational, narrative, or other text that is appropriate to the reading abilities of your students and contains important and interesting information.
2. Analyze the important ideas or information that you want students to learn from their reading or think about from another perspective.
3. Review examples of RAFT assignments and RAFT technique; print and duplicate RAFT template on Page 7.

Instructional Procedures

1. Explain that all writers need to consider the following in every composition: the role of the writer, the audience, the format, and the topic.
2. Brainstorm ideas about a topic related to the reading that your students have just completed. Select several topics from those mentioned.
3. Write RAFT on the board and list possible roles, audiences, and formats that are appropriate for each topic.
4. Ask students to choose one of the examples to write about, or after discussing a topic, have students create their own RAFT writing assignment. See the following examples from several curricular areas.

Examples of Raft Assignments

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
Travel Agent	Tourists	Travel brochure	Entice travelers with history of a place
Biologist	Legislative body	Speech	Warn of the consequences of not recycling materials
Body's stomach	Body's mouth	Complaint	Complain about eating behaviors that cause stomach aches
Character in literature	Mourners	Eulogy	Praise the behaviors of a character that made her unique and appreciated

Example of the RAFT Technique

Role of Writer:	Spider
Audience:	Young boy
Format:	A plea for life
Topic:	Pleading reasons spiders must live
	Student Essay:
<p>Pleeease Mr. Big Boy Howard, do not wash me down the drain now that you see me in the shower. You may not know it, but I am one of the most talented and helpful creatures that populate the great green earth. First of all, I spin strands of silk from my body whenever I need it. Not only are those strands super strong, my spider webs are unique creations that sparkle in the sunlight. Secondly, spiders help control the overpopulations of pests, such as aphids, mosquitoes, and cockroaches. These pests get trapped in my cobwebs and provide me with gooey and crunchy dinners—all nutty, sweet, and spicy treats to me. Thirdly, having spiders in the home eliminates the need to spray perfumed, putrid pesticides all over your house. So when you see one of my kind, just think how much money and trouble I'm saving you. And if that's not enough, I'll tell you a fourth important reason not to direct the roaring, hot river of water my way. Spiders prevent some diseases by reducing the populations of other disease carrying pests. So next time you see me in the shower, scoop me up and release me in the basement, our primary spider hangout at your house. Look for me having fun hanging around!</p>	

the role of plants, animals, and things as well as people. When appropriate, encourage the use of language that appeals to the senses and communicates vividly what this thing or being tastes, smells, hears, sees, and/or feels.

2. Use humorous, engaging, and provocative books to elicit strongly felt RAFT compositions in which students can display imaginative or historical empathy for the situations of others and consider situations and topics from different perspectives. See examples below.

Prosocial Twists

1. Give students the opportunity to extend their imaginative empathy by having them assume

Some Good Books to Use with RAFT

RAFT can be used productively with many texts across the curriculum and does not require the use of a particular kind of text. However, it may be instructive for students to write RAFT essays in response to some books written from unusual or multiple perspectives.

Titles below were suggested by Clark & Whitney (2009) and at the following website:
<http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/raft/>

- *Bunnicula* by James Howe (Atheneum)
Easy fiction
There is a new pet in the Monroe household: a suspicious looking bunny with fangs. Could it be a vampire bunny? Harold the dog and Chester the cat must find out the truth before its too late. This humorous story is told from Harold's point of view.
- *Diary of a Worm* by Doreen Cronin (HarperCollins)
Picture book
This hilarious diary tells about the life of a small worm—living with parents, playing with friends, going to school—in a huge world.
- *Flat Stanley* by Jeff Brown (HarperCollins)
Easy fiction
Stanley becomes only a quarter inch thick after a bulletin board flattens him, and amazing things begin to happen. Stanley may be flat, but he's a hero.
- *I Face the Wind* by Vicki Cobb (HarperCollins)
Picture book/nonfiction
You'll learn all about the wind in this easy-to-read informational book.
- *I Am the Dog, I Am the Cat* by Donald Hall
Picture Book
This story is told back and forth from a dog's and a cat's point of view. The two animals share their opinions on many aspects of life.
- *Frogs* by Nic Bishop

(Scholastic) Nonfiction
Discover cool and quirky
facts as you take an
informative tour through an
exciting amphibian world.
Stunning color photo-
graphs.

- *Two Bad Ants* by Chris Van
Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin)
Picture book
Join two ants and see the
dangerous world of the
kitchen from an outsider's
perspective.
- *Never Mind: A Twin Novel*
by Rachel Vail and Avi
(Scholastic)
Chapter Book
Just because you're twins
doesn't mean you have to
like it or each other. This
realistic fiction book shows
differing perspectives of
boy and girl twins on some
typical adolescent issues .
- *George vs George: The
American Revolution as
Seen From Both Sides* by
Rosalyn Schanzer (National
Geographic)
Picture book
This book tells about the
American Revolution from
both sides—King George
and George Washington.

Relevant Common Core State Standards

Visit:

<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy> to see the K-12 English language arts standards for various grade levels which correspond by number to the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR). The CCR and grade-specific standards are complements—the former providing broad standards, the latter, additional specificity. (There are additional standards that can be addressed through the use of RAFT + Prosocial Twists.)

Anchor Standards for Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing

W.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Anchor Standards for Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge

W.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

*Anchor Standards for Writing:
Range of Writing*

W.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Clarke, L.W. & Whitney, L. (2009). Walking in Their Shoes: Using Multiple-Perspectives Texts as a Bridge to Critical Literacy. *The Reading Teacher*, 62(6), 530-534.

Pritchard, R. & Breneman, B. (2000). *Strategic Teaching and Learning*. Sacramento: California Department of Education.

References & Further Resources

Buehl, D. (1995). *Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning*. Schofield: Wisconsin State Reading Association.

