

Canada – US / International Relations

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Description:

Students will research a current and relevant Canadian social, political, economic or environmental issue/problem and try and develop a general understanding and opinion on what should be done to solve it.

Subjects:

Social Studies and/or Civics

Goal:

It is the hope that this exercise will help students' citizenship and communication skills showing them how to write and send a business letter, in proper form, to a governmental, corporate or other public figure.

Objectives:

1. Research a current issue/problem dealing with Canada or U.S./Canadian/international relations;
2. Develop a reasoned opinion on an issue based on knowledge of the topic.

Materials:

1. Research resources: access to library or media center or Internet.
2. Names and addresses of government officials, corporate figures, nongovernmental organizations, etc.
3. Letter-writing materials, including paper, pen, computer, dictionary, stationary, envelopes, and the format for a formal or business letter.
4. List of possible topics or issues.

Procedures:

1. Students choose a topic of current concern in Canada or involving Canada and the rest of the world.
2. Students locate and study sources on their topic. They should get enough information so they may become aware of more than one perspective or course of action that government, business, or other groups can take on it.
3. Students should then develop an opinion on the proper course of action.
4. Students will then draft a business letter to a person/group involved with their chosen issue that uses facts to explain their opinion and the course of action they believe should be taken. (Return address and request for a reply are both vital.)
5. The teacher will proofread the letter and have the student revise until it is as close to flawless as possible.
6. Finally, the letters will be mailed. Ideally, a reply will come while students are still in the course they wrote the letter for. These can be shared with the class.

Additional Notes:

The number of appropriate topics is unlimited; anything from salmon preservation to Quebec separatism to arms control and defense issues. Many students need ideas to help them choose a topic—brainstorming issues or providing a written list of possible or previously used topics can help them get started. A sample letter to use as a model and stimulus for discussion is also useful.