# Intercultural Literary Exchange Across the Equator

While learning about popular sports and pop culture on the other side of the world, students also learn and practice letter writing, the mechanics of writing, organizing ideas, and expressing one’s thoughts in writing.

## Curriculum/State Standards

**Minnesota and NCEE Writing Standard**

- **Substrands:**
  - Types of writing
  - Elements of composition
  - Spelling, grammar, usage
  - Handwriting and word-processing

## Overview

Students will write three letters – an introductory letter, a narrative about American school life and family traditions, and a persuasive letter recommending a book to their pen pals.

## Objectives

The students will participate in Readers’ and Writers’ Workshop.

- The students will learn the purposes for writing and resulting genres.
- The students will learn the letter format and the five parts of a letter.
- The students will implement the writing process to write to their pen-pals.
- The students will engage their readers through author’s craft (voice, rich descriptive language).
- The students will produce three pieces that incorporate the five parts of a letter with either informational, narrative, or persuasive procedure.

## Strategies/Activities

**Lesson 1 Objectives:**

- Students will learn/review the parts of a friendly letter.
- Students will learn/review paragraphing.
- Students will learn to address an envelope.
- Students will learn/review geographic terms – equator, hemisphere

Day 1

Ask students if they have friends outside their city, state or country. Then, ask if they would like to know someone from across the equator, particularly the Philippines.

Start a KWL chart. Record under **KNOW**, what students know about the Philippines and under **WANT** to know, what they want to learn about the Philippines. Tell students that this chart will be saved and completed at the culmination activity.

Show them where the Philippines is on the world map and show where the United States and your state is. Considering its geographic location, encourage students to compare and contrast the climate of this country and the United States. As you talk about the climate and seasons, also talk about clothing and types of homes their pen pal might have.

## Materials

- writing paper or stationary
- pens/pencils
- envelopes
- postage stamps

## Readiness Activity

Contact someone you know from another school and introduce the pen pal project to them. Then ask for a class list from 3rd to 6th grades to match the number of 3rd – 6th grade students in your school. Write pen pals’ names on Post-It notes. Fold each Post-It note and place in a basket or box.

THIS WINNING PROJECT IDEA SUBMITTED BY:

Suzette de Mira Foroozan
Eastern Heights School
St. Paul, MN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE LEVEL</th>
<th>TOTAL BUDGET</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>$441</td>
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</table>

**3-6**

**ARTS**

**LANGUAGE**

**MATH**

**Misc**

**Science**

**Social Studies**

1

**$441**
the basket. Then have them write this person’s name and school address on their writing notebook, so they won’t lose the name.

Show students one or two poster-size samples of a friendly introductory letter and name and explain the importance of each part. Show students how the body has an introductory paragraph, a few paragraphs that have the message or ideas, and a closing paragraph.

Then, explain to them that their job today is to draft letters of introduction to their pen pals. The first paragraph has to tell their names and last names, gender, grade, school, city, state. The second paragraph should tell about their family – number of siblings, parents, pets, - and favorite family activity. The third paragraph should be about their interests – sports, hobbies, strengths. The fourth paragraph should include questions about what they want to know, taken from the KWL chart.

Day 1
Explain to students the importance of responding to their pen pals questions and expanding their answers with details and descriptive words. Tell students that after they answer their pen pals’ letters and pay close attention to answering their questions.

Day 2
Continue drafting, editing, rewriting introductory letters.

Day 3
Show students a sample of an addressed and stamped envelope. Explain the importance of a complete return and addressee’s address.

Finalize introductory letters. Have students address, stamp and seal envelopes for mailing.

Lesson 2 Objectives:
- Students will respond to their pen pals and answer their questions.
- Students will show the five parts of a letter in their responses.
- Students will proofread, edit, and finalize their own letters.
- Students will write about a favorite family tradition or holiday.
- Students will write about a typical day in school.

When most students receive letters from their pen pals, explain to students how letter writing is like a conversation on paper. Thus, they have to answer their pen pals’ letters and pay close attention to answering their questions.

Lesson 3 Objectives:
- Students will write a response showing all five parts of a letter.
- Students will recommend (persuasive) a book for their pen pals to read.
- Students will proofread, edit, and finalize their own letters.

Day 1
Review the importance of responding to pen pals and answering their questions. Tell students that after they answer their pen pals’ questions, they have to recommend a book to their pen pal. Explain characteristics of a book recommendation. This letter has to respond to questions from pen pal (1-2 paragraphs) and recommend a book (3-4 paragraphs) without giving away the story.

Have students go back to their Readers’ Workshop notebooks and choose a favorite book to recommend to their pen pals. Their book recommendations have to
- summarize the main idea without giving away the ending
- use details from the book to describe character, setting or conflict
- describe favorite part of the book with details from the story
- reason/s for recommending this book.
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Day 2
Continue drafting, proofreading, editing.

Day 3
Finalizing letters of book recommendations on word processing, addressing, and mailing.

Culminating Activity
Go back to the KWL chart at the beginning of the project and read the list of what they wanted to know about the Philippines. Have students share with the class what they learned from their pen pals.

Then they write a short essay about what they learned from this pen pal project and how it improved their writing.

Evaluation Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name __________________________</th>
<th>Teacher’s Name ____________</th>
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Checklist for Letter of Introduction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
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</table>

- Do I have a heading
- Do I have a greeting
- Do I have an introductory paragraph with my full name, gender, grade level, school name, city’s name, state name
- Do I have a paragraph about my family, parents, siblings, pets (optional)
- Do I have a paragraph about my interests
- Do I have a closing
- Do I have a signature
- Do I have return address on envelope
- Do I have pen pal’s address
- Do I have stamp on envelope

Checklist for 2nd Letter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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- Do I have a heading
- Do I have a greeting
- Do I have a closing
- Do I have a signature

- Do I have a paragraph to answer my pen pal’s questions in detail
- Do I have a paragraph to write in detail about a favorite family tradition or holiday
- Do I have a paragraph to write in detail about a typical school day

- Do I have a closing paragraph
- Do I have return address on the envelope
- Do I have pen pal’s address on the envelope
- Do I have stamp on the envelope
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....continued....

Name ____________________________  Teacher’s Name __________________

Checklist for 3rd Letter

Do I have

- a heading
- a greeting
- a closing
- a signature

Do I have a paragraph or two to

- answer my pen pal’s questions in detail
- recommend a book

Does my book recommendation include

- the book title
- author
- main character(s)
- setting
- conflict
- main idea with details from the book
- my favorite part
- why it’s my favorite
- why I recommend this book

Friendly Letter Rubric

4  Includes all five parts of the friendly letter format
   Organizes ideas that go well together
   Ideas are fully developed, on topic, and fit well together
   Uses a variety of sentence types
   No errors in capitalization, spelling, n, or grammar

3  Includes all five parts of the friendly letter format
   Topic is developed using a plan of organization
   Satisfactory development of ideas through good supporting details
   Some sentence variety is used
   Some errors in capitalization, spelling, n, or grammar

2  Includes most parts of the friendly letter format
   Attempts at developing the topic of the letter, but shows weakness in organization
   Has some unrelated details
   Has few supporting details
   Has understanding of sentences but lacks variety of patterns
   Has many errors in capitalization, spelling, punctuation and grammar

1  Includes some parts of the friendly letter format
   Attempts to write about the topic but is not well-organized
   Does not use supporting details
   Uses ideas that don’t fit the topic
   Poorly written sentences
   Multiple errors make the letter difficult to understand

Rubric for Letter of Book Recommendation

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<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary (What was it about?)</td>
<td>Variety of sentences tell the main idea of the story.</td>
<td>Uses sentences that tell some of the main idea of the story.</td>
<td>Does not tell the main idea of the story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response (What did you think?)</td>
<td>Uses many details from the book to describe the setting, character or conflict</td>
<td>Uses some details to describe feelings about the book.</td>
<td>Does not use details to support feelings about the book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Part (What was your favorite and why?)</td>
<td>Uses details from story to describe favorite part.</td>
<td>Describes favorite part of book with few or no details.</td>
<td>Does not describe favorite part of book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation (Why do you recommend this book?)</td>
<td>Gives several reasons why this book should be read.</td>
<td>Uses few reasons why this book should be read.</td>
<td>Does not give good reasons to read his book.</td>
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