

PROHUMAN CURRICULUM - GRADE 8

OVERVIEW OF UNITS:

Unit 1	September	Optimism
Unit 2	October	Grit
Unit 3	November	Gratitude
Unit 4	December	Curiosity
Unit 5	January	Courage
Unit 6	February	Compassion
Unit 7	March	Fairness
Unit 8	April	Understanding
Unit 9	May	Humanity

UNIT 6: COMPASSION

LESSON 3: WRITING A FUNDRAISING LETTER

SUMMARY:

The Prohuman Grade 8 curriculum is aligned to two sets of standards: [Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts](#) and [Character and Social Emotional Development \(CSED\) National Guidelines](#). The full collection of units introduces all nine of the prohuman character strengths: optimism, grit, gratitude, curiosity, courage, compassion, fairness, understanding, and humanity.

In Unit 6, Lesson 3, “Writing a Fundraising Letter,” students will learn tried and true techniques for writing effective fundraising letters and put their knowledge into practice by writing a fundraising letter to help raise money for the nonprofit organization discussed earlier in this unit: [Free Wheelchair Mission](#).

SUGGESTED TIME: 1 class period

RELATED SUBJECT: English Language Arts

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Write a persuasive fundraising letter
- Provide evidence to support claims from the nonprofit organization website [Free Wheelchair Mission](#)

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- Video: [The Story of Free Wheelchair Mission](#) (2024 Update) by [Free Wheelchair Mission](#) (~2 min)
- Prohuman Grade 8 Unit 6 Worksheet 3: Writing a Fundraising Letter

ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS MET

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1	Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.B	Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.C	Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.1.E	Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.9	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.	✓

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.8.10	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 discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.1	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.	✓
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.3	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.	✓

CHARACTER AND SOCIAL EMOTIONAL (CSED) NATIONAL STANDARDS MET

Social-Awareness A1	Experience and demonstrate empathy	✓
Social-Awareness A5	Practice “perspective taking” as a strategy to strengthen your acceptance of others	✓
Social-Awareness A6	Demonstrate awareness and understanding that despite differences, all people have similar needs, feelings and wants	✓
Interpersonal/ Relationship Skills A5	Understand and practice positive collaboration and cooperation skills (e.g., teamwork)	✓
Responsible and Ethical Decision-Making A3	Write about and share a principle you want to live by that you learned from a family member, book, movie, or personal experience	✓

LESSON PROCEDURE

Step 1:

- Explain that students will write a fundraising letter for the organization we learned about earlier in this unit: [Free Wheelchair Mission](#).
- Play video: [The Story of Free Wheelchair Mission](#) (2024 Update) by [Free Wheelchair Mission](#) (~2 min)

- The guidelines for the fundraising letter are on the worksheet.
- Explain that students will share their letters with three classmates for peer review. It is recommended that the teacher assign the groups.
- Explain that students' essays will be evaluated on the criteria listed on the worksheet.

Step 2:

- Discuss seven best practices for writing a fundraising letter (adapted from [The Storytelling Nonprofit](#)):
 1. Know your audience
 - Why would the person care about this letter?
 - What would they consider important about the message?
 - What can create a connection between my writing and the reader?
 2. Make it easy to read.
 - Make sure that all paragraphs are concise and easy to scan. Sometimes, paragraphs may just only be one sentence. You'll also want to strategically use bolding or italics to call extra attention to key points in your letter.
 - Keep the readers' eyes moving.
 3. Get to the point early.
 - Make sure people know why you're writing to them, what's in it for them, and why they should continue to read.
 4. Write as if you're having a conversation.
 - No one wants to read an impersonal letter that sounds like it was written from a template.
 - As freelance direct mail writer Harry B. Walsh wrote, "The tone of a good direct mail letter is as direct and personal as the writer's skill can make it ... It's a message from one letter writer to one letter reader."
 5. Create a sense of urgency.
 - One of the ways to do this is by giving a deadline on which the fundraiser ends.

- You could also talk about the need for something getting done sooner rather than later, and actually giving people good reasons why that needs to happen today.
6. Show donors they're part of the change.
- Good fundraising writing communicates to donors how they're going to make a difference.
7. Tell an interesting story.
- We will look at an example of how a fundraising letter did this.

Step 3:

- The letter on the next page is considered by many to be one of the greatest fundraising letters ever written.
- It was written to raise money for Covenant House, a shelter for homeless children. The letter was mailed repeatedly for years and turned Covenant House into a well-funded organization.



Friday, 10:40 PM

Dear Friend,

A lady should never get this dirty, she said.

She stood there with a quiet, proud dignity. She was incomparably dirty -- her face and hands smeared, her clothes torn and soiled. The lady was 11.

My brothers are hungry, she said. The two little boys she hugged protectively were 8 and 9. They were three of the most beautiful children I'd ever seen.

Our parents beat us a lot, she said. We had to leave. The boys nodded mutely. We had to leave, one of them echoed. The children did not cry. I struggled to manage part of a smile. It didn't come off very well. The littlest kid looked back at me, with a quick, dubious grin. I gave him a surreptitious hug. I was all choked up.

I would like to take a shower, the lady said.

Seventeen years ago, I did not know that there were thousands of runaway, abused and abandoned children like these in this country.

I learned the hard way.

One night, in the winter of 1968, six teenage runaways knocked on the door of my apartment where I was living to serve the poor of New York's Lower East Side. Their junkie pimp had burned them out of the abandoned tenement they called "home." They asked if they could sleep on my floor. I took them in. I didn't have the guts not to.

Word of mouth traveled fast. (It does among street kids). The next day four more came. And kids have been coming ever since. it was these kids -- with no place else to go -- homeless, hungry, lacking skills, jobs resources -- that compelled me to start Covenant House over seventeen years ago. Today our crisis centers help tens of thousands of kids from all over the country-- and save them from a life of degradation and horror on the streets.

Kids like the eleven-year-old lady and her very brave little brothers. They were easy to help: to place in a foster home where beautiful kids are wanted and loved, and made more beautiful precisely because they are wanted and loved.

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But sadly, not all of the more than 20,000 kids who will come to Covenant House this year will be that lucky. These kids have very few options. Many of them will have fallen victim to the predators of the sex-for-sale and pornography "industry."

One of them put it to me very simply and very directly:

"Bruce, I've got two choices: I can go with a john (a customer) and do what he wants, or I can rip somebody off and go to jail. I'm afraid to go to jail, Bruce. I can't get a job ... I've got no skills. I've got no place to live."

This child is 16. I do not know what I would have done if I were 16 and faced with that impossible choice.

They are good kids. You shouldn't think they're not good kids. Most of them are simply trying to survive. When you are on the street, and you are cold and hungry and scared and you have nothing to sell except yourself, you sell yourself.

There was a time when I was forced to turn these kids away simply because there was no room. I can't do that any more. I know only too well what the street holds in store for a kid all alone. That is why we run Covenant House, and that is why we keep it open 24 hours a day, seven days a week -- to give these kids an alternative, an option that leads to life and not death.

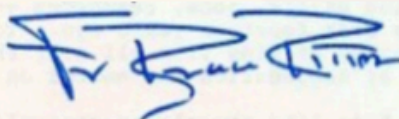
These kids come to us in need, from every kind of family background. Boys and girls. White, Black and Hispanic. Children--sometimes with children of their own. Innocent and streetwise. They are your kids and mine. Their number is increasing at a frightening rate.

We are here for them because of you. Almost all of the money that we need to help these kids comes from people like you.

A lady should never get that dirty. And a good kid should not be allowed to fall victim to the terror of street life. As more good kids come to us, we need more help. We need yours. Won't you send whatever contribution you can in the enclosed envelope today?

Thanks for my (no, our) kids.

Peace,



Father Bruce Ritter

P.S. I'm enclosing a brochure that will tell you a little bit more about the thousands of kids who come to us each year. I hope you will read it, and give our kids whatever you can. Thanks!

GRADE 8 UNIT 6 WORKSHEET 3: WRITING A FUNDRAISING LETTER

Assignment:

Write a fundraising letter of 1-2 pages with the goal of inspiring readers to donate to the nonprofit organization [Free Wheelchair Mission](#).

Fundraising Letter Evaluation Criteria:

Your letter will be evaluated on the extent to which it does the following:

- 1.) Meets the 1-2 page length requirement.
- 2.) Makes it clear why the reader should care about this organization.
- 3.) Is easy to read.
- 4.) Gets to the point early.
- 5.) Uses a conversational tone.
- 6.) Creates a sense of urgency.
- 7.) Show readers how they're part of the change.
- 8.) Tells an interesting story.