

# Literary Letters

## Purpose

Students will learn to write responses to literature that demonstrate an analytical view of literary characters.

## Materials

*For the students:* copies of 2 novels being read for class, copies of Black Line Master (BLM) *Literary Letters*, pens or pencils, paper

## Activity

### A. Pre-Activity Discussion

1. During the year, have the class read at least two books that feature vivid primary and secondary characters (see book suggestions below).
2. Have students read and discuss the books.

### B. Write a Letter

1. Pass out the BLM *Literary Letters*. Tell students they will be responding to this novel in a new way by writing a letter as one of the characters from the novel.
2. Discuss with students the different characters in the novel they are reading and ask them to imagine the kinds of letters each character might write. Ask how the different characters might express themselves and discuss how their concerns and attitudes might be different.
3. Have each student choose a character for letter-writing.
4. Tell students that the letters they will write will be addressed to another character from a different book. Explain that the letter should offer advice and should compare the characters' situations.
5. Review the novels the class has read and with the class think of other characters who might receive the letters. Encourage students to be creative and to think of character combinations that may be interesting or unusual, such as the following:
  - A letter from Anne in *Anne of Green Gables* to Sparrowhawk in *A Wizard of Earthsea*, comparing their island homes and their school experiences.
  - A letter from Long John Silver in *Treasure Island* to Timothy, the old man in *The Cay*, offering advice on dealing with a castaway boy.

(continued)

EXTENDING  
THE



ACTIVITY

Have students work in groups to write and act out skits or scenes that bring together characters from different novels.

INCORPORATING



TECHNOLOGY

Help students to set up a class chat room to discuss a character or book in depth.

Standards Link  
8.3.3

**Activity (continued)**

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- A letter from Caroline, the twin sister in *Jacob Have I Loved*, to Amy in *Little Women* about the difficulty of being a favored sister.
  - A letter from Adam in *I Am the Cheese* to Bud in *Bud, Not Buddy*, comparing their attempts to reconstruct their family past.
6. Have students use the BLM to plan the content and style of their letter. Ask them to look in the books for evidence of the way the characters talk, of what they feel is valuable, and of their attitudes and beliefs.
  7. Review the proper form for letter writing. Have students write complete drafts of their letters, keeping in mind the ideas and information they noted on the BLM.

**C. Close the Activity**




1. Have students read their letters out loud in class and tell what the letters reveal about the characters.
2. When all the letters have been read and discussed, revisit the novels and discuss any new insights students have about the novels now that they have looked at the characters closely.

**Classroom Assessment**

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**Basic Concepts and Processes**

When you are finished with the activities, assess students' knowledge by asking the following questions:

-  What elements can we look for to judge what a character is like?
  -  What role do the different characters play in this book?
  -  What is the proper format for an informal letter?
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Literary Letters

**Directions:** Use this worksheet to plan a letter written from one literary character to another.

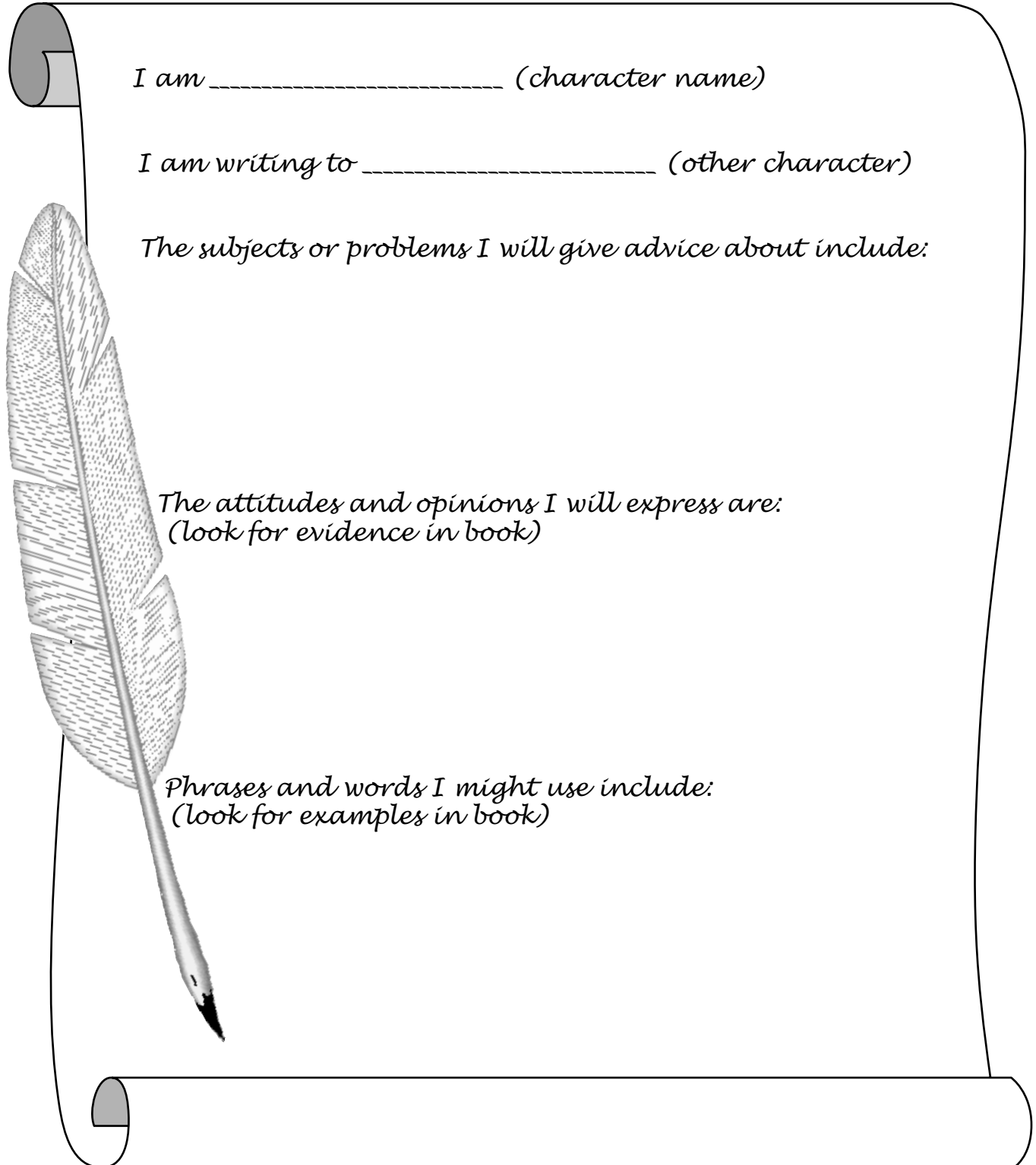
I am \_\_\_\_\_ (character name)

I am writing to \_\_\_\_\_ (other character)

The subjects or problems I will give advice about include:

The attitudes and opinions I will express are:  
(look for evidence in book)

Phrases and words I might use include:  
(look for examples in book)



# Literary Letters

## Teacher Directions

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Ask students to choose a character from a book they are currently reading for class to be the letter writer. Have them choose a second character from another book they have read in class to be the recipient for the letter. Advise students to look for characters who might have something in common, but encourage them to be creative in their choices.

Distribute the BLM *Literary Letters*. Tell students to write some notes about the subjects the letter might address. Mention that the letter should give advice and commentary and should point to similarities or differences in the two characters' situations.

Ask students to consider what attitudes, beliefs, or perspectives the character is likely to show in his/her writing. Point out that the character might give bad advice or have a narrow perspective, depending on his/her own qualities. Encourage students to review the book to see how the character reacts to different circumstances before taking notes in this section of the BLM.

Have students look for particular phrases or expressions the character is likely to use in conversation or in informal writing. Ask students to consider how they will make it look like the letter is really written in the character's own words. Have them note particular words and phrases to use on the BLM.

Once they have taken notes on the BLM, tell students to use it to guide their writing of the letter. Remind them to follow the proper form for informal letter writing.

## Answer Key

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Answers will vary.