

National Day on Writing



Thank you for participating in the National Day on Writing (NDoW), sponsored nationally by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Writing Project (NWP), and sponsored locally by the Lowcountry Writing Project (LWP). We hope that you and your students will enjoy our local theme, “Celebrate the Lowcountry through Writing,” and that you will discover the power of writing as a learning tool, not only for English class, but for all disciplines across the curriculum.

In this packet you will find some suggestions for writing assignments you might use with your students, along with suggestions for sharing the writing within your classroom and your school, as well as instructions for submitting work to the National Gallery of Writing. You will also find information on the LWP’s September 12th Writing Marathons, a special day for teachers and a way to express our thanks for your participation.

For ease of reading, each set of suggestions or instructions appears on a separate page:

- Suggestions for Early Grade assignments
- Suggestions for Middle Grade assignments
- Suggestions for High School assignments
- Suggestions for assessment (i.e., grading the pieces)
- Guidelines for submitting entries to the National Gallery of Writing
- Guidelines for submitting entries for the Lowcountry Public Reading (October 19th)

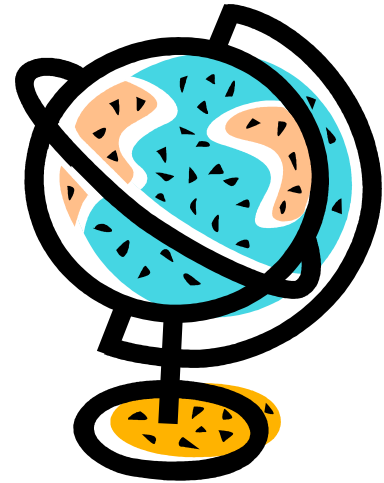
General Suggestions for Writing Assignments

We typically work harder and produce better results on projects in which we are personally invested. This principle holds true for students and their writing, too, so we encourage you to work with your students to develop assignments that they can “own.” You might offer some starter activities or topics, let your students make additional suggestions, then let them choose their own assignments for the NDoW piece.

The information on the following pages is intended only to help you get started, not to dictate the “right” way to proceed. Each page lists some of the SC ELA standards that could be addressed with a NDoW piece, along with some sample assignments you might use. You are welcome to use an assignment “as is,” but we encourage you to adapt each assignment to the needs and interests of your students and the culture of your school and your classroom. Nobody knows your students better than you, so you are uniquely qualified to adapt these suggestions to fit your students.

Suggestions for Early Grades

The SC ELA standards require students to write both informational and persuasive texts, using a variety of genres, and writing for a variety of audiences and purposes. In 1st grade, according to the standards, students should “create narratives (for example, stories and journal entries) about people, places, actions, or things” (1-5.2), “create written pieces that describe personal experiences, people, places, or things and that use words that appeal to the senses” (1-5.3), and “create written pieces (for example, simple rhymes and poems) to entertain others” (1-5.4). By 4th grade, standard 4-5 says that they should create informational pieces (i.e., postcards, flyers, letters, emails), narratives, descriptive pieces, and pieces designed to entertain (i.e., skits, plays). Any of these genres could be appropriate for NDoW pieces.



Students in early grades might enjoy writing about something they know well: their school, their neighborhood, their family, their community. They might **describe** a location (classroom, home, playground) to someone who hasn't been there. They might write a **narrative** (i.e., a story) about a favorite event (i.e., school field day, a parade, a holiday event), perhaps to describe it to someone who hasn't participated, or perhaps to remember (and celebrate) it with friends who were there. They might create **poems, letters or post cards, or stories**. They could even try out different **points of view**, perhaps by writing two versions of the same story, but from the perspective of two different characters.

Sample Assignments:

- *Tell your favorite story about something that happened in your town or in some other Lowcountry location.
- *Write an acrostic poem for “LOWCOUNTRY,” or for a Lowcountry place, a famous Lowcountry person, or a typical Lowcountry activity.
- *Imagine you serve lunch in the cafeteria. Write a letter to your grandchildren, describing the children you see every day at lunchtime. (Or imagine you are an object in the cafeteria, or perhaps a tree outside the window, looking in.)
- *Take a walk (with your class) through the school. Create a “walking tour” guide for visitors.
- *Imagine that you are a tourist visiting the Lowcountry. Write a series of post cards to friends back home, telling them about your visit. (For a technological twist, students might compose emails to describe their visit.)

Suggestions for Middle Grades

According to the SC ELA standards, students in 6th grade should “create informational pieces (for example, brochures, pamphlets, and reports) that use language appropriate for the specific audience” (6-5.1), “create narratives that have a fully developed plot and a consistent point of view” (6-5.2), “create written descriptions using precise language and vivid details” (6-5.3), and “create persuasive writings (for example, print advertisements and commercial scripts) that develop a central idea with supporting evidence and use language appropriate for the specific audience” (6-5.4). Genres listed for the 7th grade standards include books, movies, product reviews, and news reports (7-5.1); personal essays and narrative poems (7-5.2), and letters to the editor (7-5.4). In 8th grade, the sample genres include reports and letters of request (8-5.1), memoirs (8-5.2) and editorials and speeches (8-5.4). These genres offer a rich array of possibilities.



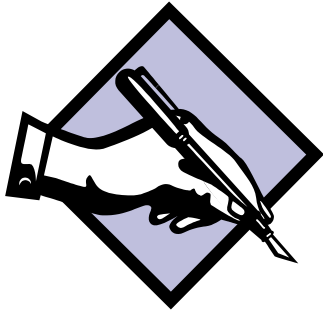
Middle schoolers might enjoy writing a **letter to the editor** of the local paper, or maybe even to a politician, to praise some local activity and encourage continued community support. (For example, they might encourage community support for farmers’ markets, applaud the preservation of space for sweetgrass basket weavers, or encourage the town to continue to support holiday parades; such pieces would require them to state a position and argue for it.) They could also practice persuasion by creating **brochures** promoting local attractions (i.e, the SC Aquarium, a local sports team, the Visitor’s Center, a museum), or by writing **scripts** for videos to promote those attractions. They could create informative pieces by writing **guides** for tourists, such as a guided walking tour of part of their town.

Sample Assignments

- *Write a story for your local or school newspaper, reporting on a local sports or arts event, or write a review of a local performance.
- *Create a brochure, to put in the Visitor’s Center, promoting a local attraction.
- *Describe a Lowcountry attraction that a tourist should be sure to visit. This assignment could take the form of a letter to a friend, a news story for the travel section of a local paper, or a script for a TV commercial or a radio ad.
- *Describe a typical day in the life of a Lowcountry middle-schooler, including details that a reader in Alaska, Hawaii, or a foreign country might find surprising. Students might complete this assignment by writing poems or even song lyrics; they could even set their lyrics to the tune of well-know songs and perform them in class.
- *Interview a sweetgrass-basket weaver, a shrimper, or someone else with a Lowcountry-related job, then write a feature story or a narrative poem about the person.

Suggestions for High School

Throughout high school, students should “write for a variety of purposes and audiences” (E1-5, E2-5, E3-5, and E4-5). The indicators for this standard suggest that students produce technical pieces (i.e., memos, business letters, technical reports), narratives (i.e., personal essays, memoirs, narrative poems), descriptive pieces (i.e., travel writing, restaurant reviews), and persuasive pieces (i.e., editorials, speeches, reports). Thus, students need to write far more than the traditional “literary analysis” papers.



Almost any kind of writing listed in the standards above would be appropriate for a NDoW piece. Using even a single Lowcountry landmark – say, the Customs House – students could write a technical piece (such as an explanation of the architectural style), a narrative (such as a narrative poem or a piece of historical fiction about something that happened there), a descriptive piece (such as a poem inspired by the building or a description of a concert held on the steps), or a persuasive piece (such as a speech that might have been delivered from the steps).

The sample assignments below offer only the barest beginning; you might do well simply to give students the theme of “Celebrate the Lowcountry through Writing,” then let them generate some ideas for different kinds of writing. Keep in mind that high school students should be increasingly aware of their rhetorical choices in light of their audience and purpose.

Sample Assignments

- *Imagine that you are a landmark of some sort (such as the Customs House, or an oak tree in White Point Garden), and describe some of the changes you have seen over the years. (This assignment could involve research in Charleston’s history, or it might turn into historical fiction.)
- *Create a brochure for the Visitor’s Center or the Chamber of Commerce to attract tourists or businesses to the Lowcountry. Use both words and images.
- *Create a piece of historical fiction – a short story, a memoir, a letter, a newspaper report – based on a Lowcountry event: the capture of the Gentleman Pirate, the decision to secede from the Union, the attack by the Hunley, the 1886 earthquake, a civil rights march, Hurricane Hugo.
- *Write a travel/arts piece, describing a particular aspect of the Lowcountry such as sports, theater, dining out, art, music, or local culture.
- *Explore perspective by writing two separate accounts of a single event, or by writing a poem for two voices. For example, you might describe Lowcountry cuisine from the perspective of a Lowcountry native and from that of someone from New York or California, or you might write a poem about the bombing of Fort Moultrie as experienced by a Union and a Confederate soldier.

Suggestions for Assessment

In keeping with the theme of celebration, we recommend that you encourage students to **perform** their pieces: to read aloud their poems, narratives, letters, and essays; to show and explain their brochures; to dramatize their scripts; or even to create and show videos based on scripts. We strongly recommend that such performances be **ungraded celebrations** of writing.



If NDoW pieces are regular class assignments, however, you probably need to assign grades. Because different assignments have different goals, we urge you not to use any commercially produced rubrics, but instead to **let students participate** in the generation of any grading criteria. Discuss the assignment and the goals for writing, then let students identify ways to measure how well each text accomplishes its goals. Identifying the important criteria can help the students self-monitor as they create and revise their pieces, and it will help them to become more independent as writers.

You might consider grading this piece on a single criterion, or at least on very few. For example, you might score “appropriateness” (for the genre), noting that what is appropriate for one genre might not be appropriate for another: the language, tone, and even the arguments in a letter to a relative might not work in a letter to the editor or in a business proposal; the brevity of a post card would not be sufficient for a travel article. (This is an important lesson for students, too – that a text is not “good” or “bad” in an absolute sense, but is “appropriate” or “effective” in relation to its purpose and its audience.)

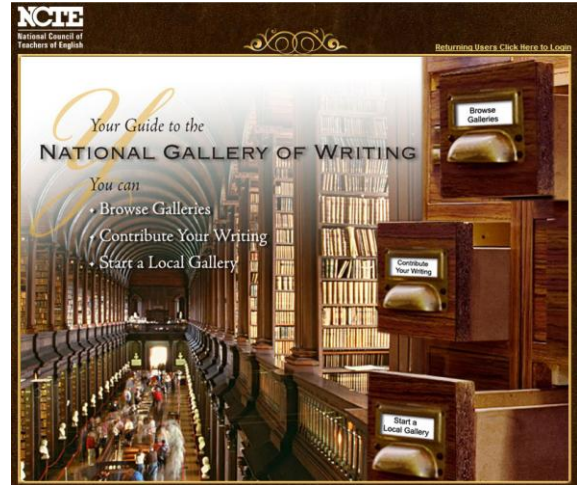
Regardless of what you do in terms of grades, we encourage you to create some kind of **anthology** for your class or your school, so that everybody can be published. At the classroom level, you might simply collect all the pieces and put them in a binder; this binder might stay in the classroom, or it might go in the school library. You might create an electronic anthology, either to burn onto CDs or to post on the class or school website. If you have a budget, hard copies are great; students can collect author autographs (as they do with yearbooks), and they can give copies to family members. With older students, you could have student editors, possibly for extra credit. If you want to publish a class or school anthology, but need some help, contact us at LWP@citadel.edu.

In addition to the anthology, you might want to hold your own **public reading**; perhaps on October 20th, the National Day on Writing. This reading could be an event to which you invite parents and friends, offering refreshments and really celebrating the student work. If several classes participate (especially at an elementary or primary school), you might host your own NDoW event in the cafeteria, posting everyone’s writing on the walls (or in the hallways), with several students from each class reading their work aloud. (Again, this would be a great event for parents and friends.)

Submitting Pieces for the National Gallery of Writing

Get your students' work displayed for the whole country to see! For this kind of national attention, your students will need to post their work to the National Gallery of Writing, an online archive of writing from students, teachers and community members. The national gallery is like a huge building with lots of rooms, and we have a "room" called "The Lowcountry Writing Project Gallery." You can find it here:

<http://www.galleryofwriting.org/galleries/124330>.



Teachers cannot post for their students, because each person can only post once. Thus, you can either:

- *use your SmartBoard or projector to show your students how to post to the gallery themselves, then have them post at home or on school computers,
- *take your students to a computer lab and have them post with your assistance, or
- *give them the instructions and let them post from home or on school computers.

How do you post?

- *Go to <http://www.galleryofwriting.org/galleries/124330>
- *Scroll to the bottom of the page.
- *Click on the button "Contribute to this Gallery."
- *Create a profile and log in.
- *Complete the "More about You, the Author" section. (Hit "next" at the bottom of the page when done.)
- *Complete the "About Your Piece" section. (Hit "next" at the bottom of the page when done.)
- *You have three choices for posting your work to the gallery:
 - +Upload by clicking on "browse," locating your Word document, and uploading it.
 - +Post a URL to your work if it is already published on the web (say, on a blog or in an online magazine)
 - +Copy and paste the text from your Word document into the editing window.
- *When done, choose "next" at the bottom of the page and follow the instructions.

All of your students may submit their work to the National Gallery of Writing. You may also submit one or two pieces of student work, as well as a piece of your own writing, for consideration for the local reading on October 20th. Finally, we'd like to offer a small gift as a thank-you for participating. See next page for details.

Submitting Pieces for the Lowcountry Public Reading on October 19th

For the **public reading** on October 19th, you should submit no more than one or two pieces per class. (We would prefer one per class, but if you find that you simply can't decide between two pieces, you may submit them both.) You may choose the piece with the highest grade, you may let students vote on the piece to be submitted, or you use some other criterion (i.e., the most creative approach, the most spirited performance during a classroom readaloud, the most humorous piece). **The reading will be held at the Riviera Theater at Charleston Place, 130 Market Street, from 4:30-6:30 pm. The program will be posted online.**

Once you make your selection(s), you have several options:

- *type the piece in Microsoft Word, to be emailed as an attachment,
- *copy and paste the piece into the body of an email message, or
- *digitally scan or photograph the piece and save it as a jpeg or gif file.

Whichever option you choose, you should email the file (or message) to LWP@citadel.edu. The deadline is Friday, September 18th, but it's OK to send pieces earlier. (Early is good!)

Please include the following information in the body of the email message:

- *Your name and school
- *A brief description of the assignment (such as the genre, audience, purpose, and/or assignment)
- *The student's name
- *The student's grade in school (so we can select papers from a range of grade levels)
- *A mailing address and phone number for the student (so we can contact those students who will be invited to read at the October 19th event)

We will then forward the submissions, minus identifying information other than grade level, to a group of LWP Teacher Consultants, who will select the papers for the October 19th public reading. We will contact the authors of those papers (and notify you) no later than early October, inviting the authors to read their work aloud at the public event.

FREE TICKETS: Our Thank-You to Participating Teachers

To thank you for participating in this event, we would like to give you two tickets to a **writing marathon**, an adults-only event that lets you and a friend enjoy a Lowcountry activity and write about it (if you like). Go on a carriage tour, attend a sports event, visit a plantation, or maybe tour a winery. Most events are scheduled for October 24th, but a few occur on other dates. You are welcome to submit your own written work for the National Gallery of Writing or for the October 19th public reading.



For a list of activities, simply visit our website (www.citadel.edu/writingproject) and click on the "Writing Marathon" link, then complete the online form to request tickets to the event of your choice. Thanks again for your work with Lowcountry students!

www.citadel.edu/writingproject