



# Literacy Connects

*A Content Literacy Newsletter from Regional Professional Development Program-Issue XLIV*



## Using Multi-genre for Summarizing and Concept Development

Using multiple genres of writing is an effective and fun way to develop and assess understanding, promote concept development, and increase retention of content knowledge and vocabulary. Following are cross curricular examples of ways you can motivate students to write and increase their understanding of your content.

### Biopoems

Students can read biographies of famous people from any content area and write e-mails, letters, journals, or stories from the perspective of the character portrayed in the book. They can also write movie reviews, plays, or re-write a scene changing the time and location. Another option is to have students write biographies of inanimate objects or concepts (rocks, planets, organs, numbers, geometric figures, mathematical functions...). This activity can be easily adapted to almost anything.

- Line 1. First name (I am...)
- Line 2. Four traits that describe that character (object, concept) (I am .....
- Line 3. Relative of (I am related to...)
- Line 4. Lover of (3 things or people) (I love...)
- Line 5. Who feels (3 items) (I feel...)
- Line 6. Who needs (3 things)
- Line 7. Who fears (3 things)
- Line 8. Who gives (3 things)
- Line 9. Who would like to see (3 items)
- Line 10. Resident of (I reside in...)
- Line 11. Last name

### Riddles for Content Review and Vocabulary

Writing often takes a backseat to "learning the content." Even though the act of writing helps students to learn, they are often required to spend their time on worksheets that require a minimum of writing and reading. This activity can be used in any class for a variety of reasons: as a unit, concept, or semester review, to check for understanding, or for a change of pace.

#### Procedures:

1. After studying a unit, students pick a concept, term, or idea and write a riddle describing their concept. Each line contains a new and more descriptive clue; they start with broad clues moving to more specific clues.
2. Riddles are exchanged with partners and solved, or students can take turns reading them to the entire class, allowing the class to solve the riddle.
- 3.

#### Extensions:

1. Riddles can be compiled into a book as review of the unit or as an introduction to the unit for the following year.
2. Riddles can be used to review for a test or quiz.

Student examples follow:

Visit the RPDP website ([www.rpdp.net](http://www.rpdp.net)) for a complete selection of *Literacy Connects*.



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## Math

I am a polygon found in the pattern blocks;  
I am a quadrilateral;  
Two of my sides are parallel;  
Two of my sides are congruent;  
My base angles have the same measure;  
I am a truncated triangle;  
What am I?  
(An isosceles trapezoid)

## Science/Math/Social Studies

I was born in England in 1642;  
I loved to experiment and invent;  
Calculus is the subject for which I'm famous;  
I studied the movement of the earth and moon;  
I determined that gravity is the force that exists  
between all bodies and the universe.  
Who am I?  
(Sir Isaac Newton)

## Life Science

I am in the animal kingdom;  
I am in the vertebrata phylum;  
I am usually green, but can be olive or black;  
I breathe with lungs;  
I eat frogs, toads and insects;  
I lay eggs, sometimes as many as 80.  
King snakes and black snakes eat me;  
I am helpful to man because I eat gophers and young squirrels  
What am I?  
(A garter snake)

## Research Recipes

Recipe poems are another fun way to share knowledge. Have students gather 10 specific facts about a subject or concept. Then list recipe language on the board: mash, beat, whip, fold, stir, bake, scant teaspoon, heaping table spoon, etc. Show students sample of recipes, so they understand the format, and have them summarize their understanding using a recipe poem. (This activity has been adapted from Reviser's Toolbox by Barry Lane)

Examples:

### Constitution Stew

- 1 teaspoon First Amendment
- 27 cups of amendments
- Sliced hatred for King George
- 1 cup of Preamble
- 13-15 oz. of African American Rights
- 16 cups voters' rights
- Cook President for 4 years then remove
- Strain out obsolete amendments
- Mince and throw away leftover racism
- Boil on high for 3 years
- Preserve in freezer for hundreds of years.  
-- Matt Lehet, 7<sup>th</sup> grade

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## Recipe for Coastal Rain Forest

### Ingredients:

- A constant shower of rain water
- 2000 decaying logs
- 100 cups of hemlock seeds
- 120 cups of spruce seeds
- 220 cups of fir seeds
- A healthy dose of fecundity
- Moss (to taste)

**Instructions:** This recipe works best if made in northwestern North America. Some have found success making similar dishes in Chile, New Zealand and the Black Sea. Place logs on the ground (preferably above the watershed line and the high tide mark) and let them rot sufficiently. Scatter in hemlock, spruce, and fir seeds among the naturally occurring fecundity. Let steam for a number of years, at least a dozen. Naturally occurring organic material from leaf litter, foliate, and animal left-overs is to be expected. Once the trees seem well-established, sprinkle the whole dish with moss for desired color. Sheila S., 6<sup>th</sup> grade

## Top Ten Lists

Comedian David Letterman has perfected the top ten list as a humorous genre of writing. Students can use this form to show what they know about a topic in any content area. For example, "*Top Ten Reasons Why You Wouldn't Want to be a Christian in Roman Times*" for social studies; "*Top Ten Reasons I'd Rather Be a One-Celled Organism*" for science; or "*Top Ten Reasons Macbeth is a Tragic Hero*" for English. These are funnier if they are stated indirectly. For example, let's say my poem is "*Top Ten Reasons I don't Want to Be a Cat.*" One reason could be my friend is a dog, but that's not as funny as writing, "My best friend's name is Fido." Be a little indirect and the audience will find the humor. Also move from 10 – 1, stacking your better reasons near the end. Try mixing some straight facts with you funny ones. (This activity has been adapted from The Reviser's Toolbox by Barry Lane)

Example:

### Top Ten Reasons Why Columbus Discovered America

- 10 He needed a job
- 9 He was looking for the edge of the world
- 8 He was looking to make some money
- 7 He tried to discover Portugal but someone beat him to it
- 6 He knew the state capital of Ohio would someday need a name
- 5 He didn't. His boats did but they were lost
- 4 Queen Isabella had a thing for explorers
- 3 He was sick of Spain and the lack of opportunities
- 2 He wanted to find a shortcut to the West Indies
- 1 He needed some gold to fill a tooth