**What is RAFT?**

The RAFTs Technique (Santa, 1988) is a system to help students understand their role as a writer, the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the expected content. It is an acronym that stands for:

* Role of the Writer - Who are you as the writer? Are you Sir John A. Macdonald? A warrior? A homeless person? An auto mechanic? The endangered snail darter?
* Audience - To whom are you writing? Is your audience the Canadian people? A friend? Your teacher? Readers of a newspaper? A local bank?
* Format - What form will the writing take? Is it a letter? A classified ad? A speech? A poem?
* Topic + strong Verb - What's the subject or the point of this piece? Is it to persuade a goddess to spare your life? To plead for a re-test? To call for stricter regulations on logging?

Almost all RAFTs writing assignments are written from a viewpoint different from the student's, to another audience rather than the teacher, and in a form different from the ordinary theme. Therefore, students are encouraged to use creative thinking and response as they connect their imagination to newly learned information.

**What Is Its Purpose?**

The purpose of RAFTs is to give students a fresh way to think about approaching their writing. It occupies a nice middle ground between standard, dry essays and free-for-all creative writing. RAFTs combine the best of both. It also can be the way to bring together students' understanding of main ideas, organization, elaboration, and coherence...in other words, the criteria by which compositions are most commonly judged.

**How Can I Do It?**

***Step one:*** Explain to the students how all writers have to consider various aspects before every writing assignment including role, audience, format, and topic. Tell them that they are going to structure their writing around these elements. (It may be helpful to display the elements on chart paper or a bulletin board for future reference).

***Step two:*** Display a completed RAFTs example on the overhead, and discuss the key elements as a class.

***Step three:*** Then, demonstrate, model, and "think aloud" another sample RAFTs exercise with the aid of the class. Brainstorm additional topic ideas, and write down the suggestions listing roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs associated with each topic.

***Step four:*** Assign students to small, heterogeneous groups of four or five or pairs and have them "put their heads together" to write about a chosen topic with one RAFTs assignment between them.

***Step five:*** Circulate among the groups to provide assistance as needed. Then have the groups share their completed assignments with the class.

***Step six:*** After students become more proficient in developing this style of writing, have them generate RAFTs assignments of their own based on current topics studied in class.

**How Can I Adapt It?**

* This strategy is great for differentiation; teachers (and students) can develop any number of possible RAFTs based on the same text that can be adjusted for skill level and rigor.
* The RAFTs strategy can be used as a prewriting strategy and/or as a strategy for helping students prepare for a small or large group discussion.