



Lesson 1.4

From Reader to Writer

In your classroom, you get to share your writing with classmates; taking turns reading, listening, and giving feedback. Readers don't always get to communicate directly with authors, though. Sometimes the writer isn't a member of your class. When you are reading library books, magazines, on-line articles, or blogs, does your brain come up with comments, questions, or suggestions? Maybe you want to say, "Tell me more!" Or, you have a polite complaint, "No fair stopping now! It was just getting interesting!" As a reader, you want certain things from writers: ideas that get your imagination churning, characters who seem as real as people next door, and answers to your most pressing questions. As a writer, make sure you provide those same things for *your* readers.



“Dear Writer”

Read the following two examples. As a reader, do you have any unanswered questions? Does the writer need to give you *more* information—or do something *differently*? Use the space below each example to send a message to the writer.



Hint: Stay positive and *be specific*—writers have feelings, you know!

Example 1

The Secret Woods

The last time we were at the beach, my friend and I hiked along a trail we always take. Suddenly, though, where we usually go left, for some reason we headed right. To the left were awesome, rolling sand dunes; to the right was the great unknown—at least unknown to us. The trail followed the ridge of a sandy hill, then cut sharply down to a thick, dark grove of trees. All along the trail were some animal tracks. Some seemed very fresh. We hesitated at the edge of the trees and then followed the tracks into the woods. In seconds, it got eerily quiet. We couldn't hear the ocean anymore. That sure was one great adventure!

Dear Writer,

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Example 2

The Stray

I live in a tall apartment building in a big city. The elevator ride usually leaves *my* stomach feeling wobbly. We're on the 12th floor. The sign clearly says "No Pets," but people *do* have pets. They sneak them in. Mrs. Harwood on 7 has a pet, and Mr. Spiven on 11 has one, too. I know for sure that one person has a really *unusual* pet! So when I saw this forlorn stray in the alley, what was I supposed to do? Leave him to starve? I'm so glad I *made* the right decision. *My* life is so interesting now!

Dear Writer,

Message Received

First . . . in writing circles or as a class, share several of your Dear Writer letters aloud. List some of the best suggestions and comments.



Next . . . imagine you are one of the two writers receiving letters from readers. How would that influence your revision? Choose one piece to revise. Follow your own advice and that of your classmates. Take 10 minutes or more to write your revision on your own paper. Feel free to change information, add new details, or both. As you revise, keep asking yourself:

- Am I offering readers details that will keep them reading?
- Am I creating clear pictures in my readers' minds?
- Am I answering my readers' most important questions?
- Am I writing something I would like to read myself?

Share and Compare

Share your revised writing with a partner. Listen carefully to the changes your partner made. Did his or her revision answer your questions? Did it make you want to read even more? Write down one question you still have on an index card, fold it, and hand it to your partner. (No peeking until all sharing is over.)



A Writer's Questions

Good writers are always answering readers' questions. But . . . do they also raise new questions as they write? Is this a good thing? Why?



Putting It to the Test

Let's say you're writing a story or essay in a testing situation. You have your topic clearly in mind, but you want to think like a reader. (After all, readers are going to score your work!) Do you think it could help to quickly jot down two or three questions your reader might have? If you did this and made sure to answer the questions, would it affect your score in the trait of Ideas? Why?