

# Our Food: We're In This Together

**Background:** Food. It connects us. It is one of the few shared experiences left. American farmers and ranchers produce the healthiest, most abundant, affordable and safest food supply in the world. But they face increasing adversity due to public unfamiliarity, as well as misinformation and scare tactics surrounding food production. It is more important now, than ever before, that consumers ask questions. Talk to a farmer or rancher. Seek out facts and truth before making decisions.

## Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Evaluate farmers' and ranchers' challenges.
- Support the fact that to feed a growing population, food production requires all methods.
- Think critically and collaborate to develop and refine questions.
- Articulate the power of words and messaging.
- Execute a number of communication styles.

## Procedure:

This lesson is designed to take 4-8 days, depending on instructor's choices.

1. Engage– Snowball activity (10-15 minutes)
2. Explore– Watch TFB's "Our Food" video
3. Explain– Conduct Socratic seminar (30-50 minutes)
4. Extend/Elaborate– Question Formulation Technique (30-50 minutes)
5. Evaluate– Letter composition/Tweet creation (2-4 days)

## Materials:

1 blank paper per student  
TFB "Our Food" video  
(available on TFB Facebook or Vimeo)  
Internet connected device per student  
Dry erase boards or giant sticky pad  
Word processor  
Letter envelopes

## TEKS:

### §130.2 Principles of AFNR

4. B, D, E, F

6. A, B

7. A

### §130.3 Professional Standards in Ag

4. A, B

5. A, C, D, E, F

6. A, B

### §130.4 Agribusiness Management and Marketing

1. B 3. A, B 5. B

6. B 7. B, D

8. D 9. C



### **Snowball activity:**

1. On a blank sheet of paper, students will answer the question — **“What is the hardest challenge a farmer has?”**
2. Crumple the paper up. Toss it to one corner of the room.
3. Have students pick up a random snowball and return to their seat. Open it up, read the challenge, and think about how they would possibly solve it. One minute or so.
4. Very quickly—have students read off challenges and record, on the board, computer, or paper (ideally where students can see).

### **Watch the video & conduct seminar:**

Show the video “Our Food” by Texas Farm Bureau. Available on Facebook, Vimeo or YouTube

- <https://vimeo.com/689824313/9669be9b7a>

After the video, conduct a Socratic seminar with the students. Refer to attached guidelines for Socratic Seminar if you are unfamiliar with the format. Have students develop their own questions to ask and discuss the main idea and motivation behind the message.

You may have to show the video more than once to refresh students.

Allow discussion to flow freely as long as it will.

Some guiding questions to spur discussion are:

- Do you still think a farmer’s hardest challenge is the same? Why/why not?
- What is meant by the essence of sustainability?
- Why would someone try to scare you about stories about your food?
- What is the key message of Our Food?
- What do you think the most important sentence is?

## **Question Formulation Technique:**

Break students into groups of 3 or 4. The purpose of this activity is develop questions to ask farmers and ranchers, and refine them to be high-quality, meaningful questions.

### **I. Question brainstorm -**

- a. For the brainstorm, students will need something to record questions on where all students can see. Preferably a chart or dry erase board, but paper would work.
  - i. Ask as many questions as you can.
  - ii. Do not stop to judge, discuss, edit, or answer any question.
  - iii. Write down every question exactly as it was asked.
  - iv. Change any statements into questions.
- b. Important: Stress to students that during a brainstorm, EVERYTHING gets written down, with no judgement of quality (ex. No "that's stupid," "that doesn't make sense," or "that's simple"). Time will be given later to assess quality, so during the brainstorm only questions are allowed to be said.

### **II. Classify open or closed -**

- a. After students have created their initial list, have them classify their questions into "open" or "closed." This can be done with a different color marker and writing an "O" or "C" next to each question.
  - i. Time permitting: you can have students discuss the benefits/challenges of open or close ended questions.
  - ii. Time permitting: have students change open-ended into close-ended and vice versa to promote critical thinking and teach how words can drastically change the meaning of a question or statement.

### **III. Prioritize questions -**

- a. For this exercise, priority will be given to open-ended questions. (You could have groups convert ALL their questions to open-ended.)
  - i. Given a few minutes, have groups prioritize questions. 1 = the most important question you want answered by a farmer or rancher, 2 = second most, so on
    1. You can do top 3, 5, 7, 10 depending on your time frame. Each student in the group will need a question though.
- b. If questions need revising, you may allow groups to discuss ways to make their questions better. Adding adjectives to be more specific, changing verbs, etc.

### **IV. Question selection -**

- a. Discuss top questions with the class. Be sure to combine or scratch out similar questions.
  - i. Decide as a class which are the top 3 questions you would like answered. Have a class member submit them in the question form at <http://texasfarmbureau.org/our-food/>
- b. Each student will write a letter with the question to a farmer or rancher using one question that was created in their group.
  - i. If you do not have enough unique questions for each student, you may allow students to double up.

## **Letter Composition:**

1. Each student will compose a letter to a farmer or rancher to ask them the question.
  - a. Have each student draft a letter with their selected questions. Use the letter formatting guide attached, or another guide of your choice.
    - Suggested paragraphs are:
      1. Greeting and explanation of student and assignment.
      2. The question. Include some background of how that question came to be.
      3. Thank you and how to contact student or teacher to respond to question.
2. After each student has completed their rough draft, have students trade letters and critique. You may provide them a copy of the rubric or simply allow them to make edit suggestions based off the letter formatting guide.
3. After peer-review, return letters to original students to compose their final draft.
4. Final drafts will be turned into the teacher. Use the rubric attached, or a rubric of your own choice, to evaluate the letters. Once letters have been returned to students with edit suggestions, have students revise one final time.
5. Mail letters – You can do this one of two ways:
  - a. Have students research farmers or ranchers in the area, and mail directly to them

- Or -

b. Locate the county Farm Bureau in your county and send the letters to distribute to members to address. Please be sure and include a note explaining what the letters are for!

County Locator can be found here - <http://texasfarmbureau.org/county-locator/>

(If your county has more than one office, the location without a hyphen is the main office. i.e. Dallas County Farm Bureau-Garland is a branch office and Dallas County Farm Bureau is the main office)

## **Final activity:**

Students will craft a tweet to combine all their learning from each section of the lesson. Students' tweets need to:

- Be 280 characters or less, including spaces and hashtags
- Include the hashtags #ourfood #TexasFarmBureau
- Include other hashtags students feel appropriate
- Be shared on Twitter, or if not possible, on a sticky note or drawing to post in the room/hallway

Choose one of the following prompts for students to use:

1. Create a tweet telling how you influence our food with farmers and ranchers.
2. Create a tweet containing what you would like to say to a farmer.
3. Create a tweet about the key message of the video *Our Food*.

## **Socratic Seminar Guidelines**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of a Socratic Seminar is to achieve a deeper understanding about the ideas and values in a source. During the seminar, participants systematically question and examine issues and principles related to a particular content, and articulate different points-of-view. The group conversation assists participants in constructing meaning through disciplined analysis, interpretation, listening, and participation.

### **Background**

- In a Socratic Seminar, the participants carry the burden of responsibility for the quality of the discussion.
- Good discussions occur when participants study the source closely in advance, listen actively, share their ideas and questions in response to the ideas and questions of others, and search for evidence in the source to support their ideas.
- Students need to create and agree on norms for the discussion and all agree to adhere to them.
- Students are encouraged to think out loud and to exchange ideas openly while examining ideas in a rigorous, thoughtful, manner.

### **Classroom Environment**

The classroom should be arranged so that students can look at each other directly. A circle or square works well. Some teachers like to use desks. Others prefer simply to use chairs without desks.

During the seminar, use particular questions to move the discussion along. Toward the end of the seminar, some teachers like to use closing questions that encourage participants to apply the ideas to their personal experiences and opinions. Answering these closing questions does not require use of the source but provides students with the chance to share their own perspectives. Lastly, debriefing questions help students reflect on the process of the seminar.

### **Sample questions to serve as the key question or interpret the source:**

- What is the main idea or underlying value in the source?
- What is the purpose or perspective?
- What does (a particular phrase) mean?
- What is the most important word/sentence/paragraph?

### **Sample questions to move the discussion along:**

- Who has a different perspective?
- Who has not yet had a chance to speak?
- Where do you find evidence for that in the source?
- Can you clarify what you mean by that?
- How does that relate to what (someone else) said?
- Is there something in the source that is unclear to you?
- Has anyone changed their mind?

### **Sample questions to bring the discussion back to students in closing:**

- How do the ideas in the source relate to our lives? What do they mean for us personally?
- Why is this material important?
- Is it right that....? Do you agree with the speakers?

### **Sample debriefing questions:**

- Do you feel like you understand the source at a deeper level?
- How was the process for us? Did we adhere to our norms?
- Did you achieve your goals to participate?
- What was one thing you noticed about the seminar?

## **SEMINAR STRUCTURE**

### **Before the Seminar**

- Introduce the seminar and its purpose (**to facilitate a deeper understanding of the ideas and values in the source through shared discussion**).
- Have students investigate the source. They may use one of several formats to process the information. The Open-Ended Questions and/or the Critical Reasoning Analysis Sheet can be used to help students understand the content. These can be used as the 'ticket' to participate in the seminar. Share any expectations related to assessment.

### **Review the Discussion Norms**

In addition to the classroom discussion norms you may have already set, it is important to include the following norms, or ones that are similar:

- Don't raise hands
- Listen carefully
- Address one another respectfully
- Base any opinions on the source

### **Additional norms might include**

- Address comments to the group (no side conversations)
- Use sensitivity to take turns and not interrupt others
- Monitor 'air time'
- Be courageous in presenting your own thoughts and reasoning, but be flexible and willing to change your mind in the face of new and compelling evidence

## **During the Seminar**

- Be seated at the level of the students and remind them to address each other and not you!
- Pose the key question.
- Ask participants to relate their statements to particular segments of the video, to clarify, and to elaborate.
- If the conversation gets off track, refocus students on the opening question by restating it.
- Use additional questions to move the discussion along.
- Invite those who have not spoken into the conversation. Some teachers use talking chips (each student is allotted a number of chips that they use when they make a contribution) or a talking chain (asking each person to comment or pass in a circle). The chips may be especially useful when working with very young children but should be used only until students 'get the idea.'
- You may wish to record for your own purposes the main ideas discussed and the contributions people make (using a shorthand or diagram) to refer to as you facilitate.
- It can be helpful to summarize the main points made in the discussion at a quiet point or towards the end of the discussion.

## **After the Seminar**

- Ask debriefing questions of the students.
- Share your own experience with the seminar as a facilitator.

*Taken and adapted from the Northwest Association for Biomedical Research at <https://www.nwabr.org/sites/default/files/SocSem.pdf> and the National Paideia Center.*

# Business Letter Sample

1234 Any Street *(Your street address)*  
Hometown, OH 45764 *(City, State ZIP)*  
July 12, 2007 *(Current Date)*

Ms. Sandra Garcia *(Name of recipient)*  
Any Company *(Business/Institution name, if applicable)*  
5678 Not Here Avenue *(Street Address)*  
Another Town, NY 10012 *(City, State ZIP)*

Dear Ms. Garcia: *(Notice the use of a colon after the greeting)*

Introductory Paragraph: Use this paragraph to explain your purpose for writing. This paragraph should probably include three or four sentences.

Second Paragraph: Notice the spacing and lack of indentations in this format. This modern business letter style is called *block format*. Use single-spacing for paragraphs, and leave an extra space between paragraphs. This second paragraph can include supporting details or additional information about why you are writing. A length of 3–5 sentences is a good guide for a second paragraph.

Concluding Paragraph: Summarize your earlier statements. Provide any additional contact information. Thank the recipient for his or her time. Two to three sentences is a good length for a concluding paragraph.

Sincerely, *(Other possible closings include Respectfully)*

*(Leave 3–4 spaces so you have room to sign your name)*

Any Student *(Type your name)*

Body (1–3 Paragraphs)



# LETTER RUBRIC

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

Assignment name: \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>25 Excellent</b>	<b>20 Good</b>	<b>15 Developing</b>	<b>10 Unsatisfactory</b>
Letter Parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has heading, date, greeting, body, closing, and signature.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has five of the six letter parts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has four of the six letter parts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has three or fewer letter parts.</li> </ul>
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Margins are present on all four sides and text is visually centered on top and bottom.</li> <li>Spacing follows correct letter format</li> <li>Neatly written or typed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Margins are present on all four sides.</li> <li>Text is not centered.</li> <li>Spacing follows correct letter format.</li> <li>Neatly written or typed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Margins are present on all four sides.</li> <li>Spacing has 1-3 errors.</li> <li>Unevenly written or typed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Margins are present on all four sides.</li> <li>Spacing has four or more errors.</li> <li>Handwriting or typing interferes with readability</li> </ul>
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Excellent punctuation, spelling, and grammar with fewer than three errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very good punctuation, spelling, and grammar with fewer than five errors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation, spelling, and grammar slightly distract the reader and interfere with meaning.</li> <li>There are ten errors or less.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Punctuation, spelling, and grammar significantly distract the reader.</li> <li>There are more than ten errors.</li> </ul>
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message stated is clear, precise, and shows insight into task.</li> <li>Letter is three or more paragraphs.</li> <li>Letter encourages a response from the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is clear and demonstrates understanding of task..</li> <li>Letter contains only two paragraphs or does not encourage a response from the reader.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is mostly clear.</li> <li>Letter is only one paragraph in length.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Message is unclear or disorganized.</li> <li>Demonstrates a lack of understanding of the assignment.</li> </ul>