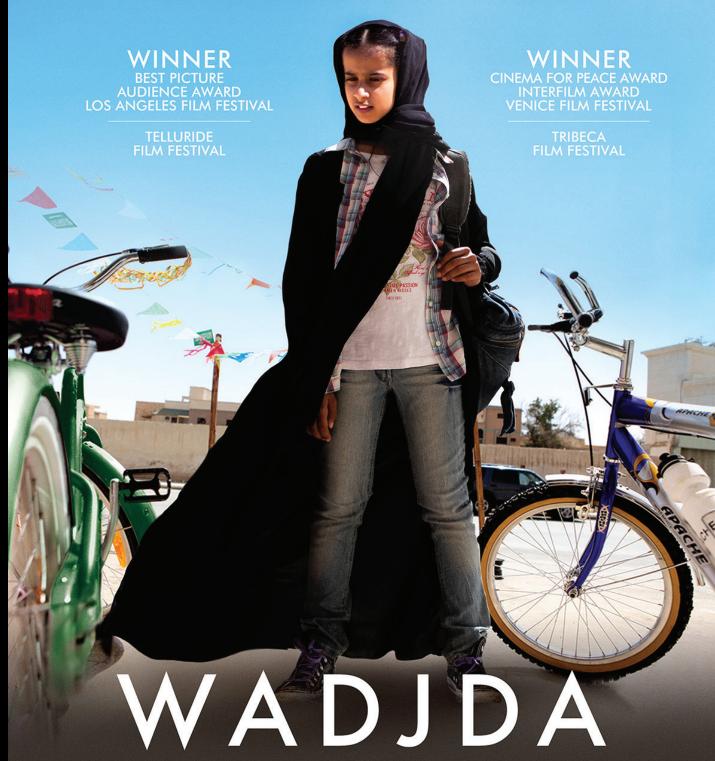
"ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF THE YEAR. SOMETHING CLOSE TO A MIRACLE."

"FUNNY AND TOUCHING. DISCOVER WHAT CAN MAKE US HAPPY, BOTH AS MOVIEGOERS AND CITIZENS OF THE WORLD. 'WADJDA' DOES THE TRICK."



A SONY PICTURES CLASSICS RELEASE RAZOR FILM IN 020-PRODUCTION WITH HIGH LOOK GROUP AND ROTANA STUDIOS IN COOPERATION WITH NORDDEUTSCHER RUNDFUNK AND BAYERISCHER RUNDFUNK WITH THE SUPPORT OF FILMFÖRDERUNGSANISTALT MITTELDEUTSCHE MEDIENFÖRDERUNG MEDIENBOARD BERLIN-BRANDENBURG INVESTITIONSBANK DES LANDES BRANDENBURG SUNDANCE INSTITUTE FEATURE FILM PROGRAM DORIS DUKE FOUNDATION FOR ISLAMIC ART PRODUCED IN COOPERATION WITH DUBBAI ENTERTAINMENT AND MEDIA ORGANIZATION AND ENJABZ A DUBBAI FILM MARKET INITIATIVE DEPLETORED WITH THE SUPPORT OF RAWI SCREENWRITERS LAB ABU DHABI FILM COMMISSION HUBERT BALS FUND PRESENT "WADJODA" REEM ABDULLAH ABDULLAH ABDULLAH ABDULLAH ABDULLAH ABDULLAH BARD MEDISTORE WAD MOHAMMED TO LE NICOLAISEN THE THOMAS MOLT SEPTER POHL OF CONTROL OF THE WARD MEDISTORE WAS REASON TO LOUISE NEMSCHOFF AND ARRANDERS WODRASCHKE WAS ALBERT BERNARD WEINTER WAS ALBERT BERNARD MEINT RESERVEN.

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About Journeys in Film

Founded in 2003, *Journeys in Film* operates on the belief that teaching with film has the power to help our next generation gain a richer understanding of the diverse and complex world in which we live. Our goal is to help students recognize cultural biases and racism (including their own), cultivate human empathy and compassion, develop a deeper knowledge of universal issues and current challenges, and encourage civic engagement as competent world citizens.

Award-winning feature films and documentaries act as springboards for lesson plans in subjects ranging from math, science, language arts, and social studies to other topics that have become critical for students to learn about: human rights, environmental sustainability, poverty, hunger, global health, diversity, gender, and immigration. Prominent educators on our team consult with filmmakers and cultural specialists in the development of curriculum guides, each one dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the culture and issues depicted in a specific film. The guides complement teachers' existing lesson plans and meet mandated curricular requirements, providing teachers with an innovative way to fulfill their school districts' standards-based goals.

We prepare teachers to use film effectively in the classroom through customized professional development workshops and online webinars. Journeys in Film is an organization with proven results. Individual teachers worldwide and entire school districts in the U.S. have employed our interdisciplinary film-based curricula.

- Millions of students have learned about our multicultural world through Journeys in Film's middle school series, based on films from Iran, South Africa, South Korea, the Maori of New Zealand, Tibet, India, China and Saudi Arabia.
- Students are becoming inspired by the courageous contemporary and historical figures portrayed in films such as *Hidden Figures*, *The Post*, and *He Named Me Malala*.
- Films like Schindler's List, Defiant Requiem, and Big Sonia not only teach about the Holocaust, but also demonstrate how one person can make a difference in the lives of others.
- Teachers are using our outstanding documentary series to teach about historical events, American prison systems, the critical role of photojournalists, and positive psychology.

Journeys in Film guides help teachers integrate these films into their classrooms, examining complex issues, encouraging students to be active rather than passive viewers, and maximizing the power of film to enhance critical thinking skills and to meet the Common Core Standards.



Why teach with film?

Today's students are the most visually literate generation in history. According to the Social Science Research Network, 65% of people are primarily visual learners. Today's students are more affected by media than ever before. They seldom need to be coaxed into watching films; after all, everyone loves a good movie. Through their own desire to be entertained, students become captivated learners.

Films have long been overlooked as an educational tool. We teach our students literature that originates from many places around the world, but we tend to forget that what often spurs the imagination is both visual and auditory. Film, which in minutes can be screened and beamed to every country in the world, is this extraordinary educational tool that goes right into the heart of different cultures. One of its strengths lies in its ability to present information rapidly and convey atmosphere, making that world come to life. It allows viewers to "feel" and thereby develop empathy skills, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of students connecting personally to the content, which in turn helps with understanding and analyzing concepts.

In teaching with films, we encourage our students to be critical consumers of what they see and teach them to consider the perspective of the filmmaker and challenge generalizations. Analyzing film and media is an empowering skill and one that is increasingly important for young people. To this end, it is imperative to integrate the film into a larger lesson, using it as a launching pad for historical and cultural exploration, as well as an examination of narrative perspective, character development, and media literacy.

In one 7th grade student's words, "I like Journeys in Film because it just doesn't teach you like a book. It's better when you can actually see it happening. Films give a firsthand view of places and stories."



A Letter from Haifaa Al Mansour



I truly hope you enjoyed watching my film *Wadjda*. It is not only the first feature film I directed, but was also the first film ever shot in my home country of Saudi Arabia. It is also the first film directed by a Saudi woman. So it is the first of many things, but

certainly not the last, as Saudi Arabia has now lifted the ban on both the production and exhibition of films within the Kingdom. I know we will now see many more films coming from my country and am so excited about all of the amazing stories there that are waiting to be told.

Wadjda is a very personal story for me but it is not autobiographical. I was never as tough or rebellious as Wadjda when I was a kid! But I learned to go after the things I want in life just like her. The story was influenced a lot by all the girls that I knew growing up, that were so full of life and creativity but never found an outlet for all of their potential. I know they could have done so much more if they had just taken a chance and pushed the boundaries of their lives a little. So I wanted to make a film that celebrates the very difficult choice of stepping outside of ascribed social limitations to pursue a dream. It is never easy, but just like my dream of making films in a country where cinema was forbidden, I wanted to show how important it is to try. I believe we all have to work hard to create the change we want to see in the world.

My goal with *Wadjda*, and with every film I direct, was to make an entertaining film that people enjoy. If a film is not entertaining, the message will never get through. I also wanted to make a film that could be special to Saudis, and make the medium itself seem more accessible, while still

presenting a window to our world to international audiences. As the script developed, I constantly tried to look at it from the outside, to the universal themes that it spoke to. I didn't want to give foreign audiences the false impression that it would be an easy or acceptable thing for a girl to ride a bike around Riyadh, so it was hard not to want to put in a bleaker end to her journey. But I think the positive aspects of the film help audiences relate to the story more.

I knew that Western audiences had ideas and concepts about women in Saudi but didn't know much about the day-to-day life of women in the Kingdom. It is hard to be a woman in Saudi Arabia and I wanted the world to know how strong the women are in my country. They are tough and sassy and the new generation has a whole new outlook and window to the world. They are empowered and motivated to improve their status within the society in ways my generation could never have imagined. They are survivors.

So I hope this film gave you a little insight into the place that I am from. Most of all, I hope it encourages you to tell your own story, to think about what is special and unique about your journey, and how you can share your perspective with the world. We need to hear about every person that takes a risk, no matter how small, and pushes for something they believe in. Those are the stories that will move the world forward.

I am so honored to be included in your studies and sincerely look forward to someday hearing all of your stories.

Respectfully,

Haifaa Al Mansour



Introducing Wadjda

A young girl who desperately wants a bicycle of her own and tries to earn the money to buy it. A wife and mother who worries about losing her husband to another woman. These two story lines intertwine in the film *Wadjda* against the backdrop of conservative society in contemporary Saudi Arabia and the cultural pressures that this society exerts on women.

Ten-year-old Wadjda's friend Abdullah has a bicycle and to Wadjda his bike represents the speed and freedom that only boys seem to have in this gender-conscious society. Having found the bike of her dreams in a local shop, Wadjda makes and sells bracelets and runs errands to earn enough money to buy it, which sometimes gets her in trouble with her school principal. When she hears about prize money for the winner of a contest that tests knowledge about the Quran and the ability to recite the sacred text, she decides that, in spite of her previously lackluster effort in learning the verses, she is going to win this prize.

Meanwhile, her mother is coping with a long commute with a cranky and overbearing driver, the restricted job opportunities she faces as a Saudi woman, and her loneliness. Her husband wants a son and she is unable to give her one; his family is pressuring him to take a second wife. She is also trying to bring up Wadjda as an almost-single mother, and Wadjda is a handful.

Students will identify with Wadjda's longing for what seems to be an unattainable goal and with the difficulty that she has fitting into her strict and conservative girls' school; her worn sneakers, visible often in the film from the opening credits on, symbolize her independence and desire to go her own way in a world that wants to force her to hide her individuality and ambition. It will be more difficult for Western students to understand the totality of restrictions facing women in this society, restrictions that are challenged most effectively by this film. This curriculum guide will help students to enter this world and understand its nuances.

This award-winning film is the work of writer and director Haifaa Al Mansour, who learned about film from her father's videos, since movie theaters were not allowed in Saudi Arabia from 1974 to 2018. She is the first female Saudi director and the first director to make a feature-length movie filmed entirely in that country.

DIRECTOR: Haifaa Al Mansour

WRITTEN BY: Haifaa Al Mansour

PRODUCER: Gerhard Meixner

Co-Producer: Amr Alkahtani

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS:

Christine Granderath, Louise Nemschoff, Bettina Ricklefs, Rena Ronson, Hala Sarhan

Music: Max Richter

CINEMATOGRAPHY: Lutz Reitmeier

Artwork from *Wadjda* appears courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics Inc.





Introducing Wadjda Filmmaker Haifaa Al Mansour

- In Saudi Arabia, the freedom to pursue personal goals is limited by cultural social standards.
- In many ways, women in Saudi Arabia are pushing boundaries to challenge their cultural social standards and achieve personal goals that are normally inaccessible to them.
- Haifaa Al Mansour is a Saudi woman who was limited by the cultural and social prohibitions against women working in a mixed-gender environment.
- Haifaa Al Mansour pushed the boundary and accomplished her goal, despite limitations. Her film shares the story of a girl in Saudi Arabia doing so as well.
- Art imitates life, often the life of the artist herself.
- How can people resist limits placed on them (whether cultural rules, physical limitations, limited access to resources, etc.) when they are trying to accomplish a personal goal?
- What are some cultural limitations placed on women in Saudi Arabia that may limit their accomplishment of a personal goal?
- How did Haifaa push the boundaries in Saudi Arabia to make her film?
- How are some women in Saudi Arabia choosing to push the limitations placed on them to achieve their own personal goals?

Notes to the Teacher

In Saudi Arabia, due to cultural rules, women are confined to a limited set of goals they are allowed to pursue. Gender mixing is not allowed and women are expected to remain hidden from public sight when outside the home, by covering themselves completely with an *abaya*. An abaya is a large, usually black, cloak wrapped to cover the whole body.

If a Saudi woman wants to go somewhere, she must be chaperoned or supervised by a male from the family. Women have not been allowed to drive or ride bikes, or do anything that calls attention to them in public. These cultural rules are attributed to their religious beliefs, and to break the rules is shameful in the eyes of God, according to many communities in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, some women are pushing back against these limitations.

There have also been restrictions on films in Saudi Arabia. Beginning in the 1980s, when the kingdom adopted more conservative Islamic practices, movie theaters were banned. The most recent development has been the lifting of the ban in April, 2018, by Crown Prince Mohamed bin Salman, the same leader who now allows women to obtain driver's licenses. See https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/11/world/middleeast/saudi-arabia-movie-theaters.html for additional details about the opening of theaters in Saudi Arabia.

The class should have viewed the film *Wadjda* before you teach this lesson; watch the film together again, if necessary and if time permits. Part 1 of the lesson reviews the film and the cultural rules for women that it demonstrates; you may wish to use Lesson 4 before this lesson to help students understand these cultural rules for women's dress and behavior.



After reviewing these cultural norms, students discuss the role and responsibilities of a director in taking a project from script to screen. Directors interpret the script; they may commission a script for a project they want to do or even write it themselves. They choose the cast, select the location(s) for filming, and hire a technical crew for operating cameras, handling lighting and sound effects, providing props and costumes, etc. They work with the actors during rehearsals and while the film is being shot. They work with editors, who take all the film from multiple shots and weave it into a seamless whole that will keep the audience's attention. Directors also have to keep track of budgets for all of these various aspects of the film's production. For a more thorough understanding of the role of the director, see http://www. filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Criticism-Ideology/Direction-RESPONSIBILITIES.html.

After a preliminary discussion, students listen to an NPR interview with Haifaa Al Mansour, the director of *Wadjda*, using **HANDOUT 1** to take notes. The interview can be found at https://www.npr.org/2013/09/22/224437165/wadjda-director-haifaa-al-mansour-it-is-time-to-open-up. After the interview, students will share their answers on the handout.

Next, the lesson takes up the driving ban for Saudi women that was lifted in 2017. Through printed copies, their devices, or projecting onto a whiteboard, give students access to the Guardian article at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/26/saudi-arabia-woman-driving-car-ban. The article describes women in Saudi Arabia driving out of defiance in order to change the rule prohibiting them from driving. This will lead into a discussion of civil disobedience and other methods of protesting a social or even legal restriction that protesters find unfair.

This part of the lesson concludes with students writing in their journals about a time when a goal they had was blocked by cultural rules or social expectations.

Part 2 begins with giving students who wish to share their journal stories an opportunity to do so. Some students may have written about very personal stories they do not wish to share with peers; be respectful of this by only calling on volunteers who wish to share.

Then the lesson moves to writing a business letter to Haifaa Al Mansour in proper format. This section of the lesson may be skipped by film literacy classes or clubs, but will prove helpful to writing classes. Students who use only texting, email, or Instagram may not ever have written a business letter, but this is a skill they should have as adults. Using **Handout 2**, students will learn about (or review) the parts of the business letter and then will brainstorm some possible topics they would like to write about. After drafting the letter, they will have the opportunity to participate in peer editing and then they should revise their draft to hand in for a grade. There is a fake address in the Procedure section to use for the inside address.



For additional information about Haifaa Al Mansour, see the following resources:

A Vanity Fair article that includes a biography of Haifaa Al Mansour

https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2018/05/meethaifaa-al-mansour-the-saudi-woman-challenging-riyadh

International Move Database page on Haifaa Al Mansour, including a list of her films

https://www.imdb.com/name/nm2223783/

An essay by Haifaa Al Mansour on why she loves movies https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/30/opinion/saudiarabia-movies-women.html

COMMON CORE STANDARDS ADDRESSED BY THIS LESSON

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.4

Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.2

Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



Duration of the Lesson

At least 2–4 one-hour class periods, depending upon the time available for student research and/or extension activities.

Assessments

Class discussion

Journal entries

Letter to filmmaker Haifaa Al Mansour

Materials needed

Projector

Laptop

White board

Dry erase markers

Student journals

Computer access to websites provided in procedures.

Copies of Handout 1: Formal Business Letter Template

Procedure

Part 1

- **1.** Ask students to recall the film orally, and discuss the plot: a girl who has been blocked by cultural rules pushes boundaries to achieve her goal of owning and riding a bike in public.
- **2.** Discuss the cultural rules for girls and women in Saudi Arabia, using Notes to the Teacher. Write them on the board. If students have completed Lesson 4, review the additional material they have learned about these rules.
- **3.** Prep them to hear an interview with Haifaa Al Mansour, the woman who directed *Wadjda* in Saudi Arabia despite the rules, by posing the following pre-listening questions and discussing:
 - Given these limitations, how do you think Haifaa was able to make the film?
 - Why do you think she did it?
 - Do you think the film's story is reflective of real life?"
- **4.** Distribute **HANDOUT 1**. Tell students that they are going to listen to an interview with the director of *Wadjda*. Ask students exactly what the role of a director is in making a film; fill in this discussion using the information in Notes to the Teacher.
- 5. Distribute HANDOUT 1: AN INTERVIEW WITH HAIFAA AL MANSOUR and review the questions with students. Then play the NPR interview of Haifaa Al Mansour about the making of the film at https://www.npr.org/2013/09/22/224437165/wadjda-director-haifaa-al-mansour-it-is-time-to-open-up. The interview takes about 7 1/2

(FILM LITERACY, ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS)



minutes; you may wish to stop it occasionally to allow students to take notes on their handouts.

- **6.** After listening to the interview, discuss the limitations Haifaa Al Mansour faced, how she circumvented the rules in Saudi Arabia to shoot the film, and why she made the film.
- 7. Remind students of Wadjda's mother's need to rely on a cranky driver to get her to work on time. Explain that not being allowed to drive legally has been another cultural obstacle for women. Discuss ways that people in general can push boundaries on social rules they disapprove of: protest marches, sit-ins like those at lunch counters during the 1960s, Rosa Parks' refusal to move from her seat. Mention Haifaa Al Mansour's way of "protesting" by making the film.
- **8.** Give students access to the article from *The Guardian* at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/26/saudi-arabia-woman-driving-car-ban. Let the students know that because of these protesting women, similar to Rosa Parks' protest, the Saudi Arabian Government eventually changed the law and made it legal for women to drive. Do they see any similarities to the actions of Wadjda and her mother?
- **9.** Then discuss how people can overcome the limitations placed upon them by outside influences, particularly gender expectations; if possible, share a personal story of your own. Elicit student volunteers to discuss a personal story or two, of overcoming an external obstacle to accomplish something outside the norm.
- 10. For homework, have students write in their journals about a time when they had a goal that was blocked by cultural rules or social expectations, and how they dealt with those obstacles.

Part 2: Writing a business letter

- **1.** Ask for volunteers to share some of the experiences that students wrote about for homework, and discuss how effective their responses to social expectations were. Do not force all students to share, since some experiences may be very personal.
- **2.** Announce that today they will write a letter to Haifaa Al Mansour. Talk about the differences between electronic forms of communication (email, text, Instagram) and a business letter.
- **3.** Distribute **HANDOUT 2: WRITING A BUSINESS LETTER** and review the information on the first page. Make sure students know how to use the template on the second page of the handout.
- **4.** Review how to write an address and a date if necessary.
- **5.** As you work through the handout with students, you can provide the following <u>fake</u> address for them to use for the purpose of filling out the inside address:

Ms. Haifaa Al Mansour Sony Picture Classics 123 Studio Dr. Los Angeles, CA 12345



- **6.** Brainstorm with the class some of the content that students might include in the body of a letter to the director; write suggestions on the board as they are mentioned. (Possible answers: reasons why students liked or disliked the film; questions about the film, Saudi Arabia, the future of the status of Saudi women, or future film projects; stories about times that students also had to take a stand against social expectations, if they are comfortable sharing) Point out that you are going to do peer editing, so they should not include anything they are uncomfortable sharing.
- **7.** Then have students begin writing a first draft. Have individual writing conferences with students while they are drafting their letters.
- **8.** Continue with your usual procedure for peer editing and revising.

Extension Activities

- 1. Show students a video that went viral, showing women in Saudi Arabia skateboarding, bowling, dancing, and playing basketball in public. These activities violate their cultural practice of preventing girls from doing "boy things," being seen in public, and drawing attention drawn to themselves. The video is completely in Arabic and for some reason incorporates a photo of President Trump several times. Discuss the video, asking students to theorize about its message and comparing it to the film Wadjda. The video may be found at https://youtu.be/1rUn2j1hLOo. After the discussion, share the following article with them on the video and the reaction to it: https://www.elle.com/uk/life-and-culture/culture/news/a33229/saudi-arabia-music-video-women/
- **2.** For students who would like to learn more about the life of girls and women in Saudi Arabia, suggest the novel *A Girl Like That* by Tanaz Bhathena. See the book summary and reviews provided at https://www.amazon.com/Girl-Like-That-Tanaz-Bhathena/dp/0374305447. Publishers Weekly recommends this for ages 14 and up at https://www.publishersweekly.com/978-0-374-30544-4.



Handout 1 - P.1 An Interview with Haifaa Al Mansour

1. What difficulties did Haifaa Al Mansour encounter in making this film? How did she overcome them?
2. What were her goals in making this film?
3. Iran has a thriving and internationally respected film industry. Why do you think there has been no equivalent film industry development in Saudi Arabia?



Handout 1 - P.1 An Interview with Haifaa Al Mansour

things — if they really change at <i>heart</i> . Not only by changing regimes and political stuff, but also by believing in wome believing in others and becoming more tolerant, more respectful for other cultures It is time to open up the culture of	•	
	e." In	
your opinion, how successful has this film been in opening up Saudi culture?		



Handout 2 - P.1 A Template for a Business Letter

The basic information that is needed in a business letter is as follows:

- **1.** A block of text that contains your return address. (Do not put your name in this block, however.) Follow your address on the next line with the date of the letter, with the name of the month fully written out, not abbreviated.
- 2. Skip a line and then add another block of text, this one with the contact information for the person that you wish to write to. Be sure to include any information necessary so that the letter will reach the recipient; it should be identical to what you will put on the envelope. This may include the name of the recipient if you know it; the department that it should go to; the name of the company; and the address of the company.
- **3.** Skip a line and then write what is known as the salutation. This should be "Dear ______:" if you know the person's name. Use "Dear Sir or Madam:" if you do not know it. Note the colon, not a comma, after the name.
- **4.** Skip another line and now write the body of your letter. It should be single-spaced, in paragraph form. The language of the letter should be more formal than a casual email, but not stilted; use what is called "standard English." If more than one paragraph is needed, skip a line between paragraphs.
- **5.** Skip a line and write a closing. This is usually just "Sincerely yours," or "Sincerely," whether you feel sincerely or not. "Thank you," is not a closing; if you wish to thank the recipient, make that part of the body of the letter.

6. Skip four lines, and then type in your name. You are leaving space to sign your name after you print the letter out. If you have a title, you can type it in just below your name, without skipping a line.

A template for the letter is on the next page. If you wish to use it, just highlight each section and replace it with the appropriate information. Your letter may continue on to a second page if the body text is long.

When you have finished writing, do the following:

- Check your letter to be sure spelling and grammar are correct.
- Check to be sure you have used an appropriate business font, like Times New Roman.
- Center your letter on the page from top to bottom.
- · Print your letter.
- Sign your letter.



Handout 2 - P.2 A Template for a Business Letter

Your street address
Your city, state, and zip code
Today's date
Recipient Name
Recipient's title
Name of company
Street address of company
City, state, and zip code of company
Dear (Insert name of recipient or "Dear Sir or Madam" if unknown):
Body of letter
Sincerely,
Your Name

Your title, if appropriate

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