

& PROJECT

P.S. You Sound Like Someone I Can Trust

Session 4 of 7

BIG CHANGES

In this session, students read and respond to a new set of letters.

YOU WILL NEED

- Paper and writing utensils
- Optional: markers and stickers
- [“John Steinbeck, “On Falling in Love” Open Letter”](#) — Mentor text
- Letters from your buddies!

BEFORE YOU START

Before you start, make sure that you have delivered the letters your students wrote to their buddies *and* received the replies from your partner classroom.

You will also need to make sure copies of the mentor text are available for each student—that could look like making copies, sharing the link with students, or ensuring that you have the means to project it.

HOW TO BEGIN (10 MINUTES)

The cool thing about life is, we're always changing and growing and learning. Sometimes solely through our own actions and reflections, and sometimes with someone else as the catalyst.

Just like the very first mentor text we looked at, that idea is going to be explored through a letter that will never be sent. The guidelines are below:

- Think of someone who helped you grow or change in some way—it can be someone still in your life or someone you've parted ways: a family member, a friend, an ex, a neighbor, a classmate, whoever!
- Write a letter to them about the impact that they had on your life and what big changes came about as a result of their presence in your life.
- Keep the letter close as a reminder that the people in your life are always there to help you change!

Because this is a “letter we're not sending” activity, don't have your students share out anything. You could, if you have a few moments, in the end, discuss the catharsis of writing a letter with someone in mind that will never be sent.

STEP 1 (15 MINUTES)

Mini-Lesson: On Falling in Love (With John Steinbeck)

Read through “[John Steinbeck, “On Falling in Love” Open Letter](#)”—if it would be helpful to include the mini biography of Steinbeck (included above the letter to his son), go for it! Otherwise, jump right into the letter.

Steinbeck wrote this letter in 1958 but the lessons he’s imparting still ring pretty true today. After you read his letter, discuss the following two questions:

- What do we learn from Steinbeck in this letter?
- What’s missing?

There are a variety of directions your students could go here, but the biggest missing piece is *how* Steinbeck learned all of these lessons—we get the end result, but none of the process here.

STEP 2 (30 MINUTES)

Reading, Replying, Reminiscing

Your students started class by writing a letter to someone who’s changed them in some way, a letter that will never be sent. They’re ending class by writing a letter to someone about something they’ve learned (and how they learned it), a letter that will be sent.

Pass out the replies from their buddies. As they read their letters, they should make notes in their notebooks about what they want to say in response and what questions/stories they want to share. If they need a reminder of how to structure this letter, give them this:

- Greeting
- Respond to any questions your buddy asked
- Talk about what's going on in your life right now and how it relates to a life lesson you've learned
 - What is the lesson you learned?
 - Why? How did it help you?
- Ask your buddy if they've ever experienced anything like this (or something equally life-changing)
- Thank your buddy and sign off

STEP 3 (5 MINUTES)

Wrap-Up

Have your students share one of two things with a partner—either one thing they loved from their partner's letter or one thing they loved getting to add to their own letter. If your students want to, have them share with the whole class too.

Collect their letters to send along—they can (and should!) keep the letters they received.