

**NOTE: Today is a computer lab lesson. Please make sure you have signed up for the lab in advance.**

TITLE OF LESSON

American Government Unit 2 Lesson 38 – Letter to a Government Official: Peer Revision and Typing  
*Does Democracy Work?*

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TIME ESTIMATE FOR THIS LESSON

One class period

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ALIGNMENT WITH STANDARDS

California – History 12.2, 12.3, 12.8, 12.10

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MATERIALS

**Current Events Presentation** – Student Page  
**Word Processing Review** – Student Page  
**Revising Letters Guidelines** – Student Page  
Legal size envelopes (one per student)

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LESSON OBJECTIVES

- To synthesize projects, notes, and other information into a structure for writing a formal letter
  - To edit and rewrite peer letters
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FOCUS AND MOTIVATE STUDENTS – WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- 1) Homework Check – Stamp/initial complete homework assignments. Pass back graded work and have students place in the appropriate section of their binders.
  - 2) **Agenda** – Have students copy the goal, agenda, and homework onto the next clean page in a notebook.
  - 3) **Current Events** – Collect the overhead transparencies from the Current Events presenters for today. Below the goal/agenda, copy the titles for three current events stories that they have chosen. Have students copy these and prepare to take notes
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ACTIVITIES – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP

1. **Current Events Presentations** – Have students come to the front of the class one at a time to present their articles. At the end of each presentation, the students should turn in their **Current Events Presentation** sheet stapled to a copy of the news article. Grades and comments should be written on the back of the **Current Events Presentation** sheet and returned to the students the next lesson. Choose the presenters for the next day that current events are due and give them a copy of the **Current Events Presentation** sheet to complete.
2. **Computer Protocol** – Remind students of appropriate computer lab behavior and the consequences for any misbehavior. Remind them to save frequently, as you will not be responsible for any lost or deleted work because they forgot to save. By their senior year, students should be very familiar with the word processing program. However, if students need some quick tips, you may want to have available the **Word Processing Review**.
3. **Save** – Quickly go over with students where they should save their work. Ideally, they should save to floppy disk that has their name written on it and can be turned in to you at the end of the period for a grade. However, you may have a school server that they can save to so that you can access their work after they have left. Check with your site technology person to find out if you have that option available. Then you may want to post the steps to saving on the board for the students to follow.

4. **Peer Revision** – Have students take out the handwritten first draft of their project. Then ask students to switch letters with a partner. Have partners write the words *Revised by and their name* at the top of the author’s letter. Explain to students that the letters must be able to convey a strong, organized structure for their ideas. All letters will need to have an introduction (explaining who the writer is and why they are writing), a body (that explains the issue in detail including supporting evidence for why it is an issue from their research, current events, personal experience, and how the writer has gotten involved), and a strong conclusion (which discusses what the writer wants the recipient to do about the issue and asks for a reply). All letters will need to have clear transitions between ideas. Partners should write comments or make their suggestions directly on the places they are suggesting changes to. Pass out the **Revising Letter Guidelines** to students to use a guide as they edit their peers’ letters (or have students access it online, working between programs). Tell students they will have 20 minutes only to complete their revisions. At the end of 20 minutes, call time. If author’s find their partners made little to no suggestions, it is their responsibility to find someone who will help them to improve their letter, as it is their grade on the line.
5. **Final Draft** – Tell students they will have most of the rest of the period to make the changes their partner suggested and type their essay onto the computer. About five minutes before the end of class, have students print a hard copy of their letter and save their work. If students have not finished, you may wish to open the lab to them at lunch or after school so that they can finish this part of their assignment on time. Have students shut down their computers, clean up their workstations, and push in their chairs.
6. **Homework** – Before leaving, pass out blank envelopes to each student and explain that they need to have their envelopes correctly addressed and stamped for the next lesson (see below for a sample).

Javier Gutierrez  
101 2<sup>nd</sup> Street  
Alhambra, CA 91801

President George Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington D.C., 20500

7. Also, they need to get their letter reviewed and edited again (for spelling, punctuation, grammar and correct formal letter structure) by at least one outside source and have a final, typed perfect letter ready to be mailed (two copies! – one to send and one for their portfolio).

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#### HOMEWORK

1. Completely address and stamp envelope.
  2. Have letter reviewed and edited for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and correct formal letter writing structure (with comments/corrections) by at least one outside source. Make sure they sign their name at the top of the second draft.
  3. A final typed letter ready to send.
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#### GROUP ROLES

None

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DOCUMENTATION FOR PORTFOLIO

**Unit 1**

Action Plan

Persuasive Essay or Flash Argument: Why should  
government care...?

American Government Unit 1 Final Exam

**Unit 2**

Political Beliefs Project

Ideological Plan

GIP Question Sheet

Service Requirement Check-Ins

Model Congress Bill on GIP Issue

Field Trip Worksheet