

## What Award Will You Receive?



A writing assignment that works well with young teens learning to write newspaper articles is the human interest story written about themselves.

### The prompt:

***For what accomplishment will you receive an award in the arts, academics, athletics, politics, military or community service? Write a human interest story that accompanies the announcement of this award.***

Spend a little time looking at the kinds and criteria for selecting recipients for awards in a variety of categories. Consider lesser known awards, too, not just the Emmy and Tony, the Pulitzer and Nobel Prizes, or the Heisman and Cy Young,. What awards are given in your community? Gathering this information can be a one or two period in-class Internet research project.

After reviewing the organization and content of human interest news stories, assign the students to write an article, in the third person, about an award they will receive fifteen years into the future. In addition to the expected lead paragraph with the who, what, when, where, and why that identifies the award, the criteria for the award, and date and place awarded, article should include a short biographical sketch mentioning the student's family, education, experience in the field, and what the student will have done to earn the award.

The assignment is a wonderful way to get the students to see themselves as successful, and also to think about the steps they need to take to reach that level of achievement. What kind of education, training, experience will they need? What college, training, apprenticeship, military options will help them get where they'd like to be in fifteen years? What kind of financial resources are needed to acquire the education/training? Are there scholarships, grants, jobs, parents to help them assemble the funds for post secondary education and training?

After writing their first drafts, have students self-evaluate their writing based on the rubric you'll be using to grade this assignment. A version of Six-Traits Rubric © is a good start. Allot time for students to revise these first drafts.

After they write the second drafts, schedule an in-class peer read-around or writing workshop so the students can get classmate feedback before writing the draft you will collect and grade. Use the same rubric/grading criteria used earlier, but direct student attention to the required content and organization pattern. It is not necessary for student readers to address issues of spelling and punctuation at this stage.

For the peer review session, groups of five students sit in circles or around a table. Group members pass their drafts to group leader. Teacher collects and redistributes the drafts to other groups. I.E. Group A reads drafts from Group B, Group B reads drafts from Group C, etc. Only students with revised drafts can participate. No draft? Use the period to write it.

Set a kitchen timer for two minutes. Have group leader pass papers and rubrics to members of group. Students read draft #1 until buzzer rings. Pass paper to the right. Read draft #2 until buzzer, etc. until there is only one more paper to read. It is not necessary for students to read the entire draft of every paper. The goal is for them to get a flavor of the writing, to see what it takes to entice one to keep reading and to see what kind of writing helps or hampers understanding.

For this last paper, teacher sets the buzzer for four to five minutes, depending on the length of the majority of the drafts. Students read the entire draft and fill in the rubric for that last paper. Invite them to include one commendation and one recommendation for the writer. Students clip the rubric to the last read draft and return the stack to the group reader. Teacher collects and redistributes the papers to the writers.

Writers review the feedback and based on those comments, write at the bottom of the rubric two or three specific changes they'll make as they revise their human interest articles.

Before the students leave class, conduct a short general discussion inviting students to comment only on the strengths they noticed in the drafts they read. I do not recommend asking that weaknesses or problems be vocalized. It's important to protect the fragile egos of your young teens. They know how challenging it was to read the poorly written drafts. The students, of course, will try to avoid those problems when revising their own papers. That's the whole point of the read around activity.

Value for students: They learn more about the hopes and dreams of their peers. They also see how classmates have responded to the assignment. Students will notice how poorly written drafts hamper comprehension. They will see ideas for improving their next draft.

Value for teacher: Because the major problems will have been resolved already, the drafts you receive will be better written and therefore take less time to read. That's one of the main goals of this activity.

Final drafts: Request two copies. One for you to grade and return, and the second to publish on your class website or in a class book – a three ring binder with a lovely title page inserted into the plastic holder - ***Articles on Awards Mrs. Roseboro's Students Receive in 2025***. Whichever you decide, be sure to send a note home to parents to view the articles on line or have the notebook on display when parents or administrators visit your classroom. If appropriate for your school community, invite your students to self-address envelopes so you can mail them the articles in five or ten years. What fun!

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