

ACADEMIC LOVE LETTERS

This activity was inspired from an idea mentioned by Ken Smith in [this article](#).

We're going to extend the [academic valentine](#) concept and turn them into *love letters*.

Pick A Point Of View

Who will write the letter? It could be a historical figure, character from literature, or someone from pop culture. And, if you want to go more abstract, you certainly don't have to stick with humans!

What Do They Love?

Imagine if George Washington wrote a love letter. What ideas would he use to express his love? Washington loved things like:

- the constitution
- democracy
- bravery

He might write a letter that compares his love to the honor of a brave soldier. Perhaps he would reference when he crossed the Delaware, stepped down from the presidency, or lead troops into battle.

Or, let's have a little more fun and imagine that [Kylo Ren](#) wrote a love letter. He might include references to:

- the power of Darth Vader
- using The Force for control
- anything that's the opposite of Han Solo

And if you wanted to push it further, what if the Sahara Desert wrote a love letter, it might compare its love using:

- dryness
- desert adaptations
- openness

Students could look up specific facts, such as humidity levels, temperatures, or famous features.

This step is key because it scaffolds the true challenge: writing about these facts in a way that mimics a Valentine letter.

Who Will They Write To?

Finally, students pick another subject to write *to*. Here's a couple examples:

Kylo Ren might write to Abraham Lincoln:

Dear Mr. Lincoln,

I think you are an amazing president. Much like Darth Vader, you rose from humble beginnings to become a powerful person. You showed bravery and courage comparable to my hero, Vader, when you held the union together. It was almost like you reached out with The Force and pulled the confederacy back. And when you gave the Gettysburg Address, your words were so powerful, it was like you were using Force Voice to control your audience. You don't even need a mask, because your top hat and beard are so recognizable. Without a doubt, you are my favorite president.

Yours, Kylo Ren

And what if the Sahara Desert wrote a letter praising The Moon:

Dear Moon,

I admire you so much. Your complete lack of water is something that I can only aspire to. My humidity is rarely lower than 5%. You force all visitors to adapt to *you*, just like I do. My animals grow large ears, sleep under rocks, and travel at night just to survive. Your barren and open landscape is a true inspiration, especially the Lunar Maria – once thought to be a sea, like my own Great Sand Sea. Keep it dry and barren!

Yours, The Sahara Desert

Your Model

The teacher model is key to setting expectations, demonstrating how you approach the task, and showing how you pre-write. Pick something fun, and connect it with academic content. You might write a letter:

- From the Alamo to [Minas Tirith](#)
- From Martin Luther King to Princess Leia
- From Kanye West to Napoleon

It helps, of course, if the two subjects have a natural connection.

Final Products

Your students can type these out, but also consider hand writing them, applying calligraphy skills, or putting them online. An optional illustration always adds a fabulous touch. I enjoyed hearing my students passionately read these out loud as well.

Remember to push your students to include specific facts. It helps to require this up front, so they have information ready when they actually start writing.