



Author(s): Elizabeth Pierce			Lesson Title: Truman Capote – <i>The Thanksgiving Visitor Dilemma</i>			
Grade Span			ICLE Application Model			
K-4	5-8 X	9-12	A	B	C	D X

Instructional Focus:

Reading Students read a variety of grade level materials, applying strategies appropriate to various situations

Writing Students write for a variety of purposes and audiences with sophistication and complexity appropriate to the grade level

Listening Students listen for a variety of purposes appropriate to the grade level

Speaking Students speak for a variety of purposes and audiences with sophistication and complexity appropriate to the grade level

Performance Task

The student reads Truman Capote's *The Thanksgiving Visitor*. The student leads a round-table discussion on the ethics and consequences of the characters' actions involved in the story. Once the discussion is complete, the student is given two scenarios that he or she responds to in writing (see below). The student responds to one of the two scenarios by computer generating the response, by supporting his or her answer with logic, and by completing any unanswered questions in the scenario without help from the teacher. The student may research additional information on anything he or she does not understand in the scenarios. There is no wrong or right answer. Once completed, graded and handed back, the student joins one of the two scenario groups to discuss his or her answer with other students. Discussion will be open-minded, respectful, and productive.

Scenario One

You are a technical writer for a small accounting firm of fifty people. You have worked for the company for four years and you have been loyal to the company. In turn, the company has paid you well and provided benefits (health care, matching 401(k) plan, flexible spending accounts [health and dependent care] and a parking space with your name on it).

One day, your boss, Mr. Findley (the man's name is on the door of the firm and on the bottom of your paycheck) enters your office that overlooks the city. He hands you a handwritten letter and asks you to type it up for him and backdate it three years. He needs, he confides, "to have a paper trail that dissolves my company of any responsibility of an audit that my client's is going through." He needs, he continues, to dissociate and distance himself and his company from any legal obscurities that the audit may uncover. "Even though loopholes are expected in this business," he says, "I, in no way, want to be held accountable for them and be dragged through the mud."

You express that you are a little uncomfortable backdating letters and you don't know enough about the situation to feel comfortable writing the letter. He says, in no uncertain terms, that if you do not write it, "there are plenty of other writers in the job market who would be willing." He sniffs and leaves your office.

Do you write the letter?

Scenario Two

You are a technical writer for a large manufacturing company called Pierce Manufacturing. Pierce Manufacturing builds and sells computerized measuring machines (CMMs). The cost of one CMM is a little over a million dollars. These CMMs measure General Motors' engine blocks to make sure that the first engine off the line has all the same dimensions as the thousandth engine off the line. Other companies also use CMMs in all facets of quality control, but General Motors is your company's largest client.

The engineers of Pierce Manufacturing have just created the most innovative CMM yet. It has a rotating table that General Motors can put its engine blocks on. When the table rotates, it means that the CMM can measure all sides, and insides, much more quickly and efficiently. The table is lifted by air pressure. The engineers say that as long as the “Center of Gravity” of the engine block is placed *exactly* in the center of the table, workers at General Motors will be delighted.

You have been assigned to write the operator’s handbook for the new CMM. Generally, you know that the operators of these machines are men and women who have graduated from high school and whose readability level is about ninth grade. You begin to test some of the engineers’ theories about the rotating table so that you can write accurate information for the operators. You learn that to find the “Center of Gravity” of anything (let alone an engine block), involves a very complex formula, which you with your Master’s Degree in Technical Communication can’t even figure out! Knowing that the average operator of the CMM at General Motors will be hurried, you assume that even if he or she did understand how to figure the formula, he or she may not have time. You guess that the operator will just have the engine block placed as closely to the center of the table as possible and will start operating the CMM.

You find out by testing, though, that if the engine block is not *exactly* centered, the air pressure for the heavier side does not compensate by pushing more air pressure through the air jets to make the table even and stable. In fact, the table will tilt and there is a large possibility that the engine block could slide off of the uneven table and fall. This could be very dangerous to the operator and possibly life-threatening.

You express your concerns to the engineers about the air jets not compensating for an uneven load on the rotating table and the possible danger because of this engineering design flaw. You also express your concerns that the average operator on the floor at General Motors is not going to 1) have the knowledge or 2) have the time to figure out the complex formula to determine the Center of Gravity. The lead engineer tells you that, “You are only a writer and don’t understand what we’ve created. Write it down the way I tell you to and don’t question me. General Motors wants 20 of these as soon as possible and the only thing holding up delivery is your writing the manual.”

What do you do?

ICLE Essential Skills

Apply in writing the rules and conventions of grammar, usage, punctuation, paragraphing and spelling. 1
Draft a report that engages an audience and is concise, clear, well-organized, accurate, and informative. 12
Use editing and revising skills to improve effectiveness and accuracy of drafts. 14
Express opinions clearly and forcefully without interrupting or insulting others. 16
Use brainstorming, role playing, and standard problem solving strategies to define a problem and suggest solutions. 19
Participate, sometimes leading, in group meetings by contributing, taking turns speaking, and working toward a common goal. 20
Define a position on a controversial topic and write a persuasive essay or make an oral presentation likely to persuade a specific audience to change an opinion or take a particular action. 27
Understand the nature and purpose of and be able to word process a variety of formats including essays, business letters,

memos, instructions, policy statements, technical proposals, user manuals, lab reports, etc.

30

Apply, extend, and expand on information while reading.

46

Ask questions of others that encourage them to participate, elaborate, and contribute to understanding topics under discussion.

48

Scoring Guide:

Score each of the following characteristics on a scale of 4 to 0, where 4 = surpasses expectations; 3 = high quality performance; 2 = satisfactory quality performance; 1 = minimum quality performance; 0 = does not meet expectations.

CHARACTERISTICS

CRITERIA SCORE

- **Leads Round-Table Discussion**

- Leads conversation without dominating
- Expresses opinions clearly and forcefully
- Does not interrupt others
- Does not insult others
- Keeps conversation "on track"
- Ensures all have a turn to express ideas

- **Writes Response to Scenario**

- Uses creativity in answering unanswered questions from scenario
- Answer is well thought out and logical
- Applies the rules and conventions of grammar, usage, punctuation, paragraphing, spelling
- Presents information in well-organized fashion that will be clear to the target audience
- Uses editing and revising skills to improve effectiveness and accuracy
- Defines a position on a scenario and writes persuasively to persuade a specific audience
- Has not asked teacher for more information
- Has engaged in obvious research outside of the classroom concerning scenario

- **Joins Scenario Group Discussion**

- Engages in conversation without dominating
- Expresses opinions clearly and forcefully
- Does not interrupt others
- Does not insult others
- Keeps conversation "on track"

- **Technology**

- Makes proper use of technology

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Keywords

English Language Arts	Mathematics	Science
Reading Book talks Comprehension In Context Research Integration	Algebra	Earth Science
Writing Careers Composition Persuasion Technical Writing Technology Integration Word Processing	Geometry	Life Science
Communications Discussion Listening	Statistics	Chemistry
Literature American Literature Character Fiction Non-Fiction Point of View Technology Integration	Calculus	Physics
Other Ethics in Writing Ethics in Business Technical Communication	Trigonometry	Other
	Other	