

# Lesson Plan #1

**Note:** This lesson plan can be used with any *Natural Inquirer* article.

## Learning Objectives:

### Students will increase:

- science reading comprehension,
- question-posing ability, and
- letter writing skills regarding science.

In small groups (or individually), students will read a *Natural Inquirer* article and write a letter to the scientist, asking for clarification on at least four questions.

In advance, make copies, or load onto the white board, the letter template given **(at right)**.

## Amount of time needed:

Two class periods (90 minutes)

## Materials needed:

Lined paper and pencils for students  
*Natural Inquirer* article  
Graphic organizer (**Page 80**)

## Day 1:

In small groups (or individually), have students read one of the *Natural Inquirer* articles. You may allow them to select an article, or you may assign one. Students may take turns reading paragraphs out loud. Depending on the amount of time available, they may skip the Reflection Sections. As students finish each section, have them write a summary of what they have read in the graphic organizer. After they have read and summarized all sections, have them write any questions that they have thought of for each section, using the graphic organizer.

## Day 2:

Show students the template for writing a letter. In their small groups (or individually), have them compose a letter to the first scientist listed in the “Meet the Scientist” section.

### Hold a class discussion about:

- The questions they had for the scientist. Why did they ask the questions they asked?
- The process of writing a letter to a scientist. What are the advantages of writing a proper letter, rather than a text message or an email? Are there any disadvantages?
- What did students learn from reading their article? Have students tell the class in rapid fire format.

Collect their letters and use the rubric on page 81 for evaluation.

If students would like to submit their letters, they may either send their hard copy letters to:

*Natural Inquirer* Scientist Letters  
Forest Service  
320 Green St.  
Athens, GA 30602-2044

**OR**, they may send letters electronically to [jessica@naturalinquirer.org](mailto:jessica@naturalinquirer.org).

**Note:** While the *Natural Inquirer* staff will attempt to answer questions sent in to our office, we cannot guarantee that all questions will be answered. If letters are sent hard copy, please include an email address so that we may reply electronically.

Students' names

Teacher's name (e.g., Mrs. Jones' 7th grade science class)

School name

School address (City, State, ZIP)

Date

Scientist Full Name (with title)

Scientist Affiliation

City, State

(If you are able to access the Internet, the scientist's exact address may be searched)

Dear [Title] [Scientist's last name]:

First Paragraph: Students should explain that they read [Article name] in the *Natural Inquirer*. After reading the article, they developed four questions that they would like to ask. This paragraph should be 4 to 5 sentences long.

Middle Paragraph(s): Students should provide the context for their questions and ask them. The context includes: (a) which article section the question concerns and (b) what about the article information prompted the question. Students may decide to write four small paragraphs, one for each question.

Ending Paragraph: Students should thank the scientist and note that they look forward to a reply.

Closing (such as Respectfully yours, Sincerely, etc.)

Student names and signatures

Student Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### *Natural Inquirer* Graphic Organizer

<b>Summary</b>	Introduction	Methods
	Findings	Discussion
<b>Questions</b>	Introduction	Methods
	Findings	Discussion

## Assessment Rubric

	Poor 1	Fair 2	Good/ Satisfactory 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Questions to Scientist	Included only one question for scientist	Included only two questions for scientist	Included only three questions for scientist	All four questions included	
Heading	Not at all in proper form	Partially in proper form	Almost in proper form	Completely in proper form	
First Paragraph	Not at all in proper form, length, or context	Partially in proper form, length, and context	Almost in proper form, length, and content	Completely in proper form, length, and context	
Middle Paragraphs	Not at all in proper form, length, and context	Partially in proper form, length, and context	Almost in proper form, length, and context	Completely in proper form, length, and context	
Grammar/Punctuation	Too many grammatical/punctuation errors	Needed to demonstrate better use of punctuation and grammar	Proper use of grammar and punctuation, few errors	No grammatical or punctuation errors	
Final Paragraph	Did not complete final paragraph	Partially completed final paragraph	Thanked scientist/ Needed improvement in final paragraph	Properly thanked scientist and ended letter	
Closing	Did not complete or not at all in proper form	Partially in proper form	Almost in proper form	Completely in proper form	