

Lisa Bush

Please Do Not...

a letter to my grade nine students before taking the Provincial Achievements Tests

Dear Students, when writing your short stories -

Please do not have your protagonist, a quiet bookseller, sacrifice himself on a marble altar for the greater good of humanity during a waxing moon because you could think of no plausible way to end your story.

Please do not make your antagonist, a neuron splitter, transport himself from a Marxist society fifty thousand years into the future to stop militant gorillas from overthrowing the world. You cannot possibly develop this storyline in seventy minutes or less.

Please have a protagonist and an antagonist.

Please do not have too many characters hanging from meat hooks or Mafia murders following graphic torture scenes of fingers being broken one by one by one by one.

Please do not entitle your story, "The amazing story in which the PAT grader will give me a high score."

Please do not have music montages or make up languages of your own.

Please write in English.

Please do not refer to obscure mathematical formulas, computer programming lingo

Poetry

or scientific theorems.
Your papers are being graded by
humanities teachers.
They will not understand
concepts of molecular gastronomy.
Nor will they find them ironic.

And remember, dear students, when writing your business letters-

Please do not write your business letters from the nineteen forties.
Or from Mars.

Please do not write as the ambassador of Slovakia
or spell everything backwards or write in British dialect.
As far as I can tell
you are not British.
Or Slovakian for that matter.

Please do not have your defective product
for which you are requesting a refund
blow up in a pile of fiery rubble in your now scorched hand.

Please do not sign your business letters with hearts.

Please do not make your email address
youareanidiot@gmail.com or
thisassignmentsucks@telus.net

If you follow the above recommendations
you will do well on the Provincial Achievement Tests
and I will not lose my job.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Bush