Letters from the Canopy: Writing to an Explorer

Learning objective: To use formal language and appropriate structure when writing a letter of enquiry.

Read the letter from Nova the owl to a famous explorer. Use the information in the text and your knowledge of formal letter writing to answer the questions below.

Dear Professor Hooten, I am writing to you today to express my keen interest in your upcoming expedition to the Whispering Woods. As a student of natural history, I have long admired your research regarding the migration patterns of rare woodland birds. I would be most grateful if you could provide me with further details regarding your itinerary and whether there might be an opportunity for a student to assist with your data collection. Please find enclosed a brief summary of my previous observations in the local forest. Thank you for your time and consideration. Yours sincerely, Nova.

Word bank: enquiry · sincerely · formal · recipient · correspondence · gratitude · expedition

1. Identify two features of a formal letter that Nova has used in her writing. (2 marks)

2. Why does Nova use formal language such as 'I would be most grateful' instead of 'I want'? (2 marks)

3. What is the primary purpose of Nova’s letter to Professor Hooten? (1 mark)

4. If you were writing a reply as Professor Hooten, how would you begin the letter? (1 mark)

5. Which sign-off is appropriate for a formal letter where the recipient's name is known: 'Yours faithfully' or 'Yours sincerely'? (1 mark)

Draw: Draw a formal letter sitting on a wooden desk, featuring a quill pen and a wax seal, as if it is about to be sent on an important journey.

Extension challenge: Write a short reply from Professor Hooten to Nova, accepting her offer to help with the expedition. Remember to use formal language and the correct layout for a return letter.