**Columnist #1:** RICK REILLY

***Rationale:*** Rick Reilly has his finger on the pulse of the culture of sports more than any other writer. He is able to say so much about society through the lens of sports.

Reilly, more than any other writer, shows that sports matter, and that the people that play sports, from grade school T-ball players to professionals, have an impact on our consciousness. They matter. And what they say and do matters. Sports are as much a part of our collective consciousness than anything. You understand that when you read Rick Reilly’s columns.

My students love sports. Especially in my all-boys class, that is all they want to write about. But to often, they just see the wins and losses, the stats and the highlights. I think Rick Reilly can show them how to think more deeply about the sports figures they love. They will all be better for it, and they may just write some fascinating columns about the state of high school sports in Colorado, the state of professional sports, or the lessons we learn- or fail to learn- from professional athletes.

*“Thanks for the Memories,”* a column about Peyton Manning’s departure from the Colts, will work well to do two things:

1. It shows how Reilly can say so much about the other players in the NFL, and the prototypical superstar, by saying what he thinks about Peyton Manning. It is a good example how a columnist can give matter-of-fact praise to one person for who they are and a the same time address larger problems in the culture of sports. He does this all the time
2. This is a good example a column that addresses, like a letter, a person directly. He also uses terrific repletion. Thank you for… Thank you for..

<http://espn.go.com/espn/story/_/id/7660415/thanks-memories-peyton-manning>

*“Do the right thing,”* a column about youth hockey playing twins who switched places, somewhat accidentally, and won fifty thousand dollars at halftime of a hockey game for midline shot, will work well to do two things:

[*http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/commentary/story/\_/id/7599623/11-year-old-hockey-fan-nate-smith-doing-right-thing*](http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/commentary/story/_/id/7599623/11-year-old-hockey-fan-nate-smith-doing-right-thing)

1. It shows that sometimes a columnist has the opportunity to let the little man be heard. Sometimes Reilly’s columns, like this one, include full interviews and are more like news stories than columns. But he is always sure to leave is with a message. A columnist has the freedom, and the responsibility, to tell stories of hope and human triumph that would otherwise not be heard.
2. After his lead he says: “Read this and feel better about the world.” People like good news. They want to hear stories about honest, moral people. Sometimes, they have to get to page six to do so.

**Columnist #2:** DAVE BARRY

**Rationale:** I have to go with Dave Barry. He is hilarious. The students get funny. At least they think they do. They get funny when they read it, but they don’t get funny when they try to write it. That is why studying Dave Barry is essential. The student writer will too often write something funny that doesn’t really have a point. Dave Barry is the best at being funny but saying something important, often times serious, through his humor.

He also writes quite frequently about young people.

He writes about a variety of topics. He is truly an observer of life. Being ‘an observer of life’ may be the number one thing I try to impart on my students. If we read Barry, we can see that he writes about everything and anything. Everybody has an opinion, but not everybody thinks about life as they go through it. Dave Barry lives with his eyes wide open.

If students can practice looking at the moments of life, each day, as potential story ideas, they can become observers of life. If you do it again and again, if you make it a practice of living, eventually you can, like Barry, just be aware of life as you are experiencing it. Writing down what you think should just be part of your experience of living.

*“Back to Basicks,”* a Dave Barry classic from 1994 that asks young students who are heading back for another school year to gather around and listen to “Uncle Dave’s” advice, does two things very well:

1. Barry gets off-track. He beings by beckoning young people to listen to his back-to-school advice, but is side-tracked by a mention of the possibility of Earth being destroyed by giant “comet chunks.” But, the tangent itself is meaningful. Barry is saying something here about the young people. He is saying something about being able to keep their attention. He is saying something about education. We can learn from the tangent earn.
2. His message is purposeful, but it makes you think about his sincerity. He is satirical, which is one of the most difficult techniques for students to understand. He ends his article with *“Uncle Dave is urging you to knuckle down and work hard in all your classes unless they're difficult or involve anything clearly useless such as the "cosine."”* He tells the young reader that it is their responsibility to carry on after his “old” generation moves on. Do you have faith? He seems to ask the adult reader.

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/08/21/2345238/back-to-basicks.html>

*“Breaking the Ice,”* an article about teenage dating from 1992, is a hilarious take on awkward teenage dating that will help students understand two things:

1. Write about your own personal experience! This is the best lesson for a young writer. My students want to make big statements about big problems, but they get caught up in what others have said or experienced. They need to, like Dave Barry, write about their own experience. They must tell their own story. Nothing is more honest and sincere. Nothing will have a more authentic voice.
2. It is hilarious and they can relate. Students love it when they can relate to writers, and they love it when adults can relate to them. In this way, they can understand what it will mean for the reader of their columns to relate to them.

[*http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/02/12/2031983/breaking-the-ice.html*](http://www.miamiherald.com/2012/02/12/2031983/breaking-the-ice.html)