

Level Two Writes

Purposes: To give practice writing in a situation with more time

Process: These are better as homework assignments

- Letters: to you, responding to lessons or reflecting on learning, or to others in the class, explaining a concept
- Explaining proverbs: responding to proverbs, what they mean and how they apply to life experiences of students
- Writing that may be used, after revision, in a Level Three writing
 - Defining, using examples as support
 - Define a characteristic such as courage, compassion, heroism
 - Define what it means to be a citizen of China (autobiography)
 - Define a technical term for a specific audience (magazine)
 - Define a cultural tradition for tourists (brochure)
 - Explaining how to do something
 - Explain how to do something you're good at (autobiography)
 - Explain how to get somewhere for tourists (brochure)
 - Explain how something works for a specific audience (magazine)
 - Description, using sensory details (see Place of Sorrows)
 - Describe your favorite childhood place (autobiography)
 - Describe a place important to your family (autobiography)
 - Describe a place tourists might want to visit (brochure)
 - Narration, using chronology and detail (see Eclipse)
 - Tell a story about a funny thing that happened to you as a child (autobiography)
 - Tell a folk tale that would be of interest to tourists (brochure)
 - Tell how something was invented (magazine)
 - Cause and Effect, using transitions to show connections and flow
 - Tell about a decision you made and the consequences of it (autobiography)
 - Tell about an historical event and its consequences evident today in China (brochure)
 - Tell about the effects of an invention or tool (magazine)
 - Comparison/Contrast, using transitions to show connections and flow
 - Compare yourself to a best friend or sibling (autobiography)
 - Compare two different places that tourists might visit (brochure)
 - Compare the effects of two different procedures (magazine)
 - Take a stand or defend an opinion, using evidence as support (see Man in the Water)
 - Take a stand on a current event and explain your opinion and why you have that opinion

Grading? Six Traits: Choose 1-3 traits per assignment. Give criteria to students ahead of time and the value of points. Then comment only on the aspects you wanted writing to focus on, for example, using transitions, clarity, use of details or evidence as support, interesting introduction, etc.

Proverbs from around the World

The first day you meet, you are friends. The next day you meet, you are brothers. —
Afghan proverb

Those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget
to be humble. — Chinese proverb

A coral reef strengthens into land. — Hawaiian proverb

Those who are choosy often pick the worst. — Ilocano proverb (Philippines)

Experience is the comb that nature gives us when we are bald. — Belgian proverb

A stranger nearby is better than a far-away relative. — Korean proverb

Don't think there are no crocodiles because the water is calm. — Malayan proverb

Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough, but not baked in the same oven. — Yiddish
proverb

In a battle between elephants, the ants get squashed. — Thai proverb

In a court of fowls, the cockroach never wins his case. — Rwandan proverb

Little by little, the camel goes into the couscous. Moroccan proverb

To attract good fortune, spend a new coin on an old friend, share an old pleasure with a
new friend, and lift up the heart of a true friend by writing his name on the wings of a
dragon. — Chinese proverb

When a dove begins to associate with crows its feathers remain white but its heart grows
black. — German proverb

The worse the passage the more welcome the port. — English proverb

NARRATION

This is telling a story.

Topic Sentence: States your topic and your viewpoint or overall impression (the most wonderful time, the messiest time, my most frustrating experience, my most embarrassing thing)

Supporting details answer these questions: HOW, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, WHO, and WHAT

Use specific nouns and adjectives and verbs to give the story color

All the supporting details must be in chronological or logical order.

PROCESS ANALYSIS

This tells how something is made or done. It is like instructions

Topic sentence: States your topic and why the reader should understand the process (why make foul shots, why celebrate moon day)

Supporting details are the steps arranged in chronological order. These steps need to tell the reader **HOW** to do the steps **NOT** just what to do.

If it is important, tell the reader what **NOT** to do.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

Tells how two things are similar **OR** different **OR** both

Topic sentence: States the topic and tells **how** you feel about the two items, whether you think they are the same or different and **why it is important to know**.

Supporting details explain how things are similar or different. This can be done **point by point** or **subject by subject**. If it is subject by subject then the points should be made for both things in the same sequence. You **must** treat the same points with both subjects.

Use transition words: similarly, in the same way, however, on the other hand, in contrast
Avoid obvious comparisons

CAUSE AND EFFECT ANALYSIS

Tells **why** something happened (**CAUSE**) OR the results of an event (**EFFECT**)

Topic Sentence: States your topic and explains whether you are treating the causes or the effects of your subject OR both.

Supporting details. Each time you mention a cause or effect you should view it as a **general statement**. Follow it up with a **specific statement**. See page 124.

Use transition words to show one thing is the result of another: thus, then, as a result

PERSUASIVE

This is like a **debate**. You are trying to win an argument. You need to be aware of your position and the arguments for the opposite position.

Topic sentence: States the topic and how you feel about the topic.

Supporting details. Make a list of all the arguments for your position and all the arguments for the opposite position. Then pick out the **THREE** best points for your position and discuss them starting with the least important of the three and ending with the biggest and best reason. Give a specific example for each of your arguments.

Avoid "absolute" words: all, never, everyone etc.

Use transition words that build your argument step by step: more important, most important, even better, best,

THE GIANT WATER BUG

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Annie Dillard



A couple of summers ago I was walking along the edge of the island to see what I could see in the water, and mainly to scare frogs. Frogs have an inelegant way of taking off from invisible positions on the bank just ahead of your feet, in dire panic, emitting a froggy "Yike!" and splashing into the water. Incredibly, this amused me, and, incredibly, it amuses me still. As I walked along the grassy edge of the island, I got

better and better at seeing frogs both in and out of the water. I learned to recognize, slowing down, the difference in texture of the light reflected from mudbank, water, grass, or frog. Frogs were flying all around me. At the end of the island I noticed a small green frog. He was exactly half in and half out of the water, looking like a schematic diagram of an amphibian, and he didn't jump.

He didn't jump; I crept closer. At last I knelt

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on the island's winter-killed grass, lost, dumb-struck, staring at the frog in the creek just four feet away. He was a very small frog with wide, dull eyes. And just as I looked at him, he slowly crumpled and began to sag. The spirit vanished from his eyes as if snuffed. His skin emptied and drooped; his very skull seemed to collapse and settle like a kicked tent. He was shrinking before my eyes like a deflating football. I watched the taut, glistening skin on his shoulders ruck and rumple and fall. Soon, part of his skin, formless as a pricked balloon, lay in floating folds like bright scum on top of the water: it was a monstrous and terrifying thing. I gaped bewildered, appalled. An oval shadow hung in the water behind the drained frog; then the shadow glided away. The frog skin bag started to sink.

I had read about the giant water bug, but never

seen one. "Giant water bug" is really the name of the creature, which is an enormous, heavy-bodied brown beetle. It eats insects, tadpoles, fish, and frogs. Its grasping forelegs are mighty and hooked inward. It seizes a victim with these legs, hugs it tight, and paralyzes it with enzymes injected during a vicious bite. That one bite is the only bite it ever takes. Through the puncture shoot the poisons that dissolve the victim's muscles and bones and organs—all but the skin—and through it the giant water bug sucks out the victim's body reduced to a juice. This event is quite common in warm fresh water. The frog I saw was being sucked by a giant water bug. I had been kneeling on the island grass; when the unrecognizable flap of frog skin settled on the creek bottom, swaying, I stood up and brushed the knees of my pants. I couldn't catch my breath.

Place of Sorrows

CHARLES KURALT

For Custer and his men, the Little Big Horn was a place of sorrows. Read to discover why this hill came to be a place of sorrows for the victorious Sioux and Cheyennes as well.

This is about a place where the wind blows and the grass grows and a river flows below a hill. Nothing is here but the wind and the grass and the river. But of all the places in America, this is the saddest place I know.

The Indians¹ called the river the Greasy Grass. White men called it the Little Big Horn. From a gap in the mountains to the east, Brevet Major General George A. Custer's proud Seventh Cavalry came riding, early in the morning of June 25, 1876, riding toward the Little Big Horn.

Custer sent one battalion, under Major Marcus Reno, across the river to attack what he thought might be a small village of hostile Sioux. His own battalion he galloped behind the ridges to ride down on the village from the rear. When at last Custer brought his two hundred and thirty-one troops to the top of a hill and looked down toward the river, what he saw was an encampment of fifteen thousand Indians stretching for two and a half miles, the

largest assembly of Indians the plains had ever known—and a thousand mounted warriors coming straight for him.

Reno's men, meantime, had been turned, routed, chased across the river, joined by the rest of the regiment, surrounded, and now were dying, defending a nameless brown hill.

In a low, protected swale in the middle of their narrowing circle, the one surviving doctor improvised a field hospital and did what he could for the wounded. The grass covers the place now and grows in the shallow rifle trenches above, which were dug that day by knives and tin cups and fingernails.

Two friends in H Company, Private Charles Windolph and Private Julian Jones, fought up here, side by side, all that day

1. Indians—Term commonly used for native peoples in North and South America; now referred to as Native Americans. The misuse of the term *Indian* began with Columbus, who thought he had reached India when he landed in the Americas.

and stayed awake all that night, talking, both of them scared. Charles Windolph said: "The next morning when the firing commenced, I said to Julian, 'We'd better get our coats off.' He didn't move. I looked at him. He was shot through the heart." Charles Windolph won the Congressional Medal of Honor up here, survived, lived to be ninety-eight. He didn't die until 1950. And never a day passed in all those years that he didn't think of Julian Jones.

And Custer's men, four miles away? There are stones in the grass that tell the story of Custer's men. The stones all say the same things: "U.S. soldier, Seventh Cavalry, fell here, June 25, 1876."

The warriors of Sitting Bull, under the great Chief Gall, struck Custer first and divided his troops. Two Moon and the northern Cheyenne struck him next. And when he tried to gain a hilltop with the last remnants of his command, Crazy Horse rode over that hill with hundreds of warriors and right through his battalion.

The Indians who were there later agreed on two things: that Custer and his men fought with exceeding bravery; and that after half an hour, not one of them was alive.

The Army came back that winter—of course, the Army came back—and broke the Sioux and the Cheyenne and forced

Graves of unknown soldiers who fought with Custer at Little Big Horn.

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them back to the starvation of the reservations and, in time, murdered more old warriors and women and children on the Pine Ridge Reservation than Custer lost young men in battle here.

That's why this is the saddest place. For Custer and the Seventh Cavalry, courage only led to defeat. For Crazy Horse and the Sioux, victory only led to Wounded Knee.²

Come here sometime, and you'll see. There is melancholy in the wind and sorrow in the grass, and the river weeps.

2. Wounded Knee—Wounded Knee Creek, South Dakota, was the scene of the final battle in 1890 between the whites and the Sioux. The white soldiers killed two hundred Sioux men, women, and children.

A PRESENT FOR POPO

Elizabeth Wong

Elizabeth Wong was born in Los Angeles, California, in 1958, the daughter of Chinese immigrants. Before receiving an M.F.A. from New York University in 1991, she worked as a newspaper journalist and television reporter in several California cities. Since then, she has written three plays—Letters to a Student Revolutionary (1991), Kimchee and Chitlins (1992), and China Doll (1992)—and a monthly Op-Ed column for the Los Angeles Times; she also writes for television.

In an interview about her writing published in Unbroken Thread: An Anthology of Plays by Asian American Women (1993), Wong commented on her original feelings about being raised in Chinatown: "I didn't want to have anything to do with all these people who talked with accents, who didn't read the things that I read or see the movies I saw. . . . I didn't have anything in common with these people." She continued, "It wasn't until I became a playwright that I began to like myself the way I am." This essay first appeared as a Los Angeles Times Op-Ed column in December, 1992.

BEFORE READING

Connecting: What memories or associations come immediately to mind when you think about one of your parents or grandparents?

Anticipating: Wong is writing about her memories of her maternal grandmother. Out of the many memories that she has, why might she select the ones that she does? How does each included detail affect our sense of Popo?

When my Popo opened a Christmas gift, she would shake it, smell it, listen to it. She would size it up. She would open it nimbly, with all enthusiasm and delight, and even though the mittens were ugly or the blouse too small or the card obviously homemade, she would coo over it as if it were the baby Jesus.

Despite that, buying a gift for my grandmother was always problematic. Being in her late 80s, Popo didn't seem to need any more sweaters or handbags. No books certainly, as she only knew six

words of English. Cosmetics might be a good idea, for she was just a wee bit vain.

3 But ultimately, nothing worked. "No place to put anything anyway," she used to tell me in Chinese. For in the last few years of her life, Popo had a bed in a room in a house in San Gabriel owned by one of her sons. All her belongings, her money, her very life was now co-opted and controlled by her sons and their wives. Popo's daughters had little power in this matter. This was a traditional Chinese family.

4 For you see, Popo had begun to forget things. Ask her about something that happened 20 years ago, and she could recount the details in the heartbeat of a New York minute. But it was those niggling little everyday matters that became so troubling. She would forget to take her heart medicine. She would forget where she put her handbag. She would forget she talked to you just moments before. She would count the few dollars in her billfold, over and over again. She would ask me for the millionth time, "So when are you going to get married?" For her own good, the family decided she should give up her beloved one-room Chinatown flat. Popo herself recognized she might be a danger to herself, "I think your grandmother is going crazy," she would say.

5 That little flat was a bothersome place, but Popo loved it. Her window had a view of several import-export shops below, not to mention the grotesque plastic hanging lanterns and that nasty loud-speaker serenading tourists with 18 hours of top-40 popular hits.

6 My brother Will and I used to stand under her balcony on Mei Ling Way, shouting up, "Grandmother on the Third Floor! Grandmother on the Third Floor!" Simultaneously, the wrinkled faces of a half-dozen grannies would peek cautiously out their windows. Popo would come to the balcony and proudly claim us: "These are my grandchildren coming to take me to *dim sum*." Her neighbors would cluck and sigh, "You have such good grandchildren. Not like mine."

7 In that cramped room of Popo's, I could see past Christmas presents. A full-wall collage of family photos that my mother and I made together and presented one year with lots of fanfare. Popo had attached additional snapshots by way of paper clips and Scotch tape. And there, on the window sill, a little terrarium to which Popo had tied a small red ribbon. "For good luck," as she gleefully pointed out the sprouting buds. "See, it's having babies."

8 Also, there were the utility shelves on the wall, groaning from a wide assortment of junk, stuff and whatnot. Popo was fond of salvaging discarded things. After my brother had installed the shelving, she did a little jig, then took a whisk broom and lightly swept away any naughty spirits that might be lurking on the walls. "Shoo, shoo,

shoo, away with you, Mischievous Ones!" That apartment was her independence, and her pioneer spirit was everywhere in it.

Popo was my mother's mother, but she was also a second mother to me. Her death was a great blow. The last time I saw her was Christmas, 1990, when she looked hale and hearty. I thought she would live forever. Last October, at 91, she had her final heart attack. The next time I saw her, it was at her funeral.

An open casket, and there she was, with a shiny new penny poised between her lips, a silenced warrior woman. Her sons and daughters placed colorful pieces of cloth in her casket. They burned incense and paper money. A small marching band led a New Orleans-like procession through the streets of Chinatown. Popo's picture, larger than life, in a flatbed truck to survey the world of her adopted country.

This little 4-foot, 9-inch woman had been the glue of our family. She wasn't perfect, she wasn't always even nice, but she learned from her mistakes, and, ultimately, she forgave herself for being human. It is a lesson of forgiveness that seems to have eluded her own sons and daughters.

And now she is gone. And with her—the tenuous, cohesive ties of blood and duty that bound us to family. My mother predicted that once the distribution of what was left of Popo's estate took place, no further words would be exchanged between Popo's children. She was right.

But this year, six of the 27 grandchildren and two of the 18 great-grandchildren came together for a holiday feast of honey-baked ham and mashed potatoes. Not a gigantic family reunion. But I think, for now, it's the one yuletide present my grandmother might have truly enjoyed.

Merry Christmas, Popo!

QUESTIONS ON SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. What is the "occasion" for Wong to write about her grandmother? What prompted the essay?
2. Why might Wong have chosen to write about the death of her grandmother? What might have been her motives?
3. Why would be a reader be interested in a tribute to someone else's grandmother?

QUESTIONS ON STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. How does the idea of a "present" unify the essay?

TEACHING STRATEGY

One way to begin is to ask students how they might go about describing one of their grandparents. Ask them to select one and then to generate a list of details that they might use in the description. After they have had a few minutes to work, ask them what type of details they have chosen. For example, how many of the details concern physical appearance? Could their remaining details be classified in any way—that is, sorted out into categories?

From here you could move to the Class Activity. Why does Wong tell us so little about her grandmother's physical appearance? How else does she "create" or reveal her character? What was important about Popo was not her physical appearance but her personality. Wong re-creates her grandmother by describing her behavior, her interests, her language.

Why write about Popo? In part, of course, Wong is remembering, paying tribute to someone who "was also a second mother to me" (paragraph 9). But her essay is a little more complicated. For instance, what is the tone of the essay? What is the focus of paragraphs 11–13? There is a great deal of sadness in Wong's essay (focusing on individual details as in the Collaborative Activity will bring this out)—not just about her grandmother, but also about the disintegration of her family. Wong notes that her mother had predicted that "no

further words would be exchanged between Popo's children" (paragraph 12). Those who gather for the family reunion are Popo's grandchildren, not her children.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

dim sum (dim' tsoom'): a light meal of small dough casings which are filled with minced meat and chopped vegetables, and then steamed.

CLASS ACTIVITY

Ask students to go through the essay and underline each detail that Wong gives about Popo's physical appearance. How many details are there other than her height (paragraph 11)? If Wong includes so few details, how then does she "create" the "character" of Popo for the reader?

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

In writing about her grandmother, Wong selects a number of details to share with the audience. What does each of the following reveal about Popo? How does each help us to understand and know Popo? Divide the class into small groups. Ask each group to focus on one item, and then summarize the group's thoughts for the class.

- a. The Christmas gifts (paragraphs 1 and 2)
- b. "No place to put anything anyway" (3)
- c. The one-room flat (4–5)
- d. Calling up to their grandmother on the third floor (6)
- e. The objects in her one-room apartment (7–8)
- f. Her funeral (10)

LINKS TO WRITING

Wong uses a number of sentence fragments in the essay (paragraphs 6, 7, 12, and 13). Ask students to label each fragment, give a reason why Wong might have used it, rewrite each as a complete sentence, and evaluate the effectiveness of the change.

LINKS TO WRITING

Paragraph 4 is a good one for class discussion of how paragraphs are structured. Of particular interest are the topic sentence, the details presented in parallel structures, and the conclusion.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. The essay was written at Christmas, one year after her grandmother's death, after some of the family had a small reunion.
2. In part, Wong might have written the essay as a way to order her experience, record her grief, and pay tribute to her grandmother. In part, it might reflect her feelings about what has happened in her family.
3. Even though Wong writes of a specific person unknown to her readers, her experiences with her grandmother and her family are universal.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. The essay begins with Wong writing about how difficult it was to buy Christmas presents for her grandmother; it ends with a reference to the small reunion as the one present Popo might have enjoyed.

Using the Senses (II)

One of the best ways to describe something so that the reader can experience it is to use sensory words. Sensory words tell what we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. The more precise the words, the more easily the reader can experience what is being described. For example, calling a person *big* is too general. Is that person *tall, stately, stout, massive, gigantic, mighty, or towering*? Listed below are specific sensory words that you can use in your writing.

Sight	Hearing	Touch	Taste	Smell
miniature	roar	icy	buttery	ripe
brief	scream	tepid	salty	vinegarish
insignificant	whine	sticky	bitter	fruity
wretched	blare	slippery	sugary	pungent
crimson	rasp	spongy	bland	overripe
azure	raucous	frozen	tasteless	spotted
gold	piercing	feathery	sour	rotten
lavender	petter	oily	peppery	fragrant
emerald	whisper	crisp	sweet	smoky
lofty	rattle	leathery	hearty	perfumed
costly	twitter	silky	creaky	fresh
squat	crackle	velvety	spicy	earthy

Using Specific Sensory Words Complete the sentences below with precise sensory words. You may use words from the list if you wish.

- The _____ trees breezed in the _____ wind.
- An _____ glass of water goes well with _____ chill.
- The _____ odor rose from the _____ basement.
- Some _____ rain fell on the _____ flowers.
- Josh picked one _____ plum from the _____ basket of fruit on the table.
- A _____ car _____ down the road.
- Tons of _____ snow covered the _____ mountains.
- Only the _____ fire warmed our _____ toes.
- Never stopping in a single town or city, the _____ train rolled swiftly through the _____ night.
- Down the _____ watersheds sped the _____ teen-agers.

Using the Senses (II)

The Senses and
Journal Writing

You already know many specific sensory words that you can substitute for general, dull words. You can find still others in either a regular dictionary or a dictionary of synonyms. One of the best sources for interesting words is a *thesaurus*, which gives a list of synonyms for hundreds of words. For example, one synonym for the word *ran* is *dashed*.

As the crowd cheered, Sue ran across the finish line.
As the crowd cheered, Sue dashed across the finish line.

Improving Writing with Sensory Words The following sentences are correct but dull. Rewrite each sentence, using a more specific word for the underlined word. Add a sensory word whenever you see a caret (^).

1. The tired climber paused briefly and wiped his ^ brow.

2. "No," said the ^ official, "I can't help you now."

3. At midnight, the last train moved out of the ^ station.

4. Like a sentinel, the tall tree loomed over the ^ landscape.

5. Our ^ dog smelled the ground, trying to track a scent.

6. Red strands of silk were woven into the ^ tapestry.

7. Two thin scarecrows flapped their arms in the ^ wind.

8. The ^ beat of rock music came out of my brother's room.

9. The ^ road went toward the distant horizon.

10. Through the dust-covered window came the ^ sun.

John Updike
Eclipse

I went out into the backyard and the usually roundish spots of dappled sunlight underneath the trees were all shaped like feathers, crescent in the same direction, from left to right. Though it was five o'clock on a summer afternoon, the birds were singing good-bye to the day, and their merged song seemed to soak the strange air in an additional strangeness. A kind of silence prevailed. Few cars were moving on the streets of the town. Of my children only the baby dared come into the yard with me. She wore only underpants, and as she stood beneath a tree, bulging her belly toward me in the mood of jolly flirtation she has grown into at the age of two, her bare skin was awash with pale crescents. It crossed my mind that she might be harmed, but I couldn't think how. *Cancer?*

The eclipse was to be over 90 percent in our latitude and the newspapers and television for days had been warning us not to look at it. I looked up, a split-second Prometheus, and looked away. The bitten silhouette of the sun lingered redly on my retinas. The day was half-cloudy, and my impression had been of the sun struggling, amid a furious knotted huddle of black and silver clouds, with an enemy too dreadful to be seen, with an eater as ghostly and hungry as time. Every blade of grass cast a long bluish-brown shadow, as at dawn.

My wife shouted from behind the kitchen screen door that as long as I was out there I might as well burn the wastepaper. She darted from the house, eyes downcast, with the wastebasket, and darted back again, leaving the naked baby and me to wander up through the strained sunlight to the wire trash barrel. After my forbidden peek at the sun, the flames dancing transparently from the blackening paper—yesterday's *Boston Globe*, a milk carton, a Hi-Ho cracker box—seemed dimmer than shadows, and in the teeth of all the warnings I looked up again. The clouds seemed bunched and twirled as if to plug a hole in the sky, and the burning afterimage was the shape of a near-new moon, horns pointed down. It was gigantically unnatural, and I lingered in the yard under the vague apprehension that in some future life I might be called before a cosmic court to testify to this assault. I seemed to be the sole witness. The town around my yard was hushed, all but the singing of the birds, who were invisible. The feathers under the trees had changed direction, and curved from right

Then I saw my neighbor sitting on her porch. My neighbor is a widow, with white hair and brown skin; she has in her yard an aluminum-and-nylon-net chaise longue on which she lies at every opportunity, head back, arms spread, prostrate under the sun. Now she hunched dismally on her porch steps in the shade, which was scarcely darker than the light. I walked toward her and hailed her as a visitor to the moon might salute a survivor of a previous expedition. "How do you like the eclipse?" I called over the fence that distinguished our holdings on this suddenly insubstantial and lunar earth.

"I don't like it," she answered, shading her face with a hand. "They say you shouldn't go out in it."

"I thought it was just you shouldn't look at it."

"There's something in the rays," she explained, in a voice far louder than it needed to be, for silence framed us. "I shut all the windows on that side of the house and had to come out for some air."

"I think it'll pass," I told her.

"Don't let the baby look up," she warned, and turned away from talking to me, as if the open use of her voice exposed her more fatally to the rays.

Superstition, I thought, walking back through my yard, clutching my child's hand as tightly as a good-luck token. There was no question in her touch. Day, night, twilight, noon were all wonders to her, unscheduled, free from all bondage of prediction. The sun was being restored to itself and soon would radiate influence as brazenly as ever—and in this sense my daughter's blind trust was vindicated. Nevertheless, I was glad that the eclipse had passed, as it were, over her head; for in my own life I felt a certain assurance evaporate forever under the reality of the sun's disgrace.

TEACHING STRATEGY

Because of its structural simplicity, Forster's essay is a good one to use on the first day that you discuss cause and effect.

What are the consequences that Forster experiences? What exactly does he mean by each? For example, what does he mean when he says property makes him feel "heavy"?

Even though the structural pattern is very simple, several points are interesting. For example, notice that paragraph 2 ends by repeating its opening almost word for word. Also, why does Forster state his second reason in a separate paragraph (3) rather than include it as the topic sentence of what is paragraph 4? Note that he does the same thing in paragraph 6. Achieving variety and suggesting an ironic stance are surely significant factors in his decision to paragraph in this way.

The essay contains quite a few allusions. Why? What does this suggest about Forster? About his sense of his audience?

CLASS ACTIVITY

Ask students to think of one thing they or their families have owned that has changed their behavior—a car, a piece of property, an appliance or electronic device, an article of jewelry or clothing. Then, have them write down one positive and one negative consequence that grew out of that

Edward Morgan Forster (1879–1970) was born in London, England, and earned two undergraduate degrees and a master's degree from King's College, Cambridge University. He is best known as a novelist, but he also wrote short stories, literary criticism, biographies, histories, and essays. His novels, many of which have recently been made into popular films, include A Room with a View (1908), Howard's End (1910), and A Passage to India (1924). He published two collections of essays, Abinger Harvest (1936) and Two Cheers for Democracy (1951).

Commenting on Forster's essays, one critic wrote: "Through all the essays . . . Forster [is] a man with an alert eye for the telling detail, who responds to what he sees, reads, and hears with emotions ranging from delight to indignation, but always with intelligence and personal concern." Forster's eye for detail is apparent in this essay from Abinger Harvest. Here Forster explores the consequences of owning property, noting that "Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven."

BEFORE READING

Connecting: What would you regard as the most important "thing" that you own? Why is it most important to you?

Anticipating: Forster observes that owning the wood made him feel "heavy." In what sense does it make him feel "heavy"?

- 1 A few years ago I wrote a book which dealt in part with the difficulties of the English in India. Feeling that they would have had no difficulties in India themselves, the Americans read the book freely. The more they read it the better it made them feel, and a cheque to the author was the result. I bought a wood with the cheque. It is not a large wood—it contains scarcely any trees, and it is intersected, blast it, by a public footpath. Still, it is the first property that I have owned, so it is right that other people should participate in my shame, and should ask themselves, in accents that will vary in horror, this very important question: What is the effect of property upon the character? Don't let's touch economics; the effect of private ownership upon

the community as a whole is another question—a more important question, perhaps, but another one. Let's keep to psychology. If you own things, what's their effect on you? What's the effect on me of my wood?

In the first place, it makes me feel heavy. Property does have this effect. Property produces men of weight, and it was a man of weight who failed to get into the Kingdom of Heaven. He was not wicked, that unfortunate millionaire in the parable, he was only stout; he stuck out in front, not to mention behind, and as he wedged himself this way and that in the crystalline entrance and bruised his well-fed flanks, he saw beneath him a comparatively slim camel passing through the eye of a needle and being woven into the robe of God. The Gospels all through couple stoutness and slowness. They point out what is perfectly obvious, yet seldom realized: that if you have a lot of things you cannot move about a lot, that furniture requires dusting, dusters require servants, servants require insurance stamps, and the whole tangle of them makes you think twice before you accept an invitation to dinner or go for a bathe in the Jordan. Sometimes the Gospels proceed further and say with Tolstoy that property is sinful; they approach the difficult ground of asceticism here, where I cannot follow them. But as to the immediate effects of property on people, they just show straightforward logic. It produces men of weight. Men of weight cannot, by definition, move like the lightning from the East unto the West, and the ascent of a fourteen-stone bishop into a pulpit is thus the exact antithesis of the coming of the Son of Man. My wood makes me feel heavy.

In the second place, it makes me feel it ought to be larger.

The other day I heard a twig snap in it. I was annoyed at first, for I thought that someone was blackberrying, and depreciating the value of the undergrowth. On coming nearer, I saw it was not a man who had trodden on the twig and snapped it, but a bird, and I felt pleased. My bird. The bird was not equally pleased. Ignoring the relation between us, it took fright as soon as it saw the shape of my face, and flew straight over the boundary hedge into a field, the property of Mrs. Henessy, where it sat down with a loud squawk. It had become Mrs. Henessy's bird. Something seemed grossly amiss here, something that would not have occurred had the wood been larger. I could not afford to buy Mrs. Henessy out, I dared not murder her, and limitations of this sort beset me on every side. Ahab did not want that vineyard—he only needed it to round off his property, preparatory to plotting a new curve—and all the land around my wood has become necessary to me in order to round off the wood. A boundary protects. But—poor little thing—the boundary ought in its turn to be protected. Noises on the edge of it. Children throw stones. A lit-

ownership. Go around the class asking students to explain their answers.

ALLUSION

Man of weight (paragraph 2): "And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it will be for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!' And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, 'Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'" (Mark 10:23–25).

LINKS TO WRITING

Write a new ending for Forster's essay. Try one that follows the advice you learned from writing the typical five-paragraph essay—that is, write a very conventional, English-class-sounding conclusion. What is the effect of adding this new ending to the essay? What does this exercise suggest about conclusions?

ALLUSION

Ahab and the vineyard (paragraph 4): The story is told in Kings 1:21. When Naboth refused to sell or exchange the vineyard that Ahab wanted, Ahab's wife Jezebel falsely accused Naboth of "cursing God and King." Naboth was subsequently stoned to death. Canute and Alexander (4): Both men sought to build empires through conquest. Canute II (944?–1035), King of Denmark, England, and Norway, was the first Danish king of England. Alexander the Great (356–323 BC) was King of Macedon and founded an empire that

stretched from the Adriatic Sea to India.

USING OTHER STRATEGIES WITH CAUSE AND EFFECT

Forster does not seem to reach a conclusion about the effects of property ownership. The essay could, however, be easily recast with a persuasive purpose. What would it require to make Forster's essay "argue" for or against the ownership of property?

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

Divide the class into small groups, and ask each to characterize Forster's tone in the essay. You will probably need to define *tone* (see the Glossary) and to preface their collective work with a general discussion of the elements that can create or influence tone in an essay. Then have them isolate specific effects that influence our perceptions of tone.

ALLUSION

Dives and Lazarus (paragraph 7): Dives is the name traditionally given to the rich man in Jesus' parable in Luke 16:19-31 of the rich man and Lazarus. Both men die and the rich man goes to hell and the poor man (Lazarus) goes to heaven. After appealing for help, the rich man is told, "between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us" (Luke 16:26).

tle more, and then a little more, until we reach the sea. Happy Canute! Happier Alexander! And after all, why should even the world be the limit of possession? A rocket containing a Union Jack, will, it is hoped, be shortly fired at the moon. Mars. Sirius. Beyond which . . . But these immensities ended by saddening me. I could not suppose that my wood was the destined nucleus of universal dominion—it is so very small and contains no mineral wealth beyond the blackberries. Nor was I comforted when Mrs. Henessy's bird took alarm for the second time and flew clean away from us all, under the belief that it belonged to itself.

5 In the third place, property makes its owner feel that he ought to do something to it. Yet he isn't sure what. A restlessness comes over him, a vague sense that he has a personality to express—the same sense which, without any vagueness, leads the artist to an act of creation. Sometimes I think I will cut down such trees as remain in the wood, at other times I want to fill up the gaps between them with new trees. But impulses are pretentious and empty. They are not honest movements towards money-making or beauty. They spring from a foolish desire to express myself and from an inability to enjoy what I have got. Creation, property, enjoyment form a sinister trinity in the human mind. Creation and enjoyment are both very, very good, yet they are often unattainable without a material basis, and at such moments property pushes itself in as a substitute, saying, "Accept me instead—I'm good enough for all three." It is not enough. It is, as Shakespeare said of lust, "the expense of spirit in a waste of shame": it is "Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream." Yet we don't know how to shun it. It is forced on us by our economic system as the alternative to starvation. It is forced on us by an internal defect in the soul, by the feeling that in property may lie the germs of self-development and of exquisite or heroic deeds. Our life on earth is and ought to be, material and carnal. But we have not learned to manage our materialism and carnality properly; they are still entangled with the desire for ownership, where (in the words of Dante) "Possession is one with loss."

6 And this brings us to our fourth and final point: the blackberries.
7 Blackberries are not plentiful in the meagre grove, but they are easily seen from the public footpath which traverses it, and all too easily gathered. Foxgloves, too—people will pull up the foxgloves, and ladies of an educational tendency even grub for toadstools to show them on the Monday in class. Other ladies, less educated, roll down the bracken in the arms of their gentlemen friends. There is paper, there are tins. Pray, does my wood belong to me or doesn't it? And, if it does, should I not own it best by allowing no one else to walk there? There is a wood near Lyme Regis, also cursed by a public

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 footpath, where the owner has not hesitated on this point. He has built high stone walls on each side of the path, and has spanned it by bridges, so that the public circulate like termites while he gorges on the blackberries unseen. He really does own his wood, this able chap. Dives in Hell did pretty well, but the gulf dividing him from Lazarus could be traversed by vision, and nothing traverses it here. And perhaps I shall come to this in time. I shall wall in and fence out until I really taste the sweets of property. Enormously stout, endlessly avaricious, pseudocreative, intensely selfish, I shall weave upon my forehead the quadruple crown of possession until those nasty Bolshies come and take it off again and thrust me aside into the outer darkness.

QUESTIONS ON SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. According to Forster, what are the consequences of owning property?
2. Is there any irony in buying property from the royalties earned from a book about England's problems in India?
3. What purpose(s) might Forster have had in writing the essay?

QUESTIONS ON STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. In what way is this a cause and effect essay?
2. Look at the conclusion of the essay. Why does Forster end in this way? Why not add a more conventional conclusion?
3. What expectations does Forster seem to have about his audience? How do you know?

QUESTIONS ON VOCABULARY AND STYLE

1. Characterize the tone of Forster's essay. Is it formal? Informal? How is that tone achieved?
2. Forster makes extensive use of allusion in the essay. Some of the names are easily recognizable, others less so. Identify the allusions below (all but c are to Biblical stories). How does each fit into the context of the essay?
 - a. The wealthy man in the parable (paragraph 2)
 - b. Ahab and the vineyard (4)
 - c. Canute and Alexander (4)
 - d. Dives and Lazarus (7)

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. It makes him feel "heavy" (paragraph 2); it makes him want to own more—"it ought to be larger" (3); it makes him feel that he "ought to do something to it" (5); it makes him feel possessive (7).
2. Forster wrote often about the British colonial empire in India and the problems that it occasioned. India was, in a sense, the property of England.
3. Having had the experience and the reactions, Forster presumably wanted to offer his insights to others.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. Forster discusses the four effects or consequences that owning property had on him.
2. One way to answer this is to imagine what a conventional ending might sound like—"In conclusion, owning property had four effects. . . ." Such a conclusion would be unnecessary and obtrusive. Note, however, that Forster does summarize the four effects at the start of his final sentence.

3. He obviously expects that his audience is educated and will recognize the many allusions that he uses. His word choice also indicates that he expects his audience is primarily British.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: VOCABULARY AND STYLE

1. Despite the allusions, the word choices, and the relatively long sentences, Forster's essay is informal and even somewhat casual. Note, for example, the effect of using "blast it" (paragraph 1); the use of "I", contractions, sentence fragments, dashes, exclamation marks; "the whole jangle of them" (2); "nasty Bolsheviks" (7).

2. The allusions are identified under Allusion. Each allusion is related to the problem of property.

3. Word definitions:

asceticism *n.* religious doctrine that one can reach a higher state by rigorous self-discipline and self-denial

fourteen-stone *adj.* one stone, a measure of weight used in Great Britain, equals 14 pounds.

Fourteen stone equals 196 pounds

depreciating *v.* reducing in value or price

pretentious *adj.* making claims, explicit or implicit, to some distinction, importance, dignity, or excellence

carnal *adj.* in or of the flesh; bodily; material or worldly, not spiritual

foxgloves *n.* any of a genus (*Digitalis*) of plants of the figwort family, with long spikes of thimblelike flowers

bracken *n.* any of a genus (*Pteridium*) of large weedy ferns

3. Be able to define the following words: *asceticism* (paragraph 2), *fourteen-stone* (measure of weight, 2), *depreciating* (4), *pretentious* (5), *carnal* (5), *foxgloves* (7), *bracken* (7), *avaricious* (7), *Bolsheviks* (Bolsheviks, 7).

WRITING SUGGESTIONS

1. **For your Journal.** Commenting on the second effect of owning property, Forster observes: "... it makes me feel it ought to be larger" (paragraph 3). To what extent does something you own make you want to own something more? Concentrate on your single most valuable (to you) possession. Does owning it ever make you want to own more? Explore the idea.
2. **For a Paragraph.** Select something you own that is important to you—a house, a car, a stereo system, a pet, something you use for recreation. In a paragraph, describe the consequences of owning it. How has it changed your life and behavior? Are there negative as well as positive consequences?
3. **For an Essay.** Extend your paragraph into an essay. Explore each of the consequences you described in a separate paragraph.

Prewriting:

- a. Make a list of possible subjects. For each item try to list at least four possible effects of owning it. Do not commit to a specific subject until you have considered the range of possibilities.
- b. Once you have selected an item, try freewriting for 15 minutes on each consequence of ownership. You are still gathering ideas for your essay; this material will not necessarily become part of your first draft.
- c. The consequences will surely vary in terms of their significance and order of importance. Plan out an organizational strategy. Which effect should come first? Try writing each paragraph on a separate sheet of paper so that you can shuffle their order easily. Consider the alternatives.

Rewriting:

- a. Make a brief outline of Forster's essay. It can be used as a model. Try to consider the author's strategy—that is, how did Forster solve the problems that this type of essay poses? Do not just imitate his form.

Stone Writing Center

@ Del Mar College

The Cause and Effect Essay

What is a cause and effect essay?

Cause and effect essays are concerned with why things happen (causes) and what happens as a result (effects). Cause and effect is a common method of organizing and discussing ideas.

Follow these steps when writing a cause and effect essay:

1. Distinguish between cause and effect. To determine causes, ask, "Why did this happen?" To identify effects, ask, "What happened because of this?" The following is an example of one cause producing one effect:

Cause	Effect
You are out of gas.	Your car won't start.

Sometimes, many causes contribute to a single effect or many effects may result from a single cause. (Your instructor will specify which cause/effect method to use.) The following are examples:

Causes	Effect
liked business in high school	choose to major in accounting
salaries in the field are high	
have an aunt who is an accountant	
am good with numbers	

Cause	Effects
reduce work hours	less income
	employer is irritated
	more time to study

more time for family and friends

However, most situations are more complicated.

The following is an example of a chain reaction:

Thinking about friend...forgot to buy gas...car wouldn't start...missed math exam...failed math course.

2. Develop your thesis statement. State clearly whether you are discussing causes, effects, or both. Introduce your main idea, using the terms "cause" and/or "effect."

3. Find and organize supporting details. Back up your thesis with relevant and sufficient details that are organized. You can organize details in the following ways:

- Chronological. Details are arranged in the order in which the events occurred.
- Order of importance. Details are arranged from least to most important or vice versa.
- Categorical. Details are arranged by dividing the topic into parts or categories.

4. Use appropriate transitions. To blend details smoothly in cause and effect essays, use the transitional words and phrases listed below.

For causes	For Effects
because, due to, on cause is, another is, since, for, first, second	consequently, as a result, thus, resulted in, one result is, another is, therefore

When writing your essay, keep the following suggestions in mind:

- Remember your purpose. Decide if you are writing to inform or persuade.
- Focus on immediate and direct causes (or effects.) Limit yourself to causes that are close in time and related, as opposed to remote and indirect causes, which occur later and are related indirectly.
- Strengthen your essay by using supporting evidence. Define terms, offer facts and statistics, or provide examples, anecdotes, or personal observations that support your ideas.
- Qualify or limit your statements about cause and effect. Unless

there is clear evidence that one event is related to another. qualify your statements with phrases such as "It appears that the cause was" or "It seems likely" or "The evidence may indicate" or "Available evidence suggests."

To evaluate the effectiveness of a cause and effect essay, ask the following questions: What are the causes? What are the effects? Which should be emphasized? Are there single or multiple causes? Single or multiple effects? Is a chain reaction involved?

THE TRANSACTION: TWO WRITING PROCESSES

William Zinsser

William Zinsser was born in New York in 1922 and received a B.A. from Princeton in 1944. For thirteen years he was an editor, critic, and editorial writer with the New York Herald Tribune. He left in 1959 to become a freelance writer and has since written regularly for leading magazines, including The New Yorker, The Atlantic, and Life. During the 1970s he taught nonfiction writing and humor writing and was master of Branford College at Yale University. Currently, Zinsser teaches at the New School and serves as a consultant on the art of writing, working with colleges, newspapers, and corporations. He is the author of fifteen books, including On Writing Well: An Informal Guide to Writing Nonfiction (now in its 5th edition), a textbook classic of which The New York Times wrote: "It belongs on any shelf of serious reference works for writers."

In this selection from that book, Zinsser dramatizes two completely different attitudes toward writing. As someone who earns his living as a writer, Zinsser sees writing as hard work. "The only way to learn to write," he has observed, "is to force yourself to produce a certain number of words on a regular basis." In an interview he once remarked: "I don't think writing is an art. I think sometimes it's raised to an art, but basically it's a craft, like cabinet-making or carpentry."

BEFORE READING

Connecting: If you had to describe your writing process to a group of younger students, what would you say?

Anticipating: Why should writing seem so easy to Brock and so difficult to Zinsser? If he finds it so difficult, why does Zinsser continue to write?

About ten years ago a school in Connecticut held "a day devoted to the arts," and I was asked if I would come and talk about writing as a vocation. When I arrived I found that a second speaker had been invited—Dr. Brock (as I'll call him), a surgeon who had recently begun

to write and had sold some stories to national magazines. He was going to talk about writing as an avocation. That made us a panel, and we sat down to face a crowd of student newspaper editors, English teachers and parents, all eager to learn the secrets of our glamorous work.

Dr. Brock was dressed in a bright red jacket, looking vaguely bohemian, as authors are supposed to look, and the first question went to him. What was it like to be a writer?

He said it was tremendous fun. Coming home from an arduous day at the hospital, he would go straight to his yellow pad and write his tensions away. The words just flowed. It was easy.

I then said that writing wasn't easy and it wasn't fun. It was hard and lonely, and the words seldom just flowed.

Next Dr. Brock was asked if it was important to rewrite. Absolutely not, he said. "Let it all hang out," and whatever form the sentences take will reflect the writer at his most natural.

I then said that rewriting is the essence of writing. I pointed out that professional writers rewrite their sentences repeatedly and then rewrite what they have rewritten. I mentioned that E. B. White and James Thurber rewrote their pieces eight or nine times.

"What do you do on days when it isn't going well?" Dr. Brock was asked. He said he just stopped writing and put the work aside for a day when it would go better.

I then said that the professional writer must establish a daily schedule and stick to it. I said that writing is a craft, not an art, and that the man who runs away from his craft because he lacks inspiration is fooling himself. He is also going broke.

"What if you're feeling depressed or unhappy?" a student asked. "Won't that affect your writing?"

Probably it will, Dr. Brock replied. Go fishing. Take a walk.

Probably it won't, I said. If your job is to write every day, you learn to do it like any other job.

A student asked if we found it useful to circulate in the literary world. Dr. Brock said that he was greatly enjoying his new life as a man of letters, and he told several stories of being taken to lunch by his publisher and his agent at chic Manhattan restaurants where writers and editors gather. I said that professional writers are solitary drudges who seldom see other writers.

"Do you put symbolism in your writing?" a student asked me.

"Not if I can help it," I replied. I have an unbroken record of missing the deeper meaning in any story, play or movie, and as for dance and mime, I have never had even a remote notion of what is being conveyed.

"I love symbols!" Dr. Brock exclaimed, and he described with gusto the joys of weaving them through his work.

So the morning went, and it was a revelation to all of us. At the end Dr. Brock told me he was enormously interested in my answers—it had never occurred to him that writing could be hard. I told him I was just as interested in *his* answers—it had never occurred to me that writing could be easy. (Maybe I should take up surgery on the side.)

As for the students, anyone might think we left them bewildered. But in fact we probably gave them a broader glimpse of the writing process than if only one of us had talked. For of course there isn't any "right" way to do such intensely personal work. There are all kinds of writers and all kinds of methods, and any method that helps people to say what they want to say is the right method for them. . . .

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QUESTIONS ON SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. Zinsser uses contrast to make a point about how people write. What is that point?
2. How effective is the beginning? Would the effect have been lost if Zinsser had opened with a statement similar to his final sentence?
3. What process do you use when you write? Does it help in any way to know what other people do? Why? Why not?

QUESTIONS ON STRATEGY AND AUDIENCE

1. Which method of development does Zinsser use for his example? How many points of contrast does he make?
2. Would it have made any difference if he had used another pattern of development? Why?
3. How effective are the short paragraphs? Should they be longer?

QUESTIONS ON VOCABULARY AND STYLE

1. What makes Zinsser's story humorous? Try to isolate several aspects of humor.
2. Zinsser uses a number of parallel structures in his narrative. Make a list of them and be prepared to show how they contribute to the narrative's effectiveness.
3. Be able to explain or define the following: *avocation* (paragraph 1), *bohemian* (3), *arduous* (3), *drone* (12), *mine* (14), *gusto* (15).

COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

What would be the result of a reparagraphing of the Zinsser essay? Would it change it? Would it be more effective? Divide students into small groups, and ask each group to reparagraph the selection. Is there general agreement on where that new paragraphing would occur?

LINKS TO WRITING

For a discussion of sentence strategies, ask the class to rewrite paragraph 16, casting it into simple sentences, each of which is followed by a period. What is the difference between that paragraph and the one that Zinsser wrote? How does the punctuation help reflect and emphasize Zinsser's meaning?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS: SUBJECT AND PURPOSE

1. The point that Zinsser is trying to make is "there isn't any 'right' way to do such intensely personal work. . . . Any method that helps somebody to say what he wants to say is the right method for him" (paragraph 17).
2. Opening with the story makes Zinsser's point more vivid and more interesting. After all, readers generally prefer stories to explicit statements, and the stories allow us to remember the points more easily.

TEACHING STRATEGY

This selection is intended as a simple example of comparison and contrast, and an effective way to open a discussion is to look at how Zinsser structures this selection. The essay records a panel discussion in which two authors (Zinsser and Dr. Brock) answer questions on six points:

1. What is it like to be a writer?
2. Is it important to rewrite?
3. What do you do when things are not going well?
4. What if you are feeling depressed or unhappy?
5. Is it useful to circulate in the literary world?
6. Do you use symbolism?

In the first five instances, Dr. Brock answers first; in the sixth, Zinsser does. The contrast is developed using a point-by-point strategy; the responses of the two writers are set off in separate paragraphs, with the exception of paragraph 12.

Why did Zinsser use this particular pattern? Could he have used the subject-by-subject strategy? He could have only if the questions had been posed at the start of the selection. Dr. Brock could have responded first in a paragraph or series of paragraphs, then Zinsser. Such an arrangement, however, would have obscured the differences between the writing processes of the two. This arrange-

ment makes the contrast particularly vivid and also preserves the format of a panel discussion that Zinsser has established.

Zinsser's thesis is clearly stated in paragraph 17. Why begin with this narrative, one that a reader probably suspects is primarily fictional anyway? The narrative makes Zinsser's point more vivid and more memorable.

Students generally expect that creative writers labor over their prose, trying to find the right words and the right arrangements of words, but many students do not realize that expository writers exercise the same care. See Class Activity.

CLASS ACTIVITY

One way to demonstrate the similarity between creative writers and expository writers is to mimeograph comments that writers have made about their craft. The five volumes in the Penguin *Writers at Work* series (reproducing interviews originally done for the *Paris Review*) are a good source of statements. Selections reproduced elsewhere in this reader can also be used—especially Peter Elbow's "Quick Revising" (Chapter 10) or any of the other revised essays included in Chapter 10.



The Writing Center
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb>



Comparing/Contrasting

What this handout is about...

This handout will help you first to determine whether a particular assignment is asking for comparison/contrast and then to generate a list of similarities and differences, decide which similarities and differences to focus on, and organize your paper so that it will be clear and effective. It will also explain how you can (and why you should) develop a thesis that goes beyond "Thing A and Thing B are similar in many ways but different in others."

Introduction

In your career as a student, you'll encounter many different kinds of writing assignments, each with its own requirements. One of the most common is the comparison/contrast essay, in which you focus on the ways in which certain things or ideas -- usually two of them -- are similar to (this is the comparison) and/or different from (this is the contrast) one another. By assigning such essays, your instructors are encouraging you to make connections between texts or ideas, engage in critical thinking, and go beyond mere description or summary to generate interesting analysis: when you reflect on similarities and differences, you gain a deeper understanding of the items you are comparing, their relationship to each other, and what is most important about them.



Recognizing comparison/contrast in assignments

Some assignments use words -- like compare, contrast, similarities, and differences -- that make it easy for you to see that they are asking you to compare and/or contrast. Here are a few hypothetical examples:

- Compare and contrast Frye's and Bartky's accounts of oppression.
- Compare WWI to WWII, identifying similarities in the causes, development, and outcomes of the wars.
- Contrast Wordsworth and Coleridge: what are the major differences in their poetry?

Notice that some topics ask only for comparison, others only for contrast, and others for both.

But it's not always so easy to tell whether an assignment is asking you to include comparison/contrast. And in some cases, comparison/contrast is only part of the essay -- you begin by comparing and/or contrasting two or more things and then use what you've learned to construct an argument or evaluation. Consider these examples, noticing the language that is used to ask for the comparison/contrast and whether the comparison/contrast is only one part of a larger assignment:



- Choose a particular idea or theme, such as romantic love, death, or nature, and consider how it is treated in two Romantic poems.
- How do the different authors we have studied so far define and describe oppression?
- Compare Frye's and Bartky's accounts of oppression. What does each imply about women's collusion in their own oppression? Which is more accurate?
- In the texts we've studied, soldiers who served in different wars offer differing accounts of their experiences and feelings both during and after the fighting. What commonalities are there in these accounts? What factors do you think are responsible for their differences?

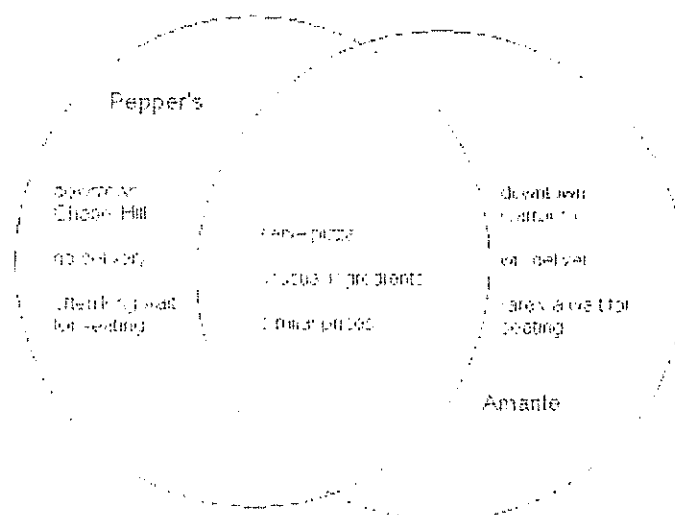
You may want to check out our handout on [How to Read an Assignment](#) for additional tips.

Using comparison/contrast for all kinds of writing projects

Sometimes you may want to use comparison/contrast techniques in your own pre-writing work to get ideas that you can later use for an argument, even if comparison/contrast isn't an official requirement for the paper you're writing. For example, if you wanted to argue that Frye's account of oppression is better than both de Beauvoir's and Bartky's, comparing and contrasting the main arguments of those three authors might help you construct your evaluation -- even though the topic may not have asked for comparison/contrast and the lists of similarities and differences you generate may not appear anywhere in the final draft of your paper.

Discovering similarities and differences

Making a Venn diagram or a chart can help you quickly and efficiently compare and contrast two or more things or ideas. To make a Venn diagram, simply draw some overlapping circles, one circle for each item you're considering. In the central area where they overlap, list the traits the two items have in common. Assign each one of the areas that doesn't overlap; in those areas, you can list the traits that make the things different. Here's a very simple example, using two pizza places:



To make a chart, figure out what criteria you want to focus on in comparing the items. Along the left side of the page, list each of the criteria. Across the top, list the names of the items. You should then have a box per item for each criterion: you can fill the boxes in and then survey what you've discovered. Here's an example, this time using three pizza places:

	Pepper's	Amante	Papa John's
Location			
Price			
Delivery			
Ingredients			
Service			
Seating/eating in			
Coupons			

As you generate points of comparison, consider the purpose and content of the assignment and the focus of the class. What do you think the professor wants you to learn by doing this comparison/contrast? How does it fit with what you have been studying so far and with the other assignments in the course? Are there any clues about what to focus on in the assignment itself?

Here are some general questions about different types of things you might have to compare. These are by no means complete or definitive lists; they're just here to give you some ideas -- you can generate your own questions for these and other types of comparison. You may want to begin by using the questions reporters traditionally ask: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? If you're talking about objects, you might also consider general properties like size, shape, color, sound, weight, taste, texture, smell, number, duration, and location.

Two historical periods or events

When did they occur -- do you know the date(s) and duration? What happened or changed during each? Why are they significant? What kinds of work did people do? What kinds of relationships did they have? What did they value? What kinds of governments were there? Who were important people involved? What caused events in these periods, and what consequences did they have later on?

Two ideas or theories

What are they about? Did they originate at some particular time? Who created them? Who uses or defends them? What is the central focus, claim, or goal of each? What conclusions do they offer? How are they applied to situations/people/things/etc.? Which seems more plausible to you, and why? How broad is their scope? What kind of evidence is usually offered for them?

Two pieces of writing or art

What are their titles? What do they describe or depict? What is their tone or mood? What is their form? Who created them? When were they created? Why do you think they were created as they were? What themes do they address? Do you think one is of higher quality or greater merit than the other(s) -- and if so, why? For writing: what plot, characterization, setting, theme, tone, and type of narration are used?

Two people

Where are they from? How old are they? What is the gender, race, class, etc. of each? What.

if anything, are they known for? Do they have any relationship to each other? What are they like? What did/do they do? What do they believe? Why are they interesting? What stands out most about each of them?

Deciding what to focus on

By now you have probably generated a huge list of similarities and differences -- congratulations! Next you must decide which of them are interesting, important, and relevant enough to be included in your paper. Ask yourself these questions:

- What's relevant to the assignment?
- What's relevant to the course?
- What's interesting and informative?
- What matters to the argument you are going to make?
- What's basic or central (and needs to be mentioned even if obvious)?
- Overall, what's more important -- the similarities or the differences?

Suppose that you are writing a paper comparing two novels. For most literature classes, the fact that they both use Calson type (a kind of typeface, like the fonts you may use in your writing) is not going to be relevant, nor is the fact that one of them has a few illustrations and the other has none; literature classes are more likely to focus on subjects like characterization, plot, setting, the writer's style and intentions, language, central themes, and so forth. However, if you were writing a paper for a class on typesetting or on how illustrations are used to enhance novels, the typeface and presence or absence of illustrations might be absolutely critical to include in your final paper!

Sometimes a particular point of comparison or contrast might be relevant but not terribly revealing or interesting. For example, if you are writing a paper about Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" and Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," pointing out that they both have nature as a central theme is relevant (comparisons of poetry often talk about themes) but not terribly interesting; your class has probably already had many discussions about the Romantic poets' fondness for nature. Talking about the different ways nature is depicted or the different aspects of nature that are emphasized might be more interesting and show a more sophisticated understanding of the poems.

Your thesis

The thesis of your comparison/contrast paper is very important: it can help you create a focused argument and give your reader a road map so she/he doesn't get lost in the sea of points you are about to make. As in any paper, you will want to replace vague reports of your general topic (for example, "This paper will compare and contrast two pizza places," or "Pepper's and Amante are similar in some ways and different in others," or "Peppers and Amante are similar in many ways, but they have one major difference") with something more detailed and specific. For example, you might say, "Pepper's and Amante have similar prices and ingredients, but their atmospheres and willingness to deliver set them apart."

Be careful, though -- although this thesis is fairly specific and does propose a simple argument (that atmosphere and delivery make the two pizza places different), your instructor will often be looking for a bit more analysis. In this case, the obvious question is "So what? Why should anyone care that Pepper's and Amante are different in this way?" One might also wonder why the writer chose those two particular pizza places to compare -- why not Papa John's, Dominos, or Pizza Hut? Again, thinking about the

context the class provides may help you answer such questions and make a stronger argument. Here's a revision of the thesis mentioned a minute ago:

Pepper's and Amante both offer a greater variety of ingredients than other Chapel Hill/Carrboro pizza places (and than any of the national chains), but the funky, lively atmosphere at Pepper's makes it a better place to give visiting friends and family a taste of local culture.

You may find our handout Constructing Thesis Statements useful at this stage.

Organizing your paper

There are many different ways to organize a comparison/contrast essay. Here are just a few:

Item-by-Item:

Begin by saying everything you have to say about the first item you are discussing, then move on and make all the points you want to make about the second item (and after that, the third, and so on, if you're comparing/contrasting more than two things). If the paper is short, you might be able to fit all of your points about each item into a single paragraph, but it's more likely that you'd have several paragraphs per item. Using our pizza place comparison/contrast as an example, after the introduction, you might have a paragraph about the ingredients available at Pepper's, a paragraph about its location, and a paragraph about its ambience. Then you'd have three similar paragraphs about Amante, followed by your conclusion.

The danger of this subject-by-subject organization is that your paper will simply be a list of points: a certain number of points (in my example, three) about one item, then a certain number of points about another. This is usually not what college instructors are looking for in a paper -- generally they want you to compare or contrast two or more things very directly, rather than just listing the traits the things have and leaving it up to the reader to reflect on how those traits are similar or different and why those similarities or differences matter. Thus, if you use the subject-by-subject form, you will probably want to have a very strong, analytical thesis and at least one body paragraph that ties all of your different points together.

A subject-by-subject structure can be a logical choice if you are writing what is sometimes called a "lens" comparison, in which you use one item (which isn't really your main topic) to better understand another item (which is). For example, you might be asked to compare a poem you've already covered thoroughly in class with one you are reading on your own. It might make sense to give a brief summary of your main ideas about the first poem (this would be your first subject, the "lens"), and then spend most of your paper discussing how those points are similar to or different from your ideas about the second.

Point-by-Point:

Rather than addressing things one subject at a time, you may wish to talk about one point of comparison at a time. There are two main ways this might play out, depending on how much you have to say about each of the things you are comparing. If you have just a little, you might, in a single paragraph, discuss how a certain point of comparison/contrast relates

to all the items you are discussing. For example, I might describe, in one paragraph, what the prices are like at both Pepper's and Amante; in the next paragraph, I might compare the ingredients available; in a third, I might contrast the atmospheres of the two restaurants.

If I had a bit more to say about the items I was comparing/contrasting, I might devote a whole paragraph to how each point relates to each item. For example, I might have a whole paragraph about the clientele at Pepper's, followed by a whole paragraph about the clientele at Amante; then I would move on and do two more paragraphs discussing my next point of comparison/contrast -- like the ingredients available at each restaurant.

There are no hard and fast rules about organizing a comparison/contrast paper, of course. Just be sure that your reader can easily tell what's going on! Be aware, too, of the placement of your different points. If you are writing a comparison/contrast in service of an argument, keep in mind that the last point you make is the one you are leaving your reader with. For example, if I am trying to argue that Amante is better than Pepper's, I should end with a contrast that leaves Amante sounding good, rather than with a point of comparison that I have to admit makes Pepper's look better. If you've decided that the differences between the items you're comparing/contrasting are most important, you'll want to end with the differences -- and vice versa, if the similarities seem most important to you.

Our handout on Organization can help you write good topic sentences and transitions and make sure that you have a good overall structure in place for your paper.

Cue words and other tips

To help your reader keep track of where you are in the comparison/contrast, you'll want to be sure that your transitions and topic sentences are especially strong. Your thesis should already have given the reader an idea of the points you'll be making and the organization you'll be using, but you can help her/him out with some extra cues. The following words may be helpful to you in signaling your intentions:

like, similar to, also, unlike, similarly, in the same way, likewise, again, compared to, in contrast, in like manner, contrasted with, on the contrary, however, although, yet, even though, still, but, nevertheless, conversely, at the same time, regardless, despite, while, on the one hand ... on the other hand.

For example, you might have a topic sentence like one of these:

- Compared to Pepper's, Amante is quiet.
- Like Amante, Pepper's offers fresh garlic as a topping.
- Despite their different locations (downtown Chapel Hill and downtown Carrboro), Pepper's and Amante are both fairly easy to get to.

Some additional websites about comparison/contrast papers:

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricentr/documents/CompAnalysis.html>

<http://depts.washington.edu/pswrite/compare.html>

Advanced Composition for Non-Native Speakers of English

<http://eslbee.com>

Writing Effective Comparison / Contrast Essays

A *Comparison* or *Contrast* essay is an essay in which you either compare something or contrast something. A comparison essay is an essay in which you emphasize the similarities, and a contrast essay is an essay in which you emphasize the differences. We use comparison and contrast thinking when deciding which university to attend, which car to buy, or whether to drive a car or take a bus or an airplane to a vacation site.

In this section, two classic organizational patterns of a comparison or contrast essay will be discussed. One is called *block arrangement* of ideas; the other is called *point-by-point* or *alternating arrangement* of ideas. Suppose you are interested in showing the differences between airplanes and helicopters. You will then write a contrast composition. One way to arrange your material is to use the block arrangement which is to write about airplanes in one paragraph and helicopters in the next. If you mention a particular point in the airplane paragraph, you must mention the same point in the helicopter paragraph, and *in the same order*. Study the following outline, which shows this kind of organization.

BLOCK ARRANGEMENT

- I. Introduction in which you state your purpose which is to discuss differences between airplanes and helicopters
- II. Airplanes
 - A. Shape and design
 - B. Speed
 - C. Direction of takeoff and flight
- III. Helicopters
 - A. Shape and design
 - B. Speed
 - C. Direction of takeoff and flight
- IV. Conclusion

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A second way to organize this material is to discuss a particular point about airplanes and then immediately discuss the same point about helicopters. This is called a point-by-point or alternating arrangement. An outline of this organization follows.

POINT-BY-POINT or ALTERNATING ARRANGEMENT

- I. Introduction in which you state your purpose which is to discuss differences between airplanes and helicopters
- II. Differences between airplanes and helicopters
 - A. Shape and design
 1. Airplanes
 2. Helicopters
 - B. Speed
 1. Airplanes
 2. Helicopters
 - C. Direction of takeoff and flight
 1. Airplanes
 2. Helicopters
- III. Conclusion

APPLICATION

Examine the short comparison or contrast essays that follow, and decide whether the authors used block arrangement or point-by-point (or alternating) arrangement.

The Differences Between Airplanes and Helicopters

Airplanes and helicopters are both important forms of air travel, but there are great differences between them.

The first major difference between airplanes and helicopters is their shape and design. Airplanes, for example, have long, slender bodies with wings while helicopters have round bodies and propellers rather than wings.

Another difference between airplanes and helicopters is their speed. Airplanes can travel extremely fast, reaching speeds of over 1,875 miles (3,000 kilometers) per hour. Helicopters, on the other hand are much slower than airplanes.

The final difference between airplanes and helicopters is their direction of takeoff and flight. Airplanes take off horizontally and can move in a forward direction only. They need a lot of space for takeoff and landing. Airplanes regularly carry several hundred passengers. Helicopters, however, take off vertically and can move in any direction. Helicopters require a very small takeoff or landing space, and most helicopters carry only two to five passengers.

Because of the great differences between airplanes and helicopters, each is used for a specific purpose. Airplanes and helicopters, therefore, are both important forms of air travel.

How to Support Your Point of View through Comparison and Contrast

It was stated at the beginning of this section that we use comparison and contrast thinking when deciding which university to attend, which car to buy, or whether to drive a car or take a bus or an airplane to a vacation site. Many times writers use comparison or contrast to support a personal point of view. For example, the following paragraphs are from the book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* by Robert Persig. Note that Persig's description of the differences between riding in a car and riding a motorcycle is not neutral. Instead, Persig uses comparison and contrast to serve a *persuasive* aim: to show the reader why riding a motorcycle is more stimulating than driving a car (Persig, by Heffernan and Lincoln).

Which do You Prefer?

You see things vacationing on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you're always in a compartment, and

because you're used to it, you don't realize that through that car window everything you see is just more TV. You're a passive observer, and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame.

On a cycle the frame is gone. You're completely in contact with it all. You're in the scene, not just watching it anymore, and the sense of presence is overwhelming. That concrete whizzing by five inches below your foot is the real thing, the same stuff you walk on. It's right there, so blurred you can't focus on it, yet you can put your foot down and touch it anytime, and the whole thing, the whole experience, is never removed from immediate consciousness.

Finally, read the following essay, *Two Dads Are Better than One*, in which a freshman composition student contrasts her stepfather with her biological father in order to decide which she should care about more. Which organizational style does she use?

Two Dads Are Better than One

I've always envied people with only two parents. They never have to feel sorry for their real father because he is lonely, and they never have to feel they should care more about their stepfather because he is the one who has provided them with the necessities most of their lives. Since I have two fathers, I have known these feelings. I know what it's like trying to decide which father I should care about more so that I could tell my friends the next time they asked. It really should be a clear-cut decision. My two fathers are so different in everything that I should be able to look at these differences and decide.

A major difference between the two is how responsible they are. My stepfather has always had a steady job. He enjoys going to work each day and knowing that at the end of the week he'll get a paycheck. With this paycheck he pays bills, buys groceries, and makes sure we all have clothes to wear. On the other hand, my father doesn't

particularly care for steady jobs. He is a singer and has worked three or four nights a week in nightclubs most of his life. With his money, he buys things like new guitars and amplifiers. His idea of providing for us, as Mom tells me, is to send ten dollars a month, which is to be divided three ways. He only does this, however, when he's out of state.

Discipline is another major difference between my two fathers. My stepfather, who can be very strict at times, believes that children should obey their parents, do what they are told when they are told to do it, and respect their elders. My father, who was never disciplined himself, has quite different views. He has always encouraged my brothers and me to rebel against rules, to ask why we had to do certain things, and to resent being made to do things we thought were stupid. (Going to bed at ten was stupid.) My mother always told us that our father only did this to cause trouble, but I'm not so sure about that. Maybe he did, but then again maybe he thought going to bed at ten was stupid, too!

Education is another big issue my stepfather is concerned about. He believes, like many people, that to be able to succeed in life, one has to have a good education. He always told us that he didn't want us to turn out like he did, a truck driver who had to be away from his family for weeks at a time. He used to punish me and my brothers for making C's on our report cards. His theory is that a C is average, and his kids are not average. I wouldn't place any money on that. My father believes that an education is good to have, but one doesn't have to have it to survive. He always says, "Look at me; I made it." I don't think, however, that I would call sleeping in the back of a station wagon "making it."

So here I have it. All their differences down on paper, and I can look at them objectively and decide which father to love more, but it isn't that easy. I love my father because he is just that, my natural father. I respect him; I am obligated to

him, and I want to make him proud of me. Then there is my stepfather, whom I respect very much; whom I feel obligated to; whom I want to make proud of me; and, most important of all, whom I have grown to love as much as any child could possibly love a parent. I guess I'll never really know which father I love more. I don't see why I should have to love either more. I think I'll just love both of them in almost equal amounts.

(Waugh)

There are several important points to remember when writing a comparison or contrast essay.

1. Know what organizational style you are using. Whether you use the block arrangement or point-by-point arrangement, you should be able to identify it. Being able to identify your organization will not only help you in the organization of your own writing, but it will also help your reader follow what you have to say.
2. State your organization. Remember that the "straight line of development" that was discussed in the introduction requires that you "tell your audience what you are going to tell them; then tell them; then tell them what you told them." An important objective in academic writing is clarity, and stating your organization will contribute significantly toward clarity.
3. Keep your audience in mind. You should *always* keep your audience in mind. After you finish writing, read your composition from the perspective of your audience. How will they respond to your writing? Will they understand what you have written? Will they agree with your point?
4. Say what you want to say. Reread Robert Persig's excerpt from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. In contrasting the difference between vacationing by car or motorcycle, his preference is clear. Make *your* preference clear in your comparison or contrast essay. To further clarify how this can be done, consider how you could say what you want to say in a comparison or contrast essay on the following topics:

- A. Vacationing in Paris or taking a three-week trip down the Amazon.
- B. Growing up in a small town or growing up in a large city.
- C. Working for large company or running your own business.
- D. _____
- E. _____

HOME

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America's Love Affair with Pizza: A Guilty Pleasure No More

When Thomas Roepsch (b. 1971) wrote this essay for an expository writing class at Marquette University, he was attending school part-time while working as owner/manager of an Italian restaurant. After selling his interest in the restaurant, he completed a B.S. in accounting and enrolled in law school. He wrote this paper in response to an assignment that asked students to use outside research to counter a commonly held view of something that interested them, and specifically, to write a "good news" paper—that is, that he attempt to change readers' views about his topic from negative or skeptical to positive or at least accepting.

- 1 The average American eats 46 slices, or 23 pounds, of pizza each year (Marston 28). Despite this popularity, pizza is commonly considered one of the poorest choices you can make when it comes to your health. Every pizza lover knows the guilt associated with devouring a greasy pizza straight out of the box, and health experts have been warning us for years that we would be much better off if we made every effort to avoid foods high in fat and cholesterol like pizza. New information, however, is changing the way nutritionists view pizza. According to a number of popular health magazines, experts have reexamined the pizza and are now finding it to be potentially an excellent way to get a fast, well-balanced meal from a single food item. And even more surprising, pizza is now being credited with the ability to save your life.
- 2 The most popular pizzas in America are topped with pork sausage, pepperoni, and layers of extra cheese, making them very high in cholesterol and fat. According to an article in *Current Health*, the National Association of Pizza Operators reported that we ate 371 million pounds of pepperoni and 2.2 billion pounds of mozzarella on our pizzas last year (Denny 16). Meat and cheese are the clear favorites when it comes to pizza. The beauty of pizza, however, is that it can be topped with almost anything. Choosing the right toppings is the secret to making pizza "health" food. Limiting the amount of cheese and meat is the key. Top pizzas with more vegetables and go easy on the pepperoni and cheese, and you will have provided yourself with a well-balanced meal.
- 3 Pizza makes a square meal because, unlike any other single food item, pizza can satisfy all five of the United States Department of Agriculture's food groups (Post 76). The crust is a very good source of complex carbohydrates, and a single slice of cheese pizza can provide a body with one fourth of its daily requirement of calcium (Denny 17). The wide variety of meat, poultry, and seafood toppings available today all provide a good source of protein. Also, if you add on the vegetables, you gain vitamins and minerals. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, don't forget to add extra sauce when ordering a healthy pizza.
- 4 The tomato sauce used in pizza is now being credited with helping to save lives. Tomatoes contain lycopene (Seppa). This protein, in addition to giving the tomato its color, is an antioxidant that is unlocked when tomatoes are cooked into red sauces. The mutating elements of the cells in our body's tissues depend on oxygen, and antioxidants like beta-carotene and lycopene limit the ability of cells to mutate. Tomato sauces like those in pizza and pasta contain high levels of lycopene and are credited with helping to prevent cells from mutating. In turn, certain types of cancers are prevented. In a clinical study, researchers at Harvard Medical School found significantly lower rates of prostate cancer among men who ate pizza or other foods with tomato sauce at least twice a week (Seppa).

The study said that men who never ate tomato sauce were 21 to 34 percent more at risk to develop prostate cancers.

Women are also able to benefit from the lycopene found in pizza sauce. Wendy Marston, writing for *Health* magazine, reports that another study was able to show a reduced risk of breast cancer in women who were eating foods with tomato sauce on a regular basis (28). Researchers measured the levels of lycopene in the breast tissue of women and found that those who had high concentrations of the compound were less likely to have breast cancer. Another recent *Health* article reports that a research team in Italy found that men and women who ate at least seven servings of tomatoes a week were less likely to have cancers of the stomach, colon, and rectum than individuals who only consumed two servings a week ("How to Slice").

It appears that the benefits of lycopene do not stop at combating cancer. The compound has also been found to help prevent heart disease. A European study of 1,300 men found that men with high concentrations of lycopene in the fat tissue of their bodies were half as likely to have a heart attack as men with low levels of lycopene (Marston 29).

Nutritionists warn, however, that this ability of lycopene is meaningless if you still want to top your pizza with a lot of high-fat toppings. One study by Harvard University suggested, however, that the presence of fat is necessary for the absorption of lycopene by the body. Foods that contain the types of fats found in olive oil and mozzarella actually improve the body's ability to absorb lycopene. They found that the levels of lycopene are two and a half times higher in people who eat pizza rather than salad (Marston 29).

Pizza today is made with a limitless variety of toppings and ingredients. Spinach, artichokes, turkey, seafood, as well as other healthful and exotic choices are growing in popularity as pizza places try to satisfy changing tastes. You can order your pizzas any way you like, but it is important to remember that there are good pizzas and bad pizzas when it comes to your health. More vegetables and sauce but less meat and cheese are the key to a healthy pizza. In our fast-paced society, pizza is an ideal food—a quick, readily available food that you can eat with your fingers. But unlike other foods of this type, pizza can also be a square meal and a healthy choice.

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THE MAN IN THE WATER



Essays and Stories

Roger Rosenblatt



RANDOM HOUSE
NEW YORK

The Man in the Water



AS DISASTERS GO, this one was terrible, but not unique, certainly not among the worst on the roster of U.S. air crashes. There was the unusual element of the bridge, of course, and the fact that the plane clipped it at a moment of high traffic, one routine thus intersecting another and disrupting both. Then, too, there was the location of the event. Washington, the city of form and regulations, turned chaotic, deregulated, by a blast of real winter and a single slap of metal on metal. The jets from Washington National Airport that normally swoop around the presidential monuments like famished gulls are, for the moment, emblemized by the one that fell; so there is that detail. And there was the aesthetic clash as well—blue-and-green Air Florida, the name a flying garden, sunk down among gray chunks in a black river. All that was worth noticing, to be sure. Still, there was nothing very special in any of it, except death, which, while always special, does not necessarily bring millions to tears or to attention. Why, then, the shock here?

Perhaps because the nation saw in this disaster something more than a mechanical failure. Perhaps because people saw in it no failure at all, but rather something successful about their makeup. Here, after all, were two forms of nature in collision: the elements and

human character. Last Wednesday, the elements, indifferent as ever, brought down Flight 90. And on that same afternoon, human nature—groping and flailing in mysteries of its own—rose to the occasion.

Of the four acknowledged heroes of the event, three are able to account for their behavior. Donald Usher and Eugene Windsor, a park police helicopter team, risked their lives every time they dipped the skids into the water to pick up survivors. On television, side by side in bright blue jumpsuits, they described their courage as all in the line of duty. Lenny Skutnik, a twenty-eight-year-old employee of the Congressional Budget Office, said: "It's something I never thought I would do"—referring to his jumping into the water to drag an injured woman to shore. Skutnik added that "somebody had to go in the water," delivering every hero's line that is no less admirable for its repetitions. In fact, nobody had to go into the water. That somebody actually did so is part of the reason this particular tragedy sticks in the mind.

But the person most responsible for the emotional impact of the disaster is the one known at first simply as "the man in the water." (Balding, probably in his fifties, an extravagant mustache.) He was seen clinging with five other survivors to the tail section of the airplane. This man was described by Usher and Windsor as appearing alert and in control. Every time they lowered a lifeline and flotation ring to him, he passed it on to another of the passengers. "In a mass casualty, you'll find people like him," said Windsor. "But I've never seen one with that commitment." When the helicopter came back for him, the man had gone under. His selflessness was one reason the story held national attention; his anonymity another. The fact that he went unidentified invested him with a universal character. For a while he was Everyman, and thus proof (as if one needed it) that no man is ordinary.

Still, he could never have imagined such a capacity in himself. Only minutes before his character was tested, he was sitting in the ordinary plane among the ordinary passengers, dutifully listening to the stewardess telling him to fasten his seat belt and saying something about the "no smoking sign." So our man relaxed with the others, some of whom would owe their lives to him. Perhaps he started to read, or to doze, or to regret some harsh remark made in the office that morning. Then suddenly he knew that the trip would not be ordinary. Like every other person on that flight, he was desperate to live, which makes his final act so stunning.

For at some moment in the water he must have realized that he would not live if he continued to hang over the rope and ring to others. He *had* to know it, no matter how gradual the effect of the cold. In his judgment he had no choice. When the helicopter took off with what was to be the last survivor, he watched everything in the world move away from him, and he deliberately let it happen.

Yet there was something else about the man that kept our thoughts on him, and which keeps our thoughts on him still. He was *there*, in the essential, classic circumstance. Man in nature. The man in the water. For its part, nature cared nothing about the five passengers. Our man, on the other hand, cared totally. So the timeless battle commenced in the Potomac. For as long as that man could last, they went at each other, nature and man: the one making no distinctions of good and evil, acting on no principles, offering no lifelines; the other acting wholly on distinctions, principles, and, one supposes, on faith.

Since it was he who lost the fight, we ought to come again to the conclusion that people are powerless in the world. In reality, we believe the reverse, and it takes the act of the man in the water to remind us of our true feelings in this matter. It is not to say that everyone would have acted as he did, or as Usher, Windsor, and Skutnik. Yet whatever moved these men to challenge death on behalf of their fellows is not peculiar to them. Everyone feels the possibility in himself. That is the abiding wonder of the story. That is why we would not let go of it. If the man in the water gave a lifeline to the people gasping for survival, he was likewise giving a lifeline to those who observed him.

The odd thing is that we do not even really believe that the man in the water lost his fight. "Everything in Nature contains all the powers of Nature," said Emerson. Exactly. So the man in the water had his own natural powers. He could not make ice storms, or freeze the water until it froze the blood. But he could hand life over to a stranger, and that is a power of nature too. The man in the water pitted himself against an implacable, impersonal enemy; he fought it with charity; and he held it to a standoff. He was the best we can do.

January 25, 1982

Writing Paragraphs: Coherence (1)

In a unified paragraph each sentence develops the paragraph's main idea. In order for the paragraph to make sense to the reader, it must be **coherent**. In other words, the individual sentences must be arranged in a logical way so that each clearly relates to all the other sentences.

Recipes, instructions, and directions are most easily understood when they are written in **chronological order**. The steps in the process are listed as they are meant to be followed in time. Events are also told in the order in which they took place. Notice, for example, how the italicized words in the following paragraph help you understand when the events took place.

A few years ago a California man bought a new car that proved to be a lemon. The tie rods were no good, the motor ground like a trash compactor, and the brakes simply would not hold. *Because* of all these defects, the man took the car back to the dealer where he had bought it. *Hours later* he drove his car home—still unsatisfied. *Next*, he wrote to the president of the automobile company. *In return* for his letter, he was offered sympathy. He was *still* stuck with the lemon. *Finally*, he marched to the Department of Motor Vehicles and paid \$25 for a special auto license plate that read JUNK.

The italicized words in the example paragraph are **transition words**. These words and phrases help the reader understand the relationship between one sentence and the next. Other commonly used transitions include the following: *for example, therefore, first, second, on the other hand, also, furthermore, in conclusion*.

Pronouns and repeated words or phrases can also help give a paragraph coherence. For example, in the paragraph you just read, the writer makes good use of pronouns to keep the writing smooth. Once the reader knows the paragraph is about a California man, there is no longer any need to keep repeating "a California man." Instead, the writer refers to the man as "he" and "the frustrated man." Likewise, the car becomes "a lemon," "an automobile," "it," and "the auto."

Exercise

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph. Add transition words and pronouns to help make the paragraph read smoothly. You may add other words or combine the sentences.

Julie carefully read the instruction booklet on her new camera. Julie had bought the camera on sale after saving her baby-sitting money. Julie bought a role of 24-exposure color film. Julie pushed a tiny button at the bottom of the camera. The camera opened. Julie removed one of the sprockets. Julie opened the box of film and threaded one end of the film into the sprocket. Julie replaced the sprocket. Julie closed the back of the camera. Julie advanced the film to number one. Julie aimed the camera at her sleeping collie. Julie took her first picture.

Name _____ Date _____ Class _____ Score _____

Proofreading and Revision: Unity and Coherence in Paragraphs

Exercise

The following paragraph is developed with reasons. However, it needs to be improved. Cross out any sentences that detract from the paragraph's unity. Use the space above the lines to add transition words or to reword to improve the paragraph's coherence. Be sure to proofread also for errors in spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

No doubt hiking is thrilling and challenging recreation. It can also be a dangerous sport. Hikers must carefully plan the outing. Tragedy may occur. One woman ignored scientists' warnings and thoughtlessly did not mark her return trail. She was a few miles northeast of Mt. St. Helens when the volcano erupted. Not knowing which way to go in the eye-tearing, throat-clenching ash, she walked directly toward the deadly volcano, with no hope for escape. Mt. St. Helens is in Washington and erupted for the first time in 1980. Unless hikers remain alert, the fun will soon wear off when they become lost. Many hikers have wandered off a trail when their attention drifted away from the hike. Some have even fallen off unnoticed cliffs, drowned in rivers or rapids, or stumbled into wild animals. Some hikers seek only the thrills and forget to use caution and common sense. Lou Ambrosi ended an extremely hot hike through the Peruvian rain forest near the Amazon River. He had been warned about the piranhas in the river. He jumped in and swam until he had cooled off. My friend Michael has a piranha. They are fish that will attack any animal, including humans. Looking back now, Lou admits, "It probably wasn't a very smart thing to do." That is just what serious hikers should be—smart.

WORD CHOICE

5 Precise, vivid, natural language paints a strong, clear, and complete picture in the reader's mind.

- ☒ The writer's message is remarkably clear and easy to interpret.
- ☒ Phrasing is original—even memorable—yet the language is never overdone.
- ☒ Lively verbs lend the writing power.
- ☒ Striking words or phrases linger in the writer's memory, often prompting connections, reflective thoughts or insights.

3 The language communicates in a routine, workable manner; it gets the job done.

- ☒ Most words are correct and adequate, even if not striking.
- ☒ A memorable phrase here or there strikes a spark, leaving the reader hungry for more.
- ☒ Familiar words and phrases give the text an "old couch" kind of feel.
- ☒ Attempts at colorful language are full of promise, even when they lack restraint or control. Jargon may be mildly annoying, but it does not impede readability.
- ☒ General meaning is clear, but the brush is too broad to convey subtleties.

1 The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary—or uses language that simply does not speak to the intended audience. Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:

- ☒ Vague words and phrases (She was nice...It was wonderful. The new budget had impact) convey only the most general sorts of messages.
- ☒ Clichés or redundant phrases encourage the reader to skim, not linger.
- ☒ Words are used incorrectly ("The bus impelled into the hotel").
- ☒ Inflated or jargonistic language makes the text ponderous and uninviting.
- ☒ The reader has trouble grasping the writer's intended message.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

5 An easy flow and sentence sense make this text a delight to read aloud.

- ☒ Sentences are well crafted, with a strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.
- ☒ Purposeful sentence beginnings show how each sentence relates to and builds on the one before.
- ☒ The writing has cadence, as if the reader hears the beat in his or her head.
- ☒ Sentences vary in both structure and length, making the reading pleasant and natural.
- ☒ Fragments, if used, add style.

3 The text hums along with a steady beat.

- ☒ Sentences are mostly grammatical and easy to read aloud, given a little rehearsal.
- ☒ Graceful, natural phrasing intermingles with more mechanical structure.
- ☒ More variation in length and structure would enhance fluency.
- ☒ Some purposeful sentence beginnings aid the reader's interpretation of the text.
- ☒ Fragments may be present; not all add flair or punch.

1 A fair interpretive oral reading of this text takes practice.

Readers will likely notice more than one of these problems:

- ☒ Irregular or unusual word patterns make it hard to tell where sentences begin and end.
- ☒ Ideas are hooked together by numerous connectives (and...but...so then) to create one gangly, endless "sentence."
- ☒ Short, choppy sentences bump the reader through the text.
- ☒ Repetitive sentence patterns put the reader to sleep.
- ☒ Transitions are either missing or so overdone they become distracting.
- ☒ The reader must often pause and reread for meaning.
- ☒ Fragments, if used, seem accidental; they do not work.

CONVENTIONS

5 The writer shows excellent control over a wide range of standard writing conventions and uses them with accuracy and (when appropriate) creativity to enhance meaning.

- ☒ Errors are so few and so minor that a reader can easily overlook them unless searching for them specifically.
- ☒ The text appears clean, edited, and polished.
- ☒ Older writers (grade 6 and up) create text of sufficient length and complexity to demonstrate control of conventions appropriate for age and experience.
- ☒ The text is easy to mentally process; there is nothing to distract or confuse a reader.
- ☒ Only light touch-ups would be required to polish the text for publication.

3 The writer shows reasonable control over the most widely used writing conventions, creating text that is adequately readable.

- ☒ There are enough errors to distract an attentive reader; however, errors do not seriously impair readability or obscure meaning.
- ☒ It is easy enough for an experienced reader to get through the text, but the writing clearly needs polishing.
- ☒ The paper reads much like a second rough draft—readable, but lacking close attention to conventions.
- ☒ Moderate editing would be required to get the text ready for publication.

1 The writer demonstrates limited control even over widely used conventions. Readers are likely to notice one or more of these problems:

- ☒ Errors are sufficiently frequent and/or serious enough to be distracting; it is hard for the reader to focus on ideas, organization, or voice.
- ☒ The reader may need to read once to decode, then again to interpret and respond to the text.
- ☒ The paper reads like a rough first draft, scribbled hastily without thought for conventions.
- ☒ Extensive editing would be required to prepare the text for publication.

WRITE TRAITS 6-TRAIT ONE-PAGER

IDEA DEVELOPMENT

5 The writing is clear, well-supported or developed, and enhanced by the kind of detail that keeps readers reading.

- ☒ The writer selectively chooses *just* the right information to make the paper understandable, enlightening and interesting—without bogging down in trivia.
- ☒ Details work together to expand the main topic or develop a story, giving the whole piece a strong sense of focus.
- ☒ The writer's knowledge, experience, insight or unique perspective lends the writing a satisfying ring of authenticity.
- ☒ The amount of detail is just right—not skimpy, not overwhelming.

3 The writer has made a solid beginning in defining a topic or mapping out a story line. It is easy to see where the paper is headed, though more expansion is needed to complete the picture.

- ☒ General, global information provides the big picture—and makes the reader long for specifics.
- ☒ Well-focused information blends with repetitive points, trivia or meanderings.
- ☒ The writer draws on some personal experience—but too often settles for generalities or clichéd thinking.
- ☒ Unneeded information may eat up space that should have gone to important details. Where's the balance?

1 Sketchy, loosely focused information forces the reader to make inferences. Readers will likely notice *more than one* of these problems:

- ☒ The main topic is still unclear, out of focus—or not yet known, even to the writer.
- ☒ Missing, limited or unrelated details require the reader to fill in many blanks.
- ☒ Lists of "factlets" may be substituted for true development.
- ☒ Everything seems as important as everything else.

ORGANIZATION

5 The order, presentation, or internal structure of the piece is compelling and guides the reader purposefully through the text.

- ☒ The entire piece has a strong sense of direction and balance. Main ideas or key points stand out clearly.
- ☒ An inviting lead draws the reader in; a satisfying conclusion ties up loose ends.
- ☒ Details seem to fit right where they are placed, making the text easy to follow and understand.
- ☒ Transitions are strong but natural.
- ☒ Pacing feels natural and effective; the writer knows just when to linger over details and when to get moving.
- ☒ Organization flows so smoothly the reader does not need to think about it.

3 The organizational structure allows the reader to move through the text without undue confusion.

- ☒ Sequencing of main ideas seems reasonably appropriate; the reader rarely, if ever, feels lost.
- ☒ Transitions are usually present, but sometimes a little too obvious or too structured.
- ☒ Structure may be so dominant or predictable that it literally smothers the ideas and voice.
- ☒ Information is *mostly* presented in an orderly, if not quite compelling, fashion.

1 Ideas, details, or events seem loosely strung together.

Readers will likely notice *more than one* of these problems:

- ☒ As yet, there is no clear sense of direction to carry the reader from point to point.
- ☒ No real lead sets up what follows.
- ☒ No real conclusion wraps things up.
- ☒ Missing or unclear transitions force the reader to make giant leaps.
- ☒ Sequencing feels more random than purposeful, leaving the reader with a sense of being adrift.
- ☒ The writing does not move purposefully toward any main message or turning point.

VOICE

5 The writer's energy and passion for the subject drive the writing, making the text lively, expressive, and engaging.

- ☒ The tone and flavor of the piece fit the topic, purpose, and audience well.
- ☒ The writing bears the clear imprint of *this* writer.
- ☒ The writer seems to know his/her audience—shows a strong concern for their informational needs and interests.
- ☒ Narrative text is open and honest.
- ☒ Expository or persuasive text is provocative, lively, and designed to hold a reader's attention.

3 The writer seems sincere and willing to communicate with the reader on a functional, if distant, level.

- ☒ The tone and flavor of the piece could be altered slightly to better fit the topic, purpose, or audience.
- ☒ The writer has not quite found his or her voice, but is experimenting—and the result is pleasant or intriguing, if not unique.
- ☒ The writer only occasionally speaks right to the audience.
- ☒ The writer often seems reluctant to "let go," holding individuality, passion, and spontaneity in check. Nevertheless, voice pops out on occasion.
- ☒ The writer is "there"—then gone.

1 The writer seems definitely distanced from topic, audience, or both; as a result, the text may lack life, spirit, or energy. Readers are likely to notice *one or more* of these problems:

- ☒ The tone and flavor of the piece are inappropriate for the topic, purpose, and/or audience.
- ☒ The writer does not seem to reach out to the audience or to anticipate their interests and needs.
- ☒ Though it may communicate on a functional level, the writing takes no risks and does not engage, energize or move the reader.
- ☒ The writer does not project personal enthusiasm for the topic or make it come alive for the reader.