

WRITING WITH SKILL, LEVEL ONE

LEVEL 5 OF THE COMPLETE WRITER

by

Susan Wise Bauer

INSTRUCTOR TEXT

This book is to be used in conjunction with *Writing With Skill, Level One: Level 5 of the Complete Writer, Student Text*

Level 1 ISBN 978-1-933339-53-5

Available at www.peacehillpress.com or wherever books are sold

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Cover design by Mollie Bauer.

Publisher's Cataloging-In-Publication Data
(Prepared by The Donohue Group, Inc.)

Bauer, S. Wise.

Writing with skill. Level one, Instructor text / Susan Wise Bauer.

p. : ill. ; cm. — (The complete writer ; level 5)

“This book is to be used in conjunction with *Writing With Skill, Level One: Level 5 of the Complete Writer, Student Text*.”—T.p. verso.

Interest grade level: 5-8.

ISBN: 978-1-933339-52-8

1. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching (Elementary) 2. English language—Rhetoric—Study and teaching (Elementary) I. Title. II. Title: Writing with skill. Level one, Instructor Text.

LB1576 .B382 2012

372.62/3

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INTRODUCTION

Level One of *Writing with Skill* is the first in a four-level writing series designed to prepare students for advanced work in rhetoric and composition. This first level builds basic skills in organization and sentence structure.

The course is designed to “pick up and go.” After you read the General Instructions, you may go directly to Week 1 and begin. But I do recommend that you take the time (if not now, soon) to read the Overview of the Year’s Sequence that follows (pages xxv-xxvii).

General Instructions

The directions in this course are targeted at the student. As the student moves into the middle grades, she is ready to take on more and more responsibility for her own academic work. Allow her to read the instructions and begin to follow them on her own before you step in with additional help and guidance.

Ultimately, writing is a self-guided activity. This course will develop the student’s ability to plan and carry out a piece of writing on her own.

In your text, some instructions will be followed by the notation “(Student Responsibility).” These are to be completed by the student independently, with no assistance from you. When instructions appear without this notation, the student may need you to help with the assignment or to check her work.

When the student sees the symbol ◆, she should stop and answer the question asked before going on. Encourage her to answer these questions out loud; this will force her to come up with a specific answer rather than a vague idea.

NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR: Train the student to read the instructions thoroughly! Students who are transitioning into independent work will be inclined to skim instructions and then tell you that they don’t understand. Your first step, when the student is confused, should *always* be to say “Read the instructions out loud to me.” Often, you’ll find that the student skipped or misunderstood the directions.

The student will need to keep a Composition Notebook. She should use a three-ring notebook divided into six sections. The sections should be labelled “Narrations,” “Outlines,” “Topoi,” “Copia,” “Literary Criticism,” and “Reference.” However, the student will be instructed to label only the first three sections and the last section. The “Copia” and “Literary Criticism” sections will not be used until later in the course (and we’re anxious not to scare young writers by making them think that they’re going to be writing research papers about novels).

The student should plan on studying writing four days per week. It is appropriate for students at this level to begin to type their assignments. Before the student begins to use any word processing program, **make sure that all grammar and spell check options are turned off.** These crutches make it easy for the young student to write carelessly, depending on the program to pick up any errors. Our goal is to teach students to write carefully, paying close attention to both mechanics and organization.

Beginning in Week 3, the student will need a thesaurus. Although any comprehensive thesaurus will work, the most recent version of the classic *Roget's International Thesaurus* is recommended. Avoid condensed or pocket-sized thesaurii, since these are less complete.

Many young writers may need to continue with regular handwriting (penmanship) practice at a different time during the day.

Evaluation

Rubrics (guides for evaluation) are provided for your use. In my opinion, giving a “grade” is not useful at this level. Use the rubric to decide whether the student has done an adequate job by following the instructions for the assignment. If the student has not followed the instructions, show him specifically where his composition falls short, and ask him to revise the assignment.

Samples of acceptable answers are also given when appropriate. These acceptable answers have the minimum level of complexity and information you should require from the student; if the student wishes to answer with more detail and subtlety, encourage him to do so.

Customizing the Course

You should feel free to adapt the assignments and pace to fit your student.

The first three weeks of the course progress slowly in order to build confidence and accustom the student to working independently. If the student has no difficulty writing narratives, you may skip Week 1. Weeks 2 and 3 should be completed, but the student may do more than one lesson per day.

During the rest of the course, the student may progress faster or slower than the recommended pace. You should also adjust required word lengths and complexity to suit your own needs.

OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR'S SEQUENCE

This course has five elements that are introduced gradually over the first 24 weeks of study.

Narrations. First, the student will review how to write narrations; the ability to summarize a story in three or four sentences is a basic skill which should be in place before middle-grade writing begins. In the first three weeks of the course, the student will review this basic skill. In the next 12-week unit, 11 of the weeks begin with a more difficult one-day narration exercise (the exception is the second week, when an unfamiliar skill introduced in Week 4 is carried over into Week 5 so that the student has additional time to understand it). When these exercises are completed, the student should place them in the first section of the notebook.

It is normal for a student at this level to find one or two of the narrations unusually challenging; sometimes a story just doesn't make sense to a particular reader. But if the student struggles with more than two or three of the narrations, you may need to spend a few weeks working on this skill before continuing with *Writing with Skill*. Additional narration practice is provided in the preceding level of this series, *Writing with Ease, Level Four*. (A placement test for *Writing with Ease* is available on the Writing with Ease page at peacehillpress.com.)

Outlines. Instead of immediately starting to write compositions, the student will begin by working on skills that need to be in place *before* she begins to write.

Writing involves two difficult tasks. First, the student has to decide what she's writing about—the general topic, the information to include, and where to find that information. Second, the student must put that information into correct order before setting it down on paper.

Instead of asking the student to do both difficult tasks at the same time, this curriculum will give her the chance to learn them separately. She will begin by practicing the second task: setting information down in order.

The student will complete 26 outlining exercises over the course of the year. Outlining helps the student put information in the correct order; once she has ordered her facts, she can begin to write about them. When the student practices outlining, she is developing her ability to carry out the second task in writing.

In this level of the course, the student will concentrate on finding the main idea in each paragraph or section of a composition. This is the most important step in learning to outline. Later levels of this course progress on to more complex outlining skills; the final weeks of this course will prepare the student for the next level by introducing very basic two-level outlining.

These outlines should be placed in the second section of the notebook.

Topoi. *Topoi* is the plural form of the Greek word *topos*, from which we get the English word “topic.” The study of topoi develops the student’s ability to carry out the first step in the writing process: figuring out what to say.

In classical rhetoric—the study of writing in ancient and medieval times—topoi helped writers and speakers to come up with arguments. An Athenian who wanted to convince his listeners that the leaders of Athens were better than the rulers of Rome might have begun his speech by telling the story of what happened to Rome when it had insane or evil emperors. Then, he might have gone on to explain that the reason why Athens was flourishing was because it had sane, virtuous leaders.

Both parts of the argument are topoi. The first (telling the story of what happened to Rome) is a topos called “chronological narrative”—a story told from beginning to end in the same order that it happened in time. The second is a topos called “cause and effect sequence”—connecting something that happened (Athens flourished!) with whatever caused it (sane, virtuous leaders).

Topos literally means “place,” and topoi are places that the young writer goes in order to find material for composition. If the student’s assignment in history is “Read this chapter about the Great Pyramid and then write a brief composition,” having a list of topoi in mind helps the student come up with the subject of the composition. She might think “Can I tell a story about the Great Pyramid from beginning to end? Yes, I could write about its construction.” (That would be a chronological narrative on a historical topic.) Or she might think “Can I explain cause and effect about the Great Pyramid? Yes, I could write about Egyptian views on the afterlife, and how those views caused the Great Pyramid to be built.” (That would be a cause and effect sequence for a historical event.)

Over the course of the year, the student will learn how to construct four basic (and valuable) topoi in history and science: chronological narrative, description, descriptive sequence, and cause and effect sequence. These are simplifications of topoi that Aristotle first proposed as tools for debators, adapted for the use of middle-grade writers. Chronological narratives make use of the skills developed in the narration exercises; the other forms make use of the skills developed in outlining.

Copia. Beginning in Week 16, copia exercises will replace the narration assignments. These exercises are intended to improve the student’s prose style.

Copia (“abundance”) is the widely accepted nickname for the famous writing text *Brevis de copia praeceptio* (“A Short Rule for Copiousness”), written by the Renaissance scholar and theologian Desiderius Erasmus and printed in 1512. In *Copia*, Erasmus offered students a detailed analysis of prose style, encouraging them to develop many different prose patterns (“abundant” ways of expression). He then took a single sentence, “Your letter pleased me greatly,” and rephrased it 195 different ways, including:

Your epistle exhilarated me intensely.
At your words a delight of no ordinary kind came over me.
How exceedingly agreeable did we find your epistle!

Your brief note made me burst with joy.
Your by no means displeasing letter has arrived.¹

The copia exercises in *Writing with Skill* ask students to rephrase, recast, and reword assigned sentences. The practice of copia forces students to use variety and encourages them to be alert to the patterns of sentences. Copia exercises were a staple of grammar-school education in Erasmus's day; they trained students to be "resourceful in language" and "served as a basis for all future literary education."²

The copia exercises assume a basic knowledge of grammar. *Writing With Skill* should be used in conjunction with a thorough grammar course.

Literary Criticism. Beginning in Week 23, the student will begin to learn how to write about literature: fiction and poetry.

Basic literary criticism is a type of writing that most students will be asked to perform at some point in their academic career; even engineering students are usually required to take a literature course in the first year of college, and will be assigned "reaction" or "literary analysis" papers. In the first year of this curriculum, students will begin to gently build the skills needed for writing about imaginative literature. They will spend four weeks learning to write the answers to basic questions about fiction, and three weeks doing the same for poetry. These written answers will form the foundation of more advanced skills, taught in later years of this course.

Documentation. In the first 26 weeks of the course, the student's focus will be on learning the basic forms, or *topoi*, that can be used to construct a longer composition. Once these basic forms are learned, an additional skill will be added: properly documenting the sources of information. Starting in Week 27, the student will continue to practice the *topoi* but will also begin to add footnotes and in-text citations to his compositions. Through this, she'll also learn to avoid plagiarism.

Final Project. In the last two weeks of the course, the student will put all of the skills she's learned together to produce an original composition. Although source material for assignments is provided in the first 34 weeks of the course, the student will need to find her own source material for the final project. Suggestions for possible topics and sources are provided in this instructor text only.

1. Desiderius Erasmus, *Copia: Foundations of the Abundant Style: De duplici copia verborum ac rerum Commentarii duo*, trans. and ed. Betty I. Knott, in *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings 2*, ed. Craig R. Thompson, vol. 28 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), ch. 33.

2. Desiderius Erasmus, *Colloquies*, trans. Craig R. Thompson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 164.

Part I

BASIC SKILLS

WEEKS 1-3

Overview of Weeks 1-3

The first three weeks of this course will review and practice three basic skills: finding the main idea in a story, finding the main idea in a paragraph, and using a thesaurus to find synonyms.

The student has been instructed to label the first section of the Composition Notebook “Narrations” and the second “Outlines.”

Narrations. First, the student will review how to write narrations.

Summarizing forces the student to identify the central story, or plot, of a narrative. This story-line is the *skeleton* of a narrative fiction; it lies underneath all of the details, dialogue, and actions, and organizes them into a particular order. Finding the story-line in narrative fiction will make it easier for the student, later on, to write her own compositions. This review will also equip the student for the lessons in beginning literary criticism (Weeks 23–26).

Finished narrations should be placed in the first section of the student’s Composition Notebook.

Outlines. Before the student begins to write her own compositions, she will study how other writers organize *their* work—what order they put their information in. She will learn how to *outline* their work by noting down the main idea in each section of their compositions. This will teach her the basic skills of outlining, which she can then use to organize her own compositions.

Finished outlines should be placed in the second section of the student’s Composition Notebook.

In the third week, the student will practice using the thesaurus as she writes both a narration and an outline. She will need her own thesaurus. Although any comprehensive thesaurus will work, the most recent version of the classic *Roget’s International Thesaurus* is recommended. Avoid condensed or pocket-sized thesaurii, since these are less complete. Free online thesaurii, as well as the “thesaurus” tool in most word processors, are also very incomplete. (With reference books, you get what you pay for.) Use a print thesaurus instead.

WEEK 1: NARRATIVE SUMMARIES

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

The steps that say “Student Responsibility” should be completed by the student with no assistance or feedback from you. Other steps may require you to help the student and/or check the student’s work.

The student instructions are reproduced below for your convenience.

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from the beginning of the first chapter of *The Pepins and Their Problems* by Polly Horvath.

At the end of the excerpt, you will see a small number that sits up above the last word. This small number is called a *superscript* number. *Super* means “above, over,” so a superscript number sits up above the regular script, or print.

When you see the superscript number, look down at the bottom of the page. You will see a line of smaller type beginning with the same number. This is called a *footnote*, because it is a note at the foot, or bottom, of the page. The footnote tells you the title of the book that the excerpt comes from, the author, the publisher, the year of publication, and the page numbers in the book where the excerpt is found.



STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

This is a short and simple passage—a warm-up for you!

When you summarize a narrative, it’s often best to start by jotting down a few phrases or short sentences that remind you of things that happened in the story. Although you may not need to do this with such a short passage, practice this now. On scratch paper, write down four

or five phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. *Do not use more than five phrases or short sentences!*

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.
If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper four or five short phrases or sentences that summarize the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble a few of the following (these are given only as a guide):

The Pepins always have problems.
The Pepins and their bizarre problems
Toads in their shoes
Couldn't put on their shoes
No one knew what to do.
They went next door to ask their neighbor for help.
Their neighbor had toads in his shoes too.
No one knew how to get the toads out.

This should be an easy assignment, but if the student is having difficulty getting started, ask him:

Who are the main characters in this story?	<i>(The Pepins)</i>
What problem do they have?	<i>(There are toads in their shoes.)</i>
How do they try to solve the problem?	<i>(They go ask their neighbor.)</i>
Does the solution work?	<i>(No, it does not.)</i>

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your four or five phrases or sentences, try to combine them into two or three sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Toads in their shoes" and "They couldn't put on their shoes" could be combined into "They couldn't put on their shoes because there were toads in the shoes"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you leave out the detail that Mr. Bradshaw was eating corn cereal, the summary will still make sense!)

Say your two or three sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first. Reading them out loud *after* you've written them is an excellent way to check your own work.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into two or three smooth, coherent sentences. She should say her sentences out loud several times before she

writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

An acceptable narration might sound like one of the following:

The Pepins were always having strange problems. One morning, they woke up to find toads in their shoes. None of them knew what to do.

OR

The Pepins woke up one morning to find out that their shoes were full of toads. So were their neighbor's, Mr. Bradshaw. None of them knew how to get the toads out of the shoes.

OR

The Pepins found toads in their shoes and couldn't get them out. They went next door to see Mr. Bradshaw, but he didn't know how to get the toads out either.

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric (guide to evaluation). This rubric focuses only on the skills emphasized in this lesson and in the accompanying grammar handbook. Future rubrics will build on this, as the student learns more about both organization and mechanics.

Week 1 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.

For example:

The Pepins didn't know what to do, so they went next door to ask Mr. Bradshaw is acceptable; they went next door *because* they didn't know what to do.

The Pepins had toads in their shoes, and they went next door is not acceptable. There is no clear causal relationship between the two sentences.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.

Day Two: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* by Joan Aiken. In this passage, young Sylvia is travelling to stay with her wealthy cousin Bonnie at the country house known as Willoughby Chase. She has not had enough to eat, and her clothes are old and thin, so she is both hungry and cold—but she knows that she should be suspicious of the strange man who is sharing the railway carriage with her. When he offers her a box of chocolates, she refuses, even though her mouth waters.

STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

On scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* There are many vivid details in this passage (like the “jam tarts, maids of honor, lemon cheese cakes, Chelsea buns, and numerous little iced confections”). Remember that details should not be included in a summary—try to stay focused on the main events.

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.
If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

Today’s exercise is designed to remind the student that details should not go into a summary. The details in this passage—the description of the cakes, the wolves, Sylvia’s dream—are so vivid that the student will be tempted to include them. If you see him writing many more than five or six short phrases or sentences, check to make sure that he is not listing details instead of main events.

The student’s phrases/sentences should resemble some of the following (these are given only as a guide):

The man offered Sylvia cakes to eat.
Sylvia was uncomfortable with the man.
Sylvia ignored man.
Stranger offered her cakes but she refused.
Sylvia fell asleep in the train.
Train stopped because of wolves.

*Wolves got on the line.
 Train stopped.
 Wolves tried to get into the train.
 A wolf broke the window.
 A wolf broke into the train compartment.
 The stranger stabbed the wolf.*

If the student is having difficulty condensing the story, ask him:

How does Sylvia react to the man in the train? *(She tries to ignore him/feels uncomfortable.)*

What happens to stop the train? *(Wolves are on the line.)*

What happens after the train stops? *(A wolf breaks in through the window.)*

How does the man react? *(He stabs the wolf with a piece of glass.)*

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together (for example, "Sylvia was uncomfortable" and "The man offered her cakes but she refused" could be combined into "Sylvia was uncomfortable with the man, so when he offered her cakes she refused"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you completely leave out the information that the man offered her cakes, the summary will still make sense!)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four smooth, coherent sentences. She should say her sentences out loud several times before she writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

An acceptable narration might sound like one of the following:

Sylvia found herself on the train with a stranger. He offered her cakes, but she tried to ignore him. After they had been travelling for a while, wolves on the line stopped the train. One wolf broke into the train car, but the stranger stabbed it to death.

OR

Sylvia was very uncomfortable with the stranger who was in her compartment, so she tried to ignore him and went to sleep. She woke up when the train stopped. Wolves were on the line, and one of them broke into the compartment. The man threw his cloak over the wolf and stabbed it with a piece of glass.

OR

When Sylvia took the train to see her cousin, she had to share her compartment with a stranger. Then wolves on the line stopped the train. One wolf broke into the compartment, but the man killed it.

When the summary is finished, check it using the Week 1 Narration Rubric from Day One.

Day Three: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing nonfiction by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

In Days One and Two, the student wrote narrations summarizing two excerpts from novels—long works of creative fiction. However, narrations can also be used to summarize nonfiction (history, science, biography, etc.).

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

The following passage about the Russian czar Peter the Great, who ruled 1682–1725, comes from *The Story of the World, Volume 3: Early Modern Times* by Susan Wise Bauer.

STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

On scratch paper, write down six or seven phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. Do not use more than seven phrases or short sentences! Make sure that you focus on the main events in the passage (like the Russian army's conquest of Azov) rather than the smaller details (the weather started to grow colder).

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.
If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper six or seven short phrases or sentences that summarize the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble some of the following:

Peter the Great wanted to sail to Europe.

Peter fascinated by the West

Peter the Great wanted his merchant ships to visit the West.

*He needed a port.
 His only port city was frozen for half the year.
 The Russians needed a warmer port.
 Peter wanted to capture the Port of Azov.
 The Port of Azov was on the Sea of Azov which led to the Black Sea and Mediterranean.
 The Turks controlled the Port of Azov.
 Peter thought he could defeat the Turks.
 Peter took his army to Azov and laid siege to it.
 The Russian siege didn't work.
 Turkish ships kept sailing in and out.
 The Russians built warships and barges.
 The Russians spent the winter building a fleet.
 The new Russian navy drove off the Turkish galleys.
 The Russians got into the fortress on a pile of rubble.
 The Russian army defeated the Turks.
 Peter and his army captured Azov.*

If the student is having difficulty condensing the passage, ask her:

What does Peter the Great want at the beginning of the passage? *(To visit the West)*
Why can't the Russian ships visit the West? *(They don't have a port to sail in and out of.)*
What does Peter decide to do? *(Take Azov away from the Turks)*
Why doesn't the siege work at first? *(Turkish ships can sail into Azov with food and weapons.)*
How do the Russians stop the Turkish ships? *(They build a navy and block the Turkish galleys.)*
What is the end result? *(They conquer Azov.)*

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your six or seven phrases or sentences, try to combine them into four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

Say your sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into four smooth, coherent sentences. She should say her sentences out loud several times before she writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

An acceptable narration might sound like one of the following:

Peter the Great was fascinated by the West. He wanted his ships to sail to Europe, but the only Russian port was frozen for half the year. So he laid siege to the Port of Azov, which was held by the Turks. After the Russians built a navy to drive off the Turkish ships, Azov was conquered.

OR

Peter the Great wanted his ships to sail to the West. His only port was frozen for much of the year, so he laid siege to the Port of Azov. At first, the Russians could not conquer it because the Turkish ships resupplied it from the water. So over the winter the Russians built a new navy and used it to conquer Azov.

OR

Peter the Great wanted to sail to the West, but first he had to conquer the Port of Azov. The port was held by the Turks, and without ships, the Russians were not able to besiege it successfully. After they built a navy, though, they were able to drive off the Turkish warships. Then they conquered Azov by building a mound of rubbish and using it to climb over the walls.

When the summary is finished, check it using the Week 1 Narration Rubric from Day One.

Day Four: Challenge Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a complete narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

In the final review exercise of this week, the student will practice summing up an entire story, from beginning to end. While the story is not difficult, there are many details, and it may take the student some time to sort out the main events.

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

This traditional folktale is German in origin—but it is so old that no one knows for sure where it came from (or what it means). The Brothers Grimm included it in their 1812 collection of fairy tales, but this version is from Andrew Lang's classic collection *The Red Fairy Book*.

STEP TWO: Note important events and write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Two:

You can summarize a long story like this in one of two ways.

If you're able to, just list the six or eight most important events in the story, in the same order that they happen in the story. But because there are so many details in the story, you might have to write down *each* event first—even though this will make a much longer list. However, once you've written down the longer list, you should be able to group events together and condense them so that you end up with only six or eight *main* events.

Here's an example. You might be able to look at the first five paragraphs of the story and sum them up in a single sentence:

Dullhead had two older brothers who refused to share their food with a stranger.

But you might have to list each event instead, like this:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

All three brothers met a little man in the the forest.

He asked them to share their food and drink.

The two oldest would not share their food with him.

The two oldest brothers hurt themselves after they refused to share.

Then you would need to work at condensing those five sentences into one or two sentences. You could start by crossing out the repetition:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

All ~~three~~ brothers met a little man in the the forest.

He asked them to share their food and drink.

The two oldest ~~would not share their food with him.~~

The two oldest brothers hurt themselves after they refused to share.

Then, cross out the details that aren't necessary for the understanding of the story.

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

met a little man ~~in the the forest~~

He asked them to share their food ~~and drink.~~

The two oldest

hurt themselves after they refused to share

Now, the first part of your summary might sound like this:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons who met a little man in the forest. He asked to share their food, but the two oldest refused.

Your finished summary should not be more than eight sentences in length.

You should expect this exercise to take you some time, so don't get frustrated! When you have finished your summary, read it aloud. If it is still too long, read through it a second time, looking for unnecessary information or repeated phrases. Cross these out and try to combine sentences.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished with your summary, check your work with your instructor.



HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student has been given the choice of either summarizing directly or writing down on scratch paper a list of main events and *then* summarizing. If the student chooses to list the main events, his phrases/sentences should resemble some of the following:

*Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.
Dullhead had two brothers and was the youngest.
All three brothers met a little man in the the forest.
He asked them to share their food and drink.
The two oldest would not share their food with him.
The two oldest brothers hurt themselves after they refused to share.
Dullhead shared his food.
He was given a golden goose.
He stayed at an inn.
The inn-keeper's daughters tried to pluck the feathers.
They stuck to the goose when they touched it.
Dullhead took the goose with the three girls attached to it.
Four more people touched them and stuck to each other.
They came to a town ruled by a king with a serious daughter.
The king had promised that whoever could make his daughter laugh would marry her.
The princess laughed when she saw Dullhead and the people stuck to him.
The king did not want Dullhead to marry his daughter.
He told Dullhead to find a man who could drink a whole cellar of wine.
Dullhead found a man who could drink it.
He told Dullhead to find a man who could eat a mountain of bread.
Dullhead found a man who could eat all the bread.
He told Dullhead to find a ship that could sail on land or water.
Dullhead found the little man.
The little man gave him the ship.
The king gave Dullhead his daughter.
Dullhead and the princess ruled the kingdom for many years.*

An acceptable finished summary might resemble one of the following:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons who met a little man in the forest. He asked to share their food, but the two oldest refused. Dullhead shared his food, and was given a golden goose as a reward. Seven people tried to touch the goose and stuck to it instead. When Dullhead took the goose and the seven people into a nearby town, the princess of the town laughed at him. The king had promised that she could marry anyone who made her laugh, but he did not want Dullhead to be his son-in-law. So he gave Dullhead three impossible tasks. The little man helped Dullhead finish the tasks, and he was able to marry the princess.

Dullhead met a little man in the forest and was kind to him. The little man gave him a golden goose as his reward. Then Dullhead discovered that anyone who tried to steal a feather from the goose stuck to it. Soon he had seven people stuck to the goose. He took the goose and the seven people into a nearby town, which was ruled by a king with a serious daughter. The king had promised that whoever made the princess laugh could marry her. Dullhead and his goose made the princess laugh, but instead of giving him

the princess, the king asked him to do three tasks. Dullhead finished the tasks with the help of the little man and married the princess.

Dullhead received a magical golden goose as a reward because he was kind to a little man in the forest. Everyone who tried to steal a feather from the goose stuck to it. So Dullhead took the goose and all of the people who were stuck to it into a nearby town. The town was ruled by a king who had promised his daughter to anyone who could make her laugh. She laughed when she saw Dullhead, but the king did not want him to marry the princess. So he told Dullhead to find a man who could drink a cellarfull of wine, a man who could eat a mountain of bread, and a ship that could sail on land or water. With the magical help of the little man, Dullhead found all three and married the princess.

If the student is unable to trim his summary down to eight sentences, ask him to answer the following questions in one sentence each.

What good thing did Dullhead do?

What did he get as a reward?

What was strange about it?

Where did he go?

What promise had been made?

Was it kept? If not, what happened instead?

How did Dullhead react?

What was the end result?

Check the student's summary using the following rubric.

Week 1 Challenge Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.
- 3 The summary must not be more than eight sentences in length.
- 4 It should mention the little man, the goose, Dullhead, the king, and the princess; the other characters do not need to be named as long as the series of events is clear.
- 5 It should end with Dullhead's marriage to the princess.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 The student may choose to capitalize *King* and *Princess* (since the story does) or to leave them lowercase, but should be consistent throughout the story.

WEEK 2: ONE-LEVEL OUTLINES

Day One: Introduction to Outlining



Focus: Understanding the basic principles of outlining

For the last week, the student has reviewed writing narrations—three or four sentences summarizing the central story, or plot, of a narrative. Now the student will begin to work on a new form of summary writing: outlining.

Before the student begins outlining, he will become familiar with two terms: *paragraph* and *topic sentence*.

The student will work independently today; his instructions are reproduced below for your convenience.

STEP ONE: Understand paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences that are all related to a single subject. You can recognize a paragraph because the first sentence is *indented* (begins half an inch farther to the right than all the other sentences).

Look at the following paragraph from the book *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know*:

All of the sentences in this paragraphs are related to one subject: the fight between the wolfhound and the Chihuahua. (Notice that the first sentence is indented.)

Now read the following three paragraphs, found in *Understanding Light: The Science of Visible and Invisible Rays*:

The sentences in these three paragraph are also all related to a single subject. What object does the paragraph describe?



All of the paragraphs tell us something about *the human eye*. But you can't just use "The human eye" as the subject for each paragraph, because *all* of the paragraphs talk about the human eye.

Instead, each paragraph tells us about a different part or function of the human eye. In the first paragraph, all of the sentences are related to the subject "What the human eye can do." In the second paragraph, all of the sentences are related to the subject "What people understand about how the human eye works." What is the subject of the third paragraph? Remember: it will have something to do with the human eye.



The subject of the third paragraph is "The structure of the human eye" or "What the human eye looks like."

When you start to outline, you will try to summarize the subject of each paragraph in one or two phrases or in one sentence. Your summary sentence or phrases should be specific enough to show how the paragraph is different from other paragraphs that might have the same *general* subject.

STEP TWO: **Understand topic sentences**

Sometimes, paragraphs have *topic sentences*. A topic sentence does your work for you, because it states the subject of the paragraph outright. Topic sentences are usually found near the beginning or end of a paragraph.

Read the following four paragraphs. In each paragraph, the topic sentence is in bold print.

—————

The first paragraph is about the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Balboa—which is exactly what the topic sentence tells you. The second paragraph is about the clusters of galaxies in the universe. The third paragraph tells the story of the camera. And the fourth paragraph is all about distraction.

In each of these paragraphs, the topic sentence sums up the subject of the paragraph. But many paragraphs do not have a single topic sentence. Look again at the three paragraphs from *Understanding Light* that you looked at in Step One. Beside each paragraph, you will see the summary phrases or sentence that explain the paragraph's main subject.

—————

These are perfectly good paragraphs—but none of them have a single topic sentence that sums up the main subject. Not every good paragraph has a topic sentence, but in every good paragraph, all of the sentences relate to a single main subject.

You will not be required to identify or write topic sentences in this year of study. However, you will often see the term *topic sentence* used, so you should know what it means.

STEP THREE: **Understand basic outlining**

In the final step of today’s lesson, you’ll study the basic principles of outlining.

When you outline a passage of writing, you begin by finding the main idea in each paragraph and assigning it a Roman numeral. Your goal is not to write a single sentence that incorporates *all* (or even most) of the information in the paragraph. Instead, you should try to write a sentence (or several phrases) that sums up the paragraph’s central theme, or subject.

You can often find the central subject of the paragraph by asking two questions for each paragraph:

1. What is the main thing or person that the paragraph is about?
2. Why is that thing important?

Read the following paragraph from *The Story of Canada* by Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore.

Now answer the following questions before looking at the answers.

What is the main thing that the paragraph is about?



Buffalo. The paragraph does talk about the Blackfoot people as well—but notice that the paragraph begins with the *buffalo*, and that all of the references to the Blackfoot people are made to explain how the *buffalo* were used.

Why is the buffalo important?



Because the Blackfoot people used it for food, clothing, and other purposes.

If you were to put together these two answers in one sentence, it would look something like this:

- I. The Blackfoot people used buffalo for food, clothing, and many other purposes.

(Notice that I is the Roman numeral for “1” or “first paragraph.”)

You might be tempted to write a whole list of things that the Blackfoot people used buffalo for (“The Blackfoot used the buffalo for meat, tipis and clothing, thread, clubs, spoons, needles, and fuel”), but when you are constructing an outline, you should *not* include *all* of the information in the paragraph. Instead, you should summarize. If you

The next paragraph in *The Story of Canada* reads:

Ask the question: What is the main thing that the paragraph is about?



Horses.
Why are horses important?



The Blackfoot tribe learned how to ride them in the 1700s.
So your sentence would sound like this:

II. The Blackfoot tribe learned to use horses in the 1700s.
(Note that II is the Roman numeral for “2” or “second paragraph.”)

Remember: you are not trying to summarize every detail in the entire paragraph. You are finding the central idea in it.

In the next day’s work, you’ll try to find the central idea in each paragraph for yourself.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about history

In today’s exercise, the student will construct his first one-level outline.

As you help the student with the rest of this year’s outlining exercises, keep this principle in mind: There may be several different, but valid, ways to outline any given paragraph. If the student can give good reasons why he’s chosen his points, don’t worry about whether he’s constructed the best possible outline.

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

This excerpt is from a biography called *Hatshepsut: Egypt’s First Female Pharaoh*, by Pamela Dell.

You’ll find the passage easier to understand if you have a little background information. Hatshepsut’s father, Thutmose I, died around 1492 BC and left two heirs: his daughter Hatshepsut and his son Thutmose II. Hatshepsut had the best claim to the throne, because she was the daughter of Thutmose I’s most important wife. But Thutmose I wanted his son, Thutmose II, to be the next ruler of Egypt instead. Unfortunately, Thutmose II was the son of a much less important wife.

To make Thutmose II more acceptable to the people as the next pharaoh, Thutmose I arranged for him to marry Hatshepsut—his half-sister. The Egyptian royal pharaohs often did this. They believed that their blood was divine, so they were reluctant to marry anyone from outside the royal family—that would be like mixing divine and human blood.

STEP TWO: **Begin to construct a one-level outline**

Student instructions for Step Two:

The passage selected for today's outlining exercise has short, easy paragraphs. Remember, you should begin by asking one simple question:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?

In this passage, every single paragraph is about Hatshepsut, Thutmose II—or both of them.

Begin your outline by deciding whether each paragraph is about Hatshepsut, Thutmose II, or both. Write your answers on the outline below, remembering that each Roman numeral stands for a paragraph of the reading. The first point is done for you.

- I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.
- VI.
- VII.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student's answers should be:

- I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II*
- II. Hatshepsut*
- III. Hatshepsut*
- IV. Thutmose II*
- V. Thutmose II*
- VI. Hatshepsut*
- VII. Hatshepsut*

Paragraphs II-V should be very straightforward, since only one of the two characters is mentioned. In the sixth and seventh paragraphs, Thutmose is mentioned, but the focus is very clearly on Hatshepsut's roles as wife and mother.

STEP THREE: **Finish constructing a one-level outline**

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now finish your outline by asking the second question: In each paragraph, what did these people *do*? Or to put it another way: What event or part of their lives or accomplishment does the entire paragraph talk about?

Remember, you should not be listing individual details from the paragraphs. Instead, try to think of the single word or phrase that sums up what all the details have in common.

Consider the first paragraph:

No one knows for sure whether Hatshepsut and Thutmose II were married when their

father died. But at the time of their marriage, neither of them was an adult. Hatshepsut was probably between 12 and 15, and Thutmose was probably a few years older or younger.

You wouldn't finish out the first main point on your outline by writing:

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II may have married before their father died, were both very young

Both the timing of their marriage, and the *age* at which they were married, are details. But both of those details tell you more about their *marriage*. So your first point should be:

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II and their marriage

or

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II's marriage

Try now to finish your outline by finding the main subject of each paragraph. You can use the answer above for I.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student's answers should resemble the following:

- I. *Hatshepsut and Thutmose II get married OR Hatshepsut and Thutmose II's marriage*
- II. *Hatshepsut and her vows OR Hatshepsut's vows*
- III. *Hatshepsut and her titles OR Hatshepsut's titles*
- IV. *Thutmose II and his battles OR Thutmose II's battles*
- V. *Thutmose II and his buildings OR Thutmose II's buildings*
- VI. *Hatshepsut and her duties OR Hatshepsut and her duties as King's Wife*
- VII. *Hatshepsut and her role as mother OR Hatshepsut and her children*

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Paragraph 2

Instructor: Hatshepsut promised to do five things. What were they?

Student: Be feminine, exude fragrance, speak in musical tones, make herself loved, tend her lord

Instructor: What word do the writers use for these promises? They say that Hatshepsut took traditional. . .

Student: Vows

Instructor: So this paragraph is all about Hatshepsut's five. . .

Student: Vows

Paragraph 3

Instructor: There are four proper names for Hatshepsut listed in this paragraph. What does the paragraph call these names? Hint: they are King's Daughter, King's Great Royal Wife, God's Wife of Amun, King's Sister.

Student: They are titles.

Instructor: So this paragraph is all about Hatshepsut's four. . .

Student: Titles

Paragraph 4

Instructor: This paragraph tells you all about one kind of success that Thutmose II may—or may not—have had. What kind of success was that?

Student: Success in battle OR Military success

Instructor: So the paragraph is all about Thutmose II's battles. That is your main point.

Paragraph 5

Instructor: What three things did Thutmose II build, according to this paragraph?

Student: Monuments, other works, the temple complex at Karnak

Instructor: So this paragraph is about Thutmose II's success at. . .

Student: Building

Instructor: That is your main point.

Paragraph 6

Instructor: The main point of this paragraph is found in the very first sentence. What did Hatshepsut perform?

Student: Her royal wifely duties

Instructor: "Hatshepsut's duties" are the main subject of the paragraph.

Paragraph 7

Instructor: This paragraph is all about another kind of job that Hatshepsut had. What was that job or role?

Student: To be a mother

Instructor: So you could say that this paragraph is all about Hatshepsut's role as a. . .

Student: Mother

Day Three: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about science

The student will continue to practice basic outlining skills for the rest of this week.

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

This excerpt, from the basic geology text *The Round World* by Michael Dempsey, discusses the metals found in the crust of the Earth (the outermost layer of the Earth).

STEP TWO: Understand how to outline science writing (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step Two:

When you outline science writing, you may need to ask slightly different versions of the questions suggested at the beginning of this week. Remember, those questions are:

1. What is the main thing or person that the paragraph is about?
2. Why is that thing important?

For a science text, you might sometimes find it more useful to ask:

1. What is being described or defined in this paragraph?
2. Is there one central thing which is most important about it?

Look at the first paragraph again and ask yourself: What is being described or defined in this paragraph?

This isn't an easy question to answer, because the paragraph starts out with a *negative* definition. What is *not* (or rarely) found in the Earth's crust?



Pure metals.

This paragraph is centered around describing what is found in the Earth's crust *instead of* pure metals. Pure metals aren't found in the Earth's crust—what is found instead?



Metals combined with other elements.

That answers both questions—metals are being described in this paragraph, and the most important thing about those metals is that they're combined with other elements.

So the first point in your outline would look like this:

- I. Metals combined with other elements

There may be more than one good way to phrase a main point. If, for example, you wrote

- I. The makeup of metals in the crust

that could also sum up the main idea of the paragraph—which then goes on to define exactly *what* the makeup of metals in the crust is.

STEP THREE: **Construct a one-level outline**

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now finish your outline by finding the main point for each of the remaining three paragraphs.

If you have difficulty, use the hints below. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

- I. The makeup of metals in the crust (this point was already covered for you!)
- II. This point has to do with amounts.
- III. This paragraph has a definition in it. What is being defined? (You don't have to give the *content* of the definition.)
- IV. How many kinds of what?

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student's answers should resemble the following:

- I. *Metals combined with other elements OR The makeup of metals in the crust*
- II. *The quantity of metals in the crusts*
- III. *The definition of ore*
- IV. *The three kinds of rock*

Note that the student should *not* put the following level of detail into the outline:

- III. *Ore is a rock with enough metal to make extraction worthwhile.*
- IV. *The three kinds of rock are igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic.*

Those details belong in a two-level outline:

- III. *The definition of ore*
 - A. *Geological processes concentrated the metal.*
 - B. *Rocks with concentrated metal are called ore.*
- IV. *The three kinds of rock*
 - A. *Igneous*
 - B. *Sedimentary*
 - C. *Metamorphic*

If the student has difficulty with the outline, use the following dialogue:

Paragraph 2

Instructor: In this paragraph, there are two words repeated twice (each). What are they?

Student: Quantity and metal

Instructor: The main point of this paragraph is “The quantity of metal in the earth’s crust.”

Paragraph 3

Instructor: What do we call a rock with enough metal in it to make extraction worthwhile?

Student: Ore

Instructor: The main point is “The definition of ore.”

Paragraph 4

Instructor: How many kinds of rock are there?

Student: Three

Instructor: The main point is “Three kinds of rock.”

Day Four: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main topic in each paragraph of a passage about science

STEP ONE: Understand topical outlines (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

In the last passage you outlined, each paragraph talked about the same basic topic: metals in the Earth’s crust. But even though *every* paragraph talked about metals in the Earth’s crust, you couldn’t outline it by writing:

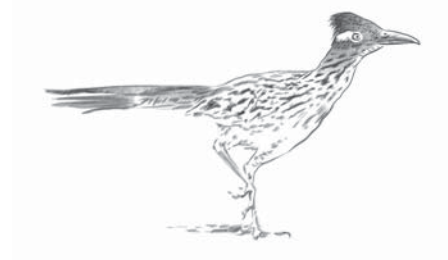
- I. Metals
- II. Metals
- III. Metals
- IV. Metals

Instead, you had to identify what was being *said* about metals in each paragraph. The first paragraph talked about metals combined with each other, the second about how *much* metal was in the crust, the third about metal in rock (ore), and the fourth about the kinds of rock that have metal in them.

But sometimes a writer will use each paragraph of an essay to talk about a different topic. Look at the following paragraphs, adapted from a popular book about birds published at the beginning of the last century:

Each one of these paragraphs describes a different bird. The simplest way to outline the passage is:

- I. The road runner
- II. Petrels
- III. Crows
- IV. The dusky grouse



This topical outline doesn't try to find the most *important* thing about the road runner, petrels, crows, or the dusky grouse. Since the paragraphs go on to give a whole list of facts about each bird, it would be almost impossible to figure out which fact is the most "central." What's central in each paragraph is the bird itself.

So the topical outline simply lists the topics: one kind of bird for each paragraph.

STEP TWO: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step Two:

This excerpt is taken from the science book *Real Things in Nature* by Edward S. Holden. After you've read the passage, you will construct a basic topical outline of its paragraphs.

STEP THREE: Construct a one-level topical outline

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now write a one-level outline for the passage, listing only the main topic discussed in each paragraph. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student's outline should resemble the following:

- I. *The sun*
- II. *The corona*
- III. *Meteors*
- IV. *Shooting stars*
- V. *Comets*

The topics of the paragraphs are fairly simple to find, but if the student has difficulty, ask the following questions:

- I. What is a huge, intensely hot globe made of gases and vapors and 5,000 times more brilliant than white-hot boiling iron?
- II. What is the envelope, or crown, of the sun?
- III. What are the clouds of stone that travel in orbits and are usually invisible?
- IV. What do we call a meteor that moves into the atmosphere and burns up?
- V. What are crowds of stones that move in a swarm around the sun and then never come back?

WEEK 3: USING THE THESAURUS

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing first-person nonfiction

This week, the student will review the skills of narration and outlining and will be introduced to the use of a thesaurus. In today's narration exercise, the student will write a summary that she will make use of in the next lesson.

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Story of My Life*, the autobiography (a biography written by the person herself) of Helen Keller. Helen Keller was born in 1880. She lost both her hearing and sight after a serious illness when she was 19 months old. Because she could neither see nor hear, she couldn't communicate with others. When she was six years old, her parents asked the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston to help them by sending Helen a teacher. The teacher who came was Anne Sullivan, aged 20. Sullivan took on the job of trying to communicate with Helen. In this part of the autobiography, Helen describes the moment when her teacher suddenly found a way to make contact with her.

STEP TWO: Understand the use of first and third person (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step Two:

You will notice that the passage is written in the *first person*—from the point of view of Helen Keller herself. Look at the following quote from the story and circle each bolded pronoun. These are first person pronouns.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and **my** teacher placed **my** hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. **I** stood still, **my** whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers.

Now read another version of the quote, in which the first person pronouns have been changed to third person pronouns and names.

Helen and Miss Sullivan walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and **Helen's** teacher placed **her** hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. **Helen** stood still, **her** whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers.

When you write your summary, you may either use the first person (as though *you* were Helen, summarizing her own story) or the third person point of view. Whichever you choose, be sure to use the same point of view all the way through the summary.

STEP THREE: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now jot down six or seven phrases or short sentences that remind you of the main events in the passage. Remember, you can use either the first or third person. You can write

Miss Sullivan gave Helen a doll

or

Miss Sullivan gave me a doll

as long as you keep the same point of view in every phrase or sentence.

Do not use more than seven phrases or short sentences! Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the passage.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student's list of events should resemble six or seven of the following. (The examples below are in the third person; it's fine for the student to use the first person instead.)

Miss Sullivan gave Helen a doll.

She spelled "doll" into Helen's hand.

Helen spelled "doll" too.

Helen showed her mother how to spell "doll."

She didn't understand what she was doing.

She learned to spell many words but didn't know what they meant.

Miss Sullivan tried to teach her what "doll" meant.

Helen could not understand that words stood for things.

Helen broke her doll.

She wasn't sorry.

Her teacher took her outside.

They walked to the well house.

Miss Sullivan put Helen's hand under the water.

She pumped water over Helen's hand and spelled "water" into it.

Helen understood that the word "water" meant water.

*Helen understood what a name was for the first time.
She could think with words for the first time.
She felt sorrow for the first time.*

If the student has difficulty locating the central events, ask her to answer the following questions in one complete sentence each:

What did Miss Sullivan bring Helen?
In the first paragraph, what did Miss Sullivan teach Helen to do?
Did Helen understand this?
Where did Miss Sullivan take her, and what did they do there?
What two things did Miss Sullivan do at the same time?
What was the result?

STEP FOUR: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Four:

After you've written down your six or seven phrases or sentences, try to combine them into four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

Say your sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP FOUR

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into four smooth, coherent sentences. She should say her sentences out loud several times before she writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

An acceptable narration might sound like one of the following:

When Miss Sullivan came to teach Helen Keller, she gave Helen a doll and tried to teach her what the word "doll" meant. Helen learned the word, but she didn't understand what it meant. So Miss Sullivan took her outside, pumped water over her hand, and spelled "water" at the same time. Finally, Helen understood what a name was.

I learned how to spell words, but I didn't understand what they meant. One day, my teacher pumped water over one of my hands and spelled "water" into the other. Suddenly I understood that the word stood for the cool thing flowing over my hand. I had words for the first time.

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 3 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.
- 3 The summary should end with a statement about Helen’s new understanding of words/names.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Either first or third person should be used consistently throughout.

OPTIONAL

- 4 Quotation marks should be used to set off words that are spelled out to Helen

Note: The student is probably not familiar with the grammar rule governing #4. The rule is: When words are referred to as words, they are set off with either quotation marks or italics. “Word as word” means that the focus is on the word *itself*, not on the meaning, so:

I felt water on my hand.

She spelled “water” on my hand.

You may explain this rule to the student if you choose, but if you think the student will be confused, feel free to ignore it.

Day Two: Thesaurus Use



Focus: Understanding and using the thesaurus

Today’s lesson introduces the student to the thesaurus. If you are not familiar with thesaurus use, be sure to read the student instructions carefully.

The student will not begin the copia exercises (rewriting sentences with the help of the thesaurus) until Part III of this course. However, she may sometimes find it helpful to consult a thesaurus in Part II, so the skill is introduced here.

Choosing the correct synonym is a skill that takes time, maturity, and plenty of exposure to good writing. Beginning writers will often choose a synonym that has the wrong shade of meaning. For example, the thesaurus gives the following synonyms for “sad”:

oppressed, unhappy, sorry, dejected, woebegone, inconsolable

If I write “I was angry and sad,” the following synonyms would be appropriate:

I was angry and oppressed.

I was angry and unhappy.

I was angry and dejected.

I was angry and inconsolable,

But “sorry” and “woebegone” are not good choices, because those emotions—while they *do* involve sadness—aren’t likely to coexist with anger.

The exercises that follow give the student some guidance in choosing good synonyms. However, at this level, it’s important not to overcorrect or overexplain. The more the student reads, explores, and experiments, the better her sense for the correct word will become.

As a completely optional exercise, you can help the student develop word sense using Google Books (books.google.com).³ Type a single word or expression into the search box. When the search results load, choose the “Preview Available” option. The results will reload, including only books that you can click on to read an entire page (as opposed to “snippet view,” which only gives you the view of a single line).

Skimming down the results will help the student gain a sense of the ways in which particular words are used. For example, the exercise that follows asks the student to distinguish between “zealous” and “willing,” but this may be difficult if the student hasn’t seen the word “zealous” used in different contexts. A quick search for “zealous” on Google Books starts with a number of books that have “zealous” in the title. You want to see how the word is used in sentences, though, so you would scroll down past these books and look for “zealous” in the actual text that appears as a brief excerpt next to the book cover. These include:

Johnson was truly zealous for the success of “The Adventurer.”

—James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson*

Every year some zealous Frenchman exposes the iniquities of the Tudors. . .

—John Acton, *Letters of Lord Acton to Mary Gladstone*

. . . his zealous and unwearied exertions. . .

—United States War Department, *Report of the Secretary of War*

Attorneys also owe an obligation to be zealous advocates for their clients.

—O. Russel Murray, *The Mediation Handbook*

3. The following instructions use the Google Books search as it worked in the spring of 2011. Websites change constantly, so you may need to adapt the instructions.

Simply reading these sentences will begin to give the student a sense of the word's exact meaning.

If you come up with too many archaic uses, you can also limit the search to books published within the twenty-first (or another) century.

STEP ONE: Understand thesaurus use (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

A thesaurus is a reference book that groups together words with similar but different shades of meaning. (A dictionary, on the other hand, contains definitions of single, particular words.) When you write, you can use the thesaurus to find the exact word you need. (Note: The numbers in the following description are based on the fourth edition of *Roget's International Thesaurus*. You will probably use a different edition, but the organization of your thesaurus will be the same even if the numbers are a little different.)

A thesaurus contains two types of lists.

The first half of the thesaurus contains words grouped by meaning and part of speech. These word groups all have numbers. For example, the list headed

475. Knowledge

might contain:

1. **nouns** that name different kinds of knowledge (information, facts, experience, perception, insight, understanding, wisdom, literacy), as well as names for fields of knowledge (literature, science, art, technology) and names of people who know things (scientist, scholar, authority, expert, intellectual),
2. **verbs** for the act of knowing (know, perceive, recognize, discern, be learned in, be expert in), and
3. **adjectives** that describe both people who are knowledgeable (informed, instructed, trained, familiar with, learned, educated, bookish) and things which are known (well-known, recognized, familiar, grasped, common, public).

The second half of the thesaurus contains an alphabetical listing of thousands of vocabulary words. This is the part of the thesaurus that you'll go to first as you write.

In the last lesson, you learned that Helen Keller "left the well-house eager to learn." Suppose that, while writing your summary, it seemed most natural to write "After Helen Keller learned that words stood for things, she was eager to learn." That's true, but when writing a summary you should try not to copy the exact wording in the passage. So instead, you could turn to the second half of your thesaurus and look up *eager* in the *e* section.

Beneath the word *eager*, you would find a series of other adjectives with different shades of meaning, each followed by a number: for example,

<i>consenting</i>	775.4
<i>desirous</i>	634.21
<i>willing</i>	622.5
<i>zealous</i>	635.9

Which of these comes closest to the meaning of *eager*, as Helen Keller used it? Probably not "consenting," because that just implies that she wouldn't *refuse* to learn if offered the opportunity—but in the passage, Keller is anxious to learn. "Willing" also fails to show how eager Keller was. But "desirous" and "zealous" both imply a real desire and need to learn.

If you decide that "zealous" is the closest to "eager," you would then turn back to the group of words numbered 635 in the first half of the thesaurus. That group of words is headed "Eagerness," so all of the nouns, adjectives, and verbs in it will have something to do with being eager. Glancing down the group, you would see that Section 635 has 15 different subgroups. The first six subgroups contain nouns; the next two contain verbs; the five after that, adjectives;

and the final two, adverbs.

Since the word “zealous” was followed by the number 635.9, you would then look down to subgroup 9 of Section 635. There, you would find a series of adjectives closely related to the adjective *zealous*:

eager, anxious, avid, keen, prompt, ready, lively, vital, champing at the bit,
and many more.

You could choose one of these adjectives to substitute for *eager* and write one of the following:

She was anxious to learn.

She was keen to learn.

She was champing at the bit to learn.

Sometimes you’ll find that the word you chose to follow leads you to a section where none of the words seem to fit. That’s normal; using a thesaurus is sometimes a process of trial and error. But reading through the lists will help expand your vocabulary and fill your memory with words.

STEP TWO: Practice thesaurus use

Student instructions for Step Two:

Begin to practice your thesaurus skills now, using two sentences from Helen Keller’s memoir.

For each underlined noun, adjective, and verb, find four synonyms in your thesaurus. List those synonyms on the lines provided. Remember that you must provide noun synonyms for nouns, adjective synonyms for adjectives, and verb synonyms for verbs.

When you look up a verb, remember that you’ll need to look it up in the present tense. “Felt” is in a past tense. The present tense of “felt” is “feel.” “Feel” is the word you’d look up in the second half of the thesaurus.

After you’ve found the synonyms, rewrite each sentence one time on your own paper, choosing from among the listed synonyms. Do not repeat any of the synonyms. When you’ve finished, read your sentences out loud and listen to how the sound and rhythm change. Remember to put your verbs back in the past tense!

If you’re not sure which subsections of the thesaurus you should go to, ask your instructor for help.

When you’re finished, show your work to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student’s answers should resemble the following, although other synonyms are certainly acceptable. “Sorrow” and “regret” are often used as synonyms; if necessary, explain to the student that since Keller uses both, she means that she felt two different emotions. Synonyms for “sorrow” should highlight sadness; synonyms for “regret” should highlight pangs of conscience.

Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.

felt *sense, feel, experience, perceive, apprehend, be aware of*
misty *faint, pale, weak, dim, shadowy, obscure, hazy, blurry, uncertain*

mystery *enigma, puzzle, problem, riddle, miraculousness, sealed book, unknown quantity*

Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst.

sorrow *grief, care, woe, sadness, unhappiness, dejection, melancholy, gloom*
regret *shame, contrition, scruples, self-reproach, penitence*
outburst *outbreak, flare-up, blaze, explosion, eruption, fit, upheaval*

The student's sentences might resemble the following:

Suddenly I sensed a shadowy consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the enigma of language was revealed to me. Neither grief nor shame followed my passionate explosion.

You may need to remind the student that verbs should be put in the past tense.

Day Three: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about science

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

The following passage has two parts. The first four paragraphs all deal with the same topic (earthworms); each paragraph explores a different part or feature of the earthworm. The last three paragraphs describe different relatives of the earthworm, so each one has a different topic.

STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

Now write a one-level outline for the passage on the worksheet below.

Because the passage shifts from a detailed discussion of earthworms to a more topical description of other worms, you should also shift your outlining style when you get to the last three paragraphs. For the first four paragraphs, use the questions

1. What is being described or defined in this paragraph?
2. Is there one central thing which is most important about it?

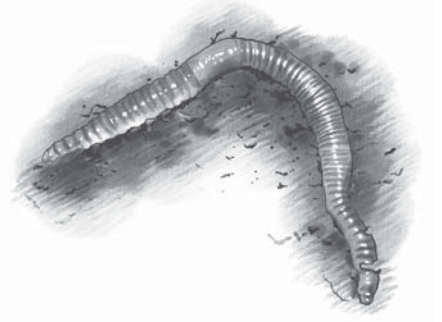
to find the main point. For the last three paragraphs, simply list the topic covered.

Two of the points are done for you.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student's outline should combine the two kinds of outlining the student has already practiced; the first four points should give the main idea of each paragraph, while the last three should list the topic of each paragraph. The finished outline should resemble the following:



- I. *The difference between earthworms and insect larvae*
- II. *How earthworms benefit the soil OR The earthworm and the soil*
- III. *What happens when the worm is cut in two OR Cutting the worm in half*
- IV. *The structure of the earthworm*
- V. *Hairworms*
- VI. *The lugworm*
- VII. *The leech*

If the student has difficulty, use the following dialogues

Paragraph 2

Instructor: This paragraph is all about the ways in which an earthworm benefits one particular thing. What is it?

Student: The soil

Instructor: "How earthworms benefit the soil" is the main idea.

Paragraph 3

Instructor: What happens to the worm in this paragraph?

Student: It gets cut in half.

Instructor: Everything else in the paragraph is related to that main idea.

Paragraph 4

Instructor: The main idea of this paragraph is stated in the very first sentence. Read the first part of that sentence out loud.

Student: The structure of the animal is very simple.

Instructor: Breathing organs, blood, the blood system, eyes, and hearing all have to do with the structure of the earthworm.

Paragraphs 6 and 7

Instructor: What kind of worm is described?

Student: The lugworm and the leech.

Instructor: Those are the topics of those two paragraphs.

Day Four: Thesaurus Use



Focus: Using the thesaurus

STEP ONE: Practice thesaurus use

Student instructions for Step One:

For each underlined noun, adjective, and verb, find four synonyms in your thesaurus. (You only need to use two for “loosened.”) List those synonyms on the lines provided. Remember that you must provide noun synonyms for nouns, adjective synonyms for adjectives, and verb synonyms for verbs.

When you look up a verb, remember that you’ll need to look up the active form and the present tense. “Is loosened” is the present tense and passive form of “loosen.” “Is aired” is the present tense and passive form of “air.” (Make sure you look at the *verb* “air,” not the *noun* “air”!) What is the active, present form of “is enriched”?

After you’ve found the synonyms, rewrite each sentence one time on your own paper, choosing from among the listed synonyms. Do not repeat any of the synonyms. When you’ve finished, read your sentences out loud and listen to how the sound and rhythm change. Remember to put your verbs back in the past tense!

When you are finding synonyms for science writing, you should be particularly careful to pick words close in meaning. Leeches are found in pools, not oceans—even though “pool” and “ocean” may both be found in the same section of your thesaurus. In this exercise, work hard to find the *right* synonyms.

When you’re finished, show your work to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

This exercise is challenging, not because the words are difficult, but because the student must find very close equivalents; “soil” is the same as “dirt,” but in this context it is not the same as “dust” or “soot.” You may need to encourage the student to look at more than one thesaurus entry; for example, the thesaurus entry for “soil” includes “dirt” but no other useful synonyms, so the student will then need to look up “dirt.” The entry for “dirt” includes “land,” and the entry for “land” includes “ground” and “earth.”

Thus the soil is loosened, aired and enriched by the same process.

<i>soil</i>	<i>dirt, land, earth, ground</i>
<i>loosened</i>	<i>break up, separate, work loose</i>
<i>aired</i>	<i>aerate, aerify, give air, freshen, oxygenate, ventilate</i>
<i>enriched</i>	<i>cultivate, enhance, upgrade, augment, build up, fertilize</i>

The leech is a wormlike animal often found in pools.

<i>animal</i>	<i>being, creature, living thing, wild thing, entity, thing, invertebrate</i>
<i>found</i>	<i>discover, encounter, identify, locate, observe, spot, see</i>

Part II

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR COMPOSITION

WEEKS 4-15

Overview of Weeks 4-15

In the next 12 weeks of this course, the student will spend one day working on a review of narration skills. On the second day of each week, he will complete an outlining exercise; on the third and fourth days, he will learn about topoi by analyzing and copying a model. The first 12 topoi lessons cover the most basic composition elements: chronological narration and description.

The only exception to the pattern is in Weeks 4-5, when the first assignment to copy a model is extended over two days so that the student is not overwhelmed.

Weekly pattern:

Review of Year 4 Skills, One-Level Outlines, Foundational Topoi

Day 1: Narrative summary

Day 2: Outlining exercise

Day 3: Analyze topos model

Day 4: Practice topos model

Topoi, Weeks 4-15

Chronological narration in history (Weeks 4, 6, 11)

Chronological narration in science (Weeks 5, 7, 15)

Description of a place (Weeks 8-11)

Scientific description (Weeks 12-15)

WEEK 4: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A PAST EVENT

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from Edith Nesbit's short story "The Deliverers of Their Country," found in *The Book of Dragons*.



STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

You will now summarize the passage in three or four sentences and write those sentences down on your own paper.

Before you can write a brief summary of a lengthy passage, you'll need to identify the most important events in the passage. On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you're not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn't understand the rest of the story. (For example, if you left out the fact that the dragons were everywhere, would the reactions of the people make sense to you?)

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

Here's a head start: begin with the sentence "Effie got a dragon in her eye."

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper five or six short phrases or sentences that summarize the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble five or six of the following (these are given only as a guide):

*Effie got a dragon in her eye.
 Her brother found a dragon in his tea.
 Doctor and father amazed by dragons
 Soon there were dragons all over the place.
 Dragons—looked the same, all different sizes
 At first the newspapers called them lizards.
 The large dragons went to bed early.
 The small dragons got everywhere.
 Got into everything, larger ones bit and got into beds
 No point in offering a reward, everybody wanted to kill them
 Everyone killed the dragons.
 The police caught the dragons on sticky wood and canvas towers.
 The stores were full of dragon poison and other remedies.
 But there were more dragons than ever.*

(Remember, the student should not provide more than five or six phrases/sentences.)

Beginning writers often have difficulty telling the difference between main events and supporting details. Watch the student as he writes down his phrases. If he's writing too many phrases, or the sentences are long and complex, stop him before he goes on. Ask him the following questions to help him distinguish between main events and supporting details:

Is the story about Effie and her family, or about the dragons?	<i>(Dragons)</i>
How did the characters in the story react to the dragons when they first appeared?	<i>(They were interested/curious, they kept them as specimens, they were pleased with them.)</i>
What changed their reaction to the dragons?	<i>(There were dragons everywhere.)</i>
How did people try to get rid of the dragons? Just list two things.	<i>(They killed them; the police set up sticky towers to catch them; they poisoned them.)</i>
What was the result?	<i>(There were more dragons than ever.)</i>

If the student is still having trouble deciding what events to leave out, ask him: If you left this event out, would the rest of the story still make sense? If it would, it's a minor detail and can be eliminated.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Effie got a dragon in her eye" and "Her brother got a dragon in his tea" could be combined into "Effie and her brother both found small dragons"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you wrote down "Everyone killed the dragons" as well as "Police caught dragons and burned them," you don't really need the second sentence. If everyone was killing the dragons, that includes the police.)

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. If you took a main event out of the original story, the rest of the story wouldn't make sense. It doesn't really matter what the newspapers first called the dragons—without that detail, the story still makes sense. But if we didn't know that the dragons were everywhere, we wouldn't understand why they were such a big problem.

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four coherent, smooth sentences. He should say his three or four sentences out loud several times before he writes; listen to make sure that you hear him talking out loud, and if necessary remind him that he should be speaking before he writes.

You may need to help him combine two phrases into one sentence. (For example, *Soon there were dragons all over the place* and *Dragons—looked the same, all different sizes* could be combined into “Soon there were dragons of all different sizes all over the place.”) Encourage him to eliminate those phrases which seem unnecessary; in the list above, *At first the newspapers called them lizards* should be cut because the subject of naming the dragons never comes up again.

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 4 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.

For example:

The dragons were everywhere, and everyone killed them

is acceptable; because the dragons were everywhere, everyone killed them.

The newspapers called the dragons lizards at first, and everyone killed them

is not acceptable. There is no causal relationship between the two sentences.

- 3 Each event of major importance should be in the summary (if it were missing from the original passage, the narrative would no longer make sense).

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a historical narrative

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik van Loon. You will see *ellipses* (. . .) after the first paragraph. The ellipses tell you that after the period at the end of “They had invented the art of writing,” some of the text has been cut. (The paragraph which we removed was unrelated to the Egyptians; it was about cats, dogs, puppies, kittens, and writing. If you’re curious, go check the book out of the library and read the whole chapter yourself.)



STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

Instead of simply summarizing this passage, you will outline it.

Let’s review the outlining process. You’ll begin by looking for the main idea in each section of text. The passage above is divided into four sections (there’s an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea. In previous lessons, you did this for single paragraphs; often, though, a single main idea will be explored in more than one paragraph.

Don’t try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/ what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? If you’re not sure, ask yourself: Who was responsible for all the inventions and discoveries in that first paragraph?



The Egyptians.

Now look at everything else in the passage, which tells you why the Egyptians were important: they were important because of all the things they did.

You can’t list each individual invention or discovery, because you’re not trying to include *all* the information in a single sentence. If you knew someone who played basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, and field hockey, you wouldn’t summarize by saying “She plays basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, and field hockey.” You’d say “She plays many sports.”

Try finishing your sentence now. What did you come up with?



Your sentence should sound like one of these:

I. The Egyptians invented and discovered many things. OR

I. The Egyptians made many inventions and discoveries.

(Be sure not to simply copy the first sentence in the paragraph. Remember, this is supposed to be a summary in *your own words*.)

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence for each one of the remaining four sections. (You can use the sentence we gave you for the first section.) When you write an outline, you should use Roman numerals for the summary sentences, like this:

I. The Egyptians made many inventions and discoveries.

II. Second sentence

III. Third sentence

IV. Fourth sentence

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn't always necessary in an outline).

When you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

For each section of text, the student should pick out a major point by asking himself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Suggested answers (the student's sentences should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

I. The Egyptians invented and discovered many things.

II. Egyptian writing could not be read.

III. A French officer discovered a stone with writing on it.

IV. Champollion discovered the main principles of Egyptian writing.

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Section 2

Instructor: What is the main thing this section is about? **Hint:** it is mentioned in every single sentence.

Student: Egyptian writing or hieroglyphs [the student may use this name even though it is not in the passage]

Note to Instructor: If the student answers “strange pictures” or “queer figures,” point out that these are synonyms for the same thing and ask: What is that thing?

Instructor: What is important about this writing? Hint: the answer is suggested in the first and third sentences and stated clearly in the last sentence.

Student: No one could read or decipher or understand it.

Instructor: Make sure that your main point has “Egyptian writing” as the subject of the sentence.

Section 3

Instructor: It may be a little harder for you to find the main idea of this section. Is Bonaparte’s visit to Africa the most important thing that happens? Hint: do we hear any more about it after this one section?

Student: No.

Instructor: What is the other important event in this section?

Student: A French officer discovers a stone with writing on it or A French officer found the Rosetta Stone or A French officer found a slab of basalt with three inscriptions on it.

Instructor: That is the main idea of the passage, because if you don’t know about the discovery of the stone, you won’t understand the next section.

Note to Instructor: Encourage the student to put his sentence in the past tense, since the passage itself is in the past tense.

Section 4

Instructor: This last section tells you about Champollion [this should be pronounced *sham-poe-LYAHN*, with the “ly” slurred together to make a single sound]. What did he discover?

Student: He discovered the meaning of Egyptian writing or He discovered the main principles of hieroglyphs.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative of a past event

The passage the student outlined in the last writing session is an example of this week's topos: a **chronological narrative of a past event** (the deciphering of Egyptian writing). Remember, a topos is a form of writing: a "place" that the student can go to find topics in history and science.

A chronological narrative of a past event explains *what happened in the past*, and *in what sequence*. A chronological narrative can stand on its own as a history composition or can be a smaller part of a larger paper.

In today's assignment, the student will examine how a chronological narrative is put together. The work should be done independently; the student's directions are reproduced below for your reference.

STEP ONE: Examine model passages

When you set out to write a chronological narrative in history, you aim to answer two simple questions:

Who did what to whom? (Or What was done to what?)
In what sequence?

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *The Story of Mankind*. The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. The Egyptians invented and discovered many things.
- II. Egyptian writing could not be read.
- III. A French officer discovered a stone with writing on it.
- IV. Champollion discovered the main principles of Egyptian writing.

Notice that each one of these main points answers the first question: *Who did what to whom?* (Or *What was done to what?*)

- I. *Who?* The Egyptians *Did what?* invented and discovered *To what?* many things.
- II. *What?* Egyptian writing *What was done to it?* could not be read.
- III. *Who?* A French officer *Did what?* discovered *what?* a stone with writing on it.
- IV. *Who?* Champollion *Did what?* discovered *To what?* the main principles of Egyptian writing.

The points are also put into chronological order (in other words, the oldest event comes first, the next oldest second, and so on). First, Egyptians invented writing. After that, the ability to read the writing faded away. Long after that, a French officer discovered the stone. And after the discovery of the stone, Champollion cracked the code of Egyptian writing.

Here is a second example of a **chronological narrative of a past event**, from *Albert Einstein and the Theory of Relativity* by Robert Cwiklik. It describes a village festival that Albert Einstein went to when he was four years old.

This chronological narrative about a past event introduces a discussion about Albert Einstein's early interest in electricity. Because chronological narratives sound like stories, they seize the reader's attention.

Glance back over the four sections and notice the order of events.

In the first section, nothing has happened yet; the crowd is just waiting for an event. With your pencil, underline "the crowd" (the *who*) once. Underline the phrase "they were waiting" twice (this answers the question *did what?*).

The second section happens right after the first section. You know this because of the word "suddenly." Draw a box around "suddenly." Underline "gas lamps" once and "dimmed" twice. These words answer the question *What did what?*

In the third section, underline "The band" and "The people" (the *who*) once. Underline the phrase "grew so quiet" twice (this answers the question *did what?*).

In the final section, draw a box around "then." This time word tells you that the last section comes *after* the events listed earlier. Underline "electric lights" once and "exploded in a blaze" twice. These words answer the question *What did what?*

Now look at the summary below:

At first, the crowd was waiting.
Suddenly the gas lamps dimmed.
The band and the people grew quiet.
Then electric lights exploded in a blaze.

The original narrative has a lot more details in it—but this summary shows you exactly how the writer tells each main event in chronological order.

STEP TWO: **Write down the pattern of the topos**

Now copy the following chart onto a blank sheet of paper in the "Reference" section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page; also leave blank space under the "Remember" column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative of a past event

A chronological narrative of a past event can be used in many different kinds of writing. If the student is asked to write about history, he can decide to tell, in order, what happened during a battle, or when a king died and his heir fought for the throne, or when an explorer set off to find a new land. But he can also use a short chronological narrative as the introduction to a scientific composition, or as a way to grab the reader's interest in a composition on any other subject. Here's the beginning of Susan Casey's book *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean*:

*57.5° N, 12.7° W, 175 miles off the coast of Scotland
February 8, 2000*

The clock read midnight when the hundred-foot wave hit the ship, rising from the North Atlantic out of the darkness. Among the ocean's terrors a wave this size was the most feared and the least understood, more myth than reality—or so people had thought. This giant was certainly real. As the RRS *Discovery* plunged down into the wave's deep trough, it heeled twenty-eight degrees to port, rolled thirty degrees back to starboard, then recovered to face the incoming seas. . . . Captain Keith Avery steered his vessel directly into the onslaught, just as he had been doing for the past five days. . . . He stood barefoot at the helm, the only way he could maintain traction after a refrigerator toppled over, splashing out a slick of milk, juice, and broken glass (no time to clean it up—the waves just kept coming). . . . [The] waves suddenly grew even bigger and meaner and steeper. Avery heard a loud bang coming from *Discovery's* foredeck. He squinted in the dark to see that the fifty-man lifeboat had partially ripped from its two-inch-thick steel cleats and was pounding against the hull.⁴

That's a much more interesting beginning than “The significant wave height, an average of the largest 33 percent of the waves, was sixty-one feet, with frequent spikes far beyond that,” which the writer gets to after the story is over.

Today, the student will practice putting together a chronological narrative of his own.

Note to Instructor: The “Practicing the Topos” exercises provide you with detailed answers and a script to help guide the student. However, if you feel comfortable guiding the student on your own, you may always allow the student to practice the topos by drawing material from his current history or science reading and using the same principles outlined below.

In later weeks, the “Practicing the Topos” exercise will be completed in a single session.

4. Susan Casey, *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean* (New York: Doubleday, 2010) pp. 3–4.

Since this is the first time the student has attempted to use this skill, this first exercise will be divided between today and the first day of next week's lesson.

STEP ONE: Plan the narrative

Student instructions for Step One:

Your first step is to plan out the narrative by choosing a theme (this will also serve as your title) and selecting the events you'll write about.

On the next page, you'll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, from the life of Alexander the Great. The bolded entries are main events; the indented entries are further details about those main events. (These details are taken from Plutarch's "Life of Alexander," written in AD 75.)

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times. Do not try to include all of the events! Instead, you will need to select which events to use and which ones to leave out. This will force you to pick a "theme" for your chronological narrative.

For example: if you decide that your chronological narrative will be about "Alexander's Invasions," you might want to start your chronological narrative at 334 BC, the invasion of Persia, and only include the following events:

- Invaded Persia in 334 BC**
- Invaded Egypt in 332 BC**
- Defeated Darius for a second time**
- Declared himself king of Persia**
- Invaded India in 326 BC**

because all of those events have something to do with Alexander's invasions.

If, on the other hand, you wanted to write a chronological narrative about "Alexander's Early Life," you might choose the following events:

- Born in 356 BC**
- Son of Philip II, king of Macedon**
- Tamed the horse Bucephalus at age 10**
- Taught by Aristotle from ages 13 to 16**
- Fought at his father's side beginning in 338 BC**

and ignore the Persians completely.

Because this is the first time you've written a chronological narrative, you may use either of the lists above. Here are other possible themes:

- "Alexander's Reign"
- "The End of Alexander's Life"
- "Alexander and Persia"

Choose a theme and select four or five main (bolded) events to use in your chronological narrative. (You can also come up with a theme of your own.)

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

EVENTS IN ALEXANDER THE GREAT'S LIFE

Born in 356 BC

Mother, Olympia

Son of Philip II, king of Macedon

Philip conquered most of Greece

Greek cities added to Macedonian kingdom

Tamed the horse Bucephalus at age 10

Philip intended to buy horse

Horse: wild, unmanageable

Alexander asked to ride the horse

Promised his father: If I can't ride it, I'll pay for it

Horse was afraid of shadow

Turned horse towards sun, rode horse

Taught by Aristotle from ages 13 to 16

Most famous philosopher in the world at this time

Gave Alexander lifelong thirst for knowledge

Interested in medicine, philosophy, history

Fought at his father's side beginning in 338 BC

Led his father's army to victory, Battle of Chaeronea

Father assassinated in 336 BC

Assassin was bodyguard, Pausanias

Pausanias then killed by rest of bodyguard

Succeeded his father to the throne

Twenty years old

Had all of his rivals to the throne murdered

Greek cities rebelled, had to reconquer them

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium

Untied the Gordian knot (impossible to untie) by cutting it

Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus

Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind

Alexander treated the women with respect

Invaded Egypt in 332 BC

Proclaimed pharaoh

Founded Alexandria

Defeated Darius for a second time

Darius and army defeated at the Battle of Gaugamela

Darius once again forced to flee

Alexander captured Babylon and Susa

Darius was assassinated by his own kinsman, Bessus

Declared himself king of Persia

Invaded India in 326 BC

Crossed the Indus River

Fought against Indian king Porus and troop of elephants

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Alexander, furious, shut himself into his tent

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Returned to Babylon

Marched back through the Gedrosian Desert

Famine, thirst, disease killed 3/4 of men before he got home

Died in 323 BC

Came down with a fever in early June

Fever lasted for weeks

In the last few days, unable to speak or name a successor

Died on June 28th

Kingdom divided among his generals

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

In this step, the student will simply choose how many events to include in his chronological narrative. You may need to help him select the correct events. Encourage him to include four or five main (bolded) events, but no more. Remind him that he can leave out main events that do not go with his theme.

Two themes are already described in the assignment. The following events belong with the three remaining suggested themes:

“The Beginning of Alexander’s Reign”

(These are simply the first five events of Alexander’s independent rule, but if necessary, you can explain to the student that the final conquest of the Persians marked the end of Alexander’s first great royal campaign.)

Succeeded his father to the throne

Twenty years old
Had all of his rivals to the throne murdered
Greek cities rebelled, had to reconquer them

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium
Untied the Gordian knot (impossible to untie) by cutting it
Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus
Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind
Alexander treated the women with respect

Invaded Egypt in 332 BC

Proclaimed pharaoh
Founded Alexandria

Defeated Darius for a second time

Darius and army defeated at the Battle of Gaugamela
Darius once again forced to flee
Alexander captured Babylon and Susa
Darius was assassinated by his own kinsman, Bessus

Declared himself king of Persia

“The End of Alexander’s Life”

(These four events follow Alexander’s assumption of the Persian crown, which was the high point of his power; the refusal of his troops to go farther into India was the first check to his power, and each of the following events decreased his authority a little more.)

Invaded India in 326 BC

Crossed the Indus River
Fought against Indian king Porus and troop of elephants
Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther
Alexander, furious, shut himself into his tent
Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Returned to Babylon

Marched back through the Gedrosian Desert

Famine, thirst, disease killed 3/4 of men before he got home

Died in 323 BC

Came down with a fever in early June

Fever lasted for weeks

In the last few days, unable to speak or name a successor

Died on June 28th

Kingdom divided among his generals

“Alexander and Persia”

(The three following events are the only ones having to do directly with Persia. If the student chooses this theme, point out that he should eliminate the invasion of Egypt because, even though it happened between the first invasion of Persia and the second defeat of Darius, it doesn't directly relate to the theme; this would be a good time to explain that a chronological narrative doesn't have to include *every* event, as long as the events that *are* present are covered in chronological order. You can also tell the student that a narrative containing only three events is acceptable because there are so many details following the first and second events.)

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium

Untied the Gordian knot (impossible to untie) by cutting it

Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus

Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind

Alexander treated the women with respect

Defeated Darius for a second time

Darius and army defeated at the Battle of Gaugamela

Darius once again forced to flee

Alexander captured Babylon and Susa

Darius was assassinated by his own kinsman, Bessus

Declared himself king of Persia**STEP TWO: Become familiar with time and sequence words
(Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Two: The student will work independently for Step Two, but the instructions are reproduced below for your reference.

Remember, when you write a chronological narrative of a past event, you ask: Who did what to whom? (Or What was done to what?) In this exercise, most of this information is supplied so that you can concentrate on making the narrative flow smoothly forward in chronological order. (In later assignments, after you've had a little more practice, you'll take more responsibility for finding the information as well.)

In this first chronological narrative assignment, concentrating on using **time** and

sequence words to turn the listed events into clear, straightforward prose. For example, if you were writing a narrative that included this main event:

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium
Learned myth about Gordian knot (who untied it would rule the world)
Cut the knot
Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus
Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind
Alexander treated the women with respect

one part of your narrative might end up sounding like this:

Alexander invaded Persia in 334. **Eventually**, he travelled to the city of Gordium. In the city was a knot known as the Gordian knot; according to myth, whoever could untie the knot would rule the world. **As soon as** he heard the myth, Alexander drew his sword and cut the knot instead.

After some time, Alexander met the Persian king, Darius, and the Persian army at the Battle of Issus. He defeated Darius in battle. **Immediately afterwards**, Darius fled. He fled so quickly that he left his wife, mother, and daughters behind him. But **when** Alexander realized this, he treated the women with respect.⁵

Look back at the words in bold print. All of them are **time** and **sequence** words—words that you use in a chronological narrative to show the order in which events happen.

Plan on using the following list of time words as you construct your chronological narrative. Try to use at least three of them, without repeating any. Finish today's work by reading the time words out loud.

SEE APPENDIX I, TIME AND SEQUENCE WORDS in *student workbook*.

You've finished a long assignment today. At the beginning of next week, you'll return to your list of events and use it to write brief chronological narrative.

5. Note: If you know other details about Alexander (more about the Gordian knot, or the Battle of Issus, or the Persian king Darius), you may certainly use them to make the narrative more interesting. But remember: this isn't required, and you can't go over 300 words for the entire composition.

WEEK 5: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Day One: Finishing the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative of a past event

At the end of last week, the student began to work on writing a chronological narrative of a past event. She selected events from a list, and also read through time and sequence words. Today, she will finish this narrative.

STEP ONE: Review the topos (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded events below under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. **Select your main events to go with your theme.**
2. **Make use of time words.**

You will find a copy of the Time and Sequence Words reference sheet in Appendix I. Take it out and place it in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook, just after the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event page.

STEP TWO: **Write the narrative**

Student instructions for Step Two:

Now use the events list you worked on at the end of last week and write your own chronological narrative, based on it.

Here's a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.
3. Do not try to include all of the events! Instead, you will need to select which events to use and which ones to leave out. This will force you to pick a "theme" for your chronological narrative.
4. Use three or more time words in your narrative.

Try not to use the identical words of the events list. For example, if you are using the following events:

Son of Philip II, king of Macedon

Philip conquered most of Greece

Greek cities added to Macedonian kingdom

try not to write:

*Alexander was the **son** of Philip II, **king** of Macedon. Philip conquered most of Greece. He added the **Greek cities** to the **Macedonian kingdom**.*

Changing the common nouns and their adjectives (the words in bold print) is a simple and straightforward way to make your narrative sound different:

*Alexander was the **heir** of Philip II, **ruler** of Macedon. Philip conquered most of Greece. He added the **city-states of Greece** to **his realm**.*

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, show your composition to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

There are three possible areas of difficulty with this assignment.

1. The student may need encouragement to leave out some of the details related to her main events. For example, if she is using this main event:

Invaded India in 326 BC

Crossed the Indus River

Fought against Indian king Porus and troop of elephants

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Alexander, furious, shut himself into his tent

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

and her composition is running too long, you could point out that any of the following combinations of details makes sense:

Invaded India in 326 BC

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Alexander, furious, shut himself into his tent

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Invaded India in 326 BC

Crossed the Indus River

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Invaded India in 326 BC

Crossed the Indus River

Fought against Indian king Porus and troop of elephants

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Use your judgment in suggesting details that can be left out; the point of this exercise is not to pick the “right” details, but to practice moving the narrative forward.

2. The student may need help choosing the correct time words. If necessary, go over the Time and Sequence Words reference list with her and suggest six or seven appropriate words for her to choose from. If the student has difficulty moving from one topic to the next, encourage her to use his Time and Sequence Words for transitions.

3. The student may have trouble using her own phrasing. If necessary, help her find synonyms for the nouns and adjectives in the event list. Don't be afraid to give her two or three alternatives to choose from.

Right now, the student has only been asked to look at nouns and adjectives. This is intentional. Remember: the focus of this lesson is the form of the chronological narrative, and trying to learn two new skills at the same time can discourage a young writer. There are many ways to rephrase sentences, and these will be covered in detail in the copia exercises that begin in Week 16.

When the narrative is finished, check it using the following rubric.



Week 4/5 Rubric Chronological Narrative of Past Events

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 Three or more time words should be used.
- 3 The composition should use more than 150 but fewer than 300 words.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 The exact words of the source material should not be used in every sentence.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a scientific narrative

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *100 Greatest Science Discoveries of All Time* by Kendall Haven.

STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You'll see that the passage above is divided into five sections (there's an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

Remember, you shouldn't try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? (That should be easy—whose name is mentioned three times?)



Vesalius (of course).

Now look at everything else in the passage, which tells you a number of different facts about Andreas Vesalius's early life—where he was born, what he read, what he did, what field of study he decided to pursue. All of these facts don't belong in your sentence. But the last three (he read medical books, he dissected animals, he went to medical school) all tell you about a single quality that Vesalius had—a quality that makes him important. He was important because he was. . .

Try finishing that sentence now.



What did you come up with? It should sound like one of these:

- I. *Vesalius was curious about living things.*
- I. *Vesalius was interested in living things.*
- I. *Vesalius was curious about how living things functioned.*

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence for each one of the remaining four sections. (You can use the sentence we gave you for the first section.) Continue to use Roman numerals for the summary sentences, like this:

- I. Vesalius was curious about living things.
- II. Second sentence
- III. Third sentence
- IV. Fourth sentence
- V. Fifth sentence

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn't always necessary in an outline).

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

For each section of text, the student should pick out a major point by asking herself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? OR Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? OR What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? OR What is the idea?

Suggested answers (the student's sentences should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

- I. *Vesalius was curious about living things OR Vesalius was curious about how living things functioned.*
- II. *Dissection was not done in medical school OR Anatomy was not taught through dissection.*

- III. Vesalius was known for dissection OR Vesalius learned through dissection.
- IV. Vesalius then gave lectures based on dissection OR Vesalius then gave lectures about the human body.
- V. Vesalius showed that Galen was wrong.

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Section 2

Instructor: What is the main thing this section is about?

Student: Dissection.

Instructor: What do we learn about dissection? Hint: it has to do with a negative (something *not* done).

Student: Dissection was not done.

Instructor: Dissection was not done where?

Student: Dissection was not done in medical school.

Note to Instructor: The student might answer “Anatomy” to the first question. This is acceptable, since dissection and anatomy are so closely related. If the answer is “anatomy,” ask “How was anatomy *not* taught?” (“It was not taught through dissection.”) “Anatomy was taught through books” is not acceptable because it does not include dissection, which is the main theme not only of this section, but of the whole excerpt.

Section 3

Instructor: Who is this section about? (Again?)

Student: Vesalius

Instructor: What did Vesalius do? Hint: it’s something others did *not* do.

Student: Vesalius dissected bodies OR Vesalius learned through dissection.

Note to Instructor: If the student starts to give individual details, such as “Vesalius took over dissecting at his second lecture” or “Vesalius raided graveyards for bodies,” say “What does that tell us about the single most important thing Vesalius did that others did not?”

Section 4

Instructor: What did Vesalius do after he graduated?

Student: Vesalius gave lectures.

Instructor: What were those lectures about?

Student: The lectures were about dissection OR The lectures were about the human body.

Note to Instructor: If the student starts to list the specific topics of the lectures (muscles,

arteries, nerves, etc.), say “What do muscles, arteries, and nerves all belong to?” (“The human body.”)

Section 5

Instructor: There are two important people in this section. Who are they?

Student: Vesalius and Galen

Instructor: What did Vesalius do to Galen?

Student: He showed that Galen was wrong.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

The passage the student outlined in the last writing session is an example of this week’s topos: a **chronological narrative of a scientific discovery** (Vesalius’s disproving Galen’s theories about anatomy).

A chronological narrative about a scientific discovery (or event) explains *what happened* and *in what sequence*—just like a chronological narrative of a past event (last week’s topos).

There are two major kinds of scientific events that can be narrated chronologically:

1. a scientific discovery or advance, and
2. a scientific process that happened in the past.

Vesalius’s disproving of Galen’s theories is an example of the first kind of scientific event. The birth of a star, the retreat of glaciers, and the fossilization of a fallen *T. rex* are examples of the second kind.

Later in the year, the student will work on chronological narratives about scientific processes. This week, the focus will be on chronological narratives about scientific *discoveries*.

The student will do today’s work independently; her directions are reproduced below for your reference.

STEP ONE: Examine model passages

When you set out to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery, you aim to answer two questions:

What steps or events led to the discovery?

In what sequence did these steps or events happen?

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *100 Greatest Science Discoveries of*

All Time. The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. Vesalius was curious about living things.
- II. Dissection was not done in medical school.
- III. Vesalius learned through dissection.
- IV. Vesalius then gave lectures based on dissection.
- V. Vesalius showed that Galen was wrong.

Notice that each one of these main points, except for the second, lists a step or event that led to Vesalius's contradiction of Galen. The points are also put into chronological order. First, young Vesalius was curious; because he was curious, he dissected and learned; after he learned, he lectured; finally, the lectures showed that Galen was wrong.

So what is the second point doing in the narrative?

Because a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery tells us how a scientist moves from one understanding of the world to another (in this case, from Galen's old understanding of anatomy to Vesalius's new understanding), you will often need to provide a paragraph or section that explains what the old understanding of the world was *before* the discovery. The second point in the narrative tells us about the old approach to anatomy; we need to know this so that we can appreciate just how different Vesalius's new ideas were.

So a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery usually includes a "background point" somewhere near the beginning—a paragraph that gives necessary background information.

Here is a second example of a **chronological narrative about a scientific discovery**, from *Seven African-American Scientists* by Robert C. Hayden and Richard Loehle. You may not be familiar with the term "Far East," which generally refers to China, Japan, Korea, and other eastern Asian countries.

In this chronological narrative about a scientific discovery, the very first paragraph is the "background point"—the one that gives you the information you need to understand *why* George Washington Carver set out to discover new uses for the peanut. With your pencil, underline "George Washington Carver" once and "faced a real dilemma" twice. Carver had talked farmers into growing peanuts instead of cotton—and now, they had too many peanuts.

Each of the following sections describes, in order, the steps Carver took to discover more about peanuts.

In the second section, draw a box around the word "began." This is the beginning—the first step Carver took. Now ask yourself: What did Carver begin to do? Did he discover anything? Use your pencil to underline the following verbs twice: "to shell," "ground," "heated," "put." These verbs show you that Carver's first step was simply to *process* the peanuts—to turn them into powder, mash, and oil.

In the third section, draw a box around the word "then." This time word shows you that the third section happened, chronologically, after the second. Circle the word "oil" in the first sentence, and then circle "soap, cooking oil, and rubbing oil" in the second sentence. After Carver processed the peanuts, he was able to turn the oil into three other products.

In the fourth section, draw a box around the word "remained." Then circle "dried peanut cake" in the first sentence and "cheese" in the second sentence. Carver's next step, after he used the oil, was to make use of what was left *after* the oil was drained away; he made cheese out of the remaining peanut material.

In the fifth section, draw a box around the word "Next." This time word shows you that Carver's final actions took place *after* he made cheese from the peanut cake. Circle "peanut cake left in the press" in the first sentence and "protein" in the last sentence. The last thing Carver did with the leftover peanut cake was analyze it for protein.

Now look at the summary below:

There were too many peanuts.
 Carver began by processing the peanuts.
 Then Carver drained off the oil and used it.
 Afterwards, Carver made cheese from the peanut cake.
 Next, Carver analyzed the leftover peanut cake for protein.

The original narrative has a lot more details in it—but this summary shows you exactly how the writer tells each step in Carver’s discoveries in chronological order.

STEP TWO: **Write down the pattern of the topos**

Now copy the following onto a blank sheet of paper in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives of scientific events, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page.

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery

Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events led to a discovery, and in what sequence

- | Procedure | Remember |
|--|--|
| 1. Ask, <i>What steps or events led to the discovery?</i> | 1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery. |
| 2. Ask, <i>In what sequence did these steps or events happen?</i> | |
| 3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order. | |

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

Like a chronological narrative about a past event, a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery can be used as a science composition on its own, or as an introduction to a paper which then goes on to examine scientific concepts. The astronomy textbook *In Quest of the Universe* begins like this:

On the night of March 23, 1993, amateur astronomer David Levy photographed part of the sky near the planet Jupiter. His friends, fellow astronomers Carolyn Shoemaker and her husband Eugene Shoemaker, spotted something unusual in the picture: a comet that had broken up into about 20 pieces. The comet became known officially as Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 (the ninth comet discovered by these three sky-watchers) and unofficially as the “string of pearls” comet.

When astronomers announced the news of the comet on June 1, 1993, they had traced its path closely enough to tell that it had come under the influence of Jupiter’s powerful gravitational field. They had deduced that the comet was pulled apart by Jupiter’s gravity in July of 1992. They predicted that the comet would crash into Jupiter on or about July 25, 1994. . . .

By the time of the predicted impacts, the entire world was watching, linked together by the Internet and the television. The Hubble Space Telescope was trained on Jupiter, as was the Galileo space probe then approaching the Jupiter system, as well as most major observatories around the world and untold numbers of amateur telescopes. It has been said that more telescopes were aimed at the same spot—Jupiter—than ever before or since, and the viewers were not disappointed.⁶

This is definitely a more gripping beginning than “Comets are thought to be material that coalesced in the outer solar system, the remnants of small eddies. These objects would feel the gravitational forces of Jupiter and Saturn, and many would fall onto those planets.”⁷

Today, the student will practice putting together a chronological narrative of her own.

STEP ONE: **Plan the narrative**

Student instructions for Step One:

Your first step is to plan out the narrative.

You’ll need to approach the chronological narrative about a scientific discovery a little differently than the narrative about a past event. Because a scientific discovery is reached by a related series of steps, you can’t pick and choose among the main events as easily as you did when you wrote about Alexander the Great. (You could leave out Alexander’s invasion of India and still have a good historical narrative—but if you left out Vesalius’s determination to find corpses and dissect them, his new discoveries about human anatomy wouldn’t make sense.)

Instead, when you write the narrative of a scientific discovery, you make three choices:

1. Where to begin and end.
2. How much detail to use.
3. Where to put the “background paragraph,” and how much information to include in it.

Below you’ll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, covering Edward Jenner’s discovery of the smallpox vaccine. The information for this list was taken from *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today’s Medicine* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002) by John G. Simmons and *Diseases: Finding the Cure* by Robert Mulcahy (The Oliver Press, 1996).

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

1. Begin planning out your narrative by circling the events that belong in the “background information” paragraph of your composition.
2. Next, mark a beginning and ending place for your composition.

6. Theo Koupelis, *In Quest of the Universe*, sixth ed. (Jones and Bartlett, 2010), pp. 1–2.

7. Koupelis, p. 198.

3. Each main event in bold print is followed by details about that main event. Draw a light line through the details you don't intend to include.

EVENTS LEADING TO JENNER'S DISCOVERY
OF THE SMALLPOX VACCINE

Smallpox was a great danger in the eighteenth century

Killed 40 million people in the eighteenth century
Half of the people who caught smallpox died
Smallpox victims kept in "smallpox houses"

No reliable way to avoid smallpox

Many doctors gave people mild cases of smallpox to protect them
The "mild cases" sometimes killed the patients

Edward Jenner born in 1749

Inoculated against smallpox as a child
Inoculation made him sick
Kept in a smallpox house while he was sick

Jenner began to train as a doctor in 1762

Apprentice to a surgeon for eight years
Entered St. George's Hospital in 1770
Studied surgery and anatomy

Jenner began to practice medicine in his home town in 1773

Jenner noticed that milkmaids were not getting smallpox

Knew milkmaids often had cowpox
Cowpox gave cows blisters on their udders
Milkmaids sometimes got blisters on hands and arms
Cowpox gave patients a fever that lasted 4 days
Many local people believed that cowpox gave them immunity to smallpox

Jenner investigated relationship between smallpox and cowpox

Kept records of cowpox outbreaks
Discovered two forms of cowpox
Decided only one form of cowpox gave immunity to smallpox

Jenner inoculated James Phipps on May 14, 1796

James Phipps was eight years old
Jenner used pus from a cowpox blister
Jenner scraped Phipps's arm and put pus into it
Phipps had a small fever
Jenner tried to give Phipps a mild case of smallpox
Phipps was immune

Jenner tested his vaccine on 23 other people

Did not know why vaccination worked
Believed his observations were correct

Jenner published his results

At first, other doctors skeptical
Royal Society of Medicine refused to accept his findings
Some people afraid cowpox would make them act like cows

Vaccine slowly accepted

Parliament gave Jenner money in 1802 to continue his research
12,000 people vaccinated in 1804
British government began to give the vaccines in 1808
Deaths decreased to 600 per year

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

The student should have circled the first two main events to use in her “background information” paragraph.

If she needs assistance choosing beginning and ending points, you may suggest one of the following:

Begin with *Edward Jenner born in 1749* and end with *Jenner inoculated James Phipps on May 14, 1796*. (This allows the student to tell the story of Jenner’s own experience with smallpox and then to end with Jenner’s first “victory” over the disease.)

Begin with *Jenner noticed that milkmaids were not getting smallpox* and end with *Vaccine slowly accepted*. (This focuses in more narrowly on the discovery of the vaccine itself.)

STEP TWO: Use time and sequence words (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step Two:

You’ll use time and sequence words in this composition, just as you did in last week’s assignment.

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded events below under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery

Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events led to a discovery, and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask, *What steps or events led to the discovery?*
2. Ask, *In what sequence did these steps or events happen?*
3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery.
2. **Make use of time words.**

Now pull out your Time and Sequence Words list and keep it in view as you write. Refer to your list of time words as you construct your chronological narrative. Try to use at least three of them, without repeating any.

STEP THREE: Write the narrative

Student instructions for Step Three:

Here’s a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.

3. The only exception is your “background paragraph,” where you describe what the world was like before the smallpox vaccine. This paragraph should come early in the composition (first or second).

4. Do not include all of the details.

5. Use three or more time words in your narrative.

6. Try not to use the identical words of the events list. As you did last week, change the common nouns and adjectives if necessary so that your narrative is not a direct copy of the events list.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you’re finished, show your composition to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

There are three possible areas of difficulty with this assignment.

1. If the student needs assistance deciding what details to leave out, refer to the following; the marked-out details add color and interest but do not advance the narrative.

EVENTS LEADING TO JENNER’S DISCOVERY OF THE SMALLPOX VACCINE

Smallpox was a great danger in the eighteenth century

~~Killed 40 million people in the eighteenth century~~

(Either use this detail

~~Half of the people who caught smallpox died~~

or this one; not both)

~~Smallpox victims kept in “smallpox houses”~~

No reliable way to avoid smallpox

~~Many doctors gave people mild cases of smallpox to protect them~~

~~The “mild cases” sometimes killed the patients~~

Edward Jenner born in 1749

~~Inoculated against smallpox as a child~~

~~Inoculation made him sick~~

~~Kept in a smallpox house while he was sick~~

Jenner began to train as a doctor in 1762

~~Apprentice to a surgeon for eight years~~

~~Entered St. George’s Hospital in 1770~~

~~Studied surgery and anatomy~~

Jenner began to practice medicine in his home town in 1773

Jenner noticed that milkmaids were not getting smallpox

~~Knew milkmaids often had cowpox~~

~~Cowpox gave cows blisters on their udders~~

~~Milkmaids sometimes got blisters on hands and arms~~

~~Cowpox gave patients a fever that lasted 4 days~~

~~Many local people believed that cowpox gave them immunity to smallpox~~

Jenner investigated relationship between smallpox and cowpox

~~Kept records of cowpox outbreaks~~

~~Discovered two forms of cowpox~~

~~Decided only one form of cowpox gave immunity to smallpox~~

Jenner inoculated James Phipps on May 14, 1796

~~James Phipps was eight years old~~

Jenner used pus from a cowpox blister

Jenner scraped Phipps's arm and put pus into it

Phipps had a small fever

Jenner tried to give Phipps a mild case of smallpox

Phipps was immune

Jenner tested his vaccine on 23 other people

~~Did not know why vaccination worked~~

Believed his observations were correct

Jenner published his results

~~At first, other doctors skeptical~~

Royal Society of Medicine refused to accept his findings

Some people afraid cowpox would make them act like cows

Vaccine slowly accepted.

~~Parliament gave Jenner money in 1802 to continue his research~~

~~12,000 people vaccinated in 1804~~

British government began to give the vaccines in 1808

Deaths decreased to 600 per year

As before, use your judgment in suggesting details that can be left out; the point of this exercise is not to pick the “right” details, but to practice moving the narrative forward.

2. The student may need help choosing the correct time words. If necessary, go over the Time and Sequence Words reference list with her and suggest six or seven appropriate words for her to choose from.

3. The student may have trouble using her own phrasing. If necessary, help her find synonyms for the nouns and adjectives in the event list. Don't be afraid to give her two or three alternatives to choose from.

When the narrative is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 5 Rubric Chronological Narrative of Scientific Discovery

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 The paragraph giving “background information” should be the first or second paragraph in the composition.
- 3 Three or more time words should be used.
- 4 The composition should use more than 150 but fewer than 300 words.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Possessive forms should be written properly. (Note that the possessive of “Phipps” is “Phipps’s.”)
- 4 The exact words of the source material should not be used in every sentence.

WEEK 6: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A PAST EVENT

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White. The “Once and Future King” is King Arthur; the first half of the novel describes Arthur’s boyhood. White imagines that young Arthur (known as “the Wart” by his adoptive family) was tutored by the magician Merlin, who taught him about the natural world by turning him into different animals. Archimedes is Merlin’s pet owl.

STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

On your scratch paper, write down four or five phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than five phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you’re not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn’t understand the rest of the story. (For example, if you left out the fact that the Wart turned into an owl, would the flying scenes make sense to you?)

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.



HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper four or five short phrases or sentences that summarize the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble four or five of the following (these are given only as a guide):

Wart turned into a bird.
Ate a magic mouse
Magic mouse turned Wart into an owl.
Archimedes the owl came to get Wart.
Wart practiced flying.
Archimedes told Wart how to fly.
World looked strange to Wart.
Saw like an owl
Saw everything as the same color
Archimedes told Wart how to land.
Wart managed to land on a branch.
Landing—going upward and then sitting down

(Remember, the student should not provide more than four or five phrases/sentences.)

Watch the student as he writes down his phrases. If he's writing too many phrases, or the sentences are long and complex, stop him before he goes on.

In this excerpt, the student may be tempted to write down too many details about exactly how birds fly and land. Remind him that it isn't necessary to include all of the details in the speeches made by Archimedes and the Wart; the summary should focus on what *happens* in the story, not on what is said.

You may ask the following questions to help distinguish between main events and supporting details:

What happened to the Wart?	<i>(He turned into a bird.)</i>
After he turned into a bird, what did he and Archimedes do together?	<i>(They practiced flying.)</i>
What did the Wart notice about the world?	<i>(He could see in the dark OR The world all looked like shades of the same color.)</i>
What did the Wart do successfully at the end of the story?	<i>(He was able to sit on the branch.)</i>

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your four or five phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Wart ate a magic mouse" and "Wart turned into an owl" could be combined into "Wart ate a magic mouse that turned him into an owl"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you wrote down "Wart saw like an owl" and

“Wart could see in the dark,” you don’t really need one of those sentences; both describe the same change.

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. Minor details don’t change the sense of the story. (It doesn’t really matter that the Wart learned to flick his wings and stall—without that detail, we can still understand the story.)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you’ve written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four coherent, smooth sentences. He should say his three or four sentences out loud several times before he writes; listen to make sure that you hear him talking out loud, and if necessary remind him that he should be speaking before he writes.

You may need to help him combine two phrases into one sentence. (For example, “Wart practiced flying” and “Archimedes told Wart how to fly” could be combined into “Archimedes helped Wart practice his flying.”)

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 6 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.
For example:
Wart ate a magic mouse and turned into an owl
is acceptable, because the mouse turned Wart into the owl.
Archimedes taught the Wart to fly and the Wart could see like an owl
is not acceptable. There is no causal relationship between the two sentences.
- 3 Each event of major importance should be in the summary (if it were missing from the original passage, the narrative would no longer make sense).

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized. (Note that “Wart” is a proper name in this context. It may be written either as “Wart” or “the Wart,” since White uses both.)
- 3 Personal pronouns should have clear antecedents and be of the proper gender (Archimedes and the Wart are “he,” while the mouse is “it”).

Day Two: Outlining Exercise

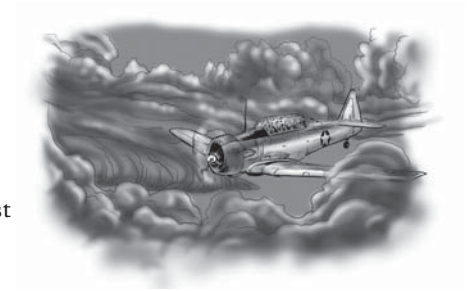


Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a historical narrative

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *Historical Catastrophes: Hurricanes and Tornadoes* by Billye Walker Brown and Walter R. Brown. This passage is about Colonel Joseph Duckworth, the first man to fly a plane into a hurricane.



STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You'll see that the passage above is divided into five sections (there's an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

Remember: don't try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

You'll notice that this passage, unlike the others you've outlined, has dialogue in it; some parts of the passage are written more like a story. This dialogue makes the passage more interesting to read, but it shouldn't affect the answers to these questions.

Try asking the first question about the first section now. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?

The answer should be obvious:



Joseph Duckworth.

Now look at everything else in the passage. There are many details about Joseph Duckworth's life—but you're not trying to include all of the information about Joseph Duckworth in a single sentence. Remember, you're trying to find the *main idea only*.

You may remember that you had a similar challenge in the first passage you outlined from *The Story of Mankind*; the passage contained a whole list of inventions and discoveries made by the Egyptians, and you summarized by saying something like "The Egyptians invented many things." In this passage, you need to take a similar approach. What important, single idea can you draw from all of these details about Joseph Duckworth?

If you're still puzzled, try finishing this sentence: "Joseph Duckworth was a very. . ."



What did you come up with? Your sentence should sound like one of these:

I. Joseph Duckworth was a very experienced pilot. OR

I. Colonel Joseph Duckworth knew how to fly in many different situations.

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence or phrase for each one of the remaining sections. Don't worry about sticking to either sentences or phrases exclusively—use whichever form seems most natural. Remember to use Roman numerals.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

For each section of text, the student should pick out a major point by asking himself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? Or Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? Or What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? Or What is the idea?

Suggested answers (the student's sentences should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

- I. Joseph Duckworth was a very experienced pilot OR Colonel Joseph Duckworth knew how to fly in many different situations.*
- II. The morning of the flight OR A hurricane moves inland OR Duckworth decides to fly into a hurricane.*
- III. The flight into the hurricane OR Duckworth and O'Hair fly into the hurricane.*
- IV. The second flight with a meteorologist on board OR They make a second flight with a meteorologist.*
- V. Flights into other hurricanes OR More hurricane air reconnaissance*

Note to Instructor: Although many guides to outlining will insist that outlines be in the form of either phrases or sentences, this requirement often pushes students into forming unnatural and awkward sentences or phrases. The student is learning to outline as a *tool*: the outline should help him organize his thoughts so that he can become a better writer. Since the outline is a tool, not an end in itself, you should let the student mix phrases and sentences and use whichever form seems most natural.

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Section 2

Instructor: What's the single most important thing that happens in the second section? Hint: it's a decision that Duckworth makes.

Student: Duckworth decides to fly into the hurricane.

Note to Instructor: Since the entire section describes the scene of Duckworth’s decision, rather than just telling about the decision itself, “The morning of the flight” is acceptable. The student could also argue that the most important thing in the second section is the arrival of the hurricane, since the flight wouldn’t have taken place unless the hurricane had moved inland. “A hurricane moves inland” is also acceptable.

Outlining is not an exact science; as noted before, it is a tool that helps the student organize thoughts. Don’t get stalled on trying to find an exact or “correct” answer for any one section, as long as the student can make a reasonable argument for the main point he has selected.

Section 3

Instructor: There are a lot of details in this third section, but there’s one thing that happens that ties the whole section together. Without this one act, the details in the section wouldn’t make any sense.

Note to Instructor: If the student is still puzzled, say “What did Duckworth and O’Hair do?”

Student: The two men flew into the hurricane.

Section 4

Instructor: What happens for the second time in this section?

Student: They fly into the hurricane.

Instructor: How is this flight different? What makes it worth mentioning?

Student: A meteorologist was aboard.

Note to Instructor: “A meteorologist measured the hurricane” should not be listed as the main point; this is a detail about what happens on the flight. The existence and importance of the flight must be established before we can find out details about what happened on it.

Section 5

Instructor: What was the result of Duckworth’s flights into the hurricane? Hint: it was something that happened three more times in 1943.

Students: There were more flights into hurricanes.

Note to Instructor: The student could argue that the result was “hurricane air reconnaissance”; this is acceptable.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a past event

The passage outlined in the last writing session was a **chronological narrative of a past event**. The student studied and practiced this form in the first week of this program; in this week, he will review and practice some more.

STEP ONE: Review time and sequence words

Student instructions for Step One:

Remember, a chronological narrative of a past event explains *what happened in the past* and *in what sequence*. Each one of the main points in your outline describes something that happened, and the passage itself presents these happenings in chronological order.

Your points probably sound something like the points below (although your exact words will be different):

- I. _____ Joseph Duckworth was a very experienced pilot.
- II. _____ A hurricane moves inland.
- III. _____ Duckworth and O’Hair fly into the hurricane.
- IV. _____ They make a second flight with a meteorologist.
- V. _____ Flights are made into other hurricanes.

Pull out your Time and Sequence Words sheet. Using your pencil, write an appropriate time word on the blank in front of each point. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

The student may need assistance choosing the correct time and sequence words from his list. If necessary, you may give the following hints:

- I. Choose a word from the “events that happen before any others” category on the list.
- II. Choose a word from the “event that happens after a previous event—but you’re not exactly sure whether a long or short period of time elapsed first” category.
- III. and IV. Choose a word from the “event that happens very soon after a previous event” category.
- V. Choose a word from the “event that happened after another event—AND was caused by the previous event” category.

Encourage the student to read the time and sequence word and then the entire sentence out loud to see whether the word fits the sentence.

The following answers are the most natural:

- I. *At first, in the beginning*
- II. *Next, after some time, subsequently*
- III. *and IV. Shortly afterwards, before long, not long after, immediately*
- V. *As a result, as a consequence*

STEP TWO: **Add dialogue and actions (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Two:

In this passage, the authors *dramatize*—use dialogue (the words characters actually speak) and actions to move the narrative forward. First, they tell you about Duckworth’s past. Then, when the narrative reaches the morning of the flight, the authors change techniques. Rather than simply listing events, they begin to tell a story.

Dialogue can make chronological narratives more interesting. Look at the following example from Harold Lamb’s history of the Mongol invasions, *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Horde*. In this section, Genghis Khan’s warriors are pursuing the defeated king Muhammad Shah, who has been driven from his country by the Mongol armies.

You will notice ellipses (. . .) in the passage below. Remember, ellipses show that words in the original have been left out of the excerpt.

The author could have written “Muhammad Shah wondered if he would be safe anywhere.” But instead, he gave Muhammad Shah dialogue—an actual speech that moves the narrative forward by showing why Muhammad Shah took sail to an island in the Caspian Sea (where he would die—although you should read the book if you want to find out how).

STEP THREE: **Add to the pattern of the topos (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Three:

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. Select your main events to go with your theme.
2. Make use of time words.
3. **Consider using dialogue to hold the reader’s interest.**

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a past event

Today, the student will practice putting together another chronological narrative about a past event.

STEP ONE: Plan the narrative

Student instructions for Step One:

Below you'll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, about the sinking of the *Titanic*. The bolded entries are main events; the indented entries are further details about those main events. (Those details are taken from Logan Marshall's 1912 account, *The Sinking of the Titanic*, and Jack Winocour's *The Story of the Titanic: As Told by Its Survivors*.)

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

Remember that you should not try to include every event. For example, you could construct a narrative with only the following events:

Collision with the iceberg

Captain realized ship was sinking

Lifeboats launched

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Leaving out the ice sightings, the initial flooding of the ship, and the sending of distress signals doesn't confuse the narrative at all; it is still clear that the ship collided with the iceberg, began to sink, and then sank after lifeboats were launched.

Look over the following events now, and mark three or four main (bolded) events to include in your narrative. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

EVENTS IN THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Ice sightings on April 14, 1912

Captain Edward Smith received six ice warnings earlier

Icebergs reported in *Titanic's* path at 9:30 PM

Report never reached captain

Titanic continued at top speed

Night was moonless and dark

Lookouts had no binoculars

Ice warning sent to *Titanic* from nearby ship *Californian*

Titanic radio operator Jack Phillips ignored warning

"Shut up! Shut up! I am busy!" (Reported by *Californian*)

Collision with the iceberg

Iceberg sighted straight ahead at 11:40 PM

Lookouts telephoned first officer on the bridge

First officer (William Murdoch) ordered ship turned to port (left)

Ship collided with iceberg 37 seconds after sighting

Sharp edge of berg cut starboard (right) side of ship open
 Passengers on deck played with ice chunks from berg

Ship began to flood

Officers told passengers there was no danger
 “Oh, no, nothing at all, nothing at all. Just a mere nothing. We just hit an iceberg.” (Reported by survivor Edith Louise Rosenbaum Russell)
 Five separate compartments filled with water
 Sixth compartment began to flood
 Pumps in sixth compartment began to work
 Pumps could remove 2,000 tons of water per hour
 24,000 tons of water flooding into ship per hour

Captain realized ship was sinking

Shipbuilder Thomas Andrews told captain ship would sink in 1 1/2 hours
 Captain Smith: “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)
 Lifeboats readied just after midnight, in early hours of April 15
 Lifeboats could only carry half the passengers on *Titanic*
 Second officer Charles Lightoller asked captain for permission to fill boats
 “Hadn’t we better get the women and children into the boats, sir?” (Reported by Lightoller himself)
 Lifeboats filled with women and children beginning 12:25 AM

Distress signals sent

White distress rocket launched 12:50 AM
 Wireless operators sent out old distress signal CQD
 “We have struck an iceberg. Badly damaged. Rush aid.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)
 Later also began to send new SOS signal as well
 “Sinking by the head.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)
 Other ships received signal but were far away
 Closest ship, *Carpathia*, responded but was four hours away
 Signal transmitted to New York (*Titanic* destination)
 Shipline official announced, “We are confident that there will be no loss of life.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)

Lifeboats launched

First lifeboats launched beginning 1:10 AM
 Passengers reluctant to leave ship
 Many said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)
 First lifeboats only 1/4 full
 Deck began to tilt, more passengers left ship
 Later lifeboats overloaded
 Last lifeboat launched 2:05 AM
 Captain Smith went down with ship but told officers to save themselves.
 “You have done your duty, boys. Now every man for himself.” (Reported by survivor W. J. Mellers)

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Propellers rose above water 2:05 AM
 First funnel of ship fell into water
 Water broke windows and flooded into bridge
 Stern (rear) of ship rose above water
 Electricity failed 2:18 AM
 Second funnel fell

Ship split in half
 Bow (front) section sank
 Stern rose back up in water
 Stern sank 2:20 AM
 Only one lifeboat returned for people in water
Rescue arrived 4:10 AM
 711 of 2,222 people in lifeboats
Carpathia arrived 4:10 AM
Carpathia picked up passengers until 8:50 AM
 Five passengers died on board *Carpathia*
Carpathia set out for New York 8:50 AM
Survivors reached New York April 18

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

You may need to help the student select which events to include. Encourage him to include three or four main (bolded) events but no more.

If necessary, point out to the student that as long as two main events make sense when put together, events between them can be eliminated. For example, the following sequences make sense:

Ice sightings on April 14, 1912

Collision with the iceberg

Lifeboats launched

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

and

Collision with the iceberg

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Rescue arrived 4:10 AM

Survivors reached New York April 18

However, going from

Ice sightings on April 14, 1912 to

Ship began to flood

doesn't make sense, because the collision has to happen in order for the ship to flood; in the same way, the student cannot go from

Lifeboats launched to

Rescue arrived 4:10 AM

because unless the ship sinks, rescue isn't needed.

STEP TWO: **Choose details and dialogue (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Two:

When you write your chronological narrative, you won't include every detail listed under the main events; this would make your narrative too long and complicated. Instead, choose the details you want to highlight, and leave others out. Be sure that you include at least one line of dialogue.

For example, if you chose the following events:

Captain realized ship was sinking

Shipbuilder Thomas Andrews told captain ship would sink in 1 1/2 hours

Captain Smith: “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)

Lifeboats readied just after midnight, in early hours of April 15

Lifeboats could only carry half the passengers on *Titanic*

Second officer Charles Lightoller asked captain for permission to fill boats

“Hadn’t we better get the women and children into the boats, sir?” (Reported by Lightoller himself)

Lifeboats filled with women and children beginning 12:25 AM

Lifeboats launched

First lifeboats launched beginning 1:10 AM

Passengers reluctant to leave ship

Many said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)

First lifeboats only 1/4 full

Deck began to tilt, more passengers left ship

Later lifeboats overloaded

Last lifeboat launched 2:05 AM

Captain Smith went down with ship but told officers to save themselves.

“You have done your duty, boys. Now every man for himself.” (Reported by survivor W. J. Mellers)

you might write:

Captain Smith realized that the ship was sinking. The first lifeboats were launched at 1:10 AM, but many passengers refused to leave the ship. They said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.”

Or you might write:

The captain realized the Titanic was doomed when the shipbuilder told him that the ship would sink in an hour and half. “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on,” he ordered. The lifeboats were filled with women and children, and then were launched.

Notice that only two or three details were included for one main event—and that another main event was simply stated with no details at all.

Read through your selected main events and mark which details and dialogue you intend to include. (You may find that you need to adjust your choices when you begin to write.)

STEP THREE: **Write the narrative**

Student instructions for Step Three:

As you begin to write, don’t forget to include time and sequence words (as you learned in Week 4’s lesson).

Here’s a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. The narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.
3. Include at least one line of dialogue, but do not try to include all of the details!
4. Use two or more time words in your narrative.
5. If necessary, review the following rules about how to write dialogue:

Use quotation marks to surround a speaker’s exact words.

If a dialogue tag (“he said,” “Captain Smith said”) comes before a speech, use a comma

after the dialogue tag. The punctuation at the end of the speech itself goes *inside* the closing quotation mark.

Captain Smith said, "Put on your life jackets."

If the dialogue tag comes after the speech, place a comma, question mark, or exclamation point (but *not* a period) before the closing quotation mark.

"Put on your life jackets," Captain Smith said.

"Put on your life jackets!" Captain Smith said.

"Should we put on our life jackets?" Captain Smith said.

Do *not* write

"Put on your life jackets." Captain Smith said.

Dialogue should never just sit in the middle of a paragraph as an independent sentence, with no dialogue tag. Don't write,

The ship began to sink. Captain Smith was concerned. "Put on your life jackets." The passengers began to obey.

Instead, write

The ship began to sink. Captain Smith was concerned. "Put on your life jackets," he told the passengers.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, show your composition to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

There are three possible areas of difficulty with this assignment.

1. The student may need help choosing which details to leave out. Remind him if necessary that if he's writing a narrative with three or four main events, he can leave out most of the details for all of the events except for one. A sample composition based on these main events:

Collision with the iceberg

Ship began to flood

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Rescue arrived 4:10 AM

might sound like this:

*The Titanic collided with an iceberg at 11:40 PM. **Immediately**, the ship started to flood, but officers told the passengers that there was no danger. One survivor reported that officers said, "Just a mere nothing. We just hit an iceberg." But five compartments were already filling with water. A sixth compartment began to flood as well. The pumps in that compartment started to work, but they could not remove the water in time. They could only remove 2,000 tons of water every hour, and 12 times that much water was pouring into the ship.*

***Before long**, the ship began to sink. Between 2:50 and 2:20 AM, the Titanic split in half. The bow sank **first**, and **then** the stern.*

*The rescue ship Carpathia did not arrive until 4:10 PM. Only 711 of the 2,222 people on board made it into the lifeboats. The Carpathia picked them up until 8:50 AM and **then** set out for New York.*

This is an acceptable length, but more details could be included to bring the composition closer to the 300 word maximum.

2. The student may need help choosing the correct time words (examples are bolded in

the sample composition above). If necessary, go over the Time and Sequence Words reference list with him and suggest five or six appropriate words for him to choose from.

3. If the student has not studied the proper punctuation for direct dialogue, he may need your help understanding the dialogue rules given in his instructions.

Note to Instructor: This assignment introduces a new skill (using dialogue). To avoid overwhelming the student with instructions, the directions do not specifically tell the student to avoid using the direct words of the events list. If the student seems to be completing the assignment with ease, however, you may choose to add this to the requirements. In that case, help him find synonyms for the nouns and adjectives in the events list, as in previous assignments.

Week 6 Rubric Chronological Narrative of Past Events

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 Two or more time words should be used.
- 3 The composition should use more than 150 but fewer than 300 words.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 At least one line of dialogue should be included; dialogue and dialogue tags should be properly punctuated.

WEEK 7: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Day One: Original Narration Exercise

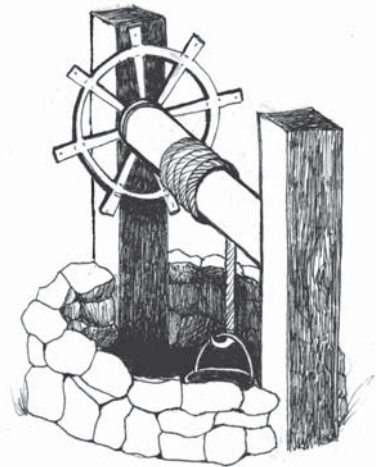


Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *Tik-Tok of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. Baum wrote a whole series of books set in the magical land of Oz. In this chapter, Betsy Bobbin and her friend the Shaggy Man have joined up with the sky fairy Polychrome, daughter of the Rainbow (in Oz, the Rainbow is a person!), and the Princess Rose, who has been driven from her throne in the Rose Kingdom and is now in exile. Travelling together, the four find an old well. The Shaggy Man tries to draw water out of it using a windlass (a mechanism for cranking a bucket up out of a well), but the hook on the end of the windlass doesn't hold a bucket. Instead, the hook creaks up out of the well with a pile of copper junk on the end of it.



STEP TWO: Note important events

Student instructions for Step Two:

On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you're not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn't understand the rest of the story.

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper five or six short phrases or sentences that summarize the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble five or six of the following (these are given only as a guide):

Shaggy Man pulled up a bundle of copper.
Shaggy pulled a copper man from the well.
Shaggy, Betsy, Polychrome, Rose Princess
Copper bundle was a man.
Sign on the back of the copper man
Mechanical man pulled up out of well
Copper man had clockwork mechanism.
Engraved plate with directions
Directions for winding clockwork man
Guaranteed for thousand years
Had to be propped up
Shaggy's old friend Tik-Tok
Copper man was Tik-Tok.
Wound him up with key
Wound up thoughts first
Flashes of light showed when he started to think.
Wound up phonograph
Copper man talked.
Still fell over until action wound
Wound up action clockwork
Man could think, talk, walk.

Remember, the student should not provide more than five or six phrases/sentences.

Watch the student as she writes down her phrases. If she's writing too many phrases, or the sentences are long and complex, stop her before she goes on.

In this excerpt, the student may be tempted to write down too many details about the labels on the clockwork man. Remind her that it isn't necessary to include all of the details; instead, she can focus on what *happens* in the story (once Tik-Tok is wound up, he can think, talk, and walk) or simply summarize the *type* of information on the labels ("The labels described Tik-Tok and told how to wind him").

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. Minor details don't

change the sense of the story. (It doesn't really matter that when Tik-Tok first walked, he went in a circle; without that detail, we can still understand the story.)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four coherent, smooth sentences. She should say her three or four sentences out loud several times before she writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

You may need to help her combine two phrases into one sentence.

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 7 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.
For example:
After he was wound up, Tik-Tok could think, talk, and walk
is acceptable.
The Shaggy Man recognized Tik-Tok, and Betsy wound him up
is not acceptable. There is no causal relationship between the two sentences.
- 3 Each event of major importance should be in the summary (if it were missing from the original passage, the narrative would no longer make sense).

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Personal pronouns should have clear antecedents and be of the proper gender (Tik-Tok is "he," while Polychrome and the Rose Princess are both "she").

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a scientific narrative

STEP ONE: **Read (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *Discoverer of the Unseen World: A Biography of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek* by Alma Payne Ralston. In this passage, Ralston explains how Leeuwenhoek became the first scientist to see single-celled organisms. The “new contrivance” Leeuwenhoek wanted to test was a tiny, clear tube of glass that would allow him to examine a drop of water underneath the lens of his microscope.

“Leeuwenhoek” is pronounced “leh-ven-hook.”

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Student instructions for Step Two:

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You’ll see that the passage above is divided into four sections (there’s an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

Remember, you shouldn’t try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/ what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?



If your answer was “Leeuwenhoek,” look again. The details in the section don’t tell you about Leeuwenhoek. What do they tell you about?

Once you’ve answered that question, answer the second: Why is it important?

Use the same strategies to come up with summary sentences for each of the remaining three sections. Remember to use Roman numerals for the summary sentences.

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn’t always necessary in an outline).

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

For each section of text, the student should pick out a major point by asking herself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? OR Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? OR What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? OR What is the idea?

Suggested answers (the student's sentences should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

- I. *Berkelse Mere was a lake that changed color in the summer OR The inland lake Berkelse Mere became white and green in the summer.*
- II. *Leeuwenhoek decided to test the lake OR Leeuwenhoek wanted to know why.*
- III. *He scooped up water to test it OR He collected a water sample to observe.*
- IV. *He saw animalcules OR He saw figures the size of a strand of hair OR He saw microscopic life forms OR Microscopic creatures were in the water.*

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Section 1

Instructor: What did Leeuwenhoek think of, in this section?

Student: He thought of the inland lake.

Instructor: What was the lake like in winter?

Student: It was clear.

Instructor: What was the lake like in summer?

Student: It became cloudy OR It became whitish with green clouds.

Instructor: So what is the most important thing in this passage?

Student: The lake.

Instructor: What was strange about the lake?

Student: It changed during the summer.

Section 2

Instructor: What did Leeuwenhoek decide to do about the lake?

Student: He decided to test it OR He was curious about it.

Section 3

Instructor: What did Leeuwenhoek do, once he got to the lake?

Student: He scooped up water to test OR He collected a water sample to observe.

Instructor: The rest of the section contains details about *how* Leeuwenhoek observed the water sample. That information would go into subpoints supporting this main point.

Note to Instructor: If the student simply says “He scooped up water” or “He collected a water sample,” ask “Why did he collect the water sample?”

Section 4

Instructor: What did Leeuwenhoek see?

Student: He saw microscopic creatures OR Microscopic creatures were in the water.

Instructor: The rest of the section contains details about the creatures Leeuwenhoek saw. That information would go into subpoints supporting this main point.

Note to Instructor: The answer to the question “What is the most important thing in this section?” is “Microscopic creatures.” The answer to “Why are they important?” can either be, “Because Leeuwenhoek saw them” or “Because they were there.”

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

The passage the student outlined in the last writing session is an example of this week’s topos: a **chronological narrative of a scientific discovery**. The student has already studied several examples of this (Vesalius’s discoveries in anatomy, George Washington Carver’s work with the peanut, the sighting of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9). Today, she’ll expand her knowledge of this form.

The student will do all of today’s work independently; her directions are reproduced below for your reference.

STEP ONE: Review the pattern of the topos (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery page in your Composition Notebook. Read through the pattern of the narrative again.

STEP TWO: Examine the model (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step Two:

Your chart should have reminded you that a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery answers two questions:

What steps or events led to the discovery?

In what sequence did these steps or events happen?

and puts those answers in chronological order.

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *Discoverer of the Unseen World*.

The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. Berkelse Mere was a lake that changed color in the summer.
- II. Leeuwenhoek decided to test the lake.
- III. He collected a water sample to observe.
- IV. He saw microscopic life forms.

Points II, III, and IV list, in chronological order, steps that led to the discovery of microscopic life forms.

Your chart should also have reminded you that you may need a paragraph giving background information. Point I gives you necessary background information; it describes an existing phenomenon (the cloudy lake) that no one in Leeuwenhoek's day understood.

Finally, your chart reminded you to make use of time and sequence words.

Below, you will see an expanded version of the passage about Leeuwenhoek's discovery.

Read through the passage one more time and follow these simple instructions:

1. Look for the time and sequence words, which have been bolded.
2. When you read the additional paragraphs, ask yourself "What new element do these paragraphs bring into the narrative?"

You will notice that most of the time and sequence words occur in the middle of the passage, where Leeuwenhoek is actually going through the steps of the discovery.

What do you think the additional paragraphs add to the narrative?

They do add to the description of the microscopic world Leeuwenhoek discovered. But you should have noticed a new element in the final paragraph. It is bolded below:

The writer of this narrative has decided to use Leeuwenhoek's exact words, found in a letter Leeuwenhoek wrote to the scientists of the Royal Society.

Last week, you learned that dialogue—the words characters actually speak—can add interest to a chronological narrative about a past event. A chronological narrative about a scientific discovery can also become more vivid and real when dialogue is used.

Many scientists wrote letters, essays, and even books about their discoveries, so often you can find the exact words that scientists have used about their own work. Introducing a sentence or two from the scientist herself *about* her discovery adds color and interest to a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery.

Now add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column on your Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery chart:

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery

Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events led to a discovery, and in what sequence

Procedure	Remember
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask, <i>What steps or events led to the discovery?</i> 2. Ask, <i>In what sequence did these steps or events happen?</i> 3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery. 2. Make use of time words. 3. If possible, quote directly from the scientist’s own words.

Note to Instructor: In the next lesson, the student will practice quoting directly from a scientist as she constructs her chronological narrative. The quotes are provided. The student has not yet been taught how to find primary sources, and it is important not to overwhelm her with too many new skills simultaneously.

The following directions are provided for you, in case you wish to assign another topic for the composition—or feel that your student is ready to find primary sources on her own.

FINDING PRIMARY SOURCES IN SCIENCE FOR MIDDLE-GRADE WRITERS

1. Anthologies

The following anthologies contain multiple excerpts from the writings of scientists in different disciplines. Although they are designed for older readers, they may be useful references to have on hand.

Bynum, W. F., and Roy Porter. *Oxford Dictionary of Scientific Quotations*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Carey, John. *Eyewitness to Science: Scientists and Writers Illuminate Natural Phenomena from Fossils to Fractals*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Mackay, Alan L. *A Dictionary of Scientific Quotations*, second expanded ed. Bristol: Institute of Physics, 1992.

Oster, Malcolm. *Science in Europe, 1500–1800: A Primary Sources Reader*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

2. Internet resources

a. Websites

Dictionary of Science Quotations at
<http://www.todayinsci.com/Quotations/QuotationsIndex.htm>

This website, sponsored by Today in Science, can be searched for direct quotes by topic or by scientist name.

A Short Dictionary of Scientific Quotations at

<http://naturalscience.com/dsqhome.html>

Briefer than the website listed above, but useful.

b. Google Books

Search print books for letters, essays, and translations.

1. Go to <http://books.google.com>.
2. Click on the “Advanced Book Search” link.
3. On the Advanced Book Search screen, enter the name of the scientist and the scientific topic in the “with all the words” field.

For example, entering Antoni van Leeuwenhoek and microscopic brought up, among other titles, The Select Works of Antony van Leeuwenhoek, containing his letters about his discoveries. Although you can also enter the scientist’s name in the “Return books written by” blank, this will limit your search and only bring up books authored by the scientist; often, the most accessible quotes are found in books authored or edited by someone else.

4. Click on the Google Search button.
5. When the search results appear, look down the left-hand side of the page and click on “Preview and full view.” (The default, “Any view,” lists books that can’t be accessed online.)

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

In the last lesson, the student saw an example of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery that made use of the scientist’s own words. Here is another, from *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today’s Medicine* by John G. Simmons. This narrative tells how the sixteenth-century French surgeon Ambroise Pare learned to use antiseptic on wounds to keep them from getting infected. (The first paragraph gives background information.)

The years of Pare’s youth were marked by the ascendancy of Francis I, who, four years after becoming king in 1515, lost his bid to become emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This led him into a series of wars with Charles of Hapsburg that were fought largely on the Italian peninsula. There, at the siege of Turin in 1537, Pare made his first and most famous innovation.

As was customary, Pare and his fellow surgeons treated gunshot wounds by cauterizing⁸ them with boiling oil of elder, which was thought to prevent death from “gunpowder poisoning.” This method caused terrible agony and more damage to

8. Cauterization is the burning of tissue in order to seal off a wound and prevent infection.

the flesh than the projectile had. At Turin, the oil ran out. As a stopgap, Pare covered the wounds with a salve composed of egg yolk, turpentine, and oil of roses. One night he wrote, “I could not sleep . . . for I was troubled in minde, and the dressing of the precedent day, (which I judged unfit) troubled my thoughts; and I feared that the next day I should finde them dead, or at the point of death by the poyson of the wound, whom I had not dressed with the scalding oyle.” In fact, these patients were still alive and in better condition than the men who had been treated with cauterization. Pare continued to treat casualties in this way, he added, and “When I had many times tryed this in divers others I thought this much, that neither I nor any other should ever cauterize any wounded with Gun-shot.”⁹

Today, the student will practice putting together a chronological narrative of her own, making use of direct quotes.

If necessary, review last week’s rules for writing dialogue with the student.

STEP ONE: **Plan the narrative**

Student instructions for Step One:

Your first step is to plan out the narrative. On the next page, you’ll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, covering Johannes Kepler’s discovery that planets move in elliptical orbits. This information was taken from *Star Maps: History, Artistry, and Cartography* by Nick Kanas (Praxis, 2007); *Johannes Kepler and the New Astronomy* by James R. Voelkel; and *Tycho & Kepler: The Unlikely Partnership that Forever Changed Our Understanding of the Heavens* by Kitty Ferguson (Bloomsbury, 2002).

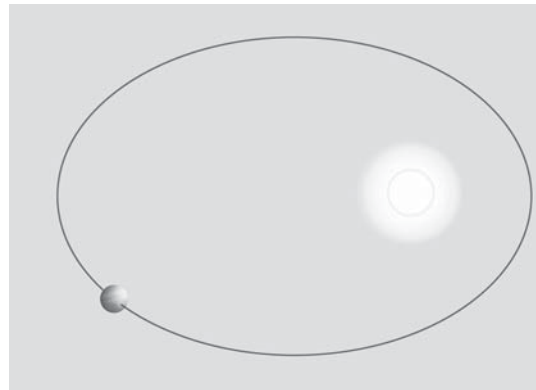
You’ll need to make three choices:

1. Which main events and details to use in your narrative.
2. Where to put the “background paragraph,” and how much information to include in it.
3. Which time and sequence words to use.

Your chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

Begin to plan out your narrative now by following these three instructions:

1. Circle the events that belong in the “background information” paragraph of your composition.
2. Draw a light line through the main events and details you do not intend to include. (Remember, you can eliminate an entire main event plus all its details. If you want to include a main event, you can also include only one of its details—or all of them.)



9. John G. Simmons, *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today’s Medicine* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), p. 120.

3. Consult your chart of Time and Sequence Words. Make an initial selection of four or five words that you might be able to use in your narrative (you'll only need to use two or three in your actual draft).

EVENTS LEADING TO KEPLER'S DISCOVERY
OF ELLIPTICAL PLANETARY ORBITS

Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s

He studied heliocentrism

One of his teachers was a follower of Copernicus

Heliocentric world view of Copernicus vs. geocentric world view

Heliocentrism=sun at center of solar system

Copernicus said sun at *exact* center of solar system

Copernicus said all orbits completely circular

Geocentrism=Earth at center of solar system

Geocentric world view still popular

Copernicus's theory still rejected by many

Most astronomers believed Earth at center of solar system

Geocentrism=Earth had no orbit because it remained still

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Helped Brahe observe orbits for planets

Assumed all orbits were circles

Observed Mars at different times

Mars seemed to speed up and slow down

Could not explain why the planet Mars moved as it did

Tycho Brahe died in 1601

Told Kepler to keep on trying to understand orbit

Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars

Failed 40 times to find formula that explained Mars orbit

Struggled with Mars orbit for five years

In 1605, Kepler realized orbit must be an ellipse

Formulated "Kepler's first law of planetary motion"

Law: Planets move in elliptical orbits, sun is one focal point of orbit

Published findings in *Astronomia Nova* in 1609

Contained theory that all planets move in elliptical orbits

Planets move faster when close to sun, slower when farther away

Argued that sun pulls on planets

Intended to prove heliocentrism once and for all

Argued that Earth behaved like other planets

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

The student should have circled the first two main events to use in her "background information" paragraph.

The student may need assistance identifying unnecessary events and details. In the list below, everything that can be left out of the composition is marked through for your reference.

~~**Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s**~~

~~He studied heliocentrism~~

~~One of his teachers was a follower of Copernicus~~

~~**Heliocentric world view of Copernicus vs. geocentric world view**~~

Heliocentrism=sun at center of solar system
~~Copernicus said sun at exact center of solar system~~
 Copernicus said all orbits completely circular
 Geocentrism=Earth at center of solar system
 Geocentric world view still popular
 Copernicus's theory still rejected by many
 Most astronomers believed Earth at center of solar system
 Geocentrism=Earth had no orbit because it remained still

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Helped Brahe observe orbits for planets
 Assumed all orbits were circles
 Observed Mars at different times
 Mars seemed to speed up and slow down
 Could not explain why the planet Mars moved as it did

Tycho Brahe died in 1601

Told Kepler to keep on trying to understand orbit

Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars

Failed 40 times to find formula that explained Mars orbit
 Struggled with Mars orbit for five years

In 1605, Kepler realized orbit must be an ellipse

Formulated “Kepler’s first law of planetary motion”

Law: Planets move in elliptical orbits, sun is one focal point of orbit

Published findings in *Astronomia Nova* in 1609

Contained theory that all planets move in elliptical orbits
 Planets move faster when close to sun, slower when farther away
 Argued that sun pulls on planets
 Intended to prove heliocentrism once and for all
 Argued that Earth behaved like other planets

STEP TWO: Write a draft of the narrative

Student instructions for Step Two:

Your next step is to write a first draft of your narrative. Here’s a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. The narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times. The only exception is your “background paragraph,” where you describe what most people believed about the Earth and sun during Kepler’s day. This paragraph should come early in the composition (first or second).
3. Do not include all of the main events and details.
4. Use two or more time words in your narrative.
5. Try not to use the identical words of the events list. In previous lessons, you were told to look at nouns and adjectives and to change them if possible. This events list contains

a number of verbs; when you write this narrative, concentrate on changing the verbs.

For example, if you are writing a paragraph based on the following events:

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Helped Brahe observe orbits for planets

Assumed all orbits were circles

try not to write:

*Kepler **worked** as an assistant to the astronomer Tycho Brahe from 1600–1601. He **helped** Brahe **observe** orbits for planets. Both men **assumed** all orbits **were** circles.*

Instead try to use original verbs in place of the verbs (bolded) in the events list.

*Kepler **became** the assistant of the astronomer Tycho Brahe in 1600 and worked with Brahe for a year. His job was to **track** the orbits of the planets. Both men **believed** that all planets **orbited** the sun in a perfect circle.*

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO:

There are two possible areas of difficulty with this step:

1. The student may need help choosing the correct time words. If necessary, go over the Time and Sequence Words reference list with her and suggest four or five appropriate words.
2. The student may have trouble using her own phrasing. If necessary, help her find synonyms for the verbs in the event list. Don't be afraid to give her two or three alternatives to choose from.

STEP THREE: Add direct quotes

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now that you've completed a rough draft of your narrative, consider how you might use Johannes Kepler's actual words to make some part of it more vivid.

Read through these five direct quotes from Kepler himself.

DIRECT QUOTES FROM KEPLER

"First, therefore, let my readers grasp that today it is absolutely certain . . . that all the planets revolve around the sun, with the exception of the moon, which alone has the Earth as its centre."¹⁰

"The planetary orbit is elliptical and the sun, the source of movement, is at one of the foci of this ellipse."¹¹

"I was almost driven to madness considering and calculating this matter. I could not find out why the planet would rather go on an elliptical orbit."¹²

"I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens."¹³

"If God is concerned with astronomy, which piety desires to believe, then I hope that I shall achieve something in this domain."¹⁴

10. Johannes Kepler and Charles G. Wallis, *The Harmonies of the World* (BiblioBazaar, 2008), p. 22.

11. Kepler and Wallis, p. 25.

12. Quoted in Owen Gingerich, *The Eye of Heaven: Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler* (American Institute of Physics, 1993), p. 344.

13. Quoted in Max Caspar and Clarisse Doris Hellman, *Kepler* (Dover, 1993) pp. 120–121.

14. Caspar and Hellman, p. 123.

Now look over your list of main events, and try to decide which main events each of these quotes belong to. (Some of the quotes might be usable in more than one part of the composition.)

For example, consider this quote: “I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens.” The quote tells you why Kepler spent his life studying the sky. So it might fit into a paragraph based on the following events:

Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars

If the draft of your paragraph based on the first event read like this:

Johannes Kepler became a university student in the 1590s. He was taught heliocentrism, because one of his teachers believed Copernicus’s theories of the universe.

you could add the quote as follows:

Johannes Kepler became a university student in the 1590s and studied astronomy. He said of his own studies, “I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens.” He was taught heliocentrism, because one of his teachers believed Copernicus’s theories of the universe.

Now decide which quote you want to use and add it in to the appropriate paragraph. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student should begin by deciding which main events each quote illustrates. For your reference, the answers are:

QUOTE	EVENTS	REASONS
“First, therefore, let my readers grasp. . .”	<p>Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s</p> <p>Heliocentric world view of Copernicus vs. geocentric world view</p> <p>Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601</p>	<p>He learned this at university.</p> <p>Describes the heliocentric world view</p> <p>His work was based on this assumption.</p>
“The planetary orbit is elliptical. . .”	<p>In 1605, Kepler realized orbit must be an ellipse</p> <p>Formulated “Kepler’s first law of planetary motion”</p> <p>Published findings in <i>Astronomia Nova</i> in 1609</p>	<p>This theory explained the orbit.</p> <p>This realization led him to formulate the law.</p> <p>This was the finding he published.</p>

QUOTE	EVENTS	REASONS
<p>“I was almost driven to madness. . .”</p>	<p>Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600-1601</p> <p>Tycho Brahe died in 1601</p> <p>Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars</p>	<p>This was his reaction to the observations he made of Mars while working for Brahe.</p> <p>This continued to be his experience as he worked on the orbits after Brahe's death.</p> <p>This was his experience as he looked for the explanation.</p>
<p>“I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire. . .”</p>	<p>Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s</p> <p>Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600-1601</p> <p>Tycho Brahe died in 1601</p> <p>Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars</p> <p>Published findings in <i>Astronomia Nova</i> in 1609</p>	<p>This motivated his studies.</p> <p>This motivated his work.</p> <p>This motivated his continued work after Brahe's death.</p> <p>This continued to motivate him.</p> <p>This lay behind his desire to share his findings.</p>

QUOTE	EVENTS	REASONS
"If God is concerned with astronomy. . ."	Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s	He believed this about his studies.
	Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600-1601	He believed this about his work.
	Tycho Brahe died in 1601	He continued to believe this about his work.
	Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars	He continued to believe this about his work.
	Published findings in <i>Astronomia Nova</i> in 1609	This lay behind his desire to share his findings.

You may need to remind the student to add a dialogue tag (see the rules for writing dialogue in Week 6, pages 80-81). All of these quotes are drawn from Kepler's writings, so it is appropriate to use "He thought," "he said," "he believed," or "he wrote."

When the narrative is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 7 Rubric Chronological Narrative of Scientific Discovery

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 The paragraph giving "background information" (heliocentric vs. geocentric world view) should be the first or second paragraph in the composition.
- 3 Two or more time words should be used.
- 4 The composition should use more than 150 but fewer than 300 words.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Possessive forms should be written properly.
- 4 The exact words of the source material should not be used in every sentence.
- 5 At least one direct quote should be included; quote and accompanying dialogue tags should be properly punctuated.

WEEK 8: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central details

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from George MacDonald’s modern fairy tale *The Princess and the Goblin*.

STEP TWO: Note central details

Student instructions for Step Two:

You may notice that this passage is a little different than the narratives you’ve been summarizing. Instead of listing a series of chronological events, George MacDonald sets the stage for his story by describing the world Princess Irene lives in. The passage should have given you a clear picture in your mind.

On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that identify the most important things about this world. If a detail doesn’t add significantly to the mental picture of the princess’s world, you should leave it out. (For example, it doesn’t really matter that the people in the world mistook animals for the goblins. But if you don’t mention that the goblins were “misshapen in body,” your picture of the world will be incomplete.)

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper five or six short phrases or sentences that sum up the central details about the Princess Irene’s world. The student can choose to include or leave out the descriptions of the princess herself; either is acceptable.

The phrases/sentences should resemble five or six of the following (these are given only as a guide):

Many mountains and valleys

Princess had eyes as blue as night sky.

Princess eight years old

Princess lived in a half-castle, half-farmhouse.

Mountains filled with caverns and mines

Miners found caverns and hollows under the mountains.

Goblins lived in caverns.

Goblins misshapen in body but cunning and mischievous

Goblins dwarfed and misshapen

Goblins grew in knowledge and cleverness.

Could do things people couldn't do

Had a king and government of their own

(Remember, the student should not provide more than five or six phrases/sentences.)

Watch the student as he writes down his phrases. If he's writing too many phrases, or the sentences are long and complex, stop him before he goes on. You may need to point out that the legend about where the goblins came from and why they lived under the mountain doesn't add anything to the picture of the world itself; the student should stay focused on the details about what the world looks like at the time of the story itself.

If necessary, you may ask the student the following question:

What is the most important geographical feature of the princess's world? *(Mountains)*

What were in those mountains? *(Caverns, mines)*

What lived in the mines? *(Goblins)*

What did the goblins look like? *(Misshapen, dwarfed, ugly, strong)*

What were the non-physical characteristics of the goblins?
(What were they like?) (Mischievous, clever, annoying to people who lived on the surface, had their own government)

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentences (for example, "Many mountains and valleys in kingdom" and "Mountains filled with caverns and mines" could be combined into "There were many mountains filled with caverns and mines in the kingdom"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary (if you wrote down "Mountains filled with caverns and mines" and "Miners found caverns," you can eliminate one of those sentences).

Say your three or four sentences several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four coherent, smooth sentences. He should say his three or four sentences out loud several times before he writes; listen to make sure that you hear him talking out loud, and if necessary remind him that he should be speaking before he writes.

You may need to help him combine two phrases into one sentence and eliminate those phrases which seem unnecessary. If helpful, remind him that describing the princess herself is optional. An acceptable summary would be:

The Princess Irene lived in a country filled with mountains, valleys, and caverns. Goblins lived in the caverns. They were ugly and misshapen, but clever and filled with mischief.

or

The kingdom was mountainous. Beneath the mountains, miners discovered caverns where goblins lived. The goblins were misshapen and hideous, but very strong. They had a kingdom and king of their own and caused trouble for the people above.

The student's answer may vary; these are simply examples. When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 8 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Sentences should describe the world at the time the story takes place.
- 2 If two or more details are listed in a single sentence, they should be related.

For example:

The kingdom was filled with mountains, and caverns were below the mountains is acceptable;

Caverns were under the mountains, and the goblins caused mischief is not acceptable. There is no stated relationship between the caverns and the goblins.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Possessive forms should be written properly.
- 4 Personal pronouns should have clear antecedents and be of the proper gender.

5 Consistent verb tense should be used throughout.

For example, the student should not write

The kingdom was full of mountains, and caverns are in the mountains

because the first verb is in the simple past and the second is in the simple present.

The kingdom is full of mountains, and caverns are in the mountains and

The kingdom was in the mountains, and caverns were in the mountains
are both acceptable.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

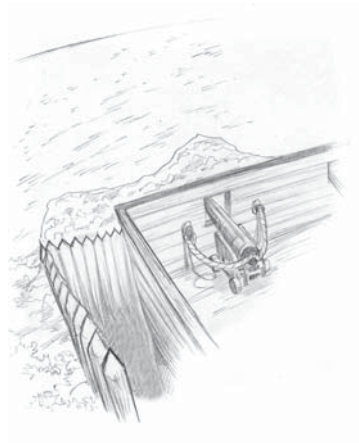
STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Mississippi Bubble* by Thomas B. Costain.

You may find the following background information useful: In the seventeenth century, France, Spain, and England were competing for control of the new land on the North American continent. The French wanted to build a great city on the Mississippi River so that they could control which ships went up and down the river. But the English and Spanish navies might appear at any moment to attack a French settlement. So might the Native Americans, known to the French as Indians, who already lived along the Mississippi. So any settlement would need a strong fort to defend it.

The leader the text refers to, Sieur d'Iberville, was a famous French general sent by King Louis XIV to establish this French colony.



STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

You've already practiced outlining passages that tell events in chronological order. For these outlines, you have been asking yourself two questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

This passage is a little different; it describes a *place*. Although you can certainly use the

same two questions when you outline a passage of description, you can also take a simpler approach. Instead of asking these two questions and writing a sentence that answers each one, you can ask yourself: What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?

Try that for the first section now.



Were you able to come up with an answer?

This first paragraph tells about Iberville's decision to build the fort and city at Biloxi. So the first section tells you about the *location* of the fort and city. Your first outline point would be:

I. The location

Look at the second section. This paragraph focuses on one specific part of the location. (Hint: it involves water.)



Did you come up with an answer?

This second paragraph tells you about the bay itself. Your second outline point can be either

II. Biloxi Bay itself

or

II. The bay and harbor

If you were doing a two-level outline of this paragraph (something you won't practice until later on), the subpoints—points that tell you more about the *main* point—would all describe the bay and the harbor formed by the bay.

Now try to complete this exercise by providing points III and IV. You can continue to use phrases rather than complete sentences. If you have difficulty, ask ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

For this passage, the student will be coming up with phrases that describe the main focus of each passage. The first two points have been provided, since the student hasn't outlined passages of description before.

Suggested answers (the student's answers should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

I. *The location*

II. *Biloxi Bay itself or The bay and harbor*

III. *The site for the fort or The high bank where the fort would be built*

IV. *The fort itself*

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues:

Paragraph 3

Instructor: The first two paragraphs described the overall location where the city and the fort would be built. But this paragraph focuses on only one of those things. What is it?

Student: The fort

Instructor: Does the paragraph describe the fort itself?

Student: No

Instructor: What does Iberville choose, in this paragraph, to prepare for the building of the fort?

Student: The site for the fort

Instructor: That is the focus of the paragraph. The bank, the ravines, and the forest are all details about the site where the fort would be built.

Paragraph 4

Instructor: What do the wooden buildings, barricade, bastions, and ditches combine to make up?

Student: The fort

Instructor: All of these details about about the fort itself. That is the focus of this paragraph.

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

The passage the student outlined in the last writing session is an example of this week's topos: a **description of a place**. In today's assignment, the student will begin to understand the elements that go into a good place description.

The first two steps of the assignment should be done independently; the student's directions are reproduced below for your reference. The student may need your assistance on the third step.

STEP ONE: **Understand the purpose of descriptions (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step One:

Like chronological narratives, descriptions of places can sometimes stand on their own; a detailed description of a medieval castle, an ancient city, or a modern submarine could be a short history composition in its own right. More often, though, a description of a place fits into a larger piece of writing. Thomas Costain's description of the fort in *The Mississippi Bubble* is part of a chapter about the bitter wars between European countries over the New World. The

description of the fort’s many walls, towers, ditches, and defenses helps give you an idea of just how hard the French were prepared to fight for control of the Mississippi River.

Here is another description of a place, this one from a book by Jonathan Kozol called *Savage Inequalities*. Kozol’s book is about the dreadful condition of schools in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. In this passage, he is being driven through East St. Louis on his way to visit a neighborhood where the schoolchildren live.

After you read the description of this bleak wasteland, you’re not at all surprised when Kozol arrives at the school itself and finds disintegrating classrooms, no heat, no equipment, damaged textbooks, and bathrooms that don’t work.

As you can see from the two examples you’ve looked at, a description of a place is more than just a listing of details. When you write a description, you decide what details to include. But you also decide what *emotion* the description should help the reader feel, or what *idea* the reader should begin to understand.

Read the following description of the field where the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066.

The writer goes on to contrast the peace of the field *now* with the struggle of the battle itself, *long ago*. He wants us to feel, sharply, the difference between the present and the past, so he uses quiet, slow, peaceful words in his description: *little, low, sluggishly, small, gently, forlorn*.

This is the first element in a well-written description: the writer has in mind a *specific purpose* that he wants the description to fulfill. Thomas Costain wanted the reader to understand just how strong and well-defended the French fort on the Mississippi would be; Jonathan Kozol wanted the reader to focus on the poverty of East St. Louis; James Hosmer, who wrote the description of the field above, wanted the reader to appreciate the peace and quiet of the present-day spot.

STEP TWO: **Write down the pattern of the topos** **(Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Two:

Now copy the following onto a blank sheet of paper in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page; also leave blank space under the “Remember” column.

The definition of this topos may seem very obvious. Copy it down anyway—you’ll be learning, in later lessons, about descriptions that *aren’t* simply physical and visual.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*

Remember

STEP THREE: Practice the topos

Student instructions for Step Three:

You'll end today's lesson by writing two brief descriptions, each with a different purpose.

Look closely at the second sentence in James Hosmer's description of the battlefield of Hastings:

Through it, in low ground, sluggishly flows a small brook, and from the brook ridges slope up gently on either hand.

Now imagine that Hosmer had wanted us to feel the urgency and danger of the Battle of Hastings himself. He might have written:

The sunken field was gashed by a thin stream of water, and from the stream's edges, ridges rose up on either hand.

What if Hosmer had written a description of the field without any particular purpose in mind? The sentence might sound like this:

A brook ran through the field. There were hills on both sides of the water.

which would have been incredibly boring (and not very descriptive). Descriptions that have purpose are always more vivid and engaging.

Your assignment is to take the following description and rewrite it twice. The first time, imagine that you're using this description of a room in the first chapter of a ghost story: make it creepy, frightening, or suspenseful. The second time, imagine that the description is coming at the conclusion of a romance in which the hero and heroine have finally fallen in love and decided to marry.

The room was large and the ceiling was high and vaulted. The windows were long and high, with arches at the tops. The floor was made of oak boards. The sun was setting outside, and the light that came through the windows was red and gold, but it did not reach all the way into the corners of the room. Curtains hung at the windows, and there was a lot of furniture in the room.

As you write, remember that you can make use of vivid adjectives (the "shining windows" or the "gloomy windows"), synonyms ("The room was large" could become either "The room was echoing" or "The room was spacious and welcoming"), and vivid verbs (did the light "flood" or "struggle" through the windows?).

If you need assistance, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, show your two descriptions to your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student may need assistance finding appropriate adjectives and verbs for the passage.

For a student who is a reluctant writer, use the thesaurus to suggest appropriate adjectives and verbs. Give the student three or four choices and encourage him to pick one. Don't feel that you are making the assignment "too easy" for a struggling student; you are instead modeling for the student the process of considering different words and choosing the best one. *Give the student as much help as necessary.* A student who is having a difficult time with this new skill should not be asked to exercise another relatively new skill at the same time.

Students who are not struggling can use the thesaurus themselves.

Don't expect the student to change every verb and add adjectives to every noun; this would clutter up the passage. Instead, focus on whether the verbs or adjectives chosen are appropriate to the purpose of the passage. The student may also leave out words and phrases, and combine or divide sentences.

An acceptable sample rewrite might be:

Ghost Story Rewrite

The room was vast and dim; the ceiling was almost out of sight. The windows were narrow and out of reach, the floor made of dark dusty wood. Night had almost come, and the last light of the sun was lurid crimson; it struggled through the glass, but the corners of the room remained dark. Tattered dirty curtains blocked all other light. Dark sofas, battered chairs, and unfriendly clusters of tables and rugs cluttered the room.

Romance Rewrite

The room was spacious and lofty, with huge arched windows; the floor was made of golden oak. The glowing light of the setting sun spilled through the windows and lit the middle of the room, leaving the corners cozy and dim. White curtains billowed at the windows. A squashy comfortable sofa sat in the middle of the room, with a loveseat on one side.

When the student has finished this assignment, tell him that the description provided is a paraphrase of a passage from Edgar Allan Poe's ghost story "The Fall of the House of Usher." Ask him to read aloud the passage below.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.¹⁵

15. Edgar Allan Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in *Prose Tales of Mystery and Imagination* by Edgar Allan Poe (Henry Frowde, 1903), p. 204.

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the form of a description
of a place

Today, the student will add an additional element to the model of the “Description of a Place.”

STEP ONE: **Understand space and distance words and phrases** **(Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step One:

Read these three excerpts from the passages you’ve already examined this week. Notice which words are bolded.

Biloxi Bay was a safe harbor, well screened by Deer Island. The bay extended **back** into the mainland for several miles and Deer Island lay **across** the mouth of the bay, blocking it off except a channel at either end.

A seemingly endless railroad train rolls **past us to the right**. **On the left**: a blackened lot **where** garbage has been burning. **Next to** the burning garbage is a row of twelve white cabins, charred by fire.

The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast **a distance from** the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from **within**. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way **through** the trellised panes . . . Dark draperies hung **upon** the walls.

When you studied chronological narratives, you learned that time and sequence words can help you put events into chronological order. When you write a description, **space and distance words and phrases** can help you create a clear picture of a place.

Pull out the list of Space and Distance Words/Phrases found in Appendix I. This is not an exhaustive (complete) list, and many of the words on it can work in more than one way (if, for example, you wanted to explain that a tree stood three feet to the right of a house, you could say, “The tree was next to the house” or “The tree was to the right of the house” or even “The tree was a short distance from the house”). But the categories on the list will give you a starting place as you write your descriptions.

Before you go on with the next step, look up from your paper and choose one object or piece of furniture in the room. Now look down your list of Space and Distance Words/Phrases and count how many of them could accurately describe your relationship to that object.

STEP TWO: **Add to the pattern of the topos**

Student instructions for Step Two:

These space and distance words and phrases can help you write a more precise, and so more interesting, description.

Read the following description and underline each of the space and distance words and phrases.

When you are finished, ask your instructor to check your work.

Now turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*



Remember

1. **Make use of space and distance words.**

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

Check the student’s work using the following key:

In a hole **in** the ground **there** lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, **filled with** the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole **with** nothing **in** it to sit **down on** or to eat; it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, **with** a shiny yellow brass knob **in** the exact middle. The door opened **on to** a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel **without** smoke, **with** panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided **with** polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats—the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound **on and on**, going fairly but not quite straight **into** the side of the hill—The Hill, as all the people for many miles **round** called it—and many little round doors opened **out of** it, first **on one side**, and then **on another**. No going **upstairs** for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were **on** the same floor, and indeed **on** the same passage. The best rooms were all **on** the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking **over** his garden, and meadows **beyond**, sloping **down to** the river.¹⁶

16. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (Random House, 1982), p. 1.

STEP THREE: Practice the topos

Student instructions for Step Three:

Look carefully at the picture of Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany. King Ludwig of Bavaria had it built between 1869 and 1884 on the ruins of a medieval castle. The palace was designed to have more than 200 rooms, but fewer than 20 were finished before the king's death. If the castle looks familiar to you, it may be because Disney used it as the model for the castle in *Sleeping Beauty*.

Write a description of at least four but not more than seven sentences describing this place. Use at least four different space and distance words and phrases in your description. Be sure to describe the castle itself *and* also to include some detail about the surrounding landscape.

The purpose of your description should be to convey how spectacular the castle is. If you need help with this purpose, ask your instructor.

When you are finished, ask your instructor to check your work.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

The student may need assistance with the purpose of this description. If necessary, suggest that he make use of some of the following words:

ADJECTIVES

monstrous
enormous
gigantic
lofty
elevated
eminent
steep
prominent
towering
soaring
ascending
high-pitched
skyscraping
gigantic
colossal
plunging
precipitous
immense
vast
stupendous
mammoth
roomy
sheer

VERBS

tower
soar
rise
overlook
surmount
command
dominate
crown
cap
crest
peak
plunge
drop
ascend
tower

When the description is finished, check it using the following rubric:

Week 8 Description Rubric

Organization

- 1 The description should use appropriate adjectives and verbs to convey a sense of vastness.

EXAMPLE: *The castle sits on top of a **gigantic** rock whose sides **plunge steeply** down.*

- 2 The description should mention both the castle itself and the landscape.

- 3 At least four space and distance words and phrases should be used.

EXAMPLE: Far **below** the castle, **to the right**, a white road stretches **into** the distance.

- 4 The composition should use at least three and not more than seven sentences.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.

- 2 Verbs should have consistent tense (all past or all present).

Rows of windows line the white walls, and spires reach sharply upwards
is acceptable.

Rows of windows lined the white walls, and spires reach sharply upwards
is not.

WEEK 9: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central details and actions

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *Mary Poppins in the Park* by P. L. Travers. Travers wrote a series of books about Mary Poppins, the magical British nanny, and her charges: Michael and Jane, the two older children in the Banks family; the twins John and Barbara; and baby Annabel. In this chapter, Michael and Jane are playing in the park, with Mary Poppins nearby—which always means that something mysterious is about to happen.

“Plasticine” is a kind of modelling clay. In the story, Michael thinks that a statue looks like “Neleus.” Neleus was a minor Greek god, one of the sons of the sea god Poseidon.



STEP TWO: Note central details

Student instructions for Step Two:

Like last week’s story, this week’s narrative contains a description. At the end of the description, something happens that moves the story forward.

On your scratch paper, write down six or seven phrases or short sentences that describe Jane’s Park for Poor People. You don’t need to summarize the conversation between Jane and Michael (so, for example, you don’t need to note “Michael asked Jane who the little plasticine woman was”), but you can use details within the conversation (so you might want to write “The little woman was named Mrs. Hickory”).

After you’ve written down your phrases, add a final sentence describing the most important thing that happens at the end of the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student should have written down on scratch paper six or seven short phrases or sentences that sum up the central details about Jane's Park for Poor People. The phrases/sentences should resemble six or seven of the following (these are given only as a guide):

Square of green with pebbled paths
Paths made of pebbles as wide as fingernail
Flowerbeds of petals
Little house of twigs
Flowers were trees.
Benches and houses made of twigs
Little man made of clay with round face, body, arms, legs
Little round man made of plasticine
Little woman named Mrs. Hickory
Lake made out of pebbles and milk
Statue of plasticine at lake
Swing of sticks and wool
Cardboard table and stools
Table and stools made of cake box
Feast of plasticine on table
Cake, fruits, meats made of plasticine
Buttercup tree over table
Plasticine doves

After the student finishes her descriptive phrases, she should have written a final sentence telling the important event that happens at the story's end. This sentence should resemble one of the following:

The little plasticine figure began to talk.
The park came to life.
Mr. Mo came to life and the food in the park became real.
The little man began to talk to Jane and Michael.

Watch the student as she writes down her phrases. If she's writing too many small details, stop her before she goes on. She shouldn't list each one of the foods made out of plasticine; you may need to remind her to summarize by either saying "Jane made foods" or else listing the major categories of the feast. You may also need to remind her not to give a blow-by-blow recounting of the conversation between Jane and Michael.

If necessary, you may ask the student the following questions:

What did Jane make in the park? *(A Park for Poor People)*
 What kinds of things did Jane make out of plasticine? *(Two little people, a feast, a statue)*
 What did Jane make out of sticks and flowers? *(Houses, benches, and trees)*
 What was under the buttercup? *(A cardboard table and a plasticine feast)*
 What did Mr. Mo suddenly do at the end of the story? *(He started to talk or He came alive.)*

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

Student instructions for Step Three:

After you've written down your phrases, try to combine them into three or four sentences. (Your last sentence doesn't count.) Because there are so many details about the park, experiment with putting three phrases into one sentence; for example, "Little house of twigs," "Flowers were trees," and "benches made of twigs" could all be combined into "Twig benches and a twig house were surrounded by trees made of flowers."

Say your three or four sentences several times before writing them down. When you've finished, add your last sentence to the end of your summary. You will probably need to use a time word to connect the last sentence to the summary, since the park itself and all of its details were already in existence *before* the event at the end of the story happened.

After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four coherent, smooth sentences. She should say her three or four sentences out loud several times before she writes; listen to make sure that you hear her talking out loud, and if necessary remind her that she should be speaking before she writes.

You may need to help her combine two or more phrases into a single sentence. An acceptable summary would be:

Jane made a Park for Poor People on a square of green, with paths made of pebbles. She made benches and a house of twigs and stuck flowers in the ground for trees. There was a lake made of pebbles and milk, with a plasticine statue. A feast of cake, fruit, and meat lay on a cardboard table. Then the little man she had made from plasticine came to life.

or

Jane's Park for Poor People had pebble paths, flower trees, and twig benches. A little man made out of plasticine lived in a twig house. She also made a huge feast of plasticine food and set it on a cardboard table with cardboard chairs. At the end of the story, the little man began to talk to her.

The student's answer may vary; these are simply examples. When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 9 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 The summary should describe the park, with a single sentence at the end describing the final event.
- 2 A time word should link the final sentence to the rest of the summary.
- 3 Details of conversations should not be listed.
- 4 If two or more details are listed in a single sentence, they should be related.

For example,

Flowers were trees, and flowerbeds were made of petals
is acceptable;

Flowers were trees, and a little round man sat on a bench
is not.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Possessive forms should be written properly.
- 4 Personal pronouns should have clear antecedents and be of the proper gender.
- 5 Consistent verb tense should be used throughout.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *Life in a Medieval Castle* by Gary Blackwood. You have probably studied before about the “feudal system.” Under this system, a lord granted land to farmers, who then became his *vassals* and owed him crops and military service.

The words in brackets [] have been inserted to make the excerpt clearer.

STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

Student instructions for Step Two:

As in last week's outlining assignment, this week's passage describes a place. Last week, you learned that although you can ask two questions about each section:

1. What is the main thing that this section is about?

2. Why is that thing or person important?

you can also ask a simpler question when outlining a passage of description:

What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?

As you work on finding the major points for your outline, you may want to use a combination of the two methods.

The reason is simple. When a passage of description is narrowly focused on one area, the single question "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?" can give you a straightforward answer. But often, a passage of description will contain sections that have a slightly different focus.

Look at the first section in the description and ask yourself "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?"



What answer did you come up with?

You probably came up with a single word:

Castles

That's not a very good major point; it's too broad, too vague, and too general. Imagine that you were using an outline to write, and your first outline point merely said "Castles." How would you know what to write—or even where to start? This question doesn't work because although the passage goes on to describe each major part of a medieval castle, the first *section* of the passage is an introduction that talks about castles *generally*.

Try asking the two other questions now. What main thing is the section about?



Castles.

Why are the castles important?



Castles were common or *Castles served many purposes* (these two points are similar—they were common because they served many purposes). That's a good first main point for the passage.

Follow this rule as you look for a major point for the remaining sections: First, ask "What part of the place does the section focus on?" If the answer is a single common word, go back to the two-question procedure instead.

Now try to complete this exercise by providing points II through VII. You can mix phrases and sentences if necessary. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.



HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

In this assignment, the student has been encouraged to try two different methods of finding the main idea in each section. It is acceptable for her to mix phrases and sentences in her outline.

Suggested answers (the student's answers should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

- I. *Castles were common or Castles served many purposes.*
- II. *Fortifications before the Norman invasion OR Early fortifications OR Early fortifications were crude.*
- III. *The appearance of castles with towers OR Castles in the early tenth century*
- IV. *How a castle was built OR Building a castle*
- V. *The mound or motte*
- VI. *The bailey*
- VII. *Inside the tower or donjon OR Cramped life inside the tower*

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues.

Section 2

Instructor: This section isn't exactly about castles. What is it about?

Student: Fortifications

Instructor: When did these fortifications exist?

Student: Before the Norman invasion or In the ninth century

Instructor: This section describes the fortifications before the Norman invasion. Remember, when you're writing an outline, you shouldn't include details in the major points of the outline. The ring of mounded earth, the ditch, and the fence are all details.

Section 3

Instructor: In this section, something new appeared. What was it?

Student: Castles with towers or Structures with towers

Note to Instructor: If the student answers "Castles," say "What was new about the castles?"

Instructor: Put that into a sentence. What appeared?

Student: Castles with towers appeared.

Section 4

Instructor: This section has quite a few details about what the finished castle looks like, but it isn't really describing a castle. All of the details together describe a *process*. What is the process?

Student: Building a castle

Section 5

Instructor: What part of the castle does this section describe?

Student: The motte OR mound

Section 6

Instructor: What part of the castle does this section describe?

Student: The bailey OR The area inside the palisade

Section 7

Instructor: What part of the castle does this section describe?

Student: The tower or What was inside the tower

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

The passage the student outlined in the last writing session is another example of this week's topos: a **description of a place**. The student studied and practiced this form in the last week of this program; this week, she'll study and practice some more.

STEP ONE: Review the use of space and distance words and phrases

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following descriptions and underline the space and distance words and phrases. The first description was written by the Greek historian Herodotus; the second, by the modern historian Stephen Blake; the third, by the secretary to the sixteenth-century Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor. In the first two lines of the assignment, the space and distance words and phrases have been bolded as an example.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

The answer key for Step One is below:

The sanctuary is situated **in the center of** the city, and one can walk **around** it and look **down into** it from all sides, because the city has risen . . . with the accumulation of soil over time but the sanctuary has remained undisturbed since it was first built, and therefore it is possible to look **down into** it. **Surrounding** it is a dry wall carved **with** reliefs, and **within** that wall is a grove of very tall trees growing **around** a large temple which contains the cult statue. The sanctuary is square and measures 583 feet **on** each side. Extending **from** the entrance is

a stone road about 1,750 feet long and 400 feet wide, leading **through** the marketplace **to the east**. Trees so tall that they seem to touch the sky grow **on either side of** the road, which continues **until** it reaches the sanctuary of Hermes. That is what the sanctuary of Boubastis looks like.¹⁷

In its plan and build, Peking, like the other sovereign cities, reflected the dominance of the imperial household. **At** its very heart, a fortress **within** a fortress **within** a fortress, lay the Forbidden City, a 385-acre enclosure that contained audience halls, private apartments, religious shrines, and about 15,000 persons—the imperial family, personal servants, privileged retainers, and eunuchs. **At the center of** the Forbidden City stood the Hall of Supreme Harmony. **In the middle of** this hall **on** a great throne the Ming emperor exercised absolute power.¹⁸

Mexico-Tenochtitlan is completely **surrounded by** water, standing as it does **in** the lake. It can be approached by only three causeways: one, about half a league long, entering **from the west**; another **from the north**, about a league long. There is no causeway **from the east**, and one must approach by boat. **To the south** is the third causeway. . . . The lake **upon** which Mexico is situated, although it seems to be one, is really two, very different from each other, for one is saline, bitter, and stinking, and has no fish in it, while the other is of sweet water and does have fish, although they are small. The salt lake rises and falls, and has currents caused by the winds. The fresh-water lake is **higher**, so that the good water flows **into** the bad, and not the other way around, as some have thought . . . **On** its shores are more than fifty towns, many of them of five thousand houses, some of ten thousand, and one, Texcoco, as large as Mexico.¹⁹

If the student has difficulty finding space and distance words and phrases, tell him which line the missing words are located in, and how many words he's overlooked. This exercise is simply intended to increase the student's awareness of how these words are used; it isn't meant to be a test.

STEP TWO: Understand point of view

Student instructions for Step Two:

If you were Herodotus, where would you be standing while describing the sanctuary of Boubastis?

Herodotus gives you a hint in the first sentence of the description, when he says "One can walk around and look down into it from all sides." As he describes the sanctuary, he is doing so from the point of view of someone who is above the place, looking down over it and seeing all of its different parts.

The second passage has a different point of view. Imagine that the narrator of this passage is walking through the walls of Peking, towards the center. He arrives at the Forbidden City, at the "heart" of the city, and walks through the walls of the Forbidden City, still heading towards the center. He arrives at the Hall of Supreme Harmony, at the center of the Forbidden Center, and walks through its door. Right at the middle of the Hall is the throne of the Ming emperor.

This point of view is of someone moving forward, getting closer and closer to the center. The first narrator can see the whole place he's describing all at once. The second narrator can't

17. Herodotus, *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, trans. Robert B. Strassler (Random House, 2009), p. 180.

18. Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639–1739* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 206.

19. Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *Cortes: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (University of California Press, 1964), p. 159.

see the Hall, or the throne, until he arrives at it.

There are four basic points of view for a description:

1. From above, as though you were hovering over the place. This is sometimes called the “impersonal” point of view, because you’re not directly involved in the place itself; you’re looking over it as a detached observer.
2. From inside it, as though you were part of the place, standing still in the middle of it at a particular point and looking around.
3. From one side, as though you were standing beside the place looking at it from one particular angle.
4. Moving, as though you were walking through the place, or around it.

You can choose to use any one of these points of view when you write a description, but once you’ve settled on one, keep asking yourself: Am I still describing this place from the *same* point of view? You shouldn’t (for example) be describing a mountain from above, and then suddenly leap into an inside cave without telling the reader how you got there.

Now look back at the third description. Try to figure out which point of view this passage is written from. When you’ve decided, check your answer with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The third description is written from a moving point of view, but rather than moving into the city, as the narrator in the second description does, this narrator is circling around the city. You may point out to the student that this is the point of view Cortes himself would have had when approaching the city of Tenochtitlan by boat.

If the student has difficulty, suggest that he draw a square on paper, to represent Tenochtitlan, and then a circle around it, to represent the lake. Label the diagram with N, S, E, and W to represent the points of the compass. Tell the student to put his pencil on the W, since the narrator mentions the causeway from the west first. Then the narrator mentions the north causeway, so now he must be standing at the north. Tell the student to move his pencil from the west to the north. Continue on to the next direction mentioned (the east) and then the final direction (south). The student should have traced three quarters of a circle, showing that the narrator is circling the city.

STEP THREE: **Add to the pattern of the topos (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Three:

Pull Appendix II, Points of View, from the back of your workbook. Place it in your Composition Notebook. (You will learn about the other points of view in Appendix II later.)

Now turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Procedure” column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*
2. **Choose a point of view.**

Remember

1. Make use of space and distance words and phrases.

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

Today the student will review the material from the last lesson and will write her own description from two different points of view.

STEP ONE: Review point of view

Student instructions for Step One:

In the last assignment, you learned about the four basic points of view that descriptions can be written from. Glance at your Points of View appendix and review those now.

When you've finished, read the following three descriptions. The first comes from the French writer Rene Auguste Constantin de Renneville, who was imprisoned in the French prison known as the Bastille from 1702 to 1713. The second was written by the nineteenth-century English novelist Charles Dickens. The third is from American Jon Krakauer's account of climbing Mount Everest in 1996.

In the margin beside each description, write which point of view is being used. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

The first description is written from *inside* a Bastille prison cell. If necessary, ask the student whether anything in the description can be seen from outside the Bastille.

The second description is written from the *above/impersonal* point of view. If necessary, ask the student to underline the words "Scrooge," "court outside," "pouring in," and "dense without." Then, ask where you would need to be standing in order to see all of these things simultaneously.

The third description is written *from one side or angle*—it describes only what Krakauer can see while standing on the peak and facing the Tibetan plateau. If the student selects "Moving through or around," ask her if the description changes as the narrator moves. (It doesn't; the first sentence mentions movement, but is there only to show how the narrator arrives at his particular vantage point.) If the student selects "Above/impersonal," ask two questions:

1. Is the narrator present in the place? (Yes. In an above/impersonal narration, the narrator is not part of the scene.)
2. Can the narrator see what's behind him? (No. He is only looking down one side of the mountain, which means that he is narrating from a particular angle rather than seeing the entire scene.)

STEP TWO: Practice the topos

Student instructions for Step Two:

Now you'll experiment with writing a description of the same place from three of the four points of view.

Choose the most interesting room in your house (or if you can go outside, the most interesting section of yard, park, field, or forest). Your goal will be to describe this place in no more than three or four sentences for each point of view, giving a sense of peace, calm, tranquility, belonging, and contentment.

The first time you describe the place, do so from an *abstract/impersonal* point of view. You should not be present in the description at all (in other words, you would write "Photographs hang along the living room wall," as opposed to "I can see pictures of my family on the wall"). Imagine that you're hovering above the place and can see everything in it simultaneously.

The second time you describe the place, do so from *one side or angle*. Choose a place to stand, and describe only what you can see from that particular spot. You should put yourself in the description (so you would write "A beech tree stands on my left, with a holly half-hidden behind it," as opposed to "There is a beech tree with a holly behind it").

Finally, describe the place one last time. This time, describe what you can see as you walk through it *or* as you walk around it. Be sure to list details in the same order that you see them as you move. You can choose to either put yourself in the description ("As I walk past the kitchen table, the refrigerator comes into view on my right") or leave yourself out ("The refrigerator stands on the right, just past the kitchen table").

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The student will complete today's work by writing three descriptions of the same place. The first should be written from the above/impersonal point of view, the second from one side or angle, and the third from a moving point of view, either through or around.

Begin by helping the student choose an appropriate place to describe. An ideal place would be a room or portion of the outdoors that the student can see from an elevated place—a yard which can be seen from a second-story window or the top of a slide, or a room which can be seen from a staircase or from the top of a piece of furniture. While the "above/impersonal" point of view doesn't require the narrator to physically *be* above the place being described (generally, writers use their imaginations and background knowledge instead), it can be very helpful for beginning writers to experience the difference between what a place looks like from above and what it looks like as you walk through it.

Whether or not you're able to find an "above" angle on the chosen place, make sure that it is large enough for the student to walk through and describe (a small room will look pretty much the same from the doorway and from the far side, which takes some of the distinctives of the "walking through" point of view away). It's also best if some of the details of the place are invisible or blocked from certain points of view.

The student has been assigned the task of conveying a sense of peace, tranquillity, calm, and contentment. Don't worry too much about how clearly this comes through. The focus of this assignment should stay firmly on point of view.

The descriptions should be brief (after all, the student has to write three of them). Acceptable descriptions might resemble the following:

From above/impersonal (note that the student herself should not be present in this description):

The garden basks under a warm sun. Flowers twine over the gate, and beds of lettuce and carrots lie on either side of the path. Sunflowers nod along the front fence, and fruit trees lean over the back wall; in the distance, chickens cluck and a rooster crows.

From one side or angle (the student *should* be present in this description):

I sit with my back against the garden fence. Carrots grow to my left, and beyond them I can see the garden path and the corner of a bed of lettuce. Above my head, a sunflower nods. I can hear invisible chickens clucking somewhere behind me.

Walking through:

(The student is present) I open the gate and step into the garden. Carrots grow in a carefully tilled bed on my right; on my left, lettuce is green against the rich dirt. As I walk down the path, I see asparagus growing in a bed just off the path. Beyond the asparagus, a row of sunflowers leans over the right-hand fence.

(The student is absent.) The garden gate leads under an arbor covered with hibiscus vine. On the other side of the gate, the path winds through beds of carrots and lettuce. Asparagus grows in the middle of the garden; along the back, apples and peaches lean over the fence, dropping their fruit on the ground.

When the description is finished, check it using the following rubric:

Week 9 Description Rubric Summary of Description of a Place

Organization

- 1 The descriptions should use appropriate adjectives and verbs to convey peacefulness (or at least the absence of violence!).
- 2 At least two space and distance words and phrases should be used in each description.
- 3 Point of view should remain consistent throughout each description.
- 4 The details described should differ in each description, depending on the point of view.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Verbs should have consistent tense (all past or all present).
- 3 Subjects and verbs should be in agreement.

WEEK 10: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central events and details

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *A Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens. You've already seen a description from *A Christmas Carol* in last week's lesson. Dickens was a master of vivid, detailed descriptions, and *A Christmas Carol* is probably his best-known work.

In this passage, the miser Scrooge is coming home in the dark after a long day's work—on Christmas Eve. He has just walked up the steps of his own house and is getting ready to open his own front door.

Jacob Marley was Scrooge's former partner, but when the story begins, he's been dead for seven years. "Livid" means ashen colored, pale, deathly white; you should also know that some bacteria found in decaying seafood can give off a very faint luminescent glow.



STEP TWO: Note central events and details

Student instructions for Step Two:

This week's story contains a series of events, *and* at least one description which should be included in your narrative summary.

Begin by writing down on scratch paper five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you, in order, of the things that happened in the story. After you've put these sentences down in order, ask yourself: If you hadn't read the story, would you need a few more *visual* details about any of these phrases or sentences? Underline one or two phrases or sentences that would be clearer if you provided a few more descriptive details. Draw a line from the phrase(s) or sentence(s) to the other side of your paper. At the end of this line, write down three or four central details about the place where the event happened.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The passage combines a series of events with at least one vital description; the narrative summary will be incomplete without a brief description of the door knocker/Marley's face. The student may also choose to provide a brief description of Scrooge's room, if this seems necessary to make the ringing of the bell clear. The description of Scrooge's empty house is *not* central to the narrative. The entire narrative should be no more than four sentences.

The student should begin by noting down five or six phrases or short sentences that sum up the main events. The phrases/sentences should resemble five or six of the following (these are given only as a guide):

Scrooge opened door with key.
Saw Marley's face in the knocker
The knocker changed to Marley's face and back again.
Scrooge went upstairs in the dark.
Went through all the rooms to see if anyone was there
Double locked himself in his room
Sat close to fire
Bell in room began to ring.
Bells all over house began to ring.
Bells stopped.
Scrooge heard chain dragging below.
Scrooge heard sound like dragging chain.
Sound came towards his door.

If the student has trouble locating the main events in the narrative, ask the following questions:

What happened on Scrooge's front doorstep? *(The knocker turned into Marley's face.)*
 What did Scrooge do when he got into the house? *(He looked through all the rooms.)*
 What did Scrooge do when he got to his room? *(He double locked himself in.)*
 What did he hear? *(He heard a chain dragging down below.)*

Note that this entire narrative is organized according to *place*: as Scrooge moves through the house, a major event happens in each place.

After jotting down the major events, the student should identify the points at which more visual description is necessary. The appearance of Marley's face on the front door is absolutely central to this passage; without it, there's no reason for Scrooge to be nervous, or to suspect that the chain-dragging sound is caused by a ghost. The details about Marley's face might include:

Face had a dismal light.
Face glowed.
Not angry or ferocious
Spectacles on forehead
Hair blowing slightly

Open, motionless eyes
Livid in color
Turned back to knocker

It is also possible that the student may decide to expand on Scrooge's locking himself in his room by explaining that the room had a low fire and also a bell hanging against one wall. However, the summary will make perfect sense without these details.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Student instructions for Step Three:

Now try to combine your phrases or sentences about the main events into three sentences (your narrative shouldn't be more than four sentences, and you'll need to keep one sentence for the additional descriptive details). Say your three sentences out loud several times. Then decide which details to include in your additional sentence. Write down all four sentences, putting the sentence with the additional details directly after the sentence that mentions the main event connected to those details. (If you can incorporate the details into one of other sentences, that's fine.)

After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor for help. And if you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP THREE

In this step, the student practices turning the jotted phrases and sentences into three or four (probably four) coherent, smooth sentences. He should say his sentences out loud several times before he writes; listen to make sure that you hear him talking out loud, and if necessary remind him that he should be speaking before he writes.

The summary should include a sentence describing Marley's face and should not be more than four sentences. It should mention Scrooge's seeing the face, entering the house, locking himself in, and hearing the "bells and clanking sound." An acceptable summary would be:

Scrooge was unlocking his door when the knocker turned into Marley's face. The face was deathly pale, staring at him with wide eyes, and was glowing slightly. The face turned back into a knocker, but Scrooge was so frightened that he searched the whole house. He locked himself into his room, but then heard chains dragging from down below.

OR

Scrooge came home in the dark on Christmas Eve. His door knocker turned into the glowing, ghostly face of his dead partner Jacob Marley. Scrooge went upstairs and locked himself into his room. Then the bells all over the house began to ring, and he heard a ghostly chain dragging towards his door.

When the summary is finished, check it using the following rubric.

Week 10 Narration Rubric

Organization

- 1 Events should be in chronological order.
- 2 If two or more events are listed in a single sentence, they should have a cause and effect relationship.
- 3 Each event of major importance should be in the summary (if it were missing from the original passage, the narrative would no longer make sense).
- 4 Vital details should be listed immediately after (or in the same sentence as) the connected event.
- 5 The summary should not be more than four sentences long.

Mechanics

- 1 Each sentence should make sense on its own when read aloud.
- 2 Each proper name should be capitalized.
- 3 Personal pronouns should have clear antecedents and be of the proper gender.
- 4 Consistent verb tense should be used throughout.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

STEP ONE: Read (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following excerpt from *The Travels of Marco Polo*, describing the palace of the Mongol khan Kublai Khan, who established the Yuan Dynasty in China. Marco Polo was a Venetian merchant who travelled to China between 1271 and 1295; when he returned, he wrote a book about his adventures.

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Student instructions for Step Two:

This week's passage is one last example of a place description—Kublai Khan's palace in China. As in the first description you outlined, some sections in this passage can be outlined fairly easily if you simply ask "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?" If this question doesn't give you a simple answer, you can instead ask:

1. What is the main thing this section is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

Use the following hints as you work through the sections.

Section 1. All of the sentences in this section refer to the same *thing*. This is an introductory section, giving the reader an overview of . . . what?

Section 2. The sentences in this section all refer to the same *quality* or *characteristic* shared by the parts mentioned.

Sections 3–5. These sections refer to specific parts of the place.

As in the last lesson, you can mix phrases and sentences if necessary. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. When you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

Clear, vivid writing is never cookie-cutter in its organization—something the student is being taught from the very beginning of the outlining process. Rather than merely describing individual parts of Kublai Khan's palace, this description begins with two sections that have slightly different purposes. The first section gives a general overview of the entire palace; the second focuses on the decorations that occur throughout the palace, rather than describing a particular spot within it. Sections 3 through 5 return to the familiar pattern; the third section describes the buildings to the rear of the the palace, the fourth the artificial north mount of the palace, and the fifth the water feature nearby.

It is acceptable for the student to mix phrases and sentences in this outline.

Suggested answers (the student's answers should resemble the following but don't need to be identical):

- I. *The palace OR The size of the palace OR The overall plan of the palace*
- II. *The ornaments and decorations in the palace OR What makes the palace beautiful*
- III. *The buildings to the rear OR The apartments behind the palace*
- IV. *The artificial mount OR The Green Mount*
- V. *Streams and ponds nearby OR The water features OR The fishponds and streams*

If the student struggles with this assignment, use the following dialogues.

Section 1

Instructor: What is situated on the southern side of the city?

Student: The palace

Instructor: What has no upper floor, but a lofty roof?

Student: The palace

Instructor: What stands on a paved foundation or platform?

Student: The palace

Instructor: What does the wall surround?

Student: The palace

Instructor: It should be pretty clear to you what the main focus of this section is . . . the palace! This section gives an overall view of the palace, before the writer begins to focus on particular *parts* of the palace—like seeing something from up high before zooming in.

Section 2

Instructor: What *kinds* of decorations are on the sides of the halls and apartments?

Student: Carved work and gilt, figures, representations

Note to Instructor: The student shouldn't answer by describing dragons, warriors, birds, beasts, and battles—these are the subjects of the decorations, not the *kinds*.

Instructor: What is on the exterior of the roof?

Student: Colors

Instructor: What do the windows look like?

Student: Crystal

Instructor: Carved work, colors, crystal—all of these tell you about what makes the palace beautiful. Instead of describing a particular place within the palace, this section tells you about the ornaments and decorations that turn the entire palace into something magnificent.

Section 3

Instructor: What is to the rear of the palace?

Student: Large buildings containing apartments

Instructor: What does the monarch keep there?

Student: His treasure

Instructor: Who lives there?

Student: His wives and concubines

Instructor: This section describes the buildings behind the palace by telling you what happens there.

Section 4

Instructor: What is on the northern side of the palace?

Student: A mount of earth

Instructor: Everything in this section describes this Green Mount.

Section 5

Instructor: Rather than describing a single place, this section describes two related places. What are they? Hint: both of them are described as large and deep.

Student: Excavations [or ponds]

Instructor: What are they connected by?

Student: A stream [or aqueduct]

Instructor: What do ponds and streams have in common?

Student: Water

Instructor: Your main point could be phrased either as “Water features at the palace” or simply as “Streams and ponds.”

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Understanding the use of figurative language in a description of a place

The student has already learned three things about the description of a place: it should serve a particular purpose, it should use space and distance words, and it should be written from a particular point of view. This week, he’ll add one more element to his descriptions.

STEP ONE: Understand metaphor and simile (Student Responsibility)

Student instructions for Step One:

Look again at these excerpts from the descriptions you studied last week.

Trees **so tall that they seem to touch the sky** grow on either side of the road, which continues until it reaches the sanctuary of Hermes. That is what the sanctuary of Boubastis looks like. (Herodotus)

In addition, the room was filled with rotten and unhealthy fumes, and every quarter of an hour, the sentry tolled a bell that was so close to my room that **it seemed it was hanging from my ears.** (de Renneville)

The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, **like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air.** The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, **the houses opposite were mere phantoms.** (Dickens)

All three of these descriptions use *figurative language*. Herodotus’s trees don’t really touch the sky; the bell wasn’t really hanging from de Renneville’s ears; and if you were in Dickens’s London during a fog, you wouldn’t see smears on palpable (touchable) brown air or phantom houses. Figurative language exaggerates some part of the description in order to make it even more vivid in the reader’s mind.

There are two major categories of figurative language (or “figures of speech”). A simile compares two things *explicitly* by using the words “like” or “as,” or otherwise spelling out for you that figurative language is being used:

like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air

In the first simile, the word “like” says clearly, “Hey, this is figurative language!” The candle light isn’t a smear; it’s *like a smear*. In the second simile, the trees don’t touch the sky. They just *seem* to touch the sky.

A metaphor doesn’t announce itself by using the words “like” or “as” or by saying that one thing “seems like” or “resembles” another. Instead, the writer simply speaks about one thing in terms of another. When Dickens writes “palpable brown air,” he is talking about the air as though it were a thing to be touched and held. This is his way of telling you that the air is smoggy and impossible to see through. If he were to spell the metaphor out, he might write,

like ruddy smears upon the air, which was like a thing that could be touched.

It’s much simpler and more elegant for him to use an adjective which means “able to be touched” (palpable) and just apply it to the air. In the same way, he doesn’t write

the houses opposite were almost invisible but not quite, like transparent ghosts.

Instead, he writes

the houses opposite were mere phantoms.

STEP TWO: Identify figurative language in descriptions

Student instructions for Step Two:

Read the following descriptions. Underline each metaphor and simile. In the margin, write “m” for metaphor and “s” for simile.

Remember this rule: A simile announces itself (“Look here! Figurative language being used!”). A metaphor simply speaks about one thing in terms of another.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

There are two levels of figurative language in today’s passages. There are actual metaphors and similes, but there are also individual nouns, verbs, and adjectives which imply a word

picture—for example, referring to the Matterhorn as a “dark finger.” The metaphors and similes the student should be able to identify are underlined in the passages below. The student may also identify the italicized words, but this isn’t required.

Explanations and teaching suggestions are found beneath each passage below; if necessary, go over the explanations with the student.

The summer heat has withered everything except the mesquite, the palo verde, the grease wood, and the various cacti. Under foot there is a little dry grass, but more often patches of bare gravel and sand roll in shallow beds that *course* toward the large valleys. In the draws and flat places the fine sand lies thicker, is tossed in *wave forms* by the wind, and banked high against clumps of cholla or prickly pear. In the wash-outs and over the cut banks of the arroyos it is sometimes heaped in mounds and crests like driven snow.²⁰

Course: The beds of gravel and sand are compared to streams that flow downwards to rivers.

Wave forms: A second use of water imagery.

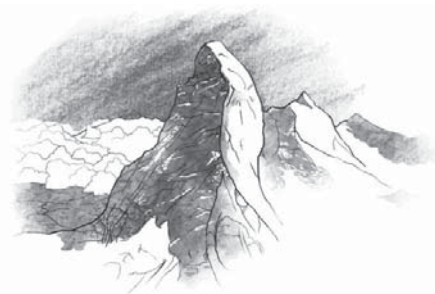
Like driven snow: Simile. If the student cannot find the simile, suggest that he look for the word “like.” The sand is heaped like snow, but whiteness is also implied.

In the center . . . is the river Nile. On both sides of the river is the black rich soil of the land of Egypt. We can see the wide fields that have been planted by . . . men of the village. Those fields will soon be covered with a bright carpet of green and, later in the season, will be brilliant with waving grain. Farther to the westward are the sandstone mountains, which glitter in the bright sunshine.²¹

Bright carpet: Metaphor. The fields will be completely concealed, as a rug conceals floorboards. If the student cannot find the metaphor, ask him to find the one thing in the passage that belongs inside a house and not outdoors.

“Brilliant” is not a metaphor, simply a descriptive word; if the student identifies it as a metaphor, ask him what the grain is being compared to. (Identifying metaphors isn’t an exact science, so if he can make a convincing argument, accept it.)

When approaching the Alps from the air, on a clear day, we look down on their highest point within the massive snows of Mont Blanc. We also identify the *dark finger* of the Matterhorn and the great north wall of the Bernese Alps. Beyond these familiar landmarks, virtually endless rows of snow peaks recede to a misty horizon. They resemble white-capped waves on a windblown sea.²²



Dark finger: The Matterhorn juts upward like a raised finger.

White-capped waves on a windblown sea: A straightforward simile, highlighting the

20. John Charles Van Dyke, *The Desert: Further Studies in Natural Appearances* (Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), p. 3.

21. Walter Scott Perry, *With Azir Girges in Egypt* (Atkinson, Mentzer & Co., 1913), p. 37.

22. Nicholas Shoumatoff and Nina Shoumatoff, *The Alps: Europe’s Mountain Heart* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 3.

contrast between the mountains and their white peaks. If the student is unable to find it, ask him to find the one thing in the passage that doesn't belong in the Alps.

The land had meantime been thickly enveloped in its pure white mantle, and wreaths of snowdrifts lay over the rocks scattered over its surface. The light became fainter. Sometimes the precipitous faces of the glaciers seemed to glow in subdued rose through the leaden grey of the atmosphere. When new "ice holes" appeared, a frosty vapour rose and spread over the surface of the ice; the ship and surrounding objects were covered as if with down; even the dogs were *frosted white*.²³

Pure white mantle: A metaphor, comparing snow with an all-covering cloak.

Wreaths: A metaphor, implying that the snowdrifts decorate the rocks.

If the student has difficulty, tell him that there are two metaphorical words in the first sentence, neither of which have to do directly with snow; you may also say that one is a clothing metaphor, the other a decoration metaphor.

Mount Shasta rises in solitary grandeur from the edge of a comparatively low and lightly sculptured lava plain near the northern extremity of the Sierra. . . . Go where you may, within a radius of from fifty to a hundred miles or more, there stands before you the colossal cone of Shasta, *clad* in ice and snow, the one grand unmistakable landmark—the pole star of the landscape.²⁴

Clad: A clothing metaphor.

Pole star: Metaphor, implying that the mountain is the central, most important part of the landscape, the one that all travellers use to orient themselves. If necessary, ask the student to identify the thing in the passage that belongs in the sky, not on earth.

STEP THREE: **Add to the pattern of the topos (Student Responsibility)**

Student instructions for Step Three:

Turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the "Remember" column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*
2. Choose a point of view

Remember

1. Make use of space and distance words and phrases.
2. **Consider using vivid metaphors and similes.**

23. Julius Payer, *New Lands Within the Arctic Circle* (Macmillan & Co., 1876), p. 294.

24. John Muir, *Nature Writings* (Library of America, 1997), p. 634.

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the use of figurative language in a description of a place

STEP ONE: Review the form of the description

Student instructions for Step One:

Read the following description of London, written by the nineteenth-century journalist Blanchard Jerrold. Jerrold teamed up with the French artist Gustave Dore to write a book about London that would combine written descriptions with engraved pictures of the city.

At every corner there is a striking note for the sketch-book. A queer gateway, low and dark, with a streak of silver water seen through the stacks of goods beyond, and bales suspended like spiders from their web; a crooked narrow street with cranes over every window, and the sky netted with ropes as from the deck of a brig. . . . An apple stall surrounded by jubilant shoe-blacks and errand-boys. A closed, grass-grown church-yard, with ancient tomb stones lying at all angles like a witch's fangs.²⁵

Now answer the following questions:

1. What is the point of view of the narrator?
2. How many space and distance words does the description use? Underline them.
3. What metaphors and similes does the description use? Underline them.
4. What quality of the city of London do you think the narrator is trying to bring out? (In other words, can you guess at the purpose of the description?)

Ask your instructor for help if you have difficulty with any of the questions. When you are finished, check your answers with your instructor.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP ONE

Suggested answers and student guidance for each question:

1. *Moving through or around* OR *From above (impersonal)*

If this short description were set into context, it would be clearer that the narrator is personally involved in the scene and walking through the city. Missing context, the student may classify the description as from above (impersonal).

This is reasonable, but you may want to point out that the first sentence suggests that (1) the narrator is personally involved, since he's thinking about carrying his sketchbook with him, and (2) the mention of "every corner" suggests that the narrator is walking from corner to

25. Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Dore, *London: A Pilgrimage* (Anthem Press, 2005), pp. 22–24.

corner; in addition, the perspective on the details given (seeing through the low gateway; looking up at a sky netted with ropes) implies that the narrator is at ground level. Only go into this level of detail, though, if the student is not struggling with the assignment.

2. *There are ten space and distance words/phrases used, bolded below:*

At every corner there is a striking note for the sketch-book. A queer gateway, low and dark, with a streak of silver water seen **through** the stacks of goods **beyond**, and bales suspended like spiders **from** their web; a crooked narrow street with cranes **over** every window, and the sky netted **with** ropes as **from** the deck of a brig. . . . An apple stall **surrounded by** jubilant shoe-blacks and errand-boys. A closed, grass-grown church-yard, **with** ancient tomb stones lying **at** all angles like a witch's fangs.

If necessary, tell the student how many space and distance words are on each line, and have him use the Space and Distance Words/Phrases list to find them.

3. There are three metaphors/similes:

like spiders from their web

netted with ropes as from the deck of a brig

like a witch's fangs

STEP TWO: Practice avoiding cliches

Student instructions for Step Two:

Although metaphors and similes can make descriptions more vivid, using figurative language that's cliched (used too often) can have the opposite effect. When Herodotus wrote that a tree seemed to touch the sky, he wasn't using a cliché. But after Herodotus, thousands (maybe tens of thousands) of writers also wrote that trees seemed to touch the sky. After thousands of writers use the same simile or metaphor, it becomes a cliché.

When you write a description, you may be tempted to describe a peak as "sharp as a needle," a stream as "chattering merrily," or the sides of a limestone pyramid as "white as snow." But because these images are so often used, they don't cause the reader to stop and picture in his mind exactly what you're describing; his eye just skims over it and he moves on.

In the description above, did the sentence about the tomb stones lying at angles like witch's fangs make you stop for a moment to picture exactly what that would look like?

You can avoid using clichés by rejecting the first image that pops into your head; it's usually the most familiar one. Imagine that you want to express just how white something is. Your first thought will probably be "White as snow." Instead of using that metaphor, stop and think for a moment. Exactly what *sort* of whiteness are you trying to describe? Is it the hard, shiny whiteness of marble? Think about what else is not just white, but also hard and shiny. Pearls? Dried toothpaste? The paint on a Chevrolet?

Or maybe it is the soft, dull whiteness of cotton. What else is not just white, but also soft and dull? A marshmallow? Chicken feathers?

When you use figurative language, you have to think about the *exact* qualities you are trying to convey. Practice doing that now. In the sentences below, cross out each cliché. Then spend some time thinking about the exact quality described in brackets. Come up with a metaphor that's new and vivid, and write it in over the crossed-out cliché.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor. And if you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

HOW TO HELP THE STUDENT WITH STEP TWO

The first part of the assignment—locating the clichés—should be simple for the student; all of the comparisons except for the first (“white as snow”) use the word “like.” Expect the second part of the assignment to take some time. The student’s new similes don’t have to be brilliant, but they should be *different*. You may need to remind the student to keep the *exact* quality in brackets in mind.

If the student needs inspiration, you may want to direct him to the nineteenth-century reference work *A Dictionary of Similes* by Frank Jenners Wilstach. Full texts are available online from books.google.com and elsewhere.

When the student has finished the assignment, you may show him the original versions of these sentences below.

The beaches are as hot and white as molten glass but the ocean is blue and numbingly cold.

—Mark Helprin, *The Pacific and Other Stories* (Penguin Press, 2004), p. 168

White beaches glistened in the tropic sunlight as if their sands were polished grains of silver.

—Charles H. Johnston, *Famous Discoverers and Explorers of America* (L. C. Page & Co., 1941), p. 67

The gallant ship, surrounded by enemies, lay like a great fortress on the sea, scattering death on every side from her hundred and four portholes.

—Thomas Babington Macaulay, *The History of England* (Penguin, 1979), p. 472

Lower away in the south . . . there lay a black squall-cloud with a rounded outline, like a big windbag, resembling nothing so much as a fat boy’s face with its cheeks blown out, when he tries to fill a football with the pressure from his lungs.

—Frederick Philip Grove, *Over Prairie Trails* (Random House, 2010), p. 106

The castle, which stood on the highest platform of the clustered hills, was built of rough-hewn limestone, full of lights and shadows made by the dark dust of lichens and the washings of the rain. Masses of beech and fir sheltered it on the north, and spread down here and there along the green slopes like flocks seeking the water which gleamed below.

—George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (William Blackwood and Sons, 1878), pp. 144–145

Glare ice, black ice they call it, polished the road and reflected first my headlights and then the rising sun. . . . The land stretched flat and frozen on either side, slicked with hoarfrost and gleaming like washed china.

—Michael Doris, *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (Macmillan 2003), p. 201

In front of the line . . . the forest was cut down, and the trees left lying where they fell among the stumps, with tops turned outwards . . . like a forest laid flat by a hurricane. But the most formidable obstruction was immediately along the front of the breastwork, where the ground was covered with heavy boughs, overlapped and interlaced, with sharpened points bristling into the face of the assailant like the quills of a porcupine.

—Francis Parkman, *Rivals for America* (Little, Brown, and Co., 1916), p. 143