

ANGEL
STYLE

A WRITING GUIDE
AND STYLEBOOK

EAST HIGH SCHOOL
DENVER, COLORADO
2012 - 2013

ANGEL STYLE

Prepared by Todd Madison, Mary Connelly, Flo Wagner, Vickie Salazar, Keith Lucero, Greg Moldow and Sue-Lin Toussaint.

Special thanks to Principals Andy Mendelsberg, John Youngquist, and Rick Arthur for their support. Thanks also to Wes Ashley, Jann Peterson, Shawne Anderson, Kate Greeley, Lisa Porter, and all the staff and students at East High School. Thanks as always to our PTSA.

Printed by RICOH Service Center at Denver Public Schools.

ANGEL STYLE

CONTENT	MARGINALIA	PAGE
Parts of Speech	TRIVIA OF SPEECH	4
	PREPOSITIONS	5
Punctuation	SEMI-COLONS	6
	“OXFORD COMMA”	7
The Word	RESISTING SYLLABLES	8
The Sentence	FRAGMENTS	9
The Paragraph	“SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT”	10
	THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE?	11
Usage	TEACHERS’ LEAST FAVORITE ERRORS	12
	BYGONE RULES	13
	PO-TA-TO/PO-TAH-TO	14
Transitions	LINKING PARAGRAPHS	15
Agreement	FUMBLERULES	16
Parallelism	HYPHENS/CAPITALIZATION/NUMBERS/ABBR.	17
Quotation Marks & Italics	SAMUEL JOHNSON	18
Active & Passive Voice	THE SLIPPERY AND THE SINISTER	19
Thesis Statements	THESIS STATEMENT ADVICE	20
Intros & Conclusions	VIVID NOT VAGUE	21
Irony	IRONY OR SARCASM?	22
Wordiness	WORD-LENGTH CONTRAST	23
Clichés	VISUAL AND MUSICAL CLICHÉS	24
Sentence Sins	LONG DOES NOT EQUAL BAD	25
Logical Fallacies	GODWIN’S LAW	26
	DAVE BARRY’S “HOW TO WIN AN ARGUMENT”	27
Spelling	ODE TO MY SPELLCHECKER/G-H-O-T-I	28
Writing Checklist	WISDOM	29
Pre-Writing	ORWELL’S CHECKLIST	30
	MORE WISDOM	31
Plagiarism	CAUTIONARY TALES	32
	A STUDENT’S VOICE	33
Citations	MLA vs. APA?	34
Paraphrasing	ADDING COMMENTARY	35
MLA Format	SOURCES	36
	CITATION HELP	37
About Style	FORMAL VS. INFORMAL	38
Inspirations	OSCAR WILDE	39
Literary Terms	THE DEVIL’S DICTIONARY	40
	WORDPLAY	41
Model: Business Letter	LONG WORDS	42
Model: Literary Analysis	HOW TO ANALYZE A TEXT	43
Model: Personal Essay	MODEL: FORMAT FOR ARGUMENT	44
Model: Informal Argument	MODEL PARAGRAPH	45
Model: 5-Paragraph Essay	FIVE-PARAGRAPH FORMAT	46
Model: Research Paper	PARAGRAPH UNITY	47
	THE ART OF THE INSULT	48
Model: Works Cited	BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH	49
Common Core State Standards	READING STANDARDS	50

Parts of Speech

TRIVIA OF SPEECH

Korean does not contain adjectives as a distinct part of speech.

The Greeks identified eight parts of speech, but the Romans dropped articles (*a, an, the*) and added interjections (*Wow! Jumping Jupiter!*).

Words can shift from one part of speech to another. For example, in this paragraph:

I was having a real fun time until I totaled my car, which was a rare make, a quality ride, and a collectible. Shoot! Then my parents started to guilt me. The whole thing weirded me out so bad that I couldn't stop swearing.

Shifts in the words above:
Real, bad: adjective to adverb. *Totaled, weirded*: adjective to verb.
Collectible: adjective to noun. *Shoot*: verb to interjection.

—from Ben Yagoda's
When You Catch an Adjective, Kill It

FOR PRACTICE:

Form sentences based on the following patterns:

Adj. + N + Adv. + V
 N + V + Adv.
 Art. + Adj. + N + V + Conj. + N + V + Adv.
 Int. + Pron. + Adv. + V.

A **NOUN** is a word that is the name of something—a person, place, thing, or idea: Mayor Hancock, Dove Valley, cliff, excitement.

The five classes of nouns are proper, common, concrete, abstract, and collective.

A **proper noun** names a particular person, place, thing, or idea. Proper nouns are always capitalized: Ryan Gosling, New York, World Series, Judaism.

A **common noun** is any noun that does not name a particular person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns are not capitalized: person, woman, president, volleyball, government, love.

A **concrete noun** names a thing that is tangible (can be seen, touched, heard, smelled, or tasted). Concrete nouns are either proper or common: Flannery O'Connor, Grand Canyon, speedboat, aroma, pizza.

An **abstract noun** names an idea, a condition, or a feeling—in other words, something that cannot be touched, smelled, tasted, seen, or heard: New Deal, greed, poverty, progress, freedom, hope.

A **collective noun** names a group or unit: United States, Denver Nuggets, team, crowd, community.

A **PRONOUN** is a word used in place of a noun. Some pronouns are **personal**: I, you, he, she, it, me, they, my, mine, ours, your, yours, its, him, his, her, hers, we, their, theirs, us, himself, themselves.

All pronouns have antecedents. An **antecedent** is the noun that the pronoun refers to or replaces.

The judge coughed and reached for the glass of water. The water touched his lips before he noticed the fly that lay bathing in the cool liquid.
 (Judge is the antecedent of his and he.)

Bill brought his gerbil to school.

One of the rowboats is missing its oars.

A person must learn to wait his or her turn.

Demonstrative pronouns: this, that, these, those

Interrogative pronouns: who, whose, whom, which, what

Relative pronouns: who, whose, whom, which, what, that

Indefinite pronouns: all, another, any, anybody, anything, both, each, each one, either, everybody, everyone, everything, few, many, most, much, neither, nobody, none, no one, nothing, one, other, several, some, somebody, someone, something, such

Parts of Speech

continued

FOR PRACTICE:

To help distinguish conjunctions, write two sentences each for each of these types: coordinating, correlative, and subordinating.

LOTS OF PREPOSITIONS

aboard	about
above	against
across	alongside
after	amid
along	at
along with	back of
around	before
away from	below
because of	beside
behind	between
beneath	by
besides	despite
beyond	during
concerning	except for
down	for
except	in
excepting	inside of
from	instead of
inside	like
in spite of	near
into	near to
opposite	on
out of	onto
outside of	over
over to	owing to
past	prior to
regarding	through
throughout	till
under	to
until	unto
up	up to
underneath	upon
without	within
in addition to	
in front of	
in regard to	
according to	
across from	

A **VERB** is a word that expresses action or state of being.

Joe ran while Emilio hid. Sally grew bored.

An **ADJECTIVE** describes or modifies a noun or pronoun. Articles *a*, *an*, and *the* are adjectives.

The green tree grows in crowded Brooklyn.

An **ADVERB** modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. An adverb tells how, when, where, how often, and how much.

Time: today, yesterday, daily, weekly, briefly, eternally

Place: here, there, nearby, yonder, backward, forward

Manner: precisely, regularly, regally, smoothly, well

Degree: substantially, greatly, entirely, partly, too

A **CONJUNCTION** connects individual words or groups of words.

Elmo loved chocolate, but he hated fudge.

When we came back to Paris, it was clear and cold and lovely.

Coordinating conjunctions: and, but, or, nor, for, yet, so

Correlative conjunctions: either, or; neither, nor; not only, but also; both, and; whether, or; just, as; just, so; as, so

Subordinating conjunctions: after, although, as if, as long as, as though, because, before, if, in order that, provided that, since, so, so that, that, though, till, unless, until, when, where, whereas, while

An **INTERJECTION** is included in a sentence in order to communicate strong emotion or surprise. Punctuation (often a comma or an exclamation point) is used to set off an interjection from the rest of the sentence.

Oh, no! The TV broke. Good grief! I have nothing to do. Yipes, I'll go mad!

A **PREPOSITION** is a word (or group of words) that shows the relationship between its object (a noun or a pronoun that follows the preposition) and another word in the sentence.

A prepositional phrase includes the preposition, the object of the preposition, and the modifiers of the object.

Some people run away from caterpillars.

However, little children with inquisitive minds enjoy their company.

Punctuation

MORE ON SEMI-COLONS

Generally, semi-colons **link** and colons **announce**. Do not confuse the two.

The game was over quickly; her inexperience led to the loss.

vs.

He played three positions: quarterback, safety, and linebacker.

Also, be sure that the words on either side of a linking semi-colon can stand on their own as complete sentences.

FOR PRACTICE: Punctuate the following lines.

Our vacation was miserable. On the first day of our trip for example it rained so much that our cabin was flooded. That night after drying off our clothes and suitcases we found bugs everywhere we looked in the bathroom in the sheets in the kitchen etc. By the end of the week we just wanted to be back in our own house safe happy and warm.

Every punctuation mark should help the reader. Just like Stop and Go signals at an intersection, marks of punctuation keep the reader, like the traffic, from getting entangled.

1. Put a **period** at the end of a declarative sentence, an imperative sentence, an indirect question, or a polite request.

*The class completed the test with time to spare.
Answer the door.
She asked whether anyone had invented time travel yet.*

2. Put a **period** after most abbreviations and initials.

Wed. Dr. Jan. etc. T.S. Eliot

3. Put a **question mark** after a direct question, but not after an indirect one.

*"Who's there?" she asked. (the exact words of the speaker)
She asked us who was there. (not the exact words of the speaker)*

4. Put an **exclamation point** after an expression that shows strong emotion.

Wow! You made varsity!

5. Put a **semicolon** between two closely related independent clauses not connected by a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so).

You may help him; I will not be able to at this time.

6. Put a **semicolon** between pairs of independent clauses not connected by a coordinating conjunction, especially when a conjunctive adverbs (therefore, nevertheless, however, for example) is present.

You may help him; nevertheless, I expect the work to be his.

7. Put a **semicolon** to separate word groups when the elements of each word group are already separated by commas or other marks of punctuation.

She is taking Algebra 2, a required class; Ceramics I, an elective; and English, her favorite class of the day.

8. Put a **colon** after a complete statement, when a list or long quotation follows.

They bought the groceries on your list: milk, sugar, bacon, bananas, and cereal.

9. Put a **colon** at the end of a salutation or between numbers used to indicate time.

Dear Sir: 7:30 a.m.

Punctuation

continued

FOR PRACTICE: Punctuate the following lines.

For someone who is so clever you sure are an idiot when it comes to the opposite sex I mean really you thought that would work Haven't you ever seen a romantic comedy Sure they are filled with clichés and ridiculous insulting situations but you could at least use one as a starting point Well what's done is done Let's try to wash off your face paint

From "Oxford Comma" by Vampire Weekend:

Who gives a *#! about
an Oxford comma?
I've seen those English
dramas too
They're cruel
So if there's any other way
To spell the word
It's fine with me, with me

Why would you speak to
me that way
Especially when I always
said that I
Haven't got the words for
you
All your diction dripping
with disdain
Through the pain
I always tell the truth

Who gives a *#! about
an Oxford climber?
I climbed to Dharamsala
too
I did
I met the highest lama
His accent sounded fine
To me, to me

10. Put a **dash** to indicate an abrupt shift or break in the thought of a sentence or to set off an informal statement.

*The driver made a fatal mistake—he did not turn on his headlights.
She told me—if you can believe it—all the summer gossip.*

10. Put a **dash** to set off an appositive or parenthetical statement that is internally punctuated.

The team captains—Joe, Chris, and Alfonso—are choosing uniforms.

11. Put a **dash** to indicate hesitant or interrupted speech.

"I told him at least once, I—we—aren't very happy with the decision."

12. Put **quotation marks** before and after direct quotations.

I said, "I will be a little late, but I will be there."

13. Put **quotation marks** around the name of a short story, poem, song, essay, TV program, radio program, or other short work. For a longer work such as a book, newspaper, magazine, play, album, or movie, italicize or underline the title.

Many students say "The Yellow Wallpaper" is their favorite story.

14. Use a **comma** to separate words, phrases, and clauses written as a series of three or more coordinate elements. This is called the serial comma or Oxford comma.

The work was tedious, hot, and exhausting.

15. Use a **comma** to separate two or more coordinate adjectives that modify the same noun.

The exhilarating, challenging hike was near its end.

16. Use a **comma** to highlight sharply contrasted coordinate elements.

The hero was brave, not egotistical.

17. Use a **comma** before any one of the conjunctions (and, but, for, or, neither, nor) when it joins a pair of main clauses.

The concert has been sold out for weeks, and I doubt we'll find any tickets.

18. Use a **comma** after an introductory adverbial clause, verbal phrase, or absolute phrase.

*When the team finished its first practice, many athletes were exhausted.
For selling the most boxes, she received a bonus.*

The Word

RESISTING SYLLABLES

As your teachers encourage you to increase your vocabulary, remember as well the value of smaller, more familiar words. Contrast:

Scintillate, scintillate, asteroid minific,
Fain would I fathom your nature specific.
Exaltedly set in ether capacious,
A reasonable facsimile of a gem carbonaceous.
Scintillate, scintillate, asteroid minific,
Fain would I fathom your nature specific.

Or, as you may know it:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.

George Orwell conjured a similar distinction with a passage from *Ecclesiastes*:

I returned and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Versus Orwell's modern English parody:

Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

FOR PRACTICE:

Write as badly as you can for half a page. Make your language as generic, clichéd, wordy, and empty as possible. Then rewrite the paragraph as masterfully as you are capable. Aim for fresh and forceful words to propel your ideas.

Jonathan Swift wrote that good writing consists of putting “proper words in proper places.” So it all begins with the word. When choosing which words to use and which words to discard, a writer must consider many factors, including context, tone, rhythm, clarity, connotation, force, and nuance. When you write, be sure to consider some of the suggestions below.

HOW VERY: By avoiding such words as *very*, *extremely*, and *really*, a writer can emphasize verbs and nouns. Contrast:

I am very tired.	I am exhausted/spent/beat.
I am extremely hungry.	I am starving/famished/ravenous.

INTERROGATE YOUR MODIFIERS: You may likewise improve your verbs and nouns by eliminating many adjectives and adverbs. When you use modifiers, always check to see if a stronger verb or noun makes them unnecessary.

Desiree quickly ran across the finish line, where she was immediately greeted by a cheering, adoring crowd.
Desiree sprinted across the finish line to a crowd exploding in cheers.

DO NOT SETTLE: When we write, the first words that come to mind are often automatic and pedestrian. So think twice. Consider the many shades of meaning available in synonyms; consider precision; consider rhythm and force. Whether using a thesaurus or simply reading more widely, expand your vocabulary. Add to your tools and weapons.

EMPLOY THE FIGURATIVE: One of E.B. White's great lessons is to ground or amplify an idea with a visual, concrete image. Two of his examples:

Idea: Humor is ruined by analysis.
Expression: Humor can be dissected, as a frog can, but the thing dies in the process and the innards are discouraging to any but the pure scientific mind.

Idea: Humorists utilize mishaps and pain.
Expression: Humorists fatten on trouble.

READ AS WRITERS READ: When you read passages you admire, pay attention to how certain words convey force and meaning. Play the substitution game: imagine the sentence with a different word and consider how the impact changes.

The dark/charcoal/black sky was lit/punctured/battled by the blazing/roaring/hungry fire.

EXPEL CLICHÉS: Now. See page 24.

The Sentence

FOR PRACTICE:

Provide examples for each of the sentence types below.

IN PRAISE OF SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

A **fragment** is not a sentence at all. Sentence fragments are groups of words that are missing either a subject or a verb, or they do not express a complete thought.

Thinks he's really funny. My brother and his bright ideas. Not my definition of success.

Sentence fragments can be useful, however, for emphasis and rhythm. Just be sure you know when you're writing one, and be sure to use them sparingly.

I stepped out on the balcony hoping to talk to her. She, of course, was gone. Story of my life.

In academic writing, fragments are particularly discouraged. But in both fiction and nonfiction, fragments may be quite effective.

For example:

A clock. I can almost see the hands ticking around the twelve-sectioned face of the arena. Each hour begins a new horror, a new Gamemaker weapon, and ends the previous. Lightning, blood, rain, fog, monkeys—those are the first four hours on the clock. And at ten, the wave.

—Suzanne Collins

Lolita, light of my life, fire of my loins. My sin, my soul. Lo-lee-ta: the tip of the tongue taking a trip of three steps on the palate to tap, at three, on the teeth. Lo. Lee. Ta.

—Vladimir Nabokov

A sentence is made up of one or more words expressing a complete thought. (Note: A sentence begins with a capital letter; it ends with a period, a question mark, or an exclamation point.)

The boys passively flopped onto the couch.
(Boys is the plural subject. Flopped is the verb.)

There are four kinds of sentences easily remembered by the sentence "I DIE."
I = Interrogative. D = Declarative. I = Imperative. E = Exclamatory.

Interrogative sentences ask questions. (*Did you know that the Statue of Liberty is made of copper?*)

Declarative sentences make statements. (*The statue is in New York Harbor.*)

Imperative sentences make commands. They often contain an understood subject (you). (*Go see the Statue of Liberty.*)

Exclamatory sentences communicate strong emotions or surprise. (*Climbing 168 stairs to reach the top of the Statue of Liberty is stupid!*)

A **simple sentence** may have a single subject or a compound subject. It may have a single predicate (verb phrase) or a compound predicate. But a simple sentence has only one independent clause, and it has no dependent clause.

My back aches. (single subject; single predicate)
My teeth and my eyes hurt. (compound subject; single predicate)
My hair and my muscles are deteriorating and disappearing.
(compound subject; compound predicate)

A **compound sentence** consists of two independent clauses. The clauses must be joined by a coordinating conjunction, by punctuation, or by both.

Energy is part of youth, but both are quickly spent.
My middle-aged body is sore; my middle-aged face is wrinkled.

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses (in italics below) and one or more dependent clauses (in boldface).

*My body is rather old, and age is not a state of mind, **unless my bald head is an illusion.*** (two independent clauses; dependent clause)

A **run-on sentence** occurs when two or more simple sentences are joined without punctuation or connecting words.

I thought the ride would never end my eyes were crossed and my fingers were going numb.

Punctuation makes it all better. (*I thought the ride would never end. My eyes were crossed, and my fingers were going numb.*)

The Paragraph

A CLASSIC PARAGRAPH

In Moulmein, in lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people – the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

—“Shooting an Elephant”
by George Orwell

FOR PRACTICE:

Write a single paragraph about either your morning routine or your thoughts on the school dress code. Include a topic sentence and arrange your support by order of importance. Next, write another paragraph on the same topic, but this time support your topic sentence with a different arrangement of details (chronological order, cause and effect, comparison, contrast, or illustration).

The **PARAGRAPH** is a unit of thought. It can be compared to a building block that is made up of separate smaller units (called sentences). Paragraphs help the reader to follow your thinking as you describe, support, or explain your specific topic or idea.

Paragraphs should include a topic sentence that tells the reader what the paragraph is about. Often, the topic sentence should come first. The body of your paragraph is where the writer provides specific details that support the topic sentence. The details must all relate to the rest of the paragraph, and they should be organized in the best possible order (see below for strategies). A closing or clinching sentence comes after all the details have been included in the body. This sentence should reinforce the paragraph’s main idea without repeating anything that has already been expressed.

Types of Paragraphs:

Descriptive—to describe your subject
Narrative—to relate a story
Expository—to clarify or explain
Persuasive—to persuade your reader

Methods for Arranging Details:

chronological order
order of location
order of importance
cause and effect
comparison
contrast
illustration (general to specific)
climax (specific to general)

EXAMPLE ONE:

What is so consistently striking about the way Eskimos used parts of an animal is the breadth of their understanding about what would work. Knowing that muskox horn is more flexible than caribou antler, they preferred it for making the side prongs of a fish spear. For a waterproof bag in which to carry sinews for clothing repair, they chose salmon skin. They selected the strong, translucent intestine of a bearded seal to make a window of a snowhouse—it would fold up for easy traveling and it would not frost over in cold weather. To make small snares for sea ducks, they needed a springy material that would not rot in salt water—baleen fibers. The down feather of a common bird, tethered at the end of a stick in the snow, would reveal the exhalation of a quietly surfacing seal. Polar bear bone was used anywhere a stout, sharp point was required, because it was the hardest bone.

—Barry Lopez

Note that in the paragraph above, the first sentence is the topic sentence, and every word that follows supports it.

The Paragraph

continued

FOR PRACTICE:

Characterize each of the four example paragraphs in this section. Identify their topic sentences and how they arrange their support.

THE BEST WAY TO IMPROVE AS A WRITER?

READ.

Read for pleasure. Read for fun. Read every day, if possible. Read authors you find especially engaging, including some who challenge you, and read everything they have published.

Spend time in the company of good writers. If all you ever read is mediocre writing, your chances of writing anything better are slim. If all you ever read is bad writing—well, you get the idea.

Rereading develops your ear. It gives you a feeling for the rhythm and cadence and flow of language. It suggests the range of possible sentence structures and patterns. It helps you realize the possibilities for imaginative use of figurative language and various figures of speech. Perhaps most important, reading expands your vocabulary.

—Stephen Wilbers,
Keys to Great Writing

EXAMPLE TWO:

One night a moth flew into the candle, was caught, burnt dry, and held. I must have been staring at the candle, or maybe I looked up when a shadow crossed my page; at any rate, I saw it all. A golden female moth, a biggish one with a two-inch wingspan, flapped into the fire, dropped her abdomen into the wet wax, stuck, flamed, frazzled and fried in a second. Her moving wings ignited like tissue paper, enlarging the circle of light in the clearing and creating out of the darkness the sudden blue sleeves of my sweater, the green leaves of jewelweed by my side, the ragged red trunk of a pine. At once the light contracted again and the moth's wings vanished in a fine, foul smoke. At the same time her six legs clawed, curled, blackened and ceased, disappearing utterly. And her head jerked in spasms, making a spattering noise; her antennae crisped and burned away and her heaving mouth parts crackled like pistol fire. When it was all over, her head was, so far as I could determine, gone, gone the long way of her wings and legs. Had she been new, or old? Had she mated and laid her eggs, had she done her work? All that was left was the glowing horn shell of her abdomen and thorax—a fraying, partially collapsed gold tube jammed upright in the candle's round pool.

—Annie Dillard

EXAMPLE THREE:

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

EXAMPLE FOUR:

Science involves a seemingly self-contradictory mix of attitudes: On the one hand it requires an almost complete openness to all ideas, no matter how bizarre and weird they sound, a propensity to wonder. As I walk along, my time slows down; I shrink in the direction of motion, and I get more massive. That's crazy! On the scale of the very small, the molecule can be in this position, in that position, but it is prohibited from being in any intermediate position. That's wild! But the first is a statement of special relativity, and the second is a consequence of quantum mechanics. Like it or not, that's the way the world is. If you insist that it's ridiculous, you will be forever closed to the major findings of science. But at the same time, science requires the most vigorous and uncompromising skepticism, because the vast majority of ideas are simply wrong, and the only way you can distinguish the right from the wrong, the wheat from the chaff, is by critical experiment and analysis.

—Carl Sagan

Usage

FOR PRACTICE: Write a short paragraph using each of the following words correctly.

There they're their accept except you're your
Its it's whose who's good well then than

ERRORS THAT MAKE YOUR TEACHERS WEEP

- Affect vs. Effect
- Among vs. Between
- e.g. vs. i.e.
- Fewer vs. Less
- Its vs. It's
- They're vs. Their vs. There
- Your vs. You're
- $2 + 2 = 5$

accept/except: The verb *accept* means “to receive or believe”; the preposition *except* means “other than.”

I accept your apology. All papers were turned in except for Stan's.

affect/effect: *Affect* means “to influence”; the verb *effect* means “to produce.” The noun *effect* means “the result.”

The story affected the class. Mark's outburst effected a stern look from his father. The effect of the budget cut was larger classes.

allusion/illusion: *Allusion* is an indirect reference to something; *illusion* is a false picture or idea.

The allusions to mythology made the story more meaningful. He had illusions about the prestige of the out-of-state school.

alright/all right: *Alright* is the incorrect form of *all right*.

All right—let's get ready to go.

among/between: *Among* is used when speaking of more than two persons or things. *Between* is used when speaking of only two.

The winner is between Carlos and Deon. Among all the students in the class, they are the two who received the most support.

anyway/anyways: *Anyways* is the incorrect form of *anyway*.

Anyway, I'll see you later.

beside/besides: *Beside* means “by the side of.” *Besides* means “in addition to.”

I put my backpack beside my bed. No one besides Chiffon understood the poem.

can/may: *Can* suggests ability while *may* suggests permission.

Can you do 100 push-ups? You may leave only with my permission.

capital/capitol: The noun *capital* refers to a city or to money. The adjective *capital* means “major or important.” *Capitol* refers to a building.

They had enough capital to start the business. Denver is the capital of Colorado. There was a huge protest on the capitol steps.

compare with/compare to: Things of the same class are *compared with* each other; things of a different class are *compared to* each other.

Serena Williams, compared with Andy Roddick, is similar in strength. The value of a man compared to a flea is not usually debated.

Usage

continued

FOR PRACTICE: Choose the right words.

(You're/Your) my favorite dancer. (Accept/Except) for the first song, the CD is terrific. The team gained (it's/its) reputation after the title game. I have (fewer/less) dollars (than/then) I did this morning. (It's/its) time to buy a new clock. The (affect/effect) of the weather (affected/effected) my mood. I have (to/too/two) go home for (to/too/two) hours. Bobby does (to/too/two).

BYGONE RULES

It's hard to believe, but sometimes English teachers are wrong. In her book *Woe Is I*, Patricia T. O'Conner lists rules for expression that either were always incorrect or have lately faded away. Feel free to debate their merit with any available grammarian.

Here are rules O'Conner insists are not worth following:

Don't split an infinitive.
To go boldly vs. to boldly go. O'Conner: "Writers of English have been merrily splitting infinitives since the 1300's."

It's wrong to end a sentence with a preposition.
O'Conner: "This is a rule that modern grammarians have long tried to get us out from under."

It's wrong to start a sentence with *and* or *but*.
Read any of your favorite writers and see how conventional the practice is.

None is always singular.
O'Conner: "None is singular only when it means 'none of it.' None of the milk was spoiled vs. None of the chickens are hatched—both correct."

Never use *who* when the rules call for *whom*.
Another dying rule.

Don't start a sentence with *there*.
Sometimes this choice makes for a weaker expression, but not always.

complement/compliment: *Complement* refers to that which completes or fulfills. *Compliment* is an expression of admiration or praise.

That color complements the color of your eyes. Many people have difficulty accepting a compliment.

different from/different than: Use *different from* in formal writing.

High school is different from middle school in many ways.

disinterested/uninterested: These words are not synonyms. *Disinterested* means "impartial" or without an interest in an outcome. *Uninterested* means "not interested."

Referees must be disinterested observers. She was uninterested in the argument.

e.g./i.e.: e.g. means "for example"; i.e. means "that is."

My country has many virtues, e.g., its beautiful coastline, but I am quite happy traveling, i.e., I am never homesick.

every day/everyday: *Every day* is a two-word phrase that refers to time; *everyday* is an adjective used to describe something that is ordinary.

Every day I drink two cups of coffee. One should not wear everyday shoes to a formal dance.

farther/further: Use *farther* to refer to physical distance. *Further* generally refers to matters of degree or metaphorical dimension.

The gas station was a lot farther away than I remembered. Before our relationship goes any further, we should talk.

fewer/less: *Fewer* refers to the number of separate units; *less* refers to bulk quantity.

A salad has fewer calories than a hamburger. I have less coffee in my cup than you do.

good/well: *Good* is an adjective; *well* is nearly always an adverb. When used to indicate state of health, *well* is an adjective.

That color looks good on you. He dances well. I am well, thank you.

imply/infer: *Imply* means "to suggest indirectly." *Infer* means to "draw a conclusion."

She implied that my polka-dot tie was inappropriate. I inferred from her accent that she wasn't from around here.

it's/its: *It's* is the contraction of "it is." *Its* is the possessive form of "it."

It's the first day of the semester. The book has never lost its appeal for me.

Usage

continued

FOR PRACTICE:

Invent examples like the ones in the second “For Practice” section of this Usage chapter.

PO-TAY-TO/ PO-TAH-TOE

At www.popvssoda.com one can find just where in the United States people call carbonated soft drinks “soda” or “pop.” The U.S. has many such differences:

In Boston one orders a “frappe” if one wants a milkshake. In Philadelphia sub sandwiches are “hoagies” but back in Boston they are “grinders.” In New Orleans, a girl “making seventeen” means she is now old enough to see R-rated movies on her own.

For more, see Wikipedia’s “Regional Vocabularies” page.

lay/lie: *Lay* means “to place.” *Lie* means “to rest or recline.”

I lay the book on the table. I had to lie down I was so tired.

like/as: *Like* is a preposition meaning “similar to”; *as* is a conjunction. The conjunction *as* has several meanings. *Like* usually introduces a clause.

If you want to make a quilt like mine, you’ll need to construct 24 blocks. As I said before, you’ll need 24 individual blocks.

than/then: *Than* is used for comparison. *Then* is used to note time or to clarify a sequence of events.

I love chocolate more than life itself. She knew then that she got the job. Elvis sang “Blue Moon,” ate a pizza, and then went home.

that/which/who: *That* refers to people or things; *which* refers only to things; *who* refers only to people. *That* introduces essential clauses while *which* introduces nonessential clauses.

These are the shoes that I want you to buy. She is the teacher who assigns the most work. These tacos, which contain extra hot sauce, are too spicy for me. I love cars that have booming stereo systems.

their/there/they’re: *Their* is possessive; *there* is a word that points, locates, or announces; *they’re* is a contraction for *they are*.

Look there! They’re bringing their own lamb to the barbecue!

to/too/two: *To* is a preposition that can mean “in the direction of.” *To* also is used to form an infinitive. *Too* means “also” or “very.” *Two* is the number.

The two cooks were careful not to sue too much butter in the recipe.

who/whom: *Who* is used as the subject of a verb. *Whom* is used as the object for the preposition or as a direct object.

Who ordered the pizza? To whom do we owe our gratitude?

who’s/whose: *Who’s* is the contraction for *who is*. *Whose* is the possessive pronoun.

Who’s riding with me? Whose coat is this?

your/you’re: *Your* is a possessive pronoun. *You’re* is a contraction for *you are*.

Your paper seems complete. You’re probably going to get credit for it.

Transitions

LINKING PARAGRAPHS

Sometimes transitional phrases create natural openings to new paragraphs. Consider:

Although
As a consequence
As a result
As we have seen
At the same time
Accordingly
Another significant factor
By the same token
Certainly
Correspondingly
Consequently
Conversely
Despite these criticisms
Each of these positions
Evidence for this position
Evidently
Finally
For this reason
For these reasons
Furthermore
Given
Having considered X
However
In addition to
In contrast
In short
In this way
Indeed
It can be seen above
It is, however, important
In the face of such
Moreover
Notwithstanding such
Nevertheless
Nonetheless
On the other hand
Of central concern therefore
Subsequently
Similarly
The author, in particular,
This interpretation
This approach
This critique
Thirdly
Therefore
There is also
Thus
To be able to understand such
Undoubtedly
While such X must be X
Whether this claim is true
—essayzone.co.uk

Note: If you can go from one paragraph or idea to another without transitional phrases, your writing will likely be less formulaic and more natural.

FOR PRACTICE:

Write a comparison/contrast paragraph dealing with two artists or performers. Use two transitions from each of the comparison and contrast lists below, and be sure to use a transition for your concluding remarks.

Transitional expressions help the reader move smoothly from one idea to another. Choose transitions carefully.

Immediately following the game, we will call home.

Mozart composed many pieces before age ten. Obviously, the kid was gifted.

Until I learned to type, I never turned in my papers on time.

The Olympics are overrun by advertising. Likewise, the Super Bowl seems to have more commercials than players.

Transitions to show location:

above	away from	beyond	into	over
across	behind	by	near	throughout
against	below	down	off	to the right
along	beneath	in back of	onto	under
among	beside	in front of	on top of	
around	between	inside	outside	

Transitions to show time:

about	first	meanwhile	soon	then
after	second	today	later	next
at	third	tomorrow	afterward	as soon as
before	til	next week	immediately	when
during	until	yesterday	finally	

Transitions for comparison (to show similarities):

as	likewise	like
also	similarly	in the same way

Transitions for contrast (to show differences):

but	otherwise	although	on the other hand
however	yet	still	even though

Transitions for emphasis:

again	for this reason	truly
to repeat	to emphasize	in fact
clearly	obviously	

Transitions to conclude or summarize:

as a result	finally	in conclusion	to sum up
therefore	last	in summary	all in all

Transitions that add information:

again	another	for instance	finally
also	and	moreover	as well
additionally	besides	next	along with
in addition	for example	likewise	equally important

Transitions to clarify:

In other words	for instance	that is	put another way
----------------	--------------	---------	-----------------

Agreement

FUMBLERULES by William Safire

- Avoid run-on sentences they are hard to read.
- No sentence fragments.
- It behooves us to avoid archaisms.
- Also, avoid awkward or affective alliteration.
- Don't use no double negatives.
- If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times: resist hyperbole.
- Avoid commas, that are not necessary.
- Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
- Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.
- Writing carefully, dangling participles should not be used.
- Kill all exclamation points!!!
- Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do.
- Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
- Take the bull by the hand, and don't mix metaphors.
- Don't verb nouns.
- Never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
- Remember to never split an infinitive.
- Always pick on the correct idiom.
- A writer must not shift your point of view.
- The passive voice should never be used.
- Do not put statements in the negative form.
- Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of ten or more words, to their antecedents.
- If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
- Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague.

FOR PRACTICE: Correct the following.

The cars zooms fast by our window. Out of all the audiences we have ever had, it is the best. The public know what's right. Everybody love parties. Kittens hates water. (These examples is silly.)

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT refers to the grammatical relationship between a subject and its verb. The principle of subject-verb agreement—that a verb agrees in number with its subject—is one of the most important concepts in English usage.

Use a singular verb with a singular subject.

The dog walks slowly. (*dog walks*)
Each of the boys has his own car. (*each has*)

The following words are singular and take a singular verb:

one	no one	nobody	either
anyone	anybody	somebody	neither
everyone	everybody	someone	each

The following “group” words take a singular verb if you're thinking of the group as a whole, but they take a plural verb if you're thinking of the individuals in the group:

audience	crowd	group	kind
band	dozen	heap	lot
class	family	herd	none
committee	flock	jury	public

PRONOUN AGREEMENT dictates that a pronoun should agree with the word to which it refers. All pronouns must have an antecedent (the word to which the pronoun refers). If the word referred to is singular, the pronoun should be singular; if that word is plural, the pronoun should be plural.

Each of the students has his own book.
Both of the boys have their own lockers.

Parallelism

FORM

Hyphens: Use hyphens to join the parts of a compound adjective (*after-school activities, fast-growing business, seven-year-old girl*). Do not use hyphens for words with most prefixes (*antismoking, postwar, multicultural, unskilled, nonviolent*). Do use hyphens for prefixes in front of a proper noun (*un-American, pro-American*).

Capitalization: Capitalize proper nouns but not common nouns (*Monday, Passover, summer, jet*). Capitalize a title that precedes a person's name (*Professor John Martin, Sir Paul McCartney*), but not a title that follows a name (*John Hickenlooper, the governor of Colorado*).

Numbers: Spell out numbers through ninety-nine, numbers that begin sentences, and very large round numbers (*Seventy-five percent of all procedures are performed at the hospital. More than eleven thousand patients have benefited in the past fifteen years.*).

Abbreviations: Use the full words for your first reference, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses: *prisoners of war (POWs)*. For common abbreviations, you usually do not need to spell out words (*CBS, DNA, FBI, NASA*). Never abbreviate common words in your writing (*esp., thru, st.*).

FOR PRACTICE:

Correct the three incorrect examples below.

Parallelism expresses similar ideas in the same grammatical structure. If an idea is expressed by an infinitive, a gerund, or a clause, other equal ideas should be expressed by parallel constructions.

Incorrect: *I like hiking, biking, and to swim.
I like to sleep, read, and riding with you.
I ate an apple and pear.*

What to do:

Use the same grammatical structure on both sides of a coordinating conjunction.

I like to hunt and to fish.

Keep members of a series in the same construction.

*Michelle is conscientious, fair, and intelligent.
I like reading, swimming, and singing.*

Keep members of a list in the same construction.

The committee recommended the following: to keep the original name, to continue community service, to maintain weekly meetings.

Use the same structure on both sides of a correlative.

Josh was neither afraid of nor intimidated by his opponent's size.

To emphasize parallel elements, repeat a preposition, an article, the sign of the infinitive, or the introductory word of a long phrase or clause.

She collected coins from Italy, from France, from Spain, and from Zaire.

Using Quotation Marks & Italics

FOR PRACTICE:

Invent a conversation between two people who are angry at each other. Punctuate for clarity.

SAMUEL JOHNSON ON WRITING

What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure.

Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is particularly fine, strike it out.

A man who uses a great many words to express his meaning is like a bad marksman who, instead of aiming a single stone at an object, takes up a handful and throws at it in hopes he may hit.

The two most engaging powers of an author are to make new things familiar and familiar things new.

Language is the dress of thought.

The greatest part of a writer's time is spent in reading in order to write.

To an aspiring writer: Your manuscript is both good and original. But the part that is good is not original, and the part that is original is not good.

No man but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money.

PUNCTUATING DIALOGUE

"What's up?" asked Maria.

"I'm just learning how to write dialogue," answered Fritz.

"Well, what have you learned so far?"

"When writing dialogue," said Fritz, "one must punctuate properly."

"Why?"

"So the reader knows who's talking, silly. For instance, whoever wrote this dialogue knows what he's doing, because he indents every time we start to speak."

"Like now. I see. Obviously I'm Maria, because the writer just indented these words."

"Exactly," said Fritz. "Of course the writer may also mention who is speaking, as in right after I said 'exactly.' And because there is a period after my name, the next word I speak will be capitalized."

"So far it's pretty simple. What else is there to know?" Maria asked.

"You tell me."

"Placing the quotation marks, commas, and periods is certainly important. The whole point of punctuation is so that the reader doesn't notice it," said Maria thoughtfully. "He or she should concentrate on what is being said, not on how it is punctuated. If a writer doesn't know how to use punctuation marks, the reader slows down, stumbles, and loses track."

"So we begin and end the quote with quotation marks," said Fritz. "But sometimes," he pondered, "we break the quote up. Like just now."

"That's so the writer can create a variety of rhythms," agreed Maria. "Or maybe the writer wants to tell how a person is saying something," she giggled.

"Easy enough," said Fritz. "Just as long as the punctuation—the commas and periods—stay inside the quotations." Never do it like this".

"But Fritz, what about writers like Cormac McCarthy and Toni Morrison who ignore some of these rules?"

"That's a story for another time, Maria."

"Whatever."

NAMING TITLES

Use quotation marks to designate the titles of short stories, poems, essays, and songs. Use italics or underlining for the titles of books, movies, plays, and albums. Never use quotation marks or italics for the names of performers (The Rolling Stones, Outkast, Penn & Teller).

"Smells Like Teen Spirit" is the first track on Nirvana's CD *Nevermind*.

Chris Rock produced the show *Everybody Hates Chris*.

Of all the jazz standards, I like "Someone to Watch Over Me" best.

Mark Twain's story "A Dog's Tale" is funnier to me than *Tom Sawyer*.

Rent is an updated take on Puccini's *La Boheme*.

Jay-Z and Kanye West collaborated on *Watch the Throne*, featuring the single "Otis."

The essay "High School Is Great!" in the collection *Things That Are Sometimes True*, is written with force and candor.

Active & Passive Voice

FOR PRACTICE:

Write five sentences in passive voice, then rewrite them using the active voice.

THE SLIPPERY AND THE SINISTER

Sometimes speakers, writers, bureaucrats, presidents, smoke-blowers, and tyrants use the passive voice to avoid responsibility, disguise intention, or inflate empty ideas. By removing the actor from the action, passive-voice users aim for responsibility-free certitude. For example:

Trespassers will be shot.

Mistakes were made.

You are hereby informed that all non-licensed repairs are required to be registered.

All protesters are subject to arrest.

I wanted my parents to know, but somehow the principal's message was deleted from our answering machine.

The primary reasons writers and teachers prefer the active voice over the passive voice are:

The active voice requires fewer words.

PASSIVE

A wallet was given to me by my father.

You are loved by me.

ACTIVE

My father gave me a wallet.

I love you.

The active voice assigns an actor to action.

PASSIVE

The football was thrown and caught.

The bill was passed on Thursday.

ACTIVE

Manning threw the football to Decker.

Congress passed the bill on Thursday.

From *Pinckert's Practical Grammar*:

Too frequently the passive is used to cover up a mystery about who is doing what is being done. (*It is thought. Mistakes were made. Trespassers will be shot.*) When the verb is vigorous, the passive voice can be ridiculous. (*My nose was being punched by you. Hot dogs are hated by her.*) In short, the passive voice may be used (I just used it) when the verb is unexciting and the agent unimportant or unknown. In good writing these conditions don't often occur, and that's why the passive voice is seldom used. (I did it again.)

Sometimes, however, the passive voice serves what the writer wants. In the book *Woe Is I*, Patricia T. O'Conner writes that the passive might work better in cases like these:

"1. When there's a punch line. You might want to place the one performing the action at the end of the sentence for emphasis or surprise: *The gold medal in the 500-meter one-man bobsled competition has been won by a six-year-old child!*

2. When nobody cares whodunit. Sometimes the one performing the action isn't even mentioned: *Hermione has been arrested. Witherspoon is being treated for a gunshot wound.* We don't need to know who put the cuffs on Hermione, or who's stitching up Witherspoon."

Thesis Statements

**FROM WRITING &
REVISING BY
KENNEDY, KENNEDY &
MUTH:**

Often a good, clear thesis suggests an organization for your ideas. For example:

*WORKING THESIS:
Despite the
disadvantages of living
downtown, I wouldn't
live anywhere else.*

*FIRST SECTION:
Disadvantages of living
downtown*

*SECOND SECTION:
Advantages of living
there*

*CONCLUSION:
Affirmation of your
fondness for downtown
city life*

A clear thesis helps to organize you, keeping you on track as you write. Your thesis can then direct you as you select details and connect sections of the essay. Its purpose is to guide you on a quest, not to limit your ideas.

As you write, however, you don't have to cling to a thesis for dear life. If further investigation changes your thinking, you can change your thesis. As you write, revise, and revise again.

*WORKING THESIS:
Because wolves are a
menace to people and
farm animals, they ought
to be exterminated.*

*REVISED THESIS:
The wolf, a relatively
peaceful animal useful in
nature's scheme of
things, ought to be
protected.*

FOR PRACTICE:

Pick a controversial topic (war, curfew, censorship) and craft three thesis statements on that single subject. Aim to make each version more specific and pointed than the one before.

Your thesis statement is the most important part of your paper. If you write a bad one, your reader may have trouble finding the virtues of your thinking. If you write a stimulating thesis statement, your reader will wish to read more and follow your argument.

A thesis statement should accomplish two tasks: it should let the reader know what to expect, and it should focus the writer's skills, tools, and arguments. The rest of the paper should simply and vigorously support whatever the thesis statement has to say.

Make sure your thesis statement is specific, interesting, and not at all obvious. It should also be debatable, rather than something that can be easily proven or answered via Google. Make sure it is a complete sentence and not a question. Do not make your thesis statement too broad; it will be impossible to support a vague thesis in a school-length paper.

FIRST EXAMPLE

Bad: Malcolm X was one of the great figures of the 20th century.

Better: Malcolm X was one of the most complex leaders of the 20th century.

Best: Malcolm X's conversion to Islam changed both his life and the trajectory of the civil rights movement.

Comment: The first version is too broad and vague. The writer is in danger of lumping all he or she knows about the subject into an unfocused paper. The second version is much better, focusing on the subject's leadership, not his entire life. The third statement is best because it is the most specific; it makes a strong claim about a specific event in the subject's life. The body of the paper must then support the claim with specific evidence, examples, and insight.

SECOND EXAMPLE

Bad: The poem "Ozymandias" is very ironic.

Still Bad: Shelley ends his poem "Ozymandias" with an ironic twist.

Better: In "Ozymandias," Shelley employs irony to undermine not only his subject's grand proclamation but also the overconfidence present in our own civilization.

MORE EXAMPLES

Good: Urban poverty, whether in Brooklyn, Sao Paulo, or St. Petersburg, has inspired some of our greatest artists.

Good: Clint Eastwood's legacy as a tough-guy actor overshadows how sensitive a director he has become.

Good: Whether it is present in an 8th grade report or a presidential address, sloppy thinking produces weak writing.

Good: Every physicist owes a debt to Isaac Newton.

Introductions & Conclusions

FOR PRACTICE:

Rewrite an introduction and a conclusion to a published essay. Consider applying some of the options listed below.

VIVID NOT VAGUE

Use strong verbs and nouns to enliven your writing. Be specific and vivid by avoiding the general and the vague.

Examples:

I am very tired.
vs.
I am exhausted.

The player defended against the shot.
vs.
Howard swatted the ball away.

She gave an amusing speech.
vs.
She packed her speech with humor.

I woke up when the alarm clock rang.
vs.
The alarm clock shattered my sleep.

My sister really likes to eat dessert.
vs.
My sister is ruled by her sweet tooth.
or
My sister lives for chocolate pudding.
or
My sister loves cake, ice cream, and pie.

To both engage your reader and to respect your reader's intelligence, your introductions and conclusions should avoid the predictable and the generic.

The **introduction** draws readers into the essay and focuses their attention on the main idea and purpose—often stated in a thesis statement.

What to avoid in introductions: "This paper is about"; "The thesis statement is"; a list of what you claim; telegraphing your entire paper; "According to Webster's"

What to consider trying in introductions: background information, raising a question or questions, citing a compelling or unusual statistic, visualizing a relevant scenario ("imagine . . ."), relaying an anecdote, citing a provocative or amusing quotation, etc.

The **conclusion** ties together the elements of the essay and provides a final impression for readers to take away with them.

What to avoid in conclusions: restating the thesis and repeating any information (trust your reader to remember what you have already written). Instead of repeating your thesis, reinforce it by tying ideas together.

What to consider trying in conclusions: citing an interesting fact/statistic not already used, envisioning a relevant scenario, zooming in on a small detail of your argument/subject that reinforces your thesis, zooming out to the big picture of your argument/subject that reinforces your thesis, envisioning or hinting at future consequences, exploring your subject's legacy, spinning your argument to a surprising or amusing finish, etc.

Read the following introduction and conclusion as models. Know that the middle paragraphs have been deleted, but trust that they were well done.

INTRO: It seems as if everywhere you turn, someone is trying to be politically correct. Whether it involves racial minorities or women, racist and sexist comments are no longer tolerated in places such as the schoolyard and the workplace. Why is it, then, that minorities and women are still exploited in everyday advertisements? Television, magazines, and billboards no longer show products, but rather show gimmicks to sell their product. In general, these gimmicks enforce racial and gender stereotypes.

CONCLUSION: The only winners in these types of ads are the advertisers themselves, who make money when customers buy the product. There needs to be a public awakening, for racism and sexism are particularly hazardous when they are inserted into entertaining advertisements. Advertisers need to take responsibility for their own actions and to end this type of exploitation. If they do not, we the consumer can always force them. After all, we have the dollars and the sense.

Irony

IRONY OR SARCASM? (simplified)

If you've ever said to someone, "I love what you're wearing" when you actually think it looks awful, there are three possibilities:

You want that person to believe you, in which case you're **lying**, but probably out of a kindly impulse.

You don't want to be believed: you want to upset the person. In this case you're being **sarcastic**.

You don't want to be believed: you want the other person to share a feeling of amusement. In this case you're being **ironic**.

—LitNotesUK

FOR PRACTICE:

With a partner, come up with two examples for each of the irony types below. Choose from life, books, movies, essays, conversations, etc.

DEFINITIONS OF IRONY

1. In rhetoric, words with an implication opposite to their usual meaning. Ironic comment may be humorous or mildly sarcastic, as for example when, at a difficult moment, an act of kindness makes things worse, and someone says, "Well, that's a *lot* better, isn't it?" Expressions *heavy with irony* are often used to drive a point home: "I'm really looking forward to seeing him, *I don't think*." In such usages, irony slides into sarcasm. (For a distinction between irony and sarcasm, see the words to the left.)
2. In general usage, incongruity between what is expected and what happens, and an outcome that displays such incongruity. The sentence adverb *ironically* is often used to draw attention to it: "*Ironically*, his kindness only made things worse."
3. Wry awareness of life's incongruity and irrationality. Irony as social comment is widely taken to work best without a fanfare.
4. Another definition that is perhaps easy to remember: *meaningful incongruity*. Irony does not describe simple surprise or disappointment (*like rain on your wedding day*). An event must have some resonance or compounded circumstance (*like rain on a weatherman's wedding day*).

Specific types of irony:

LINGUISTIC IRONY. A duality of meaning, now the classic form of irony. The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning. This type of irony is kind of a combination of definitions 1 and 3 above. Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) opens with the words, "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife". Here, the explicit meaning is undermined by the suggestion that single women want a rich husband.

SOCRATIC IRONY. A mask of innocence and ignorance adopted to win an argument. In Plato's dialogues, Socrates often plays the weak and wily underdog who pretends ignorance and asks seemingly foolish questions so as to move a debate in the direction he wants.

DRAMATIC IRONY. A double vision of what is happening in a play or a real-life situation. In Greek tragedy, the characters were blind to fateful circumstances of which the audience was all too well aware, producing a privileged and often poignant appreciation of the plot.

COSMIC IRONY. This refers to writing in which life, or God, or fate, or some other powerful force seems to be manipulating events in a way that mocks all the efforts of the protagonist. The phrase *irony of fate* suggests that, like drama, life treats people as if wryly mocking them, delivering at a strategic moment the opposite to what is deserved or at first seemed likely.

—The Oxford Companion to the English Language

Wordiness

CONTRAST

Note how one can prune unnecessary words from one's writing and preserve meaning.

There was much strife and trouble going on at this time in the former Soviet Union. People in Moscow were revolting against what they thought to be corrupt and unfair government. Boris Yeltsin, the country's leader, was on the hot seat. He responded by fighting back. He sent in tanks, soldiers, and helicopter gunships against rebels who had taken control over Russia's parliament building. All over the world people watched the violent drama unfold on CNN. Some Russians found the whole thing very sad or scary. On the TV one Russian man said, "I'm embarrassed for my country. Great nations should not have civil war in the streets, soldiers firing on rebels, and a capital city on fire."

(133 words)

Because Boris Yeltsin's government was seen as corrupt and unfair, many Russians rebelled. After protesters seized Russia's parliament building, Yeltsin ordered tanks, soldiers, and helicopter gunships to attack, while CNN broadcast the violent drama around the world. To reporters Russians expressed both fear and sorrow. One man said, "I'm embarrassed for my country. Great nations should not have civil war in the streets, soldiers firing on rebels, and a capital city on fire."

(77 words)

FOR PRACTICE: Omit unnecessary words.

In my opinion, the practice of the dress code, which is applied to everyone in the school, is one of those things that should be considered very carefully. The fact of the matter is, students should be able to express themselves according to their own self-identity. There is no doubt that this issue will be a matter of discussion throughout the years we attend this school.

A writer should strive for pithiness (*pithy* means "terse and full of meaning"). Write no unnecessary words or phrases. If one masters a few principles, one's writing will grow ever more graceful and forceful. Note how the phrases on the left, below, can be easily whittled with no loss of meaning. (Some examples come from Strunk and White's *Elements of Style*.)

<i>the question as to whether</i>	<i>whether</i>
<i>there is no doubt that</i>	<i>no doubt (doubtless)</i>
<i>used for fuel purposes</i>	<i>used for fuel</i>
<i>he is a man who</i>	<i>he</i>
<i>in a hasty manner</i>	<i>hastily</i>
<i>his story is a strange one</i>	<i>his story is strange</i>
<i>this is a subject that</i>	<i>this subject</i>
<i>the reason why is that</i>	<i>because</i>
<i>owing to the fact that</i>	<i>since (because)</i>
<i>in spite of the fact that</i>	<i>though (although)</i>
<i>call your attention to the fact that</i>	<i>remind you (notify you)</i>
<i>the fact that he had not succeeded</i>	<i>his failure</i>
<i>the fact that I had arrived</i>	<i>my arrival</i>
<i>in order to</i>	<i>to</i>

The car, which was known for its racing prowess
The car, known for its racing prowess

Gore, who was Clinton's vice president
Gore, Clinton's vice president

One of the reasons for this is that it gets cold at night.
One reason is that it gets cold at night.

The phone of my sister kept ringing.
My sister's phone kept ringing.

The speech by Colbert was filled with a great deal of humor.
Colbert filled his speech with humor.

My ambition is that I hope to one day become an architect.
I hope to one day become an architect.
My ambition is to become an architect.

This robs the food of nutrients and makes it either soggy, in the case of vegetables, or tough, in the case of meats.
This robs the food of nutrients, making vegetables soggy and meat tough.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that there will be no school on Thursday.
Attention: No school on Thursday!

Clichés

VISUAL AND MUSICAL CLICHES

Of course, clichés exist outside of writing and speaking. Hollywood, the radio, and art galleries have their own hackneyed tropes:

In the movies:

When action stars walk in slow motion away from an explosion.

When the teenage girl running away from the monster trips and falls down.

When a car won't start, just when the driver needs that car to start.

When the hero is alone, surrounded by dozens of bad guys, who then take turns attacking one by one.

In music:

When the lead singer yells, "Hello, Denver/Cleveland/etc! Are you ready to make some noise?"

When the rapper says, "Wave your hands in the air like you just don't care!"

When the audience sways their arms from side to side during a ballad.

In art:

When the road in the painting disappears into a distant sunset.

FOR PRACTICE:

- A. Go on a cliché scavenger hunt. First person to read or hear a dozen clichés wins. Promising places to look: the sports page of a newspaper, talk radio, campaign speeches, social studies textbooks.
- B. Identify three clichés in the following fields: music, movies, art, television, theater, music videos, YouTube clips, education.

George Orwell writes that some authors use words the way people build prefabricated houses: rather than assembling language word by word or brick by brick, these writers take readymade phrases and plop them together. Some of the easiest phrases to adopt are clichés—hackneyed, overused words and ideas. Avoid them in your own writing. Below is a list of just some of the thousands of clichés that infest the English language. They may have been clever once, but now their usage generally betrays a tired writer opting for the easiest and most automatic words available. When they accumulate, they deaden the page.

- a bull in a china shop
- a jack of all trades and a master of none
- a penny saved is a penny earned
- a stitch in time saves nine
- a watched pot never boils
- acid test
- and you can take that to the bank
- at the end of the day
- axe to grind
- barking up the wrong tree
- bated breath
- beat a dead horse
- better late than never
- bite the dust
- bitter end
- break a leg
- broad daylight
- buckle under
- bury the hatchet
- calm before the storm
- caught red-handed
- caught with his pants down
- come hell or high water
- dead as a doornail
- dead giveaway
- don't burn your bridges
- don't let the bed bugs bite
- don't tempt fate
- eat my dust
- face the music
- fate worse than death
- feel like a fifth wheel
- few and far between
- flat as a pancake
- flown the coop
- foregone conclusion
- free as a bird
- from the frying pan into the fire
- generous to a fault
- get on her high horse
- go the extra mile
- go with the flow
- handwriting on the wall
- harsh reality
- he gave a hundred and ten percent
- he went the whole 9 yards.
- he's always blowing his own horn
- he's chomping at the bit
- he's fishing for compliments
- he's pulling your leg
- he's pushing up daisies
- hot enough for you?
- I have a bone to pick with you
- I trust him as far as I can throw him
- if I were in his shoes
- if it ain't broke, don't fix it
- if it's not one thing it's another
- if you can't beat 'em, join 'em
- in seventh heaven
- it's not the heat it's the humidity
- jump on the bandwagon
- keep your nose to the grindstone
- kick the bucket
- larger than life
- leaps and bounds
- like a broken record
- like a fish out of water
- live and let live
- look before you leap
- look out for number one
- missed the boat
- open a can of worms
- patience is a virtue
- pay an arm and a leg
- playing with fire
- pull a fast one
- pulled the wool over my eyes
- pushing the envelope
- put the pedal to the metal
- raining cats and dogs
- running around like a chicken with its head cut off
- sharp as a tack
- she's getting the red carpet treatment
- shooting for the moon
- sigh of relief
- silence is golden
- sink or swim
- snowball's chance in hell
- stiff as a board
- that's icing on the cake
- that's just like the pot calling the kettle black.
- that's water under the bridge
- the blind leading the blind
- they're like two peas in a pod
- think outside the box
- tighter than a drum
- waiting for the other shoe to drop
- wake up and smell the coffee
- we're going to burn the midnight oil
- what goes around comes around
- when hell freezes over

Sentence Sins

LONG DOES NOT EQUAL BAD

Sentence length has nothing to do with whether or not a sentence is a run-on or not.

Here is a sentence from "A Rose for Emily" by William Faulkner:

They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men — some in their brushed Confederate uniforms — on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years.

That sentence is "only" 128 words long. Sometimes writers go much further. Faulkner himself wrote a 1288-word sentence in *Absalom, Absalom!*; Proust often exceeds 700 words; Stanley Elkin loved 500-word sentences as much as he loved two-word sentences; James Joyce ends *Ulysses* with a 12,931-word sentence; and Nigel Tomm wrote an entire novel with just one sentence of 469,856 words. But we are told his teachers would have marked it as a run-on.

FOR PRACTICE: Rewrite so that the sentences vary in length.

Down the street there was a car crash. A Honda was hit by a Toyota. The drivers were very upset with each other at first. It happened in front of Pizza Hut. A half hour later the men were laughing together.

I kissed him. He kissed me back. It was raining. A dog barked. Cars drove by. The sun was setting. I thought of someone else.

If a student were to snoop on a conversation in the East High teachers' lounge, he or she would quickly tire of all the chitchat over sandwich swapping, sore feet, and Jaguar dealerships. But that student would also be privy to the English teacher's top three complaints, addressed on this page.

Run-on sentences

A run-on sentence contains at least two independent clauses (ideas that can stand on their own) but runs them together without the necessary punctuation or relationships.

You will like that movie it has a lot of action.

Actually I was born in Texas I have a lot of relatives there.

Jack killed the giant, the golden goose was his, he escaped down the stalk.

Corrections:

You will like that movie, because it has a lot of action.

Actually, I was born in Texas. In fact, I have a lot of relatives there.

After Jack killed the giant, the golden goose was his. He escaped down the stalk.

Comma splices

Comma splice errors occur when the writer inserts a comma between two independent clauses. Generally, the sentence should be broken up or fixed with a coordinating conjunction.

I lost my ticket, it would have won me free tickets to the prom.

Misplaced and dangling modifiers

Place modifiers as closely as you can to what they modify. Otherwise, you may modify the wrong element (misplaced modifier) or you may forget to add what is being modified (dangling modifier).

Misplaced:

Michael Phelps accepted the gold for swimming with tears in his eyes.

Katniss saw the forest fire approaching through the bathroom window.

Aretha served the dessert wearing a yellow dress.

Dangling:

While surfing in the Pacific, my car was stolen.

Waving hello to my mother, the train carried my sister home.

Running with a fast break, the basket got closer and closer.

Solutions: Re-order and fortify.

With tears in his eyes, Michael Phelps accepted the gold for swimming.

As I surfed in the Pacific, my car was stolen.

Logical Fallacies

FOR PRACTICE:

Using as many logical fallacies as possible, write a page in favor of deporting all puppies and kittens from the United States (or any other horrifying proposition).

AN INTERNET ARGUMENT TRAP

Godwin's Law

As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches. At that point, whoever makes that comparison automatically loses the argument.

HOW NOT TO ARGUE: A logical fallacy is an error in argument. Unfortunately, fallacies are often effective. But if one is able to spot such fallacies, one is better armed for any verbal conflict. (Examples below from *Stephen's Guide to the Logical Fallacies*: <http://onegoodmove.org/fallacy/toc.htm>) Here are just a sample.

AD HOMINEM

(from the Latin, meaning "against the man" or "against the person")

An ad hominem is a general category of fallacies in which a claim or argument is rejected on the basis of some irrelevant fact about the author or the person you are arguing against.

Example: Bill: "I believe abortion is wrong."

Dave: "Of course you would say that, you're a priest."

Bill: "What about the arguments I gave to support my position?"

Dave: "Those don't count. Like I said, you're a priest, so you have to say that abortion is wrong."

APPEAL TO FEAR

A fallacy that occurs when fear takes the place of evidence.

Example: "You know, Mr. Smith, I really need to get an A in this class. I'd like to stop by after school to discuss my grade. I'll be in the building later visiting my mother. She's your principal, by the way. See you later."

APPEAL TO FLATTERY

A fallacy that occurs when flattery takes the place of evidence.

Example: "Might I say that this is the best history class I've ever taken? By the way, about those two points I need to get an A . . ."

APPEAL TO NOVELTY

A fallacy that occurs when it is assumed that something is better or correct simply because it is new. *Example:* "You should buy the Pretentium 350. It's got a new look and a whole new operating system."

APPEAL TO RIDICULE

A fallacy in which ridicule or mockery is substituted for evidence in an "argument."

Example: "Sure the defendant's attorney says we should have mercy on his client, but that's just pathetic."

APPEAL TO TRADITION

A fallacy that occurs when it is assumed that something is better or correct simply because it is older, traditional, or "always has been done." This sort of "reasoning" is fallacious because the age of something does not automatically make it correct or better than something newer.

Example: "Of course our king is the best. He has been on the throne longer than any other king in history, so he has got to be good."

BEGGING THE QUESTION

(also known as Circular Reasoning) A fallacy in which the premises include the claim that the conclusion is true or (directly or indirectly) assume that the conclusion is true.

Examples: "If robbery were not illegal, then it would not be against the law." or "The belief in God is universal. After all, everyone believes in God."

CONFUSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

Committed when a person assumes that one event must cause another just because the events occur together. *Example:* It is claimed by some people that severe illness is caused by depression and anger.

After all, people who are severely ill are very often depressed and angry. Thus, it follows that the cause of severe illness actually is the depression and anger. So, a good and cheerful attitude is the key to staying healthy.

Logical Fallacies

continued

FROM DAVE BARRY'S "HOW TO WIN AN ARGUMENT"

I argue very well. Ask any of my remaining friends. I can win an argument on any topic, against any opponent. People know this, and steer clear of me at parties. Often, as a sign of their great respect, they don't even invite me. You too can win arguments. Simply follow these rules:

Use meaningless but weighty-sounding words and phrases.

Memorize this list: *Let me put it this way, In terms of, Vis-a-vis, Per se, As it were, Qua, So to speak.*

You should also memorize some Latin abbreviations such as "Q.E.D.," "e.g.," and "i.e." These are all short for "I speak Latin, and you do not."

Here's how to use these words and phrases. Suppose you want to say: "Peruvians would like to order appetizers more often, but they don't have enough money." You never win arguments talking like that.

But you WILL win if you say: "Let me put it this way. In terms of appetizers vis-a-vis Peruvians qua Peruvians, they would like to order them more often, so to speak, but they do not have enough money per se, as it were. Q.E.D."

Only a fool would challenge that statement.

FOR PRACTICE:

Examine any politician's speech for logical fallacies. You may also inspect the arguments of cable news talkers, campaign ads, newspaper columns, and lawyers' appeals to juries.

GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

Committed when a person rejects a claim simply because it is pointed out that people she dislikes accept the claim.

Example: Joely and Natalie are discussing for whom they will vote for Student Senate. Natalie hates Bret and Wayne because they make fun of her clothes.

Joely: "So, who are you going to vote for?"

Natalie: "Well, I was thinking about voting for Emma, since we have never had an Eskimo in the Senate. But Johnny is certainly the best qualified. He'd be great."

Joely: "You know, Bret and Wayne are supporting him too. I never thought I'd see you and those two pigs on the same side."

Natalie: "Well, maybe it is time that we have an Eskimo."

HASTY GENERALIZATION

Committed when a person draws a conclusion about a population based on a sample that is not large enough.

Example: Sam is riding her bike in her hometown in Maine, minding her own business. A station wagon comes up behind her and the driver starts beeping his horn and then tries to force her off the road. As he goes by, the driver yells, "Get on the sidewalk where you belong!" Sam sees that the car has Ohio plates and concludes that all Ohio drivers are jerks.

POST HOC

(from the Latin phrase, *Post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, meaning "After this, therefore because of this") Committed when it is concluded that one event causes another simply because the proposed cause occurred before the proposed effect. More simply, this fallacy concludes that A causes B because A occurs before B, and there is not sufficient evidence to actually warrant such a claim.

Example: "I had been doing pretty poorly this season. Then my girlfriend gave me these neon laces for my spikes and I won my next three races. Those laces must be good luck. If I keep on wearing them I can't help but win!"

RED HERRING

(also known as Smoke Screen) Committed when an irrelevant topic is presented in order to divert attention from the original issue. The basic idea is to "win" an argument by leading attention away from the argument and to another topic.

Example: "Argument" against a ballot amendment: "We admit that this amendment is popular. But we also urge you to note that there are so many amendments on this ballot that the whole thing is getting ridiculous."

SLIPPERY SLOPE

Committed when a person wishes to show a proposition is wrong by presenting increasingly unacceptable events if the proposition is accepted.

Examples: "If I make an exception for you, then I'll have to make an exception for everyone." "If we pass laws against fully-automatic weapons, then it won't be long before we pass laws on all weapons, and then we will begin to restrict other rights, and finally we will end up living in a communist state. Thus, we should not ban fully-automatic weapons."

STRAW MAN

Committed when a person simply ignores a person's actual position and substitutes a distorted, exaggerated or misrepresented version of that position.

Example: "Senator Jones says that we should not fund the attack submarine program. I disagree entirely. I can't understand why he wants to leave us defenseless like that."

Spelling

ODE TO MY SPELLCHECKER

Eye halve a spelling
chequer
It came with my pea sea.
It plainly Marx four my
revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot
sea.

Eye strike a quay and
type a word
And weight four it two
say
Weather eye yam wrong
oar write
It shows me strait a
weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is
maid,
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the
era rite.
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem
threw it
I am shore your pleased
two no.
Its letter perfect awl the
weigh
My chequer told me
sew.

—Anonymous

G-H-O-T-I

To demonstrate how
disgusted he was by the
inconsistency of English
spelling, George Bernard
Shaw asserted that there
are two ways to spell
that common creature of
the sea: *FISH*, or
GHOTI. The second
word is pronounced just
like the first, thanks to
these sounds:

GH from *laugh*
O from *women*
TI from *motion*

So the next time you
catch and grill a trout or
a salmon—you know, a
ghoti—think of Shaw.

FOR PRACTICE:

Write a single paragraph using at least ten words that obey the rules below.

SPELLING RULES AND ADVICE

Rule 1: Write *l* before *e* except after *c*, unless the vowel sounds like *a* as in *neighbor* and *weigh*.

Examples: *receive* *perceive* *relief*

Exceptions: Eight of the exceptions are included in this sentence:

Neither sheikh dared leisurely seize either weird species of financiers.

When the *ie/ei* combination is not pronounced *ee*, it is usually spelled *ei*.

Examples: *reign* *foreign* *weigh* *neighbor*

Exceptions: *fiery* *friend* *mischief* *view*

Rule 2: When a one-syllable word (*bat*) ends in a consonant (*t*) preceded by one vowel (*a*), double the final consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel (*batting*).

sum — *summary* *god* — *goddess*

When a multi-syllable word (*control*) ends in a consonant (*t*) preceded by one vowel (*o*), the accent is on the last syllable (*control*), and the suffix begins with a vowel (*ing*)—the same rule holds true: double the final consonant (*controlling*).

prefer — *preferred* *begin* — *beginning*
forget — *forgettable* *admit* — *admittance*

Rule 3: If a word ends with a silent *e*, drop the *e* before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

state — *stating* — *statement* *like* — *liking* — *likeness*
use — *using* — *useful* *nine* — *ninety* — *nineteen*

Note: You do not drop the *e* when the suffix begins with a consonant. Exceptions include *judgment*, *truly*, *argument*, and *ninth*.

Rule 4: When *y* is the last letter in a word and the *y* is preceded by a consonant, change the *y* to *i* before adding any suffix except those beginning with *i*.

fry — *fries* *hurry* — *hurried* *lady* — *ladies*
ply — *pliable* *happy* — *happiness* *beauty* — *beautiful*

When forming the plural of a word that ends with a *y* that is preceded by a vowel, add *s*.

toy — *toys* *play* — *plays* *monkey* — *monkeys*

Writing Checklist

WISDOM

I have already made this paper too long, for which I must crave pardon, not having now time to make it shorter.

—Benjamin Franklin

The difference between the right word and the almost-right word is the difference between the lightning and the lightning-bug.

—Mark Twain

You can always edit a bad page. You can't edit a blank page.

—Jodi Picoult

Someone watches over us when we write. Mother. Teacher. Shakespeare. God.

—Martin Amis

People say to write about what you know. I'm here to tell you, no one wants to read that, because you don't know anything. So write about something you don't know. And don't be scared, ever.

—Toni Morrison

Thirty years ago my older brother, who was ten years old at the time, was trying to get a report written on birds that he'd had three months to write, which was due the next day. He was at the kitchen table close to tears, surrounded by binder paper and pencils and unopened books about birds, immobilized by the hugeness of the task ahead. Then my father sat down beside him put his arm around my brother's shoulder, and said, "Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird."

—Anne Lamott

FOR PRACTICE:

Trade papers with a classmate and apply this checklist to each other's writing.

QUESTIONS TO ASK AS YOU ADVANCE YOUR WRITING TO ITS FINAL DRAFT:

- ___ 1. Is my heading complete?
- ___ 2. Is my format (margins, font size, title) correct?
- ___ 3. Have I re-checked my teacher's assignment and rubric?
- ___ 4. Is my thesis clear?
- ___ 5. Do I have enough support for my argument?
- ___ 6. Have I checked my spelling?
- ___ 7. Have I checked my grammar?
- ___ 8. Have I proofread out loud?
- ___ 9. Does every sentence make sense?
- ___ 10. Does every sentence deserve to stay in the essay?
- ___ 11. Are my sentences varied in length?
- ___ 12. Does each paragraph have a topic sentence?
- ___ 13. Do my supporting details focus on each paragraph's main idea?
- ___ 14. Have I credited all paraphrased ideas and direct quotations?
- ___ 15. Have I followed the rules for citations and bibliography?
- ___ 16. Have I used transitions to link ideas and paragraphs?
- ___ 17. Have I pruned unnecessary words?
- ___ 18. Have I omitted clichés?
- ___ 19. Have I expressed my ideas with force?
- ___ 20. Have I omitted redundant arguments and details?
- ___ 21. Does my introduction get my reader's attention?
- ___ 22. Does my conclusion reinforce but not repeat my main points?
- ___ 23. Can I go outside and play now?

Pre-Writing

FOR PRACTICE:

For any assignment you are working on for a teacher, perform the Cubing exercise below.

ORWELL'S ADVICE

1. Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

—George Orwell,
“Politics and the
English Language”

“I don’t know so well what I think until I see what I say.” —*Flannery O’Connor*

Once we have our topic, how do we discover what we have to say? How do we figure out how to say it? Planning, either through mapping or writing complete sentences, will help us save time, arrange and prioritize our ideas, and determine connections.

Mapping

Clustering or webbing

Write the topic in the center of your paper and circle it. Write main parts or ideas around the topic and circle these. Draw lines connecting them to your topic. Then, write facts, details, examples or ideas and connect them with lines to the relevant parts.

Listing

Write the main topic or idea. Under this, as quickly as possible, jot down any and all possibilities without judging. Consider the list. Star the most promising items and cross out the least promising. Number the items in order of importance. Group like items. Add new items.

Scratch or informal outline

Simply list the essay’s main points in order. One item may take two paragraphs, or two items may be developed in a single paragraph. Scratch outlines are also useful for analyzing difficult reading passages.

Writing

Cubing

Explore a subject through six perspectives:

- Describing – color, size, shape, appearance, texture and names of parts
- Comparing – similarities and differences of the subject
- Associating – what the subject brings to mind, how it connects to experience
- Analyzing – origins, functions, significance or relationships of its parts
- Applying – ability or uses of the subject
- Arguing – pros and cons

Limit writing to no more than 3 – 5 minutes per perspective. Continue until all perspectives are complete. Include current knowledge, needed information and possible sources for that information. Reread for an angle, an insight or a surprise. These may supply a focus or detail to include in a draft.

Pre-Writing

continued

FOR PRACTICE:

Make a formal outline of a published essay. Comment on the author's organizational choices.

MORE WISDOM

Writing is easy. All you do is sit staring at a blank sheet of paper until the drops of blood form on your forehead.

—Gene Fowler

By writing much, one learns to write well.

—Robert Southey

I love deadlines. I like the whooshing sound they make as they fly by.

—Douglas Adams

The art of writing is applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.

—Mary Heaton Vorse

Good prose is like a windowpane.

—George Orwell

There are three rules for writing a novel. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

—W. Somerset Maugham

The wastebasket is a writer's best friend.

—Isaac Bashevis Singer

When something can be read without great effort, great effort has gone into its writing.

—Enrique Jardiel Poncela

I hate writing. I love having written.

—Dorothy Parker

Dialoguing

Write a conversation between two speakers. If the conversation flags, have one speaker ask the other a question. Write brief responses to keep it moving.

Dramatizing

The philosopher Kenneth Burke developed this as a way thinking about how people interact and as a way of analyzing stories and films. A five-pointed star represents five points of dramatizing: action (what), actor (who), setting (where and when), motive (why), and method (how). Although these are typically journalistic, dramatizing examines the relationship between and among the five elements. For example, how does the setting inform the action? What does the actor's language or actions reveal about him or her? How do the other actors affect the main actor?

Keeping a journal

- List new words and ideas; respond to what you are learning
- Respond to readings, assigned and personal, or copy especially memorable passages and comment
- Record observations and overhead conversations; write sketches of people
- Free write for 10 -15 minutes daily
- Organize your time; prioritize and plan
- Follow a particular event – a trial, a campaign, a controversy

Source: *St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, Short Ninth Edition

FORMAL OUTLINE

The title of the paper is placed at the top center of the outline. The word *outline* is not necessary. Major divisions are indicated by Roman numerals (I, II, etc.), subdivisions are indicated by English capital letters (A, B, etc.), subdivisions are indicated by Arabic numbers (1, 2, etc.), and further divisions are indicated by small letters, Arabic numerals in parentheses, and then small letters in parentheses.

Title of Paper

- I.
 - A.
 1.
 - a.
 - (1).
 - (a).

Plagiarism

CAUTIONARY TALES

Nada Behziz of the Bakersfield Californian plagiarized health columns and fabricated others. She was fired.

Jayson Blair plagiarized stories for the New York Times. He was fired, along with some of his editors who did not catch his wrongdoing.

Doris Kearns Goodwin, historian and Harvard professor, paid monetary damages to another writer she plagiarized.

Vishway Jit Gupta, geology professor, fabricated fossil images and plagiarized others' research. He was fired.

Dr. Dre has paid over \$1.5 million in lawsuits over plagiarism.

George Harrison, John Lennon, Brian Wilson, Timbaland, and Led Zeppelin have all had to pay fines and royalties to artists they stole from.

Harvard withdrew admission of a high school valedictorian who plagiarized columns in a local newspaper.

Fareed Zakaria was suspended by CNN and Time magazine for plagiarizing.

Jonah Lehrer was forced to resign from the New Yorker after fabricating Bob Dylan quotations.

The University of Virginia expelled 48 students at once for using an Internet search engine on an exam.

FOR MORE:

Go to Wikipedia to learn about the book *How Opal Mehta Got Kissed, Got Wild, and Got a Life*. Its author published the book right after high school. It is one of the reasons she was accepted to Harvard. The book was later recalled by the publisher after the *Harvard Crimson* discovered how much of the book was plagiarized. At Wikipedia, be sure to contrast the sampled passages.

Plagiarism is stealing. A writer must never take another writer's work or ideas and claim them as the writer's own. (The word itself comes from the Latin *plagiarius*, meaning "kidnapper.")

Whenever you employ some other writer's **information** or **insight**, you must give that writer credit.

If caught plagiarizing for the first time, a typical college student will fail that class. A second offense earns expulsion. At a school with an honor code, a first offense is often enough to warrant expulsion.

At East high school, we believe that the more students know, the less likely they are to violate academic integrity.

The following situations constitute plagiarism and should always be avoided:

- Turning in another student's paper as your own.
- Turning in any other writer's work as your own.
- Copying a part of another student's paper and incorporating it into your paper.
- Copying a part of a website, book, or article and incorporating it into your paper.
- Quoting a source word for word without using quotation marks and a citation.
- Paraphrasing, adopting, or summarizing a source's ideas without giving a citation.

Certain information need not be cited. For example, if you learn that the Earth is five billion years old or that Babe Ruth hits 714 home runs, you do not have to mention where you learned such facts. Such information is generally available in thousands of publications. It is considered common knowledge. However, if you find information that says sportswriters protected Babe Ruth by concealing his bad habits, that fact is not generally known and a citation is required.

Note: Carelessness and sloppiness are not excuses for plagiarism. Most teachers will punish lazy and incompetent students the same way they punish liars and cheats. Please consult the student handbook for East's plagiarism policy.

Plagiarism

continued

FOR MORE:

Investigate the honor codes that many high schools and universities require of their students. Discuss with your classmates whether or not East High School should have such an honor code.

A STUDENT'S VOICE

From Gilmore's book
Plagiarism:

Plagiarism comes hand in hand from procrastination and laziness. In our school, plagiarism occurs more than anyone would like, but I will have to admit the majority of the students are much more clever about it than your everyday "print an essay offline and hand it in" scenario. Paraphrasing and the copy-and-paste function become the instant companion to any student wishing to get an assignment done, just to attain the goal of turning it in on time with minimum effort.

My general opinion is that plagiarism is something too idiotic to risk getting caught and being deemed an "immoral" student. I used to be one of the over-achievers who got by sometimes with easy A's by cheating or copying work. I learned the hard way that this not only has large consequences on the teacher-student-parent trust level, but also for someone who spends so much time avoiding doing work, in the end nothing good comes to you in return. I am happy to say I do my own work now, and as an end result have improved my writing and work ethics immensely.

—Beverly,
age eighteen

From *Plagiarism: Why It Happens, How to Prevent It* by Barry Gilmore:

TOP TEN STUDENT TIPS FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

1. **Know the definition of plagiarism at your school.** Check with instructors to determine whether collaboration is permitted and what they expect of your bibliography. Remember that *all* ideas and words must be cited.
2. **Take good notes.** Develop strategies such as note cards or spreadsheet files that will help you keep track of sources, authors, and websites.
3. **Paraphrase carefully.** Try not to use more than one or two important words from the original source when you paraphrase material (and remember to cite that source even if your material isn't in quotation marks).
4. **Learn and attribute correctly.** Ask teachers what citation format they prefer and learn the basics. For more difficult citations, find a web page or book that will guide you.
5. **Leave plenty of time.** Don't get caught behind a deadline—most plagiarism occurs when students feel desperate or rushed.
6. **Make sure you understand the assignment.** Ask questions in advance that will help you avoid the feeling of being "lost" or overwhelmed.
7. **Research wisely.** Use your research skills for more than a quick web search—learn how to use search engines and the library to find the best possible sources for your projects.
8. **Make your bibliography as you work.** Type your bibliography as you find sources rather than waiting until the final draft of your paper—there are many websites that can help you format a bibliography quickly and easily.
9. **Double-check your papers.** Use a search engine or free plagiarism detection software to check your own papers before you hand them in.
10. **Make the assignment personal.** Try to make assignments important to you. Where possible, tweak topics or arguments to put your own spin on them. Look for what you can learn from the project, not just for the grade you will receive at the end.

Citations

FOR PRACTICE:

Assemble five sources (books, articles, DVDs, etc.). Then create a Works Cited page for an imaginary paper that uses all these sources. Alphabetize your list according to MLA style.

MLA VS. APA?

**If your teacher prefers
APA style to MLA style,
the OWL is here to help:**

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

When you cite outside sources for your research paper you need to make sure you give credit to those who deserve it. Parenthetical citations and a “Works Cited” page will do the job. Some general rules:

Whenever you repeat, word for word, what someone else has said or written, enclose the statement in quotation marks and use a parenthetical citation to give credit to the speaker or writer. **You should also use a citation when you state someone else’s ideas in your own words**; this will make it clear to the reader that the ideas are not your own but those of some authority.

To write a parenthetical citation, you do just as it appears below: you type the last name of your source and the appropriate page number that provided the **quotation, idea, or fact** you are employing. The reader can then follow the citation to your alphabetized Works Cited page to see the specific source. The Works Cited page will give complete details, but the citation must be specific.

For example:

Newspeak is described proudly as the “only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year” (Orwell 46).

Your Works Cited page at the end of the paper would then have the complete and correct information:

Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1949. Print.

If you insist on using footnotes or endnotes instead of parenthetical citations, you may if your teacher allows, but it is more of a bother. Example:

Newspeak is described proudly as the “only language in the world whose vocabulary gets smaller every year.”²

² Orwell 46

**SEE PAGES 47 AND 48 FOR EXAMPLES OF A WRITER USING MLA CITATIONS.
SEE PAGE 49 FOR AN EXAMPLE OF A WORKS CITED PAGE.**

Paraphrasing

ADDING COMMENTARY

To ensure that your own voice is at the heart of the paper you write, be sure to interpret the information you convey. Add commentary to the facts you uncover, so that your reader may be shaped by *your* argument, rather than your sources' argument.

For example, consider this paragraph (written years ago, by the way). Support is in **bold**, while commentary is in *italics*.

*In addition, we as Americans must think about the financial state of our country. After the **rapid growth in the 1980s, our economy has slumped into a recession** that has forced Americans to be more frugal. Meanwhile, **millions of dollars are being sent to our soldiers in the Middle East. Already, Operation Desert Shield has cost \$17.5 million** (Lydon 3). While our allies profess their utmost support in stopping *the madman Hussein*, **it is the United States that is paying for 90 percent of the effort** (Costello 21). *This drainage of resources is increasing our high national debt.**

Note how the author above mixes her opinion with the facts. Even the word "already" casts a fact in a persuasive light. Note as well that the author gives credit to her sources.

FOR PRACTICE:

Discuss with your teacher and classmates why the paraphrasing examples below both fail and succeed. Next, practice paraphrasing another writer for a few sentences. Note when and why to give credit.

As Barry Gilmore writes, "The problem with paraphrasing, frankly, is that most students haven't learned to do it well. Paraphrasing is a legitimate practice so long as credit is given."

The value of paraphrasing has partly to do with not overwhelming your papers with excessive quotations. The paraphrasing author may sustain his or her voice as a writer even when conveying other people's ideas or information. However, again, the writer must give credit.

Consider the following examples from Gilmore's *Plagiarism: Why It Happens, How to Prevent It*:

ORIGINAL SOURCE

"Some mention should be made of the notion of common knowledge before we turn to the standard for documenting sources. Observations and facts that are widely known and routinely included in many of your sources do not require documentation. It is not necessary to cite a source for the fact that Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809 or that Ernest Hemingway loved to fish and hunt" (Meyer 276).

INCORRECT PARAPHRASE

It's worth noting that in a research paper, common knowledge need not be documented. Data that is universally learned, like the date of Tennyson's birth or Hemingway's love of hunting, is exempt from the need for documentation.

CORRECT PARAPHRASE

According to Meyer, facts and observations that are widely known, such as Tennyson's birth or Hemingway's love of hunting, constitute a body of common knowledge that does not require documentation (276).

MLA Format

FOR PRACTICE:

Find three books, one song, and one web article and put their information into proper MLA format. Run your results by your teacher.

SOURCES

Some teachers require a certain number of primary sources and secondary sources in your research.

Primary Sources include a writer's original words, eyewitness accounts, videotape of an event, interviews, speeches, diaries, and original documents.

Secondary Sources are works about someone, critical evaluations, historical summaries, reviews, newspaper accounts, encyclopedias, textbooks, and interpretations.

EXAMPLES:

Primary:

Anne Frank's original journal entries

Secondary:

A biographer's interpretation of those entries

Primary:

A Supreme Court justice's written opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*

Secondary:

A history of desegregation

Most teachers and your future professors require the Modern Language Association (MLA) format for citations. For a more complete guide go to Purdue's OWL website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Basic Format

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Book with One Author

Hitchens, Christopher. *Arguably*. New York: Twelve Books, 2011. Print.

Books with more than one author

White, E.B. and William Strunk. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. New York: Longman Books, 1999. Print.

Two or more books by the same author

Wallace, David Foster. *Consider the Lobster*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2007. Print.

----. *A Supposedly Fun Thing I'll Never Do Again*. New York: Back Bay Books, 1998. Print.

Book with no author

Encyclopedia of Pseudoscience. New York: Prometheus, 1993. Print.

A translated book

Voltaire. *Philosophical Dictionary*. Trans. Theodore Besterman. Boston: Nabu Press, 2001. Print.

Anthology or collection

Eggers, Dave, ed. *The Best American Nonrequired Reading 2012*. San Francisco: Mariner Books, 2012. Print.

A work in an anthology or collection

Elkin, Stanley. "Plot." *Writers on Writing*. Ed. James Anderson. St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1988. 71-82. Print.

Article in a magazine

Rosenberg, Alyssa. "The Return of Spike Lee." *The Nation*. 19 April 2010: 45-48. Print.

Article in a newspaper

Rice, Janelle. "Hail to the Veep." *Washington Post* 17 October 2009 late ed.: A7. Print.

Article in a scholarly journal

Rodriguez, Guy. "Roosevelt as Conservationist: A Forgotten Legacy." *California Environmental Studies* 8.3 (2002): 56-71. Print.

MLA Format

continued

FOR PRACTICE:

Visit the OWL website and note all the varieties of resources that students and scholars cite. Note also the explanations for page numbers, edition and volume numbers, etc.
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

CITATION HELP

An excellent site for putting your resources in proper MLA format is KnightCite:

<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/>

Just plug in your information and it will generate an MLA-style citation.

Citing an entire website

Felluga, Dino. *Guide to Literary and Critical Theory*. Purdue U, 28 Nov. 2003. Web. 10 May 2006.

A page on a website

"Poltergeist." *The Skeptic's Dictionary*. Bob Carroll. Web. 22 Feb. 2012.

Image (painting, sculpture, photograph, illustration)

Lipski, Donald. *The Yearling*. The NBT Foundation. 1993. Denver Public Library. Web. 13 April 2010.

Email

Cruz, Penelope. "Hi Todd." Message to the author. 15 Nov. 2011. E-mail.

Tweet

Miller, T.J. (nottjmiller). "Just offered a kid 50 bucks to try and fit into the cargo pockets of his cargo pants." 11 Aug. 2012, 2:22 p.m. Tweet.

Personal interview

Diaz, Junot. Personal interview. 1 Dec. 2009.

Speech or lecture

Dawkins, Richard. "The Greatest Show on Earth." Denver University, Denver, CO. 23 May 2007. Lecture.

Painting, Sculpture, or Photograph

Picasso, Pablo. *Guernica*. 1937. Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.

Film

The Avengers. Dir. Joss Whedon. Perf. Robert Downey Jr., Mark Ruffalo, Scarlett Johansson. Marvel, 2012. Film.

Television Broadcast

"Bringing Up Buster." *Arrested Development*. Fox. KWGN, Denver. 19 Jul. 2011. Television.

DVD or Blu-Ray

"Wrap It Up." *The Chappelle Show: Season One*. Writ. Dave Chappelle. Dir. Elgin Wright. Comedy Central, 2004. DVD.

Sound recordings

Sam Cooke. "A Change Is Gonna Come." *The Man and His Music*. RCA. 1988. CD.

Digital file (mp3, pdf, etc.)

Leach, Archibald. "Questioning Authority." *Human Events* 82.2 (1975): 217-241. JSTOR. PDF file.

About Style

FORMAL VS. INFORMAL

All students should be able to shift from formal to informal depending upon assignment and occasion. In formal writing, *do not use contractions, do not use the first or second person, do not use colloquialisms, do not use casual expressions.*

Consider:

Informal
Shakespeare's got talent.

Formal
Shakespeare is talented.

Informal
General Washington smoked the British.

Formal
General Washington overwhelmed the British.

Informal
Have you got the time?

Formal
Do you have the time?

Informal
Who did you want to talk to?

Formal
To whom do you wish to speak?

Informal
Let's you and me dance.

Formal
Shall we dance?

Warning: When writing formally, avoid sounding stiff and cold. Remember that even in formal writing you may still play with words and ideas. Do not succumb to a stuffy manner; write with energy and wit.

FOR PRACTICE:

From John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction*: "Take a simple event: A man gets off a bus, trips, looks around in embarrassment, and sees a woman smiling. Describe this event, using the same characters and elements of setting, in *five* completely different ways (changes of style, tone, sentence structure, voice, psychic distance, etc.). Make sure the styles are *radically* different; otherwise, the exercise is wasted."

There are dozens of ways to write well. Only a few of these approach the sometimes formulaic academic writing that certain teachers and professors demand.

Most writers write in a kind of semi-formal style. In other words, they demonstrate command and precision, but they relax the rules of formal writing. They may use contractions, fragments, and the first person, but they do not write in a breezy, chatty manner. The style that comes from each writer is reliant on a number of factors, including education, audience, tone, and purpose. It is up to each writer to find his or her voice. The best way to find that voice is not only to write a great deal but also to read many authors and many types of literature.

Contrast the following passages to get an idea of how excellent writing can vary in style and approach.

Most tarantulas live in the tropics, but several species occur in the temperate zone and a few are common in the southern United States. Some varieties are large and have powerful fangs with which they can inflict a deep wound. These formidable-looking spiders do not, however, attack man; you can hold one in your hand, if you are gentle, without being bitten. Their bite is dangerous only to insects and small mammals such as mice; for man it is no worse than a hornet's sting.

—Alexandra Petrunkevitch

Cans. Beer cans. Glinting on the verges of a million miles of roadways, lying in scrub, grass, dirt, leaves, sand, mud, but never hidden. Pils, Rheingold, Ballantine, Schaefer, Schlitz shining in the sun or picked by moon or the beams of headlights at night; washed by rain or flattened by wheels, but never dulled, never buried, never destroyed. Here is the mark of savages, the testament of wasters, the stain of prosperity.

—Marya Mannes

When the children get to know E.T., his sounds are almost the best part of the picture. His voice is ancient and otherworldly but friendly, humorous. And this scaly, wrinkled little man with huge, wide-apart, soulful eyes and a jack-in-the-box neck has been so fully created that he's a friend to us, too; when he speaks of his longing to go home the audience becomes as mournful as Elliott.

—Pauline Kael

Inspirations

OSCAR WILDE'S GREATEST HITS

I can resist everything but temptation.

Those who try to lead the people can only do so by following the mob.

What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Experience is the name everyone gives to their mistakes.

The basis of optimism is sheer terror.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written.

The supreme vice is shallowness.

It is not prisoners who need reformations. It is the prisons.

It is only the modern that ever becomes old-fashioned.

At twilight nature becomes a wonderfully suggestive effect, and is not without loveliness, though perhaps its chief use is to illustrate quotations from the poets.

If England treats her criminals the way she has treated me, she doesn't deserve to have any.

FOR PRACTICE:

1. Compile a list of five favorite sentences from any books, essays, or stories that you admire. Consider why you chose them and describe their virtues.
2. Imagine the worst possible opening lines for books you would never want to read. Include the book titles.

FAMOUS FIRST LINES

As I write, highly civilized human beings are flying overhead, trying to kill me.
—George Orwell, "The Lion and the Unicorn"

Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens boy named baby tuckoo.
—James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.
—Gabriel Garcia Marquez, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

The Sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new.
—Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*

124 was spiteful.
—Toni Morrison, *Beloved*

He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull.
—Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.
—William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board.
—Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

Ages ago, Alex, Allen and Alva arrived at Antibes, and Alva allowing all, allowing anyone, against Alex's admonition, against Allen's angry assertion: another African amusement . . . anyhow, as all argued, an awesome African army assembled and arduously advanced against an African anthill, assiduously annihilating ant after ant, and afterward, Alex astonishingly accuses Albert as also accepting Africa's antipodal ant annexation.
—Walter Abish, *Alphabetical Africa*

If I am out of my mind, it's all right with me, thought Moses Herzog.
—Saul Bellow, *Herzog*

Laughter always forgives.
—Martin Amis, "The Moronic Inferno"

Ultima came to stay with us the summer I was seven. When she came the beauty of the llano unfolded before my eyes, and the gurgling waters of the river sang to the hum of the turning earth.
—Rudolfo Anaya, *Bless Me Ultima*

The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind and another his mother called him "WILD THING!" and Max said "I'LL EAT YOU UP!" so he was sent to bed without eating anything.
—Maurice Sendak, *Where the Wild Things Are*

Literary Terms

FOR PRACTICE:

Come up with your own examples for *alliteration*, *allusion*, *assonance*, *hyperbole*, *metaphor*, *oxymoron*, *personification*, *simile*, and *understatement*.

THE DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

If only all dictionaries could be more like Ambrose Bierce's *The Devil's Dictionary*. Some entries:

Achievement: The death of endeavor and the birth of disgust.

Bore: A person who talks when you wish him to listen.

Coward: One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs.

Discussion: A method for confirming others in their errors.

Egotist: A person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me.

Idiot: A member of a large and controlling tribe whose influence in human affairs has always been dominant and controlling.

Kleptomaniac: A rich thief.

Peace: In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

Plagiarize: To take the thought and style of another writer whom one has never, never read.

Politeness: The most acceptable hypocrisy.

alliteration — the repetition of initial consonant sounds. (*Poetry and prose are painless words to ponder.*)

allusion — reference to something in history or the arts (*Algebra was Mike's Waterloo.*)

allegory — the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions of truths or generalizations about human existence

ambiguous — capable of being understood in two or more possible senses or ways

analogy — the comparison of two things, which are alike in several respects, for the purpose of explaining or clarifying some unfamiliar or difficult idea or object by showing how the idea or object is similar to some familiar one

antagonist — one that contends with or opposes another : ADVERSARY, OPPONENT

antithesis — establishing a clear, contrasting relationship between two ideas by joining them together or juxtaposing them, often in parallel structure. *To err is human; to forgive, divine.* --Pope *That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.* -- Armstrong

apostrophe — direct address to an inanimate object or idea

archetype — 1. An original model or type after which other similar things are patterned; a prototype. 2. An ideal example of a type; quintessence.

assonance — repetition of similar vowel sounds in a group of words. (*free and easy, mad as a hatter*)

bathos — the sudden appearance of the commonplace in otherwise elevated matter or style

blank verse — poetry written in unrhymed iambic pentameter

bombast — pretentious inflated speech or writing

cacophonous — harsh-sounding

caricature — exaggeration by means of often ludicrous distortion of parts or characteristics

carpe diem — Latin for "seize the day," a theme present in many poems ("To the Virgins to Make Much of Time")

catharsis — purification or purgation of the emotions (as pity and fear) primarily through art

climax — the point of highest dramatic tension or a major turning point in the action (as of a play)

conceit — an elaborate or strained metaphor

connotation — emotions and ideas associated with a word.

couplet — a two-line stanza, usually rhymed, or a pair of rhymed lines.

denotation — dictionary definition of a word.

denouement — the final outcome of the main dramatic complication in a literary work; from the French, "untying."

diction — word choice; the characteristic pattern or effects of word choice.

elegiac — of, relating to, or comprising elegy or an elegy; especially : expressing sorrow often for something now past <an elegiac lament for departed youth>

elegy — a mournful poem, especially one that laments and praises the dead.

epigram — a brief, clever statement that often pairs opposite thoughts. (*We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.*)

epithet — a characterizing word or phrase accompanying or occurring in place of the name of a person or thing

euphonious — pleasing to the ear

figurative language — writing or speech that is not meant to be taken literally, such as metaphor, simile, and personification.

foreshadow — to represent, indicate, or typify beforehand

free verse — poetry with no regularly rhythmical pattern or meter

genre — a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content

hubris — exaggerated pride or self-confidence

Literary Terms

FOR PRACTICE:

Perform a scavenger hunt on a single poem, identifying examples of as many terms on these pages as you can.

WORDPLAY

Oxymorons

Compact contradictions

student teacher, rush hour, civil war, instant classic, anxious patient, roaring silence, pretty ugly, daily special, free market, fire water, real phony, Swiss Army

Malapropisms

Word-substitution errors

—The flood damage was so bad they had to evaporate the city.
—At least half of the customers who fly to New York come by plane.
—Louis Pasteur discovered a cure for rabbis.
—Shhh! I hear footprints.

Anagrams

Words and phrases formed by rearranging letters in words and phrases.

debit card = bad credit
geologist = go get oils
astronomer = moon starrer
Christmas = trims cash
Justin Timberlake = im a jerk but listen

Palindromes

Backwards or forward, the letters follow the same order

—Madam, I'm Adam.
—Rise to vote, sir.
—A man, a plan, a canal—Panama!
—Do geese see God?
—A nut for a jar of tuna.
—Dennis sinned.
—T.S. Eliot, top bard, notes putrid tang emanating, is sad. I'd assign it a name: gnat dirt upset on drab pot-toilet.

hyperbole — exaggeration

iambic pentameter — a kind of rhythmic meter consisting of five feet and 10 syllables (two per foot, with the accent on every second beat)

imagery — language that appeals to the reader's senses

irony — 1. discrepancy between expectation and reality or between words and intentions. 2. compelling incongruity. (see page 22)

lyric — a poem that expresses the observations and feelings of a single speaker; forms include the ode, elegy, and sonnet

melodrama — a work (as a movie or play) characterized by extravagant theatricality and by the predominance of plot and physical action over characterization

metaphor — a figure of speech in which something is described as though it were something else. (*The ship plows the sea.*)

meter — the rhythmical pattern of a poem, determined by the number and types of stresses, or beats, in each line.

motif — a usually recurring salient thematic element (as in the arts); especially: a dominant idea or central theme

ode — a lyric poem characterized by lofty feeling, elaborate form, and dignified style

omniscient narrator — a literary technique which gives the author or speaker infinite awareness, understanding, and insight; the reader is allowed into each character's perception

oxymoron — a figure of speech that fuses two contradictory or opposing ideas (*freezing fire, happy grief*)

parable — a usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle

paradox — an apparent contradiction that conveys truth (*To have peace, one must prepare for war.*)

parody — a literary or musical work in which the style of an author or work is closely imitated for comic effect or in ridicule

parallelism — the repetition of a grammatical pattern.

pathos — an element in experience or in artistic representation evoking pity or compassion

personification — a type of figurative language in which a non-human subject is given human characteristics (*The clouds cried raindrops.*)

protagonist — 1: the principal character in a literary work (as a drama or story) 2: a leading actor, character, or participant in a literary work or real event

quatrain — a four-line stanza

rhyme scheme — a regular pattern of rhyming words in a poem

rhythm — the pattern of beats, or stresses, in spoken or written language

satire — 1: a literary work holding up human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn; 2: trenchant wit, irony, or sarcasm used to expose and discredit vice or folly

simile — a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unlike subjects using either "like" or "as." (She ran like the wind.)

sonnet — a fourteen-line poem, usually written in iambic pentameter.

stanza — a group of lines in a poem, considered as a unit.

symbol — anything that has a meaning in itself and that also stands for something larger, such as a quality, an attitude, a belief or a value.

syntax — the way in which linguistic elements (as words) are put together to form constituents (as phrases or clauses)

theme — the statement about life a particular work is trying to get to the reader

tone — the attitude a writer takes toward his or her subject, characters, and readers.

tragedy — a serious drama typically describing a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (as destiny) and having a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that excites pity or terror

understatement — a statement which means less than what is intended

Models

FOR YOUR NEXT GAME OF HANGMAN: A few of the longest words in the English language.

Sesquipedalian (14 letters, meaning "many syllables")

Antidisestablishmentarianism (28 letters: the movement that opposes disestablishment)

Floccinaucinihilipilification (29 letters: an act of judging something worthless)

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious (34 letters: from *Mary Poppins*)

Hippomonstrosesquippedaliophobia (36 letters: the fear of long words)

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis (45 letters: a volcano-based lung disease)

Chargogoggomanchauggagoggchaubunagungamaugg (45 letters: a lake in Massachusetts)

Bababadaigharhtakammimarronnkonnbronnntonnerronnthunntrovarrhounawnskawnntooohooordenenthurmuk (101 letters: James Joyce's thunderclap sound)

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

MODEL: BUSINESS LETTER

Aurora Chamber of Commerce
562 Sable Blvd.
Aurora, CO 80011
December 15, 2012

(four to seven spaces)

Ms. Debra Webber, Owner
Webber's Books
Aurora Mall
14200 E. Alameda Ave.
Aurora, Colorado 80012

(double space)

Dear Ms. Webber:

(double space)

Welcome to the Aurora business community. As the Chamber's Executive Director, I would like to thank you for opening your store in Aurora Mall.

Webber's Books is a welcome addition to the town's economy, especially with the store's emphasis on educational resources. For this reason I encourage you to join the Chamber of Commerce. As a member of the Chamber of Commerce, you will have a voice in your community's development and access to promotional materials. I have enclosed a brochure about our work in the community.

If you decide to join, I would be delighted to set up a ribbon-cutting ceremony within two weeks. You would meet other members of the Chamber and receive some useful news coverage. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

(double space)

Yours truly,

(four spaces for signature)

Thomas Smith

Thomas Smith

(double space)

TS:tn

Encl. Membership brochure
cc: Mary Jones

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

HOW TO ANALYZE A TEXT

- Read or reread the text with specific questions in mind
- Assemble basic ideas, events, and names
- Think through your personal reaction to the book:
 - identification,
 - enjoyment,
 - significance,
 - application
- Identify and consider the most important ideas
- Return to the text to locate specific evidence and passages related to the major ideas

PRINCIPLES FOR ANALYSIS

After offering an observation or asserting an argument, cite the text and provide context. (Be sure to avoid too much summary.) Then comes the important part: **comment in some way on what you have discovered.** Try a combination of some of the following elements:

- Discuss what happens in the passage and why it is significant to the work as a whole
- Consider what is said, particularly subtleties of the imagery and the ideas expressed
- Assess how it is said, considering the word choice, the ordering of ideas, sentence structure, etc.
- Explain what it means, tying your analysis back to the significance of the work as a whole

—Beth Martin Birky

MODEL: LITERARY ANALYSIS

From two different papers on Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*:

The negative effect the environment can have on the individual is shown in Morrison's comparison of marigolds in the ground to people in the environment. Early in the novel, Claudia and Frieda are concerned that the marigold seeds they planted that spring never sprouted. At the end of the novel, Claudia reflects on the connection to Pecola's failure:

I talk about how I did not plant the seeds too deeply, how it was the fault of the earth, our land, our town. I even think now that the land of the entire country was hostile to marigolds that year. This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live. (206)

Morrison obviously views the environment as a powerful influence on the individual when she suggests that the earth itself is hostile to the growth of the marigold seeds. In a similar way, people cannot thrive in a hostile environment. Pecola Breedlove is a seed planted in the hostile environment, and, when she is not nurtured in any way, she cannot thrive.

* * *

One effect of the belief that white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes are the most beautiful is evident in the characters who admire white film stars. Morrison shows an example of the destructive effect of this beauty standard on the character Pecola. When Pecola lives with Claudia and Frieda, the two sisters try to please their guest by giving her milk in a Shirley Temple mug. Claudia recalls, "She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's face" (19). This picture of two young African-American girls admiring the beauty of a white American film star is impossible for Claudia to comprehend. Another character who admires white beauty is Maureen Peale. As Pecola and the girls walk past a movie theater on their way home with Maureen, Maureen asks if the others "just love" Betty Grable, who smiles from a movie poster. When she later tells the others she is cute and they are ugly, Maureen reveals her belief that she is superior because she looks more like a Betty Grable image than the blacker girls do. Pecola's and Maureen's fascination with popular images is preceded by Pauline's own belief in the possibility of movie images. She describes doing her hair like Jean Harlow's and eating candy at a movie. Rather than being transported into the romantic heaven of Hollywood, she loses a tooth and ends in despair. "Everything went then. Look like I just didn't care no more after that. I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly" (123). Admiring beauty in another is one thing; transferring a sense of self-hatred when a person doesn't measure is another. At that point, the power of white beauty standards becomes very destructive.

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

MODEL: FORMAT FOR AN ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER

At a minimum, your argumentative paper will include

- A title
- A topic paragraph with a topic sentence that proclaims the argument
- An explanation of the argument
- Some evidence from the text or texts for the explanation of the argument
- A counterargument you swiftly demolish
- Perhaps some sense of the larger significance of your theme
- A conclusion reasserting the truth of the argument you proclaimed in your opening paragraph.

—David R. Williams,
Dr. Dave's Guide to
Writing the College Paper

Note that you can reassert truth in your conclusion while avoiding repetition of information and ideas. In other words, don't repeat—reinforce.

MODEL: PERSONAL ESSAY

My boyfriend Kevin and I went out for a year and during that time, we fought until we got sick of it. We fought about the stupid things all couples fight about, but the main thing that came between us was something that other couples probably don't have to deal with. We constantly argued about whether I was too Americanized.

Kevin and I both came to the United States from Korea five years ago. Although we had this in common, we had different points of view on everything. He would ask me why I couldn't be like other Korean girls. If I were "real" Korean girl, I would listen to him when he told me to do something, depend on him for most things, and think his way instead of my way. When I didn't agree with him, we would have another fight. To me, he was too Korean and too narrow-minded. He refused to accept any culture except his own, and he always thought his way was the only way.

I eat Korean food, speak Korean, have respect for my parents as Koreans have, and I celebrate Korean holidays and traditional days. I even joined the Korean Club in school, so that I can observe my customs with Korean friends.

During the past five years, however, I have come to love certain customs from other cultures. For example, I see the way my Hispanic friends greet people with affection. They kiss and hug when they say "hello," and I love this. (In Korea, people are much more formal; they just shake hands and bow to each other out of respect.) So I started kissing my friends on the cheek, too.

Kevin didn't like this, and he told me so. He even asked me to stop it. I didn't want to, so I did it anyway but not as much. Later on, he told me not to kiss and hug other people. I asked him why, and he told me that he didn't like it and that other Koreans didn't act the way I did. He couldn't accept it.

Traditional Korean men like to tell their wives and girlfriends what to do. He would always tell me how to dress and how to act in front of others. He wanted me to stay next to him all the time. I would complain that I was not his little toy and that he couldn't just order me around.

When I would go against his wishes, Kevin would say, "Why are you so Americanized?" I didn't know how to respond to his question. He said I must be ashamed of my country or culture. I am proud of being a Korean. I just want to accept other cultures, too.

I can't deny that I sometimes act like an American, trying to be more independent and outgoing than other Korean girls. But I still act like a Korean, too. I want to go with the flow, and that doesn't mean that I don't like my culture. I am trying to balance two cultures. Through my boyfriend, I got a chance to think about who I really am. I realized that I am a Korean and an American too.

—Sue Chong

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

MODEL: PARAGRAPH WITH TOPIC SENTENCE AND SUPPORT

The fact is that homeless people are not always better off in shelters. Consider Alan, who has lived on the streets for years. He says that he had spent some time in shelters for the homeless, and he reports what they are like. They're dangerous and dehumanizing. Drug dealing, beatings, and theft are common. The shelters are dirty and crowded, so that the residents have to wait in long lines for everything and are constantly being bossed around. No wonder some of San Francisco's homeless people, including Alan, prefer the street: it affords some space to breathe, some autonomy, and some peace for sleeping.

Note how each sentence supports the italicized topic sentence. Note also how the last sentence ties the paragraph's points together.

MODEL: INFORMAL ARGUMENT

One swallow does not make a summer, nor can two or three cases often support a dependable generalization. Yet all of us, including the most polished eggheads, are constantly falling into this mental peopletrap. It is the most common, probably the most seductive, and potentially the most dangerous, of all the fallacies.

You drive through a town and see a drunken man on the sidewalk. A few blocks further on you see another. You turn to your companion: "Nothing but drunks in this town!" Soon you are out in the country, bowling along at fifty. A car passes you as if you were parked. On a curve a second whizzes by. Your companion turns to you: "All the drivers in this state are crazy!" Two thumping generalizations, each built on two cases. If we stop to think, we usually recognize the exaggeration and the unfairness of such generalizations. Trouble comes when we do not stop to think—or when we build them on a prejudice.

This kind of reasoning has been around for a long time. Aristotle was aware of its dangers and called it "reasoning by example," meaning too few examples. What it boils down to is failing to count your swallows before announcing that summer is here. Driving from my home to New Haven the other day, a distance of about forty miles, I caught myself saying: "Every time I look around I see a new ranch-type house going up." So on the return trip I counted them; there were exactly five under construction. And how many times had I "looked around"? I suppose I had glanced to the right and left—as one must at side roads and so for the in driving—several hundred times.

In this fallacy we do not make the error of neglecting facts altogether and rushing immediately to the level of opinion. We start at the fact level properly enough, but we do not stay there. A case or two and up we go to a rousing oversimplification about drunks, speeders, ranch-style houses—or, more seriously, about foreigners, racial minorities, labor leaders, and teenagers.

Why do we overgeneralize so often and sometimes so disastrously? One reason is that the human mind is a generalizing machine. We would not be people without this power. The old academic crack, "All generalizations are false, including this one," is only a play on words. We must generalize to communicate and to live. But we should beware of beating the gun, of not waiting until enough facts are in to say something useful. Meanwhile it is a plain waste of time to listen to arguments based on a few handpicked examples.

—Stuart Chase

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

A FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY FORMAT

Paragraph One

1. Thesis Statement
(sentence #1)
2. Topic Sentence
(sentence #2)
3. Topic Sentence
(sentence #3)
4. Topic Sentence
(sentence #4)
5. Concluding Sentence
(sentence #5)

Paragraphs Two through Four

1. Topic Sentence
(sentence #1)
2. Supporting Detail
(sentence #2)
3. Supporting Detail
(sentence #3)
4. Supporting Detail
(sentence #4)
5. Concluding Sentence
(sentence #5)

Paragraph Five

At least four sentences.

Note: The five-paragraph essay approach is just one of dozens of ways to write forcefully and effectively. When your teachers require one, consider the format above as a guide to structure, but take care over time not to write in a formulaic way. Most importantly, note that the principle of ASSERTION + SUPPORTING DETAILS serves nearly every kind of paper you will write for high school and college.

MODEL: FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

The authors of *Inherit the Wind*, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee, write about the Hillsboro Monkey Trial in which three forceful characters reveal conflicting viewpoints. First, E.K. Hornbeck, a reporter sent by the Baltimore Herald to cover the trial, sees all the events in a cynical light. The prosecuting attorney, Matthew Harrison Brady, a fundamental religious supporter, demonstrates to the reader how a literal interpretation of the Bible leads to narrow viewpoints. Lastly, the defense attorney, Henry Drummond, is an open-minded, brilliant lawyer who essentially catapults this court case into the trial of the century. These three characters are all phenomenal in their own right and present unique viewpoints on the issue of evolution and Darwinism.

E.K. Hornbeck, although opinionated, does not express his views on Darwinism but rather criticizes everyone around him. Hornbeck alienates both the townspeople, and prosecutor Brady, with disparaging remarks; he insists that the defendant, Bertram Cates, could not have a fair trial because of the biased townspeople and their uneducated views. Furthermore, Hornbeck accuses Henry Drummond, with whom he agrees, of being a hypocrite and a fraud because of Drummond's belief in God. Hornbeck's pessimism is key to his slant on the case; he shouts, "Step right up and get your tickets for the Middle Ages! You only thought that you missed the Coronation of Charlemagne!" Hornbeck's view of the events in the case, although somewhat mocking, adds an element of blunt truth to an otherwise bogus trial.

Matthew Harrison Brady, meanwhile, is a religious leader of the fundamental Bible belt Southern Christians and the prosecuting attorney in this case. While on the stand, Brady takes every opportunity to mention that the Bible is the final authority and all else is evil; he professes, "The Bible satisfies me, it is enough." Furthermore, everyone in Hillsboro is biased before the trial even begins because Brady is their spiritual leader and preacher. While selecting jury members, Brady asks each person whether or not he or she believes in the Bible. The prosecutor is both a powerful speaker and has an uncanny ability to twist impressionable minds; he is able to convince the townspeople that his views on the world are the truth.

On the other hand, the attorney defending Bert Cates, Henry Drummond, demonstrates that there are valid scientific ideas that go beyond the literal interpretation of the Bible. Throughout the trial, Drummond is thwarted because of the judge's preconceived viewpoint. Drummond is not allowed to call a zoologist, geologist, or anthropologist to the stand because their testimonies are deemed irrelevant to the case, which, of course, is not true. With no more options, Drummond calls Matthew Harrison Brady to the stand; this brilliant legal move on the part of Drummond not only shows that Brady has no idea what evolution is, but also that his convictions are not accepted by indiscriminating minds; his beliefs are completely unfounded and based on blind faith. Drummond is able to win based on intellect, logic, and scientific method over illogical, emotional views of people such as Brady.

In conclusion, the most important constitutional right, that of free speech, is on trial in Hillsboro. Three strong personalities, Hornbeck, Brady, and Drummond, play important parts in this saga. Hornbeck's skepticism balances the play and connects the reader to the absurdity of the case. Brady's zealotry is his downfall; he dies shortly after the conclusion of the trial. Even though Drummond loses the case, he sets a precedent that is important today. The right to teach evolution in schools is not the only issue; the right to think is the ultimate outcome.

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

PARAGRAPH UNITY

The body of your paragraph provides details that support the topic sentence. These details should be arranged in the best possible order (chronological order, cause/effect, comparison/contrast, orders of size, location, and importance). A closing or clinching sentence comes last that reinforces but does not repeat anything that has already been expressed.

Try arranging the following sentences in effective paragraph order. Also, delete any sentences that do not belong.

___When I choose a career, I expect to make a good choice.

___My parents always wanted the best for all their children.

___That's a *bad* choice.

___There are many interesting fields to investigate, and there is much rewarding work to do.

___A "good choice" is one made from a variety of options determined and narrowed down by the chooser.

___Doctors are respected members of the community.

___If the mayor of my town suddenly told me that I would have to choose between a career of cleaning public toilets and one of digging graves in the dead of night, I would object.

MODEL: RESEARCH PAPER with MLA FORMAT

Few efforts expose injustice as effectively as comedy. For centuries, humor has allowed dissidents to intelligently and scathingly undermine the status quo and insult those in power. From Benjamin Franklin's articles mocking religious hypocrites to Stephen Colbert's presidential satires, comedic writers and performers have been more honest and direct than most so-called serious critics of power.

Robin Williams offers an explanation of comedians' unique ability to protest. Comedians, he says, are like court jesters (Oloffson 1). Court jesters can mock royalty and challenge their positions without consequence because kings and queens do not see them as a threat. The jesters are, after all, just cheap entertainment. As a result, comedians often dodge the wrath of those they mock because they are dismissed as harmless. This phenomenon has worked to the benefit of comedians who, as we shall see, have much more in mind than simply getting laughs. While those in power underestimate comedians' influence, jesters are free to mock, insult, and ridicule their way to progress.

In the 1720s, for example, Jonathan Swift wrote many essays and pamphlets condemning the brutal policies of his day, yet his most famous and anthologized essay is a blast of shocking and outrageous humor (Weddington 217). In "A Modest Proposal," Swift's speaker recommends infanticide and cannibalism as surefire ways to solve poverty and hunger. By ironically (and "modestly," of course) suggesting such a plan, Swift exposes the harshness and stupidity of the policies his government actually recommended. As Bryan Weddington writes,

Swift primarily targeted the "sensible and reasonable" attitudes of his time. For instance, he was horrified by common views of child labor. Mercantilists insisted that no child was too young to go into industry; consequently, in some areas of London children of four or five could earn a living. Swift saw this condition, supported by serious men with a wealth of statistics, as a crisis worth exposing. (45)

In "A Modest Proposal," Swift builds his own mountain of statistics to defend a heartless and murderous policy. In this manner, Swift shamed his own time, and his

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

THE ART OF THE INSULT: WRITERS AGAINST WRITERS

George Bernard Shaw writes plays for the ages, the ages between five and twelve.

—George Jean Nathan

On Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*: That's not writing, that's typing.

—Truman Capote

If I thought that anything I wrote was influenced by Robert Frost, I would take that particular piece of mine, shred it, and flush it down the toilet, hoping not to clog the pipes.

—James Dickey

On Mark Twain: A hack writer who would not have been considered fourth rate in Europe.

—William Faulkner

On Jane Austen: Every time I read *Pride and Prejudice*, I want to dig her up and hit her over the skull with her own shin-bone.

—Mark Twain

On Ernest Hemingway: He has never been known to use a word that might send a reader to the dictionary.

—William Faulkner

On William Faulkner: Poor Faulkner. Does he really thing big emotions come from big words?

—Ernest Hemingway

To a fellow composer: I like your opera. I think I will set it to music.

—Beethoven

MODEL: RESEARCH PAPER with MLA FORMAT CONTINUED

words—satiric, comic, ironic, and outrageous—are still quoted centuries later to expose the shameful.

FROM LATER IN THIS SAME STUDENT PAPER:

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart represents a new approach to political satire that is quick, direct, and especially potent in the age of mass media. Like Swift, Gregory, and the Smothers Brothers, Stewart focuses on the hypocrisy of the status quo. But Stewart's style is so sharp that it allows him to, as reporter Christopher Beam put it, "be hilarious as he rips his opponents apart" (1). One of Stewart's most impressive satiric assaults was his December 5, 2010, response to the delay of legislation that would provide medical benefits to the firefighters and police officers who first responded to the 9/11 attacks. Senate Republicans planned to filibuster the bill until Bush tax cuts were extended. Stewart retaliated with clever wordplays, calling the senators "Worst Responders" and renaming the bill the "Least-We-Can-Do-No-Brainer Act of 2010" (Beam 1). He invited cancer-stricken first responders to his show and played for them a clip of a senator crying over his colleagues' retirement. The firefighters stated that they, too, had cried over colleagues—ones who had died due to poor health benefits. Political pundits from both parties agreed that the segment was brilliant, and the bill passed shortly after (Beam 2). It is unlikely that a somber article or news story could have exposed the first responders' predicament as devastatingly as Stewart's episode did. By bringing firefighters on the show, Stewart blurred the line between the heartbreak of injustice and the humor of exposing it. The clip of the senator crying, next to the first responders, was tragic, hilarious, and infuriating all at once. Even though the *Daily Show* piece was in the form of a comedy sketch, Stewart's ability to evoke such strong human emotions to make a political statement is an example of comedic protest at its best.

. . . AND SO ON. THE WRITER PROCEEDS WITH ASSERTIONS, EVIDENCE, CITATIONS, AND COMMENTARY TO DEFEND HER POSITION.

Models

continued

FOR THE STUDENT:

Read each example as a model of one of the dozens of ways to write effectively. Learn how each writer uses language, examples, style, and structure to earn his or her arguments and ideas.

BEAUTIFUL ENGLISH

In his book *Crazy English*, Richard Lederer writes of the most beautiful-sounding words in the language. After quoting poets (“She walks in beauty like the night/Of cloudless climes and starry skies”) and more poets (“The moan of doves in immemorial elms/And murmuring of innumerable bees”), Lederer writes:

Is it possible that we find these words to be lovely just as much for their meanings and associations as for their sounds? Note, for example, that Dr. Funk’s list is filled with birds and flowers. Is *bobolink* really any more attractive a word than *condor*, aside from its associations? Are *hush* and *thrush* any more euphonious than *mush* and *crush*? H.L. Mencken once quoted a Chinese boy who was learning the English language as saying that *cellar door* was the most musical combination of sounds he had ever heard. Clearly the impact that words have upon us is baffling. Sound and meaning work their dual magic upon us in ways that ear and mind alone cannot always analyze. Consider, for example, the foreign couple who decided to name their first daughter with the most beautiful word they had ever heard.

They named the child Diarrhea.

MODEL: WORKS CITED PAGE

- Beam, Christopher. “Jon Stewart and the first responders.” *Slate Magazine*.
Web. 20 Dec. 2010.
- Franklin, Benjamin. “The Speech of Miss Polly Baker by Benjamin Franklin.”
Pennsylvania History 4th ser. 68 (2001): 507-32. JSTOR. Web.
16 Apr. 2011.
- Headlam, Bruce. “For Him, the Political Has Always Been Comical.” *New York Times*. 13 Mar. 2009. Print.
- Oloffson, Helena. “Brief History of the Jester.” *Alex the Jester*. Web.
25 Apr. 2011.
- Robinson, Peter M. *The Dance of the Comedians*. Amherst: University of
Massachusetts Press, 2010. Print.
- Trier, James. “The Daily Show With Jon Stewart Part 1.” *Journal of Adolescent
and Adult Literacy* 5th ser. 51 (2008): 424-27. JSTOR. Web. 16 Apr. 2011.
- Weddington, Bryan. *Immodest Proposals*. New York: Random House,
1978. Print.

Common Core State Standards

FOR THE TEACHER:

Pick one anchor standard below and discuss how it applies to a recent or current lesson.

From the Common Core State Standards Initiative on Reading:

The standards establish a “staircase” of increasing complexity in what students must be able to read so that all students are ready for the demands of college- and career-level reading no later than the end of high school. The standards also require the progressive development of reading comprehension so that students advancing through the grades are able to gain more from whatever they read.

The standards mandate certain critical types of content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, foundational U.S. documents, seminal works of American literature, and the writings of Shakespeare. The standards appropriately defer the many remaining decisions about what and how to teach to states, districts, and schools.

From the CCSS mission statement: “The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers.” The following Common Core anchor standards for English Literature define what students should understand by the end of each grade. Along with grade-specific standards (located here: www.corestandards.com), the anchor standards define the skills and understandings that all students must demonstrate.

Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

“Break any of these rules sooner
than say anything outright
barbarous.” —*George Orwell*

BACK COVER: BLANK