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# **BUILDING WRITING SKILLS**

МІНІСТЕРСТВО ОСВІТИ І НАУКИ УКРАЇНИ  
ПРИКАРПАТСЬКИЙ НАЦІОНАЛЬНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ  
ІМЕНІ ВАСИЛЯ СТЕФАНІКА  
КАФЕДРА АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

## **BUILDING WRITING SKILLS**

*Навчально-методичний посібник*



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*Вченою радою факультету іноземних мов  
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Посібник призначений для студентів-філологів 3-5 курсів англійського відділення і включає інформацію про історію розвитку есе, його структуру та основні елементи, а також вправи й завдання для семінарських занять з курсу «Essay Writing». Весь матеріал викладений відповідно до лекцій з цього курсу. Посібник складається з чотирнадцяти розділів та додатків. Метою посібника є розвиток у студентів навичок творчого письма шляхом вивчення композиційних особливостей есе та ознайомлення з кращими зразками есе англійських та американських письменників. Кожен розділ включає різноманітні завдання, спрямовані на покращення навичок написання есе.

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## 1. THE AIM OF THE COURSE

It is aimed at helping students to write by providing them with information about structure, elements, language, types of essays, etc. as well as a number of model essays that are examples of good writing.

One of the best ways to learn writing is reading. By reading we can begin to see how other writers have communicated their experiences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings. We can study how they have used the various elements of the essay and thus learn how we might effectively do the same. We also learn by doing, by writing, by practicing what we are learning. Being engaged in reading, analyzing, and writing in conjunction with one another is to yield results.

## 2. DEFINITION OF THE ESSAY

An **essay** is usually a short piece of writing. It is often written from an author's personal point of view. Essays can be literary criticism, political manifestos, learned arguments, observations of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.

The word *essay* derives from the French infinitive *essayer*, «to try» or «to attempt». In English *essay* first meant «a trial» or «an attempt», and this is still an alternative meaning. The Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) was the first author to describe his work as essays; he used the term to characterize these as «attempts» to put his thoughts adequately into writing, and his essays grew out of his commonplacing. Inspired in particular by the works of Plutarch, a translation of whose *Oeuvres Morales* (*Moral works*) into French had just been published by Jacques Amyot, Montaigne began to compose his essays in 1572; the first edition, entitled *Essais*, was published in two volumes in 1580. For the rest of his life he continued revising previously published essays and composing new ones. Francis Bacon's essays, published in book form in 1597, 1612, and 1625, were the first works in English that described themselves as *essays*. Ben Jonson first used the word *essayist* in English in 1609, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

Other English essayists included Robert Burton (1577–1640) and Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682). In Italy, Baldassare Castiglione wrote about courtly manners in his essay *Il libro del cortegiano*. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuit Baltasar Gracian wrote about the theme of wisdom. During the Age of Enlightenment, essays were a favored tool of polemicists who aimed at

convincing readers of their position; they also featured heavily in the rise of periodical literature, as seen in the works of Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and Samuel Johnson. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Edmund Burke and Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote essays for the general public. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century in particular saw a proliferation of great essayists in English – William Hazlitt, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt and Thomas de Quincey all penned numerous essays on diverse subjects. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a number of essayists tried to explain the new movements in art and culture by using essays (e.g., T.S. Eliot). Whereas some essayists used essays for strident political themes, Robert Louis Stevenson and Willa Cather wrote lighter essays. Virginia Woolf, Edmund Wilson, and Charles du Bos wrote literary criticism essays.

## 3. PURPOSE AND STRATEGY

**Practice 3.1** Read the following essay and say if it is effective.

### *My Father*

*My father is my favorite relative. I like him a lot. He grew up in Iowa and wanted to be a doctor. Instead, he became a farmer because his parents couldn't afford to send him to medical school. They couldn't afford to because they were poor and because medical school is expensive. I read someplace that the reason medical school is so expensive is because the AMA keeps the number of students low so there will be few doctors who can therefore charge high fees. Farmers, no matter what you read, don't make much money. They have to endure a lot of hardships and get little in return. Doctors, on the other hand, have an easy life. They work for themselves, make a sure income, and are looked up to by everyone in the community. Farmers, however, are just as important to any country as doctors, yet are paid less. But my father wanted to become a doctor and ended up being a farmer, just like his father. I think I want to be a farmer, too, but my Dad wants me to be a doctor. However, I don't hold this against him.*

Here are some possible strategies for developing a 500-word essay about a favorite relative, each based on a different purpose:

*1. Purpose:* To explain why my father has become so bitter and frustrated in his middle years. – *Strategy:* Write a casual analysis of why my father has become bitter.

2. *Purpose*: To give the reader a vivid picture of what my father is like. – *Strategy*: Write an essay describing my father – his physical looks, his personality, his character.

3. *Purpose*: To illustrate to the reader the effect of the generation gap on my relationship with my father. – *Strategy*: Begin by defining the generation gap. Support this definition with specific examples of generation differences that have cropped up between me and my father.

#### 4. WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT

A **thesis statement** is the controlling idea of an essay. It is the main point that all other sentences relate to. Like a high-powered telescope, your thesis statement zooms in on the specific topic that you will discuss in the body of your essay.

A thesis statement is usually in the first paragraph of an essay. It works best as the last sentence of the opening paragraph. Ending the introduction with the thesis statement lets the writer use the beginning of the paragraph to hook the reader's interest or give background information.

A thesis statement has two parts – a topic and an opinion you hold on that topic.

Subject	Limited Subject	+	Opinion	=	Thesis Statement
Sports	Playing a team sport		has lots of benefits		Playing a team sport teaches a person self-discipline, cooperation, and leadership.
Anger	Road rage		is very dangerous		Road rage is dangerous because it puts the driver, the victim, and the surrounding cars at risk.
Writing	College writing		is similar to writing in the business world		College writing is similar to writing in the business world in three important ways: both types of writing must be logical, well-developed, and clear.

#### Practice 4.1 Fill in the blanks.

1. A thesis statement is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. A thesis statement has two parts, a \_\_\_\_\_ and an \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where should you put your thesis? \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice 4.2** Limit the following subjects that aren't already limited, add an opinion, and make them into thesis statements.

Subject	Limited Subject	+	Opinion	=	Thesis Statement
1. Friendship					
2. Work	Bosses				
3. Winning					
4. Love	Dating				
5. Winter					

**Practice 4.3** Which of the following are good thesis statements? Mark **B** for too broad, **N** for too narrow, **MO** for missing opinion, and **C** for complete. Test each thesis statement by turning it into a question.

1. \_\_\_ Schools have good education programs.
2. \_\_\_ In America today, we face the problem of keeping our air clean.
3. \_\_\_ Vehicles powered by natural gas will cut down on the pollution expelled by automobiles.
4. \_\_\_ When using a computer, the user should know many things.
5. \_\_\_ Human cloning is being studied to determine the scientific and moral consequences of the process.
6. \_\_\_ Children in America are becoming desensitized to violence because of TV.
7. \_\_\_ Many people do not eat meat because they cannot stand the thought of eating something that was once alive.
8. \_\_\_ A lot of people avoid math because they have difficulty with analytical problem solving.
9. \_\_\_ Our campus drama department will be performing *Noises Off* this spring.

10. \_\_\_\_ Since the early 1980s, people have been on various health-craze diets and exercise programs.

**Practice 4. 4** Complete the following thesis statements.

1. Marriage today \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is my favorite class because \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Sleeping \_\_\_\_\_.
4. TV award shows \_\_\_\_\_.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is a role model for college students today.

**Practice 4. 5** Write thesis statements for the following introductions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

No matter how much I tell myself I am going to get up in the morning and go, I cannot seem to do it. Every night before I go to bed, I lay out my sweat and shoes and set my alarm. In the morning when the alarm rings, I push the snooze button and promise myself that I will get up in 10 minutes. This routine goes on for the next hour until I have to get up in order to make it to work on time. Once again, I have failed to get up and go to the gym, and I have deprived myself of one more hour of sleep.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

The most important detail is to determine the number of rooms in the house. A family must consider the needs of the people living in the house and the plans in the near future. Of course, don't forget the backyard. Does the family need a fenced yard for animals or an area for the kids to play? And the family must pay attention to how well the house has been kept up. All of these items are very important details to pay attention to when looking for a new house.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Every morning, at precisely 8:00, the couple eats breakfast at the corner cafe. Afterward, they go to the market for fresh fruit or vegetables and run any errands. If there is no shopping to be done, the couple goes home and does housework or yard work. Every afternoon at 1:00, they sit down to lunch and watch a little television. In the late afternoon, they go for a walk around the lake for a bit of exercise before preparing their dinner. After dinner, they watch

the news and play a hand of cards. Soon the sun dips behind the mountain, and the couple retires for the night.

Often writers prepare readers for a thesis statement with one or several sentences that establish a content. Here are some thesis statements that begin essays. Say what you expect the authors to tell us in the essays having such controlling ideas.

- *New York is a city of things unnoticed.* (Gay Talese)
- *Most Americans are in a terrible shape.* (James F. Fixx)
- *One of the most potent elements in body language is eye behaviour.* (Flora Davis)
- *The biggest piece of claptrap about the Press is that it deals almost exclusively, or even mainly with news.* (T.S. Matthews, *The Power of Press*)
- *While I was still a boy, I came to the conclusion that there were three grades of thinking; and since I was later to claim thinking as my hobby, I came to an even stronger conclusion – namely, that I myself could not think at all.* (William Golding, *Thinking as a Hobby*)
- *Although Boswell and Johnson belonged to the same literary club, were close friends, held the same views on the Monarchy and the English class system, there are significant differences in their literary opinions and preferences.* (Student essay: *A Contrast of the Literary Opinions of Boswell and Johnson*)

Notice, in the following example, how the author eases the reader into his thesis about television instead of presenting it abruptly in the first sentence:

*With the advent of television, for the first time in history, all aspects of animal and human life and death, of societal and individual behavior have been condensed on the average to a 19 inch diagonal screen and a 30 minute slot. Television, a unique medium, claiming to be neither a reality nor art, has become reality for many of us, particularly for our children who are growing up in front of it.* (Jerzy Kosinski)

There are many ways to approach the writing of effective thesis statements. Some of them are: the direct appeal, the personal approach, the statement that describes the over-all effect, the statement that arouses the reader's curiosity.

**Practice 4.6** Read the following passages, find the thesis statement and state the type of the approach used.

- *Suppose there were no critics to tell us how to react to a picture, a play, or a new composition of music. Suppose we wandered innocent as the dawn into an art exhibition of unsigned paintings. By what standards, by what values would we decide whether they were good or bad, talented or untalented, successes or failures? How can we know that what we think is right? (Marya Mannes)*

- *There was once a town in the heart of America where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the midsts of the fall mornings. (Rachel Carson)*

- *How long it takes you to become physically fit depends on how unfit you are when you start. If you're out of condition, you certainly can't shape up in 21 days, as one book claims. But the question is really moot, because shaping up doesn't do any good unless you plan to stay in shape, and that means exercising – from now on. (Bill Maness)*

- *Shed a tear for the passing of the dream. America has become computerized, plastic, impersonal. Americans have grown guilty, isolated, rootless. We are so accustomed to hearing those things about ourselves that we've come to believe them. Well, I don't believe them any more! For the last five years, I've been wandering through the great cities and down the back roads of the United States and, much to my surprise, I've come to know a country that's as sturdy as a New England fishing boat and as lively as a Georgia fiddle tune. (Charles Kuralt)*

- *I have always envied people with hometown. They always seem to have an attic, and in the attic albums of pictures, spellers used in the third grade, go-carts and Irish mails with the scars of young heels and teeth on*

*them. In the houses of these fortunate ones there is always some casual friend of thirty or forty years' standing, someone who grew up next door, some childhood sweetheart, some inseparable companion from primary days. Some people even live in the houses their fathers and grandfathers used; and no matter how wide they may scatter from the hometown, always behind them is a solid backstop of cousins and grandmothers and relatives once or twice removed, maintaining the solidarity and permanence of the clan. (Wallace Stegner)*

- *She wanted her life to be a movie magazine tragedy like the death of a young star with long lines of people weeping and a corpse more beautiful than a great painting, but she was never able to leave the small Oregon town that she was born and raised in and go to Hollywood and die. (Rishard Brautigan)*

**Practice 4.7** Decide which of the opening sentences have definite reader appeal. Rewrite those that are lacking in appeal.

1. *In skiing and skating and riding a bicycle, the beginner is faced with a problem.*
2. *This composition is about learning to meditate.*
3. *My horse is an interesting animal.*
4. *I spent a very exciting week in New Orleans at the Mardi Gras.*
5. *Well, this young girl I am going to tell you about was named Angela.*
6. *First of all, I want to introduce myself.*
7. *Most of our zoos need to be modernized.*

## 5. SUPPORTING IDEA

The supporting ideas are what make up the body of your essay. Each body paragraph covers one major idea in the discussion of your thesis. The body paragraphs consist of a topic sentence and concrete details that support that topic sentence.

**Practice 5.1** For each of the following lists, cross out any ideas that do not support the thesis statement.

1. Children are desensitized to violence by television, video games, and comic books.

*Children aren't even affected by violent acts they see on TV.*

*Children do not care when the heroes beat up the villains in comic books.*

*Many video games cost too much.*

*Children often want to be just like the sports figures they watch on TV.*

*Most children learn very early in life to shoot figures in video games.*

2. Political campaigns often bring out the worst in candidates.

*Most people are either Republican or Democrat.*

*Candidates try to find secrets from their opponents' past.*

*Candidates use the media to help ruin other candidates' reputations.*

*Presidential campaigns occur every four years.*

*Some candidates even resort to name-calling and twisting their opponents' words.*

3. To qualify for the FBI, applicants must meet certain requirements.

*People interested in joining the FBI must have a college degree.*

*FBI applicants must be in great physical shape and have excellent eyesight.*

*The X-Files has caused a great interest in the FBI.*

*FBI agents work within the United States, while CIA agents work outside the United States.*

*FBI applicants must be willing to go through rigorous training and to move anywhere in the United States.*

4. Starting your own business takes a lot of planning and work.

*Prospective business owners must create a business plan in order to borrow money from a bank.*

*Owning your own business is rewarding.*

*People should research the current trends in the market for the type of business they plan to open.*

*Sometimes business owners can get their families to work for free.*

*People should determine how much money they will spend and how much money they will make so they can project possible earnings.*

5. To maintain a long-distance relationship, both people must be willing to sacrifice.

*Separations often happen when couples go to different universities.*

*Both parties must be sensitive to the other's needs -- even at a distance.*

*People have to communicate often with each other, even if it's hard to find the time.*

*Both people must put extra effort into the relationship to make it work.*

*My parents had a long-distance internship.*

**Practice 5.2** For each of the following thesis statements, list three supporting ideas.

1. People should always look for three things when searching for a job.

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2. Moving away from home for the first time can be hard.

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3. Animals can help people live longer.

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4. Vacations help people live longer.

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5. Studying the right way can make a difference in a test grade.

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Essays are of different lengths and often have a varying number of ideas that support their thesis statements. The thesis statement generally determines the length of an essay and the amount of support necessary to make your point. Some statements require very little proof and might need only one body paragraph; others might require much more support and might need four or more body paragraphs for a complete explanation. An essay that falls somewhere in the middle has an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion.

**Your Supporting Ideas** Now list the support you might use for your thesis statement.

**Your Thesis Statement:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting Idea 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting Idea 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supporting Idea 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 6. SPECIFIC DETAIL

Now you are ready to generate the specific details that will make up the bulk of your body paragraphs. Later in this text, you will learn about different methods of developing your ideas, such as describing, comparing and contrasting, and analyzing causes and effects. For now, we are simply going to practice generating concrete supporting details and examples that are directly related to a specific topic. Concrete words refer to anything you can see, hear, touch, smell, or taste, like *trees, boats, water, friends, fire alarm, and fresh bread*. They make writing alive because they help the reader picture what the writer is talking about.

**Practice 6.1** Put a check by the details and examples listed that support each topic sentence.

- 1. Many people are addicted to soap operas.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ viewers get caught up in the story
  - \_\_\_\_\_ people care about the characters
  - \_\_\_\_\_ soap operas are often a springboard for actors wanting more work
  - \_\_\_\_\_ people want certain situations to happen in certain ways
  - \_\_\_\_\_ mindless but entertaining TV
  - \_\_\_\_\_ can watch every once in a while to catch up
  - \_\_\_\_\_ CBS has had the number one soap opera for years

- 2. My parents have reversed the stereotypical roles in their marriage.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my dad decorates the house
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my mom and dad both work
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my sister wants to be just like our mom
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my mom mows and takes care of the lawn
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my mom builds furniture for our house
  - \_\_\_\_\_ my dad cleans the inside of the house
  - \_\_\_\_\_ I hope to marry someone like my mom

- 3. The members of every generation think they'll understand their kids' music -- until they actually hear it.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parents don't understand today's rock music
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parents who listened to rock-and-roll don't understand heavy metal
  - \_\_\_\_\_ parents become wary of bands like Kid Rock and Marilyn Manson

- \_\_\_ no parents understand new wave or punk music
- \_\_\_ Dick Clark has helped all kinds of music get established
- \_\_\_ parents have a hard time letting their kids listen to rap music
- \_\_\_ Elvis helped put rock-and-roll on the map

4. Students change their majors often throughout their academic careers.

\_\_\_ general education courses make students learn about a variety of subjects

\_\_\_ in college students discover interests in subjects they hadn't considered

- \_\_\_ professor bring new subjects to life for many students
- \_\_\_ math is difficult for many students
- \_\_\_ other students often influence the decisions about majors
- \_\_\_ the reality of the job market creates changes in majors
- \_\_\_ academic performance sometimes makes students look for alternative

interests

5. The best way to lose weight is through a good diet and exercise.

- \_\_\_ snacking all day long can cause a person to eat more than usual
- \_\_\_ people should avoid eating late at night before they go to bed
- \_\_\_ skipping meals is counterproductive for people on diets
- \_\_\_ people should do cardiovascular exercise at least three times per

week

- \_\_\_ running is great exercise
- \_\_\_ people should eat three sensible meals per day
- \_\_\_ ESPN has many exercise shows

**Practice 6.2** For each of the following topic sentences, list five details or examples to develop them.

1. Everywhere I go, I seem to see someone that I know.

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2. When I was in high school, I enjoyed many different extracurricular activities.

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3. People are beginning to use their personal computers for many different business transactions.

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4. Friends and family are a very important part of life.

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5. People must be careful when they are swimming.

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**Practice 6.3** Underline the most specific word or phrase in each group.

1. books, library, shelves, page 42, stairs
2. computer, technology, software, on-off switch, on-line help
3. backyard, swimming pool, Coppertone lotion, pool party
4. drinks, thirst, soda, root beer, root beer in a frosty mug
5. pink candles on a birthday cake, dessert, dinner, sweets, chocolate candy

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**Practice 6.4** List three details that could support each of the following topic sentences.

1. My favorite pastime is swimming.

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2. Eating a balanced diet is an important part of feeling good.

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3. A simple gift is often the best.

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4. Working for people you like is easy.

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**Practice 6.5** Develop the following topic sentences with enough specific details.

1. Before taking a test, take a moment to relax.
2. Always discuss major decisions with someone you trust.
3. When interviewing for a job, dress appropriately.
4. My roommate is a real neatness freak.
5. When reading a book, think about what you are reading.

Compare the two paragraphs. Consider how the specific details in the second one contribute to its effectiveness:

*At the turn of the century, many diseases shortened human life. People did not live very long; what life they had was miserable. If disease did not kill them, poor hygiene did. However, through improvement in medicine and public hygiene, we now live many years longer.*

*At the turn of the century, infectious diseases were the primary health menace to this nation. Acute respiratory conditions such as pneumonia and influenza were the major killers. Tuberculosis, too, drained the nation's vitality. Gastrointestinal infections decimated the child population. A great era of environmental control helped change all this. Water and milk supplies were made safe. Engineers constructed systems to handle and treat perilous human wastes and to render them safe. Food sanitation and personal hygiene became a way of life. Continual labours of public health workers diminished death rates of mothers and their infants. Countless children were vaccinated. Tuberculosis was brought under control. True, new environmental hazards replaced the old. But people survived to suffer them. In 1900, the average person in the United States rarely eked out fifty years of life. Some twenty years have since been added to this life expectancy. (Benjamin A. Kogan, *Health: Man in a Changing Environment*)*

## 7. UNITY/COHERENCE

The following excerpt is an example of writing that does not stick to the point. Notice the pieces of irrelevant information that are thrown in here and there, destroying the unity of the essay. Read the essay without them and you will see how the writing is strengthened.

*The deadly routine of my studies and work turned the past year into unbreakable boredom. Each day proceeded with unerring predictability, from sunrise to sunset. If I were to use a symbol to reflect my life this past year, it would be one gigantic yawn – so dull was the schedule by which I was tyrannized. Of course, there were always a few bright accidents that invaded the boredom, but they were rare. Every morning at 7:00 A.M. the alarm dragged me out of bed so that I could race to school in time to answer Prof. Huber's Western Civilization roll call at 8:07 A.M. For the next 50 minutes I listened to the prof drone through his battered and stained lecture notes on the meaning of civitas, the First Triumvirate, or the Barbarian Invasion. I took plenty of notes so that I could quote verbatim on the next test. Then I moved on to the next class, Introduction to Psychology, where the instructor always got hung up on «standard deviations», «chi square», and «correlation» because those were his*

graduate work specialties. Then I moved on to the next class, the next – all equally numbing to my senses.

At 1:00 P.M. it was time to report to my job as cashier of the Arco self-service gas station, located one block from where I live. I should probably mention that I live in Bakersfield, a town whose reputation is cruelly maligned. I have found that most people think of Bakersfield as the garbage dump of creation. «How can you stand to live in that ugly place?» they often ask. «Nothing but Oakies, fog and cow dung there,» they insist. But I'm defensive of my hometown, so I stick up for it. Anyway, at the Arco station, I sat in a cage, like a monkey at the zoo, collecting money through a barred window from citizens whose lives must have been duller than mine judging by the way their feet dragged and their faces drooped. «That will be \$8.50. Thank you, ma'am.» «That will be \$9.00. Thank you, sir.» «No, you will have to work the pump yourself. This is self-service.» I repeated myself over and over again – endlessly until I felt that my voice was floating out in the air somewhere, separate from my body. Sometimes I almost wished for a robbery to inject a moment of excitement into my life. My friend Jimmy Davenport, who works for a posh liquor store, was held up once, and the robbers handcuffed him in the man's toilet, along with the manager of the store and two customers. He told me that he was never so scared in his life as when he looked down the barrel of that big black pistol one of the robbers stuck in his face. But for me the most exciting event of the job was when I opened my sandwich bag to see if I was having salami or cream cheese.

At night my routine involved first propping up fat textbooks on my desk and then propping up my eyelids to keep from falling asleep as I doggedly underlined the significant passages with a thick yellow pen. I recommend these pens to all my friends because they really make the print stand out. For example, in English Lit, we studied poems like Shelley's «Hymn to Intellectual Beauty», a long rambling piece about shadows, unseen powers, and shrieks of ecstasy; but I never understood a word that I read, so gradually I would nod and nap. Then I would rise up, startled, and slap my face to keep awake. As I underlined steadily, tome after tome, I eventually allowed myself the luxury of crawling into bed, where I would fall asleep, knowing that the next day would repeat that day's petty pace.

These are the most typical transitional expressions categorized according to their functions:

<b>Addition:</b>	<i>and, again, too, also, in addition, further, furthermore, moreover, besides;</i>
<b>Cause and effect:</b>	<i>therefore, consequently, thus, accordingly, as a result, hence, then, so;</i>
<b>Comparison:</b>	<i>similarly, likewise, by comparison;</i>
<b>Concession:</b>	<i>to be sure, of course, it is true, to tell the truth, certainly, with the exception of, although this may be true, even though, naturally;</i>
<b>Contrast:</b>	<i>but, however, in contrast, on the contrary, on the other hand, yet, nevertheless, after all, in spite of</i>
<b>Example:</b>	<i>for example, for instance</i>
<b>Place:</b>	<i>elsewhere, here, above, below, farther on, there, beyond, nearby, opposite to, around</i>
<b>Restatement:</b>	<i>that is, as I have said, in other words, in simpler terms, to put it differently, simply stated</i>
<b>Sequence:</b>	<i>first, second, third, next, subsequently, later, finally</i>
<b>Summary:</b>	<i>in conclusion, to conclude, to summarize, in brief, in short</i>
<b>Time:</b>	<i>afterward, later, earlier, subsequently, at the same time, simultaneously, immediately, this time, until now, before, meanwhile, shortly, soon, currently, when, lately, in the meantime, formerly.</i>

**Practice 7.1** Cross out the topic sentences that don't support each thesis statement.

1. Holidays are fun times in my family.  
*My favorite holiday is Thanksgiving.*  
*July 4<sup>th</sup> always scares my dogs.*  
*Chanukah is a time of great celebration in my house.*  
*My boyfriend doesn't understand my family.*

2. I love working with children.  
*Children's games still make me laugh.*  
*I hate foods that are good for me.*  
*I want a good paying job.*  
*I have always liked babysitting.*

3. Exercise is essential for good shape.  
*Exercise keeps our hearts in good shape.*  
*Exercise is fun.*  
*Exercise is difficult when you are on a tight schedule.*  
*Exercise is necessary for weight control.*

4. I have learned over the years how to control my anger.  
*One way is to count to 10 before I do anything.*  
*I get angry easily.*  
*Another solution is to take a deep breath before I act.*  
*The solution I use most often is to take a walk.*

5. I really like to cook, but I never have the time.  
*I am most creative at breakfast.*  
*My favorite dish to make is beef stroganoff.*  
*My philosophy class is my toughest class.*  
*I don't like spicy foods.*

**Practice 7.2** Cross out the three irrelevant sentences in the following paragraph.

I have a very bad habit of waiting until the night before an exam to begin studying, so it is very important for me to have a well-planned and productive cramming session. One time during my junior year of high school, I failed a test. I begin by putting on comfortable clothes so that when I begin to squirm and twist to try and get comfortable, I am able to move around. Next, I get a large glass of milk and several cookies to snack on. Peanut butter cookies have always been my favorite. Once I have my snack, I spread all my books and study materials out on the living room floor. I have a hardwood floor. Finally, I am ready to begin studying for the next few hours.

**Practice 7.3** Cross out the three irrelevant sentences in the following paragraph.

Most people wonder what it would be like to win the lottery and be able to spend money as they please. The odds are that even the people who buy a lottery ticket every day will never win the lottery. Winning the lottery would change most people's lives drastically. Many people say that they would begin by paying all their debts. There are people in the world who buy so many items on credit that they are constantly trying to get out of debt. Other people say that they would buy a new house or a new car to spoil themselves a little bit. Some people simply say that they would invest the money, and use it when they retire so that they can live comfortably. Many elderly people are unable to continue the lifestyles they are accustomed to after retirement.

**Practice 7.4** Fill in the blanks in the following paragraph with logical transitions.

Today, an unlimited amount of information is available through the Internet. \_\_\_\_\_, some of this information may not be suitable for younger audiences. Many concerned parents asked for a way to block Internet sites that they did not want their children to view. \_\_\_\_\_, a system was developed by which a parent uses a password to choose which Internet sites the household computer will and won't access. \_\_\_\_\_, children who do not know the password cannot access the blocked Internet sites. \_\_\_\_\_, parents have control over the technology in their homes and feel their children are safe when they use the Internet.

**Practice 7.5** Rewrite the following paragraph, adding at least three transitions to make it more coherent.

In high school, I thought I had everything figured out. I never considered what I would do after graduation. I never made any plans. When I graduated, I was completely lost. I went to see a guidance counselor at the local college. I decided to go to college. I am in college and have made many plans for the future.

**Practice 7.6** Underline at least five effective repeated words in the following paragraph.

For many people, reading the daily newspaper is their main source of information about the world. The front page usually gives the national news or

an international political event that affects the United States. Major world events, such as an earthquake, always make front-page news. Or the the last page of the first section is the op-ed (opposite editorial) page, where editors and readers give their opinions on current news. The editorial and op-ed pages are among the few places in the newspaper where the writing is not objective, along with book and movie reviews and columnists like Molly Ivins or Dear Abby. Most newspapers have separate sections for sports, business, entertainment, classified ads, and comics. All in all, a half hour spent with the newspaper over morning coffee keeps a person up-to-date on world affairs and local people, places, and events.

## 8. ORGANIZING YOUR ESSAY

To organize the ideas in your essay, you need to consider the purpose of your essay and the way each body paragraph serves that purpose. Then you should arrange your body paragraphs in a logical manner to achieve that purpose. If your essay's main purpose is informative – to describe the layout of a building, for example – you would probably arrange the details spatially. That is, you might begin with the entrance and move to the other parts of the building as if you were strolling through it. If, however, you want to persuade a reader to buy one type of car over another, you might arrange the essay so that it moves from one extreme to another – for example, from the least important feature of the car to the most important. Once you decide on the order of your paragraphs, you need to organize the details in each paragraph.

Most paragraphs and essays are organized in one of five ways:

1. *From general to particular*
2. *From particular to general*
3. *Chronologically (by time)*
4. *Spatially (by physical order)*
5. *From one extreme to another*

Here is an example of a paragraph organized from general to particular:

*When I began attending college, I was very nervous because I was afraid I would not do very well in my classes. My first year, I took general education classes that reviewed a lot of the material I learned in high school. There was a lot of studying involved in these classes, but I was able to pass all of them. Soon I decided that my major would be business,*

*so I began taking classes that dealt with business. All of the business classes were harder than the classes I had taken in general education. Just when I thought I would not pass a class, I would do well on a test, which would raise my confidence level again. I worked very hard in every class I had to take and was able to pass every one. Tomorrow I am graduating with my bachelor's degree in business.*

This paragraph moves from the general idea of going to college to the specific notion of taking classes, graduating, and receiving a degree. Notice that it includes such transitions as *when*, *but*, *soon*, and *which*. They show the relationship among the writer's ideas.

**Practice 8.1** Write a topic sentence for the following group of sentences. Then organize the sentences into a paragraph using general-to-particular order. Add words, phrases, or sentences as necessary to smooth out the paragraph.

**Topic Sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_

*During these events, not only do you get to watch the athletes play their games, but you get to see former athletes announcing the play-by-play action.*

*Any time you turn on the TV, there are at least 14 sporting events happening at one time.*

*You can see anything from basketball to golf to racing to fishing.*

*Let's face it; the likelihood of seeing a sports figure on the TV is great.*

*And just when you think you've seen enough of the players, you are flooded with commercials that have athletes selling various products*

Here is a paragraph of particular-to-general organization.

*The water is so crystal-clear that I can see every pebble settled on the bottom. A small sandy beach reaches the water's edge and makes a perfect spot to spend the afternoon. Across the water I can see the mountainside covered in the greenest trees imaginable. A log cabin also sits among the*

*trees halfway up the mountain, so peaceful and secluded. The puffy white clouds make the sky appear to be a brighter blue, and the birds seem to enjoy floating on the soft breeze. I could sit all day next to the lake in the valley and just stare at my surroundings.*

This paragraph starts with specific details about the area around the lake and ends with a topic sentence. Such transitions as *and*, *across the water*, and *also* move readers through the paragraph.

**Practice 8.2** Write a topic sentence for the following group of sentences. Then organize the sentences into a paragraph using particular-to-general order. Add words, phrases, or sentences as necessary to smooth out the paragraph.

**Topic Sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_

*My mom hopes I'll order something more grown-up, but I never will.*

*My family knew I loved pizza and always let me order one once a week.*

*I have always loved pepperoni, even on sandwiches and in soups.*

*I used to love pizza night when I lived at home.*

*And pizza is just the best food ever created in the world.*

*Now when I go home, we just go to an Italian restaurant where I can order pizza.*

Here is an example of a paragraph organized chronologically:

*Preparing to go snowboarding for the first time can be a lot of fun. First of all, you must get into full gear upon arriving at the mountain. Then you ride a ski lift to the top of the mountain. Once at the top, it is time to buckle the boots into the bindings on the board. The bindings must be tight, but not so tight that they are uncomfortable. Next, it is time to begin the descent down the mountain. On the way down the mountain, you should pay attention to how the board moves when pressure is applied to the toes and heels of the feet. Finally, you find out where to lean in*

*order to turn right and left so you can fly down the mountain. Once you have learned the basics, you will have fun perfecting your new hobby.*

This paragraph is chronological because it explains snowboarding according to a time sequence and uses transitions such as *first of all*, *then*, *next*, and *finally*.

**Practice 8.3** Write a topic sentence for the following group of sentences. Then organize the sentence into a paragraph using chronological order. Add words, phrases, or sentences as necessary to smooth out the paragraph.

**Topic Sentence:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Spread the jelly on top of the peanut butter.*

*Unscrew the lids from a jar of peanut butter and a jar of jelly.*

*Using the knife again, remove a small amount of jelly from the jar.*

*Place two slices of bread on a plate.*

*Using the knife, remove a small amount of peanut butter from the jar.*

*Place the second slice of bread on top of the slice with the peanut butter and jelly on it.*

*First, remove a butter knife from the drawer.*

*Spread the peanut butter with the knife on one slice of bread.*

Here is an example of a paragraph organized spatially:

*It was the first football game of the season and her first football game ever as a cheerleader. Standing in front of the huge crowd made the butterflies in her stomach begin to flutter again. In the front row sat a group of her friends cheering her on. Two rows behind them sat her psychology professor. Next to him sat a few of her new sorority sisters. As the cheerleader looked across the aisle, she noticed a group of rowdy students screaming and cheering for their team. Beyond the crowd, the*

tall announcer's booth where all of the press people and the athletic director sat seemed to glare down at her. Any minute the music would begin to blare from that very booth, and she would begin her first half-time dance routine.

This paragraph is arranged spatially because it moves physically around the football stadium, using such words as *in front of*, *behind*, *next to*, and *beyond* as transitions.

**Practice 8.4** Write a topic sentence for the following group of sentences. Then write a paragraph putting the sentences in spatial order. Add words, phrases, or sentences as necessary to smooth out the paragraph.

**Topic Sentence** \_\_\_\_\_

*The hotel's check-in desk is located on the left side of the lobby.*

*Two little boys are sitting quietly on the couches next to the check-in counter waiting for their parents to finish checking in.*

*In the center of the lobby are four massive couches arranged in a conversational setting.*

*Directly across from the check-in desk is the activities counter where people can plan their stay.*

*Walking through the front door, a guest's attention is immediately drawn to the ceiling.*

*Painted as a sky, the ceiling gives guests the feeling that they have never left the outdoors.*

*Framing the front door are two huge water dolphins perched in the center of two water fountains.*

**Practice 8.5** List the best method of development for paragraphs on the following topics.

1. *How to make homemade salsa.*

2. *I think I am going to rearrange my dorm room to get more space.*
3. *What I will have for dinner tonight.*
4. *Today, people question the ethics of capital punishment.*
5. *I lift weights for an hour and run five miles every day.*

**Your Organization** What method of organization will work best for your ideas about learning? Why do you think this method will be best?

**Practice 8.6** Reorganize the following topics so that they are in a logical order. Then label your method of organization.

1. *east at the mall to the stop light*  
*west at the grocery store to the flower shop*  
*north at the flower shop until you get to Amy's*  
*south at the stop light until you hit the grocery store*

**Method of Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. *sitcoms*  
*dramas*  
*documentaries*  
*musicals*  
*awards shows*

**Method of Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

3. *community servants*  
*police badges*  
*police officers*  
*police office staff*  
*police uniforms*

**Method of Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_



**Practice 8.7** Reorganize the following sentences so that they are in a logical order. Then identify your method of organization.

*Next, I decide what I will have for dinner and begin to cook.*

*Then I change into comfortable clothes.*

*Before I completely wind down, I lay out my clothes for the next day and set my alarm clock.*

*This is always a good time to look at the mail or return phone calls.*

*While I am cooking, I listen to music or turn on the evening news.*

*First, I begin to relax by taking a shower.*

*When I return home in the evenings, I always follow the same routine.*

*After I eat, I do the dishes and sit down in the living room.*

*Then I watch television or read a book until I am ready to go to bed.*

**Method of Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Practice 8.8** Reorganize the following sentences so that they are in a logical order. Then identify your method of organization.

*Sweatshirts belong next to long-sleeved shirts, so they come next.*

*When I walk in the closet door, all of my T-shirt are hanging directly to my left in the closet.*

*My shoes follow the same pattern on the floor as the clothes hanging up do.*

*Next to the T-shirts are my long-sleeved shirts.*

*Starting the summer clothes are the tank-tops, followed by summer dresses.*

*Everything in my closet must be in order, or I will never be able to find anything.*

*All of my sweaters can be found stacked neatly on the shelf just above my long-sleeved sweatshirts.*

*Jackets, of course, go along with sweatshirts, so they are hanging next to the sweatshirts.*

*I have winter shoes immediately as I walk in the door, with sandals for summer toward the back of the closet.*

*After the jackets come the summer clothes.*

**Practice 8.9** Define the type of organization the writer uses in the following paragraph:

*The Egyptians have taught us many things. They were excellent farmers. They knew all about irrigation. They built temples which were afterwards copied by the Greeks and which served as the earliest models for the churches in which we worship nowadays. They invented a calendar, which proved such a useful instrument for the purpose of measuring time that it has survived with a few changes until today. But most important of all, the Egyptians learned how to preserve speech for the benefit of future generations. They invented the art of writing.*

Transitions may indicate temporal relationships -- a sequence or progression in time. Pay attention to the underlined temporal transitional devices:

*That night, we drank tea and then vodka with lemon peel steeped in it. The four of us talked in Russian and English about mutual friends and American railroads and the Rolling Stones. Seryozha loves the Stones, and his face grew wistful as we spoke about their recent album, «Some Girls.» He played a tape of «Let It Bleed» over and over, until we could translate some difficult phrases for him; after that, he came out with the phrases at intervals during the evening, in a pretty decent imitation of*

*Jagger's Cockney snarl. He was an adroit and oddly formal host, inconspicuously filling our teacups and politely urging us to eat bread and cheese and chocolate. While he talked to us, he teased Anya, calling her «Piglet,» and she shook back her bangs and glowered at him. It was clear that theirs was a fiery relationship. After a while, we talked about ourselves. Anya told us about painting and printmaking and about how hard it was to buy supplies in Moscow. There had been something angry in her dark face since the beginning of the evening; I thought at first that it meant she didn't like Americans; but now I realized that it was a constant, barely suppressed rage at her own situation. (Andrea Lee, Russian Journal)*

## 9. BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

The introduction to your essay – you first paragraph – should both introduce your subject and stimulate your audience's interest. The introduction of an essay captures the readers' interest, gives necessary background information, and presents your thesis statement. This paragraph essentially tells readers what the essay is going to cover without going into detail or discussing specifics.

### CONCLUSION

The concluding paragraph is the final paragraph in an essay. It draws your essay to a close, giving readers a sense of completion. That is, readers feel that all the loose ends are wrapped up and the point of the essay is clear. As with introductions, there are many good techniques for writing a conclusion. You might (1) summarize the main ideas, (2) highlight the most important issue, (3) ask a question that gets readers to think about something in particular, (4) predict the future, (5) offer a solution to a problem, or (6) call readers to action. In some cases, you might want to use several of these strategies.

**Practice 9.1** Explain why each of the beginnings interests or does not interest you. Comment on the way the author introduces the topic.

#### *The Fourth State of Matter*

*The collie wakes me up about three times a night, summoning me from a great distance as I row my boat through a dim, complicated dream.*

*She's on the shoreline, barking. Wake up. She's staring at me with her head slightly tipped to the side, long nose, gazing eyes, toenails clenched to get a purchase on the wood floor. We used to call her the face of love.*

*She totters on her broomstick legs into the hallway and over the doorsill into the kitchen, makes a sharp left at the refrigerator – careful, almost went down – then a straightaway to the door. I sleep on my feet in the cold of the doorway, waiting. Here she comes. Lift her down the two steps. She pees and then stands, Lassie in a ratty coat, gazing out at the yard.*

*In the porch light the trees shiver, the squirrels turn over in their sleep. The Milky Way is a long smear on the sky, like something erased on a blackboard...*

*(Jo Beard, The New Yorker)*

#### *My Father*

*I have no recollection of a time when I was not afraid of my father. He was critical of everyone and everything, and especially of his children.*

*He was born in Brooklyn, New York, on August 9, 1906. One night when he was a baby, his father shot himself through the head with a pistol. The boss of the printing shop where he worked had fired him that morning for coming in late and hung over. His friends believed it was an accident. They said, «He didn't mean to kill himself. He was just cleaning the gun.»*

*Two years later, Billy, a thin and silent little boy, was walking with his mother, whose name was Daisy, and a gentleman friend of hers on the beach of Coney Island. The man had made Billy a little boat, out of a wooden box, to float around in. They watched the midday sun glisten on tiny waves and seagulls squawk and flap around the barnacled pilings along the fishing pier. Old men squatted on dirty tackle boxes and boys dangled their brown legs holding out lines, waiting for a catch. Laughter shrieked from the boardwalk behind the beach, and in the distance music from the merry-go-round came and went amid the tumbling roar and screams from what was, in my father's time, the world's biggest roller coaster.*

*(Chapman Reilly, Under the Sun)*

#### *The Monster*

*He was an undersized little man, with a head too big for his body – a sickly little man. His nerves were bad. He had skin trouble. It was agony*

for him to wear anything next to his skin coarser than silk. And he had delusions of grandeur.

He was a monster of conceit. Never for one minute did he look at the world or at people, except in relation to himself. He was not only the most important person in the world, to himself; in his own eyes he was the only person who existed. He believed himself to be one of the greatest dramatists in the world, one of the greatest thinkers, and one of the greatest composers. To hear him talk, he was Shakespeare, and Beethoven, and Plato, rolled into one. And you would have had no difficulty in hearing him talk. He was one of the most exhausting conversationalists that ever lived. An evening with him was an evening spent in listening to a monologue. Sometimes he was brilliant; sometimes he was maddeningly tiresome. But whether he was being brilliant or dull, he had one sole topic of conversation: himself. What he thought and what he did...

The name of this monster was Richard Wagner...

(Deems Taylor)

### **Prejudice**

Prejudice is a judgement or opinion held in disregard of facts that contradict it. Any school child will tell you that prejudice is wrong. But any school child will also, with little or no prompting, tell you jokes about dumb Polacks, conniving Jews, naive prostitutes, senile teachers, or some other suitable group whom society has made the victim of one of its many biased stereotypes. Showing prejudice is a popular sport played skillfully by society since the beginning of time. It is a habit of the mind which affects all of us, invariably serving to feed our egos at the expense of someone else. In a petty way prejudice satisfies our need to feel superior without merit. After all, it is so easy to label someone «slow», «dirty», «unreliable,» or «ugly», in turn causing us to seem «quick», «clean», «reliable,» and «handsome» by contrast. Even a child's screaming tirade against the awful taste of spinach is usually an uninformed judgement about this much maligned vegetable. By screaming about how «yuckie» spinach is, the child is trying to prove himself too good for such a slimy aliment.

Prejudice crops up in amazing places, often slipping by unrecognized. The following quotation by Charlotte Bronte serves as a case in point: Prejudices, it is well known, are most difficult to eradicate from the heart

whose soil has never been loosened or fertilized by education; they grow there firm as weeds among the rocks.

(Michael Wilds)

### **Northeast Direct**

I'm on board Amtrak's number 175 to Penn Station. I've traveled by train a couple of times in the past year, but last time I discovered that each car had one electric outlet. Besides lots of room, besides that comforting, rolling motion, it's what I think about now when I think about the train. My Powerbook has a weak battery, and I can plug in and type as long as I want.

The car is empty. Maybe three of us new passengers, two previously seated. So I do feel a little awkward taking the seat right behind this guy I saw hustling on several minutes before I did. He'd already reclined his aisle seat, thrown his day bag and warm coat on the one by the window. He was settled. I am sure he was more than wondering why, with so many empty seats all around, I had to go and sit directly behind him. But I felt something too. Why did he have to pick a seat in a row in front of the electrical outlet? And if he grumbled when I bumped the back of his seat to get by, I grumbled because I had to squeeze past to get over to the window seat behind him.

I'm over it quickly because I've got my machine on and I'm working. And he seems to be in his world too. He's taken a daily planner out, and he's checking a few things...

(Dagoberto Gilb, *The Threepenny Review*)

### **Ring Leader**

I was thirty years old when I had my right nostril pierced, and back-home friends fell speechless at the news, lapsing into long telephone pauses of the sort that June Cleaver would employ if the Beave had ever called to report, «Mom, I'm married. His name's Eddie.» Not that I resemble a Cleaver or have friends who wear pearls in the shower, but people who have known me the longest would say that for me to draw attention to my body rather than to work all out to repel it is at least as out of character as the Beave's abrupt urge for his-and-hers golf ensembles. A nose ring, they might tell you, would be my last choice for a fashion accessory. way down on the list with a sag-enhancing specialty bra or a sign on my butt reading «Wide Load.»

*The fact is, I grew up ugly – no, worse than that, I grew up unusual, that unforgivable sin among youth. We lived in Alaska, where, despite what you might have heard about the Rugged Individualist, teenagers still adhere to the universal rules of conformity: if Popular Patty wears contact lenses, then you will by gum get contacts too, or else pocket those glasses and pray you can distinguish the girls' bathroom door from the boys'. The bad news was that I had only one eye, having lost the other in a dog attack at age seven...*

*(Natalie Kusz, Allure)*

*An increasing number of midlife women are reentering the workforce, pursuing college degrees, and getting more involved in the public arena. Several labels besides «midlife» have been attached to this type of person: the mature woman, the older woman, and, more recently, the reentry woman. By definition, she is between thirty-five and fifty-five years old and has been away from the business or academic scene anywhere from fifteen to thirty years. The academic community, the media, marketing people, and employers are giving her close scrutiny, and it is apparent that she is having a greater impact on our society than she realizes.*

*(Jo Ann Harris)*

*You are completely alone in a large open space and are struck by a terrifying, unreasoning fear. You sweat, your heart beats, you cannot breathe. You fear you may die of a heart attack, although you do not have heart disease. Suppose you decide you will never get yourself in this helpless situation again. You go home and refuse to leave its secure confines. Your family has to support you. You have agoraphobia – a terror of open spaces.*

*(Controlling Phobias Through Behavior Modification)*

*My mother used to have a little china cream and sugar set that was given to her by a woman who later killed her children with an axe. It sat cheerfully in the china cabinet, as inadequate a symbol as I have ever seen of the dark mysteries within us. Yet at least it was there to remind us that no matter how much Jesus wanted us for a sunbeam, we would still have some day to cope with a deeper reality than common sense could explain. It stood for strange cars not to get into, running shoes to wear*

*when you were out alone at night and the backs of Chinese restaurants you were not supposed to go into.*

*(Marian Engle, review of The Goddess and Other Women by Joyce Carol Oates)*

*It's like Pearl Harbor. The Japanese have invaded, and the US has been caught short. Not on guns and tanks and battleships – those are yesterday's weapons – but on mental might. In a high-tech age where nations increasingly compete on brainpower, American schools are producing an army of illiterates. Companies that cannot hire enough skilled workers now realize they must do something to save the public schools. Not to be charitable, not to promote good public relations, but to survive.*

*(Nancy Perry, Saving the Schools: How business Can Help)*

*When you leave your apartment or house, do you begin to feel better? If you leave for a week-long trip, do you find your head clears, your migraine disappears, dizziness stops, your aches and pains subside, depression fades away, and your entire attitude is better? If so, chemical pollution of the atmosphere in your home may be making you ill.*

*(Marshall Mandell, Are You Allergic to Your House?)*

## 10. WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph is a group of closely related sentences dealing with a single topic or idea. As a rule, a paragraph has the topic sentence, which states its main idea. All the other sentences must be related to this topic sentence. These sentences further explain or support the main idea and give the paragraph a feeling of unity. If they are not related to the main idea, unity is destroyed.

**Practice 10.1** Study the examples of well organized and well written paragraphs which have a sense of unity:

*It is almost impossible for an American to visualize the diet on which most of the world exists. Imagine, if you can, a medium-size portion of rice or cereal with a few local vegetables and possibly some fish – eaten only twice a day. On most days that's all there is. Occasionally there may be tea and perhaps a little sugar and once in a while a small amount of chicken or meat (though in a country like India the average consumption*

*of meat is an almost nonexistent two pounds per person per year). Three quarters of all the people on earth today have never in their whole lives eaten what Americans call a square meal – that is, meat, potatoes, vegetables, bread and butter, dessert, and a beverage.*

*All nature is a web, each animal and plant – a separate point where the strands come together. Pull at any individual, and the whole web is affected. Physicists tell us that every time a man or a grasshopper leaps into the air, the entire earth moves in the opposite direction. Our physical world shifts an immeasurably short distance as its reaction to either a single man or a grasshopper, but it moves. And the biological world reacts to the disappearance of a single bumblebee – even if the change is immeasurably small.*

**Practice 10.2** Study the following groups of sentences. Explain which of them are unified paragraphs, and which are merely groups of unrelated or disorganized ideas. Revise the latter by rearranging sentences, dropping sentences, or by adding or dropping words so that they become unified paragraphs.

*1. Indians have contributed a great deal to American farming methods. The white settlers in Colonial America might have starved if they had not copied Indian farming methods. Many places in the United States have names of Indian origin. Approximately half of our states have Indian names. At least one tribe, the Pima, had a well-developed irrigation system.*

*2. It was a warm sunny day without a cloud in the sky. I was standing by a weathered old tenement house. The paint had peeled from the walls; and what once had been a front porch was now a mass of splintered, rotted wood. Down the dirty street, I could see a little girl standing in the shadows. She held a doll with a broken head in her arms. She had long blonde hair, and she was crying.*

**Practice 10.3** Study the following groups of sentences. Explain which of them are unified paragraphs and which are merely groups of unrelated sentences. Rearrange them to make them unified.

*1. No one could escape from the city. The mainland was two miles away, across an expanse of wild water which no boat could survive. All*

*four bridges were down. Men, women, and children crouched in their houses, staying close to the walls because that was the safest place if the roof came down. Houses were collapsing, people were dying. No one knew how many, no one knew when his turn would come. The wind blew on – and on – and on. It would never stop.*

*2. As you move toward the baggage-claim area, you may see a family group which you can identify by the striking similarity in the way they all walk. Walking away from the departure area, you see three men in telephone booths. Others on their way to the baggage – claim counter who have been met by family or friends usually appear the happiest and walk with a great deal of enthusiasm. An airport is an excellent spot for viewing the entire human emotional spectrum. Those who are waiting to be met keep rising on their toes and looking around.*

**Practice 10.4** Organize the statements into a paragraph. Use only those which are relevant to the topic sentence. *Given my choice I would sooner be in the air force than in any other service branch.*

- 1. I am more interested in flying than in any other military occupation.*
- 2. Opportunities for advancement are greater in the Air Force.*
- 3. Wages in certain brackets of the Air Force are higher than in other branches.*
- 4. There are many opportunities to travel*
- 5. My cousin has been in the Navy for two years, and has sailed around the whole world.*
- 6. I think, though, that I still like the Air Force better.*

## 11. TITLE

A title is a phrase, usually no more than a few words. A title gives a hint about the subject, purpose, or focus of what is to follow. Besides suggesting an essay's purpose, a good title catches an audience's attention or «hooks» readers so that they want to read more.

Do not underline or use quotation marks around your essay title. Do not put a period at the end of your title, and be sure to capitalize it correctly. The first word and last word in a title are always capitalized. Capitalize all other words except articles (*a, an, the*) and short prepositions (such as *in, by, on, or from*).

## 12. EFFECTIVE SENTENCES

Writing occurs in sentences. The problems of writing are therefore largely problems with sentences. If you improve your sentences, you will almost automatically improve your paragraphs and essays.

Each of the following paragraphs describes the city of Vancouver. Find the difference between the paragraphs and state which of them is more effective and why:

*Water surrounds Vancouver on three sides. The snow-crowned Coast Mountains ring the city on the northeast. Vancouver has a floating quality of natural loveliness. There is a curved beach at English Bay. This beach is in the shape of a half moon. Residential high rises stand behind the beach. They are in pale tones of beige, blue, and ice-cream pink. Turn-of-the-century houses of painted wood frown upward at the glitter of office towers. Any urban glare is softened by folds of green lawns, flowers, fountains, and trees. Such landscaping appears to be unplanned. It links Vancouver to her ultimate treasure of greenness. That treasure is thousand-acre Stanley Park. Surrounding stretches of water dominate. They have image-evoking names like False Creek and Lost Lagoon. Sailboats and pleasure craft skim blithely across Burrard Inlet. Foreign freighters are out in English Bay. They await their turn to take on cargoes of grain.*

*Surrounded by water on three sides and ringed to the northeast by the snow-crowned Coast Mountains, Vancouver has a floating quality of natural loveliness. At English Bay, the half-moon curve of beach is backed by high*

*rises in pale tones of beige, blue, and ice-cream pink. Turn-of-the-century houses of painted wood frown upward at the glitter of office towers. Yet any urban glare is quickly softened by folds of green lawns, flowers, fountains, and trees that in a seemingly unplanned fashion link Vancouver to her ultimate treasure of greenness – thousand-acre Stanley Park. And always it is the surrounding stretches of water that dominate, with their image-evoking names like False Creek and Lost Lagoon. Sailboats and pleasure craft skim blithely across Burrard Inlet, while out in English Bay foreign freighter await their turn to take on cargoes of grain.*

To make sentences effective the writer should:

**1. Avoid empty sentences.** They are sentences that say too little. Grammatically they may be complete; yet they are lacking in ideas, in substance. One reason is that they may contain words that repeat the idea contained earlier in the sentence. E.g. *The reason I like the Dynamo Kyiv is that they are my favorite team.* This is writing in a circle. The idea of liking is repeated. The sentence is empty because no reasons for liking the team are given. Consider the revised version: *The Dynamo are my favorite team because they have a strong passing game, an aggressive defense, and a winning spirit. I particularly admire A. Shevchenko's ability to run or pass the football.*

**Practice 12.1** Revise the following sentences:

Suggestions:

- Read each sentence. Ask yourself, «What idea is repeated?»
- Supply the necessary facts or ideas.
- Write more than one sentence if you need to.

1. *It is impossible to learn a new language so quickly because people are not able to do it.*
2. *During those few days I began to admire his qualities because his character was so fine.*
3. *Mike had three reasons for choosing the book he was reading, and his reasons were all good ones.*
4. *My brother Fred is always joking, and he never does anything but joke around.*
5. *I flunked the test because I didn't deserve to pass.*

6. *My freshman year was a good one because it was my first year.*

2. **Avoid padded sentences.** They are sentences that are stretched out with unnecessary words. Padding can result from a) repetition of the same word or idea, b) repetition of *that*, c) use of such fillers as *on account of the fact that, the reason is that, etc.*

*E.g.*

a) **Padded:** *This book is a biography of the life of Jimmy Carter.*

**Revised:** *This book is a biography of Jimmy Carter.  
This book is about the life of Jimmy Carter.*

b) **Padded:** *It is obvious that since I like music so much that I should study.*

**Revised:** *It is obvious that since I like music so much I should study it.*

c) **Padded:** *When the boys ran away, the reason was that they were frightened.*

**Revised:** *The boys ran away because they were frightened.*

**Practice 12.2** Revise the following sentences. Omit the padding.

1. *The reason why Agnes decided on a green dress was on account of the fact that she has red hair.*

2. *In his opinion, he thought I owed the teacher an apology.*

3. *Deaf people are usually safe drivers because they are aware of their handicap of not being able to hear.*

4. *I saw a woman who was a suspicious-looking character slip into the telephone booth.*

5. *The class prepared a program that was dedicated to Mozart, who was a great musician.*

3. **Avoid overloaded sentences.** They are sentences that say too much.

**Overloaded:** *I want to be a doctor because I want to help people who suffer, but I will have to study many long years in medical school before I will be qualified as a doctor*

**Revised:** *I want to be a doctor because I want to help people who suffer. To be qualified, I will have to study for many years.*

**Practice 12.3** Revise each of the following sentences.

Suggestions:

-Look for the main idea and concentrate on putting it into a sentence.

-Leave out words or ideas that get in the way.

-Write more than one sentence if necessary.

1. *A teen-age girl may be a little upset if she is not experienced in what to wear on a date, how to be attractive to the boy she is with, and what to talk about, and I don't mean about the boy she went out with the week before but the boy she has never gone out with.*

2. *Mathematics is a subject that trains your mind and helps you to solve problems, which helps in future life because so many people can't think straight or solve their problems.*

3. *He liked playing baseball and played it well, which is unusual because in 1900 there weren't many good players and baseball wasn't a popular game.*

4. *To me, sleeping is fascinating because I consider it as a time of dreams that can come in a very special place or it may be any place I happen to be thinking of, or it may be a place that does not exist at all.*

**Practice 12.4** Revise the following sentences which contain different kinds of problems.

1. *Billy the Kid was America's best-known outlaw, and not many people know that he had a baby-faced look and didn't look like a killer at all, and never used his real name, Henry McCarthy.*

2. *I liked the movie more than the book because the movie made the characters seem more real, and they don't seem real in the book.*

3. *What I believe about criticism is that some kinds of criticism are harmful, and harmful criticism is criticism that tears a person down instead of helping him.*

4. *On account of the fact that our house has been sold, we will be moving away soon.*

5. *Mike thought that if he acted quickly that he could get the job.*

6. *I liked the waltzing bear best because it had been taught to dance.*

7. *We have two English setters, Melissa and Tom, and English setters are such a rare breed that whenever we take them walking, people stop and ask what kind of dogs they are.*

**4. Keep to the point.** Do not allow irrelevant details to slip into your writing. Keep your ideas clear. E.g. *The editor of the school paper, who has six Siamese cats, called a meeting of the staff and gave out the assignments for the final issue.*

**Practice 12.5** Revise the following sentences. Omit details that do not belong.

1. *The book I am reading, which has a blue cover and many illustrations, contains the most recent developments in the field of electronics.*

2. *Many of my friends, who are tall and very pretty, are fond of bowling.*

3. *The play was about two soldiers who became friends during World War II, which started for us when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and who were reunited years later.*

4. *I want to work in television or radio because the audiences will be doubled in ten years, when I'll be ten years older and will have my own car, and more technicians will be in demand.*

**5. Keep related sentence parts together.** Do not separate sentence parts that belong together by inserting constructions that should be written elsewhere. E.g.

**Awkward:** *I found, inside the envelope that Mother handed me, an invitation to a surprise birthday party.*

**Revised:** *I found an invitation to a surprise party inside the envelope that Mother handed me.*

**Practice 12.6** Revise the sentences to bring the separated parts together.

1. *I feel that I could, if I had an interest in chemistry, learn the subject more thoroughly.*

2. *College graduates receive, on account of their additional training and knowledge, higher salaries.*

3. *I, because I was in town, decided to buy my parents their Christmas presents.*

4. *Wolves, in spite of what many think, never attack people.*

5. *The Hawaiian Islands were, in 1778, discovered by Captain James Cook.*

6. *According to a psychologist, people are not very trustworthy who wear bow ties.*

**6. Combine ideas effectively.** Avoid overuse of *and*, use compound sentences correctly, use the linking elements.

**Practice 12.7** Use the *linking words* to restore the relationship between the parts. Classify the type of the former.

1. *Many of the girls I know ski very well; ..., they are willing to take me along with them.*

2. *I have always wanted to be a teacher; ..., I am interested in observing the methods used by my own teachers.*

3. *Farming had been a tradition in my family; ..., my interest in it was not surprising.*

4. *He had eaten more than anyone else; ..., he did it in half the time.*

5. *Everyone says that the show was the best we've ever had; ..., we sold very few tickets.*

6. *He did not want to go; ... I insisted upon his making an appearance.*

7. *Perhaps it would take me years to learn the procedure; ..., I might master it in six or seven months.*

8. *There is very little scenery in this play; ..., you must use your imagination.*

9. *I'm not a poor driver; ..., the traffic officer always stops me and threatens to give me a ticket.*

**7. Subordinate and coordinate ideas correctly.** It's up to the writer to determine whether ideas are of equal value or whether one is subordinate to the other. Avoid

- **faulty coordination**

**Faulty:** *The rain was not sufficient, and the roses drooped on their stems.*

**Revised:** *Because the rainfall was not sufficient, the roses drooped on their stems.*

- **faulty subordination**

**Faulty:** *Because the coat was too expensive for me, it was a beautiful cashmere.*



**Revised:** *Because the coat was a beautiful cashmere, it was too expensive for me.*

**Practice 12.8** Revise the sentences to correct mistakes in faulty coordination and subordination. If necessary, supply the details needed to make good sense.

1. *The game went into overtime and the coach did not appear for his broadcast at the local studio.*

2. *He was watching a television play and he decided it was the worst he had ever seen and he was disappointed that this channel would offer such a program and he turned it off.*

3. *The traffic was very light, and we all got bad sunburns at the beach.*

4. *Mark Twain became a very popular writer, and he had great obstacles to overcome.*

5. *Our school has many brilliant students, and we did not get a National Merit Scholarship.*

6. *Yesterday I was walking down the street when I met a friend I hadn't seen in years.*

7. *I listened to my father's advice, and I decided to take up chemistry.*

8. *The pictures did not turn out well, and I had taken every precaution.*

9. *People who don't like this neighborhood really value privacy.*

10. *Wolves are rare because they are on the endangered species list.*

**8. Make sentence parts parallel.** The constructions are parallel if the coordinating conjunction *and* joins sentence parts of equal value: noun and noun, verb and verb, phrase and phrase, etc.

**Faulty:** *Pat wanted a view of the West and to ride horseback.*

**Revised:** *Pat wanted to see the West and to ride horseback.*

**Faulty:** *Everyone needs sympathy and to be noticed.*

**Revised:** *Everyone needs sympathy and attention.*

**Practice 12.9** Revise these sentences to make the constructions parallel.

1. *In this course you will learn accuracy and to work fast.*

2. *When you first meet him, you consider him to be a little odd and that he needs special medical attention.*

3. *Everyone wants to avoid accidents and being sick.*

4. *Jo had to choose between taking singing lessons and to learn ballet.*

5. *My brother wanted a trip around the world and to fly in a supersonic plane.*

6. *She has many accomplishments: horseback riding, dancing, skin-diving, and a champion swimmer.*

7. *We decided to investigate further and that we might find clues in the locked room.*

8. *The woman was old, sick, and had no teeth.*

9. *The typical American changes his job seven times, and a change of career three times.*

10. *Laura is a good babysitter and reliable.*

## 13. TYPES OF ESSAYS

### ILLUSTRATION/EXAMPLE

1. An example has failed if it does not help your reader to see the general truth of what you are saying. The following example misses the point:

*As the Bible says, there is a right time for everything – even for being born and for dying. For example, the other day I failed my social science test. The day before had been beastly hot – 90 degrees in the shade – and I just didn't feel like studying, so I stretched out on the couch, fanning myself and watching TV. I guess it was my time to die intellectually because when the exam was handed back, it was decorated with a big fat F.*

The biblical reference deserves a more significant example. The following passage, on the other hand, uses examples that are exactly to the point. They are used to support the topic sentence about country superstitions. Try to count how many examples Edwin Way Teale uses:

*In the folklore of the country, numerous superstitions relate to winter weather. Back-country farmers examine their corn husks – the thicker the husk, the colder the winter. They watch the acorn crop – the more acorns, the more severe the season. They observe where white-faced hornets place their paper nests – the higher they are, the deeper will be the snow. When chipmunks carry their tails high and squirrels have heavier fur and mice come into the country houses early in the fall, the superstitions gird themselves for a long hard winter. Even the way a cat*

*sits beside the stove carries its message. According to a belief ... a cat sitting with its tail to the fire indicates very cold winter is on the way.*

Illustrations make this paragraph fun to read as well as informative.

2. Many examples are ineffective because they are vague rather than vivid. Compare two examples:

*There is no control over memory. Sometimes one remembers the most trivial details. For example, I remember trivial things about my father, about pieces of furniture in our house, and about insignificant places that I once visited. I even remember a particular shopping spree that took place a long time ago.*

*There is no control over memory. Soon you find yourself being vague about an event which seemed so important at the time that you thought you'd never forget it. Or unable to recall the face of someone who you could have sworn was there forever. On the other hand, trivial and meaningless memories may stay with you for life. I can still shut my eyes and see Victoria grinding coffee on the pantry steps, the glass bookcase and the books in it, my father's pipe rack, the leaves of the sandbox tree, the wallpaper of the bedroom in some shabby hotel, the hairdresser in Antibes. It's in this way that I remember buying the pink Milanese-silk underclothes, the assistant who sold them to me, and coming into Bond Street holding the parcel.*

*(Jean Rhys, The New Yorker, 26 April 1976)*

Vividness is the basic difference between the first and second passages. The first passage contains vague and boring examples which lack details, while the second comes to life through the use of detailed examples.

3. Read the following paragraphs which begin an essay with illustrations.

*A 13-year-old girl has had one leg amputated, but three times a week she is put through the humiliation of being forced to change into gym shorts. Says the teacher, «Those are the rules and there's no reason you can't keep score while the other girls play.»*

*A high-school teacher accidentally bumps into the upraised hand of a girl who wants to ask a question. The teacher cries out that the girl is trying to strike her and that if it happens again she'll call the police.*

*A first-grade teacher forces a boy to sit all day in a wastepaper basket as punishment for being noisy. When an assistant principal orders the boy's release after 2 1/2 hours, it is some minutes before he can stand up straight. He can barely limp to his seat.*

Without a connecting comment, these examples are puzzling. The reader wonders what they are intended to illustrate. The sequel makes clear the connection between the examples and the point they illustrate:

*These are all documented cases of teacher ineptitude, insensitivity or brutishness. While the overwhelming majority of America's teachers are professionally competent and sensitive to children's needs, there are enough who are unfit to cause concern among both parents and school administrators.*

*(Bernard Bard, «Unfeeling Teachers?» Ladies Home Journal, March 1976)*

Illustrate the following assertions with appropriate examples:

1. Astrological forecasting is (is not) accurate.
2. Not all the old are fuddy-duddy, conservative, and timid.
3. Some game shows are vulgar and tasteless.
4. I have fallen in love at first sight many times.

#### NARRATION

Read the following passages and say what makes them effective narratives:

*The last hour of her life was typical of its happiness. She came home from a day's work at school, topped off by a hard grind with the copy on the High School Annual, and felt that a ride would refresh her. She climbed into her khakis, chattering to her mother about the work she was doing, and hurried to get her horse and be out on the dirt roads for the country air and the radiant green fields of the spring. As she rode through the town on an easy gallop she kept waving at passers-by. She knew everyone in town. For a decade the little figure with the long pig-tail and the red hair ribbon has been familiar on the streets of Emporia, and she got in the way of speaking to those who nodded at her. She passed the Kerrs, walking the horse, in front of the Normal Library, and waved at them;*

*passed another friend a few hundred feet further on, and waved at her. The horse was walking and, as she turned into North Merchant street she took off her cowboy hat, and the horse swung into a lope. She passed the Triplets and waved her cowboy hat at them, still moving gaily north on Merchant street. A Gazette carrier passed – a High School boy friend – and she waved at him, but with her bridle hand: the horse veered quickly, plunged into the parking area where the low-hanging limb faced her, and, while she still looked back waving, the blow came. But she did not fall from the horse; she slipped off, dazed a bit, staggered and fell in a faint. She never quite recovered consciousness.*

*(William Allen White)*

*One afternoon in late August, as the summer's sun streamed into the [railroad] car and made little jumping shadows on the windows, I sat gazing out at the tenement-dwellers, who were themselves looking out of their windows from the gray crumbling buildings along the tracks of upper Manhattan. As we crossed into the Bronx, the train unexpectedly slowed down for a few miles. Suddenly from out of my window I saw a large crowd near the tracks, held back by two policemen. Then, on the other side from my window, I saw a sight I would never be able to forget: a little boy almost severed in halves, lying at an incredible angle near the track. The ground was covered with blood, and the boy's eyes were opened wide, strained and disbelieving in his sudden oblivion. A policeman stood next to him, his arms folded, staring straight ahead at the windows of our train. In the orange glow of late afternoon the policemen, the crowd, the corpse of the boy were for a brief moment immobile, motionless, a small tableau to violence and death in the city. Behind me, in the next row of seats, there was a game of bridge. I heard one of the four men say as he looked out at the sight, «God, that's horrible.» Another said, in a whisper, «Terrible, terrible.» There was a momentary silence, punctuated only by the clicking of the wheels on the track. Then, after the pause, I heard the first man say: «Two hearts.»*

*(Willie Morris)*

## DEFINITION

Read a student's essay that attempts to define love by giving an extended example of its effects. Say whether you find it effective, explain why.

*Love is a pitter-patter of the heart, butterflies in the tummy, the invisible symphonies that swallows dance to on silken twilit evenings; but most of all, it is a sudden, urgent lunacy. As an example, I offer the night I met Julie. I had saved for months to go to dinner at Chez Francois. I had the meal all planned. Appetizer: oysters sauteed in olive oil. Main course: lobster steamed in wine with herb sauce. Vegetable: eggplant stuffed with mushrooms. Wine: a white Macon, which I was just about to select when I met Julie – the cocktail waitress. I took one look in her eyes and my appetite went down the tube. I know that's slang and that I should write something more elegant, but I actually felt my appetite dropping from my belly down to my toes – as if it fell down a tube – and, with a little imagination, I thought I even saw it roll out on the carpet and scurry away like a routed mouse. The rest of the night I just kept ordering one drink after another so that Julie would come around and could talk to her. I ate part of a lobster feeler and then abandoned the carcass to the vulture; the eggplant stayed on the plate as if some lobotomized hen had laid it there by mistake. I never touched a mushroom. All I did was drink, chat with Julie, make a desperate and inaudible moan to myself, and get roaringly drunk. \$54.89 later and I ended up eating a McDonald's hamburger. That's love, brother, that's love.*

Definition can be clarified through the use of contrasts:

*Would you recognize this kind of man if you saw him across the room? I think so. He's the one with an attractive woman; conservatively dressed, but easy in his clothes. His hair is trimmed close to his head, but not too close. His hand are well-groomed, but not manicured. He does not laugh loudly or often. He is looking at the woman he speaks to, but he is not missing the other attractive women as they enter; a flick of the eye does it. For in all ways this man is not obvious. He would no more appear to examine a woman from the ankles up than he would move his head as he read or form the words with his lips. His senses are trained and his reflexes quick. And how did they get that way? From experience, from observation,*

and from deduction. He puts two and two together without adding on his fingers. He is educated in life.

Now what about that fellow over there – the one in the light-grey suit and the crew cut? He is telling a long story rather loudly to a girl who would rather not be hearing it. He is not, of course aware of this, since he is not only a little tight but unaccustomed to watching the reactions of women. He will look down the front of her dress but not see the glaze in her eyes. He has not been educated in observation. He is, according to the dictionary, unsophisticated in that he is natural and simple and lacking in experience.

(Marya Mannes, *The Sophisticated Man*)

By knowing what the sophisticated man is not, we have a better idea of what he is.

#### COMPARISON/CONTRAST

A comparison points out the ways that two or more persons, places or things are alike. A contrast points out how they differ.

See how an effective essay of comparison may be organized vertically and horizontally:

*Having always lived a life of luxury and comfort, John has a rich boy's contempt for money. He expects it to be there when he needs it; he sees it as having only a utility value, enabling him to do what he likes. He never lingers or hesitates over a purchase. For him, the object of shopping is not to agonize over the amount to be spent, but simply to find the best, most suitable, and most expeditious object that will satisfy all his wants. He has a high regard for quality, and a low regard for expense. He buys what suits him best, whether it is the most or least expensive item in the store.*

*Mark, on the other hand, has the poor boy's reverence and respect for money. It was not always there when he needed it; what little money he has acquired has cost him in labour, sweat, and drudgery. He spends an interminable amount of time on shopping trips, endlessly comparing prices, quality, value, and listening patiently to sales spiels and technical explanations. For him, the aim of shopping is to acquire the most for the least. He regards expense on a par with quality and usually ends up buying not his first choice nor even his second, but sometimes his third, or fourth,*

*or even fifth, acquisition always being dictated by his budget and seldom by quality.*

*Having lived a life of luxury and comfort, John has the rich boy's contempt for money. Mark, on the other hand, has the poor boy's reverence for it. John expects money to be there when he needs it and sees it as having a utility value, enabling him to do as he pleases. Mark, however, knows that money is not always there when he needs it, and that what little money he has acquired has cost him in labor, sweat, and drudgery. A pronounced difference shows up in their behavior on shopping trips. John never lingers or hesitates over a purchase; he shops for what he wants, buying always the most suitable, the most expeditious object which will satisfy all his wants. It is just the opposite with Mark. For him, shopping means acquiring the most for the least. He must choose his purchases not by quality alone, but also by expense. Frequently he ends up buying not his first choice, nor even his second or third, but his fourth or fifth choice, in every case the acquisition being dictated by budget rather than by quality. John buys the best if it suits him; Mark, to the contrary, buys what he can afford.*

#### CLASSIFICATION/DIVISION

Read the essay *The Extendable Fork* and pay attention to the way Calvin Trillin, an American writer, a reporter for *Time* magazine and a columnist for *The New Yorker*, classifies eaters by how they eat off other people's plates.

##### *The Extendable Fork*

*In our house, news that the extendable fork had been invented was greeted with varying degrees of enthusiasm I think it's fair to say that I was the most enthusiastic of all. I eat off of other people's plates. My wife was mildly enthusiastic. She figures that if I use an extendable fork I'm less, likely to come away from the table with gravy on my cuff.*

*People who eat off of other people's plates can be categorized in four types –The Finisher, The Waif, The Researcher and The Simple Thief. I might as well admit right here at the beginning that I am all four.*

*The Finisher demonstrates concern that food may be left uneaten even though the starving children your mother told you about are still hungry. Once the pace of eating begins to slacken off a bit, he reaches*

across to spear a roast potato off of someone's plate a nanosecond after saying, «If you're not planning to finish these...»

The long-reach eater I think of as *The Waif* often doesn't order much himself at a restaurant, claiming that he's not terribly hungry or that he's trying to lose weight. Then, he gazes at his dinner companions' plates, like a hungry urchin who has his nose pressed up against the window of a restaurant where enormously fat rich people are slurping oysters and shoveling down mounds of boeuf bourguignon. Occasionally, he murmurs something like, «That looks delicious.» Answering «Actually, it's not all that good» does not affect him – although it may slow down the Researcher, who, as he extends his fork usually says something like, «I'm curious how they do these fried onions.»

The Simple Thief simply waits for his dining companions to glance away, then confidently grabs what he wants. If he's desperate, he may actually take measures to distract them, saying something like, «Is it my imagination, or could that be Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley at the table over by the door?»

That sort of subterfuge is not necessary, by the way, if the plate I have singled out as a target is my wife's. She does not object to my sampling – a reflection, I've always thought, of her generous heart. In fact, I have said in the past that if a young groom on his honeymoon reaches over for the first time to sample his bride's fettuccine only to be told «Don't you like what you're having?» or «There really isn't that much of this,» he knows he's in for a long haul.

Actually, my wife might be called a Finisher herself. If we're having fried chicken, she will stare at what's on my plate after I have indeed finished. «Look at all the chicken you left,» she'll say. Or «There's a ton of meat still on that chicken.»

Oddly enough, this is precisely the sort of thing that I heard from my mother, who was also fond of saying that I didn't «do a good job» on the chicken. The way my wife eats chicken is to eat every speck of meat off the bones, so that the chicken looks as if it had been staked out on an anthill by a tribe of crazed chicken torturers. She treats a lobster the same way.

I eat more the way a shark eats – tearing off whatever seems exposed and easy to get at. I have suggested, in fact, that in fried-chicken or

lobster restaurants we could economize by getting only one order, which I could start and my wife could finish.

My wife's approach to finishing does not, of course, require an extendable fork, but I intend to be an early customer myself. According to an item in the *New York Times*, the fork is nearly two feet long when fully opened. It's being marketed under the name of Alan's X-Tenda Fork.

I might have chosen another name, but this one is, I'll admit, evocative. For me, it conjures up visions of a Limbaugh-sized man named Alan sitting in a restaurant with friends and family. He seems to be engaging in normal conversation, but his tiny eyes dart from plate to plate; occasionally, with a fork as quick as the strike of an adder, he helps with the finishing.

In fact, I can imagine Alan inventing other needed implements – a sort of vacuum tube, for instance, that can suck up French fries from three feet away. I can see him improving on Alan's X-Tenda Fork. He might install a tiny tape recorder in it, so when you pulled it out to its full length and moved it quickly across the table a voice said, «If you're not planning to finish these ...»

### **Writing Samples: Patterns of Organization**

#### **Example & Illustration**

This is the way writers often give evidence for a point they are trying to make. This is the answer to the reader's question, «For example?»

Part of Harriet Tubman's strategy of conducting was, as in all battle-field operations, the knowledge of how and when to retreat. Numerous allusion have been made to her moves when she suspected that she was in danger. When she feared the party was closely pursued, she would take it for a time on a train southward bound. No one seeing Negroes going in this direction would for an instant suppose them to be fugitives. Once on her return she was at a railway station. She saw some men reading a poster and she heard one of them reading it aloud. It was a description of her, offering a reward for her capture. She took a southbound train to avert suspicion. At another time when Harriet heard men talking about her, she pretended to read a book which she carried. One man remarked, «This cannot be the woman. The one we want can't read or write.» Harriet devoutly hoped the book was right side up.

(Earl Conrad, Harriet Tubman)

## **Narration**

Narration tells a story or part of a story. This excerpt recounts the writer's experience in the African wilderness:

*One evening when I was wading in the shallows of the lake to pass a rocky outcrop, I suddenly stopped dead as I saw the sinuous black body of a snake in the water. It was all of six feet long, and from the slight hood and the dark stripes at the back of the neck I knew it to be a Strom's water cobra – a deadly reptile for the bite of which there was, at that time, no serum. As I stared at it an incoming wave gently deposited part of its body on one of my feet. I remained motionless, not even breathing, until the wave rolled back into the lake, drawing the snake with it. Then I leaped out of the water as fast as I could, my heart hammering.*

*(Jane Goodall, In the Shadow of Man)*

## **Description**

Description uses concrete, specific details to create an image of a person, place or thing. Frequently it makes use of the five senses. Here the writer describes a whale-watching trip down the Baja California peninsula.

*The three of us left our hotel by eight in the morning, glad to be out of the milewy concrete room and again under the winter's cloudy skies. We drove south to the road leading to the lagoon where the gray whales wintered, turned and rambled along the road flanked salty marshes. At the end we found our goal: cars parked along a beach, and a little shack where we could purchase tickets for a boat ride. This is why we'd driven hundreds of miles down the Baja peninsula: to ride the waves alongside these gigantic, graceful mammals and their offspring. We bought our tickets and waited, sat on the hood of my 4X4 drinking beer with the wind blowing the taste of the ocean our way, eating crackers and pointing when a spout broke the surface. Ralph struck up a conversation in German with a couple from Frankfurt, but they all stopped talking when we saw a huge mother breach: head arcing up and back, climbing skyward for amazing seconds before she plunged back to the water with a tremendous splash.*

*(Steven Boyd Saum, Three Men in a Boat...with Nine Others)*

## **Process**

Here the writer describes how something is done in chronological order, much like a recipe or any other set of directions. In this case, the process described is how to open an oyster.

*An oyster has an irregular shape. The valves are rough and their lips hard to find. Crooked and wrinkled, the hairline crack between the valves can't be widened with the blade of a knife; the point must enter first. Furthermore, a big Chincoteague doesn't fit the left hand. One must hold the animal slanting against the edge of the kitchen sink and poke around, seeking the slot by touch as much as by sight. It takes painful practice. When the knifepoint finds a purchase, push carefully and quickly before the oyster realizes what's afoot and gets a firmer grip on itself. Push in the wrong place – it's easy to mistake a growth line for the groove – and the knife takes on a life of its own. It can skid and open up your hand. This delicate work requires patient agility to find the groove, push the knife in, then slit the muscle open and the critter without losing too much juice. (Restaurants serve oysters on their flat shell. It's better to throw that one away and lay the delicacies on a bed of crushed ice in the roundest half-shell which holds its delicious liquor. Sprinkle each one with lemon juice – a healthy oyster will wriggle the slightest bit at this to prove it's alive – lift the dishlike shell to the lips, and drink the oyster down. It's a delicious, addicting experience.*

*(Philip Kopper, How to Open an Oyster)*

## **Comparison & Contrast**

Comparison means drawing similarities between two things and perhaps noting differences, while contrast means noting only their differences. Here is an excerpt by Bruce Catton comparing and contrasting a leading Northern and Southern general in the American Civil War.

*So Grant and Lee were in complete contrast, representing two diametrically opposed elements in American life. Grant was the modern man emerging; beyond him, ready to come to the stage, was the great age of steel and machinery, of crowded cities and a restless burgeoning vitality. Lee might have ridden down from the old age of chivalry, lance in hand, silken banner fluttering over his head. Each man was the perfect champion*

of his cause, drawing both his strengths and weaknesses from the people he led.

(Bruce Catton, *Grant and Lee: A Study in Contrasts*)

### **Analogy**

Analogies draw comparisons between items that might at first appear to be unlike one another. Here the scientist and writer Lewis Thomas compares people to ants.

*Ants are so much like human beings as to be an embarrassment. They farm fungi, raise aphids as livestock, launch armies into wars, use chemical sprays to alarm and confuse enemies, capture slaves. The families of weaver ants engage in child labor, holding their larvae like shuttles to spin out the thread that sews the leaves together for their fungus gardens. They exchange information ceaselessly. They do everything but watch television.*

(Lewis Thomas, *On Societies as Organisms*)

### **Classification & Division**

Classification is the grouping of items into categories according to some consistent principle. Here essayist E.B. White divides the people of New York City into three categories, based on their reason for being there.

*There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter – the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something. Of these three trembling cities the greatest is the last — the city of final destination, the city that is a goal. It is this third city that accounts for New York's high-strung disposition, its poetical deportment, its dedication to the arts, and its incomparable achievements. Commuters give the city its tidal restlessness, natives give it solidity and continuity, but the settlers give it passion. And whether it is a farmer arriving from Italy to set up a small grocery store in a slum, or a young girl arriving from a small town in Mississippi to escape the indignity of being observed*

*by her neighbors, or a boy arriving from the Corn Belt with a manuscript in his suitcase and a pain in his heart, it makes no difference: each embraces New York with the intense excitement of first love, each absorbs New York with the fresh eyes of an adventurer, each generates heat and light to dwarf the Consolidated Edison Company.*

(E. B. White, *Here Is New York*)

### **Cause and Effect**

In cause and effect writing, the writer might focus on effects or worry more about causes, but will always establish some kind of relationship. Here Czech writer Ivan Klima traces the events that led his family to a Nazi concentration camp during WWII.

*Because my father took an interest in politics, he foresaw, correctly as it turned out, what would happen to us if Hitler's Germany were to swallow Czechoslovakia. He found a job in an electrotechnical plant in Liverpool, and all of us (by this time my brother had been born) except his mother got visas to England. But he didn't want to leave her behind, so we ended up not going. The only souvenir of this aborted journey is a large trunk that to this day stands in my mother's flat.*

(Ivan Klima, *How I Began*)

### **Definition**

Here a writer attempts to explain a word or a term, usually first by putting it in a general class and then distinguishing it from similar items in that class. Here Nelson W. Aidrich describes envy as a special kind of desire.

*Envy is so integral and so painful a part of what animates human behavior in market societies that many people have forgotten the full meaning of the word, simplifying it into one of the synonyms of desire. It is that, which may be why it flourishes in market societies: democracies of desire, they might be called, with money for ballots, stuffing permitted. But envy is more or less than desire. It begins with the almost frantic sense of emptiness inside oneself, as if the pump of one's heart were sucking on air. One has to be blind to perceive the emptiness, of course, but that's just what envy is, a selective blindness. Invidia, Latin for envy, translates as «nonsight», and Dante had the envious plodding along under cloaks*

*of lead, their eyes sewn shut with leaden wire. What they are blind to is what they have, God-given and humanly nurtured, in themselves.*

*(Nelson W. Aidrich, Old Money Hacker)*

## 14. TONE

Read the samples of paragraphs in which the authors create different kinds of tone. Define in which way the tone is created.

### Nostalgic

*My generation is special because of what we missed rather than what we got, because in a certain sense we are the first and the last. The first to take technology for granted. (What was a space shot to us, except an hour cut from Social Studies to gather before a TV in the gym as Cape Canaveral counted down?) The first to grow up with TV. My sister was 8 when we got our set, so to her it seemed magic and always somewhat foreign. She had known books already and would never really replace them. But for me, the TV set was, like the kitchen sink and the telephone, a fact of life.*

*(Joyce Maynard, An 18-Year-Old Looks Back on Life)*

### Angry

*Cans. Beer cans. Glinting on the verges of a million miles of roadways, lying in scrub, grass, dirt, leaves, sand, mud, but never hidden. Piels, 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, Wasteland)*

### Humorous

*In perpetrating a revolution, there are two requirements: someone or something to revolt against and someone to actually show up and do the revolting. Dress is usually casual and both parties may be flexible about time and place but if either faction fails to attend the whole enterprise is*

*likely to come off badly. In the Chinese Revolution of 1650 neither party showed up and the deposit on the hall was forfeited.*

*(Woody Allen, A Brief, Yet Helpful Guide to Civil Disobedience)*

### Resigned

*I make my living humping cargo for Seaboard World Airlines, one of the big international airlines at Kennedy Airport. They handle strictly all cargo. I was once told that one of the Rockefellers is the major stockholder for the airline, but I don't really think about that too much. I don't get paid to think. The big thing is to beat that race with the time clock every morning of your life so the airline will be happy. The worst thing a man could ever do is to make suggestions about building a better airline. They pay people \$40,000 a year to come up with better ideas. It doesn't matter that these ideas never work; it's just that they get nervous when a guy from South Brooklyn or Ozone Park acts like he has a brain.*

*(Patrick Fenton, Confessions of a Working Stiff)*

### Ironic

*Once upon a time there was a small, beautiful, green and graceful country called Vietnam. It needed to be saved. (In later years no one could remember exactly what it needed to be saved from, but that is another story.) For many years Vietnam was in the process of being saved by France, but the French eventually tired of their labors and left. Then America took on the job. America was well equipped for country-saving. It was the richest and most powerful nation on earth. It had, for example, nuclear explosives on hand and ready to use equal to six tons of TNT for every man, woman, and child in the world. It had huge and very efficient factories, brilliant and dedicated scientists, and most (but not everybody) would agree, it had good intentions. Sadly, America had one fatal flaw – its inhabitants were in love with technology and thought it could do no wrong. A visitor to America during the time of this story would probably have guessed its outcome after seeing how its inhabitants were treating their own country. The air was mostly foul, the water putrid, and most of the land was either covered with concrete or garbage. But Americans were never much on introspection, and they didn't foresee the result of their loving embrace on the small country. They set out to save Vietnam*



*with the same enthusiasm and determination their forefathers had displayed in conquering the frontier.*

*(The Sierra Club, A Fable for Our Times)*

## SUPPLEMENT

1. Read the essays and answer the questions:

### *On Being 17, Bright, and Unable to Read*

*David Raymond*

*When the following article appeared in The New York Times in 1976, David Raymond was a high-school student in Connecticut. In his essay he poignantly discusses his great difficulty in reading because of dyslexia and the many problems he experienced in school as a result. As you read, pay attention to the naturalness of the author's diction.*

One day a substitute teacher picked me to read aloud from the textbook. When I told her «No, thank you,» she came unhinged. She thought I was acting smart, and told me so. I kept calm, and that got her madder and madder. We must have spent 10 minutes trying to solve the problem, and finally she got so red in the face I thought she'd blow up. She told me she'd see me after class.

Maybe someone like me was a new thing for that teacher. But she wasn't new to me. I've been through scenes like that all my life. You see, even though I'm 17 and a junior in high school, I can't read because I have dyslexia. I'm told I read «at a fourth-grade level», but from where I sit, that's not reading. You can't know what that means unless you've been there. It's not easy to tell how it feels when you can't read your homework assignments or the newspaper or a menu in a restaurant or even notes from your own friends.

My family began to suspect I was having problems almost from the first day I started school. My father says my early years in school were the worst years of his life. They weren't so good for me, either. As I look back on it now, I can't find the words to express how bad it really was. I wanted to die. I'd come home from school screaming, «I'm dumb. I'm dumb – I wish I were dead!»

I guess I couldn't read anything at all then – not even my own name – and they tell me I didn't talk as good as other kids. But what I remember about those days is that I couldn't throw a ball where it was supposed to go, I couldn't learn to swim, and I wouldn't learn to ride a bike, because no matter what anyone told me, I knew I'd fail.

Sometimes my teachers would try to be encouraging. When I couldn't read the words on the board they'd say, «Come on, David, you know that word.» Only I didn't. And it was embarrassing. I just felt dumb. And dumb was how the kids treated me. They'd make fun of me every chance they got, asking me to spell «cat» or something like that. Even if I knew how to spell it, I wouldn't; they'd only give me another word. Anyway, it was awful, because more than anything I wanted friends. On my birthday when I blew out the candles I didn't wish I could learn to read; what I wished for was that the kids would like me.

With the bad reports coming from school, and with me moaning about wanting to die and how everybody hated me, my parents began looking for help. That's when the testing started. The school tested me, the child-guidance center tested me, private psychiatrists tested me. Everybody knew something was wrong – especially me.

It didn't help much when they stuck a fancy name onto it. I couldn't pronounce it then – I was only in second grade – and I was ashamed to talk about it. Now it rolls off my tongue, because I've been living with it for a lot of years – dyslexia.

All through elementary school it wasn't easy. I was always having to do things that were «different», things the other kids didn't have to do. I had to go to a child psychiatrist, for instance.

One summer my family forced me to go to a camp for children with reading problems. I hated the idea, but the camp turned out pretty good, and I had a good time. I met a lot of kids who couldn't read and somehow that helped. The director of the camp said I had a higher I.Q. than 90 percent of the population. I didn't believe him.

About the worst thing I had to do in fifth and sixth grade was to go to a special education class in another school in our town. A bus picked me up, and I didn't like that at all. The bus also picked up emotionally disturbed kids and retarded kids. It was like going to a school for the retarded. I always worried that someone I knew would see me on that bus. It was a relief to go to the regular junior high school.

Life began to change a little for me then, because I began to feel better about myself. I found the teachers cared; they had meetings about me and I worked harder for them for a while. I began to work on the potter's wheel, making vases and pots that the teachers said were pretty good. Also, I got a letter for being on the track team. I could always run pretty fast.

At high school the teachers are good and everyone is trying to help me. I've gotten honors some marking periods and I've won a letter on the cross-country team. Next quarter I think the school might hold a show of my pottery. I've got some friends. But there are still some embarrassing times. For instance, every time there is writing in the class, I get up and go to the special education room. Kids ask me where I go all the time. Sometimes I say, «to Mars».

Homework is a real problem. During free periods in school I go into the specialized room and staff members read assignments to me. When I get home my mother reads to me. Sometimes she reads an assignment into a tape recorder, and then I go into my room and listen to it. If we have a novel or something like that to read, she reads it out loud to me. Then I sit down with her and we do the assignment. She'll write, while I talk my answers to her. Lately I've taken to dictating into a tape recorder, and then someone – my father, a private tutor or my mother – types up what I've dictated. Whatever homework I do takes someone else's time, too. That makes me feel bad.

We had a big meeting in school the other day – eight of us, four from the guidance department, my private tutor, my parents and me. The subject was me. I said I wanted to go to college, and they told me about colleges that have facilities and staff to handle people like me. That's nice to hear.

As for what happens after college, I don't know and I'm worried about that. How can I make a living if I can't read? Who will hire me? How will I fill out the application form? The only thing that gives me any courage is the fact that I've learned about well-known people who couldn't read or had other problems and still made it. Like Albert Einstein, who didn't talk until he was 4 and flunked math. Like Leonardo da Vinci, who everyone seems to think had dyslexia.

I've told this story because maybe some teacher will read it and go easy on a kid in the classroom who has what I've got. Or, maybe some parent will stop nagging his kid, and stop calling him lazy. Maybe he's not lazy or dumb. Maybe he just can't read and doesn't know what's wrong. Maybe he's scared, like I was.

1. Comment on the purpose and strategy of the essay.
2. How would you describe Raymond's tone in this essay?

### *The Most Important Day*

#### *Helen Keller*

*Helen Keller (1880-1968) was afflicted by a disease that left her blind and deaf at the age of eighteen months. With the aid of her teacher, Anne Sullivan, she was able to overcome her severe handicaps, to graduate from Radcliffe College, and to lead a productive and challenging adult life. In the following selection from her autobiography, The Story of My Life (1902), Keller tells of the day she first met Anne Sullivan, a day she regarded as the most important in her life. Notice that Keller states her thesis in the first paragraph and that it serves to focus and unify the remaining paragraphs.*

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrast between the two lives which it connects. It was the third of March, 1887, three months before I was seven years old.

On the afternoon of that eventful day, I stood on the porch, dumb, expectant. I guessed vaguely from my mother's signs and from the hurrying to and fro in the house that something unusual was about to happen, so I went to the door and waited on the steps. The afternoon sun penetrated the mass of honeysuckle that covered the porch and fell on my upturned face. My fingers lingered almost unconsciously on the familiar leaves and blossoms which had just come forth to greet the sweet southern spring. I did not know what the future held of marvel or surprise for me. Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle.

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how near the harbor was, «Light! Give me light!» was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour.

I felt approaching footsteps. I stretched out my hand as I supposed to my mother. Someone took it, and I was caught up and held close in the arms of her who had come to reveal all things to me, and, more than all things else, to love me.

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. The little blind children at the Perkins Institution had sent it and Laura Bridgman had dressed it; but I did not know this until afterward. When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word «d-o-l-l.» I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. Running downstairs to my mother I held up my hand and made the letters for doll. I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkeylike imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words, among them pin, hat, cup and a few verbs like sit, stand and walk. But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled «d-o-l-l» and tried to make me understand that «d-o-l-l» applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words «m-u-g» and «w-a-t-e-r.» Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that «m-u-g» is mug and that «w-a-t-e-r» is water, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

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

misty consciousness as of something forgotten – a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that «w-a-t-e-r» meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. The living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me. On entering the door I remembered the doll I had broken. I felt my way to the hearth and picked up the pieces. I tried vainly to put them together. Then my eyes filled with tears; for I realized what I had done, and for the first time I felt repentance and sorrow.

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that mother, father, sister, teacher were among them – words that were to make the world blossom for me, «like Aaron's rod, with flowers.» It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.

1. *What is Helen Keller's thesis in this essay?*
2. *What is the author's purpose in this essay?*
3. *In which way is the essay unified?*

### *As They Say, Drugs Kill*

#### *Laura Rowley*

*Laura Rowley was born in Oak Lawn, Illinois, in 1965 and graduated from the University of Illinois at Champaign – Urbana in 1987 with a degree in journalism. While in college, Rowley was the city editor for the Daily Illini. After graduation she worked at the United Nations Chronicle in New York City. Currently the sales director for a Manhattan dress company, Rowley continues to work as a free-lance writer and hopes some day to travel and work in Africa under the auspices of either the United Nations or the Peace Corps. In the following essay, which first appeared in Newsweek on Campus in 1987, Rowley argues against substance abuse by recounting a particularly poignant personal*

*experience. As you read her piece, notice how she attempts to persuade without preaching.*

The fastest way to end a party is to have someone die in the middle of it.

At a party last fall I watched a 22-year-old die of cardiac arrest after he had used drugs. It was a painful, undignified way to die. And I would like to think that anyone who shared the experience would feel his or her ambivalence about substance abuse dissolving.

This victim won't be singled out like Len Bias as a bitter example for «troubled youth.» He was just another ordinary guy celebrating with friends at a private house party, the kind where they roll in the keg first thing in the morning and get stupefied while watching the football games on cable all afternoon. The living room was littered with beer cans from last night's party – along with dirty socks and the stuffing from the secondhand couch.

And there were drugs, as at so many other college parties. The drug of choice this evening was psilocybin, hallucinogenic mushrooms. If you're cool you call them «shrooms.»

This wasn't a crowd huddled in the corner of a darkened room with a single red bulb, shooting needles in their arms. People played darts, made jokes, passed around a joint and listened to the Grateful Dead on the stereo.

**Violent fall:** Suddenly, a thin, tall, brown-haired young man began to gasp. His eyes rolled back in his head, and he hit the floor face first with a crash. Someone laughed, not appreciating the violence of his fall, thinking the afternoon's festivities had finally caught up with another guest. The laugh lasted only a second, as the brown-haired guest began to convulse and choke. The sound of the stereo and laughter evaporated. Bystanders shouted frantic suggestions:

«It's an epileptic fit, put something in his mouth!»

«Roll him over on his stomach!»

«Call an ambulance; God, somebody breathe into his mouth.»

A girl kneeling next to him began to sob his name, and he seemed to moan.

«Wait, he's semicoherent.» Four people grabbed for the telephone, to find no dial tone, and ran to use a neighbor's. One slammed the dead phone against the wall in frustration – and miraculously produced a dial tone.

But the body was now motionless on the kitchen floor. «He has a pulse, he has a pulse.»

«But he's not breathing!»

«Well, get away – give him some f—ing air!» The three or four guests gathered around his body unbuttoned his shirt.

«Wait – is he OK? Should I call the damn ambulance?»

A chorus of frightened voices shouted, «Yes, yes!»

«Come on, come on, breathe again. Breathe!»

Over muffled sobs came a sudden grating, desperate breath that passed through bloody lips and echoed through the kitchen and living room.

«He's had this reaction before – when he did acid at a concert last spring. But he recovered in 15 seconds . . . ,» one friend confided.

The rest of the guests looked uncomfortably at the floor or paced purposelessly around the room. One or two whispered, «Oh, my God,» over and over, like a prayer. A friend stood next to me, eyes fixed on the kitchen floor. He mumbled, just audibly «I've seen this before. My dad died of a heart attack. He had the same look. . . .» I touched his shoulder and leaned against a wall, repeating reassurances to myself. People don't die at parties. People don't die at parties.

Eventually, no more horrible, gnashing sounds tore their way from the victim's lungs. I pushed my hands deep in my jeans pockets wondering how much it costs to pump a stomach and how someone could be so careless if he had had this reaction with another drug. What would he tell his parents about the hospital bill?

Two uniformed paramedics finally arrived, lifted him onto a stretcher and quickly rolled him out. His face was grayish blue, his mouth hung open, rimmed with blood, and his eyes were tolled back with a yellowish color on the rims.

The paramedics could be seen moving rhythmically forward and back through the small windows of the ambulance, whose lights threw a red wash over the stunned watchers on the porch. The paramedics' hands were massaging his chest when someone said, «Did you tell them he took psilocybin? Did you tell them.»

«No, I...»

«My God, so tell them – do you want him to die?» Two people ran to tell the paramedics the student had eaten mushrooms five minutes before the attack.

It seemed irreverent to talk as the ambulance pulled away. My friend, who still saw his father's image, muttered, «That guy's dead.» I put my arms around him half to comfort him, half to stop him from saying things I couldn't believe.

The next day, when I called someone who lived in the house, I found that my friend was right.

My hands began to shake and my eyes filled with tears for someone I didn't know. Weeks later the pain has dulled, but I still can't unravel the knot of emotion that has moved from my stomach to my head. When I told one friend what happened, shook her head and spoke of the stupidity of filling your body with chemical substances. People who would do drugs after seeing that didn't value their lives too highly, she said.

**No lessons:** But others refused to read any universal lessons from the incident. Many of those I spoke to about the event considered him the victim of a freak accident, randomly struck down by drugs as a pedestrian might be hit by a speeding taxi. They speculated that the student must have had special physical problems; what happened to him could not happen to them.

Couldn't it? Now when I hear people discussing drugs I'm haunted by the image of him lying on the floor, his body straining to rid itself of substances he chose to take. Painful, undignified, unnecessary – like a wartime casualty. But in war, at least, lessons are supposed to be learned, so that old mistakes are not repeated. If this death cannot make people think and change, that will be an even greater tragedy.

1. *What is Rowley's purpose in this essay?*
2. *How does the use of details enhance the drama of the story?*
3. *How did Rowley's opening paragraph affect you?*

### ***Earthquake!***

October 17, 1989, was a day that I will never forget. It was the day I first experienced an earthquake. I had just gotten home from school and was lying on the living room sofa watching the news on TV. My little brother was in his room playing, and my older sister was in the kitchen preparing the dinner. Our parents were still at work.

At exactly 5:04 P.M., the earthquake struck. Our apartments started shaking violently as if it was a small wooden boat tossed by giant waves in the ocean. At first, none of us realized what was happening. Then my sister yelled, «Earthquake! Get under something!» I was too stunned to move, but the shaking was so strong that soon I fell off the sofa onto the floor. I half rolled, half crawled across the floor to the dining table and got under it. My sister was sitting on the floor in the kitchen, holding her arms over her head to protect it

from falling dishes. She yelled at my little brother to get under her desk, but he wanted to be near us. He tried to get out of his room, but he kept falling down. The earthquake lasted less than a minute, but it seemed like a year to us.

At last, the shaking stopped. For a minute or two we were too scared to move. Then my sister and I cautiously got up and went to help our little brother, who was crying. As soon as he saw us, he began to calm down. There was no electricity, so I looked for my transistor radio and turned it on. Unfortunately it did not work because the batteries were too old. Next, we checked the apartment for damage, but we did not find any. We felt very lucky for nothing was broken and no one was hurt. After a while, we started worrying about my parents. I tried to call them at work, but the phone lines were busy.

Two hours later our parents finally arrived home. They were unhurt, but they had to walk home because the electric streetcars were not working. We were so happy to see them!

Our first earthquake was an experience that none of us will forget, but it taught us a lesson, too. Now we keep emergency supplies such as fresh batteries for my radio available, and we have an emergency plan for communication with one another.

1. *What is the purpose of the essay?*
2. *What strategy does the author choose to implement the purpose?*
3. *What is the organization pattern of the essay?*
4. *How is the introduction begun?*
5. *Find the thesis statement of the essay.*
6. *What kind of expectations does an introductory paragraph set for the reader?*
7. *Are there any ideas announced in the introduction?*
8. *What ideas are developed in the body paragraphs?*
9. *What connecting words show chronological order? Underline them.*
10. *What is the conclusion?*

### ***I Have Fallen in Love at First Sight Many Times***

Love at first sight... It is so wide notion. Everyone ever had to feel something like this. Especially in childhood when you only began to understand what love means.

There was a period in my life when I have fallen in love at first sight practically everyday. I did not know what was going on with me then but I considered love to be something magic. Also I thought that it couldn't last forever that's why I didn't believe that love could exist forever. And as a result I payed for it. I fell in love to one girl and it was serious. I saw her in all my dreams, I could not imagine my life without her.

Love at first sight – its power is magic. In Paris one boy fell in love to (???) the picture of Mona Lisa. The members of that museums had to give him the copy to make him get out.

1. *Read the student's essay and comment on the grammatical competence of the author? Correct the mistakes.*
2. *Speak of the purpose and strategy of the essay.*
3. *Find the thesis of the essay.*
4. *Are there enough supporting details? What are they?*
5. *Is the essay unified? Introduce some changes to make it coherent.*
6. *What organization pattern is chosen by the author?*
7. *Is the title effective?*
8. *Are the beginning and ending effective?*
9. *Are the sentences used in the essay of different types?*
10. *Write an essay under the same title or choose your own title.*

### ***What I have lived for***

***by Bertrand Russel***

*The essay was written by Bertrand Russell, one of the greatest mathematicians, philosophers, and writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in 1872 into a rich and noble British family. He wrote Principia Mathematica, A History of Western Philosophy, and many other works. Russell won the Nobel Prize in literature in 1950. In 1958 Lord Russell began the first of his many campaigns for nuclear disarmament. He died in 1970 at the age of 98.*

Three passions, simple but overwhelmingly strong, have governed my life: the longing for love, the search for knowledge, and unbearable pity for the suffering of mankind. These passions, like great winds, have blown me hither

and thither, in a wayward course, over a deep ocean of anguish, reaching to the very verge of despair.

I have sought love, first, because it brings ecstasy — ccstasy so great that I would often have sacrificed all the rest of life for a few hours of this joy. I have sought it, next, because it relieves loneliness — that terrible loneliness in which one shivering consciousness looks over the rim of the world into the cold unfathomable lifeless abyss. I have sought it, finally, because in the union of love I have seen, in a mystic miniature, the prefiguring vision of the heaven that saints and poets have imagined. This is what I sought, and though it might seem too good for human life, this is what — at last — I have found.

With equal passion I have sought knowledge. I have wished to understand the hearts of men. I have wished to know why the stars shine. And I have tried to apprehend the Pythagorean power by which number holds sway above the flux. A little of this, but not much, I have achieved.

Love and knowledge, so far as they were possible, led upward toward the heavens. But always pity brought me back to earth. Echoes of cries of pain reverberate in my heart. Children in famine, victims tortured by oppressors, helpless old people a hated burden to their sons, and the whole world of loneliness, poverty, and pain make a mockery of what human life should be. I long to alleviate the evil, but I cannot, and I too suffer.

This has been my life. I have found it worth living, and would gladly live it again if the chance were offered me.

1. *What is the structure of the essay?*
2. *Find the thesis statement of the essay.*
3. *What supporting sentences does the author use?*
4. *What connectors are used in the essay to make it coherent?*
5. *How does the author conclude the essay?*

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