

LIGHTNING LITERATURE & COMPOSITION

**LEVEL
STORM**

Student Workbook

Volume 1 – Weeks 1-18

by
Elizabeth Kamath





For Toby and Simon

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Edited by Hewitt Staff

Mailing address	P.O. Box 28010, Spokane, WA 99228
Phone	(360) 835-8708
E-mail	publishing@hewittlearning.org
Website	www.hewittlearning.org

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Week 1

Welcome



Week 1

Student Checklist

This week you will:

- Read “It’s Quite True!” by Hans Christian Andersen on pages 54-56 of *The Rainy Day Reader*
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 3
- Read “The Snake” by Stephen Crane on pages 47-49 of *The Rainy Day Reader*
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 6
- Read “Snake” by D. H Lawrence on pages 121-124 of *The Rainy Day Reader*
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 10

Complete lessons on:

- Keeping a language arts notebook
- What does “good grammar” really mean?
- Multiple approaches to topics
- Prepositions and prepositional phrases

Write multiple papers on the same topic using various methods:

- Choose the topic and write the first paper
- Write the second paper on the same topic
- Write the third paper on the same topic
- Write the fourth paper on the same topic

Do extra activities (optional)

- _____
- _____

Reading

Read "It's Quite True!" by Hans Christian Andersen on pages 54-56 of *The Rainy Day Reader*.

Comprehension Questions

1. When the white Hen says "The more I peck myself the handsomer I grow!" is she being serious or joking? What from the story tells you this?

2. The story tells us the hen next to the white Hen "heard and she didn't hear." What does that mean?

3. Name three animals who continue the gossip of the feather.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



4. Rewrite "One little feather may swell till it becomes five fowls" in your own words.

Lesson: Keeping a Language Arts Notebook

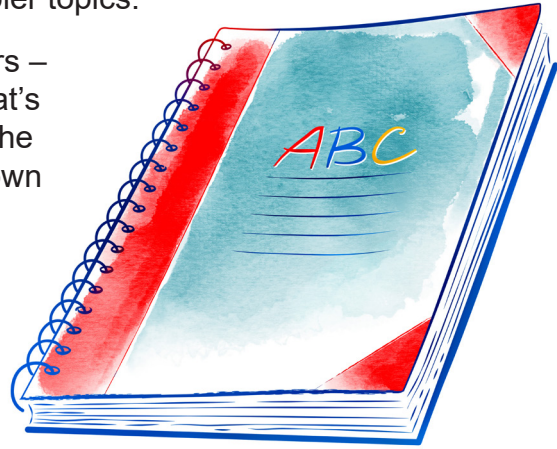
Start this year by creating a language arts notebook. If you don't have a suitable notebook yet, please get one before next week. This notebook will allow you to record areas you have troubles with, be a place for practice, and be a reference when you don't have a teacher, parent, or other resource nearby. (If you created a notebook last year, you can continue that one this year or start a new one.)

As you learn higher level grammar, as you read more deeply, as your papers grow more complex, you will encounter some challenging skills concepts. What's hard for one person will come easily to another, which is why grammar and composition books may never fit you perfectly. You may wonder why so little time is spent on an area you can't seem to

understand while the book is droning on about simpler topics.

It's not that some topics are much harder than others – it's that some topics are harder to some people. That's why we teachers do the best we can in presenting the material, but you also need to take charge of your own learning. Keeping a notebook will help you do that.

This notebook will be dedicated to grammar, mechanics, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary, composition tips, literary concepts, and any other language arts topics you wish. Set it up in any way that pleases you. You might want a section on grammar subdivided into topics like parts of speech, punctuation, and clauses and phrases. A section on composition could have subsections on introductions, outlines, brainstorming, etc. Or maybe you prefer to subdivide based on type of paper (research, persuasive, short story, etc.). A reading portion could include space for poetry concepts, one for symbolism, and another for character development. It's also fine if you want to enter concepts sequentially, as you encounter them, rather than organizing them by topic.



This is not a book for every language arts rule – only for those you have trouble with. Are there certain nouns whose plurals you struggle with? Put them here. Homophones you frequently confuse? In they go. Have trouble remembering the difference between assonance and alliteration? Take the time to write the definition of each in your notebook and give examples of each.

The notebook is not to be written in and forgotten. Spend time with it, perhaps daily, or at least weekly. Review the concepts or skills that give you trouble. If there are several, choose a few for each day. When you've conquered a concept or skill, mark it out (or put a check mark by it, or highlight it – or whatever best matches your feeling of accomplishment).

Be creative. This isn't a textbook, so experiment. Include plenty of examples from your reading and create your own. Write exercises and tests. If you have trouble with comma rules, write some sentences from your reading that include commas and explain the reason for each comma. Then create your own sentences using those same rules. If homophones are a problem, create a homophone test then take the test two weeks later. Create your own mnemonics for remembering the homophones. Are you artistic? Colors or pictures may help. Do you have difficulty creating outlines? Create outlines for a short story you read or a section of your science book or an article in a magazine. You may even discover ways of helping yourself learn that you can apply to other subjects.

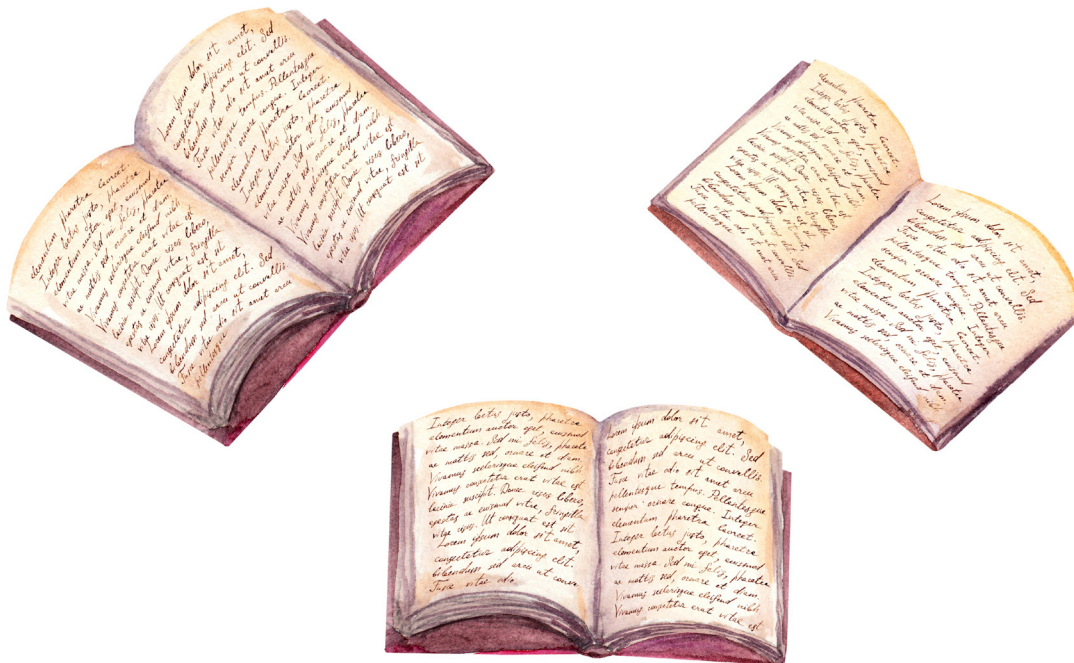
Consider spending time with the notebook during your summer holiday as well. See if you can master everything in that notebook before moving on to the next school year, when you'll start another. Or you can keep adding to the same notebook – it can be fun to look back years later and be amazed at what you used to have trouble with. You can do this well

past your school years. We all can continue to learn.

Your lesson today is to get that notebook set up (if possible). If you won't have the notebook until later in the week, jot down ideas today for how you want to structure it. How fancy or plain you make it is up to you, but make it something you want to write in. This is your place to wrestle with your language arts demons.

Summary

- Create a language arts notebook to work in throughout the year.
- Practice challenging skills and concepts.
- Be creative, and make it as fun as possible.



Reading

Read “The Snake” by Stephen Crane on pages 47-49 of *The Rainy Day Reader*.

Comprehension Questions

1. In the first paragraph, Crane addresses all five senses. List one thing in this paragraph that you could
see: _____
hear: _____
touch/feel: _____
smell: _____
taste: _____
2. “He knew that his implacable enemies were approaching...” Implacable means:
A. strong
B. desperate
C. unstoppable
D. ancient
3. Which paragraph presents the encounter most clearly from the snake’s point of view?

Lesson: What Does “Good Grammar” Really Mean?

By now you know a fair amount of grammar. You probably have some acquaintance with parts of speech, how to make nouns and verbs agree, and what constitutes a complete sentence. You will learn more grammar this year, as well as more advanced composition and reading skills. All these are important, or I wouldn’t bother writing about them. But even more important is to understand what “good grammar” means – and what it doesn’t mean.



The grammar you learn here (or in any other English class) is often called “correct” or “proper” or “good” grammar, but a better term is “standard” grammar. The reason it’s important for you to learn standard grammar is you will be expected to write (and often speak) standard grammar. You will have to write essays throughout school, letters, resumes

for jobs, and reports in those jobs. You may even choose to write stories, articles, or books. Standard grammar is a tool for all these forms of writing.

But sometimes people say that this grammar means much more. Some people say grammar isn't just standard but is "correct" or "proper." They say other ways of speaking or writing are "wrong." They say that this grammar is more logical, more beautiful, or better formed. They fret about language deteriorating if people break the rules. Sometimes they argue that people who use standard grammar think better or are more intelligent than people who don't.

All of those ideas are incorrect. The people who say them believe them, but they're misguided. Unfortunately, sometimes they're misguided to the point where they make people feel ashamed for the way they talk. There are times when people should feel ashamed of the way they talk. Gossiping and lying, like the animals do in "It's Quite True!" are forms of shameful speech. Calling other people names or saying other hurtful things are other forms of shameful speech. But no one should ever feel ashamed of their dialect.

All languages have dialects. A dialect is a way of speaking a language. The grammar that I'm teaching you is for the standard American dialect. But it's an accident that this is the standard dialect. There are different dialects in the South, in New England, and in the Southwest (to name a few) that could have become the standard dialect. There is nothing more logical, beautiful, or "right" about this dialect than any of those. They are all equal, except in the way society chooses to view them.

Let me give you some examples to prove my point.

The Double Negative

You may have been told not to use a double negative. You may have even been told that a double negative is a positive. Occasionally a double negative is a positive, but usually it isn't, and we can always tell the difference.

For example, if someone asked you if you enjoyed a certain movie, and you said, "Well, I didn't *not* like it," (notice the emphasis we put on "not" when we say something like this) they would understand that you were saying you weren't wild about it, but you didn't dislike it either. That's how we sometimes use the double negative as a positive.

Much more often, people say something like, "I don't have no money." Then an adult says, "Well, that means you do have money." But no one thinks that. We understand – even though we never learned it in school – that this double negative isn't a positive. And there's nothing wrong with that. In fact, I like this use of the double negative for emphasizing something. Everyone understands when you say, "I don't have no money," that you really don't have any money. No one is confused for a moment wondering, *Do they have money?* It's not standard. But it's not illogical. And it's not wrong.



Ain't

Let's double down on that sentence and add a taboo word: I ain't got no money. People obsessed with "good" grammar hate *ain't* with a passion. *Ain't* has a proper place in certain English dialects, in the United States and in England. (And possibly in other English-speaking countries.) And no one should be made to feel bad for saying it. In fact, *ain't* is actually more logical than not using it. To explain why, look at this chart:

I	we aren't
You aren't	you aren't
He/she/it isn't	they aren't

These are the subject pronouns with "to be" contracted with "not." Nothing weird there. But why is "I" missing the contraction? We normally say "I'm not." Notice when we do that, we use the contraction on the "am" instead of the "not." We can do this with the others too (you're not, he's not, etc.). But why can't we make "I" like the rest of the contractions in this chart?

We can, but what we get is "I amn't." And in fact, some people do say this. (Though more often they use the question form – amn't I? – because the contraction we use for that is "aren't I?" which is completely illogical since we would never say "I aren't.") But try to say "I amn't" or "amn't I?" and you'll notice it doesn't exactly roll off the tongue. Over time (for reasons I'm not going to go into), as people said this, they modified it to "I ain't," which is easier to say. This makes perfect sense, and there's nothing wrong with it, but for complicated reasons it became a "bad" word.

You

Today in standard English we use the same word – you – whether we're talking to one person or seventeen. Also, we use *you* both for the subject (*You* are here) and the object (I'm talking to *you*). This wasn't always the case. If I were writing this a few hundred years ago, I would have to teach you the difference between *thou* and *thee*, and *ye* and (the ultimate winner) *you*.



Some English dialects still use a different word when talking to more than one *you*. Some dialects use *y'all*, and some use *youse*. People obsessed with proper grammar see these as wrong, but they're no more wrong than *ye* was all those centuries ago. In fact, they're useful because they fill a gap in standard English.

Languages Change

In the same way that we no longer have to remember *thee* or *thou*, *ye* or *you*, there are many other changes that have happened to English. Old English (from over a thousand

years ago) is as different from what you speak as German is. If you could be transported back in time fifteen hundred years to a village in England, you would not be able to understand anything anyone said, not even “hello.” Languages change over time. All languages. Some more quickly than others, but we can’t stop the change. And we shouldn’t want to. It’s a natural part of language life.

Languages change in different ways and for different reasons. Vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation have all changed over the centuries. Sometimes English changed because those speaking English were invaded by others – the Vikings or the Normans. Sometimes it changed because the English speakers invaded others. When the English invaded the Americas, so did people from other European countries. These languages met and changed each other. People who spoke European languages enslaved people who spoke several different African and Caribbean languages, and English was impacted by this as well (though of course not nearly so much as the people were). This list is not complete, only a taste.

Before I leave this crucial topic, let me say I am not giving you freedom to sass back to an adult who tells you not to say, “I ain’t got no money.” Adults correct children’s grammar for good reason. Standard grammar is expected of people. Rightly or wrongly, it affects how other people see you. If you interview for a college or for a job, you’ll want to use standard grammar to make a good impression. And you’ll need it in your writing. So it’s important to learn it. But it’s important because you need it for school and work, not because it makes you a better person.

If you speak a different dialect at home, you have an additional advantage in learning a standard English dialect – you will essentially be bilingual. Your friends who speak only standard English have only that dialect, but you will be able to code-switch between your dialect and the standard one depending on the circumstances.

So when someone tells you English is going to the dogs, know that they’re wrong. Non-standard dialects are not killing English, nor are the people who speak them. Neither is the natural change that is going on even in the standard English dialect. English is changing like it always has. If you speak a different dialect, keep learning the standard one, but never let anyone make you feel bad for speaking the one you learned at home. And above all, never make anyone else feel bad for speaking a non-standard dialect.

Summary

- The English you’re taught in school is standard English.
- Standard English is important for college, careers, and other parts of life.
- Standard English is not more beautiful, logical, or “better” than other English dialects.
- Languages change over time for a myriad of reasons.



Reading

Read “Snake” by D. H. Lawrence on pages 121-124 of *The Rainy Day Reader*.

Comprehension Questions

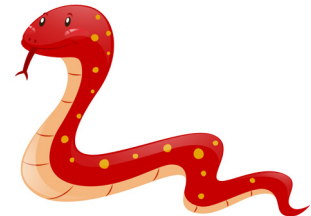
1. “He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom”. What is the meaning of “fissure”?
 - A. crack
 - B. ledge
 - C. bush
 - D. nest

2. Where is this poem set? What time of day is it?

3. How does the speaker know that the snake is venomous?

4. The speaker has various emotional reactions to the snake. Name three of them. You may choose ones that are explicitly stated in the poem and those that the poem implies.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Lesson: Multiple Approaches to Topics

As you’ve seen from this week’s reading – and have already started exploring in your own compositions – you can write about the same topic in multiple ways. It’s important to consider the breadth of possibilities for treating a topic and why authors choose one method over another. When you write, one of the first choices you might make is what sort of paper to write. When you analyze the work of a writer, part of that analysis can include their decision about how to handle their subject.

This won't always be a consideration. Sometimes you'll be assigned paper types (in fact, this will usually be the case while in school). And often you'll be examining the works of writers who only write one type of work (poets, novelists, biographers). But when given the choice, or when examining the work of an author who writes in more than one format, this question of paper type is a good place to begin.

Analyzing Choices in Literature

This week you've read three pieces about animals – a fable or fairy tale, a realistic short story, and a poem. We're going to concentrate now on the last two.



Stephen Crane, the author of the short story "The Snake," also wrote poetry. D. H. Lawrence, the author of the poem "Snake," also wrote short stories. Why might they have chosen the methods they did to write about this same topic – a man's encounter with a venomous snake? What was Crane trying to achieve, and why might he have chosen prose to support his aims? Why might Lawrence have done the same but with poetry?

These men also wrote novels, but the fact that they didn't choose that method for this topic is easily answered – it's not a big enough topic for a novel. It could be a scene in a novel, even a crucial one, but it is not enough on its own. Crane did not write nonfiction. Lawrence did write a few essays. Why might he have chosen a fictive, poetic approach over a nonfiction one?

We can't know the answers to these questions for certain. When writing an analysis of literature, it is usually impossible to thoroughly discern the writer's thought processes and purposes. (The only exception is if we have access to their own words – a diary or letters – but that is rarely the case. And even if they exist, you usually wouldn't be expected to use them until college.) Since we can't know for certain, we make suppositions based on the writing itself.

Let's start with Crane. His intent is to produce a realistic, gritty story – a man encounters a rattlesnake and kills it. He wants the reader in the scene with the man and the dog. That is one reason he gives such strong sensory description right from the start. Crane also wants to emphasize that the man is a part of this natural world. While he wins the contest with the snake on this occasion, the man isn't so different. Both are surprised while on their way, and both view the other as an enemy.

To impart these messages and feelings, Crane might have decided poetry would work against him. Poetry is often used to convey strong feeling, in particular the strong feeling of one individual. Here, Crane conveys the feelings of the man but also those of the snake. Prose is better suited to including the snake's point of view than poetry would be. Poetry also tends to be lofty and frequently elevates its subjects. Because of this, prose is also better suited to Crane's emphasis on realism and naturalism.

In contrast, Lawrence's encounter is told entirely from the speaker's point of view. There is

little naturalism here. It's true this is set in a specific time and place (Sicily at noon), with evocative details that ground us in the scene (the heat, the carob tree, the trough, etc.). And the snake itself is described at first in everyday terms, his golden skin and black tongue, his straight mouth sipping.

But this takes a turn later in the poem. Early in the poem Lawrence compares the snake to cattle twice in two lines. Cattle are a very earthy, everyday thing. By the middle of the poem, he says the snake “looked around like a god.” We can understand cattle; we can have no understanding of gods. The snake's mind is hidden from us, his feelings unknown. And he doesn't just slither away across the sand (an earthy, common image), but reenters some dark place in the earth (going to who-knows-where).



This entering into the crack in the earth unnerves the speaker, fills him with horror, and this is when he throws the stick, startling the snake who “writhed like lightning” – another heavenly thing that we do not understand. Immediately the speaker regrets his act, and the comparisons for the snake come again – a king of the underworld, a lord of life. This is not the snake Crane's man meets – a formidable enemy but one inhabiting the same world as the man. This is a godly, lordly creature from a different realm.

To underscore these feelings, these impressions, these observations of a snake (and, by extension, all snakes), Lawrence chose poetry. The intensity of poetry, its loftiness, and its greater freedom allow him to elevate the snake. He's not saying objectively there's something supernatural about snakes, but in this speaker's mind, in this encounter, these are the feelings. The speaker is ashamed of himself and his entire human education that has taught him to fear this natural (but at the same time supernatural) creature.

Making Choices When You Write

How to decide what sort of paper to write, if you haven't been assigned a certain type? One consideration is your audience. Who are you targeting? Do you think they'll respond better to fiction or nonfiction? Humor or a serious approach? Research packed with facts or persuasion filled with rhetoric?

A second consideration is your intent. Are you hoping to persuade (which can mean a persuasive essay, but could also mean a personal essay or a short story)? Do you want to communicate emotion or experience? Do you wish to engage in a lively discussion? Are you hoping to tell a memorable story?

The third piece is your abilities and preferences. Some people can write wonderful nonfiction, but their fiction is stilted and unengaging. There are skilled poets who couldn't write clear instructions to boil an egg. A best-selling novelist may be bored to tears at the

idea of writing a research paper. In these early years, I give you opportunities to write a wide variety of papers, because the only way to discover what you like and what you're good at is to try. And remember that not being good at it (or not liking it) the first, second, or even fifth time doesn't mean that will always be the case.

When assigned a paper where you have some choice, remember the multiple possibilities available to you. When analyzing an author's work, it will sometimes add greatly to your understanding if you consider why they might have chosen the method they did. Above all, remember writing is a wide world with room for all our voices.

Summary

- When analyzing a piece of literature, consider why the author chose the form (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc.) they did.
- Different forms help support different messages.
- When choosing a form for your own paper, consider your audience, what you want to say, and your abilities and preferences.



Discussion Questions

1. Which of the animals in "It's Quite True" do you think does the most damage through their gossip? Why?
2. Can you think of any examples from your own life or from the news of gossip like this doing harm?
3. What is your response when someone tells you some gossip? What should people's response to gossip be?
4. Why do you think Andersen titled this story "It's Quite True!"?
5. Who do you have more sympathy for in "The Snake" – the man or the snake? Why?
6. The only creature in "The Snake" who is given a name is the dog, Rover. Why do you think Crane did not give the man a name?
7. The narrator in "The Snake" asserts that a revulsion for snakes is natural and universal. Do you think that's true? How do you feel about snakes? If you don't like them, do you know anyone who does?
8. Even if this revulsion is not universal, it is true that more people feel disgust towards or have phobias about certain animals, such as snakes, spiders, and lizards, than they do about other animals like cats, dogs, or horses. Why do you think this is?
9. **"And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,/
He sipped with his straight mouth,"**
In these two lines from "Snake," which two words rhyme? Why might Lawrence have wanted to link these two concepts through rhyme?
10. The speaker in "Snake" feels both afraid and honored by the presence of the snake. Have you ever encountered a potentially dangerous animal in nature? What happened? How did the encounter make you feel?
11. Compare the settings in "The Snake" and "Snake." How do they differ? Does this difference affect the feeling of each piece? Does it affect how you view the snake in each one?
12. Compare the depictions of the snakes in "The Snake" and "Snake." What words do the authors use to describe them? How do you think each author wants you to feel about the snakes?
13. Compare the man in "The Snake" and the speaker in "Snake." How would you describe each of them? Do you have any sense of what either of them looks like? How do you think each of them would tell their story later to a loved one?



Lesson: Prepositions and Prepositional Phrases

In English, there are eight parts of speech: **noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, and interjection**. We're going to look at all eight this year, some more closely than others.

In previous years, I've started with the more well-known parts of speech like nouns and verbs. But this year we're going to dive straight into one of the most challenging: **prepositions**. You may remember that prepositions are little words (or occasionally phrases) that are often used to locate things in time and space. Here are a few of the many prepositions: **after, along, at, below, from, in, near, of, off, on, to, under, with**.

Be careful about *to*. Often it's not a preposition but part of a verb tense called "the infinitive" (to speak, to run, to sleep). But it's easy to avoid confusion because prepositional phrases never include verbs (I'll discuss this more below). Some of these other words aren't always prepositions either. For example, *below* or *near* may be adverbs.

It wouldn't be reasonable (or fun) to try to memorize all the prepositions, but it is important to recognize and understand prepositional phrases.

Prepositional Phrases

Prepositions and some of the words that follow them are called prepositional phrases. Here's what a prepositional phrase looks like:

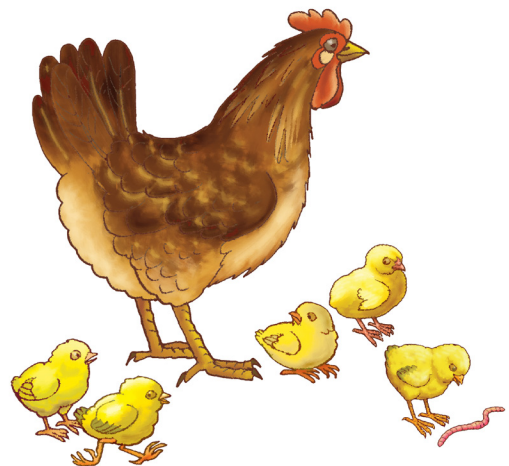
Preposition + optional modifiers + object of the preposition

Here's an example from "It's Quite True":

in the neighbour's poultry-yard

Do you see how it fits the pattern above? *In* is the preposition. *The* and *neighbour's* are the optional modifiers – they are both functioning as adjectives, modifying the noun *poultry-yard*. Finally, *poultry-yard* is the object of the preposition (which is always a noun or pronoun).

It's clear that *neighbour's* is optional because we could describe the poultry-yard in other ways (tidy, noisy, flea-infested), but it might seem like *the* is required here rather than optional because we would never say "In poultry-yard" (or "In flea-infested poultry-yard"). But that's a quirk of our language. If we were to replace *poultry-yard* with a specific proper noun, *the* would disappear ("In Denmark" "In Sicily" "In Minnesota"). Therefore, we consider words like *the* and *a* to be part of those optional modifiers.



What do Prepositional Phrases Do?

Prepositional phrases give us more information, but usually they are not needed to make a complete sentence. You can often remove prepositional phrases and still have a complete sentence. Knowing this can help you spot prepositional phrases. Consider a sentence from “It’s Quite True!”:

She said it in a quarter of the town where the occurrence had not happened.

Here we have two prepositional phrases: *in a quarter* and *of the town*. What would the sentence look like without them?

She said it where the occurrence had not happened.

That still makes sense. But the prepositional phrases do give us information. They locate us better in the space. Just knowing it wasn’t where the lost feather fell feels too vague. While the sentence isn’t terribly specific as it stands, it does tell us we’re in the same town, but a different section.

And that’s the job of prepositional phrases – to give us more information. They may do this in the same way that adjectives or adverbs do.

...as the rays of the sun fell full upon the ridge...

This slice from “The Snake” also has two prepositional phrases: *of the sun* and *upon the ridge*. The first modifies *rays* (which rays? those of the sun), and since *rays* is a noun, it is acting as an *adjectival phrase* (because adjectives modify nouns). The second prepositional phrase is telling us where those rays fell. In other words, it is modifying *fell*, which means it is an *adverbial phrase* (because adverbs modify verbs).

One thing to remember about all prepositional phrases – they do not contain a subject or a verb. They contain nouns, but that noun is not the subject of the sentence. For example, consider this sentence:

None of the animals ignored the gossip.

The subject of this sentence is not *animals*, it is *none*. Sometimes this can cause confusion. Which of these sentences is correct?

The owls in their nest listen to the hens.

The owls in their nest listens to the hens.

Even though *nest* is closer to the verb, it is not the subject of the sentence. *Owls* is the subject. Therefore *owls* is the word that must agree with the verb. If we pluck the prepositional phrase (in their nest) out of the sentence, we can clearly see which form of the verb to use:

The owls listen to the hens.



Prepositional Phrases in Your Writing

Subject-verb agreement isn't the only potential pitfall prepositional phrases can pose to sentences. While they can bring needed information and even flair to sentences, don't overuse them. Often a sentence with a prepositional phrase or two (or seven) can be rewritten with fewer or even no prepositional phrases while not losing important information.

The easiest prepositional phrases to eliminate are those that show possession and can be replaced by 's:

The feather of the hen. . . = The hen's feather. . .

But often there are other unnecessary ones, or there are so many cluttering up a sentence that we can get lost figuring out the main subject and predicate.

The man walked in silence across the courtyard to the trough.

The man silently crossed the courtyard to the trough.

The second sentence has only one prepositional phrase (to the trough), an improvement on the three in the first sentence. We will look later at the general concept of eliminating wordiness, but deleting prepositional phrases is one way to do that.

But there's one "problem" with prepositions that isn't actually a problem. For a long time, students were instructed never to end a sentence with a preposition. While there can be stylistic reasons not to do this (which we will look at later), there is no grammatical reason not to do it. Here is a sentence from "It's Quite True!":

I'll tell it to the neighbour owl; she's a very proper owl to associate with.

The *with* at the end of the sentence is a preposition. Many people would say the sentence should be:

I'll tell it to the neighbour owl; she's a very proper owl with whom to associate.

Most people today wouldn't even write like this, let alone talk like this. It's not incorrect, but it's stuffy and a bit awkward. You will learn other writing tips later that will make you less likely to end a sentence with a preposition, but rest assured there is no grammatical reason not to.



Summary

- Prepositions are little words or phrases that are often used to locate things in time and space.
- Prepositional phrases consist of the preposition, optional modifiers, and the object of the preposition.
- The object of the preposition is always a noun or pronoun.
- Prepositional phrases do not contain a subject or a verb.
- Prepositional phrases give more information, but they can often be removed without substantially harming a sentence.
- When reviewing your writing, look for prepositional phrases that can be eliminated or reworded to tighten the writing.



Underline the prepositional phrases in these sentences and lines (which I've sometimes modified) from this week's reading. If you aren't certain, look at the formula for a prepositional phrase at the beginning of this lesson. Also, review the partial list of prepositions. As a help, the number following each sentence tells you how many prepositional phrases are in the sentence.

Example: The sun went down, and the fowls jumped up on their perch to roost. (1)

1. She could not refrain from telling it to her next neighbour. (1)
2. "Hoo! hoo! to-who!" they both hooted in front of the neighbour's dovecot to the doves within. (3)
3. A man and a dog came from the laurel thickets of the valley where the white brook brawled with the rocks. (3)
4. The dog – a large lemon and white setter – walked, tranquilly meditative, at his master's heels. (1)

5. With a blanched face, he sprang forward and his breath came in strained gasps. (2)
6. His arm with the stick made a spasmodic, defensive gesture. (1)
7. And so he cried his cry, an incredibly swift jangle of tiny bells. (1)
8. In the man was all the wild strength of the terror of his ancestors, of his race, of his kind. (5)
9. The man made a preliminary feint with his stick. (1)
10. And now the man went sheer raving mad from the emotions of his forefathers and from his own. (3)
11. He gripped the stick with his two hands and made it speed like a flail. (1)
12. At the end, the man clutched his stick and stood watching in silence. (2)
13. The dog came slowly and with infinite caution stretched his nose forward, sniffing. (1)
14. He resumed his march along the path, and the dog walked tranquilly meditative, at his master's heels. (2)
15. He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom. (3)
16. How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink/at my water-trough. (2)
17. I picked up a clumsy log/And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter. (2)
18. I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education. (1)



Week 2

Nonfiction

Unit 1



Week 2

Student Checklist

This week you will:

- Read “The Peace-Maker” by Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa) on pages 259-263 of *The Rainy Day Reader*
- Answer comprehension questions, workbook pages 23-24

Complete lessons on:

- Brainstorming for a personal essay
- Choosing subtopics for a personal essay
- Outlining a personal essay
- Dependent clauses

Write the beginning of a personal essay:

- Brainstorm for topic and subtopics
- Choose subtopics
- Create an outline
- Begin the rough draft

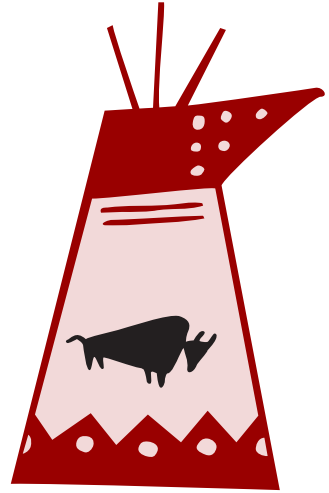
Do extra activities (optional)

- _____
- _____

Reading

Read “The Peace-Maker” by Charles A. Eastman (Ohiyesa) on pages 259-263 of *The Rainy Day Reader*.

In this piece, Eastman refers to his tribe as the Sioux. At the time, that was the term used in English publications. In this guide, I refer to them (except in direct quotes) as the Dakota, which is generally the preferred term. (“Sioux” was a name given them by an enemy tribe; they call themselves “Dakota” or “Lakota” depending on the dialect.)



Comprehension Questions

1. How does the author’s tribe (the Wakpaykootay band of the Dakota) record the heroic deeds of its people?

2. The person who has performed the greatest deed has certain privileges. What is the one that matters to this story?

3. Eastman says that Tamahay was the only Dakota who fought for the Americans in the War of 1812. How did the Americans repay him for this?

4. When the bands are meeting to choose the successor to Chief Little Crow, why do the men become louder and more threatening?

5. Which tribes were attacking Eyatonkawee’s tribe when she did her “great deed”?

6. What happened to Eyatonkawee’s husband when this attack begins?

[continued]

7. In her great deed, how many warriors did Eyatonkawee kill?

8. There are multiple conflicts in this narrative, but who (or what) is the real enemy?

Lesson: Brainstorming for a Personal Essay

This week and next you'll be writing your first major paper for this class – a personal essay. A personal essay focuses on an important part of your life. This might be an important event, an activity you love, or – in this case – a person you know.

Brainstorming is the start of most papers, and it has two phases. First brainstorm your topic. For a personal essay, think of the events, things, and people in your life who have mattered to you most. Write down as many as possible. (For the paper for this week and next, you'll be focused only on people.)



Crucial to brainstorming is freedom. Brainstorming is a time of productivity, not editing or dismissal. You may sometimes take part in group brainstorming sessions, and the same rule applies there. Everyone says ideas that are written down, and only later do people debate the merits of the ideas.

Once you've written down as many topic ideas as you can think of, begin separating the likely from the unlikely. There are many reasons to discard topics. Some may not fit within the scope of the assignment. Others might bore you. A few might be too painful or embarrassing to write about. You may have written down some people who were important to you but decide that it would be hard to communicate that importance to others.

Once you've narrowed it to a handful comes the difficult job of choosing the best – or at least the best for this assignment. Now it's time for the second round of brainstorming.

Choose one topic of the possible topics and brainstorm again. Since you're going to write about a person, I'll use that as my example. What about this person makes them important to you? Your essay is going to need detailed information and stories, not vague references. Was there a time when you felt especially close to this person? A time when they helped you out in a special way? A funny story about them that reveals their character? What are some interesting or exceptional things about them?

Brainstorm ideas for the person you've chosen. This is the heart of your paper – not just describing this person, but making it clear why they're special to you. The reader needs to

Reading

Close reading of “The Peace-Maker”: Delay and Repetition of Theme

This year, you will be reading several short stories and short nonfiction pieces. Sometimes, like this week, you will read them in one day and we will have time left over for a deeper look at the writings. Today we’re going to look at two techniques used in “The Peace-Maker”: delay and repetition of theme. (For any of these close readings, I recommend having the essay or short story handy for easy reference.)



Delay

Eastman tells us in the first paragraph that Eyatonkawee had a victory over the enemy when she was a young woman. In the second paragraph we learn the custom of publicly declaiming heroic deeds, and that the person with the most heroic deed had the privilege of being a peace maker. Although Eastman doesn’t explicitly say so, the reader is right to assume that Eyatonkawee’s heroic deed is great enough that she is the Peace Maker of the title. But what is this deed? Eastman raises this question in the mind of his reader, but he uses delay in giving us an answer.

Eastman next switches gears by introducing another person, Tamahay. Tamahay fought in the War of 1812 and “could boast of many a perilous adventure.” Ah, the reader thinks, maybe Eyatonkawee had an encounter with Tamahay and *this* is her heroic deed. But no. She did have an encounter with him, but only to recite her deed and thus keep him and another man from killing each other. Eastman delays us again.

We’re warned straightaway that the next story isn’t her heroic deed as it takes place “[m] any years afterward.” But, we think, perhaps we’ll finally learn the heroic deed here. But no again. Eyatonkawee prevents another fight by telling her deed, but we still don’t learn about it. Some readers may begin to wonder if we ever will.

After a brief digression, Eastman finally gets to The Heroic Deed. Eyatonkawee interposes herself between drunken males (yet again) and tells the story of the attack of the Sacs and Foxes. Her husband is killed in front of her, and she kills not one, not two, but three men who invade her teepee, no doubt with the intent to kill at least her and possibly her baby. Eastman puts us in that party, listening to her recount her tale. And the power of her tale furthermore puts us in the teepee with her. We’ve had to read through the whole essay to get here, but Eastman trusts that it was worth the wait.

This is the tactic of delaying. You hint to your reader that there is an exciting story or bit of information you have to share, but you don’t share it until later. This is a valid writing tool, but it is one to use judiciously. How did you feel, waiting to find out Eyatonkawee’s story?

Was it more gripping for you, wondering what the tale would be? Did it make you want to read on to find out? Or were you annoyed that you kept reading about her recounting her great deed without knowing what it was?

If you were annoyed (I was not, but it's valid to feel that way), imagine if Eastman hadn't left it until the end. What if he had started the essay with her deed? That would fit certain writing rules. For example, as you'll learn next week, writers are often instructed to put something interesting or startling into their introduction. This story would certainly fit that bill. Another reason to start with it is Eastman states at the beginning that Eyatonkawee was "[o]ne of the most remarkable women of her day and nation," but he doesn't support or explain that. This story would be ample support for that assertion, and supporting assertions is a key component to nonfiction writing.

But imagine how the essay would feel. In a sense, we would have the climax at the beginning. We would start with this marvelous story of a young woman killing three men who threaten her and her child, followed by rather mundane examples of how she used this story to restore peace between people. The essay would start with a bang but end with a whimper.

Instead, Eastman's decision to hint at the story from the beginning, and remind us of it as we go along, does a wonderful job of using delay to present her crucial story in the best possible light. Placing it at the end builds the reader's anticipation and also helps to lodge it in the reader's memory. (We're more likely to remember the end of a story than the middle or even the beginning.) Also, notice that the story framing her tale – a party with whiskey – is the least interesting of the circumstances. First she breaks up a fight between a famous warrior and another man. Next she disrupts an important tribal ceremony (that has been marred by deception). But placing her story in the midst of just another party allows her story to shine.

Here, Eastman makes delay work. But using delay incorrectly can cause confusion or disappointment for the reader. They may have trouble understanding what is going on if you omit crucial information for too long. Or if you delay a story that isn't really all that interesting, the reader may think, "I had to read this whole paper just to get to this?" It's a tricky business. Understand delay as a tool you can use in your writing, but don't reach for it too quickly or often.



Repetition of Theme

Unlike delay, you can feel more comfortable repeating a theme. You may have heard "theme" discussed in relation to fiction, but nonfiction writing can also have themes running through it. A theme is something the essay has to say – it may be a message or moral. Sometimes an author spells out a theme, and sometimes they don't. The theme of this essay is fairly obvious and is expressed in the essay's last line: Alcohol is the enemy of the

Dakota. But Eastman doesn't rely on simply one statement at the end of his essay (even though that's a powerful place to put a statement). Instead, he plants the idea throughout.

Eastman first mentions alcohol in the fourth paragraph, and the way he does it is notable. He's been describing Tamahay in positive terms. This man, who has the rakish nickname "One-eyed Sioux," was adventurous, even "reckless." He was a friend of the "Pike's Peak" Pike and fought for the US in The War of 1812. Everything about him in the third paragraph makes us warm to him.

But what is his thanks from the United States government for fighting for them? They steal his land and give him liquor, turning him into a dangerous drunk. Eastman lets us know immediately not only that liquor is dangerous for his people, but who gave it to them. Alcohol is an enemy brought to his people by an enemy.

Two paragraphs later, sure enough, there is Tamahay, in a drunken rage, painted for battle. He is whooping and women are screaming – not without reason, as he is armed with two weapons and about to attack another man. Eastman doesn't only tell us that Tamahay was a violent drunk – he shows us with this story. Alcohol has made him a threat to his own people, and no doubt if Eyatonkawee (who here is described as "young and modest" and "bashful") hadn't been able to step in between them (stop for a minute and imagine what courage that took), he likely would have killed the other man (or been killed). What Eastman doesn't tell us, but we can imagine, is not just how damaging this is to the people killed or injured, but also to the attacker when he sobers up and realizes what he has done. Alcohol is not an enemy just to a few but to the people in general.

This is reinforced in the next story. Tamahay is not the only drunken brawler in the Dakota tribe. This time it isn't one man getting randomly drunk but a group of men planning on using alcohol to kill someone and usurp power. Here alcohol isn't a substance some people might use unwisely, it's an actual weapon.

Before we get to our last story, Eastman makes a digression, but it's a digression with a purpose. He spends two paragraphs speaking directly about Eyatonkawee's feelings about alcohol. She is strongly against it, in part because her favorite brother was killed in a drunken brawl. We get the sense that many Dakota women may have felt the same way, but Eyatonkawee is uniquely situated to act. By now we realize, Eyatonkawee isn't just a peace maker with an amazing story – she is especially concerned with limiting the damage alcohol is doing to her people.

When we finally get to Eyatonkawee's recitation of her deed, at first alcohol seems to take a back seat. Yes, she proclaims it at a party where whisky is involved, but this isn't as colorful as our two previous stories. And her deed itself has nothing to do with alcohol. But Eastman has not forgotten his theme. He builds to it in dramatic fashion. Eyatonkawee finishes her story of her brave deed and doesn't only separate combatants but breaks the whiskey keg, spilling the alcohol. We get our final declaration of alcohol as "the blood of an enemy to the Sioux."



We'll look more at theme later this year, but remember when looking for themes in your reading that authors repeat their themes throughout their work, often in diverse ways. When you write your own essays and stories, keep uppermost in your mind what you're writing about. By this, I don't mean you're writing about lizards or the Revolutionary War or the story of a family lost at sea, but you also have some underlying message. For example, in the paper you're writing now, it's not just about a person, but it's about how that person was important to you. Your theme might be "This person is important to me," or "This person changed my life," or "I admire this person." Think of different ways you can express this throughout your paper.



Lesson: Choosing Subtopics for a Personal Essay

Yesterday you brainstormed for your paper, coming up with several possible subtopics. Now you have to choose which of those subtopics to include in your paper. Here is one of the editing processes on that seesaw I talked about yesterday. You've brainstormed a bunch of ideas, now you have to edit out the lesser ones.

How do you decide what to include? First consider the purpose of your paper. In this case, you're describing a person who is meaningful to you and explaining why they're meaningful. So the ideas you choose need to further this topic. Maybe this person was in the air force with some great stories about that time, but unless those stories are one reason this person is meaningful for you, they don't belong in this paper.

Once you've discarded the pieces that don't fit the theme, examine what you have left. Are there things here you simply don't want to write about? Is there a story concerning you and the subject that is too personal? Is there a story you wouldn't mind telling, but you think it would be too long for the paper? Once you've eliminated what doesn't fit, eliminate what you don't want to write about.

What you have left is a list of pertinent items that you're willing to tackle. If there are only a few, you may not need to pare any more. If there are still several, think about how the items interact. Tomorrow you're going to have to put these subtopics in some sort of order, which means they should connect in some way and thus lead smoothly from one to the other. Consider the items and how you might connect them. You don't need to draw those connections yet (that happens tomorrow), but if you notice one or two outliers that simply can't be connected, this is the time to ditch those as well.

Let's say I'm going to write a piece on a music teacher who is very important to me. I might brainstorm the following:

Physical appearance (tall, thin, 60s, perfect posture, thick white hair always held back with clips, strong voice, easy laugh), personality (crisp, funny, gentle, careful), went to Julliard, has collections of metronomes and paperweights, has five cats and a corgi, loves to play duets with me, favorite

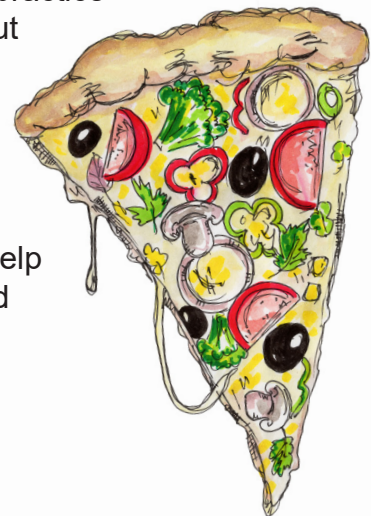
composers are Mozart and Chopin, lets me play ragtime, listens to my compositions and gives feedback, loves to garden, has three grown children and five grandchildren.

This is brief – normally I would encourage students to brainstorm more than this – but I'm giving you enough to get my ideas across. These are all potentially interesting, and some of them may be very important (especially to her) like her children and grandchildren. But if I've never met the children or grandchildren, or even if I have but they don't impact my relationship with her, there's no reason to put them in the paper.

Similarly, while the fact that she went to Julliard obviously is important to her being a music teacher, if it's not important to me, personally, it doesn't belong here. If part of what I want to communicate is what a great teacher she is – and what a great musician she is – then it's probably worth mentioning this. Do I care that she has cats and a dog? If I have my own and we talk about animals a lot, then maybe. What about gardening? You might think this is unrelated to music instruction so it should be tossed. But if I'm also a gardener and after each lesson we have wonderful talks about gardening, I might want to include it. Remember, my focus here is not a profile of a music teacher, it's a paper explaining why *this* person is important to me.

What about more general information like physical appearance and personality? That's usually worth including, in a brief fashion. Not because what they look like necessarily makes them special to you, but because it gives the reader a clearer image. The reader is going to want some notion of what this person looks and acts like. You can either lump this information together at the beginning of your essay or drop bits of it throughout at pertinent places. The second is usually the better way to go, but it will take more skill or effort on your part. For example, I might mention how my teacher laughs and smooths her thick white hair every time we talk about gardening or mention getting distracted by her quick slender fingers when we play duets together.

As with brainstorming, this process can be practiced. Spend one practice session in your notebook brainstorming as much as possible about your favorite food (for example). Come back the next day and imagine you have to write a persuasive paper arguing how delicious this food is. Figure out what from your brainstorming session you would keep. The next day imagine you have to write a short story somehow based around this food. What would you keep now? Next time it's a research paper. These exercises will help you separate the two processes (brainstorming and selection) and train you to see what subtopics are pertinent to your paper.



Summary

- Choosing subtopics is a time of control rather than productivity.
- Choose subtopics that fit the theme and that you feel comfortable writing about.
- If you struggle with this, practice it in your notebook along with brainstorming.



Reading

Close reading of “The Peace-Maker”: Organization

Today’s close reading lesson is tied to today’s lesson on organizing an essay. (And tied to your composition, where you will be outlining your own paper.) We will examine the organization of “The Peace-Maker” by creating an outline of the essay.

Creating outlines is not a precise art. If you created an outline of “The Peace-Maker,” yours might be different. That’s fine. The point is not to come up with the “right” outline, but to spend time examining the organization of this piece. First, I’ll give you my outline, then I’ll comment on it.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Eyatonkawee
 - 1. “One of the most remarkable women of her day and nation”
 - 2. Allusion to her victory
 - B. Honor from war-like deeds
 - 3. Recitation of these deeds
 - 4. Right to separate combatants in a quarrel
- II. Tamahay
 - A. “One-eyed Sioux”
 - B. Fought for America in the War of 1812
 - C. Friend of Lieutenant Pike
 - D. Alcohol
 - E. Eyetonkawee’s encounter with him when he’s drunk
 - 1. Recounts her brave deed for the first time
 - 2. Saves a warrior from Tamahay
- III. Succession for Chief Little Crow
 - A. Attempt to trick the other tribe using whisky
 - B. Eyatonkawee again recites her brave deed
 - C. Feast breaks up and peace is restored
- IV. Eyatonkawee and alcohol
 - A. She recognized how dangerous it was for her people
 - B. Her favorite brother had been killed in a drunken brawl
 - C. Because of her, Dakota men drank only secretly or moderately



- V. The telling of her great deed (at a party with whiskey)
 - A. Her tribe is attacked by the Sacs and Foxes
 - B. Her husband is killed in front of her
 - C. Three men in succession attack her and her child in her tepee
 - D. She kills each of these men
- VI. After the telling she breaks the keg of whiskey
 - A. This whiskey is also an enemy of the Dakota

You can see here that I don't give each paragraph its own upper-case Roman numeral (which I recommend you do for your papers). Instead there are six. That's because this essay is longer, and it makes more sense to give each subtopic a section, even though those subtopics usually run for multiple paragraphs.

Eastman starts by introducing two of his main topics in the first two paragraphs: Eyantonkawee and the custom of publicly declaiming warlike deeds (and some of the privileges this confers). We know now that Eyantonkawee is the Peace Maker of the title.

After this introduction, Eastman moves on to another person: Tamahay. In the same way that he introduced Eyantonkawee as "one of the most remarkable women of her day and nation" he immediately gives us reason to be interested in Tamahay. Not only is his nickname the "One-eyed Sioux," but he fought for America in the War of 1812 and was a friend of the Pike of Pike's Peak. Tamahay has one problem though – drink.



Now we have two people, and Eastman brings them together in a story. Tamahay and drink are a dangerous combination, but Eyantonkawee is the person to help. Thanks to Eastman's organization so far, this feels right. It's not unbelievable that a woman is able to separate these two warriors who are about to come to blows. Eastman has prepared us for this scene.

Eastman moves on to a second story. First he gave us the story of two men, but here he ups the excitement with the story of two bands. And this isn't a random (albeit famous) drunk looking for a fight. A chieftom is at stake. Building excitement and importance is an excellent way to structure an essay.

We have a brief (two-paragraph) aside about Eyantonkawee and alcohol (the importance of which I discussed yesterday), and then we move into the most important story of all. Although this is framed inside the story of a party with whiskey, that party is not the important part. The important thing – the thing this essay has been building to – is Eyantonkawee's tale of her brave deed. So again we have an escalation in excitement and importance.

At the end of all this is a statement of the essay's theme, that alcohol is the enemy of the Dakota. Eastman has started big, introducing us to "[o]ne of the most remarkable women of her day and nation," and ended even bigger, with her amazing deeds, dramatic spilling of the whiskey, and bold assertion that alcohol is the "blood of the enemy." You can't go wrong following this structure – start big, build, and end even bigger. This doesn't mean you have to escalate with every line (remember the digression Eastman gives us about two thirds of the way through), but in a general sense it can work well to build excitement and interest.



Lesson: Outlining a Personal Essay

Let's look at creating your own outline. Once you've selected your subtopics, the next step is organizing them. We use an outline for this task. This is another control step, but after this you get to enjoy the flow of writing a rough draft. This rough draft will be easier to write if you first create a strong outline.

Outlines use numbers and letters to help you organize. There are different styles for doing this, but here is mine. The largest level of organization uses large Roman numerals (I, II, III, etc.). For the papers you're writing now, these would indicate paragraphs. So, the first paragraph would be I, the second II, etc. The next level down is upper-case letters (A, B, C, etc.). Next are numerals (1,2,3, etc.). You may not need to go any further, but if you do, the next level would be lower-case letters (a, b, c, etc.) followed by lower-case Roman numerals (i., ii., iii., etc.).

If Roman numerals are paragraphs, what are the others? Each paragraph has a topic, and these other headers are subtopics or examples. Here's how this might play out with my piano teacher from yesterday.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Topic: Ms. Brown greatly influenced my life
 - B. Introduce her with story about my first lesson
 1. Physical description
 2. Seeing her garden for the first time
- II. Garden
 - A. Long talks about our gardens
 - B. Giving each other flowers and vegetables
 - C. How her hands look when she is gardening
- III. Playing duets together
 - A. Her hands playing the piano

- B. Story about duet we played in concert
- IV. Learning difficult pieces
- A. How demanding and exacting she is
 - B. How encouraging she is
 - C. What I've learned here I've applied to my whole life
- V. Conclusion
- A. Ms. Brown has not only taught me piano but important lessons for my whole life
 - B. She is my teacher but also my friend



Let's look more closely at this. I start with an introduction that has two jobs – it announces the topic, and it tells a story to engage the reader. You can engage the reader other ways (which we'll look at next week), but a story is a good one. In this story, I'm including at least some of her physical description and also mention of seeing her garden for the first time.

This leads to my next paragraph where I focus on the garden. When organizing you need to do this – find links between the topics so they will lead smoothly to each other. Later this year we'll look more closely at transition methods. But for now focus on organizing your subtopics in a way that each can lead to the next. In this example, my focus on her hands while she's gardening leads to her hands playing the piano in the next paragraph, and that topic (duets) in turn leads to other types of pieces I played for her.

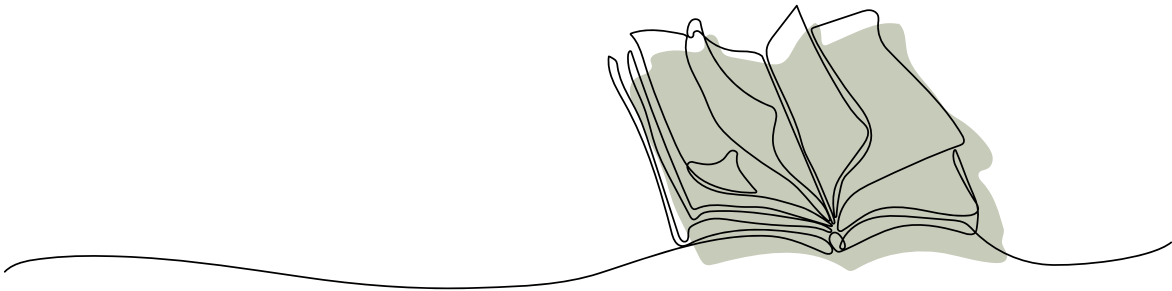
You may have more paragraphs in the middle of the paper if you have more subtopics, and that's fine, but you'll end with a conclusion. We'll look at conclusions more closely next week, but as with introductions they need to flow smoothly with the rest of the paper.

Generally speaking, the more you work at your outline, the less you'll have to work at your paper. The better organized you are when you start, the easier the writing will be. If you have a scattered bunch of notes, it can be hard to know what to put where when you start to write. But if you take the time to organize, you can see how some ideas relate to others. I strongly recommend creating an outline for any paper you write, particularly longer papers.

If outlines are a struggle for you, practice on other things you read, as I did above with "The Peace-Maker." This can do double duty – if you outline a chapter in your history book or a science article you are assigned to read, you are more likely to remember the information. This means you'll be studying for that class and polishing your outlining skills at the same time. You'll also learn how other writers organize their work, and this can give you ideas for your own.

Summary

- Outlines help organize papers, making the rough draft easier to write.
- Choose a system of numbers and letters for your rough draft that your teacher assigns or that works best for you.
- Normally, for papers of the size you're currently writing, the main headers in your outline will be paragraph and the subtopics and support will go under these.
- If you struggle with outlines, practice them in your notebook by outlining short stories, articles, or chapters from textbooks.



Discussion Questions



1. Different cultures confer status in different ways. In some cultures people gain social status by the job they hold, in others by how much money or land they have, in others by how many children. In this story, status is partly dependent on doing “notable warlike deeds.” What do you think of tying social status to warlike deeds? What imparts social status in our culture? What is your opinion of this? What do you think *should* bring people more status?
2. It is not enough to have done the deed, but the doer must tell the story each time they break up a fight. Why might this be? This is an example of the importance of story in this community. How do we use stories in our society? What importance do they have?
3. What do you think of Tamahay? How do you think Eyantonkawee felt when she had to break up the fight between Tamahay and another man? How do you think they (or any of the other men) felt when Eyantonkawee broke up their fights?
4. You might think it would be easy for a man (or several men) to push aside this woman and go on with their fight. Why do they not do so, even when drunk? How would you describe the social contract that holds them back? Can you think of anything comparable in our society?
5. Eastman makes clear Eyantonkawee’s opinion of alcohol. What is your opinion? Is alcohol always bad? Are there times it can be drunk responsibly? What do you know about the history of alcohol and indigenous peoples?
6. What do you think about Eyantonkawee’s brave deed? Do you think it was right? What else (if anything) could she have done? What would you have done in her place?
7. How do you think Eyantonkawee felt during that attack? How would she have felt when she saw her husband killed? When each man came, one by one? How do you think she felt afterwards, especially since her child was with her?
8. Why do you think Eyantonkawee’s takes her child to each body and has him count them on his fingers? What do you think she is trying to communicate to her child about what has happened?
9. When we first meet Eyantonkawee she is a young widow. In the next story she is middle-aged. In the last she is an old woman, but then we read the story where she is the youngest of all – a young wife and new mother. What do you think of this circular approach? (During that story she becomes a widow, bringing us back to the beginning of the tale again.) Why might Eastman have chosen it?

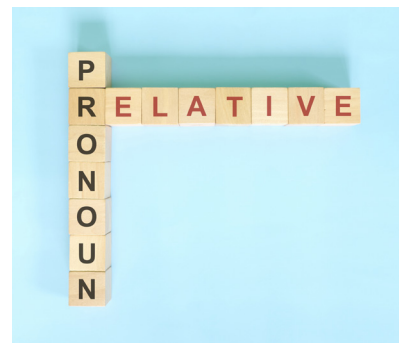
Lesson: Dependent Clauses

Last week you learned that a phrase is a group of words in a sentence that doesn't contain a subject and a verb. (Prepositional phrases never have verbs; some other types of phrases do have verbs, but then they won't have a subject.) A clause is a group of words that contains a subject **and** a verb.

Independent clauses are sentences, so can stand on their own. Dependent clauses cannot stand on their own even though they have a subject and a verb. They need to be attached to an independent clause. (Dependent clauses are also called *subordinate clauses*, because they are somewhat less important than – or in service to – the main part of the sentence.)

Relative Pronouns and Subordinate Conjunctions

Here we meet two more parts of speech: pronouns and conjunctions. In particular, relative pronouns (which I'm sure aren't the first that spring to mind when you hear the word "pronoun") and subordinate conjunctions (the slightly more challenging sibling of the coordinating conjunction). Dependent clauses often start with either a relative pronoun or a subordinate conjunction. Here are all the relative pronouns:



That	who	whose
which	whom	whoever
whosoever	whichever	whomever

If you want to bother to memorize these, stick with the first four or five. The others will then come naturally. When you see these words in a sentence, they aren't always acting as a relative pronoun. For example, they might be asking a question (Which do you want?). But often they are introducing a dependent clause.

There are so many subordinate conjunctions that I'm not going to list them. But they are words like **after, as, because, before, if, when**, and **where** that also begin dependent clauses. Here are some of each in action:

That's the man who stole my backpack.

Her favorite meal is spaghetti and meatballs, which is easy to make.

Let's go to the park after we swim.

Dependent clauses can be removed from sentences and you still are left with a sentence (although one with less information – possibly critical information):

That's the man.

Her favorite meal is spaghetti and meatballs.

Let's go to the park.

Sentences like these, with only one independent clause and no dependent clauses, are called simple sentences. A sentence with one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses is a complex sentence. We'll look more at these and other sentence types later this year. For now, let's examine dependent clauses more closely.

Commas

While sometimes the dependent clause comes later in the sentence, it can also come first:

Let's go to the park after we swim.

After we swim, let's go to the park.

Besides swapping the order of the clauses, what is the difference between these sentences? It's the addition of the comma. When the dependent clause comes first, it needs to be separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

When the dependent clause comes later, sometimes it needs a comma and sometimes it doesn't. Let's go back to our other two examples:

That's the man who stole my backpack.

Her favorite meal is spaghetti and meatballs, which is easy to make.



Why does the second sentence need a comma when the first one doesn't? The dependent clause in the first sentence is called a *restrictive* or *essential* clause. (Clauses are filled with technical terms – dependent/subordinate; restrictive/essential – practice them in your notebook until you know them.) The second one is *nonrestrictive* (or *inessential*).

As you can probably tell from the terms, this means the first dependent clause is necessary for the meaning of the sentence, while the second one is not. If I say, "That's the man," you don't know what I'm talking about. (We're assuming you haven't asked me, "Who stole your backpack?"). The clause "who stole my backpack" tells us crucial information about the man that distinguishes him from all other men. But "which is easy to make" is a bit of extra information about spaghetti and meatballs, and the heart of the sentence is understandable without it.

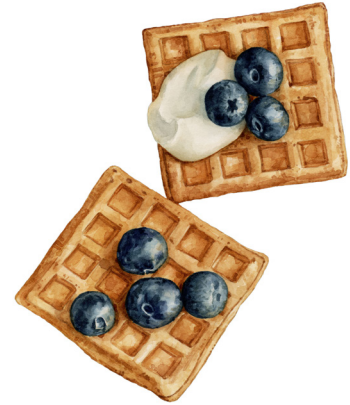
In short, restrictive (essential) dependent clauses don't get a comma while nonrestrictive (inessential) dependent clauses do. Just remember that if a clause is essential to a sentence, it shouldn't be separated from it by anything as tedious as a comma. Another way to remember this is to think about how we speak. If you say the above two sentences aloud, you may notice that you say the first one straight through but pause slightly in the second after *meatballs*.

There's another trick to restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses involving the relative pronouns *that* and *which*. When choosing one of these two words, use *that* for a restrictive clause and *which* for a nonrestrictive clause. Often this will be fairly mundane:

Corinne loves waffles that her mother cooks.

Corinne loves waffles, which we haven't got right now.

In the first sentence, *that her mother cooks* is a restrictive dependent clause because it tells us exactly which waffles Corinne loves. She may not like your waffles or mine or those from the Waffle Hut, but she does love her mother's. In the second sentence, *which we haven't got right now* is a nonrestrictive dependent clause. It's adding some information, but it's not crucial to the main meaning of the sentence. The fact that we do not have waffles on hand doesn't affect Corinne's love for them.



Truthfully, the *that/which* difference is starting to disappear. You will see *that* used with nonrestrictive clauses and *which* used with restrictive clauses. This is another example of the language evolution I was talking about. And it makes sense. We already have the comma to tell you the difference between restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses, so the use of *that* and *which* to differentiate between them is redundant. Consider the meaning of these sentences:

Larry followed the man who crossed the street.

Larry followed the man, who crossed the street.

These sentences are identical except the comma. Do they raise different pictures in your mind? In the first, *who crossed the street* is telling us which man Larry followed. Did Larry follow the man in the red and yellow plaid shirt or the one walking a Dalmatian or the one who tripped over the curb? No, he followed the one who crossed the street. In the second sentence, *who crossed the street* is telling us what that man did after Larry started following him. Did he look at his cell phone or run to catch a bus or start whistling "God Save the Queen"? Nope, he crossed the street.

We'll look more at commas later this year, but it's worth remembering that in spite of their tininess and ubiquity, they can be important enough to alter a sentence's meaning. That's why it's important to learn their proper usage.

Summary

- A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb.
- Independent clauses can stand on their own.
- Dependent clauses, also called subordinate clauses, cannot stand on their own.
- Dependent clauses usually start with a relative pronoun or subordinate conjunction.

- A sentence made up of one independent clause is a simple sentence.
- A sentence made up of an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses is a complex sentence.
- A restrictive or essential dependent clause is needed for a sentence's meaning.
- A nonrestrictive or inessential dependent clause is not required for a sentence's meaning.
- Nonrestrictive clauses are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.



Underline the dependent clauses in these sentences (which I've sometimes modified) from your reading (some are from future readings). If the dependent clause comes at the end of the sentence, label it as restrictive (**R**) or nonrestrictive (**N**). If you find yourself struggling, look instead for the independent clause, and once you take that out you should be left with the dependent clause. You can also look back to the lists above of relative pronouns and subordinate conjunctions.

Example: He was the only Dakota who fought for the Americans. R

1. There was a man called Tamahay, who was a notable character on the frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century. _____
2. "If I were a cock, I should despise her." _____
3. The family had sharp ears, and they all heard every word that the neighbouring Hen had spoken. _____
4. One must hear much before one's ears fall off. _____
5. A man and a dog came from the laurel thickets of the valley where the white brook brawled with the rocks. _____
6. The snake had apparently been crossing the path in some mystic travel when to his sense there came the knowledge of the coming of his foes. _____

[continued]

7. "Should be our last day," Papa said when they stopped to make camp. _____
8. She found pictures of two gowns that interested her. _____
9. She wants to be sure that I eat too. _____
10. After the oldest woman tasted it, she said something to the others. _____
11. When she smiled at them, they shrieked in delight and ran back to the others. _____
12. Her voice was quiet as she nodded at Hannah. _____
13. The old woman gave the braid to Hannah, who examined it with interest. _____
14. As the Indians departed, one of the little girls turned her head to stare at Hanna. _____



Week 3

Prairie Lotus

by Linda Sue Park

Unit 1



Week 3

Student Checklist

This week you will read chapters 1-10 of *Prairie Lotus*:

- Chapters 1-2
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook pages 45-46
- Chapters 3-4
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 49
- Chapters 5-7
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 52
- Chapters 8-10
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 61

Complete lessons on:

- Introductions and titles for personal essays
- Conclusions to personal essays
- Pronouns
- Conflict

Finish your personal essay

- Complete the rough draft
- Rewrite the rough draft focusing on prepositional phrases, dependent clauses, and organization
- Rewrite the rough draft, focusing on pronouns, the introduction, and the conclusion
- Write the final draft

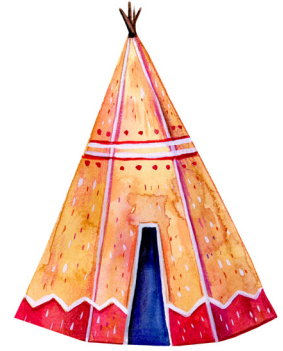
Do extra activities (optional)

- _____
- _____

Reading

Read chapters 1 and 2 of *Prairie Lotus*.

As with our last reading, this book refers to the Dakota as Sioux (the author explains this in her Author's Note). I will be referring to them as the Dakota, except when quoting from the book.



Questions

- “About time we had a hot meal,’ [Hanna’s father] said. Hanna bristled at the note of petulance in his voice; the dreary weather of the past week was hardly her fault. But she said nothing, not wanting to start a row.” What does *petulance* mean?

 - kindness
 - bad temper
 - confusion
 - acceptance
- Referring to the quote in the above question, in this context, what is a *row*?

 - a conversation
 - a meal
 - a line of things
 - an argument
- The women Hanna meets are from what tribe? In which previous reading (in this course) have you read about this same tribe?

- When he returns, how does Hanna’s father feel about this encounter?

- What does Hanna realize about the Dakota after they’ve left that makes her feel closer to them?

[continued]

6. What is Hanna's first question any time they settle in a new town?

7. What does Hanna's father do differently in this town than he's done in any other since they left Los Angeles?

8. Why did Hanna and her father leave Los Angeles? How old was Hanna when they left? How old is she now?

Lesson: Introductions and Titles for Personal Essays

As a general rule, titles and introductions for papers have two jobs: to intrigue the reader and to orient the reader. Right now your teacher may have to read what you write, but someday you'll want non-captive readers to enjoy your words. If you don't grab them right away, they may not get beyond the title or first few sentences. You need to tell them what they'll be reading about and make them want to read it.

Titles

Your title must at least hint at the paper's topic. Early on, students often stick to bland but informative titles like "The Solar System" or "The Louisiana Purchase." The reader knows where they're going with titles like these, but they also know it may not be a thrilling journey. You're ready now to move beyond these simple titles.



What is this "more"? Intrigue the reader. Perhaps hint at your topic rather than spell it out. Eastman titled his essay on Eyatonkawee "The Peace-Maker." He could have used her name, or even her name's meaning (She-whose-Voice-is-heard-afar) as the title, but while his essay is about her, it's also about something broader. It's about the role she filled in her lifetime, and Eastman encompasses Eyatonkawee and her role in this title.

But "The Peace-Maker" perhaps worked in a different way too. Time has made this a shadowy piece of knowledge for most of us, but when Eastman wrote this there was a gun (a Colt revolver) known as the Peacemaker. Perhaps Eastman chose the title as a bit of irony. He expresses some anger towards Whites in the essay (who stole Tamahay's – and

by extension other Dakota – land and gave Tamahay – and other Dakota – liquor). Maybe this is his sly way of saying, “Our Peace-Maker, who stops battles with words rather than bullets, is better than yours.”

The astute contrarians among you may be thinking, “Wait – we read a short story called ‘The Snake’ and a poem called, ‘Snake.’ Aren’t those boring titles that just name the subject?” That’s a valid argument, and you’ll read other stories and poems this year with similar titles. All I can say is for now, I want you to work on creating less minimalistic titles than these. When you’re as good a writer as Stephen Crane or D. H. Lawrence, you can title your stories, essays, and poems anything you want.

Introductions

Once you’ve caught the reader’s interest with your title, you need to maintain that interest in the introduction. For now, you are writing short papers and only need one paragraph as an introduction. In the introduction, be clearer about your topic (especially if your title is mysterious). By the time the reader is done with your introduction, they should know your topic. As with your title, use your introduction to make the reader want to read more. Raise questions they want answered. Be funny. Be outrageous. Be interesting. Surprise. Delight. Fascinate. (You don’t have to do all these, but strive for one or two.)



You’re writing about a person for this essay, so be clear in the introduction who this person is. You don’t need to explain why they’re important to you – that information can build over the course of the essay – but you should make it clear that they are important to you, or at least the nature of your relationship.

Let’s go back to “The Peace-Maker” for a moment. Because “The Peace-Maker” is longer than your paper will be (I assume), Eastman takes two paragraphs for his introduction. He grabs us right away by calling Eyatonkawee one of the most remarkable women of her day and nation. The meaning of her name is also intriguing. Why is her voice heard afar? What does she have to say? Then we learn that when a very young woman she was victorious in hand-to-hand combat. That’s pretty interesting. We want to know that story.

In the second paragraph, Eastman puts this information about Eyatonkawee into a larger, societal context. Here we learn that Eyatonkawee is fascinating and that because of this victory she has a crucial role in her society. Now we want to know more – not just about her battle but also about that role and how she plays it.

Remember my outline last week for my paper on Ms. Brown? Here’s an introduction I might write for that paper:

The curvy cobblestone path was bordered by red roses and white daisies, yellow tulips and pink hyacinths, which until the last minute completely obscured the three-foot raven. I stopped and stared at it. As I was about to touch it, a hand came down and cradled its head. The fingers were long and

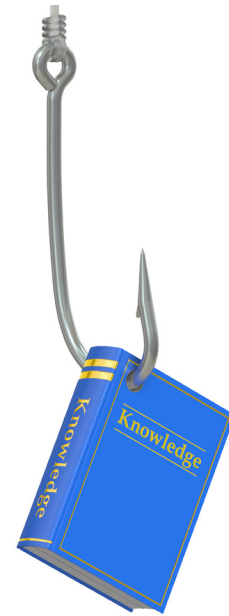
gentle, nails cut short and unpolished. I looked up at the hand's owner. "Are you here for your first lesson?" This was my first look at the piano teacher, Ms. Brown, who would go on to change my life.

Here I use surprise in the first sentence to get the reader's attention. I've provided a decent bit of detail of the garden (which I'll return to later), ending with something unexpected – a statue of a raven. I've also introduced the reader to the subject, Ms. Brown, and made it clear who she is and what she means to me. And she's not just a piano teacher, but one with a tremendous garden and a strange bird statue – what else might be interesting about her?

In the same way, you need to say enough to interest your reader in your subject, but save enough for the rest of the paper. Is your subject's physical appearance unusual? Was your first meeting funny? Are they exceptionally good at something (that matters to your relationship with them)? Find the hook that will draw your reader into the rest of the paper.

Summary

- Titles and introductions have two jobs: to intrigue and orient the reader.
- By the end of your introduction, your reader should know what is in store for them.
- Once you've captured the reader's interest, maintain it.
- While teachers have to read your papers now, when someone has the choice whether to read your writing, they might make that decision in the first paragraph.
- Some ways to hook a reader: amuse, delight, surprise, fascinate, or even be outrageous.



Reading

Read chapters 3 and 4 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions

1. Hanna has several household chores. Name any three of them.

2. What does Hanna see that tells her there is a school in this town?

3. Mr. Harris says it's fine for Hanna to go to school as long as there's no trouble. Hanna's father says this is fair, but she disagrees. Why does she think it's unfair? Who do you agree with and why?



4. Why does Hanna want to wear her hat in class?

5. Why does Hanna think Dolly might be her best chance for a friend?

Lesson: Conclusions to Personal Essays

You've come up with a catchy title, you've written an exciting introduction, your paper deftly paints a portrait of someone important to you. Now it's time to wrap things up with a conclusion that is as interesting as your introduction.



You may have been told to conclude your paper by restating, in brief, the body of your paper. You may find yourself wanting to write things like, "It's clear from what I've written here why Jill is my favorite cousin," or "Her patience, artistic ability, and quirky teaching methods made Mrs. Smith my favorite teacher" (at the end of a paper talking about Mrs. Smith's patience, artistic ability, and quirky teaching methods).

And that's not too bad. Especially early in your writing career, if you're having trouble saying much in your conclusion, it's fine to put in sentences like these. (Certainly, if you have a teacher who tells you to do it, you should do it.) But your reader has just read a paper that is only one or two pages long. Do you think in that short space of time they've managed to forget your main points? Do they need to be told again? Probably not.

So why do people tell you to do this? Because it's easy to do, and because writing a good conclusion is hard. But hard is not bad. Hard only means you (and I and every writer) have to work more at it. And as you're getting nearer to high school, you're going to have to take on more difficult writing tasks. Teachers will be expecting more, so it's best to exercise these writing muscles sooner rather than later.

Here's the tricky bit about a great conclusion – it needs to stick to the subject, but it still needs to somehow be fresh and interesting. It will ideally give the reader one last thought, without going off track from what has come before. This can be a challenge. Right now, we're focused on your essay about someone who is important to you. Here are some ways to elevate that conclusion:

- Provide an interesting quote from the subject
- Ask a thoughtful question
- Share a brief story about you and the subject
- Show how the subject is still impacting your life (assuming the rest of the paper has not addressed this)
- If you're no longer in touch with the subject, wonder what they might think of you now or what advice they would offer
- If you're no longer in touch with the subject, express why you miss them – what gap they have left in your life

You can also combine techniques. Remember the piano teacher from before? Let's say I've written a paper based on the outline from Week 2. Here's what a conclusion to that paper might look like:

Even though I haven't seen Ms. Brown for over a year, I still practice that duet. When I do, I can see her hands to the right of mine, nimbly playing the part I'm still struggling with. Ms. Brown always said to me, "The only difference between 'easy' and 'hard' is how long it takes to learn." I've found that to be true not only at the piano or in the garden, but in everything in life.



Here, without repeating what has come before, I glance back at my topics (the garden, duets, learning difficult things), while still saying something new. I give the reader a quote, make it clear that I still think about Ms. Brown, and share how she has impacted other parts of my life.

Work at making your conclusions more than a summary of your paper. A good introduction will make your reader want to read the rest of your paper. But a good conclusion will make your reader want to read more of your writing. By the way, there is no Ms. Brown. I never had an inspirational piano teacher. If I can conjure up this much of a paper about someone who doesn't exist, you can certainly do it for someone who does.

Summary

- Your conclusion needs to be as interesting as your introduction.
- Conclusions should stick to the topic but leave the reader with one new idea.
- Ways to do this include quotes, questions, and brief anecdotes.
- A strong conclusion will make a reader want to read more of your writing.

Reading

Read chapters 5-7 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions

1. Where were each of Hanna's mother's parents (Hanna's grandparents on her mother's side) from?

2. Why does Hanna decide to take her bonnet off the second day of class?

3. What does the teacher do to make Hanna feel more comfortable?

4. What do you predict will be the outcome of the meeting in Chapter 7?

Lesson: Pronouns

Welcome to our next part of speech: pronouns. Generally speaking, pronouns are words we use to replace nouns. You probably already know all the common pronouns: I, you, they, her, his, etc. I'm not going to bore you with those again. Instead, we're going to look at some more advanced and even controversial pronoun topics.



Interrogative Pronouns

You learned about relative pronouns in Week 2 and how they can connect dependent and independent clauses. Recall that sometimes instead of functioning as a relative pronoun some of those same words are asking questions. When they're doing that, they are interrogative pronouns:

Who

What

Which

Whose

Whom

You can also add **ever** to each of these to get a new, rarer, batch:

Whoever

Whatever

Whichever

Whosever

Whomever

Who is used for people:

Who is hiding in the closet?

What is used for things:

What fell behind the fridge?

Which is more often for things (though can be used for people), but when there are specific ones to choose from:

Which do you prefer, baseball or hockey?

Whose is used for people to indicate possession:

Whose is this?



Be careful not to confuse **whose** and **who's**. *Who's* is a contraction for *who is*. When you aren't sure which to use, replace it with *who is* and see if the sentence still makes sense. If not, you want *whose*.

I'm going to explain when to use **who** and **whom**, though this distinction is falling away in English. *Who* is used for subjects; *whom* is used for objects. Compare:

Who saw the Prime Minister yesterday?

Whom did you see at the beach?

The answer to the first might be *Harold saw the Prime Minister yesterday*. In this sentence, *Harold* is the subject. He is the one doing the action (seeing). The answer to the second

might be *I saw Violet at the beach*. In this sentence, *I* is the subject and *Violet* is the object. She's not seeing – she is the one being seen. She is the object of the action. That is why *Who* starts the first sentence and *Whom* starts the second.

But people rarely speak or even write this way anymore. I'm not going to test you on who vs. whom, but if you struggle with it, I suggest writing your own who/whom sentences in your notebook. You may encounter teachers or tests later where you'll need it.

In these sentences, the interrogative pronoun functions as the subject. Let's look at our first sentence again, this time with an answer:

Who is hiding in the closet?

Louis is hiding in the closet.

You probably know that *Louis* is the subject of the second sentence. Louis is doing the action of hiding. But in the same way, *Who* is the subject of the first sentence. We don't know who is doing that action yet, but *Who* is the pronoun filling that space.

Impersonal and Indefinite Pronouns

The impersonal pronouns in English are *it* and *there*. You're already familiar with using *it* when talking about an object (I dropped the glass and *it* broke) or an animal when we don't know or don't want to specify its gender (The dog lost *its* bone). But these pronouns can be used in even more impersonal ways:

It's raining.

There is snow on the mountain.

You don't need to worry much about impersonal pronouns. They rarely cause troubles.

There are many indefinite pronouns, words like *anyone*, *someone*, *no one*, (or just *one*), *many*, *nothing*, *something*, *much*, and *most*. Sometimes words that are definite personal pronouns are also used as indefinite pronouns, such as *you* and *they*. Some examples:

One needs to live life to the fullest!

Much has been done to safeguard the realm.

Many are coming tonight.

Someone should tell her to stop.

Isn't there something you could do?

They say, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em.



Notice that in each case, the word stands alone. If I were to write *Many bakers are coming tonight*, then *many* is no longer an indefinite pronoun. Instead, it is functioning as an adjective modifying *bakers*. In the sentence, "Many are coming tonight," *Many* is the subject, but in this sentence, *bakers* is the subject.

Demonstrative Pronouns

These pronouns talk about nouns that are near to, or far from, us:

This

That

These

Those

The first two are for singular items; the last two are for plural nouns. **This** and **these** are for things near us; **that** and **those** are for things far from us. Fun fact: some languages have a third category for things really far away from both the speaker and listener. What we might call the “over yonder” category. But you only have four to worry about.

This is too difficult.

That was delicious!

Could I take these with me?

Those aren't ready yet.

The trickiest thing about demonstrative pronouns is to be sure they have a clear antecedent.



Antecedents

Antecedents are the nouns or noun phrases that pronouns refer to. Often the antecedent is before the pronoun, but it can be after as well:

Robert isn't going because he doesn't feel well.

If she wants to help, Katherine needs to listen to directions.

In the first sentence, Robert is the antecedent of *he*. In the second sentence, Katherine is the antecedent of *she*. Most of the pronouns we've looked at today don't have antecedents. Demonstrative pronouns often do have antecedents, and sometimes they cause confusion:

You will want to pack sun block, a hat, bug repellent, and snacks, although these are available at our shop.

What is the antecedent for *these*? What's available – every item on the list or only the snacks? There is no way to know. If it's every item, there is a simple fix:

You will want to pack snacks, sun block, a hat, and bug repellent, although these are available at our shop.

Since the last item is a singular noun (bug repellent), we now know *these* refers back to the entire list. But if only the snacks are available, we need a different strategy:

You will want to pack sun block, a hat, and bug repellent. Also bring snacks or buy them at our shop.

This confusion can happen with personal pronouns as well:

Barbara saw Maria slip in the back door. *She* hurried up the stairs.

Who hurried up the stairs – Barbara or Maria? It could be either. There is no rule that states that the pronoun’s antecedent has to be the noun closest to it. There are various ways to fix this:

Barbara saw Maria slip in the back door. Barbara hurried up the stairs.

After seeing Maria slip in the back door, Barbara hurried up the stairs.

When she saw Maria slip in the back door, Barbara hurried up the stairs.

Barbara hurried up the stairs after she saw Maria slip in the back door.

I’m going to share one more because this isn’t one I invented, it comes from a published novel written by a successful author:

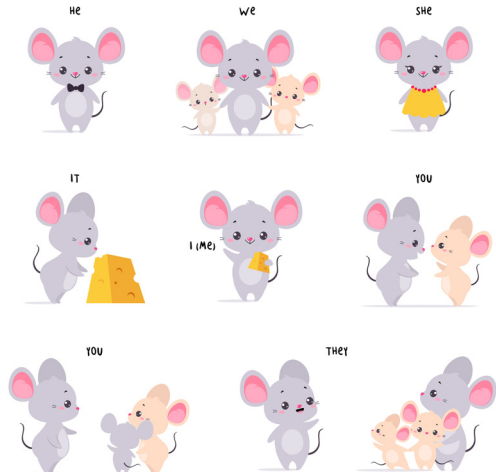
He put his head in his hands and massaged his temples. Then, dropping them, he reached for his phone.

There are several problems with these sentences, but the most amusing is the image of a man dropping his temples. While logic makes it clear the man is dropping his hands, it’s hard to avoid the ridiculous picture, and this detracts from the serious tone the writer was trying to create. A simple fix is to change the second sentence to, “Then he reached for his phone.” Be careful with your pronouns.

Third Person Non-gendered Pronouns

Here’s a standard pronoun table for subject pronouns:

	Singular	Plural
First person	I	we
Second person	you	you
Third person	he she it	they



Some languages have a third person singular personal pronoun that does not specify gender. English does not. We have **he**, **she**, and **it**. **It** is an impersonal pronoun, so we don’t use it with people. We can use it with animals and unborn babies when we don’t know their gender, but otherwise it is restricted to plants and inanimate objects. In other situations, we need other solutions. We’re going to look at two.

The first situation requires the plural pronouns (they, them, their) to be used as singular pronouns for unknown people. Consider this sentence:

Any *student* who wants a passing grade must hand in *his* report before the weekend.

This used to be correct grammar. Some people will still insist you do it this way. Their reasoning is that *student* is singular therefore the pronoun referring back to it has to be singular, so we should use the singular male pronoun *his*.

But standard English grammar is changing to prefer this: Any student who wants a passing grade must hand in *their* report before the weekend.

Some people may try to tell you that it's not logical to use a plural pronoun to refer back to a singular noun, but as we've discussed earlier, English is not logical. And it's no more logical to use only the masculine pronoun than it is to use the plural. Some people try to fix this by using *his/her* or *his or her*, but those are inelegant and distracting. It is much more important to have smooth, elegant writing than it is to cling to some notion that English is logical.

Do note that even when the third person is being used as the singular, it still takes the plural verb:

Every person is special. They are unique, important, and valuable beyond measure.

Not:

Every person is special. They is unique, important, and valuable beyond measure.



I think it's important to break the "rule" that a singular pronoun must always be used to refer back to a singular noun. Using the singular masculine pronoun to refer to unknown people is something I've fought all my life. It is not only a useless, illogical rule, but it's one that makes girls and women feel second-rate. And it's such an easy rule to throw away. You can do it without sacrificing the clarity or beauty of your writing or your unique voice. Nothing is less clear about referring back to that student as *they*; no writer has ever been commended on their elegant use of male pronouns to refer to persons unspecified. In any event, this "rule" is quickly becoming extinct, so you might as well be ahead of the game.

The use of *they/them/their* to refer to a singular noun is hundreds of years old – it has been around at least since Shakespeare's day. More recent (but not as recent as you might think) is the second issue regarding third person pronouns: some people don't wish to be referred to by the masculine (*he/him/his*) or feminine (*she/her/hers*). These pronouns don't fit their self-image, so they ask people to use different pronouns instead. Often, these are the third person *they/them/their* pronouns. Sometimes they're more recently created pronouns such as *xe/xem*, *ze/zim*, or *sie/hir*. People have been discussing various possibilities for a gender-neutral, third person singular pronoun in English since the late 18th century. Even though we hear about it more today, this is also an old issue.

My name is Elizabeth, a name with a distressing number of nicknames. This is fine for people named Elizabeth who want to be called Liz or Beth or Betty. But since I want to be called Elizabeth, I sometimes face the awkward situation of someone who, without asking, starts calling me something else. I always welcome someone asking me what I want to be

called, but I dislike someone taking it upon themselves to call me a new name. You may have faced the same situation if your name is Michael or Richard or Rebecca. You may also have faced it if your name is from a non-English language. For example, some of my husband's family is Indian, and his uncle Madhav became Mark when he moved to the US (though I know him as Madhav). (Fortunately, this practice of Anglicizing names is much less common now than it used to be.)

In the same way that we should refer to someone by whatever name they want to be called, we should use the pronouns that are right for them. This shows respect and consideration. You may wonder how to find out what pronouns someone wants. When you meet someone for the first time, you can tell them your preferred pronouns as a way of opening the door. Especially if you meet more than one person at once, don't target one person by asking them. Offering our own information first can put others at ease. If a group is meeting for the first time, it can be good for everyone to include their pronouns along with all the other introductory information (name, where they're from, etc.).

These two pronoun topics are controversial, and you will read other opinions elsewhere. But I've presented what I believe to be the future of standard grammar and the present of good manners with deep roots in English's past.

Summary

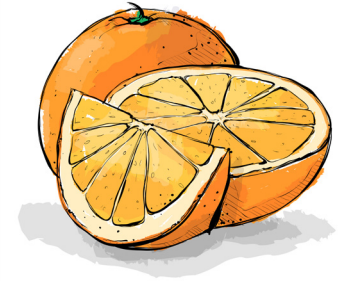
- Interrogative pronouns ask questions.
- Indefinite and impersonal pronouns don't specify who they are referring to.
- Demonstrative pronouns point to nouns that are near or far from the speaker.
- Antecedents are the words pronouns refer to.
- Be careful not to have unclear antecedents in your writing.
- Third person non-gendered pronouns are used when you're referring to a person in a mixed-gender group.
- Third person non-gendered pronouns are also used to refer to one person when that person identifies with those pronouns.



Enter the correct pronouns in the blanks. Chose from: **it, there, what, which, who, whose.**

Example: Who ordered the pizza?

1. _____ juice do you want, apple or orange?
2. _____ was something living in the cellar.
3. _____ are we having for dinner?
4. _____ hailed yesterday.
5. _____ is playing the piano?
6. _____ books are these?



Insert the correct pronoun in the blanks. Unless something about the sentence tells you otherwise, assume the people referred to include males and females.

Example: Every Prime Minster of England has made their mark on the country.

7. Anyone who wants seconds should bring _____ plate up.
8. Each waitress, when getting ready for the day, should make sure the uniform _____ puts on is _____.
9. Before a director shoots a scene, _____ must plan the shot carefully.
10. Each singer was sure _____ would win the competition.

Underline each pronoun and draw an arrow to its antecedent (if there is one).

Example: The cake is so good, I'm going to have a slice of it.

11. "Do you want those?" Humphrey asked, pointing to the almonds.
12. Nothing is good enough for her.
13. Sketchpad, charcoal, eraser: these are tools of the sketch artist's trade.



[continued]

14. Before she goes to sleep, Camille always does a half hour of yoga.
15. Something is wrong with the cat.
16. Anyone would think you were happy to miss the track meet.
17. Dae tasted the soup. "This is delicious!"
18. Ajay hoped his trip would go smoothly.
19. Jean saw the painting and screamed, "That's hideous!"

These sentences have unclear antecedents. Fix them. (You can rewrite them any way you choose, as long as your sentence has a clear antecedent.)

Example: Graham told Liam he was wrong.

Graham knew he was wrong, and admitted it to Liam.

20. My mother told my sister she needed a haircut.

21. I usually keep my magnifying glass in my backpack, but I lost it.



Reading

Read chapters 8-10 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions

1. What is the outcome of the meeting?

2. There are two reasons Hanna loves penmanship. Name one of them.

3. In these chapters, some of the townspeople and school children treat Hanna poorly in several ways because of their racism. List three of them.



Lesson: Conflict

Conflict is crucial to most stories. When writing a story, new writers are sometimes reluctant to include much conflict because they like their characters and want them to be happy. But conflict is what drives a story forward. Many things can make for an interesting story, but interesting conflict is key. Characters must strive and even suffer.

Types of Conflict

There are four major types of conflict: **character vs. character, character vs. society, character vs. nature, and character vs. self.** (Even though I use the term “character” this applies to nonfiction as well as fiction. People used to use “man” instead of “character,” but for obvious reasons we no longer do. Sometimes you’ll see “person vs. person,” but since so many stories have characters who are animals or aliens, I prefer “character.”)

Character vs. character is when two characters have a conflict. When Eyatonkawee fights the three warriors in her great deed, that's a character vs. character conflict. It doesn't need to be a physical conflict though. Hanna arguing with her father to be allowed to go to school is also an example of character vs. character conflict.

Character vs. society is what happens when the character is in conflict in some way with their entire society. Hanna has some character vs. character conflicts with other students, but more important to the story is her character vs. society conflict. Because she is half Asian, most of the Whites in her society dislike and distrust her. This conflict creates problems for her at every turn.

Character vs. nature conflicts are probably the least common, though some stories and books are based almost entirely on them. The conflict in "The Snake" is character vs. nature. Had Crane humanized the snake in some way – perhaps giving it a name, thoughts, a family – then it would be character vs. character. But this is a wild animal, part of nature. We also get hints of a character vs. nature conflict in the beginning of *Prairie Lotus* when we learn that they've been traveling in the rain for a week. Had the author given us a detailed description of that time, we would have likely seen a character vs. nature conflict of trudging through mud, a stuck wagon, and difficulty finding food.

These three types of conflict are called **external conflicts** because they involve someone or something (characters, society, or nature) outside of the character. The final type of conflict is an **internal conflict: character vs. self**. This kind of conflict can be the hardest to spot and the hardest to write, but it's also the most important. This is when a character wrestles with themselves about what to do.

Occasionally a story has no internal conflict. "The Peace-Maker" has none. Eyatonkawee may have felt some internal conflict about her great deed or one of the times she broke up a fight, but Eastman never tells us so. In her encounter with Tamahay, he describes her as young, modest, and bashful, so we could infer from this that she may have felt fear or at least hesitation, but Eastman's focus in this piece is not an internal picture of Eyatonkawee. He is interested in her actions.

We've seen Hanna have some internal struggles. She wants to go to school, but she is also afraid. She wants to obey her father, but there are also things she feels she must do that go against his wishes. As you read more of the book, try to find other internal conflicts Hanna encounters.



Introducing and Resolving Conflict

Later this year, we'll examine how conflict fits into plot. For now, it's sufficient to say that conflict generally begins early in a story and continues until nearly the end. Most stories (especially book-length works) have multiple conflicts, though some of those conflicts will be more important than others. We've already identified three types in *Prairie Lotus*.

To have a conflict, a character must want something. Then something or someone (an obstacle) gets in the way of that goal. The obstacle keeps them from getting the goal until the conflict is resolved. Eyatonkawee wants to live, and this is threatened by the three warriors who enter her tent until she resolves the conflict by killing them. (Conversely, they want to kill her, and that conflict is also resolved when they die. Characters don't always get what they want.)



Hannah wants to go to school. This desire has different desires bundled into it. She wants an education, but she also wants to have friends and to simply be a normal part of her society. These goals are threatened by a variety of obstacles, creating conflicts. The parents don't want her in school with their children (society), some of the children are mean to her (character), and she has to overcome her own fears and sadness (internal). These conflicts all make it hard to get what she wants, and her struggle to do so is a large part of the story.

How do conflicts resolve? One of three ways. The most obvious way is the character wins – they get what they want. Eyatonkawee wins all her conflicts. Hanna wins a conflict with her father when he allows her to go to school. We don't know yet if she'll win the greater conflict against her society by getting them to see that she is as good, as human, as any of them. Because that's the key conflict of this story, chances are good this one won't resolve until the end of the book.

Sometimes the conflict resolves but the character doesn't get what they wanted, no matter how good it would have been to get it. Currently, Hanna is losing some of her conflicts. The other students don't all immediately like her. A couple do, but others treat her poorly. At the moment she is losing those conflicts – her penmanship paper is thrown in the water, students draw hurtful pictures of her. If she were instantly liked by all the students, the story would be less realistic and less satisfying.

Finally, the character can seem to lose the conflict, but then find out that losing isn't so bad. The character finds out they were mistaken to want what they wanted in the first place. Although we don't see the outcome, we can imagine that when Tamahay sobered up he was happy he hadn't killed another warrior of his own tribe. That was a conflict he lost to Eyatonkawee, but it was good that he did. We can imagine a time that Hanna might lose an argument with her father, only later to find out he actually knew best.

Let's move from your reading to imagining a conflict. You're writing a story. Your character wants a bottle of grape juice from the refrigerator, opens the refrigerator and gets it, then drinks some juice. They have a desire, a goal, and nothing has kept them from it. There is no obstacle, and so no conflict. But if the character goes for that grape juice and there is a cassowary – the world's most dangerous bird – in front of the refrigerator, you now have an obstacle and the possibility for conflict. The character could run away – avoiding conflict is an option (but you can't use it too often if you want an interesting story). The character could try to fight it. They could try to entice it away with food. They could try reasoning with it or scaring it away.

When you read something, the author has chosen (or in nonfiction, life has chosen) how the conflicts resolve. As a writer, you have to make that choice. Remember that, as with anything else in your writing, there is more than one way. When writing fiction, don't necessarily opt for your first idea for resolving a conflict. Your sixth or tenth idea might be better. Remember that characters don't always have to get what they want – sometimes they can even find out it was better not to get it. Maybe your character gets the grape juice and makes friends with the cassowary. Or maybe they get the grape juice but only at the expense of several deep scratches. Maybe they don't get the grape juice at all, but they find out later it was poisoned, so they owe their life to the cassowary.

Play with your story as much as you can, but remember to include a lot of cassowaries.



Summary

- The four major types of conflict are character vs. character, character vs. society, character vs. nature, and character vs. self.
- The first three are external conflicts and the last is an internal conflict.
- Most stories, especially book-length works, have multiple conflicts.
- A conflict consists of a character wanting a goal but being impeded by an obstacle.
- A conflict can resolve by a character getting what they want, by a character not getting what they want, or by a character deciding they no longer want the goal.
- Include plenty of conflict in your own stories.

Below, are brief descriptions of conflicts from various classic stories. It doesn't matter if you've never read these stories. I provide sufficient description of each conflict to identify it as character vs character, character vs nature, character vs. society, or character vs. self. Identify the type of conflict for each one.

Example: A man kills a series of people to become, then remain, the king.



Character vs. character

1. A man has to fight several men who are living in his house, eating all his food, and trying to win his wife away from him.

2. A man must decide whether to do something he doesn't want to do, but has been ordered to do by the ghost of his father.

3. A woman is shunned by her village and forced to wear a red A on her clothing in order to shame her.

4. A woman refuses to compete with her sisters for her father's love, and because of that he banishes her.

5. A man in the freezing Yukon wilderness struggles to save his life by building a fire.

6. A White lawyer defends a Black man in a deeply racist town.

7. A spider must convince the world of meat-eating humans that a certain pig is special and shouldn't be killed for food.

8. A boy must decide if he should break the law by helping an enslaved man escape.

[continued]

9. A woman tries to get her sister to act more sensibly, while her sister tries to get her to express more emotion.
-

10. A teenage girl must find her own way in the world as a newly freed enslaved person.
-



Week 4

Prairie Lotus

by Linda Sue Park

Unit 2



Week 4

Student Checklist

This week you will read chapters 11-20 of *Prairie Lotus*:

- Chapters 11-12
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 69
- Chapters 13-14
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 73
- Chapters 15-17
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 79
- Chapters 18-20
 - Answer comprehension questions, workbook page 84

Complete lessons on:

- Sentence types
- Sentence mistakes
- Writing powerful sentences
- Sentence length

Write the beginning of a short story:

- Choose a book to base the story on and your approach to the story
- Brainstorm ideas for your story
- Create an outline for your story
- Begin the rough draft

Do extra activities (optional)

- _____
- _____

Reading

Read chapters 11 and 12 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions

1. What does Sam do that impresses Hanna?

2. Why have Dolly's parents allowed her to come to school with Hanna?

3. What happens to end Hanna and Dolly's walk around the schoolyard?

Lesson: Sentence Types

All this week we're going to look at sentences. The first two days our focus will be on grammatical construction of sentences, and the last two days we'll look at stylistic tools to improve your writing. In other words, first we'll focus on writing correct sentences, then we'll try to make those sentences more interesting.

Sentences can be divided into different types. Declarative sentences make statements (and end with a period). Exclamatory sentences express strong emotion (and end with an exclamation point). Imperative sentences issue a command (and can end with either a period or exclamation point). Interrogative sentences ask a question (and end with a question mark).

That's one way to divide sentences. Another way is this:

Simple sentence: I went to the beach. (one independent clause)

Compound sentence: I went to the beach, and I laid in the sun. (two or more independent clauses)

Complex sentence: After lunch, I went to the beach. (an independent clause with one or more dependent clauses)



Week 4 - Day 1

Compound-complex sentence: After lunch, I went to the beach, and I laid in the sun. (two or more independent clauses with one or more dependent clauses)

Coordinating Conjunctions

We looked at subordinate conjunctions in Week 2 – some of the words that can introduce dependent clauses. As you see here, dependent clauses are used in complex or compound-complex sentences. Let's now look at coordinating conjunctions, used (among other places) in compound sentences.

Unlike the large family of subordinate conjunctions, there are only seven coordinating conjunctions, so it pays to learn them all:

for and nor but or yet so

I put them in this order because they spell out the word *fanboys*, and that's your mnemonic for these words.

Compound sentences are created when two or more independent clauses are joined with a coordinating conjunction and a comma:

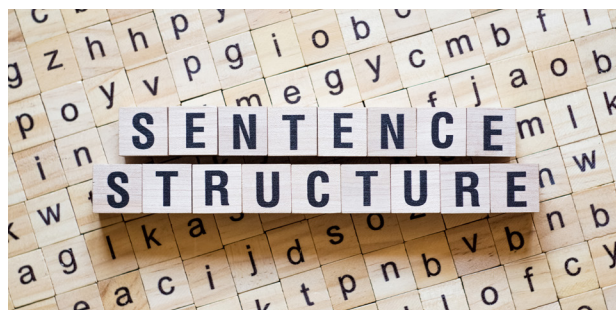
Han agreed to work late, so Viola ordered a pizza.

The sun was shining, the birds were singing, but Samuel was mad at the world.

Later this week, we'll look at how best to employ these sentence types in your writing, but for now be sure you understand how to properly construct each type of sentence. You also need to learn the vocabulary (declarative, interrogative, etc.).

Summary

- Sentences can be declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, or imperative.
- Sentences can be simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.
- Coordinating conjunctions are used to create compound sentences.



Using both groupings, identify the sentence types. (The sentences are from your readings.) You should give each sentence two labels: one from the first group (declarative, imperative, exclamatory, interrogative) and one from the second group (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex).

Example: It was a Sac warrior of like proportions and bravery with your own, who, having slain several of the Sioux, thus approached me with uplifted tomahawk!

exclamatory

complex



1. Hanna loved practicing her penmanship.

2. I cannot sleep alone tonight!

3. At this sight her heart became strong, and she quickly sprang between them with her woman's knife in her hand.

4. What would she say or do if she were here?

5. Tell us something about California, Hanna.

6. It is quite fortunate that there are many of us on the roost together!

7. One ought not to hush up such a thing, and I shall do what I can that the story may get into the papers, and then it will be spread over all the country, and that will serve those fowls right.

8. Are there no longer any Ojibways?

9. Don't listen to it!

[continued]

Week 4 - Day 1

10. Hanna cherished the button box because it had belonged to Mama.

11. Finish school, and get your diploma.

12. What if she simply froze, and she could not get a single word out?

13. In such fashion the old woman was wont to chant her story, and not a warrior there could tell one to surpass it!

14. She closed the door behind him and turned the key in the lock.

15. If there is going to be any trouble, it won't be either of us starting it.

16. Would she have said that if I weren't half-Chinese?



Reading

Read chapters 13 and 14 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions



1. Hanna suggests a cookstove for the shop. She has three functions in mind for it. Name at least two of them.

2. What is Hanna's argument for including some fancy material in the shop even if no one will ever buy it?

3. Hanna wins on the stove and the material, but what argument does she lose with her father about the shop?

Lesson: Sentence Mistakes

In addition to learning the different types of sentences, it's important to learn the main types of sentence errors so you can avoid them. While it's true there are times you can break these rules (and you will sometimes see them broken in the books you read), you must possess a thorough understanding of the rules before you can know when to effectively break them.

Comma Splices

Comma splices are the least interesting sentence mistake but the easiest to explain. Remember that a compound sentence is two (or more) independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction and a comma:

This is a boring sentence, but it is a compound sentence.

Sometimes people will forget the coordinating conjunction:

This is a boring sentence, it is a compound sentence.

That's a comma splice. At certain times and in certain places, comma splices are fine. So you are likely to see them sometimes in your reading, and they're not a mistake. But in current standard American English they are considered incorrect, so avoid them.

Run-on Sentences

More problematic than comma splices, run-on sentences aren't as clearly defined. They are not just sentences that are long. There are many long sentences that aren't run-on sentences. And a run-on sentence can be quite short:

Hanna sewed every day she loved to sew.

Here we have two independent clauses jammed together to form a run-on sentence. I can fix this problem in different ways:

Hanna sewed every day. She loved to sew.

Hanna sewed every day; she loved to sew.

Hanna sewed every day because she loved to sew.



In the first example, I've split the problem sentence into two simple sentences. This is always grammatically acceptable, but it may not always be the best stylistic choice (something we'll look at in more detail later this week). In the second, I've used a semicolon to separate the two independent clauses. This is the only other way (besides a coordinating conjunction and a comma) to join two independent clauses in a sentence. Some people hate semicolons. I don't have strong feelings about semicolons, but be careful about them. They can easily be overused, and you may encounter teachers who forbid them. The last way forms a proper complex sentence with a subordinating conjunction. If I were going to use this sentence in a paper (rather than an example), I would make one more change: Because she loved to sew, Hanna sewed every day. This sentence sounds better to my ear.

An important point to carry away from this exercise is even short sentences with little information can be written many different ways. This is a crucial key to good writing, and we'll examine this more later this week.

Rambling Sentences

While not technically run-on sentences, rambling sentences are also (usually) best avoided.

As we noted earlier, compound sentences usually consist of two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction. Sometimes a writer will form a compound sentence from three independent clauses, and this is quite a useful skill, but sometimes things

get out of hand. (See what I did there?) When this happens, we end up with a rambling sentence.

A rambling sentence is a sentence where too many independent clauses have been strung together. (Often there will be other clauses and phrases thrown in for good measure.) The sentence is not technically wrong – it's not a run-on sentence or a comma splice – but it's still often a bad idea. Sometimes an experienced writer can use rambling sentences to good effect, but more often rambling sentences are distracting or even accidental, like this one:

There was a man called Mortimer J. Peel, who was thin-lipped and nervous, and always smelled of cough drops, and he was a letter carrier, but he didn't always like his job because sometimes there was rain, or there were dogs with loud barks and sharp teeth, which terrified him, or sarcastic and impatient people, who depressed him, or rain and even hail, but he couldn't quit his job since he had nothing else, so he trudged on with the mail day after day after day.



This is a rambling sentence – many independent and a few dependent clauses correctly strung together. A better writer than I am might well write a sentence like this to good effect. I've seen rambling sentences effectively used in children's books and some types of adult fiction. They can be humorous or be used for a sense of speed or urgency. Sometimes they're also used to create an other-worldly effect.

So, while it's not always bad to string several clauses together in a sentence, only do it when you have a strong reason. If you choose to try a rambling sentence, go ahead and write it. Then break it into two or more shorter sentences. Read each of them – in context – and be honest with yourself which is better.

Sentence Fragments

To talk about sentence fragments, let's review dependent clauses for a moment. Remember that any clause – even a dependent one – has a subject and a verb (unlike phrases which can have one or the other but not both). But a dependent clause cannot stand on its own. If a dependent clause is on its own, it's actually a sentence fragment.

Those aren't the only kinds of sentence fragments. Any "sentence" that doesn't have a subject and verb and express a complete thought is a fragment. You rarely want to write fragments (also called incomplete sentences). For now, let's say you never do, especially in research reports and essays. (In fiction, they have their place, if handled thoughtfully.)

Fragments come in various forms and flavors. Let's look at a few and examine why they are fragments:

Leaving behind a translucence of green that was growing denser every day.

When she hemmed a garment or added trimming.

Should be our last day.

The first fragment is a predicate phrase from this sentence:

Rain had rinsed the gray and beige plains, leaving behind a translucence of green that was growing denser every day.

A predicate phrase is a phrase in the predicate (part of the sentence containing the main verb) that gives information about the subject of the sentence. In this case, the subject is rain. What did the rain do? In addition to rinsing, it left behind a translucence of green.

This is the type of sentence fragment I see most often. Someone will write:

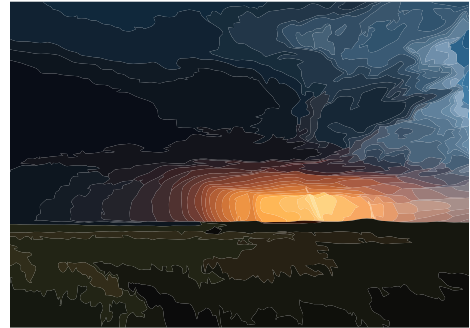
Rain had rinsed the gray and beige plains. Leaving behind a translucence of green that was growing denser every day.

What this person has done is write a complete sentence (Rain had rinsed the gray and beige plains.) then decided they wanted to say more about it, so added what they thought was another sentence. I think in their mind they're joining the two into one, but not doing it on paper. Be careful about this kind of mistake.

The second example (When she hemmed a garment or added trimming.) is a dependent clause. It can confuse a young writer because there is a subject (she) and verb (hemmed), and if the writer forgets the last requirement for a sentence (expressing a complete thought), they can think this is good enough. But it's not. We need to know what happens when she hems a garment or adds trimming.

The last example is a sentence from your reading. "Should be our last day," is the first "sentence" Hanna's father speaks in the story. But this "sentence" has no subject. To be grammatical, it would need to be "This should be our last day" or "Today should be our last day." But here is a perfect example of when you can get away with fragments – in dialogue. People frequently use fragments in their speech, and it's fine to allow your characters to do so. Sometimes you can get away with it in the narrative as well, but resist that temptation for now.

If you find yourself frequently writing sentence fragments, try this with your papers. Do one reading of what you hope is your final draft but out of order. In other words, pick sentences at random and read them, preferably aloud. Put a little check by each true sentence as you read it. When you find a fragment, fix it. Never read two sentences next to each other in a row. I'll admit, this is a tedious exercise, and that's why I only recommend it if you find you have trouble with fragments. It can help cure you of this problem.



Summary

- The most common types of sentence problems are comma splices, run-on sentences, rambling sentences, and fragments.
- Review rough drafts one time looking for sentence problems.



Determine whether each “sentence” below (adapted from your reading) is a run-on sentence (**R**), comma splice (**CS**), or fragment (**F**).

Example: As Papa drove the wagon up the wide main street. F

1. He had no knowledge of paths, he had no wit to tell him to slink noiselessly into the bushes. _____
2. He knew that his implacable enemies were approaching, no doubt they were seeking him, hunting him. _____
3. In the man’s eyes were hatred and fear in the snake’s eyes were hatred and fear. _____
4. And was a respectable hen in every way. _____
5. I heard it with my own ears, one must hear much before one’s ears fall off. _____
6. That she pulls out all her feathers, and then lets the cock see her. _____
7. That’s a terrible story I won’t keep it to myself. _____
8. Many years afterward, when Eyatonkawee had attained middle age. _____
9. Hanna bristled at the note of petulance in his voice the dreary weather of the past week was hardly her fault. _____
10. Hanna wasn’t old enough to understand, she was plenty old enough to remember. _____

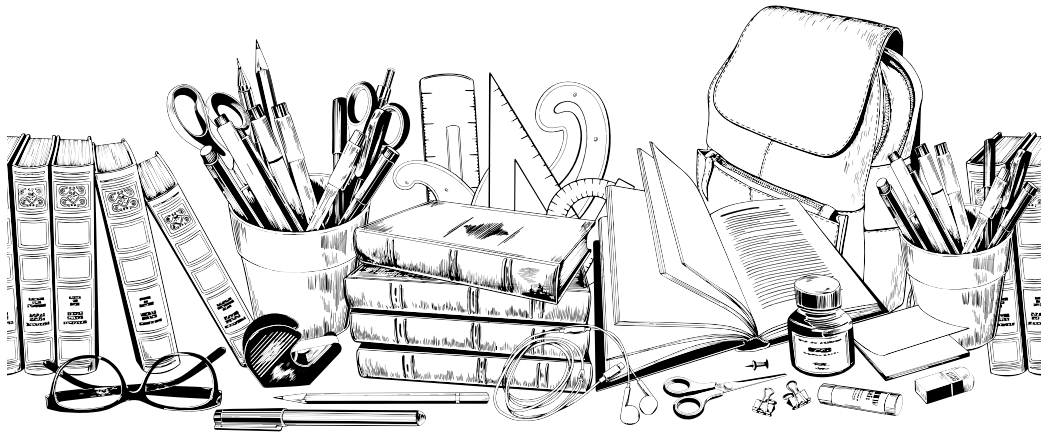
[continued]

11. With her bonnet tied on firmly and the load piled high in her arms. _____
12. Hanna would keep quiet for now she was already scheming to change his mind.

13. Greater even than when she had first defended so gallantly her babe and home!

14. The riots happened in Los Angeles when Hanna was five years old by then they were living above the shop. _____
15. The hotel was near the depot, Papa got them a room for the night. _____
16. Choose any two ways to fix the last sentence:
 1. _____

 2. _____



Reading

Read chapters 15-17 of *Prairie Lotus*.



Questions

1. Most of the ideas for their grand opening have been Hanna's. What is Papa's big idea?

2. The Dakota Hanna meets need a pass to leave their land (the reservation). What kind of conflict is that? (character vs. character, character vs. nature, etc.)?

3. Who do you think Hanna will suggest hiring as her assistant? Why?

Lesson: Writing Powerful Sentences

Now that we've covered the basic grammatical considerations of sentences, let's turn to stylistic considerations. The most important unit of writing isn't the word or the paragraph, it's the sentence. It is through combining words into sentence-length units that we communicate ideas. We then order those ideas into paragraphs and order those paragraphs into a paper, hopefully with flow and unity and even beauty, but the sentence is the key structure of written communication.

Writers, from beginners to professionals, strive (or should strive) to improve their sentences. Even the most powerful argument or the most interesting set of facts or the most delightful characters can fail to engage the reader if they are hidden by dull, clunky, awkward sentences. Fortunately, there are ways to improve your sentences.

Remove Excess Words

Perhaps the best way to improve your writing is to remove excess words. The writer Neil Gaiman has terrific advice about this: Imagine you have to pay someone for every word you write. Don't worry about this when writing a rough draft, but keep it in mind when you're

editing a rough draft. Looking for words you can remove is the surest way to fix problems with awkward or dull prose.

First, examine your adverbs. Many adverbs are unnecessary or can be replaced by a better verb or adjective. This is especially true of those expressing manner (slowly, quickly, interestingly, etc.) and degree (very, so, barely, etc.). If you're uncertain about adverbs, don't worry. We'll have a lesson on them later this year, and I'll remind you then to be careful with them.

Another set of words that are often unnecessary are those relating to time. Words like *then*, *first*, *next*, *started*, *finished*. They can be needed to improve flow (we'll look more at transition words later), but take them out first, and see if they help the flow or merely clutter up your writing. When you write about a series of actions or events, the reader can understand that one event follows another without the word *next*.

You rarely need to tell the reader that you're thinking or feeling. Do tell us *what* you're thinking or feeling, but don't write, "I think. . ." or "I feel. . ." or "It seems to me that. . ." Your reader understands that, because you've written it, you feel or think it. Again, this rule is not absolute. There may be times that you need to differentiate between someone else's opinions and yours, or even between what seem to be contradictory facts and your beliefs. But these are words to view with a critical eye.

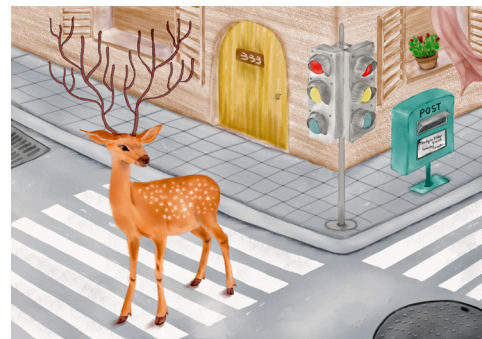
Dialogue tags. We'll look more at these later, in the lesson on dialogue, but these are things like "he said," "Abigail answered," "Robin yelled." They are occasionally needed, but far less often than you might think.

Word Order

Unlike some languages, English has a lot of freedom in word order. For example, Japanese requires that the verb be at the end of a sentence, but we can put the verb at the beginning (Stop at the corner), middle (You need to stop at the corner), or end (When you get to the corner, please stop). Often beginning writers write a sentence and don't consider the possibilities of changing the word order.

A word's placement in a sentence affects the impact it has. It has the most impact at the end of the sentence, second most impact at the beginning, and the lowest impact in the middle. The easy way to remember this is to remember the numbers 231. When you write a sentence, ask yourself what part of the sentence is most important. It might be a noun or a verb – it might even be an adjective. Do your best to put that word at the end of the sentence or, if not there, at the beginning.

It's important that you do not create an awkward sentence by doing this. Flow and clarity are more important than impact. If you write "Hanna gave Sam a smile" any benefit you



might get from emphasizing that smile at the end is outweighed by the awkwardness of the sentence. Even worse would be, “A smile was given to Sam by Hanna,” in an effort to emphasize Hanna. (We’ll see why that is worse in the next section.) It’s fine to write, “Hanna smiled at Sam” even if you wish you could put more emphasis on Hanna or the smile. But, if you can maintain clarity and flow while playing around with your word order, please do so.

One last thing about ending a sentence. People used to say you shouldn’t end a sentence with a preposition. This is false. This was a “rule” in English for a long time because in Latin you couldn’t end a sentence with a preposition. As this is English, it makes no more sense to follow Latin grammar rules than it would to follow Japanese grammar rules. But one reason it can be good to avoid prepositions at the end of sentences is they tend to be tiny, dull words like *in*, *at*, and *to*. When possible, end your sentences with more interesting words.

Active and Passive Voice

Most of the time, you should write in the active voice. Here is a sentence in the active voice:

Hanna washed the turnips.

Here the subject of the sentence (Hanna) performs an action (washing) on an object (turnips). (When I say *object* here, I mean it grammatically. When Hanna smiles at Sam, Sam is the object.) Not only does Hanna do this, but the sentence shows it in that order – the subject doing a verb to an object. The unsurprising technical term for this is SVO – subject, verb, object. English is an SVO language.

Does that mean every English sentence must be in that order? No, as we’ll soon see. But it means that is the preferred order. What if we change that order:

The turnips were washed by Hanna.

Here, Hanna is still washing the turnips, but she’s no longer the subject of the sentence. The turnips are the subject. Notice that we also add a helping verb (*were*) to *washed*. This is called the passive voice.

Most of the time, you should avoid this. Here, while we still have a subject and a verb, we no longer have an object. Instead, we end with a prepositional phrase (*by Hanna*). This breaks our SVO pattern, and is less desirable. We also use more words – six instead of four, which is a fifty percent increase.

The other more subtle thing the passive voice does is shift emphasis. In the first sentence, we focus on Hanna as the subject. In the second, we focus on the turnips as the subject. Even though the turnips aren’t being active, we expect the subject to be active (in our SVO



language), so putting something in the subject position throws more light on it. And this reason is why we sometimes appropriately (or sneakily) use the passive voice, as in the famous:

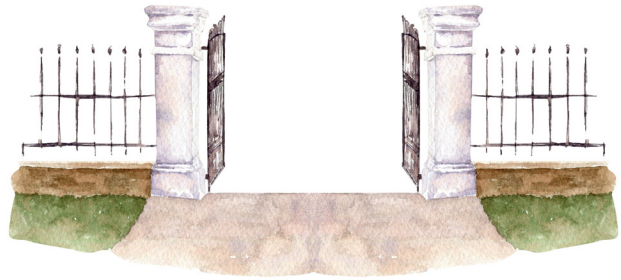
Mistakes were made.

Who made these mistakes? The writer of this sentence is hoping we'll forget to care. Let's focus on the mistakes, it says, and not who made them. Let's try to move on. Sometimes this is reasonable; other times it's shifty.

While in this case, usually the person to blame is known, we might also use the passive voice when we don't know who or what caused the action:

The gate was left open.

Maybe your family returns home to an open gate, and they don't know who did it. You could also write, "Someone left the gate open," and that's fine too. But because the actor is unknown, if you want to call more attention to the open gate itself, the passive voice is acceptable.



You may even know who or what did the action, but still want to focus more on the object: "The dog was hit by a car!" Here the poor dog is the object of our attention, so it makes sense to put it first.

Even though I gave you a few reasons to use the passive, most of the time you should use the active voice. Only use the passive thoughtfully, for good reason.

Writing good sentences is crucial to writing good paragraphs, writing good essays, or writing good books. Be sure to practice these skills in your notebook.

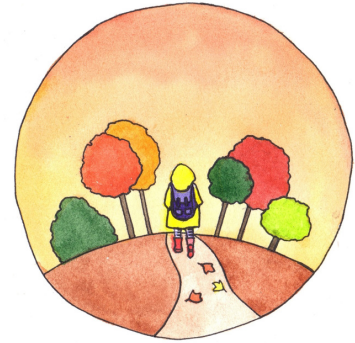
Summary

- Removing unnecessary words from your writing will increase its power.
- Remember the 231 rule – without creating an awkward sentence, try putting the strongest word at the end and second strongest at the beginning.
- Most often you will want the active voice, but sometimes the passive voice is appropriate.

Remove the unnecessary words from these sentences.

Example: Algebra is ~~so unreasonably~~ difficult.

1. I feel my sister should practice more.
2. The hill is incredibly hard to climb.
3. First put the paints on your palette. Then mix them.
4. I think autumn is the very best season of the year.
5. Elise ran so very quickly to the store.
6. I am of the opinion that dark chocolate is better than milk chocolate.



Each of these sentences is in the passive voice. Change them to the active voice:

7. The snake was seen by the man.

8. The soup was eaten by Hanna's father.

9. The roses were dug up by Hanna.

Reading

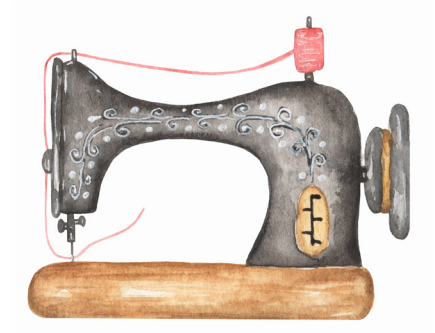
Read chapters 18-20 of *Prairie Lotus*.

Questions

1. Why does Hanna think Bess's mother won't let Bess come sew for her?

2. There are three reasons Hanna is worried about being Bess's boss. Name at least one of them.

3. Why does Hanna tell Bess and her mother the story about the Golden Spike?



Lesson: Sentence Length

We've looked at a couple ways to divide sentences. There are simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. There are also declarative, interrogatory, imperative, and exclamatory sentences. Now let's look at short, medium-length, and long sentences.

It probably comes as no surprise to you that sentences can be short, medium, or long in length, but you may not have thought about intentionally writing sentences of various lengths. But this is what good writers do.

The first consideration is sentence variety. If your paper contains only short, simple sentences it will have a choppy, simple feeling for the reader. Young children write only short, simple sentences, because that is usually all they are able to do. But you are capable of writing sentences of a variety of lengths.

Will writing only long, complex (or compound-complex) sentences make you sound like a more mature, intelligent writer? Probably not. It's true that learning how to handle longer sentences is one mark of good writing, but writing only long, complicated sentences is more likely to confuse your reader or make you look pretentious or both.

For variety, you want to combine sentences of various lengths. Probably most of your sentences will be medium in length. If you look at any section of this book, you'll notice most of my sentences are medium in length. Medium-length sentences allow you time to say enough without getting buried in phrases and clauses that can lead to confusion.

But there are times to stretch your muscles and go for that longer, more complicated sentence. Or maybe it's long without being complicated, for example containing a long list of items. A passage of description (in fiction or nonfiction) can be a good place for a long sentence. Long sentences force the reader to slow down and read more carefully (especially if the sentence contains several clauses and phrases). If you want the reader to linger over your description a bit, slow them down with a longer sentence.

Short sentences can be especially useful. As you might expect, they have the opposite effect of long sentences. Rather than slow the reader down, the reader speeds up, and the flow of the prose is choppy. This is useful when you want to convey a sense of excitement. You might do this in the climax of a story (fiction or nonfiction). Short sentences can also help promote clarity, which is useful in expository papers, especially when explaining a difficult concept.

A more surprising advantage of short sentences is people are more inclined to believe them. This is not to say your reader will think you're lying when you write long sentences, but for some reason short sentences have a "plain truth" feeling to them. If you're trying to convince the reader, it can help to write a series of medium-length and longer sentences, creating a flowing rhythm that brings your reader along with you, expounding on your ideas with strong support, but then bringing in a final punch to drive your point home.

A short sentence does that.

It can be even more effective if the short sentence is in a paragraph of its own, but be sparing with this technique. Do it too often, and it will lose its effectiveness. More often, a single-sentence paragraph will be viewed (rightly) by your reader as being too lazy to develop a thought. But occasionally it works.

When writing any paper for any purpose, strive for variety of all types. You will mostly write declarative sentences, but if appropriate, throw in the occasional interrogatory or even imperative sentence. (Students are over-eager to scatter exclamation points, so I'm not going to advise you to write exclamatory sentences.) You're probably already skilled at simple sentences, but if compound, complex, or compound-complex sentences are still difficult for you, force yourself to include some in your papers. (Practice different types in your notebook.) Finally, while most of your sentences will be medium in length, look for opportunities to include long sentences and short, punchy ones. Sentence variety will make your papers more interesting and more effective.



Summary

- Sentences can be short, medium-length, and long.
- Most of your sentences will be medium-length, but there are reasons for writing longer and shorter sentences.
- Longer sentences slow down the reader, and can be particularly useful in description.
- Shorter sentences speed up the reader, and can be used to create a sense of excitement. Also, people tend to believe short sentences more than longer ones.

