

Composition

ONE

INVENTION AND PERSUASION

C O M P O S I T I O N I

I N V E N T I O N A N D P E R S U A S I O N

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

DON'T SKIP THIS PART!

Some jet around the world, writing history as they watch it take place. Others work from home, creating imaginary worlds in words—worlds where children wish they could live. Some follow clues and discover stories that would have been lost to history without their research.

Adventurer, artist, and detective—these are all roles writers play. If you ask most writers, they'll tell you they love what they do. It's different every day. Often, they get to interview interesting people. They visit fascinating places. They're always learning new things. And they have something to say.

We believe you have something to say, too. We want to help you learn how. We think the best way to learn writing is from people who are actually doing it.

In this writing program, real, professional writers will be sharing what they have to say with you. Writers from *WORLD Magazine* or *God's World News* will share tips on how they read, think, or write.

CALLING ALL WRITERS

From the very first lesson, we're going to treat you like real writers. You may be thinking, "Wait! I've tried writing before and I'm just no good at it." We suspect that's not the problem.

You see, we've looked at a lot of writing programs for students. Most were filled with what we'd call "canned" writing assignments. They ask students to do things like describe the family car or tell how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

We don't blame you if you're not good at this type of writing. It's an exercise. It doesn't really ask you to think. Many of you probably find it boring.

Real writers get interesting assignments with purpose. They write with the expectation

that their writing will be published. We're going to do our best to create assignments that interest you.

FINDING YOUR VOICE

If you have a favorite author or two, you may be able to recognize their writing even before you see their name on the cover. They may have certain words they like to use. Or a distinct sense of humor that carries over from book to book. Or a way of putting sentences together that just *sounds* like them. These things together make up a writer's "voice."

If you haven't found your voice yet, we can help. We're going to show you how to better "listen" to others' writing. We'll demonstrate and practice how to use words well. And in the process, we believe you'll realize you have ideas worth writing about—and that you're much better at it than you ever imagined.

WHY WRITE?

We believe that Christians should be the best writers. In a world where so many people think there are many truths, Christians know better. The Bible tells us God is the God of truth (Psalm 31:5). God has given us the truth in His word. Therefore, our writing should not rest on opinions or fads. It should stand the test of logic and time.

Writing is a gift from God. In fact, it's the means through which God chose to preserve His own word through the ages. And He's still using Christian journalists, novelists, and songwriters to reach the world today.

Who knows what God has planned for you? Maybe someday you'll write a novel that God will use to draw people to him. Or maybe you'll write for your own enjoyment, keeping a journal or blog about your family. Whatever the case, we hope to inspire you to write to the glory of God.

U N I T I

SENTENCE STRUCTURE, PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE, AND THE ESSAY

LESSON 1

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE STORY BEHIND THE IMAGE

Are you a bookworm? Or are you the opposite—rather than reading, you prefer shopping, shooting basketball, playing video games? No matter whether you're an avid reader, a reluctant reader, or something in-between, you read more than you think. *A lot* more.

And you started early. Whenever you look at an image and try to figure out what it means, you're reading. If you have younger brothers or sisters, you've probably seen them pick up a book and “read” it by looking at the pictures. Maybe you can even remember doing that yourself.

Take a look at this picture. A quick glance tells you it's a picture of a girl on a skateboard playing a guitar. But you see much more if you look carefully. How old would you guess the girl is? Why is she riding a skateboard while playing a guitar? What kind of day is it outside? Where do you think she might be? Is she enjoying herself? How does the picture make you feel?

When we “read” this image, we see a teenaged girl. Her facial expression seems to indicate that she's relaxed but concentrating. Her skateboard appears to be a longboard, which would make sense, because some people use this type of skateboard as transportation. She seems to be going somewhere: She's crossing a street. We know she's in a city because we can see tall buildings and city buses behind her. We can infer that the weather is warm because there are trees with green leaves



in the background, and she's wearing shorts and flip-flops. Perhaps she's taking her guitar to a friend's house. Or maybe she's planning to perform on the street or in a park. We like this picture because the girl seems to be enjoying herself. It makes us wonder who she is and where she's going with that guitar.

ASSIGNMENT

Now it's your turn. Take a close look at this picture. What questions does this picture raise in your mind?

1. Write down five questions that the picture raises in your mind. (For example: Is the surfer in control, or about to wipe out?)
2. Write a paragraph describing the image of the surfer. Make sure to include an answer to how the picture makes you feel.



Note: Be sure to save all your work throughout this course, as you will be required to edit and modify prior work as you go along.

LESSON 2

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: WHAT A PHOTOJOURNALIST SEES

Lesson 1 demonstrated how pictures tell stories and how we read those stories. This lesson concentrates on the “author” responsible for those stories/pictures: the photojournalist. In a split second, the photojournalist makes a decision to take a photograph that can tell a story for a lifetime.

Let's look at what a photojournalist sees when he or she takes a picture and what elements make a photograph special.

James Allen Walker is a photojournalist with *WORLD Magazine*. He's taken thousands of pictures over the course of his career, but this is one of his favorites.

"Choosing one photo that I've made as my favorite is not an easy task. One reason is most of the images I make for *WORLD Magazine* are often very similar. More often than not I make a portrait of someone I've just met for the first time. Getting to know that person becomes part of the task of illustrating them for the magazine story. However, in the case of this shot I made the person that I'm illustrating and I'm introducing him to the rest of the world! He's my son, Ethan at six months old. It becomes plain why it happens to be my favorite photo, but let me expound.

"I didn't make this portrait for the purpose of a magazine cover. That came later. I've been photographing Ethan since minutes after my wife Beth gave birth to him. So, for me the picture is one example of a whole body of work, and it has become about me being a dad. It's also about sharing my life with this little person whom I adore. It's also about my sharing this treasured title with many other men who have children. All of whom execute the responsibilities in their own imperfect way. It's been a life changing experience through which God has taught me many lessons and He's made me aware of myself and how much I need Him to be a good dad. He shows me every day how I need to change my habits, and choose carefully every word in order to be a standard for Ethan. What a precious gift."



ASSIGNMENT

1. List three things you liked about James Allen Walker's picture and three things you disliked.
2. Find a photograph that has special meaning to you. Write a paragraph describing why the image is so important to you. Remember, you are helping the reader to understand the meaning behind the image.
3. Write a paragraph describing what someone else might have seen as they looked at the image without the knowledge you had of the image.



LESSON 3

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE STORY BEHIND THE IMAGE

They're funny. And they sell a lot of chicken. If you live in one of the states that boasts one or more Chick-fil-A restaurants, you probably recognized these cows even before you read the signs they are wearing. If you did recognize the Chick-fil-A cows, you have seen Chick-fil-A's advertisements.

Advertisements are ubiquitous—whether you are driving down the street, reading a magazine, watching TV, or checking your e-mail, you can't get away from companies trying to sell you something.

Advertisers' influence begins early with advertisements, commercials, and images. Did you know that by the age of two, many toddlers recognize logos for companies and products such as McDonald's, Chuck E. Cheese's, and Cheerios?

Besides feeling annoyed when a commercial interrupts your favorite television program, you may have become so used to ads that you barely notice them. But advertisers will try all

kinds of tricks to get your attention. Advertisers are particularly interested in you. Why? Kids in your age group as a whole spend about \$50 billion a year.

That brings us back to the cows. Why use cows to advertise for a restaurant that doesn't even sell beef? The idea of cows making signs that promote chicken sales to save their own hides is funny. Advertisers sometime use humor to get your attention. Creating recognizable characters helps, too. The Chick-fil-A cows are not regular cows; these cows are known for spelling words incorrectly. The cows give Chick-fil-A's brand a personality. It's hard to feel connected to a chicken sandwich. But people emotionally connect with the cow characters.

Chick-fil-A spent millions running their cow campaign, and their food sales increased greatly. Companies would not spend such big money on ads if they didn't work. Do advertisements work on you? Can you think of anything you've bought (or wanted to buy) because you liked the ad?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Make a list of at least 15 items you find in your home that have visible brand names or logos.
2. Chick-fil-A uses cows instead of chickens in their advertisements. Assume that you are the advertising agency trying to convince the founder of Chick-fil-A to go with the image of a cow over a chicken. Write a paragraph to convince him.

LESSON 4

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE ADVERTISEMENT

Whether they're drinking soda, driving cars, or mopping floors, most people in advertisements have one thing in common: They're smiling. Often, the advertisement lists all the reasons we should buy a product ("This car gets the best gas mileage in its class. Its safety rating is unbeatable."). At the same time, the beautiful, contented-looking models in the ad silently create another message: "Look at us. We're happy. If you buy this car, you'll be happy too."

You should be using the same careful eye to examine ads as you did the surfer earlier. Why? Advertisers are constantly trying to sell you something. Each company wants us to believe its product is the best. When people have lots of choices, many of them fairly similar, a company must make people believe they need (or at least really want) that company's product. If a company can't get enough customers, it'll go out of business. The company must make its product stand out.

That's why it's important to look at the tactics advertisers use to influence you to buy products. An ad is an image with a message. Some messages are printed right on the page. Imagine a toothpaste ad. Emblazoned across the top of the page is this motto: "Blinding White toothpaste will brighten your smile!" Below are two pictures.

In one, a yellow-toothed girl stands alone, looking sad. In the next picture, teeth now white, she's smiling and laughing with a group of friends. Which child would you rather be like? What message would you get from the pictures? If you said something like, "People will like you better if you whiten your teeth with Blinding White toothpaste," you understand the advertisement's implicit message.



Targeting emotions can be particularly effective with tweens and teens. When trying to sell to kids your age, advertisers often focus on worries you already have. They want to make you think you need their product to fix a particular problem—yellow teeth, acne, bad breath, and so on. Ads can make you feel even more insecure about your “flaws” if you buy into their messages.

Ads often focus on outward appearance and the things we own. It is easy to get caught up in the desire to look great and have the latest phone or other gadget. In general, the message of advertising is, “We can fix you. We can give you a great life. Buying stuff is fun, and it will make you happy.”

If you are not carefully “reading” the ads that come your way, you’re more likely to let their hidden messages influence your worldview. Everyone has a worldview. The beliefs that determine how you look at and live your life make your worldview. As Christians, we need to remember that we don’t belong to this world (John 15:19). We belong to Christ. Our joy and fulfillment come through him, not through products we purchase. Believing in Christ gives meaning to our lives; products and advertisements want you to believe in their product’s power to improve your life.



TESTING THE WATER

Pictures, words, advertisements all have the power to make you feel. They can make you feel happy or sad, thirsty or hungry. Most importantly, they can make you feel like you need what they are selling. You need the grape-flavored drink in the ad to be stronger or you need to try that sandwich with five different types of cheese and purple ketchup to be happy.

Everywhere you go and look, advertisers are speaking to you through their messages. When you made a list of brand names and logos in your house, how many did you find? Which ones did you find? In your home—when you wake up, open your refrigerator, or go into the kitchen—advertisers are speaking to you and your family through these messages.

Knowing this is important. The people making these advertisements don't want you to think. They only want you to listen to and learn from them. Why think when you can watch television and listen to advertisements that tell you how to live? Why think when you can read a magazine in a comfortable chair and see what you need to live a happy life?

If you listen to advertisements, you will learn how a pair of jeans can make you happy, what food will make you stronger, what toothpaste will make your teeth whiter, and what computer will make you look smarter. Advertisements tell you what an ideal world could look like.

I once had a student who bought a bottle of water because advertisers claimed the water came from a tropical island in the South Pacific. This "island" water came in a bottle that had a beautiful picture of paradise with palm trees, a shining sun, and a bright blue waterfall. My student told me the water tasted better than other bottled waters because it came from this beautiful place. In fact, my student wouldn't drink any other water—nothing tasted as good as her "island" water.

Let's think about that. My student believed this water was ideal because the bottle implied or said it came from a beautiful waterfall on an island in the South Pacific. I had to test this student's belief.

First, I found five colored cups. In a yellow cup, I poured "island" water. In blue, red, and green cups, I poured other bottled waters. In the orange cup, I poured tap water from the kitchen sink. My student did not know which water was in each cup. This is called a blind taste test. She took a drink from all the cups and then ranked them in terms of taste. Which water do you think she thought was best or worst?

She chose the water in the green cup—another bottled water—as the best tasting. Her second best tasting water was tap water from the kitchen sink! The "island" water in the yellow cup came in fourth. My student even said the water in the yellow cup tasted "dirty."



What do we learn from this? Advertisers' messages and images can be very powerful. The images they use can make us believe in and want what they are selling. You and I need to read advertisements very carefully and realize they are making promises or presenting ideas that may not be true.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Find an advertisement online or in a magazine that interests you.
2. Write a two- to three-sentence description of the ad. (Example: This advertisement is for Jump-high Shoes. The picture shows a tall, sweating athlete jumping and dunking a basketball. The athlete looks happy and is wearing the shoes.)
3. Then answer these questions:
 - a. What is the ad selling?
 - b. What is the stated message?
 - c. Look carefully at the picture. What is its unspoken or implicit message?
4. What tactics does the ad use to persuade you to buy the product? Here's a list of possibilities:
 - a famous person using the product
 - value/price
 - humor
 - before/after pictures—this person looks much better after using the product
 - image—you'll be cool if you use this product
 - fear—if you don't use this product people will not like you
 - facts and statistics—9 out of 10 bicyclists ride this bike
 - top of the line or "snob" appeal
 - scarcity or limited supply appeal—this product is made of the rarest materials
 - adventure or fun appeal

- “fix-it” appeal—this product will make you prettier, younger-looking, healthier
5. Do you like this advertisement? Why or why not?
 6. In this advertisement, do you think the stated or the unstated message is more likely to persuade people to buy the product? In other words, which message is stronger? Why?

LESSON 5

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: STYLE, DICTION, AND REVISION

When you hear the word “grammar” what springs to mind? Pages of worksheets with sentences to correct? Notes in red all over your paper? Learning grammar is necessary to writing well. The rules are there for a reason. For instance, if you use vague pronouns all the time, your readers get confused. Knowing rules—such as how to properly construct a sentence—will improve your style. The more you know about how grammar works, the more comfortable you will be experimenting with sentences and language. And people who are comfortable with language make better writers.

In this lesson we’re covering an easy one—*its* and *it’s*.

People confuse the two all the time. Here’s why: *its* is possessive. Often, a possessive requires an apostrophe. If I’m talking about the car that belongs to John, I would say “John’s car.” But some possessives—like *her*, *his*, and *its*—don’t require an apostrophe. For example, if we were talking about a car’s tire, we would write “its tire,” not “it’s tire.”

It’s is a contraction, or a way to put together the two words *it is*. So if you write “it’s tire,” you’re really writing, “it is tire,” which doesn’t make sense.



ASSIGNMENT

Number a piece of paper from 1 to 7. Read the paragraph below which contains seven uses of *its* or *it's*. For *it's*, substitute the words *it is*. When you say it out loud, does the sentence still make sense? If not, this should be the possessive *its* instead. If *its* is being used correctly, then substituting *it is* should sound wrong. On your paper for each instance, write "Correct" or "Incorrect" and write the correct one for any that are wrong.

A puppy is different from a full-grown dog in many respects. When **it's** first born, **its** not aware of people at all. This may be due to not yet having **it's** eyes open. Once a few weeks have passed, the puppy opens **its** eyes and can begin to react to **it's** environment. As **its** trained, a puppy can grow into a loving companion that interacts in a satisfying way with **its** owner.

LESSON 6

READING SENTENCES: KNOWING THE SUBJECT

Which sentence describes the photo better?

The girl is on the cow.

The teenaged girl riding the brown and white cow is teaching it to jump over a hurdle.

That's pretty easy, right? The first sentence doesn't give us any real idea of what's happening in the picture. But even if you couldn't see the picture, the second sentence gives enough information that you could recreate it in your mind. Your cow and girl and the hurdle it is jumping over might look different, but you'd have the basic idea.

If you understand that simple illustration of the importance of pertinent details in writing, congratulations! You've grasped one of the key elements of good writing. Over the next few lessons we're going to examine ways of making sentences more descriptive.



Don't worry—we're not going to have you rush to your thesaurus and add in a bunch of smart-sounding words. We just want you to take some time to think about the words you use. Can you use more specific words that will help your readers better visualize what you're



describing to them?

How would you describe this picture? Let's start with the subject of the picture. By subject we mean the central figure. The subject of the picture will also be the subject of your sentence. We could say the subject is "a child," but that does not give readers a very specific picture. What are some other nouns we could use that help the reader see in their minds what's on the page? The child looks very young, so we could probably use one of these nouns:

Toddler
Preschooler

The child's hairstyle and clothing look female, so we could say:

Girl



The subject of this picture is a man. If we look at the details of the picture, we can be more specific. Two other nouns that are more descriptive of this subject are

Artist
Painter

Can you think of any others?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Flip through copies of *WORLD Magazine* or another magazine or online source until you find an interesting photograph. Make sure you choose a photograph that has some good visual details. We'll be coming back to it over the next few lessons as we build an effective sentence that helps your readers imagine the photograph. Write your answers to the following:
 - a. What or who is the subject (or subjects) of the photograph?
 - b. What's another, more descriptive noun you can use to identify this subject?
2. You are the subject. Come up with at least ten nouns that describe you. I'll get you started: Student, middle-school scholar. . . .

LESSON 7

READING SENTENCES: KNOWING THE SUBJECT BETTER

In the last lesson, we looked at the subjects of two pictures. By subject, we mean the person, animal, object, place or thing that the picture is about—the central figure. When we say a sentence has a subject, it is just like the subject in the picture: The central character or topic of the sentence. The subject is always a noun (a person, place, or thing).

To make writing detailed and descriptive—so that someone can actually get a mental picture of what we're talking about—we need to be as specific as possible when we choose each word in a sentence. *Cougar* is more descriptive than *animal*. *Cookie* is more descriptive than *snack*. *Writer* is more specific than *person*.

When someone says “cookie,” we want to know what kind. Is it a *chocolate chip* cookie, *peanut butter* cookie, or *Snickerdoodle* cookie? The italicized words in the last sentence describe or modify the noun *cookie*; they are called adjectives. Well-chosen adjectives are of utmost importance when it comes to good description. I should warn you, though, it is easy to get carried away. Let's look back at our pictures from yesterday.

Which is a better description?

A fascinated blonde toddler

A cherubic, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, purple-clad female toddler

The second one gives more information, but it seems forced. No one talks that way. You've overwhelmed your reader with too much information even before you even get to the subject. You can include some of those details later in the sentence. An avalanche of adjectives will create lots of detail. But some of that detail is unnecessary and distracting.

What about the second picture? There's lots of detail to choose from here—the artist is male, he's middle-aged, he's wearing a hat and a jacket. He's holding a palette and brush, and he's got a goatee. Remember that all the description doesn't have to come in adjectival form.

We would probably start off with details that describe the artist himself:

A goateed, middle-aged artist

How would you describe him?

DANGEROUS ADJECTIVES

Adjectives can make your writing more specific and help people see a picture. Adjectives are one feature that can turn good writing into great writing.

However, did you know that adjectives can be dangerous? A sentence can have too many adjectives. Look at the example in this lesson:

A cherubic, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, purple-clad female toddler

This writer uses eight—yes, eight—adjectives to describe a child. When people talk, they use adjectives, but rarely do they use eight. This writer is forcing adjectives into this part of her sentence and, as a result, creates a phrase that is forced. Too many adjectives will cause your audience to stop listening before they ever finish reading the sentence.

I once had a student who wrote a paper describing a summer trip through Italy. The student loved her trip, but she was really excited about: *gelato*. Gelato is an Italian ice cream; it is richer, creamier, and tastier than ice cream in the United States. Even I love gelato, but this student was crazy about it.

When the time came for this student to write about gelato, she wrote a lot. Sadly, she wrote a lot of adjectives—too many adjectives. Here is one sentence from her paper:

When we got to Florence, the first thing we did was buy gelato. We found a gelato shop, and I looked at the counter. They had chocolate gelato, lemon gelato, lime gelato, hazelnut gelato, pistachio gelato, vanilla gelato, cream gelato, cappuccino gelato, raspberry gelato, chocolate chip gelato, banana gelato, peach gelato, pineapple gelato, coffee gelato, blackberry gelato, fig gelato, strawberry gelato, dark chocolate gelato, peanut butter gelato, champagne gelato, and many other types of gelato.

Do you see the problem? I understand that the shop sold many flavors of gelato, but this sentence actually fails to make this point. I stopped paying attention at



“hazelnut.” This writer feels it is necessary to tell me every flavor the shop sold, and she uses adjectives to do this. In other words, this sentence has too many adjectives.

This student could use fewer, smarter adjectives to create a better picture of all the gelato this shop sold. For example, she might write:

When we got to Florence, the first thing we did was buy gelato. We found a gelato shop, and I looked at the counter. This shop sold over 28 exciting flavors of gelato.

I like this revision: It tells me that the shop had a lot of gelato and lets me know that the author is excited about all the gelato. More importantly, I know this and am ready to move to the next sentence.

You want to use adjectives in your sentences, but you should use them carefully. Use adjectives to encourage your readers to read more, to see what you are describing. Do not overload sentences with adjectives or force them on your readers. Using a few well-chosen adjectives can improve a sentence more than a large number of adjectives.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Take another look at the picture you chose in Lesson 6.
 - a. Make a list of all the adjectives you can think of to describe the subject of the picture.
 - b. Write a short description (e.g., “a goateed, middle-aged artist”). Choose the adjectives that best describe the subject without overdoing it. Try to list at least fifteen specific descriptions. Avoid easy, generic descriptions such as *man* or *old*. You may list more than fifteen if you would like.
2. List at least fifteen adjectives that describe *you*. These descriptions should be things that distinguish you from somebody else. Again, avoid easy, bland adjectives. They should be things that show how unique you are.

LESSON 8

READING SENTENCES: STRONG SUBJECTS NEED STRONG ACTIONS

In the first two sections, we have worked on defining the subjects of two pictures. We've labored to find specific nouns to name them. We've studied the pictures, culling details so we can include accurate adjectives. Accurate adjectives help readers envision what we're seeing on the page.

To create a strong sentence, the next step is turning our subject into an actor. Creating actors requires verbs.

Specific, lively verbs propel good writing. How do you like that verb? *Propel* works well because it helps generate a picture of an object moving forward. And that's just what strong verbs do. They create action in your sentences. Strong verbs help your sentences get somewhere instead of stalling into vagueness.

Sometimes, though, nothing really happens in a sentence. The sentence might merely explain a state of being, or existence. *She is pretty. She was late. He was the winner.* These verbs—*is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been*—are all being verbs.

Sometimes we need this type of verb. But whenever we can employ a more descriptive verb, we should. Writing full of “being” verbs doesn't create vivid word images, so we should eliminate as many as we can.

“The blonde toddler is looking at cupcakes” uses a being verb. Can you choose more descriptive verbs? How about:

The little blonde-haired girl *sees* a plate of cupcakes.
The little blonde-haired girl *stares* at a plate of cupcakes
The little blonde-haired girl *gazes* at a plate of cupcakes

Can you think of any other possibilities?

“The artist is standing by a picture he painted” could use a stronger verb. The picture seems staged. Perhaps the photographer told the artist to stand next to the picture with his palate. If that's true, here's a good description:

The artist *poses* next to a picture he painted.

Or we could say:

The artist *pretends* to paint a picture.

You get the idea. You need to make every word—especially the verbs—in your sentences count. Otherwise, your sentences will lack action and be boring.



MAKING EVERY VERB COUNT

Kim Stegall, an editor with *God's World News* magazines, always faces the challenge of telling big stories in small articles, without losing any of the interest. Her experience can help you learn to make every word count:

"Sometimes with a piece of writing I evaluate words individually. I ask whether each one pulls its own weight. Do some fail to convey precise meaning? Does a single word exist that could replace a string of them? Could any be cut entirely? Shorter isn't always better. But it often is. And since verbs are usually the workhorses of a sentence, they demand strict consideration. Verbs should tighten and clarify content, infuse color, progress plot, and imply tone. A lawyer I once worked for told me that he never used exclamation points. He said that if he found himself unable to achieve enough emphasis without them, he hadn't chosen the right verb."

ASSIGNMENT

1. Pull out your picture again. What's happening in the picture? Write your answers to the following:
 - a. Using your imagination, what are three action verbs you think this character did before the picture was taken?
 - b. What are three action verbs that the character might have done after the picture was taken?
2. What activities do you enjoy taking part in? Write six verbs that describe *you*—do you *compete in track*? Do you *devour* great books? Do you *love* watching funny insects? Like in the last lesson choose actions that show how special and unique you are.

LESSON 9

READING SENTENCES: USING ADVERBS TO ANSWER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

With our subject and verb in place, we've got everything we need for a complete sentence:

The toddler stares.
The artist poses.

We've even added some adjectives to help set our subjects apart from the crowd—some details that help us recognize them:

Blonde
Goateed

But adjectives only describe nouns. And we haven't finished describing the picture. We still need more words to help readers create a mental image that matches the images we're looking at.

We need some adverbs. Adverbs describe or modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They answer important questions in a sentence. They tell where, when, and how actions take place. Adverbs also show degree (the *better* runner, the *worst* sandwich.)

Look back at the pictures. Can we add some adverbs that help describe *how*? (Hint: these adverbs often end in *-ly*.) For instance, we could say:

The blonde toddler gazes *longingly* at the cupcakes.
The goateed artist poses *stiffly* in front of his painting.

Wow! We've come a long way. We can—and will—add some more words, but we'll bet you could already start forming pictures in your mind that match the ones on the page.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Look at the verbs that you came up with in the previous lesson. Pick one of those to describe with an adverb. Because adverbs can be easily overdone, we don't want to write an adverb for every verb we write. Whenever possible, we want to allow our action verbs to be strong enough to stand alone.
2. Look back at your verbs from last time. What adverbs could you use to better define *how* you do the things you do?
 - I devour books *daily*.
 - I compete *tenaciously*.
 - I love watching insects *more than anything else*. (This is an adverb showing degree, or how *much* you love this activity.)

LESSON 10

READING SENTENCES: SENTENCES CAN CREATE IMAGES

If you can learn to create images with words, you've mastered a skill that you'll need in all kinds of writing. Good writing helps readers see what you're talking about. Readers should be able to picture what you're describing in their minds.

Let's look back at our two pictures. Compare these two sentences about the first picture:

A child sees some cupcakes.

A small blonde-haired girl watches intently as an adult sprinkles toppings onto a plate of cupcakes.

Both accurately describe the picture. But one is clearly superior and more specific. By using adjectives (blonde), adverbs (intently), and strong verbs (sprinkles), a bland sentence can be transformed into a detailed, interesting one.

Compare these sentences about the second picture:

A man stands by a painting.

A middle-aged, goateed artist wearing a hat and holding a paintbrush poses next to a painting of a boat in the water.

Both meet the requirements for a sentence—they have a subject and a verb. But the first contains almost no information. Writing a sentence with no substance is like sending an envelope with no letter inside—it is a waste of postage.

If you learn to carefully choose your words and craft them into meaningful sentences, you've taken the first step toward becoming an excellent writer.



SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

We've tried to show you how to add details to make your sentences informative and interesting. But did you know that one of the most common mistakes writers make when they write sentences is not writing sentences at all?

Let us explain. A sentence must have a subject and a verb.

Babies cry. (*subject/verb*)

Dogs bark. (*subject/verb*)

Birds fly. (*subject/verb*)

I'm sure none of you would think this is a sentence:

On the stove. *(It has a noun, stove, but no verb.)*

But what about this one?

Because I like to play tennis. *(It has a noun, I, and a verb, play. But is it a sentence? No.)*

Why not? It begins with *because*, which belongs to a group of words called subordinating conjunctions. Parts of sentences (clauses) that contain subordinating conjunctions have a subject and a verb. But they cannot stand alone.

If you sat down across from a friend at lunch and said, "Because I like to play tennis," he would wait to hear the rest of your sentence. It doesn't make sense by itself.

Later we'll learn more about parts and types of sentences and how to combine them. But for now, a good way to check your writing for this error, called a sentence fragment, is to read each sentence aloud. If you can't say it by itself and have it make sense in conversation, it's not a sentence. It's a sentence fragment. That's why

I went roller-skating. *(This is a sentence.)*

After I went roller-skating. *(This is not.)*

Look back over the sentence you wrote about the image you chose. Does it have a subject and a verb? Now read it out loud. Does it make sense?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Look back over the nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs you came up with to describe your picture. Now put the best ones together into a short paragraph that creates a word-image of the picture you chose to describe. Add additional words and phrases to fully detail what's going on in the picture.
2. Now have a parent read the description; do not let her see the picture. After she has read the sentence, give your parent the magazine and have her look for the picture you described. Was she able to find it based on your description?
3. Write three short paragraphs about yourself as if you were writing a newspaper article. Here's what someone's might look like:

"The forty-two-year-old writer and mother of three enjoys relaxing with a good book when she's not busy running kids to and from school and extracurricular activities."

LESSON 11

COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL READING: STARTING TO THINK ABOUT PARAGRAPHS

Read this paragraph and follow the directions:

I'm going to show you how to do energy transfer. Find two balls. One should be large and one should be small. Bounce them to see how high they bounce. Now bounce them again together. The small ball should bounce higher and the big one lower. That's because of energy transfer.

How did that exercise make you feel? If we tried to follow those directions, we would be a little frustrated.

Read this paragraph and try again:

To see how energy is transferred from one object to another, you'll need two balls. One should be large, the other small. A basketball and a super ball (a small rubber ball) would work well. Take the two balls outside to your driveway or another hard surface. Drop the balls one at a time, noting how high each one bounces. Next, place the super ball on top of the basketball. Drop them while they are touching. They should still be touching when they hit the ground. The super ball should bounce higher this time. The basketball has transferred some of its energy to the super ball, so it should not bounce as high as before.



How did the ball experiment go this time? Was it better than last time?

In the next several lessons, you are going to read paragraphs. Some will be good paragraphs and some will not. We think you need to have the ability to discern a good paragraph from a weak paragraph before we ask you to begin writing your own.

We could just make a list, but we think you'll understand what makes a good paragraph and remember better if we show you some examples. That's why we started out with the example "energy transfer" paragraphs. They both include elements that a good paragraph should:

- topic sentence
- four to five supporting sentences
- all sentences unified around one topic

Yet one paragraph gets the information across better than the other one. Why? We are going to help you figure that out.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Read back through both “energy transfer” paragraphs. Make a list of at least three differences you notice between the two paragraphs. Write your answer this question: What is the main reason that explains why it is easier to follow the directions in the second paragraph?
2. Using the second paragraph, fill in the following information:
 - Topic (should be a few short words)
 - The topic sentence (should be a complete sentence taken from the paragraph itself)
 - List out three to four supporting points for the topic sentence—These do not need to be complete sentences. You should summarize the steps described in that paragraph.

LESSON 12

COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL READING: PARAGRAPHS HELP READERS UNDERSTAND YOUR POINT

Imagine someone came up and dumped a jigsaw puzzle on the table in front of you but then wouldn't let you see the picture on the box. Without the picture, the puzzle would be very difficult to put together.

We hope these lessons will serve as a picture of what we're looking for in good paragraphs. We want to provide you with some examples—pictures or models—of good paragraphs. That way you'll have an idea of what you're trying to create once you begin writing your own paragraphs.

In the last lesson, what did you determine as the main reason explaining why the directions in the second “energy transfer” paragraph were easier to follow? The second one contains more specific, relevant details. The first one is rather vague. It simply tells you to “bounce the balls together,” but it does not tell you how. The second one gives you a picture you can see in your mind: “place the super ball on top of the basketball. Drop them while they are touching.” Specific details are the building blocks of a good paragraph.



As teachers of writing, we've seen lots of writing that does not include enough detail, and we think we know why. When you write a paragraph like the first example above and then read it back to yourself, it makes sense. If you've tried the experiment, you know how to do it, so your brain fills in the details that aren't on the paper.

Real writers know others will be reading what they write. So they constantly think of their readers. After each sentence, paragraph, or section, most read back over their work to see if it would make sense to others who read it.



SURPRISE YOURSELF

Sometimes we think our writing is good because we know what to expect. We wrote it, after all. If you want to get a more objective view of your work, leave your writing for a while. Get it out of your mind. Then come back later, "put on" the mindset of your intended audience, and read it fresh. You'll be surprised what you discover. Here is how Warren Smith, the Associate Publisher of *WORLD Magazine*, takes it a step further.

"I often read what I have written OUT LOUD. I used to think I was weird for doing this, and I know that sometimes the people around me think I'm weird. In fact, one day I was concentrating so hard that I started reading out loud on an airplane. I'm sure the guy sitting next to me wished he could change seats, or even change planes. But I've talked to other writers and discovered that this practice is more common than I first thought. It's one of the best ways I've found to make sure that each sentence makes sense, that each word is in the right place."

ASSIGNMENT

One good way to test how well your writing works is to read it out loud. Sometimes hearing what you've written helps you to see what you've left out.

Read the two paragraphs below aloud. Both contain specific details, but one is superior:

The first time I performed in a play, I was so nervous. My costume was really cool. I got to wear a suit of armor that looked real and carry a sword. I just had one line, "Hark! Who goes there!" but my mouth felt so dry, and my lips felt huge. I was afraid when my turn came no sound would even come out. It did though, and it was great. My best friend was in the play so that was really fun too. I was nervous, but it all worked out in the end.

I'll never forget the first time I broke a bone. Snap! Searing pain ran up my leg, and I fell to the floor of the kitchen. We were packing to move. As I had run through the kitchen to the laundry room, my toe caught on a leg of the baby's high chair. I immediately felt a rush of heat on my face as a wave of nausea washed over me. I looked at my toe. It was beginning to swell. Quickly I lay back down on the floor and closed my eyes tightly. If I lay still enough maybe I could fight off the sick feeling. I had a strong suspicion I had just broken my toe.



Which paragraph did you think is better? Answer the following questions about the two paragraphs to help you determine which is better:

1. Did you see any details in either paragraph that were not relevant? If so cross out the irrelevant details.
2. Which paragraph walks you through an event in a chronological way?
3. Which paragraph has details in it that appeal to your five senses?
4. Which paragraph has details that relate to the topic sentence but that create a vivid picture in your mind of the event? List out the information that appeals to one of your five senses for each paragraph.
5. List out all the "vivid details" for each paragraph. Which paragraph has more vivid detail?

LESSON 13

COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL READING: SENTENCES WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE FOCUS IN A PARAGRAPH

Let's go back to our puzzle analogy for a moment. But this time, let's imagine you dump a 1000-piece jigsaw puzzle in front of someone. Not only do you hide the picture on the box, but you also include a few extra pieces that don't fit!

When you write a paragraph that does not have clear direction and includes unrelated details, it's like giving someone a puzzle to figure out. Paragraph number one in Lesson 12

about the writer's first drama experience could be a good paragraph. It starts by talking about the writer's feelings when he performed in his first play. But then the writer becomes side-tracked and begins talking about his costume, instead. He gets back on track for a moment and offers some good details—what he said in the play, how he felt physically (dry mouth, huge lips), and what he feared (that no sound would come out). He skips over the actual event itself—he does not include any specific information about his performance.

Why does the second paragraph work better? Unlike the first paragraph, which fails to include the drama performance, this paragraph actually tells how it feels to break a toe. And the paragraph is unified. All the sentences stay on the topic of the writer's broken toe.

A good general rule to follow when writing paragraphs is all sentences in the paragraph should focus on one topic. When you change the subject, it is time to start a new paragraph.

ASSIGNMENT

Read these two versions of the same event:

I couldn't see the board very well. My teacher sent a note home and said I should get my eyes checked. The doctor said I was nearsighted. I tried to pass the eye test, but my eyes were too bad. I got glasses and I was amazed by how much better I could see! Before trees had looked kind of like big furry green cotton balls, but now I could see each leaf clearly. I also was better at sports. That happened when I was in the second grade. I cried when I found out I had to get glasses.

When I was in the second grade, my teacher sent a note home that said, "I think Allan may need glasses. He is squinting to see what I write on the board." The next day, my mom made an appointment with the eye doctor even though I protested that I did not need or want glasses. The day of the appointment arrived, and I was determined to somehow pass the eye test so that I didn't have to get glasses. But it was no use. My eyes were so bad, I could barely see the big "E" at the top of the chart! I started to cry. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to play sports anymore. The doctor assured me that this wasn't true, and he personally



walked me over to the optical store next door and showed me several styles of glasses that were made just for sports. I picked out a regular pair and a pair of sports glasses. From that day forward, I haven't taken my glasses off except to sleep. I'm a much better baseball player now that I can see the ball coming!

We've already looked at two key "rules" of good paragraphs: They must (1) include relevant details and (2) be unified. Let's see if you can figure out more rules by examining the paragraphs above.

1. List the differences you notice between the two paragraphs.
2. Underline all the words and phrases in the second paragraph that relate to time.
3. What do the "time" words do for the paragraph? How do they help you as a reader?
4. List all the details in the second paragraph that help you better relate to the narrator.
5. How did the author feel about the possibility of getting glasses?
6. How did he feel after his appointment?
7. What factors made him change the way he felt about having glasses?

LESSON 14

COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL READING: TRANSITIONS HELP ORGANIZE PARAGRAPHS

Did you figure out the third "rule"? Good paragraphs—and good writing in general—is organized. Not every paragraph has "time" words in it. But all well-organized paragraphs give readers some cues to help them see how the sentences relate to each other. These words or short phrases are called *transitions*. They help the reader see the logical connections between your ideas. Words and phrases like *first*, *second*, *finally*, *after that*, *the next day*, help guide the reader through your paragraph.

They can also help YOU as a writer. For instance, in the first paragraph, if the writer had tried to logically connect the paragraph about his glasses, he might have realized that the final two sentences—when he got his glasses and that he cried when he got them—were out of order. It's more logical to include that information earlier in the paragraph.

Often paragraphs can be organized by thinking about either stories or steps. In a narrative paragraph—where you are talking about something that happened to you or someone else—think of it as a story. A story has a beginning where the situation is explained, a middle where some sort of conflict occurs, and an ending where the matter is resolved or concluded.

Consider the second “glasses” paragraph:

Beginning: The writer tells when and how he found out his vision was bad.

Middle: The writer goes to his eye exam and tries to fake his way through it but fails. He is upset because he’s afraid he won’t be able to play sports. But the doctor explains that’s not true and helps him find some sports glasses.

End: The writer realizes he really did need glasses, and in fact is a better athlete because of it.

When paragraphs are explaining a process, they are organized in steps. Look back at the paragraph from Lesson 11. We can easily list the steps:

1. Take the two balls outside to your driveway or another hard surface.
2. Drop the balls one at a time, noting how high each one bounces.
3. Next, place the super ball on top of the basketball.
4. Drop them while they are touching.

If you were building a house, you would want a good strong frame to hold it up. Organization is the frame of your paragraph. You need a sturdy structure to hang the details on. Otherwise you just have a big pile of information that your reader must try to make sense of.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Think of a process you frequently engage in. Choose something simple (like brushing your teeth or making a scrambled egg). Make a list of the steps in order.
2. Then test your list by having a family member actually do what you wrote.
3. Were they able to accomplish the task the way that you intended? If not, was it because you left anything out? If necessary, fix your instructions.

LESSON 15

COMPARATIVE AND CRITICAL READING: EVALUATING PARAGRAPHS

In the last few lessons we have examined three characteristics of good paragraphs. From now on, as you read paragraphs and other writing, these characteristics will serve as criteria to help you evaluate that writing. Is the writing well-organized? Does it contain enough relevant

detail to be clear and interesting? Is it unified, or does it contain unrelated sentences?

Let's look at one final paragraph. Keep the criteria in mind as you read.

I didn't think I liked cats until Ariel adopted us. I say she adopted us because she showed up on our back porch and wouldn't leave. Mom said not to feed her, but after a week or so of Ariel's constant presence, I began to feel sorry for her. Mom finally relented and allowed me to give her some food. Ariel challenged my belief that cats are boring pets. She would chase a ball if you threw it. Then she'd bring it back and drop it at your feet just like a dog playing fetch. Dogs are good pets too. She loved to be carried around. Mom grew to like her too. She even reluctantly allowed herself to be dressed up like a baby. That made her the perfect pet for a six-year-old girl. We got her a collar with our address on it and took her to the vet.



ANTECEDENT ANXIETY

One key to writing good paragraphs is being specific. One place it's easy to become vague is when we use pronouns. As a reader it's confusing to read a paragraph that uses the word *it* or *he* or *she* and not be able to figure out its antecedent (the earlier word the pronoun refers to).

Take a look at this sentence:

The girl put the baby down for a nap, but she didn't sleep.

That's a vague pronoun reference. We can't be sure if "she" refers to the girl or the baby. Let's see if we can make the sentence better by being more specific.

Better: The girl put the baby down for a nap, but the baby didn't sleep.

Let's try a different sentence:

I grabbed hold of the door handle to put the key in, and it broke.

Again, the sentence is unclear. Which one broke, the key or the door handle? We can improve this sentence with greater specificity.

Better: I grabbed hold of the door handle to put the key in, and the handle broke.

How about one final example?

The fifth graders played the sixth graders in soccer. They couldn't believe it when they won.

Who won, the fifth graders or the sixth graders? The sentence does not share that information; the reader has to guess who won the soccer game. Specificity solves this problem.

Better: The fifth graders played the sixth graders in soccer. The fifth-graders couldn't believe it when they beat the sixth graders.

ASSIGNMENT

Answer these questions about the cat paragraph:

1. What specific detail in the paragraph did you like? What would you have liked to have more information (details) about?
2. What problems in organization did you notice? How could you fix the problems?
3. Was the paragraph unified? What sentence or sentences didn't fit?
4. What details helped you to relate to the author?
5. Where there any sentences where it was not clear what the pronoun's antecedent was? Improve the sentences by rewriting them.

LESSON 16

ESSAYS: WHAT IS AN ESSAY?

How would you describe an essay? Perhaps teachers have taught you to write a five-paragraph essay—an introduction, three points, and a conclusion. Or maybe you have written essay answers on a test. Both are types of essays. But the definition of *essay* is much broader.

Famous essay writer and novelist Aldous Huxley once said, “[T]he essay is a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything,” and it's true. Essays have been written on every topic that you can imagine. They're usually short works. But this is in comparison to

full-length books, so “short” could still mean 15 or 20 pages.

Essays serve a variety of purposes too. Students write essays in school to show their knowledge of a subject. Academics write essays to reveal new discoveries they’ve made in their field. Journalists write essays called editorials to offer their opinions on world events.

Are you getting the idea that *essay* is a very big category that encompasses many types of writing? Rather than try to come up with a perfect definition, let’s make a list of a few characteristics found in most good essays:

- Effective essays offer a well-supported opinion or position that makes readers think
- Effective essays are organized
- Effective essays are written by authors who have a distinct “voice” or style (unique way of saying things)

To put together a well-written essay, you first need to be able to distinguish between a good essay and a so-so one. We’re going to help you learn to see the difference.

While our list of three characteristics doesn’t hit all the important features of an essay, it’s a good starting point. If you can evaluate these three elements in an essay, you can make a determination about how strong or weak the essay is.



ASSIGNMENT

Flip through the opinion/editorial section of *World Magazine* or another news magazine or newspaper. Choose one essay and answer these questions:

1. What is the essay about?
2. What is the author’s opinion or belief on the subject he or she is writing about?
3. What points did the author raise in support of her position?
4. Did the author address any points that challenged her position? If so, did the author appear to respect the other side? How did she write to either show respect for her opponent or not?
5. What did you like about the essay?

LESSON 17

ESSAYS: READING AN ESSAY

We are aiming to make you a critical reader. Do you wonder why we want to make you critical? After all, *critical* means, “inclined to find fault or judge with severity.”

Well, that’s one meaning of the word. We are focusing on another meaning here: “involving skillful judgment as to truth and merit.” So how do you develop skillful judgment?

If you’ve ever taken piano lessons, played soccer, or taken part in any other skill-based activity, you probably drilled basic skills over and over. The truth is, if you want to get good at anything, you have to practice. Even if you have natural talent, to become successful, you can’t skip the practicing part.

We’re going to spend several lessons demonstrating and practicing how to skillfully judge essays. You have to keep practicing in order to become skillful. Regular reading of all types of literature, including essays, is one of the very best ways to improve your reading and writing skills.

Today, we’ll look at an essay by *WORLD* writer Janie B. Cheaney that appeared in the July 2, 2011 issue of *WORLD Magazine*. We’ve shortened it and simplified the language a bit.



BECOMING READERS

I remember the moment when I became a reader. I always liked to read, but that’s not the same thing. What made a *reader* of me was a novel I received through a children’s book club.

It was the story of a journey from Poland to Switzerland by four children in search of their parents after World War II. I had never experienced anything similar, so the story was a little hard to get into. But by 30 pages in, the story had hooked me. In Chapter 12, it changed me.

Two sisters arrive at an orphan camp in search of their brother Edek, captured two years earlier and sent to Germany. But it appears he’s run away. They join a soup line. Someone trips and spills his food. The hungry children dive for it. Ruth, the oldest sister, tries to protect some of the little children. In the confusion, she catches hold of a hand. “For some reason or other she clung on to the hand, and when everyone about her had got up and her hand was free she had not let go. Then she looked to see whose hand it was, and it was Edek’s” (Ian Serraillier, *The Silver Sword*). The best way I can describe how I felt at that moment is to say that the story itself reached out and grabbed my hand.

How mysterious is that? Words arranged in sentences, built into a story, made me bigger. It’s a bit like creation itself: light spoken into being. Writing imitates creation by “speaking” ideas into being.

It's been a delight for our journalistic team at World News Group to work with the folks at Veritas Press in creating this writing manual. This combination of sponsors offers an intensely practical perspective on the writing task while simultaneously meeting curricular requirements. Students and their families will find here the helpful preparation they will need as Christian wordsmiths, both in their undergraduate and more advanced studies, and later on in the workplace. In those regards, this manual has no equal.

—JOEL BELZ

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