

# English: Writing Skills



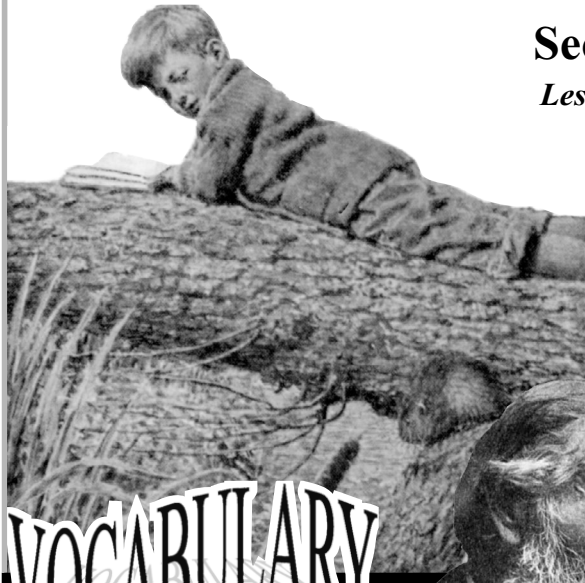
## Lesson 6

## Chapter 4

### Section 2

Lessons 6-10

TO SEE  
WHAT HE  
COULD SEE



## VOCABULARY

**Homestead:** a specified area of land where a family makes a home

**Diligent:** persevering and careful; industrious

**Reputation:** one's character in the view of the public

**Sierra Nevadas:** a 400-mile mountain range in central and eastern California and parts of Nevada

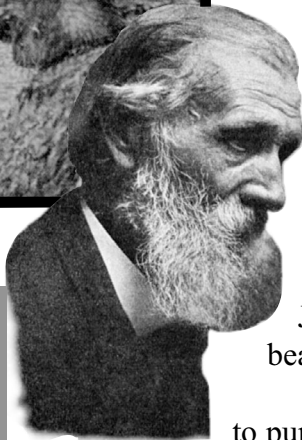
**Naturalist:** a person who studies nature

**Mammon:** money or other material wealth regarded as evil when it becomes a person's point of focus

**Great men:** referring to American heroes

**Exploited:** used for a purpose, often negative in connotation

**Philosophy:** ideas about human behavior and knowledge; the study of values, morals and behavior



In 1838, a little boy by the name of John Muir was born in Dunbar, Scotland. John lived an ordinary life by the sea and was a happy youngster. When John was about 10 years old, his family left Scotland and migrated to America.

The family settled on a **homestead** in Wisconsin where John lived from the ages of 11-21. In America, John received no formal schooling but taught himself various forms of mathematics, geometry, literature and philosophy. He was **diligent** and had a good **reputation** in the community. While he worked and helped his father, John became interested in nature's beauty—birds, animals, trees and flowers.

The young man loved to read and began to purchase books to form a library of his own.

His father would not allow John and his brothers to stay up late at night. Mr. Muir told his sons that they could get up to read as early as they chose in the morning. John often rose at one o'clock in the morning to read.

John also had an interest in mechanical operations. He had a workshop in the cellar and spent many hours inventing machines with wood. One summer, John took his inventions to the state fair in Madison, Wisconsin. While there, John decided to enroll in the state university. Paying for school was tough. He was responsible for all of his own expenses and often had less than a dollar a week left over for food (about \$30 in today's economy). He remained at the university for three years.

At the onset of the Civil War, John went to Canada and worked in a factory for two years. Later, he returned to the United States and worked in a carriage factory in Indianapolis, Indiana, where a terrible accident caused John to lose his eyesight. He was blind for a multitude of weeks, when, without warning, his eyesight returned.

That shocking experience urged John to “see what he could see” of the world and to be grateful for his vision. John took his commitment seriously and set out on a walk from Indiana to Florida. The walk was over 1,000 miles. He kept notes in his journal and developed his sense of observation and knowledge of regional geology and botany (the study of plants). From Florida, John traveled south by boat to visit Cuba. From Cuba, John traveled again by boat to South America, then sailed through the Panama Canal and up to California. After landing in San Francisco, John walked east until he came to the *Sierra Nevadas* where he discovered the giant redwoods and sequoias.

John continued to travel by foot for much of his life. He walked thousands and

thousands of miles. His love of nature led him to the Arctic where he discovered Glacier Bay and his namesake, Muir Glacier, in Alaska. Muir also visited many foreign countries. He wrote several books and articles and became a well known, respected *naturalist* and explorer. He became friends with President Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, and together, they formulated plans to preserve much of America’s natural beauty in the west.

By hard work, determination, and creativity, John Muir lived a rewarding life that also benefitted the lives of others. The man who had been blind had the vision to preserve much of America’s natural forests. Thanks to him, you too can visit the giant redwoods and sequoias and view the awesome beauty of those majestic creations! ■

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## COHERENCE IN THE INTRODUCTION

*Coherent* means “logically connected.” If a composition demonstrates coherence, then the composition is logical: the ideas are connected and follow a plan. The introduction is the first time a reader will come in contact with the writer’s ideas; therefore, the introduction should be interesting and engaging. The purpose of the introduction is to give the reader insight into what ideas are developed in the remainder of the composition.



Somewhere in the introduction, the thesis is stated. The *thesis* is the main idea that will be developed throughout the body of the composition. The thesis statement may appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of the introduction.

John Muir wrote many essays and articles. In John Muir’s era, many people did not realize the impact that cutting down an excess number of trees would have on the future. Some people were wasteful; however, some people also believed as Mr. Muir did about conserving the natural resources and beauty of the American landscape. Mr. Muir “fought” for the trees and strove to make the massive forests into national parks. Below is the introduction to one of his articles titled “Save the Redwoods.”

*We are often told that the world is going from bad to worse, sacrificing everything to **mammon**. But this righteous uprising in defense of God's trees in the midst of exciting politics and wars is telling a different story, and every Sequoia, I fancy, . . . is waving its branches for joy. The wrongs done to trees, wrongs of every sort, are done in the darkness of ignorance . . . Forty-seven years ago one of these Calaveras King Sequoias was laboriously cut down, that the stump might be had for a dancing floor. Another one of . . . more than three hundred feet high was skinned alive to a height of one hundred and sixteen feet . . . and the bark sent to London to show how fine and big that Calaveras tree was—as sensible a scheme as skinning our **great***

*men would be to prove their greatness. This grand tree is of course dead, a ghastly disfigured ruin, but it still stands erect and holds forth its majestic arms as if alive and saying, "Forgive them; they know not what they do." Now some millmen want to cut all the Calaveras trees into lumber and money. But we have found a better use for them. No doubt these trees would make good lumber after passing through a sawmill, as George Washington after passing through the hands of a French cook would have made good food. But both for Washington and the tree that bears his name higher uses have been found.*

\*The thesis statement is underlined.

Now, let's analyze the introduction. John Muir used strong language to make sure his readers understood his passion about saving the trees from wasteful enterprises. Muir began the introduction by making a reference to the greediness of people. Then, he stated his thesis as if he were a hero saving a victim: "a righteous uprising in defense of God's trees." After his thesis statement, Muir continued his introduction by explaining why he had to defend the trees. He developed and explained each reason by using examples and facts. For example, he stated, *The wrongs done to trees, wrongs of every sort, are done in the darkness of ignorance.* He supported the wrongs with two examples (cutting down an entire tree so the stump could be made into a dancing floor and skinning a tree just to show how big it was). Muir offered a comparison to skinning men to show how great they are. By using such an absurd comparison, Muir pointed out how absurd wasting trees was. He also inferred that men were cutting down the trees due to ignorance, rather than greed, and that the trees were being abused, much in the way the Christ had been abused by men—because the men did not realize what they were doing. Muir supported that idea by portraying the trees as saintly and noble by using the words of Christ, "Forgive them; they know not what they do." Mr. Muir believed that the trees would better serve the American people by being preserved in national parks instead of being consumed by industry. Muir continued to defend the preservation of the trees for the remainder of the composition, which you will read in the next few lessons. Muir finished his introduction with another comparison (to George Washington) that again showed how absurd the misuse of trees was.

The United States is fortunate to have many excellent writers. One writer who helped shape the country was Thomas Paine. During the Revolutionary War (1776-1783), Paine wrote various essays about the struggle for freedom and the reason why the cause of independence from England must be continued. Read the introduction to one of his essays called "The American Crisis." You will read the remainder of the essay in a future lesson.

*THESE are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value. Heaven knows how to put a proper price upon its goods; and it would be strange indeed if so celestial an article as FREEDOM should not be highly rated. Britain, with an army to enforce her tyranny, has declared that she has a right (not only to TAX) but "to BIND us in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER," and if being bound in that manner, is not slavery, then is there not such a thing as slavery*

upon earth. Even the expression is impious; for so unlimited a power can belong only to God.

Paine, too, was passionate about his cause. He used strong language and persuasive **philosophy**. From the thesis statement, you know that the remainder of the essay is a case against England and explains why the Americans must be resolved to fight for freedom. Paine's introduction is coherent and builds one idea upon another in logical order. First, Paine made a statement *These are the times that try men's souls*, then he gave an example of people who will be "tried" and who will avoid the crisis and who will endure it. He then defined the crisis: *Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph*. From this statement, you know that the Americans were in a fight for freedom against tyranny. Paine then explained that freedom is valuable because of the effort involved. From there, Paine progressed to his thesis statement and narrowed down his philosophy to focus on a particular tyrant: Britain, which was trying to excise power over the Americans and basically make them slaves. Paine ended his introduction with a comment that only God, not another country, had the right to exercise such power over people.

You are learning the importance of using your critical thinking skills to achieve coherence in writing. Continue now to the Activities.

## ***LIFE PRINCIPLE***



**"No right way is easy  
in this rough world.  
We must risk our lives  
to save our lives."**

**—John Muir**