

WRITING WITH SKILL, LEVEL ONE

LEVEL 5 OF THE COMPLETE WRITER

by

Susan Wise Bauer

STUDENT TEXT

This book is to be used in conjunction with *Writing With Skill, Level One: Level 5 of The Complete Writer, Instructor Text*

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GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Each day's work is divided into several steps. Complete each step before moving on to the next. It is your responsibility to read the instructions and follow them carefully. Go slowly, and make sure that you don't skip lines or sections.

Whenever you see this symbol, ♦, you're about to see the answer to a question asked in the text. Stop reading until you've answered the question yourself. It's usually best to answer the question out loud—this forces you to put the answer into specific words (rather than coming up with a vague idea of what the answer might be). Only after you've answered the question out loud should you read the answer below the line.

Whenever you have trouble, ask your instructor for help. Many of the assignments tell you to "Check your work with your instructor." Before you show any work to your instructor, read through it a final time, checking for basic grammar and punctuation mistakes.

If you are writing by hand, make sure that your handwriting is legible! If you are working on a word processor, print out your work and read it through on paper before handing it in. (Sometimes it is difficult to see mistakes when you are reading on a screen.)

You will need to keep a Composition Notebook. Use a three-ring notebook divided into six sections. You will label each section as the year goes on.

Plan to work on your writing four days per week.

Part I

BASIC SKILLS

WEEKS 1-3

Overview of Weeks 1-3

Instead of immediately starting to write compositions, you'll begin by working on skills that need to be in place *before* you begin to write. The first three weeks of this course will review and practice three very basic skills: finding the main idea in a story, finding the main idea in a paragraph, and using a thesaurus to find synonyms.

Begin by labelling the first section of your notebook "Narrations" and the second "Outlines." You will use the other four sections later in this course.

Narrations. First, you'll review how to write narrations. The ability to summarize a piece of narrative fiction (storytelling) in three or four sentences is a basic skill which should be in place before you begin to work on outlining.

Summarizing forces you to identify the central story, or plot, of a narrative. When you summarize, you have to discard details, dialogue, and action, and just keep the basic story-line. This story-line is the *skeleton* of a narrative fiction; it lies underneath all of the details, dialogue, and actions, and organizes them into a particular order.

Finding the story-line in narrative fiction will make it easier for you, later on, to write your own compositions. When you write, you will need to be able to hold the basic story-line in your head as you flesh it out with details, dialogue, and actions. This will help you put all of those details, speeches, and events in the proper order.

The first week of the course walks you step by step through the process of summarizing and writing down a narration. These skills should be review for you. If you have a great deal of difficulty with the narrations, you may need to spend a few weeks working on this skill before continuing with *Writing with Skill*. Additional narration practice is provided in *Writing with Ease, Level Four*.

When you finish your narrations, place them in the first section of your notebook.

Outlines. Your narration practice will prepare you to write your own narratives. But not all compositions are organized following a story-line; there are many other ways to organize compositions.

You will learn some of these ways as you go through this program. However, before you start to write your own compositions, you will study how other writers organize *their* work—what order they put their information in. You will learn how to *outline* their work—how to note down the main idea in each section of their compositions. This will teach you the basic skills of outlining. When you then begin to write your own works, outlining will help you put your information down in the correct order.

When you've finished these outlines, place them in the second section of your notebook.

In the third week, you'll practice using the thesaurus as you write both a narration and an outline. The best choice is probably the most recent version of the classic *Roget's International Thesaurus*. Avoid condensed or pocket-sized thesaurii, since these are less complete. Free online thesaurii, as well as the "thesaurus" tool in most word processors, are also very incomplete. (With reference books, you get what you pay for.) Use a print thesaurus instead.

WEEK 1: NARRATIVE SUMMARIES

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

Remember: you are responsible for reading and following the instructions! Your instructor is available to check your work, and to help if you if you have difficulty, but you should be able to do most of your work independently.

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from the beginning of the first chapter of *The Pepins and Their Problems* by Polly Horvath.

At the end of the excerpt, you will see a small number that sits up above the last word. This small number is called a *superscript* number. *Super* means “above, over,” so a superscript number sits up above the regular script, or print.

When you see the superscript number, look down at the bottom of the page. You will see a line of smaller type beginning with the same number. This is called a *footnote*, because it is a note at the foot, or bottom, of the page. The footnote tells you the title of the book that the excerpt comes from, the author, the publisher, the year of publication, and the page numbers in the book where the excerpt is found.

— — —

There are always problems in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Pepin; their children, Petunia and Irving; their dog, Roy; their cat, Miranda; and their very fine neighbor Mr. Bradshaw. Now, all families have problems, and all families, one hopes, eventually solve them, but the Pepins and their very fine neighbor Mr. Bradshaw have problems of such a bizarre nature that they are never able to find a solution and get on with their lives without the help of you, dear reader.

Just recently the Pepins awoke to find toads in their shoes. This was quite a puzzler.

“What shall we do?” asked Mrs. Pepin, who needed to put her shoes on so she could catch the 8:05 train to her part-time job at the Domestic Laboratory, on the outskirts of beautiful downtown Peony, where she led the field in peanut butter experiments. The Domestic Laboratory was not a strict company, but it did require its workers to arrive shod.



“What shall we do?” asked Mr. Pepin, who needed his shoes so he could drive them both to the train station. There he would catch the 8:10 to work at the cardboard factory, where he was in charge of corrugation.

“I am not putting my foot in a toad-filled shoe,” said Petunia, who was in the fifth grade, where she wasn’t in charge of anything.

“Maybe we should go next door and ask Mr. Bradshaw if he has toads in his shoes,” said Irving, who was a sixth-grade genius and in charge of leading all charges.

In the end, that is what the Pepins did. They went next door to their very fine neighbor Mr. Bradshaw, who was eating corn twinklies and hadn’t looked at his shoes yet. The Pepins explained to Mr. Bradshaw what the problem was, and together they went to examine Mr. Bradshaw’s very fine shoes. There were toads in every single pair. Even in the galoshes.

“Thank you for calling this to my attention,” said Mr. Bradshaw, and then, because he was an exemplary host as well as a very fine neighbor, he poured bowls of corn twinklies all round.

The Pepins and Mr. Bradshaw could not imagine what to do with their toad-filled shoes. How had the toads gotten into the all the shoes, and how were the Pepins to get them out? They thought for a very long while, but even Irving the genius was unable to think of a solution.¹

STEP TWO: **Note important events**

This is a short and simple passage—a warm-up for you!

When you summarize a narrative, it’s often best to start by jotting down a few phrases or short sentences that remind you of things that happened in the story. Although you may not need to do this with such a short passage, practice this now. On scratch paper, write down four or five phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. *Do not use more than five phrases or short sentences!*

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

1. Polly Horvath, *The Pepins and Their Problems* (Square Fish, 2008), pp. 3–5.

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

After you've written down your four or five phrases or sentences, try to combine them into two or three sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Toads in their shoes" and "They couldn't put on their shoes" could be combined into "They couldn't put on their shoes because there were toads in the shoes"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you leave out the detail that Mr. Bradshaw was eating corn cereal, the summary will still make sense!)

Say your two or three sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proof-read the sentences first. Reading them out loud *after* you've written them is an excellent way to check your own work.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

Now that you've had a chance to warm up, you'll summarize a slightly more difficult passage.

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* by Joan Aiken. In this passage, young Sylvia is travelling to stay with her wealthy cousin Bonnie at the country house known as Willoughby Chase. She has not had enough to eat, and her clothes are old and thin, so she is both hungry and cold—but she knows that she should be suspicious of the strange man who is sharing the railway carriage with her. When he offers her a box of chocolates, she refuses, even though her mouth waters.

— — —

"Now come along — do," said the man coaxingly. "All little girls like sweets, I know."

"Sir," said Sylvia coldly, "if you speak to me again I shall be obliged to pull the communication cord."

He sighed and put away the box. Her relief over this was premature, however, for he turned round next minute with a confectioner's pasteboard carton filled with every imaginable variety of little cakes—there were jam tarts, maids of honour, lemon cheese cakes, Chelsea buns, and numerous little iced confections in brilliant and enticing colors.

“I always put up a bit of a tiffin for a journey,” he murmured, as if to himself, and, placing the box on the seat directly opposite Sylvia, he selected a cake covered with violet icing and bit into it. It appeared to be filled with jam. Sylvia looked straight ahead and ignored him, but again she had to swallow.

“Now, my dear, how about one of these little odds and ends?” said the man. “I can’t possibly eat them all by myself, can I?”

Sylvia stood up and looked for the communication cord. It was out of her reach.

“Shall I pull it for you?” inquired her fellow-traveller politely, following the direction of her eyes upwards. Sylvia did not reply to him. She did not feel, though, that it would be ladylike to climb up on the seat or arm-rest to pull the cord herself, so she sat down again, biting her lip with anxiety. To her inexpressible relief the stranger, after eating three or four more cakes with every appearance of enjoyment, put the box back in his portmanteau, wrapped himself in a richly furred cloak, retired to his own corner, and shut his eyes. A subdued but regular snore soon issuing from his partly-opened mouth presently convinced Sylvia that he was asleep, and she began to breathe more freely. . . .

Presently she grew drowsy and fell into uneasy slumber, but not for long; it was bitterly cold and her feet in their thin shoes felt like lumps of ice. She huddled into her corner and wrapped herself in the green cloak, envying her companion his thick furs and undisturbed repose, and wishing it were ladylike to curl her feet up beneath her on the seat. Unfortunately she knew better than that.

She dreamed, without being really asleep, of arctic seas, of monstrous tunnels through hillsides fringed with icicles. Her travelling companion, who had grown a long tail and a pair of horns, offered her cakes the size of grand pianos and coloured scarlet, blue, and green; when she bit into them she found they were made of snow.

She woke suddenly from one of these dreams to find that the train had stopped with a jerk.

“Oh! What is it? Where are we?” she exclaimed before she could stop herself.

“No need to alarm yourself, miss,” said her companion, looking unavailingly out of the black square of window. “Wolves on the line, most likely—they often have trouble of that kind hereabouts.”

“Wolves!” Sylvia stared at him in terror.

“They don’t often get into the train, though,” he added reassuringly. “Two years ago they managed to climb into the guard’s van and eat a pig, and once they got the engine-driver—another had to be sent in a relief-engine—but they don’t often eat a passenger, I promise you.”

As if in contradiction of his words a sad and sinister howling now arose beyond the windows, and Sylvia, pressing her face against the dark pane, saw

that they were passing through a thickly wooded region where snow lay deep on the ground. Across this white carpet she could just discern a ragged multitude pouring, out of which arose, from time to time, this terrible cry. She was almost petrified with fear. . . . At length she summoned up strength to whisper:

“Why don’t we go on?”

“Oh, I expect there are too many of ’em on the line ahead,” the man answered carelessly. “Can’t just push through them, you see—the engine would be derailed in no time, and then we should be in a bad way. No, I expect we’ll have to wait here till daylight now—the wolves get scared then, you know, and make for home. All that matters is that the driver shan’t get eaten in the meantime—he’ll keep ’em off by throwing lumps of coal at them, I dare say.”

“Oh!” Sylvia exclaimed in irrepressible alarm, as a heavy body thudded suddenly against the window, and she had a momentary view of a pointed grey head, red slavering jaws, and pale eyes gleaming with ferocity.

“Oh, don’t worry about that,” soothed her companion. “They’ll keep up that jumping against the windows for hours. They’re not much danger, you know, singly; it’s only in the whole pack you’ve got to watch out for ’em.”

Sylvia was not much comforted by this. She moved along to the middle of the seat and huddled there, glancing fearfully first to one side and then to the other. The strange man seemed quite undisturbed by the repeated onslaught of the wolves which followed. He took a pinch of snuff, remarked that it was all a great nuisance and they would be late, and composed himself to sleep again.

He had just begun to snore when a discomposing incident occurred. The window beside him, which must have been insecurely fastened, was not proof against the continuous impact of the frenzied and ravenous animals. The catch suddenly slipped, and the window fell open with a crash, its glass shivering into fragments.

Sylvia screamed. Another instant, and a wolf precipitated itself through the aperture thus formed. It turned snarling on the sleeping stranger, who started awake with an oath, and very adroitly flung his cloak over the animal. He then seized one of the shattered pieces of glass lying on the floor and stabbed the imprisoned beast through the cloak. It fell dead.

“Tush,” said Sylvia’s companion, breathing heavily and passing his hand over his face. “Unexpected—most.”²

STEP TWO: **Note important events**

On scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* There are many vivid details in this passage (like the “jam tarts, maids of honour, lemon cheese cakes,

2. Joan Aiken, *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* (Yearling, 1962), pp. 17–21.

Chelsea buns, and numerous little iced confections”). Remember that details should not be included in a summary—try to stay focused on the main events.

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

After you’ve written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together (for example, “Sylvia was uncomfortable” and “The man offered her cakes but she refused” could be combined into “Sylvia was uncomfortable with the man, so when he offered her cakes she refused”). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you completely leave out the information that the man offered her cakes, the summary will still make sense!)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you’ve written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Three: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing nonfiction by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

In Days One and Two, you wrote narrations summarizing two excerpts from novels—long works of creative fiction. However, you can also use a narration to summarize nonfiction (history, science, biography, etc.).

STEP ONE: **Read**

The following passage about the Russian czar Peter the Great, who ruled 1682–1725, comes from *The Story of the World, Volume 3: Early Modern Times* by Susan Wise Bauer.

— — —

Peter had always been fascinated by the West. But not very many Europeans traveled to Russia, and those who settled in Russia lived apart from the Russians, in special colonies for “foreigners.” Peter had spent hours in these colonies, talking to the Westerners who lived there. He had even found an old, rotten English sailboat in a shed—and was fascinated by it. Peter wanted ships like the English

had. He wanted to build a navy that could sail to Europe. He wanted a fleet of merchant ships that could take Russian honey, wax, and furs to Europe.

But Peter knew that Russia would never be able to visit the West without a good port for ships to sail in and out of. Russia's northern coast was so cold and icy that ships couldn't even reach it for most of the year. And Peter's only port city, the city of Archangel, was so far north that it was frozen solid for half the year. During the cold dark Arctic winters, the sun only rose for five short hours a day. And the air was so cold that if you spat on the ground, your spit would freeze before it landed!

Russia needed a warmer port, and Peter had his eye on one: the port of Azov. The Sea of Azov led right into the Black Sea, which led to the Mediterranean. Azov belonged to the Ottoman Turks, but Peter was sure that the Russian army could defeat the Turks in battle and claim Azov for Russia.

So Peter marched his army down to Azov and laid a siege around the fortress that protected the port. He wrote out a demand for surrender, attached it to an arrow, and ordered an archer to shoot it into the city. But the Turks simply laughed at Peter's demand. Peter soon saw why. Turkish ships could sail right into Azov to bring food and weapons to the Turks inside the fortress. Meanwhile, the Russians camped outside the walls began to run out of food and ammunition. And the weather was growing colder. A savage winter was coming.

Peter realized that he would never be able to capture Azov unless he could stop Turkish ships from reaching it. So he withdrew his army and ordered his men to build twenty-five warships and hundreds of barges—all before spring! The Russian soldiers labored all winter, building this huge fleet and learning to sail it. When spring came, the brand-new Russian navy drove away the Turkish galleys that arrived to save Azov. Meanwhile, Russian soldiers began to build a pile of rubble high against Azov's walls. When the mound was high enough, soldiers poured over it into the fortress. The Turks waved their turbans in surrender. Azov had fallen!³

STEP TWO: Note important events

On scratch paper, write down six or seven phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the passage. Do not use more than seven phrases or short sentences! Make sure that you focus on the main events in the passage (like the Russian army's conquest of Azov) rather than the smaller details (the weather started to grow colder).

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story. If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

3. Susan Wise Bauer, *The Story of the World, Volume 3: Early Modern Times* (Peace Hill Press, 2004), pp. 166–167.

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

After you've written down your six or seven phrases or sentences, try to combine them into four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

Say your sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Four: Challenge Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a complete narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

In the final review exercise of this week, you'll practice summing up an entire story, from beginning to end.

STEP ONE: **Read**

This traditional folktale is German in origin—but it is so old that no one knows for sure where it came from (or what it means). The Brothers Grimm included it in their 1812 collection of fairy tales, but this version is from Andrew Lang's classic collection *The Red Fairy Book*.

— — —

"The Golden Goose"

There was once a man who had three sons. The youngest of them was called Dullhead, and was sneered and jeered at and snubbed on every possible opportunity.

One day it happened that the eldest son wished to go into the forest to cut wood, and before he started his mother gave him a fine rich cake and a bottle of wine, so that he might be sure not to suffer from hunger or thirst.

When he reached the forest he met a little old grey man who wished him "good-morning" and said, "Do give me a piece of that cake you have got in your pocket, and let me have a draught of your wine—I am so hungry and thirsty."

But this clever son replied, "If I give you my cake and wine I shall have none left for myself; you just go your own way." And he left the little man standing there and went further on into the forest. There he began to cut down a tree, but before long he made a false stroke with his axe, and cut his own arm so badly that he was obliged to go home and have it bound up.

Then the second son went to the forest, and his mother gave him a good cake and a bottle of wine as she had to his elder brother. He too met the little old grey man, who begged him for a morsel of cake and a draught of wine.

But the second son spoke most sensibly too, and said, “Whatever I give to you I deprive myself of. Just go your own way, will you?” Not long after, his punishment overtook him, for no sooner had he struck a couple of blows on a tree with his axe, than he cut his leg so badly that he had to be carried home.

So then Dullhead said, “Father, let me go out and cut wood.” But his father answered, “Both your brothers have injured themselves. You had better leave it alone; you know nothing about it.”

But Dullhead begged so hard to be allowed to go that at last his father said, “Very well, then—go. Perhaps when you have hurt yourself, you may learn to know better.” His mother only gave him a very plain cake made with water and baked in the cinders, and a bottle of sour beer.

When he got to the forest, he too met the little grey old man, who greeted him and said, “Give me a piece of your cake and a draught from your bottle; I am so hungry and thirsty.”

And Dullhead replied, “I’ve only got a cinder-cake and some sour beer, but if you care to have that, let us sit down and eat.”

So they sat down, and when Dullhead brought out his cake he found it had turned into a fine rich cake, and the sour beer into excellent wine. Then they ate and drank, and when they had finished the little man said, “Now I will bring you luck, because you have a kind heart and are willing to share what you have with others. There stands an old tree; cut it down, and amongst its roots you’ll find something.” With that the little man took leave.

Then Dullhead fell to at once to hew down the tree, and when it fell he found amongst its roots a goose, whose feathers were all of pure gold. He lifted it out, carried it off, and took it with him to an inn where he meant to spend the night.

Now the landlord of the inn had three daughters, and when they saw the goose they were filled with curiosity as to what this wonderful bird could be, and each longed to have one of its golden feathers.

The eldest thought to herself, “No doubt I shall soon find a good opportunity to pluck out one of its feathers,” and the first time Dullhead happened to leave the room she caught hold of the goose by its wing. But, lo and behold! her fingers seemed to stick fast to the goose, and she could not take her hand away.

Soon after the second daughter came in, and thought to pluck a golden feather for herself too; but hardly had she touched her sister than she stuck fast



as well. At last the third sister came with the same intentions, but the other two cried out, "Keep off! for Heaven's sake, keep off!"

The younger sister could not imagine why she was to keep off, and thought to herself, "If they are both there, why should not I be there too?"

So she sprang to them; but no sooner had she touched one of them than she stuck fast to her. So they all three had to spend the night with the goose.

Next morning Dullhead tucked the goose under his arm and went off, without in the least troubling himself about the three girls who were hanging on to it. They just had to run after him right or left as best they could. In the middle of a field they met the parson, and when he saw this procession he cried, "For shame, you bold girls! What do you mean by running after a young fellow through the fields like that? Do you call that proper behaviour?" And with that he caught the youngest girl by the hand to try and draw her away. But directly he touched her he hung on himself, and had to run along with the rest of them.

Not long after the clerk came that way, and was much surprised to see the parson following the footsteps of three girls. "Why, where is your reverence going so fast?" cried he. "Don't forget there is to be a christening to-day!" And he ran after him, caught him by the sleeve, and hung on to it himself. As the five of them trotted along in this fashion one after the other, two peasants were coming from their work with their hoes. On seeing them the parson called out and begged them to come and rescue him and the clerk. But no sooner did they touch the clerk than they stuck on too, and so there were seven of them running after Dullhead and his goose.

After a time they all came to a town where a King reigned whose daughter was so serious and solemn that no one could ever manage to make her laugh. So the King had decreed that whoever should succeed in making her laugh should marry her.

When Dullhead heard this he marched before the Princess with his goose and its appendages, and as soon as she saw these seven people continually running after each other she burst out laughing, and could not stop herself. Then Dullhead claimed her as his bride, but the King, who did not much fancy him as a son-in-law, made all sorts of objections, and told him he must first find a man who could drink up a whole cellarful of wine.

Dullhead bethought him of the little grey man, who could, he felt sure, help him. So he went off to the forest, and on the very spot where he had cut down the tree he saw a man sitting with a most dismal expression of face.

Dullhead asked him what he was taking so much to heart, and the man answered, "I don't know how I am ever to quench this terrible thirst I am suffering from. Cold water doesn't suit me at all. To be sure I've emptied a whole barrel of wine, but what is one drop on a hot stone?"

"I think I can help you," said Dullhead. "Come with me, and you shall drink to your heart's content." So he took him to the King's cellar, and the man

sat down before the huge casks and drank and drank till he drank up the whole contents of the cellar before the day closed.

Then Dullhead asked once more for his bride, but the King felt vexed at the idea of a stupid fellow whom people called “Dullhead” carrying off his daughter, and he began to make fresh conditions. He required Dullhead to find a man who could eat a mountain of bread. Dullhead did not wait to consider long but went straight off to the forest, and there on the same spot sat a man who was drawing in a strap as tight as he could round his body, and making a most woeful face the while. Said he, “I’ve eaten up a whole oven full of loaves, but what’s the good of that to anyone who is as hungry as I am? I declare my stomach feels quite empty, and I must draw my belt tight if I’m not to die of starvation.”

Dullhead was delighted, and said, “Get up and come with me, and you shall have plenty to eat,” and he brought him to the King’s court.

Now the King had given orders to have all the flour in his kingdom brought together, and to have a huge mountain baked of it. But the man from the wood just took up his stand before the mountain and began to eat, and in one day it had all vanished.

For the third time Dullhead asked for his bride, but again the King tried to make some evasion, and demanded a ship which could sail on land or water. “When you come sailing in such a ship,” said he, “you shall have my daughter without further delay.”

Again Dullhead started off to the forest, and there he found the little old grey man with whom he had shared his cake, and who said, “I have eaten and I have drunk for you, and now I will give you the ship. I have done all this for you because you were kind and merciful to me.”

Then he gave Dullhead a ship which could sail on land or water, and when the King saw it he felt he could no longer refuse him his daughter.

So they celebrated the wedding with great rejoicings; and after the King’s death Dullhead succeeded to the kingdom, and lived happily with his wife for many years after.⁴

STEP TWO: **Note important events and write summary sentences**

You can summarize a long story like this in one of two ways.

If you’re able to, just list the six or eight most important events in the story, in the same order that they happen in the story. But because there are so many details in the story, you might have to write down *each* event first—even though this will make a much longer list. However, once you’ve written down the longer list, you should be able to group events together and condense them so that you end up with only six or eight *main* events.

4. Andrew Lang, *The Red Fairy Book* (Longmans, Green & Co., 1891), pp. 340–345.

Here's an example. You might be able to look at the first five paragraphs of the story and sum them up in a single sentence:

Dullhead had two older brothers who refused to share their food with a stranger.

But you might have to list each event instead, like this:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

All three brothers met a little man in the the forest.

He asked them to share their food and drink.

The two oldest would not share their food with him.

The two oldest brothers hurt themselves after they refused to share.

Then you would need to work at condensing those five sentences into one or two sentences. You could start by crossing out the repetition:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

All ~~three~~ brothers met a little man in the the forest.

He asked them to share their food and drink.

The two oldest ~~would not share their food with him.~~

~~The two oldest brothers~~ hurt themselves after they refused to share.

Then, cross out the details that aren't necessary for the understanding of the story.

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons.

met a little man ~~in the the~~ forest

He asked them to share their food ~~and drink.~~

The two oldest

~~hurt themselves after they refused to share~~

Now, the first part of your summary might sound like this:

Dullhead was the youngest of three sons who met a little man. He asked to share their food, but the two oldest refused.

Your finished summary should not be more than eight sentences in length.

You should expect this exercise to take you some time, so don't get frustrated! When you have finished your summary, read it aloud. If it is still too long, read through it a second time, looking for unnecessary information or repeated phrases. Cross these out and try to combine sentences.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished with your summary, check your work with your instructor.

WEEK 2: ONE-LEVEL OUTLINES

Day One: Introduction to Outlining



Focus: Understanding the basic principles of outlining

For the last week, you have practiced writing narrations—brief summaries of stories and non-fiction narratives.

Now you'll begin to work on a new form of summary writing: outlining. But before you begin outlining, you should be familiar with two terms: *paragraph* and *topic sentence*.

STEP ONE: Understand paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences that are all related to a single subject. You can recognize a paragraph because the first sentence is *indented* (begins half an inch farther to the right than all the other sentences).

Look at the following paragraph from the book *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know*:

For five minutes these dogs tumble, grab, bite, and lunge at each other. The wolfhound throws himself onto his side and the little dog responds with attacks to his face, belly, and paws. A swipe by the hound sends the Chihuahua scurrying backward, and she timidly sidesteps out of his reach. The hound barks, jumps up, and arrives back on his feet with a thud. At this, the Chihuahua races toward one of those feet and bites it, hard. They are in mid-embrace—the hound with his mouth surrounding the body of the Chihuahua, the Chihuahua kicking back at the hound's face—when an owner snaps a leash on the hound's collar and pulls him upright and away. The Chihuahua rights herself, looks after them, barks once, and trots back to her owner.⁵

5. Alexandra Horowitz, *Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know* (Scribner, 2009), pp. 1–2.

All of the sentences in this paragraph are related to one subject: the fight between the wolfhound and the Chihuahua. (Notice that the first sentence is indented.)

Now read the following three paragraphs, found in *Understanding Light: The Science of Visible and Invisible Rays*:

Of all the instruments man uses in connection with light, the most marvelous and the most complex is the human eye. It sees size, shape, and color. It registers degrees of brightness and darkness. It adjusts itself for distance and direction. It dispatches reports of what it sees to the brain. It is provided with a case which closes automatically to protect it in times of danger. And all this is accomplished by an object as big as a large marble.

In ancient times, the work of the eye was believed to be an extension of the sense of feeling. Some invisible something came out of the eye, traveled to the object, felt it, and reported its findings. Today we are more likely to describe the eye in terms of the camera. This is a convenient method, for most of us are familiar with the working of a camera, but it is also valuable, since the mechanical operations of both the eye and the camera are similar.

The human eye is shaped somewhat like a balloon full of air. On one side is the slightly bulging *cornea*; on the other side, the *optic nerve*. But unlike a balloon, the inside of the eye contains a good deal more than air.⁶

The sentences in these three paragraphs are also all related to a single subject. What object does the paragraph describe?



All of the paragraphs tell us something about *the human eye*. But you can't just use "The human eye" as the subject for each paragraph, because *all* of the paragraphs talk about the human eye.

Instead, each paragraph tells us about a different part or function of the human eye. In the first paragraph, all of the sentences are related to the subject "What the human eye can do." In the second paragraph, all of the sentences are related to the subject "What people understand about how the human eye works." What is the subject of the third paragraph? Remember: it will have something to do with the human eye.



The subject of the third paragraph is "The structure of the human eye" or "What the human eye looks like."

When you start to outline, you will try to summarize the subject of each paragraph in one or two phrases or in one sentence. Your summary sentence or phrases should be specific

6. Beulah Tannenbaum and Myra Stillman, *Understanding Light: The Science of Visible and Invisible Rays* (McGraw-Hill, 1960), p. 101.

enough to show how the paragraph is different from other paragraphs that might have the same *general* subject.

STEP TWO: **Understand topic sentences**

Sometimes, paragraphs have *topic sentences*. A topic sentence does your work for you, because it states the subject of the paragraph outright. Topic sentences are usually found near the beginning or end of a paragraph.

Read the following four paragraphs. In each paragraph, the topic sentence is in bold print.

In 1513, a Spanish planter named Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean. Balboa and his followers marched from the shore of the Caribbean Sea through the dense forests of the Isthmus of Panama, taking twenty-two days to go forty-five miles. From the hill-tops they finally discovered a vast sea stretching south and west. Balboa called it the South Sea, and this name was much used. The ocean which Balboa saw, Magellan soon afterward crossed.⁷

Galaxies themselves cluster together. The galaxies in our own neighborhood go by the uninspiring name of the “Local Group.” The local group has about 30 members, including the Milky Way, the Magellanic Clouds and the Andromeda galaxy. Some clusters of galaxies contain thousands of members. **The Universe appears to be filled with a vast network of clusters of galaxies.**⁸

The story of cameras goes back a long way. Hundreds of years ago people learned that an image coming through a tiny hole in the side of a tent or building makes an upside-down image on the opposite wall. Eventually, scientists learned that silver salts are sensitive to light. Then they learned to coat surfaces with these salts and capture images striking them through a lens. The development of negatives followed, so the photographer could make as many pictures from a single negative as he or she wanted. Then came roll film late in the 1880s, and with this invention, photography was off on its race to become the world’s favorite hobby.⁹

Magic is successful because it is nine-tenths simple distraction. Magicians call this diversion of a spectator’s attention “misdirection.” In

7. Henry Eldridge Bourne and Elbert Jay Benton, *A History of the United States* (D. C. Heath and Co., 1913), p. 5.

8. Slightly adapted from C. Gareth Wynn-Williams, *The Fullness of Space: Nebulae, Stardust, and the Interstellar Medium* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 2.

9. George Laycock, *The Complete Beginner’s Guide to Photography* (Doubleday, 1979), p. 3.

using misdirection, the performer is simultaneously engaged in two series of actions. One series is obvious to the audience, the other is disguised.¹⁰

The first paragraph is about the discovery of the Pacific Ocean by Balboa—which is exactly what the topic sentence tells you. The second paragraph is about the clusters of galaxies in the universe. The third paragraph tells the story of the camera. And the fourth paragraph is all about distraction.

In each of these paragraphs, the topic sentence sums up the subject of the paragraph. But many paragraphs do not have a single topic sentence. Look again at the three paragraphs from *Understanding Light* that you looked at in Step One. Beside each paragraph, you will see the summary phrases or sentence that explain the paragraph's main subject.

Of all the instruments man uses in connection with light, the most marvelous and the most complex is the human eye. It sees size, shape, and color. It registers degrees of brightness and darkness. It adjusts itself for distance and direction. It dispatches reports of what it sees to the brain. It is provided with a case which closes automatically to protect it in times of danger. And all this is accomplished by an object as big as a large marble.

What the human eye can do

In ancient times, the work of the eye was believed to be an extension of the sense of feeling. Some invisible something came out of the eye, traveled to the object, felt it, and reported its findings. Today we are more likely to describe the eye in terms of the camera. This is a convenient method, for most of us are familiar with the working of a camera, but it is also valuable, since the mechanical operations of both the eye and the camera are similar.

What people understand about how the human eye works

The human eye is shaped somewhat like a balloon full of air. On one side is the slightly bulging *cornea*; on the other side, the *optic nerve*. But unlike a balloon, the inside of the eye contains a good deal more than air.¹¹

What the human eye looks like

These are perfectly good paragraphs—but none of them have a single topic sentence that sums up the main subject. Not every good paragraph has a topic sentence, but in every good paragraph, all of the sentences relate to a single main subject.

You will not be required to identify or write topic sentences in this year of study. However, you will often see the term *topic sentence* used, so you should know what it means.

10. Vincent H. Gaddis, *The Wide World of Magic* (Criterion Books, 1967), p. 176.

11. Tanenbaum and Stillman, p. 101.

STEP THREE: **Understand basic outlining**

In the final step of today's lesson, you'll study the basic principles of outlining.

When you outline a passage of writing, you begin by finding the main idea in each paragraph and assigning it a Roman numeral. Your goal is not to write a single sentence that incorporates *all* (or even most) of the information in the paragraph. Instead, you should try to write a sentence (or several phrases) that sums up the paragraph's central theme, or subject.

You can often find the central subject of the paragraph by asking two questions for each paragraph:

1. What is the main thing or person that the paragraph is about?
2. Why is that thing important?

Read the following paragraph from *The Story of Canada* by Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore.

Five hundred years ago, 60 million bison—or buffalo, as they are more often called—roamed the grasslands of North America. They meant life itself to plains nations like the Blackfoot of what is now southern Alberta. The Blackfoot moved slowly across the land, following the herds and carrying with them everything they had. They hunted deer and antelope, they grew tobacco, and they gathered wild turnips and onion. But for centuries it was the buffalo that provided for the Blackfoot people. Buffalo hides made their tipis and their clothing. Buffalo sinews were their thread. Buffalo bones made clubs and spoons and needles. They even used dried buffalo dung as fuel for their campfires. To the Blackfoot, buffalo meat was “real” meat and nothing else tasted so good. They trusted the buffalo to keep them strong.¹²

Now answer the following questions before looking at the answers.

What is the main thing that the paragraph is about?



Buffalo. The paragraph does talk about the Blackfoot people as well—but notice that the paragraph begins with the *buffalo*, and that all of the references to the Blackfoot people are made to explain how the *buffalo* were used.

Why is the buffalo important?



Because the Blackfoot people used it for food, clothing, and other purposes.

12. Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore, *The Story of Canada* (Key Porter Books, 1992), p. 313.

If you were to put together these two answers in one sentence, it would look something like this:

I. The Blackfoot people used buffalo for food, clothing, and many other purposes.

(Notice that I is the Roman numeral for “1” or “first paragraph.”)

You might be tempted to write a whole list of things that the Blackfoot people used buffalo for (“The Blackfoot used the buffalo for meat, tipis and clothing, thread, clubs, spoons, needles, and fuel”), but when you are constructing an outline, you should *not* include *all* of the information in the paragraph. Instead, you should summarize.

The next paragraph in *The Story of Canada* reads:

The Blackfoot had always gone on foot, using dogs to help carry their goods, for there were no horses in North America until Spanish colonists brought them in the 1500s. Soon after that, plains people captured animals that had gone wild, or stole them in raids. They traded the horses northward and early in the 1700s, horses came to the northern plains. Suddenly the Blackfoot were a nation on horseback. How exciting it was, learning to ride a half-wild mustang and galloping off to the horizon!

Ask the question: What is the main thing that the paragraph is about?



Horses.

Why are horses important?



The Blackfoot tribe learned how to ride them in the 1700s.

So your sentence would sound like this:

II. The Blackfoot tribe learned to use horses in the 1700s.

(Note that II is the Roman numeral for “2” or “second paragraph.”)

Remember: you are not trying to summarize every detail in the entire paragraph. You are finding the central idea in it.

In the next day’s work, you’ll try to find the central idea in each paragraph for yourself.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about history

STEP ONE: **Read**

This excerpt is from a biography called *Hatshepsut: Egypt's First Female Pharaoh* by Pamela Dell.

You'll find the passage easier to understand if you have a little background information. Hatshepsut's father, Thutmose I, died around 1492 BC and left two heirs: his daughter Hatshepsut and his son Thutmose II. Hatshepsut had the best claim to the throne, because she was the daughter of Thutmose I's most important wife. But Thutmose I wanted his son, Thutmose II, to be the next ruler of Egypt instead. Unfortunately, Thutmose II was the son of a much less important wife.

To make Thutmose II more acceptable to the people as the next pharaoh, Thutmose I arranged for him to marry Hatshepsut—his half-sister. The Egyptian royal pharaohs often did this. They believed that their blood was divine, so they were reluctant to marry anyone from outside the royal family—that would be like mixing divine and human blood.

— — —

No one knows for sure whether Hatshepsut and Thutmose II were married when their father died. But at the time of their marriage, neither of them was an adult. Hatshepsut was probably between 12 and 15, and Thutmose was probably a few years older or younger.

Hatshepsut took the traditional vows to be “feminine to a divine degree, to exude fragrance as she walked, and speak in tones that filled the palace with music.” The most important vow was “to make herself loved,” and to do so, she pledged to “tend her lord with love and affection.”

In her life as an unmarried royal princess, Hatshepsut had held the simple title of King's Daughter. But with her brother-husband's coronation, she took on the important role of King's Great Royal Wife. She also held the titles of God's Wife of Amen and King's Sister.

As king, Thutmose II carried on his father's tradition as best he could. Historians believe he was a frail and possibly sickly man. He was successful at some minor military operations, but compared with his father's great achievements. Thutmose II's military successes were insignificant. It is possible, however, that the records of his battles have been lost.

It seems to have been a time of peace, and Thutmose apparently put his efforts into other things besides warfare. He directed the building of monuments and other works. These included adding to the huge temple complex at Karnak on the east side of the Nile in Egypt's southern capital of Thebes.

Thutmose's ancient monuments indicate that Hatshepsut performed her royal wifely duties as a humble King's Wife. In many works depicting her with Thutmose, she appears in a secondary position, as a proper wife and queen would. She is usually dressed in a long, fitted sheath and a crown. Where her mother appears, Hatshepsut is portrayed standing behind both her mother and her husband, as was the tradition.

She also fulfilled her role as mother. During the New Kingdom, royal daughters were many and surviving royal sons were few. Hatshepsut gave birth to a daughter, but as far as history reveals, she and Thutmose had no sons. Whether they had a second daughter is another unanswered question. With infant mortality so high, it is possible that Hatshepsut bore another daughter who did not live to see adulthood.¹³

STEP TWO: Begin to construct a one-level outline

The passage selected for today's outlining exercise has short, easy paragraphs. Remember, you should begin by asking one simple question:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?

In this passage, every single paragraph is about Hatshepsut, Thutmose II—or both of them.

Begin your outline by deciding whether each paragraph is about Hatshepsut, Thutmose II, or both. Write your answers on the outline below, remembering that each Roman numeral stands for a paragraph of the reading. The first point is done for you.

- I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.
- VI.
- VII.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

13. Pamela Dell, *Hatshepsut: Egypt's First Female Pharaoh* (Compass Point Books, 2009), pp. 41–43.

STEP THREE: **Finish constructing a one-level outline**

Now finish your outline by asking the second question: In each paragraph, what did these people *do*? Or to put it another way: What event or part of their lives or accomplishment does the entire paragraph talk about?

Remember, you should not be listing individual details from the paragraphs. Instead, try to think of the single word or phrase that sums up what all the details have in common.

Consider the first paragraph:

No one knows for sure whether Hatshepsut and Thutmose II were married when their father died. But at the time of their marriage, neither of them was an adult. Hatshepsut was probably between 12 and 15, and Thutmose was probably a few years older or younger.

You wouldn't finish out the first main point on your outline by writing:

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II may have married before their father died, were both very young

Both the timing of their marriage, and the *age* at which they were married, are details. But both of those details tell you more about their *marriage*. So your first point should be:

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II and their marriage

or

I. Hatshepsut and Thutmose II's marriage

Try now to finish your outline by finding the main subject of each paragraph. You can use the answer above for I.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

Day Three: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about science

You'll continue to practice basic outlining skills for the rest of this week.

STEP ONE: Read

This excerpt, from the basic geology text *The Round World* by Michael Dempsey, discusses the metals found in the crust of the Earth (the outermost layer of the Earth).

— — —

Pure metals are rarely found in the Earth's crust. Nearly always they are combined with other elements, forming metallic compounds. Iron, for instance, may combine with oxygen or sulphur to form oxides or sulphides.

The quantity of metals in the crust is relatively small. If they were scattered at random, there would never be sufficient concentration of one kind to make extraction worthwhile. Enormous quantities of rock would have to be treated to get a very small quantity of metal.

Fortunately there have been a number of geologic processes during the past history of the Earth which have concentrated the metallic compounds. When a rock contains enough to make extraction worthwhile it is called an *ore*.

There are three kinds of rock, *igneous* (cooled from a molten state), *sedimentary* (built up of weathered fragments of earlier rock) and *metamorphic* (rock altered by temperatures and pressures). All three may be orebearing, though the methods by which the metal becomes concentrated vary.¹⁴

STEP TWO: Understand how to outline science writing

When you outline science writing, you may need to ask slightly different versions of the questions suggested at the beginning of this week. Remember, those questions are:

1. What is the main thing or person that the paragraph is about?
2. Why is that thing important?

For a science text, you might sometimes find it more useful to ask:

14. Dempsey, Michael. *The Round World: Foundations of Geology and Geomorphology* (Sampson Low, Marston & Co., 1966), pp. 112–113.

1. What is being described or defined in this paragraph?
2. Is there one central thing which is most important about it?

Look at the first paragraph again and ask yourself: What is being described or defined in this paragraph?

This isn't an easy question to answer, because the paragraph starts out with a *negative* definition. What is *not* (or rarely) found in the Earth's crust?



Pure metals.

This paragraph is centered around describing what is found in the Earth's crust *instead of* pure metals. Pure metals aren't found in the Earth's crust—what is found instead?



Metals combined with other elements.

That answers both questions—metals are being described in this paragraph, and the most important thing about those metals is that they're combined with other elements.

So the first point in your outline would look like this:

I. Metals combined with other elements

There may be more than one good way to phrase a main point. If, for example, you wrote

I. The makeup of metals in the crust

that could also sum up the main idea of the paragraph—which then goes on to define exactly *what* the makeup of metals in the crust is.

STEP THREE: **Construct a one-level outline**

Now finish your outline by finding the main point for each of the remaining three paragraphs.

If you have difficulty, use the hints below. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

- I. The makeup of metals in the crust (this point was already covered for you!)
- II. This point has to do with amounts.
- III. This paragraph has a definition in it. What is being defined? (You don't have to give the *content* of the definition.)
- IV. How many kinds of what?

Day Four: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main topic in each paragraph of a passage about science

STEP ONE: Understand topical outlines

In the last passage you outlined, each paragraph talked about the same basic topic: metals in the Earth's crust. But even though *every* paragraph talked about metals in the Earth's crust, you couldn't outline it by writing:

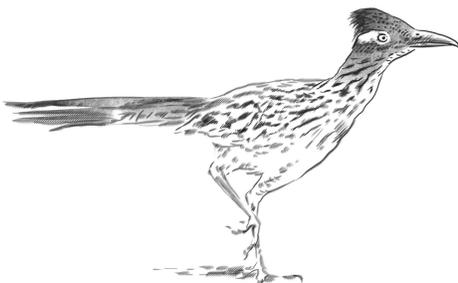
- I. Metals
- II. Metals
- III. Metals
- IV. Metals

Instead, you had to identify what was being *said* about metals in each paragraph. The first paragraph talked about metals combined with each other, the second about how *much* metal was in the crust, the third about metal in rock (ore), and the fourth about the kinds of rock that have metal in them.

But sometimes a writer will use each paragraph of an essay to talk about a different topic. Look at the following paragraphs, adapted from a popular book about birds published at the beginning of the last century:

The road runner is distinguished by curiously marked plumage, the possession of a long bill and a disproportionally long tail. As a result of its strange appearance, and stranger antics, the road runner is made the hero of many a fable. Among other wonders it is claimed that it can outrun the swiftest horse and kill the biggest rattlesnake. It is said to accomplish the latter feat by surrounding the reptile while asleep with a rampart of cactus spines on which the enraged reptile impales itself. Its food consists of a great variety of harmful insects, among which the snout beetles or weevils are conspicuous.

It devours also mice, horned lizards, centipedes, land shells and small snakes; probably a young rattlesnake would fare no better than any other small snake.



Petrels are commonly known everywhere as "Mother Carey's Chickens." They are ocean wanderers who spend almost their whole lives on the billows of the deep. Always they follow in the wake of ships, quickly pouncing upon any refuse that may be thrown overboard. Petrels delight in a storm, for

it usually brings them food in plenty and they seem to know when one is coming. Petrels, it is said, get their name from their habit of walking on the water like Peter of old. However, they only appear to patter over the surface with their long, slender, black legs and little web feet, for in truth, they are supported by the constant motion of their wings. At night, when these restless birds have finally managed to tire themselves with their endless game of cross-tag and their excursions far and wide on every side of the swiftly running ship, they tuck their heads under their wings and settle down upon the waves to slumber peacefully.

Crows are usually affectionate, almost as much so as dogs. Once a crow becomes attached to you he will always be your friend. Leave him, and, while he will make one friendship during your absence, he will come back to you as soon as you return. Crows are naturally clean. When they are eating, if the tiniest particle sticks to their plumage they immediately stop to remove it.

The dusky grouse has gray, white, and black plumage, darkest on the back and tail. They build their nests under fallen trees or at the base of standing ones. They lay from six to ten eggs of a buff color, spotted and blotched with shades of brown. Its flesh is delicious eating and the mountain camper rarely loses an opportunity to feast on it. In spring the loud and sonorous hooting of the grouse comes from some giant pine in ravine and canyon, and can be heard for long distances. The male is a lazy father.¹⁵

Each one of these paragraphs describes a different bird. The simplest way to outline the passage is:

- I. The road runner
- II. Petrels
- III. Crows
- IV. The dusky grouse

This topical outline doesn't try to find the most *important* thing about the road runner, petrels, crows, or the dusky grouse. Since the paragraphs go on to give a whole list of facts about each bird, it would be almost impossible to figure out which fact is the most "central." What's central in each paragraph is the bird itself.

So the topical outline simply lists the topics: one kind of bird for each paragraph.

STEP TWO: **Read**

This excerpt is taken from the science book *Real Things in Nature* by Edward S. Holden. After you've read the passage, you will construct a basic topical outline of its paragraphs.

— — —

The sun is a huge globe nearly 870,000 miles in diameter. It is intensely hot and is made of gases and vapors. All the metals that we know—iron,

15. Adapted from *Birds and Nature in Natural Colors* (A. W. Mumford, 1914), pp. 341–346.

gold, copper, silver—are in the sun but they are not solid. They are vapors. The clouds in the sun are made up of drops of melted iron, gold, silver and so forth, just as our clouds are made up of drops of water. These fiery clouds are inconceivably hot; and they are driven to and fro by terrific hurricanes and winds. If you look into an iron furnace where the white-hot iron is boiling you get a kind of a picture of the sun's surface. The boiling lava in a volcano is a little like the surface of the sun, only not nearly so hot. The sun is 5,000 times more brilliant than white-hot boiling iron.

Outside of the boiling surface of the sun with its atmosphere of white-hot metallic clouds there is another envelope, something like another atmosphere. It is called the corona—the crown—of the sun. We see it only at the time of a solar eclipse.

The universe is full of swarms of meteors—clouds of stones travelling in orbits of their own. Many such swarms travel in orbits about the sun, as the planets do. They are usually quite invisible. We know they exist, though, because whenever the earth passes through one of these swarms we have showers of shooting stars.

If you will watch the sky, any clear night, patiently you will be sure to see several shooting stars every hour. You will see a little spot of light like a star suddenly appear and move across the sky, often leaving a bright trail of light. Each of these shooting stars is caused by a stone from a meteor swarm which enters the earth's atmosphere and falls towards the earth. As it falls (at the rate of about 20 miles a second) it becomes hot and bursts into flame and fire. Even a rifle bullet, which only goes half a mile a second, gets very hot in its passage through the air. A meteor becomes so hot that it burns up completely unless it is very large.

Comets usually come from the spaces outside our solar system and move round the sun once and then go off again, never to return. Comets are crowds of stones moving in a swarm. If you ever see a swarm of mayflies round the globe of an electric street-lamp, go off a little distance and you will see that the swarm looks like a whitish cloud. The rings of Saturn and comets are swarms of stones. If you go near to the electric-light you can see the separate flies. If you could go near enough to a comet (or to the rings of Saturn) you could see the separate stones. Comets give out light of their own, perhaps due to electricity.¹⁶

STEP THREE: **Construct a one-level topical outline**

Now write a one-level outline for the passage, listing only the main topic discussed in each paragraph. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

WEEK 3: USING THE THESAURUS

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing first-person
nonfiction

This week, you'll review the skills of narration and outlining, as well as adding one more tool to your toolbox: the use of a thesaurus.

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from *The Story of My Life*, the autobiography (a biography written by the person herself) of Helen Keller. Helen Keller was born in 1880. She lost both her hearing and sight after a serious illness when she was 19 months old. Because she could neither see nor hear, she couldn't communicate with others. When she was six years old, her parents asked the Perkins Institution for the Blind in Boston to help them by sending Helen a teacher. The teacher who came was Anne Sullivan, aged 20. Sullivan took on the job of trying to communicate with Helen. In this part of the autobiography, Helen describes the moment when her teacher suddenly found a way to make contact with her.

— — —

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

But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name.

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

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

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

I learned a great many new words that day. I do not remember what they all were; but I do know that *mother*, *father*, *sister*, *teacher* were among them—words that were to make the world blossom for me, “like Aaron’s rod, with flowers.” It would have been difficult to find a happier child than I was as I lay in my crib at the close of that eventful day and lived over the joys it had brought me, and for the first time longed for a new day to come.¹⁷

17. Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903), pp. 22–24.

STEP TWO: Understand the use of first and third person

You will notice that the passage is written in the *first person*—from the point of view of Helen Keller herself. Look at the following quote from the story and circle each bolded pronoun. These are first person pronouns.

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

Now read another version of the quote, in which the first person pronouns have been changed to third person pronouns and names.

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

When you write your summary, you may either use the first person (as though *you* were Helen, summarizing her own story) or the third person point of view. Whichever you choose, be sure to use the same point of view all the way through the summary.

STEP THREE: Note important events

Now jot down six or seven phrases or short sentences that remind you of the main events in the passage. Remember, you can use either the first or third person. You can write

Miss Sullivan gave Helen a doll

or

Miss Sullivan gave me a doll

as long as you keep the same point of view in every phrase or sentence.

Do not use more than seven phrases or short sentences! Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the passage.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP FOUR: **Write summary sentences**

After you've written down your six or seven phrases or sentences, try to combine them into four sentences. Remember: you can do this by putting two phrases or sentences together, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

Say your sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. Remember to proofread the sentences first by reading them out loud.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Thesaurus Use



Focus: Understanding and using
the thesaurus

STEP ONE: **Understand thesaurus use**

A thesaurus is a reference book that groups together words with similar but different shades of meaning. (A dictionary, on the other hand, contains definitions of single, particular words.) When you write, you can use the thesaurus to find the exact word you need. (Note: The numbers in the following description are based on the fourth edition of *Roget's International Thesaurus*. You will probably use a different edition, but the organization of your thesaurus will be the same even if the numbers are a little different.)

A thesaurus contains two types of lists.

The first half of the thesaurus contains words grouped by meaning and part of speech. These word groups all have numbers. For example, the list headed

475. Knowledge

might contain:

1. **nouns** that name different kinds of knowledge (information, facts, experience, perception, insight, understanding, wisdom, literacy), as well as names for fields of knowledge (literature, science, art, technology) and names of people who know things (scientist, scholar, authority, expert, intellectual),
2. **verbs** for the act of knowing (know, perceive, recognize, discern, be learned in, be expert in), and
3. **adjectives** that describe both people who are knowledgeable (informed, instructed, trained, familiar with, learned, educated, bookish) and things which are known (well-known, recognized, familiar, grasped, common, public).

The second half of the thesaurus contains an alphabetical listing of thousands of vocabulary words. This is the part of the thesaurus that you'll go to first as you write.

In the last lesson, you learned that Helen Keller “left the well-house eager to learn.” Suppose that, while writing your summary, it seemed most natural to write “After Helen Keller learned that words stood for things, she was eager to learn.” That’s true, but when writing a summary you should try not to copy the exact wording in the passage. So instead, you could turn to the second half of your thesaurus and look up *eager* in the *e* section.

Beneath the word *eager*, you would find a series of other adjectives with different shades of meaning, each followed by a number: for example,

<i>consenting</i>	775.4
<i>desirous</i>	634.21
<i>willing</i>	622.5
<i>zealous</i>	635.9

Which of these comes closest to the meaning of *eager*, as Helen Keller used it? Probably not “consenting,” because that just implies that she wouldn’t *refuse* to learn if offered the opportunity—but in the passage, Keller is anxious to learn. “Willing” also fails to show how eager Keller was. But “desirous” and “zealous” both imply a real desire and need to learn.

If you decide that “zealous” is the closest to “eager,” you would then turn back to the group of words numbered 635 in the first half of the thesaurus. That group of words is headed “Eagerness,” so all of the nouns, adjectives, and verbs in it will have something to do with being eager. Glancing down the group, you would see that Section 635 has 15 different subgroups. The first six subgroups contain nouns; the next two contain verbs; the five after that, adjectives; and the final two, adverbs.

Since the word “zealous” was followed by the number 635.9, you would then look down to subgroup 9 of Section 635. There, you would find a series of adjectives closely related to the adjective *zealous*:

eager, anxious, avid, keen, prompt, ready, lively, vital, champing at the bit,
and many more.

You could choose one of these adjectives to substitute for *eager* and write one of the following:

She was anxious to learn.
She was keen to learn.
She was champing at the bit to learn.

Sometimes you’ll find that the word you chose to follow leads you to a section where none of the words seem to fit. That’s normal; using a thesaurus is sometimes a process of trial and error. But reading through the lists will help expand your vocabulary and fill your memory with words.

STEP TWO: **Practice thesaurus use**

Begin to practice your thesaurus skills now, using two sentences from Helen Keller’s memoir.

For each underlined noun, adjective, and verb, find four synonyms in your thesaurus. List those synonyms on the lines provided. Remember that you must provide noun synonyms for nouns, adjective synonyms for adjectives, and verb synonyms for verbs.

When you look up a verb, remember that you'll need to look it up in the present tense. "Felt" is in a past tense. The present tense of "felt" is "feel." "Feel" is the word you'd look up in the second half of the thesaurus.

After you've found the synonyms, rewrite each sentence one time on your own paper, choosing from among the listed synonyms. Do not repeat any of the synonyms. When you've finished, read your sentences out loud and listen to how the sound and rhythm change. Remember to put your verbs back in the past tense!

If you're not sure which subsections of the thesaurus you should go to, ask your instructor for help.

When you're finished, show your work to your instructor.

Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.

felt _____

misty _____

mystery _____

Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst.

sorrow _____

regret _____

outburst _____

Day Three: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a passage about science

STEP ONE: Read

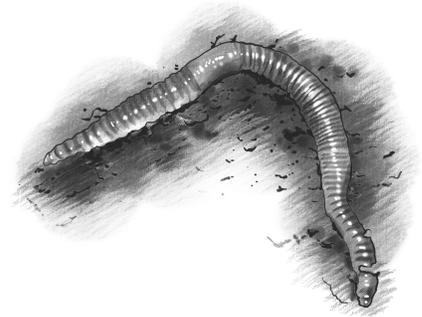
The following passage has two parts. The first four paragraphs all deal with the same topic (earthworms); each paragraph explores a different part or feature of the earthworm. The last three paragraphs describe different relatives of the earthworm, so each one has a different topic.

- - -

The earthworms are the commonest members of the branch of animals next below the insects in organization. Many people confuse the larvae of insects with worms, but a glance will at once distinguish them. The worms have no distinct head, while the larvae have. The former have no legs, while the larvae have jointed legs. Although both consist of a series of ring-like divisions, the larvae have a constant number, while earthworms have a varying number, forty or more.

There are two interesting things about the earthworm. In the first place it is of great benefit to the soil, owing to the fact that it is continually bringing the sub-soil to the surface by passing it through its body. It digests the vegetable matter in the soil and ejects the indigestible portion. Thus the soil is loosened, aired and enriched by the same process. Look for the “casts” of the earthworm on the bare ground, especially after a wet night.

The other interesting fact is that when an earthworm is cut in two, each part becomes an independent worm, and two worms grow where there was only one before. . . . The advantage of this power of resisting death is evident, inasmuch as the earthworm lives in surface soil, through which sharp-edged instruments, *e.g.*, hoe, plough-share, etc., often pass.



The structure of the animal is very simple and it has few special organs. It has no breathing organs. The blood is aerated through the body-wall. There is no heart, but the whole blood system is contractile. It has no eyes, but is provided with a very rudimentary organ of hearing.

Hairworms are interesting relatives of the earthworm. They are found in shallow water in ponds and in lakes. Owing to their resemblance to hairs, it is erroneously believed that they are really horse-hairs which have fallen into the water and have somehow become animated. The fact that they become torpid when the water dries up and revive with the return of water, has been accepted as conclusive evidence of their origin from hairs. Needless to say, they have no connection with hairs of any kind, except in appearance.

The lugworm lives in the sand of the sea-shore, and performs the same work on sand that the earthworm does on soil. Its “casts” may be seen on the surface of the sand.

The leech is a wormlike animal often found in pools. It fixes itself to other animals by means of disks, one at each end, and then extracts the blood after cutting through the skin. After one good meal it can live for months without any further food. The medicinal leech comes from Germany. It was formerly highly prized by physicians for the purpose of bleeding patients.¹⁸

18. S. Silcox, *Modern Nature Study* (George N. Morang & Company, 1902), pp. 188–189.

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Now write a one-level outline for the passage on the worksheet below.

Because the passage shifts from a detailed discussion of earthworms to a more topical description of other worms, you should also shift your outlining style when you get to the last three paragraphs. For the first four paragraphs, use the questions

1. What is being described or defined in this paragraph?
2. Is there one central thing which is most important about it?

to find the main point. For the last three paragraphs, simply list the topic covered.

Two of the points are done for you.

I. The difference between earthworms and insect larvae

II.

III.

IV.

V. Hairworms

VI.

VII.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, check your work with your instructor.

Day Four: Thesaurus Use



Focus:
Using the thesaurus

STEP ONE: **Practice thesaurus use**

For each underlined noun, adjective, and verb, find four synonyms in your thesaurus. (You only need to find two for “loosened.”) List those synonyms on the lines provided. Remember that you must provide noun synonyms for nouns, adjective synonyms for adjectives, and verb synonyms for verbs.

When you look up a verb, remember that you’ll need to look up the active form and the present tense. “Is loosened” is the past tense and passive form of “loosen.” “Is aired” is the past tense and passive form of “air.” (Make sure you look at the *verb* “air,” not the *noun* “air”!) What is the active, present form of “is enriched”?

After you’ve found the synonyms, rewrite each sentence one time on your own paper, choosing from among the listed synonyms. Do not repeat any of the synonyms. When you’ve finished, read your sentences out loud and listen to how the sound and rhythm change. Remember to put your verbs back in the past tense!

When you are finding synonyms for science writing, you should be particularly careful to pick words close in meaning. Leeches are found in pools, not oceans—even though “pool” and “ocean” may both be found in the same section of your thesaurus. In this exercise, work hard to find the *right* synonyms.

When you’re finished, show your work to your instructor.

Thus the soil is loosened, aired and enriched by the same process.

soil	_____	_____	_____	_____
loosened	_____	_____		
aired	_____	_____	_____	_____
enriched	_____	_____	_____	_____

The leech is a wormlike animal often found in pools.

animal	_____	_____	_____	_____
found	_____	_____	_____	_____

Part II

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR COMPOSITION WEEKS 4-15

Overview of Weeks 4-15

Begin by labelling the third section of your Composition Notebook “Topoi.” Leave the next two sections blank; you’ll be using them later in the year. Label the last section “Reference.”

In the next 12 weeks of this course, you’ll be doing three things.

Narrations. First, you’ll review how to write narrations. The ability to summarize a story in three or four sentences is a basic skill which should be in place before you begin to work on outlining. Eleven of these first 12 weeks begin with a one-day narration exercise; when these exercises are completed, place them in the first section of your notebook.

If you have a great deal of difficulty with the narrations, you may need to spend a few weeks working on this skill before continuing with *Writing with Skill*. Additional narration practice is provided in *Writing with Ease, Level Four*.

Outlines. Instead of immediately starting to write compositions, you’ll begin by working on skills that need to be in place *before* you begin to write.

Writing involves two difficult tasks. First, you have to figure out what you’re writing about—the general topic, the information you should include, and where to find that information. Second, you have to put that information into the correct order before you can start setting it down on paper.

Instead of asking you to do both difficult tasks at the same time, this curriculum will give you the chance to practice them separately. You’ll begin by practicing the second task: setting information down in order.

On the second day of each week, you’ll complete an outlining exercise. Outlining helps you put information in the correct order; once you’ve ordered your facts, you can begin to write about them. When you practice outlining, you’re developing your ability to carry out the second task in writing. (And because you’re outlining someone else’s writing, you don’t have to come up with original ideas while you’re practicing.)

When you've finished these outlines, place them in the second section of your notebook.

Topoi. Now that you've practiced putting information into the correct order, how do you practice the first step in the writing process—figuring out *what* to write about?

On the third and fourth days of each week, you'll study *topoi* (the plural form of the Greek word *topos*, from which we get the English word "topic"). In classical rhetoric—the study of writing in ancient and medieval times—*topoi* helped writers come up with arguments. If, for example, you were an Athenian and you wanted to convince your readers that the leaders of Athens were better than the rulers of Rome, you might first have told the story of what happened to Rome when it had insane or evil emperors. Then, you might have explained that the reason why Athens was flourishing was because it had sane, virtuous leaders.

Both parts of your argument are *topoi*. The first (telling the story of what happened to Rome) is a *topos* called "chronological narrative"—a story told from beginning to end in the same order that it happened in time. The second is a *topos* called "cause and effect sequence"—connecting something that happened (Athens flourished!) with whatever caused it (sane, virtuous leaders).

Topos literally means "place," and *topoi* are places that you go to find something to write about. If your assignment in history is "Read this chapter about the Great Pyramid and then write a brief composition," having a list of *topoi* in mind helps you come up with the subject of the composition. You might think to yourself "Can I tell a story about the Great Pyramid from beginning to end? Yes, I could write about its construction." (That would be a chronological narrative on a historical topic.) Or you might think "Can I explain cause and effect about the Great Pyramid? Yes, I could write about Egyptian views on the afterlife, and how those views caused the Great Pyramid to be built." (That would be a cause and effect sequence for a historical event.)

File any compositions written during the third and fourth days of your work under "Topoi" in the third section of your notebook.

WEEK 4: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A PAST EVENT

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from Edith Nesbit’s short story “The Deliverers of Their Country,” found in *The Book of Dragons*.

— — —

It all began with Effie’s getting something in her eye. It hurt very much indeed, and it felt something like a red-hot spark—only it seemed to have legs as well, and wings like a fly. Effie rubbed and cried—not real crying, but the kind your eye does all by itself without your being miserable inside your mind—and then she went to her father to have the thing in her eye taken out. Effie’s father was a doctor, so of course he knew how to take things out of eyes—he did it very cleverly with a soft paintbrush dipped in castor oil.

When he had gotten the thing out, he said: “This is very curious.” Effie had often got things in her eye before, and her father had always seemed to think it was natural—rather tiresome and naughty perhaps, but still natural. He had never before thought it curious.

Effie stood holding her handkerchief to her eye, and said: “I don’t believe it’s out.” People always say this when they have had something in their eyes.



“Oh, yes—it’s out,” said the doctor. “Here it is, on the brush. This is very interesting.”

Effie had never heard her father say that about anything that she had any share in. She said: “What?”

The doctor carried the brush very carefully across the room, and held the point of it under his microscope—then he twisted the brass screws of the microscope, and looked through the top with one eye.

“Dear me,” he said. “Dear, dear me! Four well-developed limbs; a long caudal appendage; five toes, unequal in lengths, almost like one of the *Lacertidae*, yet there are traces of wings.” The creature under his eye wriggled a little in the castor oil, and he went on: “Yes; a batlike wing. A new specimen, undoubtedly. Effie, run round to the professor and ask him to be kind enough to step in for a few minutes.”

“You might give me sixpence, Daddy,” said Effie, “because I did bring you the new specimen. I took great care of it inside my eye, and my eye *does* hurt.”

The doctor was so pleased with the new specimen that he gave Effie a shilling, and presently the professor stepped round. He stayed to lunch, and he and the doctor quarreled very happily all the afternoon about the name and the family of the thing that had come out of Effie’s eye.

But at teatime another thing happened. Effie’s brother Harry fished something out of his tea, which he thought at first was an earwig. He was just getting ready to drop it on the floor, and end its life in the usual way, when it shook itself in the spoon—spread two wet wings, and flopped onto the tablecloth. There it sat, stroking itself with its feet and stretching its wings, and Harry said: “Why, it’s a tiny newt!”

The professor leaned forward before the doctor could say a word. “I’ll give you half a crown for it, Harry, my lad,” he said, speaking very fast; and then he picked it up carefully on his handkerchief.

“It is a new specimen,” he said, “and finer than yours, Doctor.”

It was a tiny lizard, about half an inch long—with scales and wings.

So now the doctor and the professor each had a specimen, and they were both very pleased. But before long these specimens began to seem less valuable. For the next morning, when the knife-boy was cleaning the doctor’s boots, he suddenly dropped the brushes and the boot and the blacking, and screamed out that he was burnt.

And from inside the boot came crawling a lizard as big as a kitten, with large, shiny wings.

“Why,” said Effie, “I know what it is. It is a dragon like the one St. George killed.”

And Effie was right. That afternoon Towser was bitten in the garden by a dragon about the size of a rabbit, which he had tried to chase, and the next morning all the papers were full of the wonderful “winged lizards” that were

appearing all over the country. The papers would not call them dragons, because, of course, no one believes in dragons nowadays—and at any rate the papers were not going to be so silly as to believe in fairy stories. At first there were only a few, but in a week or two the country was simply running alive with dragons of all sizes, and in the air you could sometimes see them as thick as a swarm of bees. They all looked alike except as to size. They were green with scales, and they had four legs and a long tail and great wings like bats' wings, only the wings were a pale, half-transparent yellow, like the gear-boxes on bicycles.

They breathed fire and smoke, as all proper dragons must, but still the newspapers went on pretending they were lizards, until the editor of the *Standard* was picked up and carried away by a very large one, and then the other newspaper people had not anyone left to tell them what they ought not to believe. So when the largest elephant in the Zoo was carried off by a dragon, the papers gave up pretending—and put **ALARMING PLAGUE OF DRAGONS** at the top of the paper.

You have no idea how alarming it was, and at the same time how aggravating. The large-size dragons were terrible certainly, but when once you had found out that the dragons always went to bed early because they were afraid of the chill night air, you had only to stay indoors all day, and you were pretty safe from the big ones. But the smaller sizes were a perfect nuisance. The ones as big as earwigs got in the soap, and they got in the butter. The ones as big as dogs got in the bath, and the fire and smoke inside them made them steam like anything when the cold water tap was turned on, so that careless people were often scalded quite severely. The ones that were as large as pigeons would get into workbaskets or corner drawers and bite you when you were in a hurry to get a needle or a handkerchief. The ones as big as sheep were easier to avoid, because you could see them coming; but when they flew in at the windows and curled up under your eiderdown, and you did not find them till you went to bed, it was always a shock. The ones this size did not eat people, only lettuce, but they always scorched the sheets and pillowcases dreadfully.

Of course, the County Council and the police did everything that could be done: It was no use offering the hand of the Princess to anyone who killed a dragon. This way was all very well in olden times—when there was only one dragon and one Princess; but now there were far more dragons than Princesses—although the Royal Family was a large one. And besides, it would have been a mere waste of Princesses to offer rewards for killing dragons, because everybody killed as many dragons as they could quite out of their own heads and without rewards at all, just to get the nasty things out of the way. The County Council undertook to cremate all dragons delivered at their offices between the hours of ten and two, and whole wagonloads and cartloads and truckloads of dead dragons could be seen any day of the week standing in a long line in the street where the County Council had their offices. Boys brought barrowloads of dead dragons, and children on their way home from morning school would call

in to leave the handful or two of little dragons they had brought in their satchels, or carried in their knotted pocket handkerchiefs. And yet there seemed to be as many dragons as ever. Then the police stuck up great wood and canvas towers covered with patent glue. When the dragons flew against these towers, they stuck fast, as flies and wasps do on the sticky papers in the kitchen; and when the towers were covered all over with dragons, the police inspector used to set fire to the towers, and burnt them and dragons and all.

And yet there seemed to be more dragons than ever. The shops were full of patent dragon poison and anti-dragon soap, and dragonproof curtains for the windows; and indeed, everything that could be done was done.

And yet there seemed to be more dragons than ever.¹⁹

STEP TWO: Note important events

You will now summarize the passage in three or four sentences and write those sentences down on your own paper.

Before you can write a brief summary of a lengthy passage, you'll need to identify the most important events in the passage. On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you're not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn't understand the rest of the story. (For example, if you left out the fact that the dragons were everywhere, would the reactions of the people make sense to you?)

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

Here's a head start: begin with the sentence "Effie got a dragon in her eye."

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Effie got a dragon in her eye" and "Her brother got a dragon in his tea" could be combined into "Effie and her brother both found small dragons"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you wrote down "Everyone killed the dragons" as well as "Police caught dragons and burned them," you don't really need the second sentence. If everyone was killing the dragons, that includes the police.)

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. If you took a main event out of the original story, the rest of the story wouldn't make sense. It doesn't really matter what

19. Edith Nesbit, "The Deliverers of Their Country." From *The Book of Dragons* (Dover, 2004), pp. 41–45. Originally published by Harper & Brothers, 1900.

the newspapers first called the dragons—without that detail, the story still makes sense. But if we didn't know that the dragons were everywhere, we wouldn't understand why they were such a big problem.

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a historical narrative

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *The Story of Mankind* by Hendrik van Loon. You will see *ellipses* (. . .) after the first paragraph. The ellipses tell you that after the period at the end of “They had invented the art of writing,” some of the text has been cut. (The paragraph which we removed was unrelated to the Egyptians; it was about cats, dogs, puppies, kittens, and writing. If you're curious, go check the book out of the library and read the whole chapter yourself.)

— — —

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

In the first century before our era, when the Romans came to Egypt, they found the valley full of strange little pictures which seemed to have something to do with the history of the country. But the Romans were not interested in “anything foreign” and did not inquire into the origin of these queer figures which covered the walls of the temples and the walls of the palaces and endless reams of flat sheets made out of the papyrus reed. The last of the Egyptian priests who had understood the holy art of making such pictures had died several years before. Egypt deprived of its independence had become a store-house filled with important historical documents which no one could decipher and which were of no earthly use to either man or beast.

Seventeen centuries went by and Egypt remained a land of mystery. But in the year 1798 a French general by the name of Bonaparte happened to visit eastern Africa to prepare for an attack upon the British Indian Colonies. He did not get beyond the Nile, and his campaign was a failure. But, quite accidentally, the famous French expedition solved the problem of the ancient Egyptian picture-language.

One day a young French officer, much bored by the dreary life of his little fortress on the Rosetta river (a mouth of the Nile) decided to spend a few idle hours rummaging among the ruins of the Nile Delta. And behold! he found a stone which greatly puzzled him. Like everything else in Egypt it was covered with little figures. But this particular slab of black basalt was different from anything that had ever been discovered. It carried three inscriptions. One of these was in Greek. The Greek language was known. "All that is necessary," so he reasoned, "is to compare the Greek text with the Egyptian figures, and they will at once tell their secrets."

The plan sounded simple enough but it took more than twenty years to solve the riddle. In the year 1802 a French professor by the name of Champolion began to compare the Greek and the Egyptian texts of the famous Rosetta stone. In the year 1823 he announced that he had discovered the meaning of fourteen little figures. A short time later he died from overwork, but the main principles of Egyptian writing had become known.²⁰



STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Instead of simply summarizing this passage, you will outline it.

Let's review the outlining process. You'll begin by looking for the main idea in each section of text. The passage above is divided into four sections (there's an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

20. Hendrik van Loon, *The Story of Mankind* (Boni and Liveright, 1921), pp. 17–19.

In previous lessons, you did this for single paragraphs; often, though, a single main idea will be explored in more than one paragraph.

Don't try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? If you're not sure, ask yourself: Who was responsible for all the inventions and discoveries in that first paragraph?



The Egyptians.

Now look at everything else in the passage, which tells you why the Egyptians were important: they were important because of all the things they did.

You can't list each individual invention or discovery, because you're not trying to include *all* the information in a single sentence. If you knew someone who played basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, and field hockey, you wouldn't summarize by saying "She plays basketball, football, soccer, volleyball, and field hockey." You'd say "She plays many sports."

Try finishing your sentence now. What did you come up with?



Your sentence should sound like one of these:

- I. The Egyptians invented and discovered many things. OR*
I. The Egyptians made many inventions and discoveries.

(Be sure not to simply copy the first sentence in the paragraph. Remember, this is supposed to be a summary in *your own words*.)

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence for each one of the remaining four sections. (You can use the sentence we gave you for the first section.) When you write an outline, you should use Roman numerals for the summary sentences, like this:

- I. The Egyptians made many inventions and discoveries.
- II. Second sentence
- III. Third sentence
- IV. Fourth sentence

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn't always necessary in an outline).

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative of a past event

The passage you outlined in your last writing session is an example of this week's topos: a **chronological narrative of a past event** (the deciphering of Egyptian writing). Remember, a topos is a form of writing.

When you write a chronological narrative of a past event, you explain *what happened in the past*, and *in what sequence*. A chronological narrative can stand on its own as a history composition or can be a smaller part of a larger paper.

Today's assignment is to examine how a chronological narrative is put together.

STEP ONE: Examine model passages

When you set out to write a chronological narrative in history, you aim to answer two simple questions:

Who did what to whom? (Or What was done to what?)

In what sequence?

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *The Story of Mankind*. The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. The Egyptians invented and discovered many things.
- II. Egyptian writing could not be read.
- III. A French officer discovered a stone with writing on it.
- IV. Champollion discovered the main principles of Egyptian writing.

Notice that each one of these main points answers the first question: *Who did what to whom? (Or What was done to what?)*

- I. *Who?* The Egyptians *Did what?* invented and discovered *To what?* many things.
- II. *What?* Egyptian writing *What was done to it?* could not be read.
- III. *Who?* A French officer *Did what?* discovered *what?* a stone with writing on it.
- IV. *Who?* Champollion *Did what?* discovered *To what?* the main principles of Egyptian writing.

The points are also put into chronological order (in other words, the oldest event comes first, the next oldest second, and so on). First, Egyptians invented writing. After that, the ability to read the writing faded away. Long after that, a French officer discovered the stone. And after the discovery of the stone, Champollion cracked the code of Egyptian writing.

Here is a second example of a **chronological narrative of a past event**, from *Albert Einstein and the Theory of Relativity* by Robert Cwiklik. It describes a village festival that Albert Einstein went to when he was four years old.

As the celebration wound on, darkness fell. Everyone sensed that the event they were waiting for was about to happen. The crowd grew tense with excitement.

Suddenly, the gas lamps along the avenue were dimmed. The street was almost totally dark.

The band stopped playing. The people grew so quiet that they could hear the sausages roasting.

Then, from somewhere unseen, a switch was thrown.

In a great flash, the huge theater exploded in a blaze of bright, white light. The light spilled onto the crowd. The horses in the avenue shied and dogs yelped and howled, startled by the sudden brightness. But the people raised up a great cheer and began to applaud loudly. They stared at the theater in astonishment and wonder.

All around the theater building lamps were burning—not with smoky wicks and gas, but with clean, new electric lights.²¹

This chronological narrative of a past event introduces a discussion about Albert Einstein's early interest in electricity. Because chronological narratives sound like stories, they seize the reader's attention.

Glance back over the four sections and notice the order of events.

In the first section, nothing has happened yet; the crowd is just waiting for an event. With your pencil, underline "the crowd" (the *who*) once. Underline the phrase "they were waiting" twice (this answers the question *did what?*).

The second section happens right after the first section. You know this because of the word "suddenly." Draw a box around "suddenly." Underline "gas lamps" once and "dimmed" twice. These words answer the question *What did what?*

In the third section, underline "The band" and "The people" (the *who*) once. Underline the phrase "grew so quiet" twice (this answers the question *did what?*).

21. Robert Cwiklik, *Albert Einstein and the Theory of Relativity* (Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 1987), pp. 2–3.

In the final section, draw a box around “then.” This time word tells you that the last section comes *after* the events listed earlier. Underline “electric lights” once and “exploded in a blaze” twice. These words answer the question *What did what?*

Now look at the summary below:

At first, the crowd was waiting.

Suddenly the gas lamps dimmed.

The band and the people grew quiet.

Then electric lights exploded in a blaze.

The original narrative has a lot more details in it—but this summary shows you exactly how the writer tells each main event in chronological order.

STEP TWO: Write down the pattern of the topos

Now copy the following chart onto a blank sheet of paper in the “Reference” section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page; also leave blank space under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative of a past event

Day Four: Practicing the Topos

A chronological narrative of a past event can be used in many different kinds of writing. If you’re asked to write about history, you can decide to tell, in order, what happened during a battle, or when a king died and his heir fought for the throne, or when an explorer set off to find a new land. But you can also use a short chronological narrative as the introduction to a scientific composition, or as a way to grab the reader’s interest in a composition on any other subject. Here’s the beginning of Susan Casey’s book *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean*:

57.5° N, 12.7° W, 175 miles off the coast of Scotland

February 8, 2000

The clock read midnight when the hundred-foot wave hit the ship, rising from the North Atlantic out of the darkness. Among the ocean's terrors a wave this size was the most feared and the least understood, more myth than reality—or so people had thought. This giant was certainly real. As the RRS *Discovery* plunged down into the wave's deep trough, it heeled twenty-eight degrees to port, rolled thirty degrees back to starboard, then recovered to face the incoming seas. . . . Captain Keith Avery steered his vessel directly into the onslaught, just as he had been doing for the past five days. . . . He stood barefoot at the helm, the only way he could maintain traction after a refrigerator toppled over, splashing out a slick of milk, juice, and broken glass (no time to clean it up—the waves just kept coming). . . . [The] waves suddenly grew even bigger and meaner and steeper. Avery heard a loud bang coming from *Discovery's* foredeck. He squinted in the dark to see that the fifty-man lifeboat had partially ripped from its two-inch-thick steel cleats and was pounding against the hull.²²

That's a much more interesting beginning than "The significant wave height, an average of the largest 33 percent of the waves, was sixty-one feet, with frequent spikes far beyond that," which the writer gets to after the story is over.

Today, you'll start to practice putting together a chronological narrative of your own. In later weeks, the "Practicing the Topos" exercise will be completed in a single session. Since this is the first time you have attempted to use this skill, this first exercise will be divided between today and the first day of next week's lesson.

STEP ONE: Plan the narrative

Your first step is to plan out the narrative by choosing a theme (this will also serve as your title) and selecting the events you'll write about.

On the next page, you'll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, from the life of Alexander the Great. The bolded entries are main events; the indented entries are further details about those main events. (These details are taken from Plutarch's "Life of Alexander," written in AD 75.)

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times. Do not try to include all of the events! Instead, you will

22. Susan Casey, *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks, and Giants of the Ocean* (Doubleday, 2010) pp. 3–4.

need to select which events to use and which ones to leave out. This will force you to pick a “theme” for your chronological narrative.

For example: if you decide that your chronological narrative will be about “Alexander’s Invasions,” you might want to start your chronological narrative at 334 BC, the invasion of Persia, and only include the following events:

- Invaded Persia in 334 BC**
- Invaded Egypt in 332 BC**
- Defeated Darius for a second time**
- Declared himself king of Persia**
- Invaded India in 326 BC**

because all of those events have something to do with Alexander’s invasions.

If, on the other hand, you wanted to write a chronological narrative about “Alexander’s Early Life,” you might choose the following events:

- Born in 356 BC**
- Son of Philip II, king of Macedon**
- Tamed the horse Bucephalus at age 10**
- Taught by Aristotle from ages 13 to 16**
- Fought at his father’s side beginning in 338 BC**

and ignore the Persians completely.

Because this is the first time you’ve written a chronological narrative, you may use either of the lists above. Here are other possible themes:

- “The Beginning of Alexander’s Reign”
- “The End of Alexander’s Life”
- “Alexander and Persia”

Choose a theme and select four or five main (bolded) events to use in your chronological narrative. (You can also come up with a theme of your own.)

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

EVENTS IN ALEXANDER THE GREAT’S LIFE

Born in 356 BC

Mother, Olympia

Son of Philip II, king of Macedon

Philip conquered most of Greece

Greek cities added to Macedonian kingdom

Tamed the horse Bucephalus at age 10

Philip intended to buy horse

Horse: wild, unmanageable

Alexander asked to ride the horse

Promised his father: If I can’t ride it, I’ll pay for it

Horse was afraid of shadow

Turned horse towards sun, rode horse

Taught by Aristotle from ages 13 to 16

Most famous philosopher in the world at this time

Gave Alexander lifelong thirst for knowledge

Interested in medicine, philosophy, history

Fought at his father's side beginning in 338 BC

Led his father's army to victory, Battle of Chaeronea

Father assassinated in 336 BC

Assassin was bodyguard, Pausanias

Pausanias then killed by rest of bodyguard

Succeeded his father to the throne

Twenty years old

Had all of his rivals to the throne murdered

Greek cities rebelled, had to reconquer them

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium

Learned myth about Gordian knot (who untied it would rule the world)

Cut the knot

Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus

Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind

Alexander treated the women with respect

Invaded Egypt in 332 BC

Proclaimed pharaoh

Founded Alexandria

Defeated Darius for a second time

Darius and army defeated at the Battle of Gaugamela

Darius once again forced to flee

Alexander captured Babylon and Susa

Darius was assassinated by his own kinsman, Bessus

Declared himself king of Persia**Invaded India in 326 BC**

Crossed the Indus River

Fought against Indian king Porus and troop of elephants

Troops mutinied and refused to go any farther

Alexander, furious, shut himself into his tent

Finally Alexander agreed to go home

Returned to Babylon

Marched back through the Gedrosian Desert

Famine, thirst, disease killed 3/4 of men before he got home

Died in 323 BC

Came down with a fever in early June

Fever lasted for weeks

In the last few days, unable to speak or name a successor
 Died on June 28th
Kingdom divided among his generals

STEP TWO: **Become familiar with time and sequence words**

Remember, when you write a chronological narrative of a past event, you ask: Who did what to whom? (Or What was done to what?) In this exercise, most of this information is supplied so that you can concentrate on making the narrative flow smoothly forward in chronological order. (In later assignments, after you've had a little more practice, you'll take more responsibility for finding the information as well.)

In this first chronological narrative assignment, concentrating on using **time** and **sequence** words to turn the listed events into clear, straightforward prose. For example, if you were writing a narrative that included this main event:

Invaded Persia in 334 BC

Went to the city of Gordium
 Learned myth about Gordian knot (who untied it would rule the world)
 Cut the knot
 Defeated the Persian king Darius at the Battle of Issus
 Darius fled, left his wife, mother, and daughters behind
 Alexander treated the women with respect

one part of your narrative might end up sounding like this:

Alexander invaded Persia in 334. **Eventually**, he travelled to the city of Gordium. In the city was a knot known as the Gordian knot; according to myth, whoever could untie the knot would rule the world. **As soon as** he heard the myth, Alexander drew his sword and cut the knot instead.

After some time, Alexander met the Persian king, Darius, and the Persian army at the Battle of Issus. He defeated Darius in battle. **Immediately afterwards**, Darius fled. He fled so quickly that he left his wife, mother, and daughters behind him. But **when** Alexander realized this, he treated the women with respect.²³

Look back at the words in bold print. All of them are **time** and **sequence** words—words that you use in a chronological narrative to show the order in which events happen.

23. Note: If you know other details about Alexander (more about the Gordian knot, or the Battle of Issus, or the Persian king Darius), you may certainly use them to make the narrative more interesting. But remember: this isn't required, and you can't go over 300 words for the entire composition.

Plan on using the following list of time and sequence words as you construct your chronological narrative. Try to use at least three of them, without repeating any. Finish today's work by reading the time words out loud.

TIME AND SEQUENCE WORDS

For chronological narratives [SET AS 2 COLUMNS]

Words for events that happen before any others

First
At first
In the beginning
Before

Words for events that happen at the same time

When
At that point
At that moment
While

Words for an event that happens very soon after a previous event

When
As soon as
Soon
Shortly/shortly afterwards
Presently
Before long
Not long after
Immediately

Words for an event that happens after a previous event—but you're not exactly sure whether a long or short period of time elapsed first

Next
Afterwards
After
After some time
Subsequently
Following/following that
Furthermore
Then

Words for an event that happened long after another event

Eventually
Later/later on
Finally

Words for an event that happened after another event—AND was caused by the previous event

As a result
As a consequence
Since
Because
Seeing that

You've finished a long assignment today. At the beginning of next week, you'll return to your list of events and use it to write a brief chronological narrative.

WEEK 5: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

Day One: Finishing the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative of a past event

At the end of last week, you began to work on writing a chronological narrative of a past event. You selected events from a list, and also read through time and sequence words.

Today, you'll finish this narrative.

STEP ONE: Review the topics

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded points below under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or, *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. **Select your main events to go with your theme.**
2. **Make use of time words.**

You will find a copy of the Time and Sequence Words reference sheet in Appendix I. Take it out and place it in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook, just after the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event page.

STEP TWO: **Write the narrative**

Now use the events list you worked on at the end of last week and write your own chronological narrative, based on it.

Here's a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.
3. Do not try to include all of the events! Instead, you will need to select which events to use and which ones to leave out. This will force you to pick a "theme" for your chronological narrative.
4. Use three or more time words in your narrative.

Try not to use the identical words of the events list. For example, if you are using the following events:

Son of Philip II, king of Macedon

Philip conquered most of Greece

Greek cities added to Macedonian kingdom

try not to write:

*Alexander was the **son** of Philip II, **king** of Macedon. Philip conquered most of Greece. He added the **Greek cities** to the **Macedonian kingdom**.*

Changing the common nouns and their adjectives (the words in bold print) is a simple and straightforward way to make your narrative sound different:

*Alexander was the **heir** of Philip II, **ruler** of Macedon. Philip conquered most of Greece. He added the **city-states of Greece** to **his realm**.*

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, show your composition to your instructor.



Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a scientific narrative

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *100 Greatest Science Discoveries of All Time* by Kendall Haven.

— — —

Andreas Vesalius was born in Brussels in 1515. His father, a doctor in the royal court, had collected an exceptional medical library. Young Vesalius pored over each volume and showed immense curiosity about the functioning of living things. He often caught and dissected small animals and insects.

At age 18 Vesalius traveled to Paris to study medicine.

Physical dissection of animal or human bodies was not a common part of accepted medical study. If a dissection *had* to be performed, professors lectured while a barber did the actual cutting. Anatomy was taught from the drawings and translated texts of Galen, a Greek doctor whose texts were written in 50 BC.

Vesalius was quickly recognized as brilliant but arrogant and argumentative. During the second dissection he attended, Vesalius snatched the knife from the barber and demonstrated both his skill at dissection and his knowledge of anatomy, to the amazement of all in attendance.

As a medical student, Vesalius became a ringleader, luring his fellow students to raid the boneyards of Paris for skeletons to study and graveyards for bodies to dissect. Vesalius regularly braved vicious guard dogs and the gruesome stench of Paris's mound of Monfaucon (where the bodies of executed criminals were dumped) just to get his hands on freshly killed bodies to study.

In 1537 Vesalius graduated and moved to the University of Padua (Italy), where he began a long series of lectures—each centered on actual dissections and tissue experiments. Students and other professors flocked to his classes, fascinated by his skill and by the new reality he uncovered—muscles, arteries, nerves, veins, and even thin structures of the human brain.

This series culminated in January 1540, with a lecture he presented to a packed theater in Bologna, Italy. Like all other medical students, Vesalius had been trained to believe in Galen's work. However Vesalius had long been

troubled because so many of his dissections revealed actual structures that differed from Galen's descriptions.

In this lecture, for the first time in public, Vesalius revealed his evidence to discredit Galen and to show that Galen's descriptions of curved human thighbones, heart chambers, segmented breast bones, etc., better matched the anatomy of apes than humans. In his lecture, Vesalius detailed more than 200 discrepancies between actual human anatomy and Galen's descriptions. Time after time, Vesalius showed that what every doctor and surgeon in Europe relied on fit better with apes, dogs, and sheep than the human body. Galen, and every medical text based on his work, were wrong.²⁴

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You'll see that the passage above is divided into five sections (there's an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

Remember, you shouldn't try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? (That should be easy—whose name is mentioned three times?)



Vesalius (of course).

Now look at everything else in the passage, which tells you a number of different facts about Andreas Vesalius's early life—where he was born, what he read, what he did, what field of study he decided to pursue. All of these facts don't belong in your sentence. But the last three (he read medical books, he dissected animals, he went to medical school) all tell you about a single quality that Vesalius had—a quality that makes him important. He was important because he was. . .

Try finishing that sentence now.



What did you come up with? It should sound like one of these:

I. Vesalius was curious about living things.

24. Kendall Haven, *100 Greatest Science Discoveries of All Time* (Libraries Unlimited, 2007), pp. 7–8.

I. *Vesalius was interested in living things.*

I. *Vesalius was curious about how living things functioned.*

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence for each one of the remaining four sections. (You can use the sentence we gave you for the first section.) Continue to use Roman numerals for the summary sentences, like this:

- I. Vesalius was curious about living things.
- II. Second sentence
- III. Third sentence
- IV. Fourth sentence
- V. Fifth sentence

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn't always necessary in an outline).

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

The passage you outlined in your last writing session is an example of this week's topos: a **chronological narrative of a scientific discovery** (Vesalius's disproving Galen's theories about anatomy).

When you write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery (or event), you explain *what happened* and *in what sequence*—just as you do when you write a chronological narrative of a past event, as you did last week. There are two major kinds of scientific events that you can narrate chronologically:

1. a scientific discovery or advance, and
2. a scientific process that happened in the past.

Vesalius's disproving of Galen's theories is an example of the first kind of scientific event. The birth of a star, the retreat of glaciers, and the fossilization of a fallen *T. rex* are examples of the second kind.

Later in the year, you'll work on chronological narratives about scientific processes. This week, you'll examine how a chronological narrative about a scientific *discovery* is put together.

STEP ONE: **Examine model passages**

When you set out to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery, you aim to answer two questions:

What steps or events led to the discovery?

In what sequence did these steps or events happen?

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *100 Greatest Science Discoveries of All Time*. The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. Vesalius was curious about living things.
- II. Dissection was not done in medical school.
- III. Vesalius learned through dissection.
- IV. Vesalius then gave lectures based on dissection.
- V. Vesalius showed that Galen was wrong.

Notice that each one of these main points, except for the second, lists a step or event that led to Vesalius's contradiction of Galen. The points are also put into chronological order. First, young Vesalius was curious; because he was curious, he dissected and learned; after he learned, he lectured; finally, the lectures showed that Galen was wrong.

So what is the second point doing in the narrative?

Because a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery tells us how a scientist moves from one understanding of the world to another (in this case, from Galen's old understanding of anatomy to Vesalius's new understanding), you will often need to provide a paragraph or section that explains what the old understanding of the world was *before* the discovery. The second point in the narrative tells us about the old approach to anatomy; we need to know this so that we can appreciate just how different Vesalius's new ideas were.

So a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery usually includes a "background point" somewhere near the beginning—a paragraph that gives necessary background information.

Here is a second example of a **chronological narrative of a scientific discovery**, from *Seven African-American Scientists* by Robert C. Hayden and Richard Loehle. You may not be familiar with the term "Far East," which generally refers to China, Japan, Korea, and other eastern Asian countries.

The peanut harvest was a large one, but the market for peanuts was small. More peanuts were grown than could be sold. Besides, peanuts from the Far East were being imported and sold in America for less money than American-grown peanuts. Acres of peanuts rotted in the ground—and [George Washington] Carver received much criticism. He faced a real

dilemma. What could be done with all the surplus peanuts that he had talked the farmers into growing in place of cotton? Being the scientist that he was, Carver decided that he would take the peanut apart. He wanted to know what it was made of. What would it be good for? He sought to find new commercial uses for the peanut.

In his lab, George Carver began to shell peanuts by the handful. Saving the reddish peanut skins and broken shells, Carver ground the peanuts themselves into a fine powder. He heated the powder and then put this peanut mash under a hand press. An oily substance dripped into a cup beneath the press.

Carver then heated this oil at various temperatures to see what happened to it. The oil was broken down into other substances, which Carver used to make soap, cooking oil, and rubbing oil for the skin.

By adding certain chemicals to the dried peanut cake that remained in the press, Carver extracted a substance similar to cow's milk, though it had less calcium than animal milk. From this milk, he was able to make cheese.

Next, Carver removed the dried, crumbly, peanut cake left in the press and placed it into a glass vessel. He added water and enzymes. The enzymes were substances that would help break down any proteins in the peanut. This mixture was placed in a warm-water bath to activate the enzymes. By this technique, the different proteins in the peanut were separated, and Carver showed that a pound of peanuts contained the same amount of protein as a pound of beefsteak.²⁵

In this chronological narrative of a scientific discovery, the very first paragraph is the “background point”—the one that gives you the information you need to understand *why* George Washington Carver set out to discover new uses for the peanut. With your pencil, underline “George Washington Carver” once and “faced a real dilemma” twice. Carver had talked farmers into growing peanuts instead of cotton—and now, they had too many peanuts.

Each of the following sections describes, in order, the steps Carver took to discover more about peanuts.

In the second section, draw a box around the word “began.” This is the beginning—the first step Carver took. Now ask yourself: What did Carver begin to do? Did he discover anything? Use your pencil to underline the following verbs twice: “to shell,” “ground,” “heated,” “put.” These verbs show you that Carver’s first step was simply to *process* the peanuts—to turn them into powder, mash, and oil.

25. Robert C. Hayden and Richard Loehle, *Seven African-American Scientists* (Twenty-First Century Books, 1992), pp. 120–122.

In the third section, draw a box around the word “then.” This time word shows you that the third section happened, chronologically, after the second. Circle the word “oil” in the first sentence, and then circle “soap, cooking oil, and rubbing oil” in the second sentence. After Carver processed the peanuts, he was able to turn the oil into three other products.

In the fourth section, draw a box around the word “remained.” Then circle “dried peanut cake” in the first sentence and “cheese” in the second sentence. Carver’s next step, after he used the oil, was to make use of what was left *after* the oil was drained away; he made cheese out of the remaining peanut material.

In the fifth section, draw a box around the word “Next.” This time word shows you that Carver’s final actions took place *after* he made cheese from the peanut cake. Circle “peanut cake left in the press” in the first sentence and “protein” in the last sentence. The last thing Carver did with the leftover peanut cake was analyze it for protein.

Now look at the summary below:

There were too many peanuts.
 Carver began by processing the peanuts.
 Then Carver drained off the oil and used it.
 Afterwards, Carver made cheese from the peanut cake.
 Next, Carver analyzed the leftover peanut cake for protein.

The original narrative has a lot more details in it—but this summary shows you exactly how the writer tells each step in Carver’s discoveries in chronological order.

STEP TWO: **Write down the pattern of the topos**

Now copy the following onto a blank sheet of paper in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives of scientific events, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page.

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery

Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events led to a discovery, and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask, *What steps or events led to the discovery?*
2. Ask, *In what sequence did these steps or events happen?*
3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery.

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

Like a chronological narrative about a past event, a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery can be used as a science composition on its own, or as an introduction to a paper which then goes on to examine scientific concepts. The astronomy textbook *In Quest of the Universe* begins like this:

On the night of March 23, 1993, amateur astronomer David Levy photographed part of the sky near the planet Jupiter. His friends, fellow astronomers Carolyn Shoemaker and her husband Eugene Shoemaker, spotted something unusual in the picture: a comet that had broken up into about 20 pieces. The comet became known officially as Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 (the ninth comet discovered by these three sky-watchers) and unofficially as the “string of pearls” comet.

When astronomers announced the news of the comet on June 1, 1993, they had traced its path closely enough to tell that it had come under the influence of Jupiter’s powerful gravitational field. They had deduced that the comet was pulled apart by Jupiter’s gravity in July of 1992. They predicted that the comet would crash into Jupiter on or about July 25, 1994. . . .

By the time of the predicted impacts, the entire world was watching, linked together by the Internet and the television. The Hubble Space Telescope was trained on Jupiter, as was the Galileo space probe then approaching the Jupiter system, as well as most major observatories around the world and untold numbers of amateur telescopes. It has been said that more telescopes were aimed at the same spot—Jupiter—than ever before or since, and the viewers were not disappointed.²⁶

This is definitely a more gripping beginning than “Comets are thought to be material that coalesced in the outer solar system, the remnants of small eddies. These objects would feel the gravitational forces of Jupiter and Saturn, and many would fall onto those planets.”²⁷

Today, you’ll practice putting together a chronological narrative of your own.

26. Theo Koupelis, *In Quest of the Universe*, sixth ed. (Jones and Bartlett, 2010), pp. 1–2.

27. Koupelis, p. 198.

STEP ONE: **Plan the narrative**

Your first step is to plan out the narrative.

You'll need to approach the chronological narrative about a scientific discovery a little differently than the narrative about a past event. Because a scientific discovery is reached by a related series of steps, you can't pick and choose among the main events as easily as you did when you wrote about Alexander the Great. (You could leave out Alexander's invasion of India and still have a good historical narrative—but if you left out Vesalius's determination to find corpses and dissect them, his new discoveries about human anatomy wouldn't make sense.)

Instead, when you write the narrative of a scientific discovery, you make three choices:

1. Where to begin and end.
2. How much detail to use.
3. Where to put the "background paragraph," and how much information to include in it.

Below, you'll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, covering Edward Jenner's discovery of the smallpox vaccine. The information for this list was taken from *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today's Medicine* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002) by John G. Simmons and *Diseases: Finding the Cure* by Robert Mulcahy (The Oliver Press, 1996).

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

1. Begin planning out your narrative by circling the events that belong in the "background information" paragraph of your composition.
2. Next, mark a beginning and ending place for your composition.
3. Each main event in bold print is followed by details about that main event. Draw a light line through the details you don't intend to include.

EVENTS LEADING TO JENNER'S DISCOVERY OF THE SMALLPOX VACCINE

Smallpox was a great danger in the eighteenth century

Killed 40 million people in the eighteenth century
Half of the people who caught smallpox died
Smallpox victims kept in "smallpox houses"

No reliable way to avoid smallpox

Many doctors gave people mild cases of smallpox to protect them
The "mild cases" sometimes killed the patients

Edward Jenner born in 1749

Inoculated against smallpox as a child
Inoculation made him sick
Kept in a smallpox house while he was sick

Jenner began to train as a doctor in 1762

Apprentice to a surgeon for eight years

Entered St. George's Hospital in 1770

Studied surgery and anatomy

Jenner began to practice medicine in his home town in 1773**Jenner noticed that milkmaids were not getting smallpox**

Knew milkmaids often had cowpox

Cowpox gave cows blisters on their udders

Milkmaids sometimes got blisters on hands and arms

Cowpox gave patients a fever that lasted 4 days

Many local people believed that cowpox gave them immunity to smallpox

Jenner investigated relationship between smallpox and cowpox

Kept records of cowpox outbreaks

Discovered two forms of cowpox

Decided only one form of cowpox gave immunity to smallpox

Jenner inoculated James Phipps on May 14, 1796

James Phipps was eight years old

Jenner used pus from a cowpox blister

Jenner scraped Phipps's arm and put pus into it

Phipps had a small fever

Jenner tried to give Phipps a mild case of smallpox

Phipps was immune

Jenner tested his vaccine on 23 other people

Did not know why vaccination worked

Believed his observations were correct

Jenner published his results

At first, other doctors skeptical

Royal Society of Medicine refused to accept his findings

Some people afraid cowpox would make them act like cows

Vaccine slowly accepted

Parliament gave Jenner money in 1802 to continue his research

12,000 people vaccinated in 1804

British government began to give the vaccines in 1808

Deaths decreased to 600 per year

STEP TWO: Use time and sequence words

You'll use time and sequence words in this composition, just as you did in last week's assignment.

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the "Remember" column.

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery
 Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events
 led to a discovery, and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask, *What steps or events led to the discovery?*
2. Ask, *In what sequence did these steps or events happen?*
3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery.
2. **Make use of time words.**

Now pull out your Time and Sequence Words list and keep it in view as you write. Refer to your list of time words as you construct your chronological narrative. Try to use at least three of them, without repeating any.

STEP THREE: **Write the narrative**

Here's a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. You may choose where your narrative begins and ends, but the narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.
3. The only exception is your "background paragraph," where you describe what the world was like before the smallpox vaccine. This paragraph should come early in the composition (first or second).
4. Do not include all of the details.
5. Use three or more time words in your narrative.
6. Try not to use the identical words of the events list. As you did last week, change the common nouns and adjectives if necessary so that your narrative is not a direct copy of the events list.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, show your composition to your instructor.

WEEK 6: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A PAST EVENT

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from *The Once and Future King* by T. H. White. The “Once and Future King” is King Arthur; the first half of the novel describes Arthur’s boyhood. White imagines that young Arthur (known as “the Wart” by his adoptive family) was tutored by the magician Merlin, who taught him about the natural world by turning him into different animals. Archimedes is Merlin’s pet owl.

— — —

He was fast asleep when Archimedes came for him.

“Eat this,” said the owl, and handed him a dead mouse.

The Wart felt so strange that he took the furry atom without protest, and popped it into his mouth without any feelings that it was going to be nasty. So he was not surprised when it turned out to be excellent, with a fruity taste like eating a peach with the skin on, though naturally the skin was not so nice as the mouse.

“Now, we had better fly,” said the owl. “Just flip to the window-sill here, to get accustomed to yourself before we take off.”

Wart jumped for the sill and automatically gave himself an extra kick with his wings, just as a high jumper swings his arms. He landed on the sill with a thump, as owls are apt to do, did not stop himself in time, and toppled straight out of the window. “This,” he thought to himself, cheerfully, “is where I break my neck.” It was curious, but he was not taking life seriously. He felt the castle walls streaking past him, and the ground and the moat swimming up. He kicked

with his wings, and the ground sank again, like water in a leaking well. In a second that kick of his wings had lost its effect, and the ground was welling up. He kicked again. It was strange, going forward with the earth ebbing and flowing beneath him, in the utter silence of his down-fringed feathers.

“For heaven’s sake,” panted Archimedes, bobbing in the dark air beside him, “stop flying like a woodpecker. Anybody would take you for a Little Owl, if the creatures had been imported. What you are doing is to give yourself flying speed with one flick of your wings. You then raise on that flick until you have lost flying speed and begin to stall. Then you give another just as you are beginning to drop out of the air, and do a switch-back. It is confusing to keep up with you.”

“Well,” said the Wart recklessly, “if I stop doing this I shall go bump altogether.”

“Idiot,” said the owl. “Waver your wings all the time, like me instead of doing these jumps with them.”

The Wart did what he was told, and was surprised to find that the earth became stable and moved underneath him without tilting, in a regular pour. He did not feel himself to be moving at all.

“That’s better.”

“How curious everything looks,” observed the boy with some wonder, now that he had time to look about him.

And, indeed, the world did look curious. In some ways the best description of it would be to say that it looked like a photographer’s negative, for he was seeing one ray beyond the spectrum which is visible to human beings. An infra-red camera will take photographs in the dark, when we cannot see, and it will also take photographs in daylight. The owls are the same, for it is untrue that they can only see at night. They see in the day just as well, only they happen to possess the advantage of seeing pretty well at night also. So naturally they prefer to do their hunting then, when other creatures are more at their mercy. To the Wart the green trees would have looked whitish in the daytime, as if they were covered with apple blossom, and now, at night, everything had the same kind of different look. It was like flying in a twilight which had reduced everything to shades of the same colour, and, as in the twilight, there was a considerable amount of gloom.

“Do you like it?” asked the owl.

“I like it very much. Do you know, when I was a fish there were parts of the water which were colder or warmer than the other parts, and now it is the same in the air.”

“The temperature,” said Archimedes, “depends on the vegetation of the bottom. Woods or weeds, they make it warm above them.”



“Well,” said the Wart, “I can see why the reptiles who had given up being fishes decided to become birds. It certainly is fun.”

“You are beginning to fit things together,” remarked Archimedes. “Do you mind if we sit down?”

“How does one?”

“You must stall. That means you must drive yourself up until you lose flying speed, and then, just as you feel yourself beginning to tumble—why, you sit down. Have you never noticed how birds fly upward to perch? They don’t come straight down on the branch, but dive below it and then rise. At the top of their rise they stall and sit down.”

“But birds land on the ground too. And what about mallards on the water? They can’t rise to sit on that.”

“Well, it is perfectly possible to land on flat things, but more difficult. You have to glide in at stalling speed all the way, and then increase your wind resistance by cupping your wings, dropping your feet, tail, etc. You may have noticed that few birds do it gracefully. Look how a crow thumps down and how the mallard splashes. The spoon-winged birds like heron and plover seem to do it best. As a matter of fact, we owls are not so bad at it ourselves.”

“And the long-winged birds like swifts, I suppose they are the worst, for they can’t rise from a flat surface at all?”

“The reasons are different,” said Archimedes, “yet the fact is true. But need we talk on the wing? I am getting tired.”

“So am I.”

“Owls usually prefer to sit down every hundred yards.”

The Wart copied Archimedes in zooming up toward the branch which they had chosen. He began to fall just as they were above it, clutched it with his furry feet at the last moment, swayed backward and forward twice, and found that he had landed successfully. He folded up his wings.²⁸

STEP TWO: Note important events

On your scratch paper, write down four or five phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than five phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you’re not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn’t understand the rest of the story. (For example, if you left out the fact that the Wart turned into an owl, would the flying scenes make sense to you?)

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

28. T. H. White, *The Once and Future King* (Ace Books, 1958), pp. 162–165.

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

After you've written down your four or five phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Wart ate a magic mouse" and "Wart turned into an owl" could be combined into "Wart ate a magic mouse that turned him into an owl"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary. (If you wrote down "Wart saw like an owl" and "Wart could see in the dark," you don't really need one of those sentences; both describe the same change.)

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. Minor details don't change the sense of the story. (It doesn't really matter that the Wart learned to flick his wings and stall—without that detail, we can still understand the story.)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a historical narrative

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *Historical Catastrophes: Hurricanes and Tornadoes* by Billye Walker Brown and Walter R. Brown. This passage is about Colonel Joseph Duckworth, the first man to fly a plane into a hurricane.

— — —

[Colonel Joseph] Duckworth had grown up with airplanes. He began by flying freight along the southern coasts of the Great Lakes, before airplanes had many instruments at all. Flying so low that he could see the ground, he fought ice and wind for several years. Then, for the ten years before World War II began, he flew for Eastern Airlines, learning how to use each of the new instruments as it became available. During the war years, the Army Air Corps assigned him the command of the Instrument Flying School at Bryan, Texas.

The Texas air was clear and bright in Bryan on the morning of July 27, 1943. Lt. Ralph O'Hair and Col. Duckworth sat enjoying their second cup of coffee when O'Hair mentioned that Galveston [a coastal Texas city] was

threatened again by a hurricane that was moving inland from the Gulf [of Mexico].

“Let’s go down and get an AT-6,”²⁹ Duckworth suggested calmly. “I’d like to fly right into the center of that thing.”



. . . Without knowing exactly how to approach the storm, Duckworth and O’Hair used their vast experience of flying around and through clouds to pick the easiest path through the tremendous winds around the hurricane. Even so, they were tossed around “like a stick in a dog’s mouth,” as they described it later.

They reached the eye over land, somewhere between Galveston and Houston. Reversing their course, they flew back to Bryan and landed.

There to meet them was the base’s Weather Officer, Lt. William Jones-Burdick. He was excited by what the pilots told him.

“Sounds great, Colonel,” Jones-Burdick said. “I certainly wish that I could have been along with you!”

Duckworth smiled broadly. “Okay,” he said. “Hop in and we’ll go back through.”

This second flight, with a qualified meteorologist aboard, gave hurricane watchers their first instrument readings and expert observations from inside a major storm. Jones-Burdick carefully recorded the temperature of the air around him and described the clouds, turbulence, and rain.

Excited by Duckworth’s success, the Weather Bureau requested the Air Force to send out three more flights during the 1943 hurricane season. . . and it was proven that hurricane air reconnaissance could gather some very valuable data for weather forecasters as well as the public.³⁰

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You’ll see that the passage above is divided into five sections (there’s an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea. Remember:

29. An AT-6 was a single-engine airplane used for training pilots from the late 1930s through the 1950s. It was also known as the “North American T-6 Texan.”

30. Billye Walker Brown and Walter R. Brown, *Historical Catastrophes: Hurricanes and Tornadoes* (Addison-Wesley, 1972), pp. 141–143.

don't try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

You'll notice that this passage, unlike the others you've outlined, has dialogue in it; some parts of the passage are written more like a story. This dialogue makes the passage more interesting to read, but it shouldn't affect the answers to these questions.

Try asking the first question about the first section now. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?

The answer should be obvious:



Joseph Duckworth.

Now look at everything else in the passage. There are many details about Joseph Duckworth's life—but you're not trying to include all of the information about Joseph Duckworth in a single sentence. Remember, you're trying to find the *main idea only*.

You may remember that you had a similar challenge in the first passage you outlined from *The Story of Mankind*; the passage contained a whole list of inventions and discoveries made by the Egyptians, and you summarized by saying something like "The Egyptians invented many things." In this passage, you need to take a similar approach. What important, single idea can you draw from all of these details about Joseph Duckworth?

If you're still puzzled, try finishing this sentence: "Joseph Duckworth was a very. . . ."



What did you come up with? Your sentence should sound like one of these:

I. Joseph Duckworth was a very experienced pilot. OR

I. Colonel Joseph Duckworth knew how to fly in many different situations.

Now work on coming up with a summary sentence or phrase for each one of the remaining sections. Don't worry about sticking to either sentences or phrases exclusively—use whichever form seems most natural. Remember to use Roman numerals.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a past event

The passage you outlined in your last writing session was a **chronological narrative of a past event**. You studied and practiced this form in the first week of this program; in this week, you'll review and practice some more.

STEP ONE: Review time and sequence words

Remember, a chronological narrative of a past event explains *what happened in the past* and *in what sequence*. Each one of the main points in your outline describes something that happened, and the passage itself presents these happenings in chronological order.

Your points probably sound something like the points below (although your exact words will be different):

- I. _____ Joseph Duckworth was a very experienced pilot.
- II. _____ A hurricane moves inland.
- III. _____ Duckworth and O'Hair fly into the hurricane.
- IV. _____ They make a second flight with a meteorologist.
- V. _____ Flights are made into other hurricanes.

Pull out your Time and Sequence Words sheet. Using your pencil, write an appropriate time word on the blank in front of each point. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

STEP TWO: Add dialogue and actions

In this passage, the authors *dramatize*—use dialogue (the words characters actually speak) and actions to move the narrative forward. First, they tell you about Duckworth's past. Then, when the narrative reaches the morning of the flight, the authors change techniques. Rather than simply listing events, they begin to tell a story.

Dialogue can make chronological narratives more interesting. Look at the following example from Harold Lamb's history of the Mongol invasions, *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Horde*. In this section, Genghis Khan's warriors are pursuing the defeated king Muhammad Shah, who has been driven from his country by the Mongol armies.

You will notice ellipses (. . .) in the passage below. Remember, ellipses show that words in the original have been left out of the excerpt.

Muhammad Shah . . . decided to journey to other countries far in the west.

Concealing his treasure in a strong tower, he started along the caravan road with his escort of nobles and warriors. . . He thought no army could follow as fast as his small company could ride. But within a few days he sighted the strange horsemen speeding through the dust at his heels. They scattered his followers and loosed a few arrows at him. . . .

On his swift horse Muhammad escaped. Now he was really frightened. Leaving the highway, he doubled back toward the Caspian Sea. Only a few warriors remained with him.

The once powerful Shah had become a fugitive, trying to save his life. And the few men who stayed with him lost respect for him. He was always running away!

One night he found that arrows had passed through his tent. After that he slept out in a small shelter. “Is there no place on earth,” he begged one of his officers, “where I can be safe from the Mongol thunderbolt?”

Friends told him to hurry to the Caspian and take ship to a small island where he could hide.³¹

The author could have written “Muhammad Shah wondered if he would be safe anywhere.” But instead, he gave Muhammad Shah dialogue—an actual speech that moves the narrative forward by showing why Muhammad Shah took sail to an island in the Caspian Sea (where he would die—although you should read the book if you want to find out how).

STEP THREE: **Add to the pattern of the topos**

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column.

Chronological Narrative of a Past Event

Definition: A narrative telling what happened in the past and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask *Who did what to whom?*
(Or *What was done to what?*)
2. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. Select your main events to go with your theme.
2. Make use of time words.
3. **Consider using dialogue to hold the reader’s interest.**

31. Harold Lamb, *Genghis Khan and the Mongol Horde* (Random House, 1954), pp. 119–120.

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a past event

Today, you'll practice putting together another chronological narrative about a past event.

STEP ONE: Plan the narrative

Below, you'll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, about the sinking of the *Titanic*. The bolded entries are main events; the indented entries are further details about those main events. (Those details are taken from Logan Marshall's 1912 account, *The Sinking of the Titanic*, and Jack Winocour's *The Story of the Titanic: As Told by Its Survivors*.)

Your assignment is to write a chronological narrative based on these events. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

Remember that you should not try to include every event. For example, you could construct a narrative with only the following events:

Collision with the iceberg

Captain realized ship was sinking

Lifeboats launched

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Leaving out the ice sightings, the initial flooding of the ship, and the sending of distress signals doesn't confuse the narrative at all; it is still clear that the ship collided with the iceberg, began to sink, and then sank after lifeboats were launched.

Look over the following events now, and mark three or four main (bolded) events to include in your narrative. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

EVENTS IN THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Ice sightings on April 14, 1912

Captain Edward Smith received six ice warnings earlier

Icebergs reported in *Titanic's* path at 9:30 PM

Report never reached captain

Titanic continued at top speed

Night was moonless and dark

Lookouts had no binoculars

Ice warning sent to *Titanic* from nearby ship *Californian*

Titanic radio operator Jack Phillips ignored warning

"Shut up! Shut up! I am busy!" (Reported by *Californian*)

Collision with the iceberg

Iceberg sighted straight ahead at 11:40 PM
Lookouts telephoned first officer on the bridge
First officer (William Murdoch) ordered ship turned to port (left)
Ship collided with iceberg 37 seconds after sighting
Sharp edge of berg cut starboard (right) side of ship open
Passengers on deck played with ice chunks from berg

Ship began to flood

Officers told passengers there was no danger
“Oh, no, nothing at all, nothing at all. Just a mere nothing. We just hit an iceberg.” (Reported by survivor Edith Louise Rosenbaum Russell)
Five separate compartments filled with water
Sixth compartment began to flood
Pumps in sixth compartment began to work
Pumps could remove 2,000 tons of water per hour
24,000 tons of water flooding into ship per hour

Captain realized ship was sinking

Shipbuilder Thomas Andrews told captain ship would sink in 1 1/2 hours
Captain Smith: “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)
Lifeboats readied just after midnight, in early hours of April 15
Lifeboats could only carry half the passengers on *Titanic*
Second officer Charles Lightoller asked captain for permission to fill boats
“Hadn’t we better get the women and children into the boats, sir?” (Reported by Lightoller himself)
Lifeboats filled with women and children beginning 12:25 AM

Distress signals sent

White distress rocket launched 12:50 AM
Wireless operators sent out old distress signal CQD
“We have struck an iceberg. Badly damaged. Rush aid.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)
Later also began to send new SOS signal as well
“Sinking by the head.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)
Other ships received signal but were far away
Closest ship, *Carpathia*, responded but was four hours away
Signal transmitted to New York (*Titanic* destination)
Shipline official announced, “We are confident that there will be no loss of life.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)

Lifeboats launched

First lifeboats launched beginning 1:10 AM
Passengers reluctant to leave ship
Many said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until

another ship comes up and takes us off.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)
First lifeboats only 1/4 full
Deck began to tilt, more passengers left ship
Later lifeboats overloaded
Last lifeboat launched 2:05 AM
Captain Smith went down with ship but told officers to save themselves.
“You have done your duty, boys. Now every man for himself.” (Reported by survivor W. J. Mellers)

Ship sank between 2:05 and 2:20 AM

Propellers rose above water 2:05 AM
First funnel of ship fell into water
Water broke windows and flooded into bridge
Stern (rear) of ship rose above water
Electricity failed 2:18 AM
Second funnel fell
Ship split in half
Bow (front) section sank
Stern rose back up in water
Stern sank 2:20 AM
Only one lifeboat returned for people in water

Rescue arrived 4:10 AM

711 of 2,222 people in lifeboats
Carpathia arrived 4:10 AM
Carpathia picked up passengers until 8:50 AM
Five passengers died on board *Carpathia*
Carpathia set out for New York 8:50 AM

Survivors reached New York April 18

STEP TWO: Choose details and dialogue

When you write your chronological narrative, you won't include every detail listed under the main events; this would make your narrative too long and complicated. Instead, choose the details you want to highlight, and leave others out. Be sure that you include at least one line of dialogue.

For example, if you chose the following events:

Captain realized ship was sinking

Shipbuilder Thomas Andrews told captain ship would sink in 1 1/2 hours
Captain Smith: “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on.” (Reported by Logan Marshall)
Lifeboats readied just after midnight, in early hours of April 15
Lifeboats could only carry half the passengers on *Titanic*

Second officer Charles Lightoller asked captain for permission to fill boats

“Hadn’t we better get the women and children into the boats, sir?” (Reported by Lightoller himself)

Lifeboats filled with women and children beginning 12:25 AM

Lifeboats launched

First lifeboats launched beginning 1:10 AM

Passengers reluctant to leave ship

Many said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.” (Reported by Jack Winocour)

First lifeboats only 1/4 full

Deck began to tilt, more passengers left ship

Later lifeboats overloaded

Last lifeboat launched 2:05 AM

Captain Smith went down with ship but told officers to save themselves.

“You have done your duty, boys. Now every man for himself.” (Reported by survivor W. J. Mellers)

you might write:

Captain Smith realized that the ship was sinking. The first lifeboats were launched at 1:10 AM, but many passengers refused to leave the ship. They said, “This ship cannot sink; it is only a question of waiting until another ship comes up and takes us off.”

Or you might write:

The captain realized the Titanic was doomed when the shipbuilder told him that the ship would sink in an hour and half. “Give the command for all passengers to be on deck with life-belts on,” he ordered. The lifeboats were filled with women and children, and then were launched.

Notice that only two or three details were included for one main event—and that another main event was simply stated with no details at all.

Read through your selected main events and mark which details and dialogue you intend to include. (You may find that you need to adjust your choices when you begin to write.)

STEP THREE: Write the narrative

As you begin to write, don’t forget to include time and sequence words (as you learned in Week 4’s lesson).

Here’s a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. The narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times.
3. Include at least one line of dialogue, but do not try to include all of the details!
4. Use two or more time words in your narrative.

5. If necessary, review the following rules about how to write dialogue:

Use quotation marks to surround a speaker's exact words.

If a dialogue tag ("he said," "Captain Smith said") comes before a speech, use a comma after the dialogue tag. The punctuation at the end of the speech itself goes *inside* the closing quotation mark.

Captain Smith said, "Put on your life jackets."

If the dialogue tag comes after the speech, place a comma, question mark, or exclamation point (but *not* a period) before the closing quotation mark.

"Put on your life jackets," Captain Smith said.

"Put on your life jackets!" Captain Smith said.

"Should we put on our life jackets?" Captain Smith said.

Do *not* write

"Put on your life jackets." Captain Smith said.

Dialogue should never just sit in the middle of a paragraph as an independent sentence, with no dialogue tag. Don't write

The ship began to sink. Captain Smith was concerned. "Put on your life jackets." The passengers began to obey.

Instead, write

The ship began to sink. Captain Smith was concerned. "Put on your life jackets," he told the passengers.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you're finished, show your composition to your instructor.

WEEK 7: CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVE OF A SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY

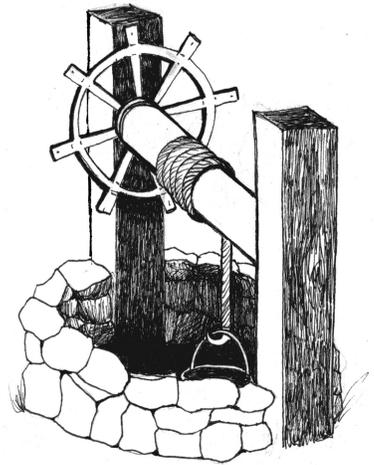
Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the main events and listing them chronologically

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from *Tik-Tok of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. Baum wrote a whole series of books set in the magical land of Oz. In this chapter, Betsy Bobbin and her friend the Shaggy Man have joined up with the sky fairy Polychrome, daughter of the Rainbow (in Oz, the Rainbow is a person!), and the Princess Rose, who has been driven from her throne in the Rose Kingdom and is now in exile. Travelling together, the four find an old well. The Shaggy Man tries to draw water out of it using a windlass (a mechanism for cranking a bucket up out of a well), but the hook on the end of the windlass doesn't hold a bucket. Instead, the hook creaks up out of the well with a pile of copper junk on the end of it.



— — —

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Shaggy. “Here is a surprise, indeed!”

“What is it?” inquired Betsy, clinging to the windlass and panting for breath.

For answer the Shaggy Man grasped the bundle of copper and dumped it upon the ground, free of the well. Then he turned it over with his foot, spread it out, and to Betsy's astonishment the thing proved to be a copper man.

“Just as I thought,” said Shaggy, looking hard at the object. “But unless there are two copper men in the world this is the most astonishing thing I ever came across.”

At this moment the Rainbow's Daughter and the Rose Princess approached them, and Polychrome said:

"What have you found, Shaggy One?"

"Either an old friend, or a stranger," he replied.

"Oh, here's a sign on his back!" cried Betsy, who had knelt down to examine the man. "Dear me; how funny! Listen to this."

Then she read the following words, engraved upon the copper plates of the man's body:

SMITH & TINKER'S
Patent Double-Action, Extra-Responsive,
Thought-Creating, Perfect-Talking
MECHANICAL MAN
Fitted with our Special Clockwork Attachment.
Thinks, Speaks, Acts, and Does Everything but Live.

"Isn't he wonderful!" exclaimed the Princess.

"Yes; but here's more," said Betsy, reading from another engraved plate:

DIRECTIONS FOR USING:
For THINKING:—Wind the Clockwork
Man under his left arm, (marked No. 1).
For SPEAKING:—Wind the Clockwork
Man under his right arm, (marked No. 2).
For WALKING and ACTION:—Wind Clockwork Man
in the middle of his back, (marked No. 3).

N. B.³²—This Mechanism is guaranteed to
work perfectly for a thousand years.

"If he's guaranteed for a thousand years," said Polychrome, "he ought to work yet."

"Of course," replied Shaggy. "Let's wind him up."

In order to do this they were obliged to set the copper man upon his feet, in an upright position, and this was no easy task. He was inclined to topple over, and had to be propped again and again. The girls assisted Shaggy, and at last Tik-Tok seemed to be balanced and stood alone upon his broad feet.

"Yes," said Shaggy, looking at the copper man carefully, "this must be, indeed, my old friend Tik-Tok, whom I left ticking merrily in the Land of Oz.

32. "N.B." is an abbreviation for the Latin phrase *nota bene*, which literally means "mark well." In English, the abbreviation N.B. stands for "Note this" or "Make a note of this fact."

But how he came to this lonely place, and got into that old well, is surely a mystery.”

“If we wind him, perhaps he will tell us,” suggested Betsy. “Here’s the key, hanging to a hook on his back. What part of him shall I wind up first?”

“His thoughts, of course,” said Polychrome, “for it requires thought to speak or move intelligently.”

So Betsy wound him under his left arm, and at once little flashes of light began to show in the top of his head, which was proof that he had begun to think.

“Now, then,” said Shaggy, “wind up his phonograph.”

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Why, his talking-machine. His thoughts may be interesting, but they don’t tell us anything.”

So Betsy wound the copper man under his right arm, and then from the interior of his copper body came in jerky tones the words: “Ma-ny thanks!”

“Hurrah!” cried Shaggy, joyfully, and he slapped Tik-Tok upon the back in such a hearty manner that the copper man lost his balance and tumbled to the ground in a heap. But the clockwork that enabled him to speak had been wound up and he kept saying: “Pick-me-up! Pick-me-up! Pick-me-up!” until they had again raised him and balanced him upon his feet, when he added politely: “Ma-ny thanks!”

“He won’t be self-supporting until we wind up his action,” remarked Shaggy; so Betsy wound it, as tight as she could—for the key turned rather hard—and then Tik-Tok lifted his feet, marched around in a circle and ended by stopping before the group and making them all a low bow.³³

STEP TWO: Note important events

On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you of the things that happened in the story. *Do not use more than six phrases or short sentences!* Remember, you’re not supposed to write down *everything* that happens in the story—just the most important events. The most important events are the ones that help the story make sense; if you took them out of the original passage, you wouldn’t understand the rest of the story.

Be sure to write the events down in the same order that they happen in the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

After you’ve written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence, or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary.

33. L. Frank Baum, *Tik-Tok of Oz* (Reilly & Britton, 1914), pp. 72–74.

Try to avoid listing minor details; instead, stick to main events. Minor details don't change the sense of the story. (It doesn't really matter that when Tik-Tok first walked, he went in a circle; without that detail, we can still understand the story.)

Say your three or four sentences out loud several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the main idea in each paragraph of a scientific narrative

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *Discoverer of the Unseen World: A Biography of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek* by Alma Smith Payne. In this passage, Payne explains how Leeuwenhoek became the first scientist to see single-celled organisms. The “new contrivance” Leeuwenhoek wanted to test was a tiny, clear tube of glass that would allow him to examine a drop of water underneath the lens of his microscope.

“Leeuwenhoek” is pronounced “leh-ven-hook.”

— — —

In considering various ways to test the new contrivance, he thought of the appearance of the fresh water in Berkelse Mere, the inland lake located “about two hours from Delft.” Its water was always clear in winter. But during the summer it lost this clearness and became whitish in color with little green clouds floating through it. The country people believed the change in the water's appearance was caused by the dews that occurred at that time; for this reason they called it “honeydew.”

This was hearsay, Leeuwenhoek reasoned. He would have to see for himself. Accepting a belief as a fact, without being curious enough to test it, was just the kind of thing that had been going on for centuries. Here was a chance for him, one of the most curious amateurs of science, to satisfy his curiosity about the nature of the inland lake. In so doing, he might also make a contribution to science. And it would give him an opportunity to test the quality of his newly made microscope and the clearness of his glass pipettes.

So he journeyed to Berkelse Mere, to the southeast of Delft. Here he scooped up a generous sample of the marshy water and put it into a container. It

was too late to examine the water when he returned home that night. So he put the container in the office-laboratory where he did all of his work and study.

The following night he assembled his simple equipment and prepared to observe the Berkelse Mere water by the light of a single candle. First he sucked a drop of water into a little glass pipette which he had glued onto the rod of his newest microscope. In reality the instrument was “a simple magnifying glass,” and this is what he always called it. It consisted of two matched oblong sheets of metal, which encased a tiny bi-convex, or football-shaped, lens. The whole thing was smaller than a small oblong football ticket.

Leeuwenhoek carefully lifted the microscope and pressed the minute lens close to one eye. He could not believe what he saw. There before him was a veritable swimming pool of earthly particles, green streaks, and little “animalcules”! The streaks were spirally wound like serpents and “orderly arranged, after the manner of copper or tin worms, which distillers use to cool their liquors as they distill over.” The amazing thing about these little figures was that they were only as thick as a strand of hair (the common form of green alga *Spirogyra*).³⁴

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

Begin to outline this passage by looking for the main idea in each section of text. You’ll see that the passage above is divided into four sections (there’s an extra space between each section). For each section, try to come up with a single sentence that states the main idea.

Remember, you shouldn’t try to include as much information as possible in this single sentence. Ask yourself two sets of questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about? *Or* Is the section about an idea?
2. Why is that thing or person important? *Or* What did that thing or person do/what was done to it? *Or* What is the idea?

Try that for the first section. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?



If your answer was “Leeuwenhoek,” look again. The details in the section don’t tell you about Leeuwenhoek. What do they tell you about?

Once you’ve answered that question, answer the second: Why is it important?

Use the same strategies to come up with summary sentences for each of the remaining three sections. Remember to use Roman numerals for the summary sentences.

34. Alma Payne Ralston, *Discoverer of the Unseen World: A Biography of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek* (The World Publishing Company, 1966), pp. 16–18.

For this assignment, try to use complete sentences (although this isn't always necessary in an outline).

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing the Topos



Focus: Understanding the form of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

The passage you outlined in your last writing session is another example of this week's topos: a **chronological narrative of a scientific discovery**. You have already studied several examples of this (Vesalius's discoveries in anatomy, George Washington Carver's work with the peanut, the sighting of Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9). Today, you'll expand your knowledge of this form.

STEP ONE: Review the pattern of the topos

Turn to the Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery page in your Composition Notebook. Read through the pattern of the narrative again.

STEP TWO: Examine the model

Your chart should have reminded you that a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery answers two questions:

What steps or events led to the discovery?

In what sequence did these steps or events happen?

and puts those answers in chronological order.

Look again at the outline you made of the passage from *Discoverer of the Unseen World*.

The exact words you used will be different, but the outline probably looks something like this:

- I. Berkelse Mere was a lake that changed color in the summer.
- II. Leeuwenhoek decided to test the lake.
- III. He collected a water sample to observe.
- IV. He saw microscopic life forms.

Points II, III, and IV list, in chronological order, steps that led to the discovery of microscopic life forms.

Your chart should also have reminded you that you may need a paragraph giving background information. Point I gives you necessary background information; it describes an existing phenomenon (the cloudy lake) that no one in Leeuwenhoek's day understood.

Finally, your chart reminded you to make use of time and sequence words.

Below, you will see an expanded version of the passage about Leeuwenhoek's discovery. Read through the passage one more time and follow these simple instructions:

1. Look for the time and sequence words, which have been bolded.
2. When you read the additional paragraphs, ask yourself "What new element do these paragraphs bring into the narrative?"

In considering various ways to test the new contrivance, he thought of the appearance of the fresh water in Berkelse Mere, the inland lake located "about two hours from Delft." Its water was always clear in winter. But during the summer it lost this clearness and became whitish in color with little green clouds floating through it. The country people believed the change in the water's appearance was caused by the dews that occurred at that time; for this reason they called it "honeydew."

This was hearsay, Leeuwenhoek reasoned. He would have to see for himself. Accepting a belief as a fact, without being curious enough to test it, was just the kind of thing that had been going on for centuries. Here was a chance for him, one of the most curious amateurs of science, to satisfy his curiosity about the nature of the inland lake. In so doing, he might also make a contribution to science. And it would give him an opportunity to test the quality of his newly made microscope and the clearness of his glass pipettes.

So he journeyed to Berkelse Mere, to the southeast of Delft. Here he scooped up a generous sample of the marshy water and put it into a container. It was too late to examine the water **when** he returned home that night. **So** he put the container in the office-laboratory where he did all of his work and study.

The **following night** he assembled his simple equipment and prepared to observe the Berkelse Mere water by the light of a single candle. **First** he sucked a drop of water into a little glass pipette which he had glued onto the rod of his newest microscope. In reality the instrument was "a simple magnifying glass," and this is what he always called it. It consisted of two matched oblong sheets of metal, which encased a tiny bi-convex, or football-shaped, lens. The whole thing was smaller than a small oblong football ticket.

Leeuwenhoek carefully lifted the microscope and pressed the minute lens close to one eye. He could not believe what he saw. There before him was a veritable swimming pool of earthly particles, green streaks, and little

“animalcules”! The streaks were spirally wound like serpents and “orderly arranged, after the manner of copper or tin worms, which distillers use to cool their liquors as they distill over.” The amazing thing about these little figures was that they were only as thick as a strand of hair (the common form of green alga *Spirogyra*).

He saw other particles that had only the beginning of streaks. But all consisted of very small green globules joined together. Among these many odd-shaped particles were many little “animalcules.” He did not know it, but undoubtedly at least some of these were Protozoa. Some were round in shape, others were elongated or oval.

Some of the creatures had two little legs near the head and two fins at the end of their bodies (probably rotifers). Others were elongated and moved very slowly (probably ciliates).

These “animalcules,” as he referred to bacteria and Protozoa in all his observations, were of several colors, some being white and transparent, while others were green in the middle, banded by white (probably *Euglena viridis*); others sparkled with green scales, and still others were a kind of dove-gray. He wrote: “The motion of most of these animalcules in the water was so swift, and so various, upwards, downwards, and round about, that ’twas wonderful to see: and I judge that these little creatures were above a thousand times smaller [in volume, not in linear dimensions] than the smallest ones I have ever seen, upon the rind of cheese, in wheaten flour, mould and the like” (mites).³⁵

You will notice that most of the time and sequence words occur in the middle of the passage, where Leeuwenhoek is actually going through the steps of the discovery.

What do you think the additional paragraphs add to the narrative?

They do add to the description of the microscopic world Leeuwenhoek discovered. But you should have noticed a new element in the final paragraph. It is bolded below:

These “**animalcules**,” as he referred to bacteria and Protozoa in all his observations, were of several colors, some being white and transparent, while others were green in the middle, banded by white (probably *Euglena viridis*); others sparkled with green scales, and still others were a kind of dove-gray. He wrote: “**The motion of most of these animalcules in the water was so swift, and so various, upwards, downwards, and round about, that ’twas wonderful to see: and I judge that these little creatures were above a thousand times smaller** [in volume, not in linear dimensions] **than the smallest ones I have ever seen, upon the rind of cheese, in wheaten flour, mould and the like**” (mites).

35. Payne, pp. 16–19.

The writer of this narrative has decided to use Leeuwenhoek’s exact words, found in a letter Leeuwenhoek wrote to the scientists of the Royal Society.

Last week, you learned that dialogue—the words characters actually speak—can add interest to a chronological narrative about a past event. A chronological narrative about a scientific discovery can also become more vivid and real when dialogue is used.

Many scientists wrote letters, essays, and even books about their discoveries, so often you can find the exact words that scientists have used about their own work. Introducing a sentence or two from the scientist herself *about* her discovery adds color and interest to a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery.

Now add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column on your Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery chart:

Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery

Definition: A narrative telling what steps or events led to a discovery, and in what sequence

Procedure

1. Ask, *What steps or events led to the discovery?*
2. Ask, *In what sequence did these steps or events happen?*
3. Create main points by placing the answers in chronological order.

Remember

1. May need a background paragraph explaining the circumstances that existed before the discovery.
2. Make use of time words.
3. **If possible, quote directly from the scientist’s own words.**

Day Four: Practicing the Topos



Focus: Learning how to write a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery

In your last lesson, you saw an example of a chronological narrative about a scientific discovery that made use of the scientist’s own words. Here is another, from *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today’s Medicine* by John G. Simmons. This narrative tells how the sixteenth-century French surgeon Ambroise Pare learned to use antiseptic on wounds to keep them from getting infected. (The first paragraph gives background information.)

The years of Pare’s youth were marked by the ascendancy of Francis I, who, four years after becoming king in 1515, lost his bid to become emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This led him into a series of wars with Charles of Hapsburg that were fought largely on the Italian peninsula. There, at the siege of Turin in 1537, Pare made his first and most famous innovation.

As was customary, Pare and his fellow surgeons treated gunshot wounds by cauterizing³⁶ them with boiling oil of elder, which was thought to prevent death from “gunpowder poisoning.” This method caused terrible agony and more damage to the flesh than the projectile had. At Turin, the oil ran out. As a stopgap, Pare covered the wounds with a salve composed of egg yolk, turpentine, and oil of roses. One night he wrote, “I could not sleep . . . for I was troubled in minde, and the dressing of the precedent day, (which I judged unfit) troubled my thoughts; and I feared that the next day I should finde them dead, or at the point of death by the poyson of the wound, whom I had not dressed with the scalding oyle.” In fact, these patients were still alive and in better condition than the men who had been treated with cauterization. Pare continued to treat casualties in this way, he added, and “When I had many times tryed this in divers others I thought this much, that neither I nor any other should ever cauterize any wounded with Gun-shot.”³⁷

Today, you’ll practice putting together a chronological narrative of your own, making use of direct quotes. If necessary, review last week’s rules for writing dialogue.

STEP ONE: **Plan the narrative**

Your first step is to plan out the narrative. On the next page, you’ll see a list of events, written out chronologically for you, covering Johannes Kepler’s discovery that planets move in elliptical orbits. This information was taken from *Star Maps: History, Artistry, and Cartography* by Nick Kanas (Praxis, 2007); *Johannes Kepler and the New Astronomy* by James R. Voelkel; and *Tycho & Kepler: The Unlikely Partnership* by Kitty Ferguson (Bloomsbury, 2002).

You’ll need to make three choices:

1. Which main events and details to use in your narrative.
2. Where to put the “background paragraph,” and how much information to include in it.
3. Which time and sequence words to use.

Your chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.

Begin to plan out your narrative now by following these three instructions:

1. Circle the events that belong in the “background information” paragraph of your composition.

36. Cauterization is the burning of tissue in order to seal off a wound and prevent infection.

37. John G. Simmons, *Doctors and Discoveries: Lives That Created Today’s Medicine* (Houghton Mifflin, 2002), p. 120.

2. Draw a light line through the main events and details you do not intend to include. (Remember, you can eliminate an entire main event plus all its details. If you want to include a main event, you can also include only one of its details—or all of them.)
3. Consult your chart of Time and Sequence Words. Make an initial selection of four or five words that you might be able to use in your narrative (you'll only need to use two or three in your actual draft).

EVENTS LEADING TO KEPLER'S DISCOVERY OF ELLIPTICAL PLANETARY ORBITS

Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s

He studied heliocentrism

One of his teachers was a follower of Copernicus

Heliocentric world view of Copernicus vs. geocentric world view

Heliocentrism=sun at center of solar system

Copernicus said sun at *exact* center of solar system

Copernicus said all orbits completely circular

Geocentrism=Earth at center of solar system

Geocentric world view still popular

Copernicus's theory still rejected by many

Most astronomers believed Earth at center of solar system

Geocentrism=Earth had no orbit because it remained still

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Helped Brahe observe orbits for planets

Assumed all orbits were circles

Observed Mars at different times

Mars seemed to speed up and slow down

Could not explain why the planet Mars moved as it did

Tycho Brahe died in 1601

Told Kepler to keep on trying to understand orbit

Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars

Failed 40 times to find formula that explained Mars orbit

Struggled with Mars orbit for five years

In 1605, Kepler realized orbit must be an ellipse

Formulated "Kepler's first law of planetary motion"

Law: Planets move in elliptical orbits, sun is one focal point of orbit

Published findings in *Astronomia Nova* in 1609

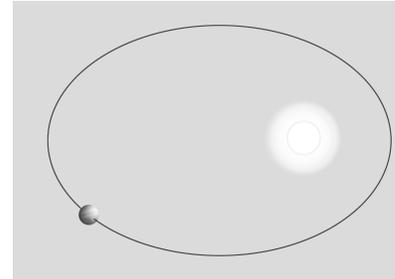
Contained theory that all planets move in elliptical orbits

Planets move faster when close to sun, slower when farther away

Argued that sun pulls on planets

Intended to prove heliocentrism once and for all

Argued that Earth behaved like other planets



STEP TWO: **Write a draft of the narrative**

Your next step is to write a first draft of your narrative. Here's a summary of your assignment:

1. This chronological narrative can be one paragraph or several paragraphs, but it must be at least 150 words long and no longer than 300 words.
2. The narrative must progress chronologically forward at all times. The only exception is your "background paragraph," where you describe what most people believed about the Earth and sun during Kepler's day. This paragraph should come early in the composition (first or second).
3. Do not include all of the main events and details.
4. Use two or more time words in your narrative.
5. Try not to use the identical words of the events list. In previous lessons, you were told to look at nouns and adjectives and to change them if possible. This events list contains a number of verbs; when you write this narrative, concentrate on changing the verbs. For example, if you are writing a paragraph based on the following events:

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Helped Brahe observe orbits for planets

Assumed all orbits were circles

try not to write:

*Kepler **worked** as an assistant to the astronomer Tycho Brahe from 1600–1601. He **helped** Brahe **observe** orbits for planets. Both men **assumed** all orbits **were** circles.*

Instead try to use original verbs in place of the verbs (bolded) in the events list.

*Kepler **became** the assistant of the astronomer Tycho Brahe in 1600 and worked with Brahe for a year. His job was to **track** the orbits of the planets. Both men **believed** that all planets **orbited** the sun in a perfect circle.*

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: **Add direct quotes**

Now that you've completed a rough draft of your narrative, consider how you might use Johannes Kepler's actual words to make some part of it more vivid.

Read through these five direct quotes from Kepler himself.

DIRECT QUOTES FROM KEPLER

"First, therefore, let my readers grasp that today it is absolutely certain . . . that all the planets revolve around the sun, with the exception of the moon, which alone has the Earth as its centre."³⁸

38. Johannes Kepler and Charles G. Wallis, *The Harmonies of the World* (BiblioBazaar, 2008), p. 22.

“The planetary orbit is elliptical and the sun, the source of movement, is at one of the foci of this ellipse.”³⁹

“I was almost driven to madness considering and calculating this matter. I could not find out why the planet would rather go on an elliptical orbit.”⁴⁰

“I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens.”⁴¹

“If God is concerned with astronomy, which piety desires to believe, then I hope that I shall achieve something in this domain.”⁴²

Now look over your list of main events, and try to decide which main events each of these quotes belong to. (Some of the quotes might be usable in more than one part of the composition.)

For example, consider this quote: “I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens.” The quote tells you why Kepler spent his life studying the sky. So it might fit into a paragraph based on the following events:

Johannes Kepler studied at university in the 1590s

Worked as assistant to astronomer Tycho Brahe 1600–1601

Kepler tried to find mathematical explanation for movement of Mars

If the draft of your paragraph based on the first event read like this:

Johannes Kepler became a university student in the 1590s. He was taught heliocentrism, because one of his teachers believed Copernicus’s theories of the universe.

you could add the quote as follows:

Johannes Kepler became a university student in the 1590s and studied astronomy. He said of his own studies, “I am moved by an exceedingly powerful desire for knowledge of the heavens.” He was taught heliocentrism, because one of his teachers believed Copernicus’s theories of the universe.

Now decide which quote you want to use and add it in to the appropriate paragraph. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

39. Kepler and Wallis, p. 25.

40. Quoted in Owen Gingerich, *The Eye of Heaven: Ptolemy, Copernicus, Kepler* (American Institute of Physics, 1993), p. 344.

41. Quoted in Max Caspar and Clarisse Doris Hellman, *Kepler* (Dover, 1993) pp. 120–121.

42. Caspar and Hellman, p. 123.

WEEK 8: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central details

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from George MacDonald's modern fairy tale *The Princess and the Goblin*.

— — —

CHAPTER 1

Why the Princess Has a Story about Her

There was once a little princess whose father was king over a great country full of mountains and valleys. His palace was built upon one of the mountains, and was very grand and beautiful. The princess, whose name was Irene, was born there, but she was sent soon after her birth, because her mother was not very strong, to be brought up by country people in a large house, half castle, half farmhouse, on the side of another mountain, about half-way between its base and its peak.

The princess was a sweet little creature, and at the time my story begins was about eight years old, I think, but she got older very fast. Her face was fair and pretty, with eyes like two bits of night sky, each with a star dissolved in the blue. Those eyes you would have thought must have known they came from there, so often were they turned up in that direction. The ceiling of her nursery was blue, with stars in it, as like the sky as they could make it. But I doubt if ever she saw the real sky with the stars in it, for a reason which I had better mention at once.

These mountains were full of hollow places underneath; huge caverns, and winding ways, some with water running through them, and some shining with all colours of the rainbow when a light was taken in. There would not have been

much known about them, had there not been mines there, great deep pits, with long galleries and passages running off from them, which had been dug to get at the ore of which the mountains were full. In the course of digging, the miners came upon many of these natural caverns. A few of them had far-off openings out on the side of a mountain, or into a ravine.

Now in these subterranean caverns lived a strange race of beings, called by some gnomes, by some kobolds, by some goblins. There was a legend current in the country that at one time they lived above ground, and were very like other people. But for some reason or other, concerning which there were different legendary theories, the king had laid what they thought too severe taxes upon them, or had required observances of them they did not like, or had begun to treat them with more severity, in some way or other, and impose stricter laws; and the consequence was that they had all disappeared from the face of the country. According to the legend, however, instead of going to some other country, they had all taken refuge in the subterranean caverns, whence they never came out but at night, and then seldom showed themselves in any numbers, and never to many people at once. It was only in the least frequented and most difficult parts of the mountains that they were said to gather even at night in the open air. Those who had caught sight of any of them said that they had greatly altered in the course of generations; and no wonder, seeing they lived away from the sun, in cold and wet and dark places. They were now, not ordinarily ugly, but either absolutely hideous, or ludicrously grotesque both in face and form. There was no invention, they said, of the most lawless imagination expressed by pen or pencil, that could surpass the extravagance of their appearance.

But I suspect those who said so had mistaken some of their animal companions for the goblins themselves—of which more by and by. The goblins themselves were not so far removed from the human as such a description would imply. And as they grew misshapen in body they had grown in knowledge and cleverness, and now were able to do things no mortal could see the possibility of. But as they grew in cunning, they grew in mischief, and their great delight was in every way they could think of to annoy the people who lived in the open-air storey above them. They had enough of affection left for each other to preserve them from being absolutely cruel for cruelty's sake to those that came in their way; but still they so heartily cherished the ancestral grudge against those who occupied their former possessions and especially against the descendants of the king who had caused their expulsion, that they sought every opportunity of tormenting them in ways that were as odd as their inventors; and although dwarfed and misshapen, they had strength equal to their cunning. In the process of time they had got a king and a government of their own, whose chief business, beyond their own simple affairs, was to devise trouble for their neighbours.

It will now be pretty evident why the little princess had never seen the sky at night. They were much too afraid of the goblins to let her out of the house then, even in company with ever so many attendants; and they had good reason, as we shall see by and by.⁴³

STEP TWO: Note central details

You may notice that this passage is a little different than the narratives you've been summarizing. Instead of listing a series of chronological events, George MacDonald sets the stage for his story by describing the world Princess Irene lives in. The passage should have given you a clear picture in your mind.

On your scratch paper, write down five or six phrases or short sentences that identify the most important things about this world. If a detail doesn't add significantly to the mental picture of the princess's world, you should leave it out. (For example, it doesn't really matter that the people in the world mistook animals for the goblins. But if you don't mention that the goblins were "misshapen in body," your picture of the world will be incomplete.)

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

After you've written down your five or six phrases or sentences, try to combine them into three or four sentences. You can do this by putting two phrases in the same sentence (for example, "Many mountains and valleys in kingdom" and "Mountains filled with caverns and mines" could be combined into "There were many mountains filled with caverns and mines in the kingdom"). Or you may find that one or more of your jotted notes turns out to be unnecessary (if you wrote down "Mountains filled with caverns and mines" and "Miners found caverns," you can eliminate one of those sentences).

Say your three or four sentences several times before writing them down. After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them.

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

43. George MacDonald, *The Princess and the Goblin* (Blackie & Son, 1888), pp. 1–6.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *The Mississippi Bubble* by Thomas B. Costain.

You may find the following background information useful: In the seventeenth century, France, Spain, and England were competing for control of the new land on the North American continent. The French wanted to build a great city on the Mississippi River so that they could control which ships went up and down the river. But the English and Spanish navies might appear at any moment to attack a French settlement. So might the Native Americans, known to the French as Indians, who already lived along the Mississippi. So any settlement would need a strong fort to defend it.

The leader the text refers to, Sieur d'Iberville, was a famous French general sent by King Louis XIV to establish this French colony.

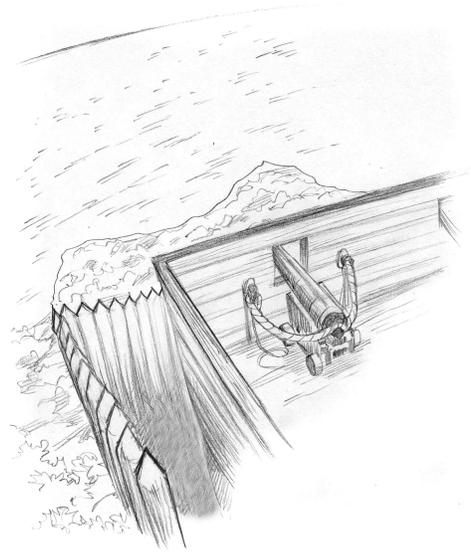
— — —

The expedition had touched first at a place on the north of the Gulf which Iberville named Biloxi. They returned to Biloxi after their success in finding the mouth of the river and the commander decided that a fort should be built there. Temporarily it would serve as the headquarters of the French on the Gulf. The great city they hoped to build on the bend of the river would come later.

Iberville had chosen well. Biloxi Bay was a safe harbor, well screened by Deer Island. The bay extended back into the mainland for several miles and Deer Island lay across the mouth of the bay, blocking it off except a channel at either end. This made a snug little harbor for the new settlement. There was always the danger of English or Spanish ships appearing on the green waters of the Gulf.

The site that the great leader chose for the fort was ideal. It was a high bank on the east side of the bay near the mouth. Here the French guns could sweep the horizon and the lookout could keep a sharp eye on the beach, the water, and the country round about. There were deep ravines on two sides of the hill which run down to the bay; this made a natural fort of the hill. The weakest spot was on the forest side where the land sloped gently to the woods beyond. Iberville put his men to work immediately to build a strong entrenchment from one ravine to the other. He knew only too well how suddenly and swiftly the Indians could attack. . .

The fort they erected was similar to those which the French had always constructed in their pioneering efforts along the St. Lawrence River. There were several wooden buildings, the main one two stories in height, inside a high barricade of logs. The outer wall had bastions at each corner. These were made of squared logs, two to three feet thick, placed one upon another. The four bastions were surrounded by deep ditches, and they served as projections from which the defenders could meet the attacks of the enemy with raking fire in all directions. They could also keep the enemy from setting fire to the walls of the fort.⁴⁴



STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

You've already practiced outlining passages that tell events in chronological order. For these outlines, you have been asking yourself two questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this section is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

This passage is a little different; it describes a *place*. Although you can certainly use the same two questions when you outline a passage of description, you can also take a simpler approach. Instead of asking these two questions and writing a sentence that answers each one, you can ask yourself: What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?

Try that for the first section now.



Were you able to come up with an answer?

This first paragraph tells about Iberville's decision to build the fort and city at Biloxi. So the first section tells you about the *location* of the fort and city. Your first outline point would be:

I. The location

Look at the second section. This paragraph focuses on one specific part of the location. (Hint: it involves water.)



Did you come up with an answer?

44. Thomas Costain, *The Mississippi Bubble* (Random House, 1955), pp. 24–26.

This second paragraph tells you about the bay itself. Your second outline point can be either

II. Biloxi Bay itself

or

II. The bay and harbor

If you were doing a two-level outline of this paragraph (something you won't practice until later on), the subpoints—points that tell you more about the *main* point—would all describe the bay and the harbor formed by the bay.

Now try to complete this exercise by providing points III and IV. You can continue to use phrases rather than complete sentences. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

The passage you outlined in your last writing session is an example of this week's topos: a **description of a place**. Today's assignment is to understand the elements that go into a good place description.

STEP ONE: Understand the purpose of descriptions

Like chronological narratives, descriptions of places can sometimes stand on their own; a detailed description of a medieval castle, an ancient city, or a modern submarine could be a short history composition in its own right. More often, though, a description of a place fits into a larger piece of writing. Thomas Costain's description of the fort in *The Mississippi Bubble* is part of a chapter about the bitter wars between European countries over the New World. The description of the fort's many walls, towers, ditches, and defenses helps give you an idea of just how hard the French were prepared to fight for control of the Mississippi River.

Here is another description of a place, this one from a book by Jonathan Kozol called *Savage Inequalities*. Kozol's book is about the dreadful condition of schools in poor, inner-city neighborhoods. In this passage, he is being driven through East St. Louis on his way to visit a neighborhood where the schoolchildren live.

As we ride past blocks and blocks of skeletal structures, some of which are still inhabited, she slows the car repeatedly at railroad crossings. A seemingly endless railroad train rolls past us to the right. On the left: a

blackened lot where garbage has been burning. Next to the burning garbage is a row of twelve white cabins, charred by fire. Next: a lot that holds a heap of auto tires and a mountain of tin cans. More burnt houses. More trash fires. The train moves almost imperceptibly across the flatness of the land.⁴⁵

After you read the description of this bleak wasteland, you're not at all surprised when Kozol arrives at the school itself and finds disintegrating classrooms, no heat, no equipment, damaged textbooks, and bathrooms that don't work.

As you can see from the two examples you've looked at, a description of a place is more than just a listing of details. When you write a description, you decide what details to include. But you also decide what *emotion* the description should help the reader feel, or what *idea* the reader should begin to understand.

Read the following description of the field where the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066.

There is a little patch of a square mile or so, in the midst of the rich Sussex landscape in England. Through it, in low ground, sluggishly flows a small brook, and from the brook ridges slope up gently on either hand. It is covered for the most part with the green, thick English grass, dotted now and then by old elms and oaks. A gray, half-ruined wall, toothed with battlements at the summit, runs along one verge of the field; and there are two or three old towers, forlorn. . . . [with] wall and towers suggesting a splendor that has now departed.⁴⁶

The writer goes on to contrast the peace of the field *now* with the struggle of the battle itself, *long ago*. He wants us to feel, sharply, the difference between the present and the past, so he uses quiet, slow, peaceful words in his description: *little, low, sluggishly, small, gently, forlorn*.

This is the first element in a well-written description: the writer has in mind a *specific purpose* that he wants the description to fulfill. Thomas Costain wanted the reader to understand just how strong and well defended the French fort on the Mississippi would be; Jonathan Kozol wanted the reader to focus on the poverty of East St. Louis; James Hosmer, who wrote the description of the field above, wanted the reader to appreciate the peace and quiet of the present-day spot.

STEP TWO: **Write down the pattern of the topos**

Now copy the following onto a blank sheet of paper in the Reference section of your Composition Notebook. You will be adding to this page as you learn more about chronological narratives, so leave plenty of room at the bottom of the page; also leave blank space under the "Remember" column.

45. Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (Harper Perennial, 1992), pp. 11–12.

46. James Kendall Hosmer, *A Short History of Anglo-Saxon Freedom* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), p. 25.

The definition of this topos may seem very obvious. Copy it down anyway—you'll be learning, in later lessons, about descriptions that *aren't* simply physical and visual.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*

Remember

STEP THREE: Practice the topos

You'll end today's lesson by writing two brief descriptions, each with a different purpose.

Look closely at the second sentence in James Hosmer's description of the Battle of Hastings field:

Through it, in low ground, sluggishly flows a small brook, and from the brook ridges slope up gently on either hand.

Now imagine that Hosmer had wanted us to feel the urgency and danger of the Battle of Hastings himself. He might have written:

The sunken field was gashed by a thin stream of water, and from the stream's edges, ridges rose up on either hand.

What if Hosmer had written a description of the field without any particular purpose in mind? The sentence might sound like this:

A brook ran through the field. There were hills on both sides of the water.

which would have been incredibly boring (and not very descriptive). Descriptions that have purpose are always more vivid and engaging.

Your assignment is to take the following description and rewrite it twice. The first time, imagine that you're using this description of a room in the first chapter of a ghost story: make it creepy, frightening, or suspenseful. The second time, imagine that the description is coming at the conclusion of a romance in which the hero and heroine have finally fallen in love and decided to marry.

The room was large and the ceiling was high and vaulted. The windows were long and high, with arches at the tops. The floor was made of oak boards. The sun was setting outside, and the light that came through the windows was red and gold, but it did not reach all the way into the corners of the room. Curtains hung at the windows, and there was a lot of furniture in the room.

As you write, remember that you can make use of adjectives (the "shining windows" or the "gloomy windows"), synonyms ("The room was large" could become either "The room was echoing" or "The room was spacious and welcoming"), and vivid verbs (did the light "flood" or "struggle" through the windows?).

If you need assistance, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, show your two descriptions to your instructor.

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the form of a description
of a place

STEP ONE: Understand space and distance words and phrases

Read these three excerpts from the passages you've already examined this week. Notice which words are bolded.

Biloxi Bay was a safe harbor, well screened by Deer Island. The bay extended **back** into the mainland for several miles and Deer Island lay **across** the mouth of the bay, blocking it off except a channel at either end.

A seemingly endless railroad train rolls **past us to the right**. **On the left**: a blackened lot **where** garbage has been burning. **Next to** the burning garbage is a row of twelve white cabins, charred by fire.

The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a **distance from** the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from **within**. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way **through** the trellised panes. . . Dark draperies hung **upon** the walls.

When you studied chronological narratives, you learned that time and sequence words can help you put events into chronological order. When you write a description, **space and distance words and phrases** can help you create a clear picture of a place.

Pull out the list of Space and Distance Words/Phrases found in Appendix I. This is not an exhaustive (complete) list, and many of the words on it can work in more than one way (if, for example, you wanted to explain that a tree stood three feet to the right of a house, you could say “The tree was next to the house” or “The tree was to the right of the house” or even “The tree was a short distance from the house”). But the categories on the list will give you a starting place as you write your descriptions.

Before you go on with the next step, look up from your paper and choose one object or piece of furniture in the room. Now look down your list of Space and Distance Words/Phrases and count how many of them could accurately describe your relationship to that object.

STEP TWO: **Add to the pattern of the topos**

These space and distance words and phrases can help you write a more precise, and so more interesting, description.

Read the following description and underline each of the space and distance words and phrases.

In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat; it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.

It had a perfectly round door like a porthole, painted green, with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle. The door opened on to a tube-shaped hall like a tunnel: a very comfortable tunnel without smoke, with panelled walls, and floors tiled and carpeted, provided with polished chairs, and lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats—the hobbit was fond of visitors. The tunnel wound on and on, going fairly but not quite straight into the side of the hill—The Hill, as all the people for many miles round called it—and many little round doors opened out of it, first on one side, and then on another. No going upstairs for the hobbit: bedrooms, bathrooms, cellars, pantries (lots of these), wardrobes (he had whole rooms devoted to clothes), kitchens, dining-rooms, all were on the same floor, and indeed on the same passage. The best rooms were all on the left-hand side (going in), for these were the only ones to have windows, deep-set round windows looking over his garden, and meadows beyond, sloping down to the river.⁴⁷



When you are finished, ask your instructor to check your work.

Now turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*

Remember

1. **Make use of space and distance words.**

47. J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit* (Random House, 1982), p. 1.

STEP THREE: **Practice the topos**

Look carefully at the picture of Neuschwanstein Castle in Germany. King Ludwig of Bavaria had it built between 1869 and 1884 on the ruins of a medieval castle. The palace was designed to have more than 200 rooms, but fewer than 20 were finished before the king's death. If the castle looks familiar to you, it may be because Disney used it as the model for the castle in *Sleeping Beauty*.

Write a description of at least four but not more than eight sentences describing this place. Use at least four different space and distance words and phrases in your description. Be sure to describe the castle itself *and* also to include some detail about the surrounding landscape.

The purpose of your description should be to convey how spectacular the castle is. If you need help with this purpose, ask your instructor.

When you are finished, ask your instructor to check your work.



Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria, Germany. Credit: Shutterstock.com

WEEK 9: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central details and actions

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from *Mary Poppins in the Park* by P. L. Travers. Travers wrote a series of books about Mary Poppins, the magical British nanny, and her charges: Michael and Jane, the two older children in the Banks family; the twins John and Barbara; and baby Annabel. In this chapter, Michael and Jane are playing in the park, with Mary Poppins nearby—which always means that something mysterious is about to happen.

“Plasticine” is a kind of modelling clay.

In the story, Michael thinks that a statue looks like “Neleus.” Neleus was a minor Greek god, one of the sons of the sea god Poseidon.

— — —

“What are you making?” he enquired, flinging himself on the grass beside her.

“A Park for Poor People,” she replied. “Everyone is happy there. And nobody ever quarrels.”

She tossed aside a handful of leaves and he saw, amid the wildweed, a tidy square of green. It was threaded with little pebbled paths as wide as a fingernail. And beside them were tiny flower-beds made of petals massed together. A summer-house of nettle twigs nestled on the lawn; flowers were stuck in the earth for trees; and in their shade stood twig benches, very neat and inviting.

On one of these sat a plasticine man, no more than an inch high. His face was round, his body was round, and so were his arms and legs. The only pointed thing about him



was his little turned-up nose. He was reading a plasticine newspaper and a plasticine tool-bag lay at his feet.

“Who’s that?” asked Michael. “He reminds me of someone. But I can’t think who it is!”

Jane thought for a moment.

“His name is Mr. Mo,” she decided. “He is resting after his morning labours. He had a wife sitting next to him, but her hat went wrong, so I crumpled her up. I’ll try again with the last of the plasticine—” She glanced at the shapeless, coloured lump that lay behind the summer-house.

“And that?” He pointed to a feminine figure that stood by one of the flower-beds.

“That’s Mrs. Hickory,” said Jane. “She’s going to have a house, too. And after that I shall build a Fun Fair.”

He gazed at the plump little plasticine woman and admired the way her hair curled and the two large dimples in her cheeks.

“Do she and Mr. Mo know each other?”

“Oh, yes. They meet on the way to the Lake.”

And she showed him a little pebbly hollow where, when Mary Poppins’ head was turned, she had poured her mug of milk. At the end of the lake a plasticine statue reminded Michael of Neleus.

“Or down by the swing—” She pointed to two upright sticks from which an even smaller stick hung on a strand of darning wool.

Michael touched the swing with his finger-tip and it swayed backwards and forwards.

“And what’s that under the buttercup?”

A scrap of cardboard from the lid of the cake-box had been bent to form a table. Around it stood several cardboard stools and upon it was spread a meal so tempting that a king might have envied it.

In the centre stood a two-tiered cake and around it were bowls piled high with fruits—peaches, cherries, bananas, oranges. One end of the table bore an apple-pie and the other a chicken with a pink frill. There were sausages, and currant buns, and a pat of butter on a little green platter. Each place was set with a plate and a mug and a bottle of ginger wine.

The buttercup-tree spread over the feast. Jane had set two plasticine doves in its branches and a bumble-bee buzzed among its flowers.

“Go away, greedy fly!” cried Michael, as a small black shape settled on the chicken. “Oh, dear! How hungry it makes me feel!”

Jane gazed with pride at her handiwork. “Don’t drop your crumbs on the lawn, Michael. They make it look untidy.”

“I don’t see any litter-baskets. All I can see is an ant in the grass.” He swept his eyes round the tiny Park, so neat amid the wildweed.

“There never is any litter,” said Jane. “Mr. Mo lights the fire with his paper. And he saves his orange peel for Christmas puddings. Oh, Michael, don’t bend down so close, you’re keeping the sun away!”

His shadow lay over the Park like a cloud.

“Sorry!” he said, as he bent sideways. And the sunlight glinted down again as Jane lifted Mr. Mo and his tool-bag and set them beside the table.

“Is it his dinner-time?” asked Michael.

“Well—no!” said a little scratchy voice. “As a matter of fact, it’s breakfast!”

“How clever Jane is!” thought Michael admiringly. “She can not only make a little old man, she can talk like one as well.”

But her eyes, as he met them, were full of questions.

“Did *you* speak, Michael, in that squeaky way?”

“Of course he didn’t,” said the voice again.

And, turning, they saw that Mr. Mo was waving his hat in greeting. His rosy face was wreathed in smiles and his turned-up nose had a cheerful look.

“It isn’t what you call the meal. It’s how it tastes that matters. Help yourself!” he cried to Michael. “A growing lad is always hungry. Take a piece of pie!”

“I’m having a beautiful dream,” thought Michael, hurriedly helping himself.

“Don’t eat it, Michael. It’s plasticine!”

“It’s not! It’s apple!” he cried, with his mouth full.⁴⁸

STEP TWO: Note central details

Like last week’s story, this week’s narrative contains a description. At the end of the description, something happens that moves the story forward.

On your scratch paper, write down six or or seven phrases or short sentences that describe Jane’s Park for Poor People. You don’t need to summarize the conversation between Jane and Michael (so, for example, you don’t need to note “Michael asked Jane who the little plasticine woman was”), but you can use details within the conversation (so you might want to write “The little woman was named Mrs. Hickory”).

After you’ve written down your phrases, add a final sentence describing the most important thing that happens at the end of the story.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

After you’ve written down your phrases, try to combine them into three or four sentences. (Your last sentence doesn’t count.) Because there are so many details about the park,

48. P. L. Travers, *Mary Poppins in the Park* (Harcourt Books, 1997), pp. 186–191.

experiment with putting three phrases into one sentence; for example, “Little house of twigs,” “Flowers were trees,” and “benches made of twigs” could all be combined into “Twig benches and a twig house were surrounded by trees made of flowers.”

Say your three or four sentences several times before writing them down. When you’ve finished, add your last sentence to the end of your summary. You will probably need to use a time word to connect the last sentence to the summary, since the park itself and all of its details were already in existence *before* the event at the end of the story happened.

After you’ve written the sentences down, ask your instructor to check them. If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *Life in a Medieval Castle* by Gary Blackwood. You have probably studied before about the “feudal system.” Under this system, a lord granted land to farmers, who then became his *vassals* and owed him crops and military service.

The words in brackets [] have been inserted to make the excerpt clearer.

— — —

Castles of various sorts were common throughout Europe during the Middle Ages—in Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. They served a variety of purposes: as toll stations, arsenals, fortresses, and watchtowers. In terms of a fortified residence, the castle flourished above all in those countries where the feudal system was most firmly in place—in France and in Norman-occupied Britain. . . .

Before the Norman invasion [in the ninth century], European fortifications were crude for the most part, not much more than a ring of mounded-up earth surrounded by a ditch and topped by a fence, or palisade, of upright logs.

In the first half of the tenth century, structures that could properly be



considered castles began to appear. They were of this same basic “ringwork” design, except for the addition of a tower, or donjon, sometimes inaccurately called a keep. The donjon provided a stronghold that was more secure and could be more easily defended than the palisade.

Jean de Colmieu, writing in the early twelfth century, describes how such a castle was constructed:

They throw up a little hill of earth as high as they can; they surround it by a fosse [ditch] of considerable width and awful depth. On the inside edge of the fosse they set a palisade of squared logs of wood. . . . If it is possible they strengthen this palisade by towers built at various points. On the top of the little hill they build a house, or rather a citadel, whence a man can see on all sides. No one can reach its door except by a bridge, which . . . gradually rises until it reaches the top of the little hill and the door of the house, from which the master can control the whole of it.

This fortified hill was called a motte, meaning “mound” in French (not to be confused with the word *moat*, another name for the ditch that was dug around the perimeter). Most mottes were 100 to 250 feet in diameter at the base and could be as high as 80 feet, not including the height of the tower, which might add another 30 or 40 feet.

The area within the palisade, which might cover from two to ten acres, was called the bailey. In some cases, the bailey entirely surrounded the motte. In others it was entirely separate, except for the wooden bridge described by de Colmieu that linked the two sections. In this case, the motte might have a smaller palisade of its own around the tower.

An ordinary Norman manor house of the time had a simple floor plan: the kitchen and storeroom were located at one end, the main living and dining room was in the center, and the lord’s private chamber was at the other end. The layout of the typical donjon probably resembled a manor house turned up on end, so that the kitchen was on the ground floor, the main hall on the second floor, and the lord’s chamber at the top. Considering that the towers of many motte and baileys were no more than twelve feet square and forty feet tall, life inside them must have been cramped, to say the least.⁴⁹

49. Gary L. Blackwood, *Life in a Medieval Castle* (Lucent Books, 2000), pp. 15–17.

STEP TWO: Construct a one-level outline

As in last week's outlining assignment, this week's passage describes a place. Last week, you learned that although you can ask two questions about each section:

1. What is the main thing that this section is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

you can also ask a simpler question when outlining a passage of description:

What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?

As you work on finding the major points for your outline, you may want to use a combination of the two methods.

The reason is simple. When a passage of description is narrowly focused on one area, the single question "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?" can give you a straightforward answer. But often, a passage of description will contain sections that have a slightly different focus.

Look at the first section in the description and ask yourself "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?"



What answer did you come up with?

You probably came up with a single word:

Castles

That's not a very good major point; it's too broad, too vague, and too general. Imagine that you were using an outline to write, and your first outline point merely said "Castles." How would you know what to write—or even where to start? This question doesn't work because although the passage goes on to describe each major part of a medieval castle, the first *section* of the passage is an introduction that talks about castles *generally*.

Try asking the two other questions now. What main thing is the section about?



Castles.

Why are the castles important?



Castles were common or Castles served many purposes (these two points are similar—they were common because they served many purposes). That's a good first main point for the passage.

Follow this rule as you look for a major point for the remaining sections: First, ask "What part of the place does the section focus on?" If the answer is a single common word, go back to the two-question procedure instead.

Now try to complete this exercise by providing points II through VII. You can mix phrases and sentences if necessary. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

The passage you outlined in your last writing session is another example of this week's topos: a **description of a place**. You studied and practiced this form last week; this week, you'll study and practice some more.

STEP ONE: Review the use of space and distance words and phrases

Read the following descriptions and underline the space and distance words and phrases. The first description was written by the Greek historian Herodotus; the second, by the modern historian Stephen Blake; the third, by the secretary to the sixteenth-century Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor. In the first two lines of the assignment, the space and distance words and phrases have been bolded as an example.

The sanctuary is situated **in the center of** the city, and one can walk **around** it and look **down into** it from all sides, because the city has risen . . . with the accumulation of soil over time but the sanctuary has remained undisturbed since it was first built, and therefore it is possible to look down into it. Surrounding it is a dry wall carved with reliefs, and within that wall is a grove of very tall trees growing around a large temple which contains the cult statue. The sanctuary is square and measures 583 feet on each side. Extending from the entrance is a stone road about 1,750 long and 400 feet wide, leading through the marketplace to the east. Trees so tall that they seem to touch the sky grow on either side of the road, which continues until it reaches the sanctuary of Hermes. That is what the sanctuary of Boubastis looks like.⁵⁰

50. Herodotus, *The Landmark Herodotus: The Histories*, trans. Robert B. Strassler (Random House, 2009), p. 180.

In its plan and build, Peking, like the other sovereign cities, reflected the dominance of the imperial household. At its very heart, a fortress within a fortress within a fortress, lay the Forbidden City, a 385-acre enclosure that contained audience halls, private apartments, religious shrines, and about 15,000 persons—the imperial family, personal servants, privileged retainers, and eunuchs. At the center of the Forbidden City stood the Hall of Supreme Harmony. In the middle of this hall on a great throne the Ming emperor exercised absolute power.⁵¹

Mexico-Tenochtitlan is completely surrounded by water, standing as it does in the lake. It can be approached by only three causeways: one, about half a league long, entering from the west; another from the north, about a league long. There is no causeway from the east, and one must approach by boat. To the south is the third causeway. . . . The lake upon which Mexico is situated, although it seems to be one, is really two, very different from each other, for one is saline, bitter, and stinking, and has no fish in it, while the other is of sweet water and does have fish, although they are small. The salt lake rises and falls, and has currents caused by the winds. The fresh-water lake is higher, so that the good water flows into the bad, and not the other way around, as some have thought. . . . On its shores are more than fifty towns, many of them of five thousand houses, some of ten thousand, and one, Texcoco, as large as Mexico.⁵²

STEP TWO: **Understand point of view**

If you were Herodotus, where would you be standing while describing the sanctuary of Boubastis?

Herodotus gives you a hint in the first sentence of the description, when he says “One can walk around and look down into it from all sides.” As he describes the sanctuary, he is doing so from the point of view of someone who is above the place, looking down over it and seeing all of its different parts.

The second passage has a different point of view. Imagine that the narrator of this passage is walking through the walls of Peking, towards the center. He arrives at the Forbidden City, at the “heart” of the city, and walks through the walls of the Forbidden City, still heading towards the center. He arrives at the Hall of Supreme Harmony, at the center of the Forbidden Center, and walks through its door. Right at the middle of the Hall is the throne of the Ming emperor.

51. Stephen P. Blake, *Shahjahanabad: The Sovereign City in Mughal India 1639–1739* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 206.

52. Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *Cortes: The Life of the Conqueror by His Secretary*, trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (University of California Press, 1964), p. 159.

This point of view is of someone moving forward, getting closer and closer to the center. The first narrator can see the whole place he's describing all at once. The second narrator can't see the Hall, or the throne, until he arrives at it.

There are four basic points of view for a description:

1. From above, as though you were hovering over the place. This is sometimes called the "impersonal" point of view, because you're not directly involved in the place itself; you're looking over it as a detached observer.
2. From inside it, as though you were part of the place, standing still in the middle of it at a particular point and looking around.
3. From one side, as though you were standing beside the place looking at it from one particular angle.
4. Moving, as though you were walking through the place, or around it.

You can choose to use any one of these points of view when you write a description, but once you've settled on one, keep asking yourself: Am I still describing this place from the *same* point of view? You shouldn't (for example) be describing a mountain from above, and then suddenly leap into an inside cave without telling the reader how you got there.

Now look back at the third description. Try to figure out which point of view this passage is written from. When you've decided, check your answer with your instructor.

STEP THREE: Add to the pattern of the topos

Pull Appendix II, Points of View, from the back of your workbook. Place it in your Composition Notebook. (You will learn about the other points of view in Appendix II later.)

Now turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the "Procedure" column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*
2. **Choose a point of view.**

Remember

1. Make use of space and distance words and phrases.

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the form of a description of a place

STEP ONE: **Review point of view**

In the last assignment, you learned about the four basic points of view that descriptions can be written from. Glance at your Points of View appendix and review those now.

When you've finished, read the following three descriptions. The first comes from the French writer Rene Auguste Constantin de Renneville, who was imprisoned in the French prison known as the Bastille from 1702 to 1713. The second was written by the nineteenth-century English novelist Charles Dickens. The third is from American Jon Krakauer's account of climbing Mount Everest in 1996.

In the margin beside each description, write which point of view is being used. When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

The walls were dirty and soiled with filth; only the ceiling was still fairly clean and white. The furniture consisted of a small broken feeding table, a small collapsed chair of straw on which one could no longer safely sit; and the entire room was swarming with fleas; in a minute I was covered with them. The names of the prisoners were written on the unclean walls. Here a camp bed, a thin mattress, a feather pillow, a vile torn cover eaten by moths were laid down for me. I had never seen so much vermin, and I only kept myself free of it through constant effort to exterminate it. . . . I ate poorly, and slept even worse. In addition, the room was filled with rotten and unhealthy fumes, and every quarter of an hour, the sentry tolled a bell that was so close to my room that it seemed it was hanging from my ears.⁵³

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside, go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all

53. Constantin de Renneville, quoted in *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism and Freedom*, by Hans-Jurgen Lusebrink, trans. Rolf Reichardt (Duke University press, 1997), pp. 10–11.

day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms.⁵⁴

Plodding slowly up the last few steps to the summit, I had the sensation of being underwater, of life moving at quarter speed. And then I found myself atop a slender wedge of ice, adorned with a discarded oxygen cylinder and a battered aluminum survey pole, with nowhere higher to climb. A string of Buddhist prayer flags snapped furiously in the wind. Far below, down a side of the mountain I had never laid eyes on, the dry Tibetan plateau stretched to the horizon as a boundless expanse of dun-colored earth.⁵⁵

STEP TWO: **Practice the topos**

Now you'll experiment with writing a description of the same place from three of the four points of view.

Choose the most interesting room in your house (or if you can go outside, the most interesting section of yard, park, field, or forest). Your goal will be to describe this place in no more than three or four sentences for each point of view, giving a sense of peace, calm, tranquility, belonging, and contentment.

The first time you describe the place, do so from an *abstract/impersonal* point of view. You should not be present in the description at all (in other words, you would write "Photographs hang along the living room wall," as opposed to "I can see pictures of my family on the wall"). Imagine that you're hovering above the place and can see everything in it simultaneously.

The second time you describe the place, do so from *one side or angle*. Choose a place to stand, and describe only what you can see from that particular spot. You should put yourself in the description (so you would write "A beech tree stands on my left, with a holly half-hidden behind it," as opposed to "There is a beech tree with a holly behind it").

Finally, describe the place one last time. This time, describe what you can see as you walk through it *or* as you walk around it. Be sure to list details in the same order that you see them as you move. You can choose to either put yourself in the description ("As I walk past the kitchen table, the refrigerator comes into view on my right") or leave yourself out ("The refrigerator stands on the right, just past the kitchen table").

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

54. Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost Story of Christmas* (Chapman & Hall, 1845), pp. 5–6.

55. Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air* (Anchor Books, 1999), p. 189.

WEEK 10: DESCRIPTION OF A PLACE

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



Focus: Summarizing a narrative by choosing the central events and details

STEP ONE: Read

Read the following excerpt from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens. You've already seen a description from *A Christmas Carol* in last week's lesson. Dickens was a master of vivid, detailed descriptions, and *A Christmas Carol* is probably his best-known work.

In this passage, the miser Scrooge is coming home in the dark after a long day's work—on Christmas Eve. He has just walked up the steps of his own house and is getting ready to open his own front door.

Jacob Marley was Scrooge's former partner, but when the story begins, he's been dead for seven years. "Livid" means ashen colored, pale, deathly white; you should also know that some bacteria found in decaying seafood can give off a very faint luminescent glow.

— — —

Now, it is a fact that there was nothing at all particular about the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It is also a fact that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, during his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as little of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City of London. . . . Let it also be borne in mind that Scrooge had not bestowed one thought on Marley since his last mention of his seven-years'-dead partner that afternoon. And then let any man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scrooge, having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, without its undergoing any intermediate process of change—not a knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow, as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like a bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, but looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacles turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously

stirred, as if by breath of hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, they were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made it horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face, and beyond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not conscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from infancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he had relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut the door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half expected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking out into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, except the screws and nuts that held the knocker on, so he said, "Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every room above, and every cask in the wine merchant's cellars below, appeared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge was not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, and walked across the hall, and up the stairs: slowly, too: trimming his candle as he went. . . . Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the street wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose that it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that. Darkness is cheap, and Scrooge liked it. But, before he shut his heavy door, he walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had just enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. Nobody under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in the grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of gruel (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody under the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-gown, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the wall. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two fish baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in; double locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secured against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-gown and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire to take his gruel.



It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter night. He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before he could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful of fuel. . . . As he threw his head back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disused bell, that hung in the room, and communicated, for some purpose now forgotten, with a chamber in the highest story of the building. It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplicable dread, that, as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. It swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; but soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but it seemed an hour. The bells ceased, as they had begun, together. They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below, as if some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in the wine merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains.

The cellar door flew open with a booming sound, and then he heard the noise much louder on the floors below; then coming up the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.⁵⁶

STEP TWO: Note central events and details

This week's story contains a series of events, *and* at least one description which should be included in your narrative summary.

Begin by writing down on scratch paper five or six phrases or short sentences that will remind you, in order, of the things that happened in the story. After you've put these sentences down in order, ask yourself: If you hadn't read the story, would you need a few more *visual* details about any of these phrases or sentences? Underline one or two phrases or sentences that would be clearer if you provided a few more descriptive details. Draw a line from the phrase(s) or sentence(s) to the other side of your paper. At the end of this line, write down three or four central details about the place where the event happened.

If you have trouble with this assignment, ask your instructor for help.

STEP THREE: Write summary sentences

Now try to combine your phrases or sentences about the main events into three sentences (your narrative shouldn't be more than four sentences, and you'll need to keep one sentence for the additional descriptive details). Say your three sentences out loud several times. Then decide which details to include in your additional sentence. Write down all four sentences, putting the sentence with the additional details directly after the sentence that mentions the main event connected to those details. (If you can incorporate the details into one of other sentences, that's fine.)

After you've written the sentences down, ask your instructor for help. And if you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

56. Dickens, pp. 19–25.

Day Two: Outlining Exercise



Focus: Finding the central topic in each paragraph of a description

STEP ONE: **Read**

Read the following excerpt from *The Travels of Marco Polo*, describing the palace of the Mongol khan Kublai Khan, who established the Yuan Dynasty in China. Marco Polo was a Venetian merchant who travelled to China between 1271 and 1295; when he returned, he wrote a book about his adventures.

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The grand khan usually resides during three months of the year, namely, December, January, and February, in the great city of Kanbalu, situated towards the north-eastern extremity of the province of Cathay; and here, on the southern side of the new city, is the site of his vast palace . . . the most extensive that has ever yet been known.

It reaches from the northern to the southern wall [of the city], leaving only a vacant space (or court), where persons of rank and the military guards pass and repass. It has no upper floor, but the roof is very lofty. The paved foundation or platform on which it stands is raised ten spans above the level of the ground, and a wall of marble, two paces wide, is built on all sides, to the level of this pavement, within the line of which the palace is erected; so that the wall, extending beyond the ground plan of the building, and encompassing the whole, serves as a terrace, where those who walk on it are visible from without. Along the exterior edge of the wall is a handsome balustrade, with pillars, which the people are allowed to approach.

The sides of the great halls and the apartments are ornamented with dragons in carved work and gilt, figures of warriors, of birds, and of beasts, with representations of battles. The inside of the roof is contrived in such a manner that nothing besides gilding and painting presents itself to the eye. . . . The exterior of the roof is adorned with a variety of colour, red, green, azure, and violet, and the sort of covering is so strong as to last for many years. The glazing of the windows is so well wrought and so delicate as to have the transparency of crystal.

In the rear of the body of the palace there are large buildings containing several apartments, where is deposited the private property of the monarch, or

his treasure in gold and silver bullion, precious stones, and pearls, and also his vessels of gold and silver plate. Here are likewise the apartments of his wives and concubines; and in this retired situation he despatches business with convenience, being free from every kind of interruption. . . .

Not far from the palace, on the northern side, and about a bow-shot distance from the surrounding wall, is an artificial mount of earth, the height of which is full a hundred paces, and the circuit at the base about a mile. It is clothed with the most beautiful evergreen trees; for whenever his majesty receives information of a handsome tree growing in any place, he causes it to be dug up, with all its roots and the earth about them, and however large and heavy it may be, he has it transported by means of elephants to this mount, and adds it to the verdant collection. From this perpetual verdure it has acquired the appellation of the Green Mount. On its summit is erected an ornamental pavilion, which is likewise entirely green. The view of this altogether—the mount itself, the trees, and the building, form a delightful and at the same time a wonderful scene.

In the northern quarter also, and equally within the precincts of the city, there is a large and deep excavation, judiciously formed, the earth from which supplied the material for raising the mount. It is furnished with water by a small rivulet, and has the appearance of a fish-pond, but its use is for watering the cattle. The stream passing from thence along an aqueduct, at the foot of the Green Mount, proceeds to fill another great and very deep excavation. . . . In this latter basin there is great store and variety of fish, from which the table of his majesty is supplied with any quantity that may be wanted. The stream discharges itself at the opposite extremity of the piece of water, and precautions are taken to prevent the escape of the fish by placing gratings of copper or iron at the places of its entrance and exit. It is stocked also with swans and other aquatic birds. . . . Such is the description of this great palace.⁵⁷

STEP TWO: **Construct a one-level outline**

This week's passage is one last example of a place description—Kublai Khan's palace in China. As in the first description you outlined, some sections in this passage can be outlined fairly easily if you simply ask "What part of the place does this paragraph focus on?" If this question doesn't give you a simple answer, you can instead ask:

1. What is the main thing this section is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

57. Marco Polo and John Masfield, *The Travels of Marco Polo, the Venetian* (J. M. Dent, 1908), pp. 166–171.

Use the following hints as you work through the sections.

Section 1. All of the sentences in this section refer to the same *thing*. This is an introductory section, giving the reader an overview of . . . what?

Section 2. The sentences in this section all refer to the same *quality* or *characteristic* shared by the parts mentioned.

Sections 3–5. These sections refer to specific parts of the place.

As in the last lesson, you can mix phrases and sentences if necessary. If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. When you are finished, check your assignment with your instructor.

Day Three: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One



Understanding the use of figurative language in a description of a place

You've already learned three things about the description of a place: it should serve a particular purpose, it should use space and distance words, and it should be written from a particular point of view. This week, you'll add one more element to your descriptions.

STEP ONE: Understand metaphor and simile

Look again at these excerpts from the descriptions you studied last week.

Trees **so tall that they seem to touch the sky** grow on either side of the road, which continues until it reaches the sanctuary of Hermes. That is what the sanctuary of Boubastis looks like. (Herodotus)

In addition, the room was filled with rotten and unhealthy fumes, and every quarter of an hour, the sentry tolled a bell that was so close to my room that **it seemed it was hanging from my ears**. (de Renneville)

The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already—it had not been light all day—and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, **like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air**. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, **the houses opposite were mere phantoms**. (Dickens)

All three of these descriptions use *figurative language*. Herodotus's trees don't really touch the sky; the bell wasn't really hanging from de Renneville's ears; and if you were in Dickens's London during a fog, you wouldn't see smears on palpable (touchable) brown air or phantom houses. Figurative language exaggerates some part of the description in order to make it even more vivid in the reader's mind.

There are two major categories of figurative language (or "figures of speech"). A simile compares two things *explicitly* by using "like" or "as," or otherwise spelling out for you that figurative language is being used:

**like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air
they seem to touch the sky**

In the first simile, the word "like" says clearly, "Hey, this is figurative language!" The candle light isn't a smear; it's *like a smear*. In the second simile, the trees don't touch the sky. They just *seem* to touch the sky.

A metaphor doesn't announce itself by using the words "like" or "as," or by saying that one thing "seems like" or "resembles" another. Instead, the writer simply speaks about one thing in terms of another. When Dickens writes "palpable brown air," he is talking about the air as though it were a thing to be touched and held. This is his way of telling you that the air is smoggy and impossible to see through. If he were to spell the metaphor out, he might write,

like ruddy smears upon the air, which was like a thing that could be touched.

It's much simpler and more elegant for him to use an adjective which means "able to be touched" (palpable) and just apply it to the air. In the same way, he doesn't write

the houses opposite were almost invisible but not quite, like transparent ghosts.

Instead, he writes

the houses opposite were mere phantoms.

STEP TWO: Identify figurative language in descriptions

Read the following descriptions. Underline each metaphor and simile. In the margin, write "m" for metaphor and "s" for simile.

Remember this rule: A simile announces itself ("Look here! Figurative language being used!"). A metaphor simply speaks about one thing in terms of another.

If you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help. And when you are finished, check your work with your instructor.

The summer heat has withered everything except the mesquite, the palo verde, the grease wood, and the various cacti. Under foot there is a little dry grass, but more often patches of bare gravel and sand roll in shallow beds that course toward the large valleys. In the draws and flat places the fine sand lies thicker, is tossed in wave forms by the wind, and banked

high against clumps of cholla or prickly pear. In the wash-outs and over the cut banks of the arroyos it is sometimes heaped in mounds and crests like driven snow.⁵⁸

In the center . . . is the river Nile. On both sides of the river is the black rich soil of the land of Egypt. We can see the wide fields that have been planted by . . . men of the village. Those fields will soon be covered with a bright carpet of green and, later in the season, will be brilliant with waving grain. Farther to the westward are the sandstone mountains, which glitter in the bright sunshine.⁵⁹

When approaching the Alps from the air, on a clear day, we look down on their highest point within the massive snows of Mont Blanc. We also identify the dark finger of the Matterhorn and the great north wall of the Bernese Alps. Beyond these familiar landmarks, virtually endless rows of snow peaks recede to a misty horizon. They resemble white-capped waves on a windblown sea.⁶⁰



The land had meantime been thickly enveloped in its pure white mantle, and wreaths of snowdrifts lay over the rocks scattered over its surface. The light became fainter. Sometimes the precipitous faces of the glaciers seemed to glow in subdued rose through the leaden grey of the atmosphere. When new “ice holes” appeared, a frosty vapour rose and spread over the surface of the ice; the ship and surrounding objects were covered as if with down; even the dogs were frosted white.⁶¹

Mount Shasta rises in solitary grandeur from the edge of a comparatively low and lightly sculptured lava plain near the northern extremity of the Sierra. . . . Go where you may, within a radius of from fifty to a hundred miles or more, there stands before you the colossal cone of Shasta, clad in ice and snow, the one grand unmistakable landmark—the pole star of the landscape.⁶²

58. John Charles Van Dyke, *The Desert: Further Studies in Natural Appearances* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 3.

59. Walter Scott Perry, *With Azir Girges in Egypt* (Atkinson, Mentzer & Co., 1913), p. 37.

60. Nicholas Shoumatoff and Nina Shoumatoff, *The Alps: Europe's Mountain Heart* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), p. 3.

61. Julius Payer, *New Lands Within the Arctic Circle* (Macmillan & Co., 1876), p. 294.

62. John Muir, *Nature Writings* (Library of America, 1997), p. 634.

STEP THREE: **Add to the pattern of the topos**

Turn to the Description of a Place chart in your Composition Notebook. Add the bolded point below under the “Remember” column.

Description of a Place

Definition: A visual description of a physical place

Procedure

1. Ask, *What specific purpose should this description fulfill?*
2. Choose a point of view.

Remember

1. Make use of space and distance words and phrases.
2. **Consider using vivid metaphors and similes.**

Day Four: Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two



Focus: Understanding the use of figurative language in a description of a place

STEP ONE: **Review the form of the description**

Read the following description of London, written by the nineteenth-century journalist Blanchard Jerrold. Jerrold teamed up with the French artist Gustave Dore to write a book about London that would combine written descriptions with engraved pictures of the city.

At every corner there is a striking note for the sketch-book. A queer gateway, low and dark, with a streak of silver water seen through the stacks of goods beyond, and bales suspended like spiders from their web; a crooked narrow street with cranes over every window, and the sky netted with ropes as from the deck of a brig. . . . An apple stall surrounded by jubilant shoe-blacks and errand-boys. A closed, grass-grown church-yard, with ancient tomb stones lying at all angles like a witch’s fangs.⁶³

Now answer the following questions:

63. Blanchard Jerrold and Gustave Dore, *London: A Pilgrimage* (Anthem Press, 2005), pp. 22–24.

1. What is the point of view of the narrator?
2. How many space and distance words does the description use? Underline them.
3. What metaphors and similes does the description use? Underline them.
4. What quality of the city of London do you think the narrator is trying to bring out? (In other words, can you guess at the purpose of the description?)

Ask your instructor for help if you have difficulty with any of the questions. When you are finished, check your answers with your instructor.

STEP TWO: Practice avoiding cliches

Although metaphors and similes can make descriptions more vivid, using figurative language that's cliched (used too often) can have the opposite effect. When Herodotus wrote that a tree seemed to touch the sky, he wasn't using a cliché. But after Herodotus, thousands (maybe tens of thousands) of writers also wrote that trees seemed to touch the sky. After thousands of writers use the same simile or metaphor, it becomes a cliché.

When you write a description, you may be tempted to describe a peak as "sharp as a needle," a stream as "chattering merrily," or the sides of a limestone pyramid as "white as snow." But because these images are so often used, they don't cause the reader to stop and picture in his mind exactly what you're describing; his eye just skims over it and he moves on.

In the description above, did the sentence about the tomb stones lying at angles like witch's fangs make you stop for a moment to picture exactly what that would look like?

You can avoid using clichés by rejecting the first image that pops into your head; it's usually the most familiar one. Imagine that you want to express just how white something is. Your first thought will probably be "White as snow." Instead of using that metaphor, stop and think for a moment. Exactly what *sort* of whiteness are you trying to describe? Is it the hard, shiny whiteness of marble? Think about what else is not just white, but also hard and shiny. Pearls? Dried toothpaste? The paint on a Chevrolet?

Or maybe it is the soft, dull whiteness of cotton. What else is not just white, but also soft and dull? A marshmallow? Chicken feathers?

When you use figurative language, you have to think about the *exact* qualities you are trying to convey. Practice doing that now. In the sentences below, cross out each cliché. Then spend some time thinking about the exact quality described in brackets. Come up with a metaphor that's new and vivid, and write it in over the crossed-out cliché.

When you are finished, check your work with your instructor. And if you have difficulty, ask your instructor for help.

The beaches are as hot and white as snow, but the ocean is blue and numbingly cold.
[Too hot to walk on]

White beaches glistened like the sun.
[Brightness—glittering and reflective]

The gallant ship, surrounded by enemies, lay like a stone on the sea.

[Strength—impregnability, resistance]

Lower away in the south, there lay a black squall-cloud with a rounded outline, like a big ball.

[Roundness and puffiness]

Masses of beech and fir sheltered the castle on the north, and spread down here and there along the green slopes like a blanket.

[Extent—the way that the trees creep farther and farther down the slopes and cover more and more land]

Glare ice, black ice they call it, polished the road and reflected first my headlights and then the rising sun. The land stretched flat and frozen on either side, slicked with hoarfrost and gleaming like gold.

[Not just shininess, but also reflectiveness]

In front of the line of battle, the forest was cut down, and the trees left lying where they fell among the stumps, with tops turned outwards. The ground was covered with heavy boughs, overlapped and interlaced, with sharpened points bristling into the face of the assailant like pins and needles.

[Not just sharpness, but also the ability to keep people away]