Paragraph Writing Workshops

1 Narrative Paragraphs

If you want to tell about a series of events—in a letter, on a history test, or in a short story—you will be writing narration. You can develop the skills required for narrative writing by creating paragraphs that grab and hold your reader's attention.

Narrative writing tells a real or an imaginary story with a clear beginning, middle, and ending.

A narrative paragraph has three main parts. Each part performs a specific function.

HERE'S HOW

Structuring a Narrative Paragraph

- In the **topic sentence,** capture the reader's attention and make a general statement that sets the scene.
- In the **supporting sentences,** tell the story event by event, often building suspense.
- In the **concluding sentence,** show the outcome, summarize the story, or add an insight.

The following narrative paragraph describes the experience of a foolish deep-sea diver.

MODEL: Narrative Paragraph

A Narrow Escape

We were young and sometimes we went beyond the limits of common sense. Once, my comrade Philippe Tailliez was diving alone in December, with his dog Soika guarding his clothes. The water was 52 degrees Fahrenheit. Philippe was trying to spear some big sea bass but had to break off the chase when he could no longer stand the cold. He found himself several hundred yards from the deserted shore. The return swim was a harrowing, benumbed struggle. He dragged himself out on a rock and fainted. A bitter wind swept him. He had small chance of surviving such an exposure. The wolfhound, moved by an extraordinary instinct, covered him with its body and breathed hot air on his face. Tailliez awoke with near paralyzed hands and feet and stumbled to a shelter.

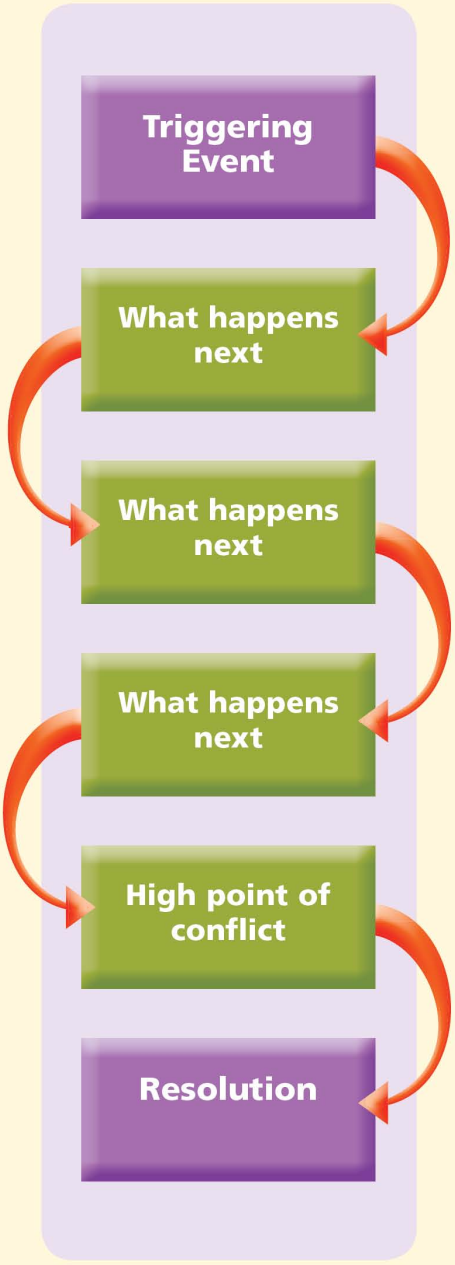
—Jacques Cousteau, "Menfish"

Topic Sentence: Makes a general statement

Supporting Sentences: Relate events one by one

Concluding Sentence: Gives outcome

You can use a graphic organizer like the one below to help you organize a narrative paragraph.



QuickGuide for Writing Narrative Paragraphs

- Use brainstorming to develop a list of details you might include in your narrative. Choose the details you will use and arrange them in chronological order. (See page 90.)
- Include the incident or obstacle that set up the conflict in the story. Use suspense to show how it developed, and then tell how it was resolved.
- Include enough details about the people involved so that they seem believable and interesting.
- Use transitions such as *first, by evening,* and *finally* to keep the order clear.
- Include a clear introduction and conclusion.

Create Real-World Texts

1. Write a narrative for world history class about a face-off between two powerful leaders.
2. For a job application, write a narrative telling about your experience as a computer programmer (or whatever your special skill may be)—how you learned your skill, what your early projects were, and what you have done lately.
3. Write a narrative for your blog that tells about a trip you recently took.
4. As a gift, write an incident in the life of a friend or relative that you feel reveals a unique aspect of that person's character.

2 Descriptive Paragraphs

When you want your reader to picture a person, an object, or a place clearly, you need to write a good description. Good descriptive writing helps your reader see, hear, smell, taste, and feel all the details you are describing.

Descriptive writing paints a vivid picture of a person, an object, or a scene by stimulating the reader's senses.

HERE'S HOW

Structuring a Descriptive Paragraph

- In the **topic sentence,** make a general statement about the subject and suggest an overall impression.
- In the **supporting sentences,** supply specific details that help readers use their five senses to bring the picture to life.
- In the **concluding sentence,** summarize the overall impression of the subject.

MODEL: Descriptive Paragraph

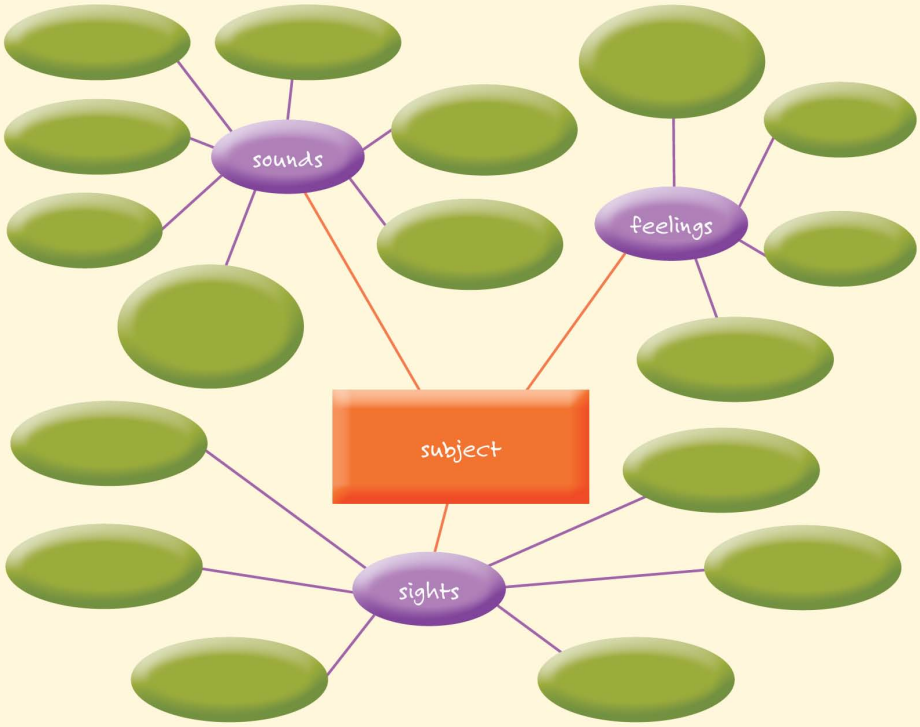
The Riverwalk

The Riverwalk in San Antonio, Texas, is a favorite noon-hour getaway for workers in nearby offices. Below street level the green river winds leisurely between the promenades on either side, carrying occasional boatloads of sightseers in brightly colored gondolas. Lining the river are bakeries, art and handicraft stores, ice-cream stands, and restaurants, where lunchtime shoppers and idlers under the hot sun browse and sample the goods. As the lazy hour draws to a close, the relaxed workers slowly climb the stone stairs to the busy streets of the city.

- Topic Sentence: Gives overall impression
- Supporting Sentences: Provide sensory details
- Concluding Sentence: Reinforces overall impression and refers back to first sentence

Notice that the topic sentence creates a positive overall impression by using the words *favorite* and *getaway* to suggest that it is a special place.

You can use a graphic organizer like the one on the next page to help you organize a descriptive paragraph.



QuickGuide for Writing Descriptive Paragraphs

- → Use brainstorming, clustering, or freewriting to record a memory of a person, scene, or object that lends itself to vivid description.
- → Form an overall positive or negative impression of your subject. Then list specific details, and organize them in spatial order or another logical order. (See pages 5, 20–22, 90–93, and 239.)
- → Use figurative language to bring images to life.
- → Use transitions such as *below, lining the river,* and *under* to keep the order clear.
- → Include a clear introduction and conclusion.

Create Real-World Texts

1. Write a paragraph describing a person who has played a special role in your life, such as a coach, teacher, or role model.
2. Think of a negative image you have seen, such as a park littered with trash, and describe it.
3. Describe a scene in nature with a focal point, such as a mountain, a lake, or a splendid garden.
4. For biology class, describe the process of mitosis in a nontechnical way using figurative language and vivid images.

3 Expository Paragraphs

Whenever you want to provide information or explain something to your readers, you will be using expository writing. Learning how to write an expository paragraph will help you analyze, define, and compare and contrast the subject you want to write about. Expository writing is also known as **informative** or **explanatory writing.**

Expository writing explains or informs.

HERE'S HOW

Structuring an Expository Paragraph

- In the **topic sentence,** introduce the subject and state the main idea.
- In the **supporting sentences,** supply specific details such as facts and examples that support the main idea.
- In the **concluding sentence,** draw a conclusion about the subject or in other ways bring the paragraph to a strong ending.

MODEL: Expository Paragraph

Seaweed for Sale

The possibility exists that seaweed algae could have commercial value in this country. Dried, it could be fed to livestock. Collected in quantity and decomposed, it could give off sufficient methane gas to be used as fuel. So far, however, no one has succeeded in producing a crop that is commercially usable. Scientists are testing a system, however, that may produce vast quantities of algae at very low cost. One scientist, Walter Adley, has discovered that algae will grow extremely rapidly under the proper conditions: sunlight, wave action, and harvesting at an early age. In the waters off the West Indies, he has tested a scheme to build platforms covered with a heavy plastic screen. Kept wet by the waves, algae grow rapidly on the screens. Adley has successfully harvested the algae. Adley's technique may make it possible to put algae to many good uses.

—L.E. Taylor, *Measuring the Pulse of Life on Maine's Coast*

Topic Sentence: States the main idea

Supporting Sentences: Develop the main idea with information and a specific example

Concluding Sentence: Makes a general statement about the value of the example in the paragraph body

You might want to use one of the graphic organizers on pages 261–271 to help you organize your paragraph.

QuickGuide for Writing Expository Paragraphs

- → Use freewriting or brainstorming to list facts, examples, reasons, or steps in a process that would help you explain your subject.
- → Choose the details you will use and arrange them in logical order. (See pages 90–93.)
- → Use transitions such as *for example, however, similarly,* and *in contrast* to keep the order clear.
- → Include a clear introduction and conclusion.

Create Real-World Texts

1. Write a quick-start user manual for your cell phone or other device you know how to work well.
2. For health class, write a paragraph about the flu and how to protect yourself from getting sick.
3. Name a career you would be interested in and explain how your personality would be suited to that career.
4. Write a brief comparison/contrast of two different brands of the same general product that you are interested in purchasing.

4 Persuasive Paragraphs

If your purpose is to express an opinion—whether in a newspaper editorial or in a letter of complaint about a faulty product—you will be writing **persuasion.** Audience is an important consideration in persuasive writing since many of your readers may hold views different from yours. The kind of persuasive writing you will most commonly do in school is called **argumentative writing.**

Persuasive writing asserts an opinion or claim and uses facts, examples, and reasons to convince readers. *(See pages 272-307 for more on argument.)*

HERE'S HOW

Structuring a Persuasive Paragraph

- In the **topic sentence,** assert an opinion or claim.
- In the **supporting sentences,** back up your assertion with facts, examples, reasons, and, if necessary, citations from experts. Appeal to the reader's reason but also engage the reader by appealing to emotion as well.
- In the **concluding sentence,** restate the assertion and draw a conclusion that follows from the supporting details.

The following model shows how each sentence in a persuasive paragraph functions. Notice how the supporting sentences back up the opinion in the topic sentence.

MODEL: Persuasive Paragraph

Pennies from Heaven?

The millions of dollars spent by NASA in recent years to search for life in outer space has been a waste of taxpayers' money. Since 1959, when the first organized search for extraterrestrial life began, not one single piece of evidence has been found that life exists anywhere but on Earth. Frank J. Tipler, a physicist at Tulane University, points out that if intelligent beings existed, they would already have contacted us. So convincing were these arguments that in 1978 Congress withdrew its support of the search for life in outer space. A movement led by Carl Sagan, however, gained wide popular support, based largely on the emotional appeal of finding life in outer space. As a result Congress again appropriated money that could have been better spent on much-needed social programs. While the expensive radio telescopes continue to detect nothing, people right here on Earth continue worrying about housing and medical care—problems that government should be solving.

Topic Sentence: Asserts an opinion or claim

Supporting Sentences: Back up assertion and appeal to reason

Concluding Sentence: Makes a final appeal, this time engaging the emotions by raising concerns about housing and health care

You can use a graphic organizer like the one below to help you organize a persuasive paragraph. The arrows represent transitions.

QuickGuide for Writing Persuasive Paragraphs

- → Through freewriting explore opinions you have on different subjects. Then choose one and think of facts, examples, and reasons to back up your opinion.
- → Appeal to reason as well as emotion.
- → Arrange the details in a logical order. (See pages 90–93.)
- → Use transitions such as *for example, in contrast,* and *most important* to keep the order clear.
- → Include a clear introduction and conclusion.

Create Real-World Texts

1. Write a brief editorial for your school newspaper expressing an opinion on a current event at school.
2. Think of a product you have used. Then write a review of it for a short feature in a consumer magazine.
3. Your family is going to have a meeting to discuss how to make your daily life at home more "green." In preparation, write a paragraph laying out your suggestions. Include all your reasons for your choices.
4. To practice for an essay test, write a one-paragraph answer to this prompt: The state legislature is studying the idea of raising the legal driving age to eighteen in response to complaints about irresponsible sixteen- and seventeen-year-old drivers. Prepare a "brief" in which you persuade your representative to support or oppose such a change.

Compositions

CHAPTER 3

At the beginning of this chapter, you read an example of an effective composition—Harold Krents's moving plea against the stereotyping of the disabled. Everywhere in your world, you will find various kinds of compositions addressing a wide variety of topics about whatever issues matter to people.

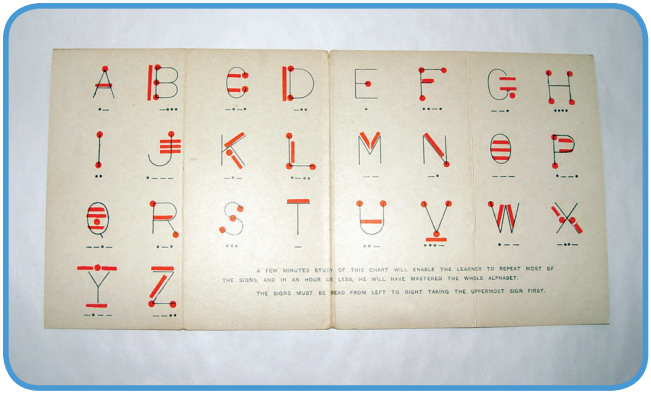
> A **composition** presents and develops one main idea in three or more paragraphs.

1 Structure of a Composition

Carefully constructed compositions have three main parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. These three parts of a composition parallel the three-part structure of a paragraph.

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE	COMPOSITION STRUCTURE
Introduction	
topic sentence that introduces the subject and expresses the main idea	introductory paragraph that introduces the subject and expresses the main idea in a thesis statement
Body	
supporting sentences	supporting paragraphs
Conclusion	
concluding sentence	concluding paragraph

As you read the following composition on cracking codes, notice how the three main parts and the thesis statement work together to present a unified subject.



MODEL: Composition

Cryptanalysis: Breaking Codes

There are no easy ways to crack a code. In fact, no one has yet discovered a shortcut that will bypass the hard work. Breaking a code requires certain qualities on the part of the cryptanalyst. — Introduction / Thesis Statement

The first quality is the ability to study. Before anyone can hope to break a code, he or she must know how codes are put together. There may be a similarity between a system one has studied and the system one has to break. Therefore, the wider one's knowledge of various code systems, the more likely it is that one will begin to recognize messages at a first or second look.

The second quality required is patience. Consider the story of the patience of the Arab cryptanalyst who studied an intercepted message to the Sultan of Morocco for 15 years before success was achieved! A particular code may reveal nothing, even after precious hours of searching for a clue. That's because good codes can be uncrackable. Short cryptograms with only a few letters or words often fall into this category. The only hope of breaking short coded messages sometimes is to know something about the sender and the intended recipient and to accumulate a collection of messages from the sender. — Three Body Paragraphs

The third quality required by the cryptanalyst is a vivid imagination. When breaking codes, one has to be prepared for almost anything. A good imagination helps when the time has come to make wild or calculated guesses and when nothing but imagination can hope to get answers.

With all this, the cryptanalyst still needs luck. A little luck can bring answers that all the logical thinking in the world could never achieve. — Conclusion

—Julian A. Bielewicz, *Secret Languages*

Practice Your Skills

Analyzing a Composition

Use the composition "Cryptanalysis" above to answer the following questions.

1. What is the main idea of the composition?

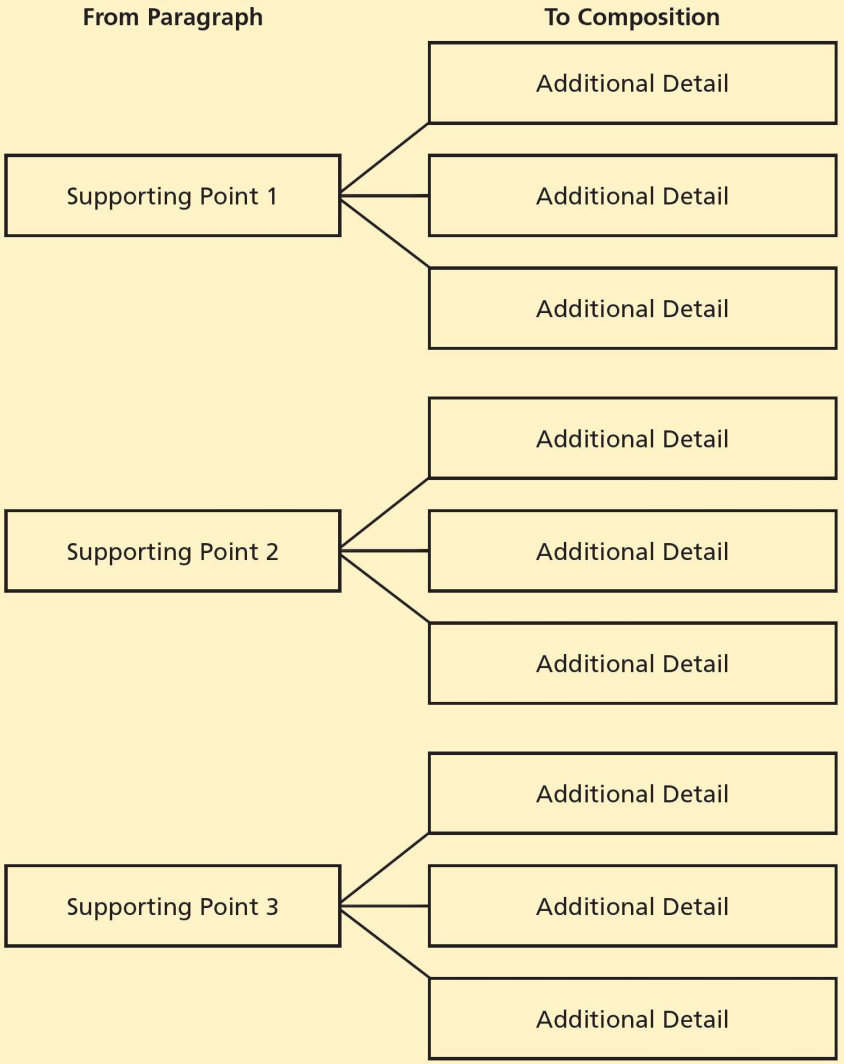
2. How do the paragraphs in the body support the main idea?

3. What is the conclusion of the composition?

4. How does the conclusion recall the introduction?

PROJECT PREP Expanding *From Paragraph to Composition*

In your writing group, discuss each writer's draft with a focus on how to expand it. For example, can the topic sentence be adapted to serve as a controlling idea for a longer composition? Can each supporting detail become the topic of a supporting paragraph? Use an organizer like the following to map out ways the supporting points can be expanded into paragraphs of their own. Make a plan for a rewrite.



2 Introduction of a Composition

Try to accomplish the following in your introductions.

HERE'S HOW

Writing an Introduction

- Introduce the subject.
- Capture the reader's attention and prepare the reader for what is to follow.
- Establish the tone—your attitude toward both the subject and the audience.
- Present the controlling idea in a thesis statement.
- State or imply your purpose for writing.

When beginning the introduction, you might use any of a number of strategies to capture the reader's attention. For example, you could use a lively quotation, cite a little-known statistic or fact, provide an anecdote, quote from a conversation you heard, or just relate an arresting bit of information.

Tone

In the introduction, writers often reveal their attitude toward their subject.

Tone is the writer's attitude toward the subject and audience.

In setting the tone of a composition, consider your positive or negative feelings about your subject. For example, your tone may be serious or comical, admiring or critical, sympathetic or mocking, joyful or sad. The following paragraph, from a composition by Woody Allen, sets a humorous tone about a subject many people take seriously—the existence of UFOs.

MODEL: Humorous Tone

All UFOs may not prove to be of extraterrestrial origin. Experts do agree, however, that any glowing, cigar-shaped aircraft capable of rising straight up at 12,000 miles per second would require the kind of maintenance and spark plugs available only on Pluto. If these objects are indeed from another planet, then the civilization that designed them must be millions of years more advanced than our own. Either that, or they are very lucky. Professor Leon Speciman theorizes a civilization in outer space that is more advanced than ours by approximately 15 minutes. This, he feels, gives them a great advantage over us, since they needn't rush to appointments.

—Woody Allen, "The UFO Menace"

The tone of Harold Krents's "Darkness at Noon" is friendly and serious. Notice how both Allen and Krents set the tone of their compositions through their choice of language.

Practice Your Skills

Identifying Tone

Read each opening sentence and write an adjective—such as *reflective, humorous,* or *enthusiastic*—to describe the tone of each.

1. I regard driving a car as a responsibility, not a right.
2. My first car was a used-parts shop on wheels.
3. I was thrilled when I got my first car.
4. My new car was a symbol of my deep desire for freedom.

Thesis Statement

In addition to introducing the subject and setting the tone, the introduction also contains the thesis statement.

> The **thesis statement** states the main idea and makes the purpose of the composition clear.

Notice how each of the following thesis statements makes the main idea and purpose of the composition clear.

MODEL: Thesis Statements

The first time I drove a car I was a jumble of nerves and fear. (expresses a feeling about an experience)

The Japanese Tea Ceremony reveals the beauty in everyday routine. (explains a factual subject)

A healthy society depends on a high degree of citizen participation in the government. (states an opinion)

The thesis statement is the **controlling idea** of the composition. It should be broad enough to include the main points in the composition yet limited enough to allow you to cover your subject adequately. It usually creates the strongest impression when it is the first or last sentence of the introduction.

Practice Your Skills

Identifying Thesis Statements and Purpose

Write the thesis statement from each of the following introductory paragraphs. Then indicate the writer's purpose: to explain a factual subject, to express a feeling about a personal experience, to describe, or to persuade.

1. San Juan, Puerto Rico, is really two cities in one. Old San Juan is rich in Spanish history. It has walled forts and stunning cathedrals dating back hundreds of years. The new city has skyscrapers, international banks and businesses, and the bustling atmosphere of modern cities everywhere. For tourists as well as residents, the two-in-one city provides a seemingly endless variety of enjoyable activities.

2. A single knoll rises out of the plain in Oklahoma, north and west of the Wichita Range. For my people, the Kiowas, it is an old landmark, and they gave it the name Rainy Mountain. I returned to Rainy Mountain in July. My grandmother had died in the spring, and I wanted to be at her grave. Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood. She could tell of the Crows, whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been. I wanted to see in reality what she had seen more perfectly in the mind's eye, and traveled 1,500 miles to begin my pilgrimage.

—N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*

Practice Your Skills

Writing a Thesis Statement

Write a thesis statement for the following subject and list of details.

Subject energy consumption

Details
- Early people used fuel for light and heat.
- The use of fuel for mechanical power was a big change.
- The present rate of energy consumption is the greatest in all of history.
- The world's resources are being depleted.
- People must change the way they use energy.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Introduction*

Following the plan you developed with your writing group, draft an introduction to your expanded paper. Refer to the chart on page 105 to make sure your introduction accomplishes its purposes.

In the Media

Across the Media: Representing Culture

On page 107 you read one paragraph about Puerto Rico and another about Rainy Mountain and the Kiowa people. Unless you are Puerto Rican or Kiowa yourself, you may not have much personal knowledge of these cultures. Yet no doubt you were able to call to mind vivid images of each. Where did these images come from?

Chances are that some of them—maybe even most—came from the media. Television and movies leave powerful, lasting, and highly selective impressions. The way a culture is portrayed in media presentations is always incomplete. Cultures are far too rich and complex to be reduced to a few images or well-worn stereotypes. Nonetheless, the power of the media can shape the way we see and think about other cultures, just as it shapes the way we see and think about people with disabilities and others who are for whatever reason regarded as "different."

Media Activity

To see how your own views about a culture have been shaped by the media, choose a culture to focus on and write answers to the questions that follow.

- In what television shows has this culture been portrayed? How was it portrayed? What generalizations did the shows suggest about this culture? Give specific examples.
- In what movies has this culture been portrayed? How was it portrayed? Was the overall portrayal positive or negative? Were the characters from this culture presented respectfully and with complexity, or were they oversimplified? Explain your answer.
- What do you know about this culture beyond what you have seen in the media? Where did you learn these things? How does your knowledge compare or contrast with the impressions created by the media about this culture?

Discuss your responses with your classmates.

3 Body of a Composition

After you have written the introduction, your next task is to develop your preliminary working thesis statement, idea by idea, in the body of your composition.

Supporting Paragraphs

The paragraphs that make up the body of a composition develop the main idea presented in the thesis statement. Although all the supporting paragraphs relate to the thesis, each one deals with one aspect of that thesis. Like any good paragraph, each has its own topic sentence and supporting sentences.

The **supporting paragraphs** in the body of a composition develop the thesis statement.

Following are the introduction and body of a composition. Notice how each of the supporting paragraphs develops the thesis statement.

MODEL: Introduction and Body of a Composition

Why I Like Going to the Movies

When the windchill factor is 62 degrees below zero and most people are keeping warm indoors, I am likely to be standing in a line to buy movie tickets, determined to see the latest release. On a warmer day, when the lines circle around the block, I will be waiting patiently, planning my purchases at the refreshment counter to help the time pass. To me going to the movies is worth any amount of hardship. The experience of seeing a movie satisfies me in a way few other experiences can match.

Once I purchase a ticket, I feel a thrill of anticipation. In the darkened theater, leaning back and settling low into my seat, I am transported from the real world into another larger-than-life world. The sound wraps me in a shield that deflects the noises of the outside world. Eyes riveted to the screen, I float comfortably into a world of sheer imagination. For two hours I can escape the cares of life beyond the theater walls.

During a good movie, the isolated feeling is so complete that I lose the sense of viewing the movie and begin to feel that I am actually in it. In one scene I am the romantic hero; in another, the tortured villain. I am all of the characters: comic and tragic, noble and selfish, aging and youthful. As I identify with the characters, my personality stretches and bends. I feel what they feel and experience what they experience.

Even a mediocre movie is worth the price of admission. The track and zoom of the camera, the light and darkness and colors, the settings and scenery and costumes—all of these are enjoyable to see. Although the familiar sights of school, home, and neighborhood are pleasant to me, I hunger for new colors and images as well. Movies serve up a feast for my eyes and my mind.

The body of "Why I Like Going to the Movies" can be presented in a simple outline that shows how the main idea of each paragraph supports the thesis statement of the entire composition.

Thesis Statement The experience of the movies satisfies me in a way few other experiences can match.

I. Transports me into another world

II. Allows me to identify with the major and minor characters

III. Offers a feast for my eyes and mind

Practice Your Skills

Analyzing Supporting Paragraphs

Reread the thesis statement and paragraphs that make up the body of "Cryptanalysis" on page 103. Then develop an outline like the one above, using Roman numerals to show the main idea of each paragraph and how each supports the thesis statement.

Practice Your Skills

Developing Supporting Ideas

Under each of the following thesis statements, write three ideas that could be developed into three supporting paragraphs for the body of a composition. Write them in the form of the preceding outline.

1. I have some advice for incoming ninth graders on the art of adjusting to high school.

2. Three of my favorite songs have different moods.

3. There are three things you should always do before going to bed at night.

Adequate Development

Readers are looking for information and clear explanations, so provide ample specific details to support your ideas.

In the first model below, not enough details are included. In the second, the writer provides specific information, allowing the reader to understand the subject more completely.

Writing Tip

Achieve **adequate development** by adding any specific information and details that the reader will need to understand your subject.

MODEL: Inadequately Developed Paragraph

The Empire State Building in New York City is one of the most impressive buildings in the world. It once was the world's tallest building, and it still ranks as one of the tallest. Every year many people visit it. On a clear day, you can see far away. Besides its height the Empire State Building is impressive in other ways, for it has many windows and other things. People who are visiting New York City should be sure to see the Empire State Building.

MODEL: Adequately Developed Paragraph

The Empire State Building in New York City is one of the most impressive buildings in the world. Completed in 1931, it was the world's tallest building until 1972. At 1,250 feet it is now the eighth tallest building in the world. The two observation decks, which are on the 86th and 102nd stories, are visited by 1.5 million people every year. From the higher deck on a clear day, observers can see as far as 80 miles away. Besides its height, the Empire State Building is impressive in other ways. It has 6,500 windows, 7 miles of elevator shafts, and 60 miles of water pipes. People who are visiting New York City should be sure to see the Empire State Building.

Practice Your Skills

Checking for Adequate Development

The following paragraph lacks adequate development. Use your own knowledge or do some research to find specific supporting details that will strengthen the paragraph. Then revise the paragraph accordingly.

Memory Tricks

Memory tricks, called *mnemonics,* often succeed when unaided memory fails. For example, some people use a memory trick to remember the names of the Great Lakes. Others use a trick so they will remember the lines on a musical staff. Whenever you have to remember a series of items, make up a sentence with words that begin with the same letters as the items.

Logical Development

The ideas you developed to support your thesis statement are claims.

Claims are statements asserted to be true.

In the opening reading from *Darkness at Noon*, the claims are:

- People often assume that a blind person cannot hear.
- People often assume that a blind person cannot talk.
- Many people believe a blind person cannot hold a job.

The author, Harold Krents, then developed those claims with examples.

CLAIMS	EXAMPLES
People often assume that a blind person cannot hear.	People talk loudly and enunciate clearly, or whisper, as in the airport.
People often assume that a blind person cannot talk.	In a restaurant, Harold Krents was bypassed by the waitress, who asked for Harold's order by asking his wife what he wanted.
Many people believe a blind person cannot hold a job.	Krents experienced forty rejections even though his credentials were first class.

Simply providing examples for claims, however, does not support your assertion that they are true. You need to go further and provide a warrant for each claim.

A **warrant** is a statement that explains how an example serves as evidence for a claim.

Warrants often use the word *because*, as in the following example.

CLAIMS, EXAMPLES, AND WARRANTS	
Claim	People often assume that a blind person also cannot talk.
Example	In a restaurant, Harold Krents was bypassed by the waitress, who asked for Harold's order by asking his wife what he wanted.
Warrant	Because the waitress didn't ask Harold himself what he wanted to order, she must have assumed that in addition to being blind, he could not speak and possibly could not hear either.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Body Paragraphs*

Following the plan you developed with your writing group, draft the body paragraphs of your composition. Be sure to provide adequate development, and support each claim with a warrant. You might want to make a chart like the one below to help you keep track of your claims and warrants.

	Topic Sentence (claim)	Example	Warrant
1st body paragraph			
2nd body paragraph			
3rd body paragraph			

Think Critically

Evaluating Evidence

In order to support or prove a thesis in an expository or persuasive essay as effectively as possible, use evidence consisting of facts, examples, data or statistics, anecdotes, incidents, and opinions of qualified experts. Before you decide to include a piece of evidence, however, you should **evaluate** it, judging it critically. To analyze and make distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this evidence clearly relevant to my thesis?
- Is this a fact or an expert opinion?
- Is my source reliable?
- Is my evidence up to date?
- Is the evidence unbiased and objective?
- Is this a fact my audience will readily grasp?

Suppose, for example, that you are arguing for longer hours at your public library or media center. Here is how you could evaluate evidence on this issue.

EVIDENCE	EVALUATION
Students and workers need access to information.	Supports thesis—shows need for longer hours.
Some taxpayers object to homeless people using libraries for sanctuaries.	Does not support thesis—evidence is not related to the thesis.
Some librarians need longer hours to supplement earnings.	Does not support thesis—evidence is not related to the thesis.

Thinking Practice

Choose one of the following arguable opinions or one based on an issue that is important to you. Make a chart like the one above to evaluate the evidence for your position.

1. Skateboarding is not a public menace.
2. Safer working environments for teenagers are needed.
3. Biodegradables cost little more than other paperware.

114

4 Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis

A composition has **unity** when all the supporting paragraphs relate to the main idea in the thesis statement. No sentences or paragraphs should wander off the main point.

Compositions should also have **coherence**—the quality that makes the ideas in the paragraphs flow logically and naturally from one to the next.

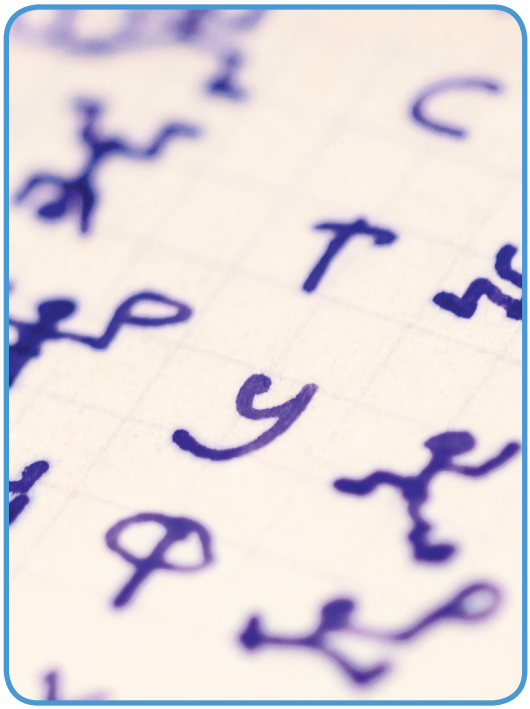
HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Achieving Coherence

- Double-check your organization to make sure each detail fits logically into your method of organization.
- Use transitional words and phrases. See charts with transitions on pages 5, 90–92, and 291.
- Every now and then repeat key words.
- Use similar words or phrases in place of key words.
- Use pronouns in place of key words.

Emphasis, another important quality of a composition, helps readers recognize your most important ideas. You can show emphasis by writing more about one idea, by discussing it first, or by using transitional words and phrases to highlight it.

Julian Bielewicz's composition "Cryptanalysis" on page 103 shows all three of these qualities. It has unity because all the supporting paragraphs describe what qualities a cryptanalyst needs to break a code. It has coherence because in each of the supporting paragraphs, the author uses introductory transitions such as *the first quality, the second quality*, and *the third quality* to make the organization clear. Finally he reveals his emphasis by placing his most important idea in his first supporting paragraph.



Writing Tip

Check your compositions for the qualities of **unity, coherence,** and **emphasis.**

Practice Your Skills

Analyzing Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis

Reread the introduction and the body of the composition "Why I Like Going to the Movies" on pages 109–110. Then write answers to each of the following questions.

1. What characteristic of the three supporting paragraphs gives this composition unity?
2. What transitional phrase in the second supporting paragraph links it to the first supporting paragraph?
3. What aspect of the experience of going to the movies is probably most important to this writer? How do you know this author's emphasis?
4. How do transitions from each paragraph to the next give the composition coherence?
5. What three transitional phrases give coherence to the second paragraph of the body of the composition?

PROJECT PREP *Evaluating* ***Reviewing Drafts***

Bring your expanded draft to your writing group. For each paper, think about how effectively the author makes claims and warrants and draws valid inferences. Also evaluate one another's latest drafts for unity, coherence, and emphasis. Note suggestions your partners make for your writing and make revisions as you see fit.

TIME OUT TO REFLECT

As you come near to the end of a writing project, stand back from it and determine the extent to which it accomplishes its purpose, addresses its audience, suits the occasion, and meets expectations for the genre. If you have strayed from the requirements of your purpose, audience, occasion, and genre, make revisions now.

5 Conclusion of a Composition

No composition is complete without a conclusion that sums up the ideas in the body and reminds readers of the thesis statement. A good conclusion often ends with a clincher statement that rings in the reader's memory.

The **conclusion** completes the composition and reinforces the thesis statement.

The following paragraph is the conclusion to "Why I Like Going to the Movies" on pages 109–110. It reinforces the thesis, restates supporting ideas, and has an excellent clincher statement.

MODEL: Conclusion of a Composition

As I see more and more movies, I recognize the acting and filmmaking techniques that mark a great movie. Still, all my new critical skills are nothing compared to the fundamental pleasure I experience at the movies. Although the images disappear with the last click of the projector, they find a lasting home in me. As I leave the theater, I feel as if I have discovered a great treasure, or captained a starship, or danced to a driving rock beat. I like living in my everyday world, but movies give me exciting new worlds to enjoy. — Clincher

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Conclusion*

Based on the feedback from your writing group, revise the introduction and body of your composition and add a strong conclusion. As he or she may direct, submit your draft to the teacher as well as your writing group members for review.

Writing Tip

The **concluding paragraph** completes the composition and reinforces the main idea.

The Language of Power *Run-on Sentences*

Power Rule: Use the best conjunction and/or punctuation for the meaning when connecting two sentences. Revise run-on sentences. (See pages 672–674.)

See It in Action A run-on sentence, also called a fused sentence, is the incorrect joining of two complete sentences. When this mistake is made with a comma between the sentences, it is called a **comma splice.**

Comma Splice Dad shot and missed, I did the same.

Dad shot and missed is an independent clause. It can stand alone as a sentence. The same is true for *I did the same.* To join the two independent clauses, use a comma and a conjunction.

Corrected Dad shot and missed, and I did the same.

Another way to correct a run-on sentence is to make one clause dependent on the other by adding a subordinating conjunction (see pages 63 and 657).

Comma Splice My father would stand beneath the hoop and shout, I would shoot over his head at the basket attached to our garage.

Corrected When my father would stand beneath the hoop and shout, I would shoot over his head at the basket attached to our garage.

Remember It Record this rule and examples in the Power Rule section of your Personalized Editing Checklist.

Use It Check your project for comma splices and other run-ons. Add the proper conjunction to a comma splice or separate the independent clauses with a period and a capital letter at the beginning of the next sentence. Combine sentences, when possible, by making one clause dependent on the other.

PROJECT PREP Editing *Getting Ready to Publish*

Look for errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics. If you find any, use proofreaders' marks to correct them or correct them on your word processor. Get to know your word processor's way of showing you potential errors, such as a red squiggly line under a word. Correct any the program may point out to you that seem in need of correcting.

Using a Six-Trait Rubric

Ideas	**4** The text conveys an interesting idea with abundant supporting details and is well chosen for the purpose and audience.	**3** The text conveys a clear idea with ample details and suits the purpose and audience.	**2** The text conveys a main idea with some supporting details and suits the purpose and audience.	**1** The text does not convey a main idea and fails to suit the purpose and audience.
Organization	**4** The organization is clear with abundant transitions.	**3** A few ideas seem out of place or transitions are missing.	**2** Many ideas seem out of place and transitions are missing.	**1** The organization is unclear and hard to follow.
Voice	**4** The voice sounds natural, engaging, and personal.	**3** The voice sounds natural and personal.	**2** The voice sounds mostly unnatural with a few exceptions.	**1** The voice sounds mostly unnatural.
Word Choice	**4** Words are specific, powerful, and precise.	**3** Words are specific and some words are powerful and precise.	**2** Some words are overly general.	**1** Most words are overly general.
Sentence Fluency	**4** Varied sentences flow smoothly.	**3** Most sentences are varied and flow smoothly.	**2** Some sentences are varied but some are choppy.	**1** Sentences are not varied and are choppy.
Conventions	**4** Punctuation, usage, and spelling are correct. The Power Rules are all followed.	**3** Punctuation, usage, and spelling are mainly correct and Power Rules are all followed.	**2** Some punctuation, usage, and spelling are incorrect but all Power Rules are followed.	**1** There are many errors and at least one failure to follow a Power Rule.

PROJECT PREP Revising and Editing *Final Draft*

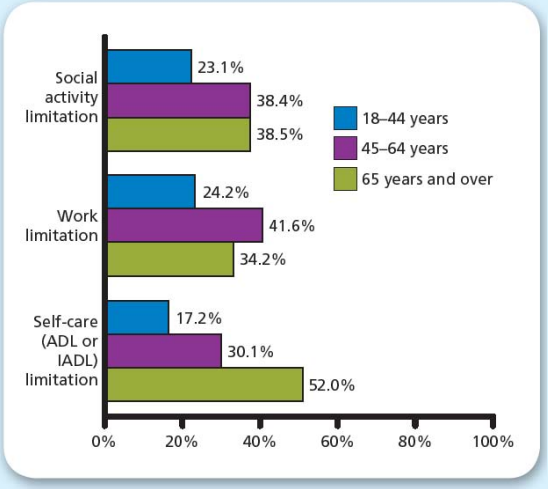
Based on the feedback from your writing group and teacher, prepare a final, polished version of your essay. You might exchange papers with a writing partner for one final critique before you consider it done. When you are satisfied with your essay, publish it in the form you chose (see page 79) or in another appropriate way. For instance, you might find places on the Internet where stereotyping, misconceptions, and particular groups of people are discussed and post your essay there.

Writing Lab

Project Corner

Interpret Graphics
Explaining Information in a Chart

Look at the chart on this page, which represents the percentage of Americans in different age groups with varying levels of disabilities. The first category represents people whose disabilities limit their social activities. The second category represents people whose disabilities limit their work activities. The third category represents people whose disabilities limit their ability to perform such basic actions of daily life (ADL) as bathing and dressing or more complex instrumental actions of daily life (IADL) such as cooking and driving. **Write a paragraph** interpreting the information in this chart.



Speak and Listen Present a Panel Discussion

Meet with other students who have written on the same misconception you have or on a related one. **Plan and present a panel discussion** in which you discuss the effect of this misconception on the group it is about. Also address the issue of how people who hold this misconception might be challenged to change it. (See pages 513–516 for more on group discussions.)

Reflect Write About You

Think about misconceptions you have learned about based on the discussions you have been in and the papers your classmates have written. What have you learned from this inquiry? How has your thinking changed after being exposed to these many examples and arguments? **Write a reflection** about what you have learned and share it with your class.

In Academic Areas
Descriptive Proposal

1. After much study you have concluded that jumping rope is one of the most beneficial ways to stay healthy and build strong muscles. ***Write a descriptive proposal*** to the Department of Health and Physical Education in which you ask for a grant to finance the rest of your research and describe exactly how you will carry out your research.

In the Workplace Persuasive Note

2. As a publicist for a leading publishing company, you and your assistant must submit promotional materials to magazines, newspapers, and television stations. Recently you have noticed a decline in your assistant's proofreading skills that you fear will affect business. ***Write a note that will persuade*** your assistant to be more careful and to improve his or her skills. (You can find information on persuasive writing on pages 272–307.)

Timed Writing Persuasive Newspaper Essay

3. Poisonous beetles have invaded your city, killing trees and making nearly fifty people ill. The city council has decided to start spraying the area to kill the beetles, but the spray, you have discovered, is toxic to many animals and could cause more sickness in humans. Write an essay for your local paper that will argue your point about the city council's decision to spray your town to kill the beetles. You have 30 minutes to complete your work. (For help budgeting time, see pages 37 and 458–459.)

Before You Write Consider the following questions: What is the subject? What is the occasion? Who is the audience? What is the purpose?

In your persuasive essay include a strong thesis statement and an introduction that grabs the reader's attention. Make sure your arguments are developed in a coherent manner and that you acknowledge opposing viewpoints. Include transitions to connect ideas clearly.

After You Write Revise your work to be sure it accomplishes its purpose. Then evaluate your work using the six-trait evaluation form on page 119.

Unit 2

Purposes of Writing

Good writing begins with creating clear targets. Are you aiming to persuade others or simply inform them? Will you describe a profound experience of your own or analyze another writer's personal story? Once you know what purpose you're aiming for, you can use techniques that have helped other writers successfully accomplish those purposes. Another target is just as important as your writing aim—your audience. Who are your readers? How much do they already know about your subject? How much information can they absorb? What style and tone will capture their interest? If you estimate the readers' needs with accuracy, powerful writing is sure to follow.

Never underestimate your readers' intelligence or overestimate their information. — *An old newspaper saying*

CHAPTER 4

Personal Writing

A personal narrative expresses the writer's personal point of view on a subject drawn from the writer's own experience.

People use personal narratives whenever they tell what happened. The following examples show that narratives play a regular part in our everyday lives.

- **A research scientist documents** the appearance of a cell as part of an experiment to find a cure for a serious illness.
- **You explain to friends** how you broke your leg.
- **A newcomer to your school relates** how war and political unrest forced her to leave her homeland.
- **You read Marco Polo's account** of his trip to China in order to write a history report.
- **You write an e-mail message** to your cousin in another state recounting an amusing anecdote you overheard.
- **Your mother tells** how at age three you gave yourself a haircut and ended up half bald, an incident that now makes you feel embarrassed.

Writing Project — Personal Narrative

You Really Shouldn't Have! ***Write a personal narrative telling what happened when you received a gift you did not want.***

Think Through Writing Think about a gift that you once received that you found awful or embarrassing. What was the occasion? Who gave it to you? What was the problem with the gift? What did you do upon receiving it, and afterwards? Write informally about this occasion and how you felt about it and acted.

Talk About It In your writing group, discuss the events you have written about. What sorts of gifts did each student write about? What were the problems with them? How did they feel about the gifts, and how did they act in response?

Read About It In "The Jacket," Gary Soto recalls a time in his youth when he had no choice but to wear an ugly green plastic jacket. Think about his experience and how it compares to the one you have written about.

MODEL: Personal Narrative Writing

The Jacket

Gary Soto

My clothes have failed me. I remember the green coat that I wore in fifth and sixth grades when you either danced like a champ or pressed yourself against a greasy wall, bitter as a penny toward the happy couples.

When I needed a new jacket and my mother asked what kind I wanted, I described something like bikers wear: black leather and silver studs with enough belts to hold down a small town. We were in the kitchen, steam on the windows from her cooking. She listened so long while stirring dinner that I thought she understood for sure the kind I wanted. The next day when I got home from school, I discovered draped on my bedpost a jacket the color of day-old guacamole. I threw my books on the bed and approached the jacket slowly, as if it were a stranger whose hand I had to shake. I touched the vinyl sleeve, the collar, and peeked at the mustard-colored lining.

From the kitchen mother yelled that my jacket was in the closet. I closed the door to her voice and pulled at the rack of clothes in the closet, hoping the jacket on the bedpost wasn't for me but my mean brother. No luck. I gave up. From my bed, I stared at the jacket. I wanted to cry because it was so ugly and so big that I knew I'd have to wear it a long time. I was a small kid, thin as a young tree, and it would be years before I'd have a new one. I stared at the jacket, like an enemy, thinking bad things before I took off my old jacket whose sleeves climbed halfway to my elbow.

I put the big jacket on. I zipped it up and down several times, and rolled the cuffs up so they didn't cover my hands. I put my hands in the pockets and flapped the jacket like a bird's wings. I stood in front of the

Soto establishes his topic in the first paragraph: a green coat that failed him for two years of school.

Soto compares the color of the coat to something very unappealing: day-old guacamole.

Specific details, such as "vinyl sleeve" and "mustard-colored lining" help readers visualize the jacket.

mirror, full face, then profile, and then looked over my shoulder as if someone had called me. I sat on the bed, stood against the bed, and combed my hair to see what I would look like doing something natural. I looked ugly. I threw it on my brother's bed and looked at it for a long time before I slipped it on and went out to the backyard, smiling a "thank you" to my mom as I passed her in the kitchen. With my hands in my pockets I kicked a ball against the fence, and then climbed it to sit looking into the alley. I hurled orange peels at the mouth of an open garbage can and when the peels were gone I watched the white puffs of my breath thin to nothing.

Adding this note about smiling at his mother tells the reader about Soto's personality. As much as he hated the jacket, he remained polite.

I jumped down, hands in my pockets, and in the backyard on my knees I teased my dog, Brownie, by swooping my arms while making bird calls. He jumped again and again, until a tooth sunk deep, ripping an L-shaped tear on my left sleeve. I pushed Brownie away to study the tear as I would a cut on my arm. There was no blood, only a few loose pieces of fuzz. Damn dog, I thought, and pushed him away hard when he tried to bite again. I got up from my knees and went to my bedroom to sit with my jacket on my lap, with the lights out.

By starting every sentence in this paragraph, except one, with "I," Soto is focusing on his personal experience.

That was the first afternoon with my new jacket. The next day I wore it to sixth grade and got a D on a math quiz. During the morning recess Frankie T., the playground terrorist, pushed me to the ground and told me to stay there until recess was over. My best friend, Steve Negrete, ate an apple while looking at me, and the girls turned away to whisper on the monkey bars. The teachers were no help: they looked my way and talked about how foolish I looked in my new jacket. I saw their heads bob with laughter, their hands half-covering their mouths.

Sitting with the lights out helps create the tone for the selection. It is both literally and figuratively dark.

Even though it was cold, I took off the jacket during lunch and played kickball in a thin shirt, my arms feeling like braille from goose bumps. But when I returned to class I slipped the jacket on and shivered until I was warm. I sat on my hands, heating them up, while my teeth chattered like a cup of crooked dice. Finally warm, I slid out of the jacket but a few minutes later put it back on when the fire bell rang. We paraded out into the yard where we, the sixth graders, walked past all the other grades to stand against the back fence. Everybody saw

Soto may be wrong that teachers were laughing at him, but his perception shows how the jacket shaped his view of the world.

me. Although they didn't say out loud, "Man, that's ugly," I heard the buzz-buzz of gossip and even laughter that I knew was meant for me.

And so I went, in my guacamole jacket. So embarrassed, so hurt, I couldn't even do my homework. I received Cs on quizzes, and forgot the state capitals and the rivers of South America, our friendly neighbor. Even the girls who had been friendly blew away like loose flowers to follow the boys in neat jackets.

I wore that thing for three years until the sleeves grew short and my forearms stuck out like the necks of turtles. All during that time no love came to me—no little dark girl in a Sunday dress she wore on Monday. At lunchtime I stayed with the ugly boys who leaned against the chainlink fence and looked around with propellers of grass spinning in our mouths. We saw girls walk by alone, saw couples, hand in hand, their heads like bookends pressing air together. We saw them and spun our propellers so fast our faces were blurs.

I blame that jacket for those bad years. It was a sad time for the heart. With a friend I spent my sixth-grade year in a tree in the alley waiting for something good to happen to me in that jacket, which had become the ugly brother who tagged along wherever I went. And it was about that time that I began to grow. My chest puffed up with muscle and, strangely, a few more ribs. Even my hands, those fleshy hammers, showed bravely through the cuffs, the fingers already hardening for the coming fights. But that L-shaped rip on the left sleeve got bigger; bits of stuffing coughed out from its wound after a hard day of play. I finally scotch-taped it closed, but in rain or cold weather the tape peeled off like a scab and more stuffing fell out until that sleeve shriveled into a palsied arm. That winter the elbows began to crack and whole chunks of green began to fall off. I showed the cracks to my mother, who always seemed to be at the stove with steamed-up glasses, and she said that there were children in Mexico who would love that jacket. I told her that this was America and yelled that Debbie, my sister, didn't have a jacket like mine. I ran outside, ready to cry, and climbed the tree by the alley to think bad thoughts and watch my breath puff white and disappear.

Soto's self-consciousness will connect with all readers who recall feeling laughed at in sixth grade.

Note the specific details that Soto uses in this paragraph to make his point that the jacket caused him academic problems.

Soto uses the present tense, "blame," to indicate that he still feels bad about the jacket. How would the meaning change if he had used the past tense, "blamed"?

But whole pieces still casually flew off my jacket when I played hard, read quietly, or took vicious spelling tests at school. When it became so spotted that my brother began to call me "camouflage," I flung it over the fence into the alley. Later, however, I swiped the jacket off the ground and went inside to drape it across my lap and mope.

I was called to dinner: steam silvered my mother's glasses as she said grace; my brother and sister with their heads bowed made ugly faces at their glasses of powdered milk. I gagged too, but eagerly ate big rips of buttered tortilla that held scooped up beans. Finished, I went outside with my jacket across my arm. It was a cold sky. The faces of clouds were piled up, hurting. I climbed the fence, jumping down with a grunt. I started up the alley and soon slipped into my jacket, that green ugly brother who breathed over my shoulder that day and ever since.

By retrieving the jacket, Soto shows that he realized that as much as he disliked the jacket, he needed it. Do you think this points to a larger purpose in the story?

The final sentence provides a conclusion to the story: the experience of owning the jacket has remained with Soto throughout his life.

Respond in Writing Respond to Soto's story about his guacamole jacket. What would you have done if you'd received a very ugly article of clothing that you always had to wear?

Develop Your Own Ideas Work with your classmates to develop ideas to assist you in writing about a gift that you found embarrassing or awful yet had to keep and use.

Small Groups: In your writing group, make a graphic organizer like the following to outline the ways in which you and your writing partners have written about your experience with an unwelcome gift.

The experience	The emotions you felt at the time	The sequence of events	The key details

Whole Class: Make a master chart of all of the emotions and actions generated in the small group discussions.

Write About It You will next write a personal narrative about an unwelcome gift that you could not get rid of. You can choose from any of the possibilities in the chart on the next page.

Possible Topics and Examples	Possible Audiences	Possible Forms
• a birthday gift • a holiday gift • a gift on a special occasion such as graduation or a religious ceremony • a gift from a visitor or guest	• your classmates • the person who gave you the gift • the people who knew you at the time • your parents, guardians, or other significant adults	• your autobiography or memoir • a narrative poem • a letter • a diary entry

1 Getting the Subject Right

To think of a subject for a personal narrative, consider your own experiences, reflections, and observations. Writers have penned essays about everything from driving lessons to friendships. In the following excerpt from a personal narrative, writer Annie Dillard writes about a significant childhood experience.

MODEL: Personal Narrative

When I was six or seven years old, growing up in Pittsburgh, I used to take a precious penny of my own and hide it for someone else to find. It was a curious compulsion; sadly, I've never been seized by it since. For some reason I always "hid" the penny along the same stretch of sidewalk up the street. I would cradle it at the roots of a sycamore, say, or in a hole left by a chipped-off piece of sidewalk. Then I would take a piece of chalk, and, starting at the other end of the block, draw huge arrows leading up to the penny from both directions. After I learned to write I labeled the arrows: SURPRISE AHEAD or MONEY THIS WAY. I was greatly excited, during all this arrow-drawing, at the thought of the first lucky passerby who would receive in this way, regardless of merit, a free gift from the universe. But I never lurked about. I would go straight home and not give the matter another thought, until, some months later, I would be gripped again by the impulse to hide another penny.

—Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

Drawing on Personal Experience

To prompt your thinking, look through your journal entries and try clustering or freewriting to recall experiences, people, places, and objects that have personal significance for you. You might recall a teacher who influenced you. You might visualize a special place that provided you pleasure. Even an old pair of shoes can be the starting point for a personal narrative. The following sources can all lead to appropriate subjects.

SOURCES OF SUBJECTS FOR PERSONAL NARRATIVES

photograph albums or scrapbooks	old toys or games
letters or e-mails from friends	newspapers or magazines
family stories	souvenirs from vacations
clothing or jewelry	items in your desk
diaries and old journals	favorite places

Exploring the Meaning of an Experience

While a personal narrative may not have a thesis statement, it does communicate a main idea to the audience. This main idea usually grows out of the meaning that the experience had for you. For instance, suppose that you acted in a school play in your freshman year in high school, and you want to write about that experience. In the resulting personal narrative, you could turn any of the following interpretations of that experience into the main idea of your narrative.

- The experience helped you build self-confidence and self-esteem.
- The experience stimulated an interest in theater as a career.
- The experience introduced you to a group of talented people.

In the following excerpt, notice how Annie Dillard explains the meaning of her childhood experience of hiding pennies.

MODEL: Personal Narrative

The world is fairly studded and strewn with pennies cast broadside from a generous hand. But—and this is the point—who gets excited by a mere penny? If you follow one arrow, if you crouch motionless on a bank to watch a tremendous ripple thrill on the water and are rewarded by the sight of a muskrat kit paddling from its den, will you count that sight a chip of copper only, and go on your rueful way? It is dire poverty indeed when a man is so malnourished and fatigued that he won't stop to pick up a penny. But if you cultivate a healthy poverty and simplicity, so that finding a penny will literally make your day, then, since the world is in fact planted in pennies, you have with your poverty bought a lifetime of days. It is that simple. What you see is what you get.

—Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

As Dillard makes clear, her experience of hiding pennies for strangers to find taught her a lesson about the importance of noticing the small things in life. The pennies symbolize for her all of the details that fill our lives and that are of far more value than any amount of money. That lesson serves as the main idea of her personal narrative.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Recognizing Importance*

In your writing group, discuss the experience that you chose as your subject for a personal narrative. Explain what the experience means to you—what has made it important. After your discussion, summarize in writing what you said.

Think Critically

Think Critically

Interpreting Experience

When you are in the middle of an experience, you are often too caught up in it to understand fully its impact on your life. When planning a personal narrative, you need to interpret the experience in order to decide what makes it worth writing about. A checklist, like the one below, may help you explore the experience.

Checklist for Interpreting Experience

Experience: We moved to a new town between seventh and eighth grades.

This experience is important to me now because it

helped me see something in a new way.
✓ changed the way I feel about myself.

I will always remember this experience because it

✓ strongly affected my attitudes.
had important consequences.

This experience is worth writing about because it

will be familiar to many readers.
✓ gave me an insight that may help other people.

Interpretation: This experience helped me become more outgoing with people. I had to make an effort to make friends, and it worked!

Thinking Practice

Choose one of the following experiences or one of your own choice. Then interpret that experience by developing a checklist like the one above.

- a funny episode that happened last summer
- an insight you had about someone you know
- an incident that gave you an insight into your neighborhood

2 Refining Your Subject

Once you have decided on the meaning of an experience, you need to think about the purpose and audience of your narrative.

Considering Your Purpose

Usually you will write a personal narrative to reflect on your experience and enlighten your readers. However, you can combine this general purpose with specific purposes, which you achieve by including different kinds of paragraphs. For example, listed in the following table are possible specific aims for a composition about being in the freshman class play.

PURPOSE IN PERSONAL WRITING

Overall Purpose: to express thoughts and feelings about being in a class play

Specific Aims	Kinds of Paragraphs
to explain the challenges of playing a particular role	informative
to tell an anecdote about a humorous person in the cast	narrative
to describe the director of the play	descriptive

You can learn more about other writing purposes on pages 94–101.

Considering Your Audience

Try to make the subject as appealing and significant for your audience as it is for you. Suppose, for instance, that you are writing about white-water rafting on the Colorado River. Since most readers have not had this experience, you should describe the river and the process of rafting in sufficient detail so that your readers will be able to understand and visualize the experience.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Identifying an Audience*

With your writing group, discuss the audience that you will be writing for and how best to approach that audience. What do they need to know to understand your experience fully?

3 Developing and Organizing Details

Selecting Details

Vivid, memorable details will flesh out your experience for readers. If you are writing about a person, think about the look on the person's face. If you are writing about a place, think of the smell in the air, the feel of the ground—all that you saw, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled. From this list, select those details you want to include in your draft and weed out any that are not relevant to the main idea. The following guidelines will help you select the most effective details.

HERE'S HOW

Guidelines for Selecting Details

- Choose details that are appropriate for your purpose and audience.
- Use factual details to provide background information.
- Use vivid descriptive and sensory details to bring your experience to life.

In the following excerpt from a personal narrative, the writer E. B. White describes his return to a favorite childhood haunt—a camp at a lake in Maine. Notice how he has selected details that develop the main idea—that the week at the camp was memorable.

MODEL: Sensory Details in a Personal Narrative

We had a good week at the camp. The bass were biting well and the sun shone endlessly, day after day. We would be tired at night and lie down in the accumulated heat of the little bedrooms after the long hot day and the breeze would stir almost imperceptibly outside and the smell of the swamp drift in through rusty screens.

—E. B. White, "Once More to the Lake"

Now look at how another writer, Eudora Welty, uses details that develop the main idea, which is that listening was important in her family when she was young.

MODEL: Auditory Details in a Personal Narrative

When I was young enough to still spend a long time buttoning my shoes in the morning, I'd listen toward the hall: Daddy upstairs was shaving in the bathroom and Mother downstairs was frying the bacon. They would begin whistling back and forth to each other up and down the stairwell. My father would whistle his phrase, my mother would try to whistle, then hum hers back. It was their duet.

—Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings*

Practice Your Skills

Identifying Effective Details

Review "The Jacket" by Gary Soto. Find details in the narrative that the author uses to give life to the experience he wrote about. Then write at least ten details under the title "Examples of Effective Details."

Organizing Details

The overall organization of your personal narrative will probably be **developmental order.** That is, ideas will be arranged in a progression so that one idea grows out of the previous idea and leads to the next idea. However, within this overall pattern of organization, you may use individual paragraphs that are narrative, descriptive, and informative. Within each paragraph, you should use an appropriate method of organizing your details, as the following chart shows.

Writing Tip

Organize details in each paragraph of your personal narrative depending on the type of paragraph you are using.

TYPES OF ORDER

Kind of Writing	Kind of Details	Type of Order
Narrative	events in a story, narrated from beginning to end	chronological order
Descriptive	details to help readers visualize from top to bottom, right to left, or vice versa	spatial order
Informative	background details and details explaining the meaning of an experience	order of importance

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Listing Details*

In your writing group, focus next on the details of each event in the story. Are there facial expressions, gestures, and other behaviors that you could explain in greater detail? Are there details in the environment—a rainstorm, for example, or the music in the background—that could help you describe the mood of the situation? For each writer, focus on the details of the events of the story, providing suggestions for descriptions that could help the story come to life for readers.

The Power of Language

Participial Phrases: Getting into the Action

Present participial phrases, or "*–ing* modifiers," can add a double dose of action to sentences. Notice how much more force the sentence with the participial phrase has than the two separate sentences expressing the same idea.

Two Separate Sentences I gritted my teeth. I prepared for the collision with the wall.

Participial Phrase Gritting my teeth, I prepared for the collision with the wall.

Participial phrases can work their power anywhere in a sentence. In "The Jacket," Gary Soto uses them both in the middle and at the end of sentences to rev up the action and to help show feelings.

Middle of a Sentence I sat on my hands, heating them up, while my teeth chattered like a cup of crooked dice.

End of a Sentence I closed the door to her voice and pulled at the rack of clothes in the closet, hoping the jacket on the bedpost wasn't for me but my mean brother.

You can pack even more action into a sentence by using an **absolute phrase.** To create an absolute phrase, add a noun before an *-ing* phrase. In the following example from "The Jacket," *hands* is the noun that helps create the absolute phrase.

Absolute Phrase I saw their heads bob with laughter, their hands half-covering their mouths.

Try It Yourself

Write three sentences that use participial phrases, one with a participial phrase at the beginning, one with the phrase in the middle, and one with the phrase at the end. Also try writing a sentence with an absolute phrase. You may imitate the sentences above if you wish. Try to write sentences on your project topic and incorporate them into your draft if you can. During revision, check to see where adding other participial phrases might make your writing more dramatic and immediate.

Punctuation Tip

Place a **comma after** a participial phrase that comes at the **beginning of the sentence.** Set off a **nonessential participial phrase** from the rest of the sentence with **commas.**

Personal Narrative Writing — Drafting

Once you have chosen the subject of your personal narrative and have organized the details you wish to include, you can write the first draft. Personal narrative writing is less formal than other kinds of writing. For example, you should write from the first-person point of view, using the pronoun *I*. In addition, you should write in a natural, personal style and follow a less formal structure than in most of the other writing you do. However, a personal narrative should still have all the parts of any good piece of writing: an engaging introduction, an effective body, and a memorable conclusion.

1 Drafting the Introduction

Introduce your personal narrative in a way that convinces your readers that this experience, person, place, or thing had a strong impact on you. To achieve this goal, tell readers what your narrative is about but also let them in on your feelings about your subject. Your introduction sets the tone of your narrative.

HERE'S HOW

Introduction of a Personal Narrative

- It introduces the subject and purpose of the essay.
- It makes clear the main idea of the essay.
- It sets the tone to reveal the writer's point of view.
- It captures the reader's interest.

You can find more information on writing introductions on pages 105–107.

Creating a Tone

The **tone** of an essay expresses the writer's attitude toward the subject. To choose an appropriate tone for your narrative, think about the effect that you want to have on your readers. Do you want them to laugh with you, cry with you, or share the pleasure of a special time or place? Notice how the writer of the following three paragraphs has used three different tones—humorous, angry, and reflective—to deal with the same subject.

MODEL: Humorous Tone

Who knew what lurked in those pale waters? All around me happy snorkelers surfaced, crowing with glee about the rainbow of fish that had nibbled at their fingertips. I looked at my own fingers with a sense of doom, absolutely certain that a razor-toothed barracuda was preparing to greet me when *I* went below. Grimly I locked my bloodless lips over the mouthpiece, ducked my head, breathed in water, and came up choking. *Why* in the world was I doing this?

MODEL: Angry Tone

It was a raw, windy day, and I was furious. I hate swimming! Since I'm too skinny to look good in a bathing suit, I never go to the beach if I can help it. Here I was, though, all signed up for a free lesson in snorkeling—a sport I'd never wanted to try. Ow! Was that a sea urchin I stepped on?

MODEL: Reflective Tone

This little bay is my favorite spot in the world. When I go out very early in the morning before the crowds, it is like paradise. I never grow tired of the magic in that clear and silent world as I am surrounded by bright blue and yellow fish. In their world I cannot help feeling at peace.

Practice Your Skills

Analyzing Tone

Look once again at "The Jacket" by Gary Soto. What do you think is the author's tone? In other words, what attitude does he have about the events he describes? Is he happy? nostalgic? sad? bitter? Write a paragraph in which you explain what you think the tone is. Be sure to support your opinion by including examples—including specific quotations—from the selection.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Drafting Introductions*

Experiment with tone by writing three different introductions to your essay. Share them with your writing group and evaluate the effectiveness of each one for your purpose and audience.

2 Drafting the Body

Once you have introduced the subject and set a tone that is appropriate for your purpose, you are ready to draft the body of your narrative. As you write, make your interpretation of the experience clear and use sensory details to add richness, interest, and individuality to your writing. The following guidelines will also help you draft the body of your personal narrative.

HERE'S HOW

Guidelines for Drafting the Body

- Make sure that each supporting paragraph has a topic sentence that helps develop the main idea.
- Follow a logical order of ideas and details.
- Use transitions between sentences and paragraphs to give your narrative coherence.
- If you discover new ideas and details as you write, change those sections of the narrative that are affected by the new insights or details.

In personal essays, you may use different types of writing, such as narrative, descriptive, or informative, to accomplish your purpose. For instance, throughout his essay "The Jacket," Gary Soto uses description and narration to express his feelings about the jacket. Early in the essay, he uses description to imply his initial feelings about it.

MODEL: Description in Personal Writing

The next day when I got home from school, I discovered draped on my bedpost a jacket the color of day-old guacamole. I threw my books on the bed and approached the jacket slowly, as if it were a stranger whose hand I had to shake. I touched the vinyl sleeve, the collar, and peeked at the mustard-colored lining.

—Gary Soto, "The Jacket"

A few paragraphs later, Soto uses narration to tell what he did when he was alone with the jacket.

MODEL: Narration in a Personal Narrative

I put the big jacket on. I zipped it up and down several times, and rolled the cuffs up so they didn't cover my hands. I put my hands in the pockets and flapped the jacket like a bird's wings. I stood in front of the mirror, full face, then profile, and then looked over my shoulder as if someone had called me. I sat on the bed, stood against the bed, and combed my hair to see what I would look like doing something natural. I looked ugly.

—Gary Soto, "The Jacket"

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Writing the Body*

Select one of the three introductions that you wrote for your personal narrative. Now draft the body, continuing in the same tone that you established in your introduction. Be sure to use the details that you collected. In the course of drafting, stop occasionally and read over what you have written to see whether you are using a consistent tone in your writing.

3 Drafting the Conclusion

The conclusion of a personal narrative should give readers a sense of completion and a lasting impression of the personal experience or insight that you have related. Following are several appropriate ways to end a personal narrative.

HERE'S HOW

Ways to End a Personal Narrative

- Summarize the body or restate the main idea in new words.
- Add an insight that shows a new or deeper understanding of the experience.
- Add a striking new detail or memorable image.
- Refer to ideas in the introduction to bring your narrative full circle.
- Appeal to your reader's emotions.

The following paragraph concludes the narrative that was introduced in the last model paragraph on page 138. The writer titled the narrative "Early Morning Magic." This conclusion both summarizes the experience of swimming in the morning and restates the main idea.

MODEL: Conclusion

After an early morning swim like this, I come out of the water and spread out on the sand to dry off. The sound of the waves soothes me, and I continue to picture the fish I have seen and the reef that I have explored. Days and even weeks later, I'm able to reflect back on that time and feel a moment of peace in the middle of a hectic day.

TIME OUT TO REFLECT

Writing a personal narrative is likely to bring you some deeper insight or understanding about the meaning of an experience. If this insight or understanding is not apparent right away, don't worry. Give yourself time. Think about what you have written in your draft. Be open to any new feelings or ideas that come to mind as a result of your writing experience. Jot them down and decide whether they might be effective in the conclusion of your essay.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Writing the Conclusion*

Based on the introduction and body you have written, write a conclusion that uses one of the ways to end a personal narrative described above.

In the Media

Across the Media: People in the News

Personal narratives are often the heart of what is presented on the news, but their treatment in newspapers, on television, and on the Internet can vary considerably. Following is an example of how the story was treated when a famous writer was hit by a car.

- The newspapers reported the basic facts.
- The television news added film clips of the accident and the hospital and clips from movies based on his books.
- On the Internet, there was a discussion forum and links to related information. Fans e-mailed their get-well wishes to the author. Months later, there was information on his recovery.
- A television newsmagazine interviewed the author, who discussed how the accident affected his life.

Media Activity

Study the coverage a personal story gets in various media. Choose a personal story that is making headlines today and complete the following activities on your own or with a partner or small group.

- Clip articles from the newspaper about the story. Write a sentence evaluating the impact of each article and how effectively it conveyed information.
- Watch television news to see how the story is covered. Make a video recording or take detailed notes that you can review later. Evaluate the impact of the story in a sentence or two.
- Search the Internet to see how the story is being covered online. In addition to general searches, search for discussions of the story through Google or Yahoo Groups as well as Twitter. Evaluate the online coverage.

Finally, write a brief essay comparing the coverage in different media. Also include a critique of each medium: What can other media do better?

Personal Narrative Writing — Revising

At this point you have turned the raw materials of your personal perceptions and reflections into a rough draft. Your draft is far from a polished piece of writing, though. As Donald M. Murray, a well-known teacher of writing, wrote, "When a draft is completed, the real job of writing can begin." In a personal narrative, this job involves the important task of adding details for adequate development and checking unity, coherence, and clarity.

1 Checking for Adequate Development

An effective personal narrative should touch the reader in some way. For instance, if you have narrated a personal experience, your narrative should make the reader feel the way you did during that experience. The reader should be able to hear and see and touch everything as you did. To evaluate whether you have achieved this effect, check your essay for vivid and interesting details. The following strategies will help you think of additional details as you revise your personal narrative.

STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING ADEQUATE DEVELOPMENT

Events	Close your eyes and slowly visualize the experience that you are writing about. Write details as you "see" them in your mind's eye.
Places	Visualize the place you are describing. Start at the left side and visualize slowly to the right. Then visualize the place from top to bottom or vice versa.
People	Visualize each person that you are writing about. Start by visualizing the head and face and slowly move down to the feet. Write details as you "see" them.
Feelings	Imagine yourself once again undergoing the experience that you are writing about. This time focus on your feelings, thoughts, and impressions as you move through the experience.

PROJECT PREP — Revising — *Checking Development*

In your writing group, focus on the physical feelings of the event. For each writer, suggest ways to describe the gift or other physical elements vividly for your readers. Rather than simply describing a touch sensation, such as "The pink bunny suit was furry," use your imagination to say something like, "I stroked the fur of the pink bunny suit, the cheap fibers feeling like the hair of an ancient woolly mammoth just recovered from a melting glacier."

2 Checking for Unity, Coherence, and Clarity

You will also want to revise the style of your personal narrative. Supply any needed transitions to help your writing flow more smoothly. The following checklist will help you identify other areas for improving when you revise.

Evaluation Checklist for Revising

- ✓ Does your introduction capture the reader's interest? If not, what might make a better beginning? (pages 137–138 and 245)
- ✓ Have you held the reader's interest to the end? If not, how can you add to the interest level of your narrative? (pages 137, 139, and 143)
- ✓ Does your feeling about your subject come through? If not, how can you make the point more clearly? (pages 136–137 and 143)
- ✓ Does your ending give the reader a sense of completion? If not, how might you make it more effective? (page 141)
- ✓ Write a title for your personal narrative.

PROJECT PREP Revising *Holding Your Story Together*

Exchange drafts with other members of your writing group and read one another's draft. Based on the feedback from your readers, revise your narrative so that it has unity, coherence, and clarity.

Carefully reread your revised draft for the conventions of language—grammar, punctuation, spelling, and usage.

The Language of Power *Sound-Alikes*

Power Rule: For sound-alikes and certain words that sound almost alike, choose the word with your intended meaning. (See pages 796–813.)

See It in Action It is easy to confuse two words that are pronounced alike but have different meanings and spellings. The following sentence from "The Jacket" correctly uses the homophone *wear* instead of its sound-alike *ware*.

> I wanted to cry because it [the jacket] was so ugly and so big that I knew I'd have to **wear** it a long time.

Some words sound almost alike and are easily misused, such as *accept/except, affect/effect,* and *loose/lose.* If you are unsure about a word choice, use a dictionary to confirm a word's meaning and usage. In the following sentence, Gary Soto correctly uses the word *loose* to describe his jacket after his dog tears the sleeve.

> There was no blood, only a few **loose** pieces of fuzz.

Remember It Record the rule and examples in the Power Rule section of your Personalized Editing Checklist. You may want to memorize some of the more commonly confused words. (See pages 796–813.)

Use It Read through your narrative and look for homophones and words that sound almost like another word. Check to see that you have chosen and used the word with your intended meaning.

PROJECT PREP Editing *Checking for Errors*

Refer to your Personalized Editing Checklist to make sure you are not repeating errors you have made in the past. The checklist on the previous page will also help you in editing your work. Save your work.

Using a Six-Trait Rubric

Personal Narratives

Use an evaluation form like the one below to measure your personal narrative.

Ideas	**4** The topic and details convey the experience powerfully to the intended audience and fulfill the intended purpose.	**3** The topic and details convey the experience to the intended audience and fulfill the intended purpose.	**2** The topic and details do not clearly convey the experience to the intended audience or fulfill the intended purpose.	**1** The topic and details do not convey the experience and fail to address the audience or fulfill the purpose.
Organization	**4** The introduction captures attention; the body is rich in details; the conclusion provides a powerful ending.	**3** The organization is mostly clear, but a few ideas seem out of place or transitions are missing.	**2** Many ideas seem out of place and transitions are missing. The introduction, body, and conclusion do not work together.	**1** The organization is unclear. The introduction, body, and conclusion do not present, develop, and interpret the experience.
Voice	**4** The voice sounds natural, engaging, and personal.	**3** The voice sounds natural and personal.	**2** The voice sounds mostly unnatural with exceptions.	**1** The voice sounds mostly unnatural.
Word Choice	**4** Words are vivid, specific, and rich in sensory images.	**3** Words are specific and some appeal to the senses.	**2** Some words are overly general.	**1** Most words are overly general.
Sentence Fluency	**4** Varied sentences flow smoothly. Devices that promote coherence are used effectively.	**3** Most of the sentences are varied and smoothly flowing. Transitions help coherence.	**2** Some sentence patterns are not varied and some sentences are choppy. Few transitions are present.	**1** Sentences are not varied and are choppy. There are very few transitions and little coherence.
Conventions	**4** Punctuation, usage, and spelling are correct.	**3** There are only a few errors in punctuation, usage, and spelling.	**2** There are some errors in punctuation, usage, and spelling.	**1** There are many errors and at least one failure to follow a Power Rule.

PROJECT PREP

Editing

Using a Rubric

Produce a final version of your story, using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Personal Narrative Writing Publishing

You may decide to complete the writing process by sharing your writing with someone who was part of the experience you wrote about or with someone who may have an interest in it. (For more publishing ideas, see page 129.)

PROJECT PREP Publishing *Distributing Your Story*

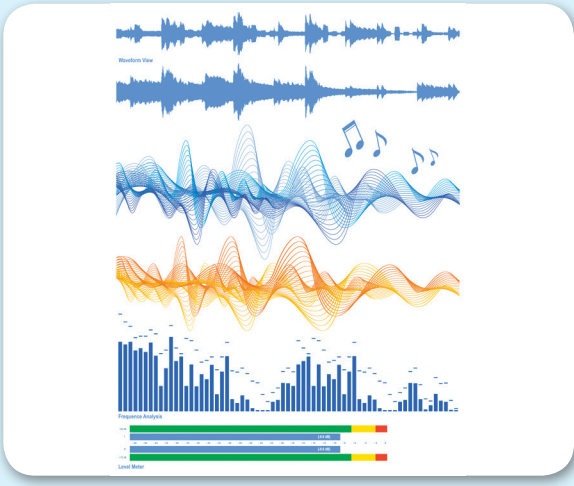
Publish your story in the format you chose (see page 129) or in another appropriate medium. For instance, you may give a copy of your story to a person who received the same awkward gift you did.

Writing Lab

Project Corner

Get Dramatic Act It Out

Select one story from your writing group and **produce a short drama** based on the events. Either act the play live for your classmates or film it and show it on a screen.



Collaborate and Create Make Music

In your writing group, **create a soundtrack** for one of the stories. What music would accompany the events of the story? What mood would you want to create in conjunction with this narrative? Read the story, with the soundtrack accompaniment, to the whole class.

Experiment Change Point of View

Write your story from the perspective of the person giving you the gift. How would this person feel during the event? What details would this person include?

Change Genres Try a New Medium

Write about your experience in a different form. If you've written a story, try the graphic novel medium, a poem, or another way of presenting a narrative.

Apply and Assess

In Everyday Life
Narrative Journal Entry

1. You are a biologist who has spent ten years studying the ant populations in Brazil. Yesterday you returned to your hometown high school to be honored at the graduation ceremony. You were surprised, however, at all the changes your hometown has gone through in the last ten years. ***Write a journal entry*** that details your first day returning to your hometown. Give specific details about your experiences, reflections, and observations. Be sure to include a discussion of what has made the experience of returning important.

In Oral Communication Oral Personal Narrative

2. You have been asked to be a guest on a local public television show. The host has asked you to prepare a talk for the television audience that will enlighten them on the most exciting adventure you have experienced in your lifetime. ***Prepare an oral presentation*** to give on the show. Choose details that will be appropriate for your television audience. Use factual details to provide background information, and bring your speech to life with descriptive and sensory details. Then deliver your speech to your classmates. (You can find information on oral presentations on pages 502–508.)

Timed Writing Magazine Article

3. You have decided to start a magazine that features personal narratives about people's journeys to faraway places. ***Write a personal narrative*** for the first issue of the magazine about a long and enjoyable journey you have taken with a friend or family member. You have 25 minutes to complete your work. (See pages 37 and 458–459 for help with budgeting time.)

Before You Write Consider the following questions: What is the situation? What is the occasion? Who is the audience? What is the purpose?

Be sure to introduce your subject in a way that catches your reader's interest and sets the tone for the personal narrative. Try to interweave the narration of events with the expression of your thoughts. Use transitions throughout that help convey the passage of time and order of events. Add a memorable conclusion that leaves your reader with the idea or feeling that you wish to convey.

After You Write Evaluate your work using the six-trait evaluation rubric on page 146.

CHAPTER 5

Descriptive Writing

"It is harder to see than it is to express. The whole value of art rests in the artist's ability to see well into what is before him," wrote Robert Henri. Notice those little words "well into." Henri did not merely write "see what is before him." Those two extra words imply that artistic vision is not simply a matter of looking at surfaces. It involves seeing beneath the surface too. This is as true for writers as it is for visual artists.

Descriptive writing creates a well-developed verbal picture of a person, an object, or a scene by stimulating the reader's senses.

Here are a few ways that writers "see well into" their topics and use description.

- **Novelists and story writers describe characters, settings, and scenes** so that readers can enter a lifelike fictional reality.
- **Scientists include an "Observations" section in professional papers,** reporting the results of experiments.
- **Local and national activists, in speeches, articles, and books, describe social or environmental problems** so vividly that readers want to take action.
- **Nature writers create word-pictures** of animals, plants, and geological or oceanic formations.
- **Restaurant reviewers describe dishes in precise detail** so that a newspaper, magazine, or Web site reader can almost taste the cuisine.
- **Students write e-mails** to friends describing movies, books, or other creative works that are special to them.

Writing Project — Descriptive

A Portrait in Words ***Follow the directions below to write a description of someone who is very important to you.***

Think Through Writing Describe someone who is very important to you. Who is it? What does he or she look like? How does your person dress, talk, laugh? What makes your person unique?

Talk About It Share your writing. Ask each author to talk about additional specific details he or she could use to describe the chosen person. What details seem the most effective in helping you visualize the subject of the writing?

Read About It In the following piece, Native American author N. Scott Momaday describes an old arrowmaker who used to visit his house when Momaday's father was a boy. Notice that this is not simply a description of what the arrowmaker looks like, but a description of who he is.

MODEL: Descriptive Writing

A Vision Beyond Time and Place

N. Scott Momaday

When my father was a boy, an old man used to come to [my grandfather] Mammedaty's house and pay his respects. He was a lean old man in braids and was impressive in his age and bearing. His name was Cheney, and he was an arrowmaker. Every morning, my father tells me, Cheney would paint his wrinkled face, go out, and pray aloud to the rising sun. In my mind I can see that man as if he were there now. I like to watch him as he makes his prayer. I know where he stands and where his voice goes on the rolling grasses and where the sun comes up on the land. There, at dawn, you can feel the silence. It is cold and clear and deep like water. It takes hold of you and will not let you go.

Momaday uses specific details to describe what he sees and hears: wrinkled skin, rolling grasses, silence that will not let go.

I often think of old man Cheney, and of his daily devotion to the sun. He died before I was born, and I never knew where he came from or what of good and bad entered into his life. But I think I know who he was, essentially, and what his view of the world meant to him and to me. He was a man who saw very deeply into the distance, I believe, one whose vision extended far beyond the physical boundaries of his time and place. He perceived the wonder and meaning of Creation itself. In his mind's eye he could integrate all the realities and illusions of the earth and sky; they became for him profoundly intelligible and whole.

The word *but* provides a transition between the previous sentence and this one. It tells the reader that the sentences are connected, and that the information in the two sentences might seem contradictory.

Once, in the first light, I stood where Cheney had stood, next to the house which my grandfather Mammedaty had built on a rise of land near Rainy Mountain Creek, and watched the sun come out of the

black horizon of the world. It was an irresistible and awesome emergence, as waters gather to the flood, of weather and of light. I could not have been more sensitive to the cold, nor than to the heat which came upon it. And I could not have *foreseen* the break of day. The shadows on the rolling plains became large and luminous in a moment, impalpable, then faceted, dark and distinct again as they were run through with splinters of light. And the sun itself, when it appeared, was pale and immense, original in the deepest sense of the word. It is no wonder, I thought, that an old man should pray to it. It is no wonder . . . and yet, of course, wonder is the principal part of such a vision. Cheney's prayer was an affirmation of his wonder and regard, a testament to the realization of a quest for vision.

The first sentence introduces a specific instance when the writer noticed the sun. In the rest of the paragraph, Momaday adds detail to the description and reflects on the experience.

By using the word *wonder* in three sentences, Momaday connects them together.

This native vision, this gift of seeing truly, with wonder and delight, into the natural world, is informed by a certain attitude of reverence and self-respect. It is a matter of extrasensory as well as sensory perception, I believe. In addition to the eye, it involves the intelligence, the instinct, and the imagination. It is the perception not only of objects and forms but also of essences and ideals, as in this Chippewa song:

Momaday not only describes what he perceives with his senses, but also what he understands with extrasensory perception.

as my eyes
search
the prairie
I feel the summer
in the spring

Even as the singer sees into the immediate landscape, he perceives a now and future dimension that is altogether remote, yet nonetheless real and inherent within it, a quality of evanescence and evolution, a state at once of being and of becoming. He beholds what is there; nothing of the scene is lost upon him. In the integrity of his vision he is wholly in possession of himself and of the world around him; he is quintessentially alive.

Most Indian people are able to see in these terms. Their view of the world is peculiarly native and distinct, and it determines who and what they are to a great extent. It is indeed the basis upon which they identify themselves as individuals and as a race. There

is something of genetic significance in such a thing, perhaps, an element of being which resides in the blood and which is, after all, the very nucleus of the self. When old man Cheney looked into the sunrise, he saw as far into himself, I suspect, as he saw into the distance. He knew certainly of his existence and of his place in the scheme of things.

Momaday uses *genetic, blood,* and *nucleus* to show that the way of seeing that he is describing is deeply rooted in a person.

In contrast, most of us in this society are afflicted with a kind of cultural nearsightedness. Our eyes, it may be, have been trained too long upon the superficial, and *artificial*, aspects of our environment; we do not see beyond the buildings and billboards that seem at times to be the monuments of our civilization, and consequently we fail to see into the nature and meaning of our own humanity. Now, more than ever, we might do well to enter upon a vision quest of our own, that is, a quest after vision itself. And in this the Indian stands to lead by his example. For with respect to such things as a sense of heritage, of a vital continuity in terms of origin and of destiny, a profound investment of the mind and spirit in the oral traditions of literature, philosophy, and religion—those things, in short, which constitute his vision of the world—the Indian is perhaps the most culturally secure of all Americans.

Using the transition Momaday alerts the reader that he is shifting his attention from one group of people to another.

As I see him, that old man, he walks very slowly to the place where he will make his prayer, and it is always the same place, a small mound where the grass is sparse and the hard red earth shows through. He limps a little, with age, but when he plants his feet he is tall and straight and hard. The bones are fine and prominent in his face and hands. And his face is painted. There are red and yellow bars under his eyes, neither bright nor sharply defined on the dark, furrowed skin, but soft and organic, the colors of sandstone and of pollen. His long braids are wrapped with blood-red cloth. His eyes are deep and open to the wide world. At sunrise, precisely, they catch fire and close, having seen. The low light descends upon him. And when he lifts his voice, it centers upon the silence and carries there, like the call of a bird.

By giving details about grass and dirt, Momaday helps the reader picture the place where the man stands.

The comparison of the man's voice with the call of a bird brings a clear sound to the mind of the reader.

Respond in Writing Respond to Momaday's description of his tribal elder. What details does he include that help you envision the old man?

Develop Your Own Details Work with your classmates to develop details that will help you describe someone of importance to you.

Small Groups: In your writing group, create a chart similar to the one below to organize the information that you might include in your descriptive writing. Add more rows as needed.

Overall body features	Face	Hair	Speech	Personality

Whole Class: Make a master chart of all of the ideas generated by the small groups, and discuss the types of features your classmates feel should be included in their descriptions.

Write About It You will next write a description of a person who is familiar and important to you. The following chart provides possible topics, audiences, and forms for your writing.

Possible Topics	Possible Audiences	Possible Forms
• a friend • a family member • a coach • a professional (teacher or doctor, for example)	• family members • friends • people who know and like your person • people who are unfamiliar with this person	• a magazine article • a blog entry • a tribute • a letter

Elements of Descriptive Writing

The descriptions in "A Vision Beyond Time and Place" help readers see, hear, and touch the person and place that is being described. When you write a descriptive essay, let each part play its role in bringing your subject to life.

HERE'S HOW

Structuring a Descriptive Essay

- In the **introduction,** capture the reader's interest, introduce the subject, and suggest or imply your overall impression of the subject, or tone.
- In the **body of supporting paragraphs,** present vivid details, especially details that appeal to the five senses.
- In the **conclusion,** reinforce the overall impression and tie the essay together as a whole.

1 Specific Details and Sensory Words

When you show a description rather than merely tell it, you use vivid, specific details and words that appeal to the senses. When reading a good description, the reader feels as if he or she is seeing, hearing, and feeling the things described.

Writing Tip

Use **specific details and sensory words** to bring your description to life.

In 1869, naturalist John Muir took a job herding sheep in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California. Following is his description of a moment of rest on the trail.

MODEL: Sensory Details

The sheep are lying down on a bare rocky spot such as they like, chewing the cud in grassy peace. Cooking is going on, appetites growing keener every day. No lowlander can appreciate the mountain appetite, and the facility with which heavy food called "grub" is disposed of. Eating, walking, resting, seem alike delightful, and one feels inclined to shout lustily on rising in the morning. . . . Sleep and digestion as clear as the air. Fine spicy plush boughs for bedding we shall have tonight, and a glorious lullaby from this cascading creek.

—John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*

This passage describes both physical sensations and the personal responses of the narrator. In a single short paragraph, it involves all five senses. Muir uses specific, vivid, accurate, and imaginative word choices to describe his subject. These sensory images are listed in the following chart.

SPECIFIC SENSORY DETAILS	
Sight	sheep lying on bare rock; clear air
Sound	"lullaby from this cascading creek," sheep that are "chewing the cud"
Smell	"spicy" aroma of the branches used for bedding
Taste	heavy "grub"
External Feeling	"plush" feel of the bedding branches
Internal Feeling	keen appetite

Practice Your Skills

Analyzing a Descriptive Essay

Look back at the descriptive essay "A Vision Beyond Time and Place" and answer the following questions:

1. What passages in the essay make up the introduction?
2. What passages in the essay make up the body of the work?
3. What passages in the essay make up the conclusion?
4. What do you think is the subject of the essay?
5. What overall impression of the subject did you get from the essay?
6. List five or more details that convey the overall impression you received.
7. Find two or more examples in which the writer uses a comparison to enhance or clarify a description.
8. How would you describe the organizational pattern of this essay? What is the logical progression from one paragraph to the next?
9. The physical description of Cheney is more detailed in the conclusion than in other parts of the essay. Why do you think Momaday chose this strategy? What impression does the last paragraph make?

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Developing Details*

Using a chart like the one above or a cluster diagram (see pages 19 and 97), brainstorm for as many specific details and sensory words as you can to describe your subject. Compare notes with your writing group. Add any new ideas you pick up.

2 Figurative Language

In Muir's description, his sleep is "clear as the air." He describes one sensation—the feeling of being asleep—in terms of another—the clarity of the air. Also, he compares the scent of branches to that of spice.

Writers often use imaginative comparisons to make their descriptions more interesting. **Figurative comparisons** include **simile,** which uses *like* or *as* to compare two dissimilar things, and **metaphor,** which makes an explicit comparison of two dissimilar things without using *like* or *as*. Comparisons can also be made between similar things. For example, in a passage near the one quoted on the preceding page, Muir compares the falls of Tamarack Creek with the falls of the Yosemite, without using figurative language. He merely reports, "These falls almost rival some of the far-famed Yosemite falls." That statement is a **literal comparison,** since it is a comparison of one waterfall with another.

You can find out more about types of figurative comparisons on pages 219–220.

Writing Tip

Use **figurative language** and **comparisons** to add color and depth to your description.

Practice Your Skills

Generating Similes and Metaphors

You can make general observations into strong figurative comparisons by using a chart. Here, a comparison found in "A Vision Beyond Time and Place" is used as the base for a simile and a metaphor.

Comparison	Simile	Metaphor
"When old man Cheney looked into the sunrise, he saw as far into himself, I suspect, as he saw into the distance" (page 153).	Cheney's self was as vast as the landscape, as bright as the sunrise.	Cheney's self-insight is the rising sun, spreading its light into the darkest corners of the human mind.

Copy and complete the chart, using other comparisons you find in Momaday's essay to create similes and metaphors.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Figurative Language*

In your writing group, talk about your subject's intangible qualities, such as personality traits. These are often hard to describe without similes or metaphors. After identifying the important traits, help each author think of similes or metaphors that would help readers understand. For example, a brave person might be described as "lionhearted."

The order of prewriting, drafting, and revising is probably the most common process, but the stages of writing often overlap and intermingle. Sometimes you may continue freewriting throughout your writing process. Other times you may set your writing aside for a while before revising so that you can evaluate your draft with fresh eyes.

1 Purpose, Subject, and Audience

Purpose

Writing vivid descriptions will not only help you write a descriptive essay but also aid you in writing stories, poems, persuasive essays, informational essays, and explanatory essays. It would be very difficult to inform readers about a feature of the world, or to convince them to hold a certain opinion on an issue, or to express your personal experience and feelings, without using your powers of description. Think about your purpose, and then think about how descriptive writing can play a part in your writing.

Subject

Cheney was important to N. Scott Momaday, and the Sierra Nevada was important to John Muir (so important that he founded the Sierra Club in 1892 to help preserve it). Both authors cared deeply about their subjects and observed their subjects closely to learn from them. This knowledge of and esteem for their subjects come across in their descriptive writing. Like Momaday and Muir, try to choose a topic that you care about.

The following guidelines can help you choose a subject for your descriptive essay.

HERE'S HOW

Guidelines for Choosing a Subject

- Choose a subject that is important to you—something that really matters. If you are genuinely interested in your subject, your reader will be too.
- Choose a subject you know well and in detail.
- Choose a subject that, by its very nature, offers good opportunities for description: a subject that has sensory impact.

Audience

N. Scott Momaday was writing for a general audience that includes people of all ages. If he were writing a book for small children, he probably would have used simpler comparisons and shorter sentences. If he were writing for a newsletter that chronicles Native American spiritual practices, he might have gone into even more detail about Cheney's daily devotions.

Whom you are writing for influences how you write. It affects the kinds of details you put in and the ones you choose to leave out. It also affects your choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, and language. The following questions can help you aim your descriptive writing at a specific intended audience.

HERE'S HOW

Questions for Analyzing an Audience

- How much, if anything, does my audience already know about my subject?
- What background information, if any, should I include in order to explain the basics of this subject to this audience and to make my description clear, concise, and meaningful?
- How does my audience feel about my subject? Should I expect to encounter any biases, and if so, how can I organize my essay in order to neutralize or disarm them?
- Do I share the audience's opinion, and if not, how can I address their opinion respectfully while expressing my own?

Practice Your Skills

Identifying Your Audience

Identify four appropriate audiences for each of the following descriptive subjects. Explain how each audience would affect your description.

Subject a polar bear

Audiences zoologists, hunters, artists, people on a tropical island who have never seen a polar bear

1. a computer
2. a prehistoric cave painting
3. a coral reef
4. a newborn baby
5. the night sky
6. an anthill
7. a telephone
8. a mountain
9. a Web site
10. an automobile

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Audience*

With your writing group, discuss the audience you have chosen (see pages 159–160). Help each author understand the needs and other considerations of the chosen audience and discuss how to shape the description so that it is well suited to the intended audience. Take notes so you can use them when you draft.

2 Creating an Overall Impression

"A Vision Beyond Time and Place" does not tell the reader everything about Cheney. Selecting, or filtering, details—knowing what to put in and what to leave out—is extremely important when writing descriptions. The goal is to give the reader a clear impression without overwhelming the reader with minor details.

In order to know which details should pass through your filter and which should be barred by it, you should have in mind an overall impression—a feeling about the subject that you want to transmit to your reader. You can then leave in the material that contributes to the desired impression and take out the material that does not.

Practice Your Skills

Determining Overall Impressions

1. What is the overall impression Momaday is trying to convey in "A Vision Beyond Time and Place"?
2. What phrases or passages work toward establishing this overall impression in the introduction to the essay?
3. What phrases or passages continue expressing this overall impression in the body of the essay?
4. What phrases or passages carry this overall impression into the conclusion of the essay?
5. Did you derive any different or conflicting impressions from the essay? If so, what were those impressions and how did you get them?

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Overall Impression*

1. In your writing group, discuss the main impression you want to convey about your subject. For the description of a person, for example, what character trait do you want the reader to be sure to understand?
2. On your own, review all the details you have collected about your subject. Are there any that do not contribute to the overall impression you are trying to convey? Are there any additional details that would strengthen that impression that you might want to add?
3. Meet again with your writing group to share the outcome of your review of details. Help one another consider the effect of each detail on the overall impression.

In the Media

Home Pages

First impressions can be critical in any relationship. This is why businesses and other organizations put so much effort into creating their home pages. A successful Web site will have enough detail that even an impatient Internet user will stay at the site. An overall impression that is inviting, positive, and exciting will make visitors want to explore the site and learn more about what it offers.

The links give the variety of options available for exploration. The major subject areas are covered along with additional links to related topics.

The illustration gives the impression that the Web site is like a classroom, with desks, a window, some bookshelves, as well as a large white board, which is the focal point of the page.

These links invite the visitor to contact the company and to view the entire catalog.

The books are the universal symbol of learning.

The logo, designed as a rug under the desks, shows that the company is the foundation for what goes on in the classroom.

The chairs facing the white board invite the visitor to sit down and learn more.

Media Activity

On your own, explore three other home pages for businesses, universities, sports teams or leagues, or other organizations. Identify the overall impression that each home page is trying to make and the details that contribute to it.

3 Developing a Description

With your intended audience and desired overall impression in mind, you can begin to fill out the details of your description. Use one or more of the strategies below.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Developing a Description

- List as many sensory details as you can about your subject. If you wish, make a chart like the one on page 157.
- Freewrite to come up with figurative comparisons you can use to help readers understand your description. Use metaphors and similes.
- Find background information or factual details you might need to describe the subject to your audience. Compile outside information if necessary.
- If you are describing a scene, draw a picture; if you are describing a location, draw a map.
- Filter some details into your writing and filter some out, depending on whether they fit with your desired overall impression.

Practice Your Skills

Selecting Details

Explain whether each of these details does or does not fit this impression of a hospital: "It was a busy, welcoming, well-run place where people are healed."

1. Visitors enter the lobby carrying flowers and gifts for patients.
2. An ambulance drives up to the emergency entrance. Orderlies await with a gurney bed.
3. In a corridor, a surgeon reassuringly explains a procedure to a patient's relatives.
4. In the children's wing, patients draw with crayons.
5. A nurse sprints down a hall to answer a patient's call.
6. In an overcrowded emergency room, sick and injured people wait hours to be seen by a busy, curt doctor.
7. A patient tastes his dinner, makes a sour face, and throws it on the floor.
8. An intern runs down the hall calling "Nurse Maxwell, where is that chart?"
9. New parents proudly look at the babies in the nursery.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Evaluating Details*

As you prepare to draft your description, review once again the details you have collected. Do you have enough of them? Do they all contribute to the overall impression you are trying to convey? Do most of them appeal to the senses?

Think Critically

Think Critically

Observing

If a spaceship landed on Mars, and a video camera began automatically recording images, those images would be **objective:** not based on an individual's opinions or judgments. If, however, an astronaut picked up the camera, the images would become **subjective:** based on the astronaut's opinion of what was interesting enough to record. Subjectivity is what makes a description interesting because it bears the stamp of a human being.

Examples of both kinds of details in N. Scott Momaday's essay are shown in the following chart. Notice how the objective details supply the most basic information and how subjective details are added to this information in order to make a more vivid description.

OBJECTIVE DETAILS	SUBJECTIVE DETAILS
A man came to a house.	"When my father was a boy, an old man used to come to Mammedaty's house and pay his respects."
Dawn arrives.	". . . at dawn, you can feel the silence. It is cold and clear and deep like water."
A man prays.	"He was a man who saw very deeply into the distance . . ."
A man's eyes open.	"His eyes are deep and open to the wide world."

Momaday's objective details can be verified by any impartial onlooker. The subjective observations and inferences, in contrast, can vary. Unique, subjective details are the ones that say, "This is what the world looks like to me."

Thinking Practice

Make a chart like the one above to record objective and subjective observations of your classroom. Compare your work to that of your classmates.

4 Organizing a Description

Your organizational plan for a descriptive essay should depend on your aim and on the nature of your details. The following chart shows possible ways to organize your thoughts.

WRITING AIM	KINDS OF DETAILS	TYPE OF ORDER
to **describe** a person, place, object, or scene	sensory details	spatial *(page 91)*
to **recreate** an event	sensory details events	chronological *(page 90)*
to **explain** a process or show how something works	sensory and factual details, steps in a process, how parts work together	sequential *(page 260)*
to **persuade**	sensory and factual details, examples, reasons	order of importance *(page 92)*
to **reflect**	sensory and memory details, factual details, interpretations	developmental *(page 135)*

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Organizing*

1. Once again, review your descriptive details. In what order should you present them? If you are describing a person, for example, spatial order—from head to toe possibly, or the reverse—might seem logical. It is not the only possibility, though. Instead, you could organize your description according to personality traits, possibly in the order of least to most important. Decide which organizational strategy will work best for your subject.
2. Share your organizational plan with your writing group and ask for feedback. Take note of any helpful comments you receive on your organization.

The Power of Language

Adjectives in the Predicate: Details, Details

As you get ready to draft, think about how you can smoothly and powerfully present the details you have collected. One straightforward yet forceful way is by using adjectives in the predicate. These occur after a linking verb and modify the subject. (See page 608.) In "A Vision Beyond Time and Place," Momaday often uses adjectives in the predicate (pages 151–153):

> He was a lean old man in braids and was impressive in his age and bearing.
>
> The shadows on the rolling plains became large and luminous in a moment, impalpable, then faceted, dark and distinct again as they were run through with splinters of light.
>
> And the sun itself, when it appeared, was pale and immense, original in the deepest sense of the word.
>
> The bones are fine and prominent in his face and hands.

Try It Yourself

Write three descriptive sentences on your topic that use linking verbs with adjectives in the predicate. You can copy the structure of the sentences above. Try to use your sentences in your project. Then later, as you revise, look for other opportunities to supply details through adjectives in the predicate.

Punctuation Tip

If you use a series of adjectives in the predicate, separate them with commas. Use *and* or another conjunction after the comma before the last adjective in a series. (See pages 848–850.)

Descriptive Writing — Drafting

If you have done extensive prewriting, you are already well on your way toward the creation of a good descriptive essay. During the drafting stage, let your words flow freely as they follow the path set down in your organizational plan. Keep your audience and intended impression in mind as you follow this path. When drafting a descriptive essay, also remember the following points.

HERE'S HOW

Tips for Drafting a Description

- Create reader interest with a catchy introduction. Try out several possible beginnings if necessary.
- Suggest your overall impression early on to unify the essay.
- Follow your outline, but be willing to improvise if you come up with new ideas as you go along.
- Use fresh, vivid language. Employ descriptive, sensory words and images.
- Use transitions that are appropriate for the type of order you have chosen (pages 5, 90–92, and 291).
- Conclude in a way that ties the description together and leaves the reader with a satisfying feeling of closure.

PROJECT PREP — Drafting — *Adding Sensory Details*

Based on all your prewriting work and the feedback provided by your group, follow the tips for drafting a description above and write a first draft of your descriptive text. Use transitions so that one idea flows smoothly into the next and so the work as a whole feels tightly woven. Take a few risks by experimenting with descriptive language and figures of speech.

Descriptive Writing Revising

Revising is an opportunity to mold and shape your essay, just as if you were molding and shaping clay. At times it may be hard to tell where drafting ends and revising begins. While drafting, you might alter some wordings, and while revising, you might think of a whole new passage. Use the **Evaluation Checklist for Revising** to revise your description.

Evaluation Checklist for Revising

Checking Your Introduction

- ✓ Does your introduction grab your reader's attention and make him or her want to keep reading? (page 156)
- ✓ Have you suggested an overall impression of the subject? (page 161)
- ✓ Have you set a tone for the essay as a whole, one that is appropriate for your subject and audience? (pages 137–138)
- ✓ Are you providing all the background information your audience may need? (pages 159–160 and 163)

Checking Your Body Paragraphs

- ✓ Are you supporting the overall impression with enough details? (pages 161–162)
- ✓ Are you using specific sensory words and details to bring the description to life? (pages 156–157)
- ✓ Are you using comparisons and figurative language to enhance details? (page 158)
- ✓ Do your paragraphs have clear topics with relevant supporting details that develop the topics?
- ✓ Do your paragraphs proceed in a logical order, with suitable transitions from paragraph to paragraph? (page 165)

Checking Your Conclusion

- ✓ Have you elaborated on the overall impression you set out to establish? (page 163)
- ✓ Have you referred back to an idea in the introduction? (pages 156 and 167)
- ✓ Have you ended with a memorable phrase or image that lingers in the reader's mind?

Checking Your Words and Sentences

- ✓ Is your word choice specific and lively? (pages 48–56)
- ✓ Do your sentences involve the reader through the five senses? (pages 156–157)
- ✓ Have you varied your word choice and sentence structure? (pages 59–70)

PROJECT PREP Revising *Using a Checklist*

Review your draft using the **Evaluation Checklist for Revising** above as a guide.

Polish your essay by catching any errors. As always, watch for the Power Rules.

The Language of Power *Pronouns*

Power Rule: Use subject forms of pronouns in subject positions. Use object forms of pronouns in object positions. (See pages 721–729.)

See It in Action To determine which form of a pronoun to use, look at how the pronoun is functioning in a sentence. In "A Vision Beyond Time and Place," Momaday uses pronouns correctly.

> But **I** think **I** know **who he** was, essentially, and what his view of the world meant to **him** and to **me.**

In the first part of the sentence, few would make the mistake of saying "Me think me know." However, many might be tempted to say "whom he was" because it might seem that the pronoun is the object of *know: I know whom*. Actually, though, *who* needs to be in the subject form because it also functions as a subject in the clause *who he was*. If a pronoun functions as both an object and a subject, the subject form wins out. The second part of the sentence is less complex. Momaday uses the object pronouns *him* and *me* because each is the object of the preposition *to*.

Remember It Record this rule and example in the Power Rule section of your Personalized Editing Checklist.

Use It Read through your descriptive essay and put a checkmark by each pronoun. Check how each one is used in the sentence to make sure you have used the correct form each time.

PROJECT PREP Editing *Peer Review*

With a writing partner, exchange papers and review one another's descriptions. Provide any feedback that would help to improve the composition in any way.

Using a Six-Trait Rubric

Descriptive Writing

Ideas	**4** The text conveys an overall impression with abundant vivid details and is well chosen for the purpose and audience.	**3** The text conveys an overall impression with ample details and suits the purpose and audience.	**2** The text conveys an overall impression with some vivid details and suits the purpose and audience.	**1** The text does not convey an overall impression and fails to suit the purpose and audience.
Organization	**4** The organization is clear with abundant transitions.	**3** A few ideas seem out of place or transitions are missing.	**2** Many ideas seem out of place and transitions are missing.	**1** The organization is unclear and hard to follow.
Voice	**4** The voice sounds natural, engaging, and personal.	**3** The voice sounds natural and personal.	**2** The voice sounds mostly unnatural with a few exceptions.	**1** The voice sounds mostly unnatural.
Word Choice	**4** Words are specific and powerful, rich in sensory images.	**3** Words are specific and some words appeal to the senses.	**2** Some words are overly general.	**1** Most words are overly general.
Sentence Fluency	**4** Varied sentences flow smoothly.	**3** Most sentences are varied and flow smoothly.	**2** Some sentences are varied but some are choppy.	**1** Sentences are not varied and are choppy.
Conventions	**4** Punctuation, usage, and spelling are correct. The Power Rules are all followed.	**3** Punctuation, usage, and spelling are mainly correct, and Power Rules are all followed.	**2** Some punctuation, usage, and spelling are incorrect, but all Power Rules are followed.	**1** There are many errors and at least one failure to follow a Power Rule.

PROJECT PREP Revising *Final Version*

Based on the feedback from your writing partner, prepare a final, polished version of your descriptive essay.

Descriptive Writing Publishing

Seek out ways to make your description available to readers. Think about who would be interested in your subject, or in good student writing, or in you as an expressive person. Consider the following possible ways to publish a descriptive essay.

HERE'S HOW

Ways to Publish a Descriptive Essay

- Create a class anthology of descriptive writings, including your own. Supply illustrations.
- Submit your descriptive piece to a magazine that publishes student writing.
- Conduct an oral reading in your classroom.
- Send your descriptive essay as an e-mail or traditional letter to a friend or family member.
- Add your descriptive essay to your personal Web page.

editing

Publishers often require authors to trim their work before publication. For practice, cut the excess out of the following:

> The black cat was dark-colored, and it meowed and purred as it walked casually and sauntered down the sidewalk.

PROJECT PREP Publishing *Final Version*

Publish your finished piece according to the conventions of the form you chose (see page 155) or through another appropriate medium. You might, for example, share your writing with someone who knows the person you are describing and might appreciate your careful and thoughtful account.

TIME OUT TO REFLECT

Have your skills of observing and describing changed as a result of this chapter? If so, how does your work from this chapter differ from your earlier descriptions? Why do you think one description is better than another? Record your thoughts in the Learning Log section of your journal.

Writing Lab

Project Corner

Change Perspectives
Describe Yourself

Describe yourself, in writing, from the point of view of the person you have written about. How would that person see you? How would that person's writing style be different from yours? Try to capture the essence of the personality you described in that person's written voice.

Draw Conclusions
Summarize Understanding

Think about how your feelings toward this person reflect something about you. What can you conclude about yourself based on what you have written about this person? **Write a summary** of your conclusions.

Get Creative
Write a Poem

Rewrite your descriptive text or a part of it as a poem. Consider a variety of poetic forms. Compose a poem in free verse or use traditional forms that include rhyme and meter. Challenge yourself to use a precise form such as a sonnet for your description.

In the Workplace

A Descriptive E-mail

1. You take a different route to work one day that takes you through the outskirts of the city. The landscape is so breathtaking that you slow down to observe every flower, tree, rock, and pond. ***Write an e-mail*** to your boss explaining why you were late and describing the beautiful landscape. Paint a vivid picture using specific details and sensory words. Try using similes and metaphors in your description. (You can find information on writing e-mails on pages 484 and 539–543.)

In Academic Areas

A Descriptive Oral Presentation

2. You are a scientist who has just returned home after spending two years observing the behavior of ocelots. The principal of the local elementary school invites you to speak to a class of second graders. ***Prepare an oral presentation*** describing to an audience of second graders what ocelots look like. Use specific details and sensory words to bring your description to life. (You can find information on oral presentations on pages 502–508.)

Timed Writing

A Descriptive Essay

3. Your English teacher is preparing a book of essays entitled *Sweltering.* She has asked you to write an essay describing the hottest day you can remember, including details such as what it felt like to step outside into the sun and what you did to cool down. ***Write a brief essay*** describing the hottest day you can remember, using vivid descriptions that appeal to the senses and using similes and metaphors. Use transitions to help convey meaning about the sensory details and how they relate to one another and the overall impression. You have 20 minutes to complete your work. (See pages 37 and 458–459 for help with budgeting time.)

Before You Write Consider the following questions: What is the situation? What is the occasion? Who is the audience? What is the purpose?

After You Write Evaluate your work using the six-trait evaluation rubric on page 170.

CHAPTER 6

Creative Writing

Creative writing gives power to the imagination and its infinite possibilities. It can explore the unexplored, and it can enable people to express thoughts and feelings in unusual ways. Creative writing's unique window on the world has the ability to change the way we look at and think about things.

Here are some examples of the ways that creative writing can have impact in real life.

- **Short story writers express responses** to political turmoil.
- **Playwrights adapt plays** for different contexts and bring new meaning to the issues in it. For example, a play by Shakespeare could be set in modern times.
- **Poets participate in poetry slams,** providing a different way of experiencing a poem and an opportunity for developing their craft.
- **Counselors use role-plays** in conflict-resolution training, a method to curtail violence in schools, across the country.
- **Individuals describe journeys** they or others have taken that reflect important themes in life.

Writing Project Story, Scene, and Poem

On the Road ***Write a creative story about a character who takes a colorful journey. Later, if you choose, you will use it as the basis for a dramatic scene and a poem.***

Think Through Writing Think of a situation that involves a person or other character going on a journey to reach a destination. On this journey there are obstacles that must be overcome. You might write about a soldier crossing a battlefield, a person driving through difficulties to complete a trip, someone crossing an area to get to the other side, or another journey requiring the ability to rise above, work around, or triumph over obstacles. Write about what this situation might be, who might be doing the crossing, why this person seeks this destination, what might stand in the way, and what awaits the successful traveler at the other end.

Talk About It In your writing group, discuss the stories produced by each writer. What sorts of people are making the journeys? What obstacles must they overcome? What qualities or skills enable them to get to their destination?

Read About It In the following selection, author Eudora Welty describes an old woman walking a great distance from the country to a town where she acquires medicine for her grandson. Think about the ways in which the author includes obstacles that Old Aunt Phoenix must overcome and what you learn about Phoenix through her completion of the journey. As you read the story, think about whether it is effective or not and why.

MODEL: Short Story

A Worn Path

Eudora Welty

It was December—a bright frozen day in the early morning. Far out in the country there was an old Negro woman with her head tied in a red rag, coming along a path through the pinewoods. Her name was Phoenix Jackson. She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock. She carried a thin, small cane made from an umbrella, and with this she kept tapping the frozen earth in front of her. This made a grave and persistent noise in the still air, that seemed meditative like the chirping of a solitary little bird.

The first sentences establish the setting.

Comparing the women's tapping to the chirping of a bird is a simile.

She wore a dark striped dress reaching down to her shoe tops, and an equally long apron of bleached sugar sacks, with a full pocket: all neat and tidy, but every time she took a step she might have fallen over her shoelaces, which dragged from her unlaced shoes. She looked straight ahead. Her eyes were blue with age. Her skin had a pattern all its own of numberless branching wrinkles and as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead, but a golden color ran underneath, and the two knobs of her cheeks were illumined by a yellow burning under the dark. Under the red rag her hair came down on her neck in the frailest of ringlets, still black, and with an odor like copper.

Now and then there was a quivering in the thicket. Old Phoenix said, "Out of my way, all you foxes, owls,

beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals! . . . Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites. . . . Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my direction. I got a long way." Under her small black-freckled hand her cane, limber as a buggy whip, would switch at the brush as if to rouse up any hiding things.

Through dialogue, the reader learns that the woman is on a long journey.

On she went. The woods were deep and still. The sun made the pine needles almost too bright to look at, up where the wind rocked. The cones dropped as light as feathers. Down in the hollow was the mourning dove—it was not too late for him.

The path ran up a hill. "Seem like there is chains about my feet, time I get this far," she said, in the voice of argument old people keep to use with themselves. "Something always take a hold of me on this hill—pleads I should stay."

After she got to the top she turned and gave a full, severe look behind her where she had come. "Up through pines," she said at length. "Now down through oaks."

Her eyes opened their widest, and she started down gently. But before she got to the bottom of the hill a bush caught her dress.

Her fingers were busy and intent, but her skirts were full and long, so that before she could pull them free in one place they were caught in another. It was not possible to allow the dress to tear. "I in the thorny bush," she said. "Thorns, you doing your appointed work. Never want to let folks pass, no sir. Old eyes thought you was a pretty little *green* bush."

By speaking to the thorns as if they were conscious, the woman shows how she looks at the world.

Finally, trembling all over, she stood free, and after a moment dared to stoop for her cane.

"Sun so high!" she cried, leaning back and looking, while the thick tears went over her eyes. "The time getting all gone here."

At the foot of this hill was a place where a log was laid across the creek.

"Now comes the trial," said Phoenix.

Putting her right foot out, she mounted the log and shut her eyes. Lifting her skirt, leveling her cane fiercely before her, like a festival figure in some parade, she began to march across. Then she opened her eyes and she was safe on the other side.

"I wasn't as old as I thought," she said.

But she sat down to rest. She spread her skirts on the bank around her and folded her hands over her knees. Up above her was a tree in a pearly cloud of mistletoe. She did not dare to close her eyes, and when a little boy brought her a plate with a slice of marble-cake on it she spoke to him. "That would be acceptable," she said. But when she went to take it there was just her own hand in the air.

So she left that tree, and had to go through a barbed-wire fence. There she had to creep and crawl, spreading her knees and stretching her fingers like a baby trying to climb the steps. But she talked loudly to herself: she could not let her dress be torn now, so late in the day, and she could not pay for having her arm or her leg sawed off if she got caught fast where she was.

At last she was safe through the fence and risen up out in the clearing. Big dead trees, like black men with one arm, were standing in the purple stalks of the withered cotton field. There sat a buzzard.

"Who you watching?"

In the furrow she made her way along.

"Glad this not the season for bulls," she said, looking sideways, "and the good Lord made his snakes to curl up and sleep in the winter. A pleasure I don't see no two-headed snake coming around that tree, where it come once. It took a while to get by him, back in the summer."

She passed through the old cotton and went into a field of dead corn. It whispered and shook and was taller than her head. "Through the maze now," she said, for there was no path.

Then there was something tall, black, and skinny there, moving before her.

At first she took it for a man. It could have been a man dancing in the field. But she stood still and listened, and it did not make a sound. It was as silent as a ghost.

"Ghost," she said sharply, "who be you the ghost of? For I have heard of nary death close by."

But there was no answer—only the ragged dancing in the wind.

She shut her eyes, reached out her hand, and touched a sleeve. She found a coat and inside that an emptiness, cold as ice.

"You scarecrow," she said. Her face lighted. "I ought to be shut up for good," she said with laughter. "My senses

The word *but* tells the reader that what comes next will modify or contradict what was just said.

Words such as *old* and *dead* contribute to the mood of the story.

is gone. I too old. I the oldest people I ever know. Dance, old scarecrow," she said, "while I dancing with you."

She kicked her foot over the furrow, and with mouth drawn down, shook her head once or twice in a little strutting way. Some husks blew down and whirled in streamers about her skirts.

Then she went on, parting her way from side to side with the cane, through the whispering field. At last she came to the end, to a wagon track where the silver grass blew between the red ruts. The quail were walking around like pullets, seeming all dainty and unseen.

"Walk pretty," she said. "This the easy place. This the easy going."

She followed the track, swaying through the quiet bare fields, through the little strings of trees silver in their dead leaves, past cabins silver from weather, with the doors and windows boarded shut, all like old women under a spell sitting there. "I walking in their sleep," she said, nodding her head vigorously.

In a ravine she went where a spring was silently flowing through a hollow log. Old Phoenix bent and drank. "Sweet-gum makes the water sweet," she said, and drank more. "Nobody know who made this well, for it was here when I was born."

The track crossed a swampy part where the moss hung as white as lace from every limb. "Sleep on, alligators, and blow your bubbles." Then the track went into the road.

Deep, deep the road went down between the high green-colored banks. Overhead the live-oaks met, and it was as dark as a cave.

A black dog with a lolling tongue came up out of the weeds by the ditch. She was meditating, and not ready, and when he came at her she only hit him a little with her cane. Over she went in the ditch, like a little puff of milkweed.

Down there, her senses drifted away. A dream visited her, and she reached her hand up, but nothing reached down and gave her a pull. So she lay there and presently went to talking. "Old woman," she said to herself, "that black dog come up out of the weeds to stall you off, and now there he sitting on his fine tail, smiling at you."

A white man finally came along and found her—a hunter, a young man, with his dog on a chain.

The woman speaks naturally and informally, using colloquial expressions, such as "shut up for good" and using a singular verb, *is,* with a plural noun, *senses.*

Comparing the moss to lace is an example of a simile.

The precise language and specific details enable the reader to visualize the scene.

"Well, Granny!" he laughed. "What are you doing there?"

"Lying on my back like a June-bug waiting to be turned over, mister," she said, reaching up her hand.

He lifted her up, gave her a swing in the air, and set her down. "Anything broken, Granny?"

"No sir, them old dead weeds is springy enough," said Phoenix, when she had got her breath. "I thank you for your trouble."

"Where do you live, Granny?" he asked, while the two dogs were growling at each other.

"Away back yonder, sir, behind the ridge. You can't even see it from here."

"On your way home?"

"No sir, I going to town."

"Why, that's too far! That's as far as I walk when I come out myself, and I get something for my trouble." He patted the stuffed bag he carried, and there hung down a little closed claw. It was one of the bob-whites, with its beak hooked bitterly to show it was dead. "Now you go on home, Granny!"

"I bound to go to town, mister," said Phoenix. "The time come around."

He gave her another laugh, filling the whole landscape. "I know you old colored people! Wouldn't miss going to town to see Santa Claus!"

But something held old Phoenix very still. The deep lines in her face went into a fierce and different radiation. Without warning, she had seen with her own eyes a flashing nickel fall out of the man's pocket onto the ground.

"How old are you, Granny?" he was saying.

"There's no telling, mister," she said, "no telling."

Then she gave a little cry and clapped her hands and said, "Git on away from here, dog! Look! Look at that dog!" She laughed as if in admiration. "He ain't scared of nobody. He a big black dog." She whispered, "Sic him!"

"Watch me get rid of that cur," said the man. "Sic him, Pete! Sic him!"

Phoenix heard the dogs fighting, and heard the man running and throwing sticks. She even heard a gunshot. But she was slowly bending forward by that time, further and further forward, the lid stretched down over her eyes, as if she were doing this in her sleep. Her

The first comment by the hunter establishes his personality: he laughed as he spoke.

chin was lowered almost to her knees. The yellow palm of her hand came out from the fold of her apron. Her fingers slid down and along the ground under the piece of money with the grace and care they would have in lifting an egg from under a setting hen. Then she slowly straightened up, she stood erect, and the nickel was in her apron pocket. A bird flew by. Her lips moved. "God watching me the whole time. I come to stealing."

The mixture of long and short sentences keeps the writing engaging.

The man came back, and his own dog panted about them. "Well, I scared him off that time," he said, and then he laughed and lifted his gun and pointed it at Phoenix.

She stood straight and faced him.

"Doesn't the gun scare you?" he said, still pointing it.

"No, sir, I seen plenty go off closer by, in my day, and for less than what I done," she said, holding utterly still.

He smiled, and shouldered the gun. "Well, Granny," he said, "you must be a hundred years old, and scared of nothing. I'd give you a dime if I had any money with me. But you take my advice and stay home, and nothing will happen to you."

"I bound to go on my way, mister," said Phoenix. She inclined her head in the red rag. Then they went in different directions, but she could hear the gun shooting again and again over the hill.

She walked on. The shadows hung from the oak trees to the road like curtains. Then she smelled wood-smoke, and smelled the river, and she saw a steeple and the cabins on their steep steps. Dozens of little black children whirled around her. There ahead was Natchez shining. Bells were ringing. She walked on.

Detail tells what the woman could see, smell, and hear. Together, they make the setting vivid for the reader.

In the paved city it was Christmas time. There were red and green electric lights strung and crisscrossed everywhere, and all turned on in the daytime. Old Phoenix would have been lost if she had not distrusted her eyesight and depended on her feet to know where to take her.

She paused quietly on the sidewalk where people were passing by. A lady came along in the crowd, carrying an armful of red-, green- and silver-wrapped presents; she gave off perfume like the red roses in hot summer, and Phoenix stopped her.

"Please, missy, will you lace up my shoe?" She held up her foot.

"What do you want, Grandma?"

"See my shoe," said Phoenix. "Do all right for out in the country, but wouldn't look right to go in a big building."

"Stand still then, Grandma," said the lady. She put her packages down on the sidewalk beside her and laced and tied both shoes tightly.

"Can't lace 'em with a cane," said Phoenix. "Thank you, missy. I doesn't mind asking a nice lady to tie up my shoe, when I gets out on the street."

Moving slowly and from side to side, she went into the big building, and into a tower of steps, where she walked up and around and around until her feet knew to stop.

Phrases such as "until her feet knew to stop" suggest that the woman has made this trip many times.

She entered a door, and there she saw nailed up on the wall the document that had been stamped with the gold seal and framed in the gold frame, which matched the dream that was hung up in her head.

"Here I be," she said. There was a fixed and ceremonial stiffness over her body.

"A charity case, I suppose," said an attendant who sat at the desk before her.

But Phoenix only looked above her head. There was sweat on her face, the wrinkles in her skin shone like a bright net.

"Speak up, Grandma," the woman said. "What's your name? We must have your history, you know. Have you been here before? What seems to be the trouble with you?"

Old Phoenix only gave a twitch to her face as if a fly were bothering her.

"Are you deaf?" cried the attendant.

But then the nurse came in.

"Oh, that's just old Aunt Phoenix," she said. "She doesn't come for herself—she has a little grandson. She makes these trips just as regular as clockwork. She lives away back off the Old Natchez Trace." She bent down. "Well, Aunt Phoenix, why don't you just take a seat? We won't keep you standing after your long trip." She pointed.

The old woman sat down, bolt upright in the chair.

"Now, how is the boy?" asked the nurse.

Old Phoenix did not speak.

"I said, how is the boy?"

But Phoenix only waited and stared straight ahead, her face very solemn and withdrawn into rigidity.

"Is his throat any better?" asked the nurse. "Aunt Phoenix, don't you hear me? Is your grandson's throat any better since the last time you came for the medicine?"

By not telling the purpose of the journey until this late in the story, Welty builds suspense.

With her hands on her knees, the old woman waited, silent, erect and motionless, just as if she were in armor.

"You mustn't take up our time this way, Aunt Phoenix," the nurse said. "Tell us quickly about your grandson, and get it over. He isn't dead, is he?"

At last there came a flicker and then a flame of comprehension across her face, and she spoke.

"My grandson. It was my memory had left me. There I sat and forgot why I made my long trip."

"Forgot?" The nurse frowned. "After you came so far?"

Then Phoenix was like an old woman begging a dignified forgiveness for waking up frightened in the night. "I never did go to school, I was too old at the Surrender,"[1] she said in a soft voice. "I'm an old woman without an education. It was my memory fail me. My little grandson, he is just the same, and I forgot it in the coming."

"Throat never heals, does it?" said the nurse, speaking in a loud, sure voice to old Phoenix. By now she had a card with something written on it, a little list. "Yes. Swallowed lye. When was it?—January—two, three years ago—"

Phoenix spoke unasked now. "No, missy, he not dead, he just the same. Every little while his throat begin to close up again, and he not able to swallow. He not get his breath. He not able to help himself. So the time come around, and I go on another trip for the soothing medicine."

"All right. The doctor said as long as you came to get it, you could have it," said the nurse. "But it's an obstinate case."

"My little grandson, he sit up there in the house all wrapped up, waiting by himself," Phoenix went on. "We is the only two left in the world. He suffer and it don't seem to put him back at all. He got a sweet look. He going to last. He wear a little patch quilt and peep out holding his mouth open like a little bird. I remembers so plain now. I not going to forget him again, no, the whole enduring time. I could tell him from all the others in creation."

"All right." The nurse was trying to hush her now. She brought her a bottle of medicine. "Charity," she said, making a check mark in a book.

1 The surrender of General Robert E. Lee (1807–1870) of the Confederacy on April 9, 1865, to General Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885) of the Union, which ended the Civil War.

Old Phoenix held the bottle close to her eyes, and then carefully put it into her pocket.

"I thank you," she said.

"It's Christmas time, Grandma," said the attendant. "Could I give you a few pennies out of my purse?"

"Five pennies is a nickel," said Phoenix stiffly.

"Here's a nickel," said the attendant.

Phoenix rose carefully and held out her hand. She received the nickel and then fished the other nickel out of her pocket and laid it beside the new one. She stared at her palm closely, with her head on one side.

Then she gave a tap with her cane on the floor.

"This is what come to me to do," she said. "I going to the store and buy my child a little windmill they sells, made out of paper. He going to find it hard to believe there such a thing in the world. I'll march myself back where he waiting, holding it straight up in this hand."

She lifted her free hand, gave a little nod, turned around, and walked out of the doctor's office. Then her slow step began on the stairs, going down.

The tap of the cane in this paragraph parallels the tapping in the first paragraph.

The story ends, but the woman's journey is only half over. She still has a long walk back home.

Respond in Writing Respond to Eudora Welty's story. Did you like it? Why or why not? What feelings does it stir in you? What details stirred those feelings?

Develop Your Own Ideas Work with your classmates to develop ideas to assist you in writing a story about a person's journey across a series of obstacles to reach a destination.

Small Groups: In small groups, use the following list of questions to help you think through the details of writing a story about a journey.

Questions for Thinking of Details

- What is the setting of the story? In what ways does the setting affect what happens in the story?
- Who is making the journey?
- What obstacles make the journey difficult?
- What qualities or skills does the main character have that make completing the journey possible?
- What sequence of events does the story include?

Whole Class: Make a master chart of all of the ideas generated by the small groups to get a collection of details to draw on for your story.

Write About It You will next write a story about a traveler who must overcome obstacles to reach a destination. You may choose from any of the following topics, audiences, and forms.

Possible Topics	Possible Audiences	Possible Forms
• a person crossing a dangerous area on foot to get somewhere (a street, a battlefield, a neighborhood) • a person advancing a ball in a sporting activity across a field or court filled with defenders (a soccer player, a lacrosse player, a basketball player) • a person on a mission across an area filled with challenges (a spy returning to headquarters with information, a detective returning to the police station with a prisoner) • a person on a routine trip that becomes dangerous (a person going grocery shopping during a sudden tornado, someone walking home from school when a riot breaks out)	• other teenagers • the creative writing community • television producers • the director of a theater	• a first-person short story • a third-person short story • a story in a specialized genre, such as a detective story or a satire

Analyzing a Short Story

A **short story** is a fictional account of characters resolving a conflict or situation.

The main purpose of writing a short story is to create a piece of fiction that will entertain the reader. When writing your short story, you will be using both narrative and descriptive skills to express yourself and to tell what happens to a character or characters who try to resolve a conflict. As the narrative unfolds, you describe the characters, places, events, and objects in order to tell the reader clearly what happens.

You can learn more about narrative and descriptive writing on pages 94–97 and pages 124–173.

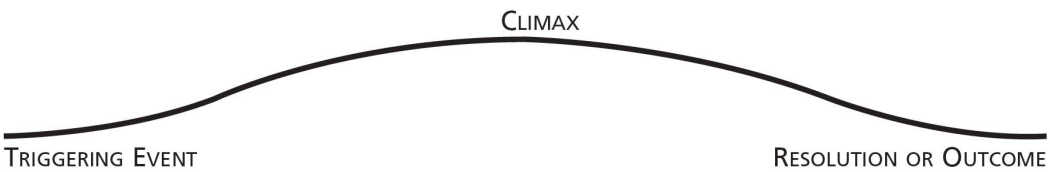
Elements of a Short Story

A short story has three major sections: a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning identifies the person telling the story, describes the place and time when the story takes place, and gradually introduces the major and minor characters. In addition, the writer creates a problem or obstacle that the main character must overcome. The middle of the story relates a chain of events that result as the characters try to resolve the problem. The ending of the story usually explains how everything turns out.

For information about how the elements of a short story contribute to its meaning, turn to pages 320–321.

Plot and Central Conflict

The **plot**—the sequence of events leading to the outcome or point of the story is like a play-by-play account of a sporting event. It tells who does what as the story unfolds. It also tells how the characters behave in the face of a **conflict**—the struggle or major problem—around which the story is built. In a sporting event, the conflict is between two or more opponents, and it usually boils down to the simple question of who will win. In a short story, the conflict is rarely so simple. For example, the conflict could center on a force within the main character—such as a bitter struggle with his or her conscience. This central conflict drives the plot, from which all the action and dialogue of the story flow. The plot, therefore, usually begins with an event that triggers the conflict. Once the central conflict is revealed, the plot moves briskly on to the most intense part of the conflict—the **climax.** Finally, in the **resolution,** the plot resolves the conflict or presents another outcome.



Believable Characters

Believable characters struggling through the twists of a plot are the hallmarks of an effective short story. In most stories the spotlight is on one character who is trying to resolve the conflict. Other characters either help or hinder the main character. Well-written short stories use narration, description, and dialogue to present believable characters that draw readers into the story.

Setting

The **setting** of a story is the environment in which the action takes place. It includes the time and the cultural context in which the story occurs. The setting also establishes a mood or atmosphere that reflects the events of the story. **Mood** is the overall feeling that the story conveys. Writers rely on vivid sensory details to establish setting and mood, which may change as the story progresses. A frightening story, for example, may begin at midnight on a rainy night. By the end of the story—if it has a happy ending—dawn might be breaking on a clear day.

Narrator

The **narrator** is the storyteller—the "voice" that tells what happens. The reader follows the events of the story through the eyes or **point of view** of that narrator. The following chart shows the different points of view a narrator may assume to tell a story.

POINT OF VIEW	NARRATOR'S ROLE IN THE STORY
First-Person	Observes or participates in the story's action; uses *I*, *we*, and other first-person pronouns. **Example** Before breaking the wishbone, **I** phrased **my** wish carefully in my mind, for never before had a wish been so important to **me.**
Third-Person Objective	Observes but does not participate in the story's action; relates the words and actions of the characters but not their thoughts and feelings; uses *he, she, him, her, his, hers, they, them, their,* and *theirs* **Example** Before breaking the wishbone, **the contenders** were silent briefly, **their** brows knit.
Third-Person Omniscient ("All-Knowing")	Observes but does not participate in the story's action; relates the thoughts and feelings as well as the words and actions of all the characters. **Example** Before breaking the wishbone, **Alexis** repeated her wish silently to **herself,** while her sister **Connie, with equal fervor, hoped** that **her sister's wish** would come true.

Each point of view has certain advantages. The first-person narrator not only narrates as a participant in the story but also responds to the other characters. With a first-person narrator, the reader experiences all of the story through that narrator's observations, thoughts, and feelings. The third-person objective narrator can relate two events happening simultaneously in two different places. This technique permits the reader to see the connections between those events. The third-person omniscient narrator can relate not only simultaneous events but also all the characters' inner thoughts and outer actions at the same time. This technique gives the reader a broader opportunity to identify with all the characters and see the connections among the events of the story.

Theme

Most stories have a **theme,** or main idea, of some kind. For instance, a story may be about hope or despair, love or hate, courage or fear, peace or war. Its outcome may also imply some lesson or moral or make some meaningful observation or conclusion about life. Some stories present a twist or surprise that is a lesson or moral in itself.

Practice Your Skills

Understanding Elements of a Short Story

Write answers to the following questions about "A Worn Path" on pages 175–183.

1. What event triggers the action of the story?
2. What is the central conflict and what event brings about that conflict?
3. At what point does the story reach its climax?
4. How does the boy's grandmother resolve her problem?
5. What is the outcome of the story? Does the outcome suggest a theme, or message, about life? If so, what is it?
6. Who are the characters in the story?
7. Who is the main character?
8. What is the setting of the story? Describe it in a few sentences.
9. How do you think the setting contributes to the overall effect of the story?
10. What point of view does the writer use?

PROJECT PREP Analyzing *Travel Stories*

In a small group, discuss short stories and novels you have read and movies you have seen that portray the story of a journey. Identify specific features of the plot or theme or how the characters are developed that you liked or disliked about each story.

Writing a Short Story

Prewriting

Writers approach the task of beginning a short story in different ways. For many the process begins with an urge to write. William Faulkner followed a different process. "With me, a story usually begins with a single idea or memory or mental picture. The writing of the story is simply a matter of working up to that moment, to explain why it happened or what caused it to follow." The following prewriting strategies will help you discover the best approach for getting your story started.

1 Developing Story Ideas

"What will my story be about?" Many people waste too much time worrying about subjects for their stories. Famous short story writer Shirley Jackson offers the following explanation.

> People are always asking me—and every other writer I know—where story ideas come from. Where *do* you get your ideas, they ask; how do you ever manage to think them up? It's certainly the hardest question in the world to answer, since stories originate in everyday happenings and emotions, and any writer who tried to answer such a question would find himself telling over, in some detail, the story of his life. Fiction uses so many small items, so many little gestures and remembered incidents and unforgettable faces, that trying to isolate any one inspiration is incredibly difficult, but basically, of course, the genesis of any fictional work has to be human experience. . . . A bald description of an incident is hardly fiction, but the same incident, carefully taken apart, examined as to emotional and balanced structure, and then as carefully reassembled in the most effective form, slanted and polished and weighed, may very well be a short story.
>
> —Shirley Jackson, "Experience and Fiction"

Short stories, then, may be based on real-life happenings or forged in a writer's imagination. Whatever the source, a good story will hold a reader in suspense until the problem or conflict that the characters face is finally resolved. The following strategies provide possible sources for story ideas and may even directly stimulate a few ideas.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Developing Story Ideas

- Review your journal writings for conflicts or turning points in your life that may be worth developing into a story.
- Whenever you think of a story idea, write it in your **journal**.
- If possible, form a small discussion group to generate story ideas.
- Scan newspaper headlines and news items for an event you could build into a fictional story. Some pieces of information, for example, might suggest a mystery, a romance, an adventure, or a comic tale.
- Observe people in your daily life. Sometimes even small events or snatches of conversation, such as an incident that you noticed in a shopping mall or a conversation you overheard in a pizza parlor, will suggest a conflict around which you can build a plot.

Listening Tip

While you are working on your story, make an effort to listen closely to the speech patterns of people you know or encounter. If you hear anything distinctive, make a note of it in your journal. You might be able to use it to help you develop natural-sounding dialogue for your story.

Whatever approach you take, concentrate on finding an event that triggers a conflict for you or for someone else. Do not discard events that seem ordinary or humdrum. Well told, stories about the simple pains or pleasures of daily life can be effective and moving.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Story Possibilities*

1. With your writing group, reread the above **Strategies for Developing Story Ideas** and apply them to developing your own ideas for a story. Start by reading over all the ideas that you have written in your journal. You may also want to scan newspapers for story ideas or use ordinary situations as the basis for imagining unexpected happenings.
2. Once you have used the above strategies to generate several ideas, discuss each one with your writing partners to see if any can trigger a conflict. After you evaluate each idea and its potential, help each author select one that he or she could use to create the most imaginative story. Then save your work in your writing folder for later use.

2 Building an Engaging Plot

A plot usually unfolds from the event that triggers the conflict to the event that resolves the conflict. The following chart shows strategies for developing a plot. If you introduce a subplot, a secondary story line often involving minor characters, you could use the same strategies.

STRATEGIES FOR UNFOLDING A PLOT	
1. Introduce the event or circumstance that triggers the action.	
From Within a Character	• a decision to try something new • an uncomfortable or painful feeling
From the Outside World	• an accident • a meeting with a stranger
2. Develop details that describe the nature of the conflict.	
Conflict with Self	• a struggle with conscience or desires • a struggle against old ways
Conflict with Others	• friends, family members • authority figures, enemies, strangers
Conflict with Nature	• storms and floods
3. Develop details about obstacles the characters will struggle against to resolve the conflict.	
Within a Character	• fears or habits of the past • illness
In the Outside World	• misfortunes • challenges from nature
4. Develop details concerned with how the main character will overcome obstacles.	
By the Character	• strength or growth of character • perseverance and new skills
Through Outside Events	• luck or change of circumstances • others' decisions
5. Develop details about the resolution, or solution to the problem, and the outcome.	
Overcoming Obstacles	• new wisdom • success, feeling at peace
Failing to Overcome	• acceptance of shortcomings • decision to try again

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Plot Development*

In your writing group, discuss how to develop the plot of each story.

3 Sketching Characters

In her autobiography, famous mystery writer Agatha Christie explained that she often used real people she saw on the bus as the basis for many of her characters. She knew that to be believable, characters in a story must ring true to a reader. In other words they must look and walk and talk like real people.

To create such imaginary "real" people, you should always visualize your characters in your mind—or on paper—until you have added enough details to turn the characters into flesh and blood. For example, you would want to consider such aspects as a character's name, age, physical appearance, voice, mannerisms, background, personality traits, and eccentricities. The following description shows how the specific details of physical features contribute to a characterization.

MODEL: Characterization

Elisa Allen, working in her flower garden, looked down across the yard. . . . She was thirty-five. Her face was lean and strong and her eyes were as clear as water. Her figure looked blocked and heavy in her gardening costume, a man's black hat pulled down over her eyes, clod-hopper shoes, a figured print dress almost completely covered by a big corduroy apron with four big pockets and the knife she worked with. She wore heavy leather gloves to protect her hands while she worked.

—John Steinbeck, "The Chrysanthemums"

Completing a profile like the one below will help you create a preliminary sketch of your characters so that they will be realistic and believable to your reader.

Name:
Age:
Role in story:
Physical appearance:
Most important personality traits:
Mannerisms:
Background information:
Strengths:
Weaknesses:

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Character Sketches*

In your writing group, help create a preliminary character sketch for each of the characters that will appear in each writer's story. Discuss ways to elaborate on each character in each story. Save your character sketches to use when drafting your story.

Think Critically

Elaborating

One way to reveal character is through precise description. To help your readers see characters exactly as you see them, you may need to call on the skill of elaborating. When you **elaborate** on a character, you work out the details of that character.

To assist in the elaborating of your characters, construct a chart like the one below. Visualize an aspect of the character for each heading on the chart. Then list as many details as you can to reveal your character's age, physical traits, and mannerisms. When you write your story, you can select the details from the chart that contribute to the impression you want to create.

CHARACTER ELABORATION CHART

Character	teenager Mark Stevens
Appearance (face, age, eyes, hair, face, physical build)	sixteen, lean but muscular, strong features, brilliant blue eyes, gleaming white teeth; long, blond, curly hair; unusually long arms with huge hands
Clothing	baseball cap, basketball shoes, cutoff jeans, baggy T-shirt with neon colors
Mannerisms and Actions (ways of walking, talking, voice)	chews gum, squints, and looks at training track; shoulders hunched, hands jammed in pockets; speaks in rapid half-sentences with low voice
Possessions	camera around neck

Thinking Practice

Select a character from your journal or originate a new one and then elaborate about him or her with as many details as possible. Construct a chart like the one above to help you visualize the character more completely. You may also wish to draw a detailed picture of your character.

4 Framing Your Story

When you have your plot and characters in mind, you can frame your story by creating a meaningful setting and deciding on what point of view to use.

Creating a Setting

When planning the setting of your story, remember that the most effective settings are those that establish a mood that mirrors the characters' feelings and the action.

Writing Tip

Match the **setting** of your story to the characters' feelings and the action.

Notice the mood of fear that the author develops in his story about the taboos and beliefs of people in a primitive hunting society.

MODEL: Details of Mood in a Setting

My father is a priest; I am the son of a priest. I have been in the Dead Places near us, with my father—at first, I was afraid. When my father went into the house to search for the metal, I stood by the door and my heart felt small and weak. It was a dead man's house; a spirit house. It did not have the smell of man, though there were old bones in a corner. But it is not fitting that a priest's son should show fear. I looked at the bones in the shadow and kept my voice still.

—Stephen Vincent Benét, "By the Waters of Babylon."

Also strive for as much realistic detail in your setting as possible to help the action unfold believably. As English writer Ford Madox Ford said, "Unless I know what sort of doorknob his fingers closed on, how shall I—satisfactorily to myself—get my character out-of-doors?"

MODEL: Realistic Details in a Setting

It was a narrow, little shop, not very well lit, and the doorbell pinged again with a plaintive note as we closed it behind us. For a moment or so we were alone and could glance about us. There was a tiger in *papier-mâché* on the glass case that covered the low counter—a grave, kind-eyed tiger that waggled his head in a methodical manner. There were several crystal spheres, a china hand holding magic cards, a stock of magic fishbowls in various sizes, and an immodest magic bat that shamelessly displayed its springs. On the floor were magic mirrors; one to draw you out long and thin, one to swell your head and vanish your legs, and one to make you short and fat like a draught; and while we were laughing at these the shopman, as I suppose, came in.

—H. G. Wells, "The Magic Shop"

Choosing a Point of View

The power you have as a writer is both fun and challenging. You can make anything happen that you want, such as changing the characters, the mood, and the setting. You also have complete control over the point of view you choose for your story. As you learned on pages 186–187, you can choose one of three points of view when telling your stories: first person, third person objective, or third person omniscient. Even if the story is about an experience you have had, for example, you could tell it from the third person objective or omniscient point of view, referring to yourself as *he* or *she*. In a similar way, if your story is actually about your best friend, you could tell it in the first person, referring to the main character as *I*. Choose whatever point of view is most suitable for your story, but be sure to use it consistently throughout the story, without switching back and forth. However, you may intentionally introduce another point of view to add interest and complexity to your story. If you do, make the differences in point of view very clear. For example, maybe every time the point of view shifts, a new section of the story begins, with a space between the sections.

If you choose a point of view that does not allow you to enter the minds of all your characters, remember that a character's actions and dialogue can reveal what he or she is feeling.

EXAMPLE: Third-Person Objective Narrator

Character Revealed Through Action

Anna gripped the wood armrests tightly as she awaited the news. (Anna's actions show that she feels nervous.)

Character Revealed Through Dialogue

"I won!" Loren shouted triumphantly as he approached his mother in the kitchen. (The dialogue shows that Loren feels proud and happy.)

PROJECT PREP *Prewriting* ***Setting and Point of View***

In your writing group, discuss how each author can develop the setting and mood for each story. Also consider which point of view will be most effective for the telling of the tale. Keep notes on the group's feedback to use as you draft.

5 Ordering Events

When you sketched out the events in the unfolding of your plot, you probably placed them in chronological order, the order in which they happen. If you plan to tell your story in chronological order, look over your list of events to make sure each happening progresses logically from the one before it. Also consider all the events you wish to include in your story and add any new events to your list, in proper sequence. Your final list might look like the one below.

MODEL: Events in Chronological Order

– At the breakfast table, Anthony's father teases him about the bandage on his face and says he's too young to shave.
– Anthony leaves the table and slams the door on his way out.
– Hurrying angrily to school, Anthony crosses the street without noticing an approaching car.
– The car slams on its brakes but knocks Anthony down.
– Police come and take Anthony to the hospital, where his broken arm is put in a cast.
– Police call Anthony's father at work and report the accident.
– Anthony's father heads straight for the hospital with a gift.
– Anthony's father gives him the gift: an electric razor.

Literary Strategy: Flashback

Sometimes when drafting your story, you may want a variation from chronological order. You may, for example, begin at the end of the story and use flashbacks to show the events leading up to your ending. A **flashback** is a memory sequence that interrupts the chronological order of events for the purpose of telling what happened at some time in the past. You could also begin your story at the moment of highest tension, use flashbacks to tell what came before that moment, and then continue in chronological order—on through the resolution and outcome.

PROJECT PREP *Prewriting* ***Order of Events***

In your writing group, help each author identify the events that will be included in his or her story. Discuss whether the story should be told in chronological order or whether it will include flashbacks or other ways of ordering events.

The Power of Language

Fluency: Let it Flow

A good story seems to flow effortlessly from beginning to end. Varying the length and structure of your sentences will make your paragraphs flow invitingly.

These beginning four sentences from "A Worn Path" vary in length:

> It was December—a bright frozen day in the early morning. Far out in the country there was an old Negro woman with her head tied in a red rag, coming along a path through the pinewoods. Her name was Phoenix Jackson. She was very old and small and she walked slowly in the dark pine shadows, moving a little from side to side in her steps, with the balanced heaviness and lightness of a pendulum in a grandfather clock.

The shortest sentence, "Her name was Phoenix Jackson," prepares readers for the description of the woman in the long sentence that follows. These two adjacent sentences contribute significantly to the fluency of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph aloud and consider its variety and flow:

> Now and then there was a quivering in the thicket. Old Phoenix said, "Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals! . . . Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites . . . . Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my directions. I got a long way." Under her small black-freckled hand her cane, limber as a buggy whip, would switch at the brush as if to rouse up any hiding things.

This passage, like the first example, includes sentences of varied lengths. In addition, the sentences begin in varied ways. The first sentence, for example, begins with adverbs. Next, the dialogue strings together a series of imperative sentences and ends with a statement. The last sentence begins with an adverbial phrase.

Try It Yourself

Write a passage of about five sentences on your project topic. Use at least three different kinds. Also count the number of words in each sentence. If they are all about the same, revise the length of some to create more variety and flow.

Punctuation Tip

Commas are often used after certain introductory elements in a sentence. These include phrases of four words or more, participial phrases, and adverbial clauses. (See page 854.)

Most writers have their own special strategy and style of drafting. Some, for example, use their prewriting work rigorously, referring often to their list of organized details as a guide. Others find that they have a clear enough idea of their story to sit down and write it from start to finish without once looking back at their notes. Experiment until you find a drafting style that is effective for you.

The Beginning

As you draft your story, keep your audience and purpose in mind. While your basic writing purpose is to create and be inventive, you may have another more specific goal. For example, you may want to have your audience strongly identify with a particular character. On the other hand, your goal may be to influence your reader by providing an insight about life. To reach your audience successfully, use the following strategies to begin your story.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Beginning a Story

- Be inventive and capture the reader's attention by using sensory details to describe the setting and to create a mood.
- Establish the narrator's point of view and use it consistently. If you intentionally introduce another point of view later, keep it clearly distinctive.
- Use vivid language and interesting details to introduce the characters and the central conflict.
- Provide any background information about the time and place of the story that the reader may need.
- If you are using strict chronological order, include the triggering event that starts the story in motion. If you are using flashbacks, however, begin with an incident in the story that reflects the central conflict.

The Middle

A good beginning will help you write the middle of your story as well. Once the plot is set in motion in well-written stories, the events seem to unfold somewhat naturally. As you draft the middle of your story, present those events as smoothly as possible and make your characters live and breathe. The following strategies will help you draft the middle of your story.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Drafting the Middle

- Include only those events that have a direct bearing on the plot and the central conflict.
- Tell the events in a logical, dramatic order (either strict chronological order or a variation using flashbacks) and use transitions to connect the events smoothly and show the passage of time.
- Build on the conflict and pace the plot so that the action moves along in an engaging way until it reaches a climax.
- Use narration, description, dialogue, reflection, and action to show—not just tell—what the characters are thinking and to advance the plot.
- Be sure the point of view is always clear.

Connecting the Events in the Story When you draft the middle of your story, you simply pick up where you left off and show how each event follows from the triggering event at the beginning of your story. Keep in mind that the story's events should not just follow; they should actually build on one another, with each event adding to the tension until the plot reaches its climax. Use transitions to show the passage of time between events as well as the buildup of tension as your story approaches its climax. The transitions will also keep your story flowing smoothly from one event to another.

For a list of transitions commonly used in chronological order, turn to pages 5 and 90.

Using Flashbacks If you are using flashbacks, how do you accomplish the same smooth-flowing results? In movies or on television, directors sometimes indicate that a flashback is about to start by playing dreamlike music and making the screen look dim, fuzzy, and wavy. When you write, you have several options. You can simply skip a line or use a row of stars or asterisks to indicate a break in the chronology.

MODEL: Showing Flashback with Spacing

Anthony was still thinking about his father's teasing as he charged across the street. He didn't even see the car at first—he just heard a heart-stopping screech of brakes. Without thinking, he was in the middle of the street himself, feeling the crunch of the car's fender.

* * * * *

Anthony had come down to breakfast—feeling good and ready and eager for the day ahead, which he knew included a chance to sit next to Julie at lunch. . . .

With an appropriate point of view, you can make the connections even smoother by using narration to introduce the flashback so that the events will be smoothly connected.

MODEL: Showing Flashback with Narration

Anthony was still thinking about his father's teasing as he charged across the street. He didn't even see the car at first—he just heard a heart-stopping screech of brakes. Without thinking, he was in the middle of the street himself, feeling the crunch of the car's fender. For a while all was a blur of pain. Little by little, Anthony began to remember how the day had begun.

He had come down to breakfast—feeling good and ready and eager for the day ahead, which he knew included a chance to sit next to Julie at lunch. . . .

Notice that in both cases the verb tense changes from simple past to past perfect when the flashback begins. This change in tense indicates to the reader that the events in the flashback have occurred earlier.

Using Dialogue Besides using narration to tell your story, you can also use dialogue to show how the plot unfolds. Using natural-sounding dialogue is also one of the best ways to bring your characters to life and to let your reader "hear" as well as visualize the people in your story. As you read the following two versions of an event, notice how much livelier the one with the dialogue is.

Narrative

He shyly handed her a tiny white package tied with a narrow gold ribbon, explaining that he was sorry he had missed her birthday and hoped she liked it. She beamed with pleasure.

Dialogue

"Here," he said shyly as he thrust the slim white package at her. "I'm real sorry I didn't come around last night for your birthday, but I had to work."
"Oh, Josh," she breathed. "What's this?"
"Not much, actually," he gulped. "Hope you like it."
"Cool, it's just the charm I wanted! How could you have known?"

How can you make your dialogue sound as natural as possible? Use the following tips.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Writing Natural-Sounding Dialogue

- Let characters interrupt one another or break off their sentences on their own.
- Use contractions (*can't* instead of *cannot*, for example) to sound more realistic.
- Have characters speak in their natural dialects or with their own distinctive patterns.
- Vary the speaker tags (*he whispered, she crowed*), both in their choice of words and in their position in relation to the quote.

Practice Your Skills

Writing Dialogue

Imagine a dinner-table discussion about curfews. Write a dialogue of about fifteen lines between the characters. Refer to page 884 for the rules of punctuating dialogue to be sure you do it correctly.

The Ending

The ending of a story is the payoff. It must bring the events to a fitting close. Try using the following strategies to write your ending.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Ending a Story

- Resolve the conflict and complete the action of the story.
- If the conflict is not to be resolved, present an outcome that is logical and believable.
- Continue to use dialogue, action, or description to show, not just tell, what happens.
- Match the mood of the story.
- Leave the reader feeling satisfied.

Drafting a Title Once you are satisfied with your story, read it aloud and think of a title that will invite and challenge the reader to set aside some time to read your story.

Writing Tip

End your short story by showing how the **conflict** is resolved and by telling the final outcome of events. Remember to leave a strong emotional impression on your readers.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Developing a Draft*

Based on the feedback you have received from your writing group, prepare a draft of your story. Include all suggestions that you find worthwhile and that contribute to a more interesting reading experience for your readers.

When you revise a short story, check for believability. Are your characters walking, talking people with whom your readers can identify? Does your setting seem real? Even imaginative settings like another planet should have a ring of authenticity to them. As you revise, look for missing details needed to make your story ring true to a reader.

Sharpening Characterizations

When revising, ask yourself, Does each character convey a distinct, memorable personality? Have you fallen into the trap of presenting a "type" instead of a real person (a kindly grandmother, for example, rather than a living, breathing elderly person with unique characteristics)? The following strategies will help you create lifelike characters.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Revealing Character

- Avoid stereotypes.
- Use dialogue with natural-sounding speech that reflects the personality of your characters.
- Use descriptions rich in sensory details to help readers see your characters.
- Use narration to record significant actions—such as little gestures, particular turns of phrase, and automatic reactions of surprise, fear, or anger.
- With a third-person omniscient narrator, use narration to record thoughts and feelings.

Tightening Descriptions

When some people are learning how to write fiction, they tend to overwrite, or to use **purple prose.** In other words they use unnecessary words to describe a character or a setting and create a mood. As you revise, look for and replace any purple prose. Following is an example of how purple prose can call so much attention to itself that it distracts the reader from becoming involved with the character. Reread John Steinbeck's description of his character Elisa Allen on page 191. Contrast that effective description with the purple prose below and then consider the effects of the purple prose if it had appeared in Steinbeck's story.

> Elisa Allen worked in her flower garden. And what a garden it was! Fragrant roses blushed hot pink in the glimmering sunshine and sent their roots ever deeper and deeper into the fertile, life-giving mud beneath the surface. Lambent lilies arched their slender backs and reached toward the sunshine, drawn as if to a gigantic burning magnet in the cloudless, endless, brilliant blue sky. . . .

As you can see, purple-prose Elisa becomes lost as the focus in this rambling, self-conscious description. Although elaborating is useful to paint sharp, accurate pictures of your characters, limitless descriptive details will only cloud the picture. Tighten your descriptions so that you say as much as possible in a few well-chosen words.

> In her flower garden, Elisa Allen poked the fertile soil around the hot-pink roses, yanked the weeds, and then stood, staring at the tall, brilliant lilies.

Evaluation Checklist for Revising

After sharpening your characterizations and tightening your descriptions, you are ready to check over your whole story and look for ways to make it even better. The following checklist will help you revise your short stories.

Evaluation Checklist for Revising

- ✓ Does the beginning of your story describe the setting, capture the readers' attention, introduce characters, and include the triggering event? (pages 185 and 197)
- ✓ Does the middle develop the plot by making the central conflict clear and by including events that are directly related to that conflict? (pages 185, 190, and 197–200)
- ✓ Are events in the plot arranged in chronological order or in an order that makes the chronology of events clear? (page 195)
- ✓ Does the pacing of events keep the story moving in an engaging way?
- ✓ Does the story build until the action reaches a climax? (pages 185 and 198)
- ✓ Did you use literary strategies such as dialogue and flashback to enhance the plot? (pages 195 and 198–200)
- ✓ Did you use natural-sounding dialogue and purposeful description to bring your characters to life? (pages 199–200)
- ✓ Does the ending show how the conflict was resolved and bring the story to a close? (pages 185 and 200)
- ✓ Did you choose an appropriate point of view and stick to it throughout the story? (pages 186–187 and 194)
- ✓ Does the story have a theme or express your reasons for writing it? Does it accomplish your specific purpose for creative writing? (page 187)

Practice Your Skills

Matching Dialogue to Character

The statements below all express the same general meaning. Each one, however, creates a different image and would therefore be suitable to reveal a different kind of character. Choose one statement. Then, avoiding stereotypes, write a one-paragraph description of the character that the statement leads you to visualize. Save your work.

1. "Yup," I says again, "that was one fine meal you rustled up."
2. "Wow! That was like really dee-lish!"
3. "That was a wonderful dinner indeed."
4. "I am beholden to you for a fine meal."
5. "Please! I'd love the recipes. What a meal!"

Practice Your Skills

Revealing Character

Write one paragraph telling what goes on in Brenda's mind when she learns her family must move out of state by the end of the month. Use a third person omniscient narrator. The first sentence is provided for you.

Brenda grew steadily more angry at being wrenched from her friends, her new job, and—worst of all—her lifelong confidant, cousin Burt.

Practice Your Skills

Tightening Descriptions

Write a two-paragraph passage of purple prose about the character you described previously. Have fun. Try to make your description as overdone and rambling as possible. Then trim it back to an effective three- or four-sentence description. Select a partner and exchange papers. Revise your partner's description so that the writing is even tighter. Discuss your changes.

PROJECT PREP Revising *Using Strategies and a Checklist*

After your class has divided into small discussion groups, take turns reading your stories aloud. Comment on what is especially strong about them and what could be improved, paying special attention to sharp characterizations and tight descriptions. Then return to your seat and use your listeners' comments and the checklist on page 202 to make a thorough revision of your short story. If time permits, repeat the process of meeting in small groups or share your story with new test readers, including friends or family members. Different audiences can sometimes have different responses to your work that will help you approach your revisions with new insights.

In the editing stage, the writer produces error-free writing that demonstrates control over grammatical elements as well as accurate spelling and correct use of capitalization and punctuation.

The Language of Power *Negatives*

Power Rule: Use only one negative form for a single negative idea. (See page 789.)

See It in Action In mainstream English, also known as Standard English, do not use two negatives to express one negative meaning. However, in short stories and other fiction, you may occasionally use double negatives to make a character's dialogue sound realistic, as in this example from "The Worn Path."

> Don't let none of those come running my direction.

Writers deviate from using Standard English in the service of painting a vivid character. In the following example from "The Worn Path," Welty does not use a helping verb with the present participle *doing*. This omission strengthens the characterization of Phoenix, who never attended school.

> Thorns, you doing your appointed work.

Remember It Record this rule and example in the Power Rule section of your Personalized Editing Checklist.

Use It Read through your short story and circle all words considered to be negative. Check each one to make sure you have not used a double negative unless you are using non-mainstream forms in the conversation of a character.

Using a Six-Trait Rubric — Stories

Ideas	**4** The plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are original and creative.	**3** The plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are effective.	**2** Most aspects of the plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are effective.	**1** Most aspects of the plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are ineffective.
Organization	**4** The organization is clear with abundant transitions.	**3** A few events or ideas seem out of place or transitions are missing.	**2** Many events seem out of place and transitions are missing.	**1** The order of events is unclear and hard to follow.
Voice	**4** The narrator's voice sounds natural and the point of view is effective.	**3** The narrator's voice sounds mostly natural and the point of view is effective.	**2** The narrator's voice sounds unnatural at times and the point of view seems forced.	**1** The narrator's voice sounds mostly unnatural and the point of view is forced and ineffective.
Word Choice	**4** Specific words and sensory images help readers picture characters and setting.	**3** Words are specific and some words appeal to the senses to help readers picture characters and setting.	**2** Some words are overly general and do not bring characters or setting into focus.	**1** Most words are overly general and do not bring characters or setting into focus.
Sentence Fluency	**4** Varied sentences flow smoothly and dialogue reflects characters.	**3** Most sentences are varied and flow smoothly, and dialogue reflects characters.	**2** Some sentences are choppy and dialogue seems forced.	**1** Sentences are choppy and not varied, and dialogue seems forced or is missing.
Conventions	**4** Conventions are correct and Power Rules are followed except for effect.	**3** Conventions are mainly correct and Power Rules are followed except for effect.	**2** Some conventions are incorrect but Power Rules are followed except for effect.	**1** There are many errors and at least one accidental failure to follow a Power Rule.

PROJECT PREP — Editing — *Using a Rubric*

Use the six-trait rubric to conduct one final edit of your story so that it provides the best possible experience for your readers.

Writing a Short Story — Publishing

After editing your work, prepare a neat final draft. In the publishing stage, the writer makes a final copy for his or her intended audience.

PROJECT PREP — Publishing — *Video Recording*

Make a video of someone reading your story aloud. You may wish to assume the different voices of your characters yourself. On the other hand, you could invite others to take on roles and give a dramatic reading. Give your video to the school library.

Writing a Play

Since a play is written to be performed, its very nature brings its characters to life. No feeling or emotion can be truly hidden from the audience. There is a certain rhythm or flow to the work too—often driven by the emotional content of the story. In this sense, plays can be a poetic as well as an animated form of a story.

A **play** is a piece of writing intended to be performed on stage by actors.

As you read an excerpt from *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson, pay close attention to how emotions affect the rhythm or flow of the story when it is told in play form.

The Piano Lesson

ACT TWO

Scene One

(The lights come up on the kitchen. It is the following morning. DOAKER is ironing the pants to his uniform. He has a pot cooking on the stove at the same time. He is singing a song. The song provides him with the rhythm for his work and he moves about the kitchen with the ease born of many years as a railroad cook.)

Doaker: Gonna leave Jackson, Mississippi
and go to Memphis
and double back to Jackson
Come on down to Hattiesburg
Change cars on the Y.D.
coming through the territory to
Meridian
And Meridian to Greenville
And Greenville to Memphis
I'm on my way and I know where
Change cars on the Katy
Leaving Jackson
and going through Clarksdale
Hello Winona!
Courtland!
Bateville!
Como!
Senitobia!
Lewisberg!
Sunflower!
Glendora!
Sharkey!

And double back to Jackson
Hello Greenwood
I'm on my way Memphis
Clarksdale
Moorhead
Indianola
Can a highball pass through?
Highball on through sir
Grand Carson!
Thirty First Street Depot
Fourth Street Depot
Memphis!

(WINING BOY enters carrying a suit of clothes.)

Doaker: I thought you took that suit to the pawnshop?

Wining Boy: I went down there and the man tell me the suit is too old. Look at this suit. This is one hundred percent silk! How a silk suit gonna get too old? I know what it was he just didn't want to give me five dollars for it. Best he wanna give me is three dollars. I figure a silk suit is worth five dollars all over the world. I wasn't gonna part with it for no three dollars so I brought it back.

Doaker: They got another pawnshop up on Wylie.

Wining Boy: I carried it up there. He say he don't take no clothes. Only thing he take is guns and radios. Maybe a guitar or two. Where's Berniece?

Doaker: Berniece still at work. Boy Willie went down there to meet Lymon this morning. I guess they got that truck fixed, they been out there all day and ain't come back yet. Maretha scared to sleep up there now. Berniece don't know, but I seen Sutter before she did.

Wining Boy: Say what?

Doaker: About three weeks ago. I had just come back from down there. Sutter couldn't have been dead more than three days. He was sitting over there at the piano. I come out to go to work… and he was sitting right there. Had his hand on top of his head just like Berniece said. I believe he broke his neck when he fell in the well. I kept quiet about it. I didn't see no reason to upset Berniece.

Wining Boy: Did he say anything? Did he say he was looking for Boy Willie?

Doaker: He was just sitting there. He ain't said nothing. I went on out the door and left him sitting there. I figure as long as he was on the

other side of the room everything be alright. I don't know what I would have done if he had started walking toward me.

Wining Boy: Berniece say he was calling Boy Willie's name.

Doaker: I ain't heard him say nothing. He was just sitting there when I seen him. But I don't believe Boy Willie pushed him in the well. Sutter here cause of that piano. I heard him playing on it one time. I thought it was Berniece but then she don't play that kind of music. I come out here and ain't seen nobody, but them piano keys was moving a mile a minute. Berniece need to go on and get rid of it. It ain't done nothing but cause trouble.

Wining Boy: I agree with Berniece. Boy Charles ain't took it to give it back. He took it cause he figure he had more right to it than Sutter did. If Sutter can't understand that . . . then that's just the way that go. Sutter dead and in the ground . . . don't care where his ghost is. He can hover around and play on the piano all he want. I want to see him carry it out the house. That's what I want to see. What time Berniece get home? I don't see how I let her get away from me this morning.

Doaker: You up there sleep. Berniece leave out of here early in the morning. She out there in Squirrel Hill cleaning house for some bigshot down there at the steel mill. They don't like you to come late. You come late they won't give you your carfare. What kind of business you got with Berniece?

Wining Boy: My business. I ain't asked you what kind of business you got.

Doaker: Berniece ain't got no money. If that's why you was trying to catch her. She having a hard enough time trying to get by as it is. If she go ahead and marry Avery . . . he working every day . . . she go ahead and marry him they could do alright for themselves. But as it stands she ain't got no money.

Wining Boy: Well, let me have five dollars.

Finding Ideas for a Play

Like stories and novels, plays are based upon conflict. A conflict can occur between two or more people: To find possible subjects for a play scene, think about conflicts you have seen and heard—or just heard of. They may come from your own life, the lives of people you know, or your imagination. Freewrite about some of them in your journal. Visualize them and use other prewriting techniques, such as clustering or self-questioning.

Practice Your Skills

Finding Ideas for a Play Scene

Here are three situations in which participants might experience the same thing but react differently. Write a brief description of what might be going on in each of these situations.

1. a family Thanksgiving meal
2. students waiting for their teacher to arrive
3. people playing a game or a sport

Crafting a Theme

Your main purpose in writing a play is to entertain your audience. However, you may also want to leave your audience with some message, idea, or question. The main idea you want to plant in your audience's mind is called the **theme.** Usually a theme is implied rather than stated explicitly. You craft the actors' dialogue and arrange the action and events so that the audience can **infer,** or figure out, your message. Ask yourself the following questions to help you decide on a theme.

- Is the idea one I really care about?
- Is the idea one my audience will care about?
- Can I fit interesting characters and plot around it?

Developing Characters

Actors bring many of their own ideas about how a character is portrayed and they make many decisions with the director of the play about how a character should be represented. It's the playwright, though, who invents the characters and writes the dialogue. It's up to the playwright to create interesting characters with colorful personalities, so the actors can bring them to life.

Practice Your Skills

Sketching Characters

Look back to the situations that you described in the previous **Practice Your Skills** activity. Choose one situation and develop each of the characters involved in that situation. List the most apparent traits of each character's personality; explain how they know each other, and what they think of each other. How might each of these characters react to something surprising?

Creating a Setting

You can be as imaginative as you want when you are writing a play, but you have to keep in mind that someone is going to have to stage your play and build whatever sets you describe. **Setting** is where and when the action occurs in a play. In addition to

creating a physical representation of place and time, the setting often contributes to the overall mood. Works of fiction have settings too; however, it is one thing to write about the Grand Canyon, and it is another very different thing to build the Grand Canyon on a stage. Many plays use simple sets so that they are easier to stage and also so that the audience pays more attention to the characters than the sets. A playwright who has something specific in mind for a setting must describe it, so that the set designer can build it. For instance, "a bedroom" is more specific than "a house" but if you have in mind a particular kind of bedroom, like the sloppy bedroom of a troubled teenager, then you must supply that information in your play.

Practice Your Skills

Finding Settings

Describe where and when the situation you have chosen from the previous **Practice Your Skills** activity takes place. Then provide instructions for building your set. As a playwright you need to give enough information for a set designer to build your set, but you don't need to account for every detail of the setting. Instead, concentrate on creating something interesting enough for an audience to look at and/or convincing enough for the characters to inhabit.

Establishing Tone and Mood

It is the playwright's responsibility to set the tone and mood of a play. **Tone** is the writer's attitude toward the characters and events. **Mood** is the feeling or atmosphere the audience draws from the characters, setting, and action. Tone and mood influence one another and are often closely intertwined. Both are shown through the words and details—even the rhythm—of a character's dialogue and body language. Additionally, the setting, props, costumes, lighting, music, and sound effects combine to set the tone and mood of a play. Characters' moods can change from scene to scene, depending on their emotional state and point of view. For example, in one scene the character is light-hearted and happy as she is twirled around the dance floor with her true love. In the next scene she projects a foul mood as her best friend reveals her boyfriend's cheating. As you write dialogue and stage directions, think about the tone and mood you want to set.

Writing Dialogue

Dialogue is what your characters say to each other in your play. The playwright develops the characters by giving them something revealing and interesting to say.

The audience finds out about the characters primarily through dialogue, and it has to sound just right. Even dialogue that sounds very natural may not work. For example, imagine two characters sitting next to each other on a bus ride home after school. One asks the other, "What do you want to do today?" The other says "I don't know. What do you want to do?" And then the first character replies, "I don't know—whatever." This is a conversation that everyone has had. Yet, it obviously doesn't lend itself to drama. Entertain your audience by having your characters talk about something interesting

without making their conversation sound too unfocused. The plot as well as its emotional content is almost always driven by dialogue in a play.

Practice Your Skills

Writing Dialogue

Write a conversation between two of your characters in the situation you have chosen from the previous **Practice Your Skills** activities. For example, if your situation is a Thanksgiving meal, the characters' conversation might involve sharing a memory of something that took place long ago. Develop your characters' personalities with dialogue that reveals their thoughts and feelings.

Writing Stage Directions

Stage directions tell the cast how to deliver their lines and what to do while they are onstage. They also inform the crew about what effects—such as the sound of rain—they need to produce. You need to account for all of the important action that occurs during a performance: when characters enter and leave the stage, how they will speak, important gestures they will make, and, if it is crucial to the scene, where they will stand on the stage. In fiction, the narrator might say something like "Dirk gave me a long stare and then angrily told me to leave him alone." In a play, the long stare and the fact that Dirk is angry have to be written in the stage directions. "Dirk: [pausing and staring angrily at Jen] 'Leave me alone.'" The crew also uses your stage directions. For example, if your scene needs a ringing telephone, you must write "[the telephone rings three times]," so that the crew can ring the phone on cue.

Practice Your Skills

Writing Stage Directions

Return to the dialogue that you wrote for the previous activty. Rewrite it, adding stage directions that indicate how the characters are speaking and what they are doing onstage. Keep your stage directions brief so they don't muddy the script.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Writing a Scene*

1. Try writing a scene from a play. Use the material you've already written in previous **Practice Your Skills** activities, or develop an especially dramatic moment from your short story. If you want, write a summary of the scenes that come before and/or after your scene. Stick with one setting if you can, since too many changes of setting can make a play very difficult to stage. Finally, determine the tone of your play. Will it be serious, comic, light-hearted, friendly, angry, absurd, realistic, or what? Then, carefully draft your scene with dialogue and stage directions that will reveal the plot, the characters, and the theme.
2. Share a draft with your peers for feedback. After revising accordingly, prepare a final copy. You may want to stage a production of it so that you can see it performed.

In the Media

Across the Media: Evaluating Artistic Performances

Some works of literature are written to be performed. Sets, costumes, blocking, makeup, lights, and music are the elements that bring a play to life. Though the script may remain unchanged, no two performances will be alike.

If an artistic performance moved you and caused you to see things a little differently, it was effective. The following questions may help you evaluate an artistic performance on the stage or over the airwaves.

HERE'S HOW

Questions for Evaluating Artistic Performances

1. Does the performance move you?
2. Does the performance help illuminate the work?
3. Are the performers confident and well prepared?
4. Did the performers establish a good rapport with the audience through eye contact and effective body language?
5. If it is an audio presentation, do the performers provide ample vocal variety to express the work's nuances and underlying meanings?
6. If it is a live stage presentation, does the performance use the stage effectively?
7. If it is a video presentation, are the video tools used effectively to make statements? For example, are there thoughtful uses of camera angles, lighting, sequencing, and music? How do they contribute to the overall effect?

Media Activity

- Review the scene on pages 207–209. Practice reading it aloud and take turns performing it for the class. The rest of the class will use the above questions to evaluate your work.
- See a live play or recall a live performance you saw. Write a paragraph evaluating the performance against the criteria listed above.
- Find and view a video presentation of a literary work. As before, write a paragraph evaluating the work using the criteria above.

Writing a Poem

A great poem stops you in your tracks. Whether it stirs deep emotions or startles the mind, its impact is certain. Poetry is a way of using language that gets the most out of each word and syllable.

Poetry is a writing form that expresses powerful feelings through imaginative uses of language, such as sound and imagery.

As you read the following poem by May Swenson, think about what gives this poem its impact.

> Hold a dandelion and look at the sun,
> Two spheres are side by side.
> Each has a yellow ruff.
>
> Eye, you tell a lie,
> that Near is large, that Far is small
> There must be other deceits. . . .

1 Finding Ideas for Poems

How do poets become inspired? How do they decide what to write about? Many poets do not begin with a clear picture of how their poems will look when they are finished writing. However, they do begin with a kernel of an idea from which their poem emerges. Some of these "seeds" for poems are strong emotions, striking images, and interesting phrases that the poet may have heard or seen.

Once you have thought of a "seed" for your poem, the rest of the poem will follow as you begin to collect memories, impressions, and new ideas about your subject.You can write a poem about anything, whether you think your subject is very important, such as how you feel about someone close to you, or whether you think it is mundane, such as the description of a meal. Sometimes great poems delight their readers by helping them see something familiar in a fresh way. Look how the British poet Simon Armitage makes the familiar image of a doctor new in this excerpt from his poem "The Anaesthetist":

> Hard to believe him when he trundles in,
> scrubbed up and squeaky clean, manoeuvering
> a handcart of deep-sea diving gear.

Practice Your Skills

Charting to Find Ideas for a Poem

Copy the Idea Chart below. Imagine a brand-new way to think about the sample topic and write at least one new idea for each topic on the right-hand side.

Sample Topics	Poem Ideas
a telephone conversation monkeys a car ride a field of sunflowers a backpack	

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Expanding on an Idea*

Choose a moment from your story or scene or select one of the new ideas from your Idea Chart above and freewrite about it for two to five minutes to tap ideas for a poem.

TIME OUT TO REFLECT

Think about how you have generated ideas for stories, plays, and poems. How are the strategies that you have used to generate these ideas for each form similar? How are they different? What kind of ideas, if any, are particularly well suited for a story? for a play? for a poem? Why?

2 Using Sound, Rhythm, and Meter

Sound

Words not only mean things, but they also have sounds of their own. Some poets even make up words so that readers will listen to the sound of their poems without trying to figure out what the words mean. You don't have to write nonsense to emphasize sound in your poem. Imagine writing a poem called "Snake" with a line like "She silently slips toward the songbird's eggs." The *s* sounds most likely make you think of a slithering snake. Even the word *slithers* sounds snakelike. When a poet uses a certain kind of sound in a poem, it is called a **device,** and there are many types of devices. Here are a few definitions of sound devices, along with some examples:

SOUND DEVICES	
Onomatopoeia	Use of words whose sounds suggest their meanings ***splash, click, zoom, woof***
Alliteration	Repetition of a consonant sound or sounds at the beginning of a series of words "**B**ring me the **b**abbling **b**aby"
Consonance	Repetition of a consonant sound or sounds used with different vowel sounds, usually in the middle or at the end of words "The heavy li**m**bs cli**m**b into the **m**oonlight bearing feathers" —W. S. Merwin, from "December Night"
Assonance	Repetition of a vowel sound within words "The dr**ow**ned t**ow**ns of the Quabbin/the pilfered burial m**ou**nds" —Adrienne Rich, from "North America"
Repetition	Repetition of an entire word or phrase **"You do not do, you do not do/** Any more, black shoe" —Sylvia Plath, from "Daddy"
Rhyme	Repetition of accented syllables with the same vowel and consonant sounds "When I have utterly re**fined** The composition of my **mind,** Shaped language of my marrow **till** Its forms are instant to my **will**" —Stanley Kunitz, from "Single Vision"

Rhythm and Meter

Rhythm is a sense of flow produced by the rise and fall of accented and unaccented syllables. In some poems, especially traditional poems, the rhythm follows a specific beat called a **meter.** Metered poems follow a regular, countable pattern like the beats of a piece of music. If you were to listen to a marching band play a song, you would hear the beats of the snare drum form the meter of that song. The beats or meter help the marchers know when to take a step. As a matter of fact, those beats that form a poem's meter are called **feet.** Here is an example of some lines from a poem written nearly 200 years ago that has a clear meter:

MODEL: Meter

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

—William Blake, from "The Tyger"

Poetry that does not have a regular, clear meter is called **free verse.** Many contemporary poets write in free verse. A poem can have a rhythm even if it does not have a meter.

The rhythm of speech depends on the speakers' accent, whether they repeat words, what kind of emphasis they place on words, and many other factors. Walt Whitman, a nineteenth-century American poet, tried to use the rhythm of conversational speech in his poems and helped make free verse popular. Here is an example of his free verse.

MODEL: Free Verse

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

—Walt Whitman, from "Song of Myself"

editing

Poetry depends on brevity and economy of words. Rewrite the following bloated lines of poetry to make the line have rhythm.

The blue hat and the dull red almost-orange pants
And the oversized green t-shirt old and worn

Practice Your Skills

Developing Sound Devices

Write a sentence using each of the sound devices listed below. For instance, you could use the word *buzzed* for onomatopoeia in the sentence "The honeybee buzzed toward me."

1. onomatopoeia
2. alliteration
3. consonance
4. assonance
5. repetition
6. rhyme
7. meter

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Sound Devices*

In your writing group, discuss ways to Incorporate sound devices into a description of an ordinary object. What does an eraser sound like when rubbed against paper? What is the sound of chalk on a chalkboard or a marker on a white board? What do shoes sound like when a person walks across a floor? After your discussion, think of three or four sound devices you could use in the poem you are writing.

3 Using Figurative Language

Poets also use **figurative language,** language that means something other than its literal meaning. Following are some examples.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE	
Imagery	Use of visual details or details that appeal to the senses. My candle burned alone in an immense valley. Beams of the huge night converged upon it, Until the wind blew. Then beams of the huge night Converged upon its image, Until the wind blew. — Wallace Stevens, from "Valley Candle"
Simile	Comparison using the words *like* or *as* "Darkness falls like a wet sponge" —John Ashbery, from "The Picture of Little J.A. in a Prospect of Flowers"
Metaphor	Implied comparison that does not use *like* or *as* "The locker room of my skull is full of panting egrets." —James Tate, from "Happy as the Day Is Long"
Personification	Use of human qualities to describe something non-human The bird would cease and be as other birds But that he knows in singing not to sing. The question that he frames in all but words Is what to make of a diminished thing. —Robert Frost, from "The Oven Bird"
Hyperbole	Use of extreme exaggeration or overstatement The Chinese say we live in the world of the 10,000 things, Each of the 10,000 things crying out to us Precisely nothing —Charles Wright, from "Night Journal"

Oxymoron — Use of opposite or contradictory terms

"Fight fire with fire and water with water."

—William Matthews, from "Blue Notes"

Symbol — Use of an object or action to stand for another

In this excerpt from May Swenson's "Strawberrying," the strawberries that stain the hands and that look like heads in a basket or bursting hearts stand for both the vitality (strength) of life and its fragility.

My hands are murder-red. Many a plump head
drops on the heap in the basket. Or, ripe
to bursting, they might be hearts, matching
the blackbird's wing-fleck

Practice Your Skills

Developing Figurative Language for Poems

Now it's your turn to think of some figurative language. Write an example of your own for each of the following types of figurative language. You may write them in verse or prose, as long as your examples are imaginative.

1. Image
2. Simile
3. Metaphor
4. Personification
5. Hyperbole
6. Oxymoron
7. Symbol

PROJECT PREP *Prewriting* ***Figurative Descriptions***

In your writing group, take the common objects for which you provided sound devices and add a figurative description of each. Also think of three figures of speech you might be able to use in the poem you are writing.

4 Choosing a Form

The most elemental unit of a poem is the word. In a poem, a sequence of words becomes a line, and then a sequence of lines becomes a **stanza.** Most types of poetry have lines, and each of these lines ends with a line break. Stanzas are separated by stanza breaks.

In traditional poetry, lines are based on the poem's meter and often have a specific number of words or syllables. When the last word of a line rhymes with the last word of another line—not always the next line—the last words of the lines are called end **rhymes.** Here's an example of lines with end rhymes, from Robert Frost's poem, "Departmental."

MODEL: Departmental

An ant on the table cloth
Ran into a dormant moth
of many times his size.
He showed not the least surprise.

Notice how *cloth* and *moth* rhyme with each other, as well as *size* and *surprise.* Those are the end rhymes. Frost has also composed these lines using seven syllables per line (except for the third line—he wasn't trying to be perfect). This is called a syllable count and forms the poem's meter.

A number of poetic forms use rhyme. The table below describes a few of the more common rhyming forms.

SELECTED RHYMED POETIC FORMS

Ballad	Poem that tells a story; narrative poetry. Many ballads use a four-line stanza called a **quatrain** with the second and fourth lines rhyming.
Sonnet	A form with several variations. The Shakespearean sonnet is a 14-line poem consisting of three quatrains, each with alternating rhymes, and a final couplet, a pair of rhymed lines.
Limerick	A humorous five-line poem with a rhyme scheme AABBA
Ode	A poem written in tribute to an inspirational subject. John Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and "Ode to a Nightingale" are early nineteenth century versions of a form that goes back to Roman times.

Unrhymed poems can also have very strict forms. The following chart shows a few of the more common unrhymed poems.

SELECTED UNRHYMED POETIC FORMS	
Cinquain	A five-line poem with two syllables in the first line, four in the second, six in the third, eight in the fourth, and a return to two in the fifth. There are many varieties of cinquains, however, that do not follow this pattern.
Haiku	Japanese poetry with three lines and 17 syllables—five in the first line, seven in the second line, and five in the third line. Haiku usually contain a reference to a season or other aspect of nature.
Sestina	A 39-line poem made up a six six-line stanzas and a final stanza of three lines, with complex patterns of word repetition from line to line.

Not every poem uses syllable counts and meters in its lines, though. In fact most contemporary poems do not follow the traditional verse structures.

William Carlos Williams's poem "This Is Just to Say" uses short, unrhymed lines and short stanzas.

MODEL: This Is Just to Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

This poem uses four-line stanzas, known as **quatrains,** as its structure. A stanza break is a stronger break in the flow of a poem than a line break, in the same way that a paragraph is a stronger break in the flow of a story than a break is after a sentence.

Poems can be written with or without stanzas and can contain any number of lines. Did you notice that there is no punctuation in Williams's poem? He uses line breaks and stanzas instead of punctuation.

Poetry Rubric

You can use the rubric below to evaluate poetry.

Poetic Techniques	**4** The rhyme scheme (if used) and sound devices create a strong effect and help express a meaningful idea.	**3** The rhyme scheme (if used) and sound devices create a strong effect and help express an idea.	**2** The rhyme scheme (if used) is inconsistent but sound devices help express meaning.	**1** The rhyme scheme (if used) is inconsistent, and few if any sound devices are used.
Figurative Language	**4** The poem is enriched by a wide variety of memorable figurative language.	**3** The poem is enriched by a variety of figurative language.	**2** The poem uses figurative language once or twice.	**1** The poem uses no figurative language.
Graphic Elements	**4** The poem uses line length, capitalization, and punctuation creatively to help express the ideas precisely.	**3** The poem uses line length, capitalization, and punctuation to help express ideas.	**2** The poem uses line length, capitalization, and punctuation in predictable and uninspired ways.	**1** The poem's use of line length, capitalization, and punctuation seems unintentional.

Practice Your Skills

Writing Poetry in a Variety of Forms

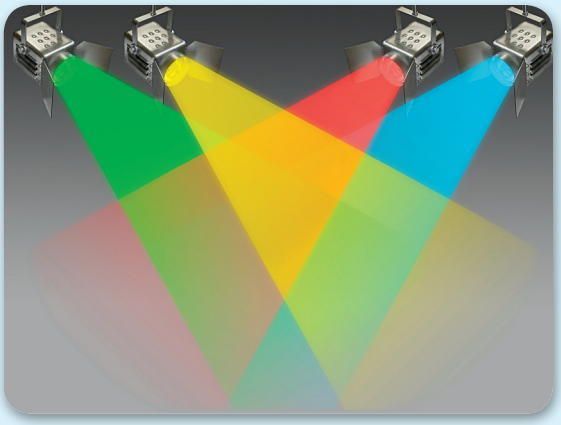
Choose one rhymed and one unrhymed form from the charts on pages 221 and 222. Find out more about the forms and locate some examples in a library or online. Then, using any of the ideas you have collected, try writing a poem in each form. Use the same subject for each so you can see the limits and possibilities of each form.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Writing a Poem*

1. Using an idea from your story or scene or any other ideas, write a draft of a poem. You can use a rhyme scheme or you can write in free verse.
2. Share your draft with your peers for feedback. Make any changes that you think will strengthen your poetry. Then put your class poems together into an anthology and take turns reading them aloud to your classmates.

Writing Lab

Project Corner



Think Critically

Write a Review

With members of your writing group, exchange the scenes you wrote (see page 212). **Write a brief review** of your group member's scene, using the rubric below.

Drama Rubric

Dramatic Elements	**4** The plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are original and creative. The theme is meaningful.	**3** The plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are effective. The theme is clear.	**2** Most aspects of the plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are effective, but the theme is unclear.	**1** Most aspects of the plot, setting, characters, and dialogue are ineffective. The theme is unclear.
Stage Directions	**4** The stage directions clearly indicate actions and states of mind and add depth and subtlety.	**3** The stage directions indicate actions and states of mind.	**2** The stage directions indicate actions but do not go deeper.	**1** There are few if any stage directions.
Mood and Tone	**4** The scene establishes a mood effectively and the mood is appropriate to the theme. The tone enhances the mood and theme.	**3** The scene establishes a mood effectively and the mood is appropriate to the theme. The tone reflects the mood and theme.	**2** The scene establishes a mood but some of the details included don't seem related to that mood. The tone is not clearly tied to the mood and theme.	**1** The mood and tone are hard to identify.

In the Workplace
Scene for a Commercial

1. You work as a writer for a company that produces television commercials. Your client, the Uneeda Burrito Company, wants a commercial for their new line of frozen burritos, the Burrito Inferno. They have some requirements: the commercial's setting must be a kitchen; the characters must include a mother, father, daughter, son, and dog; and the characters must love the burritos. ***Write a scene*** for the Uneeda Burrito Company commercial. Develop the characters' personalities by giving them dialogue that reveals how they think and feel. Include stage directions to indicate how the characters are speaking and what they are doing. (You can find information on writing plays on pages 207–213.)

For Oral Communication Story for a Radio Broadcast

2. You have been selected to write a story for the weekly radio broadcast on WIAM-AM of "The Life I Never Lived." Each week an author is selected to read a story on the air about the life he or she would like to have lived. The author last week read a story titled, "I Was a Teenage Idol in King Arthur's Court." ***Write a story*** to read for the radio broadcast. Maintain a consistent point of view throughout your story, and list your events in a logical, dramatic order. Use descriptions, dialogue, and action to advance the plot of your story. (You can find information on writing stories on pages 188–206.)

Timed Writing Short Story

3. To entertain your classmates, ***write a short story*** that builds on this scene: Morgan was walking home from his clarinet lesson. Just as he turned the corner onto his street, he heard a crashing sound. He turned and saw Carol, the shy girl from the percussion section, carrying a pair of cymbals. Suddenly it began to rain.

Before You Write Consider the following questions: What is the situation? What is the occasion? Who is the audience? What is the purpose?

Introduce at least two other characters, and make certain the plot is driven by a conflict that needs to be resolved. Use vivid language and interesting details to capture your reader's interest. Use transitions to help your reader follow the story's chronology. You have 25 minutes to complete your work.

After You Write Evaluate your work using the six-trait rubric on page 205.

CHAPTER 7

Expository Writing

Expository writing presents information or offers an explanation.

When writing to explain, you analyze, classify, define, or compare things; you may also describe the sequence of a process, note how something works, or explain how to do something. Here are some examples of expository writing.

- **An investigative journalist writes a hard-hitting exposé** that reveals wrongdoing among elected officials.
- **Computer manufacturers write documentation** to support their latest software applications.
- **A writer for a consumer magazine compares and contrasts this year's new automobiles,** listing the pros and cons of each.
- **A group of scientists explains the results** of their latest experiments in a scientific journal.
- **High school students write answers to essay questions** on history tests explaining the causes and effects of World War II.
- **Corporations publish annual reports** explaining why they made or lost money during the year.
- **A government publication explains the process of becoming a citizen** for those who were not born in the United States.
- **A student handbook explains the expectations for students** in the categories of attendence, behavior, and academic achievement.

Writing Project — Analytical

How Do You Feel? ***In an analytical expository essay, explain the range of basic human emotions and how those emotions are identified and experienced.***

Think Through Writing Friends and family have probably said to you at one time or another, "I know how you feel." But do they? How *do* you feel? If you are angry, for example, how do you know you are? Write about your feelings

from three different angles: what goes on in your head when you are mad, what physical changes you feel, and what the outward signs of your feelings might be. Try to explain each of those angles as fully as possible, using examples from your own experience.

Talk About It In your writing group, discuss the writing you have done. In what ways are your explanations of the three ways to experience anger similar? In what ways are they different? What conclusions can you draw from the similarities and differences?

Read About It In the following selection, Jane Goodall describes her experiences living with chimpanzees in Gombe, an area in Tanzania, Africa. She tries to describe the chimps and their emotions so that other people can understand them.

MODEL: Expository Writing

From *Through a Window: My Thirty Years with the Chimpanzees of Gombe*

The Mind of The Chimpanzee

Jane Goodall

When I began my study at Gombe[1] in 1960 it was not permissible—at least not in ethological[2] circles—to talk about an animal's mind. Only humans had minds. Nor was it quite proper to talk about animal personality. Of course everyone knew that they *did* have their own unique characters—everyone who had ever owned a dog or other pet was aware of that. But ethologists, striving to make theirs a "hard" science, shied away from the task of trying to explain such things objectively. One respected ethologist, while acknowledging that there was "variability between individual animals," wrote that it was best that this fact be "swept under the carpet." At that time ethological carpets fairly bulged with all that was hidden beneath them.

The opening presents a controversial idea that engages readers and stirs feelings.

The rhetorical device of the metaphor here (ethology as a carpet) strengthens the prose.

How naive I was. As I had not had an undergraduate science education, I didn't realize that animals were not supposed to have personalities, or to think, or to feel emotions or pain. I had no idea that it would have been

Note Goodall's tone here. She has a hint of sarcasm in her tone.

1 **Gombe:** Gombe Stream Reserve (National Park) in the northwest of Tanzania.
2 **ethological:** Related to ethology, the scientific study of animal behavior, especially as it occurs in a natural environment.

more appropriate to assign each of the chimpanzees a number rather than a name when I got to know him or her. I didn't realize that it was not scientific to discuss behavior in terms of motivation or purpose. And no one had told me that terms such as *childhood* and *adolescence* were uniquely human phases of the life cycle, culturally determined, not to be used when referring to young chimpanzees. Not knowing, I freely made use of all those forbidden terms and concepts in my initial attempt to describe, to the best of my ability, the amazing things I had observed at Gombe. . . . .

Well chosen details help develop Goodall's main idea that chimpanzees experience many emotions similar to those of humans.

The editorial comments on the first paper I wrote for publication demanded that every *he* or *she* be replaced with *it,* and every *who* be replaced with *which.* Incensed, I, in my turn, crossed out the *its* and *whichs* and scrawled back the original pronouns. As I had no desire to carve a niche for myself in the world of science, but simply wanted to go on living among and learning about chimpanzees, the possible reaction of the editor of the learned journal did not trouble me. In fact I won that round: The paper when finally published did confer upon the chimpanzees the dignity of their appropriate genders and properly upgraded them from the status of mere "things" to essential Being-ness. . . . .

It is not easy to study emotions even when the subjects are human. I know how I feel if I am sad or happy or angry, and if a friend tells me that he is feeling sad, happy or angry, I assume that his feelings are similar to mine. But of course I cannot know. As we try to come to grips with the emotions of beings progressively more different from ourselves, the task, obviously, becomes increasingly difficult. If we ascribe human emotions to non-human animals we are accused of being anthropomorphic[3]—a cardinal sin in ethology. But is it so terrible? If we test the effect of drugs on chimpanzees because they are biologically so similar to ourselves, if we accept that there are dramatic similarities in chimpanzee and human brain and nervous system, is it not logical to assume that there will be similarities also in at least the more basic feelings, emotions, moods of the two species?

Here Goodall addresses a position different from hers and acknowledges that studying emotions is hard even in humans.

3 **anthropomorphic:** Having ascribed human characteristics to things not human.

In fact, all those who have worked long and closely with chimpanzees have no hesitation in asserting that chimps experience emotions similar to those which in ourselves we label pleasure, joy, sorrow, anger, boredom, and so on. Some of the emotional states of the chimpanzee are so obviously similar to ours that even an inexperienced observer can understand what is going on. An infant who hurls himself screaming to the ground, face contorted, hitting out with his arms at any nearby object, banging his head, is clearly having a tantrum. Another youngster, who gambols[4] around his mother, turning somersaults, pirouetting[5] and, every so often, rushing up to her and tumbling into her lap, patting her or pulling her hand towards him in a request for tickling, is obviously filled with *joie de vivre*.[6] There are few observers who would not unhesitatingly ascribe his behavior to a happy, carefree state of well-being. And one cannot watch chimpanzee infants for long without realizing that they have the same emotional need for affection and reassurance as human children. An adult male, reclining in the shade after a good meal, reaching benignly to play with an infant or idly groom an adult female, is clearly in a good mood. When he sits with bristling hair, glaring at his subordinates and threatening them, with irritated gestures, if they come too close, he is clearly feeling cross and grumpy. We make these judgments because the similarity of so much of a chimpanzee's behavior to our own permits us to empathize.[7]

Very specific examples, spun out in varied, colorful, and rhythmic sentences, provide strong support for Goodall's main idea.

4 **gambols**: Leaps about playfully.
5 **pirouetting**: Turning on the point of the toe or on the ball of the foot as in ballet.
6 ***joie de vivre***: Hearty or carefree enjoyment of life.
7 **empathize**: To identify with and understand another's situation, feelings, and motives.

Respond in Writing What insights about chimps do you learn from Goodall's text? What emotional states in the chimps does she identify? How similar to human emotions do they seem?

Poll Your Classmates Work with your classmates to develop a list of basic human emotions.

Small Groups: In your small group, discuss human emotions and try to come up with a list of the basic, fundamental emotions. You may wish to think about basic emotions in pairs of opposites. For example, in the circle to the right, joy and sadness are opposite emotions. How might you complete the circle with pairs of opposites?

Whole Class: Make a master list of all of the groups' emotions and refer to it as you work on your expository text.

Write About It You will next write an analytical essay explaining fundamental human emotions and how they are identified and experienced. Some of the following possibilities require research. Those are marked with an asterisk. Others you can write about based on your own experiences.

Possible Topics	Possible Audiences	Possible Forms
• differing theories of emotions* • a case study of one person, possibly yourself • similarities and differences between human and animal emotions* • managing emotions from a personal point of view • managing emotions from the view of experts*	• a younger family member or friend who is experiencing a difficult time • teenagers • adults • animal rights groups	• brochure in counselor's office • article in *Psychology Today* magazine • Web site for an animal rights group • a children's book

Expository Writing Prewriting

In writing an essay for the purpose of explaining or informing, you will be able to use several types of writing that you have already learned about, including narrative writing and descriptive writing (pages 94–97 and 124–173).

1 Getting the Subject Right

Planning an expository essay is a very important step, which may also be an enlightening and enjoyable step. As you explore a subject, you undoubtedly will learn some new, fascinating facts and details. First, though, you must choose a subject.

Discovering and Choosing a Subject

The first step in discovering subjects for expository essays is to take an inventory of subjects you already know from your own experience and study. The following strategies may also serve as springboards for discovering subjects.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Discovering Subjects for an Expository Essay

- Use the clustering technique, starting with the phrase *things I could explain.* (page 19)
- Freewrite to discover what is on your mind.
- Ask yourself questions about your interests and skills and write them down.
- Review your journal for subjects suitable for explaining or informing. (pages 13–14)
- Browse through the library and skim books, newspapers, or magazines for subjects that interest you.
- Consider your favorite subjects in school and read your notes to find possible subjects.
- View educational television programs—such as documentaries—for issues or events you would like to explore in writing.
- Interview people who know about a subject you are interested in and get ideas from your interview.
- Talk with friends and family about subjects of interest to them and you.

Limiting and Focusing a Subject

After you think about possible subjects, the next step is to choose the one that interests you the most and limit it until it is manageable. To make your choice, use the following guidelines.

HERE'S HOW

Guidelines for Choosing a Subject

- Choose a subject that you will enjoy writing about.
- Choose a subject that will interest your readers.
- Choose a subject that you know about or can readily find information about.
- Choose a subject that you can develop in a short essay.
- Choose a subject about which you have achieved some insight.

A broad subject is like a lump of clay that needs to be shaped. To shape, or narrow, a subject for an expository essay so that it is manageable, answer the following questions.

HERE'S HOW

Questions for Limiting a Subject

- What about my subject do I want to explain?
- What possible approaches can I choose to explain my subject?
- What insight or understanding can I draw from my subject?

Using the questions above, you might limit the subject of the Big Dipper as follows.

What about my subject . . . ? I want to explain the importance of the Big Dipper to travelers and stargazers.

What possible approaches . . . ? I could tell how people viewed the Big Dipper throughout history or how people use it today, or I could compare it with other constellations.

What insight or understanding . . . ? Constellations like the Big Dipper help people feel less overwhelmed by space.

The example below shows how the broad subject has been limited to a manageable one.

Broad Subject	the Big Dipper
Limited Subject	the importance of the Big Dipper to travelers and stargazers

Determining Your Audience

Think about who will be reading your essay and ask yourself the following questions.

- What do my readers already know about my subject?
- What questions might they ask about the subject?
- What are my readers' attitudes toward my subject? If their attitudes differ from mine, how can I address those differences?

For example, who will read your essay about the Big Dipper? Will your audience be a class of fifth graders or the members of the astronomy club? If fifth graders are your audience, your explanations should be simple, basic, and straightforward. If your audience is made up of members of the astronomy club, you can assume that they already know quite a bit about the Big Dipper. Therefore, you would need to look for a new or different focus for your essay.

PROJECT PREP *Prewriting* ***Subject and Audience***

1. With your writing group members, discuss how your initial writing can be broadened to cover the topic you have chosen. For example, how does your analysis of anger relate to the topic you have selected? How can you use what you've written as a start for your expository text?
2. Next discuss what audience you chose and what form your text may take (see page 230). Limit your subject, analyze your audience, and consider what kind of information you may need to write effectively on your topic. Summarize these items in writing.

2 Exploring and Refining the Subject

Gathering Information

Use brainstorming, freewriting, charting, clustering, talking with others, or conducting research (see pages 13–14 and 18–20) to explore your subject. Collect as many of the following types of supporting details as possible.

TYPES OF SUPPORTING DETAILS FOR EXPOSITORY WRITING

facts	incidents	steps in a process
examples	comparisons	analogies
reasons	contrasts	causes and effects

As you collect your information, jot down any details you think of or come upon—without concerning yourself about the order of your ideas. The following prewriting notes list facts and examples for an essay about the Big Dipper.

EXAMPLE: Gathering Information

Limited Subject

The importance of the Big Dipper to travelers and stargazers

Facts and Examples as Details

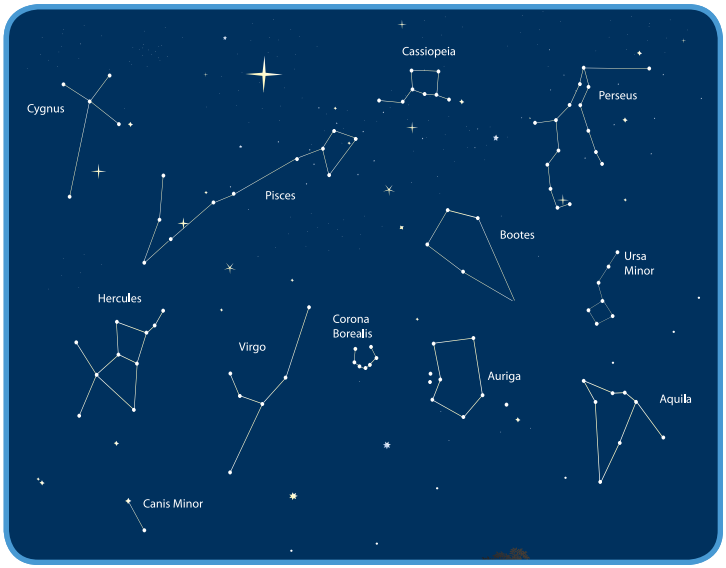
- Stars pointing to the North Star and the last star on the handle are moving away from each other; the Big Dipper will lose its shape in 50,000 years
- In ancient times shepherds along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and Iroquois Indians along Lake Ontario saw the dipper as a bear.
- The seven stars in Ursa Major are seen as a dipper or a plow.
- Two stars opposite the handle at the front of the dipper point to the North Star.
- The constellation helps stargazers get oriented in the night skies.
- The handle points to Arcturus—a bright star in the constellation Boötes.
- From Arcturus you can find the bright star Spica in the constellation Virgo.
- Virgo contains the double star (Mizar and Alcor), which ancient Arabs saw as a horse and rider and American Indians saw as a woman carrying a baby.
- The stars at the top of the dipper, near the handle, point to Vega in the constellation Lyra (the harp).

- In the 1800s, slaves escaping from the South to freedom followed the North Star.
- Navigators in northern seas use the Big Dipper to find the North Star.
- The Big Dipper is bright enough to be seen from cities, where lights brighten the sky too much to see many stars.
- On winter evenings the Big Dipper's handle points down, but its position is reversed on summer evenings.

Developing a Working Thesis

As you gather information, you will begin to see connections between the facts and examples. At this point you should focus your thoughts more precisely by drafting a **working thesis**—a preliminary statement that announces your subject and expresses a main idea. For example, notice that several facts indicate that the Big Dipper has been an important marker in the sky for a long time. With this idea in mind, you could write the following working thesis.

Limited Subject	the importance of the Big Dipper to travelers and stargazers
Working Thesis	For centuries the Big Dipper has served as an important beacon to travelers and stargazers.



The working thesis will guide you in selecting the most relevant evidence when gathering information if your topic requires research. As you begin to organize your essay, you will need to make distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement. For example, the writer of the essay on the Big Dipper would select from the list only those facts, examples, and incidents that explain the historical importance of the Big Dipper.

You may find the following steps helpful in developing a working thesis.

HERE'S HOW

Steps for Developing a Working Thesis

- Look over the information you have gathered.
- Express the main idea you plan to convey.
- Choose the details you will use to support your main idea.
- Check that the working thesis takes into account all of the information you selected to include in your essay.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Working Thesis*

Using the guidelines presented on the previous pages, gather information for your subject. Jot down notes in the order you think of them or find them in your research. When you have finished, look them over and determine your working thesis. In your writing group, discuss each author's working thesis, making suggestions for improvement as appropriate.

Think Critically

Constructing Analogies

When writing an expository text, you may need to explain something unfamiliar to your audience. A comparison, or an **analogy,** between an unfamiliar process or situation and facts or concepts more familiar to your readers may help them understand. Suppose you want to explain the process of running for office. Suppose, too, that you have experience as a runner in track-and-field events. You might focus on the similarities and build an analogy between running in track and running for office. Remember, an analogy is never exact. Running for office is not running in track but is similar enough to be helpful to your readers.

When you are comparing familiar and unfamiliar ideas, a chart like the one below will help you develop the analogy.

ANALOGY CHART: RUNNING FOR OFFICE

Familiar Subject: running in track

Runner's Needs	Candidate's Needs
proper training and equipment	background and job skills, a campaign staff, and funds
physical and mental stamina for the race	competitive spirit, stamina
sense of timing and pacing in the race	well-planned schedule of speeches and media events

Completed Analogy

Just as a runner needs proper training and equipment, a candidate needs experience and training as well as a campaign staff and funds. A runner needs both physical and mental stamina; a candidate needs a competitive spirit and the ability to go the distance. Just as a runner must pace himself and have a good sense of timing, a candidate needs to have a well-planned schedule of speeches and media events.

Thinking Practice

Choose a subject from the left column below. Then use the knowledge or skill from the right column to make an analogy chart like the one above.

Essay Subjects	Familiar Knowledge/Skills
1. writing a poem	**1.** repairing cars
2. building a friendship	**2.** cooking or baking

3 Organizing Your Essay

Once you have gathered your information and have a working thesis statement, you will use the thinking skills of classifying and ordering to organize the information into meaningful categories by examining connections and distinctions among ideas.

You can learn more about organizing information on pages 90–93.

Grouping Supporting Details into Categories

To group your list of supporting details into categories, ask yourself what one item has in common with another. The groupings that follow show three categories that can be made from the list of supporting details about the Big Dipper.

MODEL: Classifying Details

Category 1: **Interpretations of the Big Dipper's star pattern**

- Ancient shepherds along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and Iroquois Indians along Lake Ontario saw the shape of a bear.
- When just the seven stars are included in the constellation, people see a dipper or a plow.

Category 2: **Use of the Big Dipper in locating the North Star**

- Navigators in northern seas use the Big Dipper to find the North Star.
- In the 1800s, slaves escaping from the South to the North were told to follow the drinking gourd in the sky.
- Two stars at the front of the dipper point to the North Star.

Category 3: **Use of the Big Dipper in locating other stars**

- It helps stargazers get oriented in the night sky.
- You can follow the handle to Arcturus, a bright star in the constellation Boötes.
- If you continue following the handle from Arcturus, you can find the bright star Spica in the constellation Virgo.
- The stars at the top of the dipper, closest to the handle, point to Vega in the constellation Lyra (the harp).

Some of the details from the original list were not placed in any category. Keep such leftover details because you might be able to use them in the introduction or conclusion of the essay.

A classification cluster is one way you can organize information. Often this type of cluster will help you see whether you need more information for one or more of your categories.

Here is a classification cluster for an essay about grizzly bears. Notice the types of categories and information the writer has included.

Arranging Categories in Logical Order

After creating categories, you need to decide on the order in which to present them. The chart that follows lists five commonly used types of logical order.

TYPES OF LOGICAL ORDER	
Chronological Order	Items are arranged according to when they happened in time.
Order of Importance	Items are arranged in order of importance, interest, or degree.
Spatial Order	Items are arranged according to location.
Developmental Order	Items of equal importance are arranged in an order made clear to the reader.
Comparison and Contrast	Items are arranged according to similarities (comparisons) and differences (contrasts).

Making an Outline

As a final step before writing a first draft, consider making an outline. An **outline** is a helpful plan for drafting the body of your essay. The form of an outline allows you to use a numbering and lettering system to show the order of your ideas. Each large category of information becomes the main topic of a supporting paragraph in the body of the essay

and is assigned a Roman numeral. For example, the beginnings of an outline for an essay on the Big Dipper might look like this.

First Main Topic	**I.** People's interpretations of star pattern in the Big Dipper
Second Main Topic	**II.** Use of Big Dipper to locate North Star
Third Main Topic	**III.** Use of Big Dipper to locate other stars

The supporting details for each category become the subtopics and supporting points of the outline. As you add subtopics and supporting points under each main topic, order them logically within each category of thought.

You can review types of logical order on pages 90–93.

The following outline for the body of an essay on the Big Dipper shows logical developmental order.

MODEL: Outline of the Body of an Essay

I. People's interpretations of star pattern in Big Dipper — Main Topic
- **A.** Largest shape—Great Bear — Subtopic
  - **1.** Shepherds in the Tigris-Euphrates area — Supporting Points
  - **2.** Iroquois Indians near Lake Ontario
- **B.** Seven stars only
  - **1.** Dipper
  - **2.** Plow
- **C.** Double star within dipper
  - **1.** Horse and rider to ancient Arabs
  - **2.** Mother and baby to to American Indians

II. Use of Big Dipper in locating North Star — Main Topic
- **A.** Pointers at front of dipper
- **B.** Use by navigators — Subtopics
- **C.** Use by land travelers—importance to slaves

III. Use of Big Dipper in locating other stars
- **A.** Arcturus
- **B.** Spica
- **C.** Vega

Notice that when you write a formal outline for the body of an essay, you use Roman numerals for each idea that supports your thesis. Each idea becomes the **main idea** of a supporting paragraph. You then use capital letters for each category of information that comes under a topic. Then, under each subtopic, you use Arabic numerals to list the supporting details or points. When you draft the body of your essay, the information below each Roman numeral in the outline will correspond with a separate paragraph. After finishing an outline, check its form. The following questions will help you see if you have consistency and balance in each part.

HERE'S HOW

Checking an Outline

- Did you use Roman numerals for main topics?
- Did you use capital letters for subtopics?
- Did you use Arabic numerals for supporting points?
- If you included subtopics under topics, did you have at least two of them for each topic?
- If you included supporting points under subtopics, did you have at least two of them for each subtopic?
- Did you indent the outline as shown in the model?

Using a Graphic Organizer

You might prefer to use a less formal graphic organizer, such as those on pages 261–271.

PROJECT PREP Prewriting *Organization*

Using the guidelines presented on the previous pages, organize the information you have collected on your project topic. Use an organizing structure that is appropriate to your purpose, audience, and context or occasion. Create an outline or use another graphic organizer so you have a good visual image of the form of your composition, and identify and save any ideas that don't fit into one of the main categories you create. Take your work to your writing group and discuss each author's plan for organizing the expository text.

Writing Tip

Organize your notes in an outline that shows how you will cover the **main topics, subtopics, and supporting details** of your subject; or develop a **graphic organizer** of a different sort to help you organize your ideas.

In the Media

Television News

There's no escaping it: television has changed the way people get their information *and* form their opinions. Politicians and their messages are often reduced to sound bites or brief quotes on the evening news. Images sometimes seem to have a bigger impact than the people creating them.

However, some sources in the media have the potential to probe deeper. Notice in the chart below how the formats of newsmagazines and documentaries allow for substantial, in-depth looks at political issues.

NIGHTLY NEWS	NEWS MAGAZINES	DOCUMENTARIES
very brief (two to three minutes)	usually twenty-minute segments	usually fifty minutes or longer
intro by anchor	intro by anchor	often beginning with a dramatic visual before introduction
brief videotape shots	lengthy videos	video with much attention to camera style and technique
brief interview or quote from person involved	lengthy interviews/ multiple quotes and sources	multiple quotes and sources, real-life conversations
editing to achieve maximum effect and stay within time limit; balanced presentation	editing with much concern for effect and balance	editing to enhance overall effect—music and voice-over narration often added to heighten emotions
closing from anchor or reporter	closing from anchor or reporter	often concludes with strong emotional effect
often put together on same day news happens	requires preparation time (weeks at least)	requires longest preparation time (even years)

Media Activity

To understand the characteristics of each of these types of visual media, view each one critically and describe how each might present a politician, actor, or musician. Write at least a paragraph for each medium sketching out what the presentation might include.

The Power of Language

Adjectival Phrases: Modifiers Come Lately

Warm up for drafting your expository text by playing with adjectival phrases, which add life and detail to sentences. Often adjectives or elements functioning as adjectives come before the word they modify. They can also come after, or "lately," to produce a change in rhythm and a change in the way a reader forms a picture of what you are describing. Consider the following examples from Jane Goodall's text on pages 227–229. The adjectival phrases are after the noun they modify, the word *infant*.

> An infant who hurls himself screaming to the ground, face contorted, hitting out with his arms at any nearby object, banging his head, is clearly having a tantrum.

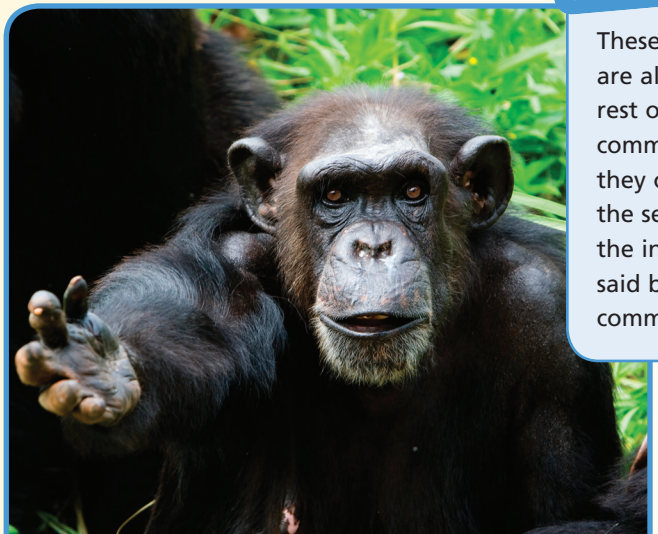
Here are two more examples.

> Another youngster, who gambols around his mother, turning somersaults, pirouetting and, every so often, rushing up to her and tumbling into her lap, patting her or pulling her hand towards him in a request for tickling, is obviously filled with *joie de vivre*.

> When I began my study at Gombe in 1960 it was not permissible—at least not in ethological circles—to talk about an animal's mind.

Try It Yourself

Try writing three sentences on your project topic with an adjectival phrase "come lately" in each one. Use the resulting sentences in your draft if you can, and try creating other similar sentences. You can always add more details with "adjectival phrases come lately" when you revise.



Punctuation Tip

These "extra detail" phrases are always set off from the rest of the sentence by a comma—or by two commas if they occur somewhere within the sentence. In that case, the interrupting modifier is said be enclosed by the two commas. (See pages 859–864.)

When you draft, you convert the items in your outline or graphic organizer into sentences and paragraphs. Remember, your first draft should include all the parts of an essay: an introduction with a thesis statement, a body of supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion.

1 Drafting the Thesis Statement

In drafting your thesis statement, you may have to refine your working thesis to take into account any new ideas you wish to include in your essay. Use the following guidelines to help you.

HERE'S HOW

Drafting a Thesis Statement

- Review your prewriting notes and your working thesis.
- Revise your thesis until it covers all your supporting ideas.
- Avoid such expressions as "In this paper I will . . ." or "This paper will be about . . ."

Review the information about the Big Dipper on pages 234–236 and 238–240 and the working thesis on pages 235–236, which does not cover the various shapes people see in the Big Dipper's star pattern. If you want to include these details, you could expand the thesis statement as follows.

Refined Thesis Statement

The stars in and near the Big Dipper are a distinguishing feature of the northern skies and a beacon for travelers and stargazers.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Thesis Statement*

Using the guidelines presented on this page, draft a thesis statement. If you have extra information you want to include that did not fit into any of your categories, be sure to take that into account as you write your thesis statement. Take your work to your writing group and discuss each author's thesis statement.

2 Drafting the Introduction

In an expository text the introduction captures the reader's attention, sets the tone, and states the thesis. Usually a formal style and objective tone are appropriate for an expository text. The following suggestions will help you draft your introduction.

HERE'S HOW

Ways to Begin an Essay

- Give some background information or relate an incident that shows how you became interested in your subject.
- Cite an example or incident that catches the reader's attention.
- Don't be afraid to take a risk and try something creative.
- Give one or two of the original details that did not fit into your outline.
- Always include your thesis statement, preferably as the last sentence of the introduction.

In the following introduction to the essay on the Big Dipper, the writer sets the tone, captures attention, and includes a slightly altered version of the thesis statement.

MODEL: Introduction of an Expository Essay

On a clear night in the country, the sky blazes with countless points of light. An earthbound observer like me feels small and lost until I find the Big Dipper, the familiar, easy-to-spot shape that was for most of us our first-known constellation. Even in a city sky illuminated by the bright lights below, the seven stars that form the Big Dipper are easy to see. Their pattern is a distinguishing mark of the northern skies and a centuries-old beacon for travelers and stargazers.

Thesis Statement

PROJECT PREP Drafting Introduction

Think through the possible ways of introducing your subject and experiment to see which one feels most effective to you. Draft your introduction and share it with your writing group. Discuss each author's introduction and evaluate how well it 1) raises interest, 2) lets the reader know what is to come, 3) sets an appropriate tone, and 4) is well suited to the purpose, audience, and form. Using feedback from your group members, revise your introduction.

3 Drafting the Body

When you draft the body of your essay, follow the order of your outline or organizer and include all the points you have listed. Each main topic (Roman numeral) in your outline becomes one paragraph in the body of your essay. If covering all the points under a main topic makes an extremely long paragraph, use two or more paragraphs to cover the points.

HERE'S HOW

Guidelines for Developing Ideas

- Include enough supporting points or ideas to explain your thesis statement fully.
- Make distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement.
- Leave no question that readers might ask unanswered.
- Include enough evidence to explain each topic and subtopic fully.
- Use specific details and precise language to explain each piece of evidence fully and address subtleties of meaning.

Logical Development

The ideas you developed to support your thesis statement are claims. **Claims** are statements asserted to be true.

In the opening reading, Jane Goodall makes this claim:

> Some emotional states of the chimpanzee are very similar to those of humans.

She develops this claim with examples.

CLAIM	SUPPORTING EXAMPLES
Some emotional states of the chimpanzee are very similar to those of humans.	• infants behave in ways that look like tantrums • playful infants seem to show a joy in living • a male reclining after a meal and playing with a baby or grooming a female seems to be in a good mood • a male with bristling hairs and irritated gestures seems grumpy

Examples alone, however, do not support your assertion that your claims are true. Each claim must be backed up by a warrant. A **warrant** is a statement that explains how an example serves as evidence for a claim.

Warrants often uses the word "because," as in the following example:

Claim	Humans and chimpanzees have similar states of emotion.
Examples	tantrum, playfulness, relaxing, glaring
Warrant	Because chimpanzees exhibit behavior that humans recognize and exhibit themselves in certain emotional states, humans and chimpanzees have similar states of emotion.

Valid Inferences In addition to providing warrants for your claims, you also need to make sure that your conclusions or inferences are valid. An inference is **valid** if it follows logically from the claims. For example, suppose you make these claims.

Claim	Certain behavior is universally associated with certain emotional states.
Claim	Chimpanzees exhibit behavior associated with emotional states.
Valid Inference	Chimpanzees experience the emotional states other creatures experience.

That inference is *valid* because the second claim just gives a specific example of a general truth stated in the first claim. The first claim may not be right, but the logical extension of it is valid nonetheless.

The following inference would not be valid.

Claim	Chimpanzees feel happiness and sadness.
Claim	My little brother feels happiness and sadness.
Invalid Inference	My little brother is a chimpanzee.

This inference is invalid because it does not follow logically from the claims. The original claim is that chimps feel happiness and sadness, not that any creature who experiences happiness and sadness is a chimp.

Coherence

As you draft your essay you will want to provide smooth transitions from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. Seamless transitions will keep your reader from becoming confused. Coherence in your essay will ensure that your reader continues to read. Use the following strategies to connect your thoughts and to achieve coherence.

You can learn more about coherence on pages 90–93 and 115.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Achieving Coherence

- Use transitional words and phrases.
- Repeat a key word from an earlier sentence.
- Use synonyms for key words from an earlier sentence.
- Repeat an idea from an earlier sentence, using new words.
- Use a pronoun in place of a word used earlier.

You can find a list of transitions on pages 5, 90–92, and 291.

Compare the outline on page 240 with the body of the essay on the Big Dipper, which follows. As you read, you will see how the words and phrases in **boldface** type make the ideas flow smoothly. Notice how the repetition of key words—such as *shape, pattern, stars,* and *constellation*—is also used as a connecting device. Also notice how transitional words, such as *therefore* and *also*, help the writer achieve coherence.

MODEL: Body of an Expository Essay

People have made different interpretations of **this pattern** of lights near the North Star. Many observers, including the ancient shepherds along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and the Iroquois near Lake Ontario, saw the seven stars as part of a larger **shape,** a great bear. In **this shape,** called Ursa Major, the handle of the dipper forms the tail of the bear. The **smaller** form made by the seven stars **alone** has been seen both as a dipper, or drinking gourd, and as a plow. **Inside the dipper** is a double star, including the bright star Mizar and the tiny star Alcor. Ancient Arabs saw **this pair** as horse and rider. Early American Indians saw **it** as a woman with her baby. **All** the various interpretations, **from** the strong Great Bear **to** the nurturing woman, are positive images.

From I in Outline

Aside from stirring people's imagination, the Big Dipper **also** serves a practical guide for travelers. Navigators in northern waters have long used **it** to locate the North Star. The **stars** that form the front of the dipper point directly to the North Star. Travelers on land can **also** find north by tracing a line from the Dipper to the North Star. Historians note that slaves escaping from the South on the Underground Railroad were told to "follow the drinking gourd."

From II in Outline

The Big Dipper can **also** be used as a guidepost for finding **other stars** and **constellations.** If you trace a line extending from the handle of the dipper, you can easily find the bright star Arcturus in the constellation Boötes (the shepherd). Extend **that** line **even farther** in the **same** direction and you can see Spica, the bright star in the constellation Virgo (the maiden). A stargazer, **therefore,** can rely on the Big Dipper **throughout** the year for help in finding **other patterns** in the sky.

From III in Outline

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Body Paragraphs*

Using the guidelines on the preceding pages, draft the body of your expository composition. Choose your supporting details carefully. Provide smooth transitions from your introduction to the body of your text and between each body paragraph. Monitor how well you are addressing your purpose and audience and if the tone is appropriate.

You may want to create a chart like the one below to help you keep track of your claims and warrants.

	Topic sentence	Examples/ Information	Warrant
1st body paragraph			
2nd body paragraph			
etc.			

In your writing group, read each author's account. Pay attention to how the author has developed the ideas. Are the details well chosen and relevant? For the text about emotions, do you get a full understanding? Has the author considered all relevant positions on the subject? Has the author addressed views that may contradict the thesis statement? Has the author provided paragraph breaks appropriately so that each new topic has its own distinct presentation?

4 Drafting the Conclusion

The conclusion to an expository essay should be strong and leave a lasting impression with your audience. It should also end with a **clincher sentence** that echoes in the reader's mind. The conclusion provides an excellent opportunity to express whatever insights you have gained from writing about your subject.

HERE'S HOW

Strategies for Writing a Conclusion

- Summarize the body of the essay.
- Draw a conclusion based on the body of the essay.
- Add an insight about the thesis or a lesson learned.
- Refer to details from your prewriting notes that were not used in the body or introduction but that support your thesis.
- Refer to ideas in the introduction to bring the essay full circle.
- Explain the implications or significance of your topic.

In the Big Dipper essay, the concluding paragraph's main idea is a detail not used elsewhere.

MODEL: Conclusion

Although they appear stationary, the stars above are really speeding through space at the rate of one million miles a day. Five stars in the Big Dipper are moving in the same direction, so they will keep their positions relative to one another. Two of the stars, however—the star nearest the North Star and the last star in the handle—are speeding away from each other in opposite directions. Stargazers 50,000 years from now will no longer be able to see a dipper shape. No doubt they will find meaningful shapes in the new pattern of stars. They must find a new and equally important compass and guide at night as they try to understand the distant heavens and their own small place within them.

The clincher sentence brings the essay full circle by referring to an idea in the introduction. It also fixes in the reader's mind the main idea that the Big Dipper is a familiar sight and practical guide.

On the following page, you can read a conclusion to a problem-solution text written by a high school student from Canton, Ohio. Notice the strong feeling of ending and the memorable final words.

STUDENT MODEL: *Conclusion of a Problem-Solution Essay*

The separation of church and state is a relevant, controversial issue in America. When Thomas Jefferson stated the need for a separation of church and state, he meant our founding fathers believed in religious freedom for all, and as Americans we cannot force our views on other people; he would be shocked to see the extremes to which people have taken his words to serve their own purposes. Thankfully, there is a remedy for the dilemma. It comes down to respect and basic human decency. Once Americans are willing to respect each other's beliefs and freedoms, the United States will become the place it was meant to be: a truly free nation.

Marti Doerschuk, "Separation of Church and State: Protecting Human Rights or Suppressing Religious Freedom?" Canton South High School, Ohio

Drafting a Title Next think of a title for your essay. Read over each paragraph, looking for words and phrases you could use as a title. A good title should make your readers curious enough to want to read your essay.

PROJECT PREP Drafting *Conclusion*

In your writing group, discuss how each author might most effectively conclude the essay. The closing paragraph provides an opportunity to emphasize a final point and leave readers with a clear impression. What final point do you wish to make? Experiment with different possibilities before deciding on one to use as your conclusion.

Many writers put away their first or second draft for a few hours or overnight before they revise it. In this way they have a fresh outlook and can more easily see what needs to be improved. In this stage you may decide that some ideas are out of order and must be moved, or that your essay requires cuts in some places. You may also have new insights to add. This is your opportunity to make these changes and to adjust the overall structure of your essay. As you revise your essay, think of your readers and find ways to make your messages as clear as possible.

Checking for Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis

If your essay has **unity,** all the supporting paragraphs relate to the main idea and the thesis. As a result, your readers will not be distracted by paragraphs or sentences that stray from your main idea. If your essay has **coherence,** the ideas in the paragraphs flow logically and naturally from one to the next. When your essay has coherence, your readers can easily follow the sequence of your well-connected ideas. If your essay has **emphasis,** your readers will understand which points are the most important. The following questions will help you check your essay for unity, coherence, and emphasis.

Checking for Unity, Coherence, and Emphasis

Checking for Unity

- ✓ Does every idea and detail relate to the subject?
- ✓ Does the topic sentence of each paragraph relate directly to the thesis statement?
- ✓ Does every sentence in each paragraph support its topic sentence?

Checking for Coherence

- ✓ Did you write the paragraphs in the body of your essay in a logical order?
- ✓ Did you use transitions to connect the introduction, body, and conclusion and clarify the relationships among ideas?
- ✓ Did you write the sentences within each of the paragraphs in a logical order?
- ✓ Did you use transitions between the sentences within each paragraph?

Checking for Emphasis

- ✓ Do your transitional words show the relative importance of your ideas?
- ✓ Did you give an adequate amount of space to important and complex ideas?

Strategies for Revising

You can use the four basic strategies below for revising.

REVISION STRATEGIES	
Adding	Add supporting details such as facts, examples, extended definitions, concrete details, and quotations to explain your ideas more completely.
Deleting	Delete unnecessary words, phrases, and ideas that stray from your thesis statement.
Substituting	Substitute vivid words for ordinary words and specific details for general ones.
Rearranging	If your order is weak, rearrange sections or ideas and revise transitions to make the order clear.

Using these strategies, you can take a pretty good text and turn it into a *really* good text. For example, you can add **rhetorical devices** to your draft—such as parallelism (see page 392) and analogies (see page 237). With substitution, you can create alliteration (page 216) and figurative language (see pages 52–54, 158, and 219–220). You can also substitute a word with one that conveys the exact connotation you mean and achieve subtlety. Deleting is always a good strategy when you have extraneous material.

Using an Evaluation Checklist

Use this revision checklist along with the one on the previous page to help you revise.

Evaluation Checklist for Revising

Checking Your Text as a Whole

- ✓ Does the introduction set the tone and capture attention? (page 245)
- ✓ Does the thesis statement make your main idea clear? (page 244)
- ✓ Is your idea well developed, with substantial, relevant evidence and well-chosen details? (pages 246–247)
- ✓ Did you address views contradictory to your thesis and answer readers' potential concerns? (pages 246–249)
- ✓ Did you use an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context or occasion? (pages 238–241)
- ✓ Did you include distinctions about the relative value of specific data, facts, and ideas that support the thesis statement? (pages 246–249)
- ✓ Did you make important connections among complex ideas very clear? (page 249)
- ✓ Do you have a strong concluding paragraph? (pages 250–251)
- ✓ Did you add a title? (page 251)
- ✓ Did you maintain a formal tone throughout? (pages 105–106)

Checking Your Paragraphs

- ✓ Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? (pages 80–82)
- ✓ Is each paragraph unified and coherent? (pages 247–248 and 252)

Checking Your Sentences and Words

- ✓ Are your sentences varied? (pages 59–66)
- ✓ Are your sentences clear and concise? (pages 68–70)
- ✓ Did you use specific words and sensory words? (pages 48–56 and 156–157)
- ✓ Did you include figurative language, parallelism, and other rhetorical devices? (pages 52–54, 253, and 392)

PROJECT PREP Revising *Second Draft*

1. Based on the feedback from your writing group and from your teacher if available, produce a new draft of your text. Use the guidelines and strategies on the previous pages to turn a good draft into a *very* good draft. Step up your style by using rhetorical devices, and don't settle for the most obvious statements—reach for complex, interesting, and subtle points to make. In addition to all of the issues raised during your writing group discussions, begin to polish the grammar, spelling, and punctuation in this draft.
2. Exchange your new draft with a member of your writing group. Read each other's papers with an eye toward improving the presentation according to any of the standards outlined in this chapter. Provide suggestions to help your writing partner write the clearest analysis and explanation possible.