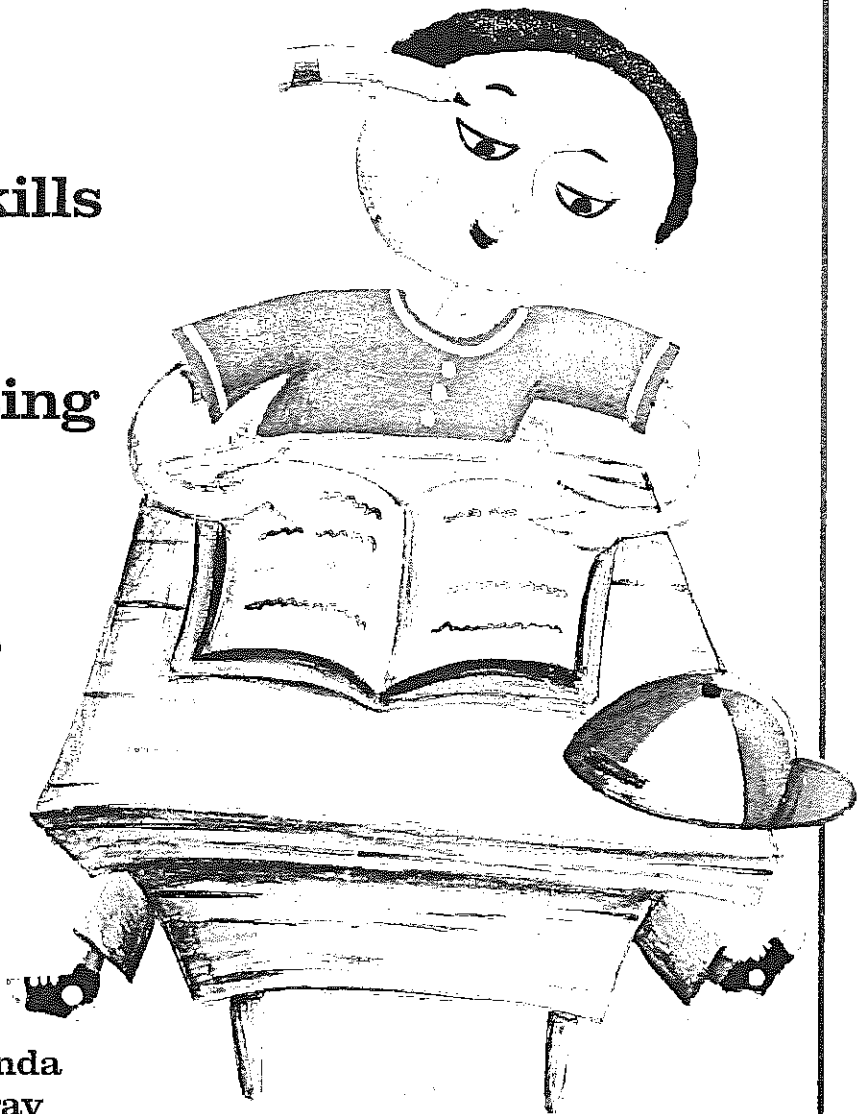


The Comprehensive **Expository Writing** Guide

- Informative Pieces • Expository Essays
- "How to" Pieces • Reports
- Compare/Contrast

**All The Skills
You Need
To Teach
Good Writing**

Notes



by Barbara Mariconda
& Dea Paoletta Auray

Empowering
Writers

Second Edition

Teacher Friendly • Data Driven • Proven Results

SECTION 1: Recognizing Genre/ Organization

Teacher Background

It is critical that students understand *genre* - in other words, before attempting to write, they need to be clear about the purpose of their writing, the audience, and the organizational framework. Therefore, the first activities in this book deal with *genre* and with *organization*.

In broad terms, the genres students will encounter most often in school and beyond are narrative, expository, and persuasive writing. Within each of these broad genres are “subgenres”. The activities in this section are designed to help students recognize the key characteristics of each genre.

Defining Narrative, Expository, Persuasive Writing

Narrative Writing - The first kind of stories children are exposed to are usually narrative stories. These stories develop around a main character in a setting who has a problem, adventure, or meaningful experience. The main character typically grows or changes in some way as the story develops. *Narrative writing is written for the purpose of entertaining an audience of others.* (See the Empowering Writers publication: The Comprehensive Narrative Writing Guide for everything you need to know about narrative writing.)

Expository Writing - This genre is different from narrative writing in purpose, organization, and tone. *Exposition is written for the purpose of informing an audience of others.* Therefore, the organization is very straightforward, typified by an introduction paragraph, a number of paragraphs in the body of the piece, each with a broad, yet distinct main idea and followed by a variety of supporting details. The piece ends with a conclusion paragraph that creatively sums up the main ideas. The tone of an expository piece is usually straightforward and the author works hard to present information in an organized, sequential fashion. This does not mean, however, that the piece cannot have style and a unique voice that holds the readers’ interest. Exposition includes the following subgenres: • the informational essay • the “how-to” piece • the “compare/contrast” piece • “response to literature”. The focus of all types of expository writing is on a TOPIC.

Persuasive Writing - The purpose of the persuasive essay or letter is to persuade or convince the audience to think or believe as the author does. The organizational framework is similar to that used in expository writing; however, in persuasive writing the author must not only present information about their position on a given issue, but must skillfully use that information to support their position. The author

may accentuate some information and downplay other information in order to persuade their audience. The persuasive piece will contain the author's opinions, and is, therefore, not necessarily as objective as an expository piece. (See the Empowering Writers publication: The Comprehensive Persuasive Writing Guide for everything you need to teach persuasive writing.)

In this section, students will be exposed to excerpts of writing in each genre, side by side for comparison, with a focus on identifying the characteristics of expository writing. This will help them in terms of prewriting - knowing the characteristics of genre is essential in approaching a particular writing task, and will also help with reading strategies and comprehension.

Expository Texts for Analysis

Before students can begin writing well organized, fully elaborated expository pieces they need experience in reading and analyzing many examples of this kind of writing. They need to see and understand how the author organizes and illustrates a variety of facts so that the reader can readily access the information provided.

Examining the organizational framework of the expository pieces in this book provides students with valuable prewriting experiences which lay the groundwork for successful expository writing. These expository texts include examples of straight informational pieces, “how-to” pieces, and compare/contrast pieces.

There are a number of different activities in this book that will enable students to analyze the organizational framework of the expository:

- Diagraming and Understanding the Expository Framework - Students read an expository text and identify and label the key parts - introduction, main ideas, supporting details, and conclusion, using the PILLAR FRAMEWORK as a guide.
- Identifying and Eliminating Extraneous Details - Students are provided with expository pieces which contain a number of irrelevant details which they must identify and eliminate.
- Adding Relevant Details - Students analyze additional relevant details and place them strategically within the appropriate paragraph of the piece, supporting/elaborating around the main idea.
- Comparison and Critique - Students read, compare, and critique a variety of expository pieces – some of which are disorganized, others well organized but minimally elaborated, others that are well organized and fully elaborated.

Organization

Expository writing, by its very nature, requires careful organization. In order to deliver information in a way in which the reader can easily grasp, information must be arranged and presented in a logical, sequential manner, with like details grouped together. Often times, students, when writing about a topic, simply list details in random order, as they come to mind. This abstract random collection of facts does not lend itself to solid elaboration on the part of the author, or clear comprehension on the part of the reader.

So how can we best organize exposition? As stated earlier, the basic organizational plan for an expository report, essay, or article, is as follows:

- **Introduction Paragraph** - The first paragraph in which the author grabs the reader's attention (lead) and tells the reader what the entire piece will be about (topic sentence).
- **Body of the Piece** - A number of paragraphs, each with a broad yet distinct main idea sentence, which explains what the paragraph is about, followed by a variety of supporting details. (Often times teachers require three paragraphs in the body of the piece, however, two well-developed paragraphs, or 4, 5, or 6, paragraphs work equally as well - the key is for the author to write as many paragraphs as needed to fully explore the topic. Requiring three paragraphs can result in a formulaic, one size fits all approach that limits the author.)
- **Conclusion Paragraph** - The final paragraph which creatively reiterates the main ideas and restates the thesis or topic sentence in a general way. This may be accomplished in a straightforward, although not literal repetition, or it may be implied.

THE EXPOSITORY PILLAR

INTRODUCTION Lead/Topic Sentence	
Main Idea#1 _____	
Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail
Main Idea#2 _____	
Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail
Main Idea#3 _____	
Detail	Detail
Detail	Detail
CONCLUSION	

Birds

lead

TOPIC

intro

1. Look out the window. Are there any birds out there? Birds come in all colors. They sing in many ways. They also build nests. Let's learn about birds!

topic sentence

2. How can you tell one kind of bird from another? By their feathers! Feathers come in many colors. In my yard you can see red birds called cardinals. Robins have red and brown feathers. Do you know a crow by its black feathers? Green, blue, yellow - if you look around you can see birds in all colors!

color

3. Go outside and listen. You will hear birds singing. Some birds chirp. Other birds sound like this: cheep! cheep! cheep! Owls say HOOOT! HOOOT! Have you ever heard a bird coo? Do you know what kind of bird quacks?

birdsong

4. Birds live in nests. Most make their nests in trees. Birds get string and grass. They use twigs and bits of paper. They put them together on a branch to make a nest. That's where they lay their eggs!

nests

5. If you see a bird, look at its ²color and hear its ³song. Look in a nearby tree to see a nest! Birds are fun to see!

conclusion

SECTION 2: Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas

Introduction to Generating Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas

In order to plan and organize an expository piece, students need to be able to generate broad main ideas pertaining to their given topic which will later be supported with specific details. Each main idea needs to be broad enough to “umbrella” a number of details. The difficulty then becomes generating main ideas that are broad enough to cover a range of details, *yet distinct from the other main ideas within the piece*.

The challenge here is focused around the fact that very often, students beginning to work with exposition will generate main ideas that are extremely general, or too closely related to one another. For example, when writing an essay giving information about “friendship”, they have a tendency to generate main ideas such as this collection:

TOPIC: Friendship

MAIN IDEA #1: Fun

MAIN IDEA #2: Nice

MAIN IDEA #3: Interesting

Imagine the author wanted to include the following detail:

Friends often share time together going to a movie, museum, or the playground.

Would this detail support the main idea that friendship is fun, nice, or interesting? The fact is, this detail could support *any* of the main ideas *because the main ideas are so general*. As the student continues to work through this piece of writing, adding details to “support” each main idea, the piece will begin to ramble in a redundant fashion due to a lack of focus and no delineation of main ideas. In fact, so often when teachers notice that student writing seems overly general, listy, and redundant, they attribute this to poor elaboration. Actually, the problem is often that because the main ideas are weak, general, and overlapping, elaborating effectively is nearly impossible. Generating broad yet distinct main ideas is actually the first step toward effective elaboration.

Look at the additional examples on the next page taken from pieces of writing about the topic: ZOOS. Imagine that writing an information piece about zoos is the culminating activity following a class field trip to the zoo.

Introduction to Generating Broad Yet Distinct Main Ideas (cont.)

Student Number 1 writes the following main idea sentences:

- 1.) Zoos work hard to create realistic habitats.
- 2.) You can see many exotic creatures at the zoo.
- 3.) You can visit the gift shop at the zoo.

* These **main idea sentences** are **distinct**, and therefore effective.

Student Number 2 writes the following main idea sentences:

- 1.) Zoo animals are cool.
- 2.) There are lots of animals there.
- 3.) The zoo is interesting.

* These **main idea sentences** are **not distinct** enough and “**overlap**”, and therefore are ineffective.

Look at the following **detail sentence**:

The hippopotamus is one creature you will meet at the zoo.

Imagine that each student wants to include that detail in their piece.

This is clear for student #1 - this detail obviously belongs in paragraph/main idea #2. Where would you place this detail based on student #2's main idea sentences? Because the main ideas are not significantly different from one another, it is unclear as to where that detail might best belong.

Another way to gauge the effectiveness of a group of main idea sentences is to restate the main idea in a single word or two (a blurb). For example:

Main Idea Sentences

- 1.) Zoos work hard to create realistic habitats.
- 2.) You can see many exotic creatures at the zoo.
- 3.) You can visit the gift shop at the zoo.

“Blurbs”

habitats
exotic creatures
gift shop

Pick, List, and Choose - A Process for Thinking, Prewriting, and Planning

Sample sets of MAIN IDEAS - prewriting plans, based on PICK, LIST, CHOOSE.

Notice how combinations of Main Ideas were chosen so as not to OVERLAP.

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Changes in Nature

MAIN IDEA #2: Autumn Holidays

MAIN IDEA #3: Autumn Sports

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Changes in Nature

MAIN IDEA #2: Autumn Foods

MAIN IDEA #3: Autumn Sports

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Changes in Nature

MAIN IDEA #2: Halloween

MAIN IDEA #3: Thanksgiving

MAIN IDEA #4: Election Day

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Back to School

MAIN IDEA #2: Changes in Nature

MAIN IDEA #3: Autumn Holidays

MAIN IDEA #4: Autumn Activities

Why would the following combinations **NOT** work?

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Halloween

MAIN IDEA #2: Autumn Holidays

MAIN IDEA #3: Autumn Activities

MAIN IDEA #4: Autumn Sports

TOPIC: AUTUMN

MAIN IDEA #1: Halloween

MAIN IDEA #2: Thanksgiving

MAIN IDEA #3: Autumn Foods

PLANNING AN EXPOSITORY PIECE

1.) PICK your TOPIC

2.) LIST what you know about
your topic

3.) CHOOSE three BROAD yet
DISTINCT ideas from your list.
Be sure you can come up with
at least 4 details to support the
MAIN IDEAS you've chosen!

exp
pre-write

Name _____

Main Ideas--Overlapping or Distinct? - 1

Read each group of Main Ideas. If they overlap, cross out the ideas that are too similar and replace them with distinct ideas. Then write a main idea sentence for each main idea. You may use the sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help you.

Ex. TOPIC: SPACE TRAVEL

MAIN IDEA #1: ~~It's fun.~~ fast

MAIN IDEA #2: Helps scientists learn.

MAIN IDEA #3: ~~It's cool.~~ expensive

(Fun and cool are too similar and will overlap.)

MAIN IDEA #1: Space travel is an extremely fast way to get around.

MAIN IDEA #2: We can learn a lot about science from space travel.

MAIN IDEA #3: It is expensive to send people into space.

Ex. TOPIC: CITIES

MAIN IDEA #1: skyscrapers

MAIN IDEA #2: traffic

MAIN IDEA #3: things to do

MAIN IDEA #1: _____

MAIN IDEA #2: _____

MAIN IDEA #3: _____

Sentence Starters

- Have you ever seen ____? • Visitors are amazed by ____.
- Cities are known for ____.
- Watch out for ____.
- While in the city you might ____.
- City dwellers can ____.
- What many people notice about the city are/is ____.
- If you enjoy a variety of activities ____.
- In the city you can ____.
- Look out for ____!
- Get a load of ____.

Lesson Plans -

Revising Boring, Redundant Main Idea Sentences

Teacher Background:

Beyond understanding the concept of BROAD YET DISTINCT, successful main idea sentences need interesting word choice and good sentence variety. In an attempt to articulate their main idea “blurbs” into sentences, students often resort to redundant, formulaic sentence structure. Read these three main idea sentences which refer to the topic, “thunderstorms”.

TOPIC: THUNDERSTORMS

MAIN IDEA #1: *The first thing I will tell you about is that thunderstorms are noisy.*

MAIN IDEA #2: *The second thing I will tell you about is that thunderstorms are dangerous.*

MAIN IDEA #3: *The last thing I will tell you about is how thunderstorms can be helpful.*

Notice the redundant “broken record” approach in each sentence: *The first thing...the second thing,*” etc. Besides being redundant, the sentences are boring. Read the next group of sentences which communicate the same main ideas in a much more interesting fashion.

MAIN IDEA #1: Boom! Crash! I’m sure you recognize the noisy sounds of a thunderstorm!

MAIN IDEA #2: Thunderstorms should never be taken lightly--they can, in fact, be quite dangerous.

MAIN IDEA #3: Surprisingly, despite being noisy and dangerous, thunderstorms can actually be beneficial in a number of ways.

Students can be empowered to use vivid, interesting words and good sentence variety. One way to accomplish this is to provide them with alternatives to dull, overly general adjectives, as well as a menu of sentence starters that will enable them to vary redundant sentence structure.

MI +
detail

Thesaurus of General Adjectives

interesting
appealing
fascinating
enthraling
intriguing
curious

nice
charming
delightful
enchancing
captivating
pleasant

pretty (as in a person)
beautiful
attractive
handsome
elegant
lovely
adorable
gorgeous

great
terrific
incredible
fantastic
awesome
grand
magnificent
splendid
marvelous
excellent

big
enormous
gigantic
huge
immense
colossal
giant
massive

fun
enjoyable
entertaining
amusing
delightful
pleasant
satisfying

strange
bewildering
bizarre
curious
extraordinary
mysterious
odd
peculiar
unusual
weird

exciting
exhilarating
thrilling
sensational
electrifying
rousing
stimulating
death-defying

dangerous
harmful
hazardous
menacing
perilous
risky
challenging

smart
clever
skillful
bright
intelligent
shrewd
brilliant

beautiful (as in a place)
charming
captivating
lovely
lush
majestic
splendid
breathtaking

scary
frightening
terrifying
alarming
horrifying
shocking
spooky

small
tiny
petite
little
miniature
microscopic
puny

hot
blazing
burning
flaming
scalding
scorching

cold
arctic
chilly
cool
freezing
frigid

difficult
hard
challenging
complex
demanding
perplexing
troublesome

easy
effortless
simple
uncomplicated
manageable
comfortable
a cinch

special
unique
exceptional
distinctive
extraordinary
meaningful

(animal - although a noun, students often benefit by having word referents to use: creature, beast, monster, critter, feathered/furry friend, varmint)

Name _____

Revising Boring, Redundant Main Idea Sentences! - 1

Read this author's prewriting plan and the main idea sentences. Notice the boring, redundant sentence variety. Each sentence begins the same way:

TOPIC: Winter

Main Idea 1: Changes in nature	<i>In winter there are many changes in nature.</i>
Main Idea 2: Outdoor activities	<i>In winter there are many outdoor activities.</i>
Main Idea 3: Problems with winter	<i>In winter there are also some problems.</i>

This kind of writing does not capture the readers' attention or encourage them to read on. How can the author revise these sentences in order to improve the sentence variety, word choice, and reader appeal? Authors must have a variety of tools and vocabulary at their disposal. They learn through reading, listening, and imitation. Be aware of good sentence variety when you read published examples. Listen for interesting sentences when essays or reports are read aloud. You can also try some of the sentence starters below. Try several, or create your own. Begin by REVISING the main idea sentences above, using interesting sentence variety.

Changes in nature: _____

Outdoor activities: _____

Problems: _____

Sentence Starters

• You'll notice that ____.

• This season is characterized by ____.

• During the winter season ____.

• One way to recognize winter is by ____.

• Cold weather lovers can participate in ____.

• This chilly time of year is perfect for ____.

• Look around - you'll see ____.

• You will find that ____.

• Without a doubt, ____.

• No one would argue that ____.

• Of course, everyone agrees that ____.

• Certainly, ____.

• You must admit, ____.

Name _____

MAIN IDEA BLURBS INTO SENTENCES - 1

Look at this writer's PILLAR FRAMEWORK. The author has a good prewriting plan. Help the author by writing a complete MAIN IDEA SENTENCE for each main idea listed on the pillar.

TOPIC: <u>Picnics are Fun</u> Introduction: Lead/Topic Sentence		
MAIN IDEA #1: Food to pack		_____
Detail	Detail	_____
Detail	Detail	_____
MAIN IDEA #2: Enjoy nature		_____
Detail	Detail	_____
Detail	Detail	_____
MAIN IDEA #3: Play outdoor games		_____
Detail	Detail	_____
Detail	Detail	_____
CONCLUSION		

Sentence Starter Suggestions

- Picnic planning requires ____.
- One way to enjoy a picnic is ____.
- Don't forget ____.
- Wouldn't you agree that ____?
- Everyone enjoys ____.
- The best part of a picnic might be ____.
- Who doesn't love ____?
- It's fun to ____.
- Every picnic includes ____.
- The most successful picnics include ____.

Name _____

THE MISSING MAIN IDEA! - 1

Read each paragraph. Think about the specific details in each sentence. Ask yourself what the paragraph is all about and write a BLURB in the margin. Then write a MAIN IDEA SENTENCE on the line above the paragraph that tells what the entire paragraph is about.

MAIN IDEA: _____

When you surf you ride the crest of the wave--the higher the wave, the better! The wave carries you along the top of fast-moving water at high speeds. Standing upright, the challenge involves balancing and steering by shifting your weight along the surf board. It is not a sport for the nervous or the overly cautious person! You must enjoy the thrill of the roaring surf and the risk of wiping out!

MAIN IDEA: _____

Most important is the surfboard itself--it should be lightweight and constructed of fiberglass. They come in various lengths and styles to suit the needs of the wave riders. Well-fitting swimming trunks are a must--you wouldn't want to lose your suit in a wipeout! A wetsuit is helpful to protect you in cooler climates where the water is cold.

MAIN IDEA: _____

Of course, Hawaii is the most desired surfing spot in the world because of its thirty-foot waves! California is another favorite. There are over 40 surfing beaches in Southern California alone. Since not everyone is capable of surfing the big waves, many people prefer to body surf or boogie-board along the coasts where waves are less ferocious--for example, along the Atlantic coast. And Australia and Africa boast big waves as well, and where there's waves, there's surfing!

BONUS: What is the TOPIC of this piece? _____

Write a good title for this piece. _____

Name _____

Sentence Variety and Word Choice - 1

Read each dull main idea sentence below. Revise each sentence by varying the sentence structure, and replacing overly general adjectives with more specific, vivid adjectives to create main idea sentences that your audience will read with enthusiasm. Also, try using word referents to replace the double underlined topic word in each sentence.

Ex. Hurricanes are scary.

Revision: You'd better believe that these powerful storms are terrifying!

1.) The Grand Canyon is awesome.

Revision: _____

2.) Snowboarding is fun.

Revision: _____

3.) Raccoons are cute.

Revision: _____

Student Reference Sheet

Name _____

DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS

- **What does it “look” like?**

(sound like? feel like? taste like?
smell like? seem like?)

- **Why is that important?**

(Why is that important to your main idea?)

- **Is each detail in a separate sentence?**

(Separate the Grocery List!)

- **Did you give a specific example?**

(Avoid general language such as
“stuff” “things” “nice”, etc.)

Name _____

Good...and Better! - 5

Read each pair of sentences. In one sentence the author simply presents an important detail. In another, the author presents the same detail....only better! Label each sentence...GOOD if the author simply presents an important detail, and BETTER if the author fully elaborates!

- 1.) _____ If you want a good snack you can always go for a piece of fruit because it's really good for you.

_____ Crispy apples and juicy oranges provide fiber and vitamins.

- 2.) _____ Sturdy, ankle-high boots with solid support help prevent injuries when hiking.

_____ Be sure to get some really good boots if you want to go out for a nice hike.

- 3.) _____ It's always really, really important to have your cell phone in your pocket in case you need it.

_____ A reliable, high-quality cell phone with voice mail and e-mail capacity is a necessity in an emergency.

Name _____

What Does it Look Like? Why is it Important? 1

It is not enough for an author to simply list details in a paragraph. Instead, the author needs to elaborate. One way to elaborate is to explain how something looks, feels, sounds, and to explain why that detail is important. Read the detail sentence below. Help the author elaborate by responding to: What does it “look” like? Why is it important?

Ex. Read this detail sentence from a paragraph about ice cream:

People enjoy an ice cream cone on a hot day.

The revision:

*People enjoy a **refreshing triple scoop chocolate** ice cream cone to keep cool on **a sweltering August** day.*

1.) Read this detail sentence from a paragraph about kittens:

A kitten is a nice pet.

Your revision: _____

Name _____

Find the Overly General Words and Phrases - 2

Read the paragraph about theme parks. Look at the words in boldface print. These words are way too general and do not add to the elaboration of the piece.

Theme parks offer something for everyone. There are **fun things** to do there. You can go on **all kinds of rides**. Most theme parks have shops where you can buy **all sorts of stuff**. In between the rides and shopping you can get **something to eat** at one of their restaurants. People also enjoy all **types of entertainment**.

Now read the revised paragraph. The author has provided **specific examples** instead of overly general words or phrases. Decide which paragraph is more powerful.

Theme parks offer something for everyone. There are **many games, animal exhibits, and even a fun house** for your enjoyment. Of course, most people love the **wild roller coasters, exciting rides like the Whip, as well as kiddy rides such as the merry-go-round**. Theme park shops offer **tee-shirts, mugs, and small, inexpensive souvenirs**. In between the rides and the shopping, you can get **burgers, fries, hot dogs, and frozen yogurt** in the food court or restaurant. People also enjoy listening to **the bands** and watching **theme-related skits**.

Break Up that Grocery List! pp. 211-215

Objective: Students recognize the “grocery list” - a lengthy list of different details - and learn to better elaborate by presenting each detail in a separate, descriptive sentence.

Procedure:

- 1.) Begin by gathering the class and explain that you want to give them some details about a significant event - all the gifts you received at your last birthday party.

Then begin to list all your gifts:

Ex. “At my last birthday party, I got a lot of terrific gifts. I got a new suede coat, a set of dishes, movie tickets, a gift certificate to the book store, a pair of brown leather boots, a DVD, two CDs, a bouquet of flowers, a goldfish, a new cell phone...”

Be sure to go through your list in a droning sort of tone, to emphasize the boring, listy sound of the description. Ask the class what they notice. Discuss how a grocery list is NOT the most effective way to describe a number of distinct details.

- 2.) Choose an age appropriate activity from this section, photocopy it for your class and make a transparency for the overhead.
- 3.) Share the “listy example” and the revised, separated grocery list. Point out evidence of the use of the detail generating question: “What does it look like?”
- 4.) Have the class try their hand at the activity. Point out the sentence starters at the bottom of each activity and encourage them to use these as necessary.
- 5.) Circulate and read successful examples aloud. Also, be sure to affirm the students for any specific description they may have added.

Sample Revisions:

Break Up that Grocery List! #1 - When you shop for snack food be sure to buy some fudgy chocolate cookies that are perfect for dunking. A huge bag of crispy potato chips with ridges are always appreciated when you're in the mood for something salty. It's a good idea to have a box or two of crackers on hand for serving with cheese or peanut butter. And, for a scrumptious late night snack, nothing beats a gallon of mint chocolate chip ice cream.

Name _____

Break Up that Grocery List! 1

Details are always more powerful when they appear one at a time rather than grouped together in a list. Read each "grocery list" below. Then break up that grocery list by writing each detail in a separate sentence. Be sure to include what each detail "looks like" and why it is important. * There are some sentence starters on the bottom of the page to help.

Ex. At your birthday party you should serve pizza, cake, potato chips, and ice cream.

Revision: Start your party with crispy potato chips as an appetizer. The main course might be delicious, cheesy pizza. Dessert should be chocolate cake with plenty of frosting. Top it off with vanilla ice cream.

When you shop for snack food be sure to buy cookies, chips, crackers, and ice cream.

Your revision: _____

*One must-have snack food is _____ Don't forget the _____

Most people stock up on _____ Don't you always buy _____

And don't pass up the _____ Be sure to get _____

Student Reference Sheet

How to Write a Fully Elaborated, Well-Supported Paragraph

AUTHORS INCLUDE:

- A BROAD YET DISTINCT MAIN IDEA SENTENCE
- A number of details related to your main idea
- The DETAIL-GENERATING QUESTIONS:

“What Does it Look Like?” “Why is it Important?”

“Did you give a specific example?” “Is each detail in a separate sentence?”

- GOOD WORD CHOICE
- SENTENCE VARIETY
- AT LEAST ONE POWERFUL “GOLDEN BRICK” DETAIL IN EACH PARAGRAPH
- Quote • Statistic • Descriptive Segment • Anecdote • Amazing Fact

AUTHORS AVOID:

- Overly vague words and phrases such as:
nice, fun, good, pretty, cool, awesome, great, big,
interesting, stuff, things, and much more
- The “Grocery List” – (Do not list your details in a single sentence. Put each detail in a separate sentence.
ex. Frogs eat beetles, moths, mosquitoes, small fish, and smaller frogs.)
- The “Broken Record” – (Do not begin each sentence with the same words:
ex. There are.....There are.... There are.....)
- TOO MUCH “TELLING” – (Instead of telling that something is terrific, SHOW your reader what terrific looks like through the use of an example or two.)

Intros + Leads

Sentence Starters for use in a "How to" Piece

The next step involves ____ Be sure to ____ Pay close attention to ____
Continue by ____ After that ____ Once this is accomplished, go on to ____
It's important to remember to ____ Now you can start to ____ Next, ____
Always keep in mind that ____ It is critical that you ____ As you continue, be sure to ____

Sentence Starters for use in a "Critical Stance Response"

In my experience ____ Think about this: ____ Have you considered that ____
It seems to me that ____ I am convinced that ____ Certainly, ____ This calls to mind ____
I believe that ____ An example of this is ____ For example, ____ I know in my own life ____
I have come to see that ____ Life has shown me that ____ I have seen others who ____

Sentence Starters for use in a "Response to Literature"

This is clear when ____ In the story we see how ____ Specifically, ____ This is evidenced by ____
This is demonstrated by the fact that ____ We see an example of this when ____
The reader sees ____ The author shows us that ____, when ____ The proof is ____
For example, ____ The main character demonstrates this when ____
An illustration of this is ____ We understand this clearly when ____
The author proves this when ____ We observe this when ____

Sentence Starters for use in a "Compare/Contrast" Piece

Similarly, ____, however, have ____ On the other hand ____ In the same way ____
They differ in that ____ One trait they share is ____
Conversely, ____ Another similarity is ____ Another difference is ____
Likewise, ____ A like characteristic is ____ They deviate in that ____
These creatures share ____ In the same way ____ In contrast, ____

WHAT YOUR INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH NEEDS

A LEAD: Catch the reader's attention with:

- an amazing or unusual fact
- a question
- a descriptive segment
- a statistic
- a quote
- an anecdote

A TOPIC SENTENCE: Briefly, *clearly*, tell the reader what the piece will be about.

Read each introduction paragraph that follows. Pay attention to the different kinds of leads. The lead appears in italics. The topic sentence is underlined. Notice that the topic sentence in each example is the same!

They're cute and furry, sophisticated and intelligent, playful and independent. Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: descriptive segment)

These celebrities of the animal kingdom have been featured everywhere from Broadway to King Tut's tomb! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: amazing fact)

"I'd travel anywhere around the globe to make a picture," says Hollywood actress Maxine Foster, "as long as I could bring my kitty cat along on the shoot!" Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: quote)

What do more than 70 million Americans have in common? They are the proud owners of the fabulous feline! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: statistic)

Are you looking for a good companion, a faithful friend, some good clean entertainment? Then look no further! Just buy yourself a cat! Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: question)

I come home and plop down on my couch, exhausted. A warm ball of fur rubs against my ankles, jumps onto the couch and cuddles up, purring softly. Suddenly I feel the stress of the day melting away. Without a doubt, cats are beautiful, easy to care for, and great company!

(Type of lead: anecdote)

Notice that there is no doubt what any of these paragraphs are introducing....an expository piece of writing that will provide information about the following topic: CATS MAKE WONDERFUL PETS. Also notice that the author can be as creative as he or she wants to be in constructing an attention grabbing lead--each lead sentence was effective.

Name _____

Leads and Topic Sentences - 2

Read each introduction paragraph. Fill in the author's prewriting plan in order to highlight each main idea. Underline the lead in red and the topic sentence in blue. Then, on the line below each paragraph, tell which kind of lead the author used:

- Descriptive Segment • Amazing Fact • Question
- Quote • Statistic • Anecdote

In a recent poll, eight out of every 10 kids questioned said that they preferred pizza to all other foods. Pizza is a convenient, delicious, and nutritious family food choice.

TOPIC: _____

Main Idea #1 _____

Main Idea #2 _____

Main Idea #3 _____

Type of lead: _____

Do you enjoy an occasional swim? Would you like to join the arts and crafts club, or learn yoga, karate, or judo? Does a trip to the weight room sound appealing? The YMCA offers sports, crafts, and clubs for people of all ages!

TOPIC: _____

Main Idea #1 _____

Main Idea #2 _____

Main Idea #3 _____

Type of lead: _____

