

Writing:

The Other Half of Literacy

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Judy Smith, presenter
stljudys@earthlink.net
636-795-4711

A Separation of Powers

From *Six Way Paragraphs Introductory Level* page 38 – 4th Grade

The United States Constitution was written in 1787. The writer, James Madison, wanted a strong government. It would have three branches. One would be the president. A second would be the courts. A third would make laws. This third branch would represent the people.

How many representatives would there be? Madison said the numbers should reflect how many people live in a state. New Jersey had few people. These people did not agree. They said each state should have the same number of representatives. The people of Connecticut wanted a compromise. They said the law-making branch should have two parts. In one part, each state would have the same number of members. In the other part, the number of members from a state would vary. Large states would have more members. Small states would have fewer. The states agreed.

The three branches balance each other's power. No branch has all the power. The states adopted this plan in 1789. Here is what each branch does.

The executive branch is the office of the President. (It also includes his or her cabinet). This branch enforces federal laws. It appoints federal officials. It deals with foreign countries. The President is commander of the armed forces.

The judicial branch includes the Supreme Court. It also includes the lower Federal Courts. It decides cases of law.

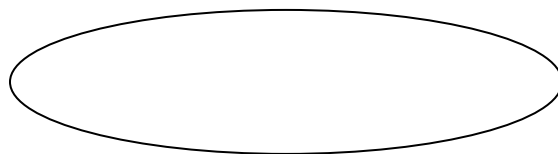
The legislative branch makes laws. It also amends and repeals laws and collects taxes. One part of this branch is the Senate. It has 100 members. Each state has two senators. The other part is the House of Representatives. It has 435 members. Each state sends a number of representatives based on its population.

During and Post- Reading -- Finding the Main Idea

In one or two words, what is this about? _____

Specific Details

Main Idea -- What is the author saying about the topic?



Including Thoughts

Topic – What is this about?		
<p><u>Key Questions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. So what?2. So what does that prove or show?3. Why did you use this fact?	Specific Details	Inferences/ Conclusions
Main Idea: _____ _____		

To Teach Students to Elaborate Writing

Start with a sentence rather than a paragraph. By working with students on the parts of a sentence, you can teach them to manipulate the parts to come up with strong sentences. Then they can begin writing paragraphs.

Parts of a Sentence

- ✓ **Subject or Who or What** The boy
- ✓ **Predicate or Did What** -- walked his dog.

Add

- ✓ **More Precise Action – did what** – jogged with, dragged, ran with,
- ✓ **Adjectives or Describers** – little boy, who lives next door, mean dog, that bit my sister

Add

- ✓ **How** -- quickly, gladly, slowly, sadly
- ✓ **When** -- every day, after school, once a day, on the weekends, always, never
- ✓ **Why** -- because he loved his dog, because his mom said so, to earn his allowance, since it was his job
- ✓ **Where** -- around the block, to the store, to the playground, in the city, to the park

Teach students to combine these elements to have a variety of sentences.

Easy way to help student with punctuation:

If a sentence begins with a how, when, why, or where of three or more words at the beginning of the sentence, they need a comma.

If a sentence ends with how, when, why, or where, no comma is needed.

Example:

Because he loved his dog, the boy walked him every day.

The boy walked his dog everyday because he loved him.

For Practice

Which is Stronger Writing?

Paragraph from an essay on *Of Mice and Men* answering the question, “Which characters were misunderstood by others in the novel *Of Mice and Men* and how does that misunderstanding reinforce the theme of isolation in the novel?”

Other people see George and Lennie’s friendship as one getting more out of it than the other, but really they are just good friends. For example, when they start their new job, the boss says, “What stake you got in this guy? You takin’ his pay away from him?” The boss is suspicious, and it seems as if he assumes that someone is doing something they shouldn’t. George and Lennie’s friendship is not immediately apparent to others. In addition, Slim says to George, “Funny how you an’ him string along together . . . none of the guys ever travel together.” Slim is not as suspicious of people’s motives as the boss because he doesn’t automatically believe they are doing something wrong. Slim is a bit wary and confused about this new kind of relationship which he doesn’t yet understand. Furthermore, Lennie accidentally kills Curley’s wife which causes Curley and the others to hunt for him; George find him first and kills him in an act of mercy. George loves Lennie like a brother and looks out for Lennie’s feelings above his own. He doesn’t want anyone else to kill Lennie because he knows that they would not be as gentle as he is.

Paragraph from an essay written for an AP US History exam answering the question “How were the lives of the Plains Indians in the second half of the 19th century affected by technological developments and government actions?”

First, technological developments affected the Plains Indians in various ways. As settlers pushed farther and farther west for farmland, they brought their mechanical reapers and other such farming equipment with them, tearing up the land. The construction of railroads also tore up the land and forced the Plains Indians to move around constantly. The construction of highways had the same effect. All of these things in turn killed thousands of buffalo, an animal crucial to the survival of the Plains Indians.

Writing Expository and Persuasive Information

1. **Topic sentence – gives an overview of the topic (expository) takes a side of the issue, tells what the writer is going to prove (persuasive)**

Non-Fiction Example:

- A. Abraham Lincoln was the sixteenth president of the United States. (report)
- B. Abraham Lincoln, one of the **greatest** presidents, served in the 1860's. (simple essay – one area of proof)
- C. Abraham Lincoln, one of the **greatest**, served in the 1860's which was one of the most **turbulent** times of American history. (more complex – two areas)
- D. Abraham Lincoln, one of the **greatest, courageously** served in the 1860's which was one of the most **turbulent** times of American history. (top level writers)

Fiction Example:

- A. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is about how Atticus Finch and his children were affected by a trial in their town. (book report)
- B. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus Finch displayed real **courage**. (simple essay or paragraph – one point of proof)
- C. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus Finch **courageously** represented a black man **falsely accused** of a crime. (more complex – two areas)
- D. In *To Kill a Mockingbird* Atticus Finch **courageously** represented a black man **falsely accused** of a crime despite the **persecution** of his family. (top level writers – definitely an essay)

Write a multi-level topic sentence for something you teach:

Expository and Persuasive (cont.)

2. **Text-Based sentence** – comes from the text, story, research. The biggest problem kids have here is that they choose weak facts or write things too generally.

Text-Based	What It Is	Where to Find	When to Use
Fact	a statement that can be proved by observation, experience, checking in a reference book, or consulting with an authority.	valid experiments research interviews	to support a main idea – will need explanation as to what the fact means
Statistic	a fact which involves numbers	valid experiments research interviews graphs, charts, etc.	to support a main idea – will need explanation as to what the statistics shows or proves
Sensory Detail	use of specific detail to explain how something looks, sounds, smells, tastes, or feels	student map of details which then list looks like, sounds like, etc.	to make an explanation or example more visual and real for the audience – description of what a tornado does to a city, cancer does to a body etc.
Incident	a happening or occurrence	student personal experience	to help explain a main idea
Example	an instance of something	student personal experience research interviews references	to help explain or prove a main idea (if students are using as proof, they will need multiple examples and will need to check the logic of their conclusions)
Quotation	exactly what someone has said about a topic or idea (in order to be valid quotes, the person quoted must be an authority on the topic)	research books of quotes	to help prove a thesis statement of a conclusion
Illustration	an extended example	student personal experience research interviews references	to help explain or prove a complicated point

Which types of “proof” do you accept in your content area?

Expository and Persuasive (cont)

3. **Thought-Based sentence** – comes from putting the pieces together and drawing valid conclusions, opinions, analysis, and evaluation. This is the tough part of writing.

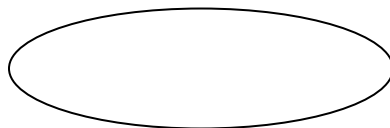
You can help kids do this by having them fill write a sentence following the prompt :

1. So what?
2. So what does that prove or show?
3. Why did you use this fact?

Write a text-based on something you recently taught: _____

Write a thought-based sentence about the fact _____

Closing sentence – pulls everything together.



Which is Stronger Writing? answer

ANSWER – They are both examples of strong writing. The difference is that in English essays teachers are looking for more inference etc. while in social studies and other areas where you have to prove something, they want an inference followed by facts to back it up OR the facts followed by inference.

In the examples below, I used bold for text-based (provable) sentences and italic for thought-based (conclusion or inference) sentences. Further explanations are on the following pages.

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