

WRITING WITH SKILL

STUDENT WORKBOOK LEVEL 1



Outline

- I. Ships prepared for battle
- II. Nelson prepared himself for battle
- III. Nelson sent messages to his fleet
- IV. The first shots were fired
- V. Nelson's ship joined the battle
- VI. Nelson was wounded



WRITING WITH SKILL, LEVEL ONE

LEVEL 5 OF THE COMPLETE WRITER

by

Susan Wise Bauer

STUDENT TEXT

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Overview of the Year's Sequence	iii
General Instructions	xxiii

Part I: Basic Skills

1

Weeks 1-3

Overview of Weeks 1-3

Week 1: Narrative Summaries

3

Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Polly Horvath, <i>The Pepins and Their Problems</i>	3
Step One: Read	3
Step Two: Note important events	4
Step Three: Write summary sentences	5
Day 2. Original Narration Exercise: Joan Aiken, <i>The Wolves of Willoughby Chase</i>	5
Step One: Read	5
Step Two: Note important events	7
Step Three: Write summary sentences	8
Day 3. Original Narration Exercise: Susan Wise Bauer, <i>The Story of the World, Volume 3: Early Modern Times</i>	8
Step One: Read	8
Step Two: Note important events	9
Step Three: Write summary sentences	10
Day 4. Challenge Exercise: The Brothers Grimm, "The Golden Goose"	10
Step One: Read	10
Step Two: Note important events and write summary sentences	13

Week 2: One-Level Outlines

15

Day 1. Introduction to Outlining	15
Step One: Understand paragraphs	15
Step Two: Understand topic sentences	17
Step Three: Understand basic outlining	19

Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Pamela Dell, <i>Hatshepsut</i>	21
Step One: Read	21
Step Two: Begin to construct a one-level outline.	22
Step Three: Finish constructing a one-level outline	23
Day 3. Outlining Exercise: Michael Dempsey, <i>The Round World</i>	24
Step One: Read	24
Step Two: Understand how to outline science writing.	24
Step Three: Construct a one-level outline.	25
Day 4. Outlining Exercise: Edward S. Holden, <i>Real Things in Nature</i>	26
Step One: Understand topical outlines	26
Step Two: Read	27
Step Three: Construct a one-level topical outline	28
Week 3: Using the Thesaurus	29
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Helen Keller, <i>The Story of My Life</i>	29
Step One: Read	29
Step Two: Understand the use of first and third person	31
Step Three: Note important events.	31
Step Four: Write summary sentences	32
Day 2. Thesaurus Use.	32
Step One: Understand thesaurus use	32
Step Two: Practice thesaurus use	33
Day 3. Outlining Exercise: S. Silcox, <i>Modern Nature Study</i>	34
Step One: Read	34
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	36
Day 4. Thesaurus Use.	37
Step One: Practice thesaurus use	37
Part II: Building Blocks for Composition	39
Weeks 4-15	
Overview of Weeks 4-15	
Week 4: Chronological Narrative of a Past Event	41
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Edith Nesbit, <i>The Book of Dragons</i>	41
Step One: Read	41
Step Two: Note important events	44
Step Three: Write summary sentences	44
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Hendrik van Loon, <i>The Story of Mankind</i>	45
Step One: Read	45
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	46
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Chronological Narrative of a Past Event.	48
Step One: Examine model passages	48

Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	50
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Alexander the Great.	50
Step One: Plan the narrative.	51
Step Two: Become familiar with time and sequence words	54
Week 5: Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery	57
Day 1. Finishing the Chronological Narrative of a Past Event	57
Step One: Review the topos	57
Step Two: Write the narrative.	58
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Kendall Haven, <i>100 Greatest Science Discoveries of All Time</i>	59
Step One: Read	59
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	60
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery	61
Step One: Examine model passages	62
Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	64
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Edward Jenner and the Smallpox Vaccination	65
Step One: Plan the narrative.	66
Step Two: Use time and sequence words.	67
Step Three: Write the narrative	68
Week 6: Chronological Narrative of a Past Event	69
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: T. H. White, <i>The Once and Future King</i>	69
Step One: Read	69
Step Two: Note important events	71
Step Three: Write summary sentences	72
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Billye Walker Brown and Walter R. Brown, <i>Historical Catastrophes: Hurricanes and Tornadoes</i>	72
Step One: Read	72
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	73
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Chronological Narrative of a Past Event.	75
Step One: Review time and sequence words	75
Step Two: Add dialogue and actions	75
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	76
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: The Sinking of the <i>Titanic</i>	77
Step One: Plan the narrative.	77
Step Two: Choose details and dialogue.	79
Step Three: Write the narrative	80
Week 7: Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery	83
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: L. Frank Baum, <i>Tik-Tok of Oz</i>	83
Step One: Read	83
Step Two: Note important events	85
Step Three: Write summary sentences	85

Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Alma Smith Payne, <i>Discoverer of the Unseen World</i>	86
Step One: Read	86
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	87
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery	88
Step One: Review the pattern of the topos	88
Step Two: Examine the model	88
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Johannes Kepler and Planetary Orbits	91
Step One: Plan the narrative.	92
Step Two: Write a draft of the narrative	94
Step Three: Add direct quotes	94
Week 8: Description of a Place	97
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: George MacDonald, <i>The Princess and the Goblin</i>	97
Step One: Read	97
Step Two: Note central details	99
Step Three: Write summary sentences	99
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Thomas B. Costain, <i>The Mississippi Bubble</i>	100
Step One: Read	100
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	101
Day 3. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One: Description of a Place	102
Step One: Understand the purpose of descriptions	102
Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	103
Step Three: Practice the topos	104
Day 4. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two: Neuschwanstein Castle	105
Step One: Understand space and distance words and phrases	105
Step Two: Add to the pattern of the topos.	106
Step Three: Practice the topos	107
Week 9: Description of a Place	109
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: P. L. Travers, <i>Mary Poppins in the Park</i>	109
Step One: Read	109
Step Two: Note central details	111
Step Three: Write summary sentences	111
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Gary Blackwood, <i>Life in a Medieval Castle</i>	112
Step One: Read	112
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	114
Day 3. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One: Description of a Place	115
Step One: Review the use of space and distance words and phrases	115
Step Two: Understand point of view	116
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	117
Day 4. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two: A Place in Your Home or Yard	118
Step One: Review point of view	118
Step Two: Practice the topos.	119

Week 10: Description of a Place	121
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Charles Dickens, <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	121
Step One: Read	121
Step Two: Note central events and details	123
Step Three: Write summary sentences	123
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: <i>The Travels of Marco Polo</i>	124
Step One: Read	124
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	125
Day 3. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part One: Description of a Place	126
Step One: Understand metaphor and simile	126
Step Two: Identify figurative language in descriptions	127
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	129
Day 4. Analyzing and Practicing the Topos, Part Two	129
Step One: Review the form of the description	129
Step Two: Practice avoiding clichés	130
Week 11: Combining Chronological Narrative of a Past Event and Description of a Place	133
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Mark Twain, <i>Tom Sawyer</i>	133
Step One: Read	133
Step Two: Note important events	135
Step Three: Write summary sentences	136
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: R. A. Van Middeldyk, <i>The History of Puerto Rico</i>	136
Step One: Read	136
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	138
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Roy Adkins, <i>Nelson's Trafalgar</i>	138
Step One: Review the elements of a chronological narrative	138
Step Two: Review the elements of a description of a place	140
Step Three: Analyze a model passage	141
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Ivan the Terrible and St. Basil's Cathedral	143
Step One: Plan the narrative	143
Step Two: Plan the description	145
Step Three: Write	146
Week 12: Scientific Description	147
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Arthur Conan Doyle, <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i>	147
Step One: Read	147
Step Two: Note important events in the two different stories	150
Step Three: Write summary sentences	150
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Ian Ridpath, ed., <i>The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Astronomy and Space</i>	151
Step One: Read	151
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	152

Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Bill Bryson, <i>A Short History of Nearly Everything</i>	154
Step One: Examine model passages	154
Step Two: Understand the use of figurative language	156
Step Three: Write down the pattern of the topos	157
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Volcanoes.	157
Step One: Plan the description	158
Step Two: Choose a metaphor or simile	160
Step Three: Write the description.	160
Week 13: Scientific Description	161
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Norwegian folktale, "Why the Sea Is Salt"	161
Step One: Read	161
Step Two: Find the different stories in the narrative	164
Step Three: Note the main events in each story	164
Step Four: Write summary sentences	164
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: A. W. Greely, <i>The Greely Arctic Expedition</i>	165
Step One: Read	165
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	167
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Scientific Description.	167
Step One: Understand point of view in scientific description	168
Step Two: Identify point of view in scientific description	170
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	171
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Volcanoes.	171
Step One: Review point of view	171
Step Two: Understand the aspects of a present point of view.	172
Step Three: Write the description.	173
Week 14: Scientific Description	175
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Rudolf Erich Raspe, <i>The Adventures of Baron Munchausen</i>	175
Step One: Read	175
Step Two: Find the different stories in the narrative	179
Step Three: Note the main events in each story	179
Step Four: Write summary sentences	179
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Anna Botsford Comstock, <i>Handbook of Nature Study</i>	180
Step One: Read	180
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	181
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Scientific Description.	181
Step One: Understand combined points of view in scientific description.	181
Step Two: Identify combined points of view in scientific description.	183
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	184

Day 4. Practicing the Topos: The Planet Mars	185
Step One: Write a draft of the description of Mars	185
Step Two: Write a draft of the present point-of-view section of the description	188
Step Three: Settle on a metaphor or simile	189
Step Four: Complete the final draft	189
Week 15: Combining Chronological Narrative of a Scientific Discovery and Scientific Description	191
Day 1. Original Narration Exercise: Jim Kjelgaard, <i>Big Red</i>	191
Step One: Read	191
Step Two: Write summary sentences.	194
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Margery and Howard Facklam, <i>Changes in the Wind</i>	194
Step One: Read	194
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	196
Day 3. Analyzing the Topos: Chronological Narrative that Includes Scientific Description	196
Step One: Chronological narrative of a past event as an introduction to scientific description	197
Step Two: Chronological narrative of scientific discovery combined with a scientific description	198
Step Three: Examine the models	199
Day 4. Practicing the Topos: Deep-ocean Hydrothermal Vents	201
Step One: Write a rough draft of the description.	201
Step Two: Write a rough draft of the chronological narrative	205
Step Three: Finalize the composition	207
Part III: Sentence Skills	209
Weeks 16–22	
Overview of Weeks 16–22	
Week 16: Description of a Person	211
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Gladys Edson Locke, <i>Queen Elizabeth</i>	211
Step One: Read	211
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	213
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Description of a Person	213
Step One: Examine model passages	213
Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	215
Step Three: Identify aspects in descriptions of persons	216
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: Ludwig van Beethoven.	217
Step One: Review the pattern of the topos	217

Step Two: Plan the description	218
Step Three: Write the description	219
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Using the thesaurus to improve writing	219
Step One: Review thesaurus use	220
Step Two: Explore synonyms for basic noun, verb, and adjective forms.	221
Week 17: Description of a Person	223
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Isaac Newton Arnold, <i>The History of Abraham Lincoln and the Overthrow of Slavery</i>	223
Step One: Read	223
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	225
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Conveying Positive or Negative Impressions	225
Step One: Examine model passages	225
Step Two: Identify word choice in descriptions	227
Step Three: Add to the pattern of the topos	228
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: Isaac Newton	229
Step One: Read the description	229
Step Two: List the qualities described	230
Step Three: Write the description	231
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Transforming Nouns and Adjectives	232
Step One: Understand how to transform nouns to adjectives and adjectives to nouns	232
Step Two: Begin the Sentence Variety chart	233
Step Three: Practice sentence variety	234
Step Four: Vary one of your own sentences	234
Week 18: Using a Metaphor to Organize a Character Description	235
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Matthew Pilkington, <i>A General Dictionary of Painters</i>	235
Step One: Read	235
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	236
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Using a Metaphor to Organize a Description	237
Step One: Examine a model passage	237
Step Two: Add to the pattern of the topos	240
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: Henry VIII.	241
Step One: Review the connection between character and description	241
Step Two: Prepare to write the description	242
Step Three: Plan the governing metaphor	244
Step Four: Use the governing metaphor to write the description	244
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Transforming Active and Passive Verbs	245
Step One: Review	245
Step Two: Understand how to transform passive verbs into active verbs	246
Step Three: Add to the Sentence Variety chart	247
Step Four: Practice sentence variety	248

Week 19: Biographical Sketch	249
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: <i>Standard Classics, With Biographical Sketches</i> <i>and Helpful Notes</i> (Edgar Allan Poe)	249
Step One: Read	249
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	251
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Biographical Sketch	251
Step One: Examine model passages	251
Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	254
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: Writing a Biographical Sketch	255
Step One: Choose important life events	255
Step Two: Choose aspects to include	256
Step Three: Write the sketch	260
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Transforming Active and Passive Verbs	260
Step One: Review	260
Step Two: Understand how to transform active verbs into passive verbs	261
Step Three: Practice sentence variety	263
Step Four: Vary one of your own sentences	264
 Week 20: Biographical Sketch	 265
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Thomas Heath, <i>Archimedes</i>	265
Step One: Read	265
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	267
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Biographical Sketch Focusing on Achievement	267
Step One: Examine model passages	267
Step Two: Add to the pattern of the topos	270
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: William Shakespeare	271
Step One: Draft the chronological narrative	271
Step Two: Draft the paragraphs about work	272
Step Three: Finish the sketch	276
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Indirect Objects and Prepositional Phrases	276
Step One: Review	276
Step Two: Understand how to transform indirect objects into prepositional phrases	277
Step Three: Add to the Sentence Variety chart	278
Step Four: Practice sentence variety	278
 Week 21: Sequence: Natural Process	 279
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: The Life Cycle of Salmon	279
Step One: Read	279
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	280
Day 2. Analyzing the Topos: Sequence: Natural Process	281
Step One: Examine model passages	281

Step Two: Write down the pattern of the topos	284
Day 3. Practicing the Topos: The Death of a Star	284
Step One: Plan the step-by-step process	284
Step Two: Divide the list into paragraphs	286
Step Three: Write the sequence	287
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Infinitives to Participles	287
Step One: Review	287
Step Two: Understand how to transform infinitives into participles	288
Step Three: Add to the Sentence Variety chart	289
Step Four: Practice sentence variety	289
Week 22: Sequence: Natural Process	291
Day 1. Outlining Exercise and Topos Review: William James Burroughs, <i>The Climate Revealed</i>	291
Step One: Read	291
Step Two: Review the pattern of the topos	292
Step Three: Construct a one-level outline.	293
Day 2. Practicing the Topos, Part One: The Octopus	293
Step One: Plan the step-by-step process	293
Step Two: Divide the list into paragraphs	296
Step Three: Write the step-by-step process.	296
Day 3. Practicing the Topos, Part Two: The Octopus	296
Step One: Write the introduction	297
Step Two: Write the paragraph about scientific knowledge	298
Step Three: Write about the repetition	299
Step Four: Add a brief physical description.	299
Step Five: Put the composition together	301
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Review Transforming Sentences	301
Step One: Read	301
Step Two: Transform sentences	302
Part IV: Beginning Literary Criticism: Prose	303
Writing about Stories	
Weeks 23–26	
Overview of Weeks 23–26	
Week 23: Hero/Villain, Protagonist/Antagonist	305
Day 1. Read: Rudyard Kipling, “Rikki-Tikki-Tavi”	305
Step One: Understand the background	305
Step Two: Read	306
Day 2. Think	306
Step One: Identify the characters	306

Step Two: Identify the protagonist	306
Step Three: Identify the antagonist	307
Step Four: Identify the conflict.	307
Step Five: Begin the Literary Terms chart	307
Day 3. Write	308
Step One: Write the summary	308
Step Two: Write the analysis.	308
Step Three: Assemble the essay	308
Day 4. Literary Language	309
Step One: Understand synecdoche	309
Step Two: Add to the Literary Terms chart.	310
Step Three: Identify synecdoche.	310
Week 24: Hero/Villain, Protagonist/Antagonist	313
Day 1. Read: Guy de Maupassant, “The Necklace”	313
Step One: Understand the background.	313
Step Two: Read	314
Day 2. Think	314
Step One: Identify the characters	314
Step Two: Identify the protagonist	314
Step Three: Identify the antagonist	314
Step Four: Identify the conflict.	315
Day 3. Write	315
Step One: Write the summary	315
Step Two: Write the analysis.	315
Step Three: Assemble the essay	316
Day 4. Literary Language	316
Step One: Understand inversion.	316
Step Two: Understand the surprise story	317
Step Three: Add to the Literary Terms chart	318
Week 25: Supporting Characters	319
Day 1. Read: Lucy Maud Montgomery, <i>Anne of Green Gables</i>	319
Step One: Understand the background.	319
Step Two: Read	320
Day 2. Think	320
Step One: Identify the first protagonist-antagonist pair.	320
Step Two: Identify the second protagonist-antagonist pair	321
Step Three: Identify the supporting character	321
Step Four: Add to the Literary Terms chart	321
Day 3. Write	322
Step One: Write the summary	322

Step Two: Write the analysis	322
Step Three: Assemble the essay and provide transitions	323
Day 4. Using Direct Quotes	324
Step One: Understand the use of direct quotes in a literary essay	324
Step Two: Review the rules for using direct quotes	325
Step Three: Add direct quotes to your essay	326
Week 26: Idea Stories	327
Day 1. Read: Arthur Machen, “The Bowmen”	327
Step One: Understand the background	327
Step Two: Read	328
Day 2. Think	328
Step One: Identify the protagonist and antagonist	329
Step Two: Identify the idea in the story	329
Step Three: Learn about the story’s effect	330
Day 3. Write	333
Step One: Write the summary	333
Step Two: Write about the idea	333
Step Three: Write about the story’s effect	333
Day 4. Reviewing Terms and Forms	334
Step One: Add to the Literary Terms chart	334
Step Two: Construct the Essay Chart	334
Part V: Research	337
Weeks 27–31	
Overview of Weeks 27–31	
Week 27: Two-Level Outlining	339
Day 1. Introduction to Two-Level Outlining: Patricia Buckley Ebrey et al., <i>Pre-Modern East Asia to 1800</i>	339
Step One: Understand the two-level outline	339
Step Two: Practice the two-level outline	341
Day 2. Outlining Exercise: Albert E. McKinley et al., <i>The World War</i>	342
Step One: Read	342
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	343
Step Three: Construct a two-level outline	344
Day 3. Outlining Exercise: <i>Earth’s Changing Environment</i>	345
Step One: Read	345
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	346
Step Three: Construct a two-level outline	346
Day 4. Outlining Exercise: L. R. F. Griffin, “Study of Giant Trees”	347
Step One: Read	347

Step Two: Understand how to construct a two-level outline	348
Step Three: Construct a two-level outline	350
Week 28: Documentation	353
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Jacob Abbott, <i>History of King Charles the First of England</i> . . .	353
Step One: Read	353
Step Two: Identify the form of each paragraph	355
Step Three: Construct a one-level outline.	355
Step Four: Construct a two-level outline of selected paragraphs	356
Day 2. Day Two: Documentation	356
Step One: Understand footnotes.	357
Step Two: Understand endnotes and in-text citations	358
Step Three: Understand the Works Cited page.	359
Step Four: Practice documentation.	361
Day 3. Day Three: Avoiding Plagiarism	365
Step One: Understand the definition of plagiarism	366
Step Two: Understand the concept of “common knowledge”	369
Step Three: Practice!	370
Day 4. Day Four: Taking Notes: Julius Caesar	372
Step One: Examine a sample of note-taking	372
Step Two: Learn proper form for taking notes	374
Step Three: Practice taking notes	375
Week 29: Writing from Notes: Chronological Narrative of a Past Event, Description of a Person, Description of a Place	381
Day 1. Practicing the Topos, Part One: Taking Notes	381
Step One: Take notes for the chronological narrative	382
Step Two: Take notes for the personal description	383
Step Three: Take notes for the place description.	385
Day 2. Practicing the Topos, Part Two: The Chronological Narrative.	389
Step One: Arrange notes in chronological order	389
Step Two: Divide notes into main points.	390
Step Three: Write the chronological narrative	392
Day 3. Practicing the Topos, Part Three: The Personal Description	393
Step One: Review the elements of a personal description	393
Step Two: Plan the personal description	394
Step Three: Write the personal description.	395
Day 4. Practicing the Topos, Part Four: The Place Description	395
Step One: Review the elements of a place description	395
Step Two: Write the place description.	396
Step Three: Assemble and title the composition	396
Step Four: Attach the Works Cited page.	397

Week 30: Writing from Notes: Sequence: Natural Process, Scientific Description	399
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Anthony L. Komaroff, <i>Harvard Medical School Family Health Guide</i>	399
Step One: Read	399
Step Two: Identify the form of each paragraph	400
Step Three: Construct a one-level outline.	400
Step Four: Construct a two-level outline	400
Day 2. Practicing the Topos, Part One: Taking Notes: Digestion	401
Step One: Review the elements of a sequence and a scientific description	401
Step Two: Make a preliminary plan	401
Step Three: Take notes.	402
Day 3. Practicing the Topos, Part Two: Write	408
Step One: Write the description	408
Step Two: Write the sequence.	409
Step Three: Assemble the composition	409
Day 4. Copia Exercise: Main Verbs and Infinitives	410
Step One: Review	410
Step Two: Understand how to transform main verbs into infinitives	411
Step Three: Add to the Sentence Variety chart	412
Step Four: Practice sentence variety	412
 Week 31: Writing from Notes: Biographical Sketch, Description of a Person	 415
Day 1. Outlining Exercise: Catharine M. C. Haines, <i>International Women in Science</i>	415
Step One: Read	415
Step Two: Construct a one-level outline	416
Step Three: Construct a two-level outline	417
Day 2. Practicing the Topos, Part One: Taking Notes: Marie Antoinette.	418
Step One: Review the elements of a biographical sketch and description of a person	418
Step Two: Make a preliminary plan	418
Step Three: Take initial notes from an encyclopedia.	419
Step Four: Take additional notes from other sources	421
Day 3. Practicing the Topos, Part Two: Organizing the Biographical Sketch	429
Step One: Arrange notes in order	429
Step Two: Divide notes into main points.	431
Step Three: Title the main points.	432
Step Four: Place the personal description	433
Day 4. Particing the Topos, Part Three: Writing the Biographical Sketch	434
Step One: Write	434

Step Two: Assemble Works Cited page	434
Step Three: Proofread	434
Part VI: Beginning Literary Criticism: Poetry	435
Writing about Poems	
Weeks 32–34	
Overview of Weeks 32–34	
Week 32: Sound	437
Day 1. Read: Edgar Allan Poe, “The Bells”	437
Step One: Read silently.	437
Step Two: Read out loud.	437
Step Three: Read for punctuation	437
Step Four: Read for effect.	437
Day 2. Analyze	438
Step One: Examine the overall form.	438
Step Two: Understand onomatopoeia	438
Step Three: Look for repetition	439
Step Four: Look for repeated rhymes	440
Step Five: Find examples of alliteration	440
Day 3. Think	441
Step One: Understand the difference between stories and poems	441
Step Two: Examine the movement of the poem	442
Step Three: Understand the connection between form and meaning	442
Day 4. Write	443
Step One: Understand proper form for quoting a poem	443
Step Two: Write one paragraph for each stanza.	444
Step Three: Write an introduction and assemble your essay	445
Week 33: Meter.	447
Day 1. Read: Percy Bysshe Shelley, “Ozymandias”	447
Step One: Read silently.	447
Step Two: Read out loud.	447
Step Three: Read for punctuation	447
Step Four: Read for dialogue	448
Day 2. Analyze	448
Step One: Understand meter	448
Step Two: Understand iambic pentameter	450
Step Three: Understand rhyme scheme	451
Step Four: Understand sonnet form	452

Day 3. Think	453
Step One: Identify the voices within the poem	454
Step Two: Examine the movement of the poem	454
Day 4. Write	455
Step One: Write one paragraph for each aspect of the poem	455
Step Two: Write an introduction and conclusion.	455
Step Three: Assemble and proofread your essay	456
Week 34: Narrative	457
Day 1. Read: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “The Charge of the Light Brigade”	457
Step One: Read silently.	457
Step Two: Read out loud.	457
Step Three: Read for rhythm	457
Step Four: Read for motion	458
Day 2. Analyze (Ballad Form).	459
Step One: Identify complete and incomplete dactyls	459
Step Two: Identify rhyme scheme	461
Step Three: Understand ballad form	462
Day 3. Think	466
Step One: Examine the movement of the poem	466
Step Two: Understand the relationship between form and meaning	467
Step Three: Investigate the historical background.	467
Day 4. Write	473
Step One: Write a chronological narrative describing the Battle of Balaklava	473
Step Two: Explain the movement of the poem	473
Step Three: Explain how the meter and rhyme scheme of the poem support its meaning	474
Step Four: Assemble and proofread the composition	474
Part VII: Final Project	475
Weeks 35–36	
Overview of Weeks 35–36	
Week 35: Finding and Researching Your Topic	477
Step One: Decide which topoi to include	477
Step Two: Collect resources	478
Step Three: Do initial reading	479
Step Four: Choose final resources	480
Week 36: Writing Your Final Composition	481
Step One: Make a preliminary plan	481
Step Two: Take notes	482

Step Three: Write the topoi	483
Step Four: Assemble the composition	483
Appendix I: Time and Sequence, Space and Distance Words/Phrases	485
Appendix II: Points of View	487
Appendix III: Literature	489
Appendix IV: Poetry	525
Works Cited	533
Permissions	543

Sample

WEEK 1: NARRATIVE SUMMARIES

Day One: Original Narration Exercise



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

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

STEP ONE: Read

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

STEP TWO: **Note important events**

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

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

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

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

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

STEP THREE: **Write summary sentences**

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

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

If you have trouble, ask your instructor for help.

Day Two: Original Narration Exercise



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

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

STEP ONE: **Read**

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

— — —

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Wolves!” Sylvia stared at him in terror.

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

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

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

“Why don’t we go on?”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

STEP TWO: **Note important events**

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

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