

Do Now!

Writing Activities

Fusco's English Class
2012-2013



My Best Day Ever

- Most formal **paragraphs** consist of at least 5-8 sentences. Usually, the first sentence of such a paragraph is the **topic sentence**, which contains the paragraph's main idea. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support the main idea. Practice writing a solid formal paragraph with a topic sentence and several supporting sentences. Write your paragraph on the topic "My Best Day Ever."

Sweltering, Not Hot

- Even the best writers rely on obvious words. Practice mental flexibility by writing a paragraph describing a typical August afternoon without using the words *hot*, *humid*, *heat*, or *sun*.

Mean as a Snake

- **Similes and metaphors** are two ways of making comparisons. Similes compare things using the words *like* or *as* (*Angela is as sly as a fox.*) Metaphors do not use *like* or *as*; they imply that one thing “is” another (*All the world’s a stage*). Write a paragraph that contains three similes and two metaphors.

Igloo Living

- If you knew you were going to be banished to an igloo for the rest of your life, what five items would you take along? (Assume you would get all the food, water, heaters, and warm clothes you needed.) Write a paragraph about what you'd take, and why.

No One Needs Email

- A **thesis** is the main idea of a paper or essay; it must be something arguable. “*The Yellow Wallpaper* explores the role of women in society” is not a thesis, because no one could reasonably contradict it. “*The Yellow Wallpaper* blames the main character for her own madness” is a thesis, because someone could contradict it.
- Write a thesis on the topic “The Importance of Email.” The paragraph must make an arguable claim.

Inventing the New Checkers

- New board games come out all the time, but very few of them catch on. Describe a new board game that you think could be a big hit.

When I Was Your Age...

- Twenty years have passed, and your high school has invited you to be the keynote speaker at a graduation ceremony. Write a speech in which you give advice to the seniors and discuss what your own life has been like in the years since you've graduated.

Was that black cat crossing the street a foreshadowing of something bad?

- **Foreshadowing** is the technique of providing clues about what's to come in a the story without actually giving away the plot. A writer might use a storm to foreshadow a death, or a bizarre occurrence in nature to foreshadow a political revolution.
- Write a paragraph foreshadowing one of the following events: the inheritance of a fortune, the downfall of a major corporation, or the discovery of a crime.

Uniforms should be required...

- **Persuasive writing** tries to convince readers of something. Skilled persuasive writers can be convincing about any position, even one they don't believe in themselves.
- Try your hand at persuasive writing: Compose three paragraphs persuading your reader that every American teenager should be required to wear school uniforms.

After Soho House, It's Off to the Spa

- If you could be any celebrity for one day, who would you be? Write a paragraph explaining why you would want to be this person. Write a second paragraph about what you'd do if you got to be this person for a day.

I Hid During Snacktime

- If you're tired of conveying emotion with sentences like *Randy was frightened* or *Sandy was happy*, try describing body language: *Randy covered under his blanket* or *A grin lit up Sandy's face*, for example.
- Write a story about your first day of kindergarten and express the emotions you felt by describing your body language.

Love, Valor, Freewriting

- To **freewrite**, you must write *without stopping* for a designated period of time. While freewriting, don't pause to think about the perfect word or to get your thoughts in order. Don't even worry about spelling or punctuation. Just write whatever pops into your head.
- Freewrite for five minutes on the topic of love.

Angry as an Undertipped Waitress

- Some of the most effective **similes** and **metaphors** make unexpected comparisons. *Sly as a fox* is a bit of a cliché, so a reader's eyes might glaze over when she encounters it, but would notice a simile like *sly as a hungry ferret*.
- Write a paragraph that contains three clever, original comparisons.

Never Do Your Homework Ten Minutes Before Class

- Suppose you've been hired to write a book called *The Secrets of Brilliant Students*. Write a sample paragraph from the book.

Then I Took a Pretzel and...

- Imagine you fell down a mine shaft with nothing more than a pair of extra socks, some dental floss, a miniflashlight, a bag of pretzels and a set of keys. You managed to survive for two days and then freed yourself. In three to five paragraphs, tell the story of how you escaped. Try to create a suspenseful mood for your story.

Slurp, Crack, Lull

- Ready for some **onomatopoeia** action? Read the following sentences:
 - When Emily opened her soda, the sound was so loud that it woke her baby sister, who began to cry. Startled, Emily dropped her soda, which made a noise when it hit the floor.
- A few onomatopoeic words can spice up that boring paragraph. For example:
 - When Emily opened her soda, the *crack* was so loud that it woke her baby sister, who began to *screech*. Startled, Emily dropped her soda, which *burst* when it hit the floor.
- Now it's your turn. First, write five plain, nondescript sentences. Then make them more interesting by using onomatopoeic words.

Thailand, England, Australia?

- Where would you most like to go on vacation? Imagine that money is no object. Write a few paragraphs about where you'd go, and why.

Amanda Destroyed His Tree House

- Altering a word or two can completely change the meaning of a sentence. Rewrite the sentence below six times, each time changing two words. An example has been included for you.
 - Serge opened his birthday present.
 - Serge opened his cellar door.

Lottery Tickets Are Involved

- Imagine you're a gas station attendant and are really bored at work. What do you do to amuse yourself? Write an account of your tactics.

In My Humble Opinion, Your Facts Are Wrong

- **Fact** refers to something that can be proven true, while **opinion** refers to something a person believes or perceives. Think about the last movie you saw. Write three factual sentences about the movie. Then write three sentences that describe your opinions about the movie. If you were writing about *Old School*, for example, two of your sentences might read:
 - **FACT:** Many people really loved the movie *Old School*.
 - **OPINION:** *Old School* is one of the stupidest, most offensive movies ever made.

A Seat from Fenway, Elvis's Guitar

- If you had all the money in the world and could own any piece of memorabilia, what would you choose? Answer this question by writing a paragraph that has a topic sentence and at least four supporting sentences.

Mac and Cheese, Chips and Salsa

- In some newspapers and magazines, recipes are printed along with a little story that relates to the recipe. Write down the recipe for a dish you often make for yourself (even if it's just microwave popcorn), and then compose a brief story to go along with it.

Always Use Transitions

- **Transitions** are the sentences or words that aid readers in following the flow of your argument or point. Transitions can be used to:
 - **Show contrast:** Katie eats popcorn after school. In contrast, Brian eats cereal.
 - **Elaborate:** I love sneaking into movies. In addition, I try to steal candy while I'm there.
 - **Provide an example:** You can get many useful items at that store. For example, Patrick recently picked up a lava lamp and a bobblehead doll.
 - **Show results:** Manny ingested nothing but Red Bull and burgers every day for a month. As a result, he gained ten pounds.
 - **Show sequence:** The police arrested Bob at the party. Soon after, Harvard rescinded Bob's acceptance, and eventually Bob drifted into a life of crime.
- Come up with five sentences of your own, each one of which uses one of the kinds of transitions explained above.

Fear and Unhappiness

- In literature, **dystopias** are unhappy societies where people live in fear. The world described in George Orwell's *1984* is a classic dystopia.
- Come up with a fictional dystopia of your own and write a few paragraphs describing it. What makes it so terrible? What are its inhabitants scared of? What is everyday life like?

The Mysterious Egg

- Use the following sentences as the beginning of two different, very short stories:
 - Eve stared down at the egg in her hand. There was no other choice: she had to call F.B.I headquarters.
- One of your short stories should be serious, the other should be funny.

She Went Skydiving

- Choose something interesting that has happened to you in the past year, and write a story about it. Rather than writing in the first person “I”, write in the **third person** (using the pronoun “he” or “she”), and make yourself the protagonist of the story.

Introducing the New...

- Write a script for a TV commercial advertising a new product that, according to you, the world simply can't do without.