

ENGLISH STANDARDS OF LEARNING
ENHANCED SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

WRITING *LESSON PLANS*
Grade 8



Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Education
Richmond, Virginia
2004

WRITING Lesson Plan → Ruffling Feathers

Organizing Topic Composing and Revising

Related Standard(s) of Learning 6.6, 7.8, 8.7

Objective(s)

- The student will practice brainstorming to generate ideas for writing topics.

Materials needed

- Chalkboard or overhead projector and transparency markers

Lesson procedure

1. Lead the students in a discussion of the writing process, explaining that first step is to generate an idea about which to write. Ask students how one gets and organizes ideas for writing, and list their suggestions on the board (e.g., webbing, clustering, sketching, listing, cubing, quick-writes).
2. Model a technique, called “Ruffling Feathers,” for generating ideas for persuasive and opinion papers: the teacher lists groups of people on the board and then asks students for some generalizations that would ruffle the feathers of each group. These generalizations are topics that could be used for a persuasive paper. For example, ask students to call out generalizations that are guaranteed to ruffle feathers of the following groups:
 - Dog owners: (People should be allowed to live in a dog-free zone.)
 - Mothers of kindergartners: (Kindergartners don’t need a teacher. They just need some toys, some snacks, and a naptime rug.)
 - Skateboarders: (Skateboarding isn’t really a sport. Anyone can do it.)
 - Hungry restaurant customers: _____
 - Musicians: _____
 - SUV owners: _____

Source

- Barry Lane and Gretchen Bernabei. *Why We Run with Scissors*.

WRITING Lesson Plan → Explaining a Process

Organizing Topic Composing and Revising

Related Standard(s) of Learning 6.6, 7.8, 8.7

Objective(s)

- The student will write a “how to” paragraph, using multiple steps.

Materials needed

- An example of an expository paragraph explaining a multi-step process.
- Powdered drink mix
- Pitcher, water, and ice
- Sugar, if needed
- Measuring cup
- Spoon and glasses
- Chalkboard or overhead projector and transparency markers

Lesson procedure

1. Lead a discussion about expository writing, and give examples of expository writing that explains a process.
2. Demonstrate a task that requires several steps to complete, for example, how to make a drink from powdered drink mix.
3. While demonstrating the process, stop after each step and ask students to explain the step. Write and number the step on the board (or have a student do the recording on the board), as follows:
 - 1 — Gather the drink mix package, a spoon, sugar, ice, measuring cup, and a 2-quart pitcher.
 - 2 — Carefully open the drink mix package at the top, being careful not to spill any of the contents.
 - 3 — Pour the drink mix into the empty pitcher.
 - 4 — Measure one cup of sugar, and pour it into the pitcher.
 - 5 — Measure and add one cup of water.
 - 6 — Stir the drink mix into the water until all of the powder is dissolved.
 - 7 — Add ice cubes.
 - 8 — Add additional water until the 2-quart pitcher is full.
 - 9 — Pour drink into glasses.
 - 10 — Enjoy a refreshing drink.
4. Have the students choose a multi-step process about which to write, such as:
 - How to eat a fruit roll up (or any sandwich-type cookie) “properly.”
 - How to get your dog (or cat) to go outside.
 - How to convince a parent to let you stay up a half-hour past your usual bedtime.Instruct the students to number and write down the steps for their chosen task.
6. Follow this lesson with the next lesson on using transitions in writing, in which the numbers of the steps are replaced by appropriate transitions and a paragraph is written in standard paragraph format.

WRITING Lesson Plan → Adding Transitions

Organizing Topic Composing and Revising

Related Standard(s) of Learning 6.6, 7.8, 8.7

Objective(s)

- The student will add transitions in an expository paragraph.

Materials needed

- Chalkboard or overhead projector and transparency markers
- Transparency of the 10-steps-to-making-powdered-drink-mix list from the previous lesson

Lesson procedure

1. Display on the board or overhead the 10 steps to making powdered drink mix.
2. Lead students in a discussion about the use of transitions in writing, stressing that transition words are words dealing with time order.
3. Have the students replace the numbers of the steps with some transition words that are used in expository paragraphs, rewriting the list into an expository paragraph in proper format. Words to use include the following:

<i>afterwards</i>	<i>in the beginning</i>	<i>finally</i>	<i>after</i>
<i>secondly</i>	<i>at last</i>	<i>first</i>	<i>when</i>
<i>then</i>	<i>later</i>	<i>afterwards</i>	<i>at the same time</i>
<i>meanwhile</i>	<i>before</i>	<i>during</i>	

WRITING Lesson Plan → Creating Mood

Organizing Topic Composing and Revising

Related Standard(s) of Learning 8.7

Objective(s)

- The student will be able to identify, select, and use words that create a consistent mood within a piece of writing.

Materials needed

- Pictures of three houses: a fancy and attractive house; a modest, nondescript house; and a derelict, “haunted” old mansion
- Moods Organizer in transparency and handout forms (see step 3 below)
- Overhead projector

Lesson procedure

- Introduce students to the idea of mood by discussing music used in movies. Ask students to describe typical background music used when something scary is going to happen, when there is danger, when there is a love scene, or when something funny is about to happen. Students may realize that in movies, the type of “mood” music used in a scene can change the mood of the scene entirely. They may not realize, however, that language can be used to create the same effect.
- Show students the pictures of the three houses. Read the following description of a house that contains little description and does not suggest a mood:

The House

(objective or no mood)

While Charlie and I were **walking**, we came upon an **empty house** that was partially **out of sight** behind **trees** and **bushes**. We **went** inside and **looked** around. The **wind blew** through the house. We went up the **stairs**, and they **squeaked** as we put our weight on them. We found an upstairs bedroom whose **door** was partially ajar. We went in and found it was empty except for a **broken mirror** on the wall.

- Using the sample Moods Organizer shown below, create a Moods Organizer with the center column filled in from “The House,” and the left and right columns blank. Display the organizer on the overhead, and fill in details as the students make suggestions to create a positive or a negative mood for the piece.
- Divide the class in half, and have one group use the details from the positive column to revise “The House” to have a positive mood. Have the other group do the same to create a piece with negative mood.

Example of completed Moods Organizer based on the three pictures of the three different houses.

Moods Organizer		
Positive (happy, sunny mood)	Objective (no specific mood)	Negative (frightening, threatening mood)
hiking	walking	climbing over sharp, jagged rocks
new house under construction	empty house	abandoned, run-down estate
peeking	out of sight	hidden
flowering dogwood trees	trees	oak trees burnt by countless lightning strikes
brilliant red azaleas	bushes	strangled by ivy
skipped across the threshold	went	disappeared
peeped	looked	stared

breeze	wind blew	blast of cold air raged
sturdy wooden ladder	stairs	rotten timbers and missing steps
soft	squeaked	groaned
unlocked door	door	heavy metal door with a rusted, unforgiving lock
cracked	broken mirror	shattered and splintered

The House

(positive mood)

While Charlie and I were **hiking** one sunny afternoon, we found a **new house under construction**. We didn't see it at first because it was only **peeking** out from behind the **flowering dogwood trees** and the **brilliant red azaleas**. We **skipped across the threshold** ready to explore. We **peeped** around. There were no windows, so the **breeze** filled the house with the sweet perfume of the flowers outside. We climbed to the second floor on a **sturdy wooden ladder**, as no stairs had yet been constructed yet. We opened an **unlocked door** and saw only a **cracked** mirror lying on the floor ready to adorn the room.

The House

(negative mood)

Charlie and I lost the path we were on and hated to admit that we were lost. We were **climbing over sharp, jagged rocks**. We saw an **abandoned, run-down estate hidden** behind **oak trees burnt by countless lightning strikes** and **strangled by ivy** that blocked out most of the sunlight. Despite its uninviting appearance we **disappeared** inside and **stared** at the **charred** walls and **stained** wood floor. A **blast of cold air raged** through the room quite unexpectedly. We carefully climbed the stairs that had **rotten timbers** and **missing steps** that **groaned** as we put our weight on them. Upstairs we banged against the **heavy metal door** with a **rusty, unforgiving lock** until it opened and found a mirror that was **shattered** and **splintered** lying on the floor.

WRITING Lesson Plan → Identifying Point of View

Organizing Topic Usage and Mechanics

Related Standard(s) of Learning 8.8

Objective(s)

- The student will identify point of view in writing.
- The student will understand that writing should be in a consistent point of view.

Materials needed

- Four familiar children’s books (see step 2 below)

Lesson procedure

1. Define *point of view* in writing, and give examples of two points of view:
 - **First person:** It me, it’s all about me. This is what I did. This is how I understand it. This is what I saw happen.
 - **Third person omniscient:** The narrator knows everything about every character and everything that happened in the past and will happen in the future. The narrator is the “Eye in the Sky.”
2. Give groups of students several examples of familiar books, and ask the groups to determine the point of view of the story in each book. Children’s books, such as the following, could be used to provide examples:
 - *The Berenstain Bears’ Moving Day*
Years ago, when Brother Bear was an only cub, they lived in a hillside cave halfway up Great Bear Mountain at the far edge of Bear Country. It was a comfortable cave, cool in summer and cozy in winter. And while it wasn’t perfect—it tended to be dark and it dripped and trickled a bit—it was home, and the Bear family was quite happy there. (third person)
 - *There’s an Alligator under My Bed*
There used to be an alligator under my bed. When it was time to go to sleep, I had to be very careful because I knew he was there. But whenever I looked, he hid,...or something. (first person)
 - *The Ugly Duckling*
As the shell cracked open, out popped an odd little creature that didn’t look at all like the other little ducklings who were quacking nearby. In the barnyard, the other ducks were quite mean to the duckling, always pecking at him and chasing him away. (third person)
 - *Curious George Goes to the Hospital*
This is George. He lived with his friend, the man with the yellow hat. He was a good little monkey, but he was always curious. Today George was curious about the big box on the man’s desk. (third person)
3. Lead a discussion about the points of view used in writing and the effect point of view has on the reader’s understanding of the story.

WRITING Lesson Plan → Identifying the Verb

Organizing Topic Usage and Mechanics

Related Standard(s) of Learning 6.7, 7.9, 8.8

Objective(s)

- The student will identify the verb in the sentence.

Materials needed

- Overhead projector and transparency markers
- List of complete sentences

Lesson procedure

- Display the question, “Where’s the verb?” on the overhead. Suggest to students that a useful technique for locating the verb in a sentence is make the sentence negative by adding *does not* (*do not*) or *did not*. The verb phrase usually will follow the word *not*, for example: “Simon tried to put the bike in the garage.” “Simon did not **try** to put the bike in the garage.”
- Provide practice by giving students sentences and asking them to use this technique to locate the verb. Some examples are:

Sentence	Sentence with <i>does not</i> (<i>do not</i>) or <i>did not</i> added	Word following <i>not</i> is the verb
Jane lost her cat	Jane <i>did not</i> lose her cat.	<i>Lose</i> follows <i>not</i> ; <i>lose</i> is the verb (in its past-tense form, <i>lost</i>).
They hiked a mile	They <i>did not</i> hike a mile.	<i>Hike</i> follows <i>not</i> ; <i>hike</i> is the verb.
Susan and Marie eat candy.	Susan and Marie <i>do not</i> eat candy.	<i>Eat</i> follows <i>not</i> ; <i>eat</i> is the verb.

This verb search technique is a suggestion from the National Council of Teachers of English in their article “Some Questions and Answers about Grammar.”

WRITING Lesson Plan → Combining and Diagramming Complex Sentences

Organizing Topic Usage and Mechanics

Related Standard(s) of Learning 8.8

Objective(s)

- The student will identify and diagram complex sentences.
- The student will edit writing so that it contains complex sentences.
- The student will use sentence diagramming as a graphic organizer to edit writing to achieve sentence variety.

Materials needed

- Overhead projector and transparency markers
- Transparency of diagrammed sentences
- Grammar book with examples of diagramming
- Internet site for diagramming sentences, such as <http://www.netmagic.net/~taz/files/diagrams.pdf>
- Power Point presentation for diagramming sentences, such as that found at <http://ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/>
- Example of writing from student writing or a grammar book and containing numerous simple sentences

Lesson procedure

1. Read a paragraph containing a series of simple sentences. Lead students in a discussion of the impact of the writing. Students will probably say that it is boring or babyish.
2. Show diagramming of simple sentences on the overhead to show students the repeating pattern of such simple sentences.
3. Ask students to combine the sentences, using subordinate conjunctions, such as *because, since, whereas, after, before, until, when, whenever, while, although, unless, and if*. An example is the combining of the two simple sentences, “I eat breakfast.” and “I am hungry in the morning.” into the complex sentence “I eat breakfast because I am hungry in the morning.”
4. Diagram the resulting complex sentences on the overhead.
5. Provide examples of simple sentences that can be made into complex sentences. Have students rewrite the simple sentences as complex sentences and then diagram them.

WRITING Test Items from the Virginia Standards of Learning Assessment

Released writing test items can be accessed at <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Assessment/releasedtests.html>. Reviewing these assessment items and using them in the classroom will allow educators and students to become familiar with the types of questions being asked as well as the testing format.

Teachers should also review the electronic format with students to acquaint them with the tools and functionality of online testing. Released writing online testing can be accessed at http://etest.ncs.com/Customers/Virginia/pat_home.htm.