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4-30-2014

# Transferable Writing Strategies, Individualizing Learning

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### Recommended Citation

Wilson, Carol B.; Kumar, Neena; and Kirby, Lauren, "Transferable Writing Strategies, Individualizing Learning" (2014). *Arthur Vining Davis High Impact Fellows Projects*. Paper 25.

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**Arthur Vining Davis High Impact Fellows Program**  
**Wofford College**  
**September 2013—March 2014**

## **Transferable Writing Strategies, Individualizing Learning**

### **Proposal by**

**Neena Kumar: Legacy Charter School Teacher Mentor**

**Lauren Kirby: Wofford Student Fellow**

**Carol Wilson: Wofford Faculty Mentor**

Neena Kumar is a Writing Strategies teacher at Legacy Charter School in Greenville, South Carolina. She works with 3 classes of 12 students each, whose post-high-school goals are often community college or technical school, to improve their writing to equip them for college-level writing. Because of her relatively small class size, Neena is able to individualize instruction in ways that teachers of classes of 25 students cannot. Yet she wants to develop common understandings and approaches to writing that will benefit her students as well as students in other classes in other schools. Her interest in the AVD High Impact Fellows Program stems from a desire to enable her students to follow a writing process that allows them to progress independently in their areas of learning need within a small group context.

Lauren Kirby is a junior at Wofford College from Sherman, Texas. She is majoring in English while completing the Teacher Education Program. Lauren is a member of the Wofford women's basketball team and hopes to one day coach and teach high school English. Her interest in the High Impact Fellows Program stems from the opportunity to collaborate with educators on writing strategies that can be used in the classroom.

Carol Wilson is an Associate Professor of English at Wofford College. In that role, she teaches 100- and 200-level English courses that emphasize reading, writing, analysis, and speaking skills required for college-level work. Her upper-level teaching includes courses in modernist novel, European drama of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, teaching of adolescent literature (along with lesson and unit plans), and business and professional writing. She offers academic support services as the Coordinator of Academic Advising, coordinating information for general education advisors for first and second year students. She also coaches students on personal management, study strategies, and strategies for stronger academic performance.

Our group's hope is to develop a unit of writing instruction that invites a variety of specific instructional strategies, so that she can encourage individual students to meet their potential and transfer their knowledge from project to project, from class to class, and from high school to college.

**Goal:** To create a 10-day unit of instruction for Neena to use in her classroom in January 2014 that accomplishes several objectives:

- Create one unit that guides students through writing one specific piece of writing.
- Describe a 4-step, transferable writing process that Neena can use in teaching her class and that students can use in writing independently.

- Find and develop instructional strategies that enhance students' abilities to write effectively for audience and purpose.
- Find and develop multiple activities and handouts that will allow Neena to vary group and individualized instruction and learning.
- Find and develop strategies that students can use in independent writing throughout the year, across different writing contexts.
- Create a bibliography of resources that Neena and others can use in further development of writing strategies for high school students.
- Consider the following ideas in developing the unit and bibliography:
  - Ways to foster individualize and differentiate learning and writing
  - Varying instructional approaches to meet differing learning needs
  - Developing different writing assignments to encourage students to transfer learning from one project to another.
  - Including low stakes writing that requires little grading, but that affirms progress and success

**Process:** Our group met several times on Wofford's campus to plan Neena's lesson and to discuss resources that would be most helpful. In January 2014, on separate occasions, Lauren and Carol visited Neena's classroom, to meet her students and to see her teach. The visits emphasized for us all that while Neena's small class size is unusual, all students need a clear understanding of the writing process that they can use to structure their writing in different contexts, for different disciplines.

**Neena's original description of the process she uses** to guide students' writing emphasizes a clear process of writing; however, she wanted to define an overall structure that students will find easy to remember and follow. She will incorporate much of these approaches into that process.

List what is given/available/known to you

Understand what is being asked/what is the task/ what is the goal.

1. Select a relevant and attainable task.
2. Know what is the end result.
3. Ask, "What is the purpose of the task?"
4. Ask, "Who is the audience?"

Outline existing information/ Summarize what is available

Identify information you need in terms of research

Create a list of resources you will consult

Make a timetable and decide how will you divide your time in order to get to the goal.

Research the selected topic

Collect and organize information

Use a variety of resources to gather information

Build the product

- write report/letter/story/response
- Make video/powerpoint/slide show
- Draw graphic organizer/poster/map/collage

## Revise and Reflect

- Strengths and weaknesses of the finished product.
- List takeaway pointers for next drafts

## The writing process developed for a 10-day unit

The highlighted topics 1-4 incorporate Neena's existing practices (included here in *italics*) and will organize the resources we have gathered. A great deal of Neena's original process appropriately emphasizes brainstorming and idea development. Our plan is to give students 4 broad, easy-to-remember steps in the writing process: Generate ideas, Draft, Revise ideas, Edit. In this project, we have found and included several graphic organizers that to help her students generate ideas and create the first draft. Then, we have include guided readings and an error log to assist students in editing their work.

### 1. **Generate Ideas:** Brainstorming activities: 2 days

- Vocabulary development and guidance
- Oral collaboration among students
- Individual note-taking and planning by students

This section includes Neena's original directions for students:

*List what is given/available/known to you*

*Understand what is being asked/what is the task/ what is the goal.*

1. *Select a relevant and attainable task.*
2. *Know what is the end result.*
3. *Ask, "What is the purpose of the task?"*
4. *Ask, "Who is the audience?"*

*Outline existing information/ Summarize what is available*

*Identify information you need in terms of research*

*Create a list of resources you will consult*

*Make a timetable and decide how will you divide your time in order to get to the goal.*

*Research the selected topic*

*Collect and organize information*

*Use a variety of resources to gather information*

### 2. **Draft:** 3 days

- Writing in sections: introduction, body, conclusion
- Sometimes the students work for 1 day on each section.
- This section could be extended, to allow for intensive paragraph work in the body.

This section includes Neena's original instructions for students:

*Build the product*

- *Write report/letter/story/response*
- *Make video/powerpoint/slide show*
- *Draw graphic organizer/poster/map/collage*

### 3. **Revise ideas** (big picture revision): 3-4 days

- Focus on organization, ideas, evidence, explanation
- Include 1-on-1 conferences with teacher
- Include peer editing

Included: guided readings (for individual writers and peer editors), response sheet from the teacher to use in revision

This section includes Neena's original instructions for students:

*Revise and Reflect*

- *Strengths and weaknesses of the finished product.*
- *List takeaway pointers for next drafts*

4. **Edit** to produce final draft to go in the portfolio: 1 day
- Prepare the paper to be typed for submission later
  - Evaluate with rubric

This stage could be extended to allow careful attention to specific needs: for example, spelling, punctuation, or transition words.

## Assessment

Our group created a short-term assessment of the one unit that Neena implemented in February, 2014. Because the impact of the unit should transfer across the school year, we are much more interested in the long-term, assessments that would reach across the semester or year than in assessment of the initial unit. The descriptions of those possibilities are options for others to try. Neena will rely upon a combination of the 3, when she begins the 2014-15 school year's instruction.

### Short term, first unit assessment

As the unit opens, students will write a 250-300 word paper on "how I write papers," describing their writing process, with great reassurance that they will not be penalized for an honest description of their writing papers in one sitting, or with no revision or editing. Neena will read each essay looking to note how many students mention the steps of our writing process:

1. Generating ideas
2. Creating a first draft
3. Revising for organization, ideas, and content
4. Revising and editing on the paragraph and sentence level, for phrasing, punctuation, and grammar

At the end of the unit, students will be asked to write a 250-300 word paper about what they changed or learned in this one paper. Neena will use the same 4 point list to see if student awareness of the writing process has changed.

### Semester or year-long assessment: possibilities

Since our project runs from October, 2013, to March 2014, these are possibilities, all holding interest for Neena in a year-long course.

1. *Error log over semester:* Students will keep an error log for each paper, in which they notice the frequency of pre-determined errors in their work. The goal will be to reduce the number of errors of each kind.
2. *Portfolio over semester.* Neena already has her class create a portfolio, and she may decide that it's a good long-term assessment vehicle. The Portfolio would include final versions (and perhaps drafts) of each paper written over the term, along with a metacognitive essay about how process for writing has changed, or what the student has learned. This metacognitive essay could also be shaped as a letter to next year's class on the topic of "What you need to know to write well." In this instance, they become teachers in their writing to next class and can provide models for use with the next class.
3. *COMPASS test success.* At the end of the school year, students will take the Compass test. Neena could rely upon earlier testing, either standardized or her own practice Compass, to compare with the final scores on this test as a measure of learning in grammar and mechanics.

## Neena Kumar's implementation of the plan

**Assignment:** Write a five-paragraph essay for the school news magazine

### Schedule of activities:

#### Day 1

Pre assessment:

The students are given a free writing assignment.

“You are given a writing task. Describe in complete sentences, the steps you would follow to turn in a complete publish worthy task.

Students spend fifteen minutes writing their response and then share it with the group. We generate a list and I go over the holes that might be there in their list, justifying each step.

#### Day 2

The students are invited to browse through the recent issues of magazines. (I subscribe to *Upfront*, *Time*, *Ideas and Discoveries*, *Mental Floss*, *Sports Illustrated*, *National Geographic* and *Popular Science*)

They are asked to browse and see what catches their eye in terms of stories. They spend thirty minutes browsing and then share with class the stories that caught their eye.

A mini-lesson on the different kinds of articles that can be found in a newspaper includes

**News articles:** These are found at the front of a newspaper. They inform readers about things that are happening in the world or in the local area.

**Feature articles:** These explore news stories in more depth. They may be triggered by a story that has been in the news for a while. The purpose of a feature is not just to tell you what has happened, but also to explore or analyze the reasons why.

**Editorials, columns and opinion pieces:** These are pieces by 'personality' writers. They might be there to inform (because the writer's expert opinion is valued), or they might be there to entertain (because the writer has a comic or interesting way of describing everyday life).

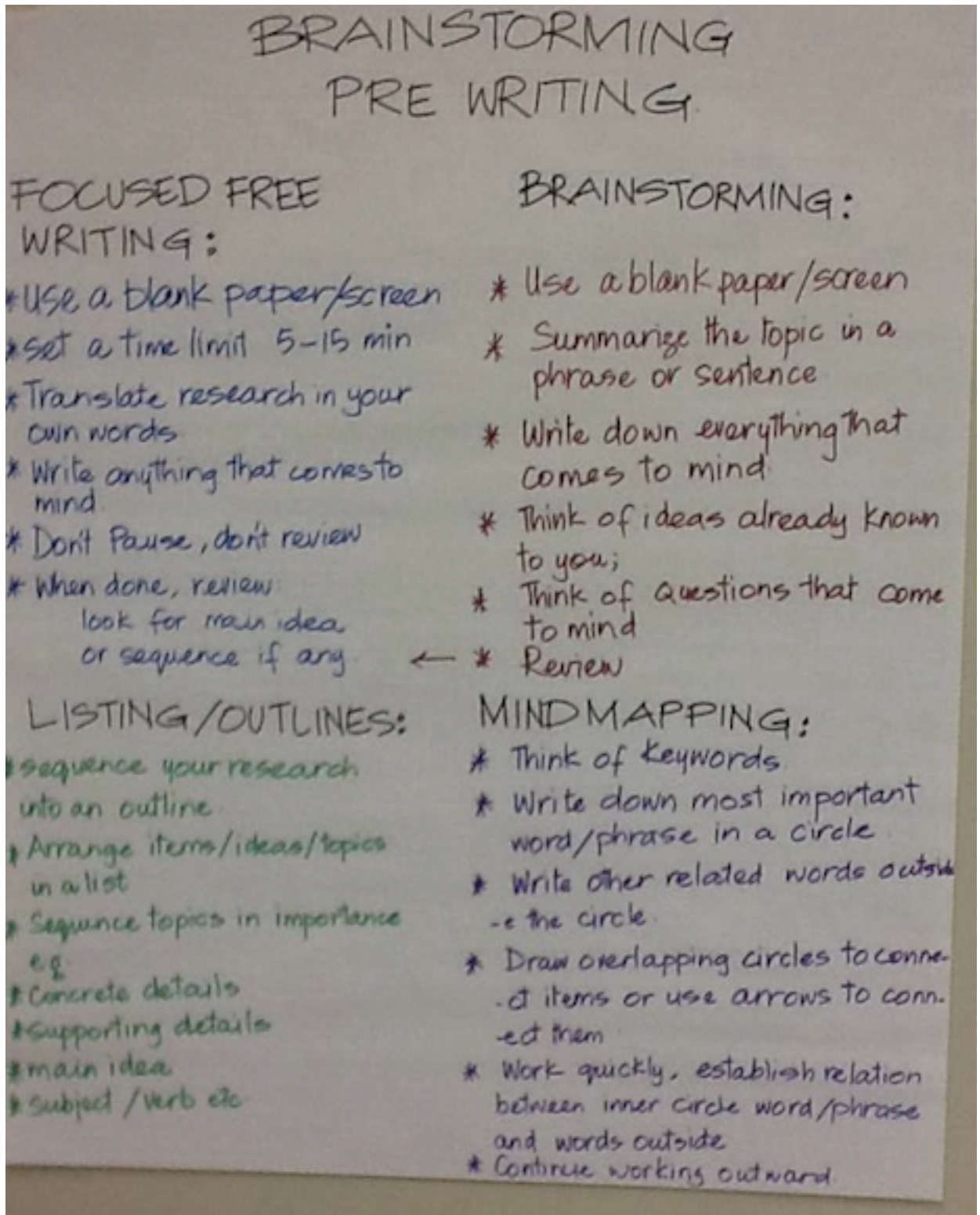
(Above information excerpted from Bitesize BBC website)

Now the students are asked to decide, which kind of article do they want to write? They submit their ideas/ title and what they would like to cover in it, how long do they think it will be and how would they go about accomplishing it.

## Day 3

The students are asked to do a Prewrite/Brainstorming session.

They are given a minilesson on ways to brainstorm or pre write. Based on the list that Lauren came up with, I made a quick guide line for the students. I am attaching a picture of the guide line: Picture 1

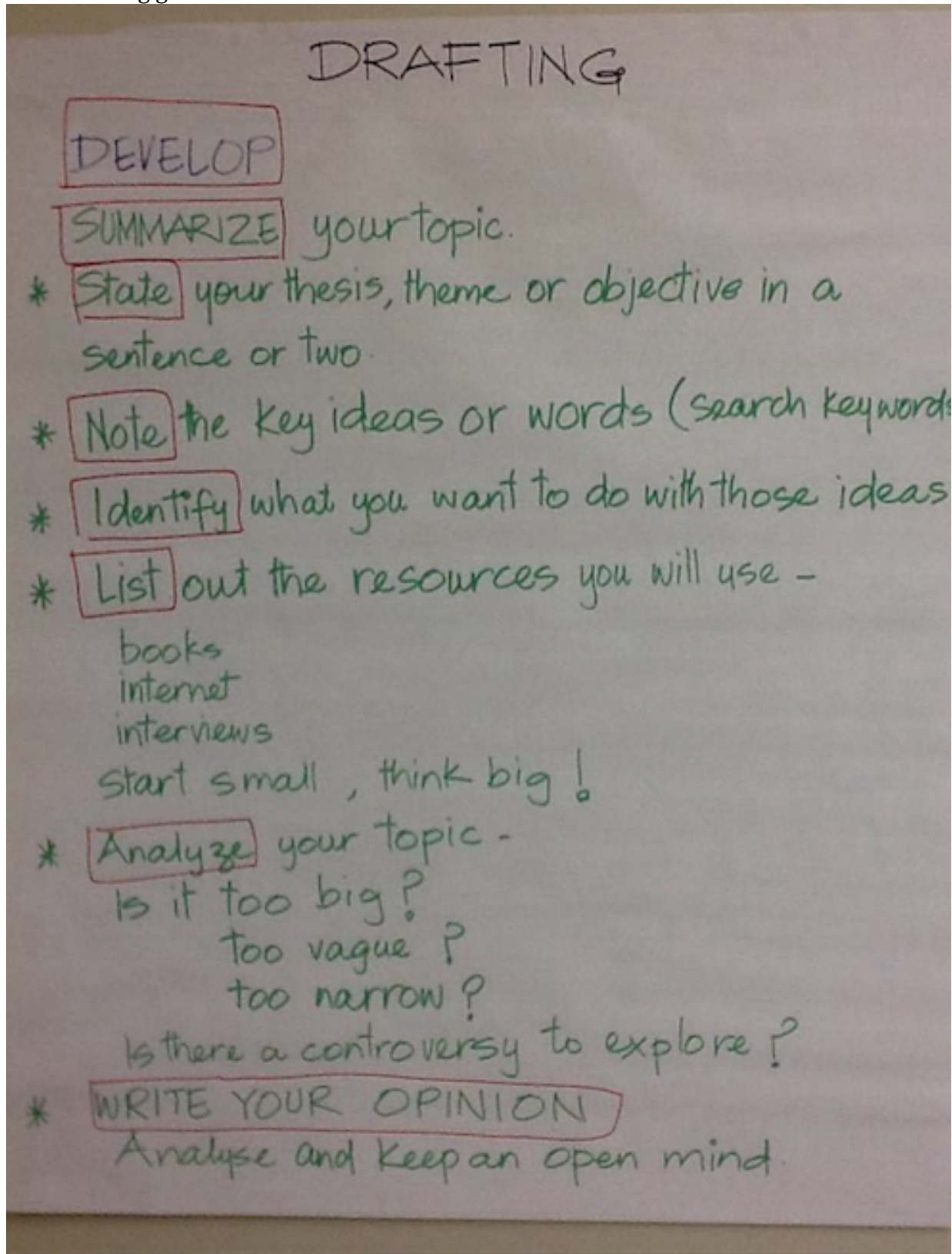




## Day 4

The students are asked to start thinking how they are planning to organize their ideas in the 5 paragraph organizer. Once an outline is established, a mini-lesson on drafting follows.

The following guideline is created and shared with the students



The image shows a piece of paper with handwritten guidelines for drafting. The title 'DRAFTING' is written at the top. Below it, the word 'DEVELOP' is boxed. The first step is 'SUMMARIZE your topic.' followed by four bullet points: '\* State your thesis, theme or objective in a sentence or two.', '\* Note the key ideas or words (search keywords)', '\* Identify what you want to do with those ideas', and '\* List out the resources you will use -' followed by a list of resources: 'books', 'internet', and 'interviews'. Below the list is the phrase 'Start small, think big!'. The next step is '\* Analyze your topic -' followed by three questions: 'Is it too big?', 'too vague?', and 'too narrow?'. Below these is the question 'Is there a controversy to explore?'. The final step is '\* WRITE YOUR OPINION' followed by the instruction 'Analyze and keep an open mind.'

# DRAFTING

**DEVELOP**

**SUMMARIZE** your topic.

- \* **State** your thesis, theme or objective in a sentence or two.
- \* **Note** the key ideas or words (search keywords)
- \* **Identify** what you want to do with those ideas
- \* **List** out the resources you will use -
  - books
  - internet
  - interviewsStart small, think big!
- \* **Analyze** your topic -
  - Is it too big?
  - too vague?
  - too narrow?Is there a controversy to explore?
- \* **WRITE YOUR OPINION**  
Analyze and keep an open mind.

The next two days are allowed for research, drafting and organizing the first draft. In these days, a mini-lesson on how to write a topic sentence and weave the main idea into the same and what it means to have paragraph unity are taught and modeled. The students bring in their first draft by the day 5

### **Day 5**

#### **Peer editing:**

Each student is provided with a guided reading response and a peer's first draft. They are asked to read and edit for spelling, main idea and organization. (one of Carol's Guided Response Sheets was used in the test lesson.)

### **Day 6**

#### **Revise**

The students revise and type and email their revised version. I start conferences, giving one on one edits and feedback on each one's writing.

### **By Day 10**

The students type their final drafts after incorporating the edits and suggestions and turn in the final draft. The final draft is graded on Ideas, Organization, Word Choice and Sentence Variety,

## Resources

Bean, John C. *Engaging Ideas: the Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking, and Active Learning in the Classroom*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2011.

Burke, Jim. *The Common Core Companion: The Standards Decoded, Grades 9-12: What They Say, What They Mean, How to Teach Them*. New York: Corwin, 2013.

Cheatham Hill School. "Graphic Organizers."  
<http://www.cobbk12.org/Cheathamhill/LFS%20Update/Graphic%20Organizers.htm>

Dunnellon Middle School. "Graphic Organizers."  
[http://www.marion.k12.fl.us/schools/dms/extra/file/Story\\_Map\\_Character%20-%20Graphic%20Organizer.pdf](http://www.marion.k12.fl.us/schools/dms/extra/file/Story_Map_Character%20-%20Graphic%20Organizer.pdf)

Curriculum Associates. "The Write! Place." [http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm)

Graf, Gerald; Cathy Berkenstein; Russel Durst. *"They Say/I Say": The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing with Readings*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Norton, 2012.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. "GreatSource iWrite. "Graphic Organizers for Narrative Writing."  
<http://greatsource.info/iwrite/educators/enarrgraphorg.html>

Kirby, Dan. *Inside Out: Strategies for Teaching Writing*. New York: Heinemann, 2003.

National Council of Teachers of English. "ReadWriteThink." <http://www.readwritethink.org/>.

Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

South Carolina Department of Education. *Common Core State Standards*.  
[http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/190/documents/CCSSI\\_ELASStandards.pdf](http://ed.sc.gov/agency/programs-services/190/documents/CCSSI_ELASStandards.pdf)

Study Guides and Strategies. <http://www.studygs.net/writing/prewriting.htm>.

Urbanski, Cynthia D. *Using the Workshop Approach in the High School English Classroom: Modeling Effective Writing, Reading, and Thinking Strategies for Student Success*. New York: Corwin, 2005

Web English Teacher. <http://www.webenglishteacher.com>.

**Generate Ideas (GI)**  
**Handouts and Resources**

## Four exercises in prewriting:

<http://www.studygs.net/writing/prewriting.htm>

### Focused Free writing

1. **Use a blank paper or computer screen** and set a time limit of 5 - 15 minutes
2. **Summarize the topic in a phrase or sentence;** generate a free flow of thought
3. **Write anything that comes to mind**, whether on topic or off, for the period of time you chose,
4. **Don't pause.** Don't stop.  
Don't rush; work quickly
5. **Don't review** what you have written until you have finished
6. **At the end of your time**, refer back to the beginning:  
Rephrase the initial topic  
Repeat a word, phrase, or important thought or emotion that makes sense.
7. **Review:**  
Are there words or ideas you can grab onto for the topic?  
Is there a main idea to this sequence of ideas?

### Listing and outlines

This is a more structured and sequential overview of your research to date. You may also outline to organize topics built from free writing, brainstorming, or mind mapping:

1. Arrange items or topics, usually without punctuation or complete sentences
2. List topics and phrases them in a grammatically similar or parallel structure (subjects, verbs, etc.)
3. Sequence topics in importance, defining what "level" of importance they are. Items of equal importance are at the same level

### Brainstorming

1. **Use a blank paper or computer screen** and set a time limit of 5 - 15 minutes
2. **Summarize the topic in a phrase or sentence;**  
generate a free flow of thought
3. **Write down everything** that comes to mind to generate a free flow of thought:
  - o **Think of ideas** related to this topic, the crazier the better: be wild and amuse yourself; eliminate nothing
  - o **Make up questions and answers** about the topic, no matter how strange: Why am I doing this? What could be interesting about this to me? Why don't I like this? What color is it? What would my friend say about it?
4. **Review:**  
are there words or ideas you can grab onto for the topic?  
Is there a main idea within this sequence of ideas?

(continues on next page)

## Mind mapping

1. Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words
2. Take a pencil (you'll be erasing!) and a blank (non-lined) big piece of paper or use a blackboard and (colored) chalk
3. **Write down the most important word or short phrase or symbol in the center.**  
Think about it; circle it.
4. **Write other important words outside the circle.**  
Draw over-lapping circles to connect items, or use arrows to connect them  
(think of linking pages in a web site)  
Leave white space to grow your map for
  - further development
  - explanations
  - action items
5. **Work quickly** without analyzing your work
6. **Edit this first phase**  
Think about the relation of outside items to the center,  
Erase and replace and shorten words for these key ideas  
Relocate important items closer to each other for better organization  
Use color to organize information  
Link concepts with words to clarify the relationship
7. **Continue working outward**  
Freely and quickly add other key words and ideas (you can always erase!)  
Think weird: tape pages together to expand your map; break boundaries  
Develop in directions the topic takes you--don't bet limited by the size of the paper  
As you expand your map, tend to become more specific or detailed

LINK: <http://www.studygs.net/writing/prewriting.htm>

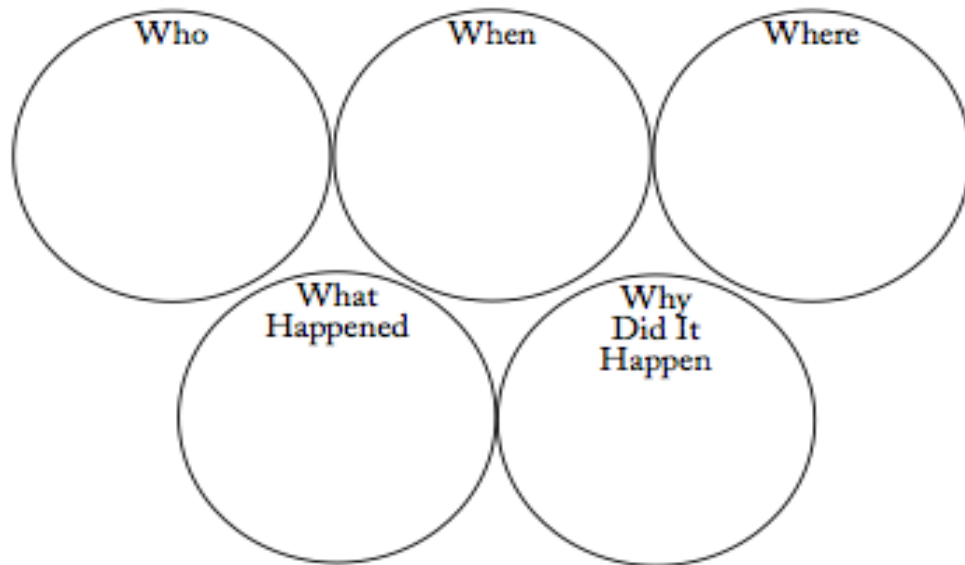
## GI: 5 Ws Diagram

Curriculum Associates. "The Write! Place." [http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm)

### WRITE! **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Ws Diagram

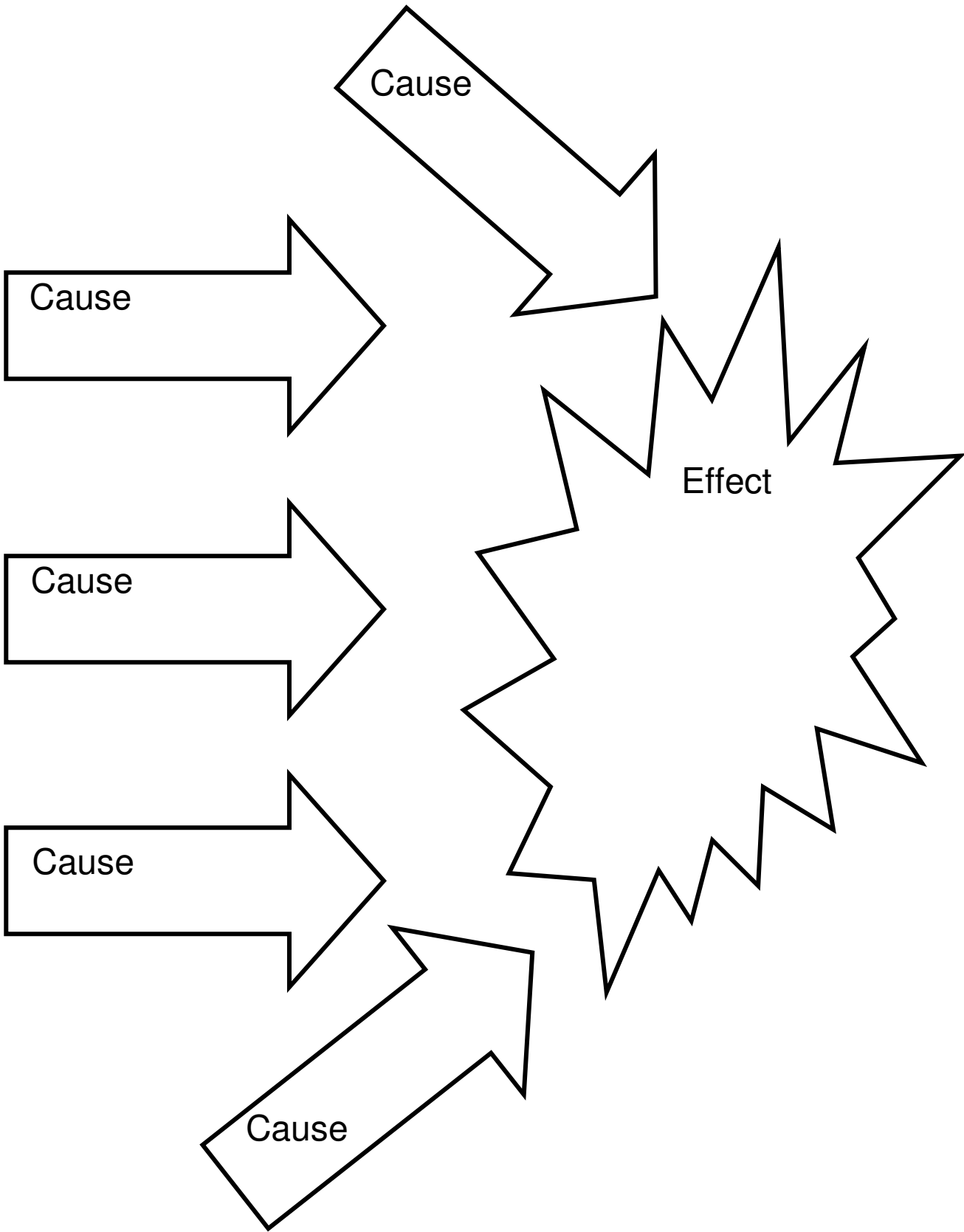


# GI: Cause and Effect

[http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm)

## Cause and Effect

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## GI: Chronological Narrative

# Chronological Narrative

**Directions:** Planning your narrative is easy.

Step 1: Fill out the 5 W's Chart.

Step 2: Write 4 or more events from beginning to end.

<b>When?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>What Happened?</b>	<b>Why it Happened?</b>	<b>How It Happened?</b>
<b>Where?</b>				1.  2.  3.  4.

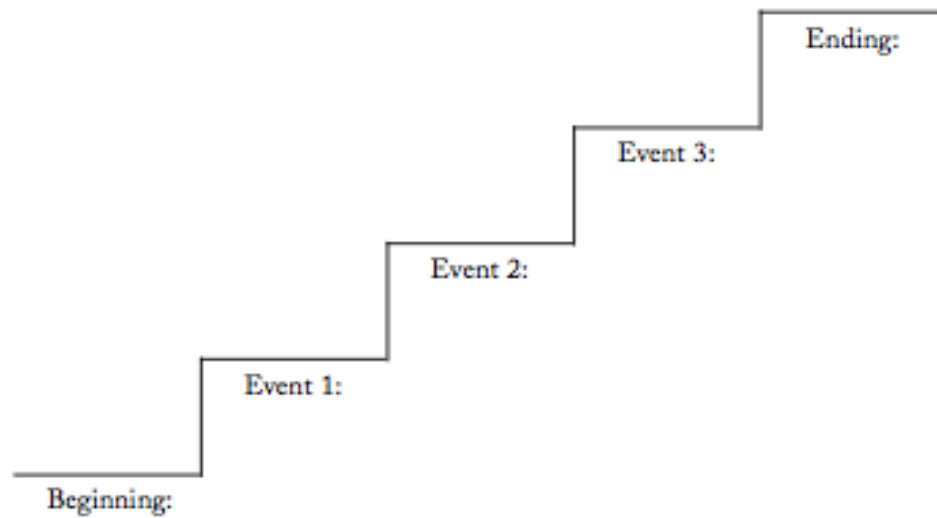
# Comparison Matrix


## **GI: Sequence Steps**

# WRITE! **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Sequence Steps

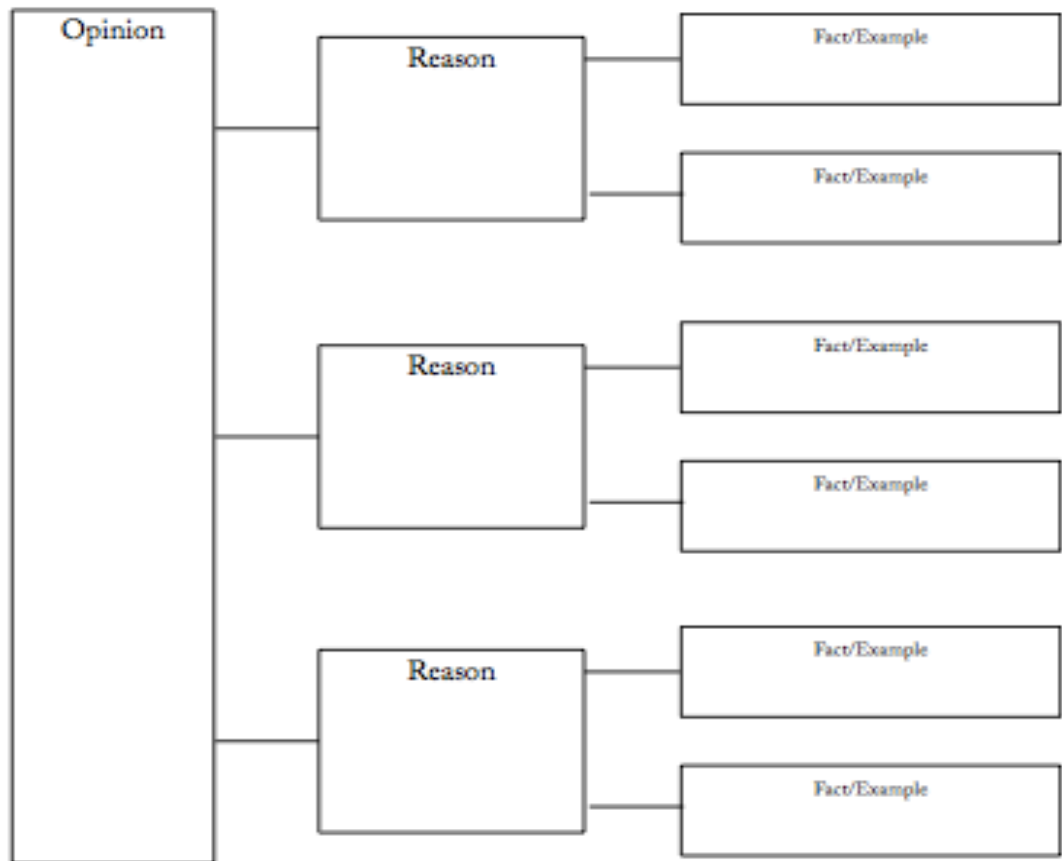


# GI: Reasons and Facts Diagram

## WRITE! **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Reasons and Facts Diagram



[http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/PDF\\_C-E/PDF\\_Opinions/reasonsFactsDiagram.pdf](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/PDF_C-E/PDF_Opinions/reasonsFactsDiagram.pdf)

## GI: Story Pyramid

[http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm)

# Story Pyramid

.....

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions:

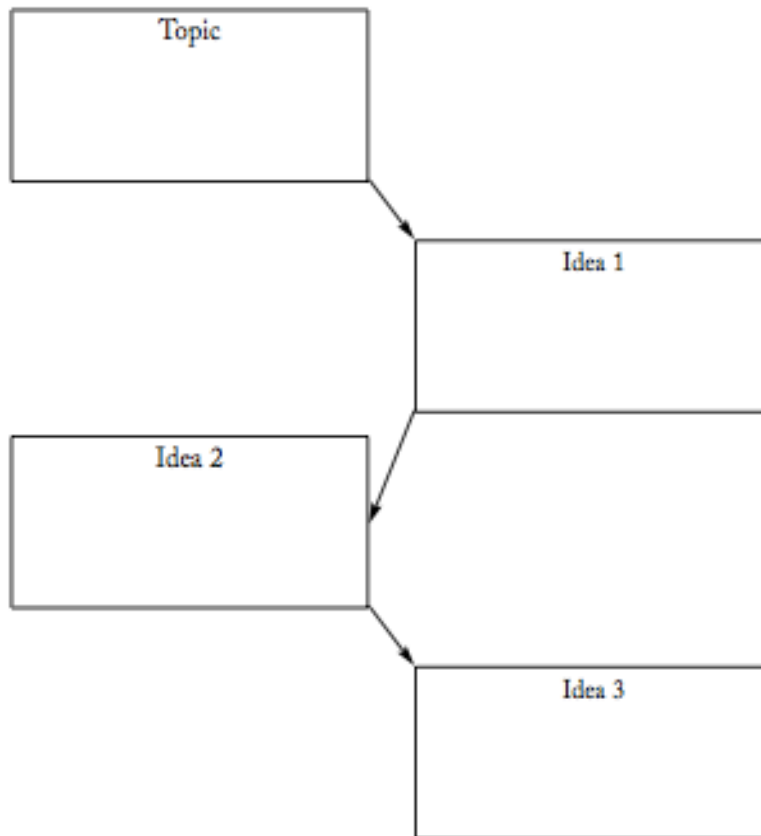
1. Insert 1 word that names a central character.
2. Insert 2 words that describe the setting.
3. Insert 3 words that describe a character.
4. Insert 4 words that describe one event.
5. Insert 5 words that describe another event.

# GI: Summary Diagram

## WRITE! **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Summary Diagram

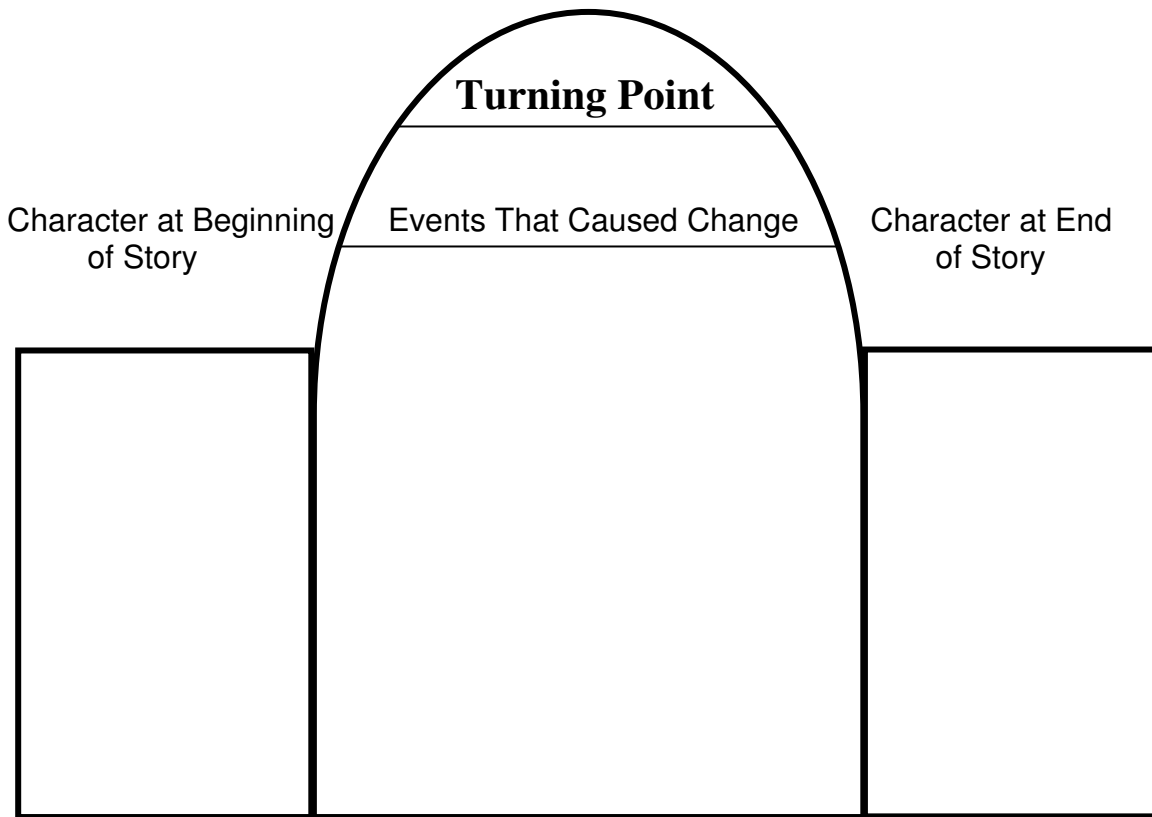


[http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/PDF\\_C-E/PDF\\_Summaries/summaryDiagram.pdf](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/PDF_C-E/PDF_Summaries/summaryDiagram.pdf)

# GI: Story Map: Character Change

[http://www.marion.k12.fl.us/schools/dms/extra/file/Story\\_Map\\_Character%20%20Graphic%20Organizer.pdf](http://www.marion.k12.fl.us/schools/dms/extra/file/Story_Map_Character%20%20Graphic%20Organizer.pdf)

## Story Map Showing Character Change





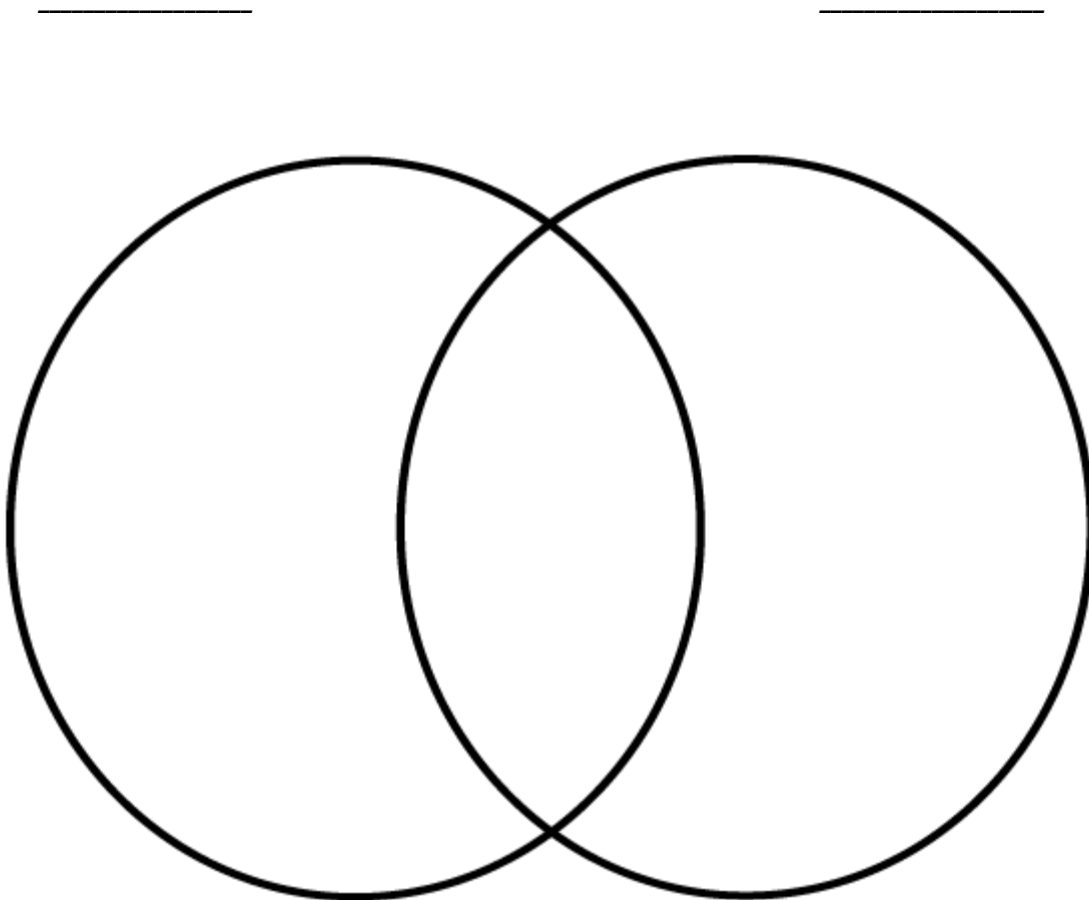
# GI: Venn Diagram

<http://www.cobbk12.org/Cheathamhill/LFS%20Update/Graphic%20Organizers.htm>

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Venn Diagram



**Drafting (D)**  
**Handouts and Resources**

## D: DRAFTING

### What you need

- **Adequate time period** for focus
- **Clear study area** to eliminate distractions, whether other school projects or friends' demands, in order to concentrate on the task at hand
- **Preparation and research** with as much current and historical data and viewpoints as necessary
- **Target audience** or a clear idea for whom you are writing: your professor, an age group, a friend, a profession, etc.
- **Prewriting exercises** and notes on ideas from your research
- **Review** all the above.  
Don't "study" it; just refresh yourself on the main concepts for now

### What you will NOT need:

- **Title or introduction:**  
derive these from your prewriting exercise
- **Reference works, print-outs, quotes,** etc.  
Rely on your notes, and don't overwhelm yourself with facts.  
Details can be added; you now want to focus on developing your argument
- **Edits!**  
Do not revise as you write, or correct spelling, punctuation, etc.  
Just write, write, write.  
This is the first draft, so what you put down will be revised and organized "after"

### Take a break after your prewriting exercise!

Refresh yourself

- **Review the ideas, topics, themes, questions** you have come up with in your prewriting exercise. Try reading the prewriting text out loud (a type of self-mediation). Listen for patterns that seem most interesting and/or important. Summarize them.
- **Evaluate the ideas, topics, themes, and questions** whether by scoring, prioritizing, or whatever method seems best.  
Keep this list in case your first choice(s) don't work
- **Sequence** what you have prioritized as in outlining, above.

(continued)

## Writing your draft

### Your first paragraph

- Introduce the topic; entice the reader (remember: audience)
- Establish perspective and/or point of view!
- Focus on three main points to develop

### Establish flow from paragraph to paragraph

- Topic sentences of each paragraph define their place in the overall scheme
- Transition sentences, clauses, or words at the beginning of paragraph connect one idea to the next
- Avoid one and two sentence paragraphs which may reflect lack of development of your point
- Continually prove your point of view throughout the essay
  - Don't drift or leave the focus of the essay
  - Don't lapse into summary in developing paragraphs. Wait until its time, at the conclusion
- Keep your voice active
  - "The Academic Committee decided..." not "It was decided by..."
  - Avoid the verb "to be" for clear, dynamic, and effective presentation (Avoid the verb "to be" and your presentation ~~will be~~ effective, clear, and dynamic)
  - Avoiding "to be" will also avoid the passive voice
- Support interpretations with quotes, data, etc.
  - Properly introduce, explain, and cite each quote
  - Block (indented) quotes should be used sparingly; they can break up the flow of your argument

### Conclusion

- Read your first paragraph, the development, and set it aside
- Summarize, then conclude, your argument
- Refer back (once again) to the first paragraph(s) as well as the development
  - do the last paragraphs briefly restate the main ideas?
  - reflect the succession and importance of the arguments
  - logically conclude their development?
- Edit/rewrite the first paragraph to better set your development and conclusion

### Take a day or two off!

LINK: <http://www.studygs.net/writing/roughdrafts.htm>

## D: Developing a topic: Seven stages of writing assignments

<http://www.studygs.net/writing/topic.htm>

### **If a topic is *not* assigned, identify a subject that interests you.**

Refer to your text book, a lecture, a hobby you have that relates to the subject, something that you are curious about.

### **Summarize your topic**

State your thesis, theme, or objective in a sentence or two at most.

### **If the topic is assigned, or when you have identified your subject:**

- **Note key ideas or words (search terms!) you think will be important.**  
Use only short phrases or individual words at this point  
Construct a map using these words and phrases  
Refer to our Guide on [concept mapping](#) on how to create one
- **Identify what you want to do with the concepts!**  
Refer to our list of [terms for essays](#)  
Pick a likely verb (or two) and write out the definition to keep before you.  
Are you to develop a persuasive or expository essay, or a position paper?  
What has the teacher assigned?
- **List out what sources you will need**  
to find information for your essay:  
Start small: what does an encyclopedia say about it?  
Is there a reference librarian who can help you find sources, both for an overview and for detailed research?  
Is a search engine enough? Or too boring?  
Think big: are there experts you can talk to? an organization?
- **Analyze your topic so far**  
Is it too vague or broad, or too narrow?  
Is it interesting enough? Is there a controversy to explore, or do you think you can help others understand a problem? Will you provide information from two points of view, or only one while anticipating questions and arguments?
- **Summarize your topic**  
and present it to your teacher for feedback.  
Bring these first few steps with you in case the teacher will want to help you refine or restate your topic
- **Write out your opinion on, or approach to, the topic**  
Remember: you are writing an essay as a learning experience and you may find information that is against your position. You will need to resolve this.

- **Keep an open or critical mind** as you research:  
You may only see your side and not be objective.  
Your position could be prejudicial to, or otherwise affect, your investigation

**LINK:** <http://www.studygs.net/writing/topic.htm>

## D: DRAFTING

### Writing an essay: research

Develop your time line

Allow for editing, revision and unexpected developments

- **Inspiration phase:**

This is continuous to prevent losing ideas and inspirations

Keep a convenient place to organize phrases, vocabulary, events, etc. for later use

- **Research phase; information gathering and recording:**

Do not copy research word-for-word unless using quotes to illustrate ideas.

The goal is to transform source material into your ideas and organization while adequately representing the authors in a neutral manner.

Keep a good record of source material for citations and bibliography.

- **Organizing/prewriting phase**

with concept mapping, outlining, even brainstorming

Determine how you will build the scenes of your argument, narrative, story, etc.

See our definitions of writing terms in our Guides.

### Research phase: information gathering and recording:

Document all interviews, readings, experiments, data, websites, reports, etc.

People: instructor, teaching assistant, research librarian, tutor, subject matter experts, professionals

1. **Develop research strategies and a list of resources**

2. **Narrow your topic and its description;**

Pull out key words and categories

Develop a list of key words--50 or so--that form the foundation of both your research and writing. Build the list from general sources and overviews

3. **Bring your topic and keyword list** to a local research librarian, teacher, support professional on resources available

Text books (!), reference works, web sites, journals, diaries, professional reports

4. **International conventions of copyright govern the use** and reproduction of all material: all information should be properly cited

- A. **What are some resources?**

- o **Search engines**

c.f. Search Engine Colossus with links to search engines from 148 countries

- o **Directories and portals on the Internet that categorize/organize information and links**

c.f. Open Directory Project; Librarians Index to the Internet; Infomine

- **Web sites devoted to particular topics**, including text, graphics, movies, music files  
e.g. Internet Directory for Botany
- **Government documents, forms, laws, policies, etc.**  
c.f. U.S. Government Printing Office disseminates official information from all three branches of the United States Federal Government
- **Services and information by**  
non-profit organizations and by for-profit businesses
- **LISTSERVs or discussion groups**  
c.f. L-Soft "the official catalog of LISTSERV® lists"
- **Resources at your local (public) library**  
These may require membership or registration
- **Newspaper, journal, magazine databases**  
Often restricted to subscribers, require registration, or can be fee-based for access

### Using an Internet search engine

Find the best combination of key words to locate information you need;  
Enter these in the search engine

- **Refer to known, recommended, expert, or reviewed web sites**
- **Review the number of options returned.**  
If there are too many web sites, add more keywords.  
If there are too few options, narrow/delete some keywords,  
or substitute other key words
- **Review the first pages returned:**  
If these are not helpful, review your key words for a better description
- **Use advanced search options in search engines:**  
Search options include
  - Key word combinations, including Boolean strings
  - Locations where key words are found  
For example: in the title, 1st paragraphs, coded metadata
  - Languages to search in
  - Sites containing media files (images, videos, MP3/music, ActiveX, JAVA, etc.)
  - Dates web sites were created or updated
- **Research using several search engines**  
Each search engine has a different database of web sites it searches  
Some "Meta-Search" engines actually search other search engines!  
If one search engine returns few web sites, another may return many!
- **Evaluate the content of the web sites you've found:**  
Beware referencing blogs as they are often opinions and not "fact"
- **Track your search:**  
List resources you checked; the date you checked them  
Identify the resource, especially its location and the date you found it
- **When printing, set your options to print the** Title of the page | the Web address | the date printed

**LINK:** <http://www.studygs.net/writing/research.htm>



## D: Chronological Narrative

<http://www.cobbk12.org/Cheathamhill/LFS%20Update/Graphic%20Organizers.htm>

# Chronological Narrative

**Directions:** Planning your narrative is easy.

Step 1: Fill out the 5 W's Chart.

Step 2: Write 4 or more events from beginning to end.

When?	Who?	What Happened?	Why it Happened?	How It Happened?
Where?				1.
				2.
				3.
				4.

# Descriptive Organizer

.....

Topic



Details				



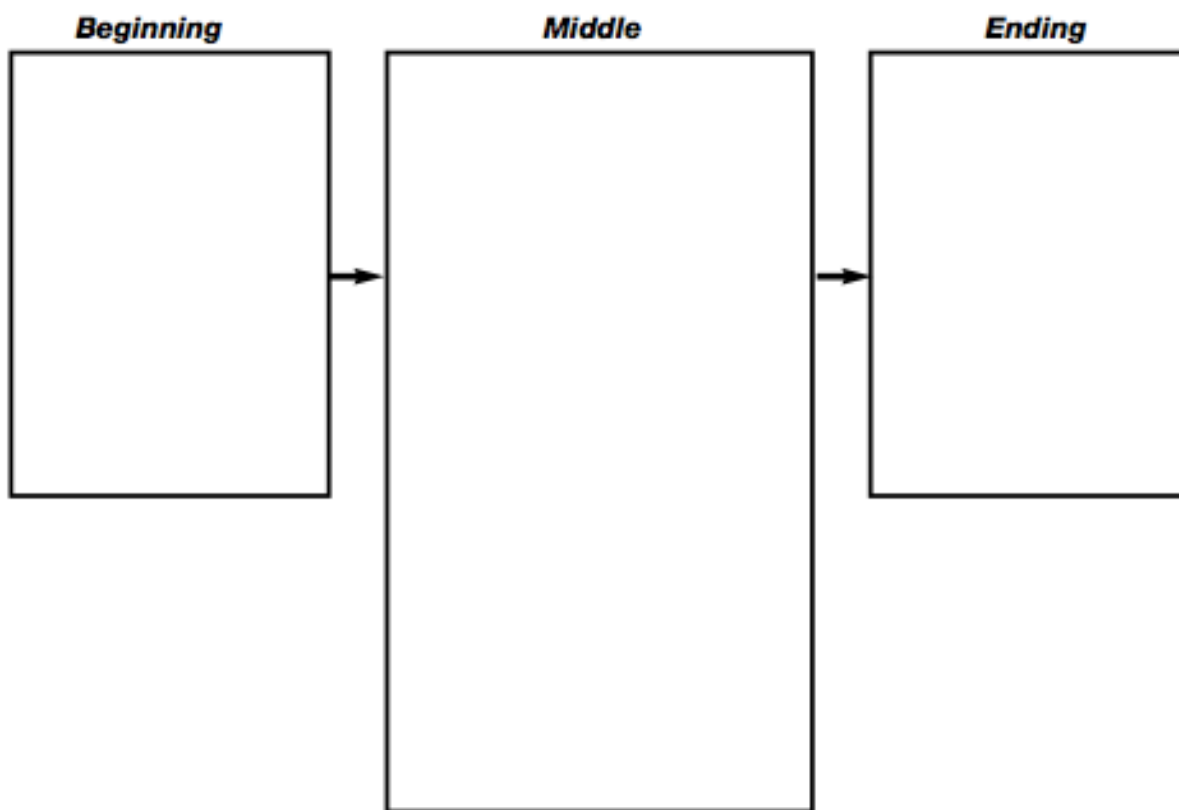
Main Idea Sentence

## D: Events Chart

### *WRITE!* **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Events Chart**



## D: Opinion Chart

### WRITE! **Graphic Organizers**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

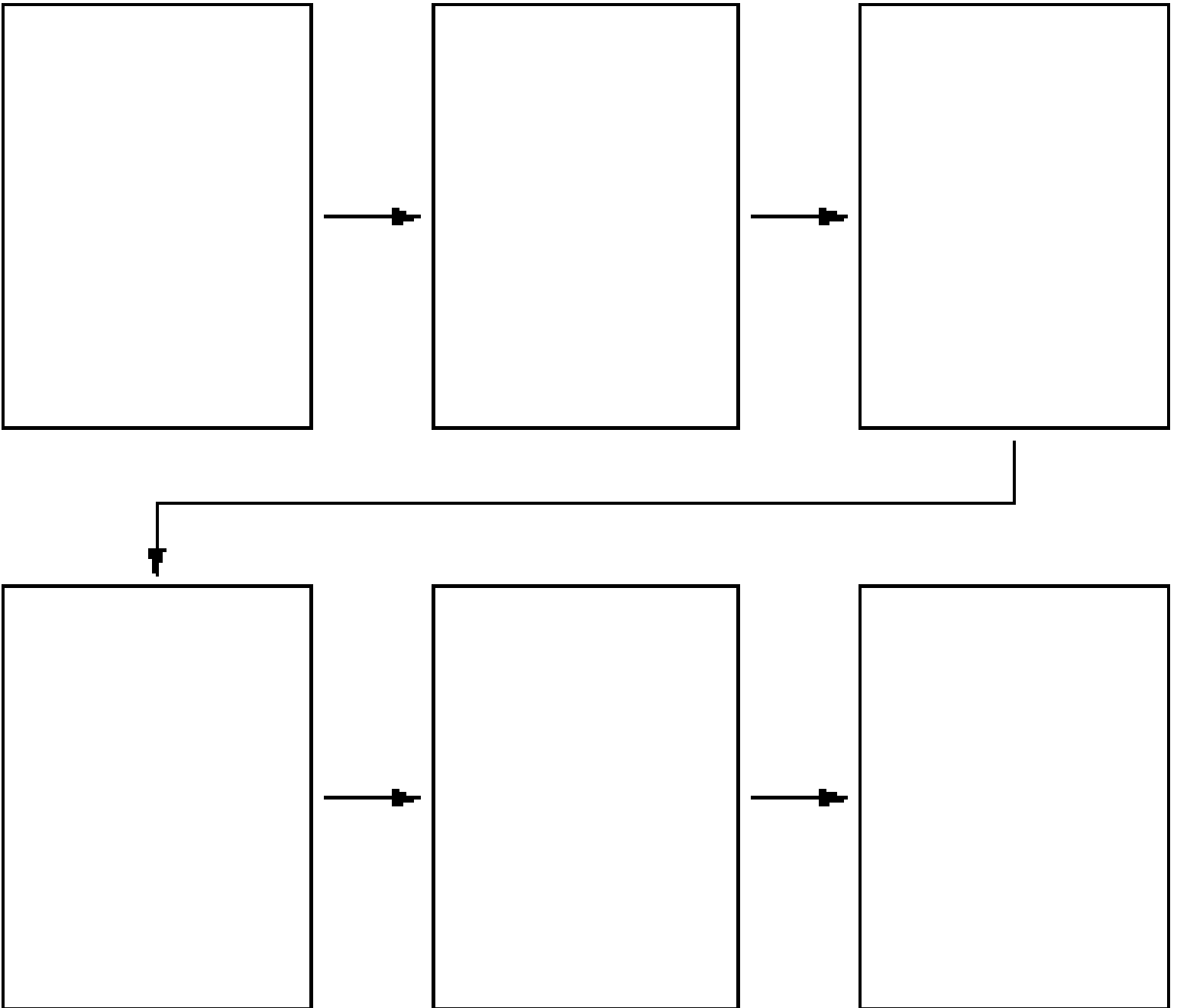
#### Opinion Chart

<b><i>What is the topic?</i></b>			
<b><i>What is your opinion?</i></b>			
<b><i>What reasons or facts back up your opinion?</i></b>			

**D: Sequence Chain 6 Steps**

<http://www.cobbk12.org/Cheathamhill/LFS%20Update/Graphic%20Organizers.htm>

# Sequence Chain for



## D: Story Map

[http://greatsource.info/iwrite/educators/e\\_narr\\_graph\\_org.html](http://greatsource.info/iwrite/educators/e_narr_graph_org.html)

## II. Story Map

A story map can help you plot out just what happens in a story.

- Fill in each part of the story map.
- Use the story map to guide your writing.



<b>1. Title</b>	
<b>2. Main Characters</b>	
<b>3. Other Characters</b>	
<b>4. Conflict</b>	
<b>5. Setting</b>	
<b>6. Rising Action</b>	
<b>7. Event 1</b>	
<b>8. Event 2</b>	
<b>9. Event 3</b>	
<b>10. Climax</b>	
<b>11. Resolution</b>	

## D: Story Pyramid

### GI: Story Pyramid

[http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic\\_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm](http://www.curriculumassociates.com/educator-resources/write/Graphic_Org/ceGrades3-5.htm)

## Story Pyramid



1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

### Directions:

1. Insert 1 word that names a central character.
2. Insert 2 words that describe the setting.
3. Insert 3 words that describe a character.
4. Insert 4 words that describe one event.
5. Insert 5 words that describe another event.

## D: Time Line

<http://greatsource.info/iwrite/educators/>

### III. Time Line

For how-to essays, a time line can help you organize the steps in the process.

- Type time indicators in the left column.
- Type events or steps in the right column.



<b>1. First</b>	
<b>2. Next</b>	
<b>3. Then</b>	
<b>4. Finally</b>	



# D: Graphic Organizer

Paragraph

Argument:  
Evidence:  
Explanation:

Conclusion

Intro ideas

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

I will write about \_\_\_\_\_  
My tentative thesis is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Remember to . . . . .

Paragraph

Paragraph

Paragraph

# D: Graphic Organizer 2

Paragraph

Argument:  
Evidence:  
Explanation:

Conclusion

Intro ideas

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

I will write about \_\_\_\_\_  
My tentative thesis is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Paragraph

Argument:  
Evidence:  
Explanation:

Paragraph

Argument:  
Evidence:  
Explanation:

Paragraph

Argument:  
Evidence:  
Explanation:

## D: Newspaper Article Summary

### Newspaper Article Summary Questions

1. What is the title of the article you are considering?
2. What is the main idea of the article?
3. Fill in the table below to outline the main points in the article. Use the back if you need additional space.

Main Point	Connection to Main Idea

4. What is your final impression of the main points included in the article? How do they combine to support the main idea?
5. What ideas do you have for the letter that you will write in response to this article? What position will you take and why?

**Revising Ideas (R)**  
**Handouts and Resources**

## Transitional Words & Phrases

<http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr6.htm>

**Using transitional words and phrases** helps papers read more smoothly, and at the same time allows the reader to flow more smoothly from one point to the next.

**Transitions enhance logical organization and understandability** and improve the connections between thoughts. They indicate relations, whether within a sentence, paragraph, or paper.

**This list illustrates categories of "relationships" between ideas**, followed by words and phrases that can make the connections:

### **Addition:**

also, again, as well as, besides, coupled with, furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, similarly

*When there is a trusting relationship coupled with positive reinforcement, the partners will be able to overcome difficult situations.*

### **Consequence:**

accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this reason, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, so then, subsequently, therefore, thus, thereupon, wherefore

*Highway traffic came to a stop as a result of an accident that morning.*

### **Contrast and Comparison:**

contrast, by the same token, conversely, instead, likewise, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather, similarly, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, in contrast

*The children were very happy. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, their parents were very proactive in providing good care.*

### **Direction:**

here, there, over there, beyond, nearly, opposite, under, above, to the left, to the right, in the distance

*She scanned the horizon for any sign though in the distance she could not see the surprise coming her way.*

### **Diversion:**

by the way, incidentally

*He stumbled upon the nesting pair incidentally found only on this hill.*

### **Emphasis**

above all, chiefly, with attention to, especially, particularly, singularly

*The Quakers gathered each month with attention to deciding the business of their Meeting.*

**Exception:**

aside from, barring, beside, except, excepting, excluding, exclusive of, other than, outside of, save

*Consensus was arrived at by all of the members exclusive of those who could not vote.*

**Exemplifying:**

chiefly, especially, for instance, in particular, markedly, namely, particularly, including, specifically, such as

*Some friends and I drove up the beautiful coast chiefly to avoid the heat island of the city.*

**Generalizing:**

as a rule, as usual, for the most part, generally, generally speaking, ordinarily, usually

*There were a few very talented artists in the class, but for the most part the students only wanted to avoid the alternative course.*

**Illustration:**

for example, for instance, for one thing, as an illustration, illustrated with, as an example, in this case

*The chapter provided complex sequences and examples illustrated with a very simple schematic diagram.*

**Similarity:**

comparatively, coupled with, correspondingly, identically, likewise, similar, moreover, together with

*The research was presented in a very dry style though was coupled with examples that made the audience tear up.*

**Restatement:**

in essence, in other words, namely, that is, that is to say, in short, in brief, to put it differently

*In their advertising business, saying things directly was not the rule. That is to say, they tried to convey the message subtly though with creativity.*

**Sequence:**

at first, first of all, to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, for now, for the time being, the next step, in time, in turn, later on, meanwhile, next, then, soon, the meantime, later, while, earlier, simultaneously, afterward, in conclusion, with this in mind,

*The music had a very retro sound but at the same time incorporated a complex modern rhythm.*

**Summarizing:**

after all, all in all, all things considered, briefly, by and large, in any case, in any event, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, in short, in summary, in the final analysis, in the long run, on balance, to sum up, to summarize, finally

*She didn't seem willing to sell the car this week, but in any case I don't get paid until the end of the month.*

**Link:** <http://www.studygs.net/wrtstr6.htm>

## **RI: Peer Editing**

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/peer-edit-with-perfection-786.html?tab=4>

**Peer Editing of** \_\_\_\_\_  
(title of the paper)

**Author of the Paper** \_\_\_\_\_

**Editor of the Paper** \_\_\_\_\_

**1. Compliment the author's work in the paper. What is interesting, clear, or accurate here? Be specific. Offer 3-5 observations.**

**2. Suggest ways that the author can improve the paper. Consider the ideas, organization, transitions, evidence, and explanation.**

**3. Point out any corrections that the author should make: spelling, punctuation, or formatting, for example.**



## RI: Guided Reading: Evidence & Explanation

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

Evidence & Explanation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

---

Read your partner's paper carefully. Write "thesis" next to the sentence that you believe is the main idea or argument of the paper.

Choose one body paragraph from the paper. Write the **main idea of that paragraph** here:

List the **evidence** the author uses in this paragraph to make the main idea convincing:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Does the author **explain** the **evidence**?

Ask the author questions here about the evidence to help with explanation.

Offer the author suggestions about organization. Remember that your job is to make suggestions, and the author will decide whether to take your advice.

# RI: Guided Reading: Organization

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

Organization

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

---

Read your partner's paper carefully. Write "thesis" next to the sentence that you believe is the main idea or argument of the paper.

List the **main idea of each body paragraph** here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Why is the first idea first in the paper?

Why does the second idea follow the first?

Why does the third idea follow the second?

Why does the fourth idea follow the third?

Does the author use language to signal a **transition** from one idea to the next?

On the author's paper, put a box around each transition phrase that connects ideas between paragraphs and within each paragraph.

Offer the author suggestions about organization. Remember that your job is to make suggestions, and the author will decide whether to take your advice.

## RI: Guided Reading: Paragraphs

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

Paragraphs

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Title:

\_\_\_\_\_

Read your partner's paper carefully. Write "thesis" next to the sentence that you believe is the main idea or argument of the paper.

List the main idea from each body paragraph here:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Ask the author questions about each of these ideas. Consider "Who," "What," "When," "Where," "Why," and "How" questions.

Offer the author suggestions about the main ideas of the paragraphs. Remember that your job is to make suggestions, and the author will decide whether to take your advice.

## RI: Guided Reading: Thesis

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

### Thesis

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Author: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Read your partner's paper carefully. Write "Thesis" next to the sentence you believe is the paper's main idea or argument.

Is any part of the main idea unclear?

Tell the author what is interesting about the main idea here:

Ask the author questions about the main idea here. Consider "Who," "What," "When," "Why," and "How" questions.

Give the author one or two suggestions here. Remember that the author is responsible for the paper, so just make the suggestion. The author will decide if it's an idea to include.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/peer-edit-with-perfection-786.html?tab=4>

## PEER EDIT WITH PERFECTION! WORKSHEET

1. What is peer editing?



2. What are the three steps in the peer-editing process?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. How should you always start your peer edit?

4. \_\_\_\_\_ are not allowed when peer editing another person's paper.

**Editing (E)**  
**Handouts and Resources**

## E. Proofreading writing assignments

<http://www.studygs.net/writing/proofreading.htm>

Intentionally separate "proofreading" from the "writing" and "revising" processes. Writing and revising focus on content, message and style; proofreading focuses on "mechanics."

### **Work with another**

It is twice as hard to detect mistakes in your own work as in someone else's! Get a second opinion! A fresh set of eyes may not only find errors, but also have suggestions for improvement. Professional editors proofread as many as ten times. Publishing houses hire teams of readers to work in pairs, reading out loud. And still errors occur.

### **Cultivate a sense of doubt**

Take nothing for granted. If you know you repeat certain errors, double check for them. Most errors in written work are made unconsciously.

### **Read out loud, word for word**

Take advantage of two senses: hearing and seeing. It is often possible to hear a mistake, such as an omitted or repeated word that you have not seen.

### **Slow down**

Read what is actually on the page, not what you think is there. This is difficult, particularly if you wrote what you are reading

### **Why slow down?**

When you read normally, you often see only the shells of words -- the first and last few letters, perhaps. You "fix your eyes" on the print only three or four times per line, or less. You take in the words between these points, and get less accurate the more you stray from the point. The average reader can only take in six letters accurately with one fixation. This means you have to fix your eyes on almost every word you have written and do it twice in longer words, in order to proofread accurately. You have to look at the word, not slide over it.

LINK: <http://www.studygs.net/writing/proofreading.htm>

## E. Revising and editing writing assignments

<http://www.studygs.net/writing/revising.htm>

**Before the revising/editing**, take a break to gain a new perspective. It will help you review how effectively you have communicated your message.

### General review strategies:

1. **Revising takes practice:**  
Try reviewing with a limited agenda, for example with focus on vocabulary, and build from there.
2. **Read the paper out loud to yourself.**  
Read it slowly. How does it "sound?"
3. **Cover the text with a blank paper**, and lower it down as you read for a line by line analysis.

Does the text flow in an effective manner?  
Is it too long for what you wish to say? too short?  
Keep in mind your audience: they do not know what you do.  
They rely on what information you give them, *in the order* you give it to them.

### Title

Does the title briefly describe and reflect the purpose of the paper?  
If there are headings and sub-headings, are these similarly brief and concise?

### Introductory paragraph/introduction

Get a good start!  
Capture attention at the beginning or you may lose your audience.  
An introduction should present the purpose in an inviting way.  
Is your first sentence interesting and inviting?  
Does your first paragraph predict the development of the piece?  
Does it clearly introduce the subject, project, or idea to be developed?

### Supporting paragraphs

Does each paragraph build the argument or story? Did you follow a plan or outline?  
Is each paragraph in an effective or logical order?  
Is your train of thought, or that of the "characters," clear?  
Do your transitions between paragraphs work?  
Are relationships between paragraphs clear?  
Can any paragraphs be eliminated as unnecessary, or combined with others more effectively?  
Does each sentence support *only* the topic sentence of *that* paragraph?  
Can any sentences be eliminated as unnecessary, or combined with others more effectively?  
If there are side-stories or digressions, are their purposes clear in the context of the whole?

### Conclusion

Does the conclusion summarize and clarify important information and resolve the thesis statement?  
Does the conclusion leave the reader thinking?  
Is it supported by the paper?



LINK: <http://www.studygs.net/writing/revising.htm>

**E: Error Log**

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

**Error Log**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Period:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Dates:** \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Paper 1</b>	<b>Paper 2</b>	<b>Paper 3</b>	<b>Paper 4</b>
	Date:	Date:	Date:	Date:

# E: Error Log: Sample

Carol Wilson, Wofford College

## Error Log

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Errors</b>	<b>Paper 1</b> Date:	<b>Paper 2</b> Date:	<b>Paper 3</b> Date:	<b>Paper 4</b> Date:
Spelling				
Subject Verb Agreement				
Sentence Fragment				
Wrong Word				
Sentence-Ending Punctuation				
Apostrophe				

