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Final Master's Portfolio

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FINAL MASTER'S PORTFOLIO

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A Final Portfolio

Submitted to the English Department of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in the field of English
with a specialization in English Teaching

5 July 2022

Dr. Sue Carter Wood, First Reader
Dr. Chad Iwertz Duffy, Second Reader

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Write to Learn

I suppose my journey to Bowling Green State University's graduate program began when I was seven years old. I attended my mother's undergraduate commencement ceremony and I wanted to be on that stage with her and all the other adults in their black dresses and colorful sashes.

As an adult, the motivation is much more practical; simply, I want to offer students at the high school where I teach more options for advanced English classes. I am somewhat unhappy with AP offerings, especially for students who plan on attending college but do not require the skills that AP courses will teach them. Dual enrolled courses are the direction I want to take, and in order to offer these courses, I need a Master's degree in English. Personally, I relished the idea of returning to academia and of being challenged intellectually--something I don't get in teaching junior high and high school students.

My first course was Graduate Writing, which is designed to ready students for the rigors of graduate-level writing. In the first week, we examined the idea of writing as learning. I did not really understand this, at least in a practical sense. I knew that one could learn to write and demonstrate learning through writing, but to learn by the process of writing was something that I had never really done. Throughout the rest of my courses, I kept this idea in mind and began to understand it as I was learning things far outside my normal knowledge. I needed to write in order for me to process my thoughts and synthesize them with the ideas of others. Yes, writing is still the product of learning, but it is also the process of learning. The pieces in this portfolio represent this new understanding. For both, I used the act of writing to better understand the concepts presented in them.

For the first project in this portfolio, I chose “Rhetorical Grammar: Lessons in Breaking Rules,” the final project in the course Grammar in the Context of Writing. It provides rationale for teaching grammar to encourage students’ awareness of rhetoric. This project was inspired by my 2021 senior students. Through examination of their writing and the objectives of their course, I chose to focus on three grammar concepts--conjunctions, nominalization, and passive voice--which work well for students who may not be skilled in rhetorical thinking because the effects of each concept are not difficult to notice, articulate, and imitate; plus, they build on the grammar that students have already learned.

The revision process started with a reflection on this project’s audience. For the original version, I wrote it with my instructor in mind, which would not be effective once I widened the audience to include peers. I worried about explaining each grammar concept too much, as if I was doubting the knowledge of the audience. The peer readers did not agree with this--they wanted more information about each concept. So, during revision, I changed this mindset; as I added more explanation of each concept, I considered what I would want, if I were reading it. The explanation became less of a grammar lesson and more of an example to facilitate the points I was making about rhetoric. This shift in thinking helped me find a balance between too much information and not enough.

Additionally, as I widened the audience, I realized that not all teachers have a homogeneous class with only native English speakers. Honestly, I felt rather embarrassed that I did not realize this during the original writing. In the section “Context for the Lessons,” I added a short paragraph describing the make-up of my 2021 class in order to clarify my students’ previous knowledge.

The second piece is a researched essay about a woman rhetor--Juliet V. Strauss. This was the final project for the course *Convincing Women: Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Rhetorical Tactics and Practices*. It explores the ethos of columnist Strauss and how she used this to garner enthusiasm for creating an Indiana state park. For this assignment, we were encouraged to find a local woman rhetor to study. I originally chose Gene Stratton-Porter, but quickly changed my mind because of a Facebook post. In February, Turkey Run State Park posted a short biography of Juliet Strauss for National Women's Month, and when I read it, I knew I wanted to learn more about her. As I read her work, I quickly became overwhelmed with ideas for the project. I struggled with finding a focus and narrowing her work into an analytical project. Because of this, I was unhappy with the original version, though I received a good score. I turned it into a teaching unit; however, the unit did not strongly correlate with the research. I chose to include this project in the portfolio simply because I loved reading about Strauss, and I wanted the opportunity to make it something I was satisfied with.

This project is much more substantially revised than the previous one. I knew that I needed to have a stronger focus, so I decided to eliminate the teaching plan and focus just on Strauss and her work. After visiting Turkey Run to get inspiration, I started revision by going back to research. There is little scholarly work written about Strauss, so I had to read other sources. I read several more of her columns in *Ladies' Home Journal*, looking for patterns to connect with her first column. As I read more, I started thinking of more ideas again, and I had to stop myself from including things like Indiana's centennial celebration and Strauss's humorous fables in order to keep the project manageable and cohesive.

I included discussion of her column “Shall We Save Turkey Run?” because it was no longer in the unit plan and connected it to her usual column topics of women, tradition, and self-reflection. I decided to focus on her audience, as this is what I believe her strongest rhetorical skill is connecting with them.

Every peer reviewer mentioned how much they enjoyed the prose style of writing, so as I added new sections, I tried to maintain this more informal writing style.

At the end of this graduate program, I definitely now understand what it means to write to learn, and this became a strategy I used during this program and also in my teaching and expectations for my students. This concept is now a part of the curriculum for my dual enrollment classes as well as seventh grade language arts. When students use writing to process, the final written product seems less daunting as it represents the students’ learning process not just their knowledge.

Stephanie Fryer

Dr. Wood

Grammar in the Context of Writing

17 December 2021

Rhetorical Grammar: Lessons in Breaking Rules

Rationale

Lectures, worksheets, writing full of red-marked errors: these traditional grammar instructional strategies do not work. If they did, sophomores would come to class knowing the parts of a sentence or comma rules. But they don't. They have learned about nouns every year since first grade but most still cannot identify them. However, is identifying nouns (or any other part of speech) really that important for native speakers? Students write and speak sentences with nouns correctly placed. State standardized testing never has students label parts of speech. No career asks its personnel to diagram a sentence. In the past, grammar was often taught using identification, correction, and diagramming. These types of grammatical skills are often unnecessary and do not improve students' understanding of grammar and writing.

This is not to say that teaching grammar is completely unnecessary. Grammar is the foundation of language and ensures clear communication. Unfortunately, people tend to "view grammar as prohibitive rules" because this is how they learned grammar in school (Weaver 1). Some even take pride in writing that is grammar-textbook perfect and denounce others who have a few minor mistakes in their work. Education has cheapened language by distilling it down to lists of rules few can actually remember.

In reality, grammar can be a tool to engineer meaning and influence an audience's understanding. Instead of teaching the rules that native speakers already know, we can show students what is possible with language. Or rather, we can move from a prescriptive approach to a more rhetorical and experimental one. Ultimately, this is how grammar can be a powerful tool in writing.

Teaching grammar with this rhetorical view capitalizes on what students already know as they have been using language to manipulate others since they could speak. Language is powerful and shapes our understanding of the past and the present. Understanding how grammar impacts an audience's understanding of ideas will create stronger writers who can influence others through language.

First, it comes down to this question: What do writers actually need to know? Connie Weaver says that students can understand and discuss grammar without most grammatical terms. Instead, writers look for patterns and describe their function or purpose as they are "easier to grasp than terms and rules" (Weaver 27). The focus on function, instead of rules, lends itself to deeper understanding of a text and usage that matters beyond "it's just how it's done."

Prescriptive grammar books teach grammar in the same pattern: parts of speech, phrases/clauses, sentences, punctuation. However, this progression may not be the best for students. Just like reading or math lessons, grammar lessons should be appropriate for the students' needs and readiness which rarely align with standardized textbook curriculum (Weaver 31). In my own classes, I examine student writing and determine what skills would benefit their writing. Several students in this year's class have been using passive sentence constructions but are unable to articulate why. When I ask them why they wrote the

sentence in this way, they are unable to articulate the reasoning; they respond similarly to this: “I don’t know, but it does sound weird.” In writing, they struggle with moving between specifics and generalizations--at topic, paragraph, and sentence levels. They doubt their own knowledge on a topic, and use nominalization to cover this and make the writing “sound more professional.” And, this year’s students asked to learn about the word *nor*, which they said they had no idea how to use though they know what it means. Their own writing demonstrates this. For the lessons presented here, I chose passive voice, nominalization, and rhetorical conjunctions as these are topics my students are ready to learn.

Argument is a logical place to introduce these topics because their rhetorical purpose is rather clear. Also, they appear in several texts that we will study.

Passive voice

How many grammar books say to never use passive voice? So, I actually don’t know, but I imagine that it is most of them. However, we use passive voice all the time, and it can be a rather powerful rhetorical tool if deployed in the correct situation.

Contrary to what Weaver recommends, I do expect students to learn the terms *active* and *passive* because each term describes the effect. In an active sentence, the subject is doing the verb, while in a passive voice sentence, the object of the verb becomes the subject. Knowing these terms will help students remember their rhetorical effects. Like the old textbooks say, passive voice is generally avoided in writing, but it does have a precise rhetorical function necessary for some situations. It mainly serves to de-emphasize the agent, so it is useful when a writer wants to hide it or downplay the agent’s importance. This seems complicated for students to grasp, but it is actually quite simple--even young

children use this construction to deflect blame for their actions. Consider these two sentences:

1. I ate the plums that you were saving in the icebox.
2. The plums that you were saving in the icebox have been eaten.

The first clearly shows who ate the plums; the speaker is accepting the blame, and thus, the consequences. However, the second removes the agent so it is unclear who actually ate the plums, so the speaker of this sentence cannot be blamed for the action. Because of this rhetorical effect of removing the agent, passive voice is a common structure in science, news, and politics, so it is important for readers to understand how ideas are modified when presented in passive voice and what the author wants the reader to think about these ideas.

The lessons for this mini unit focus on this effect of deflecting blame, allowing writers to control their messages and helping readers understand the implications of passive voice.

Nominalization

Similarly to passive voice, prescriptive grammar instructs to avoid nominalization, creating nouns from verbs or adjectives. Generally, nominalization creates overly complicated and confusing sentences because the writer is taking something specific and making it more general. These sentences also tend to use a passive construction. For example, in the sentence “The zombie ate the slow runner,” the adjective “slow” describes the runner. To nominalize this adjective, add a noun ending-- “slowness.” The sentence could now be “The slowness of the runner caused him to be eaten by the zombie.” It is much

wordier than the first sentence. Obviously, in this case, prescriptive grammar is correct; writers should not use nominalizations if they make sentences more confusing.

However, it's not that simple. Strong arguments must skillfully maneuver between specificity and generality; the specifics provide details while the general highlights trends and connections. Nominalization can do this. Crovitz and Devereaux say that with nominalization, writers can "imagine, contextualize, and manipulate generalized concepts that capture a range of specific items" ("More" 99). In other words, writers can use nominalization to place specifics into categories and show how they relate to broader concepts. Throughout school, students are taught to be precise and find specific examples, which is important, but students who only do this lack an understanding of how the specifics fit in with a larger context. Learning how to use nominalization productively without wordiness can help students articulate how specific examples lead to broader ideas. Though many writers and teachers tend to scorn nominalization as it can be problematically generic and overwrought, it can be a helpful tool in navigating both deductive and inductive reasoning. Plus, it works as a planning strategy to better understand a topic a student is exploring. The mini unit I have developed examines both the benefits and drawbacks of nominalization and encourages students to articulate the effects of this technique.

Conjunctions

High school students know FANBOYS. They recognize conjunctions. They use them consistently in writing. Most students even punctuate them correctly. So, what more do students need to know? These conjunction lessons take what students already know and show them how to break the prescriptive grammar rules responsibly. What happens if a

writer starts a sentence or paragraph with “and?” Why would a writer use a conjunction between every item in a list, perhaps with no comma? Conjunctions join ideas, but they have a strong impact on the rhythm of a sentence and a paragraph. Conjunctions can make writing flow effortlessly or interrupt the rhythm to draw attention to itself. The trick is to know how to take advantage of conjunctions’ rhythmic capabilities.

Course Description

These lessons are part of the course English 111: English Composition from Ivy Tech Community College in Indiana. It will be taught to second semester, high school seniors as dual enrollment. This course is a writing course focused on modes of writing including narration, comparison, argument, and research as well as writing and reading practices that foster success in other undergraduate courses. The class meets every day for forty-seven minutes.

The course objectives are the same for every English 111 course with the primary goal of preparing students for the varying writing rigors of college. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

1. Apply critical reading and thinking skills to the writing process,
2. Demonstrate an awareness of language as a tool for learning and communication,
3. Develop strategies for making independent, critical evaluations of student and published texts,
4. Apply strategies for the composition process such as drafting, collaboration, revision, and peer evaluation to produce written documents,

5. Write well-organized essays with a firm thesis and a clear introduction, body, and conclusion,
6. Engage in prewriting activities, including narrowing a topic, generating ideas, determining the audience and the relationship between audience and content, and setting an appropriate tone, and
7. Recognize and develop styles appropriate to varied writing situations.

The lessons I present here relate to objectives 2 and 7.

Context for the Lessons

These grammar lessons are designed to complement rhetorical analysis of arguments. Students will study the techniques and effectiveness of well-written arguments in order to improve their own. Though reading and writing rhetoric is not a specific learning objective for this course, it challenges students who are already adept with basic grammar. These grammar lessons are grouped by grammatical topic (passive voice, conjunctions, nominalization), and all nine do not need to be taught subsequently; instead, each mini unit should be used in conjunction with other writing or reading tasks that will benefit from a focus on the particular grammatical topic. For example, teaching passive voice in conjunction with research helps students recognize why a writer might use it, which can reveal a writer's purpose and bias. The lessons about nominalization, as nominalization is often passive, need to be taught after passive voice and would work best when connected to revision of students' own writing.

Several lessons include analysis of two seminal U.S. texts: *The Declaration of Independence* and Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I A Woman?" I have chosen these simply because

my students have already studied the ideas and construction of them, but also because they are short. These texts could easily be replaced with others that students have studied.

I designed this unit for my students and their needs. All of them are native English speakers. For teachers of students who are not fluent in English, these lessons may need to be modified or teachers may need to provide further instruction in each grammatical concept.

Works Cited

Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

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Weaver, Constance. *Grammar to Enhance Writing*. Portsmouth: Heineman, 2008.

Part 2: Lesson Plans

*Passive and Active Voice***Lesson 1: Basic Function of Active and Passive Voice**

Objectives:

- Students will identify passive and active voice.
- Students will compare the shift in emphasis between active and passive voice.
- Students will articulate how language can shape our understanding of events.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedure:

1. Share a story of a child breaking a cookie jar. When the parent asks what happened, the child says, "It was broken." Ask
 - a. What is interesting about the child's story?
 - b. What are some other things the child could have said?
 - c. Why do you think the child chose to say what they did?
2. Students complete "Who is Responsible" exercise. Guide a discussion about students' answers, leading to observations related to active/passive voice.
3. Teacher guides students to describe patterns as "active" and "passive."
 - a. active: subject does the action
 - b. passive: subject has action done to it
4. Provide students with sentences written in both active and passive voice. Guide a discussion about the patterns in the structure of the sentences. Students should notice
 - a. use of be verbs
 - b. use of "by"
 - c. changes in emphasis
 - d. passive voice "freezes" the action

Homework:

Students read pages 91-92 of *Thank You For Arguing* and answer this question: Why can passive voice be a powerful move in argument?

*Passive and Active Voice***Lesson 2: Usage of the Passive**

Objectives:

- Students will compare the shift in emphasis between active and passive voice.
- Students will utilize passive voice to avoid blame and calm an audience.
- Students will articulate how language can shape our understanding of events.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.
- W.3: Write arguments that use rhetorical strategies to enhance a claim.

Procedure:

1. Discuss the reasons why passive voice is avoided in writing (and life).
2. Discuss situations in which writers frequently use passive voice: news, politics, science, and argument. Guide students to understand that sometimes de-emphasizing the doer is the best choice.
3. Discuss the excerpt from *Thank You For Arguing* and the homework question. Key point--passive voice can calm down an audience.
4. Students complete "Party Post-Mortem."

*Passive and Active Voice***Lesson 3: Analyzing Passive Voice**

Objectives:

- Students will analyze the purpose of writers' use of active and passive voice.
- Students will articulate how language can shape our understanding of events.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedure:

1. Refresh students on the reasons to use passive voice.
 - a. de-emphasize/change subject
 - b. reduce blame
 - c. mollify an audience
2. Have pairs of students examine Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" (This was previously studied as an argumentative text.) Students look for examples of active and passive voice. They should find zero examples of passive voice. Guide students in a discussion about Truth's lack of passive voice.
 - a. What is her purpose and tone? Why would she not want to reduce blame? Why would she only use active voice?
3. Students complete "Active and Passive Voice: Declaration of Independence."

Conjunctions

Lesson 1: Reviewing FANBOYS

Objectives:

- Students will determine the use of conjunctions.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author’s perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedures:

1. Review the acronym FANBOYS. Ask students to share guidelines/rules that govern how they are used. If students struggle with articulating these things, have them each write four sentences--each containing *but, or, and, so*. Then, discuss how the conjunctions are being used. Be sure students know what each conjunction signals.
2. Share these paragraphs with students:
 - a. *Monday started out like any other day. I got dressed, ate breakfast, and rode the bus to school without incident. My first couple of classes were pretty routine: going over homework, working on papers, prepping for a test. At lunch, I got my usual slice of pizza and sat at my usual spot in the cafeteria. But today would be different.*
 - b. *Monday turned out to be pretty crazy. It started out like any other day. I got dressed, ate breakfast, and rode the bus to school without incident. My first couple of classes were pretty routine: going over homework, working on papers, prepping for a test. At lunch, I got my usual slice of pizza and sat at my usual spot in the cafeteria.*
 - c. Discuss the effect of the conjunction-led sentence in the first paragraph. How does it make you feel? How does the second passage change this effect?
3. Provide the first paragraph of “Ain’t I A Woman?” and discuss Truth’s use of a conjunction-led sentence.
 - a. “Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that ‘twixt the Negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon. But what’s all this here talking about?”
4. Students complete “Dramatic Conjunctions.”

Conjunctions

Lesson 2: Nor and Yet

Objectives:

- Students will determine the use of conjunctions.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedure:

1. Ask students to share their responses to the previous assignment.
2. Provide students with several sentences using the conjunction *nor*. Ask them to look for patterns or guidelines on how to use *nor*.
 - a. emphasize a negative position
 - b. paired with another negating word
3. As a class, finish the following sentences using *nor*. Discuss how the sentences feel a bit formal.
 - a. I'm not what you'd call a good dancer...
 - b. Our team didn't surrender any goals in the match...
 - c. She's neither convinced by your argument...
4. Transition to discussion of *yet*. Provide students with several sentences that use *yet* as a conjunction. Discuss patterns. Guide students to understand that *yet* signals a transition from a positive to a negative statement or vice versa. In the sample sentences, replace *yet* with *but*. Discuss how the meaning generally remains the same, but the formality has changed.
5. Students complete "Ex Rejection."

*Conjunctions***Lesson 3: Breaking More “Rules”****Objectives:**

- Students will determine the use of conjunctions.
- Students will understand how conjunctions add to the meaning and feeling of a text.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author’s perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedures:

1. Review traditional rules of conjunctions. Remind students that they have already learned one way to break the rules--starting a sentence with a conjunction.
2. Write a sentence on the board that uses a conjunction in a list. Explain the rule that governs this construction. Rewrite the sentence, adding extra conjunctions between each item of the list. Ask students how the feeling of the sentence has changed. Remove all of the conjunctions from the list. Ask students how the feeling of the sentence has changed.
3. Students identify repetition of conjunctions in “Ain’t I a Woman?” Guide a discussion of the effect of this repetition.
4. Students complete “Conjunction Manipulation.”

Nominalization

Lesson 1: Abstract vs. Concrete

Objectives:

- Students will understand the difference between concrete and abstract nouns.
- Students will consider concepts as parts of larger categories and organize writing deductively or inductively.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedures:

1. Provide students a list of adjectives and/or verbs. Ask students to provide the noun form of each adjective, i.e. "happy"--- "happiness." Ask students to find commonalities between the noun forms. Guide students to understand that the noun forms are abstract and formal.
2. Provide students with a list of concrete nouns. Ask students to provide an abstract version of these nouns, i.e. "child"--- "childhood." Students choose one of the abstract nouns and create a list of concrete activities that fall under their noun.
3. Demonstrate how writers can generate broad ideas from specific problems. (This is part of the task on the worksheet; however, this task will work best if students have seen an example first.) In front of the class, write a paragraph that uses nominalization to indicate the broad category, then shift the writing to the specific. Demonstrate how the opposite (specific to general) organization can also be effective.
4. Students complete "Abstract and Concrete: Organizing Your Thinking."

*Nominalization***Lesson 2: The Bad Side of Nominalization**

Objectives

- Students will understand how a reliance of nominalizations can affect writing.

IAS:

- RN 3.3: Determine an author's perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedure:

1. Remind students how they changed adjectives/verbs into their noun forms. Ask students to articulate why we might do this in English.
2. Provide a sentence using several nominalizations. Ask students to evaluate its effectiveness. Rewrite the sentence together, removing the nominalizations. Students discuss the effectiveness of the revised sentence. Discuss how these types of nouns often appear in sentences with passive voice.
 - a. original: There was a review of the proposal by the committee, but no explanation was offered for their decision.
 - b. revised: The committee reviewed the proposal but did not explain their decision.
3. Watch Ted-Ed's video "Beware of Nominalizations." Students share their takeaways. Be sure students recognize how nominalizations can complicate sentences and make a sentence feel static.
4. Provide students with two sentences: one with nominalizations and one without. Ask students to articulate the rhetorical difference between these sentences. Guide students to the understanding that the noun feels static and the verb feels more forceful.
 - a. Parents have great love for their children.----Parents greatly love their children.
5. Students complete "Too Many Abstract Nouns."

*Nominalization***Lesson 3: The Good**

Objectives: Students will recognize the positive uses of nominalization.

IAS

- RN 3.3: Determine an author’s perspective or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective and analyze how style and content contribute to the power and persuasiveness of the text.

Procedure:

1. Review the differences between nominalizations and their verb forms. Be sure students understand how nominalizations slow down action.
2. Remind students that nominalizations can bog down a sentence. However, sometimes they can be useful.
3. Students reread The Declaration of Independence, identifying nominalizations and revising sentences to eliminate them. (There will be nominalizations that cannot easily be eliminated.) With students, discuss the effectiveness of the revised sentences. How do they shift the meaning of the original? Why might Jefferson have used the nominalization?
 - a. “Such has been the patient sufferance of these Colonies” ---These colonies have patiently suffered.
4. Provide students this paragraph:

“Because Jack had reinforced Jill’s behavior with a variety of reinforcers, Jill tended to approach Jack. This tendency was strong even after Jill had recently accessed several of these kinds of reinforcers.”¹

 - a. Discuss the purpose of this nominalization--transition.
5. Pairs of students examine “Ain’t I a Woman” looking for nominalizations. Don’t let them look for too long, there aren’t any in this speech. Discuss reasons why Truth would not use nominalizations.
6. In small groups, ask students to develop guidelines for using nominalizations. Share and record.
7. Students revise their own working arguments according to the guidelines.

¹ from <https://sites.uwm.edu/editing/nominalizations/>

Part 3: Materials

Who is Responsible?²

For each situation, write a statement in which you accept responsibility and a separate statement in which you hide the cause of the problem.

| Situation | Accept Responsibility | Hide the Cause |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|
| It's your job to mow the lawn, but it hasn't happened. | | |
| Your friend confided a secret in you, but then you told the secret to someone else. | | |
| You didn't lock your car, and now some of your boyfriend's stuff is missing. | | |
| You deleted your group's digital folder with drafts of your group project. | | |

Reread your statements in each column. What patterns do you notice?

² adapted from Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *More Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Party Post-Mortem³

While your parents were away, you decided to throw a party. Unfortunately, your friend Trevor posted an invite on Tik-Tok and linked your address to Google Maps. Trevor is proud of his 3,281 Tik-Tok followers. You'll go down in history as a legendary figure at school. Not so much when your parents come home though. There is damage to the house and belongings, general mess and stains, and rumors.

Task: Write an email to your parents confessing the outcome but deflecting the blame using passive voice. You want to prepare them for what they're going to find, but at the same time you want to make sure that your punishment doesn't last through college.

³ adapted from Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2017.

“Active and Passive Voice: Declaration of Independence.”

Examine the use of active and passive voice in the Declaration of Independence.

PASSIVE VOICE

1. Write one example of passive voice from the text.
2. Rewrite the example so it is active.
3. How did the meaning of the sentence change?
4. Why do you think passive voice was used in this particular situation? Consider the overall argument. Be specific to the content of the writing.

ACTIVE VOICE

5. Write one example of active voice from the text.
6. Rewrite the example so it is passive.
7. How did the meaning of the sentence change?
8. Why do you think active voice was used in this particular situation? Consider the overall argument. Be specific to the content of the writing.

Think of what you’ve learned about active and passive voice. How can this be a powerful tool in argumentative or persuasive writing? (6-10 sentences)

Dramatic Conjunctions⁴

Something crazy happened to you over the weekend. Rumors are flying--and there's a story there. Get dramatic and tell it, and use a conjunction in a standalone sentence to raise the suspense.

**In a footnote, explain the purpose and effect of your standalone sentence.

⁴ adapted from Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *More Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Ex Rejection⁵

You get an email from your ex about getting back together. This isn't going to happen, especially after the way you were treated. But you're not going to get too salty about it. Instead, your ex will get a response that is polite but direct in shutting down their nonsense. Write this response. Use the conjunctions *yet* and *nor* to maintain your formal tone.

**In a footnote, explain the purpose and effect of your conjunctions.

⁵ adapted from Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *More Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Conjunction Manipulation⁶

It was supposed to be the blockbuster movie of the summer. You were excited and happy to drop \$15--only to be very disappointed. Make your critique clear.

Use at least TWO of the conjunction strategies we've discussed.

- starting a sentence with a conjunction
- using nor
- using yet
- repeating conjunctions
- eliminating conjunctions

⁶ adapted from Crovitz, Darren and Michelle D. Devereaux. *More Grammar to Get Things Done*. New York: Routledge, 2020.

Abstract and Concrete: Organizing Your Thinking

Complete this table:

| Things that annoy or frustrate you | General category that matches each frustration |
|--|--|
| School rules about cell phones are too strict. | cell phone policies |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Choose one of the rows in the table above. Write a paragraph that shifts from the general to the specific.

Too Many Abstract Nouns

Each sentence contains at least one abstract noun that overcomplicates the sentence. Revise the sentence in a way that removes this noun and give more action to the sentence. You will need to add and remove words.

1. The intention of the jury is to reach a decision.
2. The budget cuts for the football team were the topic of the debate.
3. Our presentation was about gasoline taxes.
4. The NIH did a study about the progression of lupus.
5. The coroner did an examination of the body.

Compare the original sentences to your rewrites. How do your rewrites change the sentence's power?

Stephanie Fryer

Dr. Sue Carter Wood

Convincing Women

29 April 2022

“From Hollows Where Clear Waters Flow:” The Ethos of Juliet V. Strauss

At the end of trail 11, behind the inn, there is a sculpture at Turkey Run State Park called “Subjugation.” It features a tall woman with one hand, holding a goblet, raised up to the sky while animals lie at her feet. The plinth it rests on reads

“In Memoriam

Juliet V. Strauss- ‘The Country Contributor’

by

The Woman’s Press Club of Indiana”

A memorial for a writer? This is not at all what one would expect to find tucked into the trees in a state park. However, it was Indiana native Juliet Strauss who saved these trees from destruction. She used her journalistic ethos as a rural Indiana mother to engender statewide passion for this land.



Beginnings

Juliet V. Strauss was born in 1863 in Rockville, Indiana, to impoverished, but intellectual, parents. She loved to wander through the forests near her home and was considered by everyone to be a tomboy, climbing trees and riding astride (Boomer 3). Her father called her his Gypsy Girl, or Gyp, because she never settled in one place for long.

She spent as much time outdoors as she could, especially in the forest. In her writing, she later personifies this land she loved:

“It is beauty, rather than grandeur, which characterizes these glens...the green gloom of hemlock shaded grottoes; the delicate fringes of maidenhair ferns; the grey-green lacings of beautiful lichens on walls of stone; the sunlit vistas beyond overhanging cliffs; the fairy timely of miniature falls in the clear bubbling run--all suggest nature in her most seductive mood” (“Hoosier Conservationist” 9).

For young Strauss, Parke County was a bucolic wonderland despite the Civil War, which deeply affected the area. Her life was simple and she was taught the value of self-sufficiency through gardening and livestock raising, and thrift by watching her mother make ends meet. It was the quintessential rural childhood of the 19th century.

Despite Strauss’s low upbringing, she was soundly educated, though she never finished high school. Her mother, Susan Humphries, stressed the importance of education in bettering oneself. She taught her children to read and write at home and learned math herself in order to help them through school. Strauss said that she had “something more valuable than schooling by way of education--the close companionship of a cultured mother who had a vocation for teaching and who devoted her whole life to the care and education of her children” (Strouse).

Indeed, her mother encouraged Strauss’s work as a writer and allowed her to write for the local newspaper--the *Rockville Tribune*--at just sixteen years old so she could learn shorthand (Boomhower 14). In 1881, Strauss married her editor, Isaac Strouse, who later became the owner of the *Rockville Tribune*. (Strauss used the German iteration of her husband’s name as her own throughout their marriage.)

For twenty-five years, Strauss wrote for the *Tribune*. Her popular weekly column, “Squibs and Sayings” commented on life in Parke County from the glories of spring to the first woman bicyclist in Rockville. At times her writing was critical of the social scene, so she and her husband were often excluded from social events because of her writing. In an 1893 column, Strauss’s remarks on a performance in Rockville of *Julius Caesar* prompted a letter of complaint from an outraged reader. In her column, Strauss had commented on the audience more than the performance:

“There is nothing in the way of intellectual pursuit which a certain class of would-be intellectual women wont tackle. Bus alas, in thought as in dress, they are fearfully afraid they will be *de rigueur*. So they pound their heads over books that they think they ought to read...and [make] sure of the opinions of others, whom they consider authority, before voicing their conclusions” (“Squibs and Sayings”).

These harsh words clearly establish Strauss’s critical views of Rockville’s most influential women. To her, these women had no opinions of their own but parroted the ideas of others, implying that she herself has unique ideas. Strauss was known for her blunt commentary on societal mores and values, particularly mocking the fashionable set who were overly concerned with material goods, but this comment went too far in the eyes of Rockville high society. In response, a rival newspaper, *Rockville Republican*, printed a scathing letter to the editor criticizing Strauss’s lack of experience. The writer implied that Strauss does not have the authority to judge others: Strauss, who was born and raised in Rockville, “who has been outside of the corporation only a few times, whose whole education was received in the common schools of this town, not even finishing the high school course, should set herself...up for the critic and censor...of the entire county” (“Audi Alteram Partem”).

Not everyone felt this way. Strauss later wrote how a Rockville attorney praised her column saying, “there are a whole lot of us who believe in you and who know that you are going to get there” (Strause). Despite these kind words, this type of criticism continued to be a sore spot for the rest of her life.

But Strauss’s social struggles did not stop her from writing. In 1903, Strauss also began writing for the *Indianapolis News* as “The Country Contributor.” Strauss’s biographer, Ray Boomhower, speculates that she was offered this column as a way to appeal to female and rural readers which would bring in more advertising revenue (53). Regardless of the original reason, “The Country Contributor” was an overwhelming success.

“The Ideas of a Plain Country Woman”

Strauss was soon discovered by Edward W. Bok, the editor of the immensely popular national magazine, the *Ladies’ Home Journal*.

This magazine began in 1883 aimed at upper class women who had the time and money for leisure reading and purchasing goods for the home. However, by 1900, owner Cyrus Curtis realized that there was more readership among middle class women than he anticipated, or perhaps, desired. In fact, high literacy, rising prevalence of electricity, and a significant increase in middle class purchasing power created an audience of women who had money to spend and time to read (Scanlon 14). He and his editor, Bok, shifted the magazine’s focus to what middle class women desired: “mild political and social reforms” and ideas relating primarily to women and the running of a household (Scanlon 12). These changes caused the *Ladies’ Home Journal* to be the first magazine to reach one million subscribers in 1903 (Santana). Because of her commentary on practical life, Strauss was the perfect addition to grow the magazine into a middle class culture changer.

Her column, titled “The Ideas of a Plain Country Woman,” signed by The Country Contributor, appeared in the November 1905 issue among pieces from other writers like “My Plan for a Model Kitchen,” “The Housewife and her Helpers,” and “The Simple Life Amid Plenty.” All of these would have appealed to the *Journal’s* conservative female readership by celebrating the domestic life that many of these women aspired to. In fact, Strauss often used herself to illustrate her points about womanhood and rural living, cementing the idea that she was part of this female ideal.

For Strauss, the voting woman was not part of this ideal. She often criticized the bluestockings and the suffrage movement saying that women should not need to vote because they can already have the power to do everything that they should need to and that voting was just one more responsibility women did not have time for. She railed against the notion of women working outside of the home, but was fully aware that she was getting paid for her writing though her husband provided for her. She never truly addressed this contradiction, and even admitted to working outside the home when her children were young. In her later writing, she admits woman suffrage may be the right direction, but she never wavers in her conviction that the place for a woman is in the home.

In her first column, she discusses the work of womanhood and the unnecessary suffrage movement, setting up her beliefs for the writing to come. Strauss extolls the work mothers do for their families: “The intelligent woman who has done real work...is the perfect flower of civilization” (“Ideas” Nov. 1905). She declares that caring for the family and preserving conservative values is all women’s manifest destiny, their birthright, their god-given duty.

The illustration that accompanies this column is reminiscent of Renaissance paintings of the haloed virgin Mary, teaching young Jesus at her knee, similar to how Strauss was taught by her own mother, serving as a visual representation of the ideal mother. Strauss often references Christianity in her writing, equating the religion with good, old fashioned, moral values. In this first column, she quotes Psalm 68:13: “Yet ye have lien among the pots yet shall ye be as the wings of the dove.” Strauss uses this verse as the divine calling of women to motherhood and hard work:



“I smile when I see how intrinsic is that spirit of womanliness that rises white and unsmirched from life’s scullery and its seeming degradations, and I wonder why it is that we are called upon to see and know all the unspeakable side of life, to bear the burden of it--do the menial tasks, hustle out of sight the debris, the ghastly accumulations of daily living, and make the face of life sweet and attractive for man, for coarse, sinful, unsympathetic man, who is big and strong, yet who cannot bear the sight of such things!” (“Ideas” Nov. 1905).

Her answer to this wondering is that “service is the crowning glory of life” and that mothers earn this mother-of-god halo through service to her family (“Ideas”). However, not every mother will receive this honor--she must be willing to do the grueling work it takes to raise a family. Strauss pokes fun at a woman she met who “Would just die!” if she had to butcher a chicken. Strauss replies that she would kill a cow by herself if she needed in order to feed her family, showcasing the driving duty a mother ought to have for her family’s survival and comfort. With this anecdote, Strauss sets herself up as the ideal woman--tough and

dedicated to her family's well being; she is no delicate woman of leisure or a man who "cannot bear the sight" of the "unspeakable side of life." In addition to men and soft women, she even takes a jab at a "preacher with his hands soft from idleness."

This first column, as well as many of her others, draws a clear distinction between men and women, with men being exhausting yet philosophical geniuses, pondering the future; while women are more concerned with the immediate and the practical. She says that most of the world's geniuses are men, but that women should not be bothered by this: "The world doesn't need many geniuses. If you ever lived in the house with one you would be convinced that a little of him goes a long way" ("Ideas" Nov. 1905). Women have too many earthly responsibilities to consider without adding "epoch-making" and suffrage. For Strauss, women do not need to be grand geniuses to live a glorified and fulfilled life running their household. Her humorous remark reassures all women readers that they have value, not based on formal learning or social prowess, which is how men might judge each other, but in their hard work and dedication to their families.

In a column arguing for traditional women's roles, one would not expect to find such criticism of men. Jennifer Scanlon, professor of women's studies at Bowdoin College, argues that Strauss's idealistic views were a "subversive picture of traditional marriage" (101). Strauss recognized the sacrifices women made for their husbands and families, asserting that men could not understand what women gave up when they married. She believed that two-thirds of women felt less happy being married than before. The cause of this dissatisfaction was men's shortcomings--primarily their lofty and selfish thoughts.

Strauss's ideas about marriage probably derived from her own problematic one. In the early years, she and her husband struggled with poverty. In later writing, she called

their early marriage, without adequate funds, a “dreadful mistake” and said that her “young husband--a Tom Sawyer village lad--had little taste for the ties of domesticity” (“Ideas” May 1906.) Her husband provided very little help at home, and “never noticed that [she] was the shabbiest, the most overworked of all [their] family and friends.” (“Ideas” Dec. 1909).

Strauss’s personal stories about her own marriage would have struck an emotional chord with her middle class readers, who likely struggled with similar issues within their own marriages. By doing so, she created rapport with her readers who could trust her writing because she was so open about herself. No man or marriage is ideal: this idea appears many times in her columns, establishing that society’s idealistic view of marriage is incorrect, that women struggle in marriage, that her readers’ struggles are normal.

The divine woman in the accompanying illustration seems to have everything under control with easy perfection, which is the womanly ideal Strauss, and so many other women, strove for. Though she encourages her readers to strive toward this, she subverts this idea of perfection in running a household. In reality, a perfectly happy marriage and constant joy in the housework are unattainable. Strauss recognizes this and accepts it as part of being a woman. She offers an anecdote of when she was plagued by an “attack of the ‘I don’t want to’s’” when she needed to butcher a few chickens--something every woman understands (“Ideas” Nov. 1905). Her solution to this attitude was to open up her Bible to a random page and read the seventh verse, and the verse gave her this message: “And I heard a voice saying unto me, ‘Arise Peter; slay and eat.’” She laughed and then butchered the chickens. Sharing her mundane struggles creates a rapport with readers “by making them feel they were a part of her existence and encouraging them to see the worth of their own

lives as homemakers” (Boomhower 70). Instead of showing readers the ideal they could never attain, she shows them the joys and pitfalls of reality which mirror their own.

The “simple, personal, and sincere style” of Strauss’s writing made the Country Contributor in *Ladies’ Home Journal* and *Indianapolis News* a hit. Letters poured into the *Indianapolis News* inquiring of the Country Contributor’s true identity. The newspaper sent reporter Herschell to meet with Strauss and get a tour of Rockville. In his article, he answered readers’ most asked questions: Is she sincere? Does she really mean what she says?...Does she live the life she writes about?” Herschell’s answer is “You bet!” (“Who is the Country Contributor?”). Readers connected with her writing so much that they needed to know that she was real, that they could trust what she said, that she truly was just like them. Herschell’s interview with Strauss proved that she was exactly what she said. Her reputation as a rural woman who could discuss the simple things in life with a “bright, sparkling style” gained her a large national following for the next decade.

“Shall We Save Turkey Run?”

While Strauss was well known for her arguments lauding traditional womanhood in the early twentieth century, she is currently remembered in Parke County for something else--her campaign with activist Colonel Richard Lieber to save a forested area from logging, a seeming departure from her previous work about homemaking. In 1916, the land of the Lusk family, locally known as Turkey Run, was set to be auctioned off with an estimated revenue of \$25,000. The prime interested parties were a lumber company and John Lusk’s heirs, who had not inherited the land due to legal oversights. This was the land of Strauss’s gloried youth with its beech forests and shadowy ravines. When she heard of the auction, she penned the governor an “inspiring letter describing eloquently and

graphically the beauties of Turkey Run...with a passionate appeal...to take steps to preserve for future generations this historic place” (qtd. Boomhower 90). This letter does not seem to exist today, but Governor Ralston’s previous remarks illustrate the profound impact her words had on him. He formed the Turkey Run Commission, which was tasked with finding the funds to purchase the land and develop it into Indiana’s first state park. Col. Lieber and Strauss were among the appointees.

Strauss used the Country Contributor's voice to advocate for the state’s purchase of this land for a park. April 24, 1915, she published her Country Contributor column in *Indianapolis News* with the title “Shall We Save Turkey Run?” This title suggests that Strauss will explore the answer to this question with a final “yes” or “no.” However, her argument is not “should we” or “shouldn’t we;” according to her, Turkey Run clearly should be purchased. This question is a challenge meant to unify her varied audience, not just in saving the park from potential logging destruction, but also the destruction from careless visitors. Unlike the *Ladies’ Home Journal*, Strauss’s column in the *Indianapolis News* had an audience that varied widely by age, socioeconomic status, and gender. In order to save Turkey Run, they all had to be on board.

Before she targets a specific audience, Strauss, with her usual self-deprecating humor, addresses her own reputation as a spoilsport who no one listens to. She says, “I wish to say a word in regard to the preservation of Turkey run. I shake in my boots as I begin--knowing what a fatality there is in my advocating anything. I can break up any revival meeting that ever convened just by going to it” (“Shall”). In this, she deftly acknowledges her own social reputation while honestly poking fun at herself. She turns a bit more serious as she reflects upon her own lack of power: “I never wrote a particularly

earnest plea in our home paper urging the preservation of our pretty trees that somebody didn't go out the next day and fell two or three of them or hack off several lovely branches" ("Shall).

She aims her first point at the women, perhaps as they connect so strongly to her Country Contributor ethos. She says, "there is still enough left to restore [Turkey Run] to something of its original beauty if the women of the state could get ahold of it in time." This statement sets up women as caretakers who can improve what they touch. Here she is referencing the "devastation by greed" of the logging companies but also campers who have vandalized the park's natural beauty. Women, and by extension, mothers, can use their power of improvement to restore the land to its former glory. Women are used to improving every aspect of a household--finances, children, house, husband--so they have the power and experience to save Turkey Run.

In the subsequent paragraph, Strauss specifically addresses men in a way she believes will resonate with them. She says, "I wish seriously to ask the men of Indiana if they wish the state to become a desert. I want to call out to them as loudly and strongly as my little voice will permit...I wonder how many beech trees are dead in Indiana from the two years' drought? Have you thought of it?...Remember that clearing the land has a serious effect upon the rainfall" ("Shall"). As she does in the *Ladies' Home Journal*, she distinguishes between men and women by their goals and natural attributes. Women can take what is available to them and improve it, while men are more concerned with broader ideas and have the power to address them. In this case, she wants them to connect the recent drought with the clearing of trees. Instead of examining the immediate concerns, she is encouraging men to examine larger trends and causes that they have the power (through business and

politics) to influence. In a later paragraph she further separates men and women by saying, "I have fairly given over all hope of inspiring men to action regarding things pertaining to simple beauty" ("Shall") Her previous argument, which is aimed at men, about the connection between drought and deforestation relies on the practical consequences of logging instead of the emotional argument of beauty. In her mind, men do not care about the "simple beauty" of the world, but she does, placing beauty as an argument aimed at women.

She continues with an address to "young folk," though her argument here would more strongly appeal to adult nostalgia. Strauss uses her own memories of trips to Turkey Run as a child to reminisce about the days when Turkey Run was a delightful paradise. She compares the method of travel--she journeyed there slowly in a wagon; 1916 young visitors rushed to it in automobiles, missing the joy and education of a slow journey. Because her childhood journeys were slow, "there was time to notice the rich growth in the fence corners and to tell the names of things growing there" ("Shall"). Addressing the "young folk" offers her the opportunity to contrast the past with the present. Her real audience in this section are adults, more specifically parents. Strauss blames parents, including herself, for not teaching their children the beauty, care, and knowledge of their immediate environment: "We have failed to disclose to children that everything by the wayside is interesting and of actual value...when we take our children in fast running cars...giving them only a mingled impression of open country, are we teaching them anything besides a mere love for fast going?" ("Shall"). Similarly to her first column in *Ladies' Home Journal*, Strauss praises the simplicity of life and rejects the more modern ways of living.

As part of her recollection of a simpler past and the restorative joy of the “deep dark woods,” she reveals that she has lost the “exquisite Turkey run feeling” she used to have because of her adult daughter’s death in 1912. She says that she “knew what it meant for nature to fail to help” her. Even a “running stream brought on a fit of melancholia really dangerous to sanity” (“Shall”). This personal admission would appeal to her audience because they believe that they know her; they had been reading her column in *Indianapolis News* for over a decade. A revelation like this highlights the deeper impact of Turkey Run because, for Strauss, it is gone. Not yet physically, but the beauty and peace she extolls throughout the argument do not impact her positively any longer. All she has is the memory of a “Christmas feeling which children have” (“Shall”). With this, Strauss offers an image of a possible desolate future without the comforts and joys of nature if her audience refuses to take action to save Turkey Run. She says, “I never expect again to find in nature the joyous uplift I once found, but I do earnestly wish for others to find it. I want to think that the girls of the coming generations may be as happy as I was” (“Shall”).

For the end of her argument, Strauss unifies her targeted audiences, as the responsibility of saving Turkey Run, of maintaining collective happiness, belongs to everyone: “Oh, Indiana--this is not a light matter. We have produced too many poets, statesmen, preachers, teachers, and sturdy fine folk to allow our home to be thus desecrated. We cannot remain indifferent to the destruction of a place like Turkey run” (“Shall”). She pleads with everyone, and simultaneously compliments and chastises the state. Her deliberative argument concludes with a unifying traditional call to action, emotional imagery, and an argument of pride that she expects to appeal to everyone:

“Rouse yourself now, Indiana, to a call to an imperative duty. Each state has its show places, its natural beauty spots to which it likes to take visitors. There was a time when the remoteness of Turkey run kept it in a manner unknown to fame, but since the automobile days it is accessible to all the motorists of central Indiana. It is still possible to save this place, and with it some of the aboriginal timber of the state as well as to conserve for our children something upon which to found some affection and pride for their native state...If a child has no reverence for trees, no feeling for the woods and the country, how can we expect him to be a good man?” (“Shall).

Her call to action is reminiscent of a general encouraging troops before a battle, bringing them together for a common goal--in this case, preserving the natural beauty of Turkey Run for the success of future generations.

With her help, the Turkey Run commission raised an impressive \$30,000, but was outbid by the logging company by a mere \$100. With skilled negotiations and a sizable donation by the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Association, the committee purchased Turkey Run from the logging company for \$40,200. Indiana had its second state park. (Boomhower 101).

Juliet Strauss died within the next year without witnessing the full realization of her and Col. Lieber’s dreams. Without Strauss’s passionate writing, it is unlikely that Turkey Run would be a state park today, and an annual 700,000 visitors would miss out on the land’s beauty and mystery that she so loved as a child. In 2019, Turkey Run State Park was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places, cementing the park’s historical value at the federal level, ensuring that Strauss’s legacy as a rural activist remains intact for future families to explore.

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