

Character-Based Writing Lessons In Structure & Style

Daniel K. Weber

First Edition © March 2007
Institute for Excellence in Writing, Inc.

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ISBN-10: 0-9779860-4-7
ISBN-13: 978-0-9779860-4-0

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Published by
Institute for Excellence in Writing, Inc.
P.O. Box 6065, Atascadero, CA 93423
1 (800) 856-5815
www.writing-edu.com

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To the Student...

These lessons are designed to help you strengthen your composition skills using readings from selections associated with the lives of Mother Teresa, Abraham Lincoln and St. Francis. I have tried to select stories, excerpts, and historical references that are both interesting and important. I hope you will enjoy the lessons that follow.

Almost every lesson has source text for you to read before you start your assignments. After you have read the source text for a given lesson, please do the assignments in the order they appear. Each lesson builds upon the previous ones, as the checksheets clearly show. The checksheets are meant as guides – use them to remind yourself of the skills you have already learned and to make sure you have incorporated new skills into your compositions.

Spaces for your outlines are provided throughout, however, it may be more convenient to use a separate sheet of paper. This will eliminate the hassle of flipping back and forth from the source text to your outline as you work along.

Some of the later lessons will seem to skip a step in the assignment section. For instance, the assignment may simply say to write a composition. However, by that time, you should already know the model and the process: you must still make a note outline, write at least two drafts, and keep your final composition in the back of this book, or in a special folder.

If something isn't clear, don't hesitate to ask your parent or teacher for help. Discuss each lesson with them. This is not meant to be a workbook that you use all by yourself; it is a book of lessons that should be used under the guidance of your parent or teacher.

Above all, have fun. Say a prayer before you begin each lesson, asking the Lord to direct and inspire you as you read and write. Do your work for the glory of God, and you will be blessed. Peace in Christ.

To the Parent and Teacher...

This book is intended primarily for use with IEW's Teaching Writing: Structure and Style program. If you are not familiar with that course, you may find this book difficult to use. Along those lines, it is important to understand that this is not a workbook that will teach the student writing. It is a collection of lessons that you, the teacher, can use to teach writing. You are the critical element for success with this book.

You will notice that I have included a variety of source text material on three carefully selected historical figures. These three individuals exemplify particular

character traits that we would all like to emulate and make our own. Reading about these traits and then writing about these traits has the power to assist young minds in the formation and personalization of these traits.

Different students require different levels of challenge. This book provides checksheets at three levels: Level A – beginner, Level B – intermediate, and Level C – advanced. Level A students progress through the lessons focusing on the fundamentals of style. Level B students are expected to learn the fundamentals and build upon these skills with more detail. Level C students should already be familiar with (or quickly learn) the basics of the skills taught, have a firm grasp of grammar, and be able to employ the advanced techniques which are taught in this book. The checksheets for each lesson, however, are suggested. If your students work at a different pace, that's okay. The lessons aren't rigid. You should adjust the checksheet to include or exclude skills as you progress. The flexibility makes this an ideal book for teaching mixed grade groups.

Some of the punctuation or grammar taught in this book may differ slightly from what you have learned before or normally practice in your home or classroom. You are the teacher, and it is your prerogative to teach your students what you want them to learn. If, for example, you disagree with the absence of a comma before a particular “who/which” clause, put it in. If you believe firmly in using “because” instead of “since” (or vice versa), teach it. These lessons are not meant to be authoritative about grammar and usage, but to be a source of ideas, models, and techniques to broaden composition experience and aptitude.

As you may have noticed, the checksheets throughout the book do not have a section to assign grades. The model checksheet on the next page includes a grading system for those who wish to grade their students' compositions.

Above all, be joyful. Smile and laugh as you teach. Teach with prayer and patience, joy and love.

Unit III: Summarizing Narrative Stories

Lesson 6: Mother Teresa Speaks on Abortion

Objective

To learn how to summarize narrative stories, a step toward reviewing and critiquing books and movies. In Unit III, you will create outlines primarily by following your level of the Narrative Story Model. This system of creating outlines will be useful when you summarize long or short stories, books or movies, plays, videos or speeches (such as the following excerpt from Mother Teresa's Nobel Lecture during her receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway on December 11, 1979). In each case you follow a 3-paragraph Narrative Story Model.

Source Text

"I was surprised in the West to see so many young boys and girls given into drugs, and I tried to find out why—why is it like that, and the answer was: because there is no one in the family to receive them. Father and mother are so busy they have no time. Young parents are in some institution and the child takes back to the street and gets involved in something. We are talking of peace. These are things that break peace, but I feel the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion, because it is a direct war, a direct killing—direct murder by the mother herself. And we read in the Scripture, for God says very clearly: Even if a mother could forget her child—I will not forget you—I have carried you in the palm of My hand. We are carried in the palm of His hand, so close to Him that unborn child has been carried in the hand of God. And that is what strikes me most, the beginning of that sentence, that even if a mother could forget something—impossible—but even if she could forget—I will not forget you. And today the greatest means—the greatest destroyer of peace is abortion. And we who are standing here—our parents wanted us. We would not be here if our parents would do that to us. Our children, we want them, we love them, but what of the millions".

"Many people are very, very concerned with the children in India, with the children in Africa where quite a number die, maybe of malnutrition, of hunger and so on, but millions are dying deliberately by the will of the mother. And this is what is the greatest destroyer of peace today. Because if a mother can kill her own child, what is left for me to kill you and you to kill me? There is nothing between. And this I appeal in India, I appeal everywhere: Let us bring the child back, and this year being the child's year: What have we done for the child? At the beginning of the year I told, I spoke everywhere and I said: Let us make this the year that we make every single child born, and unborn, wanted. And today is the end of the year, have we really made the children wanted? I will give you something terrifying. We are fighting abortion by adoption, we have saved thousands of lives, we have sent words to all the clinics, to the hospitals, police

stations—please don't destroy the child, we will take the child. So every hour of the day and night it is always somebody, we have quite a number of unwedded mothers—tell them come, we will take care of you, we will take the child from you, and we will get a home for the child. And we have a tremendous demand from families who have no children that is the blessing of God for us”.

“And also, we are doing another thing that is very beautiful—we are teaching our beggars, our leprosy patients, our slum dwellers, and our people of the street, natural family planning. In Calcutta alone in six years—it is all in Calcutta—we have had 61,273 babies less from the families who would have had, but because they practice this natural way of abstaining, of self-control, out of love for each other. We teach them the temperature meter, which is very beautiful, very simple, and our poor people understand. And you know what they have told me? Our family is healthy, our family is united, and we can have a baby whenever we want. So clear—those people in the street, those beggars—and I think that if our people can do like that how much more you and all the others who can know the ways and means without destroying the life that God has created in us”.

Assignment

1. Read the source text. The Narrative Story Model found on the following page has been adjusted for Levels A-C. The forms are very similar, and all lead to the same result.
2. The first paragraph of a 3-paragraph composition appears on the next page. Using the Narrative Story Model Outline as a guide, write the other two paragraphs, following the checklist on page 34.
3. Save your work as we will revisit this narrative model and critique process in Unit IX.

Structural Tools and Suggestions

This outline format is different from the one you learned in Units I and II. Rather than taking key words from the source text, use the story sequence chart to ask yourself questions about the story. Put the answers in a three-paragraph outline format. The information you put in your outline may not be in the same order as it appears on the original story. Paragraphs should be of approximately equal length. In the last sentence of your last paragraph, include 2-3 key words that also appear in your composition's title. You may wish to wait until writing the last paragraph to decide the title. Your title should repeat the key words of the last sentence.

**Narrative Story Model Note Outline:
Mother Teresa Speaks on Abortion**

**Story Sequence Chart
3 Forms of the Same Model**

	A	B	C
<p>I. West, young people, drugs</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. parents, absent, busy 2. young parents, prison 3. kids, gangs 4. peace, broken 5. children, not wanted <p>II. abortion, greatest destroyer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. murder, mother 2. God, holds all 3. India, Africa, too many 4. Year of Child, adoption 5. clinics, hospitals <p>III. poor people, NFP</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Calcutta, 61,273 less 2. self-control, love 3. thermometer, simple 4. poor, understand 5. rich, understand? 	<p>I.</p> <p>Who is in the story? What are they like? Where did they live? What was their situation? When did they live?</p>	<p>I.</p> <p>Who? Like? Where? When? Mood?</p>	<p>I.</p> <p>Characters Setting (Time & Place) Mood</p>
	<p>II.</p> <p>What was the problem? What happened? What did they think? What did they say? What did they do?</p>	<p>II.</p> <p>Problem? What happened? Think? Say? Do?</p>	<p>II.</p> <p>Conflict Plot</p>
	<p>III.</p> <p>Climax? How was the problem solved? How could the problem be solved? What is the moral message?</p>	<p>III.</p> <p>Climax? Solution? Moral? Message?</p>	<p>III.</p> <p>Climax Theme Message</p>

Title Repeats Key Words of Last Sentence

Model First Paragraph: Mother Teresa Speaks on Abortion

The first week of December 1979, Mother Teresa traveled from Calcutta, India to Oslo, Norway so that she could accept the Nobel Peace Prize of 1979. On December 11th, she delivered a speech, as all recipients are expected to do. During her lecture, she pointed out that drug use among young people in the West seems to be very normal. By “West”, she meant the advanced, industrialized nations like the United States of America. Mother Teresa pointed out that children might turn to drugs if they feel unwanted by their parents. Many times parents are too young themselves and may be using drugs and may end up in prison. Then who cares for the children? Probably, gangs continue to grow in the United States because of this sad situation. Peace is broken where children are not wanted. Jesus said, “Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Luke 18:16) Like Jesus, Mother Teresa says, “Tell them come, we will take care of you, we will take the child from you, and we will get a home for the child.”

who?
characters?
where?
- place
when?
- time

Style Tools and Examples (Level B & C now, Level A later)

The next dress-up element is an adverbial clause, which begins with one of the clausal starters shown here. In each paragraph you write from now on, include and underline an adverb clause that begins with one of these clausal starters. “Because” can also be an adverbial starter, although you will use the “because” along with another clause for several more lessons. Note that the first letter of the words: *when, while, where, as, since, if, although*, when said in that order, can create the Web site-looking acronym “www.asia”

ADVERBIAL CLAUSAL STARTERS: *when while where as since if although (because)*

She inquired of her assistants... when they gathered together.
while dinner was served.
where they would feel at ease.
as soon as she arrived in Oslo.
since they had the keys to her suitcase.
as if she expected good news from them.
although she was exhausted from her trip.
because the prize was at stake.

Practice creating adverbial clauses with the following examples. Ask your parent or teacher for suggestions if you can't think of anything. If you can't write small enough to fit your clause on one line, use a blank paper instead. (This applies to any of the fill-in-the-blank exercises in this book.)

Mother Teresa invested the Nobel Peace Prize money wisely...

when _____.

while _____.

where _____.

as _____.

since _____.

if _____.

although _____.

She took from the lazy assistant the responsibility he had been given...

when _____.

while _____.

where _____.

as _____.

since _____.

if _____.

although _____.

Checksheet for Lesson 6

<p>Levels A, B, & C</p> <p>Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> title centered and underlined <input type="checkbox"/> name, date <input type="checkbox"/> clearly presented</p> <p>Mechanics <input type="checkbox"/> indent paragraphs <input type="checkbox"/> complete sentences <input type="checkbox"/> capitals (uppercase) <input type="checkbox"/> punctuation</p> <p>Structure <input type="checkbox"/> follows model <input type="checkbox"/> paragraphs roughly equal size <input type="checkbox"/> title reflects key words of last sentence</p> <p>Style Tools <input type="checkbox"/> underline dress-ups (one of each) <input type="checkbox"/> no "banned" adjectives</p>	<p>Paragraphs</p> <p style="text-align: right;">I. II.</p>
	<p>Level A</p> <p>Dress-Ups "-ly" word <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "who/which" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "because" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> quality adjective <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Level B</p> <p>Dress-Ups "-ly" word <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "who/which" clause (no "to be" verbs with "who/which") <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "because" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> quality adjective <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> adverbial clause (www.asia) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>
	<p>Level C</p> <p>Dress-Ups dual "-ly" word <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "who/which" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> invisible "who/which" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> (no "to be" verbs with "who/which") <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> "because" clause <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> dual adjectives <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> adverbial clause (www.asia) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/></p>

Lesson 11: The Faith of St. Francis

Objective

To learn to create outlines by topic, in this case, three paragraphs on one theme – faith.

Source Text

<p>On a certain morning in 1208, Francis was hearing Mass in the chapel of St. Mary of the Angels, near which he had then built himself a hut; the Gospel of the day told how the disciples of Christ were to possess neither gold nor silver, nor scrip for their journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, and that they were to exhort sinners to repentance and announce the Kingdom of God. Francis took these words as if spoken directly to himself, and so as soon as Mass was over he threw away the poor fragment left him of the world's goods, his shoes, cloak, pilgrim staff, and empty wallet. At last he had found his vocation. Having obtained a coarse woolen tunic of "beast color", the dress then worn by the poorest Umbrian peasants, and tied it round him with a knotted rope, Francis went forth at once exhorting the people of the countryside to penance, brotherly love, and peace.</p>	<p>Yet strong and definite as the saint's faith convictions were, he was never a slave to a theory in regard to the observances of poverty or anything else; about him indeed, there was nothing narrow or fanatical. As for his attitude towards study, Francis desiderated for his friars only such theological knowledge as was conformable to the mission of the order, which was before all else a mission of example. Hence he regarded the accumulation of books as being at variance with the poverty his friars professed. Francis resisted the eager desire for mere book learning, so prevalent in his time. This prevalent desire of his time struck at the roots of his simplicity and threatened to stifle the spirit of prayer, which Francis accounted preferable to all else.</p>	<p>Francis devoted himself to evangelizing Central Italy in 1213. About this time he received from Count Orlando of Chiusi the mountain of La Verna, an isolated peak among the Tuscan Apennines, rising some 4000 feet above the valley of the Casentino, as a retreat, "especially favorable for contemplation", to which he might retire from time to time for prayer and rest. For, in his faith walk, Francis never altogether separated the contemplative from the active life, as the several hermitages associated with his memory, and the quaint regulations he wrote for those living in them bear witness. At one time, indeed, a strong desire to give himself wholly to a life of contemplation seems to have possessed the saint.</p>
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Assignment

1. Read the three columns on the previous page, then create a note outline using the space provided. Choose key words from the most interesting or important facts, considering which ones will help you most build on the theme of faith.
2. From your outline, write a three-paragraph composition on these three remarkable examples of faith. Be sure to follow the checksheet on page 63. Also, remember to follow the topic-clincher rule and to highlight (or make bold) the key words which are reflecting or repeating.
3. As usual, edit carefully, get a second opinion, and rewrite or type a final draft. Be sure to save your completed composition for use with a later assignment in Unit VIII.

Note Outline: The Faith of St. Francis

I. Gospel Message, faith in action

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Clincher

II. Learning, faith, not fanatical

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Clincher

III. Faith, retreat, contemplation

1. _____

2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Clincher

Style Tools and Examples

Strengthening Weak Verbs

As main verbs, forms of *to be* such as *is*, *are*, *was*, and *were* weaken your sentences. To avoid *to be* verbs, you can often do one or more of the following: (A) change the verb entirely, (B) change the verb ending, or (C) form a helping verb without a “to be” verb.

(Model) Francis was ready and willing.

- (A) Francis **experienced** tremendous willingness.
- (B) Francis **willed** his life to follow the gospel.
- (C) Francis **had been willing** for years.

Practice rewriting *to be* verbs by replacing the verbs in the following sentences using each of the ways discussed above.

1. Francis **was** never a slave to any theory.

(A) _____

(B) _____

(C) _____

2. The Friars **were** worried because of their hunger.

(A) _____

(B) _____

(C) _____

Sentence Openers (new for Level A, review for Levels B & C) [Refer to preposition list on page 45.] Following the examples, rewrite the sentences to include sentence openers #2 and #3.

- (Subject) **❶ The people** saw Francis preaching to the birds.
(Preposition) **❷ From** the comfort of their homes, the people saw Francis preaching to the birds.
("-ly" word) **❸ Unexpectedly**, the people saw Francis preaching to the birds.

- (Subject) **❶** Francis did not separate the contemplative from the active.
(Preposition) **❷** _____
("-ly" word) **❸** _____

- (Subject) **❶** Count Orlando reached out to assist Francis in prayer.
(Preposition) **❷** _____
("-ly" word) **❸** _____

Style Note, Level A

In this assignment, write paragraphs with at least subject, prepositional, and "-ly" openers. Practice until you feel comfortable with these three. When you are confident, add the remaining openers one at a time as guided by your teacher.

Checksheet for Lesson 11

	Paragraphs	I.	II.	III.
<p>Levels A, B, & C</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>___ title centered and underlined</p> <p>___ name, date</p> <p>___ clearly presented</p> <p>Mechanics</p> <p>___ indent paragraphs</p> <p>___ complete sentences</p> <p>___ capitals (uppercase)</p> <p>___ punctuation</p> <p>Structure</p> <p>___ follows model</p> <p>___ paragraphs roughly equal size</p> <p>___ topic and clincher sentences</p> <p>___ repeat or reflect 2-3 key words</p> <p>___ title reflects key words of final sentence in last paragraph</p> <p>Style Tools</p> <p>___ underline dress-ups (one of each)</p> <p>___ no "banned" adjectives</p> <p>___ no "banned" verbs</p> <p>Sentence Openers (as required)</p> <p>___ ❶ subject</p> <p>___ ❷ preposition</p> <p>___ ❸ "-ly" word</p> <p>___ ❹ "ing"/"ed" opener</p> <p>___ ❺ adverb clausal opener</p> <p>___ ❻ VSS (<5 words)</p>	<p>Level A</p> <p>Dress-Ups</p> <p>"-ly" word _____</p> <p>"who/which" clause _____</p> <p>"because" clause _____</p> <p>quality adjective _____</p> <p>adverb clause _____</p> <p>(www.asia) _____</p> <p>strong verb _____</p> <p>Sentence Openers</p> <p>(#1, #2, #3)</p> <hr/> <p>Level B</p> <p>Dress-Ups</p> <p>"-ly" word _____</p> <p>"who/which" clause _____</p> <p>(no "to be" verbs with "who/which") _____</p> <p>quality adjective _____</p> <p>adverbial clause _____</p> <p>(www.asia) _____</p> <p>strong verb _____</p> <p>Sentence Openers</p> <p>(#1, #2, #3, #5, #6)</p> <hr/> <p>Level C</p> <p>Dress-Ups</p> <p>dual "-ly" word _____</p> <p>"who/which" clause _____</p> <p>invisible "who/which" _____</p> <p>(no "to be" verbs with "who/which") _____</p> <p>dual adjectives _____</p> <p>adverbial clause _____</p> <p>dual verbs _____</p> <p>Sentence Openers (all)</p> <p>_____</p>			

Stylistic Decorations (Level C)

From now on, include one stylistic decoration in every paragraph. Use them moderately; try not to reuse decorations in a composition. The six decorations are:

1. Question
2. Conversation (quotations)
3. Simile and Metaphor
4. 3sss (three short staccato sentences)
5. Alliteration
6. Dramatic paragraph opening and closing

Question

In compositions, questions immediately get your audience to start wondering what their answers would be, interesting them in what you have to say. Suppose you are writing a composition about guns and gun control. You could effectively grab your reader's attention by writing,

"Should handguns be controlled, licensed, registered or even banned?"

Or, if you were writing a composition about the importance of knowing a second language, you might begin with the following question,

"In many countries, students are required to learn English as they study their native language. In addition, most of the world recognizes English as the primary international language. Given these facts, why do so many Americans still seek to learn a foreign language"?

Conversation (Quotations)

In a narrative composition, (for example, "The Fox and the Crow") you *could* tell the story without conversation, but a few lines of dialogue would add variety.

The fox sat down and smirked. Putting on his most debonair air, he began, "My dear crow, most gorgeous creature in the woods, I swoon when you sing. Will you please favor me with a tune?"

Quotations also have a place in creative writing. The passage below, taken from Keats' "Ode to a Nightingale", is one of the most profound expressions of loneliness in a strange place.

*"Perhaps the self same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn."*

You can work passages such as this into your own writing. For example,

“There I was in the heart of the city – alone, fearful, and hungry. Lost in the traffic I felt like Ruth, homesick, standing ‘in tears among the alien corn.’ How terribly alien this new city seemed to me.”

You can also use quotations to add to history reports, biographical accounts, and various other assignments.

In a letter dated 1859, President Lincoln entreated, “Those who deny freedom to others, deserve it not for themselves; and, under a just God, can not long retain it.”

Similes and Metaphors

Similes and metaphors draw comparisons between two seemingly unlike or unrelated things. A simile uses “like” or “as”, where a metaphor does not.

*The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor.*

In this passage from Alfred Noyes, the wind was not a torrent, the moon was not a galleon (a type of ship), and the road was not a ribbon. They are all metaphors, which could have been converted to similes by adding the word “like” to each line. For instance, “The moon was like a ghostly galleon...”

Try to use metaphors and similes in your writing on a regular basis. In compositions longer than 5 paragraphs, for example, you could write a simile into one paragraph and a metaphor into another.

Three Short Staccato Sentences (3sss)

Three short sentences provide emphasis and attract the reader’s attention, especially if they follow certain patterns, such as 4:4:4 (4 words in each sentence) or 4:3:2 (each sentence has one word less than the one before it).

Bulls approach me. They surround me. They encompass me. [3:3:3:]

Using 3sss also gives you the opportunity to use an occasional sentence fragment for extra emphasis. Be careful, though; while sentence fragments can be effective, they can also confuse your reader if you overuse them.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repetition of initial sounds in adjacent words or syllables. Examples of alliteration:

Dust of death Down to the dust Ravenug and roarig lion (This one is

a double alliteration: two sounds repeat, the “r” and the “ing” sounds.)

Dramatic Paragraph Openings and Closings

The dramatic paragraph opening and closing requires that the topic sentence of the paragraph always comes first in the paragraph – except when you have a dramatic opening of five words or less. The dramatic opening, a VSS, comes just before the topic sentence. The dramatic closing is the last sentence of the paragraph. If your composition is short (up to five paragraphs), when you write in a dramatic opening, you must end with a dramatic closing. Later, in larger compositions, you can use a dramatic opening or closing alone in the paragraph.

“Here I am, Lord.” Faithfully, Francis answered God’s call and solemnly set out with his Friars toward Rome.

****(Paragraph Details Here)****

Answering God’s call, Francis faithfully and humbly led his followers to serve the poor. Francis served the Lord.