

Suggested Assignments For Students Using

A Writer's Guide
to
Powerful Paragraphs
by
Victor Pellegrino

from the
Institute for Excellence in Writing



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Introduction & How to Use This Booklet

This is a companion booklet to the text *A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs* by Victor Pellegrino. If you do not have that book, it may be ordered from The Institute for Excellence in Writing (800-856-5815).

It is assumed that most of the teachers and students using this booklet of Suggested Assignments have some degree of experience with the *IEW Structure & Style Syllabus*.

Generally, these assignments would fall into the realm of our Unit VII (Creative Writing), in that the information for the paragraphs will be coming from the students brain, rather than from a printed source text or story.

As with all our models, we strongly recommend that students write from key word outlines, even when doing Creative Writing. For a better understanding of how to “take notes from the brain,” please review one of the following videotapes:

- Teaching Writing Structure & Style, Tape 5 (Unit VII)
- Student Writing Intensive (any level), Day 4

In some cases, the paragraphs may be written about something being studied in History, Science, Religion or Literature. In that case, the Unit IV or Unit VI style of note-taking would be appropriate. A few assignments will require a small amount of research.

For each assignment, an outline should be made on a separate sheet of paper. While younger or less experienced students may need help in completing the outline, older and more experienced students should be able to do their outline independently. Additionally, teachers should provide students with a checklist of Stylistic Techniques at an appropriate level.

This booklet provides one suggested assignment for each paragraph model. The teacher may wish to provide additional, similar assignments of their own design for added practice and a more thorough understanding. Conversely, if any of the paragraph models in the book or these assignment suggestions seem confusing or frustrating, skip it and move on to another model. Many of the models are very similar. Don't let one bump in the road stop your trip.

Before beginning with these assignments, the teacher and students should read and discuss pages 9-38 of *A Writer's Guide to Powerful Paragraphs*. Likewise, before beginning these suggested assignments, teacher and students should read each chapter, study the sample paragraph and discuss the practical suggestions offered.

Lastly, it is strongly suggested that teachers and teaching parents who use these assignments with students actually do the assignment themselves, either before giving it to the student or while the student is working. This small sacrifice will reap great benefits: greater understanding, better teaching, increased empathy for the student, and improved writing skills. Have fun!

For questions, suggestions, additional books or videotapes, contact:
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#1 Chronological Paragraph (Page 41)

Write a paragraph outlining the sequence of events of something which has happened, either from your study of history or in your own life. Follow the practical suggestions on Page 43. Remember, the goal is to convey a clear sequence of events through time.

A second assignment for this paragraph would be to re-write the same sequence of events, only using the flashback idea on Page 43.

Possible events:

- Discovery
- Battle
- Problem and Solution
- Special Day

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence

Note: Several student samples of this completed assignment are available at the end of this booklet.

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#2 Descriptive Paragraph (Page 45)

Write a paragraph describing your favorite holiday. Try to convey the excitement of the holiday, using sensory words that convey the scene, the smell of food cooking, particular sounds, and tastes that make this the holiday of your choice. Remember, the goal is to convey a clear, complete, and vivid description of your favorite holiday.

Possible holidays:

- Christmas
- Fourth of July
- Thanksgiving
- Easter
- St. Valentine's Day

Other requirements:

- Dress-ups & Sentence Openers (Decoration/Triple)
- Topic and clincher sentences repeat/reflect 2-3 key words
- All details within paragraph support topic sentence

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Sample paragraphs from students completing assignment #1:

By Faith Porter (12/02)

School has increased in its difficulty over the years. In the past, kindergarten was carefree; all I had to do was finger paint, crafts, and daily naptimes, which gave me the rest I needed. During my elementary years, math went from adding and subtracting to multiplication and division, while I also studies states and capitals. After that came junior high with its more advanced math, it also strengthened my independent study skills. Recently high school has been the most difficult, my responsibilities have gone from naptime to excellence in writing. School has had such a huge part in helping me plan for the future.

Life Changes Dramatically
by Aimee Dominick (12/02)

Throughout my ten years of schooling, my education has gone from learning to write my A-B-C's to a squared + b squared = c squared. What seems like eons ago was really just kindergarten. I don't remember much about that first year in public school except making a gingerbread man Christmas ornament and getting my fingers maliciously smashed in a cubby hole by the kindergarten bully. Following that, the next four years of elementary school were spent at Mother Lode Christian School. There I learned how to read in the first grade and met my best friend in second. In third grade I wrote a report on horses and in fourth grade I was introduced to California history and long division. Soon after, I transferred to home schooling for fifth grade. I was devastated at the time although now I see it was the best decision my parents ever made regarding my schooling. Little by little, I became accustomed to this method of schooling and my education continued to expand. From this point, I entered my junior high years, but, praise be to God, I was privileged enough to take only one year of junior high for which I am eternally grateful. Until the eighth grade, school was never in its smallest measure, a struggle for me. Learning new concepts came easily to me. But it was then that it hit me: school was not going to be so easy anymore. Pre-Algebra loomed before me and I came to dread the hour when I went into a detailed study of the constitution. Similarly, high school and geometry is constantly challenging. But, with God's help, I can succeed and excel. As is obvious, life dramatically but gradually changes from kindergarten to high school.

Growth in Independent Study
by Isaac Dominick (12/02)

Throughout my numerous years of schooling, my individual progression towards independent study has strengthened. In kindergarten, I, who was five years of age, savored every minute of learning. However, in my next years of elementary school, I found that learning was not so exciting after all. I began studying and taking tests and in some cases even having homework. During these crucial years I began to understand the meaning of independent study. As soon as I entered junior high, I began to move from class to class each hour, when in elementary school I stayed firmly planted in one classroom. Soon I realized that independence was key if I was to pass on to the next level. Well, I made it! I moved on to high school, and that is where I am now. Evidently, in my opinion, high school is for those who can take care of themselves school wise. It requires diligence, self-confidence, perseverance, courage, and without a doubt the help of God. Due to the intensive training in the formal years of my life, independent study has become normal. I can only hope that as I succeed into college my strength in independent study will not diminish, but surpass that of now.