

Grade 11 ▶

Unit One

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS
Review as necessary to enable revision skill use	<input type="checkbox"/> Expository: Informative Report
	WRITING ON DEMAND
	<input type="checkbox"/> ongoing, all disciplines

REVISION SKILLS

Complexity and Simplicity
Narrative Thread

GENRE FOCUS

Expository: Informative Report

NOTES

By this point in their education, students have likely written dozens of informative reports. Many have likely followed a topic sentence and supporting ideas paragraph format. One challenge in this unit is to convey facts via a narrative thread. In other words, to tell a factual story. The reader should feel more engrossed in an unfolding drama than a miner of factual tidbits from a traditional report.

A few publications specialize in this type of writing. The Atlantic Monthly often features interesting reporting with a narrative thread. Find several examples to share with students and discuss these thoroughly during the Acquaintance and Analysis sessions. (Obviously, be sure to pre-read any article you use for instruction.)

The angle a writer takes can influence how well the narrative thread works as an organizational scheme. For example, rather than explaining how a tornado forms, a writer may write about the events in a National Weather Service office on a day that a tornado occurs. This angle allows the writer to introduce characters (e.g., NWS personnel), events, (e.g., storms forming, alerts being issued), rising action (e.g., rotation on radar, funnel cloud sighting), and other elements of story, such as climax and theme. It may be helpful to students for the teacher to plan a brief coaching session to discuss possible angles for each student's report.

The other challenge for the students is to produce a report that is so well written that it is worthy of consideration by a periodical publisher. Students need to consider possible report topics and identify periodicals that include articles with related topics. When writing, the students need to keep the readers of the identified periodicals in mind. Encourage them to create a brief reader profile that can be used to guide their decisions on elements such as tone, word choice, and complexity/simplicity.

PATTERN STATEMENT

The receiver influences the giver

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *The receiver influences the giver*, can be illustrated by engaging students in brainstorming a list of people (famous or otherwise), and then having them work in small groups to develop a list of potential gifts for each person on the list (EX-ex). After having the groups share some of the results, have the small groups discuss the following questions (EX-co):

- What did you just do? List the steps.
- In identifying potential gifts, what did you do? What did you consider?
- When it comes to selecting gifts, what does the giver try to do?

Using additional questioning, guide students to recognize the pattern: *The receiver influences the giver* (EX-el). Ask the students to think of examples of the pattern, and encourage them to think of the roles, giver and receiver, outside of the gift-giving scenario. For example, a football quarterback (a "giver") must throw a pass that fits the intended receiver (height, catching ability, location on field).

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COMPLEXITY and SIMPLICITY			
Objective		Checklist	
<p>Student independently identifies sections of a draft that present complex material and revises such sections by using shorter sentences and more common terms (i.e., shorter words).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft to identify passages that address potentially new or unfamiliar topics. <input type="checkbox"/> Review the terminology and sentence lengths. <input type="checkbox"/> Revise to simplify the presentation within these passages by defining necessary but new terms, using familiar terms instead of topic-specific ones, and shortening sentence lengths. 	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no passages of overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology that are ineffective for the given audience, and all attempts at clarification (e.g., definitions) fit smoothly into the text and clarify the writer's intended meaning. ▶ Additional revisions may improve other elements but issues of complexity and simplicity have been effectively addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features no passages of overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology that are ineffective for the given audience. ▶ Some attempts at clarification (e.g., definitions) either distract the reader by interrupting the writing's flow or confuse the reader by obscuring the writer's intended meaning. ▶ Additional revisions could strengthen the writing by reworking clarification attempts to fit into the text's flow or better communicate the author's intended meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features few (2 or fewer) passages of overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology that are ineffective for the given audience. ▶ Additional revisions could eliminate overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology by defining new but necessary terms, using familiar terms instead of topic-specific ones, and/or shortening sentence lengths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features several passages of overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology that are ineffective for the target audience. ▶ Significant revision could reduce overly complex or simplistic topics/terminology by defining new but necessary terms, using familiar terms instead of topic-specific ones, and/or shortening sentence lengths.



NARRATIVE THREAD			
Objective		Checklist	
<p>Student independently identifies a narrative thread that can be used to carry a reader from the text's opening to its conclusion and revises the piece to include such a thread.</p>		<p><input type="checkbox"/> Read the draft sentence by sentence, focusing on the flow (or lack of it) from one to the next.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Rework the writing to base the transitions on an obvious narrative "thread," such as chronology (i.e., an obvious thread frees the writer from being too concerned with transitions)</p>	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features a consistent narrative thread, such as chronology. ▶ The writing never drops the narrative thread. All sentences/ sections clearly connect to the rest of the text. ▶ The selected narrative thread strengthens the writer's meaning and adds interest for the reader. ▶ Additional revisions may improve other aspects of the writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features a consistent narrative thread, such as chronology. ▶ The writing never drops the narrative thread. All sentences/ passages clearly connect to the rest of the text. ▶ The selected narrative thread, while used throughout the text, fails to strengthen the writer's meaning. A different thread (e.g., cause and effect) would produce a stronger text. ▶ Additional revisions could strengthen the writing by reexamining the selected narrative thread, exploring alternatives, and selecting a unifying element that strengthens the text's meaning or impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing features a consistent narrative thread, such as chronology. ▶ Though apparent through the text's transitions, the writing occasionally drops the narrative thread, leaving some sentences/passages disconnected from the rest of the text. ▶ Additional revision could strengthen the writing by carrying the narrative thread into and throughout every section of the text to increase its coherence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing lacks a consistent narrative thread, such as chronology. ▶ Significant revision could strengthen writing by revising transitions and other elements to provide a narrative thread that unifies the text and guides the reader.

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EXPOSITORY: Informative Report			
Definition		Objective	
Provides an objective and thorough summary of some topic. Coverage, while complete, is often more general than specific in nature with only enough detail to validate a fact.		With teacher prompting, student writes a cohesive (unified and complete) and coherent (clear and logical) multi-paragraph (i.e., sufficient for the topic) informative report based on content gathered from multiple resources (i.e., sufficient for the topic) and appropriate for submission to a periodical that covers such topics.	
Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	PROFICIENT	ADEQUATE	NOT YET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a cohesive and coherent multi-paragraph informative report based on content gathered from multiple resources (i.e., sufficient for the topic) and appropriate for submission to a periodical. ▶ Report features originality throughout, adding new depth or insights to the reader's understanding of the topic. ▶ Additional revisions may minimally improve other aspects of the report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a cohesive and coherent multi-paragraph informative report based on content gathered from multiple resources (i.e., sufficient for the topic) and appropriate for submission to a periodical. ▶ Report includes passages that feature originality, adding new depth or insights to the reader's understanding of the topic. ▶ Additional development or revision could increase the report's originality by keeping a consistent, fresh perspective or by focusing on main ideas that add depth or new insights to the reader's understanding of the topic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing presents a cohesive and coherent multi-paragraph informative report based on content gathered from multiple resources (i.e., sufficient for the topic) and appropriate for submission to a periodical. ▶ Report lacks originality. Though the topic is well chosen, the writer's perspective and/or the writing's main ideas fail to add new depth or insights to the reader's understanding of the topic. ▶ Additional development or revision could improve the report's originality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Writing fails to cohesive and coherent multi-paragraph informative report based on content gathered from multiple resources (i.e., sufficient for the topic) and appropriate for submission to a periodical OR Writing features examples of content copied directly from sources or only minimally changed without correct punctuation or attribution. ▶ Additional development or revision could significantly improve the report's content and/or credibility (i.e., reference more sources).

PRACTICE TEXT

“This is a serious situation,” warned Mike Prather. “The set-up means we’re likely to see super cell thunderstorms with the real possibility of tornadoes. Possibly large ones.” He paused, hoping the viewers were understanding the gravity of the approaching weather. “We know what to do in these storms, but we need everybody to be on their A game.” Twenty-four hours later, Prather would be rendered bereft of speech by what his TV cameras caught and broadcasted to the nation.

As Keith Weston watched Prather’s forecast on the evening news, he wondered if the next day would start the same way that morning had. He awoke to the high-pitched tone of his weather warning radio. Storm watches were being issued with specific warnings about “straight-line winds.” He reset the radio, then headed out to his deck to rearrange chairs and potted plants that could be blown over in a storm. Straight-line winds are thunderstorm winds that are not associated with tornadoes. If such wind reaches or exceed 58 miles per hour, then the National Weather Service classifies the storm as severe. Straight-line winds are produced by the downward momentum in the downdraft region of a thunderstorm. An environment conducive to strong straight-line wind is one with strong updrafts and downdrafts, dry air in the middle troposphere, and a storm with a fast forward motion. To reduce the damage from straight-line wind it is important to secure objects that can be blown by the wind. It is also important to keep trees well pruned. The storms hit within a few minutes, but everything seemed to blow through with minimal effect. The electricity was still on, and everything on the deck was exactly where he had put it. It didn’t take long, though, before newscasts were telling of small tornadoes that had hit surrounding communities. Would the weather Prather described in his forecast for the next day be similar?

As that day dawned, April 27, 2011, a sense of impending ruination hovered over Alabama. Storms were coming, and everyone knew it. April can truly be diabolical to the canton. Tornadoes bloom about the same time as azaleas, and the storms are far less anticipated than the pink flowers. Azaleas are ericaceous plants that are included in the genus *Rhododendron*. At Bellingrath Gardens in Mobile, some azalea bushes grow up to twenty feet tall. Bellingrath has more than 250,000 azalea bushes on its grounds. A few years earlier, a major tornado had ripped through portions of the state on April 8th. The TV newscasts had recently commemorated those storms by showing video footage from that night. While macabre, the footage only showed the tornado as it had appeared on radar. No live footage of those storms existed. The meteorologists kept pointing out the “hook echo” and tracing the storm’s track by moving their fingers across the radar display. While horrible in its destructiveness, the April 8th storms would soon play a supporting role to April 27th’s lead. The April 27th storms would not be satisfied with mere hook echo appearances.

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Television weather forecasts involve the use of green screens or chroma key compositing, or, as those in television production call it, “chroma keying.” Green screening is a production technique that allows two images to be overlaid. On TV weather forecasts, the meteorologist appears to stand in front of images gathered via radar. In reality, the screen behind the forecaster is blank and is often green in color. The images from radar are added so that the familiar arrangement of forecaster and radar images appears on television screens. “Chroma keying” is also used in the entertainment industry for special effects in movies and video games.

The local TV meteorologists entered living rooms with live, non-intermittent coverage partway through the afternoon. Prather would be on camera for the next several hours. As he detailed the various warnings that had been issued, the screen behind him suddenly flipped from radar to live video. Prather stood pointing with his mouth agape. No words left his lips; he was shocked by what he was witnessing—by what he was covering on live TV. He gathered his wits and calmly continued, “Folks, this is a huge tornado, on the ground, in the city. Take cover immediately. This is a very, very dangerous situation.” The video was enough to persuade even skeptics to seek shelter in their cellars or inside rooms. A prodigious funnel cloud vomited debris into the sky. Bits of the debris blew forty miles southeast and landed in Keith Weston’s front yard while he huddled in the laundry room of his house, watching TV via an internet connection on his tablet computer. Weston heard one of Prather’s off-camera colleagues mumble, “All we can do is pray for the people caught in that storm.”

About eighteen hours later, as Weston discovered the detritus in his yard, a dazed mayor addressed the April 28th emergency meeting of the Tuscaloosa city council. “We have utter destruction,” he explained. “Neighborhoods have been removed from the map. Thousands upon thousands of our citizens have lost their possessions.” Later investigation would reveal that more than 10% of the city had been destroyed, and the death toll would soon surpass fifty. Sixty-five tornadoes—one of the state’s worst natural disasters—left scars across communities that are still visible today...

A POSSIBLE REVISION

This is not THE correct revision, but one possibility. Accept any justifiable revisions.

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