Grade 8 ‣

Unit Four

PRE-INSTRUCTION CHECKLIST

MECHANICS	ACQUAINTANCE & ANALYSIS
Review as necessary to enable revision skill use	☐ Expository: Persuasive
	WRITING ON DEMAND
	☐ ongoing, all disciplines

PATTERN STATEMENT

Any weakness can diminish what is otherwise strong.

NOTES

Two different revision skills that both address specific that can weaken writing provide the focus for this unit. The first, strong verbs weakened to nouns, is a frequent weakness of academic writing. Great verbs like *transform* become *transformation*. This produces less active, and therefore less powerful, writing.

The second revision skill weakens writing but can be difficult to edit. Writers frequently feel committed to their attempts at clever literary technique, but as Mark Tredinnick suggests, "...make sure nothing you do just decorates your writing." Edits, though difficult, must often be made. For example, removing a simile that makes perfect sense to the writer but confuses the reader can be tough. First, the writer knows what part of the comparison is intended and what that comparison reveals. Second, coming up with the simile seems like a creative success to the writer. Young writers need help in recognizing when attempts at linguistic cleverness weaken the clarity and strength of their writing. Then they need help in restating or restructuring their thoughts to remove such weaknesses from their writing.

A review of word forms (verb vs. noun) and literary techniques/tools (e.g., similes, allusion, metaphor, alliteration) will aid students in practicing the unit's revision skills.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

The pattern, *Any weakness can diminish what is otherwise strong*, can be illustrated with any object that will break at an obvious point. For example, if two short sections of chain are available, talk about needing to use them as one, longer chain and use a paper link to connect the two. A section of rope can also work. Fray one part of the rope to the point where only a thread or two are holding it together. Try using for a task so students can see that it will (and does) break. Then use transparent tape to connect the rope back together and repeat trying to use it. A few examples of this nature will make the point (EX-ex). Have the students consider the examples and respond to the following questions:

- What happened each time the _____ (chain, rope, etc.) was used?

- Why did this happen? Why did the _____break in the place it did?

- How does the place where the break happened differ from the rest of the _____?

Using the students' responses as a reference, suggest that two major ideas seem evident: strength and weakness (EX-co). Use questioning to guide students to the pattern statement, *Any weakness can diminish what is otherwise strong* (EX-el). Engage the students in identifying other illustrations of the pattern. For example, in football, a weakness in the offensive line can leave the quarterback vulnerable to being tackled by the opposing team. Consider creating a list of the best illustrations and keep the list on display throughout the unit. Explain that the pattern can be illustrated in writing, as well. Proceed to the COmprehension strand.

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REVISION SKILLS

TOOLS vs. CLARITY	
Objective	Checklist
With teacher prompting, student identifies literary techniques (e.g., alliteration, metaphor, allusion) within a draft, evaluates their usage in relation to clarity (e.g., a metaphor features common enough elements to communicate to the intended audience, alliteration communicates clearly and is not used simply to be used), and revises or justifies leaving the text as is.	☐ Read the draft sentence by sentence, identifying all literary techniques, such as alliteration, metaphors, and allusions. ☐ For each one, ask, "Does this technique keep or improve the clarity of my intended meaning?" ☐ Eliminate any that do not keep or improve your clarity. Restructure the sentence or passage as necessary.

Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	**PROFICIENT**	**ADEQUATE**	**NOT YET**
‣ Writing features literary techniques/ tools that effectively clarify or illustrate the author's meaning and do not interrupt the writing's flow ‣ Additional revision may improve other aspects of the writing but literary techniques/ tools are used well.	‣ Writing features literary techniques/ tools that clarify or illustrate the author's meaning. ‣ Some literary techniques/tools, while clarifying or illustrating the author's meaning, negatively affect the writing's flow. They do not seem to naturally connect with the their surrounding text. ‣ Additional revision may improve flow through more natural integration of the included literary techniques/tools.	‣ Writing features at least one example of a literary technique/ tool that clarifies or illustrates the author's meaning. ‣ Literary technique/tool use is limited to one OR additional use negatively affect the writing's clarity. ‣ Additional revision could improve the use of literary techniques/ tools.	‣ Writing features several examples of literary techniques/ tools (e.g., similes, allusions) that negatively affect clarity, OR no attempt to use literary techniques/ tools to clarify or illustrate the author's meaning. ‣ Additional revision could significantly improve the use of literary techniques/ tools.

VERBS to NOUNS	
Objective	Checklist
With teacher prompting, student identifies sentences with words normally used as verbs changed into nouns that require additional, weakening words, such as: *do a study of…, make progress toward…, and the making of….* The student revises the sentences by converting the nouns into verbs: *study, progress, make.* e.g., (*The team conducted a study of…* revised to *The team studied…*).	☐ Read the draft to identify nouns formed with a suffix. ☐ Identify the verb from which the noun was formed (e.g., action formed from act). ☐ Revise the sentence by using the verb form. If the meaning stays the same, consider keeping the revision.

Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	**PROFICIENT**	**ADEQUATE**	**NOT YET**
‣ Writing features no sentences weakened by nouns formed from verbs. ‣ All sentences maintain the author's intended meaning. Any revisions have included the restructuring needed to keep the intended meaning. ‣ Additional revision may improve other aspects of the writing.	‣ Writing features no sentences weakened by nouns formed from verbs. ‣ A few sentences that feature strong verbs fail to communicate or contradict the author's intended meaning. Such sentences were likely revised to change weak nouns to strong verbs but not restructured to maintain the author's meaning. ‣ Additional revision could improve writing by clarifying the writer's meaning while maintaining good use of strong verbs rather than weak nouns.	‣ Writing features few (three or fewer) sentences weakened by nouns formed from verbs. ‣ Additional revision could further strengthen the writing by reducing the number of weak nouns and increasing the powerful verbs from which the nouns are formed.	‣ Writing features multiple sentences weakened by nouns formed from verbs. Little, if any, revision seems to have been attempted. ‣ Additional revision could significantly strengthen the writing by using powerful verbs rather than weak nouns formed from them.

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REVISION
SKILLS
Tools vs. Clarity
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Verbs to Nouns
▪
GENRE
Expository:
Persuasive

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grade

GENRE

EXPOSITORY: Persuasive	
Definition	**Objective**
Presents an argument for the reader to accept the writer's premise or to take specific action. Examines an issue for the purpose of convincing the reader. While objective, persuasive writing is overtly biased; however, factual accuracy is still an important element.	With teacher prompting and support, student writes a cohesive and coherent essay attempting to persuade a reader to accept an opinion or position, detailing at least three reasonable rationale statements in separate paragraphs and structuring the rationale from most to least important, and including a paragraph that synthesizes the rationale to make a concluding argument to the reader.

Rubric			
EXEMPLARY	**PROFICIENT**	**ADEQUATE**	**NOT YET**
‣ Writing presents a cohesive (unified and complete) and coherent (clear and logical) persuasive essay, detailing at least three reasonable rationale statements in separate paragraphs.	‣ Writing presents a cohesive (unified and complete) and coherent (clear and logical) persuasive essay, detailing at least three reasonable rationale statements in separate paragraphs	‣ Writing presents a cohesive (unified and complete) and coherent (clear and logical) persuasive essay, detailing at least three reasonable rationale statements in separate paragraphs.	‣ Writing fails to present a cohesive (unified) and coherent (clear and logical) persuasive essay, detailing at least three reasonable rationale statements in separate paragraphs
‣ Essay structure presents the rationale from most to least important, and includes a paragraph that synthesizes the rationale to make a concluding argument	‣ Essay structure presents the rationale from most to least important, and includes a paragraph that synthesizes the rationale to make a concluding argument	‣ Essay structure presents the rationale from most to least important, and includes a paragraph that synthesizes the rationale to make a concluding argument	AND/OR Essay structure fails to present the rationale from most to least important, AND/OR lacks a paragraph that synthesizes the rationale to make a concluding argument
‣ Essay flows, making a convincing argument and capturing/ maintaining a reader's interest. It draws the reader through the author's thinking to the conclusion.	‣ Essay flows, making a convincing argument and capturing/ maintaining a reader's interest. It draws the reader through the author's thinking to the conclusion.	‣ Essay reads much like a list of facts and reasons. It lacks flow and fails to make a convincing case for a reader to accept an opinion or position or take a specific action	‣ Additional development or revision could significantly improve the essay's content and/or structure.
‣ Essay not only presents the writer's viewpoint but also effectively addresses the most likely counter arguments an opposing viewpoint may offer.	‣ Essay lacks recognition of opposing arguments and never addresses the most likely counterarguments.	‣ Additional development or revision could significantly improve the essay's flow and strengthen its effect on the reader.	
‣ Additional revisions may minimally improve the essay.	‣ Additional develop-ment or revision may increase the essay's effectiveness by identifying and addressing likely arguments offered by an opposing perspective.		

PRACTICE TEXT

SCHOOL BUSES: A ROLLING LOUVRE

Buses provide transportation for thousands of school students every day. At some point in the past, someone made the decision that school buses should be orangish-yellow with black text to provide information to onlookers about the school name and bus number. Red lights flash to send out communications to drivers about when to stop for loading passengers. School buses have had this coloration for decades.

It's time to make an alteration to this design. School buses should no longer make appearances as rolling orangey-yellow tubes of pumpkin toothpaste. They should undergo a transformation and become exhibitions of the artwork of the students who ride them.

Imagine our streets and roads showcasing young people's unique expressions rather than the uniform relics of years past. School buses would not only be more attractive, they'd attract more attention. This would make them safer than the current unvarying color scheme. Neons and vibrant hues would bring school buses alive like hot air inflating a balloon. They'd be such a sight that no driver would be able to ignore them.

In addition to being safer, school buses painted by the students who ride them would provide some motivation for students to go to school. Helping design and paint the school bus would make them feel like they have some say in how they get to and from school. According to researcher and writer David Park, giving people choices is one to way to motivate them.1 By making their school bus distinct, students would feel not only school pride, but also personal pride in their contribution to mobile art.

Some may argue that turning a school bus's exterior over to students will result in a sloppy appearance. This could be avoided by having a requirement that students submit a paint plan to the school's administrator of transportation. The administrator could approve or disapprove any submitted plans before students are allowed to lift a spray can or paintbrush. This obstacle is easily overcome with such a simple permission process.

School buses could be more attractive and safer. They could provide some motivation for students to have regular attendance at school. Buses could be the new canvas for budding da Vincis and Michelangelos. These are great reasons to replace our outdated, orangish-yellow school buses with new, vibrant displays of student talent.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Park, D., Fire: *The Science of Getting People Excited* (New York: NonExistent Pub. Co., 2010), 45.

A POSSIBLE REVISION

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

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