

Book Two
English Proficiency
Developing Your Reading and Writing Power



Richard M. Bossone

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY:
Developing Your Reading
and
Writing Power

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INTRODUCTION

This book will teach you how to read and write expository essays. Why is reading and writing this type of essay important? Most courses in school and many jobs require you to read for information and understanding. Most courses in school also require you to organize your ideas and present them effectively to your teachers and classmates. College placement tests often include the reading and the writing of an expository essay. In addition, by learning to write such essays, you will be able to handle almost any writing situation that requires you to organize your thoughts. Finally, and most importantly, learning to write is learning to think more clearly, no matter what the occasion. The ability to recognize logical thinking in what you read and to use such thinking is essential in your school, business, and personal life.

In this book, reading and writing will be taught together. Why? Because by improving your reading, you will improve your writing. When you discover how authors put their works together, you will be able to use this knowledge in your own writing. The reverse is also true. When your own writing improves and you learn how to compose an expository essay, you will find it easier to read and understand someone else's essay.

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SECTION 1: READING AND WRITING ESSAYS

UNIT ONE:

An Overview: FINDING OUT WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT READING AND WRITING AN ESSAY



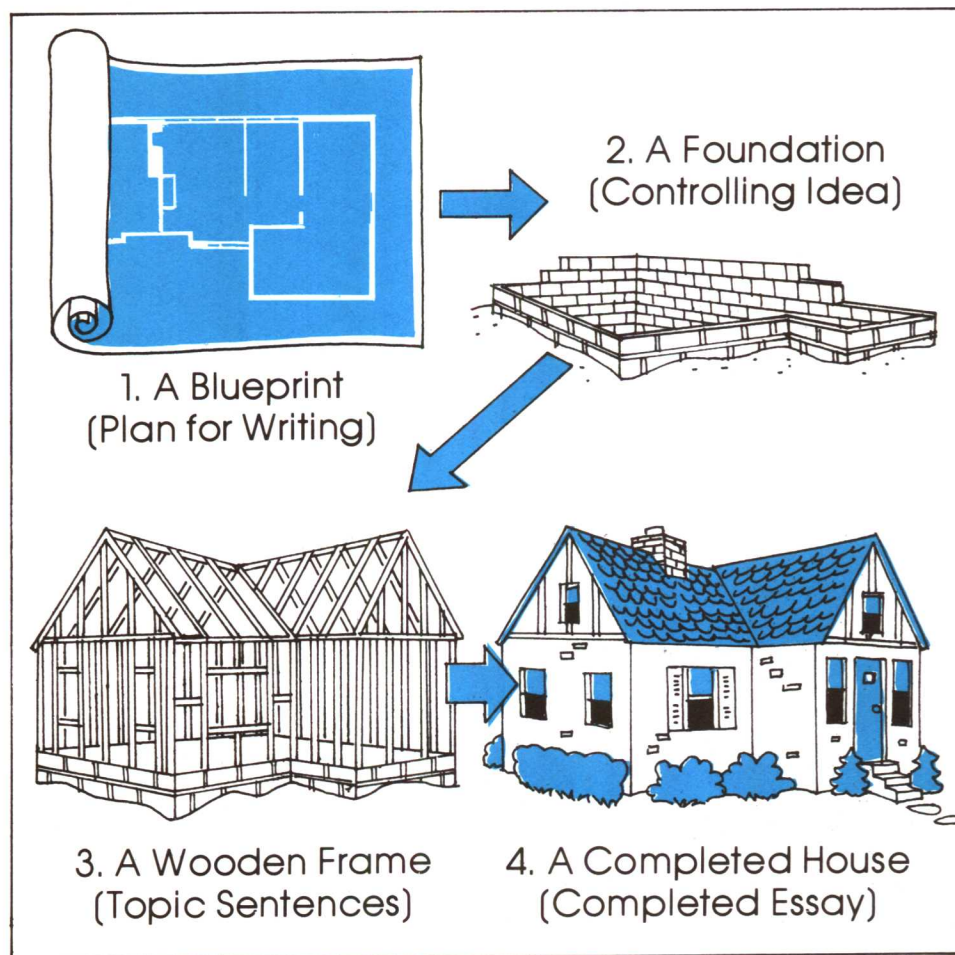
This unit is designed to help you find out what you already know about reading and writing essays. If you decide that you are going to take swimming lessons, your coach will first work with you to discover how much skill you already have. Are you a "beginner," an "intermediate," or an "advanced" swimmer? By finding out beforehand just how much you know and how much skill you have, you and your coach can concentrate on the skills you need especially to work on.

In this unit, then, you will test yourself to see what skill you already have in reading and writing essays. You will also get an overview of what the whole book is about. When you have finished the unit, you will have a good idea of what you are expected to learn and what units and lessons in the course you will need to work on most.

First, you will learn how each part of the essay contributes to the structure of the whole. Think of your plan for writing as being similar to an architect's design, or blueprint, for a house. Working from your plan, you first decide on a *controlling idea* (thesis statement). This is like laying the foundation of a house. Next, you

write logically by formulating *topic sentences*. These sentences are built on the controlling idea just as the wooden frame of a house is built on the foundation. Finally, you write the rest of the essay by giving *supporting details*. This completes your work, just as builders lay bricks and put up walls to complete a house.

Remember, being a good writer is not a talent with which you are born. Every good writer has had to work hard to succeed. But, with work, you will succeed!



Important Terms Used in This Book

1. **Expository**—a type of writing in which authors primarily use explanation to set forth their ideas.
2. **Essay**—a short, nonfictional prose composition on a single subject; sometimes called a *theme*.
3. **Title**—the name given to a composition. The title of an essay should give the reader an idea about the limited subject matter of the essay.
4. **Introductory Paragraph**—the first paragraph of an essay. The opening paragraph of an essay uses an introductory technique to gain the reader's attention and presents the controlling idea (thesis statement) of the essay.
5. **Controlling Idea**—the main idea that an author will develop in an essay. The controlling idea is expressed in a single sentence that should always be in the introductory paragraph; also known as *thesis statement*.
6. **Body Paragraph**—any paragraph that provides support for the controlling idea or thesis statement of an essay; also known as a *developmental paragraph*.
7. **Topic Sentence**—the sentence that tells what a body paragraph is about. The first sentence of a paragraph is usually the topic sentence.
8. **Supporting-detail Sentences**—sentences that back up, or support, the idea presented in a topic sentence. A topic sentence and supporting-detail sentences make up a body paragraph.
9. **Concluding Paragraph**—the final paragraph of an essay. The concluding paragraph of an essay uses some type of concluding technique to summarize and restate the controlling idea (thesis statement) of the essay.

Lesson 1

ANALYZING THE FOUR-PARAGRAPH ESSAY: TRANSFERRING FROM READING TO WRITING

LOOKING AHEAD

In This Lesson:

READ:

- to understand the overall organization of a four-paragraph essay.
- to analyze the various components of an essay in order to transfer this knowledge to your own writing.

WRITE:

- a four-paragraph expository essay.

Activity 1 Analyzing the Four-Paragraph Essay

You are probably wondering if you read as well as you should. This activity will help you to determine how well you read. Here is a model of an expository essay. Read it thoughtfully and carefully.

Problems of Cities and Suburbs

The city and the suburbs once seemed very different places. A city meant tall buildings, honking taxis, and smog-filled skies. The suburbs, on the other hand, meant family homes, gardens and lawns, and clean air. The problems faced by cities and suburbs also seemed quite different. Nowadays, however, *metropolitan* and suburban areas share many of the same problems, such as crime and drug addiction.

Crime is one problem found in both urban and suburban areas. Elderly people are mugged whether they are hurrying along a city street or strolling down a suburban avenue. Residents living in cities and suburbs hide in fear behind double-locked doors, hoping to prevent robberies. In both the cities and the suburbs, big, *vicious* dogs are used as additional protection against robberies. Even *juvenile* crime is a growing problem as gangs increase in the metropolitan and suburban areas.

Drug addiction is another problem shared by cities and suburbs. Young people growing up in overcrowded, unpleasant conditions in the city ghettos often turn to drugs such as heroin for a temporary escape from life. Suburban youngsters turn to drug addiction to search for "kicks" and to put excitement into their boring lives. Often they become addicted to another kind of drug—alcohol. Whether the drug is heroin, cocaine, or alcohol, it can be bought quite easily either in a city or on a suburban school playground. Parents and officials in both areas are worried by the *prevalence* of drug addiction.

The "urban crisis," no longer limited to our cities, touches everyone. Even though our American cities and suburbs may still look different from each other, many problems facing these two areas today are really the same.

Exercise 1 Define the following words by seeing how they are used in the essay.

1. *metropolitan*—as used in paragraph 1. Pick out the word that means the same as *metropolitan*:
 - a. suburban
 - ⓑ. urban
 - c. rural
2. *vicious*—as used in paragraph 2. Pick out the word that means the same as *vicious*:
 - ⓐ. fierce
 - b. guard
 - c. frightening

3. *juvenile*—as used in paragraph 2. Pick out the word that means the same as *juvenile*:
- a. immature
 - b. adult
 - ☒ c. youth
4. *prevalence*—as used in paragraph 3. Pick out the word that means the same as *prevalence*:
- a. power
 - ☒ b. widespread nature
 - c. dangers

Exercise 2 Answer the following questions:

1. What is the title of this essay? Problems of cities and suburbs
2. How many paragraphs are there? 4
3. Can you pick out from the following the one sentence in this essay that is the controlling idea (thesis statement)?
- ☒ a. Nowadays, however, metropolitan and suburban areas share many of the same problems, such as crime and drug addiction.
 - b. Drug addiction is another problem shared by cities and suburbs.
 - c. The "urban crisis," no longer limited to our cities, touches everyone.
 - d. The problems faced by cities and suburbs also seemed quite different.
4. In the second paragraph (body or developmental paragraph 1), can you choose from the following one sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph?
- a. Even juvenile crime is a growing problem as gangs increase in the metropolitan and suburban areas.
 - b. Elderly people are mugged whether they are hurrying along a city street or strolling down a suburban avenue.
 - ☒ c. Crime is one problem found in both urban and suburban areas.
 - d. In both the cities and the suburbs, big, vicious dogs are used as additional protection against robberies.
 - e. Residents living in cities and suburbs hide in fear behind double-locked doors, hoping to prevent robberies.

5. In the third paragraph (body or developmental paragraph 2), can you choose from the following one sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph?
 - a. Parents and officials in both areas are worried by the prevalence of drug addiction.
 - ☒ b. Drug addiction is another problem shared by cities and suburbs.
 - c. Whether the drug is heroin, cocaine, or alcohol, it can be bought quite easily either in a city or on a suburban school playground.
 - d. Suburban youngsters turn to drug addiction to search for “kicks” and to put excitement into their boring lives.
6. Which sentence in the concluding paragraph best sums up that paragraph (and the whole essay)?
 - a. The “urban crisis,” no longer limited to our cities, touches everyone.
 - ☒ b. Even though our American cities and suburbs may still look different from each other, many problems facing these two areas are really the same.
7. Is there any sentence in the concluding paragraph that is related to the introductory paragraph?
8. Who among the following might have written this essay?
 - a. someone who lives in the city
 - b. someone who lives in the suburbs
 - c. someone from a foreign country
 - ☒ d. someone who is familiar with the problems of cities and suburbs

Activity 2 Further Analysis of the Various Parts of the Four-Paragraph Essay

This activity will show you a model structure of an essay—the main elements that hold up the finished project. It is important for you to understand this structure so that you can reproduce it in your own writing. Using this structure carefully will help you to organize an essay.

Model: If one were to visualize what a four-paragraph essay would look like, it might look like the drawing on the next page: