

Writing Workshops

Houghton
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English

Level 10



This booklet contains Writing Workshops and Writing Assessments to complement “Exploring the Writing Process” and Units 1–7 in *HOUGHTON MIFFLIN ENGLISH, Level 10*. This material also appears in blackline-master format in the *Teacher’s Resource Book—Writing* for Level 10.

Contents

Writing Workshops

| | |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Exploring the Writing Process | WW–1 to WW–8 |
| Unit 1 Writing with a Descriptive Focus | WW–9 to WW–16 |
| Unit 2 Writing a Personal Narrative | WW–17 to WW–24 |
| Unit 3 Writing with an Expository Focus | WW–25 to WW–32 |
| Unit 4 Writing with a Persuasive Focus | WW–33 to WW–40 |
| Unit 5 Writing Stories, Plays, and Poems | WW–41 to WW–56 |
| Unit 6 Writing About Literature | WW–57 to WW–68 |
| Unit 7 Writing a Research Report | WW–69 to WW–78 |

Writing Assessments

| | |
|------------------------------------------|----------------|
| Unit 1 Writing with a Descriptive Focus | WA–1 to WA–2 |
| Unit 2 Writing with a Narrative Focus | WA–3 to WA–4 |
| Unit 3 Writing with an Expository Focus | WA–5 to WA–6 |
| Unit 4 Writing with a Persuasive Focus | WA–7 to WA–8 |
| Unit 5 Writing Stories, Plays, and Poems | WA–9 to WA–10 |
| Unit 6 Writing About Literature | WA–11 to WA–12 |
| Unit 7 Writing a Research Report | WA–13 to WA–14 |

Acknowledgments

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Name _____

Date _____

A Little Nectar of the Gods

Mythology has inspired artists and writers throughout history with tales of romance and deceit, jealousy and envy, greed and pride. Because myths are a common reference point for many readers (often the myths are well known), writers can incorporate subtle symbolism or a new interpretation. One example of such a myth is the story of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Classical mythology tells us that Orpheus was an extraordinary lute player and that his music tamed wild beasts, animated rocks and trees, and even caused rivers to stop flowing in order to listen to his music. Orpheus fell in love with and married the dryad (wood nymph) Eurydice. One day Eurydice was bitten by a snake and died. Orpheus was so stricken with grief that he entered the underworld determined to find her and bring her back. Once there, his music so charmed Persephone and Pluto, the rulers of the underworld, that they allowed Orpheus to take Eurydice back with him. Orpheus was told that he could lead her to the upper air, but on one condition: he could not look back to see whether she was following him until they had left the underworld completely. Thus, he guided Eurydice to the upper air. When he got to the edge, however, in a forgetful moment, fraught with anxiety and doubt, he turned around to make sure that she was there—and she promptly disappeared. Having lost Eurydice again, and this time forever, Orpheus spent the rest of his life mournfully playing his lute and singing about his loss.

Explore the writing process by creating a work inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice.

Prewriting

Step 1. Brainstorm a list of possible writing ideas inspired by the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Think of different types of writing—short story, play, poem, narrative, exposition, description, response essay—and generate ways of subtly intertwining this story line into your work. You might want to think of possible interpretations of the myth to apply to your ideas. Prewriting gives you the chance to try new things and to take risks, so be sure to explore all the ideas that come to mind.

If you find it more effective, you may cluster or freewrite as alternatives for brainstorming.

(Continue on page WW-2.)

| | |
|------|------|
| Name | Date |
|------|------|

(Continued from page WW-1.)

Step 2. Asking questions is one effective method of exploring your ideas. Since the story provides you with a basic starting point, you can begin to explore ways of using the story in your own writing. Answering the five *W*'s (*Who*, *What*, *When*, *Where*, *Why*) and *How* will help you to generate ideas for your work. For instance, you might re-enact the myth in a modern-day setting. For your play or your story, you would have to decide *who* Orpheus would be and *who* Eurydice would be. *Where* would it take place? *What* instrument might Orpheus play? Another option might be to write a narrative about yourself that has an underlying lesson—you lost something, were given the opportunity to earn it back, and you lost it again out of carelessness or doubt. Perhaps you could write a poem about love, or about believing in the impossible, or about hope. Another option might be to explain the myth as one example of how myths work as models for behavior. You could also respond to the myth as a piece of literature or write a critical review of the story. Explore a variety of interesting and unique ideas. Use the space below to ask the five *W*'s and *How*.

Answers should lead you to more questions: Keep asking and answering, because the more you explore, the more material you have to choose from later.

Writing Workshop

(Continue on page WW-3.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-2.)

Step 3. Now you must focus your ideas to develop a central theme or main point. Review the notes that you collected in *Steps 1* and *2*. Decide now whether you will write a story, a play, a narrative, a description, an exposition, a response essay, or a poem. Star or circle interesting and promising ideas. Notice any patterns that occur or any themes that appear repeatedly. Next, based on the focus you have selected, you have other decisions to make. You must limit your topic, decide on the purpose, designate an audience, define your role as the writer, and establish a length for your work. Although these decisions have to be made individually, they are interdependent. These qualities come together to guide you as you draft and they affect the final flavor of the writing.

To establish a purpose, think about your chosen audience: What do you want them to know, to do, or to feel after reading your writing? Next, consider your audience and your purpose when determining your role as writer. Your voice and your tone should appeal to your audience and should complement your purpose.

Limited topic: _____

Audience: _____

Purpose: _____

Role as writer: _____

Length: _____



(Continue on page WW-4.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-3.)

Step 4. Now that you have focused your writing, you must establish the supporting details. Because there are different kinds of support from which to choose, take care to select the kind or kinds that will be the most effective for the type of writing you have chosen. For instance, if you are explaining how the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice actually teaches a lesson, you might select cause and effect as the appropriate kind of support. Look over the information that you have gathered for your writing and decide what kind of support you need, and then list the details of your project below.

You will probably find that you can best support your ideas by using a combination of details.

Step 5. Your final prewriting step is to organize your support. Determine the order that will best suit your purpose and your supporting details. If you are writing a story, you may choose to arrange your details in chronological order. If you are explaining, you might use order of importance. If you are writing a poem, you may want to use this space to experiment with different formats or types of poetry. Arrange your notes below according to the order that you choose.

Remember to use the appropriate transitions for the order that you choose. Your writing will flow smoothly and your ideas will be clearly presented when you make effective transitions.

(Continue on page WW-5.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-4.)

Drafting

Step 6. To begin drafting your work, create a topic sentence if you are writing a paragraph, or a thesis statement if you are writing more than one paragraph that is not a story, a play, or a poem. The thesis statement and the topic sentence express the limited topic and the focusing idea for your audience. Below, write a thesis statement or a topic sentence, and then organize your supporting details into an outline. Use the outlining method that suits you: mapping, rough outline, topic outline, or sentence outline. If you are writing a story or a play, use the space to map the action. If you are writing a poem, list images and details. You might also make a topic outline—start with the characters, then describe the setting, and finally move to the action.

Every detail of your outline should be directly related to your thesis statement. If you are writing a story or a play, the details should help develop the characters, the setting, the plot, and the theme.

Thesis statement/topic sentence: _____

Outline

(Continue on page WW-6.)

| Name | Date |
|------|------|
|------|------|

(Continued from page WW-5.)

Step 7. Draft your piece. Follow your outline or your map carefully to keep your writing focused. Grab your audience with your introduction, but also include your thesis statement or your topic sentence there (if appropriate). The body of your work should develop and support the main idea, and the conclusion should pull everything together neatly and efficiently.

Don't simply repeat or paraphrase your thesis statement in your conclusion. The conclusion of a story or a play should complete the action somehow.

Writing Workshop

(Continue on page WW-7.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-6.)

Revising

Step 8. When you have finished drafting your writing, leave your draft. Return to it after you have given yourself time to separate yourself from the writing effort. In this way, you can be more objective and better at revising. With some distance from the writing, you can approach it as a reader rather than maintaining your role as the writer. Use the items in the checklist below that apply to your particular type of writing to guide you as you revise your writing.

It is often helpful to read your writing aloud to hear errors that your eyes might have missed.

Revising Checklist

- _____ 1. Is my introduction captivating but informative? Does it serve its purpose?
- _____ 2. Does my topic sentence or thesis statement clearly express my topic and my focusing idea?
- _____ 3. Does every sentence relate to or support the thesis statement or the topic sentence? Should I cut anything?
- _____ 4. Are my sentences and my paragraphs logically organized? Should I move any?
- _____ 5. Are sentences combined effectively?
- _____ 6. Do I need to correct any rambling or blurred sentences?
- _____ 7. Did I use variety in sentence length and sentence structure?
- _____ 8. Is my word choice appropriate, effective, and accurate?
- _____ 9. Have I used fresh imagery and colorful figurative language?
- _____ 10. Is the voice consistent? Is it appropriate for the audience and the purpose?
- _____ 11. Have I chosen a title that has flair and is effective?

(Continue on page WW-8.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-7.)

Proofreading

Step 9. To proofread efficiently, you should read your draft a number of times, each time looking for a different type of error. Read your draft at least three times: (1) Read each sentence and check structure, agreement, and usage. (2) Check mechanics. (3) Find word and spelling errors. You probably already know some of your own weak spots, so guard against them by anticipating them. Below, write a brief checklist that includes any errors that you find recurring in your writing. One example might be: "Have I used the words *there*, *their*, and *they're* correctly?" Make all of your corrections neatly between the lines or in the margins.

Publishing

Step 10. Publish your writing for your chosen audience. If you decided to adapt the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice for children, prepare your manuscript for publication and send it to an elementary school teacher. If you wrote an explanation or an interpretation of the myth, offer it to a classics teacher or compare it to a friend's interpretation. If you wrote a poem, submit it to your school magazine or to a local literary magazine. Use the publishing method that is appropriate for the audience that you chose and the purpose that you designed for your piece.

Name _____

Date _____

Taking Off

Situation: Imagine that you are a writer for a travel magazine called *Takeoff*. Your newest assignment is to write an article describing the attractions of Santo Niño, a lush tropical island in the Caribbean, for an audience of young, adventuresome tourists. You first contact the island's tourist office, requesting printed information and photographs. You receive the following Fact Sheet and a box of thirty color slides, each depicting a breathtaking scene. Because your deadline is rapidly approaching (and your travel budget is low), you decide not to visit Santo Niño to get a first-hand impression. Instead, you'll use the information that you have, your knowledge of other Caribbean islands, and your fertile imagination in writing your article.

Fact Sheet

Background and Geography

Area: 150 square miles (110 jungle, 40 settled or cultivated)

Average temperature: October–March 85°F; April–September 95°F

Capital: Tres Lobos (37,000 inhabitants)

Languages spoken: English and Spanish

Transportation: 2 major roads (1 north-south, paved; 1 east-west, unpaved); cars (average rental \$18/day); bicycles (average rental \$6/day), fishing boats (average rental \$150/day)

Beaches: 35 miles of white sand beach (public)

Hotels: 1 luxury, 5 standard/business class, 17 bed-and-breakfast

Elevation: from sea level to 5457 (Mt. Cervantes)

Active volcano: Malvado Peak (last eruption March 1981)

Population: 379,000

History: Inhabited from prehistoric times by a native people known as Azulams; Christopher Columbus claimed the island for Spain in 1494; Spanish colony until 1865 when Santo Niño gained independence in bloodless revolution

Special Attractions

La Fortaleza, built in 1577, is the oldest Spanish prison in the Caribbean. Now part museum, part fashionable shopping mall.

The annual Shark Hunt (Persecución del Tiburón), which takes place on April 15, awards trophies for the largest and most dangerous sharks caught. An all-night fish-fry and songfest is held after the hunt.

The Santo Niño Festival is held every year from January 11–16 to celebrate the island's emancipation from Spain. It features a carnival in which the Spirit of Freedom (El Libertador) is crowned. Other attractions include street dancing in traditional costumes, regional reggae and calypso music, native food and craft booths, and a torch light procession on closing night.

The Santo Niño Nature Preserve contains over 300 varieties of tropical vegetation and 160 species of wildlife.

An 18-mile coral reef is one of the most colorful and unusual in the Caribbean and is the home of over 130 species of tropical fish. Tourists can snorkel and scuba dive off Dulcinea Reef or see the entire network of reefs from a glass-bottom boat. They can also view the wrecks of *San Jorge* and *El Sueño Raro*, Spanish treasure ships sunk in 1560.

(Continue on page WW–10.)

Name _____

Date _____

(Continued from page WW-9.)

Prewriting

Because you've been given an assignment—to write an article describing the charms of Santo Niño for the young, adventuresome traveler—your writing purpose and your audience have already been established. You still need, however, to decide on your point of view, tone, supporting details, and organizational pattern before you begin drafting. You also need to come up with a bold title, a thesis statement, and a concluding sentence. With these tasks in mind, you roll up your sleeves and get to work.

Step 1: Read the Fact Sheet carefully and study the slides of the island. (Use your imagination to create these slides. Imagine islands that you have read about or seen represented in printed material or in films.) What do you see that entices you? What do you *hear, smell, taste, and feel* that makes you want to catch the next plane? How can you present these sensory details so that your readers will feel the same urgency to take off? Ponder these questions, and do some freewriting in response to the slides and to the details given in the Fact Sheet.

Look for *implications* in the facts about Santo Niño. What do the miles of public beach offer? Of what interest is a volcano? Is there anything for travelers to do off-season?

Step 2: List at least five facts about Santo Niño that involve sensory details. (For example, the Festival includes native foods that appeal to the senses of taste, smell, and sight.)

Use specific nouns and strong verbs in your descriptions. Use modifiers selectively: don't modify a word unless doing so will make the image more precise.

Step 3: Study these facts, and then select a point of view and a tone that will most effectively convey the island's appeal.

Point of View: _____

Tone: _____

A stiff, overly formal tone will put readers off. Choose a tone that allows *your voice* and your enthusiasm for your topic to be heard.

Step 4: Now number the facts and details that you listed in *Step 2* in the most effective order for your purpose and audience. You want your readers to get a clear, sharp picture of the island's physical beauty and of its cultural and recreational diversity. Therefore, arrange your material so that your "word slides" connect logically. Look for spatial relationships, chronological relationships, and relationships that are regulated by rank.

(Continue on page WW-11.)

Name

Date

(Continued from page WW-10.)

Step 5: It is especially important that you capture your readers' interest right away and leave them with a lingering yearning to visit Santo Niño. Keeping these goals in mind, write a working title, a thesis statement, and a concluding sentence for your article.

The freewriting that you did in *Step 7* is a good source of inspiration for a title, a thesis statement, and a concluding sentence.

Working Title: _____

Working Thesis Statement: _____

Working Concluding Sentence: _____

Drafting

Step 6. Now draft your article, following the order that you established in *Step 4* and incorporating the writing that you did in *Step 5*. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence, and every sentence should contribute to the overall impression that you are creating. Think and write in *concrete* images. Avoid vague, abstract language. Speak to your readers in an inviting voice.

Develop the facts about the island in your body paragraphs. Use your introduction and conclusion to "sell" readers on the idea that paradise awaits them.

(Continue on page WW-12.)

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