



Week One: Vocabulary

Lesson & Assignments: Introduce New List

Assignment 1: Read the list of vocabulary words below. Then, using a dictionary as needed, match the vocabulary words with their definitions listed in the definition bank on the next page. Write each vocabulary word, follow it with a punctuation mark such as a hyphen or colon, and then write the definition.

e.g.

1. *to eat* – to put (food) into the mouth and chew and swallow it

Vocabulary Words –

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| 1. affluence | 9. gumption |
| 2. apprentice | 10. lassitude |
| 3. belligerent | 11. impudent |
| 4. concoction | 12. malicious |
| 5. disperse | 13. pious |
| 6. exuberant | 14. placate |
| 7. flaunt | 15. refuge |
| 8. forlorn | |

Definition Bank

| | |
|--|--|
| a state of physical or mental weariness; lack of energy | devoutly religious; making a hypocritical display of virtue |
| a mixture of various ingredients or elements | the state of having a great deal of money; wealth |
| a shelter from pursuit, danger, or trouble | not showing due respect for another person; impertinent |
| a person who is learning a trade from a skilled employer | filled with or characterized by a lively energy and excitement |
| intending or intended to do harm | to make (someone) less angry or hostile |
| hostile and aggressive | pitifully sad and abandoned or lonely |
| spirited initiative and resourcefulness | to distribute or spread over a wide area |
| to display something in order to create envy or admiration or to show defiance | |



Week One: Grammar

Lesson & Assignments: Nouns & Pronouns

Writing is not just about having good ideas. If it were, people with good ideas would automatically be good writers. Unfortunately, this is not the case.

A good writer knows that he must have more than creative ideas in his head. In fact, he must have much more than ideas. A good writer must have *knowledge* of his language.

If you want to be a good writer and do not understand your language (whether English, Japanese, or French), you will not get very far. Understanding the basic mechanics of your language is essential to crafting good writing in letters, essays, reports, and stories. Although these studies may seem boring to you, **your writing has no ability to improve or grow unless you take the time to build a strong foundation in mechanics.**

We begin our study of writing mechanics with *the parts of speech*. Our English language has **eight** parts of speech. Below are the names and some examples of each:

| | | |
|-----------|--|---|
| Noun | Names a person, place, thing, or idea | Examples: mom, Mr. Grape, Seattle, NYC, apple, guitar, happiness, joy |
| Pronoun | Replaces a noun | Examples: he, she, it, I, you, some |
| Verb | States an action, helps another verb, or links another word to the subject | Examples: be, have, do, like, work, sing, can, must |
| Adjective | Describes a noun | Examples: a/an, the, sixty-nine (69), blue, some, good, big, red, interesting |
| Adverb | Describes an adjective, verb, or another adverb | Examples: quickly, silently, well, badly, very, really |

| | | |
|--------------|---|---|
| Conjunction | Joins clauses or sentences or words | Examples: and, but, when |
| Preposition | Links a noun to another word | Examples: under, above, over, in, on, after, to, at |
| Interjection | Short exclamation, sometimes inserted into a sentence | Examples: My! Oh! Ouch! Hi! |

THE NOUN –

A noun names a person, place, thing, or idea.

We can separate nouns into two main groups: **concrete nouns** and **abstract nouns**.

Concrete nouns are nouns that we can touch with our hands, see with our eyes, smell with our nose, hear with our ears, or taste with our tongue. In other words, we use one or more of our five senses to experience the concrete noun. Concrete nouns name people, places, and things.

The other type of noun is an abstract noun. This is a noun that we cannot see, hear, feel, touch, or taste.

Happiness is an example of this. We cannot see, hear, smell, touch, or taste happiness. It is an idea or a concept. You cannot say what color happiness is or what it tastes like. If you tried to touch happiness, you would have a very hard time doing so because there is nothing to touch. Does happiness have a smell? No. *Happiness* is an abstract noun. *Freedom* and *liberty* are two other examples of abstract nouns. Abstract nouns do not have color, sound, taste, etc. Abstract nouns name ideas.

We can also categorize nouns in another way: **common nouns and proper nouns**. **Let us look at common nouns first.**

COMMON NOUNS –

| Person | Place | Thing | Idea |
|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| • mother | • home | • cup | • love |
| • brother | • store | • bananas | • hope |
| • clerk | • street | • table | • happiness |
| • policeman | • bedroom | • book | • fear |
| • athlete | • warehouse | • computer | • anger |

Notice that the nouns in the table above do not start with a capital letter. That is because they are not naming a specific person, place, thing, or idea. **We call these types of nouns common nouns or improper nouns. We use common nouns when we are not referring to someone, someplace, or something by a specific name.**

Assignment 1A: Write five common nouns for each:

| Person | Place | Thing | Ideas |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. | 1. | 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. | 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. | 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. | 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. | 5. | 5. |

Assignment 1B: Underline the common nouns in the following sentences. (Some sentences contain more than one common noun.)

1. The alarm rang.
2. I took out the trash.
3. We played trains on the porch.
4. Mom is making pasta for dinner.
5. The rain wouldn't stop.
6. The baby is in the crib.
7. New plants look nice.
8. James needs new shoes.
9. My dad built a table.
10. Our neighbor visited with his dog.
11. She delivered a flower.
12. He used the marker.
13. Does Anna like chocolate?
14. The clerk showed us the mulch.
15. When is the concert?

PROPER NOUNS –

| Person | Place | Thing |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mom• Aunt Susan• Grandpa Chuck• President Anderson | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highland Park• Walgreens• King's Dominion• France | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Empire Apples• Bible• Android• Nile River |

Note that all of the nouns in this table begin with a capital letter. These nouns are naming a specific person, place, or thing (note that ideas – abstract nouns – can never be made proper.) ***We call these types of nouns specific or proper nouns. We use proper nouns when we are referring to something by a specific name.***

The following categories are always proper nouns.

1. Names of people and pets:

Mrs. Edwards David Snoopy Garfield

2. Names of places and buildings:

Madrid, Spain Main Street Washington Monument
Lake Ontario Alaska Pacific Ocean

3. Names of books, movies, newspapers, and magazines:

Charlotte's Web Toy Story The Orlando Times
Highlights Monsters, Inc.

4. Names of holidays, days of the week, and months:

Christmas Sunday April
Memorial Day Thanksgiving Friday

5. Names of languages:

Spanish English French Italian

6. Names of companies and brand names:

Google

Pepsi

Nike

Apple

7. Titles of people when used in front of their names:

President Lincoln

King George

Captain Hook

Judge Peterson

Prince William

Doctor McNeish

8. Names of religions:

Baptist

Protestant

Jewish

Catholic

SOME CONFUSING NOUNS –

Two groups of nouns that can be confusing when it comes to capitalizing them are the seasons (spring, summer, fall, and winter) and directions (north, south, east, west).

The general rule for seasons is that you do not capitalize them unless they start a sentence or are part of the name of an event such as the "Winter Olympics."

The rule for directions is also easy. If you are referring to a specific part or location of the country (such as *the South, the Northwest, the East*), then you should capitalize these nouns. But, if you are just referring to a general direction, then do not capitalize these nouns (such as *north of town, southeast of my house*).

Assignment 1C: Write five proper nouns for each. Remember to capitalize each proper noun:

| Person | Place | Thing |
|--------|-------|-------|
| 1. | 1. | 1. |
| 2. | 2. | 2. |
| 3. | 3. | 3. |
| 4. | 4. | 4. |
| 5. | 5. | 5. |

MAKING NOUNS PLURAL –

Making nouns plural is something you should already be familiar with at this level. Most of the time, it is something you learn just by speaking. You know to turn *eyelash* into *eyelashes* or *chair* into *chairs*. You know that there are various plural forms such as *tomato* turned into *tomatoes* or *sheep* into *sheep*. For the sake of time, we will not review rules for making nouns plural here. If you feel you do not understand the rules, you can ask for review material from your instructor.

MAKING NOUNS POSSESSIVE –

Although this also should be something you are familiar with, making nouns possessive can be confusing for a lot of students. Let us review the basic rules:

Rule #1 - If the noun ends in any letter other than S, we use an apostrophe and then the letter S to show possession.

- the dog - the dog's bone
- the men - the men's team
- the quiz - the quiz's answers

Rule #2 - If a singular noun ends in the letter S, we can use EITHER an apostrophe and the letter S or we can use ONLY an apostrophe to show possession.

- Charles - Charles's book OR Charles' book
- the boss – the boss' paperwork OR the boss's paperwork
- Jesus - Jesus's mother OR Jesus' mother

Rule #3 – If a plural noun ends in the letter S, we use only an apostrophe to show possession.

- guys – guys' night out
- dogs – the dogs' bones

Rule #4 - Acronyms form the possessive with an apostrophe and the letter S.

- NASA - NASA's spaceship

- USA - the USA's flag
- ABC - ABC's documentary

Rule #5 - If you have two nouns and two objects that are individually owned, then each noun is made possessive.

- John and Mary - John's and Mary's hats (they each have their OWN hat)
- James and Ann - James' and Ann's dinners (they each have their OWN dinner)

Rule #6 - If you have two or more nouns and all nouns own the same object, then just the last noun is made possessive.

- John and Mary - John and Mary's children (they have the same children)
- James and Ann - James and Ann's car (they own the same car)
- Kara, Dave, and Julie – Kara, Dave, and Julie's father (they all have the same father)

Assignment 1D: Make the following nouns possessive.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Matt | 11. Brussels |
| 2. the porch | 12. Ezra and Owen (assignments) |
| 3. the camera | 13. the bedrooms |
| 4. the asparagus | 14. Eliza |
| 5. the USA | 15. the monitor |
| 6. the dogs | 16. the glass |
| 7. Andy and Jessa (car) | 17. Lukas |
| 8. the business | 18. the donkeys |
| 9. Maris | 19. the store |
| 10. the desk | 20. Chris and Jenny (house) |

NOMINATIVE PRONOUNS –

Next up is the pronoun. We can study the pronoun immediately following the noun because it performs the same job as the noun. ***A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.*** Pronouns are very useful because otherwise we would be repeating the same noun over and over again. There are several kinds of pronouns in English. Each type of pronoun is used in a specific way. This lesson will teach you how to use **nominative** and **possessive pronouns (You will learn about the other kinds of pronouns later**

this year).

Nominative pronouns are sometimes called *subject pronouns*, because they usually take the place of a noun that is functioning as the subject in a sentence (more about that in Lesson 4).

Here are the **nominative** or **subject pronouns**. The singular is given with its plural in the next column.

| <u>Singular</u> | <u>Plural</u> |
|-----------------|---------------|
| I | we |
| you | you |
| he | they |
| she | they |
| it | they |

Remember, these pronouns are used as the subjects of a sentence. Below are some examples using each of these pronouns.

| <u>Singular</u> | <u>Plural</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>I</i> drive a car. | <i>We</i> drive a car. |
| <i>You</i> eat ice cream. | <i>You</i> (all) eat ice cream. |
| <i>He</i> speaks Russian. | <i>They</i> speak Russian. |
| <i>She</i> swims every day. | <i>They</i> swim every day. |
| <i>It</i> keeps food cold. | <i>They</i> keep the food cold. |

Imagine that two friends, Hannah and Ashley, are having a conversation about a field trip. The subjects are placed in parentheses to make it easier for you to see them.

- (Hannah, speaking) went on a field trip.
- (Ashley, being spoken to) went on a field trip.
- (Caleb) enjoyed the field trip.
- (Jane) arrived too late for the field trip.
- (The car) was full.
- (Jane and Caleb) bought some souvenirs.

Below are the same sentences with nominative pronouns in place of the nouns used above.

I went on a field trip.

You went on a field trip.

He enjoyed the field trip.

She arrived too late for the field trip.

It was full.

They bought some souvenirs.

POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS –

Lastly, we will move on to **possessive pronouns**. As you learned above, we can make nouns possessive to show that someone or something owns something. Possessive pronouns show ownership as well but are used at the end of a sentence.

Here are the **possessive pronouns**. The singular is given with its plural in the next column.

Singular

mine

yours

his

hers

its

Plural

ours

yours

theirs

theirs

theirs

We use possessive pronouns as substitutes for possessive forms of nouns, when these nouns are used at the end of a sentence.

For example –

- “This dog is Andrew's.” (possessive form of noun)
- “This dog is his.” (replaced with possessive pronoun)

Remember, these pronouns are only used to show possession. Look at some examples using each of these possessive pronouns.

Singular

The car was *mine*.

The ice cream is *yours*.

The book will be *his*.

The swimming pool is *hers*.

The tires were *its*.

Plural

The car was *ours*.

The ice cream is (all of) *yours*.

The book will be *theirs*.

The swimming pool is *theirs*.

The tires were *theirs*.

Assignment 1E: Underline all of the nominative or possessive pronouns in the following sentences.

1. Are you American?
2. The books are theirs.
3. He is a student.
4. They are our friends.
5. Is that toy yours?
6. It is loud.
7. That tent is mine.
8. The flowers are hers.
9. Are we going to the party?
10. She loves to bake.
11. The tickets are ours.
12. Are they eating here?
13. The blankets are ours.
14. You are going on a trip.



Week One: Writing

Lesson & Assignments: Beginning & End

(More About Introductions & Conclusions) – *Rough Draft*

In English Level II, we did cover the fundamentals of writing introductions and conclusions, but time and time again, we find these portions of essay writing to be what challenge students the most. Many students do well with a METHOD, but unfortunately, as students expand to writing essays longer than five paragraphs, these methods do not always work.

The most common introduction and thesis method for five-paragraph essays is to state the topic and provide the three reasons that will be discussed within the essay. For example: “Spring is my favorite season of the year because the weather is perfect for outdoor play, I celebrate my birthday, and our family goes on our annual vacation.”

This method may certainly be easy, but it is predictable, overly used, and not suitable if your essay will cover more than three reasons (which most essays longer than five paragraphs do). Since this class focuses on expanding your essays beyond five paragraphs and growing your writing voice, we want to begin by helping you start and end your essays even better than you already are.

GROWING THE INTRODUCTION –

As we learned in English Level II, all introductions must contain a **hook**, a **bridge**, and a **thesis**. Most students can grasp the concept of the hook and even the thesis with some practice, but the bridge can be ambiguous and is often where writing introductions gets tricky. What does one write in the bridge to fill up the space between the hook and thesis? Without a method, writing the bridge can be rather daunting.

Remember, an introduction is like a road map. It gives the reader the idea of where the writer is headed in the essay. While the hook, bridge, and thesis should work together to lay out the basic ideas of what will be presented in the essay, these three things can neither be so broad that they distract nor so narrow that they limit the reader's ability to understand.

Because writing the bridge can feel so challenging, many students still revert to following a method and end up using the bridge to list out all of the main reasons that will be discussed in the essay. This is not necessarily *wrong*, but it does not at all create a compelling introduction. A list-style introduction is too predictable. The reader already knows all of the reasons, so why does the reader need to read the rest of the essay?

One great way to think about an introduction is as a **welcome into your home**. The introduction is used to gain the reader's interest and trust. A list of reasons does not accomplish this.

Suppose I showed up at your door. You could welcome me in two different ways. First, you could open the door and begin rattling off a list of reasons about why you know I will enjoy spending time in your home. "I have just made an amazing dinner. I know you will like it. Also, I arranged the couches in a new way, so I know you will really enjoy conversation more. I turned the thermostat up, because I know you often get cold. Oh, and I bought some new coffee to try. I think you will really like it. And here is my dog. He's really friendly. For all of these reasons, we are going to have a great time tonight. Welcome!"

This, of course, would be *really* weird . . . but this is kind of how list-style introductions sound. They are weird, awkward, and clunky.

Instead, what if I pull up to your house and notice that you had set out a pot of fresh flowers on the porch? I ring the bell, and you answer. You greet me with a hug and a smile. I can smell an amazing aroma coming from the kitchen. Instead of giving me a bunch of talk and reasons, you open the door wide and tell me to come in. You show me where to hang my coat and you introduce me to your dog. I look around and notice that your house is pretty and well-kept, and your spirit is calm and kind, so I immediately feel welcomed without you having to say much of anything.

This is how an introduction should be.

But, what does that mean in writing? –

When a reader approaches your essay, their mind is still in their own world. Your introduction is designed to help the reader leave the distractions of their own world and current situations behind in order to enter the world of your essay. The introduction is your opportunity to help the reader embrace your topic and care about the ideas you plan to discuss.

While the conclusion is like a sales pitch to get someone to buy your product (more on that next week!), an introduction is a sales pitch to get someone in the door. Think about some of your local establishments, maybe a store, a coffee shop, or even a home. What things outside of these buildings make them inviting or uninviting? Although you may be thinking, “You should never judge a book by its cover,” the reality is that we *do*. And your readers *will* judge your essay by the content in the introduction. With the introduction, you have to get the reader in the door.

So, now we are back to the bridge. Writing the hook is pretty easy, and with practice, you will be constructing compelling thesis statements more easily. But what do you put in the bridge? This middle section of the introduction that so often causes students to stumble is the place to **put your ideas in context**. Why does your topic matter? How does your topic relate to other things, people, situations, culture, etc? How can you interest the reader in your topic?

Let us look at an example essay:

EXAMPLE

Aline Towers

March 27, 2017

Putting on a Play

Putting on a play is one of the most challenging undertakings in the entertainment business. It can take years of planning and work to create a well-executed performance. Producing a play is much harder than making a movie since it is performed anew for each audience. There is no stopping to correct mistakes. However, when all of the work is finished, the play will be one of the greatest achievements of the creator’s life.

For any play to be successful, the first step is creating a good story. Stories give the audience the base from which to judge the rest of the play. If the acting and props are superb, yet the story is lacking, then the play will be a failure, and months of preparation will be for naught. Consequently, a good plot is essential. There are infinite possible variations to the plot. Should it be a serious play or a silly one? Should the story have a sad or a happy conclusion? Should the story be based on an actual event or should it have a fictional story line? The possibilities for plot are endless, yet the creator must craft a good story to compel the

audience.

To find inspiration and understand how a successful plot is written, it can be beneficial to study the works of others. You can learn a great deal about play writing when you study the works of past craftsmen, such as Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, or Jean Cocteau. Any element of a past play might give you inspiration or insight about structure. In addition, a mistake made by another can be learned from, and a successful formula can be built upon. At the same time, do not forget to keep your story original and imaginative. Your plot must be your own.

Once a good story is in place, actors are needed. The performance of the actors is another element that can make or break the success of a play. Selecting actors who not only have the ability and confidence to play the parts but who also have the right chemistry to be part of a cohesive team is key. The performance is just as important as the story in the minds of the audience. A good director must be able to find actors who can bring the story to life, in a convincing and meaningful way.

The first step to proper casting is to know who is available and willing. This step is accomplished through auditions. There are generally two types of auditions. These are open casting (where anyone who wants to try out simply shows up on the day of auditions), and appointment-only auditions, (where an appointment is made with the director). The latter is designed to limit applicants and usually includes a basic set of requirements. Either type of addition can be useful, based on preferences and needs of the playwright and director.

Once you have an inventory of possible actors who have the right skills to be compatible with the play, it is helpful to look at the physical appearance of all applicants and assess what roles are possible for them accordingly. Though an obvious and perhaps silly example. a man who is 6'4" would not make a good dwarf in a play. Potential applicants should be chosen both on acting skill and suitability of appearance. Once several options are in place, final casting is the next step.

Casting is based on several factors, mainly enunciation, projection, and personality. These factors are determined by a short piece that the applicant is asked to read or memorize upon auditioning. The actor is sometimes allowed to suggest parts, but otherwise the casting is up to the director. It is the director's responsibility to remain open minded and unbiased based on friendships or any other factor, only considering what is good for the production.

Once the roles are chosen, the next step is production, which includes all of the steps leading up to the performance. This includes the development of sets; the creation of costumes, the staging; and, of course, all of the practice. Production usually takes several months, and this time is filled with things like vision meetings, costume sizing, and many rehearsals. Throughout all of this, the actors must learn how to deal with emotions such as stage fright or excitement. It is crucial for the actors to learn to speak clearly and loud enough for an audience to hear. Moreover, the actors must learn how to be true to their character in order to present themselves convincingly on the stage. Production is an incredibly important time for the play, because all of this behind-the-scenes work is what makes successful performances.

Once production is finished and the play is ready to perform, the following step is to find a venue and promote the play. The play can be performed in a public place, such as a park, or on a rented or owned stage. Once the venue is selected, publicity is key to receiving an ample crowd. Promotion is accomplished through the use of billboards, fliers, the internet, and word of mouth. And so the play is ready to perform!

It is important for all participants to be thoroughly prepared on the night(s) of the performance. Plenty of rest and food is essential. It is natural for actors to be nervous, so it is the director's job to reassure the actors. The performance of a play should be an enjoyable and meaningful experience, not one full of stress or worry. The director has the ability to lead his cast in this way, which translates into a positive experience for the audience as well. All of the preparation leads to this moment, and the play is underway.

A well-executed performance is something that the writer himself, the director, the cast, and the audience will never forget. This is a performance that people have devoted themselves to for months or perhaps a year. But, this is a performance that has given new confidence to cast members, shaped a director, moved an audience to tears or inspiration, and in the end, caused a writer to realize that what he started long ago has made an impact.

This essay is eleven (11) paragraphs long, so it is a large departure from the essays you were writing in English Level II. However, you can begin to see how students push beyond those five paragraphs. With greater detail and development plus more than three reasons, reaching nine or ten or eleven paragraphs will not be so difficult.

This essay, as you have read, contains roughly nine different components of putting on a play: writing a story, learning from other playwrights, finding potential actors, choosing suitable applicants, deciding final casting, going through the production stage, finding a venue and promoting the play, and preparing for performance night.

So, let's get back to the introduction. If you have been relying on a list-the-reasons, method-style introduction, what do you do when your essay has nine components? Your introduction may sound like this:

Putting on a play is one of the most challenging undertakings in the entertainment business. In order to put on a successful play, one must write a story, learn from other playwrights, find potential actors, choose suitable applicants, decide final casting, go through the production stage, find a venue and promote the play, and prepare for performance night. When all of the work is finished, the play will be one of the greatest achievements of the creator's life.

The first sentence and the last have not changed, but that bridge in the middle has been turned into a list. It sounds clunky. It is a bit boring. It is too narrow in that it virtually gives away all of the main ideas to the essay. In addition, this introduction does not provide any context for this challenge of producing a play. For example, why does the challenge matter? What can it be compared to? What makes it interesting and worthy enough to read or learn about?

With only a clunky list and no context, this type of introduction does not *get me in door*, because I do not really need to read anything else. I already know all of the steps and can envision what they entail myself.

Now, let us look again at the original introduction:

Putting on a play is one of the most challenging undertakings in the entertainment business. It can take years of planning and work to create a well-executed performance. Producing a play is much harder than making a movie since it is performed anew for each audience. There is no stopping to correct mistakes. But, when all of the work is finished, the play will be one of the greatest achievements of the creator's life.

See how this introduction uses the bridge to give context:

- **Why does this challenge matter?** The challenge of putting on a play matters because all of the

hard work can pay off to become a great achievement. The bridge in this introduction creates the emotions of committing to a lengthy process, overcoming difficulty, and striving for excellence. This *gets the reader in the door*, because the reader wants to know how all of this is accomplished.

- **What can the challenge be compared to?** The challenge is compared to making a movie, which typically seems like one of the more difficult undertakings in the entertainment business. However, the author's aim now is to show you why the creation of a play is actually far more difficult. This *gets the reader in the door* because the reader wants to know why.

See also how this introduction helps the reader transition into the world of play production. A list is just a list. Lists tell, but they do not show. They do not make ideas come to life. Instead, the original introduction shows the idea of creating a play. This idea of creating a play entails “years of planning,” a process that is “harder than making a movie,” and no opportunity to “correct mistakes.” Description, comparison, and detail allow this introduction to help readers enter the world of play production, so they can be fully immersed in the ideas the writer is about to discuss.

Another way you can avoid using the list method is to group similar ideas into larger sections.

Take a look at this list-style introduction:

I would really like to go to Rome because of all the great things it has to offer. First, I would like to go to Rome for its history. Another reason that I would like to go there is the Colosseum which would be really fun to see. There would be a lot of fun stuff to do in Rome which is another great reason that I would want to go there. I would like to know more about the culture in Rome. The weather would also be another reason that I would like to go there. If I could go anywhere in the world, I would like to go to Rome for multiple reasons.

Now, this introduction does not have the best hook, but the biggest problem is simply that the introduction is a list, without any connection or context. It does not gain the reader's interest. However, if we look at the introduction, we can see two major focal points: history and culture. So instead of listing out each individual reason, let's rewrite the introduction to group the reasons into two important sections:

Rome is one of those places that we can often easily imagine because we have seen so many pictures of this city in history books and atlases. However, seeing Rome through pictures and our imagination is far different from seeing it in person. This city plays a central part in the world's early history, making it an absolutely fascinating place. Thus, if I could travel

anywhere in the world, I would go to Rome, for I would love to experience its history and culture firsthand.

The introduction grows my interest and appreciation for Rome, so that when you say you would want to go to Rome more than any other place, I understand *why*. It's not just the fun stuff to see or do . . . because there is fun stuff to see and do anywhere in the world. But, because you are enthralled with Rome's prominence in world history and its diverse culture, you want to visit. The introduction captures this idea, without giving too much information away, while still presenting a clear, specific topic and thesis.

As you write longer essays with greater detail and development and more reasons/components, think really hard about the context of your ideas. What can you put in between a hook and thesis that will capture your audience's attention, help them transition into the world of your topic, and understand the context of your ideas? How can you get the reader in the door?

Finally, we leave you with this: although you should always begin an essay with a thesis, the introduction itself need not be written first. In fact, writing the introduction first is not always the most effective plan. When you start writing an essay, you may not always know where you are headed. Throughout the writing process, you will likely think through complicated issues more thoroughly, which may lead you to reorganize ideas, shift your thoughts, and perhaps even change your main idea or argument. Thus, as the writing process is often a discovery process, the introduction may no longer be suitable once you have finished writing the essay in its entirety. Sometimes, it is best to write a tentative introduction first, then revise it later as necessary. Sometimes, you may even find it easier to write the entire essay first, then write the introduction last, so you can ensure that it matches up with all you have discussed in the essay.

The most important takeaway from this lesson is this: do not get stuck in a box. Do not get stuck in the box of an introduction method, and do not get stuck in the box that says you must craft the perfect introduction from the very beginning. There is so much room for creativity when it comes to the introduction, about how you write it and when you write it. Although you must always include a hook, a bridge, and a thesis, allow freedom to help you create introductions that truly welcome your reader to what you want to say.

Assignment 1: Let's start with something that should be easy to write about! This week, submit a rough draft for your first essay. This essay should be seven (7) to ten (10) paragraphs and tell about ***a recent vacation or trip.***

Focus intently on crafting an introduction that avoids any listing or method-style writing. Remember to include a fitting hook and a clear thesis with a bridge that welcomes the reader and gains his/her attention.

Then write the body of the essay, utilizing either chronological order or order of importance.

You should also write the conclusion, based on what you have learned from English Level II or already know from previous essay-writing experience. We will cover more information about the conclusion in Lesson 2, so you will have time to revise it if needed before submitting the final essay.

Ensure that the essay is formatted properly. Write your name and the date in the upper left hand corner. Add a title centered above the essay. Properly format the paragraphs with an indented first line or a full space between each paragraph, and left-align the text. Justified text is optional but not required. Content should be typed in one of the standard fonts, size 12.



Week One: Literature

Lesson & Assignments: Intro to Story & The Epic

Throughout this year, we are going to study literature from ancient times to modern times. As we read various works, you may begin to notice some similarities in structure, characters, themes, etc. You may also realize that some of our favorite modern stories bear remarkable resemblance to tales of long ago. As we study works across centuries, we can appreciate the value of quality writing to society and the impact of literature on generations.

By this point, you should already be familiar with basic elements of literature, but if not, let's briefly review.

- The **title** is the name of the story – a simple but important element!
- The **author** is the person who wrote the story.
- The **plot** is what happens in the story – the beginning, middle, and end.
- The **characters** are the people in the story, who the story is about.
- The **setting** of the story is the location and time in which it takes place.
- The **theme** is the main idea of the story.
- The **conflict** is the major problem or issue in the story.
- The **resolution** is how that problem or issue is solved.
- The **structure** is made up of the **point of view (1st person, 2nd person, or 3rd person)** and **verb tense (past or present)** in which the story is written.

With these generalities in mind, let's get started!

Nowadays, we use the word *epic* loosely—and primarily as an adjective. “That was epic!” we might say, about a show, a sporting event, or a vacation. We mean to express that the experience was incredible or impressive. And yes, the use of *epic* in this way is correct.

However, historically, an epic—noun—is a specific *type of writing*, one which we will learn about throughout this class. The purpose of this class is to introduce you to early works of literature. Interestingly, though, many prominent works of early literature are, in fact, epics. And so, we will be looking at the epic as a whole over the coming weeks.

You will learn about the epic in the big picture—what makes an epic, how an epic is structured, etc. In addition, you will also be introduced to individual epics and their unique characteristics, to gain an understanding of how these works shaped the world and continue to shape our understanding of history.

WHAT IS AN EPIC? –

Epic comes from the Greek work *epos*, meaning “story, word, poem.” In simple terms, an epic is a *really long narrative poem*. Even more simple: an epic is a story-telling poem that contains lots and lots (sometimes volumes full) of lines. Now, there is more to an epic, but let's just start with these basics and take a look at ten of the most well-known epics throughout history.

- ***The Epic of Gilgamesh*** (we cover this next week) was recorded and preserved some 4,000 years ago and is considered the “earliest great work of literature that has survived into the modern age.”
(1) This poem was recorded on clay tablets in cuneiform; its modern translations reach approximately 3,600 lines, telling the story of the ruler Gilgamesh and his pursuit of immortality.
- Homer's ***The Iliad*** and ***The Odyssey*** are believed to have been composed sometime during the 8th Century BC. *The Iliad* was composed in Epic Greek (also referred to as Homeric Greek), a blend of Ionic Greek and other Greek dialects. This poem contains 15,693 lines, divided into twenty-four books, telling the story of the Trojan War between the Greeks and the Trojans.
- The ***Mahābhārata*** is a Sanskrit epic of ancient India, compiled between the 3rd Century BC and the 3rd Century AD. At over 200,000 lines, this poem—which discusses a struggle for power between two groups of cousins—earns the title as the longest epic poem known and is often considered the longest poem ever written.
- ***The Aeneid*** is an epic poem of 9,896 lines, written by the Roman poet Virgil sometime between 29 and 19 BC. This poem tells the story of Aeneas, a character from the Greek story about the Trojan War and details events that lead to the founding of Rome.
- ***Beowulf*** (we cover this in Lesson 3), one of the most important and frequently translated works of Old English literature, was recorded likely sometime between 700 and 1000 AD. This poem, which contains 3,182 alliterative lines, tells us of Beowulf's heroic adventures, most notably his defeat of the monster Grendel.
- ***The Divine Comedy*** was composed over twelve years (finally completed in 1320) by Dante

Alighieri, an Italian poet and scholar. This poem contains 14,233 lines and is divided into three sections, imagining Dante's travels through Hell (*Inferno*), Purgatory (*Purgatorio*), and Heaven (*Paradiso*).

- ***Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*** is an anonymous Middle English poem, containing 101 stanzas of alliterative verse and a total of 2,530 lines. This poem combines stories and traditions from Welsh, Irish, English, and French cultures and ultimately tells about Sir Gawain's acceptance of a challenge from the Green Knight.
- ***The Faerie Queene*** is an English epic poem by Edmund Spenser containing over 36,000 lines. Books I-III were published in 1590, then republished along with Books IV and V in 1596. This poem is largely allegorical, following several knights as an examination of various virtues.
- ***Paradise Lost*** was written by John Milton and first published in 1667. This epic poem of over 10,000 lines tells the biblical story of the fallen angel Satan, the first man and woman, and Adam and Eve's banishment from the Garden of Eden.

AN EPIC ISN'T JUST LONG –

Length is not the only thing that defines an epic. This type of narrative doesn't just tell any old story. Instead, an epic focuses on “extraordinary feats and adventures of characters from a distant past.” (2) In addition, several main characteristics can help us further define an epic:

- often begins *in medias res*, “in the middle of things”, in the middle of the plot. Further information about past events are often later woven into the story via dialogue, flashbacks, or description.
- may begin with a statement of theme or purpose
- written in a formal style
- written using third-person narration, with an omniscient (infinitely aware) narrator
- often includes an invocation—a request for inspiration and help—to a muse, which is an inspirational god of literature, art, and science
- often contains long lists, referred to as an epic catalogue, such as the list of trees in *The Faerie Queene*, the list of demons in Book I of *Paradise Lost*, or the catalogue of ships located in *The Iliad*.
- occurs across lengthy time spans or at a time far removed from any living memory
- narrates a journey across vast, varied settings
- follows a brave and determined hero, though one presented without favoritism; the audience discovers both the hero's virtues and shortcomings.
- includes supernatural or otherworldly intervention or obstacles which challenge the hero's success and often sets him against seemingly impossible odds

- often provides an explanation, though the fictional story, for certain historical circumstances or events
- often reflects on concern for the future of a culture or civilization

AN ORAL TRADITION –

One important thing to understand about epic poetry is that this type of writing is rooted in the *oral tradition*, rather than the literary tradition. This means that many of the early epics were originally oral stories, not written texts, passed down from generation to generation by professional poets. These poets, known as bards, earned a living by singing folk tales and epic poems. Although the main elements of the stories were preserved in each telling, many of the other details likely shifted based on when and where the story was told.

With all of this in mind, let's get started on this week's assignments!

Assignment 1A: In complete sentences, answer the following questions.

1. Explain what you think are some challenges related to oral story telling rather than written story telling.
2. Imagine trying to memorize a novel, which you must then retell to an audience. Without having the text to refer to, do you think you could tell the story in the same way each time? Why or why not?
3. Now, think of a fairy tale. Name the fairy tale and then write down the most important characters, objects and actions in the story.
4. Reach out to several family members or friends. Ask them to make a list of the most important characters, objects, and actions in the same fairy tale. (Don't show them your list!) Now compare your list with the other lists. Are they similar or dissimilar? In what ways? (Be specific!) If similar, why do you think this is? If different, why do you think this is? If a little bit of both, why?

Assignment 1B: Of course, it would have been impossible for a bard to memorize word-for-word thousands or hundreds of thousands of lines of poetry. Therefore, bards relied on mnemonic devices—patterns of letters or ideas, for example—to help them retain the most important elements each time they told the story. These patterns essentially became a map for the storytelling, which is why we see so many of the same standard elements in epics across centuries.

One such pattern is the **epic hero cycle**. This is a standard cycle of events used in an epic. Think of a movie or book with a character who might fit this cycle (some easy examples – *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Shrek*, *Superman*, etc.).

Then, **complete the attached chart, using specific examples from the story to show how the character demonstrates the epic hero cycle.**

Sources –

1. Tearle, Dr. Oliver. “10 of the Best Epic Poems Everyone Should Read.” *Interesting Literature*, <https://interestingliterature.com/2017/06/10-of-the-best-epic-poems-everyone-should-read/>.
2. “Poetry 101: What Is an Epic Poem? Learn About the History and Characteristics of Epics and Examples.” *MasterClass*, 2020 November 8, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/poetry-101-what-is-an-epic-poem-learn-about-the-history-and-characteristics-of-epics-with-examples#how-did-epics-originate>.