



## 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. affront
2. consequence
3. disdainful
4. extraordinary
5. heedless
6. immaculate
7. nonsense
8. pandemonium
9. resolute
10. scarce
11. solitude
12. torment

Definition Bank	
showing a reckless lack of care or attention	wild and noisy disorder or confusion; uproar
a state or situation of being alone	an action or remark that causes outrage or offense
spoken or written words that have no meaning or make no sense; foolish or unacceptable behavior	to cause to experience severe mental or physical suffering
a result or effect of an action or condition	very unusual or remarkable
(especially of food, money, or some other resource) insufficient for the demand	showing contempt or lack of respect
perfectly clean, neat, or tidy	purposeful, determined, and unwavering



## 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!

For our first lesson, we will begin with the noun and the pronoun.

## 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. Each sentence contains only one common noun.

1. He put the books away.
2. The grass is wet.
3. We sat in the sun.
4. Our house is small.
5. Will you get the mail?
6. I need to buy a gift.
7. The bottle broke.
8. Justin needs a shirt.
9. We will go eat dessert.
10. The snow-blower is loud.

## PROPER NOUNS –

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

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

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. Tim                    | 11. Paris                            |
| 2. the company            | 12. Carter and William (cell phones) |
| 3. the table              | 13. the cupboards                    |
| 4. the genius             | 14. Julie                            |
| 5. the USA                | 15. the paper                        |
| 6. the cats               | 16. the class                        |
| 7. James and Susan (sofa) | 17. Amos                             |
| 8. the bus                | 18. the elephants                    |
| 9. Iris                   | 19. the hotel                        |
| 10. the book              | 20. Anthony and Tabitha (apartment)  |

## **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**



on 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*.

### Plural

The car was *ours*.

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

The book will be *theirs*.

The swimming pool is *hers*.  
The tires were *its*.

The swimming pool is *theirs*.  
The tires were *theirs*.

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

1. You are very tall.
2. The table is theirs.
3. He plays basketball.
4. They are very friendly.
5. Is that dog yours?
6. It is going to rain tomorrow.
7. That plate is mine.
8. The gift is hers.
9. We will be going on vacation.
10. The paintbrushes are ours.

**Assignment 1F:** Write whether each underlined pronoun is nominative or possessive. (Note: some sentences have more than one underlined pronoun!)

1. How likely are you to read the book?
2. This house is ours.
3. They are the best neighbors we have ever had!
4. It is time to eat.
5. He is three and a half years old.
6. Those figure skates are mine.
7. Is that yours? It is not!
8. Do you think this could be hers?
9. Those books are not mine but yours.
10. She is still sleeping in her crib.



## **Week Two: Writing**

### **Lesson & Assignments: Topic Vs. Thesis**

The word *thesis* can sound daunting and so advanced, but the concept is not hard to understand. Simply put, a thesis statement is a **sentence that clearly identifies the topic and main idea of an essay**. Whereas a topic sentence identifies the topic and main idea for a particular paragraph, a thesis statement identifies the topic and main idea of the entire essay. The thesis is like a road map for the essay, telling the reader what to expect from the rest of the essay. Though the structure of a thesis statement can vary slightly depending on the type of essay being written, all essays *must* have a thesis statement.

Developing a strong, compelling thesis statement does require significant practice, so do not imagine that we will overwhelm you with lots of information about thesis development right now. In this lesson, we only want to introduce the concept and its importance in a simple way. A specific and clear thesis sets the tone for a strong, focused, and interesting essay.

Of course, one of the biggest confusions we run into is the difference between a topic and a thesis. It is important to discuss the difference first.

#### **TOPIC VS. THESIS –**

A topic and a thesis are not the same thing, and they are not interchangeable. A topic can come in several forms: as a single word, as a command, as a simple sentence, or even as a question. **However, the thesis is always a statement sentence.**

Example:

- **Topic:** Cheese
- **Thesis:** Of all kinds of cheese, my favorite is Swiss.

## **BEGINNING STEPS –**

### **1. Define your topic.**

When you begin writing an essay, you must first choose a topic. Perhaps the assignment gives you a topic, or perhaps you are allowed to choose your own. Regardless, you must first define the topic. Did the assignment give an extremely specific topic, or is the topic only somewhat specific, rather general, or completely open to your decision?

- An extremely specific topic: Write about how ice cream is made.
- A somewhat specific topic: Write about ice cream.
- A general topic: Write about your favorite dessert.
- An open topic: Write a descriptive essay on the topic of your choice.

**But how do you choose?** Choosing a topic is one of the very first obstacles that many students must overcome. Even when it comes to writing paragraphs, such as we did last week, many students struggle just to know what to write about in the first place.

1. The best piece of advice we can offer is to write about things that interest you. Do you like building model planes? Write about it. Do you participate in Boy Scouts? Write about it. Do you dance? Do you ski? Do you love to bake or draw or sing? Write about it. Your writing will always be more interesting if you choose topics that you love or that inspire you.
2. Another way to choose a great topic is to write about experiences that are personal to you. Write about the time you met your best friend or a special experience you have had with a friend. Write about a time you were afraid, sad, excited, or inspired. Write about the time you camped in your backyard or the time you skied down a giant hill and felt so proud. Write about the time your grandmother passed away or the time you traveled to China with your family to adopt a new sibling. Writing about personal things will help you more easily think of what to say and connect with your readers.
3. Sometimes, you must choose a topic within a certain realm. Perhaps you must write about a historical character or something you have recently studied in science. Of course, these guidelines may limit your ability to write about a major interest or a personal experience, but you can still use the first two concepts to help you. Is there a person in history that you find very interesting? Or have you read about someone in history that you relate with? You can apply

these same concepts of interest and personal relation to just about any subject.

## 2. Narrow your topic.

Unless the assignment gives you an extremely specific topic, you will likely need to narrow it to be more specific. For example, if the assignment asks you to write an essay about ice cream, your topic is still a bit too general to start writing. There are a lot of things about ice cream on which you could write.

You need to narrow the topic. Will you write about the history of ice cream? Will you write about the first time you ate ice cream? Will you write about how your family always makes homemade ice cream for birthdays? Will you write about the ice cream disaster you had at the beach last weekend? Will you write about your decision-making processes when choosing ice cream flavors?

Essentially, when we are creating a thesis, we are narrowing the topic down to a **very specific statement of purpose or opinion**. The thesis is built from our core ideas and beliefs. The reality is, because we all have individual worldviews, experiences, and ideas, everyone's thesis should be slightly different.

## 3. Understand The Difference.

In basic terms, there are two types of thesis statements: **expository and persuasive**.

The expository thesis presents the topic and main idea to the reader, **without providing an argument or opinion. The expository thesis should be factual.** In this class, we will use *only* the expository thesis, as this is what you will use for all of your beginning essays, whether expository, narrative, or descriptive.

The persuasive thesis, on the other hand, presents not only the topic **but also an arguable perspective about the topic**. This type of thesis presents an idea for which there is argument or opposition, which you then must *defend* and *prove* based on reliable evidence.

### Expository Thesis Statements:

- Students can become more effective writers by employing three strategies.
- Wolves are often pictured in fairy tales as ferocious animals, but they are very social and unique animals who do not deserve their scary reputation.
- George Washington was an excellent leader, because he was a man of courage, perseverance, and

desire to help our country succeed.

- The rewarding process of photographing a lunar eclipse requires careful preparation and sound equipment.

### **Persuasive Thesis Statements:**

- Grover is the most important character on *Sesame Street*.
- A longer school day does not guarantee that students will be productive in classes, reminding us that young people must find learning meaningful in order to do well.
- Free public transportation should be implemented as a key step in reducing unemployment rates.
- Our family should get a dog because of the opportunity it will provide us children for learning responsibility.

### **HOW TO CREATE AN EXPOSITORY THESIS –**

We will focus now only on the expository thesis, as that is all you will need for a while.

Follow these steps to develop an expository thesis:

**1. Identify the topic.**

- 2. Make a statement of fact.** Remember, an expository thesis is always factual. “Dogs are popular pets because they are loyal, useful, and excellent companions” = fact. With this statement, I am merely explaining three key reasons why dogs are popular pets. On the other hand, if I say, “Dogs are better than cats because they are loyal, useful, and excellent companies,” I have now made an opinion-based claim, which is persuasive, not expository. With this statement, I am challenging the reader to see these three reasons as proof for liking dogs better than cats, when in fact, cats have their own traits which make them wonderful pets as well. An expository thesis should focus on explaining, not proving a point.

**NOTE:** This is also a good place to discuss personal fact vs. personal opinion. A statement such as “My favorite holiday is Christmas” is considered *personal fact*. It may not be a scientific fact or a world-wide fact, but it is a fact of who YOU ARE. With this statement, you are not trying to prove why Christmas is the best holiday, nor are you trying to convince others to like Christmas as well. You are merely explaining why Christmas is your favorite holiday. Personal facts are acceptable for use when writing expository thesis statements. On the other hand, personal opinion is reserved

strictly for persuasive writing. For example, if you write that “Christmas is the best holiday,” you are now stating a personal *opinion* and making a *claim*, suggesting that Christmas is better than any other holiday. Personal opinion is not acceptable for use when writing expository thesis statements.

3. **If useful, qualify the topic.** For expository thesis statements, a common and simple qualifying word is *because*. “Spring is my favorite season because I love planting the garden with my mom, visiting the local Lilac Festival, and celebrating all of the birthdays in my immediate family.”
4. **Write just a sentence, not a paragraph.** A lot of students get confused with this one. A thesis is not a group of sentences, not a paragraph, and not the complete introduction (more on this next week). A thesis should be one sentence.

### **STRONG VS. WEAK –**

There is really quite a lot to get into when it comes to writing strong, compelling thesis statements, but there are two key errors we will focus on right now. These are the errors we see most frequently in the early stages of essay writing.

#### **ERROR 1: Your thesis is too general.**

- I like herbal tea.
- I am going to write about George Washington.
- This paper will cover three reasons why good sleep habits are important.

What makes your essay important to read is a thesis that is interesting and compelling, a statement that contains not just the topic but the main idea about it.

#### **Strong:**

- Because of its medicinal qualities and ability to improve focus, herbal tea is often my drink of choice.
- George Washington was an excellent leader, because he was a man of courage, perseverance, and desire to help our country succeed.
- Many people view sleep as an inconvenience, but plenty of quality sleep on a regular basis is necessary for our bodies to heal and stay healthy.



## **ERROR 2: Factual, but overly obvious:**

- Exercise is good for you.
- Education is important.
- Traveling the world is exciting.

While it is fine to use factual statements when writing expository, narrative, and descriptive essays, they still must contain some interest. Your audience doesn't want to read another essay about the basic facts about the importance of exercise or education. They want you to inform them of something they perhaps do not already know or fully understand.

## **Strong:**

- Exercise doesn't mean you have to join a gym, register for a marathon, or start lifting weights; moving your body is always the goal, and there are several really fun ways to accomplish this!
- As education has always been considered a crucial part of any society, there are several major educational methods promoted today.
- Traveling the world has given me the opportunity to grow in empathy for people of many different cultures.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Remember that there are two types of theses – expository and persuasive. Expository thesis statements will always present fact, whereas persuasive thesis statements will present opinion. However, both types of statements are capable of being strong, because they are needed for different types of papers. When assessing whether or not a thesis statement is strong, do not base your assessment solely on seeing fact or on your agreement/disagreement with the statement. Look instead for statements that are both specific and thought-provoking.

## **FINAL NOTES –**

One method of thesis writing is often taught and used for writing five-paragraph essays. This type of thesis identifies the topic and the three main ideas that will be covered within the essay.

- Example: “Dogs are loyal, useful, and excellent companions.”

This method is really straightforward and easy to use. However, please know that you can also write a thesis statement without listing main ideas; a thesis statement can be more open-ended while still being specific, as you might see in many of the examples above.

We encourage you to try writing a variety of interesting thesis statements, because eventually you will need more room for explaining and expanding on your ideas once you are writing more than five paragraphs.

Writing a thesis is not a method. While the thesis should clearly identify the topic and main idea of the essay and provide direction for the contents of the essay, it should still be interesting.

**Assignment 2A:** Write whether each thesis statement below is strong or weak. Then, briefly explain why.

(NOTE: Some of the thesis statements below are opinion-based [persuasive]; remember, absence of fact or the use of opinion does not make a statement weak. Remember that a strong thesis statement may be either expository OR persuasive, as long as it is both specific and thought-provoking.)

1. Edgar Allen Poe is a good author.
2. Normally heroes are imagined as fictional people like Wonder Woman and Superman, but in reality heroes can be real human beings who are not extraordinarily fast, strong, or fearless.
3. Over the last 20 years, changes in technology have made a profound difference in the way American college students communicate.
4. Playing sports has many benefits.
5. Participating in volunteer work is essential to the development of strong character.
6. It is difficult to write about topics you find boring.
7. The rise of Starbucks created a market that allowed small, independent coffeehouses to thrive.
8. Not having confidence hurts your life.
9. This paper will examine the similarities and differences between two articles.
10. Tourists are often out of place in other cultures.

**Assignment 2B:** Write a strong expository thesis statement for each of the following topics.

(NOTE: For this assignment, please stay away from opinion-based [persuasive] theses. We will be writing expository essays for the remainder of this class, so we want your practice to focus primarily on expository thesis statements.)

If you are having trouble with this assignment, try to make each topic as personal as possible. Avoid merely writing something like, “An invention is a device created to benefit society.” INSTEAD, write a statement about an invention that you find particularly useful. For the topic of traveling, write a statement about a recent trip you took. Write a statement about *your* favorite book or what *you* think is a delicious meal. Etc.

### TOPICS -

- An Invention
- Reading
- Traveling
- The Best Weekend
- Family
- Freedom
- Your Favorite Book
- A Delicious Meal
- Fear
- Learning



## **Week One: Literature**

### **Lesson & Assignments: The Basics of Reading & Response**

Many of us read for fun. But others of us do not feel that reading is enjoyable. To some extent, even as English teachers, we can relate to that. Not every book is really exciting or even well-written. Not every book is something we would recommend to our students, no matter how popular it is. Sometimes reading is really fun, and sometimes it *can* feel like a chore.

However, throughout this program, we have tried to choose books that we find exciting and interesting. So, if you love reading, you will probably find the upcoming assignments much easier. If you do not already enjoy reading, our aim is that you would still be able to understand the purpose of fictional literature and perhaps discover the kinds of fiction you *can* enjoy and learn from.

This all begins by learning how to ***read with a purpose.***

As a student, your idea might be that you read in order to complete an assignment or just 'to get it done.' Even if you find reading enjoyable, you may not feel the same way about texts assigned as schoolwork. Still, whether or not you enjoy reading, learning to read with a purpose can change the entire process. This gives you a reason to read, not just to finish the assignment and get a good grade, but to discover that there is perhaps more to the text than what your initial impressions tell you.

First, you must acknowledge that reading does have a purpose. We read to connect the ideas on the page to things we already know. We read to learn more about other people or other subjects, so that this increased learning can connect to our current knowledge. Reading broadens our perspective, our critical thinking skills, and our empathy for other people and other cultures. Reading narratives especially enables us to better understand what it means to be human.

Ultimately, we should not be reading to complete the assignment. We should be reading to ***learn.*** When we look at reading this way, we can never look at a book as just another pointless story. If we approach reading as an opportunity to learn, we will gain more from the text, even if reading is not our favorite pastime or even if the book we are reading is not something we would choose for ourselves.

## READING TO LEARN –

Some of us naturally learn as we read, but for others, this process is more challenging. It can be difficult to get through some books, let alone learn important things from the book, especially if reading is not something we enjoy. The great thing about the reading process is that we can follow many simple methods that help us to better retain the information and gain things from the story.

The reading process is generally comprised of three steps:

1. **Reading for Comprehension:** this is the first reading of a text. Before we can try to learn from a text or understand it more fully, we must first comprehend the text itself.
2. **Reading with Specific Focus:** this is the second reading of a text or a portion of a text. In this reading, we identify a specific focus in order to discover or understand greater meaning. We do this when we learn more about individual characters, theme(s), or figurative language.
3. **Reading with Questions:** this is the third reading of a text. In this step, we ask questions about the text or the author's purpose. We ask questions to develop curiosity and discussion. Asking questions also helps us connect the text to a larger context.

## ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE –

The first step to reading comprehension is to understand the *elements of literature* – what are the components that go into every fictional work?

- 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* and *verb tense* in which the story is written –

either past or present.

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Person View:</b> A single character narrates a story, speaking for and about themselves. “It was late last night when I decided to go to the grocery store.” or “Mom and I were quite tired by the time the show was finished.”	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Person View:</b> This is the most uncommon point of view used in literature, but often used in song lyrics. The author uses the pronoun “you” to refer to a character in the story, making the reader feel as if he is the character. “Late last night, I went to the grocery store with you. Of course, we got lost.”	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Person View:</b> This is the most commonly used point of view. The author refers to characters as “he”, “she”, “it”, “they”, etc. “Kelly went to the grocery store late last night. She was going to buy whipped cream.” or “They were extremely happy when the show was finished, as they were all tired.”
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<b>Past Tense:</b> The <b>past tense</b> is most commonly used in story writing. “I talked to my mother on the phone.” or “Jenna dropped the cookie tray on the floor and promptly burst into tears.”	<b>Present Tense:</b> Sometimes, the <b>present tense</b> may be used to narrate a story. The present tense is most often used with 1 <sup>st</sup> Person Point of View. “I am afraid. I feel as though I am going to lose everything I have.”
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Remember, every story will contain these elements. Sometimes, the elements are easy to find and sometimes, you really have to look hard. However, when we take the time to look at each element in a story, we can better understand and appreciate what we are reading.

Now let's get started on our journey of reading, both for FUN and to LEARN!

**Assignment 1A:** Get to know the author, Carlo Collodi! Read a brief biography below.

The first of ten children, Carlo Lorenzini was born on November 24<sup>th</sup>, 1826 in Florence, Italy to a cook and a servant. His childhood years were spent both on the streets of Florence and in his mother's native village, Collodi – which later became his pen name.

After completing primary school, Collodi was sent to seminary, though he had no interest in joining the clergy. Despite this, Collodi gained a literary and musical education during his time at seminary. When he was sixteen, Collodi took a job at a bookstore in Florence, where a small press was also located. Collodi's interest in writing grew, and soon, he was a journalist, playwright, newspaper editor, and short-story writer for adults. In the 1850s, Collodi published several books, both fiction and non-fiction.

Although Collodi never married nor had children of his own, he made the choice in 1875 to switch from writing material for adults to writing material for children. He said that adults were “too hard to please.” First, Collodi wrote some school texts, but in 1881, he submitted *Story of a Puppet* to an editor friend for publication in the children's section of the newspaper. Collodi referred to this story as a “bit of foolishness,” but the editor accepted it and children loved it. The story was published as a series between 1881 and 1882. However, the story ended in November 1882 with the puppet left hanging in a tree. Parents and children alike protested the ending, wanting to know what became of the puppet, so Collodi wrote another installment, published in early 1883. Soon after this, the installments were published in book form, known as *The Adventures of Pinocchio*.

Carlo Collodi died on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1890, while he was working on a sequel to *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. Just two years later, Pinocchio’s story was translated into English, and Collodi's fame for this beloved puppet grew worldwide.

**Assignment 1B:** Read chapters 1-12 of *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi.