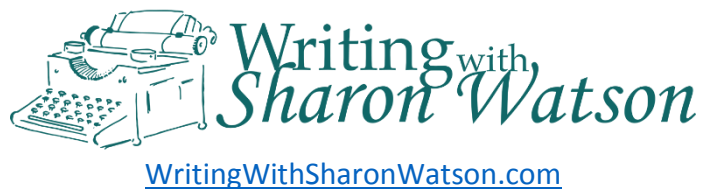


# The Power in Your Hands: Writing Nonfiction in High School

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

Sharon Watson



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## Part 1: Before You Write

*"I hate writing,  
but I love having written."  
-Dorothy Parker*

### Chapter 1: Thinking & Planning

#### Lesson 1

Some people say that writing is a mystery, that there are no rules, and that it is all subjective. You may be glad to know that those people are wrong.

Sure, what we *like* about the written word is subjective. Some readers enjoy fantasy or adventure novels while others prefer a thrilling article about last night's ball game or the latest scoop on fashions. But professional and school writing follow definite patterns and guidelines that are objective and measurable. Writers use specific tools to help them create newspaper articles, travel brochures, and riveting biographies. You can, too.

**WARNING:** Cheesy analogy ahead. Proceed at your own risk. And bring tortilla chips and maybe some salsa.

Learning to write is like learning to cook. The amateur cook learns to use the kitchen equipment, combine the ingredients, and follow a recipe. In the same way, writers learn how to use their tools (parallelism, the thesaurus, similes, cheesy analogies, the Fog Index, proofreading skills, and so forth); combine ingredients like introductions, topic sentences, various paragraph types, and conclusions; and follow the recipe of specific structures for each type of writing.

When you combine the methods and tools in this course with the skills you will develop from practicing them, you will be unbeatable. Or at least hard to catch up with.

You will learn how to correct your own work, too, using an objective set of criteria. In addition, because of all your practice, you will develop a gut instinct about the quality of your own writing.

## Your Writing Self

You may love the objectivity of writing reports; research and facts give you a thrill. Or maybe the challenge of creating an imaginative story excites you, but reports leave you baffled. This is perfectly normal. Not every student is good at every type of writing. It is a

Be aware of the conditions that help you write best. Why write early in the morning when you think best late at night?

rare student that excels in both research papers and storytelling. Those are two separate writing skills and involve varying personalities and different areas of the brain.

Many things about writing are hard. Find out what makes writing a chore for you and in what circumstances it becomes easier.

Understanding your writing self will help you strengthen your weaknesses and build your strengths.

Find your writing self in the following descriptions. Check all that apply to you:

- I like to write only about topics that are interesting to me.
- Writing stories is much more fun than writing reports and essays.
- I would rather walk across a burning desert at high noon with buzzards circling overhead while I drag a bone-dry water bottle than write anything whatsoever.
- It's hard for me to know how to begin and end my essays or reports.
- Writing is easier if it is very quiet around me.
- Research is interesting.
- I have trouble coming up with good ideas.
- Late at night is the best time to write.
- Writing by hand is pure torture, but writing at the keyboard is a little easier.
- It's hard to think of enough points or reasons for my assignments.
- When something interesting happens to me, I like to write it down.
- I like to try to change someone's mind with my writing.
- I have sloppy handwriting and/or bad spelling ~~skills~~ skills.
- I can't find enough information to finish a paper.
- I write best when I'm with friends or listening to music.
- I don't care one way or the other about writing.
- The ideas are in my head, but I can't make them come out and sound right on paper.

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- I make lists and like to take notes; they help me remember sermons and lectures.
- I have many ideas for writing, and I keep them in a notebook so I can use them later.
- I don't like to research. It's tedious.
- If I'm not interested in the topic, I have trouble doing the assignment.
- I need a lot of time to think about the assignment before I begin to write.
- Finding a topic I'm interested in is hard.
- Forget everything else—let me write stories.
- I would like to know how to write better.
- You gotta be kidding. Checking this box is enough writing for me for one day.
- Feeling the pencil or pen on the paper helps me write better.
- I like playing with words and finding just the right one.
- I don't mind writing essays and reports, but I have trouble writing interesting stories.

Do you identify with any of those statements?

If you do not, please jot in the margin a statement or two about what is true for you about writing.

No matter what your attitude or proficiency, you will learn enough guidelines and tools and read enough examples in this course to help you improve your writing abilities. If you apply what you learn here, you will develop practical writing skills you can use anywhere for the rest of your life.

## Lesson 2

### *The Planning Phase*

BE ADVISED: The rest of this chapter may be TOO EASY if you are an **intermediate** or **accomplished** writer! You may already know the material. Hang in there. New stuff is on the way.

Some brief definitions are in order before we proceed . . .

**Beginning writer:** one who has not had much experience writing for school.

**Intermediate writer:** one who has written some essays for school but has not had much experience in the different types of writing (persuasion, exposition, description, and narration).

**Accomplished writer:** one who has written many kinds of essays and reports in high school and is preparing for college and/or professional writing.

Now back to your regularly scheduled lesson.

You wouldn't build a dog house without planning it first. The same is true for writing: Before you write, plan.

And part of planning, for a writer, is the tool of **brainstorming**.



Brainstorming helps you think. It means writing down ideas in a spontaneous, free-flowing manner, which is an essential tool for any writer. This is not the time to evaluate your ideas or hold them back. Just write them quickly and evaluate them later. Often a silly idea will lead to a usable one.

When your teacher gives you a broad topic, brainstorm. Make a list of ideas you can write about within the topic. If the teacher's topic is ecology, you have dozens of options. You could write about any of the following narrowed-down topics and still be in the general topic of ecology: recycling, the effect of a natural disaster on an area's ecology, toxic waste clean-ups, or a person who had an impact on how we think about conservation. If you have trouble thinking of ideas, ask a friend, classmate, or parent for ideas or go to a book on the subject and read the chapter headings.

Brainstorming can be effective—and more fun—when done with others. Many times you'll glean an idea from a brainstorming session with friends or classmates that you might not have thought of alone.

Try brainstorming with the brightness turned down on your computer screen; that's one weird way to gather ideas without immediately evaluating them. When you're through, turn the brightness back up and ponder your possibilities. And your spelling mistakes.

By now you may have thought of specific topics within the general topic of ecology. Write at least two ideas in the space below. If you get stuck, talk to others or consult a book on the subject for more ideas. Discuss your topics with your teacher. You will not be writing this as a report. This is just for practice—so have fun with it.

*Practice 1.1*

And the lesson continues . . .

## *The Trick to Finding a Topic*

There is a trick to writing anything: find a topic that interests you. Writing about recycling may bore you to tears, but writing about saving eagles may capture your attention. When you have the chance to choose your topic, find an interesting angle and concentrate on that.

If your topic is chosen for you, hunt around until you find something about that topic that makes you tingle. It could be an electrifying finger-in-the-socket tingle or only a kids' carnival-ride sensation, but search for the thing that moves you. For instance, perhaps you have to write about World War II, but you usually give wars a yawn in history class. It now

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becomes your job to read about that war in order to find something that warms your blood or fires your imagination. Perhaps acts of heroism inspire you, or you may find that because one side won, your grandparents immigrated to another country. Maybe spy stories, POW (prisoner of war) facts, or stories of the Navajo Code Talkers fascinate you. Search for the interesting angle and follow it.

A bored student often produces a boring paper, and, let me tell you, your teacher already has enough boring papers to read. Let your paper be the one that shines. You just might make the writing experience more fun for yourself, as well.

Choose a topic that is too broad or that is of no interest to you. Write it on a clean piece of paper, the back of an envelope, the inside of an old cereal box, whatever. Then brainstorm different facets of that topic narrow it down or to find something of interest in it.

*Practice 1.2*

Be spontaneous with your ideas and don't criticize them. Identify something worth writing about in that too-broad or too-boring topic. Discuss your results with your teacher. You will not be writing this for a report; just take your ideas out for a joyride. To use a colorful worksheet on the benefits of bike riding, go to <http://writingwithsharonwatson.com/benefits-of-bike-riding-brainstorm-and-organize/>.

## Chapter 2: Opinions

### Lesson 4

#### *The Introduction: Hooking Your Reader*

When you've written a stellar essay about a topic you feel strongly about, how do you get the reader interested in it?

*Professional Tip*

You have **one paragraph** in which to capture your reader's attention. That is **less than one minute** of reading time.

Create an interest or curiosity in your topic by hooking your reader in the introduction. In fact, your first sentence or paragraph is called a **hook**.

Later in this lesson you will learn five very specific tools for hooking your reader. For now, though, think about choosing the right words or painting a vivid picture. As a high school writer, you are too old to begin an essay like this:

Horses are my favorite animal.

Instead, you will use well-placed words to indicate to the reader that your favorite animal is the horse:

Nothing can match the steady rhythm of my horse as he gallops across the meadow. He carries me with him, and I feel the power of his sturdy body as we fly. For a few moments, I am riding a living, breathing magic carpet.

Underline the words in that example that tell the reader that the horse is this student's favorite animal. Notice that the writer tries to pull the reader into the experience instead of simply reporting an opinion. Keep in mind this more mature way of writing when you hit the keyboard.

Avoid telling the reader in the introduction what you eventually are going to tell him in your essay. Giving an audience a heads up may be a good tactic for speeches or sermons, but it bores and insults readers. This introductory paragraph is suitable for elementary school writing:

I am going to write my opinion on why I like my youth choir. I like it because I love to sing, I enjoy the challenge of learning new and difficult songs, and I have the opportunity to travel to many cities and sing with other choirs.

That paragraph is a yawner. It does not create any interest or curiosity in the reader because it's only a dry list of what will follow in the paper. Younger students may have



learned how to write this way; it aided them in organizing their thoughts. But you are too old for that now.

As an older student, you need more mature techniques. This introduction to an opinion is appropriate for high school writing:

We file onto the dark stage and take our positions on the risers, trying to ignore the buzz from the audience on the other side of the curtain as we quietly hum our first measures over and over. The girl next to me hums her lines, too, and she throws me off. I clear my throat, unlock my knees, and wish I could look at my music just one more time. Beyond the curtain, I hear the director's shoes squeak across the stage as the audience quiets itself. Now the curtain is lifting. The audience is clapping. Above the noise, I try to hear the note from the pitch pipe. The baton moves. I take a deep breath. I wouldn't miss this concert for the world.

This scenario successfully uses descriptions to show the writer's love of the choir, and it creates some excitement and anticipation.

Here are five practical tools for beginning your **introductory paragraph** (or **introduction**). They're arranged below in a stunning display of palindromic beauty:



- Q** An intriguing **question**
- S** A thought-provoking **statement**
- F** A shocking, tantalizing, or to-the-point **fact**
- S** An engaging **story**
- Q** A clever **quotation**

Choose one to begin each of your essays. Read the following examples of the above tools. Real students wrote some of them:

**Question:** Do *you* know the latest technological advance that affects you most?

**Statement:** Many parents today are raising pirates. [Written by a student on pirating songs from the Internet.]

**Fact:** Fifty children are diagnosed with autism every day, according to the Autism Society of America, and boys are affected more often than girls.

**Story:** Ben and Jodi have a teenage daughter who stays out too late partying and always comes home drunk. They feel that the only way to keep Mackenzie safe is to host the parties and take away the car keys belonging to her friends. Mackenzie agrees and often invites her friends over for a night of fun. Unfortunately, Mackenzie's family is not unusual.

**Quotation:** “If I had known how hard it would be to quit smoking, I never would have started,” says Jodi Heffernan, a ninth-grader at Central High.

*Practice 2.5* Earlier, you wrote your opinion of teens owning credit cards. Beside each tool, write a first sentence or two that is calculated to capture the interest of the reader. Invent a fact or make up a quotation if you need to (something you won’t do in a real paper!). Then put a mark next to the tool you like the best for the topic of credit cards.

Question:

Statement:

Fact:

Story:

Quotation:

## Chapter 3: Persuasion Essentials

### Lesson 6

#### *Unity and Completeness*

Absolutely everything you write in a paragraph—explanations, illustrations, examples, quotes, and so forth—should be about that topic sentence. No sentence should go off the trail and introduce a new topic. When each sentence in a paragraph points to the topic sentence, you have achieved what is called **unity**.

The following paragraph does not exhibit unity. Figure out when the paragraph begins to veer off its true topic and write the sentence number in the margin:

(1) Babysitters should have first-aid training. (2) This training can be anything from how to choose age-appropriate toys to performing CPR. (3) CPR stands for cardiopulmonary resuscitation and can be performed by one person or by a team in which one person works for a while on the victim and then a second person takes over. (4) CPR used to be performed by alternating phases of pushing on the chest and breathing in the victim's mouth, but the American Heart Association has developed a method that includes calling 9-1-1 first and then pushing on the center of the victim's chest.

In addition to unity, you will strive for **completeness**. Is the topic adequately covered, or did you stop far short of fully examining the assigned concept? Note how the following paragraph gives a shallow, incomplete treatment of the topic:

Kudzu is another botanical pest. Originally from China and Japan, the vine flourishes here despite temperature or precipitation variations, growing almost as well in drought as in rain-forest conditions. It envelops anything it grows on and can cover whole houses if left unchecked.

This treatment of the kudzu topic is more complete:

Kudzu is another botanical pest. Originally from China and Japan, the vine flourishes here despite temperature or precipitation variations, growing almost as well in drought as in rain-forest conditions. Because it is so vigorous, it envelops anything it grows on and can cover whole houses if left unchecked. While the luxurious growth might create fantastical shapes and seem like a lovely green blanket on the landscape, this softening effect that hides rusting tractors and slows erosion has a dark side—literally. The

climbing vines cover nearby foliage and block the sunshine. Healthy, useful plants then fall prey to kudzu's invasiveness. Given a few years, kudzu can even kill bushes and whole trees. Because the vines are not native to our area, they have no natural predators in place. Therefore, they continue to advance uncontrolled over the countryside.

That paragraph covers the topic more fully than the first paragraph about kudzu because it gives additional details of how troublesome the plant can be.

Answer from the previous page: The paragraph about babysitters and CPR veers from the topic sentence in sentence three.

Just as you work to achieve unity and completeness in each paragraph, you will create unity and completeness in your whole essay. Every word, sentence, image, and example will point toward the thesis statement and enlarge upon it. Your thesis statement is the star of the essay; everything else is the supporting cast.



## Chapter 7: Persuasion—Moral/Ethical

### Lesson 1

#### *Prefer the Active Voice*

What can you do when you view a commercial that crosses a line or when you learn that a company has been treating its employees unfairly? Use the moral/ethical persuasive appeal. Keep reading to find out.

But first, a brief message from the active voice.

When your teacher throws an eraser at you, you can record the event in one of two sentences:

“The eraser was thrown at me by my teacher.”

or

“My teacher threw an eraser at me.”



The first sentence is passive. The eraser, which looks like the subject, is not doing the throwing. In other words, the subject is not performing the verb. Many passive constructions use a form of the verb *to be* (*was* in that first example), they are too wordy, and they are hard to understand.

The second sentence is active. The teacher is doing the throwing. The subject is performing the verb. The meaning is much clearer, and the sentence is shorter. This can make your writing stronger.

Many writing texts will tell you to prefer the active voice, and this one is no different. **Prefer the active voice.**

There is one exception to this rule (you knew there would be): If the thing receiving the action is more important, then use the passive construction. For example, “Charles Darnay was accused of treason” is a passive construction but is acceptable here because Charles Darnay, who is being accused, is more important than the person accusing him.

*Practice 7.1* Below are sentences that contain active and passive constructions. Put an “A” next to the active ones and a “P” next to the passive ones. Then, on a separate piece of paper, rewrite the passive ones and make them active. (Note: Put a star next to the sentence that is correct as passive.)

1. He was heard by someone from the RCA record label during the concert.
2. Sir James Barrie wrote *Peter Pan*, the story about a boy who never grows up.
3. The astronaut Vladimir Shostakovich was struck in the foot by a meteor while repairing the space station.
4. An escape was planned by the pandas in the zoo.
5. The crowbar was dropped by the intruder when he heard the police sirens.
6. Begin shoveling snow at the start of a snowstorm and you will regret it!
7. An injury was sustained in the head by the soccer goalie.

## Chapter 10: Common Grammar Mistakes

### Lesson 1

The title of the chapter isn't the most exciting. In fact, you might find it downright boring—or even intimidating.

I've been known to zone out when people try to explain football rules and lingo to me. My eyes glaze over. My ears hear a voice but no real words. Everything grows dim. The same may be true for you and the subject of grammar.

I'd like to make some concepts as easy as possible to understand.

You've just learned quite a bit about proofreading skills, some of which you've already been applying to your essays. This chapter highlights some common mistakes in punctuation and homophones (words that sound the same but are spelled differently). Knowing how to avoid these mistakes will set you apart from the average writer.

### Commas and Compound Sentences

Commas are beastly things. Let's tame them.

A compound sentence is made of two independent clauses. An *independent clause* has a subject and a verb (or subject and predicate) and can stand alone as a complete sentence. Comma mistakes in compound sentences are rampant.

The infographic on the next page is your tutorial and shows you what **compound sentences** are, what **coordinating conjunctions** are, and where the comma goes in a sentence of this sort. It also explains the exceptions. Imagine it in color. It's really lovely in color. Before we go any further, here are some important terms and examples.

An **independent clause**:

Jesse hates to do homework.

A **dependent clause**, one that cannot stand alone (This one is missing a subject):

Which is not good.

A **compound verb**, often confused with a compound sentence:

Olivia bakes cupcakes and takes them to youth group every week.



You cannot make a complete sentence out of the second half of the sentence: “takes them to youth group every week.” Therefore, it is *not* two independent clauses joined together to make a compound sentence. It is a sentence with a coordinating conjunction (*and*) that joins two verbs (*bakes* and *takes*).

A **compound sentence** with a **coordinating conjunction** (*and*). Note the comma before the coordinating conjunction:

Olivia bakes cupcakes, and she takes them to youth group every week.

A sentence with a **subordinating conjunction** (in this case, *because*)—which does not get a comma:

Olivia bakes cupcakes because she takes them to youth group every week.




## How to use Commas with Compound Sentences and Coordinating Conjunctions!

Hmm. Comma . . . or no comma? Ask yourself these key questions:

**1. Is there a coordinating conjunction?**

Here are your coordinating conjunctions:

**But  
Or  
Yet  
For  
And  
Nor  
So \***



**2. Is the coordinating conjunction connecting two independent clauses?**

Jason looked in the mirror but could not see himself.  
 → NO! The words "could not see himself" are not an independent clause. They can't stand alone. The coordinating conjunction is connecting two actions (verbs): "looked" and "could not see."

Jason looked in the mirror but he could not see himself.  
 → YES! "Jason looked in the mirror" is an independent clause. So is "he could not see himself." The coordinating conjunction "but" is connecting two independent clauses.

**3. Are the answers to #s 1 and 2 "yes"?**

Then insert a comma BEFORE the coordinating conjunction.

Jason looked in the mirror , but he could not see himself.

↑ Independent Clause    ↑ Comma BEFORE Coordinating Conjunction    ↑ Independent Clause

**4. Exception: Can you silently say "so that" instead of "so"?**


If you can, then "so" is not a coordinating conjunction. No comma is needed.

Jason looked in the mirror so he could enjoy the view.

↑ Silent "that."

→ Another pesky exception: If the two independent clauses are short and parallel in construction, no comma is needed. Example: The rain fell and the wind blew.

→ Yet another exception: If the two independent clauses are imperatives and closely related, no comma is needed. Example: Buckle up and hold on!



\* Notice that "because" is not on this list. It is not a coordinating conjunction. Unless you absolutely need a comma for clarity, do not insert one before the word "because."


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*Practice 10.1* Feel free to download a colorful version of the infographic by going here: <http://writingwithsharonwatson.com/commas-compound-sentences-coordinating-conjunctions/> .

In numbers 1-7, write the coordinating conjunctions. In numbers 8-20, read each sentence carefully. If it is a true compound sentence with a coordinating conjunction, place the comma correctly. If it is not a compound sentence, leave the comma out.

Just so you know, an imperative sentence (subject: *You*) with two verbs does not get a comma: "Spit your gum out and throw it away."

To delete a comma, do this: 

To insert a comma, do this:  Use a colorful pen so you can see your corrections clearly.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8. I love to play the tuba and will enter the Oompah Contest next week.

9. Seymour fed the dogs but he forgot to tell his mom.

10. Doctors study ethics for they make many life-and-death decisions every day.

11. Jason doesn't know if he will write a letter of complaint to the NFL about the godaddy.com commercials or send a short e-mail.

12. He fixed a peanut butter sandwich for me so I wouldn't faint during my comma quiz.

13. The costume designer shopped all day yet did not find the right material for Anna's and Elsa's dresses.
14. Jeremy loves to read *The Three Musketeers* but he refuses to watch the movies.
15. Johnny Depp bought a private island for his family in 2004 because he wanted them to have a safe haven.
16. I quit gardening for I couldn't stand the worms and fat grubs.
17. I quit gardening because I couldn't stand the worms and fat grubs.
18. The soles on my new sneakers are flapping so I bought a new pair.
19. Write your essay this week and hand it in by Friday.
20. *Castaway* uses no music while the main character Chuck Noland is deserted on the island and I didn't even notice!



## Chapter 17: Compare and Contrast

### Lesson 3

#### *Method 2: Elements or Features*

Instead of writing about your two topics separately (WW I and WW II, for example), this method focuses on elements or features of the items being compared.

##### Method 2

**Section 1:** Introduction

**Section 2:** Element 1

**Section 3:** Element 2

**Section 4:** Element 3

**Section 5:** Conclusions

##### Example

**Section 1:** Introduction

**Section 2:** What the wars were about

**Section 3:** Where the wars were fought

**Section 4:** What ended the wars

**Section 5:** Conclusions

Elements? Features? What are those? Those are aspects shared by the two topics. If, for example, you were considering which gym shoes to buy and you narrowed it down to buying the Cheetahs or the Roadrunners, you might look at these features: price, sole, composition (leather or canvas), color and/or design, brand name, the coolness factor, which celebrity endorses them, and so on.

For the war topic, you might examine these features or elements: where the wars began, how they began, what was being fought over, which countries were on what sides, the technologies that aided each side, how the wars ended, what the treaties covered, and so forth. These are some of the common elements in almost any war topic.

One student wrote an essay contrasting the differences between modern books children read today versus classic books they read years ago. Here are the elements she wrote about:

- **the characters:** average and wimpy versus brave, strong, and honest
- **the protagonists:** deceive others/no discernible change in character versus being tested for honesty, perseverance, and courage
- **the endings:** “the ends justify the means” versus inspiring readers to greatness

Each section or element begins with the new books and ends with the classics. You can see why a chart will be helpful in keeping track of everything and plotting your strategy.

You will decide whether to highlight the similarities or the differences, based on your research and the conclusions you will draw. And you will write a thesis statement that reveals the two topics you are comparing. Here’s the thesis statement for the student’s essay on books:

Children’s love of reading hasn’t changed over the years, but the books they read have.





She's made it very clear what she is comparing and contrasting.

When dealing with features, you may find your job easier if you create a chart instead of two lists. Here's a chart comparing Goliath to David:

Features	Goliath	David
Vocation	Seasoned warrior	Seasoned shepherd, part-time musician for King Saul
Previously killed	Men in battle and other national heroes	A lion and a bear
Weaponry	Bronze helmet, bronze armor weighing 125 lbs., bronze greaves, bronze javelin with a point that weighted 15 lbs., shield	5 smooth stones 1 slingshot
Support	The whole Philistine army	God King Saul, kind of
Enemies	A fearful Israel army	Philistine army His brothers—harassed and belittled him, attributed negative motives to him
Age	Adult	Teen
Size	Giant—over nine feet tall	Teen-sized boy
Motivation	Glory of Philistia Personal glory and plunder Giant-sized ego to uphold	To prove there is a God in Israel To defend God's name

A chart will help you think of ideas and will also help you organize your material.

### *Practice 17.3*

Japan and Jamaica Kingdom are island countries and, because of this, will have elements to compare and contrast. On a separate piece of paper, create a chart and brainstorm some of the elements, features, or aspects of these island nations that a student could write about in a compare-and-contrast paper.

You are not going to write about these two; you are just brainstorming ideas. You also do not have to fill in the complete chart. Simply create the chart and come up with ideas for the “features” column.

## Chapter 18: Literary Analysis

### Lesson 1

Reading a book for pleasure is one type of experience, but reading an assigned story for literature class is an entirely different animal. For school, students analyze what they read in order to make discoveries or draw conclusions, and analyzing is an important tool for students who are training themselves to think.

In elementary school and junior high, you wrote a book report; in high school, you write a literary analysis (plural: *analyses*).

### Take It Apart

**Analyze** simply means to take something apart to get a better look at it. In chemistry, when you analyze a molecule, you take apart all the elements—all the parts—and look at each one separately. When you talk about a car, you analyze its parts—the size of the engine, the design of the body, how low or high it sits, the suspension, the ride, the tires, the paint job, the quality of the interior, the audio equipment, and other features. The same is true when you analyze a poem, short story, play, or novel.

Of course, you don't take it apart just to see it strewn across your desk. You determine how it works, just like the kid who takes apart the vacuum cleaner to see what makes it go.

Here are some example assignments literature teachers may give:

- How does Jack's rise to power in *Lord of the Flies* compare with Macbeth's rise to power?
- Trace Bilbo's development in *The Hobbit*. In your opinion, what is his greatest change? How does it come about?
- What are Lord Henry Wotton's views on women in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*? How does the author make these views known? What is their effect on Dorian Gray?
- What is the historical significance of *Tom Sawyer*? How was it viewed when it first was published? How has it changed the way we look at novels?
- What are the symbols in *Cry, the Beloved Country*? How do they contribute to the theme and the mood?
- Explain Julian's character in "Everything that Rises Must Converge." How does the author communicate this? How does Julian differ from his mother?

Fear not. A literary analysis is simply an expository essay in which you support your view. You will write an introduction, a thesis statement, topic sentences, a variety of paragraph



types, and an insightful conclusion. If it is a compare-and-contrast analysis, you will use one of the three types of compare-and-contrast models you learned in the previous chapter.

Which thesis statement below is the most appropriate for a literary analysis?

- Fahrenheit 451* is long and boring.
- Fahrenheit 451* is about firemen who burn things.
- Guy Montag learns a lot about books in *Fahrenheit 451*.
- Ray Bradbury's use of imagery in key places in *Fahrenheit 451* enhances his theme of technology versus nature.

The last thesis statement is an opinion you can prove, and it shows that you have been contemplating the book with deliberation and insight.

Along with using short quotations and examples from the story, you will also use short quotations or facts from **secondary sources** in your analysis. The story or novel is a primary source. Secondary sources include . . .

- ✓ critics' remarks,
- ✓ what the author has written about the story,
- ✓ what other authors or experts have written about the story, and
- ✓ information you find in encyclopedias, biographies, autobiographies, and online about the life and times of the author, and so on.

This chapter differs slightly from others in this course because, to prepare you to write an analysis, it's a short lesson on literature. That way, you'll know what to look for in a novel or short story.

Here's what we'll cover in the next lessons:

Setting  
Character and characterization  
Conflict  
Plot  
Point of view  
Dialogue  
Voice  
Theme and Symbols  
Digging Deeper: Motif  
Text and context  
You and your interpretation

Near the end of the chapter, you will have a chance to critique a student's literary analysis.



Select a short story or novel with which you are familiar. Write its name below and have the story or book handy so you can answer questions at the end of each section in this incredibly long and possibly even boring chapter.

*Practice 18.1*

