

Just Write: A...

by
Kathryn Robinson

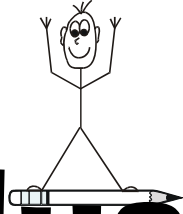
Grades 1 - 4

Paragraph



WriteMath Enterprises
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Just Write: A Paragraph

(Grades 1 - 4)

Real-world
writing
that
students
understand

Kathryn Robinson

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I dedicate this book to
Carol Finch, a dear friend and ardent supporter,
who believed in me through all adversity.

I would also like to express my thanks to
my editor and friend, Steve Robinson
who is a constant inspiration to me.

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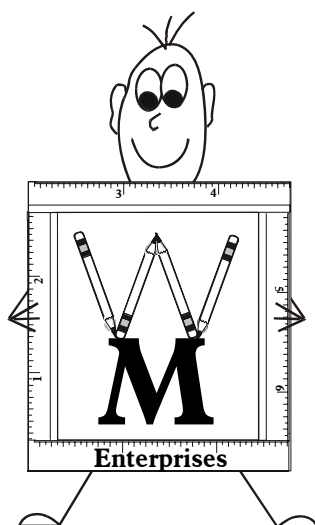
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About the Author

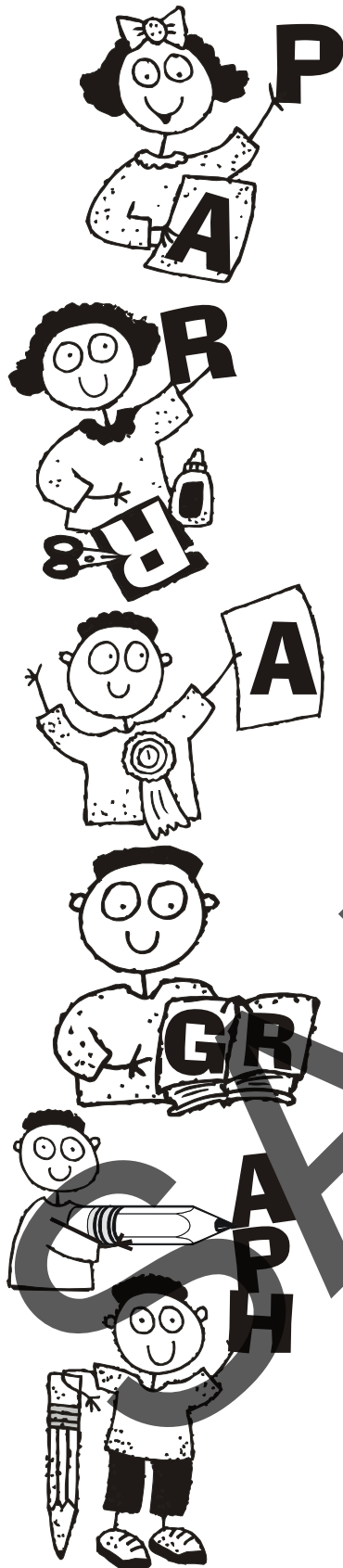
- **Kathryn Robinson** has taught elementary level school children for the last 20+ years in widely diverse cultural and challenging international settings in the United States, Germany, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Due to the paucity of Math and Language Arts materials in Bangladesh, Kathy wrote *Just Turn and Share Math Centers* and day-by-day writing lessons for use in her international classroom. Settling in the Florida Suncoast area in 1994, Kathy uses these centers and writing lessons as an adjunct activity for day-to-day classroom, textbook-based lessons. *Just Turn and Share Math Centers Series*, and *Just Write: Expository*, *Just Write: Narrative*, *Just Write: A Sentence*, *Letters to Ted E. Bear*, and *Just Write: A Paragraph* lessons continue to challenge, invigorate, and motivate her students in the classroom.

Highlights of Kathy's career

- College of St Elizabeth – BA (Elementary Education & French)
- Cameron University – MA (Special Education)
- Elementary Teacher – Germany, Oklahoma, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Florida
- *P.E.P. Writes* co-author
- PTA President, American International School
- UCF Project Central Participant
- ESOL Instructor – Hillsborough County
- FIN Multiple Intelligences Workshop Presenter
- Florida Writes Workshop Presenter
- *Just Turn & Share Math Centers Series* author
- *Just Write: Expository*; *Just Write: Narrative*; *Just Write: A Sentence*; and *Letters to Ted E. Bear* Writing Books Author



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Introduction

Omit needless words.

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.

- William Strunk, Jr.
The Elements of Style (1918)
ch.2 , sec. 13

A paragraph, then, is a group of words focused on a topic or main idea. Writing a paragraph sounds easy to adults but it is a very difficult task to a seven- to ten-year-old student. Writing a topic sentence, developing support, maintaining focus on a topic/main idea, using a variety of sentence-subjects, combining sentences to avoid repetitive information, and writing a well-written conclusion are just a few areas that this book will deal with to ensure a young writer's success.

Older students often wonder: What is the difference between a topic and a main idea? Let's discuss that aspect as we begin. When an idea is subdivided into different elaborated areas, the overall idea is considered the topic and each elaborated area is designated a main idea related to that topic. If the overall idea of the piece of writing is tightly focused and is not subdivided into separate elaborated concepts, then the overall idea is referred to as the topic.

For example:

Dogs are known as man's best friend. More so than humans, a dog will remain loyal to his master for the length of the animal's lifetime. If a master is under attack, a dog will fight to the death to protect its master. No one could have a better friend than a dog.

In the previous paragraph the topic of the paragraph is a “dog is a man’s best friend.” The entire paragraph is focused on man’s best friend. The paragraph is not subdivided into different elaborated sections that explain all the different ways a dog is helpful to man. Therefore ‘*man’s best friend*’ is usually referred to as the topic or the main idea of the paragraph – both words denoting the same concept.

My dog, Rani, is definitely my best friend. Rani helps me, comforts me, and has even tried to protect me. Every morning Rani helps me get ready for school. I can never find my socks, so I’ll yell, “Rani, go look!” and she’ll race around the house sniffing for my socks. It usually takes her about three minutes to return with a pair of my socks crumpled and soggy in her mouth. But hey, at least I have them. Rani also comforts me whenever I’m in trouble or sad. If she sees tears in my eyes, she comes up and licks them from my cheeks. Her warm body nestles up against me and I have to hug her. No matter how sad I am, I can’t help but smile at her concern. The main reason that I call Rani my best friend is that she protects me. If anyone bothers me while I am walking her, Rani bares her teeth, growls from deep in her throat, and gets ready to attack. I just have to say, “At ease, girl” and she’ll back down. No one dares to approach me when I’m with Rani. No one could be a better friend than my pet German Shepherd, Rani.

The above paragraph has several elaborated ideas under the topic idea of Rani is my best friend: helps, comforts, and protects. Each idea is elaborated and considered a separate *main idea*. This paragraph contains one topic (*my dog is my best friend*) and three main ideas that support this topic. In this case, the main ideas are not the same as the topic.

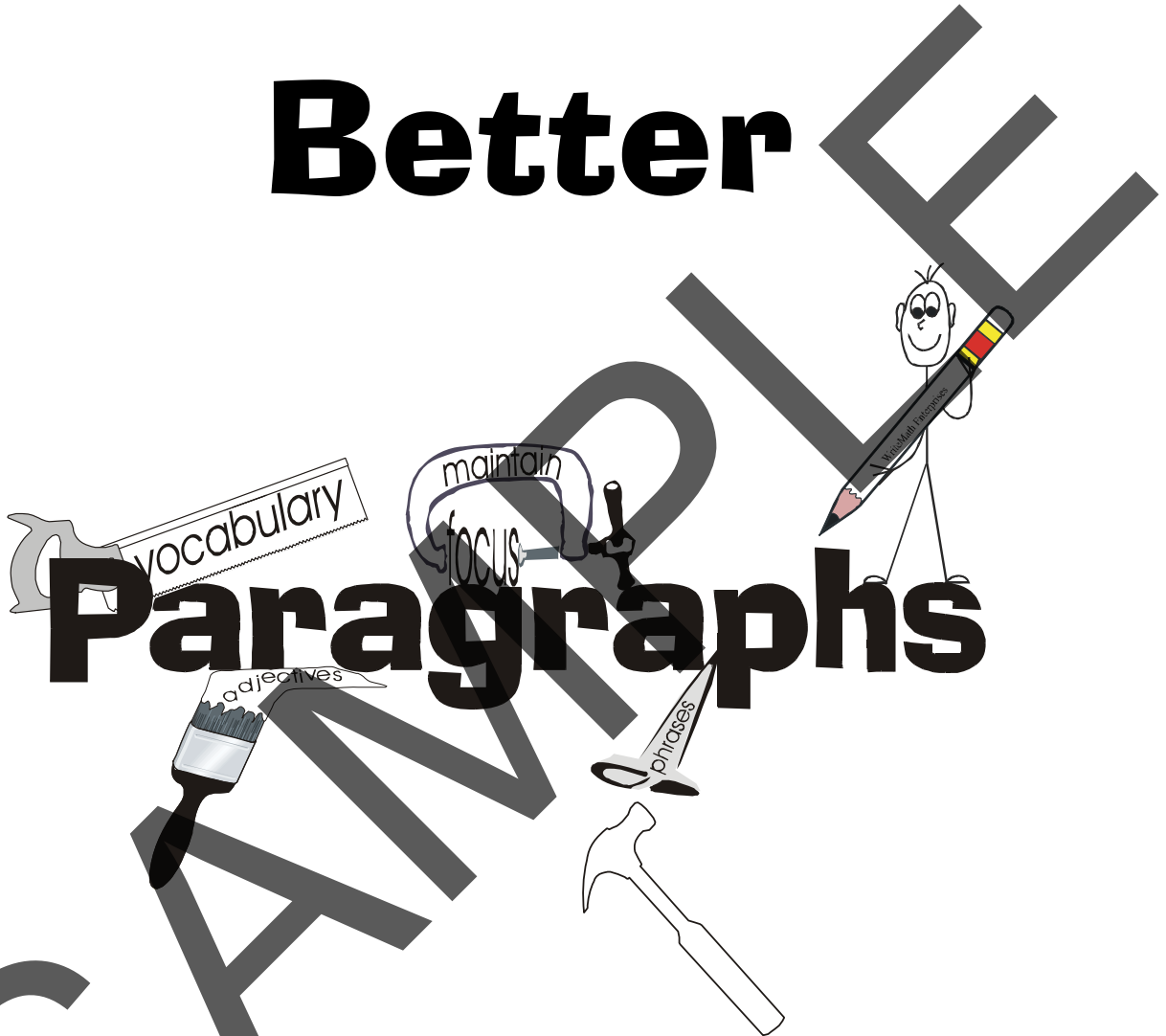
Young students must learn to keep their topic sentence focused on the topic rather than on any of the supporting details. Many students tend to allow the topic sentence to contain a main idea (e.g. *My dog, Rani, is my best friend because she helps me*). Including a main idea in the topic sentence signals the reader that the whole piece of writing will be about my dog *helping me* rather than the general concept of the dog being “my best friend”. If, however, the entire piece of writing *is* about the dog helping him, then this is an appropriate topic sentence.

Topic sentence choice is only one aspect of paragraph writing that presents difficulties for students. A well-focused, tightly-elaborated piece of writing is difficult to maintain. This book will provide you with ideas and suggestions to help students write paragraphs that are tightly focused, well-elaborated, and interesting to read.

Let's Build

Better

Paragraphs



- All of the following activities must be repeated several times before young writers are ready to move on to a new level.
- I highly recommend accompanying each repetition of an activity with an interesting and enjoyable experience about which the students will want to write.

Artistic Writing

- Objective:** To write a simple paragraph using art activities
- Comment:** Students enjoy working with art. I use art to stimulate the beginning of my paragraph instruction.
- Grades:** 1-5
- Supplies:** Play dough/pipe cleaners/clay/any moldable art medium
Half sheets of paper - 8" x 5" (approximately)
- Time Frame:** 1-3 writing lessons

Directions:

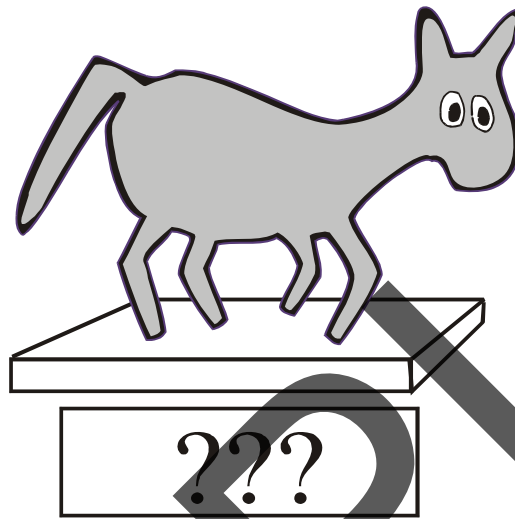
1. Students make an object out of play dough and mount it on a piece of construction paper. They should not tell anyone what they are making. (*This part of the activity can be completed before the writing lesson – such as in art class, or at a center.*)
2. Students exchange their ‘work of art’ with another student.
3. Display pictures of works of art from a museum. Discuss other names that the artist/sculptor could have named the work of art. Include the idea of ‘perspective’ – two people might have two entirely different interpretations of the same concept.



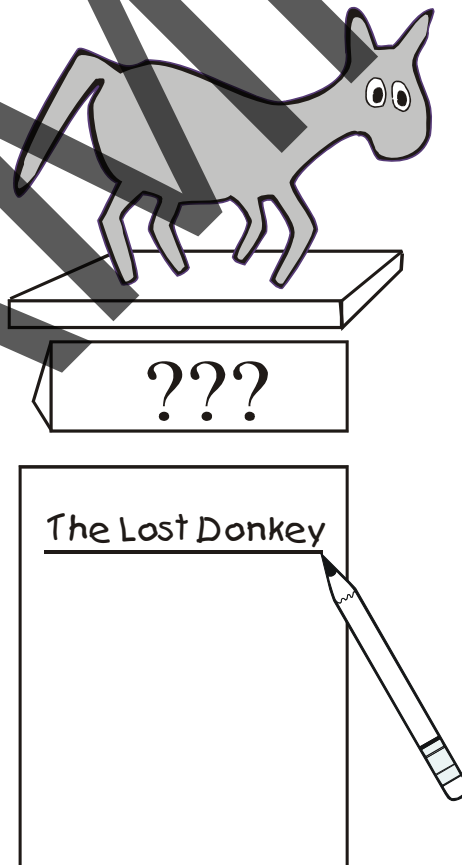
THE THINKER

by Rodin

4. Point out the title attached to Rodin's artwork (*The Thinker*).
5. Distribute a half sheet of paper to each student.
6. Indicate to students that they are now going to label the work of art in front of them.

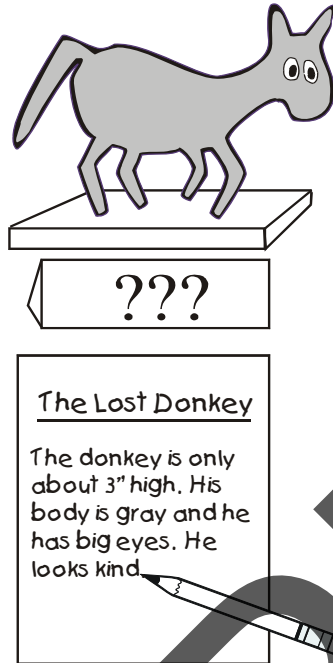


7. Ask students to create a title for the work of art at the top of the paper.



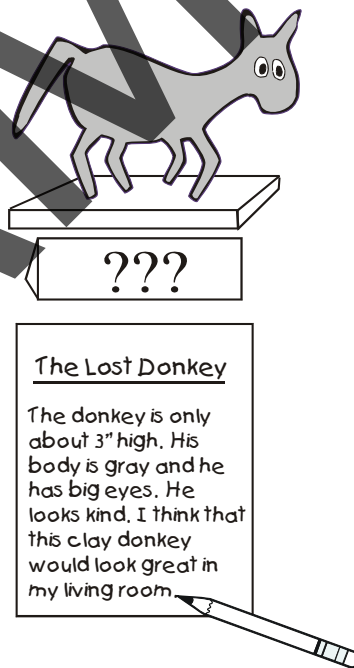
8. Students share titles.

9. During the next writing lesson, teacher models writing two to three sentences describing the artwork.



10. Students share writing.

11. During the next writing lesson, students will conclude their writing with an "I think" Conclusion (See page 53).



12. Students share writing. They have written a simple paragraph. The title can easily be transformed into a simple statement to create a topic sentence.

Building Details with Pictures

- Objective:** To use pictures as detail-builders
- Comment:** Young writers have difficulty creating details that support a main idea. The use of pictures helps them understand the detail aspect of the writing.
- Grades:** K-3
- Supplies:** page 9 or 10
magazine pictures
glue
paper
- Time Frame:** 4 writing lessons




Directions:

Day #1

1. Teacher discusses the idea of a topic or a main idea. Looking at the large picture in the top box, class decides on the topic/main idea for all of the pictures. (e.g. *camping*)
2. Students create a sentence about the large picture.

Kindergarten: Students tell a sentence about the large picture. (e.g. *"I love camping."*)

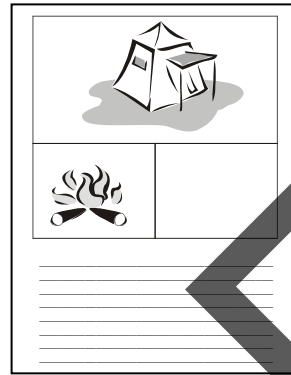
First Grade and up : Students write a sentence about the large picture. (e.g. *My family and I enjoy camping at Wild Adventure State Park.*)

	
	
<p>My family and I enjoy camping at Wild Adventure State Park.</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

3. Students share sentences.

Day #2:

1. Students discuss the picture in the first small box in relation to the larger picture. (e.g. *cooking marshmallow while camping.*)



2. Students create a sentence about the picture.

Kindergarten: Students tell a sentence..

(e.g. *“I love to cook marshmallows when we go camping.”*)

First Grade: Students write a sentence about the first small picture.

(e.g. *After dinner , we roast marshmallows.*)



Second Grade and up: Students write a sentence about the first small picture.

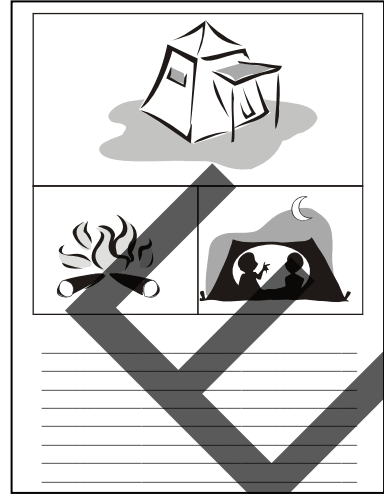
Then they add two to three more sentences about this idea.

(e.g. *After dinner , we cook marshmallows. My brother and I search for long sticks to roast marshmallows. Then we hold them over the hot fire until they are cooked. My brother likes them black, but I only cook them until they are light brown and still gooey on the inside.*)

3. Students share sentences.

Day #3:

1. Students discuss the picture in the second small box in relation to the larger picture. (e.g. *telling stories at night while camping.*)



2. Students create a sentence about the picture.

Kindergarten: Students tell a sentence.
(e.g. *“We tell scary stories at night.”*)

First Grade: Students write a sentence about the second small picture.
(e.g. *Late at night, my brother and I tell each other very scary stories.*)



Second Grade and up: Students write a sentence about the second small picture. Then they add two to three sentences about this concept.
(e.g. *Late at night, my brother and I tell each other scary stories. We tell stories about ghosts, monsters, and wild animals. One time my brother told me a story about a wolf in the forest. It sounded so real that I screamed because I thought I heard it out in the bushes.*)

3. Students share sentences.

Day #4:

1. Students write a concluding sentence about the topic/main idea. (See page 53)

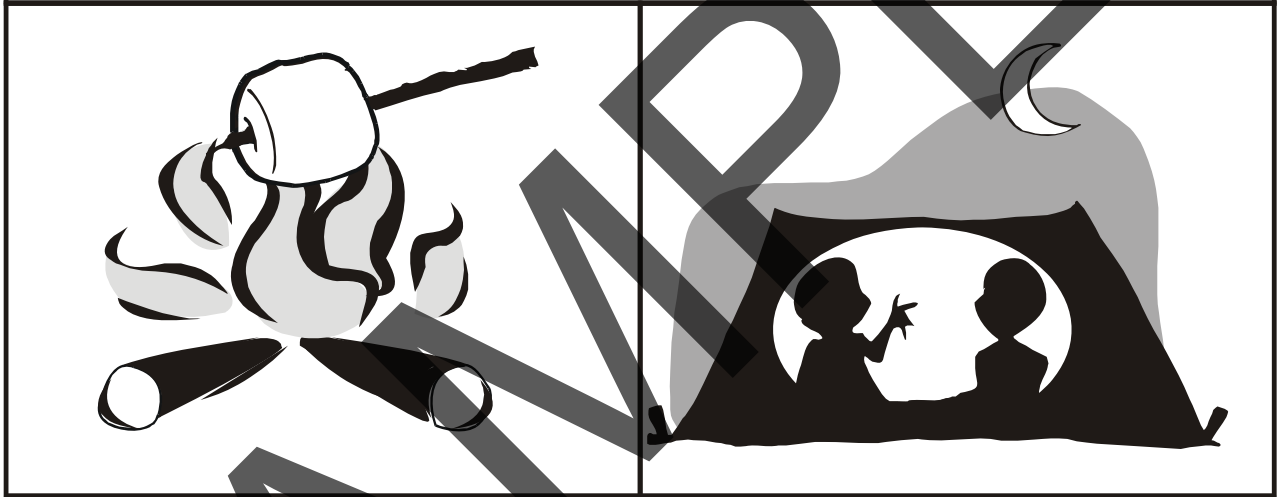
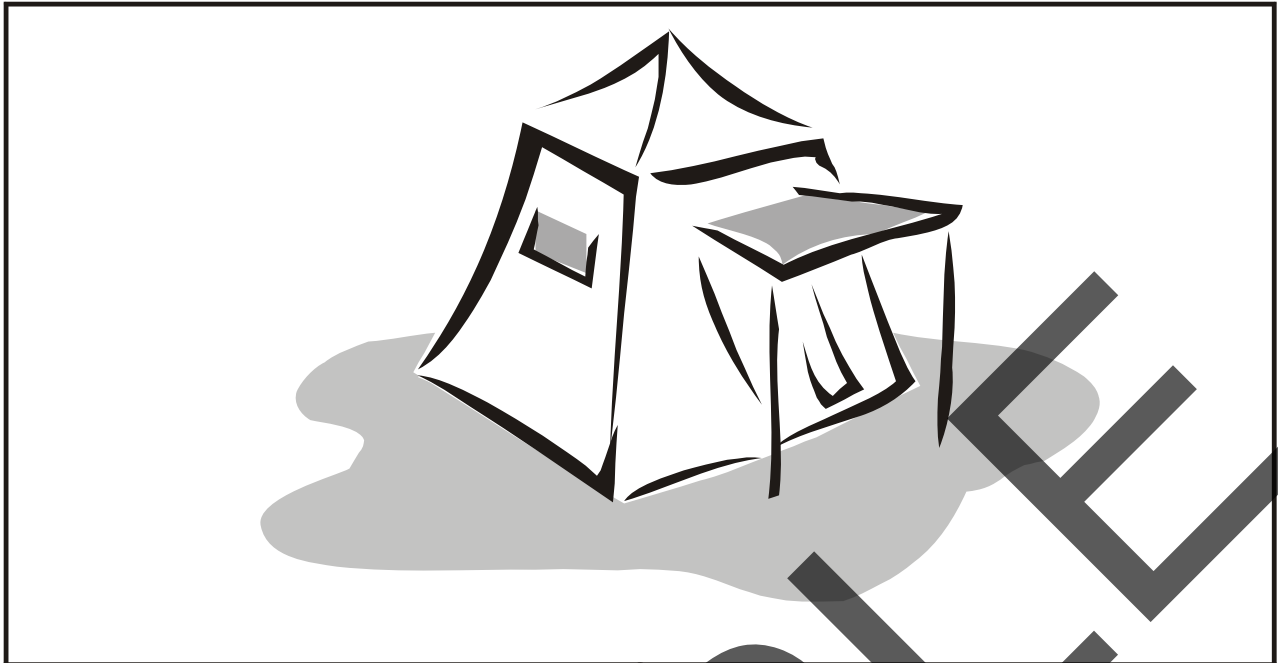
Kindergarten: optional

First grade and up: e.g. Students might conclude with a suggestion
(See page 53) *Camping is a great thing to do if you want to have a good time.*

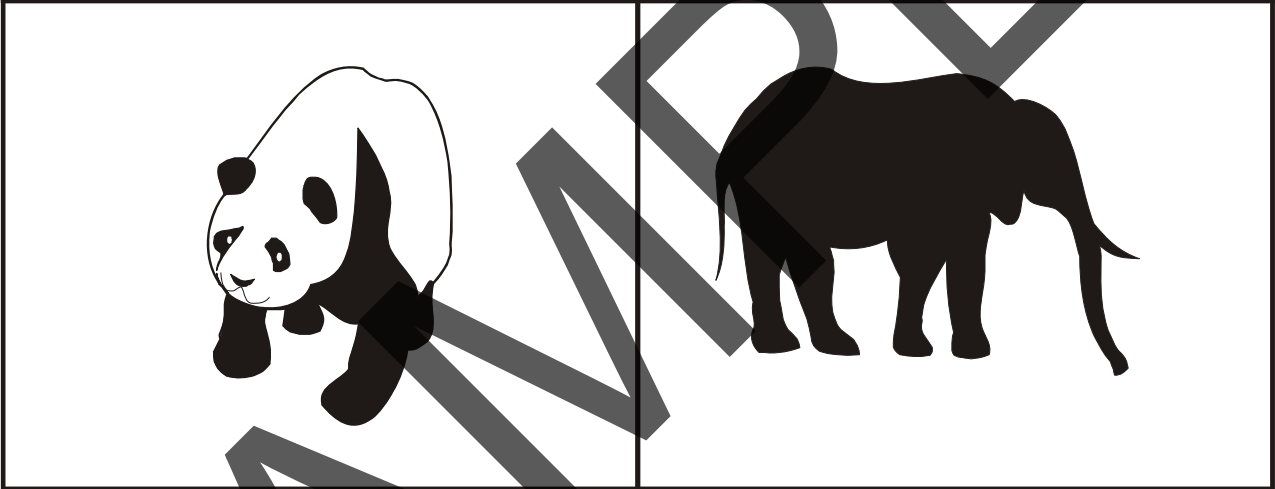
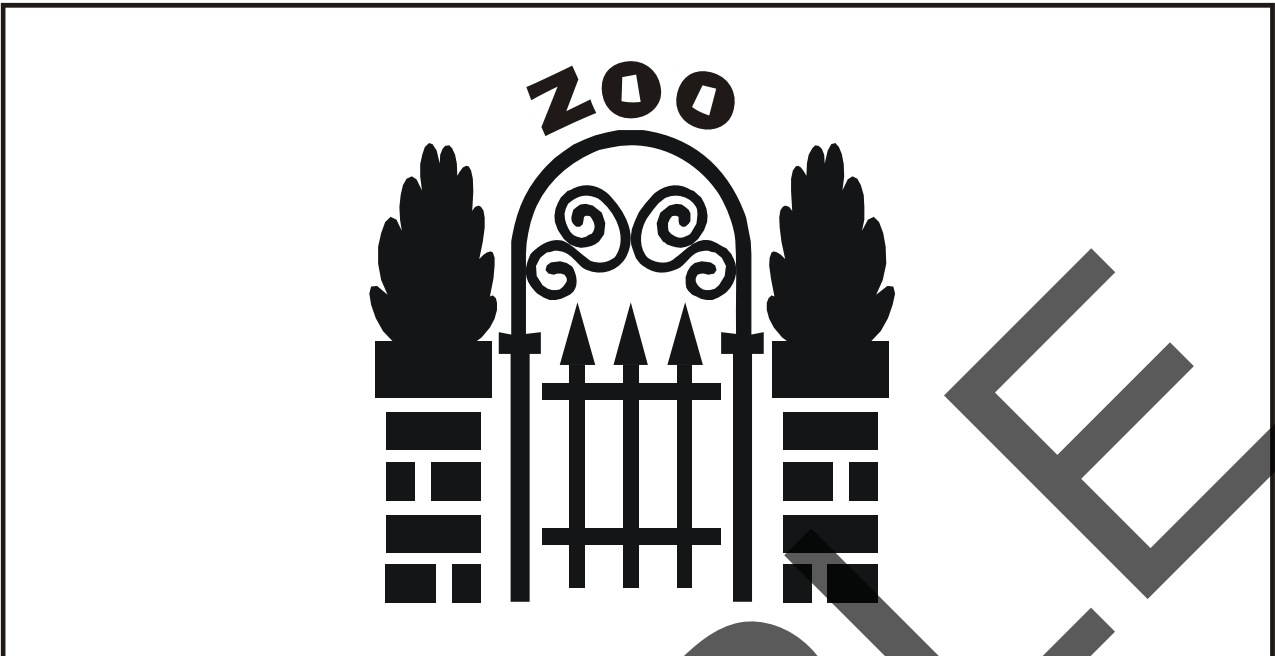


My family and I enjoy camping at Wild
Adventure State Park. After dinner, we
roast marshmallows. Late at night, my
brother and I tell each other very scary
stories. Camping is a great thing to do if
you want to have a good time.

2. Writers share their writing.



SAMPLE



Handwriting practice lines consisting of seven horizontal lines.

Picture Those Details

Objective: To use pictures as detail-builders

Comment: Young writers have difficulty creating details that support a main idea. Developing main ideas and support through the use of pictures helps them understand the elaboration aspect of writing. Activity should be spread over several days. Too many components during one writing period promote stress and frustration.

Grades: 1-3

Supplies: magazine pictures
glue
paper
page 15

Time Frame: 1-3 writing lessons

Directions:

1. Students choose an interesting picture or draw one. Writers then glue it in the large box on page 15.



2. Students write a sentence about the large picture.
(e.g. *Every summer we go to Cocoa Beach.*)



- Using newspapers, magazine, or pictures from advertisements, students glue another picture that supports some aspect of the larger picture in the smaller box.



- First Graders** add a sentence about the new pictures in relation to the larger picture. (e.g. *Whenever we go there, I bury my dad in warm sand.*)

Second Graders and older students add two to three more sentences about the smaller picture. (e.g. *Whenever we go there, I bury my dad in warm sand. Sometimes I bury him so deep that all anyone can see is his head. He always laughs and says, "Boy, you wait until I get out of here! You'll be next!" Then I run away and leave him there.*)

- Students find and glue another picture portraying a different aspect of the larger picture into the second smaller box.



6. **First Graders** write a sentence about the second picture in relation to the larger picture. (e.g. *Sometimes my dad and I even build sand castles.*)

Second Graders and older students add two to three more sentences about the smaller picture. (e.g. *Sometimes my dad and I even build sand castles. We build towers and moats. Then we scoop up the ocean water with our buckets and fill the moats with water. We play for hours with our toy boats and soldiers until the waves wash the castle away.*)



Every summer we go to Cocoa Beach. Whenever we go there, I bury my dad in the warm sand. Sometimes my dad and I even build sand castles.

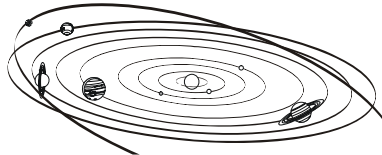


7. Writers end with a concluding sentence (See page 53). For example, they could end with a feeling or an opinion/thought: **I think that Cocoa Beach is the greatest place on Earth.**






Every summer we go to Cocoa Beach. Whenever we go there, I bury my dad in the warm sand. Sometimes my dad and I even build sand castles. I think that Cocoa Beach is the greatest place on Earth.

***** Suggested Additional Activities:**


1. Glue a picture in the large box on page 15 (*Topic/Main Idea*). Then glue two related pictures into the two smaller boxes. Repeat *Picture Those Details* Activity.

	
	
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2. Glue a topic picture in the large box. Then write two related words into the smaller boxes. Repeat *Picture Those Details* Activity.

<p>Planets</p> 	
Saturn	Mars
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

<p>fishing</p> 	
boat	bass
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	

SAMPLE

Brainstorming for Writing Ideas

Objective: To brainstorm a topic

Comment: Brainstorming is a method of collecting as many ideas as possible based on a topic. Students should not attempt categorizing or limiting their ideas until they have written them all down on paper. Brainstorming is the key to detailed writing and should occur daily or as needed or required - but not less than weekly.

Grades: 1-5

Supplies: Brainstorming Overhead (*See page 17*)
Vis-à-vis

Object such as a dinosaur bone, or a plastic dinosaur (or other topic choice)

Time Frame: 1 writing lesson

Directions:

1. Teacher tells the students that they are going to write about dinosaurs (or some other topic). He/she passes the dinosaur around the class.
2. Teacher asks students to close their eyes and think about pictures, movies, or books of dinosaurs that they have seen or read.
3. After a couple of minutes, students open their eyes and suggest ideas related to dinosaurs. Students learn to write down anything that comes to their mind in a brainstorming session.

Brainstorming



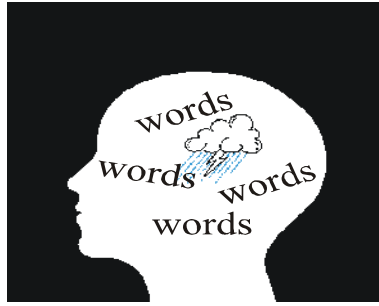
Topic
dinosaurs

Brainstorming...

long neck	Dino
omnivores	Barney
herbivores	long ago
carnivores	extinct
giant	etc.
flying	
before man	
Tyrannosaurus Rex	
Brontosaurus	
Pterydactyl	

4. Repeat activity as many times as possible per week on a variety of subjects.

Brainstorming



Topic

Brainstorming...

SAMPLE