



Before Papers Come Paragraphs

Introductory Unit: Page One—The Very Beginning

Lesson 2: Elbow Grease and Black Berets—The Dual

Nature of Writing / Parent Guide

The Denim *Beret*
Writing Program

Notes on Lesson 2

Every writing program is organized with care, generally so that lessons are presented in a logical, orderly manner. *The Denim Beret Writing Program* is organized to present concepts and skills from the inside-out. To orient and prepare students for this deep dive, though, I want them to first grasp the big picture, so that the details of writing make more sense. This means that before your student will learn anything about *how* to write well, they will first understand *what* “writing” is and *why* they need to study it. That is what this introductory unit is all about, and it is for all students at all levels.

In lesson 2 your student will learn about the two natures of writing. In other words, writing has two identities that must function together to result in “excellence.” These natures are “craft” and “art.” The craft of writing has to do with techniques, conventions, and rules that writers need to know, such as paragraph structure and grammar. The art of writing has to do with originality, creativity, style, and other abstract qualities that help make an essay or story appealing and memorable to readers. My goal in this program is to provide students with the tools and insights they need to work within both natures for any writing project they undertake.

Evaluation Guide

WARM-UP

From lesson 2 through unit 3, warm-up exercises are a required part of every lesson. Such exercises, often called “journaling” in the writing community, are a common part of writing classes, and many serious writers journal regularly in their notebooks. The purpose varies from writer to writer, but in this program these exercises have several purposes:

1. to help students nurture their natural voice and keep it supple;
2. to promote enjoyment by providing students with opportunities to relax and write without fear of criticism or “doing things wrong”;
3. and to begin building a collection of musings from which future essay ideas might be drawn.

It's important to hold your student accountable for the warm-up exercises, but accountability is *all* you're after. These exercises should never be formally critiqued, though they can be gently discussed. Check to make sure that your student's warm-up meets the following criteria:

- continuous writing for a minimum of 10 minutes
- prompt was followed
- completion of approximately a half page (consider size of handwriting when judging this)
- evidence of effort

If you are comfortable, you might consider allowing him (or her) to write “private” at the top of any entry that he doesn't want you to read. Knowing his ideas won't be read and quietly judged can help your student write more freely. For these entries you can simply glance at the page to make sure it's complete. You can also ask your student to tell you what it's about or to read a few sentences that seem “safe” to share.

To record the completion grade, I suggest that you write “C” at the top of the paper. At the end of the unit, record an overall warm-up grade on the student's lesson planner. This can also be simply “C” for “complete,” or you can assign another kind of grade.

GRAMMAR MINI-LESSON

In this lesson students continue gaining a birds-eye view of the “sentence” by learning the four types found in English. These are declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, and imperative. Sometimes sentences can be two types at once. Below you will find the answer key to the worksheet exercises. If your student struggles with them, please do not continue progressing in grammar until he or she has grasped the four types. Instead, invent more sentences to identify and discuss together. You will also find more practice worksheets and explanations on the internet.

A. Label each sentence below with the letter that corresponds to the correct sentence type.

Sentence types: a. declarative b. interrogative c. exclamatory d. imperative
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1. D Please make some sugar cookies for Santa.
2. B Will you frost and sprinkle the cookies?
3. C These cookies are the best I've ever had!
4. D Drop the cookie, Rover!
5. B Why don't you come and sit by the fire?
6. D Don't tell anyone that I added salt instead of sugar to that last batch of cookies.
7. A There is nothing like eating sugar cookies and drinking hot chocolate in front of a fire on a snowy evening.
8. A Maybe tomorrow we can take a sleigh ride.
9. C Oh no, the cookies are burning up!
10. D Don't forget to leave Santa a glass of milk along with the cookies.

11. Bonus!! B Grab that blanket for me, will you? *At first glance this looks like a command and therefore an imperative sentence. However, normal English syntax orders the sentence this way: "Will you grab that blanket for me?" This normal syntax identifies it as an interrogative sentence. If your student is ready for a little challenge, this may be a good time to introduce the concept of syntax and how English can often function grammatically with variations on its normal subject-verb pattern. Consider examining the sentences above with your student and discussing which ones could be expressed grammatically using the same words but with a different syntax. You might also want to discuss which variations are grammatical but awkward--and why.*

B. Write an original example of each of the four sentence types:

1. declarative: Answers will vary.

2. interrogative: Answers will vary.

3. exclamatory: Answers will vary.

4. imperative: Answers will vary.

LESSON ASSIGNMENT

Lesson 2 is unusual in *The Denim Beret Writing Program* because it is one of the few lessons that has no lesson assignment; instead, your student will take an open-book quiz on both it and lesson 3. When your student has finished both the lesson 2 warm-up and lesson reading, it is time for lesson 3!