



Before Papers Come Paragraphs

Introductory Unit: Page One—The Very Beginning Lesson 3: Why Writing Well Matters (In the Real World) / Parent Guide

The Denim *Beret*
Writing Program

Notes on Lesson 3

I have always found it rather sad that many students spend years studying a subject without understanding its value for their lives. Writing is such a basic and useful skill to have—one of the “3 R’s,” in fact—that I feel I would be doing my students a profound disservice by taking them farther in their studies without first helping them understand why they should bother. Simply telling them “you need to know how to write” isn’t enough. I want them to take ownership of this subject, because they will pour so much of themselves into their efforts to become excellent writers. To compel them to do that, they need to have reasons to care.

You may want to read this lesson with your student and discuss it as you go. Even if you don’t, though, be aware that this lesson is unusual in that it has an exercise *within* the lesson this time. This should be completed when directed, not after your student finishes the entire lesson. The exercise is a two-paragraph essay about your student’s views on writing. It should be completed in the “Writing Exercises” section of your student’s notebook.

Please do not grade this essay; instead, just make sure that your student followed the directions and completed it. The essay is just an exercise meant to get your student thinking. You’ll want to note that it is completed *before* your student continues with the lesson, and you may want to discuss it as well. The essay should contain the following parts:

Paragraph 1: reflection on student’s feelings about writing (6-sentence minimum)

Paragraph 2: thoughts on the value of learning how to write well (6-sentence minimum)

Evaluation Guide

WARM-UP

In the lesson 2 parent guide, I explained writing warm-ups in detail—what they are and how to evaluate and score them. Please refer to that if you missed it. Briefly, check your student's warm-up for the following criteria only:

- 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

Record a completion grade on the page when you are satisfied with your student's work.

GRAMMAR MINI-LESSON

This lesson studies the "sentence" from a different angle. In lesson 1 students learn that a proper sentence is a complete thought. Incomplete thoughts may be used in speech and casual writing sometimes but are technically not sentences". They are called "fragments". In this lesson students learn that for a sentence to be correctly written, it must also be separated from other sentences in specific ways. All sentences must begin with a capital letter and end with a period, question mark, or exclamation mark. If they are combined with other sentences, they must be correctly joined with a conjunction + comma or with a semi-colon. Your student will learn about these options another time. For now it is enough to know that if a sentence, or complete thought, is joined to other sentences without the proper capital letters and punctuation, the result is one of two errors: a run-on or a comma splice. Because these errors are common in student writing, I encourage you to remind your student to watch out for them.

Here are the answers to the practice exercises:

- A. Read each sentence and label it either "run-on" or "comma splice". Then delete or add what is necessary to create two separate sentences. Remember, this will be a capital letter, an end mark, and/or a comma.

1. run-on_____ For my birthday I want a trip to Disney World my favorite part is Tomorrowland. *For my birthday I want a trip to Disney World. My favorite part is Tomorrowland.*
2. comma splice_____ Mickey Mouse is one of Walt Disney's oldest characters, Donald Duck is just as popular, though. *Mickey Mouse is one of Walt Disney's oldest characters. Donald Duck is just as popular, though.*

3. comma splice The roller coaster made me dizzy, well, the spinning tea cups were actually worse. ~~The roller coaster made me dizzy. Well, the spinning tea cups were actually worse.~~

4. comma splice After we visit Main Street, let's have lunch, can we have pizza? ~~After we visit Main Street, let's have lunch. Can we have pizza?~~

5. run-on The ride "It's a Small World" isn't an exciting ride, but I loved it anyway it just made me happy. ~~The ride "It's a Small World" isn't an exciting ride, but I loved it anyway. It just made me happy.~~

B. In the corresponding blanks below, write one run-on sentence and one comma splice sentence on the subject of "Disney World" or another theme park. Then write each of your sentences correctly.

Answers will vary for this exercise. Run-ons should contain at least two sentences that have no punctuation separating them. Comma splices should contain at least two sentences that are joined by commas only (no conjunctions). All "correct" sentences should be properly separated and punctuated.

Run-on: _____

Corrected Run-on: _____

Comma splice: _____

Corrected Comma splice: _____

LESSON ASSIGNMENT

This assignment is an open-book quiz on lessons 2 and 3. Your student may need to review lesson 2 before beginning the quiz.

Directions: Answer the questions in the spaces provided. Please use dark blue, green, or purple for your answers. Write in complete sentences, and add lines as needed. This is an open-book quiz, but first see what you remember by answering as many questions as you can without help.

1. What does the following quote mean: "The pen is mightier than the sword?" Give an example of how this can be true.

Those who can write well can change our world in ways the sword never can. While the sword can force change by placing the strong in positions of authority over the weak, the pen can move hearts and change minds.

2. What are the two natures of writing? Identify and explain both.

a. craft

b. art

3. What is the ultimate purpose of writing lessons, according to lesson 2?

To contribute something meaningful to the world.

4. What are the two kinds of art mentioned in lesson 3? (HINT: they are not specific arts, such as painting or music)

a. practical (i.e., business letters, academic papers, emails, personal letters, presentations)

b. fine (i.e., stories, poetry, novels, essays, memoirs)

5. Name three ways in which knowing how to write well can be valuable.

Possible answers might include the following...

- Allows for confident communication for any purpose..
- Clean writing increases personal credibility.
- Removes dependence on others when polished writing is important.
- Needed for many jobs and careers.
- Aids in daily communication, such as emails.
- May be required for educational programs, such as higher degrees and career training
- Deep understanding makes reading a richer experience.
- Can be fun, meaningful, and satisfying.
- Never a waste of time.

a.

b.

c.