

Introduction and Pretest

Your students should be familiar with the proofreading and technology skills in the advanced level of the Writer's Guide before beginning this unit.

Introduction

Introduce the students to the unit with an explanation like the following: *We're going to learn to be authors who can write many different kinds of passages. Sometimes authors work with other authors to produce one piece of writing. Authors who write together work in a cooperative group. Their writing is often improved by sharing ideas or discussing the work of other authors. Sometimes we'll work cooperatively to write a class passage. When we write a cooperative passage, I'll write the ideas and the passage on chart paper or on a transparency for the whole class. Everyone will contribute ideas.*

Sometimes authors work alone. After we practice together, you'll produce a piece of writing of your own.

Beginning Writing Sample

PREPARATION Write the following prompt on the board or on a transparency: Write a passage of three hundred to five hundred words that compares and contrasts the planets Neptune and Venus. First write an introductory paragraph. Next write one paragraph describing Neptune and one paragraph describing Venus. Then write one paragraph telling about their similarities and another paragraph telling about their differences. Finally write a concluding paragraph.

Each student will need a copy of page 5, lined paper, and a folder to use as a writing portfolio in which to keep writing assignments.

In this unit, you'll learn about expository writing. Expository writing informs or explains. Expository writing is about facts. It is nonfiction. There are many ways to write expository passages. Some expository passages compare and contrast ideas or topics; others state cause and effect. Expository writing can also be a summary of a topic, or it can be a set of instructions.

Explain to the students that before they learn more about expository writing, you'd like a sample of their writing. Tell them you'll save this sample so you and they can see how their writing improves as they learn more about expository writing.

Read the prompt aloud. *A writing prompt may have words or instructions you don't fully understand. Are there any words or instructions in this prompt you don't fully understand?*

Explain the meaning of any words or instructions the students ask about.

How many paragraphs must you write? Idea: Six. What are they? Ideas: An introductory paragraph, a paragraph that describes Neptune, a paragraph that describes Venus, a paragraph that tells how the planets are the same, a paragraph that tells how the planets are different, and a concluding paragraph.

Give each student a copy of page 5. Tell the students to pay close attention to details about Venus and Neptune that are the same and details that are different. Read aloud the facts about Neptune and Venus.

Reread the prompt. Tell the students they may include other details about the planets from their own knowledge or from research they've done. Ask them to edit, proofread, and write a final copy of the passage that compares and contrasts the two planets. Evaluate the students' writing using the rubric on page 6. Keep the writing sample and the scoring rubric for comparison at the end of the unit.

Fact Sheet

Facts about Neptune	Facts about Venus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • eighth planet from the sun • diameter about 30,800 miles • fourth-largest planet • Length of a day on Neptune is 16.1 hours. • gravity similar to Earth's • has four rings and thirteen moons • Winds are the strongest of any planet. • Winds blow up to twelve hundred miles an hour. • radiates twice as much energy as it receives from the sun • discovered in 1846 • first planet to be discovered by scientific equation rather than by observation • named after the Roman god of the sea • Average temperature is -409°F. • Only one spacecraft has traveled near Neptune—<i>Voyager 2</i> in August 1989. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – discovered new satellites around Neptune – discovered that what were thought to be arcs were complete rings with bright spots 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • second planet from the sun • diameter about 7,500 miles • sixth-largest planet • slightly smaller than Earth • considered Earth's sister planet • One day on Venus equals 243 Earth days. • gravity similar to Earth's • has no rings, moons, or satellites • spins backward on its axis • can sometimes be seen by the naked eye at dawn and dusk • brightest object in the sky except for the sun and the moon • named after the Roman goddess of love and beauty • Average temperature is almost 900°F. • hottest planet • surrounded by clouds of poisonous sulfuric acid

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RUBRIC**Pretest****Posttest****Scoring the Samples**

Give the student a score of 0 if there is no evidence of the element.

Give the student a score of 1 for each element at the emergent or minimum level.

Give the student a score of 3 for each element at a satisfactory level.

Give the student a score of 5 for each element at the mastery level.

Evaluating the Elements of a Piece of Expository Writing

	The author of this passage that compares and contrasts . . .	Points Earned
O R G A N I Z A T I O N	Organizes information on a Venn diagram.	
	Writes an introductory paragraph.	
	Develops related paragraphs to form a middle.	
	Writes a concluding paragraph.	
	Organizes and presents information in a logical manner.	
C O N T E N T	States the purpose in the introductory paragraph.	
	Writes two paragraphs describing the features of the subjects.	
	Writes a paragraph describing the subjects' similarities.	
	Writes a paragraph describing the subjects' differences.	
	Writes a concluding paragraph that restates the purpose.	
S T Y L E	Uses active voice.	
	Uses own words to develop ideas.	
	Develops details that reflect knowledge of the subjects.	
	Uses compound sentences.	
	Uses complex sentences.	
M E C H A N I C S	Uses coordinating and subordinating conjunctions correctly.	
	Uses conventional spelling at a developmentally appropriate level.	
	Uses conventions of capitalization.	
	Uses conventions of punctuation.	
	Employs standard English usage.	
Total Points		

If the student scores . . .

85–100 points	The student has mastered the skills and concepts taught in the advanced level of Expository Writing.
20–84 points	The student is properly placed in the advanced level of Expository Writing.
0–19 points	Administer the pretest for the intermediate level of Expository Writing.