

THE CRAFTED WORD WRITER'S TOOLBOX



UNIT ONE

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms.”

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*:

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Welcome to Unit One

Read. Write. Create. Share.
Collaborate. Assess. Reflect.



It's good to know where a road is taking you. Part of my problem as a kid your age was that I hardly ever knew why I was studying what I was studying, and I never seem to know what was coming around the bend. It was just by a stroke of luck that I had a few teachers who sensed a bit more in me than I sensed in myself, and so I was able to stumble my way through high school, college and a good part of the globe before settling down to teach English to you guys--and it's a job that is a gift from heaven

because I really like this job and because you teach me as much as I teach you (or as much as I hope I teach you).

Maybe because my head has a way of racing a million miles an hour, or maybe because I too need to edit and revise my teaching; but I have never done the same curriculum from year to year--similar, maybe, but never the same. This year I feel like we have the gift of a great classroom, the right tools and a schedule that gives us "time" to create more than I ever dreamed possible--and creating is the life-blood of learning.

All creation starts with muddy hands with which we can shape the wet clay of possibility. My muddy puddle started this summer when I looked long and hard at how I taught and why I taught and what I taught, and that is what prompted me to post by the lighthouse: Fitz English: Read. Write. Create. Share. Collaborate. Assess. Reflect.

And I want to make this happen in simple and straightforward way. It is something we have to make happen together, and it may well be a road that we have to smooth out together as well. The first road we travel is called "The Crafted Word: Unit One." It is one of five units I put together this summer with the belief that it will help you become a better writer, reader, and creator; moreover, our blogs and portfolio's and studio's will allow us to create share our work with each other and the world in amazing ways.

I have already shared this unit---or most of it at least--in class today. Section two will receive it tomorrow. I created the unit in Pages, and I do feel it would be best to work on it in Pages as well. Pages should be a free download for you in the app store on your iPads. If you download Pages today, I can share the unit with you via airdrop tomorrow.

Each unit is a series of exercises, readings, and prompts that covers the basic skills any good writer and reader needs--and then some, (I hope). Most all of your required work can be completed in the unit itself because it is basically an online textbook. I will grade and assess your work using Notability.

Every worthwhile adventure should be an odyssey from which you emerge a stronger person.

You will. I believe in you.

Portfolio Development

Why Are We Doing This?

Someone is not just looking for you; they are searching for you, and you are only one one regrettable statement or stupid posting away from your judgement, and hence your character, being questioned by an admissions committee, potential boss, or anyone else casually (or intently) searching your name on the web—and it is going to happen! The irony that the only thing worse than a questionable digital presence is no presence at all.

While there is some nobility in being off the grid, there may also be precious little else to set your particular genius and passion apart from the masses that are arrayed beside, before and behind you. A powerful and compelling digital portfolio puts your proverbial best foot forward. Your digital portfolio collated and curated over the course of years makes a powerful statement of who you are, what you value, and what you have accomplished. A digital portfolio shows that you give a damn, and that you have been giving a damn for a long time. And that is a powerful reflection of your inner character, your persistence, and your values.

Our Portfolio Development wants to guide you through the process of creating a digital portfolio that can grow and evolve over time. An effective digital portfolio reflects not only who you are, but it also captures the depth and breadth of who you aspire to be. A compelling digital portfolio combines the archiving and presenting possibilities of a website with the dynamic and engaging qualities of an active and interesting blog. And it is easier than you think to get it all started. The harder part is to keep it going and to let your portfolio morph and change and grow with the same naturalness as you morph and change and grow.

Enough talking: time to get started.

Create, Collate, and Curate

The goal during unit one is to start the process of creating the best possible portfolio—one that appeals to you and to your audience.

The first step is to “figure it out,” meaning, learn to use Weebly. It is an incredibly powerful website-building platform—one that powers millions of robust professional websites. There is no reason yours can’t be just as good!

Over time your portfolio can and should expand to include what you are most passionate about. Nurture that passion in a way that feels best and right for you.

But it’s up to you. I can only take you so far. Pay attention to the small details. Give a damn about what you are doing.

Our goals for the first unit are fairly simple:

1. **Create:** it is important to create enough posts and pages to make your site a worthwhile place to visit. A blog that is regularly updated helps to foster interest in what you are writing and creating. Make your site a more compelling and dynamic place by adding video, podcasts, music, slideshows, and images.
2. **Collate:** Organize your site so that it is visually appealing and easy to navigate.
3. **Curate:** Never be satisfied. Be sure. Be sure that what you have on your site is what you honestly feel makes your portfolio

Good luck. I already love what I am seeing so far!

Bloggging

To write well in a sustained and dynamic way, you need to live, think and act like a writer. Writers need to live wise and literate lives that values the development and practicing of sound and timeless writing skills, acquiring a broad and rich vocabulary, and the reading and study of good and enduring literature. Living a literate life needs to be a choice, not a chore; it needs to be a conscious and willing approach to do what writers need to do, and, most importantly, living a literate life should be an unending source of joy, satisfaction, and pride for as long as you live on this small orb spinning slowly wide and barely charted universe.

Many amazing writers are self-motivated, self-taught and self guided, but usually that evolves out of a lack of opportunity to learn and develop with capable and inspiring teachers and enlightened guides. I have taught myself to plumb the pipes and wire the wiring in my house, but I would never presume to call myself a plumber, much less an electrician. I took on those tasks more to save money than to develop a skill. Writing, however, is my passion, my vocation and my avocation. Some people go to the gym. I go to the empty page, and it is there where I find the unmitigated joys and rewards above and beyond an ordinary life with its ordinary days and ordinary pursuits. It is through writing that I see the sublime and occasionally touch it, and, even more occasionally, capture the essence of that sublimeness in the confines of words; and it is through writing that I hope to guide you (my students) and help you experience the rewards of living a literary life.

Writers write best about what they know best. Our blogs are designed to help you continue writing and to create an awesome and interesting online digital footprint centered around your interests and passions. I hope to guide you in creating, curating, and sustaining an enlightened web presence using personal blogs to share and showcase a range of writing pieces and multi-media content--including podcasts, trailers, and video. I can also help you create a published e-book and/ or or print book that, in addition to your blog that will serve as a compelling digital portfolio of your writing pieces, travelogues, artistic endeavors, and personal interests, so when that time comes and someone important asks you what separates you from the rest of the pack, you will have

something awesomely compelling to show them! And trust me: that time is coming soon.

Blogging is not just a class assignment; it is a shared writer's experience that is meant to be fun, engaging, and rewarding.

A Fitz Style Journal Entry

Use this rubric to help create and post engaging and compelling blog posts!

*Set the Scene & State the Theme;
Say What You Mean, & Finish It Clean!*



When writing a blog post, is important to remember that a reader is also a viewer. He or she will first “see” what is on the screen, and that first impression will either attract their attention and interest—or it may work to lose their attention and interest; hence, a bit of “your attention” to the details will go a long way towards building and maintaining an audience for your work. Plus, it gives your blog a more refined and professional look and feel—and right now, even as a young teenager, you are no less a writer than any author out there.

So act like a writer. Give a damn about how you create and share your work and people will give a damn about what you create! It is a pretty simple formula.

Below is a rubric for how to create a “Fitz Style” journal entry. I call it “Fitz Style” only because I realized that over time my journal posts began to take on a “form” that works for me. Try it and see if it works for you. You can certainly go above and beyond what this does and add video or a podcast to go along with it —and certainly more images if it is what your post needs. Ultimately, your blog is your portfolio that should reflect the best of who you are and what interests you at this point in your life presented in a way that is compelling, interesting, and worth sharing.

One of the hardest parts of writing is finding a way to make sense of what you want to say, explain, or convey to your readers--especially when facing an empty page with a half an hour to kill and an entry to write (or a timed essay or exam writing prompt). Here is a quick formula that might help you when you need to create a writing piece "on the fly." At the very least, it should guide you as you write in your blog, and at the really very least, it will reinforce that any essay needs to be at least three paragraphs long! I've always told my students (who are probably tired of hearing me recite the same things over and over again): "If you know the rules, you can break them." But you'd better be a pretty solid writer before you start creating your own rules. The bottom line is that nobody really cares about what you write; they care about how your writing affects and transforms them intellectually and emotionally as individuals.

If a reader does not sense early on that your writing piece is worth reading, they won't read it, unless they have to (like your teachers), or they are willing to (because they are your friend). Do them all a favor and follow these guidelines and everyone will be happy and rewarded. Really!

Formatting

How something “looks” is important. Never publish something without “looking” to see the finished product in your portfolio or blog.

<p style="text-align: center;">Interesting Title</p> <p>After the initial look, the title is the first thing a reader will see. The title should capture the general theme of your journal entry in an interesting and compelling way.</p>	<h2 style="color: #008080;">Embrace the Beast</h2>
<p style="text-align: center;">Relevant Quote</p> <p>A short and pithy quotes works in tandem with your title to capture the essential theme of your entry. Quotes are easy to find online—or even make one up, or steal one from your writing piece.</p>	<p><i>If you do not change direction, you may end up where you are heading.</i> ~Lao Tzu</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Eye-catching Image</p> <p>An image embedded in your post is the final touch of the formatting. A picture really does paint a thousand words and this final touch prepares your readers and entices them to read the important stuff—the actual writing piece you create.</p>	
<h2 style="color: #800000;">Opening Paragraph</h2>	<h2 style="color: #800000;">Example Text</h2>
<p style="text-align: center;">The “Hook!”</p> <p>A hook is just what it says it is—a way to hook your reader’s attention and make him or her eagerly anticipate the next sentence, and really, that is the only true hallmark of a great writer!</p>	<p>A poem is alive.</p>

Set the Scene

Use your first paragraph to lead up to your theme. If the lead in to your essay is dull and uninspired, you will lose your readers before they get to the theme. If you simply state your theme right off the bat, you will only attract the readers who are "already" interested in your topic. Your theme is the main point, idea, thought, or experience you want your writing piece to convey to your audience. (Often it is called a "Thesis Statement.")

Just when you think a poem is done and you want to say, "Sit. Stay still. Don't move, change, or be anything different than you are right now," it does just the opposite: it dashes off in a new direction. A once great line now seems as stale as cafeteria bread. That powerful theme that so caught your fancy, suddenly seems trivial and self-indulgent. Or maybe one line transforms the whole direction of the poem and you need to rip out and demolish the old guts and start a total rehab. Or maybe you just want to be done because all you are working on is some forgettable assignment with an even more forgettable due date--and I am a soft grader anyhow, especially when it comes to poetry.

State the Theme

I suggest making your theme be the last sentence of your opening paragraph because it makes sense to put it there, and so it will guide your reader in a clear and, hopefully, compelling way. In fact, constantly remind yourself to make your theme be clear, concise and memorable. Consciously or unconsciously, your readers constantly refer back to your theme as mnemonic guide for "why" you are writing your essay in the first place! Every writing piece is a journey of discovery, but do everything you possibly can to make the journey worthwhile from the start.

If you want to be a poet get rid of the useless and vacuous and expand and seize the potential of what your words can do and effect and change. If you want to be anything that is beyond the ordinary, then you have to be extraordinary.

Body Paragraphs

Example Paragraphs

Say What You Mean

Write about your theme. Use as many paragraphs as you "need." A paragraph should be as short as it can be and as long as it has to be. Make the first sentence(s) "be" what the whole paragraph is going to be about.

Try and make those sentences be clear, concise and memorable (just like your theme) and make sure everything relates closely to the theme you so clearly expressed in your first paragraph. If your paragraph does not relate to your theme, it would be like opening up the directions for a fire extinguisher and finding directions for baking chocolate chip cookies instead!

And finally, do your best to balance the size of your body paragraphs. If they are out of proportion to each other, then an astute reader will make the assumption that some of your points are way better than your other points, and so the seed of cynicism will be sown before your reader even begins the journey.

The world is full of people who love to say, "Yeah, that's good enough," but the people who are remembered by the world have always been ready for the vortex and insecurity of change when and where change was needed. They are the ones who misread Thoreau when he admonishes us to simplify our lives by eliminating the possibilities of their lives instead of the useless and vacuous parts of their own lives.

<p>Body Paragraph #2</p>	<p>Last night I watched some Russian figure skater go out on the ice in obvious pain. He skated around the ice and attempted some leaping twirl of some sort and wrenched his surgically repaired back and could not finish the competition. His pained comment afterwards, spoken in broken English, was simple: "I want the world to know I tried."</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Example Conclusion</p>
<p>Finish It Clean Conclusions should be as simple and refreshing as possible. In conversations only boring or self important people drag out the end of a conversation.</p> <p>When you are finished saying what you wanted to say, exit confidently and cleanly. DON'T add any new information into the last paragraph; DON'T retell what you've already told, and DON'T preen before the mirror of your brilliance. Just "get out of Dodge" in an interesting and thoughtful (and quick) way.</p> <p>Use three sentences or less. It shows your audience that you appreciate their intelligence and literacy by not repeating what you have already presented!</p>	<p>All you can ever do is try. It is our greatest strength! Make anything you make better than it was. Make your poem a better poem. Be open to and embrace the change and the possibilities directly in front of you. It will make you a better you.</p> <p>Leap.</p>

Cut and paste your finished piece in the box below.
Proofread, edit, and revise as needed.

Title

Quote

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Short Story

The Gift of the Magi

~by O. Henry

One dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies. Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one's cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied. Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be Christmas.

There was clearly nothing to do but flop down on the shabby little couch and howl. So Della did it. Which instigates the moral reflection that life is made up of sobs, sniffles, and smiles, with sniffles predominating.

While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home. A furnished flat at \$8 per week. It did not exactly beggar description, but it certainly had that word on the lookout for the mendicancy squad.

In the vestibule below was a letter-box into which no letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

The "Dillingham" had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week. Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, though, they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D. But whenever Mr. James Dillingham Young came home and reached his flat above he was called "Jim" and greatly hugged by Mrs. James Dillingham Young, already introduced to you as Della. Which is all very good.

Della finished her cry and attended to her cheeks with the powder rag. She stood by the window and looked out dully at a gray cat walking a gray fence in a gray backyard. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87

with which to buy Jim a present. She had been saving every penny she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week doesn't go far. Expenses had been greater than she had calculated. They always are. Only \$1.87 to buy a present for Jim. Her Jim. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him. Something fine and rare and sterling--something just a little bit near to being worthy of the honor of being owned by Jim.

There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen a pier-glass in an \$8 flat. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks. Della, being slender, had mastered the art.

Suddenly she whirled from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brilliantly, but her face had lost its color within twenty seconds. Rapidly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its full length.

Now, there were two possessions of the James Dillingham Youngs in which they both took a mighty pride. One was Jim's gold watch that had been his father's and his grandfather's. The other was Della's hair. Had the queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed, just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters. It reached below her knee and made itself almost a garment for her. And then she did it up again nervously and quickly. Once she faltered for a minute and stood still while a tear or two splashed on the worn red carpet.

On went her old brown jacket; on went her old brown hat. With a whirl of skirts and with the brilliant sparkle still in her eyes, she fluttered out the door and down the stairs to the street.

Where she stopped the sign read: "Mne. Sofronie. Hair Goods of All Kinds." One flight up Della ran, and collected herself, panting. Madame, large, too white, chilly, hardly looked the "Sofronie."

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Madame. "Take yer hat off and let's have a sight at the looks of it."

Down rippled the brown cascade.

"Twenty dollars," said Madame, lifting the mass with a practised hand.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings. Forget the hashed metaphor. She was ransacking the stores for Jim's present.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the stores, and she had turned all of them inside out. It was a platinum fob chain simple and chaste in design, properly proclaiming its value by substance alone and not by meretricious ornamentation--as all good things should do. It was even worthy of The Watch. As soon as she saw it she knew that it must be Jim's. It was like him. Quietness and value--the description applied to both. Twenty-one dollars they took from her for it, and she hurried home with the 87 cents. With that chain on his watch Jim might be properly anxious about the time in any company. Grand as the watch was, he sometimes looked at it on the sly on account of the old leather strap that he used in place of a chain.

When Della reached home her intoxication gave way a little to prudence and reason. She got out her curling irons and lighted the gas and went to work repairing the ravages made by generosity added to love. Which is always a tremendous task, dear friends--a mammoth task.

Within forty minutes her head was covered with tiny, close-lying curls that made her look wonderfully like a truant schoolboy. She looked at her reflection in the mirror long, carefully, and critically.

"If Jim doesn't kill me," she said to herself, "before he takes a second look at me, he'll say I look like a Coney Island chorus girl. But what could I do--oh! what could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?"

At 7 o'clock the coffee was made and the frying-pan was on the back of the stove hot and ready to cook the chops.

Jim was never late. Della doubled the fob chain in her hand and sat on the corner of the table near the door that he always entered. Then she heard his step on the stair away down on the first flight, and she turned white for just a moment. She had a habit for saying little silent prayer about the simplest everyday things, and now she whispered: "Please God, make him think I am still pretty."

The door opened and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two--and to be burdened with a family! He needed a new overcoat and he was without gloves.

Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail. His eyes were fixed upon Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not read, and it terrified her. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for. He simply stared at her fixedly with that peculiar expression on his face.

Della wriggled off the table and went for him.

"Jim, darling," she cried, "don't look at me that way. I had my hair cut off and sold because I couldn't have lived through Christmas without giving you a present. It'll grow out again--you won't mind, will you? I just had to do it. My hair grows awfully fast. Say `Merry Christmas!' Jim, and let's be happy. You don't know what a nice-- what a beautiful, nice gift I've got for you."

"You've cut off your hair?" asked Jim, laboriously, as if he had not arrived at that patent fact yet even after the hardest mental labor.

"Cut it off and sold it," said Della. "Don't you like me just as well, anyhow? I'm me without my hair, ain't I?"

Jim looked about the room curiously.

"You say your hair is gone?" he said, with an air almost of idiocy.

"You needn't look for it," said Della. "It's sold, I tell you--sold and gone, too. It's Christmas Eve, boy. Be good to me, for it went for you. Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered," she went on with sudden serious sweetness, "but nobody could ever count my love for you. Shall I put the chops on, Jim?"

Out of his trance Jim seemed quickly to wake. He enfolded his Della. For ten seconds let us regard with discreet scrutiny some inconsequential object in the other direction. Eight dollars a week or a million a year--what is the difference? A mathematician or a wit would give you the wrong answer. The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on.

Jim drew a package from his overcoat pocket and threw it upon the table.

"Don't make any mistake, Dell," he said, "about me. I don't think there's anything in the way of a haircut or a shave or a shampoo that could make me like my girl any less. But if you'll unwrap that package you may see why you had me going a while at first."

White fingers and nimble tore at the string and paper. And then an ecstatic scream of joy; and then, alas! a quick feminine change to hysterical tears and wails, necessitating the immediate employment of all the comforting powers of the lord of the flat.

For there lay The Combs--the set of combs, side and back, that Della had worshipped long in a Broadway window. Beautiful combs, pure tortoise shell, with jewelled rims--just the shade to wear in the beautiful vanished hair. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession. And now, they were hers, but the tresses that should have adorned the coveted adornments were gone.

But she hugged them to her bosom, and at length she was able to look up with dim eyes and a smile and say: "My hair grows so fast, Jim!"

And then Della leaped up like a little singed cat and cried, "Oh, oh!"

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

"Dell," said he, "let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on."

The magi, as you know, were wise men--wonderfully wise men--who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. O all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

Active Reading Exercise

Five New or Cool Words: Find five new or cool words and use them in sentences.

1. **Word:** Use the word in a sentence.
2. **Word:** Use the word in a sentence.
3. **Word:** Use the word in a sentence.
4. **Word:** Use the word in a sentence.
5. **Word:** Use the word in a sentence.

Four Fantastic Phrases: Use four fantastic phrases in sentences

1. **Phrase:** Use the phrase in a sentence.
2. **Phrase:** Use the phrase in a sentence.
3. **Phrase:** Use the phrase in a sentence.
4. **Phrase:** Use the phrase in a sentence.

Three Enduring Themes: Identify and show three timeless themes and describe how those themes are used in the story.

1. **Theme:**
2. **Theme:**
3. **Theme:**

Two Quotable Quotes: Copy and cite two quotable quotes

1. *“Put quote in italics here”* ~Source
2. *“Put quote in italics here”* ~Source

One Thoughtful Response: Use the “Personal Reading Response” Rubric posted in this document.

Literary Terms 1-10

Writing Exercise: Using this short story, learn these terms and use them in sentence relating to “The Gift of the Magi.”

You should study the terms on The Crafted Word Quizlet site.

Antagonist

- The character who works against the protagonist in the story
- Put your sentence here

Climax

- The climax is the result of the crisis. It is the high point of the story for the reader.
- Put your sentence here

Crisis

- When the conflict reaches a turning point. At this point the opposing forces in the story meet and the conflict becomes most intense. The crisis occurs before or at the same time as the climax.
- Put your sentence here

Exposition

- Describes the scene, sets the tone and theme, presents the characters and other facts necessary to understanding the story.
- Put your sentence here

Falling Action

- The events after the climax which close out the story.
- Put your sentence here

Foreshadowing

- The use of hints or clues to suggest what will happen later in the story.
- Put your sentence here

Plot

- How and why a story happens and unfolds
- Put your sentence here

Protagonist

- The principal character in a work of fiction
- Put your sentence here

Resolution

- Rounds out and concludes the action. Usually the final scene in a book, play, or movie. It is often called the "denouement."
- Put your sentence here

Rising Action

- A series of events that builds from the conflict. It begins with the inciting force and ends with the climax.
- Put your sentence here

Reading Response

How to Craft a Personal Response to Literature

A personal reading response needs to feel and sound like “you” speaking at your very best. A personal response needs to be both honest and “thoughtful.” Being thoughtful means that you are careful and considered in your writing. Use this rubric when you are asked to or desire to craft a one-paragraph personal response to a piece of literature. Read the descriptions of each step of the rubric on the left side, and then insert your sentences into the boxes on the right side of the rubric. When you are completed, paste the full paragraph in the text box below the rubric.

Steps	Your Text
<p>Broad Theme:</p> <p>Hook</p> <p>Every writing piece needs a good and pithy “hook” to gain and grab the readers attention. Without even mentioning the title, write a brief, single sentence that tries to capture the attention of your audience by stating the major theme of your personal reading response.</p>	<p>Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>

Steps	Your Text
<p>Narrow Theme:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Get Specific</p> <p>In the second sentence, introduce the piece of literature, the genre of the piece, and the author, as well as the major effect the writing piece had on you personally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember that book titles are italicized. • Short story, song, and poem titles are put in quotes. 	<p>Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>
<p>One/Two Punch:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What is the Author Trying To Do?</p> <p>Every writer writes for a reason. A writer tries to get his or her reader to feel or think in a certain way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write two or three more sentences that tells your reader what you feel the author is trying to do in the writing piece. 	<p>Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>

Steps	Your Text
<p data-bbox="215 275 451 310">Smoking Gun:</p> <p data-bbox="285 363 704 394">How Does the Author Do It?</p> <p data-bbox="215 447 773 716">“Briefly” (3-5 sentences) summarize the story, poem, or song. It is important to give a brief summary of the writing piece because it helps your reader put the writing piece in context. This does not mean, however, to give away all of the details and spoil it for your reader.</p> <ul data-bbox="266 764 773 1157" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="266 764 654 835">• Who: who is are the major characters?<li data-bbox="266 842 654 913">• Where: where is the action happening?<li data-bbox="266 919 727 991">• When: when is the action taking place?<li data-bbox="266 997 773 1068">• What: what is the main conflict that is happening?<li data-bbox="266 1075 638 1146">• Why: why is this conflict happening?	<p data-bbox="797 275 1365 310">Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>

Steps	Your Text
<p data-bbox="215 275 456 310">Head & Heart:</p> <p data-bbox="321 363 669 399">Express Your Thoughts</p> <p data-bbox="215 447 769 716">Remember that in a personal response, you can't be wrong—as long as you are truthful. In this section of your paragraph write honestly from your head and heart. Below are some ideas for how to approach this paragraph, but please expand the list to suit your response.</p> <ul data-bbox="264 772 760 1283" style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="264 772 760 884">• How did the writing piece affect you? Was it exciting, boring, interesting, dull...why?<li data-bbox="264 890 760 961">• What emotions did it make you feel?<li data-bbox="264 968 760 1039">• Did you change any ideas you have because of it?<li data-bbox="264 1045 760 1117">• Did it challenge you to think and feel in a different way?<li data-bbox="264 1123 760 1194">• Did it your own personal world view?<li data-bbox="264 1201 760 1283">• Did it bring up memories of other books or authors you have read?	<p data-bbox="797 279 1365 310">Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>

Steps	Your Text
<p>Get Out:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Elevator Review</p> <p>The conclusion is as important as the hook, so do your best to make the end of your paragraph as interesting and refreshing as your opening sentence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine that someone in an elevator asked you about what you are reading, and you only have ten seconds to respond. • You can touch on what you have already written, but don't use the same words again. 	<p>Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>
Steps	Your Text
<p>Publish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut and paste each step of the rubric in here. • Proofread carefully and make any revisions you feel are needed. 	<p>Place your text here and proofread carefully.</p>

Sentence Building

Exercise #1: Writing Better Sentences

Adding Detail: One of the most common problems with sentences is that they just don't tell the reader enough or give enough detail so that the reader feels informed and edified after reading the sentence. In the same way that any writing piece should always cover who/what/when/where/why, so should sentences—whenever possible. In many cases, this information might be in the sentence before or after, but it is certainly good practice to incorporate who/what/when/where/why into your sentences.

Below are two simple rules for helping to make your sentences more informative, detailed, and interesting to your readers.

Adding Detail: Write five sentences **that include at least three** of the who? what? when? where? and why? Details. The order of who/what/when/where/why is not important. Put the details (who, etc) within parentheses in bold.

e.g. The young soldier struggled all night **(when)** through the jungle **(where)** to reach his base camp before the enemy could reach him **(why)**.

Exercise #1

- Put your sentence here
- Put your sentence here
- Put your sentence here
- Put your sentence here
- Put your sentence here

Adding Imagery and Action: It is our job as writers to spark our readers' imaginations! A lot of writers forget that their readers are not "in their heads." The readers can't "see" anything that is not "specifically" described. Simply saying, "It was a cold day" can mean something completely different depending

on the time of year or place on the planet. So, as you write, be conscious of your readers, and be sure to give them the needed imagery and actions to make your thoughts become more real to your readers.

Exercise #2

Use specific imagery and actions to make these sentences more image rich.

- **e.g. Ginny ran into the house.** Ginny ran into the house like she was late for a date. (I used a simile to create an image)
- **e.g. The red car pulled out of the driveway.** The classic red Mustang convertible squealed out of the driveway and onto Birch Street. (I added descriptive adjectives and more detailed images and action.)

Now do the same for these sentences:

- The tree fell in the woods.
- The plane flew through the sky
- I am not feeling well today.
- The baseball game was fun.
- I like ice cream.

Poetry

Fitz's Top Three Haiku Techniques

To count or not to count? That is the question...

The writing of haiku is probably one of the most dumbed down exercises in our collective poetry curriculums around the planet. Every year I ask my students the same question: 'What do you know about haiku?' And invariably the entire room is shouting 5-7-5 as if it is the code that will stop a bomb from going off. It is almost like asking, "What is baseball?" and having everybody shout "FIELD" at the same time. Baseball is certainly played on a field, but the answer is a long way from the nuance, practice, and reality of the game. Haiku has survived as an art form for so many thousands of years because there is something quintessentially cool, fun, and thought provoking about the writing and reading of haiku—but too many of us teachers forget to keep that in mind and impose a creative rigidity at the start by insisting on a metrical structure that is as unquestioned as gravity.

- The writing of haiku has to be kept fun and thought provoking. In fact, the term haiku is derived from the word "Hai" which means "insightful," and the term "Ku," which means "fun." (Or something very close to that.)
- Haiku are poems of 20 syllables or less constructed in three lines using an images, actions, and a **cutting element** (usually a punctuation mark that sets up the **twist**) that separates the haiku into two sections. This might not be the definition you know, but it is the one we will use for the haiku I teach here. It is not a bad idea to stay close to the traditional 5-7-5 syllable scheme, but it is certainly not the end all be all of "effective haiku." Only a pedant is going to sit there and count syllables on you.
- A traditional haiku always has what is called in the Japanese language, a *kigo*, which is a seasonal reference of some sort, though for most western writers of haiku this has gone the way of the 5-7-5.

- A good haiku has neither too little or too much, and it just feels like a haiku when you read it or hear it. It makes you want to say, "Ahhhhh ku..."
- A haiku should be structured like a small cottage or hut: it is a small, familiar place that holds a secret of some sort — as well as the promise of great intellectual depth or emotional warmth.
- Write from your point of view from out of your own experiences.
- Never explain the meaning of what you say. Finding meaning is part of the joy and play of the readers

Here are my three beginning haiku techniques that can help you write effective haiku.

Technique # 1: Image and action + cool twist: Using images and actions to create a vivid and visual experience for your reader is a powerful method for engaging and keeping your audience interested in what you are writing — and that has to be the primary goal of all writers. The most effective images and actions are created using specific nouns and verbs. I like to teach haiku as a way to practice this basic skill of writing because haiku not only use images and actions, they also add in a thoughtful element (the cutting) into each poem.

For example:

In the bog
the kid with the new sneakers
is getting nervous.
~fitz

Technique # 2: Image on Image + Cool Twist: Part of the powerful effect of black and white photography is the visceral response created by the

contrasts between shades of black and white. For some reason, a black and white photo is more evocative than a color image—at least to me! For most of my assignments, I ask my students to include a black and white image to go along with their haiku.

For example:

Outside the bombed cottage
a snow-dusted soldier smiles
and flips the pancakes.
-fitz

Technique #3: Narrowing or Expanding) Big to small, and small to big): "Give me a stone and I'll show you the universe. Show me the universe and I'll give you a stone." The technique of expanding or narrowing is common and effective in all types of writing. It is a way of amplifying or focusing attention. It helps us to see the universal meaning in small and specific images; and it allows us to see the unique and particular within the "big picture."

For example:

All that's left
of the long winter--
a mitten in the daffodils
~fitz

Now let's practice these three techniques!

Fitz's Haiku Technique #1

The Technique of Images & Actions + Cool Twist

1. First create a series of **images and actions** and make the first two lines of a "potential" haiku.
2. Nature, and especially the seasons, is the best raw material for haiku. Go outside and watch nature. (Yes, move away from your computer and grab a notebook and a pencil!)
3. Find a place where you can just sit and observe what is happening around you.
4. Whenever you "see" something happening, write down that image and action using only nouns and verbs--and occasionally a necessary adjective, and rarely an adverb!

Don't look for what is "out of the ordinary." Look for ordinary things doing things in ordinary ways. The most commonplace images make for the best haiku.

For Example:

- In her nest of grass
The robin sleeps all day
- A single earthworm
Inches across the wet pavement
- Three painted monarchs
Dance around a single flower
- Lightening flashes
And distant rumbling

Next, take those images and actions and create a haiku by adding a short thought, question, or statement. In traditional haiku this is called the "**cutting**." The cutting adds a "**twist**" into the poem and lets your reader experience the image and action in a new (and often profound—and sometimes funny) way.

- A good way to set off this cutting is by adding a semi-colon, double dash or colon at the end of the first section.
- I generally use a semi-colon in place of a comma and conjunction (so, yet, and, or, nor, for, but).
- I use a colon to introduce a statement or a list.
- I use the double dash when I want to add a cool thought or sudden insight to complete the haiku. Try to keep this line between four and seven syllables.
- Notice that a haiku does not have a title, but the author name is always placed below in italics.

Here are the completed haiku using my examples.

In her nest of grass
 The robin sleeps all day;
 It must be Sunday.
 ~fitz

A single earthworm
 Inches across the wet pavement:
 Stop the speeding car?
 ~fitz

Three painted monarchs
 Dance around a single flower —
 Sweet waiting nectar!
 ~fitz

Lightning flashes
 And vague distant rumbling:
 Somebody's getting wet.
 ~fitz

These may not be the greatest haiku in the world, but I hope you get the basic idea of what I am trying to do. By adding the cutting I want you to see that even the most common of experiences can have profound and unique meaning.

Fitz's Haiku Technique #2

The Technique of Image on Image + Cool Twist

The important part of this exercise is to practice creating images and actions using nouns and verbs and “essential” adjectives. (An essential adjective is something like: a “red” rose; whereas, a non-essential adjective would be a “beautiful” rose.

1. First you need to create juxtaposed images--especially if the images are "out of place"--that are connected with a prepositional phrase.

For example:

- The rubber ball
in the new snow
- A dark puddle
on the dry street
- On a withered branch
the black crow

2. Now add an action of some sort to the beginning or the end that helps add a new dimension and twist to the images and so create a haiku:

The rubber ball
in the new snow
will soon be lost
~fitz

When will the kids find
the dark puddle
on this dry street?
~fitz

On his long grey branch
the black crow
waits all day.
~fitz

Fitz's Haiku Technique #3

The Technique of Narrowing & Expanding

To use this technique to create haiku you simply need to start with either a big or a small image.

For example:

- The last oak leaf [small]
- The moon in the night sky [big]

1. Now expand upon the image

Yesterday's winds:
strong enough to carry away
the last oak leaf.

~fitz

2. →or narrow down the image:

The moon in the night sky
walks with me
Down this wet road
~fitz

Each of these three techniques should help you compose haiku that are cool, fun, and insightful, but like any form of writing, the proof is always in the pudding. It is up to you to practice, experiment, innovate and use your own creative judgements while keeping in mind that traditions that evolved over the course of the last several hundred years. Don't break the rules because you can; break the rules only after you know them!

Haiku Portfolio:

- Create a page called Seasons' Haiku
- Create four separate pages in your portfolio titled: Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall
- Create four haiku for each season using the techniques we have studied.
- Each haiku should have its own place on the page and be associated with a black and white image

Theme Building Exercise

As I often say, *“a sentence is a thought fully expressed; a paragraph is a thought fully explained, and an essay is a thought fully explored.”* The main thing each of these statements have in common is that they each deal with a single thought. In writing this is called *“Unity,”* meaning that any writing piece, no matter how long or short, needs to be unified behind a single guiding thought, and that thought must always reflect a singular theme, and hence, have unity—that single main thought is the heart of that writing piece—and that heart is what pumps the lifeblood and it is what gives a sentence, a paragraph, an essay, a poem, or a story, its life. This central guiding thought is called the “theme.”

In the same way that we naturally speak in sentences and paragraphs, we are also naturally guided by themes when we talk with each other. It is rare to be telling a friend about a heartbreaking loss in a baseball game and then randomly switch to talking about digging up worms to go fishing. In conversation, it is almost like we have a disconnect detector, and when our detector senses a conversation going off track, it gives us a warning; “Danger, Will Robinson, you are flying massively off course.”

One of the main reasons I assign so much writing to my students is to force them to bring their writing to the level of their normal speech because, as humans, we really do practice unity of speech in our everyday conversations, but we often lose that unity when writing—and the big question is why?

It is because we write so slowly, carefully, and thoughtfully as if wading through a swamp where every step is bogged down by the weight of our efforts

But it is also because we write like we are in a massive bumper car war in total darkness.

Either way it is not a natural way to do things.

The middle ground is to develop your writing “voice” to the point where writing does become a natural way to express your thoughts fluently and confidently in strings of words tied and woven together by a unity of theme. I need to write deliberately and attentively to try and recreate the inner voice that is guiding my thoughts. I have to try and stay focused enough to stay on the

right track even if (like right now) I come back to a writing piece many hours, days, weeks, or even years later. If I have strength as a writer, it is not the subtleness, worldliness, or wisdom of my thoughts; it is more that years of practice have helped me, for better and worse, to write like I think and speak. I am comfortable with how and why I write, and I enjoy exploring thoughts (themes) and seeing what is created out of that first seed—that first theme—that started the ball of this writing piece going.

How to Create a Guiding Theme

The Theme Building Exercise is simply an exercise in creating themes out of the experiences of your life that you (as the writer) can narrow down to something you can write about in a single paragraph—in this case, the narrative paragraph. If you use my narrative paragraph rubric, you will see that it goes from a broad theme to a narrow theme, which is then narrowed down even further in the one/two punch to create a tightly focused theme that you can write about in the confines of a single paragraph because it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully “explain” a broad and universal theme in a single paragraph.

In this exercise, you take a meaningful experience you have had, and then you try to capture the broad universal theme in a single short and pithy sentence. Don't refer to yourself or your experience in the broad theme.

For Example:

- **Experience #1:** Meeting old friends at your summer camp.
- **Broad Theme:** Old friends never become strangers.
- **Experience #2:** Your dejection after a hard fought athletic contest that you should have won.
- **Broad Theme:** It's easier to fall in a hole than climb out of it.

Each of these two broad themes are themes that any person in the world could or can relate to in an immediate way, and so the broad theme acts as a hook to entice your potential reader to read on. The trick now is to shift the theme to something that happened in your life; so in the narrow theme write a sentence that captures that theme at work in an experience in your life.

For Example:

- Old friends never become strangers, **especially if those old friends are my summer bunkmates from Stinson Lake in the White Mountains of New Hampshire.**

Here I have taken the broad theme and added a narrow theme and used an experience from life to show that theme at work in my life — my own narrative — and now all I need to do is narrow it a bit further and I'll have a good and focused 'guiding thought' around which to build the rest of my paragraph.

For Example:

- Old friends never become strangers, especially if those old friends are my summer bunkmates, Mark and Bingy from Stinson Lake, in the White Mountains of New Hampshire. **From mid-June, and the end of school, through Labor Day, and the beginning of school in September, we were a small band of brothers living like feral children in paradise. Outside of those summer months, we never saw each other and seldom spoke or wrote to each other, but in those summer months we became the friends that time, distance, fate, or fortune could not--and will not--separate.**

That last sentence is the final narrowing of the theme for my paragraph. I would follow this with some specific examples of stuff we did together, and follow that with a reflection about the importance of this friendship in my life--and that would be my paragraph, and a darn good one at that, but only because I put everything a good paragraph needs into that paragraph. Without an effective and compelling guiding theme a paragraph is a car without an engine: it just won't go anywhere--except downhill.

Exercise #1

In this exercise, come up with two meaningful experiences of your own, and try to create your own guiding theme using the same steps outlined above.

Narrative Paragraph #1

1. Meaningful Experience: [put text here]
2. Broad theme: [put text here]
3. Narrow Theme: [put text here]
4. One/two Punch: [put text here]

Narrative Paragraph #2

1. Meaningful Experience: [put text here]
2. Broad theme: [put text here]
3. Narrow Theme: [put text here]
4. One/two Punch: [put text here]

Think of this "formula" for creating a guiding theme whenever you are writing about a personal experience. A paragraph without a guiding theme is like an egg without a yolk, and if you become an expert in creating and narrowing down themes, you will never be stumped by a writing assignment that ask for "paragraphs!"

Paragraph Building

Fitz's Narrative Paragraph Rubric

This rubric is designed to help writers organize the flow and focus of a personal experience narrative paragraph. In a narrative paragraph, a writer writes from a personal point of view about something “worth writing about” in his or her life.

This rubric breaks a paragraph down into three areas:

1. **The first part of the paragraph** introduces and narrow downs a theme from a broad theme (interesting and catchy enough to anyone) to a more narrow and focused theme that a writer can explore and explain in a single paragraph of 350 words or less.
2. **The central part of the paragraph** focuses on introducing and describing the experience that captures the essence and importance of your theme in a series of images and actions that tell the who, what, when, where, and why of the experience. (This is similar to text support or facts in expository or analytical writing). It proves the author has the authority and enough experience to write about this theme from the point of view of someone who has lived through the experience—and now has a story to tell.
3. **The last third of the paragraph** (the head & heart and the conclusion or transition) explicates (which means to explain in detail) how the theme works within the experience the author just described. In the diagram you can see how the triangle starts small (narrow) and expands back towards a solid base. In practice, the writer should focus first on the parts of the experience that show the theme in action. Towards the end of the paragraph, the writer can (he or she does not have to) write about the importance of the theme in a universal way.
4. **The closing line or transition** will either be a brief and pithy conclusion or a sentence that transitions to a new paragraph that is logically linked together with the paragraph just completed.

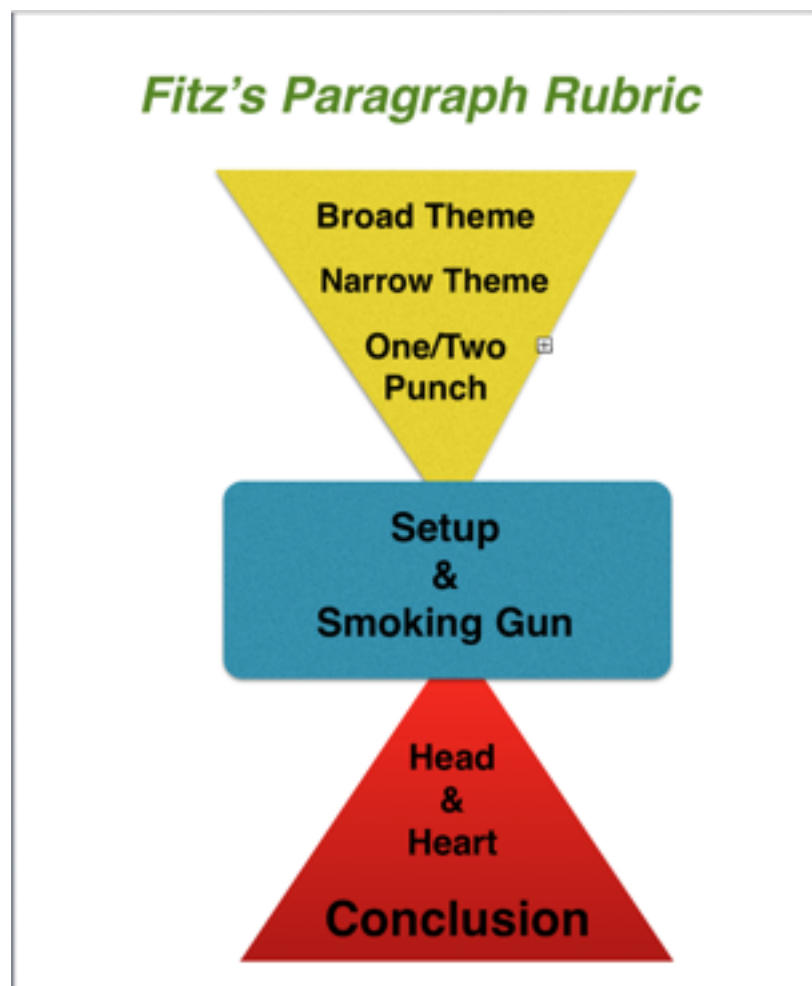
NOTES

Read each section carefully to be sure you are following the flow of the rubric. A narrative writing piece needs to have the natural flow of human speech to be effective. If it is too choppy, it will be an ineffective piece because it won't feel or sound real.

Remember that no writing piece is ever “done.” It is abandoned, and every minute before that time is a good time to “change” your paragraph for the better. Before you abandon this piece, let it sit for a couple of days, then go back to it with fresh eyes and a fresh mind.

When you are ready to abandon it, record it as a podcast or a short video essay and post it on your blog (along with the text) and as a single document in your Quip folder.

This rubric, if used wisely, is essentially a brief essay—and a damn good one if you give it the time and focus that well-crafted writing needs.



The Power of Family Paragraph Rubric

No matter how a family is created, it is, for better or worse, the most universal theme and common thread that binds us all together as humans. Every family develops its own dynamic, their own way of doing things that they borrowed from traditions, religions, cultures, and often trial and error; but the basic fabric of a family is the same the world over—it is a group of people who are somehow brought together and figure out what it means to be a family.

Think of your own family and use this rubric to write a one paragraph reflection on some aspect of your experience with your family.

STEPS OF THE RUBRIC: Read the left hand column carefully and try to follow all of the steps of the rubric. Read each section out loud and proofread carefully. A narrative should “sound” just like you would speak.	Your name The Writers Toolbox The Power of Family Date
ONE WORD THEME: Writing out your theme as a single word is a good way to help keep focused as you write the paragraph. Put your one word theme as size 18 Font centered on the page.	One word theme here, centered: Size 18 Font Family

GUIDING QUOTE:

If you are only writing a single paragraph, I think it is a great idea to put a quote above the paragraph that captures the mood, tone, and theme of your paragraph.

For example: if I wish to write about the power of family, I could use a quote like this, put in italics, with the author's name below the quote.

*Home is where when you get there,
they have to let you in.*
~Robert Frost

"Guiding Quote"
Size 12 italics

1. BROAD THEME: Write a short declarative statement that touches on a broad theme that all of us can relate to in some way or other. This acts as a "hook" that will attract your reader's attention. Despite what you might wish, no one really cares about you when they read; a reader cares primarily about himself or herself. This broad theme is a theme that almost any person can relate to on some level, and hopefully it is intriguing enough to make your reader want to read on.

For example: if you want to write about the importance of family, here is an example of a broad theme:

- *It is only our immediate family that gives us unconditional love.*

It is only our immediate family that gives us unconditional love.

2. NARROW THEME:

Narrow down your theme by writing a phrase or sentence using the theme word that captures how your chosen theme is used in a specific way in the experience you are going to write about. Make sure it is "clear, concise and memorable" because this is what you want your readers to remember "as" they read your paragraph. This is the sentence that "steers" your reader in the direction you want your paragraph to go, and in that sense, it is what your paragraph is going to be about.

For example:

- *It was my family that I turned to when there I has no place left to go.*

Insert Your Text here:

3. ONE/TWO PUNCH:

Follow your topic sentence with one or two more sentences that add detail or explanation to your topic sentence. These sentences can (and maybe should) be longer sentences. This helps to “narrow down” the focus of your paragraph so that you only have to write what can be fully explained in one paragraph.

For example:

- *When I was alone in the world; when nothing was going my way, I knew that the door of family would always open always open for me and welcome me back into the arms of those people who love me without reservations.*

Insert Your Text here:

4. SMOKING GUN:

When writing about a personal experience, chose a specific personal experience (or even a smaller part of an experience) that explicates, illustrates, and amplifies the theme of your paragraph. This personal experience is proof that you have been there and done that, which is why we call it the smoking gun! It is evidence that you are the one who had the experience that only YOU can write about with full authority. When you write the smoking gun, be sure to include as much detail as needed—the who? what? when? where? and why?—to fully capture the theme of your paragraph.

For example:

- *At no other time in my life was this more obvious than when I returned to my family home in Concord after a long journey to the China to discover the essential truth about life. Broke, disheveled, and disenchantèd, I stood on the doorstep and tentatively rapped on the door. No smile was wider than my mom's; no arms were wider than my dad's as they pulled me into their arms and into the living room I left so long ago.*

Insert Your Text here:

5. HEAD & HEART:

Show your reader your thoughts!
Write as many more sentences as you "need" (but at least three more) to illustrate and elaborate upon whatever you introduced in your theme-setting sentences. This is where you *reflect* upon your experience and describe the ways that your experience reflects your broad and barrow theme.

For example:

- *It didn't matter that I left home without even telling them where I was going. It didn't matter that I had once criticized their lives as dull and meaningless, and it didn't matter that I never called and never wrote. It only mattered that I was home again.*

Insert Your Text here:

6. GET OUT or GO ON!

This sentence either wants to close out your thoughts or "transition" to a potential new paragraph.

For example:

- *For me, it only matters that I will never turn my back on my family again because when times are tough, family is all that really matters.*

Insert Your Text here:

RULE OF THREE:

- Literature is abandoned, not finished! Go back and re-read what you have written.
- Find three areas or sentences that you can make better. If you can't or won't do this, then you are light years away from being a writer.
- **Often you can find a better broad or narrow theme sentence somewhere else in the paragraph.** You can almost always find a more clear and effective way to write a sentence than you wrote on your first try.
- If the rule of three was too easy (meaning you easily found mistakes) do it again...and again if you have to.

Insert Your Text here:

Literature

Our Ninth Grade Mission Statement

How To Live Wisely in an Imperfect World

As you discovered when completing your summer reading assignments, our course this year will focus on the question of how one constructs a meaningful and worthwhile life in the face of human moral and social failings, the unfair nature of life, and the unexpected challenges of the physical world, despite its beauty. By reading short stories, novels, essays, poetry, and each other's writings you will examine how individuals navigate change, especially when confronted with the conflict between the ideal world we often seek and the imperfections that also exist in the "real world."

Through class discussions, personal narratives and expository essays, you will reflect frequently on this "essential" question as well as consider the transitions before each of you, first, as leaders and role models for the younger boys at Fenn and, second, as young men shortly to embark on a new life at another school a year from now. I look forward to your participation as well as the rich conversations we will have together around the table, in electronic discussion boards and in the "blogosphere."

There has never been a great writer who has not also been a great reader, for it is through great and enlightened literature that we sense the possibilities of the written word

Call of the Wild versus Into the Wild

We will be discussing *Call of the Wild* and *Into the Wild* in a series of Harkness discussions and written reflections.

Introduction to Walden

Our major outside text this fall will be the mega-classic book *Walden*, by Henry David Thoreau. In my mind, it is the most well-written book in the English language, and as much as any other book I have read, it has shaped—and continues to shape my life. I hope it may do the same for you.

Punctuation

Comma Rule #1:

Using Commas to Separate Elements in a Series of Words, Phrases, or Items

Commas are used to separate three or more words or phrases in a list or series.

- e.g. Please bring skates, gloves, hats and food to the rink. [with words]
- e.g. I am tired or you always forgetting your books, forgetting your assignments, and forgetting to bring a pencil to class. [with phrases]

You may omit the last comma [which is called the Oxford Comma] if there will be no confusion in meaning. I tend to use the Oxford Comma more often than not because why risk being confusing.

- e.g. I love pizza, milk, and french fries. [three items with an Oxford Comma=no confusion]
- e.g. I love pizza, milk and french fries. [three items without an Oxford Comma (but milk and french fries might not be good mixed together:)]
-

If there are only two elements, no comma is needed between the elements.

- e.g. I love pizza and french fries.
- e.g. I despise the Rangers and Redwings.

If you are introducing a list with a noun, use a colon to introduce the list.

- e.g. Don't forget these important items: my books, pencil, baloney, and peanut butter and fluff sandwich.

If you introduce the list with a verb use a comma after the first item in the list:

- e.g. Don't forget to bring my books, pencil, baloney, and peanut butter and fluff sandwich. [Note how important the Oxford Comma is here. Without it, a reader might infer that someone should bring a baloney and peanut butter sandwich, which is kind of gross:)]

There you have it. Everything I know about Comma Rule #1.

~fitz

Exercise #1

Create five sentences that use commas in a series of words

1. Put sentence here
2. Put sentence here
3. Put sentence here
4. Put sentence here
5. Put sentence here

Exercise #2

Create Five sentences that use commas in a series of phrases.

1. Put sentence here
2. Put sentence here
3. Put sentence here
4. Put sentence here
5. Put sentence here

Comma Rule #2

Commas with Coordinating Conjunctions:

So, yet, and, or, nor, for, but

Commas with conjunctions must have an independent clause (meaning, it can stand alone as a sentence) BEFORE and AFTER the conjunction and comma.

For Example:

- I need to buy a new computer, **so** I am going to the mall.
- It is a cold day, **yet** it is a beautiful day on the mountain.
- Sally is happy today, **and** she is feeling better.
- I am either going to climb the mountain, **or** I going to die trying.
- I am neither talented, **nor** is there a place for me on the team.
- Do not show up at my house, **for** I am not going to be home today.
- I am not a good basketball player, **but** I am an amazing baseball star.

A comma and a conjunction can always be replaced with a period or semi-colon instead of the comma and conjunction.

For Example:

- It is raining, so I am not going to school. **Comma being used with a conjunction**
- It is raining; I am not going to read. **Here a semi-colon is used**
- It is raining. I am not going to study comma usage. **Here a period is used**

***Each sentence is punctuated correctly. The choice is up to the writer. A conjunction makes for a longer more flowing sentence, while a semi-colon or period makes for two more terse clauses or sentences,**

***The most common mistake writers make with this rule is inserting a comma between an independent clause and a phrase or dependent clause.**

For Example:

- I am going to school but not the mall. **No comma is needed because “not the mall” is a phrase, not an independent clause. That said, it is not “wrong” to use a comma there, but a comma is not needed unless you really want to emphasize the pause.**
- I am going to the mall and then to school. **The “and” here is just combining two elements in a series, so it is not acting as a coordinating conjunction; therefore, no comma is needed.**

Exercise #1

Repair these sentences, if they need repair:

1. It is so foolish to worry about tomorrow yet I seem to worry about it all the time.
2. It is, so fun to go fishing early in the morning.
3. I think we should spend more time studying the comma rules for it will help us become more effective writers.
4. I went to the lake, yet no one else showed up.
5. Either you, or me is going to win this game.

Exercise #2

Write seven sentences of your own using each of the coordinating conjunctions:

1. Put your sentence here...so
2. Put your sentence here...yet
3. Put your sentence here...and
4. Put your sentence here ...or
5. Put your sentence here ...nor
6. Put your sentence here ...for
7. Put your sentence here ...but

Comma Rule #3: Commas with Introductory Elements

An introductory element is any word, phrase or dependent clause that comes before the main independent clause of the sentence.

- **Introductory words** are usually names, adverbs, salutations or interjections
 - e.g. **Actually**, Fred can take the test. [**introductory adverb**]
 - e.g. **Fred**, be careful taking the test. [**introductory name**]
 - e.g. **Oh**, Fred should be careful taking the test. [**interjection**]

Exercise #1

Write five sentences using introductory words:

1. Put sentence here
2. Put sentence here
3. Put sentence here
4. Put sentence here
5. Put sentence here

- **Introductory phrases** generally act to set up or place in context the main clause of the sentence, and so are usually prepositional or adverbial phrases.

➡ An adverbial phrase simply modifies some sort of action (a verb) by telling a reader:

- * when some action happened
- * where some action happened
- * how some action happened
- * how much some action happened

- e.g. Without thinking, he ran into the burning building and saved his goldfish. **This is an adverbial phrase: the word *without* modifies the verb thinking**

➡

- e.g. Before dinner, I plan on taking a nap. **This is a prepositional phrase: the word *before* modifies the noun dinner**
 - ➡ as far as comma usage goes, knowing whether the phrase is a prepositional phrase or an adverbial phrase does not really matter.
 - ➡ All that really matters is that you—the writer—recognize the phrase as a phrase introducing and/or modifying the independent clause that likely follows.
 - ➡ whether or not the comma is “needed” can be the choice of the writer depending on if you want the reader to pause at that point in time.
- e.g. Without a second thought he saved his goldfish.
 - ➡ Only a fool or a pedantic old teacher would be perplexed by the lack of a comma in this sentence.

Exercise #2

Write five sentences using introductory phrases:

1. Put sentence here
2. Put sentence here
3. Put sentence here
4. Put sentence here
5. Put sentence here

- **Introductory clauses** are always dependent or subordinate clauses (different name for essentially the same thing) because the clause contains a subject and a verb, but it is not a completed thought. To muddy the water even further, some folks call these clauses restricted or unrestricted clauses.
 - e.g. *Because it is snowing*, I am not going to school.
 - e.g. *After the snow falls tonight*, school will surely be canceled tomorrow.

- e.g. *Provided our headmaster is a wise man*, we will surely get the day off tomorrow
- e.g. *Since you don't seem to care*, we will have school tomorrow!
 - ➔ A dependent/subordinate/restricted clause always has a “word” before the clause (marked in red in the examples). This is often called the *dependent marker word*.
 - ➔ Below is an incomplete list of possible dependent marker words introducing a dependent clause:

Exercise #3

Use these dependent marker words in a sentence:

rather, even though, once, whenever, although, until, if only, whereas, as long as, because, before, as if, after, whether,

1. Put sentence here
2. Put sentence here
3. Put sentence here
4. Put sentence here
5. Put sentence here
6. Put sentence here
7. Put sentence here
8. Put sentence here
9. Put sentence here
10. Put sentence here

Grammar

Error #1: Missing Commas after Introductory Elements

This should be a fairly simple error to recognize if you completed the previous punctuation exercise

Editing is a process of finding errors in your writing and fixing those errors. It's easier to edit when you know what to look for. The top ten common writing errors have proven to be among the top culprits in in secondary and college writing, so it should apply to you guys as well:)

Keep these errors in mind when, writing, proofreading and revising.

The first and most common grammatical error is to omit the comma after an "introductory element." Study this rule. View the power points, and take the quizzes. When completed, you can take The Crafted Word Rule #1 Test!

***An introductory element is a word, phrase, or clause that introduces and/or sets up the main part of the sentence**

To understand this, you need to know the difference between a phrase and a clause:

- **A phrase is a group of closely related words that is missing a subject or a verb. It is usually a prepositional phrase.**

For example:

- After eating, we went home. *There is no subject in the introductory phrase.*
- After dinner, we went home. *There is no verb in the introductory phrase.*

***A clause is a closely related group of words that contains a subject AND a verb._**

For example:

- I am cool. *"I" is the subject, and "am" is the verb*
- Phil ran towards the water. *Phil is the verb; ran is the verb, and "towards the water" is a prepositional phrase.*

Here's the rub: You need to be able to tell if a clause is **dependent** or **independent**.

The Difference between an Independent and Dependent Clause

- An independent clause when it can survive on its own as a sentence as an idea fully expressed or a completed thought.

For example:

- Phil ran towards the water. *This is a fully expressed thought!*

***A dependent clause needs another clause to "complete the thought" and complete the sentence.**

For example:

- While Phil ran towards the water, *This is "dependent" on more information--as in an independent clause--to be a fully expressed thought, such as: While Phil ran towards the water, I called the police.*

Here are the two big rules on clauses and comma usage:

1. If a dependent clause comes at the beginning of a sentence, it needs to have a comma after the dependent clause, but if the dependent clause comes after an independent clause ...
2. ... it does not need a comma because the word that comes before the dependent clause acts as the comma.

***Generally, it is better to put the independent clause first because it has the most important information in the sentence.**

For example:

- We didn't have school today because it was snowing. *Not having school is the main point of the sentence, and so it should come to your reader's attention first.]*

- Because we had the storm of the century today that walloped New England with ten feet of snow, we didn't have school today. *Here the important part is the big storm, so it is fine to have the dependent clause come first.*

Commas can separate clauses, but only if the comma precedes a coordinating conjunction.

- e.g. I am going to the mall, and I am going to the Apple store, but I am not going to buy anything.
- e.g. I heard my mother calling, so I walked home, and I found a ball, a bat, three quarters and one old shoe on the way home.

If you connect two clauses with a comma, you create the dreaded “comma splice,” which is in my top ten writing mistakes of all time.

- .e.g. I am going fishing, I will use my new fishing pole.

To “repair” a comma splice you can add a period and make two sentences:

- e.g. I am going fishing. I will use my new fishing pole.

Or you can add a comma and a conjunction:

- e.g. I am going fishing, so I will use my new fishing pole.

Or you can replace the comma with a semi colon:

- e.g. I am going fishing; I will use my new fishing pole.

Rhetoric

So What's Your Point? *The Uses and Abuses of Rhetoric*

*Knowing that you do not understand is a virtue;
Not knowing that you do not understand is a defect.*

—Lao Tzu

Nobody likes to be wrong, and for that matter, most of us “like” to be right. Few of us walk around writing, saying or thinking, “Boy, my opinions and views are certainly shallow, uninformed, and alarmingly trivial—but here is what I think....” We like to be assured that what we know and feel is valid and real and informed, for there is a serenity in *knowing that we know*—or that we have thoughtfully reached a level of knowingness that is somewhere near to certainty. I admit that a certain jealousy sweeps over me when I hear or read someone say exactly what I already think and feel (and though I knew) but I just never found the words or the way to say it with that much eloquence and clarity. Or I am at a party and two prodigious minds are arguing a topic, and I find myself swinging dizzily from one side to the other: “He’s right. No, she’s right. But *he* made a good point. Now *her’s* is better.” Worse is when I decide to butt in to the conversation with my limited skills and sketchy half-ass information, and I am forced to slink away with my tail between my legs like a proud, yet sheepish, cur. In each instance I have been victimized by a majestic and compelling use of rhetorical language—which is simply effective and persuasive speaking or writing. But don’t fear. Becoming a more adept rhetorical speaker and writer is a skill that can be learned and practiced in every facet of our academic, social, and intellectual interactions.

The first skill is to stop. Think. Think some more. Then speak. Lao Tzu had it right almost three thousand years ago when he wrote the short poem posted above this essay. He was no doubt annoyed by people who were obsessed with being right, but who were not equally obsessed with knowing what they needed to know before opening their big mouths or wetting ink to papyrus! The wisest and most enduring advice then is to stay the heck out of conversations you have no right or aptitude to be in. Sadly, Lao Tzu’s wisdom is lost on most

people, for our lives are full of moments where we are carried away by the ephemeral sound of our own voices and not by the content and wisdom of our arguments. We only need to read or hear the endless screed of Facebook postings, political rantings, and absurd comments that so fill our everyday lives to know that we live in opinion-full, yet shallow, times. I am just as guilty as any of you. Regrettably, it is often impossible to undo what we say or write or post. The only practical (and wise) thing we can do is to start fresh and choose our arguments more carefully, think more deeply, and know when, where, and how to say or write what we want to say or write. Only then will our rhetoric rise to the level of the sublime. Hopefully, this set of criteria for speech giving will not banish us collectively to a vow of silence, for there is much each of us do know, perhaps more than any other person on the planet!

The second skill is to know that a gaggle of thoughts and opinions cannot be simply dumped on the page or on the person like an elaborate jigsaw puzzle. We need to complete the picture for our listeners and readers; moreover, we need to let our listeners and readers feel like a part of the building process for without a sympathetic audience our words are but emptiness in a vacuum, and our rhetoric will be a self-aggrandizing show-boating of our superior and subtle thoughts, and we will not convince anybody of anything. A good rhetorician understands his or her audience as fully as the subject matter, and they are willing and happy to meet that audience on a common field of play with a common set of rules for the game at hand. I worked for many years as a boatbuilding wood-shop teacher, and my mantra for building a simple boat has always been the old maxim that “form follows function.” It is much the same with rhetoric: the ways in which we build our arguments and state our cases need to be crafted with the same adherence to sound and effective principles of construction as a craftsman building his or her boat. No doubt there are new and radical boats launched every day, but every one of them must float, and they must move through the water in some semblance of the way the builder hopes they do, or else it is essentially a failure. Interesting, perhaps—but still a failure. Some people have mastered the art and craft of rhetoric through experience, reading, practice, common sense and an uncommon intuition; most of the rest of us are best served by listening, watching, reading, parsing, and perfecting the time-worn and time-tested formulas and spontaneous performances of whomever we feel is simply awesome at drawing sap from a telephone pole, a meal from a loaf of bread, or, simply, sense from sound.

The final skill (which I need to practice right now) is discerning the limits of what you know well enough to speak or write sensibly about, so this is where I leave you off because I am pretty sure that I have reached the limit of my erudition on rhetoric—though not my interest in the subject. I need to be content at this point to be, as Buddha once said, the finger pointing at the moon. If you *really* want to master the art of rhetoric—if truth is mightier than the sword of your opinions—you'll figure it out. The obvious starting point is to read Aristotle's seminal work, *Rhetoric*, or even just the history of the discussions surrounding rhetoric and its uses and abuses in ancient Greece to the present times. There are reams of discussions and treatises on rhetoric in print and widely available on the internet. Reading Aristotle, who is way more wordy than Lao Tzu, is a sensible place to begin; but, at the very least (and before your next argument) remember what Mark Twain said: "If you don't lie, you'll never have to remember anything."

The Tricolon: Rhetorical Technique #1

For some weird and mystic reason, we humans love to hear and read words, phrases, and clauses in groupings of three. Fitz's Tri-colon Sentence Rubric is a wham dammer of a way to create a powerful sentence that carries a lot of information in a powerful way.

The Tricolon Compound Sentence Exercise

Create five sentences with three "clauses." Use a semi-colon after the first clause followed by a comma and conjunction before the last clause. This type of sentence is awesome because it allows you to express three related ideas in one sentence—one for each theme of your body paragraphs.

- e.g. The first four books of *The Odyssey* gives us a glimpse into the life and times of the ancient Greeks; [semi-colon + plus another independent clause] it gives us a lesson in the values and customs during the time of *The Odyssey*, and [comma and conjunction + plus another independent clause] it gives us a story told through stories.

Here is a rubric to help you out!

Tricolon Sentence Rubric	Example Text
Independent clause + semi-colon:	I love fishing;
Independent clause + comma and conjunction	I love waking up early in the morning, but
Final Independent clause + period	I don't love the long walk to the river.
Completed Tricolon Sentence	I love fishing; I love waking up early in the morning, but I don't love the long walk to the river.

Exercise #1

Post five tricolon sentences here.

1. Put your sentence here
2. Put your sentence here
3. Put your sentence here
4. Put your sentence here
5. Put your sentence here

Vocabulary

Stones, Words, and Walls

Language is the gift—as well as the tool—that allows and enables us to appreciate, understand, and express the complexity and nuance of our inner and outer lives. Our language builds upon itself, and it evolves, as we evolve, to breathe the newest air of the universe. The right words bring clarity to chaos and echo long enough that those who listen will be enlightened, and those who read will be entranced by the mysterious alchemy of a shared language—and it is this sharing of words that we need to focus on. We need to let the words we use bubble up from the broth of shared experience, and as like minds congregate, you will find your audience as much as they will find you.

I worked for a number of years building stone walls for John Bordman—a brilliant and ornery yankee curmudgeon who was insistent that every wall be a testament to eternity—in the hopes that I could learn everything I needed to learn about this “piling on of stones.” From early on in my apprenticeship, he would leave me at a site for hours on end to pick through a mountain of stone trying to find the stones that would “fit together” to make the wall. I placed my stones and squinted at them from a distance (just like John) to see if the hand of gravity (and not the vanity of man) had placed the stone. Invariably, when he returned, he would calmly and quietly destroy ninety percent of my day's work. As critical as he was of society, he rarely crushed my fragile ego by criticizing my efforts. Instead, he would say things like, “Damn hard to find good stones in this pile!” While in the same breath he would add, “But, it's all we have to work with.” He would then go on to craft a magnificent wall—a wall that will last for centuries—walls built out of the material at hand, walls that only a true connoisseur of stone walls will appreciate.

It didn't take long to figure that building stone walls would take its toll on both the body and the fingers of a fledgling folksinger; however, in my world of metaphor, I carry those same stones with me as I struggle to build a song, a poem, a story—or this. Words are the stones we work with; and the more stones in our pile, the more we can build the wall of our dreams; but, equally important is the reality that a pile of good stone does not make a wall—as a thousand new

vocabulary words won't make you a better writer. John Bordman never went out and bought more stone just to have more to choose from; instead he always bought good stone in the first place: stone from walls that edge the fields (and what once was fields) all over New England—hand-picked stones culled from the wisdom of his experience: big, solid, interesting stones, already weathered by the storms and vicissitudes of time.

It's not so much that we need a lot of obscure words as much as we need good words—and we need to recognize good words. If our experience of life is limited and shallow, our big words will only impress small minds, and they will alienate the truly wise. We need the experience of words used well: words used in elevated writing; words used in great speeches; words we hear and read and feel in meaningful ways; words that we see actually working to bring sense to the senseless. A truly extensive and effective vocabulary is built on an attentiveness to precise language. It means embracing the world of words used well; It means turning off asinine TV; it means measuring a book by the possibilities it presents, not by its rank on the best seller lists, and it means discussions informed by wisdom and decorum—not polemics or politics. If you are a writer, it means entering your writer's space with an open and disciplined mind. It means learning the craft and recognizing the art of writing well.

Crafting words is culling good stones from stubborn piles and squinting at them from a distance, sensing gravity and vanity in the same breath.

SAT Vocabulary & Roots 1-10

Here are the Unit One Vocabulary Words. Study them on The Crafted Word Quizlet Page.

Complete the exercises in your document

Here is the link to Quizlet: <http://quizlet.com/join/et5JvaM9h>

Sat Vocabulary

abbreviate

(v) to shorten, abridge

e.g. We must abbreviate our trip because of the approaching storm.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

abstinence

(n) the act of refraining from pleasurable activity, e.g., eating or drinking

e.g. During the holy week, I must practice abstinence and not eat meat or play games.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

adulation

(n) to give or receive high praise

e.g. I received much adulation after my game winning touchdown!

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

adversity

(n) misfortune, an unfavorable turn of events

e.g. Dealing with adversity is just a fact of life in poor countries.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

aesthetic

(adj) pertaining to beauty or the arts

e.g. Her aesthetic approach to music is different than mine: she likes Mozart; I like The Rolling Stones.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

amicable

(adj) friendly, agreeable

e.g. After the fight, the two old friends reached an amicable agreement.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

anachronistic

(adj) out-of-date, not attributed to the correct historical period

e.g. Your approach to learning is anachronistic. You need to try new ways of teaching.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

anecdote

(n) short, usually funny account of an event

e.g. Every time someone started to share something, she felt the need to add her own anecdote to the discussion.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

anonymous

(adj) nameless, without a disclosed identity

e.g. You may choose to remain anonymous when you fill out the survey.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

antagonist

(n) foe, opponent, adversary

e.g. Every good story needs an antagonist to make things difficult for the good guy.

Prompt: Use this word in a sentence

Roots 1-10

Exercise: Research these roots and find an additional word that uses these roots.

alter:

other

e.g. alternate, alter ego

Put your word or words here

ami, amic:

- love

e.g. amiable, amicable

Put your word or words here

amphi:

- both ends or all sides

e.g. amphibian

Put your word or words here

ann, ennui:

- year

e.g. anniversary, annual, biennial, perennial

Put your word or words here

anthrax:

- human, man

e.g. anthropology, anthropomorphic, misanthrope

Put your word or words here

aqua, aque:

- water

e.g. aquatic, aquarium, aqueduct

Put your word or words here

arch:

- chief, leader, ruler

e.g. archangel, monarch, archaic, archenemy

Put your word or words here

arthro:

- joint (as in a body)

e.g. arthritis, arthroscopy

Put your word or words here

aud:

- sound

e.g. auditorium, audible, audiologist, audiotape

Put your word or words here

bell:

- war

e.g. belligerent, bellicose

Put your word or words here

This is not the end, but another beginning.
On to Unit Two!