




# Contents

Introduction . . . . .	4
Personal Connections . . . . .	7
Think Abouts . . . . .	13
Visualization . . . . .	19
Predictions . . . . .	25
Story Maps . . . . .	31
Character Analysis . . . . .	37
Character Perspective . . . . .	43
Setting . . . . .	49
Context Clues . . . . .	55
Problem and Solution . . . . .	61
Details . . . . .	67
Point of View . . . . .	73
Cause and Effect . . . . .	79
Compare and Contrast . . . . .	85
Summary . . . . .	91
Main Idea . . . . .	97
Figurative Language . . . . .	103
Journal Responses . . . . .	109
References . . . . .	112



to recall information from the story and label story elements, including characters, setting, problem, and solution.

The three activity pages gradually increase in difficulty. The introductory level asks students to come up with the title, main characters, setting, problem, and solution. The intermediate level requires students to give more details in the description of the setting and to list all attempts to solve the problem. Finally, in the challenging level, students must categorize characters as major or minor, state effects of the setting, and describe both primary and secondary problems, attempts to accomplish goals, and the solution. Each level is purposely designed to require more of the reader than the last, so that each assignment is increasingly challenging.

## How to Use This Book

The diverse group of grades 4–8 teachers who tested these organizers all took different approaches; they used the graphic organizers for leveled responses, as an avenue for scaffolding, and for individual projects. How you decide to use these graphic organizers will depend on your students' needs, your academic goals, and your teaching style. Keep in mind that by modeling the target skill prior to assigning the graphic organizers, you help prepare

students to better understand and complete the activity. You'll find teaching tips under the Model Lesson section of each chapter and further teaching tips under the description of each organizer.

### • **Leveled Responses**

Some teachers modeled the introductory level organizer in a large-group mini-lesson and then assigned the three organizers according to the needs of each student. Assessment was instantaneous. Teachers recognized immediately when a task was too easy or too difficult, and had the students try a different level or made a note to assign them the more appropriate level when they reviewed that skill.

How the leveled responses were assigned depended on individual teaching styles. For example, some teachers approached the assignments in the same way they assigned leveled books in guided reading; they explained to their students that every reader is different and requires a different challenge. If students were uncomfortable—or too comfortable—with the activity, the teacher would encourage them to try a different level. These teachers emphasized individual challenge and flexibility. They made sure no student was “trapped” on a particular level.



# What's the Message?



Book title \_\_\_\_\_ Page number/section \_\_\_\_\_

What's being explained or described in this part?

Describe meaningful connections you make with characters, objects, places, ideas, and emotions in the passage. Use the connections you make below to write your own similes.

A simile is a comparison between two unlikely items, linking them with *like* or *as*. For example, if you make a connection with a character's feelings, you might say, "After she yelled at Maniac, Amanda Beale felt like an already chewed piece of bubble gum."

## Connections to my own experiences

### Connection 1

This connection helps me understand ...

### Connection 2

This connection helps me understand ...

## Connections to other sources (movies, books, other people)

### Connection 3

This connection helps me understand ...

## Super Similes



Pick a connection you listed above. Connection # \_\_\_\_\_. What does it make you want to learn more about? Write your answer on the back of this page.



# Contents

Introduction .....	4
--------------------	---

## **The Building Blocks of Writing**

Writing Paragraphs .....	7
Finding a Voice .....	13
Using Figurative Language .....	19

## **Nonfiction Writing**

Description .....	25
Enumeration .....	31
Persuasive Essay .....	37
Compare and Contrast Essay .....	43
Informative How-To Essay .....	49

## **Narrative and Memoir Writing**

Point of View .....	55
Character Development .....	61
Plot Development .....	67
Dialogue .....	73
Memoir .....	79

## **Important Formats for Writing**

Book Reports for Fiction .....	86
Newspaper Article .....	92
Friendly and Business Letters .....	98
Writing to Prompts on High-Stake Tests .....	107



top (*Why I don't like camping*) and having students help you list the details that support this main idea in the left column (*bugs, food, no computer, no cell phone, wild animals*). Be sure students understand that the details you listed are in this order to show the events of the writer's day in sequence. In the right column, list how the writer elaborated each detail. Explain that you'll take notes in the right column; you won't use complete sentences.

### Why I don't like camping...

Details or Reasons	Tell Me More
① bugs	get bitten bug spray gags me
② food	raw hamburgers
③ no contact with the outside world	no computer (no IM) no cell phone (help/emergency)

### How to Teach

Next, show students a blank two-column chart. Ask them to suggest topic ideas for a different paragraph, or provide a topic sentence such as "We love to play games outdoors." Together, brainstorm details (list them in the left column) and then examples or descriptions they can use to explain each detail (list them in the right column). Before beginning to write, reread the list of details and talk about how to arrange them. Is there one idea that should go first? Do some ideas fit together? Would it be best to leave a particular one for the

Name: John Date: Dec 14

### Paragraph Planner

Topic: Making bead bracelets

Topic sentence: It's easy to make bead bracelets

Details or Reasons	Tell Me More
① String	need string—should be stretchy, durable + must fit bead hole
② Beads + patterns	choose colors make a pattern
③ How to organize	be careful— all your beads can fall on floor

How will you end your paragraph? You do lots of

Introductory

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Idea Organizer

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Details or Reasons	Tell Me More

How will you end your paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_

Intermediate

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Starting Off Write

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Details or Reasons	Tell Me More

How will you end your paragraph? \_\_\_\_\_

Go back to the topic sentence you wrote at the top of the page. Change it into a question that will grab a reader's attention. Be sure the main idea of the paragraph remains the same.

Use another piece of paper to write your paragraph.

Challenging



# Writing Paragraphs

**Skill:** Organize a series of related sentences around one topic.

## Overview

A paragraph is a well-organized set of sentences that focuses on one “controlling,” or main, idea. A paragraph has a beginning (topic sentence), a middle (body), and an end (a closing or transition to the next paragraph). The topic sentence states what the paragraph will be about, while the sentences that follow it provide details, examples, and descriptions that explain the main idea. The final sentence is used to bring closure if the paragraph is standing alone. If the paragraph is going to lead to another one, the writer will need to make a smooth transition to the next paragraph.

## Model

Camping is not for me. Last summer I went on a dreaded camping trip with my parents, my sister Katie, Aunt Anita, Uncle John, and my four cousins, Colleen, Danielle, Meghan, and Jennifer. I was the only boy. By the time we got to the campsite and struggled to set up the tents, I was eaten alive by bugs. While I scratched, Mom sprayed insect repellent, which gagged me. She continued to spray it even though it was landing on the food that was being prepared for our first campsite dinner. The food was nothing to write home about. I managed to get a burger that was burnt on the outside and raw on the inside. Mom told me not to worry. This is the same person who told me that I couldn't bring my computer or cell phone. I had no connection with the outside world. This was particularly scary as nightfall approached. It would have been nice to have a phone because I knew there were wild animals not far away. That's why I slept with one eye open the entire first night. The second day was pretty much a repeat of the first. By the second night, I was counting down the days until my return to civilization—video games, fast food, the mall, TV remote, and my own soft bed.

## How to Teach

Begin by writing the model paragraph on chart paper or copying it onto a transparency. Spend a few minutes

examining this model with students. On a piece of chart paper, make a chart like the one on page 8, putting the main idea at the