

Writing the Essay V

The **BIG** Idea

- What do I need to consider when I proof-read and revise my essay?

AGENDA

- Approx. 45 minutes
- I. Warm Up (5 minutes)
 - II. Proof-reading Your Essay (5 minutes)
 - III. Group Evaluation (10 minutes)
 - IV. Revise Your Essay (20 minutes)
 - V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

MATERIALS

- PORTFOLIO PAGES:**
 - Portfolio pages 19-22, Grade 12 Skills Checklist (Applying to College section)
- STUDENT HANDBOOK PAGES:**
 - Student Handbook page 35, Sample Essay (First Draft)
 - Student Handbook page 36, Proof-reading Checklist (2 copies)
 - Student Handbook page 37, Essay Evaluation
- FACILITATOR PAGES:**
 - Facilitator Resource 1, Sample Essay (Revision)
- Overhead and LCD projector
- Notebook paper, pens, and pencils

OBJECTIVES

During this lesson, the student(s) will:

- Describe what to look for when proof-reading an essay.
- Use a checklist to proof-read two students' essays.
- Revise essay based on provided feedback.

OVERVIEW

This is the fifth week, and last lesson, in the essay-writing unit. In this lesson, students will read an essay to review the importance of proof-reading. Next, they'll proof-read two other students' essays, using a proof-reading checklist. Finally, they will revise their own essays using the feedback from each student.

PREPARATION

- List the day's **BIG IDEA** and activities on the board.
- The following handouts need to be made into overhead transparencies or copied onto chart paper:
 - **Student Handbook page 35, Sample Essay (First Draft)**
 - **Student Handbook page 36, Proof-reading Checklist** (2 copies)
 - **Student Handbook page 37, Essay Evaluation**
 - **Facilitator Resource 1, Sample Essay (Revision)**
- Make copies of **Student Handbook page 37, Essay Evaluation** (two copies for each student).

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

You may wish to solicit help from a senior English teacher to provide proof-reading assistance for students who need it.

In **Activity I**, you may wish to skip the proof-reading exercise (**Student Handbook page 35, Sample Essay (First Draft)**) if your students will find it childish.

For **Activity II**, you may wish to use a proof-reading rubric already in use in English class rather than the **Student Handbook page 36, Proof-reading Checklist**.

In **Activity III**, you may wish to offer to proof-read the work of students who prefer not to share their essays with classmates.

ACTIVITY STEPS

I. Warm Up (5 minutes)

1. [As students enter, ask them to read their **Student Handbook page 35, Sample Essay (First Draft)**. As they read this essay, ask them to look for any errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Circle any mistakes and write the correction in the space above.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** The essay you just read was on its way to becoming a strong essay. But how do you think this writer would come across to an admissions committee? [Take answers from a few volunteers.] Lots of spelling and grammatical errors make the writer seem sloppy and careless — as if she didn't give the essay much time or attention. This is *not* the impression you want to give an admissions committee, is it?
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Last week, you had a chance to work on your draft essays. Even if you're feeling pretty good about your essay now, it's not done yet! It is critical that you proof-read and revise your essay. In today's lesson, we'll talk about what to look for when you proof-read your essay. Next you'll break into small groups of three to proof-read each other's essays. Then you'll spend the rest of the period using this feedback to revise your essays.

II. Proof-reading Your Essay (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a look at the draft essay you just read. What were some of the errors you found?
2. [Take a few answers from volunteers. You may also want to show **Facilitator Resource 1, Sample Essay (Revision)** on an overhead projector. Point out a few different types of errors, including spelling, grammar, and punctuation.]
3. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Let's take a look at some of the things we should look for when we review our essays today. [Have students turn to their **Student Handbook page 36, Proof-reading Checklist** and review the list.]

III. Group Evaluation (10 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Now it's time to share your essays in small groups. You will read and proof-read two other students' essays. To guide your feedback, please use the proof-reading checklist we just reviewed.

2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** I'd like you to read each student's essay two times. As you read through the essay, consider the proof-reading checklist.
3. [Divide students into groups of three and give them about 10 minutes to read and proof-read each other's essays. You may want to alert them halfway through this time to wrap up and work on the next person's essay.]
4. [Give students a few minutes before they break up their groups to review and discuss their feedback.]

IV. Revise Your Essay (20 minutes)

1. [Give students the remaining time to use the feedback they just received and the proof-reading checklist to revise their essays in their class notebooks. Provide paper for those who didn't bring their essay to class.]

V. Wrap Up (5 minutes)

1. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Once you've incorporated your partner's proof-reading notes to create an almost-final draft, you're ready to share your essay with two trusted adults – a teacher and someone else whose writing ability you respect. Give them a copy of your essay and the **Student Handbook page 37, Essay Evaluation**. Be prepared to carefully consider any changes they suggest. [Give each student two copies of **Student Handbook page 37, Essay Evaluation**.]
2. **SAY SOMETHING LIKE:** Terrific work today, everybody. That's the final lesson in our "Applying to College" unit. Over the past six weeks, you've demonstrated that you have the tools and the skills to complete a strong college application. We'll be talking more about steps to college next week, when we'll learn more about finding financial aid. As you continue your college applications, please use **Portfolio pages 3-4, College Application Tracker** to keep your eye on approaching deadlines, and don't hesitate to ask me or the school counselor if you need help.

SKILLS CHECKLIST

Direct students' attention to **Portfolio pages 19-22, Grade 12 Skills Checklist**. Have students complete the skills checklist questions for Applying to College skills.

APPLYING TO COLLEGE

I can...

Identify and keep track of the admissions requirements at the colleges of my choice.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Complete a college application.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify one or more personal strengths of interest to an employer or college admissions officer.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Identify an experience that provides appropriate evidence of one or more of my personal strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well
Create an essay that effectively conveys my personal strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/> not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> somewhat	<input type="checkbox"/> very well

Sample Essay (Revision)

Below is the revision with corrected words and phrases in bold.

I have wanted to be **a** teacher since I fell in love with Miss Cailor in second grade. In first grade, reading had been a struggle, **and** the **adventures** of Dick and Jane hardly seemed worth the effort. But in second grade, Miss Cailor helped me make sense of all those letters. Before long, I was off and running, brimming with the giddy self-confidence of a brand new reader. It wasn't just the books she brought to life. We learned number facts by **playing** a variation of Bingo, with treats as the reward for a job well done. We learned to knit on simple looms. **For** Christmas that year, I gave everybody scarves, stretched to **their** maximum length so I could finish faster. Suddenly, I felt competent and eager to learn everything. It was like Miss Cailor **had** unlocked the doors to a magical kingdom.

At age seven, I **knew** what I wanted to be when I grew up. In high school, I joined **Future Teachers** of America as soon as I could. When our next-door **neighbor** approached me about tutoring her sons in reading the summer after my sophomore year, I volunteered. They were in second and third grade, already fantastic athletes, though less successful in school. They reported dutifully to my **mother's** kitchen every weekday, bringing the smell of the playground indoors, and probably wishing they could be elsewhere. I'd grown up with sisters, and dusty little boys were like **aliens** to me. They struggled through easy-reader classics **like** "Billy Brown the Baby Sitter," and I wondered what I could do to unlock the magic of books.

That is how we came to make a pilgrimage to the Cleveland Public Library, a 45-minute bus ride from our small suburban town. Cleveland might as well have been a foreign country. My family ventured downtown once a year to visit Santa Claus and **take** in the Christmas lights. **I'd** been on the bus exactly twice, and both times my dad had been waiting for me on the other end. My sense of direction was non-existent, **and** I was shy about asking strangers for help. I was terrified to make the trip, especially with two little boys in tow. But, for me, the "big" library beckoned like Emerald City, full of undiscovered **treasures**.

On the day of the **trip**, **as** the three of us walked the **two** long blocks to the bus stop, my head was bursting with questions: What if we missed the bus? What if we got on the wrong bus? What if we got off at the wrong stop? What if the boys escaped my grasp, and I had to tell **their** mother they were missing?

The bus arrived at the scheduled time — a miracle! — in a whoosh of air brakes and a plume of exhaust. And then we were walking up the steps, coins tinkling in the fare box. We settled into our seats. The bus **passed** houses much fancier than **our** own, and we waited for reassuring glimpses of Lake **Erie** through the trees.

By the time we reached the library, most of my anxiety was gone. The boys raced me up the impressive marble steps and flung open the heavy doors, and we entered a brand new world. **It's** a feeling that sticks with me, even now.

That summer, I learned how little I knew about teaching reading, and how eager I was to learn more. I was already intrepid in my pursuit of this mission, and one step closer to being the inspiring teacher I want to be!

Sample Essay (First Draft)

Carefully review this essay for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Circle any mistakes and write the correction in the space above.

I have wanted to be teacher since I fell in love with Miss Cailor in second grade. In first grade, reading had been a struggle, the adventures of Dick and Jane hardly seemed worth the effort. But in second grade, Miss Cailor helped me make sense of all those letters. Before long, I was off and running, brimming with the giddy self-confidence of a brand new reader. It wasn't just the books she brought to life. We learned number facts by playing a variation of Bingo, with treats as the reward for a job well done. We learned to knit on simple looms. For Christmas that year, I gave everybody scarves, stretched to their maximum length so I could finish faster. Suddenly, I felt competent and eager to learn everything. It was like Miss Cailor has unlocked the doors to a magical kingdom.

At age seven, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up. In high school, I joined future teachers of America as soon as I could. When our next-door neighbor approached me about tutoring her sons in reading the summer after my sophomore year, I volunteered. They were in second and third grade, already fantastic athletes, though less successful in school. They reported dutifully to my mother's kitchen every weekday, bringing the smell of the playground indoors, and probably wishing they could be elsewhere. I'd grown up with sisters, and dusty little boys were like aliens to me. They struggled through easy-reader classics like "Billy Brown the Baby Sitter," and I wondered what I could do to unlock the magic of books.

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On the day of the trip. As the three of us walked the too long blocks to the bus stop, my head was bursting with questions: What if we missed the bus? What if we got on the wrong bus? What if we got off at the wrong stop. What if the boys escaped my grasp, and I had to tell their mother they were missing?

The bus arrived at the scheduled time — a miracle! — in a whoosh of air brakes and a plume of exhaust. And then we were walking up the steps, coins tinkling in the fare box. We settled into our seats. The bus past houses much fancier than our own, and we waited for reassuring glimpses of Lake Erie through the trees.

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Proof-reading Checklist

- ☐ Check your spelling and grammar carefully. Use the spell-check and grammar-check on your word processing program, but remember this won't catch every error.
- ☐ Use a printed copy to proof-read. It's easier to proof-read a printed copy than catch errors on a computer screen.
- ☐ Read your essay aloud to yourself. If it doesn't sound right, check your grammar. If it doesn't flow, you may need transitions.
- ☐ Check for proper capitalization.
 - First word of a sentence
 - Names of people and places (e.g., Future Farmers of America, Cornell University)
- ☐ Make sure subjects and verbs agree.
 - Jon runs home every night after work.
 - We run home every night after work.
- ☐ Make sure subjects and possessive pronouns agree.
 - Loren will finish her essay.
 - The students will finish their essays.
- ☐ Use plurals and possessives correctly.
 - Dogs (more than one dog)
 - Dog's leash (the leash of one dog)
 - Dogs' leashes (the leashes of many dogs)
- ☐ Use the following words correctly. (Spell-check won't help you!)
 - There (a place) Please put your essay over there.
 - Their (possessive) The students finished their essays.
 - They're (they are) They're writing the best essays ever written.
 - It's (it is) It's almost time for the bell to ring.
 - Its (possessive) The dog chased its tail.
 - To (a preposition) Send your application to URI.
 - Too (also) He's applying there, too.
 - Two (the number) Two people from my high school will attend Freshman Orientation next week.
- ☐ Use punctuation to show where your sentences start and end.
 - Wrong: Read each sentence aloud if you think you should stop use a period if you think you should pause use a comma.
 - Right: Read each sentence aloud. If you think you should stop, use a period. If you think you should pause, use a comma.
- ☐ Avoid sentence fragments.
 - Wrong: Seemed like a bad omen.
 - Right: The impending thunderstorm seemed like a bad omen.

Essay Evaluation

Thank you for taking the time to read my essay. As you read through it, please consider the criteria in the left-hand column. Next to each, circle the score that best describes the essay. If you have specific comments, write them in the last column, or use the back of this page.

CRITERIA A good essay is:	QUALITY: How well did this essay do this?				COMMENTS
	4 Very well	3 Fairly well	2 Somewhat	1 Not at all	
Focused	Describes a single event or experience. Clearly answers the essay question.	Focuses mostly on single event, strays some; needs clearer link to question.	Focus isn't clear; needs better link to question.	Covers too much information and/or does not answer question.	
Convincing	Supports claims with specific, strong details.	Some evidence provided, but not very specific.	Little evidence provided; evidence is weak or vague.	Claims not supported by any evidence.	
Descriptive	Provides several vivid details; readers feel like they're there.	Some good details are provided.	Few details provided; may be vague or unclear.	No details provided.	
Organized	Opening grabs reader; purpose is clear; transitions are logical; ends with strong conclusion.	Opening does not grab reader; needs better transitions; ending not clear.	Purpose is unclear; weak transitions; ending does not provide a logical conclusion.	Purpose is unclear; no transitions between thoughts; ends without clear, logical conclusion.	
Personal	Shows clear, insightful thoughts and feelings; reflects personal strengths.	Shows some personal perspective and strengths, but not very revealing.	Shows minor or trivial personal reaction; little or weak reference to personal strengths.	No personal insight; perspective is vague or a cliché; does not reflect personal strengths.	
Easy to read	Language is conversational, easy to read aloud; writing is clear.	Language could be clearer; a few phrases are too formal or informal.	Much of the language is unclear, too formal or informal.	Most language is too formal <u>or</u> inappropriate use of slang; several phrases unclear.	
Grammatically correct	Does not contain grammatical, spelling, or punctuation errors.	Few errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation.	Several distracting errors.	Many errors, making it difficult to read.	

