

Writing to Learn

THE PARAGRAPH



McGRAW-HILL INTERNATIONAL EDITIONS
English Language Series

LOU and MARILYNN SPAVENTA

Writing to Learn

THE PARAGRAPH

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1997

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WRITING TO LEARN: THE PARAGRAPH
International Edition 2001

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Some ancillaries, including electronic and print components, may not be available to
customers outside the United States.

10 09 08
20 09 08
PMP SEP

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Spaventa, Louis J.

Writing to learn / Louis J. Spaventa, Marilyn L. Spaventa. – 1st ed.

Includes indexes.

Contents: [bk. 1] The sentence – bk. 2. The paragraph – bk. 3. From paragraph to essay
– bk. 4. The essay.

ISBN 0-07-230753-6 (bk. 1) – ISBN 0-07-230754-4 (bk. 2) – ISBN 0-07-230775-2
(bk. 3) – ISBN 0-07-230756-0 (bk. 4)

2. English language—Textbooks for foreign speakers. 2. English
language—Rhetoric—Problems, exercises, etc. 3. Report writing—Problems, exercises,
etc. I. Spaventa, Marilyn. II. Title.

PE1128.S697 2000

808'.042—dc21

99-057820
CIP

www.mhhe.com

When ordering this title, use ISBN 0-07-118829-0

Printed in Singapore

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PREFACE

To the Instructor

WRITING TO LEARN is a four-book ESL writing series aimed at adult learners of English from diverse educational backgrounds. The series focuses both on the process of writing and on writing as a product. The goal of the series is to help students learn how to write for academic and vocational success. Each book in the series makes use of student skills and experience to generate writing topics while providing guided practice of appropriate vocabulary and grammar, English writing conventions, writing, editing, rewriting, and journal writing. Each chapter of the first three books in the series begins with a visual image that leads to discussion and writing. The fourth text uses photographs and readings as prewriting prompts. WRITING TO LEARN begins with an elementary text designed to improve student ability to write accurate and descriptive English sentences. The upper elementary to intermediate level text focuses on writing paragraphs. The third or intermediate level text takes the student from paragraph writing to organizing, writing, and editing essays. The final book at the advanced level concentrates on improving student essay writing skills and enhancing essay writing style.

Each book in the series is divided into six units. Books 1 and 2, *The Sentence* and *The Paragraph*, have two chapters in each unit while books 3 and 4, *From Paragraph to Essay* and *Writing Essays*, have just six units each. The reason for the difference is to create more and shorter lessons for the elementary to lower intermediate levels, and fewer but longer lessons at the intermediate to advanced levels of writing.

Here are the unit themes:

Unit One: Myself and Others

Unit Two: Family and Relationships

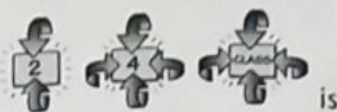
Unit Three: Education

Unit Four: Work

Unit Five: Leisure and Recreation

Unit Six: The Natural World

Students who work through several texts in the series will have the opportunity to explore the same theme from different perspectives.



The use of icons to indicate pair and group work is meant to facilitate classroom organization while eliminating repetitive instructions. Notice that the number indicates the total number of students needed to form the group. Be sure to follow each chapter in the Instructor's Edition for helpful suggestions and instructions for activities that are not included in the student text.

Organization

Each unit and chapter is divided into the following four sections:

- A. Prewriting** In *The Paragraph*, each chapter begins with prewriting activities based on a picture story. Prewriting activities include vocabulary learning, pair work, group work, and discussion. It is important to begin writing lessons with something to talk about and the words necessary to talk. We encourage a lot of conversation before the student writes.
- B. Structure** Grammar activities include review of the basic English grammar necessary for the writing in the chapter. While the structure section introduces grammar with example, explanation, and practice exercises, *The Paragraph* is not meant to be a grammar text. Grammar has been incorporated as a tool for expressing one's thoughts rather than as an end in itself.
- C. Writing and Editing** Activities in this section are devoted to improving writing skills, especially employing the vocabulary and grammar practiced in sections A and B. Activities in this section develop from controlled to creative practice. You will notice that we have not included sample student sentences and paragraphs for students to follow in the writing section. In many texts, writing samples are provided with the expectation that students will diligently work with the sample to produce their own personalized writing. In fact, this rarely happens and students are more likely to be constricted by the model. In this series, the writing models appear in the structure and editing sections to encourage students to alter the samples and make the language their own.
- D. Journal Assignment** The personal, unedited, daily writing practice that journal writing affords is an important part of the process of writing well in English. To introduce students to journal writing, there is a journal writing assignment at the end of each chapter in this second book. Other texts in the series provide more extensive lists of topics. These assignments allow students to synthesize and expand what they are studying in each unit.

You will need to decide how you will respond to student journal writing. Here are a few suggestions.

- Respond only to the content of what is written in the journal.
- Look for positive examples of vocabulary and grammar usage consistent with each chapter and highlight or underline them in student journals.
- Tell students you are going to read their journals with an eye toward a particular kind of writing: a descriptive sentence, an opinion, a comparison, an analysis or explanation, and so on. Then identify that writing when you come across it in student journals.

- Ask students to read something from their journals during class time. Ask the students listening to respond in writing to what they hear.
- Each week, read selected journal entries aloud to the entire class to inspire and foster respect among students of each other as writers.

Appendices Each text contains appendices of grammar and writing conventions for student reference. During your first class meeting, when you familiarize students with the book, make sure you take some time to point out the appendices and what they contain. Students too often discover appendices at the end of a course.

Instructor's Edition The Instructor's Edition of *The Paragraph* contains chapter-by-chapter notes of explanation, advice, suggestions, and reproducible quizzes for each chapter.

Web Site The *Writing to Learn* web site can be located through The McGraw-Hill, Inc. web site at <www.mhhe.com> This interactive site should be useful to instructors and students. For instructors, the site can be a virtual teacher's room, where instructors can raise questions and exchange ideas and activities related to this series. Students can post and read writing assignments for each chapter and thus expand the walls of their classroom.

The Paragraph

This second book in the series emphasizes writing paragraphs. Picture stories are used to elicit vocabulary, discussion, and student opinion. The instructor will find it easy to order sentences into a paragraph based on the picture sequence in each chapter if he or she chooses to do so. Some exercises in the book involving manipulation of language within a paragraph give students the opportunity to work with paragraphs. However, student success in using this book should be based on ability to create a meaningful paragraph from the beginning step of brainstorming information to redrafting for style, grammaticality, effect on the reader, and content. So while one goal of the text is to expose students to the form of the English paragraph, another goal is to give them some thinking tools to use in creating their own paragraphs.

The First Lesson

Begin your first class with an exercise that helps your students become familiar with this text. You can do this orally, in writing, or both. Students might work in pairs or small groups. A familiarization exercise is contained in the **To the Student** part of the introduction to *The Paragraph*.

Question your students about the names of the six units, the number of chapters in each unit, the number of sections in each chapter, the number and names of the appendices, and their thoughts about the use of each chapter section and appendix. Create and distribute a follow-up activity that reviews the text organization.

If you do the exercise orally, use the cooperative question-and-answer technique called "Numbered heads together." Have each student in a pair or group count off: 1, 2 or 1, 2, 3, 4. Tell the class that before you call on anyone to answer, students who know the answer in a pair or group should tell the answer to their partner or group mates. Then pick a number. When you call "Number 1," for example, only students who are "Number 1" may raise their hands to answer. If the answer is correct, go on to the next question. If it is not, ask another "Number 1." In this way, you can begin teaching students to rely on their partners or group mates. We encourage students to turn to each other as resources for language learning. This is an essential element of process writing.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, we acknowledge the debt of thanks we owe to our students at Santa Barbara City College, whose interests and concerns were the catalyst that led us to embark upon this writing project. We would like to thank as well our colleagues at City College and in the larger field of ESOL writing, who often made valuable suggestions to us about our manuscripts.

This book and this series would not have been written without the encouragement and persistence of Tim Stookesberry and Aurora Martinez, at McGraw-Hill, and of our series editor, the inimitable, indefatigable, and empathetic Bob Hemmer.

Should you have any suggestions or comments, we would be happy to receive them from you in writing, via email, or at our web site. You can write to us care of the ESL Department, Santa Barbara City College, Santa Barbara, California, 93109, USA. Our email address is spaventa@sbcc.net.

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