

Advanced Writing Techniques Course Overview Exercise

Recall the rules we learned throughout the term:

1. Choose a suitable design for your outline and stick to it
 - Consider scope (too wide/too narrow)
 - For stories consider order, major events, level of detail
 - Use concise, precise terms in your outline
 - One item per point
2. Consider the paragraph to be your building block for your writing.
 - The first sentence sets the scene/scene/ tone for the paragraph
 - In narration and description, the paragraph sometimes begins with a concise, comprehensive statement serving to hold together the details that follow
 - Example: The breeze served us admirably.
 - Example: Elusive birds filled Mr. Foreman with despair.
 - The opening sentence can also indicate by its subject the direction the paragraph is going to take
 - Example: He picked up the potato gun and began his hunt.
 - Example: Goguma sales pitches permeated the air.
 - Example: Curious facial expressions filled the room.
3. Use the active voice
 - Omit needless words
 - Use the subject-verb-object sentence structure format to avoid being wordy
 - Make every word *tell*
 - Example: There was a horse galloping across the field gracefully → A horse galloped gracefully across the field.
 - Example: The reason I chose a chainsaw was because it is good for destroying large numbers of zombies → The chainsaw's zombie-destroying power drew me to it.
4. Use the positive form
 - Make clear, definite assertions
 - Example: didn't remember → forgot
5. Use definite, specific, concrete language
 - If your sentence admits a doubt, your writing will lack authority
 - Example: I don't think you are a very good person → You are a bad person. (which one stings more?)
 - Example: I do not think studying math is a very good use of my time → Math is a waste of time.

6. Express similar ideas in similar form
 - Grammatical example (parallel structure)
 - Example: I like to ride my bike, swimming, and dancing → I like biking, swimming, and dancing.
 - Same idea extends to consecutive sentences that express similar ideas
7. Keep related words together to avoid confused meaning
 - Be sure that modifying phrases are placed as closely as possible to the thing they are describing
 - Example: Miss Papile called her parents back in Canada to tell them the love of her life, Mr. Kwak, had bought her an engagement ring for just 50 cents → Miss Papile called her parents back in Canada for just 50 cents to tell them that the love of her life, Mr. Kwak, had bought her an engagement ring.
 - Example: While running down the street, my wig flew off → While I was running down the street, my wig flew off.
8. Avoid fancy words
 - Don't try to make sentences around a fancy new word you've learned; think of what you want to say, and how best to say it.
9. Vivid writing = focus on the five senses

Zombie Apocalypse Story Chain Blogging Exercise

- Visit the site and add to the story chain
 - <http://christoper2012.globalblogs.org/zombie-apocalypse/>
 - Write 1-3 sentences
 - You can choose any topic as funny or ridiculous as you like – as long as you follow the rules we've learned above in your writing.
 - Everyone in class will make at least one contribution to the thread and then we will share the completed story in class
- Next you will start your own story chain about a zombie apocalypse on a blog you create on wordpress.com
 - Introduction to blogging video: <http://www.commoncraft.com/video/blogs>
 - Write 1-3 sentences
 - You can choose any topic as funny or ridiculous as you like – as long as you follow the rules we've learned above in your writing.
 - You should also make a sketch of each portion of the story, take a picture and attach it to your post.
- Add links to other story chains

- You must make at least 10 total contributions to stories started by at least four different people in the class.
- Once the story you initiated is complete, you have to map out the story in an outline
 - Then you must think about how the plot could have been better organized if an outline had been set up before starting the writing process.
 - Rearrange the story as you like, creating a new outline
- Re-write the story according to your new and improved outline, including and excluding contributions and plot points (and illustrations) as you see fit
- Submit your completed story next class

One thing I need to figure out is how to make it so that all the students can create several threads on the same page. This will make it much easier for them to contribute to other story chains. Other than that, I don't foresee any major challenges. Students love writing story chains, they love zombies, and they love computer-based exercises. The first time I do this exercise, we will use the computer lab to make sure everyone is comfortable with the process. For future blogging story chain exercises, students will be expected to do it outside of class as part of a homework assignment.

This is how the story starts.

The conditions could not have been more perfect for scuba diving. Rays of light pierced through the water illuminating the colorful coral and fish. There I was, hovering above a beautiful reef in El Nido, The Philippines, when I saw a man with dead eyes, arms outstretched, stumbling towards me awkwardly.