

WRITING SKILLS LESSONS FOR DEVELOPING EXTENDED WRITING (Formal essay style) AND CHANGING RECOUNT TO ACCOUNT USING NOMINALISATION AND CONNECTIVES

(This set of lessons is based on 40 minute periods and has been used with Elective Modern History classes in Stage 5)

Begin by introducing what you are going to do as an exercise in learning the steps which are necessary to take when writing accounts (argumentative essays in the old sense) and that you are trying to teach them to develop their writing from *recount* writing – just telling the historical story - into *account* writing - incorporating cause and effect – and that, like most things, there are ways and means to achieve this and, therefore, achieve better marks. Make sure that the students keep a record of all of this process and keep all of this material. At the end of the week's lessons you will be collecting ALL the material so they must keep each step. No throwing out is allowed. This is a critical learning exercise for them. Every draft, every attempt must be labelled and kept.

Lesson 1 Be sure that the students have a set amount of information on the topic you are going to write on and that it is the **same** information for all students. This may be in the form of a handout or a section of a textbook they are using. The best method to ensure that the students have, in outline, the same basic facts is for you to supply them. Discuss the meaning of those facts without too much amplification but enough for them to understand the cause and effect of each. Work through the text with the students and come to an agreement on the main facts.

After the class prepare a summarised list of the facts gleaned from the lesson's planning and reading to ensure that the students receive the same information. Put them into the order of the text in the same manner which a student would use when making notes from a text. You may find it useful to separate some facts which you would generally consider linked together. This will give the better students an opportunity to link them together later and will be an example to the weaker students as to how to go about doing this. A good example of the final list of facts is attached, which is an extract from Modern Quest, by Low, Masterson et al.

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Lesson 2 Step 1.
Ask the students to list the four most important **facts** in the list **in order of most important to least important** using the letters next to each point. Point out to them that it has to be their own work. They are not to discuss it with anyone. Point out also that there is NO SINGLE SOLUTION but that everyone thinks differently and approaches such tasks differently. Now they have a preliminary list of four letters. Label this selection as List One (5 minutes max.)

Step 2.
Pair (or in threes but no more) the students with students they would not normally work with, thus separating friends and making the students work with people who think differently. Ask the new pairing to compare their choice of facts and, if different (and the chances are they will even if only in

order), discuss and negotiate until they come up with a **common order**. Insist on them coming to an appropriate common conclusion. If the class is large turn the pair into a foursome and go through the exercise again. (5 minutes maximum for pairs and each second round quarterings). This list of letters becomes List TWO.

Step 3.

Ask each group (2 or 4 students) to place on the board their list of letters – **note only the list of letters**. Take the time for the remainder of the students to digest this list and realise that (hopefully) each list will be different even if only slightly. The greater number of pairings or quarterings, the more likely that there will be at least one common listing. Not a problem. Most should be different.

Step 4.

Get a member of the pairing/quartering to explain their reasoning behind their choice of order as they write it on the board. Allow only 1-2 minutes for each pairing to do this otherwise it drags. It may be best to just ask why the first choice if you have a large class. Be aware throughout this part of the exercise that the other students do not change their list because 'so and so' has written their list on the board and 'he/she is the best student in the class'. Get a representative from each group up to the board at the same time. This alleviates the problem.

Note: At this point you will probably (should?) get some squeals because the better students will have taken the opportunity to include some of the other 6-7 issues as sub-issues of the main four points and other students will complain that they did not have that opportunity. As you have not excluded this possibility say so. Get the students to explain why they included extra sub-issues and it will show the weaker students how connections are made. If the students begin to lose interest move on to the next stage in class. I have found that they maintain their interest because, at this point in the lessons, it starts to become competitive.

Step 5.

Homework. The students, having listened to the explanations provided by their peers, now have to go home and refine their own, individual list. At this point they have heard everyone's point of view. This list will be list THREE. As part of their homework they are now to include the detail from the information given so that their third list is, in fact, the points of importance. You will find that some students will not change their list. They will be happy with it.

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Lesson 3

Step 1.

Students return with their final list. Each student reads out his/her list by note form rather than letter form but putting the letter order on the board as a visual clue to the rest of the class. This allows all students to realise that different emphases remain. If the class is large then choose about 10-12. (1-2 minutes each)

Step 2.

Now get the students to write their own introduction based on the list and **following the order established by their own list THREE beginning with the most important point and ending with the least important.** Tell the students to label this piece of writing Introduction One but do not give them any other guidance as to how you want the introduction written. Some students will want to change their order again. Let them but warn them that they might get confused (unless, of course, you have realised that their selection is inappropriate in which case you would have intervened earlier and given them some guidance). (10 minutes)

Step 3.

Students read out a selection of introductions, say 6-8. Make sure that you select from different pairings/quarterings and different levels of writing, reinforcing that each introduction is different (as it will be I hope) and just as valid as any other one. Be very positive at this stage and give all the readers personal and specific encouragement. Some will just write out each note point in a full sentence. Some will combine ideas thus limiting or increasing the number of sentences. You will also find that some include a topic sentence and then a sentence for each point making a satisfactory five sentence introduction. The better students will begin to give examples as well as explanation. Ask the remaining students which they thought was the best, not necessarily the most detailed or the clearest, but which they thought came closest to **their** idea of what an introduction should be. Discuss why.

Step 4

Now is the time to give some real guidance on their writing styles and for you to intervene directly in the process. You will have noted those you considered better and those you considered weaker in particular. Take one or two of the weaker ones and one or two of the stronger ones and work with the student orally in front of the class to improve the introduction making sure that the better students realise that theirs too require emendation. **Some areas you might consider are language level, logical structure, sense, words left out – all of which are the mechanics of writing. At no time criticise the choice of the points written about. There is a real feeling of ownership of these points by now and if you reinforce positively the choice of points and criticise only the literacy styles, the students remain positive and engaged.** Choose very carefully whose work you discuss as this can be a very threatening exercise. At all times, reinforce the value of the writing in a positive manner and make the point each time that the writer has made and continues to make great progress. (Remainder of class time – 20 minutes).

Homework. Students go home and reassess their own introduction and rewrite it, hopefully applying what they have learned. This becomes Introduction Two. Ask them to write down what they changed and why.

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Lesson 4

Step 1.

Students return with their finished introduction. Ask the students generally if they changed anything major in their introduction? Those who say 'yes' ask them what and why and ask them to read out what they wrote firstly and then what they wrote secondly. In front of the other students suggest improvements in discussion with the student. Again be careful who you do this with and reinforce the positives in the exercise. You should make the point that all students will learn from this exercise no matter how good they think their writing is. Allow most of the lesson for this exercise. This is a very important turning point but you have to be incredibly on the ball and confident that you can suggest emendation logically, critically and sympathetically enough to encourage them to change **because they want to and can see the logic of it** not because they have to. Ask them continuously 'what would you suggest here if we want to say ..., or suggest, or argue that ...'.

NOTE By the end of this exercise you want each student to have achieved an introduction which contains a topic sentence - in which they answer the question using words from the question - and at least four sentences stating their arguments. At no time should you insist that there is only one answer. Use the work they have done and simply encourage them to amend it to suit their introduction not your view of what it should be in a perfect world. Allow 30 minutes. Some of the better students will be satisfied with what they have written. Don't let them be so. Challenge them to develop their work further. Keep suggesting areas they can improve. These better students will be the ones for whom this exercise is, in some ways, the most difficult. They know they can write well. Teachers have been telling them for years, so why should they re-learn? Tell them that you, too, continue to learn to improve your skills.

Step 2.

Get them to write their first paragraph. **Now** tell them that the paragraph **MUST** have a topic sentence using some of the **words from the question**, the **first idea** in their introduction and then some **EXPLANATION** and, if possible, **AN EXAMPLE**. This is the **SEE** method. .

Statement (followed by)
Explanation (followed by)
Evidence

For homework (or in class, depending on the time available) they write the remaining paragraphs, in the order established in their introduction, and include explanation and evidence. They also write a concluding paragraph in which they restate their arguments. They bring the completed work to class the next day. **Ask three to five of your average students to bring their work to you at the beginning of the next day before school.**

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INTRODUCING NOMINALISATION

Before you go into the next class select three paragraphs from different students' work and transfer them to a format which you can display to the class – hand written overheads written in double spacing, typed overhead in large print (18 cpi and double spaced), or on a computer for use with a data projector (18 cpi, double spaced).

You can now move the students on to a further step called Nominalisation. This develops their writing to (a) force them to put argument in and (b) to allow them to express themselves in different ways.

Lesson 5 Nominalisation. Take one of the paragraphs from one of the students. The example below is a piece of work from one of the students and is based very clearly on the content of the table which was the information supplied to the students for the original discussion. The topic was:

What brought about the end of the Qing Empire in 1911?

The most important thing that brought about the end of the Qing Empire in 1911 (words from the question) **was the consistent losses in wars** (point B, this student considered this the most important point) . **China lost the first 'opium war' of 1839—42 to Britain. It lost the second 'opium war' of 1856—60 to Britain and France. It lost to Japan in the Sino—Japanese War of 1894—95 which was the most humiliating defeat as Japan had always been an inferior country. China also lost to a multinational force in the Boxer Rebellion during 1899 and 1900.** (the remaining information taken directly from the Details box)

This is a simple paragraph which contains **information (and additional information)** and some **evidence (although it is not used effectively)**. It also contains an **additive connective**.

Including only the basic information still tells the reader about the losses of the wars and makes sense on its own and would be, in effect, a simple explanation. It is a series of simple sentences and is typical of Year 7 or 8 work.

China lost the first 'opium war'. It lost the second 'opium war'. It lost to Japan. China also lost to a multinational force in the Boxer Rebellion.

Adding in the additional information makes the writing more detailed but still statements.

China lost the first 'opium war' of 1839—42 to Britain. It lost the second 'opium war' of 1856—60 to Britain and France. It lost to Japan in the Sino—Japanese War of 1894—95. China also lost to a multinational force in the Boxer Rebellion during 1899 and 1900.

Nominalisation, naming an action or an attribute, however, will force the student to give reasons by presenting evidence to support their statements and answer the EXPLAIN question properly. To take the first statement.

China lost the first 'opium war' of 1839—42 to Britain.

Using nominalisation, change the verb "lost" into the noun form "loss" and end up with a sentence which is obviously incomplete

China's loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842 ...

This is now the time to talk about **connectives**. Give the students a range of **cause/effect** connectives such as

consequently	an outcome of
accordingly	therefore
as a result of	because
however	under the circumstances

Discuss which ones could be used. Some examples are as follows:

As a result of **China's loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842**
An outcome of **China's loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842**
Because of **China's loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842 ...**
China's loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842 consequently led to ...
Because of the **loss of the first opium war to Britain in 1839-1842** China

In each case the students realise that more information is needed as the sentence is, obviously, incomplete.

Nominalisation can also be used to change adjectives and, again, force the issue of evidence particularly with the use of a causal connective.

The decisions made by the Government were **legitimate**. (statement)

Despite the **legitimacy** of the Government's decisions ... (incomplete)

The students now work through their first paragraph and identify the statements they have made by highlighting or underlining each statement in a particular colour. Then they identify the verbs and adjectives they could change to the noun form. Using connectives they restructure their sentences so that they are forced to provide supporting evidence. That supporting evidence can be found in the original text which you supplied to them at the beginning of Lesson One and from which these facts were developed.

For homework they complete the essay and hand in EVERYTHING they have done in this exercise in to you for marking. You mark the final essay commenting, not only on the content, but on the progress (hopefully) they have shown. Certainly there should be progress from the essay they submitted at the end of Lesson Four.

The topic is What brought about the end of the Qing Empire in 1911?

Possible causes	Details
A. Leadership of Empress Dowager Cixi	Real ruler of Qing empire; very strongly opposed to foreigners and anyone who wanted to make changes in China; used terror and bribery to remove her Chinese enemies.
B. Consistent losses in wars	Lost first 'opium war' (1839—42) to Britain; lost second 'opium war', (1856—60) to Britain and France; lost to Japan in Sino—Japanese War (1894—95), the most humiliating defeat as Japan had always been an inferior; lost to a multinational force in the Boxer Rebellion (1899—1900)
C. Very poor economy	The empire was bankrupt: very high taxes, widespread famine, huge foreign debt, wasteful government expenditure; millions of beggars, rapidly increasing population; regular natural disasters, e.g. floods, earthquakes; lack of modern technology.
D. Growth of local Chinese officials compared with Emperor	The officials were meant to work for the Emperor. From the 1860s, they built up their own private armies with foreign training and weapons. They sent their sons to new foreign military schools, not the traditional Chinese ones.
E. Breakdown of traditional education system and values	The traditional leaders were men — Confucian scholars — who valued the past and all things unchanging. By 1900, they put more emphasis on making money and having a private army. This led to a lack of respect for and disobedience towards the old leaders and ideas.
F Leadership of Dr Sun Yat-sen	Educated as a doctor in Japan and the USA, he became a revolutionary. He wanted to overthrow the Qing empire and to set up a republic in China. He tried many unsuccessful uprisings in the south, from the 1890s. He inspired many educated Chinese with his three principles for a strong China free of foreign control —nationalism, democracy, people's livelihood.
G. Influence of foreign ideas, such as nationalism, democracy, republicanism	Some Chinese students travelled overseas and learnt of the growth of independent nations in the nineteenth century. They learnt of nations without emperors. Foreign traders and missionaries also helped to spread these ideas in China.
H. Growth of trade with foreign countries	China traded silk and tea to Europe but the British smuggled opium into China which was much more profitable. Many Chinese merchants became very rich and powerful. They bribed officials. Many traditional industries, such as silk, collapsed against competition from cheap European cotton.
I. Growth of anti-foreign feelings among Chinese	Many Chinese were angry at the constant humiliation of China by more powerful foreigners. They wanted to strengthen China to be able to resist these foreigners and remove them from China. They believed China was so weak because it was ruled by an 'un-Chinese' family, the Qing. It was their Chinese duty to rebel against this foreign family.
J. No adult heir to the empire in 1908	The Empress Dowager Cixi eliminated or terrorised members of the royal family who could challenge her control of the empire. This left only a four-year-old boy, Pu Yi, to become the last Emperor after she died in 1908.