

A Practical Application for All Nine of the IEW Units

Ideas on how all nine units integrate into writing assignments in all your other subjects.

This bird's eye view will help you see how IEW integrates into your schoolwork overall. The nice thing about IEW is that instead of presenting nine-zillion writing styles, you get 9 Units suitable to handle *any* prompt that is given to you. The trick is learning to realize which Unit your prompt requires. Below is a little quick key for writing using the structural models presented in Teaching Writing: Structure and Style (IEW.com/TWSS-D).

Teaching through the nine units can be very fun. Plan on spending about a month on each unit and then move on. Repeat the process every year, going deeper each and every time. Elementary students may only get through Unit 7. Watch the appropriate portion of the TWSS either by yourself or with your student **and do the practicum as directed on the disc**. Then create a similar assignment for your student and do it with him or her over and over, helping him as much as necessary until they can do it by themselves.

The Style part is taught as you go through the structural units. Do not feel like you need to teach all the dress-ups and sentence openers before moving past Unit 1 and 2. Style is like the spice shelf in a kitchen. The chef needs to eventually learn what all the things are and how to use them, but you don't need to know how to use them all to make a pretty wonderful chili. Also, since not everyone likes to use every spice on the shelf, once you have tasted and understand them, you might not use them all in your own writing. But if some "recipe" (such as a picky college professor?) calls for a special one, you'll know how to use it.

Units 1 and 2

These units are the gateway into the IEW methods. Unit 1 shows students how to create an outline from a single paragraph and Unit 2 shows them how to take that outline and re-create a paragraph. These Units are there to get the kids started and are easy to learn thus helping even the most writing-phobic student to achieve. But don't be tempted to stay there, the best is yet to come!

Suggestions for Unit 1 and 2 paragraphs for outlining

1. Articles and Stories for Note Taking and Summarizing (part of the Writing Source Packet. See IEW.com/wsp-e)
2. Paragraphs from your student's reader, science, or history book.
3. Weekly reader or other student magazines have great paragraphs for outlining.

Unit 3: Retelling Narrative Stories

This unit teaches the basics of telling a story. You take a very simple fable or tale and reduce it to its basics: beginning, middle and end. The beginning is the characters and setting, middle is the plot or problem, and end is the climax and resolution often coupled with a moral.

Unlike the Non-fiction units, the outline for narrative is more freeform with the notes being answers to questions (who is in the story, what do they say, think, etc.). Then the construction of

the story tends to use the outline rather loosely adding in or leaving out and rearranging at will. There are no perfect delineations between what goes in what paragraph leaving much to the style of the writer. Some people love this free-form flow, others hate its flexibility complaining, “But what is the *right* way!” Once either the teacher or the student (or both!) are willing to get past this desire for strict order, this unit can become quite fun.

The beauty of this model comes in standardized tests where your students are given a prompt that is supposed to help prompt a story, e.g., “Imagine you are in your back yard and you find an object. Write a story about that object.” Ugh! With this model, your student can scan thru the many stories they know and twist it to match any prompt. Example: Imagine I imagined that I found a stick. What stories do I know that have sticks? Lets say I chose “The Three Little Pigs.” I could make a story about three little mice building their houses against the cat. One built out of bird feathers (leftover from a previous victim), another out of leaves, the third out of sticks. It didn’t work. The cat knocked the stick house down too and ate them all, hence the loose stick I found in the yard. The conclusion? Good kitty!

Unit 3 Assignment Ideas

1. Rewrite a fable/fairy tale/myth. Change characters/setting if desired. IEW has a set of stories available as an e-book for easy resourcing.
2. Retell a key story from history.
3. Retell a part of your reader
4. Summarize a longer story focusing on the key conflict
5. Tell a family story
6. Personify some item from nature and tell how nature works thru a story (a water droplet going thru the water cycle, a piece of food traveling thru the digestive tract, a germ making someone sick, etc).

Unit 4: Summarizing a Reference

This is great for any quick report when you are working from a single source (such as a textbook chapter, encyclopedia article, magazine article, etc). Read through the five stages of report writing as described in Units 4 and 6 of the TWSS syllabus. Unit 4 explains stages one to three while Unit 6 continues with the remaining stages.

Unit 4 Assignment Suggestions

1. “What does this chapter/article say about _____.”
2. Use it instead of end of chapter quizzes or to fill an empty afternoon. :)
3. Write an A-Z of history or science over the course of the year to sum up things learned. You can do this in order, or let them pick letters at random (but over the course of the year all must be used!).
4. IEW offers a packet of “mini-books” which are ready-made source texts for report writing.

Note: Be sure to give the assignment in number of paragraphs. “Write 1 (or 2, or 3, etc.) paragraphs on what you find interesting or important in this document.” Beginning students will collect a jumble of facts and string them into a paragraph. Older, more mature students should be able to choose topics on which to write.

Unit 5: Writing from Pictures

This is a great model for taking any picture and writing on it. You simply ask for each picture, “What is the central fact,” e.g., What is happening in the picture! After you write that, you simply expand on that concept by asking the famous questions: who, what, why, when, where, and how.

If you have three pictures, you do the central fact and details on each picture, one paragraph per picture. If you need to write 3 paragraphs on ONE picture, you simply do the thing on the one picture, then imagine what the next picture would look like and write on it, then what another consecutive picture might portray and write on that. You could also do one picture prior and one picture after, whatever you prefer.

Unit 5 Assignment Ideas

1. Purchase a packet of “Pictures for Writing” for ready-made lessons.
2. Take a cartoon from the newspaper, white out the words, and write.
3. This can be useful as a chapter test if you would like. Simply choose three pictures in the text book and have your students write a three paragraph report on those pictures.
4. Take a photo from the family scrapbook to inspire some writing
5. Have students draw pictures for inspiration

Unit 6: Summarizing Multiple References

This unit builds on Unit 4 by increasing the complexity of the report. Instead of “what does that ONE reference have to say about _____,” you’re asking “what is the general consensus about _____.” All grade levels need to learn how to take several references, choose topics, and write a report using details from a variety of sources. These can be anywhere from a short five-paragraph report to a multi-page research paper. Thus, this unit is a good one to introduce introduction/conclusion methods.

Unit 6 Assignment Ideas

“Write a ___ paragraph report on China, planet Mars, history of flight, etc.” Your student should not write *everything* they can find about the subject, just the number of topics necessary to create the number of paragraphs you assigned. They simply pick the portions that are interesting or important to them located in the sources available.

You don’t have to teach footnotes right off the bat. Teach bibliography first and slowly work your way into requiring footnotes.

You can also use this Unit when note booking as you can write a variety of paragraphs on related subjects from various sources. For instance, if you read a book like Johnny Tremain and wanted to do a study on the Revolutionary War, you could create a notebook and do paragraphs on silver smithing, Paul Revere, printing, Ben Franklin, various British generals, muskets and how they work, a map of Boston in 1776, etc. (Note booking works with Unit 4 too.)

Unit 7: Inventive Writing

This unit is really more of a confluence of fiction and non-fiction writing. The key is taking information from the brain and organizing it on paper. It can be factual (“My Grandmother”) or fictional (“My Pet Monster”).

The “My Dog Model” described in the TWSS syllabus is the picture for creative writing. You choose three topics, come up with details, and then finish it off with a intro/conclusion.

Unit 7 Assignment Ideas

1. Use the idea list in the Unit 7 section your seminar workbook.
2. Check out this website for scores of prompts suitable for multiple ages:
http://mrswarnerarlington.weebly.com/uploads/6/9/0/0/6900648/prompts_blowingaway.pdf
3. Have your student write what they learned in history today (from their brain). Could also be what they liked about the story, response to a movie or TV show.
4. Rewrite a fable, etc. in the voice of another author (Dickens, Shakespeare, King James Bible, etc.)

Unit 8: Formal Essay Models

This is the crown of “non-fiction” as you take what you have learned and add your own opinion to the piece. An essay can be any number of paragraphs from five to hundreds. The famous “Thesis” statement that everyone is looking for is simply the point of your paper in one single sentence and usually is located either at the beginning or the end of your introduction. The rest of the paper is the proof of what you are trying to say, and your conclusion can be a restatement of your thesis statement underscoring your most powerful argument.

“The Elegant Essay” (IEW.com/TEE-T) goes into depth on essay writing while the High School Essay Intensive will give you a one-day seminar touching on the basics of doing essays, especially timed and personal ones. The Elegant Essay dives deep into writing strong thesis statements, methods to organize body paragraphs, and an arsenal of introduction and conclusion techniques. Use it any time after 8th grade.

The Formal Essay Models provide is a way for the evaluator to see what information is in the writer’s brain. When writing an essay, you might need to do some study to get some information in there before you can actually write something. :)

Assignment Ideas

- what is your opinion on...
- what is important about...
- which is better...
- what is the reasoning behind...
- what is the central premise...
- compare this and that
- contrast this and that
- persuade me what you think about....

For a list of specific essay types, check out
<http://depts.gallaudet.edu/englishworks/writing/essay.html>

Unit 9: Formal Critique

The final result of the fictional models is the formal critique. These can be glorified book reports where the writer simply summarizes an author's basic story line and then critiques it: determining if it was good or not and why. The why part can get into detailed literary analysis where you examine character development, use of literary devices such as irony or foreshadowing, exploration of theme, etc. It is purely subjective, so goes into the fictional model.

Use this model for book reports, movie reviews (its one way to get something positive out of going to the movies!), or full blown literary analysis. Just be sure to assign it *before* the fact so they can take appropriate notes.

Writing About Literature

Teaching the Classics (IEW.com/tcs) is great for any grade level to do this.

Andrew Pudewa's "Response to Literature" talk provides additional models for writing about literature. (IEW.com/wes10-lit-e)

Windows to the World: An Introduction to Literary Analysis (IEW.com/wtw-t) is perfect for high school students for literary analysis.

Final Words

I hope this overview helps you see how you really don't need to be confined to writing lessons prepared by curriculum publishers. Learn the models and then pick any one of them to create an assignment to cement learning in your student's mind. If you go thru the SWI then SICC A, B, and C, you will have been taught all 9 units and have experience doing a variety of assignments in each one and be pretty well set for *any* kind of future writing.

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