

Informative Writing

8



This man is reading instructions as he constructs a cabinet. What do you think is most important for creating effective informative writing?

Learning Objectives

In this chapter you will learn how to ...

- 1 Get your facts straight.
- 2 Make the information interesting.
- 3 Organize information appropriately.
- 4 Put **I D E A S** to work in informative writing.

Informative writing is everywhere in our lives, and we encounter it nearly every day. We read sets of instructions to put new products together. We read newspaper articles on the Web. We write grocery lists. We read textbooks. Informative writing can be dry and not very exciting, or it can be quite interesting. Either way, the purpose of informative writing remains the same: it must clearly and accurately relate essential information.

While some informative writing is purely personal, such as letting Facebook friends or Twitter followers know what is going in your life, this chapter will focus on more formal informative writing designed for specific audiences.

The best informative writing presents accurate and essential information while keeping the readers interested and engaged. When thinking about the types of support (the *Details* and *Explanation* of **I D E A S**) that go into informative writing, a writer selects examples, personal experiences, specific and concrete details, facts, statistics, anecdotes, and beliefs/assumptions that will connect to the readers. All of that support is often guided by a thesis, a controlling idea of the paper. As in all writing, the writer's goal is to spark the readers' interest and keep them reading to the end.

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1 Get your facts straight.

Get Your Facts Straight

If you wrote that the Declaration of Independence was written in 1781, your reader would doubt the reliability of the information throughout your paper. Simple mistakes, like using a wrong date or not knowing your facts, can seriously hurt your message and your credibility. A glaring weakness disrupts reading and makes readers look at your writing more skeptically. In turn, they will not trust you.

When working with sources, when paraphrasing, when using examples, or when relating details, you have to be accurate and precise. Accurate details matter whether you are writing a memo to your boss, composing a history paper, or filling out a medical chart for a patient.



EXERCISE 8.1 Writing Specific Statements

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Directions: What specific details and explanations would make the following statements more informative and enhance the writer's credibility? *Answers will vary. Sample answers provided in the Instructor's Manual.*

EXAMPLE: They say the government should do something to improve the economy.

The writer should tell who "they" are and explain what "something" is.

The Nonpartisan Economic Watchdog Group (*they*) said Congress should work in unison to improve the economy through additional stimulus spending for infrastructure repair, job retraining for displaced workers, and development of renewable energy. (*something*)

1. Everybody knows that creek has dangerous pollutants that are probably making people who come into contact with the water sick.
2. I heard things that make me think that politician should not be trusted.
3. No one needs to have bad skin. My brother took some stuff he saw on TV that cleared his acne up fast.
4. I heard on the radio that the public employees' unions will soon bankrupt our state.
5. I read that people hate the new changes to that computer's operating system.

2 Make the information interesting.

Make the Information Interesting

All of us have read boring writing. You can probably think back to some high school textbooks that were pretty dry; they did not spark interest in what you needed to learn. But think about what made them boring:

- Did the text assume you knew information that you did not know?
- Were there no examples that you could connect to?
- Did the author talk down to you?
- Was the text too small to be read effectively?
- Was it all just too confusing?

Good writers spark their readers' interest through memorable quotations, compelling examples, vivid details, strong explanations, and interesting word choices. Details, examples, explanations, and clear language make informative writing "go." They are crucial to keeping readers interested. In

addition, a smart, interesting thesis directs the action of a piece of writing, and details and explanation must also be provided to support that thesis.

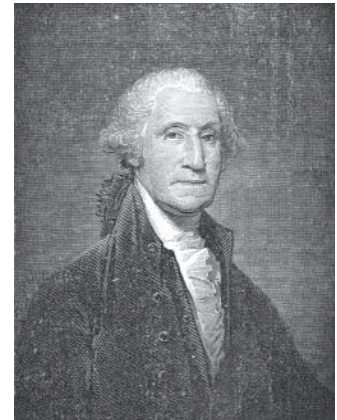
EXERCISE 8.2 Analyzing Details in Informative Writing MyWritingLab

Directions: The following passage gives some basic information about medical treatments during a particular era in American history.

During the period of 1780 to 1850, known as the “Age of Heroic Medicine,” patients were as likely to die from their treatment as they were from disease. Many reputable doctors at this time believed most illnesses could be cured by removing toxins from the body through bloodletting, purging, and blistering. Sometimes patients, already weakened from disease, died when too much blood was taken. Others suffered serious side effects from the poisons used to clean out their intestines. Few wanted the additional pain from acidic materials applied to the skin to cause blisters that were then pierced and drained. Given the misery these dangerous treatments induced, the patients truly were the “heroes” of this age.

Now read the same passage after it has been expanded with details and examples. After you have finished reading, answer the questions that follow.

During the “Age of Heroic Medicine” from 1780 to 1850, many reputable doctors believed they could cure illnesses by removing toxins from the body. Unfortunately, patients, even wealthy and highly esteemed ones like George Washington, were likely to suffer as much from their treatment as they were from their illness. When the retired President developed a severe sore throat after riding around his estate on horseback during a snow storm, three prominent physicians were called to his aid. A doctor typically began treatment with bloodletting, a remedy for everything from fever to toothaches to mental illness. The doctor removed “stagnant” blood by applying leeches to the patient or by cutting open a vein. Over the course of nine to ten hours, Washington’s physicians bled him multiple times. They eventually drained about four pints of his blood—almost half the blood in his body. Doctors also removed toxins by purging the intestines with powerful, often dangerous, chemicals, such as calomel or mercurous chloride. Those who survived often suffered from serious side effects, such as losing teeth or having their jawbones deteriorate. Washington received multiple doses of calomel. Along with being bled and poisoned, a patient might undergo blistering, a painful procedure in which the doctor would apply a “blister,” an acidic substance, to the patient’s skin,



resulting in a second degree burn and blisters. The theory behind blistering was that the body's toxins would be drained along with the blood and pus. Washington's physicians initially applied to his throat a blister made from a mixture of dried beetles. As his condition worsened, doctors applied additional blisters to his extremities. Further weakened by his treatment, Washington died that evening, unable to overcome the septic sore throat and possibly pneumonia. Given the misery these dangerous treatments caused, the patients truly were the "heroes" of this age of medicine.

1. Which details in the second paragraph make it both more informative and more interesting to you?
2. How does including the example of George Washington help you better understand what medical treatment was like during the "Age of Heroic Medicine"?

3 Organize information appropriately.

Organize Information Appropriately

Informative writing can be confusing and even boring if readers get lost in the details. Writers who keep their readers' needs in mind know that organization is key. We will emphasize that point again: *Organization is key.*

Move from Old to New Information

There is an old saying that goes something like this: "To catch a fish, you have to think like a fish." With that adage in mind, be aware that when you are trying to inform readers, you have to think about what they already know and what they need to know in order to catch and keep their attention. You have to hook and hold them on the line. You do not want the readers to get away.

For example, a human resources director writing to employees at a company about changes in health insurance plans will probably start with what the old plan offered and then transition to what the new plan provides for employees. An employee of that company talking about this health plan to her husband will probably start with a general context ("You remember Bill, the guy in accounting?"); she will establish particulars about the situation ("Last quarter, the company had some really nice profits—we were up ten percent in sales."); and then she will offer the new information ("Now, he wants to increase our co-pays because he says the health insurance plan is way too expensive.").

Many times as speakers and writers, we move from known to new unconsciously because it is a strategy we have used for years when communicating. But more importantly, when writers think about how to generate interest in a

topic, they have to think about the details, examples, and explanations needed to make the new information come alive for the reader.

EXERCISE 8.3 Organize Informative Essays

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Directions: In the following examples, two writers have brainstormed ideas and support for their informative papers. Each writer has generated some points to include in the paper and is ready to begin organizing.

As you read each list, think about which points are the most important and how the writers could organize them. First, cross out those points that do not seem relevant for the writer’s audience and purpose. Next, add any points that would make the paper more interesting and informative. Finally, suggest how the writer should organize these points in a scratch outline. Be prepared to explain why you recommend a particular organization. Also keep in mind that the writers should move from known to new information.

1. Each spring Sandra suffers from seasonal allergies that make it difficult to focus. She plans to write a paper that presents information about pollen allergies and how they may impact a student’s performance. Here is what she has brainstormed so far.

Seasonal Allergies

worst times of year for allergies

~~different kinds of allergies in my family—food, bee stings~~

~~how they differ from colds~~

how drowsy allergy medications make me

other allergies that could make studying difficult

~~what might be making pollen counts rise~~

allergy symptoms

dangers—overmedication and trigger asthma

treatments—medication and non-medication

~~what causes these allergies~~

how I did poorly on final exams because my allergies were so bad

2. Drew is an avid comic book collector and wants to share information about his hobby with his fellow students. He wants to show that collectors are not “nerds,” and the hobby can be enjoyable and profitable. Here is what he has brainstormed so far.

Collecting Comic Books

buying and selling

~~protecting~~

why collect comic books



how I got started collecting
 famous comic book artists
 which comics are the most desirable
 Comic Book Collecting Association (CBCA)
 The history of comic books
 grading scale for condition of books
 my favorite series
 where to find comic books
 stereotypes of comic book collectors
 conventions
 examples of valuable comics



4 Put **I D E A S** to work in informative writing.

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Put **I D E A S** to Work in Informative Writing

What essential information does my audience need to know? Which details are important? How can I make this subject interesting to my readers? What is the focus? What is my point here?

You should ask yourself these questions as you prepare to draft informative writing. As you think through which details are most important, keep in mind **I D E A S**, which stands for **I**nterest, **D**etails, **E**xplanation, **A**udience, and **S**tyle.

STUDENT WRITER AT WORK

In Collin Seibert's Introduction to College Writing class, the professor gave the following assignment. (See the full assignment on p. 248.)

Historical/Cultural Marker: Informing About a Place in Your Community

Writing Task

Drawing on your knowledge of your neighborhood, city, community, or metro area, locate a place that is significant to your community or a special group of which you are a member. You need to find a landmark and inform a general reader about it. Your aim is to provide a text (one to four paragraphs) that describes and offers reasons why this place is important. Ideally, if funds are available, your informative prose would be printed on a historical/cultural marker at that place.

Collin thought about his high school's home field, where up until this year he played left tackle. It is named after a former coach and teacher at his high school, but he realized there was no marker nor any information at the stadium to inform fans as to why it was named after Ken Pickerell.

Using the **I D E A S** template, Collin asked these questions about his Historical/Cultural Marker paper:

	<u>Interest:</u> How can I get the reader's attention? After the info about where it's located, what do readers need to know about Coach Pick that will show how he's such a great guy? How has he been such a positive influence for me and others? I assume that's why they named the stadium after him.
	<u>Details:</u> I wonder how much I will have to detail. I could provide the various titles he's had since that'll show why they named the stadium after him. But what else? The way he coached people? When did he start at Oswego?
	<u>Explanation:</u> Since I only have so much space, I can't really provide detailed examples. From looking at other markers that our professor showed us, it seems to be "just the facts." But I don't want it to be boring. What about describing the situation with his wife?
	<u>Audience:</u> I can't assume that someone looking at the marker will know much about Coach Pick since he retired in the 80s. We all know him because he's around, but I want to make sure I show respect for what he stands for. My audience needs to get that positive vibe.
	<u>Style:</u> It's a historical marker, and from the ones I've seen, they don't usually have a lot of long sentences. You gotta get right to the point. My professor, he keeps talking about how I need to vary the lengths of my sentences though.

When Collin visited the Writing Center with a draft of his paper, the tutor made these comments:

- Your paper starts a bit abruptly. On some markers I've seen, they start with a quotation related to the battle, the building, or the person. Is there anything he said often that people remember him by? You could start the whole text part with a quote that really tells a lot about him.
- You don't have enough information in the location section. All you have right now is that it's in front of the stadium.
- Is there anything else he's known for other than coaching? Was he a booster after he retired? What other important info might you want to add into the second paragraph? It's kind of light right now.

After revising his historical/cultural marker after visiting the Writing Center, Collin turned in the following paper for his college writing class.

Collin's Historical Marker

Seibert 1

Collin Seibert
Professor Taylor
English 1000
19 March 2014

Coach Pick

Location

This historical marker will be placed at the entrance of the main gate leading into the football stadium. This spot is the ideal spot because at Oswego High School the football stadium is already named after Ken Pickerill, but no historical markers are present.

Text

"I just enjoy being there with the kids."

He was the first to arrive at the field and the last one to leave. He was a coach, manager, groundskeeper, and sports fan. Ken Pickerill served as a teacher, athletic director, board member, and a coach for longer than five decades at Oswego School District 308. Coach Pick served as a football, wrestling, and baseball coach at Oswego H.S. since 1956.

Comment: Seibert explains where the marker will be and provides a reason why it needs to be there.

Comment: He took the tutor's advice and begins with a quotation.

Comment: The last two sentences serve as a thesis.

In addition to his duties in the athletic department, Coach Pick is responsible for creating the Oswego Booster Club, which helps raise money for all of the athletic teams at Oswego H.S. He donated and helped raise money to help fund projects on the grounds of Oswego High School, including Jackie's Field of Dreams, which is named after his wife who lost her battle with cancer in March 2001. His dedication to Oswego's student-athletes was seen daily even after he retired in the early 1980s. Either in the dugout of the ball field or on the sidelines of a football game, he was always around in a positive way. He would encourage athletes to do their best and work harder than others not only on the field but also in life. He always told the athletes he coached that there is always something you can do to get better.

Comment: Seibert provides details about the coach's character.

Coach Pick was so valuable to the thousands of student-athletes who have been a part of Oswego High School's athletic programs. Ken Pickerill was not only a coach but also an inspiring person to the many people's lives he has touched, and as a community we grew to love the guy.

Comment: He concludes by explaining why the stadium is named after the coach.

IDEAS in Action

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In the first reading, commentary using the **IDEAS** template is provided to show how a close, analytical, critical reading is important when reading informative writing.

SELECTION 1

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The Apple, Alcohol, & “Johnny Appleseed”

Michael Pollan

This passage is from The Botany of Desire: A Plant’s Eye View of the World by Michael Pollan. In this section of the book, Pollan discusses Americans’ love affair with apples, and he specifically informs readers about the relationship of apples to alcohol during the history of America.

PRE-READING PROMPT

1. Who was Johnny Appleseed? What do you know about this character from American history and folklore? If you have never heard of him, look up the name on the Internet and briefly tell what you have learned about him.
2. What are the ways people today typically consume apples? What products typically contain apples?
3. Why do you think early pioneers in America might have avoided drinking water? What might their alternative beverages have been?

¹ The sweetest fruit makes the strongest drink, and in the north, where grapes didn’t do well, that was usually the apple. Up until Prohibition, an apple grown in America was far less likely to be eaten than to wind up in a barrel of cider.

“Hard cider” is a twentieth-century term, redundant before then since virtually all cider was hard until modern refrigeration allowed people to keep sweet cider sweet.

² Corn liquor, or “white lightning,” preceded cider on the frontier by a few years, but after the apple trees began to bear fruit, cider—being safer, tastier, and much easier to make—became the



Comment: **Details:** Pollan provides a fact that might surprise readers.

Comment: This sentence functions as a general **thesis**.

Comment: **Explanation:** Pollan provides a historical context.

alcoholic drink of choice. Just about the only reason to plant an orchard of the sort of seedling apples John Chapman had for sale would have been its intoxicating harvest of drink, available to anyone with a press and a barrel. Allowed to ferment for a few weeks, pressed apple juice yields a mildly alcoholic beverage with about half the strength of wine. For something stronger, the cider can then be distilled into brandy or simply frozen; the intensely alcoholic liquid that refuses to ice is called applejack. Hard cider frozen to thirty degrees below zero yields an applejack of 66 proof.

Comment: Details and Explanation: Pollan points out important differences among cider, brandy, and applejack.

Comment: Details: Pollan offers new information—a description about how widespread and popular cider was and how it was healthier to drink on the frontier.

Comment: Explanation: Pollan provides another historical context by discussing early attempts to ban alcohol.

Comment: Explanation: This quote provides a transition from the temperance movement in America (banning of alcohol) to the apple's new reputation.

Comment: Audience and Style: This allusion refers to Dionysus, the Greek god of fertility and wine.

Comment: Explanation: Another allusion refers to John Chapman or "Johnny Appleseed," who is credited with creating apple orchards across America.

³ Virtually every homestead in America had an orchard from which thousands of gallons of cider were made every year. In rural areas cider took the place not only of wine and beer but of coffee and tea, juice, and even water. Indeed, in many places cider was consumed more freely than water, even by children, since it was arguably the healthier, because more sanitary, beverage. Cider became so indispensable to rural life that even those who railed against the evils of alcohol made an exception for cider, and the early prohibitionists succeeded mainly in switching drinkers over from grain to apple spirits. Eventually they would attack cider directly and launch a campaign to chop down apple trees, but up until the end of the nineteenth century cider continued to enjoy the theological exemption the Puritans had contrived for it.

⁴ It wasn't until the twentieth century that the apple acquired its reputation for wholesomeness—"an apple a day keeps the doctor away" was a marketing slogan dreamed up by growers concerned that temperance would cut into sales. In 1900 the horticulturalist Liberty Hyde Bailey noted that "the eating of the apple (rather than the drinking of it) has come to be paramount," but for the two centuries before that, whenever an American extolled the virtues of the apple, whether it was John Winthrop or Thomas Jefferson, Henry Ward Beecher or John Chapman, their contemporaries would probably have smiled knowingly, hearing in the words a distinct Dionysian echo that we are apt to miss. When Emerson, for instance, wrote that "man would be more solitary, less friended, less supported, if the land yielded only the useful maize and potato, [and] withheld this ornamental and social fruit," his readers understood it was the support and sociability of alcohol he had in mind. Part of reason John Chapman was welcome in every cabin in Ohio was because he was bringing the gift of drink. Since Prohibition we've been taught to think of Johnny Appleseed as a Walt Disney character, harmless and saccharine, when in fact the man was an American Dionysus.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In summary, how has the perception of the apple changed from what it was two hundred years ago to what it is today?
2. In order to understand why apple growers began to market the fruit as a wholesome, healthy treat, you have to know what is meant by the temperance movement and Prohibition. Look these up on the

- Internet. In your own words explain why Prohibition threatened the apple industry.
3. Why do you think the Puritans, who were among those who “railed against the evils of alcohol,” were willing to make an exemption for apple cider?
 4. Often writers use *allusions*—references to characters or events from literature, history, or popular culture. Twice Pollan alludes to a Greek god—“Dionysian echo” and “American Dionysus.” Look up Dionysus. Why is “American Dionysus” an appropriate label for John Chapman?

I D E A S for Your Own Writing

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Explore a Change

Pollan shows how apples went from being thought of as the main ingredient of a popular alcoholic beverage to being a “wholesome” fruit. In a short set of paragraphs or a longer essay, explain how our perception of something has changed with time. For example, cigarettes were once used in movies to suggest sophistication and sensuality. What is the perception of smokers today? Having a cell phone once meant a person was wealthy and probably a high-power businessperson. Who has cell phones today? Other possible topics include the following:

the role of either parent	fast food
exercise	eating every supper with one’s family
rap/hip hop music	recycling
kindergarten	

As part of your research for this paper, you may want talk to older friends or family members to learn what they remember about how the topic was viewed twenty years ago or more. They can work as sources for your paper.

SELECTION 2

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from The Cave of Bats

Richard Conniff

The next passage comes from a chapter in Richard Conniff’s book Every Creeping Thing. Conniff is an accomplished award-winning author of books and articles on human and animal behavior. In this excerpt, he explains a significant difference between two flying creatures—bats and birds.

PRE-READING PROMPT

1. Before you begin reading, what are some of the obvious differences between bats and birds that you already know?
2. If you knew your readers already understood the basic differences between mammals and birds, what kinds of details would you look for to make a comparison more interesting and engaging?

Birds lay eggs and spare themselves from having to fly around with all that extra weight. But a bat gives birth to a single offspring weighing a quarter of her normal body weight, or sometimes to twins. (To ease birth with the help of gravity, she may hang upside down and catch her newborn in the wing membrane between her legs.) Her young may then latch on to a nipple and cling to her in flight for several days afterward. Birds can gather food and **regurgitate** it for their young back at the nest; bats can't. The mother must continue to eat for two, nursing her offspring until it is capable of taking flight to **forage** for its own food. Since a young bat starts to fly when it reaches 80 to 90 percent of its adult weight, this is the equivalent of nursing a teenager.



regurgitate: vomit

forage: gather

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Conniff discusses some basic differences between bats and birds, but makes the information new and interesting for his readers. How does he do this? What details make these basic differences more interesting?
2. At the end of this passage, Conniff makes a surprising shift in his comparison. What is he comparing bats to in this final sentence?
3. Besides simply showing readers the difference between bats and birds, what insight about bats do you think he is trying to give his readers? What do you think is his reason for sharing this insight?

I D E A S for Your Own Writing

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A Fresh Look at the Obvious

Taking your cue from Richard Conniff, write a paragraph in which you present in a new and engaging way an obvious difference between two subjects. Just as Conniff wants his readers to better understand and appreciate the bat, your comparison should help readers better

appreciate one of the subjects by looking more closely at differences they take for granted. Possible topics include the following:

- comparing a modern-day bathroom to the outhouse of the past
- comparing a fast food hamburger to a burger hot off the grill
- buying an apple from the store compared to picking one off a tree
- reading an ebook compared to reading a paper text
- housebreaking a puppy compared to potty-training a baby
- wearing dress shoes compared to wearing sneakers or flip-flops

SELECTION 3

MyWritingLab

A Night of Lynching, a Life of Remembering

Sharon Cohen

In the first longer reading selection of the chapter, Sharon Cohen profiles James Cameron who, as a young man, narrowly escaped a lynching. In his later years, he turned the terror of that night into America's Black Holocaust Museum.

PRE-READING PROMPT

1. What kinds of situations might cause people to take the law into their own hands? Do you think this is ever justified?
2. Why do you think it's important for us to remember the mistakes and injustices of the past?
3. Having an experience that puts one seconds away from death can be life changing. What kinds of changes do you think it can bring about in a person?

¹ He remembers every detail about that long-ago night: the pearl-white glow of the moon, the roar of the frenzied mob, the fists and clubs beating him—then the rough hands forcing his head into a noose. And, of course, he remembers the rope. It left a burn mark on his neck.

² He is an old man now, a great-grandfather with a cane and a cap of frosty silver hair. It has been more than 70 years since two of his friends were **lynched** one horrible August night—and he was supposed to be next. James Cameron turned his near-death experience into his life's work, telling his story of Aug. 7, 1930, hundreds of times over the years and creating America's Black Holocaust Museum—dedicated to the suffering that blacks have endured throughout the nation's history.

³ Cameron, about to turn 89 and frail from heart surgery and cancer, is determined to keep the flame burning and ensure that his small, struggling

lynched: hanged by a mob without a trial

15-year-old museum survives after he is gone. “It’s the most important thing in the world to me to carry on this fight, to explain the history that’s been hidden. I wonder if God saved me for this mission?” He paused, then answered his question: “It had to be. And I thank him for that.”

⁴ When Cameron talks about the night he was almost killed, his words flow like those of an actor with a keen sense for the dramatic pause, the telling detail, the precise moment to raise or lower his raspy voice.

⁵ Always, the memory brings tears to his eyes.

⁶ Cameron, then 16 and living in Marion, Ind., had finished playing horseshoes and accepted a ride from his friend, Thomas Shipp. Soon they picked up Abe Smith. As they coasted along in the 1926 Ford roadster, he says, one of the other teens suggested holding up someone to get money. Cameron says he told them he wasn’t interested, but they all drove to a lover’s lane.

⁷ One of his companions, he says, handed him a .38-caliber revolver and, calling him by his nickname, said: “Apples (Cameron’s mother had an apple orchard), you take the gun and hold the people up.” Cameron approached a car and pointed the gun at a man—who was with a woman—but realized it was one of his regular shoeshine customers. So, he says, he gave the gun to Shipp, told him that he wouldn’t rob anyone, then ran down the road.

⁸ A few moments later, he heard gunshots.

⁹ The man in the car had been shot to death. Rumors spread that the woman was raped. Both were white. The three black teens were quickly rounded up and taken to jail, where thousands of people, including women and children, gathered with gas cans, iron bars and sledgehammers, crashing through bricks and pounding down the door. The mob rushed past law enforcement officers to grab the youths. Marion actually had fairly good race relations for the time, says James Madison, an Indiana University history professor who wrote about the incident in “A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America.” He says the town had an NAACP branch and two black police officers.

¹⁰ None of that mattered that night.

¹¹ Shipp and Smith were brutally beaten, then lynched on a tree in the courthouse square. Cameron was next. “They began to chant for me like a football player: ‘We want Cameron, we want Cameron,’” he recalled, clasping his hands tight. “I could feel the blood in my body just freezing up.”

¹² Cameron, who says he was beaten into signing a false confession, was hit in the head with a pick handle; pummeled with fists, clubs and rocks; bitten and spat on as the mob dragged him out of the jail, shouting racial slurs. “The miracle is I didn’t go unconscious,” he said. They pulled him toward the tree, where he saw the dangling, bloody bodies of his friends.

¹³ “They put the rope around my neck and threw it over the limb,” Cameron said. “They were getting ready to hang me up when I said, ‘Lord, have mercy, forgive me my sins.’ My mother always told us children, ‘Before you do anything,

always pray.” So he prayed. “Then,” he said, “I gave up hope.” Then suddenly, he said, came a heavenly voice with an order: “Take this boy back. He had nothing to do with any raping or killing.” The crowd parted, he says, as he stumbled back into the jail. Cameron has asked others who were there that night, but no one else heard that voice. But there apparently was a protest.

¹⁴ One man stood atop a car and shouted that Cameron was innocent and should be freed, according to documents unearthed by Madison, who said a few others also tried to calm the crowd. The lynching scene was captured in a photo—reproduced and sold for 50 cents—that became an enduring symbol of racial terror in America. It shows a milling crowd, people smiling or staring calmly into the camera, women in summer dresses, men in fedoras and ties, one pointing up to the mutilated bodies. Two men were charged with **inciting** the mob, but they were **acquitted**, according to Madison. Cameron was convicted of being an **accessory before the fact** to voluntary manslaughter. He spent four years in prison, was freed at age 21, and attended technical high school and college.

¹⁵ He and his wife, Virginia, reared five children, and Cameron supported them as a truck driver, laundry man, record store owner, waiter, junk man and maintenance engineer. He was a strict father, instilling pride in his children, says his 59-year-old son, Virgil, who recalls how the family resisted the segregation policies at movie theaters in Indiana. “We sat wherever we wanted,” he said. “We were the Camerons. He had that type of strength. He would not tolerate racism.”

¹⁶ Cameron was always determined to tell his story. In 1946, he sent a letter to his idol, poet-writer Langston Hughes, seeking advice. He received an answer (framed on his museum wall) but no publisher. Decades passed and, in 1979, he and his wife visited Israel and Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial, where he was moved by exhibits of Jewish persecution and the inscription: “To remember is salvation. To forget is exile.” Turning to his wife, he said, “Honey, we need a museum like that in America to show what happened to black people.”

¹⁷ The big civil rights museums were still years away, and Cameron’s interests were in the horrors of slavery and lynching—atrocities he believed were neglected by white historians. When he began soliciting help for his museum, he said, “People thought I was crazy. They thought everything should be buried and not dug up.” He forged ahead and published his memoirs in 1982, mortgaging his house to print 5,000 copies of “A Time of Terror.” The book was later reprinted by Black Classic Press.

¹⁸ For his museum, Cameron visited the Library of Congress; he haunted rummage sales and bought books, lynching photos, and Ku Klux Klan robes and hoods. In 1988, he opened his museum in a small storefront room, then six years later moved to an abandoned 12,000-square-foot gym that the city of Milwaukee sold him for \$1. About that time, he met Daniel Bader, who offered a generous check. “He’s somehow able to put you in his skin and let you see the world through his eyes,” said Bader, president of the Helen Bader Foundation, which remains a financial supporter.

inciting: causing

acquitted: declared not guilty

accessory before the fact: person involved before a crime, but not in the crime itself

¹⁹ On a whim, Cameron says he wrote a letter to the governor of Indiana in 1991 seeking a pardon. Two years later, it was granted. A week later, Cameron, decked out in a black tuxedo, returned to Marion to receive the key to the city that, an accompanying letter said, should serve to “lock out any denial of the abuses of that ugly time.” The letter is displayed at the museum, but another piece of Marion’s past is locked up for safekeeping—a thumb-size hunk of yellow rope given to him several years ago that was purported to have been used in the lynchings.

²⁰ Over the years, Cameron’s museum has featured the works of black photographers and artifacts from the *Henrietta Marie*, a slave ship found off the Florida coast. But times have been tough and the museum operates on a shoestring budget, says Jessie Leonard, the interim director. She says she’s still looking for financing for a permanent exhibit on Cameron’s life—from his days as a young man helping to form three NAACP chapters to his protest at a Klan rally a few months ago, in a wheelchair.

²¹ Leonard calls Cameron “a quiet soldier” but “not so quiet he cannot be heard.” Cameron vows to continue talking—and protesting—as long as he can: “Something inside me just keeps urging me on.”

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Interest

1. One of the simplest ways to grab a reader’s attention is by having a strong title. In what ways does the title of this article attract readers, and how might the title make someone not want to read further?
2. The essay profiles James Cameron and the museum he created. In writing an informative profile of a person and/or place, what should a writer focus on and emphasize in order to keep a reader’s interest? In what ways does the author keep your interest? How does she do this? Are there any parts of the article that didn’t seem necessary? Which ones, and why do you think so?

Details

3. Which details give you a sense of the kind of person Cameron was before the incident that nearly cost him his life?
4. Which details show that Cameron has become “a quiet soldier” whose voice is still heard?
5. Which details about the museum connect to Cameron’s determination and spirit?
6. The author uses statements from people who know Cameron. How do these quotations provide interesting and new information in the essay? How do the statements by Cameron function in the same way?

Explanation

7. Cameron was convicted of accessory before the fact to voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to four years in prison. Was this a fair

sentence? Why or why not? Why does the writer choose not to address this question?

8. What might be some of the reasons that the men who allegedly incited the riot were acquitted? How does the author address this issue?
9. Cohen describes the photo taken of the lynching: “It shows a milling crowd, people smiling or staring calmly into the camera, women in summer dresses, men in fedoras and ties, one pointing up to the mutilated bodies.” What about this image makes it especially fitting as an “enduring symbol of racial terror in America”? Do you agree with the author on this point? Why or why not?

Audience

10. How would you describe the writer’s attitude toward her subject? Does her approach to the topic of her article invite her readers to listen, or does it alienate them?

Style

11. This is a newspaper article, and newspaper articles tend to have short sentences and paragraphs. Look at all of the one-sentence paragraphs. Which ones work as transitional paragraphs and paragraphs that relate important quotations?

I D E A S for Your Own Writing

MyWritingLab

Profile of an Event and a Person

Taking your cue from Cohen’s article, profile a person in your community and relate an important event in his or her life. In the essay, you need to inform readers about the significance of this event without being preachy or angry or sappy. Like Cohen does in her essay, relate the facts of the event and its effect on the person without trying to persuade a reader about something. Make sure the essay is interesting for readers.

Informing about Your Community

Your new boss just relocated to your local area. During the course of your conversation with her, she asks you, “Since I don’t know much about this area, are there any events or places I need to check out?” In your conversation, you suggest a few you can think of off the top of your head. But when you get home later that night, you remember more, so you decide to email your boss. In two to three paragraphs in an email format, inform your new boss about the event or place she should “check out.” Provide details, examples, and explanation in your email.

SELECTION 4

MyWritingLab

Seven Sustainable Wonders

Alan Thein Durning

The second essay of this chapter is by the environmental activist, Alan Thein Durning. The author founded the Sightline Institute, and his most famous book is How Much is Enough?: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth (1992). “Seven Sustainable Wonders” makes readers look at simple but important innovations that he deems are “sustainable.”

PRE-READING PROMPT

1. What are some inventions that have made an important impact on people’s lives? Which have made the greatest impact on your own life?
2. Think about inventions that do not involve electronics or other sophisticated forms of technology. Which of these do you think have been the most significant?
3. Of the inventions you have thought about so far, which have had the most destructive impact on our environment?

¹ I’ve never seen any of the Seven Wonders of the World, and to tell you the truth I wouldn’t really want to. To me, the real wonders are all the little things—little things that work, especially when they do it without hurting the earth. Here’s my list of simple things that, though we take them for granted, are absolute wonders. These **implements** solve every day problems so elegantly that everyone in the world today—and everyone who is likely to live in it in the next century—could make use of them without Mother Nature’s being any the worse for wear.

implements: tools

1. The Bicycle

² The most **thermodynamically** efficient transportation device ever created and the most widely used private vehicle in the world, the bicycle lets you travel three times as far on a plate full of calories as you could walking. And they’re 53 times more energy efficient—comparing food calories with gasoline calories—than the typical car. Not to mention the fact they don’t pollute the air, lead to oil spills (and oil wars), change the climate, send cities sprawling over the countryside, lock up half of urban space in roads and parking lots, or kill a quarter million people in traffic accidents each year.

³ The world doesn’t yet have enough bikes for everybody to ride, but it’s getting



thermodynamically: energy, in the sense of power to work.

there quickly: Best estimates put the world's expanding fleet of two-wheelers at 850 million—double the number of autos. We Americans have no excuses on this count: We have more bikes per person than China, where they are the principal vehicle. We just don't ride them much.

2. The Ceiling Fan

⁴ Appropriate technology's answer to air conditioning, ceiling fans cool tens of millions of people in Asia and Africa. A fan over your bed brings relief in sweltering **climes**, as I've had plenty of time to reflect on during episodes of digestive turmoil in cheap tropical hotels.

climes: environments

⁵ Air conditioning, found in two-thirds of U.S. homes, is a juice hog and the bane of the stratospheric ozone layer because of its CFC coolants. Ceiling fans, on the other hand, are simple, durable, and repairable and take little energy to run.

3. The Clothesline

⁶ A few years ago, I read about an engineering laboratory that claimed it had all but perfected a microwave clothes dryer. The dryer, the story went, would get the moisture out of the wash with one-third the energy of a conventional unit and cause less wear and tear on the fabric. I don't know if they ever got it on the market, but it struck me at the time that if simple wonders had a PR agent, there might have been a news story instead about the perfection of a solar clothes dryer. It takes few materials to manufacture, is safe for kids, requires absolutely no electricity or fuel, and even gets people outdoors where they can talk to their neighbors.

4. The Telephone

⁷ The greatest innovation in human communications since Gutenberg's printing press, telephone systems are the only entry on my wonders list invented in this century, and—hype of the information age notwithstanding—I'll wager that they never lose ground to other communications technologies. Unlike fax machines, personal computers and computer networks, television, VCRs and camcorders, CD-ROMs, and all the other **flotsam and jetsam** of the information age, telephones are a simple extension of the most time-tested means of human communication: speech.

flotsam and jetsam: wreckage, ruins

5. The Public Library

⁸ Public libraries are the most democratic institutions yet invented. Think of it! Equal access to information for any citizen who comes inside. A lifetime of learning, all free. Libraries foster community, too, by bringing people of different classes, races, and ages together in that endangered form of human habitat: non-commercial public space.

⁹ Although conceived without any ecological intention whatsoever, libraries are waste reduction at its best. Each library saves a forest full of trees by making thousands of personal copies of books and periodicals unnecessary. All that paper savings means huge reductions in energy use and water and air pollution, too. In

principle, the library concept could be applied to other things—cameras and camcorders, tapes and CD's, cleaning equipment and extra dining chairs—further reducing the number of things our society needs without reducing people's access to them. The town of Takoma Park, Maryland, for example, has a tool library where people can check out a lawn mower, a ratchet set, or a sledgehammer.

6. The Interdepartmental Envelope

¹⁰ I don't know what they're really called: those old-fashioned slotted manila envelopes bound with a string and covered with lines for routing papers to one person after another. Whatever they're called, they put modern recycling to shame.

7. The Condom

¹¹ It's a remarkable little device: highly effective, inexpensive, and portable. A few purists Greens might complain about disposability and excess packaging, but these are trivial considering the work the condom has to do—battling the scourge of AIDS and stabilizing the human population at a level the earth can comfortably support.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

I nterest

1. Which parts of the first paragraph make an audience want to read more? Which parts of the paragraph might not grab readers' attention?
2. What criteria does Durning use to determine which “wonders” go on his list?
3. Why do you think Durning chose to inform readers about “simple” wonders?

D etails

4. Which items does Durning do the strongest job of detailing why they are wonders and how they have benefitted humankind? Why do you think he chose them?
5. Which details and reasons provided for any of the wonders are the most surprising to you, and why? What is the most important new information to you? What doesn't seem new?
6. What are common details among the wonders that the author informs readers about? Are there any features shared among some of them, and if so, what are they?

E xplanation

7. In the last sentence of the first paragraph, Durning explains the reasons he has noted these particular wonders: “These implements solve everyday problems so elegantly that everyone in the world today—and everyone who is likely to live in it in the next century—could make use of them without Mother Nature's being any the

- worse for wear.” Which of the seven wonders is the most detailed in connecting with this description? Why do you think so? Which one is the least detailed? Why do you think so?
8. If you had to reduce his list of wonders by two items, which would you remove? Why?
 9. If Durning had to expand his list of wonders by two items, what would you suggest he add? Why?

Audience

10. Durning’s title has the word “sustainable” in it. What kind of attitude toward the world does that word choice show?

Style

11. Describe the style of this essay. Is it formal, in the middle, or informal in its approach to the reader? Or does it mix the levels of formality? How and why?

I D E A S for Your Own Writing

MyWritingLab

Two Unsustainable Wonders

Durning describes inventions that have benefitted humankind without hurting the environment. Take a different approach and describe what you think are two inventions that have *least* benefitted humankind and have most hurt our environment by informing readers about the effects of these inventions. Like Durning, you need to describe and explain each of your selections.

Informing about Your Own Wonder

Write an essay that informs readers about a type of technology or a service that is free or reasonably priced and beneficial to many people in American society. In this short essay, you need to use strong examples and provide detailed explanations to show how it is a “wonder.”

SELECTION 5

MyWritingLab

Soup

The New Yorker

The final reading selection of the chapter is “Soup,” an unsigned essay that first appeared in the “Talk of the Town” section of New Yorker magazine in January of 1989. Albert Yeganeh, the subject of this article, also inspired the “Soup Nazi” episode on the television series Seinfeld.

PRE-READING PROMPT

1. Given the competition in today's market, what does it take to be a successful business owner?
2. How do you think a successful business owner should treat customers?
3. When you visit a restaurant, which is more important to you—the food or the service? Why?

alchemist: early scientists who conducted chemical experiments in the search for mixtures with magical properties

concoctions: mixtures

borscht: an Eastern European beet soup

¹ When Albert Yeganeh says “Soup is my lifeblood,” he means it. And when he says “I am extremely hard to please,” he means that too. Working like a demon **alchemist** in a tiny storefront kitchen at 259-A West Fifty-fifth Street, Mr. Yeganeh creates anywhere from eight to seventeen soups every weekday. His **concoctions** are so popular that a wait of half an hour at the lunchtime peak is not uncommon, although there are strict rules of conduct in line. But more on that later.

² “I am psychologically kind of a health freak,” Mr. Yeganeh said the other day in a lisping staccato of Armenian origin. “And I know that soup is the greatest meal in the world. It’s very good for your digestive system. And I use only the best, the freshest ingredients. I am a perfectionist. When I make a clam soup, I use three different kinds of clams. Every other place uses canned clams. I’m called crazy. I am not crazy. People don’t realize why I get so upset. It’s because if the soup is not perfect and I’m still selling it, it’s a torture. It’s my soup, and that’s why I’m so upset. First you clean and then you cook. I don’t believe that ninety-nine per cent of the restaurants in New York know how to clean a tomato. I tell my crew to wash the parsley eight times. If they wash it five or six times, I scare them. I tell them they’ll go to jail if there is sand in the parsley. One time, I found a mushroom on the floor, and I fired the guy who left it there.” He spread his arms, and added, “This place is the only one like it in . . . in . . . the whole earth! One day, I hope to learn something from the other places, but so far I haven’t. For example the other day I went to a very fancy restaurant and had **borscht**. I had to send it back. It was junk. I could see all the chemicals in it. I never use chemicals. Last weekend, I had lobster bisque in Brooklyn, a very well-known place. It was junk. When I make a lobster bisque, I use a whole lobster. You know, I never advertise, I don’t have to. All the big-shot chefs and the kings of the hotels come here to see what I’m doing.”

³ As you approach Mr. Yeganeh’s Soup Kitchen International from a distance, the first thing you notice about it is the awning, which proclaims “Homemade Hot, Cold, Diet Soups.” The second thing you notice is an aroma so delicious that it makes you want to take a bite out of the air. The third thing you notice, in front of the kitchen, is an electric signboard that flashes, say “Today’s Soups . . . Chicken Vegetable . . . Mexican Beef Chili . . . Cream of Watercress . . . Italian Sausage . . . Clam Bisque . . . Beef Barley . . . Due to Cold Weather . . . For Most Efficient and Fastest Service the Line Must . . . Be Kept Moving . . . Please . . . Have Your Money . . . Ready . . . Pick the Soup of Your Choice . . . Move to Your Extreme . . . Left After Ordering.”

4 “I am not prejudiced against color or religion,” Mr. Yeganeh told us, and he jabbed an index finger at the flashing sign. “Whoever follows that I treat very well. My regular customers don’t say anything. They are very intelligent and well educated. They know I’m just trying to move the line. The New York cop is very smart—he sees everything but says nothing. But the young girl who wants to stop and tell you how nice you look and hold everyone up—yah!” He made a **guillotining motion with his hand**. “I tell you, I hate to work with the public. They treat me like a slave. My philosophy is: The customer is always wrong and I’m always right. I raised my prices to try and get rid of some of these people, but it didn’t work.”

guillotining motion with his hand: pretends to cut his head off

5 The other day, Mr. Yeganeh was dressed in chefs’ whites with orange smears across his chest, which may have been some of the carrot soup cooking in a huge pot on a little stove in one corner. A three-foot-long hand-held mixer from France sat in the sink, looking like an overgrown gardening tool. Mr. Yeganeh spoke to two young helpers in a twisted Armenian-Spanish **barrage**, then said



barrage: outpouring, a rush of words

to us, “I have no overhead, no trained waitresses, and I have the cashier here.” He pointed to himself theatrically. Beside the doorway, a glass case with fresh green celery, red and yellow peppers, and purple eggplant was topped by five big gray soup urns. According to a piece of cardboard taped to the door, you can buy Mr. Yeganeh’s soups in three sizes, costing from four to fifteen dollars. The order of any well-behaved customer is accompanied by little waxpaper packets of bread, fresh vegetables (such as scallions and radishes), fresh fruit (such as cherries or an orange), a chocolate mint, and a plastic spoon. No coffee, tea, or other drinks are served.

6 “I get my recipes from books and theories and my own taste,” Mr. Yeganeh said. “At home, I have several hundreds of books. When I do research, I find that I don’t know anything. Like cabbage is a cancer fighter, and some fish is good for your heart but some is bad. Every day, I should have one sweet, one spicy, one cream, one vegetable soup—and they must change, they should always taste a little different.” He added that he wasn’t sure how extensive his **repertoire** was, but that it probably includes at least eighty soups, among them African peanut butter, Greek moussaka, hamburger, Reuben, B.L.T., asparagus and caviar, Japanese shrimp miso, chicken chili, Irish corned beef and cabbage, Swiss chocolate, French calf’s brain, Korean beef ball, Italian shrimp and eggplant Parmesan, buffalo, ham and egg, short rib, Russian beef Stroganoff, turkey cacciatore, and Indian mulligatawny. “The chicken and the seafood are an addiction, and when I have French garlic soup, I let people have only one small container each,” he said. “The doctors and nurses love that one.”

repertoire: collection, portfolio

⁷ A lunch line of thirty people stretched down the block of Mr. Yeganeh's doorway. Behind a construction worker was a man in expensive leather, who was in front of a woman in a fur hat. Few people spoke. Most had their money out and their orders ready.

⁸ At the front of the line, a woman in a brown coat couldn't decide which soup to get and started to complain about the prices.

⁹ "You talk too much, dear," Mr. Yeganeh said, and motioned to her to move to the left. "Next!"

¹⁰ "Just don't talk. Do what he says," a man huddled in a blue parka warned.

¹¹ "He's downright rude," said a blond woman in a coat. "Even abusive. But you can't deny it, his soup is the best."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Interest

1. Analyze the attention-getting quality of the first paragraph. How does the author reach out to the audience, and what aspects of the paragraph would make a reader want to read further? Why?
2. Of all of the direct quotations from Yeganeh, which one sticks out the most to you and why? What is the writer trying to inform his readers about through this article about Yeganeh, his philosophy, his business, and his personality?

Details

3. What dominant personality trait of Yeganeh is emphasized in this article? Is he someone you would want to work for? Why or why not?
4. The author uses specific details throughout the essay. Which details help you picture the workplace? Which details help you envision Mr. Yeganeh and understand his personality? Which details help you to understand the product—Mr. Yeganeh's soups? Which details reveal the types of customers who come for this soup?

Explanation

5. Why do so many customers tolerate Mr. Yeganeh's strict rules and rude behavior? What examples in the article support their tolerance for his attitude?
6. What explanation of his methods does the author provide through direct quotations? Why do you think the author chose to not take a side or comment extensively on the way Mr. Yeganeh acts in this article?
7. How do customers' statements provide an explanation for the popularity of his restaurant?

Audience

8. Do you think the author's approach and tone in the essay is successful? Why or why not?

Style

9. In the final part of the essay, the author details the lunch line and Yeganeh's attitude toward customers who don't follow the rules. Look at the quotations and how the author describes the action, but focus specifically on the verbs used. How does the author create a mood with his verbs?
10. Most of the essay has long paragraphs that provide long quotations from the chef. Why would a writer choose to use such long paragraphs that provide direct quotations from Yeganeh?

I D E A S for Your Own Writing

MyWritingLab

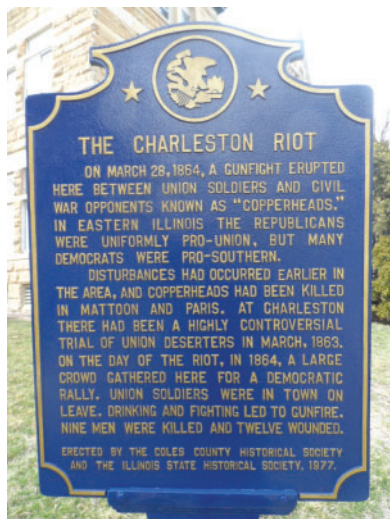
Preparing for a Job Interview: Informing about Your Work Ethic

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines the term *work ethic* in this way: "A set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence." In "Soup," the author informs readers, in part, about the work ethic and cooking/business philosophy of Albert Yeganeh. In a short essay, prepare for future job interviews where an interviewer may ask a question such as this: "How would you describe your work ethic?" Inform your reader/future employer about your personal work ethic.

Informing about the Characteristics of a Successful Business

Based on your experience as a consumer, explain the characteristics of one kind of successful business. What, for example, makes a grocery store, gas station, hair salon, or bookstore a good place to shop? What qualities does a good business have to have, and why? Use details, examples, and thoughtful explanations to inform a reader about what you know are essential characteristics for a certain kind of business or shop.

Historical/Cultural Marker: Informing about a Place in Your Community



Your Writing Task: Drawing upon your knowledge of your neighborhood, city, community, or metro area, locate a place that is significant to your community or a special group of which you are a member. Your task is to find a landmark and inform a general reader about it. Your aim is to provide a text (one to four paragraphs) that describes and offers reasons why this place is important. Ideally, if funds are available, your informative prose would be printed on a historical/cultural marker at that place.

Since you are writing for a wide audience (anyone who might come along and read this historical marker at a certain spot in your community), your writing cannot use first person (*I, mine, we, us*) or second person (*you, your*). The marker must use third person when relating details about this place and explaining why it is a significant and important place in your neighborhood, city, community, or metro area.

Your Audience: Keep in mind that the person reading this marker will be standing exactly in front of the place that you are writing about. So think about how your text can complement and inform a general reader about that landmark.

Format: Before you offer the full text for the historical/cultural marker, you should indicate under the heading of “Location” in one or two sentences where exactly this marker would be placed. The informative prose for the marker (one to four paragraphs) should be placed under the heading of “Text,” and the text should be single-spaced with double-spacing between paragraphs.

A Successful Historical Marker . . .

- Is entertaining, easy to read, and thought provoking.
- Provides a strong background and context about this place at the beginning of the text.
- Relates specific and concrete details about this place that are important and significant to your community or special group.
- Presents these details clearly and concisely.
- Has focused and unified paragraphs.

- Uses transitions and a variety of sentence types.
- Provides a medium level of tone and diction—not too formal, but not too informal.
- Is free of mechanical and proofreading errors.
See page 229 for Collin Seibert’s response to this assignment.

Career Profile Assignment

Your Writing Task: Write an informative essay about a career in which you have an interest, ideally a career you hope to have some day. You will present information about this career by highlighting the experiences—perhaps a typical day on the job—of an individual currently engaged in this career. Some possible subjects for this essay include a doctor, a small business owner, a teacher, a gardener, a parole officer. While any career profile will include a discussion of the work itself and the workplace environment, you should present these elements through the individual’s perspective. The essay “Soup” is a good example of a workplace profile that presents the restaurant business through the experiences of one individual—Mr. Yeganeh.

You will gather material for this paper by observing, interviewing, and notetaking; thus, you will practice firsthand research techniques (see Chapter 12, p. 356 for tips on preparing for interviews). Once you have compiled sufficient information, you will organize it into an informative profile.

NOTE: **It is best to avoid profiling an immediate family member. You will not gain meaningful experience in interviewing, notetaking, and research by talking to Mom or Dad over the supper table. However, if you want to interview a distant family member who has a profession you are interested in, please discuss the matter with your instructor.

Your Audience: Imagine that the counselors have asked for your career profile to be kept as a resource in the Career Center to be read by students interested in that career. Your profile will be an important resource because it is more than just dry facts about a career. It is a lively, entertaining account that highlights your individual attitude and point of view while presenting important information.

Special Considerations

- **Determine a *dominant impression* that you want your profile to convey.** A profile of a particular career professional might stress the necessary leadership skills or perhaps the person’s ability to communicate well. Having a dominant impression to convey will help you to focus your details, so the essay communicates a specific point about the subject to the readers.

- **Make your essay *informative, interesting, and well organized*.** Inform your readers by including facts and relevant information about the career. Remember, “memorable quotations, compelling examples, vivid details, and interesting word choices” will interest and engage your readers. Finally, you may also find using the writing strategy of narration a good approach for your topic. A dramatic narrative of your topic in a story form is an effective way to capture your readers’ interest while presenting information.
- **Give careful consideration to *your role in this profile*.** Do you want to be a visible part of the discussion? In other words, will the profile be a first person narrative? (I.e., “After being held spellbound by his thrilling highwire act, I asked the Great Fernando how he got involved in circus work.”) You may also choose to not be a visible part of the narrative, to write it in third person as was the approach of the author of “Soup.” Either approach can be successful.

Rejection Letter

Your Role and Position: You are a regional director of Missouri Health Matters, a non-profit health promotion organization that works in urban, suburban, and rural communities within the state of Missouri to encourage exercise and healthy eating habits to young children, tweens, and teenagers. Your official title is Regional Director of Health Programs, and your territory is the western, northwestern, southwestern, and some central parts of the state.

The Rhetorical Situation: Context, Audience, Purpose, and Genre: Your organization has a need for more health program specialists, employees who give presentations and workshops about topics such as these: the need to eat more grains, vegetables, and fruits; the crucial need for young adults to exercise more often; the perils of obesity; and the negative health effects of junk food. The Executive Director of MO Health Matters gave you clearance to hire one new health program specialist because the organization is expanding. You conducted interviews, you’ve offered the job to a candidate, and that person has now formally accepted the job offer. During the process of finding these new hires, you interviewed five other very qualified individuals.

You have to write a rejection letter that will go to the five people who didn’t get the position as health program specialist. Since you’re incredibly busy as a Regional Director of MO Health Matters, you cannot personalize these five letters. That’s a shame because the people you interviewed were very qualified and would have been great at the job. However, the person you hired—someone right out of college with a community health degree and substantial internship experience—was the best candidate.

You have to create a one-page form letter for the five candidates who did not get a job. All of them were very well qualified, had substantial work or internship experience, and held degrees that cohere with what MO Health Matters wanted. They just didn't get the job because of the strong competition.

A Successful Rejection Letter . . .

- Provides a respectful and appropriate buffer before relating the bad news.
- Explains the situation with poise, honesty, and thoughtfulness.
- Offers a tone that is respectful and appropriate.
- Provides a closing paragraph that offers goodwill and positive closure.
- Has focused and unified paragraphs.
- Is free of irrelevant details.
- Follows the proper format of a professional letter.
- Exhibits strong concision, cohesion, transitions, and sentence variety in length and type.
- Provides a medium level of tone and diction—not too formal, but not too informal.
- Is free of mechanical and proofreading errors.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

Learning Objectives

How they connect to writing at college . . .

-
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 1 Get your facts straight. | Presenting inaccurate information can create distrust in readers.
Present information accurately and truthfully. |
| 2 Make the information interesting. | Spark readers' interest through memorable quotations, compelling examples, vivid details, strong explanations, and interesting word choices. |
| 3 Organize information appropriately. | Organization is key to keeping readers interested and informed.
Think about what the readers already know and what the readers need to know in order to catch and keep their attention. |
-

Learning Objectives How they connect to writing at college . . .

4 Put **I D E A S** to work in informative writing.

Consider these crucial factors when brainstorming, drafting, and revising your informative writing:

- Interest
- Details
- Explanation
- Audience
- Style

MyWritingLab Visit **Chapter 8, “Informative Writing,”** in MyWritingLab to test your understanding of the chapter objectives.