Nonfiction for High School

A Sentence-Composing Approach

A Student Worktext

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In memory of John M. Crocker,
a good father, a good friend,
a good man: a model worth imitating.

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*If **nonfiction** is where you do your best writing, or your best teaching of writing, don't be buffaloed into the idea that it's an inferior species. The only important distinction is between good writing and bad writing.*

—William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*

NONFICTION: WORDS, SENTENCES, PARAGRAPHS

Throughout this worktext, you will learn the meanings of words in the context of nonfiction selections and study many nonfiction authors, your mentors whose writing is your apprenticeship in better reading and writing.

A SENTENCE-COMPOSING APPROACH: A WRITER'S TOOLBOX

Throughout the rest of this worktext, you will learn valuable tools for writing. Activities are based upon sentences of skilled authors, many of whom you may recognize. Those tools are requirements for many assignments in this worktext.

A NONFICTION SAMPLER: MINIATURE EXAMPLES

This collection of short nonfiction will strengthen your reading skills, and provide scaffolding for building your sentences and paragraphs the way authors build theirs. You'll learn to do what authors do.

NONFICTION: A REALITY SMORGASBORD

All of the excerpts in this worktext are *nonfiction*, the branch of literature that is not fiction, poetry, or drama. That's what nonfiction is not, but what is it?

NONFICTION DEFINED

Nonfiction is writing that's about what's real. Unlike fiction, none is made up. There are many kinds of nonfiction:

- real people (biography)
- real thoughts (essays)
- real information (articles in magazines and newspapers, print, or digital)
- real current events (news and journalism)
- real past events (history)
- real facts, processes, wikis, and blogs (information)
- real opinions about how good—or bad—things are (reviews)
- real memories (memoirs)
- real famous words (public documents, speeches)
- real memorable correspondence (letters)
- real education or instruction (textbooks, manuals, how-tos).

TRUE VS. FICTIONAL STORIES

Fiction is any story, short or long (novel), primarily from the author's imagination. Its source is the head of the author, not the history of an event (journalism) nor the facts of a real person's life (biography) nor the ideas of a person (essay) nor any other kind of nonfiction.

A fictional story never really happened except in the author's imagination. Think Harry Potter.

A nonfictional story did really happen and is based upon fact. Think Harry Truman, American two-term president from 1945 to 1953, whose biography *Truman* by David McCollough is a nonfiction account of Harry Truman's life.

Another distinction is that nonfiction is based upon factual or historical actuality; fiction, upon pretended actuality. Harry Potter, in actual truth, couldn't fly on a broomstick during Quidditch; however, in simulated truth, rendered through the skill and creativity of author J. K. Rowling (and through computer-generated images in the movie versions), Harry appears to be actually flying during Quidditch matches in the wizardly world at Hogwarts. Because of Rowling's skill in creating its realistic details, the flying seems to be actual—but isn't.

In actual truth, however, President Harry Truman did order the first and only military use of an atomic bomb to speed the end of World War II. The bombing actually happened on August 6 in the city of Hiroshima, Japan, and August 9, 1945, in Nagasaki, Japan. The true story of one of those two cities is a nonfiction book titled *Hiroshima* by John Hersey, who went to that city, interviewed six survivors, and reported their experiences and observations. Here is the opening of the book, a description of where those six survivors were at the exact moment the bomb went off.

A Noiseless Flash

> At exactly fifteen minutes past eight in the morning, on August 6, 1945, Japanese time, at the moment when the atomic bomb flashed above Hiroshima, Miss Toshiko Sasaki, a clerk in the personnel department of the East Asia Tin Works, had just sat down at her place in the plant office and was turning her head to speak to the girl at the next desk. At that same moment, Dr. Masakazu Fujii was settling down cross-legged to read the Osaka *Asahi* on the porch of

> his private hospital, overhanging one of the seven deltaic rivers which divide Hiroshima; Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura, a tailor's widow, stood by the window of her kitchen, watching a neighbor tearing down his house because it lay in the path of an air-raid-defense fire lane; Father Wilhelm Kleinsorge, a German priest of the Society of Jesus, reclined in his underwear on a cot on the top floor of his order's three-story mission house, reading a Jesuit magazine, *Stimmen der Zeit*; Dr. Terufumi Sasaki, a young member of the surgical staff of the city's large, modern Red Cross Hospital, walked along one of the hospital corridors with a blood specimen for a Wassermann test in his hand; and the Reverend Mr. Kiyoshi Tanimoto, pastor of the Hiroshima Methodist Church, paused at the door of a rich man's house in Koi, the city's western suburb, and prepared to unload a handcart full of things he had evacuated from town in fear of the massive B-29 raid which everyone expected Hiroshima to suffer. A hundred thousand people were killed by the atomic bomb and these six were among the survivors.

The distinction between fiction and nonfiction is that fiction reflects scenes from an author's imagination, while nonfiction reflects events from an author's research, investigation, and discovery.

Much nonfiction, like most fiction, tells stories—but real stories of actual events (history or current events) or of real people (biography). Authors attempt to portray those nonfiction stories truthfully, factually, to reflect the actuality of the event or the life of the person.

Man . . . is the storytelling animal.

—Graham Swift, *Waterland*

Other kinds of nonfiction are not stories, but they, too, reflect the actuality of thought or procedure. A speech or a letter reveals the thoughts of the speaker or writer. An essay or an article or a review reveals the opinion of the author.

In *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*, you'll analyze nonfiction of various types by hundreds of authors—usually excerpts of sentences or paragraphs. Some are from biographies, some from essays, some from journalism articles, some from informational texts, some from public documents or speeches, some from stories of actual events.

Among their authors are many—old and new—who are famous: Diane Ackerman, Maya Angelou, Truman Capote, Annie Dillard, Laura Hillenbrand, Langston Hughes, Erik Larson, John F. Kennedy, Tracy Kidder, Abraham Lincoln, John McFee, Barack Obama, George Orwell, Anna Quindlen, George Washington, Tom Wolfe, Richard Wright—and hundreds more established or contemporary authors.

These authors, and the others, have various ways of writing nonfiction: telling a true story about themselves or others, narrating a real event, exploring an idea or situation, reporting an incident, writing an important speech, and many other forms of nonfiction.

They all tell us something we don't know, or don't fully understand, or don't believe or accept, or don't know but would like to know. They reveal to us a world unseen, an idea unexplored, a life unimagined, a hope unrealized.

The reader finds that what might have been the author's self-absorption has been transformed into hospitality. Detail that could seem merely personal and trivial instead becomes essential and personal. . . . It is our story, too, the human story of work and rest, love and loneliness, grief and joy. We notice how the world goes on, and how often it is the simple things . . . that allow us to dwell on the issues of life and death that concern us all.

—Kathleen Norris, "Stories Around a Fire"

ACTIVITY 1: FICTION OR NONFICTION?

Listed randomly are landmark titles of fiction and nonfiction known to culturally literate readers. Write *F* for fiction, *NF* for nonfiction. If you aren't sure, research the title to find out.

1. "I Have a Dream" Martin Luther King Jr.	**11.** *The Old Man and the Sea* Ernest Hemingway
2. *Gone with the Wind* Margaret Mitchell	**12.** *The Prince* Machiavelli
3. "Theory of Relativity" Albert Einstein	**13.** *Hiroshima* John Hersey
4. *To Kill a Mockingbird* Harper Lee	**14.** *Death of a Salesman* Arthur Miller
5. "Gettysburg Address" Abraham Lincoln	**15.** "Self-Reliance" Ralph Waldo Emerson
6. *The Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith	**16.** *Frankenstein* Mary Shelley
7. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* Maya Angelou	**17.** *Walden* Henry David Thoreau
8. *Charlotte's Web* E. B. White	**18.** *The Divine Comedy* Dante Alighieri
9. *The Chronicles of Narnia* C. S. Lewis	**19.** *The Diary of a Young Girl* Anne Frank
10. "The Lottery" Shirley Jackson	**20.** "Of Studies" Francis Bacon

NONFICTION TOPICS

What topics are subjects of nonfiction? Count the number of grains of sand in all the deserts of the earth, and then count the number of drops of water in all the oceans on the planet, and then multiply both figures by a billion trillion. That's how many topics nonfiction has been written about—

from *A* to *Z*, from common subjects (cars, travel, sports, health, friendship, money, and a billion more) to esoteric subjects (metaphysics, astrobiology, mycology, phylogeny, ontogeny, postmodernism, and a billion more). The number is endless—with their subjects ranging tiny (an ancient history of salt) to huge (a history of the universe).

Take this example: a popular category of nonfiction about self-help or how-to books. On the Internet, amazon.com lists over 600,000 titles beginning with *How to . . .* Here are a few illustrating the range of that kind of nonfiction:

- *How to Train a Wild Elephant: And Other Adventures in Mindfulness* by Jan Chozen Bays
- *How to Babysit a Grandpa* by Jean Reagan and Lee Wildish
- *How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bittman
- *How to Be Photogenic: A Guide for Girls and Guys to Look Better in Pictures!* by F. Saeyang
- *How to Be Interesting (in 10 Simple Steps)* by Jessica Hagy
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- *How to Raise the Perfect Dog: Through Puppyhood and Beyond* by Cesar Millan
- *How to Build a Fire: And Other Handy Things Your Grandfather Knew* by Erin Bried
- *How to Write a Book This Weekend, Even If You Flunked English Like I Did* by Vic Johnson

In *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*, you'll read just a tiny bit of varied kinds of nonfiction, but through the activities, you'll increase your ability to read and write nonfiction on higher skill levels. (None will assign you to write a book over the weekend. Promise.)

IMPORTANCE OF NONFICTION

Why study methods of reading and writing nonfiction? Something done frequently should be something done well. Nonfiction is the kind of writing you'll probably read most often in college or the workplace. In college, students read textbooks, print and digital, in almost all courses and are expected to master the contents without help—scientific data, mathematical theories, psychology studies, anthropological research reports, and many others. At work, employees are often required to read database information, operational and procedural manuals, product descriptions and inventories, focus group summaries evaluating products and services, comparative market statistics, and much more. A lot of that nonfiction is rough going, requiring advanced skills of interpreting for reading and composing for writing.

The purpose of this worktext is to help you become a better reader and writer of nonfiction, including the kinds that require deep reading.

Force yourself to reflect on what you read, [sentence by sentence, and] paragraph by paragraph.

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge

UBER-LITERACY

By focusing on nonfiction sentences and paragraphs—how they are built and how they link to each other to convey meaning—this worktext *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach* promotes uber-literacy, the kind of deep reading that characterizes the most skillful readers capable of interpreting difficult nonfiction texts in college or career. The constant purpose of this worktext is to illustrate how sentences make meaning in those nonfiction texts and how understanding that process improves your ability to interpret and compose nonfiction. Carefully

completing activities in this worktext, you can become uber-literate. (In case you're wondering, the prefix *uber-* means "very.")

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.
There, shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

—Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Criticism"

YOUR TURN: INFORMATIONAL ARTICLE

Pretend you work for a publisher of high school textbooks. Your job is to introduce the nonfiction section of a literature textbook. Your editor assigned you to write two double-spaced pages that tell high school students what nonfiction is, including the kinds of nonfiction, and to contrast nonfiction and fiction.

Directions:

1. Review the information about nonfiction in this section.
2. List important terms associated with nonfiction to explain in your introduction to the nonfiction section of the anthology.
3. Draft your introduction, including explanations or definitions of nonfiction terms or types.
4. Exchange your draft with other students in your class for suggestions to improve your introduction to nonfiction, and give them suggestions, too. Then revise several times until your review is finished.

SENTENCE-COMPOSING OVERVIEW

THE READING–WRITING CONNECTION

Reading and writing are inseparable—two sides of the same coin. Reading is the receipt of someone else's writing. Writing is the beginning of someone else's reading (unless you're writing a diary, in which case the someone else is your future self). When a sentence is composed, it is intended to be read. Sometimes, though, especially with difficult texts, what's written is not read *well*, and so the writer's intention isn't fully met. As a result, comprehension and communication are incomplete.

To understand a sentence fully, especially a difficult sentence, requires getting into the head of the writer to extract meaning from his or her writing and then importing it into your own head, without losing, distorting, or ignoring any of the original meaning in the process.

In *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*, you'll practice ways to read and write sentences well. The sentence approach to nonfiction breaks down reading and writing to a manageable unit of meaning—the sentence—to help with interpreting and composing sentences. Sentence activities on reading and writing nonfiction in this worktext raise your skill in both to a higher level for use in and beyond high school.

Sentence craft equals sentence comprehension equals sentence appreciation.

—Stanley Fish, *How to Write a Sentence: And How to Read One*

SPEECH VS. WRITING

In listening and in speaking while conversing, communication through sentences, one at a time, is simple. The reason is obvious: spoken sentences are usually short, simple, with easy words. Each sentence is basic in content

and style. Sentences, one after the other, are quick and easy to understand, because each is usually short and simply constructed.

In reading and in writing, compared to listening and speaking, communication is far more complex. Sentences are often long, intricate, with more demanding vocabulary. Most contain many parts in addition to a subject and a predicate. Most sentences are advanced in content and style, packed with multiple sentence parts, each with its own meaning. Together, those sentence parts require deep, slow reading for full understanding.

SPOKEN SENTENCES (OVERHEARD ON A BUS)

1. Janelle went to the mall to buy some new jeans.
2. She wanted to get some in the newest style.
3. She got a slice of pizza at the food court.

WRITTEN SENTENCES (SELECTED RANDOMLY FROM NONFICTION)

Following are the originals, then a translation of each into a series of spoken sentences showing how all the information might be conveyed in a conversation through a series of many shorter, simpler sentences, and many more words, than in the original written sentence:

1a. *In writing:* Dotted with sticker bushes, tumbleweed, and coiled rattlesnakes, the desert around our house seems to have no reason for existence, other than providing a place for people to dump things they no longer want, like tires and mattresses.

Andre Agassi, *Open: An Autobiography*

1b. *In conversation:* We live in a desert. It is dotted with sticker bushes. There's tumbleweeds here and there. There's even rattlesnakes coiled up. The desert seems kind of useless. The only thing people use it for is for a dumping ground. They throw stuff there they don't want, like tires and mattresses.

2a. *In writing:* One structure, rejected at first as a monstrosity, became the World Fair's **emblem** [*symbol*], a machine huge and terrifying, **eclipsing** [*overshadowing*] instantly the tower of Alexandre Eiffel that had so wounded America's pride.

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

2b. *In conversation:* One structure was rejected. It was considered at first a monstrosity. The structure was a machine, which was huge and terrifying. It outdid the French Eiffel tower that had hurt the pride of America.

3a. *In writing:* As the contest for the State Legislature that would name his successor raged in Missouri, Senator Benton stood fast by his **post** [*position*] in Washington, outspoken to the end in his condemnation of the views his **constituents** [*followers*] now embraced.

John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*

3b. *In conversation:* Senator Benton never changed his mind. He even voiced opinions that sharply disagreed with the people who had elected him. He continued to express those strong views during the battle in Missouri among the candidates who were fighting to replace him as senator.

The **juxtaposition** [*contrast*] of the written and spoken versions demonstrates that the written version is harder to understand, requiring more deep reading than the spoken version.

Throughout this worktext, you'll sample nonfiction sentences that illustrate strong writing and apply what you learn to building better sentences like those of authors.

My approach is to focus all my attention on the sentences—try to get them as good and honest and interesting as I can.

—George Saunders, author of *Tenth of December*

Reading and writing nonfiction both involve comprehending and communicating sentences that are thick not thin, long not short, packed not empty. Such sentences are the focus of activities throughout this worktext, intended to enrich and expand your ability to read and write nonfiction.

Throughout the sections of this worktext, you'll learn and apply sentence-composing skills of various kinds, with a recurring emphasis on variety in sentence structure for better reading and writing of nonfiction. Throughout the worktext, this strand focuses on three important sentence-composing tools: *identifiers*, *describers*, and *elaborators*.

To introduce you to those power tools, here are examples, with many more to follow within the activities of *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*. Later, you'll learn exactly what they are, how they work, and why they matter for reading and writing nonfiction, or any kind of writing.

EXAMPLES

The first sentence is *before* adding the tool (underlined); the second, *after* adding the tool.

Identifiers

1a. *Before:* Sergeant Fales felt anger with the pain.

1b. *After:* A big broad-faced man who had fought in Panama and during the Gulf War, Sergeant Fales felt anger with the pain.

Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*

2a. *Before:* One of the young men had a loose, gangly build.

2b. *After:* One of the young men, a six-foot-three freshman named Roger Morris, had a loose, gangly build.

Daniel James Brown, *The Boys in the Boat*

3a. *Before:* Captain Kendall had a strong jaw and a wide mouth that bent easily into a smile.

3b. *After:* Captain Kendall had a strong jaw and a wide mouth that bent easily into a smile, a trait that made him popular among all passengers but especially women.

Tracy Kidder, *Among Schoolchildren*

Describers

4a. *Before:* The rest wait patiently outside.

4b. *After:* Listening through loudspeakers, the rest wait patiently outside.

Susan Cain, *Quiet*

5a. *Before:* The police entered the hotel basement.

5b. *After:* The police, holding their flickering lanterns high, entered the hotel basement.

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

6a. *Before:* Play is widespread among animals because it invites problem-solving.

6b. *After:* Play is widespread among animals because it invites problem-solving, allowing a creature to test its limits and develop strategies.

Diane Ackerman, *Deep Play*

Elaborators

7a. *Before:* The spiders lie on their sides.

7b. *After:* The spiders lie on their sides, their legs drying in knots.

Annie Dillard, "Death of a Moth"

8a. *Before:* His face was open and ordinary.

8b. *After:* His face, its features unremarkable but pleasant and regular, was open and ordinary.

Daniel James Brown, *The Boys in the Boat*

9a. *Before:* The official name was the World's Columbian Exposition.

9b. *After:* The official name was the World's Columbian Exposition, its official purpose to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery of America.

Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

As these examples illustrate, using those three sentence-composing tools builds better sentences—thick not thin, long not short, packed not empty—to attain variety and maturity in sentence structure in and beyond high school, for college or career.

You'll never get anywhere with all those damn little short sentences.

—Gregory Clark, *A Social Perspective on the Function of Writing*

IDENTIFIER TOOL

In the next three sections of *Nonfiction for High School: A Sentence-Composing Approach*, you'll read and write nonfiction that uses these important sentence-composing tools: *the identifier*, *the elaborator*, *the describer*. They add detail and style to writing and are indispensable tools for your writing toolbox.

Identifiers (appositives) are sentence parts that identify people, places, or things by telling who or what they are. Many begin with one of these words: *a*, *an*, *the*.

Contrast the sentences below. Notice how much identifiers (appositives) improve sentences.

1a. I came to philosophy as a last resort.

1b. A professional football player, print and television journalist, academic English teacher and world-traveler, I came to philosophy as a last resort.

John McMurty, "Kill 'Em! Crush 'Em! Eat 'Em Raw!"

2a. The study of electricity got a boost with the invention of the Leyden jar.

2b. The study of electricity got a boost with the invention of the Leyden jar, **the first device capable of storing and amplifying static electricity.**

Erik Larson, *Thunderstruck*

3a. The dictionary had a picture of an aardvark.

3b. The dictionary had a picture of an aardvark, **a long-tailed, long-eared, burrowing African mammal living off termites caught by sticking out its tongue as an anteater does for ants.**

Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*

ACTIVITY 1: MATCHING

Match the appositive with the sentence. Insert the appositive at the caret (^). Write out each sentence, underlining the appositive. Notice the three places appositives occur in a sentence: *opener*, *S-V split* (*between a subject and verb*), *closer*.

Sentences	Appositives
1. I started making an iceball, ^ . Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*	**a.** the year that showed us we could make our own destinies
2. She had tied rags around her shoulders to keep out the spring chill and was picking through the trash while her dog, ^ , played at her feet. Jeannette Walls, *The Glass Castle*	**b.** a boy who could and did imitate a police siren every morning on his way to the showers
3. This was 1979, ^ . Roya Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No*	**c.** a black-and-white terrier mix
4. Maria was a town character, ^ . Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing*	**d.** a perfect one from perfectly white snow
5. I looked with a mixture of admiration and awe at Peter, ^ . Robert Russell, *To Catch an Angel*	**e.** a fat middle-aged woman who lived with her old mother on the outskirts of town

ACTIVITY 2: COMBINING WITH THE IDENTIFIER TOOL

Combine two sentences into just one sentence. Make the underlined part an identifier (appositive) to insert at the caret (^) in the first sentence. Notice how appositives use commas for the places where they occur in a sentence: *opener*, *S-V split*, *closer*.

EXAMPLES

Opener Appositive: ^ , Sergeant Fales felt anger with the pain. He was a big broad-faced man who had fought in Panama and during the Gulf War.

Combined: A big broad-faced man who had fought in Panama and during the Gulf War, Sergeant Fales felt anger with the pain.

Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*

S-V Split Appositive: The postmistress, ^ , presides over a falling-apart post office. She is a gaunt woman who wears a rawhide jacket and denims and cowboy boots.

Combined: The postmistress, a gaunt woman who wears a rawhide jacket and denims and cowboy boots, presides over a falling-apart post office.

Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

Closer Appositive: Young Masai men set off on a pilgrimage to Mount Kilimanjaro, ^ . It is the sacred center of their world.

Combined: Young Masai men set off on a pilgrimage to Mount Kilimanjaro, the sacred center of their world.

Diane Ackerman, *Deep Play*

OPENER APPOSITIVES

1. ^ , Dodd had been a professor at the university since 1909, recognized nationally for his work on the American South and for a biography of Woodrow Wilson. Dodd is the chairman of the history department.

   Erik Larson, *The Devil in the White City*

2. ^ , Mother took credit for her successes, and believed setbacks couldn't stop her. She was a born optimist.

Diane Ackerman, *An Alchemy of Mind*

3. ^ , Daniel Webster combined the musical charm of his deep organ-like voice, an ability to crush his opponents with a **barrage** [*bombardment*] of facts, a confident and deliberate manner of speaking, and a striking appearance to make his speeches a magnet that drew crowds. Webster was a very slow speaker, averaging about a hundred words a minute.

John F. Kennedy, *Profiles in Courage*

S-V SPLIT APPOSITIVES

4. Marguerite Frolicher, ^ , accompanying her father on a business trip, woke up with a memory of her bad dream. She was a young Swiss girl.

Walter Lord, *A Night to Remember*

5. The hangman, ^ , was waiting beside his machine. The hangman was a gray-haired convict in the white uniform of the prison.

George Orwell, "*A Hanging*"

6. The face of Liliana Methol, ^ , was badly bruised and covered with blood. She was the fifth woman in the plane.

Piers Paul Read, *Alive*

CLOSER APPOSITIVES

7. The teacher chose an escort for Clarence, ^ . He was a small, wiry boy with a crew cut just growing out that resembled an untended garden.

Tracy Kidder, *Among Schoolchildren*

8. Paddy became friendly with a cow from a near-by field, ^ . The cow was a big, fat, brown animal with sleepy eyes and an enormous tail that coiled about its hind legs like a rope.

Christy Brown, *My Left Foot*

9. He lived alone, ^ . He was a gaunt, stooped figure who wore a heavy black overcoat and a misshapen fedora on those rare occasions when he left his apartment.

Barack Obama, *Dreams from My Father*

REVIEWERS

Readers want to know what you think—about that game, movie, book, restaurant, play, concert, hotel, television show, car, any product, any service. The purpose of a favorable review is to tell readers to get it; the purpose of an unfavorable review is to warn readers to forget it.

Either way, before parting with their money, readers want to know what reviewers think of it. Because of the enormous popularity of reviews of all kinds, readers frequently seek this kind of nonfiction.

ACTIVITY 3: THE BEST/THE WORST

As partners, share with each other your opinion about any one of the topics in the list below, and then open the discussion with the rest of the class. Finally, write five sentences, each about a different topic from the list, and in each use an identifier tool (appositive).

- movie or TV show you saw
- book you read
- game you attended or viewed
- music you listened to

- restaurant you visited
- concert you attended
- car you drove
- game you played
- product you bought
- tech device you used
- or anything else

YOUR TURN: CRITICAL REVIEW

For an article in your local newspaper, write a review of an event in sports or entertainment in which you include examples of the *identifier tool* (appositive) in different places: opener, S-V split, closer.

Directions:

1. Attend or recall the event.
2. List important terms associated with that event. Choose terms probably unfamiliar to your readers. For example, for the sport lacrosse, key terms are *attackman* and *midfielder*; for a movie, terms could include *computer-generated images* (*CGI*) and *docudrama*. Identify those terms by using the identifier tool (appositive) as Tim does in his review below.
3. Draft your review of the event, using appositives to identify important terms. Use appositives in different places and lengths, and sometimes use more than one appositive within the same sentence.
4. Exchange your draft with other students in your class for suggestions to improve your review, and give them suggestions, too. Then revise several times until your review is finished.

5. Create a memorable title and subtitle, with a colon between them. *Examples:* "CGI: Making Fake Real" or "Football: The Torture Sport."

Here is an example, a review of a concert by a high school student named Tim. Notice how frequently Tim identifies unfamiliar names or terms to help his readers. Study Tim's review, especially the underlined *identifiers*.

Radiohead Live: A Sonic, Techno Dazzler
by
Tim Mrozek
(*a student paper*)

(1) Radiohead is no stranger to breaking new ground, but with the release of their two new albums, two highly experimental and electronic records, many questions arose as to how they might perform the music live—concerns that were quickly resolved at last night's concert. (2) The venue was packed at the Gorge Amphitheatre, a natural, outdoor music arena, as many fans of Radiohead eagerly but restlessly awaited the appearance of the band. (3) Nearing dusk, Thom Yorke and the rest of his band took the stage amidst gales of applause and cheers. (4) The crowds' concern over whether or not these guys could pull off such strange and atmospheric music was quickly laid to rest as the band began with "Packed Like Sardines in a Crushed Box," the first track off their newest album *Amnesiac*, a great kick-off for the album. (5) At this point everyone realized that not only did Radiohead have the ability to perform these very experimental songs, dazzlers that most bands couldn't even dream of attempting live because of the techno challenges, but they were able to play them even better live than in a techno-rich recording studio. (6) As the sun began to set over the mountains in the distance, creating a very interesting mood, intensified by the very emotional moods

of Radiohead's music, Thom began to play one of the band's most recognized and adored songs, "Paranoid Android," a "Bohemian Rhapsody"-like epic song consisting of three original songs put together to form what is considered by some the quintessence of Radiohead's genius. (7) Thom, pumping his fist during one of the more intense parts, his voice echoing off of the mountains and into the concertgoer's hearts, brought the song together with his hauntingly beautiful vocals. (8) The band's most creative and versatile member with a new show-stopper at every live concert, Johnny Greenwood played one of his custom-wired guitars, giving the live version of the song the original sound for which that guitar has become known. (9) At the same time, Colin Greenwood, Johnny's older brother, stood between Thom and Johnny, playing the smooth yet odd bass line that really holds the song together. (10) Ed O'Brien, the most "normal" of the band members, was on the far left playing with his many pedals that give his guitar its unique sound. (11) All the while, Phil Selway, the band's percussionist, sat, sadly obscured by the others, yet heard clearly, holding the song to the proper pace and rhythm. (12) The entire concert was memorable, a sonic, techno dazzler.