

Pittsburgh Personals

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Introduction

Pittsburgh Personals is a unit that attempts to obtain young writers to place Pittsburgh as the setting for a personal narrative. Many writers set stories in a familiar place such as where they grew up, where they attended college or where they live presently. Pittsburgh with its reputation as the steel city has many stories about it that reflect its hard and tough steel town history. These stories are reflected in the novels set in an earlier time period such as *Out of this Furnace*, *The Valley of Decision* and the short story "Paul's Case." Today, Pittsburgh's image as a steel town and a smoky city is gone. The neighborhoods still remain, rich and poor, professional and trade. Its neighborhood tradition is maintained, unlike other American cities. Tradition dies hard here. So, much of Pittsburgh's ethnic diversity remains.

The big mansions of the industrialists endure along Fifth Avenue "Millionaire's Row" in Oakland and Shadyside. Clayton, the home of industrialist Henry Clay Frick, remains in Point Breeze, along Reynolds Avenue near many of the homes of my students. The steel, iron and glass mills set along much of the Monongahela River in Hazelwood, Homestead, and Braddock are gone, yet the heritage of hard work and ethnic identity remain in the neighborhoods and churches of that area where many Allderdice students live now. Point Breeze, Homewood, and The Hill continue as Pittsburgh neighborhoods just as they did in the stories of Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*, John Edgar Wideman's *Brothers and Keepers* and playwright August Wilson's *Fences*.

Objectives

In researching Pittsburgh, students will use print and electronic sources in the school library. Student will compile a bibliography of sources, select a list of readings, write a report, and present a report of information to the class in the areas of the history, the labor movement, the steel barons, the Pittsburgh public schools, or the communities that compose Allderdice.

You will write a personal narrative set in Pittsburgh. It will be a personal reflection about your school, church/synagogue, uptown commercial area, or street where you live. You will include information from the history of the area for your background. Cite facts that document Pittsburgh's past, what it is today, what you think it will become.

I thought it would be interesting for young writers who live in the city of Pittsburgh to observe their place in an urban setting. I am also curious to read what effect Pittsburgh's urban setting has on them. The Pittsburgh Personal should be a personal portrait set in the city they call home. At Taylor Allderdice High School in the Squirrel Hill section of Pittsburgh, our student population comes from nine Pittsburgh neighborhoods and communities in the East End area of the city. They vary in income, race and religion, much as the authors who write about Pittsburgh do. Since all writing attempts to communicate the writer's experience to the reader, writing about their experiences in Pittsburgh will tell what growing up in the city means to them. Ironically, community leaders want to keep young people in Pittsburgh and are making attempts to keep them here.

One example, might be the ritual of school picnics and/or ethnic heritage days, which occurs annually in the 100-year-old Kennywood amusement park every summer. A new play being presented now at the University

of Pittsburgh's Repertory Theatre is called "Ferris Wheel." Written by Janyce Lapore, it is the story of four girls who visit Kennywood for the annual Italian Day picnic. The writer set the story in a familiar Pittsburgh backdrop, Kennywood, a place known to Pittsburghers.

Other landmarks include Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland where Willa Cather sets much of her short story "Paul's Case." Point State Park is another favorite of Pittsburghers. It is where the rivers of the Allegheny and the Monongahela meet at the point of downtown Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River. Today, a huge fountain at the Point reaches heights of 500 feet. Every person who drives through Pittsburgh from the West comes through a tunnel to view this stunning fountain that represents the new Pittsburgh.

Place is one of the greatest components of the stories we read. Why are travel books so popular if people did not want to read about different places on earth? We are transported to a place via the author. I remember teaching Greek and Norse mythology to freshmen my first year at Allerdice High in 1982. The contrast, I often believed, between Greek versus Norse myths can be read in different ways. Greek myths were set in the Mediterranean with lush vegetation, a warm and sunny climate, and a long and fertile growing season. The Norse myths had cold ice kings and valkyries. They had a difficult time due to their harsh climate: ice, freezing temperatures and shorter growing seasons demanded, I think, tougher codes than those of their more sensuous Mediterranean counterparts who were often tripped up by their deep-seated passions in that lush climate. Pittsburgh's mountainous topography held the natural resources of coal and iron that fueled the power that built the nation. Though the region's climate is a temperate one, the temperature in the mills reached high temperatures fevering the intense heat of the mighty laborers who broke the sweat of their brows daily to survive. The writings in the Atlantic Monthly of the 1800's and Thomas Bell's Out of This Furnace reveal the hell that was the mills in those days. That internal combustion described not only the process of the forge but also the spirit of the men who labored.

A setting or place influences a writer's observations, reflections, and feelings in a positive or negative way. Often, one reads that the narrator might never return to his roots, especially if the story is set in a hard and tough industrial town like Pittsburgh or in the industrial 1800's London of Dickens' time. Whether we like it or not, both writer and reader are affected by place; both have different viewpoints about a place depending on their perspective of how a particular place affects the joy or sadness of their lives. Maybe that is why author Thomas Bell left Pittsburgh never to return. Maybe that is why Peter Mayle's books on the region of Provence have proved to be so popular with the American public. If they can't live there, they can vicariously live there by becoming armchair travelers with Mr. Mayle.

Other American Autobiographies

Russell Baker

So much of what I have read has centered on place as a drawing card for me. Three of my favorite autobiographies tell the stories of writers who talk about their early years and the influence that their home, street, school and community had on them. Russell Baker, a former humor columnist for The New York Times, writes truthfully about his tough childhood life during the Depression in *Growing Up*. After his father dies, Baker's mother leaves Virginia and moves to New Jersey. His childhood is a traditional one of the late 1920's—parents, siblings, aunts and uncles—and sitting on the porch on Sunday afternoons. His mother moves to New Jersey in 1931 because her brother Allen has settled there and offers to take in her family after the death of her husband. Thus, the story is like that of many Americans who move from one town to another for work, climate, and family. Baker writes, "From now on she would live for me, and, in turn, I would become her future." His mother's widowhood reflects the situations of many single parent families today. Much responsibility is placed on children to assist the single parent with two children and no income. Baker contrasts Virginia's small town gentility to his new life in the North in Newark.

Gay Talese

Gay Talese in *Unto the Sons* writes about his growing up in Ocean City, New Jersey, as the only child of Italian immigrants. What is significant about his story is his perspective as an outsider. He is an outsider because he is a first generation American of Italian descent and a Roman Catholic in a dry WASP town of Ocean City, New Jersey. Talese's father was a tailor in the town. He reveals how his ethnicity and religion keep him outside of mainstream American culture and also how American culture propels him forward to work in mainstream America. He learns to observe everything that goes on in his father's shop with his clients. He observes and reflects on his childhood to tell a story of what it is like to be outside the mainstream, which often works to one's advantage when telling a story and motivating a person to become a part of America's heritage. In this case he becomes a reporter for The New York Times.

Eudora Welty

Eudora Welty was born in Jackson, Mississippi. Today at 92 years, she still lives in her father's house that she talks about in her book *One Writer's Beginnings*. She reveals her family's influence on her; she cites her mother's independent West Virginia roots and her father's gentle guidance. Much of her story centers on her observation of things. I think of her story as quiet when she writes about the warm summer days and the view of the street from her house. Her love of observation is furthered when she gets her first camera—one way to record what was happening.

Her autobiography is divided into Listening, Learning to See, and Finding a Voice. She talks about the Silence sign in the Jackson Carnegie Library, much as Annie Dillard talks about it in Pittsburgh's Homewood Carnegie Library. Developing one's sense of hearing, seeing, tasting, touching and smelling contributes to each author's writing. Being readers and observers, they define themselves through places such as their homes, schools, libraries; and through people like their parents, siblings, teachers, adults and children they meet along their life's odysseys.

Welty's and Dillard's lives are free of chaos. They concentrate on listening and observing because they have the time and freedom to be children. Other writers do not. To write well one needs to listen and observe. Many students do not spend as much quiet time listening, observing and reflecting as older authors who generally did observe things more closely when they were children. Too many are being tested to justify their free public education, which many leaders and media have said is poor. However, it takes a great deal of strength to face up to a poor childhood, a bleak neighborhood, and the loneliness of non-communication in some children's lives.

Strategies

Defining Place and Setting

This unit seeks to achieve a sense of what place or a setting means to the human experience. This setting is Pittsburgh, in general, but it can be zoomed into a person's particular place in Pittsburgh such as a particular neighborhood, school, house, room, or commercial area. Often, we think of the place where we live as having no particular effect on our perspective, as unimportant to our makeup, as something we want to cover up or are ashamed of, or as something that reflects positively about others and ourselves. In any story the setting casts the mood or tone. It indicates the where in our surroundings, the place or landmark the audience may know, and the time when the story takes place.

Often, a setting or place is of particular importance to us in our routine everyday life. The buildings, streets, houses, and schools we see in our walks or drives. These routine places are the streets where we live, the neighborhoods where we attend school, the shopping areas where we make purchases and hang out, and the

bigger picture of our downtown with its skyscrapers and historical landmarks. By describing our setting or place, we reveal who we are. We make choices about what to see.

An American childhood is dictated by a pluralistic and stratified nation of various economic, sociological, ethnic, religious and racial groups striving toward an American identity even for those groups who prefer separation to the melting pot. One place where this diversity seeks a common ground is the public school. American education has sought to gather a diverse population into a literate school community based on the ideals of American democracy. Our democracy means freedom to live and worship as we choose and to be independent and financially well off. To live the American dream is to own a better house in a better neighborhood, attend a school with the best education, and have friends who possess the same values.

So, I would like to explore with the students what it is like to be living in Pittsburgh now. Our school is urban but is a microcosm of American society from wealthy students who live in upscale neighborhoods as well as poorer students who live in the areas where the future might seem less hopeful. The school is located in the upper middle-class community of Squirrel Hill where professionals and many people from the university community live. Thus, many students are from affluent homes and highly educated parents. Other students from communities like Greenfield, and Lincoln Place have families who possess less education and income. Hazelwood, once a sprawling suburb, then a location for iron and steel works until the 1980's, has changed. Some communities are being revitalized with new companies, housing, and shopping districts. A new shopping complex in Homestead is located where old steel mills thrived. Students would better understand their Pittsburgh history by reading *Out of This Furnace*, a novel that is set in Pittsburgh in the early 1900's that tells the stories of ethnic Slovaks who labored in those mills. How can we know who we are if we don't appreciate what life was like before? By reading Pittsburgh's history as the industrial capital of the country, students should know Pittsburgh's heritage and place in the past and now. The labor movement began here with people like Philip Murray, Monsignor Charles Owen Rice and many others who fought for the worker's right to unionize and for collective bargaining in the 1930's. To not know Pittsburgh's labor history is ignorance. As George Santayana said, "Those who don't remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Students will write a reflection about life in Pittsburgh today, and how the routine settings of Pittsburgh affect their outlooks, their moods. By describing a specific place and telling a story, they will convey what it is like to be a young person living in Pittsburgh today. Part of that story might reveal what Pittsburgh was like before in its industrial and labor heyday. Many Pittsburghers have families who have lived here for three to four generations. In Allegheny County with the second oldest population in the country, kids might learn from adults what their houses, schools, churches and city were like before and what they see now. Much of Pittsburgh is traditional. It is still composed of large ethnic Eastern European communities and churches. Many children retain the customs and heritage of their elders via church. If their families still remain in Pittsburgh, there is much information for them to hear and know from their grandparents or other elders. The Smithfield Presbyterian Church downtown often houses a genealogical workshop in the fall. Students could look up their family heritage there. Many Pittsburgh Eastern European rite churches have great religious and cultural traditions that have remained such as pysanky, egg coloring and such. They continue to teach these crafts to young people. Talking to elders about their childhood is another way to communicate what Pittsburgh was like in the past. Through a program sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh called Generations Together, students volunteer to meet with elders.

Literature Models

"Paul's Case" by Willa Cather

Much of the reading we have done for this seminar revolves around Pittsburgh as the setting for various stories. "Paul's Case" a short story by Willa Cather is set in the Pittsburgh of the early 1900's. A teenaged boy

named Paul is disgusted with his place at home on Cordelia Street in the East End. The houses, the stoops and the people bore Paul, who escapes to the theatre at Carnegie Music Hall, where he works as an usher. The dull routine of everyday life in his East End neighborhood of Cordelia Street and at school contrasts sharply with the world of the symphony, opera and paintings at Carnegie Hall in Oakland. The contrast is so sharp and painful for Paul that he breaks out of the routine in Pittsburgh to live his dreams in New York. When what he is and what he hopes to be don't converge—Paul loses hope. He knows he won't get into that world without money and he isn't willing to settle for a banal job that will only earn him little. He wants the big life now; the narrow view on Cordelia Street repels him. For some students Paul's choice may seem good because it is what he wants and he has no hope if he cannot have what he wants now. This might appeal to some less mature 15 year olds who think they must have what they want now, but who cannot think that work will help them to attain their goals—not necessarily their fantasies as with Paul.

An American Childhood by Annie Dillard

Annie Dillard's memoir called *An American Childhood* is set in the 50's in Pittsburgh's East End in a neighborhood called Point Breeze. She attends a private girls' school that exists today, the Ellis School. In her story Dillard reveals much about what it was like to live an upper-class life. Her father was an executive for American Standard. Dillard describes her first house on one street then shows how her parents moved up to a larger home on another street in Point Breeze. She cites her favorite playground, Frick Park, where she played for hours. Dillard describes her church, Shadyside Presbyterian, where the wealthy Mellons and Scaifes were members. She describes her social life of dances and cotillions and meeting all of the boys from the same affluent background. Her American childhood is one of privilege and freedom. Dillard is free to explore, imagine and escape to the world of books, her insect collection. Eventually, she leaves Pittsburgh for another place—where writing and her interests prevail over social responsibilities that may have played a more important part in her parents' generation.

Brothers and Keepers by John Edgar Wideman

John Edgar Wideman, an African-American, grew up in Homewood. He graduated from another Pittsburgh public high school, Peabody. He writes about himself and his younger brother, Robbie, in *Brothers and Keepers*. It is a kind of Cain and Abel story in that John becomes a successful author and athlete, and his brother, Robbie, becomes a thief and convict. How do two brothers who grow up in the same neighborhood of Homewood, the same family go in such diverse directions? Do you think Homewood today is similar or different to the Homewood in Wideman's book set in the 60's? How does Homewood affect each brother? How does your neighborhood, your family affect you?

In addition, students could view the painting by Pittsburgh's Romare Bearden. This African-American artist created a collage entitled "Pittsburgh Memories." It is located at the Carnegie Museum of Art. Bearden incorporates memories into his art. This collage is a picture of his home when he was a boy in Pittsburgh. It is a picture he made when he was 75 years old. This picture might also capture visually what a person sees as part of memory and what students might see as part of their childhood homes.

Other Readings

Other books cover the industrial Pittsburgh of the mid to late 1800's. Thomas Belajac or Thomas Bell wrote a famous novel based on his life in Pittsburgh called *Out of this Furnace*. Mr. Bell lived in New York for the remainder of his life. One might investigate when Bell left Pittsburgh and why he chose to live in New York. His description of Slovak immigrants' experiences touches off a resounding hard life in Pittsburgh industries for immigrant laborers before unions. In *Valley of Decision*, a novel by Marcia Davenport, she describes an upscale industrialist and the vivid divide between rich and poor, entrepreneur and worker.

Earlier writings published in the Atlantic Monthly and elsewhere also reveal and refer to Pittsburgh "as hell with the lid off." The dark and smoky city was hard and rough. Laborers worked twelve hours a day for little pay. Coal miners were paid by a full load and nothing short of it. Muckrakers like Lincoln Steffens revealed the travesty and injustice of the human experience as the dignity of man is shortchanged for the profits of the capitalists. The denigration of the worker is almost compared to being an animal. With huge influxes of immigrants to America, work was cheap and so were the lives of the men and women who risked their lives to improve the lives of others by producing heat through the production of gas, steel and coal-mining.

These readings reveal the inner torment and indignation of immigrant laborers who suffered in silence at the unfair labor practices and their dehumanization for want of a better life for their children--another American dream. With students who come from nine communities of various religious, racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, it will be interesting to see what their narratives reveal about their places today. Many of the stories we read in seminar are located along the Monongahela River, where many of Pittsburgh's mills and foundries were located. Some students live along the river today, but it is a much different setting. In the last fifteen years almost all of the mills have closed. A foundry in Hazelwood did not survive. Almost no one in the community wanted the sulfur smelling mill to be resurrected, so the smells have evaporated. Most young people now may not remember what and how their homes and shopping areas have changed. But, certain places like Kennywood Park remain today. That amusement park has been around since the early 1900's. It was the center of rides and picnics that Pittsburghers enjoyed for generations. It was a place where many teens received their first kiss. At least, that was where Annie Dillard remembers hers. Students still can't wait to go there in the spring. The school bands play there. Now they have a physics and communication day for students every May. Often, they introduce a new ride like the Pittsburgh Plunge.

These places reveal the routines of our daily lives. However, a first kiss, a school orientation, moving to a new house and our associations still provide a daily drama that we often take for granted. So, just how much of living in a big city is really quaint, ordinary, and familiar to us, especially when our perspective is a walk home from school, the view of the street from our bedroom window—what we see and do everyday? How much does it tell about us? How much does it reveal to others? This tells as much about us as it does about others. One part of Annie Dillard's book refers to throwing snowballs at cars, for example. In that scene a man runs after Annie and her friend until he catches them. The terror and fear of getting caught is common to most people and throwing snowballs seems to be part of our American experience in Pittsburgh and its neighborhoods. Literature is a reflection of life and truth about ourselves revealed through reading about other people and other lives as told in narratives. Reading stories and writing stories can begin with our daily lives and can be used in the classroom to promote self-expression.

Americans are products of a culture that reflects diversity. Much of who we are is determined by our parents—who variously embody European and African religious and cultural values. For later western Pennsylvania immigrants the transition to becoming an American was hard. The language, religion, education, and income of many blacks and immigrants did not assimilate them into the predominant WASP culture. They remained foreigners in the American community. Many remained within their protected communities of immigrants from the same towns in Europe, finding comfort with people who spoke the same language and followed the same customs and religion. Some ethnic diversity is still maintained here. The public television station has produced a number of programs that reveal the story of Pittsburgh's neighborhoods today.

I expect that many students will still have many of these experiences. They will identify with the same ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic diversity as their grandparents. However, I presume that many will not. They neither have nor desire a concept of their ethnic identity. The pressure to belong to a peer group based on music and neighborhood is a new culture not steeped in the tradition of elders but of youth. For many students of one-parent families, culture is school and their peers. They will define themselves through their neighborhoods, their schools, and their friends. What is important to them may not be school, it may be music and hip culture.

Classroom Activities

The new emphasis in American education is the portfolio. A student compiles a portfolio of reading, writing, speaking and listening selections from each school year. Then, the child selects the best examples of his work in a portfolio that is carried throughout the high school years. As part of the portfolio process, children are expected to read twenty-five books of fiction and non-fiction. They are also expected to write in various genres including the narrative and informational report.

Research

In the library

Students will begin their reading in the library with research about Pittsburgh. They will gather information on Pittsburgh's demographics, famous landmarks, famous people, and famous history. They will write a report and present it to the class. From their research they will take notes on their writing. Students will summarize their reading by writing a precis. In addition, they will document their sources of information noting author, title, publisher and date for print books. They will learn how to cite works in a bibliography that will be required for their informational report. Students will work in groups of three to five. Each student will read and gather information about Pittsburgh past and present. The factual report will cite print and electronic sources. Each group will present a collective body of information to the class via oral presentations and visuals.

Books on Pittsburgh will be displayed in the library for students' perusal.

Supplementing photographs could be a story of Pittsburgh via film from the Pittsburgh Visitors and Convention Bureau has one. It might be neat to have students view a film like this and then respond by citing their own image of Pittsburgh versus that of the tourist film. One part of this could be informational, another creative, another reflective. The order or sequence of presentation could be reversed with students reflecting on a part of Pittsburgh and then going to a larger scope of Pittsburgh facts and figures and propaganda. This might include where they will choose to live in the future. Will work, lifestyle, or other things dictate their choices?

They will compare Pittsburgh in terms of work, lifestyle and other amenities or the lack thereof. This can be in conjunction with the career abilities unit that is another part of the grade 10 curriculum.

Out of class reading

Students will be presented a bibliography with information about Pittsburgh. From the readings each student will select one book to review and report for a reading round table. This will count as one of the twenty-five books each student is expected to read each school year. See the student bibliography.

In class reading

Willa Cather's "Paul's Case"

Annie Dillard's *American Childhood*

John Edgar Wideman's *Brothers and Keepers*

Students will read "Paul's Case," noting its Pittsburgh setting. With information about Willa Cather's teaching experience in the early 1900's, students will note her setting of landmarks that stand today such as the University of Pittsburgh's Student Union then known as the Schenley Hotel, and the Carnegie Music Hall and Library, all located in Oakland. Paul lives on Cordelia Street, which is still located in Pittsburgh's East End.

Writing/Speaking

1. The documented factual report/precis/small group oral and visual presentation
2. The fiction/non-fiction book review/individual presentation in reading round table
3. The autobiographical/personal narrative/individual writing with two peer revisions

To demonstrate their writing in various genres each student will write a report with citations; a book review of one book from the student bibliography; and a first person narrative about themselves with a Pittsburgh locale as the setting. To master these genres one needs to write often and with a minimum of two revisions for content and grammar.

For the report one needs to be able to read information and then cite its salient points to the reader or audience. This research can take place in the school library. The student will read a selection a few times to get the most salient points. From the notes taken from the reading, the student will write a precis, which is one-third or one-fourth the length of the original reading. See Appendix A.

The second writing is a critical review of a book for the student audience. Student will judge the work for its content and message and how well it conveys the message intended. See Appendix B.

The third composition and the most natural format for tenth graders is the first person narrative. It is often the most interesting because we are curious to know a person's true story of conflict and resolution. Some of the most interesting stories are our own. Depending on our situation, telling the truth in a personal narrative can be a daunting task for an adult, let alone a teenager. But, reality and facing the truth are elements that build strength and understanding not only for the reader but also for the writer. Do we not learn from the experience of others? Do we not become more tolerant when a person faces a tough dilemma? Do we see a universal truth in the revelation of character? See Appendix C.

The Pittsburgh Personals unit will focus on the personal narrative. However, the setting will take place in Pittsburgh. Having read selections set in and about Pittsburgh, both fiction and non-fiction, students will see how authors describe Pittsburgh using sensory impressions and how they reveal a setting by describing a place in terms of its time and place. Some writing might be a reflection of Pittsburgh's historical, architectural and cultural landmarks: the three rivers, Pittsburgh Zoo, Carnegie Hall, Kennywood Park, Allegheny County Jail, PPG Place, the Andy Warhol Museum, the Clayton mansion, the Homewood Cemetery.

Students will observe these places and then describe them using sensory impressions. From there students can relate the effect a place has had on their perception of Pittsburgh. Other writing might reflect the effect of the everyday place on their perceptions. This could involve an observation and description of their house and street, their neighborhood, their classroom or school, their church or synagogue, or larger landmarks—the campus of Carnegie Mellon, Chatham, or the parks, Schenley, Mellon or Frick—all of which are located near the homes of many students.

After researching Pittsburgh landmarks, students could bring in photographs of Pittsburgh or of their favorite place in Pittsburgh. However, the culminating activity would be their Pittsburgh Personal narrative about their view of Pittsburgh from wherever they choose. The final product will be a personal narrative using Pittsburgh as their setting. This will be an autobiographical narrative.

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Materials for classroom use

Appendix A. How to write a precis from Warriner's Grammar and Composition. New York: Harcourt, 1982

The precis

- Is a brief, but accurate summary of your reading
- Requires you to be clear and concise
- Puts maximum meaning into minimum space
- Is excellent reading practice
- Requires that you understand ideas thoroughly

Study the following facts:

1. A precis is a short summary. It is not a paraphrase. It is one-third to one-fourth as long as the original writing.
2. A precis gives only the "heart" of the passage. It omits repetitions and details unless they are important.
3. A precis is written entirely in the words of the person writing it, not in the words of the original selection. Do not lift long phrases or whole sentences from the original.
4. A precis is written from the point of view of the author whose work is being summarized. Begin as though you were summarizing the writing.

To write a precis proceed as follows:

1. Read carefully. Grasp writer's main point via topic sentence, unclear definitions. Take brief notes.
2. Decide author's main point. Write it out in your own words.
3. Revise till you have given an accurate summary.
4. Revise and reduce precis to proper length.

Reduction

1. Reduce clauses to participial, gerund or infinitive phrases.
2. Reduce a clause to prepositional phrase.
3. Reduce clause to appositive.
4. Reduce clause to single words.

Do exercise 4 on page 260. Avoid wordiness by reducing clauses to phrases, phrases to single words. This process is known as reduction. See pages 257-61 of Warriner's.

Appendix B. How to write a book review from Scholastic Journalism

I. What is a review?

A. An informative account of the content and quality of an art form

B. Review means a looking back or booking again. The reviewer studies his subject matter and does not make snap judgments

II. Parts of a good review

A. Contains the following elements

1. Approach

a. Brief intro paragraph telling the reader of the general or specific nature of the subject reviewed

b. Highlight the chief feature or most timely aspect of the work. Emphasize or summarize the critic's reaction, favorable or unfavorable. It may even feature audience or spectator reaction.

c. There is no way to start a review except to make clear to the reader what is being reviewed.

2. Presentation of the subject

a. If the art form is a book of nonfiction, the main ideas are enumerated and discussed

b. Make clear the purpose and evaluate the work in terms of its purpose—how well does the author succeed in accomplishing it.

3. A critical evaluation of the work

a. A review discusses the strengths and weakness of an art form by relating specific examples from the work to support the judgment

b. Trite or general words and phrases like "well done" "well portrayed" "dull" and "interesting" are avoided by citing proof of those generalizations. If a generalization is used, it should be immediately supported with specifics.

B. The preceding covers what every review must contain—information about the work and judgment of it. However, the review must present the elements of a good composition: unity, coherence, emphasis, and style, which are based on the reviewer's originality and creativity. It should be an interesting piece of writing in itself whether the reader is actually motivated to read a book on the basis of it.

Appendix C. The components of a personal narrative peer editing sheet.

Writer's name _____

Title of Paper _____ Date _____

Narrative Essay Evaluation

Peer Evaluation Dichotomous Scale

1 (poor), 2 (average), 3 (very good), 4 (excellent), 5 (superior)

Read the story and evaluate the narrative according to the following criteria:

1. The story makes a specific point that is stated or strongly implied. 1 2 3 4 5

2. Details are based on who, what, when, where, why, and how questions. Are details with nature of the story, the writer's purpose, and the audience in mind?

Are irrelevant details left out? 1 2 3 4 5

3. The story is well paced and doesn't drag. 1 2 3 4 5

4. Events are arranged chronologically--with or without flashback. Is the story arranged in a logical, understandable time sequence? 1 2 3 4 5

5. The writer uses conversation to advance the story, bring out important point, add liveliness. 1 2 3 4 5

6. Is this story of interest to you (audience)? 1 2 3 4 5

7. Overall rating 1 2 3 4 5

Comments from peer editor:

Appendix D. Content Standards COMMUNICATIONS

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.

2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.

3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All student write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
6. All student exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
8. All students compose and make oral presentation for each academic areas of study that are designed to persuade, inform, or describe.