

Sample Lesson – Writing Is Elementary

Purpose Activity Five – Teaching Focus

Grades 2–4

Without a focus, writing just rambles on without any purpose. In an unfocused piece, the reader soon asks, “What’s the point?” Activities Five and Six help students recognize and create a focus.

- Put Practice Pages 4 a–b (pages 10–11) on transparencies and read aloud the two versions of the same story. Ask students to think about the differences. After reading the two versions, have students comment on them while you record on a chart or overhead transparency using the following format. (Sample responses are in Figure 1.)

Figure 1

My Trip to the Filton Fair	The Scariest Ride
Has no focus	Has focus on the rollercoaster
Lists too many activities	Describes one activity in detail
Not interesting	More interesting
“All you want to know”	

Purpose Activity Six – Teaching Focus

Grades 2–4

- Step One**

Explain again what a focus is (the specific idea(s) within a topic that you are writing about) and use the same analogy of climbing a mountain or tall building. This is the same as step four of the Painted Essay™.

Pretend you have just climbed a mountain and are standing at the top (or in a city, you have just gone to the top of the tallest building.) There is a 360-degree view. You want to write down all you see, but there is so much that you would be there forever writing. So, you take out a set of binoculars and focus in on one little section. You write only on the view you see in your focus.



Note: It is good practice for students to try to develop their own focus. However, it is perfectly acceptable for teachers to give students a focus.

Give examples:

- Topic – Computers; Focus – How computers help with homework.
 - Topic: Swimming; Focus – The difference between swimming in a pool and swimming in a lake.
- **Step Two**

Then, using Practice Pages 5 a–b and 6 a–b (pages 12–15) on an overhead projector, give students guided practice narrowing down a topic to a focus. Use Practice Page 7 a–b (pages 16–17) as additional practice in class or as independent practice.

• **Step Three**

Read aloud or distribute copies of other drafts that need a focus (Practice Pages 8 a–b, pages 18–19). As a class, determine a focus by sorting the sentences and putting them onto a graphic organizer (Practice Page 9, page 20). Examples of completed graphic organizers for this activity can be found on Practice Pages 10 and 11 (pages 21–22).

- **Adaptation Grades K–1:** Teacher should give a focus for each piece of interactive/whole-class writing.

Example:

After taking a class trip to a sugar house, you can tell students that as a class they are going to write a report on how difficult it is to make maple syrup. Ex: After going to the zoo, students write a whole-class report on the animals that are the fiercest.

- **Adaptation for grades K–1:** Hunt yard sales for books familiar to students. Undo the book and laminate each page. Put each separated book into folders with the pages out of order. Students can take one and try to put it in order and retell the story independently or with a partner.
- **Adaptation for grades K–1:** Put copies of the pages of familiar stories on construction paper. Divide the students into two groups. Give each child in the group one page of one of the stories. The students in each group must work together to put the story in order. When they have it in order, they stand in front of the class holding each piece up for the other group to see and discuss. Have students tell their part of the story aloud. The other group decides if they have put the story in good order. Books without words work well also.

Practice Page 4a

My Trip to the Filton Fair

I went to the Filton fair with my mom and my friend John. I love the Filton Fair. It has a lot of rides that are fun. First we went on the Ferris wheel. I could see everything from there, and we decided where to go next. We then went on a rocket ride. I almost got sick on that ride, but I managed to get off without any incidents. After that we went on a roller coaster ride. This roller coaster is one of the largest in the country. It was scary. It was the best ride. We decided to go on it twice! When we got off we went to get something to eat. I ate a sausage and peppers sandwich, spicy curly fries, and fried dough for dessert. YUM! The food is one of the best things at the fair. I bought lots of stuff, too. I bought a key chain with a fuzzy on it, a poster of Ricky Martin, and I won lots of stuffed animals by hitting the bottles with a ball. I also won a big teddy bear when I tossed the rings on bottles. I was very lucky that day. I went home with lots of good stuff and I was stuffed.

We went home about 9:00 p.m. I was tired and fell asleep in the car. It was a very good day at my favorite fair.

Practice Page 4b

The Scariest Ride

I love the Filton Fair. It has good food, lots of prizes, booths to buy whatever I want, but most of all it has the SUPER DIP, one of the largest roller coasters anywhere.

When my friend John and I saw it from the Ferris wheel, we decided to go on it immediately. There was no line, and we got right on. Slowly we went up...up...up.... We went up so high that I could almost feel the clouds. The sun was shining on my face and right in my eyes, so I decided to look down. Below the people looked the size of my action figures. "There's Mom," I said to John. "Let's yell to her." We began to scream her name, but she couldn't hear us because the people in the front cars were screaming too loud. We continued to go up...up...up..., higher and higher. When we got to the top of the first hill I noticed that the tracks actually did a loop-de-loop. My stomach did flip flops before we did. "Oh my.....EEEEEEEEKKKKKK." Down we went, faster than I have ever gone before... down and up and around; down and up and around.... TWICE. I screamed and screamed as loud as I could. Up... up...up we went again. I began to get very nervous. I knew that this ride had more loops and up-side-down twists than any other I had been on.

After going on it twice, John and I decided that was enough. It was time to eat all that greasy fair food and play a few games to unwind from the scariest ride I have ever been on.

Practice Page 5a

Finding Focus in Titles

Read each set of titles and circle the one in each pair that has a clear focus.

1. _____ Cats

_____ Rosie the Cat's Adventure In the Garden

2. _____ My Room

_____ My "Stephen King," Messy, Sloppy Bedroom

3. _____ The Effect of Cartoons On Kids

_____ TV

4. _____ Swimming At the Cliffs

_____ My Summer Vacation

5. _____ Science Class

_____ The Funniest Science Experiment

Practice Page 5b

6. Write titles for the following that give each piece a focus.

George Washington

My Grandpa

My Hobby

The Doctor's Visit

Practice Page 6a

Find a Focus

One focus has been given for each topic below. Now write another focus for each topic.

1. **Dogs**

Dogs are intelligent animals.

Your focus:

2. **Disney World**

Disney World can be an educational place.

Your focus:

Practice Page 6b

3. Toys

Television influences what toys we buy.

Your focus:

4. Seasons

Winter has many outside sports.

Your focus:

Practice Page 7a

Find a Focus

Find two good focuses for the following topics:

Horses

Martin Luther King Jr.

Practice Page 7b

Find a Focus

Find two good focuses for the following topics:

Gardens

Automobiles

Movies

Practice Page 8a

Unfocused, Unorganized Report

My Mom

I love my mom. She is fun. She has brown hair and brown eyes. She is 43 years old. She helps me with my homework and other hard stuff. She helps me a lot. She laughs a lot and tells lots of jokes. She drives me to piano lessons and soccer practice. She likes to watch comedies on television with me. We laugh a lot together. She helps me with my homework and other hard stuff like projects. She is a good cook. She buys me clothes and cooks my dinner. She has a good breakfast for me when I get up. She is the best mom. I am lucky. She taught me to use the computer, and she lets me use hers. We go to the park all the time, and she goes down the slide with me.

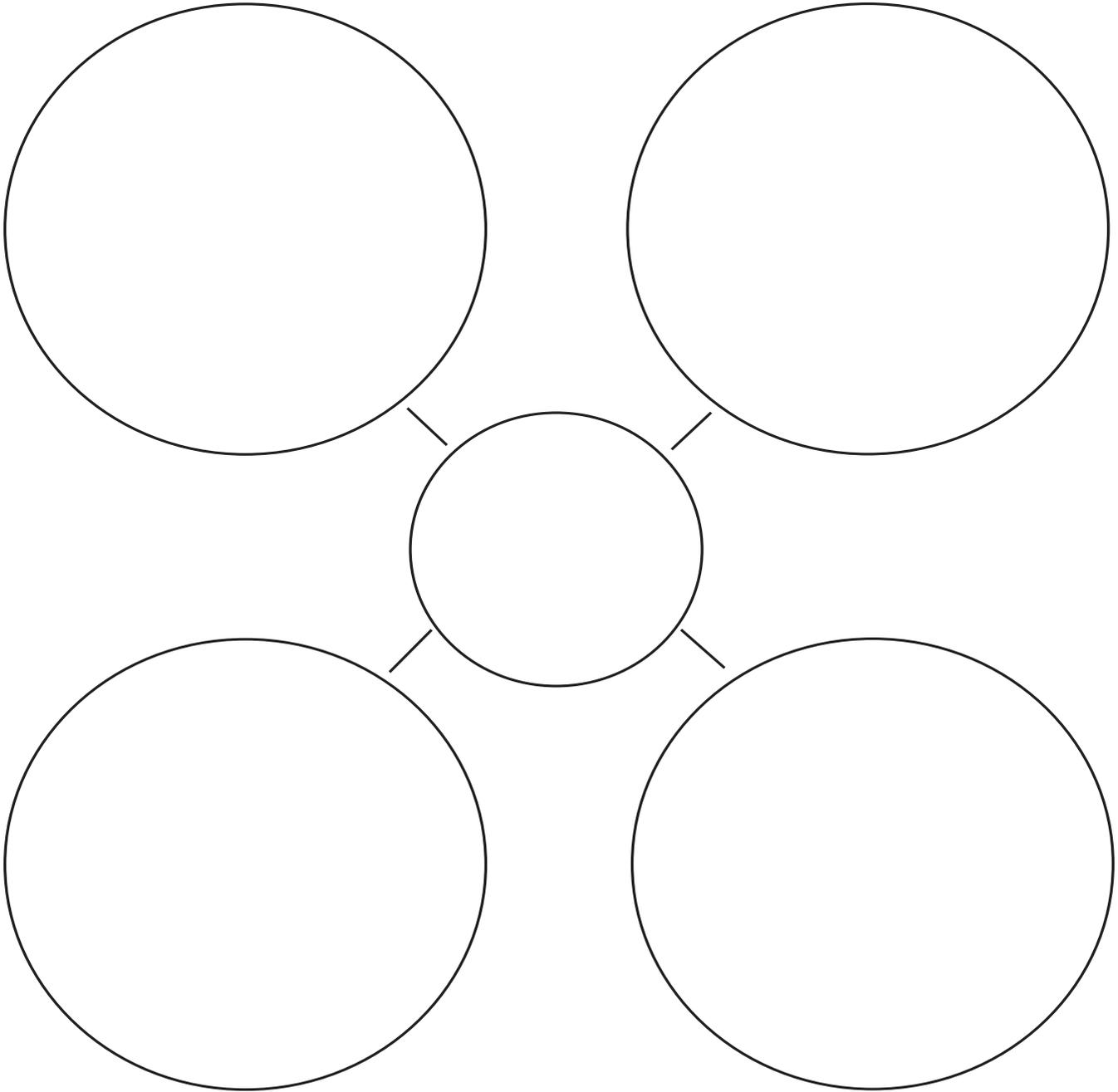
Practice Page 8b

Unfocused, Unorganized Report

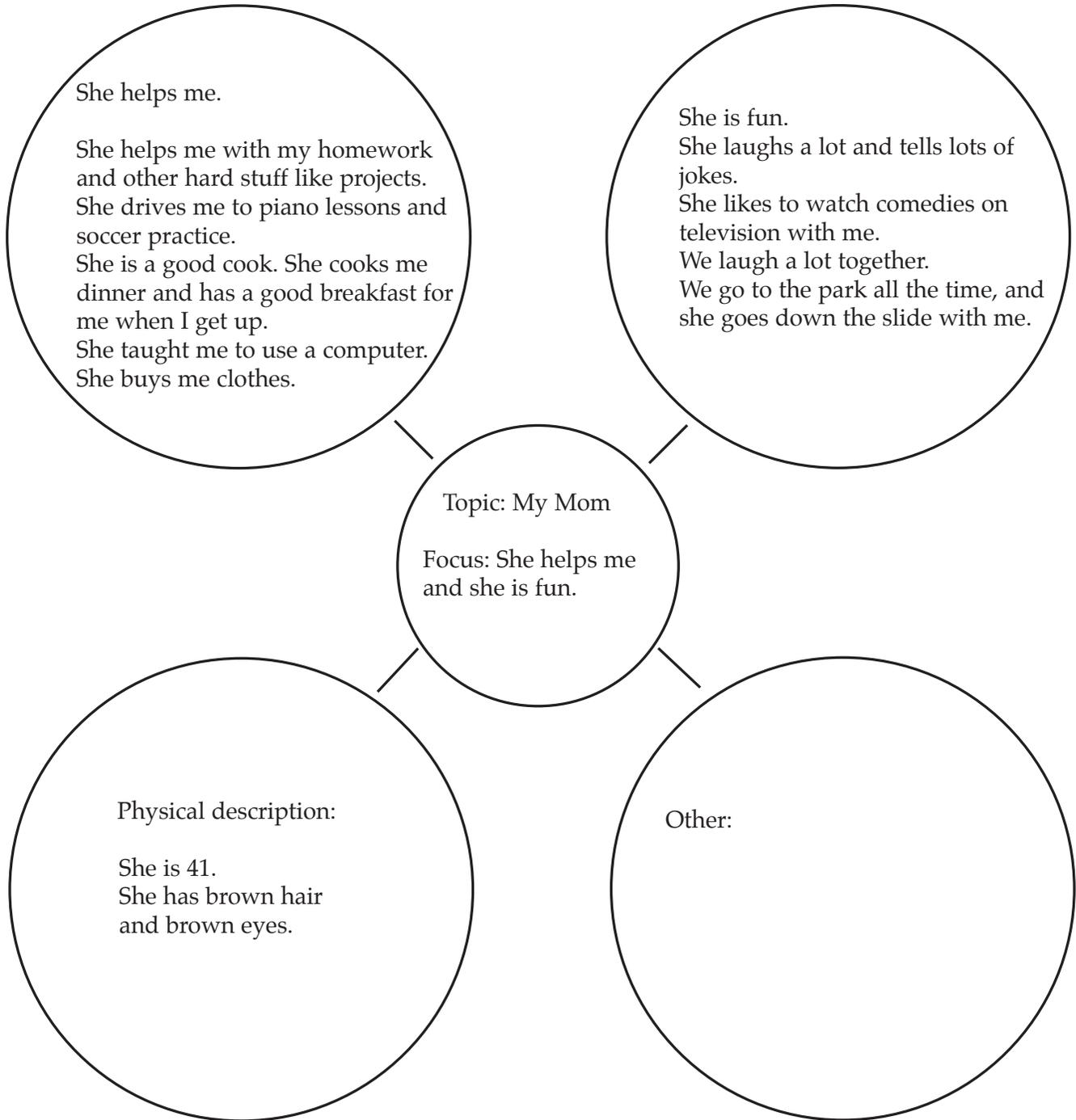
Starfish

My critter for my report is the starfish. It lives on the bottom of the ocean. They also live in the shallow water and in tidal pools. The starfish move slowly. They eat clams, oysters, and snail, and sometimes they eat fish eggs and mollusk. Its stomach comes out of its mouth to grab its food. There are 1,000 different species of the common starfish. It is not a fish. They live in groups of forty or more. Some of them are bright colors and can change color to hide. They are all different sizes from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 3 feet. Most have 5 arms. If it loses an arm it can grow another one. It adapts very well to its environment. Some starfish have more than 50 arms. They live in the deep water. They have tube feet to cling onto rocks so the waves will not wash them into the shore. Star fish need water to live. If they are washed up on the sand, they will die in a few hours. They have millions of tiny feet to help them grip on to the rocks so big waves won't wash them away. Their mouths are on their flat bottom. They crawl on top of the food they eat. They do not have a brain but nerve cells and eyespots on at the tip of their arms.

Practice Page 9



Practice Page 10



Practice Page 11

Mouth and Stomach

It has an unusual mouth and stomach. Its stomach comes out of its mouth to grab its food. Their mouths are on their flat bottom. They crawl on top of the food they eat.

Feet

It has unusual feet. They have millions of tiny feet to cling onto the rocks so the big waves won't wash them away. They move slowly on their feet.

Topic: Starfish

Focus: It has unusual features to help it survive in its environment

Other- Not a fish

It lives on the bottom of the ocean. They eat clams, oysters, and snails, and sometimes they eat fish eggs and mollusk. There are 1,000 different species. Some of them are bright colors and can change colors to hide. They live in groups of forty or more. They are different sizes from $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to 3 feet. They live in the deep water. They need water to live. If they wash up on the sand, they will die

Arms

Most have five arms. When it loses one, it can grow new arms. Some starfish have more than 50 arms. They have no brain, but nerve cells and eyespots at the tip of each arm.