



# The LeafLIT

## A Literacy Publication

# EXPOSITORY WRITING

by Kathryn Limerick

Expository writing is defined by Webster as, "a setting forth of the meaning or purpose." It is one of the most common genres of writing. We use it to explain material, describe something and/or inform our reader. Although expository writing does not come as naturally as personal narrative writing, it can still be easy to teach if you break it down into small pieces throughout the writing process.

In kindergarten, we may see a lot of picture drawing with some labeling of the picture, along with a few legible, self-generated words that begin a sentence. However, by fifth grade, we expect the writing to include multiple paragraphs, a logical sequence, a topic sentence, a thesis statement, and figurative details. Regardless of grade, addressing your students as authors will greatly increase their excitement.

Sometimes the hardest part about writing, in any genre, is generating ideas. There are many teacher-generated ideas on the web, but you can allow your students to come up with their own ideas and offer a writing prompt only on occasion. If students are having trouble generating ideas, provide them with a notebook so they have a place to write them down. Then, during writing time, they have the book with a plethora of ideas waiting to be expanded. Treatment and use of notebooks can be taught through mini-lessons. Notebooks are one of the best ways to redirect students and make them feel like they are being respected and heard.



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# EXPOSITORY WRITING

When you ask your students to begin the writing process, you can provide some sort of graphic organizer like a Thinking Map. One of the Thinking Maps that works well with expository writing is the Brace Map since it is designed for whole-part relationships.

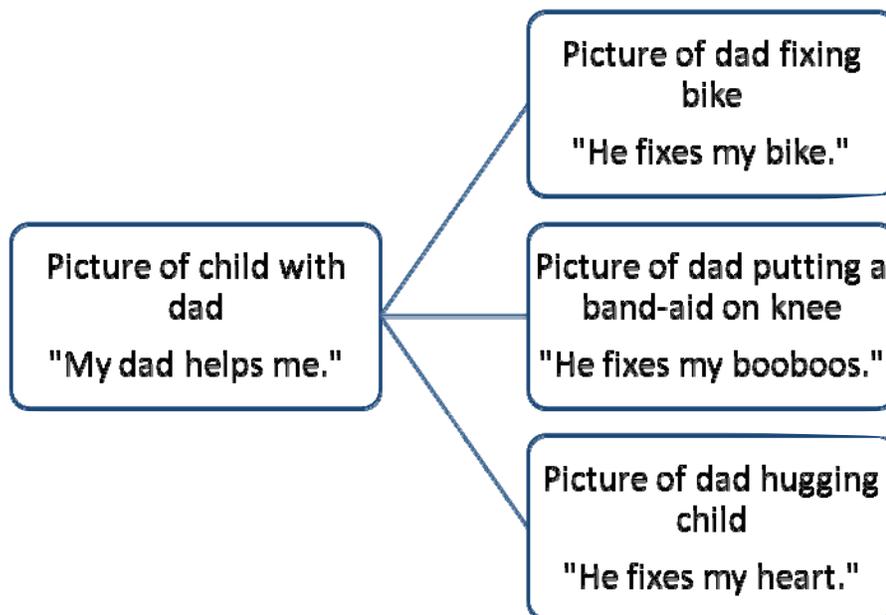
KINDERgARTEN

1ST gRADE

2<sup>ND</sup> gRADE

For example, if you are teaching kindergarten through second grade, you may want to help your students focus on a topic and create a sentence about the topic (topic sentence). Then you may want them to generate ideas to support this topic. The supporting sentences will create a paragraph.

Often, students in kindergarten may draw their Brace Map. Remember that illustrations can be used to show concept understanding. The following is a way a student may "draw" his Brace Map about his dad.

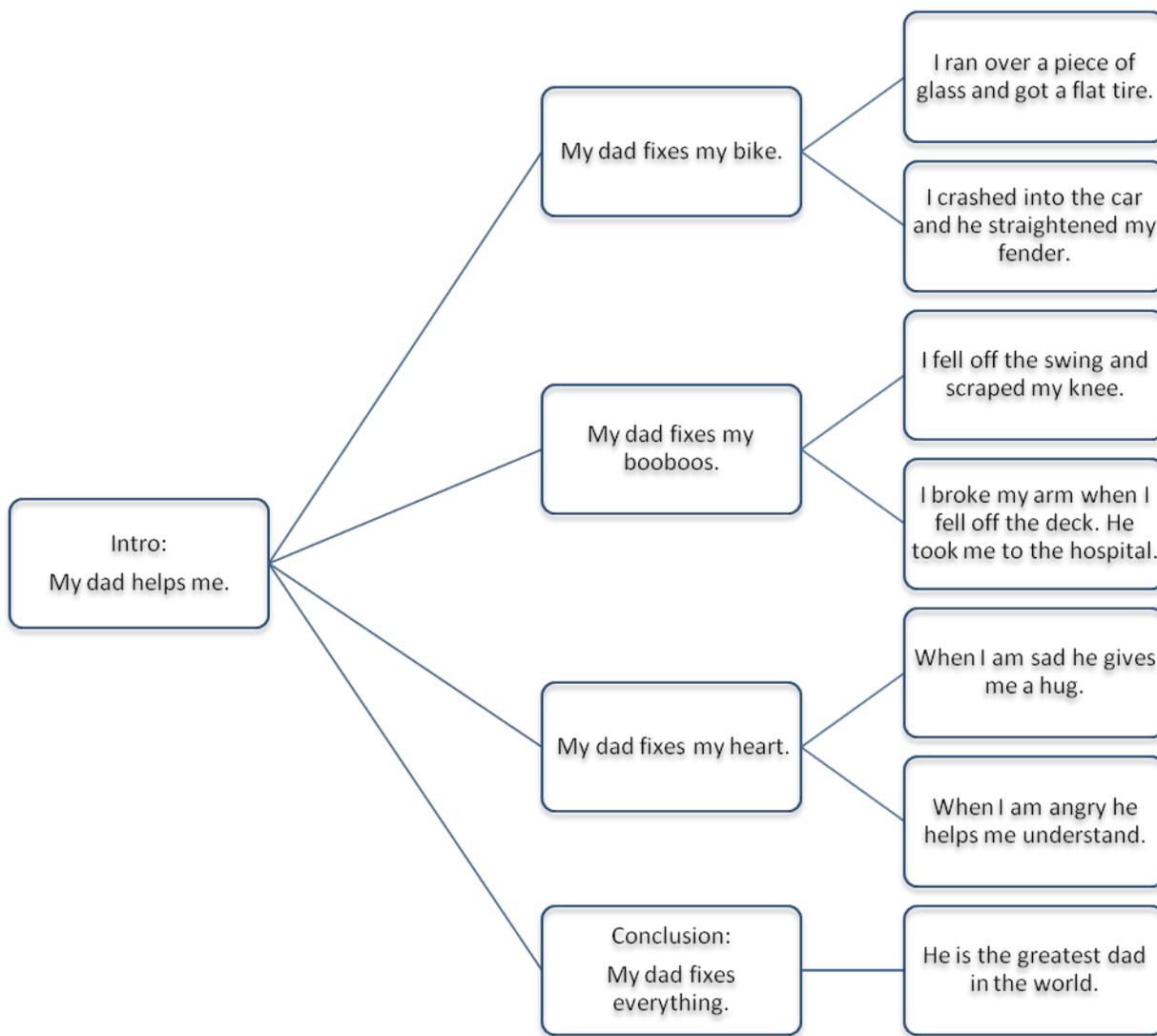


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3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE  
4<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE

Third through fifth grade teachers may want to have the first bubble be the thesis statement, the next series of bubbles contain the topic sentences, and the final areas contain the supporting details of the topic sentences. Thesis statements and conclusions could be taught during drafting instruction.

The same topic from an older student may look like this:





# EXPOSITORY WRITING

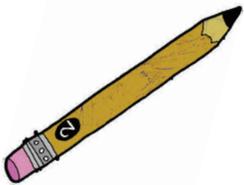


Once your students have organized their essays, they will need to begin drafting. You may want to have your students skip lines as they are drafting so they can add details during the revision process. Stapling or taping additional pages to their essays allows students to add on without rewriting.

During writing time, conferences are important to help students stay focused. As you walk around the room, questions like, "What is your thesis?", "What is your topic sentence?", and "What information supports your topic sentence?" will help students stay on-task. Holding conferences at students' desks is an effective way to manage your room. Sometimes a line at your desk creates havoc, noise, and, most of all, a reason for children not to work.

About once a month, ask your students to begin the editing stage in preparation for publishing. Getting your students involved in editing each other's work as early as kindergarten will help them later in their scholastic career. Editing checklists are useful tools.

The following is what a primary checklist might look like:



Yes/No	My friend's essay has these...
	There are capitol letters at the beginning of all sentences.
	There is punctuation at the end of every sentence.
	All names are capitalized.
	Sight words (word wall words) are all spelled correctly.
	There is a topic sentence.

Be sure to add specific skills that you have taught in class-ex. thesis statements, ellipses, various punctuation, etc.

Once partners have edited, allow your students to publish their writing. You may want to have them type their essay on the computer and then illustrate their story. Even fifth grade students love the occasional opportunity to use crayons, markers, or paint. You also may want to talk with your art teacher to get ideas for different ways to illustrate.

Publishing is a great reason to have a party! Invite your principal, assistant principal, parents, community, and other classes to your room and allow your students to share their work. The audience will have the opportunity to see some great writing, and your students will feel like real authors.



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