

## *A Sample Lesson Plan*

**NOTE TO TEACHERS:** I currently use this plan in my 10th grade English classes, which are composed of students of average and below average ability. I previously used it in my Honors Class, and I am confident that it can be modified for use with students of **all ability/grade levels**. The Lesson Plan provides my students with additional direction and experience in writing a multi-paragraph essay. Because most of my students lack confidence and skill in their writing, I encourage them to write the majority of the essay in class.

The ten steps in the plan do NOT have to be consecutive. Students turn in a rough draft for optional peer editing before my final check of their papers. Then they rewrite the final draft for entry in the contest. Because I have been checking their progress and most papers have been peer edited, the final drafts are relatively free of errors and, consequently, easy to check.

—*Janis Bean*



## *Step One: Announcing the Contest*

*(See the Announcement Checklist on page 8)*

I stress the opportunities the contest provides: a chance for students to touch base with their values and ideals, improve their writing skills, and win prizes. On this day, I identify and give some biographical information on our sponsor. Next, I give examples of *laws of life* found in students' personal experiences and beliefs, as well as examples from famous personalities and well-known literary characters. I briefly describe topics used by prior winners and explain that many of the essays were written by students who first thought they had nothing to write about. I emphasize my commitment to the contest and reassure students about the confidentiality of the contest. Finally, I ask them to begin thinking about their topics.

**TEACHER TIP:** *I often point out examples of laws of life from current events or a recent reading assignment.*

## *Step Two: Pre-Writing Activity*

I distribute the student questionnaire (see page 20 for a sample questionnaire) and tell my students that the questionnaire will help them identify their *laws of life* and possible topics. I explain that I will read their responses to the questionnaire and that I will keep them confidential. I briefly review each question before the students begin. I allow at least forty-five minutes for completion; some students request and are given extra time to complete the questionnaire at home. As I look over their responses, I mark those that might be used as a basis for their essays.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Be sure to allot yourself time between steps two and three to read your students' responses.*

## Step Three: Discussing the Opening Paragraph

Having first made general comments about their responses, I then return the questionnaires and reassure my students that many of them have had similar feelings and experiences. Students are then asked to take notes on suggested types of introductory paragraphs. I give examples to illustrate how each approach can be developed into an essay, and I encourage them to decide on a topic. I also tell my students that I will have an individual conference with each of them before they start writing. The following types of introductions work well for the *laws of life* essay:

- Personal Anecdote or Example  
(*"Although my brother is severely retarded, he has been my teacher."*)
- Role Model Character Sketch  
(*"My grandmother has taught me many things."*)
- Analogy  
(*"Having a strong set of personal laws is like having a strong foundation for a new house."*)
- Direct Statement of Topic  
(*"My essay is about having hope, faith, and charity."*)
- Use of a Maxim, Proverb, or Quotation  
(*"Life is making stepping stones out of stumbling blocks."*)
- Commenting on a Story or Parable  
(e.g., The Boy who Cried Wolf; The Good Samaritan)

## Step Four: Writing the Introduction

I have students get out their questionnaires. Then I ask those who have ideas to begin working quietly while I confer with each student who is undecided on a topic. To help students who think they have nothing to write about, I have them look through my collection of Quotable Quotes from *Reader's Digest*, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, or collections of inspirational essays (one excellent resource is the book *Chicken Soup for the Soul*). I encourage each student to complete his or her introductory paragraph.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Be patient. This may be the hardest step for some of your students. A winning idea may be born today in your classroom!*

## Step Five: The Supporting Paragraphs

I review the use of transition and the mechanics for incorporating quotes. Next, I suggest the following methods for developing the supporting paragraphs. Each supporting paragraph can:

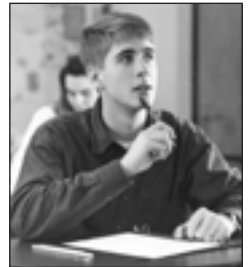
- describe a different law;
- illustrate the importance of the same law in three different areas of a student's life;
- be about three different experiences or famous individuals who exemplify a law;
- continue the development of an analogy.

Advanced students who are doing a philosophical treatment will not be limited to these methods of development. While students are writing, I check completed introductions and work with students who need help. I ask my students to complete their first supporting paragraph by the next time we work on their essays.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Point out grammatical and mechanical errors as you check; this significantly reduces errors on the rough draft.*

## Step Six: Completing the Supporting Paragraphs

I briefly review pronoun-antecedent agreement and pronoun case and remind my students to avoid the impersonal “you” in their writing. I also tell my students to check their papers for pronoun errors. While they continue to work on their supporting paragraphs, I circulate and help students on a one-on-one basis.



**TEACHER TIP:** *I encourage students at this point to exchange what they have written so far with another student to peer review for errors in pronoun usage.*

## Step Seven: The Concluding Paragraph

I remind my students that the concluding paragraph should parallel the introduction. Students can refer again to the role model, experience, or analogy mentioned in the introductory paragraph. They can also make a concluding statement about each of the supporting paragraphs, or they can use and relate a quote to their topic. I remind my students to be thinking of a title for their essays. Students write their conclusions while I continue to check for errors and offer suggestions. I tell my students that their rough drafts should be written on every other line for peer editing purposes.

## Step Eight: Peer Editing the Rough Draft

I give students the opportunity to work in small groups of their choosing (no more than three to a group) to proofread and edit each other's essays. I furnish each student with a peer editing guide (a copy of this guide is on page 23). Students can make corrections and revisions in between the lines of their rough drafts. Most students like to work in groups; however, allow those who do not wish to participate in the peer editing process to revise and edit their own papers with your help and support.

Peer editing allows students to share their experiences and feelings, as well as their writing. At this point, many of my students want their friends to read their essays aloud, and I encourage everyone to share their essays. However, I also respect the wishes of students who do not want to have their essays read by other classmates. I also remind my students of the due date for their rough drafts.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Allow yourself plenty of time between steps eight and nine to check papers.*

## Step Nine: Writing the Final Draft

I return the rough drafts on which I have marked errors and made general suggestions for improvement. Students are instructed to type or rewrite the final draft in blue or black ink. They are also told to write on every line, to number each page after the first, and NOT to write on the backs of pages nor put their names anywhere on their essay. Finally, I inform students once again of the contest deadline.

**TEACHER TIP:** *Ask students to hand in their essays 3-5 days before the actual contest deadline. In doing so, you will avoid any late entries that would be disqualified.*

## Step Ten: The Entry Form

Students complete the Entry Form (see page 21), which is then stapled to each essay. Most students have worked hard on their essays, and I commend them for their effort. Finally, we have an open discussion about the essay writing experience. I ask my students to share what the experience has meant to them and what they have learned from writing about their *laws of life*. I also urge my students to think about the ways in which writing about their values will impact their behavior and their relationships with others.

