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### Introduction

Ladies and Gentlemen, A Preview of Coming Attractions!

### Body of the Essay

A Bodybuilding Exercise

### Conclusion

The Final Zing!

### Transitions

It's All in the Transition.

### Editing and Proofreading

Essay Style and Format.

Proofreader's Marks.

Essay Checklist

### Answer Key

Overheads

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3 Brainstorming, page 52
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Introduction

Writing is a complex task that requires students to integrate many skills all at once. The complexity of writing and the importance of basic mastery puts pressure on teachers and students alike. In this book, we’ve tried to break down the process of writing an essay. The activities and exercises in these pages help build a strong foundation through reading and analyzing essays and by taking students through the steps of writing an essay.

△ The Approach of This Book
This book addresses the following aspects of essays:

- structure
- types (expository, narrative, descriptive, persuasive)
- brainstorming
- writing a thesis
- outlining and taking notes
- writing the introduction, body, and conclusion
- introducing transitions
- editing and proofreading

We suggest that you teach the lessons in sequence, as the lessons build upon each other.

An overhead transparency accompanies most of the lessons in this book. The transparencies give a brief overview and present examples for the class to analyze together. Each lesson also includes at least one reproducible that provides students with more practice and/or reference sheets. When a lesson includes an overhead, we suggest that you display it for reference as students work on the reproducible.

The teaching pages display the pertinent National Language Arts Standards as well as information about how to present the overheads and the reproducibles. Writing Practice is a feature that allows students to apply the lesson skills in their own writing. Some lessons also include sections on Enriching the Lesson and Teaching Tips.

△ On Overhead Writing Lessons
*Strong Sentences, Powerful Paragraphs,* and *Exceptional Essays* comprise the Overhead Writing Lessons series of books. Each book targets and teaches specific grammar and writing skills that will make your students better and more confident writers.
Exceptional Essays

Purpose

To give an overview of the elements of an essay

In writing essays, students integrate all the skills they’ve learned about sentences and paragraphs into one piece of writing. Very simply put, in an essay, a writer explains what he or she thinks and why. To write exceptional essays, students must successfully combine form and content to express their points of view. This lesson begins the process by giving an overview of the essay and its structure.

Launching Activity: Exceptional Essays (Overhead 1)

Read aloud “This Movie Is Full of Holes.” Then ask students about their opinions on other books that have been made into movies, such as the Harry Potter series. Be quick to question students who offer vague statements to help them articulate the reasons behind their opinions. Bring the discussion to a close by explaining that they’ve presented good ideas for some potentially exceptional essays. Go over the definition of an essay and information on the overhead. Tell students that an essay is usually three paragraphs or longer, and that the sentences and paragraphs in an essay work together to make an important point.

Reiterate that there are different types of essays, but that all essays share the same format: introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion.

Have students reread the essay on the overhead independently. Then discuss the questions at the bottom of the overhead. For question 1, remind students that the thesis always appears in the first paragraph, the introduction. They’re looking for one or two sentences that tell the reader what the essay is about. Underline or highlight the thesis in the essay: But kids who really loved reading the book Holes by Louis Sachar will also love the movie. Be sure students understand that the thesis isn’t always the first sentence of an essay.

Then bracket the second and third paragraphs, and explain that this is the body of the essay because it contains details that support the thesis. After students point out the facts discussed in the body—acting and writing—ask: Do you notice that the writer briefly mentions acting and writing in the introduction? Allow students to express their opinions freely about the effectiveness of the conclusion. Keep the discussion centered on the writer’s success or failure at proving his or her point rather than their own personal feelings about the book and movie.
Student Reproducible
An Exceptional Essay: After reading aloud “Acoma, the City in the Sky,” review the parts of the essay. Then give students time to read it on their own. Explain that it is an expository essay. The writer presents facts about a topic. Then discuss the facts students noticed in the essay. You may want to model your own response first: One of the first facts I noticed was that Acoma sits on a 367-foot-tall mesa. When a writer gives such a specific detail, I’m pretty certain that he or she has done some research to find that information. Giving the names of people and places, dates, and measurements is a good way to present facts. Then ask students to circle, underline, or highlight other facts in the essay.

Writing Practice
Challenge students to put their opinions into essay form. Have them write their own reviews about a movie based on a book. Do they think the transfer from page to screen was a success or a failure? What evidence do they have to support their opinion? At this early stage, it’s important for students to get their opinions down on paper. The goal here is to get students writing.

Teaching Tip
Select a variety of expository, narrative, descriptive, and persuasive essays for students to read as you use this book in your classroom. You might store them in labeled envelopes, folders, or boxes. The structures of the essays are the same, but the differences in the writers’ voices, tones, opinions, and feelings will open up the world of essays for students.
An Exceptional Essay

Acoma, the City in the Sky

introduction
[The Acoma [AH-koh-mah] Pueblo, one of the 19 Indian Pueblos in New Mexico, sits on top of a 367-foot-high sandstone mesa. Because of its location, Acoma is known as the Sky City. Location is also the reason that the Acoma Pueblo is considered to be the oldest inhabited village in the United States. It has beautiful, 360-degree views. Acoma was easy to defend—until the Spanish arrived.]

thesis
[The first white men visited Acoma in 1540. Searching for gold, Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his Spanish expedition stopped at Acoma. Pedro de Castaneda, a member of the expedition, wrote, “The village was very strong because it was up on a rock out of reach, having steep sides in every direction. . . . There was a wall of large and small stones at the top, which they could roll down without showing themselves, so that no army could possibly be strong enough to capture the village.” In 1598, the Acoma people met another Spaniard. Juan de Oñate had declared himself governor of the Pueblo lands. He demanded that the Indians swear obedience to Spain. Soon the Pueblos and Spaniards were fighting. When Oñate’s nephew was killed at Acoma, things took a turn for the worse.

Oñate sent soldiers to Acoma in the winter of 1599. From the top of the mesa, the Acoma people threw ice, spears, stones, and arrows at their enemy. Then the Spanish sounded their trumpets to signal an attack. While the Acoma people defended the trail at the top of the mesa, the Spanish climbed the mesa’s steep walls on another, undefended side. The village was destroyed. The Acoma people were enslaved by the Spanish.

But slowly, the people escaped and returned to Acoma to rebuild their homes. Although the village doesn’t have electricity or running water, families continue to live there today. A road was built to the top of the mesa in 1929, so the villagers don’t have to carry water up the steep trail as they did before.]

body
[To reach Acoma today, visitors can climb the trail or ride a bus to the top. They can see the smoke stains on the southwest side of the mesa that were caused by the Spanish cannons. They can stare up the mesa and wonder how the heavily armed soldiers managed to climb its sheer sides. But, at the top, gazing at Enchanted Mesa across the valley, visitors will also understand why the Acoma people continue to live in the Sky City.]