mini MOVES for EVERY WRITER

50

Transferable Techniques for Writing Across the Content Areas

SAM FUTRELL

REBEKAH O'DELL

Solution Tree | Press

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For the Dragons with a K.

—Sam and Rebekah

Acknowledgments

Ultimately, every book is an experiment: An experiment to scale a teaching idea to a book-size concept. An experiment to attempt to translate concepts and practice into coherent words another teacher can use. An experiment of collaboration and vision aligning. An experiment in pushing the limits of friends' and family's patience. An experiment in maintaining one's sanity.

We are tremendously grateful to everyone we've dragged through this experiment alongside us.

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SAM

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Reproducibles are in italics.

About the Authors

Samantha (Sam) Futrell teaches middle school social studies at St. Michael's Episcopal School in Richmond, Virginia. With a master's degree in history and over a decade of experience as a social studies educator, Sam has made significant contributions to the field through curriculum development and professional development for educators.

Sam also serves as the president of the Virginia Council for the Social Studies, the Virginia affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies, where she and her team curate high-quality professional development opportunities for Virginia's social studies educators. She has won several awards for her leadership in the Virginia educational community and her dedication to civil rights advocacy.

Rebekah O'Dell teaches seventh- and eighth-grade English language arts in Richmond, Virginia. Before moving to middle school, Rebekah taught high schoolers for over a decade in classes ranging from inclusion to International Baccalaureate.

Alongside Allison Marchetti, Rebekah is a cofounder of *Moving Writers* (https://movingwriters.org), a popular blog for grades 6–12 writing teachers, as well as the host of the Moving Writers Community. She is the coauthor of three other books on writing instruction: *Writing With Mentors: How to Reach Every Writer in the Room Using Current, Engaging Mentor Texts* (2015); *Beyond Literary Analysis: Teaching Students to Write With Passion and Authority About Any Text* (2018); and *A Teacher's Guide to Mentor Texts, 6–12* (2021). She's a frequent speaker and workshop leader across the United States.

Rebekah has a bachelor's degree in English and a master of teaching in secondary English education from the University of Virginia.

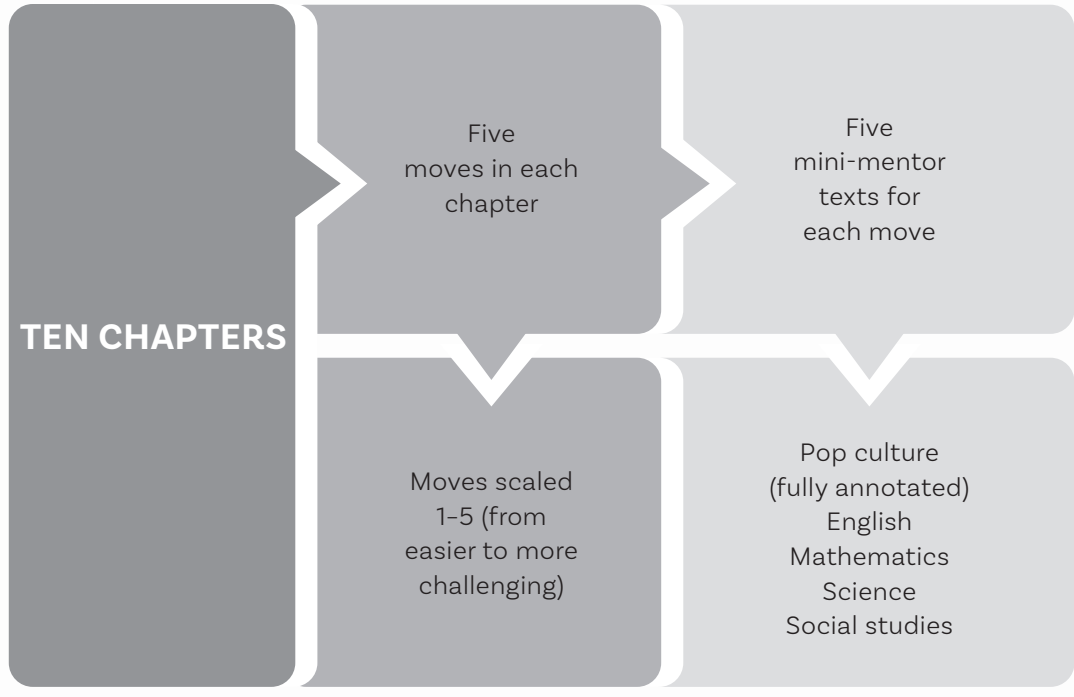
To book Sam Futrell or Rebekah O'Dell for professional development, contact pd@SolutionTree.com.

PART 2

Moves for Every Writer

Each of the next ten chapters contains five moves that home in on a particular aspect of writing, from introductions to organization to voice. That means, over the next 186 pages, you will find fifty moves that will elevate students' writing in any core class (English, mathematics, science, and social studies).

For each move, we selected mini-mentor texts from professional writers about pop culture, English, mathematics, science, and social studies. This, we hope, emphasizes that each of the techniques highlighted in this book transcends not only academic disciplines but various types of writing projects as well.



Keep the following in mind as you venture into part 2.

- **Chapter order doesn't matter:** While you could follow the order of moves in the chapters to meet the needs of a full year's writing curriculum, you do not have to go chapter by chapter. Cover chapters in any order based on how they align with your curriculum and with students' writing needs.
- **Choose the move that works for you and your students:** The same goes for the moves within each chapter. Choose the move your class or individual students study based on their needs, their ability levels, their interests, or the writing product you want students to create.

  Most moves begin with a pop culture example. This serves a dual purpose: to hook students and to show the ubiquity of the move. It's not just a "school thing"—this is a move that is really used by real writers writing about topics that interest our students. In our classes, we often introduce mini moves with these pop culture examples before moving into examples specific to our content areas.

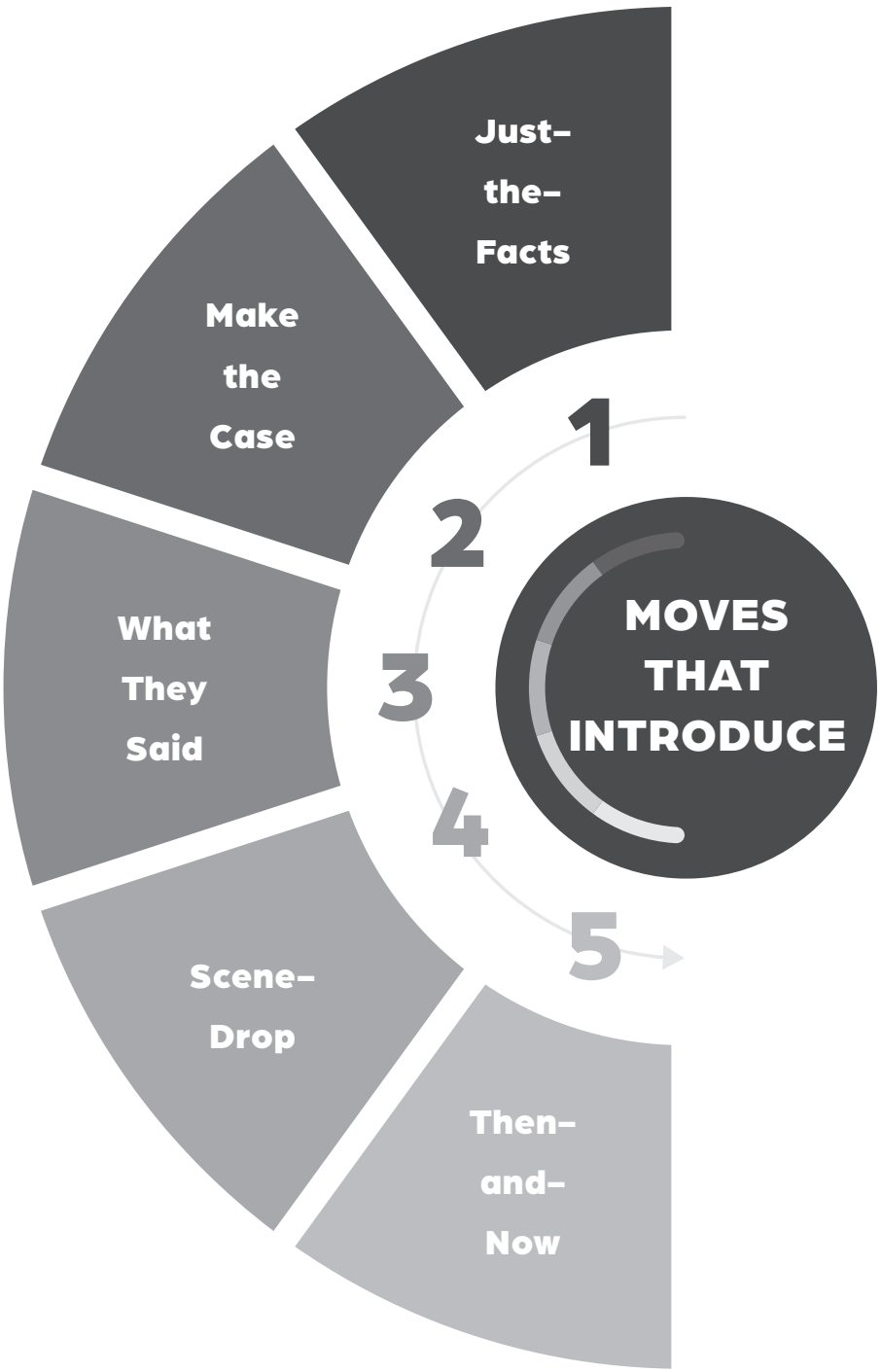
  That being said, some moves fit better in certain writing contexts than others. It would be unlikely, for example, for anyone to use the Scene-Drop move (page 36) in an on-demand writing piece, like a response to a document-based question or free-response question on an AP exam. Writing on demand capitalizes on expedient argumentation and an evidence-forward introduction, whereas the Scene-Drop move slowly draws the reader into the piece and focuses on craft, rather than information.
- **Formulas break down the moves into components:** For most moves, we have provided (to the best of our ability) a formula. These formulas are not an exact science but an attempt to label and compartmentalize mini moves' components to help students get started. Once students have had practice with a move over time, they will naturally begin to innovate on the formula, increasingly making it their own. Writing is not prescriptive, but we do think these formulas will help young writers visualize the strategies experts use to make their writing outstanding. If a student asks to try a variation on a formula as they experiment with the mini move, we encourage them! We want our students to make their writing their own.

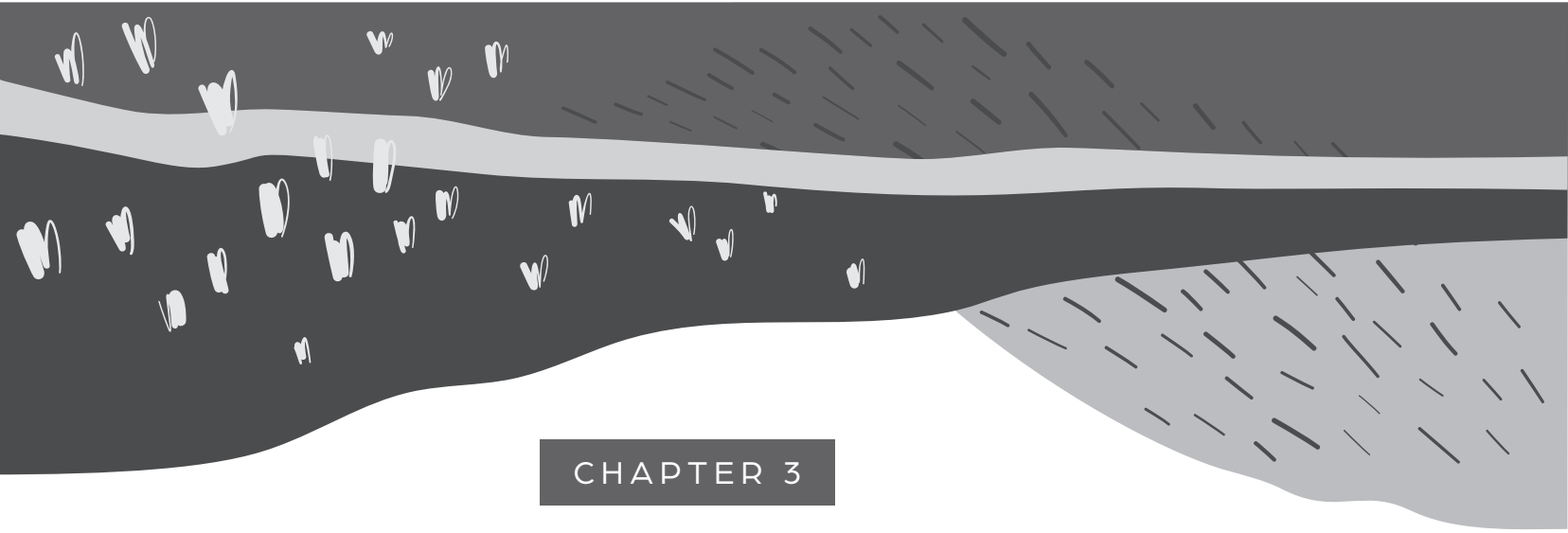
  You will also notice that as we move from level 1 moves to level 5 moves in each chapter, the formulas become looser and harder to pin down. This makes sense—as writing itself becomes more sophisticated, it becomes less rigidly formulaic.

In short, if the formulas help you and your students move forward, great! You know your students best, though, so you should use your best judgment on when to introduce the formulas and when to skip them.

- **Use the student workbook pages:** The book you're reading now is teacher facing and can stand completely on its own. But one of our goals is to make classroom application of mini moves as easy as possible. We have read many professional texts that offer an amazing new instructional paradigm but fail to fully connect that paradigm to student work. That's why we developed an online student workbook, which you can use in conjunction with this teacher text. The workbook pages directly align with each chapter and move in this book and offer physical space for students to practice mini moves. If used together, the workbook and this teacher text offer fifty comprehensive writing lessons, which can apply to any core class. Visit **go.SolutionTree.com/literacy/MMEW** to access the "*Mini Moves for Every Writer* Student Workbooks."
- **Embrace the videos:** Each of the mini moves in this book has a corresponding video lesson at the previously mentioned URL if you cannot access via the QR codes given in appendix B (page 223). These videos are student facing and follow the mini-move lesson pattern outlined on pages 14–15; you access them via the code on the inside front cover of this book. Consider these an additional, free resource for how to successfully implement mini moves in every classroom. We use these videos in our own classrooms all the time for the following.
  - Substitute teacher plans
  - Flipped classroom instruction
  - Student choice boards
  - That sick day we *should* take, but instead try to slog through

Our hope is that what follows is your one-stop shop for skill-based writing instruction that transcends every content area and can be applied in every classroom today.





CHAPTER 3

Moves That Introduce

The way we open our writing sets a tone for the entire piece. As we write this very opening statement for you, we, as the writers, are questioning the metaphysical state of our relationship with you as the reader.

> "How can we impart the importance of those initial words that crack open a window between the author's mind and the readers'? How can we ensure that the subsequent breeze is both ardent and emphatic? How do we say something less stupid than what we just wrote?"

The opening to any piece of writing is not just a way to begin; it is a way to envelop the reader in the writing itself. With the right opening, the reader becomes part of the writing—ingrained and invested in its success from the very start.

Since you're reading this book, you know what many writing teachers might not know—there is no one way to open a piece. For example, everyone knows the student whose fourth-grade teacher taught them to begin their writing with a rhetorical question.

Sam was that student. She's pretty sure her answer to an AP United States History document-based question began this way: "Have you ever been at the supermarket and thought, 'I wonder how the Civil War started'?" She could have benefited from a teacher pulling her aside and asking, "Sam, how often are you really thinking about the Battle of Gettysburg next to the kumquats?"

It's not that a rhetorical question is always a bad way to open a piece of writing—sometimes, it's the perfect move to make. It's just that, in many instances like that one, the question feels disingenuous, far-fetched, and tonally mismatched. The takeaway here is this: The opening to a piece of writing must be authentic and curated in both style and substance to fit the writing itself. See table 3.1 (page 28) for recommendations on when best to use particular introductory moves. When you go to teach these moves, remember to use the instructional model conveyed in chapter 2 (page 13).

Table 3.1: Writing Needs and Moves That Introduce

When Writers Need . . .	Start Here . . .
To write a simple, no-frills introduction	Just-the-Facts (page 28)
To center the argument in their introduction	Make the Case (page 31) Then-and-Now (page 41)
To add voice and creativity to their introduction	What They Said (page 33) Scene-Drop (page 36) Then-and-Now (page 41)
To play with time in their introduction	Scene-Drop (page 36) Then-and-Now (page 41)
To write an evidence-centered introduction	Just-the-Facts (page 28) What They Said (page 33) Then-and-Now (page 41)

Just–the–Facts (Level 1)

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2012), only 25 percent of U.S. students are proficient writers by the time they leave high school. (The next national assessment for writing is slated for 2032; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2024a.) So, let's begin our opening moves with one that is perfect for both burgeoning writers and those who might need more support.

A Just-the-Facts intro asks writers to begin their piece with information that they learned while researching. It is an excellent way to incorporate objective evidence, like data, into the initial paragraphs of any piece. It is also, perhaps, the most natural way to begin any piece of writing.

We love using the Just-the-Facts intro for expository or argumentative writing because it answers some of what are commonly known as the *reporter's questions*: Who? What? When? Where? Why? Opening with these specific details about a larger topic offers the reader just enough background information to be engaged with the rest of the piece and establishes the writer as a reliable narrator.

This is the basic formula: Objective Observation + Reporter's Answers.

POP CULTURE

Consider this method in the context of the annotated mentor text in figure 3.1.

When we talk to students about a Just-the-Facts intro, we cover the following.

- We start by noticing how much information—how many facts—is presented in just the first sentence of this piece.
- The first sentence gives the *who* (Gwyneth Paltrow and Terry Sanderson), the *what* (a not-liable decision in favor of Paltrow), and the *when* (Thursday). From the very beginning, the reader knows exactly what the essay will be about.
- Students might notice that the author uses last names to elevate formality.
- When naming Terry Sanderson, the author gives a brief descriptor of who this person is ("retired optometrist"). The author assumes, rightly so, that the reader knows who Gwyneth Paltrow is.

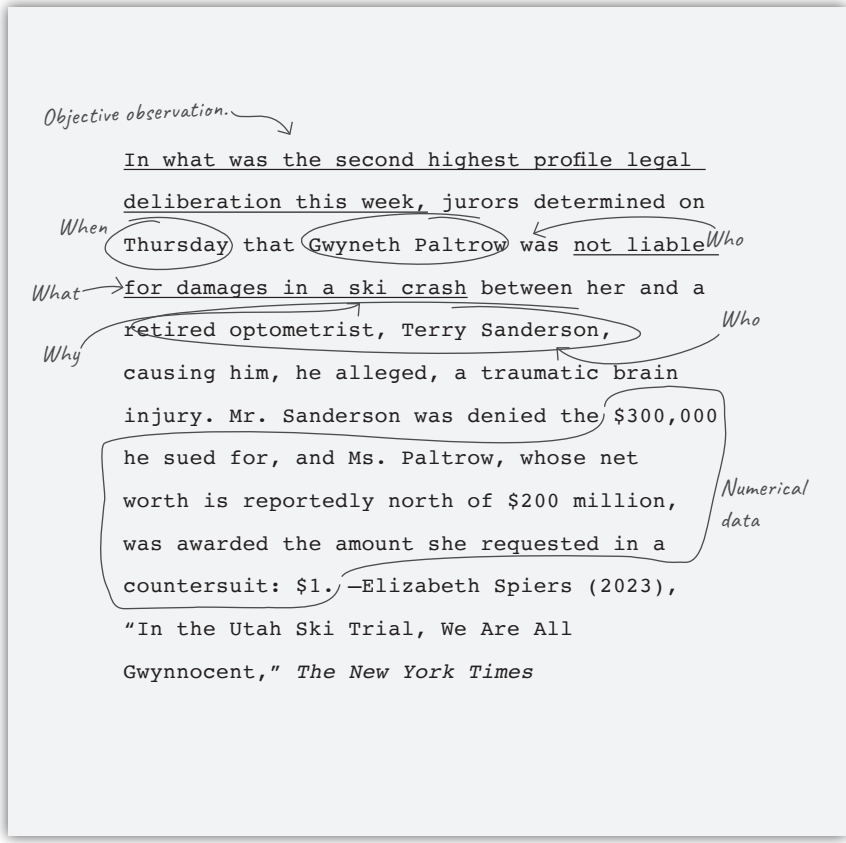


Figure 3.1: Just-the-Facts, annotated mentor text.

- It makes sense that the author uses past tense in a Just-the-Facts intro because it relies on established information to set up what's to come.
- Numerical data (dollar amounts, in this example) appear throughout the introduction. While numerical data are not a necessity in the Just-the-Facts intro, those data can offer excellent context for the reader.
- Students might notice that the question "Where?" is not answered here. That's OK! Writers do not have to answer every question in a Just-the-Facts intro, just those that are essential for the reader to have answered at the beginning of the piece. Here, the author leaves the *where* unanswered in the intro so they can elaborate on these two questions in the body of the piece. You can apply this same thinking when using this move in the other content areas detailed in this section.

ENGLISH

Climate activist Greta Thunberg who, at age 15, led school strikes every Friday in her home country of Sweden—a practice that caught on globally—has now, at 20, managed to bring together more than 100 scientists, environmental activists, journalists and writers to lay out exactly how and why it's clear that the climate crisis is happening. —Barbara J. King (2023), "Greta Thunberg's 'The Climate Book' Urges World to Keep Climate Justice Out Front," *NPR*

MATHEMATICS

In the 1950s, four decades before he won a Nobel Prize for his contributions to game theory and his story inspired the book and film "A Beautiful Mind," the mathematician John Nash proved one of the most remarkable results in all of geometry. Among other features, it implied that you could crumple a sphere down to a ball of any size without ever creasing it. He made this possible by inventing a new type of geometric object called an "embedding," which situates a shape inside a larger space—not unlike fitting a two-dimensional poster into a three-dimensional tube. —Mordechai Rorvig (2021), "Mathematicians Identify Threshold at Which Shapes Give Way," *Quanta Magazine*

SCIENCE

On Feb. 3 a train carrying hazardous materials derailed in East Palestine, Ohio. Some of the contents immediately caught fire. Three days later authorities released and burned off additional material from five tankers. These fires caused elevated levels of harmful chemicals in the local air, although the Environmental Protection Agency says that the pollution wasn't severe enough to cause long-term health damage. —Paul Krugman (2023), "Conspiracy Theorizing Goes off the Rails," *The New York Times*

SOCIAL STUDIES

A nearly 60-foot replica of a 4,000-year-old boat—complete with a sail made from goat hair—recently launched off the coast of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates.

According to a statement from Zayed University, the vessel passed numerous trials over two days at sea. It journeyed 50 nautical miles in the Arabian Gulf, reaching speeds of up to 5.6 knots (6.4 miles per hour). —Julia Binswanger (2024), "This Bronze Age Ship Replica, Made From Reeds and Goat Hair, Just Sailed 50 Nautical Miles," *Smithsonian Magazine*

Make the Case (Level 2)

Sometimes, beginning with the piece's central claim is the best opening move to make. It's direct, it orients the reader to the writing's key argument, and it is especially useful for writers who need a guiding light to return to throughout their piece.

The Make the Case intro is slightly more complex than the Just-the-Facts intro because it asks for a bold, up-front take followed by a paragraph of contextual evidence.

This is the basic formula: Claim + Evidence.

POP CULTURE

Consider this method in the context of the annotated mentor text in figure 3.2.

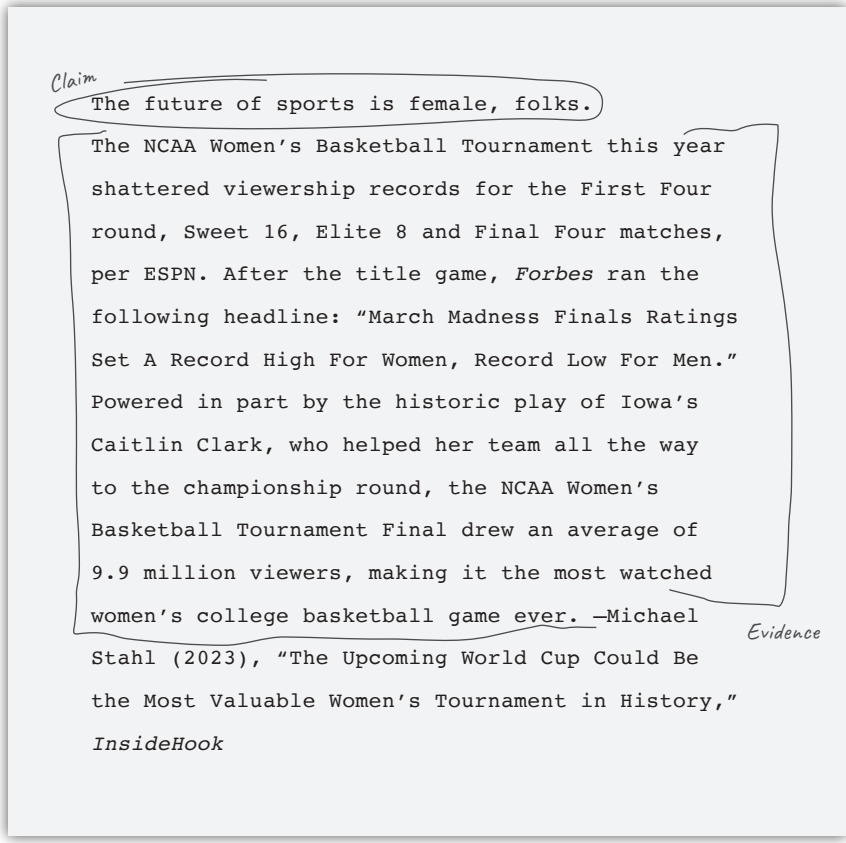


Figure 3.2: Make the Case, annotated mentor text.

Here is what we would discuss with our students about the Make the Case intro.

- Students will notice the claim stands alone in its own paragraph not just here but in all the mentor texts. This allows the reader to visually position the argument up front in their mind.
- Students might point out the use of the term "folks." The words writers choose—especially those in the first sentence—determine the tone of the piece. By speaking directly to the reader here, the author establishes a congenial tone.
- The evidence paragraph answers many of those reporter's questions (Who? What? When? Where? Why?) that we saw in the Just-the-Facts intro. But the evidence paragraph also answers other questions, like, "How many viewers were there?"
- The author uses data to support the claim with numerical evidence.
- Students may notice that the claim is simple—it uses a helping verb and totals only a handful of words. A claim doesn't have to be lengthy to be profound.

ENGLISH

Dennis Lehane's *Small Mercies* may take place in Boston's Southie neighborhood in 1974—but the topics it deals with are incredibly timely.

At once a crime novel, a deep, unflinching look at racism, and a heart-wrenching story about a mother who has lost everything, this narrative delves into life in the projects at a time when the city of Boston struggled with the desegregation of its public school system—and a lot [of] residents were showing their worst side. —Gabino Iglesias (2023), "Dennis Lehane's 'Small Mercies' Is a Crime Thriller That Spotlights Rampant Racism," *NPR*

MATHEMATICS

In a new proof, a long-neglected mathematical object has finally gotten its moment in the spotlight.

At first glance, modular forms—functions whose abundant symmetries have intrigued mathematicians for centuries—seem to have garnered more than enough attention. They crop up in all sorts of problems: They were a key ingredient in Andrew Wiles' 1994 proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, which resolved one of the biggest open questions in number theory. They play a central role in the Langlands program,

an ongoing effort to develop "a grand unified theory of mathematics." They've even been used to study models in string theory and quantum physics. —Jordana Cepelewicz (2023b), "New Proof Distinguishes Mysterious and Powerful 'Modular Forms,'" *Quanta Magazine*

SCIENCE

Speaking two languages provides the enviable ability to make friends in unusual places. A new study suggests that bilingualism may also come with another benefit: improved memory in later life.

Studying hundreds of older patients, researchers in Germany found that those who reported using two languages daily from a young age scored higher on tests of learning, memory, language and self-control than patients who spoke only one language. The findings, published in the April issue of the journal *Neurobiology of Aging*, add to two decades of work suggesting that bilingualism protects against dementia and cognitive decline in older people. —Jaya Padmanabhan (2023), "Bilingualism May Stave Off Dementia, Study Suggests," *The New York Times*

SOCIAL STUDIES

President Biden's most significant failure during his first two years in office is the lack of progress on the truly domestic portion of his domestic agenda.

Earlier in the pandemic, the federal government did more to help parents than it ever did before. Washington temporarily mandated paid leave for many workers, it gave billions of dollars in aid to child care businesses, and for several glorious months in 2021, it even expanded the child tax credit to provide assistance to most families with children. —Binyamin Appelbaum (2023), "And Child Care for All," *The New York Times*

What They Said (Level 3)

A Teacher's Guide to Mentor Texts tells us that "all writing is a reflection of decision making" and "when we read like writers, we notice the decisions they have made" (Marchetti & O'Dell, 2021, p. 7). Understanding the patterns of a writing move also asks us to read like writers.

Writers often open their pieces with quotes. Doing so immediately adds another voice to the conversation. This lends authority and nuance to the piece from the get-go.

Consider this move the older sibling to the Just-the-Facts intro. While operating on the same basic structure, a What They Said intro requires research to find the right

quotes, as well as a more sophisticated understanding of grammar and text-evidence explication.

This is the basic formula: Quoted + Source + Quote + Commentary.

POP CULTURE

Observe the mentor text annotations in figure 3.3.

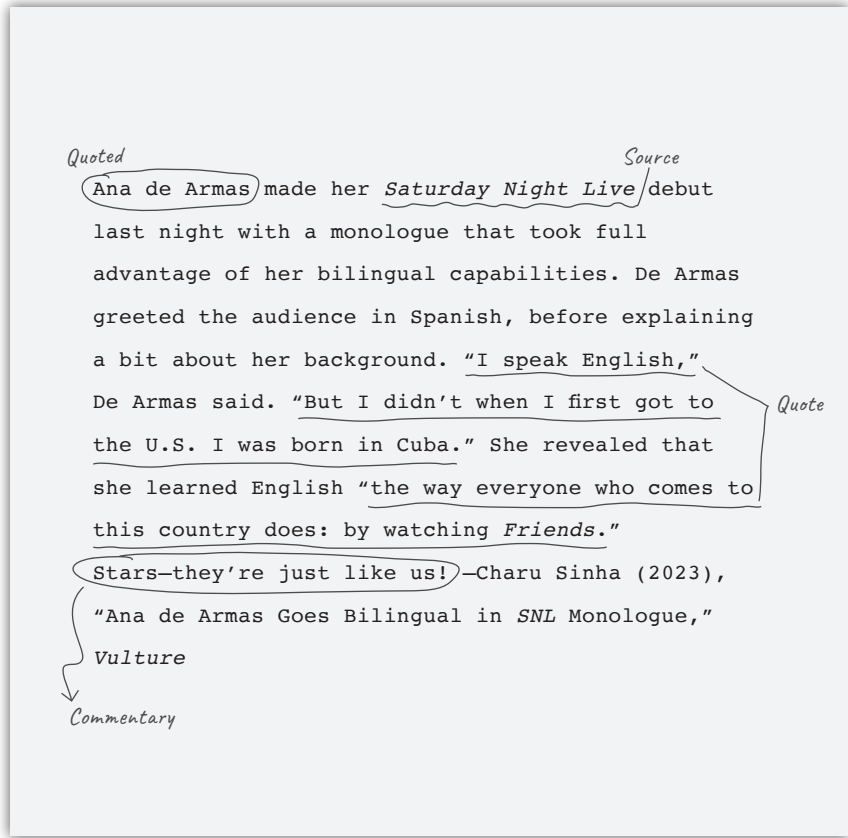


Figure 3.3: What They Said, annotated mentor text.

Here's how we might break down this mentor text with our students.

- The quoted person is named right away in this mentor text. Students should feel free to use this strategy—it helps the reader immediately know whose voice the writer is bringing into the conversation. But we would point out that's not the case in all the content-area examples. Students should feel free to order the components of this mentor text as they see fit.

- The author indirectly cites the source of this quote as *Saturday Night Live*. If this structure feels odd or difficult for students, the mathematics and social studies (page 36) mentor texts contain examples of more direct citations.
- Students who are looking for grammatical observations in this mentor text will note that the first quote is broken up with a comma (which is inside the quotation mark) and a phrase of attribution ("De Armas said"). When the author picks the quote back up, they begin with a capital letter and end the quote with a period inside the quotation mark.
- The second quote does not need a comma, as it is incorporated into the author's sentence.
- The commentary provides a simple explanation of why the quote feels significant to the author.

ENGLISH

Parable of the Sower was first published in October 1993. It tells the story of 15-year-old Lauren Olamina, a young Black woman living through a time of severe societal collapse. She creates (through observation and deduction) a new religion, Earthseed, which she expounds between her diary entries in simple verses that are both axiomatic and richly open-ended: "The Self must create / Its own reason for being. / To shape God, / Shape Self." —Roz Dineen (2024), "On the Simple Prophecy of Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*," *Literary Hub*

MATHEMATICS

"For me, mathematics exists in the space between us," Emmy Murphy wrote in accepting the 2020 New Horizons in Mathematics Prize.

That space, for her, is a realm of art, perhaps even more than science. And like an artist, she is most fulfilled when exploring the fertile ground where constraint meets creation. The objects she studies are "beautiful to me in the same way that architecture or fashion or expensive furniture is beautiful—the way they are both highly constrained by their geometry and also highly flexible," she told *Quanta*. —Erica Klarreich (2023a), "Emmy Murphy Is a Mathematician Who Finds Beauty in Flexibility," *Quanta Magazine*

SCIENCE

"As I imagine it," Carl Sagan once said, "there will be a multilayered message. First there is a beacon, an announcement signal, something that says, *Pay attention. This is not some natural astronomical phenomenon. This is a signal from intelligent beings* . . . Then, the next layer is one that says, *This message is directed specifically to you guys on Earth. It isn't directed to anybody else.* And the third part of the message is the real content, which is a very complex set of data in a new language, which is also explained."

He was describing his novel, *Contact*, a 370-or-so-page answer, literally or in spirit, to every question we can ask about how finding alien intelligence might go. Yes, there's conflict and strife—acts of terrorism, government obstruction, frustration and loss and death—but at its core the story promises an inviting cosmos. A door opening to a galactic community. We're not only not alone but also welcomed. This hope is central to the idealistic origins of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence (SETI), to Sagan's motivations as a scientist and communicator. It also makes it especially weird that the novel ends with its heroine finding proof that God is real, but we'll get to that. —Jaime Green (2023), "Why Does *Contact* Say So Much About God?," *The Atlantic*

SOCIAL STUDIES

"Millennials are many things, but above all, they are murderers," *Mashable* noted in 2017, introducing a list of 70 items and institutions that Millennials were purported to have "killed," including napkins, breakfast cereal, department stores, the 9-to-5 workday, and marriage. The list was tongue-in-cheek—the cereal aisle persists—but it captured something essential about a generation that has reshaped old habits of American life.

Even amid this slaughter of tradition, Millennials are best known for another characteristic: how broke they are. Millennials, it's often said, are the first American generation that will do worse than its parents financially. —Jean M. Twenge (2023), "The Myth of the Broke Millennial," *The Atlantic*

Scene–Drop (Level 4)

It's a balmy September morning in the third week of school. The air-conditioning is broken in Sam's classroom—again—and she and her students can feel the humidity closing in on them. Yet, in spite of the moisture accumulating on the whiteboard,

which makes her purple dry-erase marker about as effective as a paintbrush in an aquarium, her class is beginning their first venture into writing on demand.

Sam describes introductory paragraphs and tells the students that they need to include context in their introductions. Otherwise, she says, "I feel like Bear Grylls being dropped into the middle of the Amazonian rainforest with only a backpack full of peanuts—disoriented, disheartened, and possibly anaphylactic, since I'm allergic to peanuts."

She waits for laughter. It doesn't come.

"Are you really allergic to peanuts?" Linnea asks.

"No. It was a joke," Sam says.

"My cousin is allergic to peanuts," Emerson says.

"Well, a lot of people are," Sam responds.

"He has to carry an EpiPen!" Emerson shouts. "I get to stab him with it, if he accidentally eats one."

She realizes she's losing control of the room.

"OK. OK," she says, holding her hands up as Emerson begins to speak again. "I am glad you're prepared to stab your cousin, Emerson. But the point is—you need background information in your introductions. Otherwise, the reader will be lost right from the start."

"Yeah . . ." Linnea has re-entered the chat. "But what if the context is coming later? Like, what if I'm building up to it?"

Sam considers this and begins to nod her head in agreement. "Yeah," she says. "That's interesting! Let's see if we can find a mentor text for that."

We've all read great pieces of writing that do not front-load the opening paragraph with context. These pieces often take a microscopic lens to the opening sentences to set a particular scene before zooming out to consider the larger context. Such a beginning adds an element of personality and investment to the piece. We want to keep reading to figure out how this scene we've been dropped into connects to the larger topic of the writing as a whole. Adding narrative elements to non-narrative writing is also just plain fun.

This is the basic formula: Sensory Imagery(Setting + Characters).

POP CULTURE

Consider the annotated mentor text in figure 3.4 to understand this method.

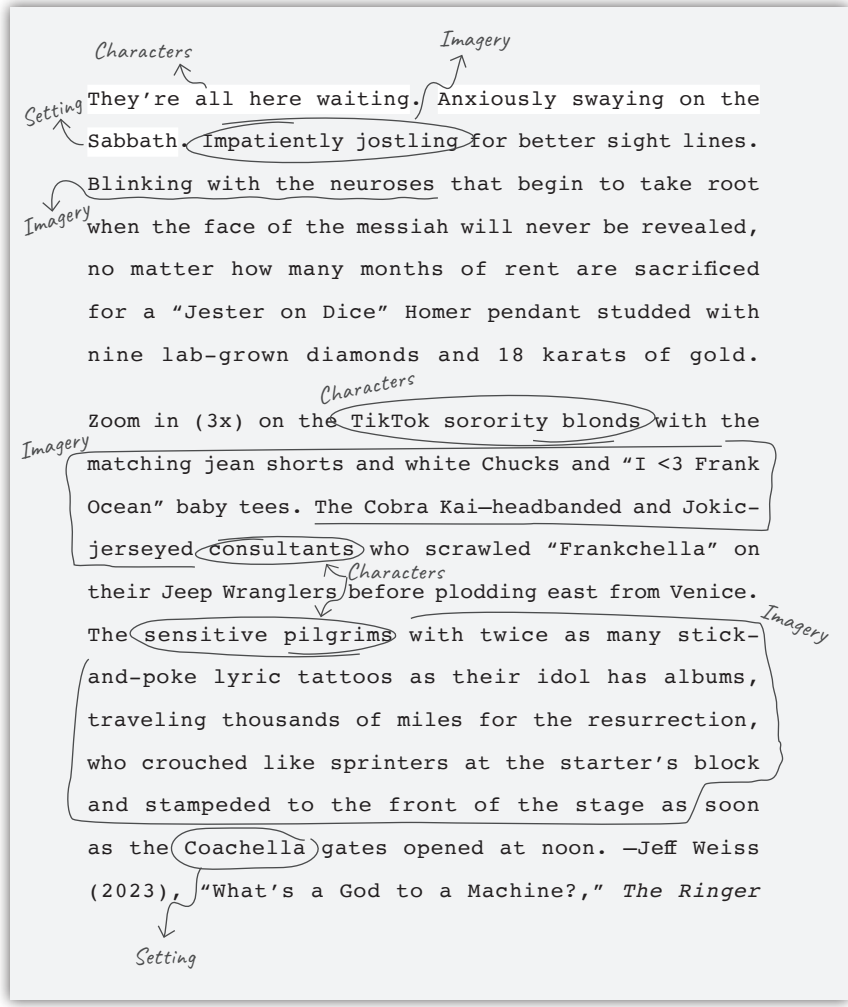


Figure 3.4: Scene-Drop, annotated mentor text.

Like most mini moves that require more writerly choice and direction, the Scene-Drop intro does not have an exact formula. But here's what we would notice with our students.

- If asked to explain how the author brings the reader into the scene, students might notice that the author begins by using present tense. This makes the reader *feel* as if the scene is happening right now.
- We would ask our students to identify the imagery that the author uses in this Scene-Drop intro and what sensory experiences they connect to. Though answers will vary, students might note the following.
  - Phrases like "anxiously swaying" and "impatiently jostling" tell the reader about the characters' movements and what the author feels in the scene.
  - "Zoom in (3x) on the TikTok sorority blonds" tells the reader what the author sees in the scene.
  - Words like "plodding" and "stampeded" give more descriptions of movement, but also describe what the author hears in the scene.
- Though the author is describing a real-life experience, the people in the Scene-Drop intro are described so vividly that they seem like characters in a novel.
- Students might notice that the central topic of the piece is not revealed until the end of the Scene-Drop intro. By prioritizing imagery and tone over context, the author elevates suspense.
- This mentor text includes a hyperspecific compound, contrasting description: "the Cobra Kai–headbanded and Jokic-jerseyed consultants." While not a necessity of the Scene-Drop intro, this is an excellent imagery technique for students who want a challenge to try in their writing.
- Carefully chosen diction is key to a Scene-Drop intro. Here, diction is a through line for analysis. The author uses "Sabbath," "messiah," and "sacrifice" to establish their argument that Coachella, for some, is a religious experience.
- Finally, students might notice in this mentor text, and some of the content-area mentor texts, that the central topic of the piece is not revealed until the second paragraph. "Burying the lede" like this can elevate the tension of the scene.

ENGLISH

The small, sickly African girl who arrived in Boston on a seafaring vessel in 1761 had already been stripped of her family and her home. She missed her father, who suffered after having his young child "snatched," she would later lament in writing. She longed for her mother, whose morning libations to the sun had imprinted on her an enduring memory. She was naked beneath her only physical covering, a "dirty carpet." She owned nothing, not even herself.

A little over a decade later, this same girl, named Phillis Wheatley after the slave ship that had transported her (the Phillis) and the enslavers who had purchased her (Susanna and John Wheatley), was an author. Her widely read 1773 book of verse, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, was striking in its creativity and spoke up for Black humanity. In his erudite, enlightening new biography, *The Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley*, the historian David Waldstreicher points out that the remarkable and unlikely story of this Revolutionary-era Black celebrity, who was both highlighted and castigated for her race, turns on such reversals and contradictions. Wheatley emerges in these pages as a literary marvel. Waldstreicher's comprehensive account is a monument to her prowess. —Tiya Miles (2023), "The Great American Poet Who Was Named After a Slave Ship," *The Atlantic*

MATHEMATICS

A few minutes into a 2018 talk at the University of Michigan, Ian Tobasco picked up a large piece of paper and crumpled it into a seemingly disordered ball of chaos. He held it up for the audience to see, squeezed it for good measure, then spread it out again.

"I get a wild mass of folds that emerge, and that's the puzzle," he said. "What selects this pattern from another, more orderly pattern?"

He then held up a second large piece of paper—this one pre-folded into a famous origami pattern of parallelograms known as the Miura-ori—and pressed it flat. The force he used on each sheet of paper was about the same, he said, but the outcomes couldn't have been more different. The Miura-ori was divided neatly into geometric regions; the crumpled ball was a mess of jagged lines. —Stephen Ornes (2022), "The New Math of Wrinkling," *Quanta Magazine*

SCIENCE

The giant new spaceship was all fueled up and ready to go. Its stainless-steel exterior gleamed in the South Texas sun. Everyone gathered at the launch site was elated to witness the first uncrewed test flight of Starship, the futuristic spacecraft that Elon Musk wants to someday use to take people to Mars. The crowd erupted in cheers as the 33-engine rocket booster below the spacecraft ignited its engines and rose from the launchpad, generating twice the thrust of the Saturn V rocket that propelled Apollo astronauts to the moon more than 50 years ago.

But as Starship climbed higher, toward the edge of space and the next move in the sequence, something went wrong. The spaceship and the rocket booster failed to separate as intended, and started tumbling. Four minutes after a beautiful liftoff, Starship exploded over the Gulf of Mexico. —Marina Koren (2023), "Elon Musk's Explosive Day," *The Atlantic*

SOCIAL STUDIES

The sky above the Mississippi River stretched out like a song. The river was still in the windless afternoon, its water a yellowish-brown from the sediment it carried across thousands of miles of farmland, cities, and suburbs on its way south. At dusk, the lights of the Crescent City Connection, a pair of steel cantilever bridges that cross the river and connect the east and west banks of New Orleans, flickered on. Luminous bulbs ornamented the bridges' steel beams like a congregation of fireflies settling onto the backs of two massive, unbothered creatures. A tugboat made its way downriver, pulling an enormous ship in its wake. The sounds of the French Quarter, just behind me, pulsed through the brick sidewalk underfoot. . . .

After the transatlantic slave trade was outlawed in 1808, about a million people were transported from the upper South to the lower South. More than one hundred thousand of them were brought down the Mississippi River and sold in New Orleans. —Clint Smith (2021), *How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning With the History of Slavery Across America*, p. 3

Then–and–Now (Level 5)

When we began our YouTube channel, Mini Moves for Writers (www.youtube.com/@minimovesforwriters4503), in 2021, we wanted to offer free writing resources for students—especially those who might have "fallen behind" during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Now, this book builds off that mission, offering even more resources to supplement those videos and even more videos to support writing instruction.

One way that writers of all kinds begin a piece of writing is by identifying a contrast or comparison between what has happened in the past and what is happening now. When writers do this, they aren't always trying to write about history. The passage of time offers writers a natural stage for comparison, which creates context for the ideas they are about to reveal. This little history-corner moment provides a dynamic beginning in any content area—from art to economics to ecology.

This is the basic formula: How Something Used to Be + How It Has Evolved.

POP CULTURE

Consider the annotated mentor text for this method in figure 3.5.

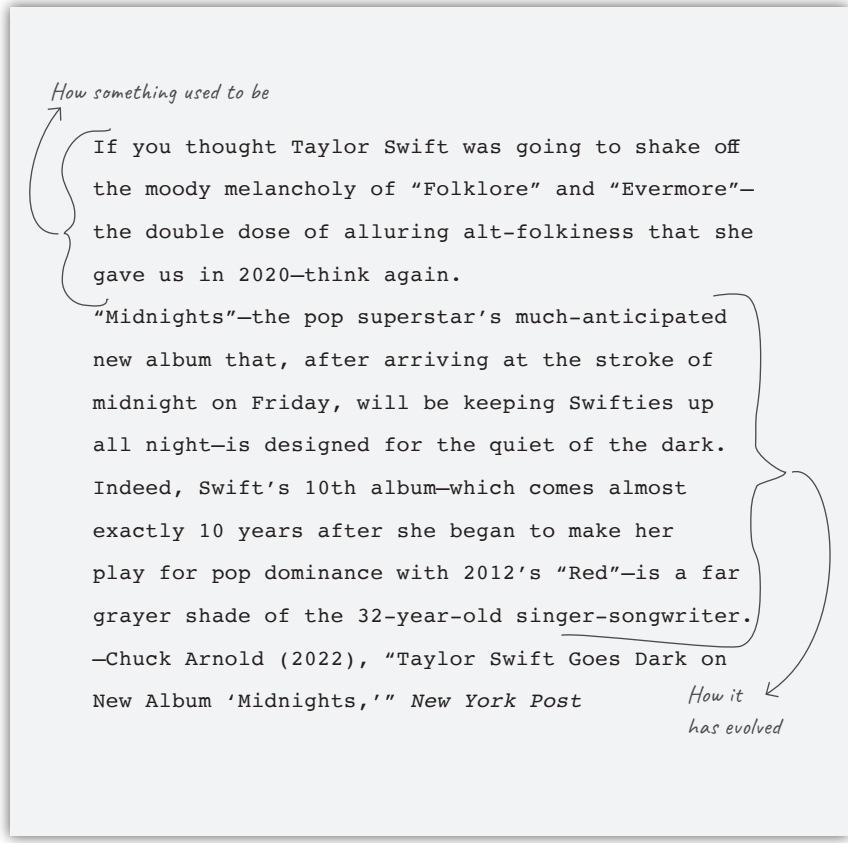


Figure 3.5: Then-and-Now, annotated mentor text.

As with all the advanced mini moves, the formula for the Then-and-Now intro is not an exact science. And that's why we love it! Students have more choice and agency in these advanced moves, and they can choose what to take away from the mentor text. Here's what we might notice about this Then-and-Now move when we introduce it to our classes.

- The topic of the piece is named right away, and the first paragraph explains and evaluates the past iterations of the topic. Here, that topic is Taylor Swift's musical career.
- Students might notice that the author provides a date in the first paragraph to help the reader understand that these albums came out several years prior.
- The first paragraph is used to either compare or contrast with the second.
- If comparing, the author uses parallel imagery or diction in the first and second paragraphs to highlight similarities (specifically, they use the Dash That Describes move, page 89).
- If contrasting, the author uses binary vocabulary within each paragraph to emphasize differences.
- We would point out to students that analysis makes up the majority of this intro. That *Folklore* and *Evermore* are "alt-folk" and *Midnights* is made for "the quiet of the dark" are the author's own evaluations. In this way, the Then-and-Now intro is the more complex version of the Make the Case intro.
- Even if the author is identifying a comparison between then and now, the author will still explain how something has evolved.

ENGLISH

Back in 1995, Russia's two major art museums, in St. Petersburg and Moscow, mounted exhibitions a month apart that attracted considerable attention. Not so much because of the art, although much of it was spectacular, but because Russia openly identified it as art looted from Nazi Germany at the end of World War II. . . .

. . . Last month, those "twice saved" treasures came to mind with the news that a German government delegation had traveled to Nigeria to return 20 precious artifacts, a tiny portion of the vast trove of what are known as Benin Bronzes, plundered by British colonial soldiers from what was the West African kingdom of Benin. (The kingdom is now part of Nigeria; modern Benin is a separate, neighboring state.) —Serge Schmemann (2023), "'She Comes Back to Where She Belongs,'" *The New York Times*

MATHEMATICS

In the fourth century, the Greek mathematician Pappus of Alexandria praised bees for their "geometrical forethought." The hexagonal structure of their honeycomb seemed like the optimal way to partition two-dimensional space into cells of equal area and minimal perimeter—allowing the insects to cut down on how much wax they needed to produce, and to spend less time and energy building their hive.

Or so Pappus and others hypothesized. For millennia, nobody could prove that hexagons were optimal—until finally, in 1999, the mathematician Thomas Hales showed that no other shape could do better. Today, mathematicians still don't know which shapes can tile three or more dimensions with the smallest possible surface area. —Jordana Cepelewicz (2023a), "Mathematicians Complete Quest to Build 'Spherical Cubes,'" *Quanta Magazine*

SCIENCE

Alex Wiltschko began collecting perfumes as a teenager. His first bottle was Azzaro Pour Homme, a timeless cologne he spotted on the shelf at a T.J. Maxx department store. He recognized the name from *Perfumes: The Guide*, a book whose poetic descriptions of aroma had kick-started his obsession. Enchanted, he saved up his allowance to add to his collection. "I ended up going absolutely down the rabbit hole," he said.

More recently, as an olfactory neuroscientist for Google Research's Brain Team, Wiltschko used machine learning to dissect our most ancient and least understood sense. Sometimes he looked almost longingly at his colleagues studying the other senses. "They have these beautiful intellectual structures, these cathedrals of knowledge," he said, that explain the visual and auditory world, shaming what we know about olfaction. —Allison Parshall (2022), "Machine Learning Highlights a Hidden Order in Scents," *Quanta Magazine*

SOCIAL STUDIES

When up to 190,000 Russian soldiers invaded Ukraine last February, even its most ardent foreign supporters expected the nation's far more limited defenses would collapse within days.

But one year later, Russia has lost a reported 200,000 men, including many high-ranking military officials, and President Vladimir Putin has been embarrassed by the Ukrainian Army's successes and the resilience of Ukraine's many citizen militias. —Christina Pazzanese (2023), "One Year Later: How Does Ukraine War End?," *The Harvard Gazette*

Use the reproducible "Writing Application Practice: Moves That Introduce" (page 46) to introduce.

Student Samples

The following student samples include moves that introduce.

This sample uses Just-the-Facts (level 1):

> Chromium is an element discovered by Louis Nicolas Vauquelin in 1797 in Paris, France. He discovered it by experimenting with different particles and created the element we now use for many different purposes like material for our pots and pans, the silver parts of our tires, and even our kitchen sinks. —Presley, Ninth Grade

This sample uses What They Said (level 3):

> "You would be a pro if you did this a million times." That was Mr. Hayward's response to a student's peril in math today. We are working on quadratic equations and just got to the point where we are factoring unfactorable expressions. I know, sounds so easy. After he explained the topic, we tried it on our own with limited success. People who didn't understand (which was the majority) paraded around the room with questions. Unfortunately, the math was still not mathing. —Saniya, Eighth Grade

This sample uses Then-and-Now (level 5):

> Over time scientists have kept getting closer and closer to what an atom really looks like. For example in 440 BC in Greece Democritus thought an atom was something that could continuously be split apart and cut in half that will go on forever. But he had no clue what an atom really looked like. The next person to study atoms and make a discovery was John Dalton, who said that every substance is made of atoms and that atoms can create compounds. J.J. Thompson took both of these theories and combined them and figured out that there were more particles in the middle of an atom. Much trial and error has gotten us to where we know a lot about atoms. Atoms have been studied for 2000+ years and after all that we are finally understanding what they really are. —Bryce, Ninth Grade

Writing Application Practice: Moves That Introduce

After teaching your students one of these moves—or all of these moves—you'll be looking for an opportunity for them to practice these skills immediately.

For each writing task, we have provided a prompt you could use to get your students writing. They can use this prompt to practice a single move for that writing task or to begin combining, mixing, and matching moves. You can find all writing application practice from the whole book in one place in appendix C (page 275).

Content Area	Writing Application Practice
English	Choose one of the moves that introduce, and use it to introduce a book you've recently read to someone who has not yet read it.
Mathematics	What did you learn or practice today in class? Use a move that introduces to introduce the topic to a parent or friend.
Science	Pretend you are rewriting a chapter from your science textbook. Write a brief introduction to your current unit using one of the moves that introduce.
Social Studies	Who is the most significant figure in the unit you are now studying in class? Introduce this person by using one of the moves that introduce.