



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **11th Grade** | Unit 6

LANGUAGE ARTS 1106

NONFICTION

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Nonfiction

Introduction

Nonfiction is a form of prose that explains or expresses certain information or ideas. Nonfiction takes many forms and deals with many topics. The most important nonfiction book is the Bible. Most Christians have read the accounts of Abraham, Moses, and David. These nonfiction accounts explain the history of mankind. Other Biblical accounts describe man's daily existence and man's future. Some examples of nonfiction are textbooks, newspapers, news reports, magazines, lectures, and sermons.

In this LIFE PAC® you will learn more about nonfiction. You will learn the definition, the importance, the forms, and the types of nonfiction. Then you will read various outstanding examples of nonfiction. Most selections were written by American authors. The works of two English authors who greatly influenced American literature will briefly be studied in this LIFE PAC. You will also complete a topical study of nonfiction in preparation for the expository essays you will write.

By studying this LIFE PAC you should become more aware of the importance of nonfiction as a tool for expressing your own thoughts, beliefs, and experiences. Prose has the power to sway man's destiny. In truth, "the pen is mightier than the sword."

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFE PAC®. When you have finished this LIFE PAC, you will be able to:

1. Recognize and define nonfiction.
2. Differentiate between fiction and nonfiction.
3. Explain the importance of nonfiction.
4. Recognize the expository patterns of writing.
5. Recognize the elements used in descriptive writing.
6. Name and recognize the four major forms of nonfiction.
7. Identify the characteristics of the major forms of nonfiction.
8. Give examples of selections written about personal experience, biography and autobiography, ideas, and humor.
9. Write three expository compositions using each of the three basic patterns—illustrative, analytical, and argumentative.

1. ELEMENTS OF NONFICTION

In this section you will be studying the elements of nonfiction—what nonfiction actually is and what forms it takes. You will learn the differences between fiction and nonfiction. The two forms of nonfiction you will study in this section are exposition and description. These two forms are closely related and are often combined in a single work. As you study these forms, you will become familiar with the characteristics of each. This section will provide a foundation upon which you may base your plans for expository writing.



Section Objectives

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Recognize and define nonfiction.
2. Differentiate between fiction and nonfiction.
3. Explain the importance of nonfiction.
4. Recognize the expository patterns of writing.
5. Recognize the elements used in descriptive writing.

Vocabulary

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

anti-Semitism
argumentative

corroborative
figurative language

vignettes

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFEPAK appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

DEFINITION AND IMPORTANCE OF NONFICTION

To understand and to appreciate nonfiction, a reader should be aware of the meaning of nonfiction and be able to distinguish between fiction and nonfiction. The reader will appreciate nonfiction more when he realizes its importance, influence, and popularity.

Distinction between fiction and nonfiction.

Nonfiction is a type of writing that attempts to present an actual situation as it really happened or as it now exists. Nonfiction writing is considered to be factual, truthful, real, and **corroborative**. Although some modern fiction can be described in those same terms, fiction generally is imaginative. The use of numerous characters and several plots or subplots is characteristic of fiction. Frequently, fiction is produced for the entertainment and the enjoyment of the reader. Nonfiction writing gives straightforward information, personal opinions, or reminiscences, which may be quite entertaining to a reader interested in that subject. Probably the only way to distinguish nonfiction writing from fiction is to consider the purpose of the author's writing, the genre, or form, he uses, and the presence or absence of an imaginative situation.

Nonfiction may present an author's opinions, feelings, thoughts, or experiences in a particular field. It may give factual information and definite explanations of processes or developments. Some nonfiction writing utilizes a formal, serious, straightforward, exact presentation or style. Other nonfiction writing follows an informal pattern—reminiscing, chatting, or joking. A nonfiction writer may try to convince the reader to adopt the author's viewpoint and act upon it. This pattern of writing is defined as **argumentative** or persuasive writing—sometimes called propaganda. Although propaganda can be either positive or negative, this word has gained a negative connotation. Warnings from the Tuberculosis Association, the National Safety Council, or the Kidney and the Heart Foundations are expressions of positive propaganda. These messages, as well as those given by doctors, ministers, or teachers, are helpful forms of persuasion. Negative or destructive propaganda can be exemplified by Hitler's **anti-Semitism**.

Humorous experiences at home, at school, at church, in the neighborhood, with friends, or on the job, provide a wide scope of subjects for nonfiction writing. **Vignettes**, or character sketches, make the

delightful personalities of the author's favorite people come alive for others. Although fiction is often thought of as being the only exciting reading, nonfiction can be even more exciting, proving the old saying that "truth is stranger than fiction."

Nonfiction may appear in the form of formal essays, informal essays, sermons, letters, diaries, journals, biographies, autobiographies, magazine articles, news reports, and newspaper articles. Nonfiction writing is basically expository and descriptive in nature, although the narrative form may be employed occasionally.

Fiction, on the other hand, is narrative prose. Although the plot may be based on real life experiences, the author uses his imagination to develop or to change these experiences into a suitable plot. The characters described in a story may be based on actual people, but the author adapts certain characteristics to fit his plot. A work of fiction can be quite long, such as a novel, or short, such as the short story. A continuous plot or a number of subplots develop from conflicts among the various characters. These conflicts rise to a peak, or a *climax*, and then are resolved in some plausible fashion as the story draws to a close. Modern fiction tends to have fewer solutions to the problems or conflicts of the story; nevertheless, the story does reach some type of conclusion.

Nonfiction aims to instruct or to inform. The fiction writer, however, wants to write a story that will hold his reader's interest throughout the book. The author hopes to create memorable characters. The author is not interested in convincing the reader to act immediately on information received. Frequently, the writer does want to challenge the reader to reflect upon life and human nature; but he wants primarily to entertain the reader with the story itself.

Fiction, then, can be defined as any literary work portraying imaginary characters and events, not to be accepted as true or factual. Fiction portrays life in a dimension different from ordinary daily routine—life as people might like it to be or as they dream about it. Fiction genres, or types, include the short story, the novelette, the novel, and the drama. Fiction uses narrative, descriptive, and expository writing in its genres but is primarily narrative or "storytelling" in nature.

Answer true or false.

- 1.1 _____ Nonfiction writing is of little importance today because of the widespread use of computers.
- 1.2 _____ Truth can never be “stranger than fiction” because fiction involves the fantastic and unusual.
- 1.3 _____ Persuasive writers try to broaden the reader’s outlook so that he will accept all viewpoints about a subject.
- 1.4 _____ Propaganda is an unacceptable type of writing that promotes only problems and encourages a narrow viewpoint about things.
- 1.5 _____ Both the novel and the short story are genres of fiction.
- 1.6 _____ A propaganda writer hopes to convince the reader of his particular viewpoint by using argumentative prose.
- 1.7 _____ Nonfiction writing depends heavily upon the writer’s imagination to develop a formal style.
- 1.8 _____ Formal writing is usually more serious in tone, exact in form, and concrete in style than informal writing.
- 1.9 _____ Writing that distorts the truth for evil purposes is referred to as fictional.

Importance of nonfiction. Nonfiction has become especially popular in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries because few people feel that they have enough leisure time to settle down for a whole afternoon or evening of reading. A lengthy novel or even a short story can require the reader’s close attention to plot. Most people, however, are interested in the newspaper or news report coverage of current events and in informative magazine articles. Various news media have brought far-away places, interesting people, and unusual events to the public’s attention. Frequently those who want to learn more about these people or events turn to nonfiction sources for information.

The widespread importance of nonfiction writing can be substantiated by the number of periodicals, newspapers, and nonfiction books published in print or digitally each year.

The United States produces about fifty major newspapers that range from two hundred thousand to over 2 million copies in daily circulation. *The Wall Street Journal* has an average daily circulation of 2.3 million.



The Washington Post has a circulation of 0.4 million in the US. Smaller towns have their own newspapers, published daily or weekly. Many businesses and institutions print newsletters. Interestingly, India and Japan have the world’s largest daily newspaper circulation. *Dainik Jagran* has sixteen million readers, and *Dainik Bhaskar* has about fourteen million. In Japan, *Yomiuri Shimbun* has a daily circulation of ten million.

Complete these activities.

- 1.10** Check your school library to see the number of periodicals to which it subscribes in either print or digital format.
- _____ newspapers
 - _____ magazines
- 1.11** Ask your school librarian or the public librarian the names of the two most popular magazines in your school or town.
- _____
 - _____
- 1.12** Take a poll of the students and teachers in your school or of the members of your church. Write the answers to the following questions:
- What seems to be the most popular magazine? _____
 - What newspaper is more widely read? _____
 - What is a popular nonfiction book? _____

FORMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF NONFICTION

Two forms of written nonfiction include exposition and description. These two forms should be understood as separate ways to write nonfiction, although they are often both used together in the same work.

Exposition. Expository writing explains or points out the various aspects of a subject. Exposition is nonfiction writing that attempts to explain clearly and precisely the particular subject being written about. Faulty or confusing explanations cause numerous misunderstandings and cause errors in carrying out directions or in fulfilling obligations. An expository writer first must be knowledgeable about his subject. A person may understand a subject very well and still not be able to explain it clearly to someone else.

Expository writing is a skill that is useful in daily living. This type of writing is necessary for taking tests, keeping records, recording minutes at meetings, giving directions, preparing reports, and writing both business and social letters. Most textbooks make constant use of both expository and descriptive writing. Nonfiction paperbacks, ranging in subject from agriculture to zoology are primarily expository in nature. Expository writing can enlarge and enrich the reader's scope of knowledge in almost every field of learning.

Two ways of learning the proper way to write are by reading and by writing. By reading exposition composed by a professional writer, a person begins to recognize certain characteristics and to incorporate these elements into his own writing. By writing, a person has the opportunity to use the skills he has learned through reading. The old saying that "practice makes perfect," was never truer than in improving one's expository skills. Only through writing can a person view his own strengths and weaknesses of expression.

The general characteristics of exposition have been classified as clarity, conciseness (or unity), completeness, and coherence (or logic). Clarity, clearness of the explanation, is extremely important. Expository writing is an attempt to explain clearly a subject or a portion of it. To make his writing clear, the writer must understand exactly what he hopes to convey to the reader. This understanding involves both correct and complete knowledge as well as a good plan of organization. Obviously, the subject should be limited to a length that can be covered thoroughly for the purpose of the writer. After having familiarized himself with the subject selected, the writer should make an outline including all the facts necessary to make the subject clear and understandable.

The writer must follow this outline carefully. Unusual or technical terms should be defined clearly. Examples and illustrations are useful ways to explain information.

Conciseness, or compactness, requires unity of thought; all of the information necessary for understanding the subject should be presented in a logical, organized manner. No unnecessary information should obscure the explanation. Sentences should be compact, not verbose. Explanations or descriptions should not be extended unnecessarily. Phrases and clauses should be placed close to the word or words they modify or describe.

Completeness is also important. The reader must have sufficient information for complete understanding. The discussion should be complete enough to cover the subject, yet short enough to hold the reader's interest. Sufficient details to develop the ideas clearly should be included. The writer may present the necessary information, yet confuse the reader if he fails to make his explanation coherent. *Coherence* literally means *sticking together*. Information must be presented in a logical order or sequence. An interesting or challenging topic sentence should introduce the subject, and the following sentences should explain it.

Expository writing may be classified as one of three major writing patterns: illustrative, analytical, or argumentative.

The *illustrative* pattern of expository writing is the development of paragraphs or essays by the use of examples, definitions, comparison or contrast, and supporting detail. Sometimes, a combination of two

or more of these methods is utilized. Many paragraphs or essays can be developed by the use of examples. The parable of the Good Samaritan presents examples of three men's reactions to the same situation. The definition type of illustrative writing, similar to a dictionary entry, first gives the general classification or identification of the item or the subject. The distinguishing characteristics unique to the subject or to the item come next. The definition can also be expanded by naming various elements which make up the whole.

Comparison or contrast points out likenesses or differences in a subject. The qualities of the situation or of the object being illustrated are compared with something already familiar to the reader. Frequently a vivid contrast can be drawn by stating what a subject is *not*. Two ways of using comparison and contrast are the *block* method and the *pendulum* method. The block method first describes one alternative in its entirety and then presents an alternative approach. An author using the pendulum method swings back and forth between the two alternatives being compared, discussing one aspect of comparison before going to the next. Illustrative development by the use of details presents added descriptive material to complete the picture. The writer must make a careful choice of details needed to enrich the illustration.

The following example demonstrates the technique of comparison used by Alexander Hamilton and James Madison in *The Federalist Papers*. This excerpt also utilizes definition. This selection comes from Number 10, written by Madison:

A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure democracy, and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the Union.

The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government in the latter to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens and greater sphere of country over which the latter may be extended.

The *analytical* pattern of expository writing involves the breaking down of a process or a subject into its various parts, or components, showing the relationship of the parts to the whole. This pattern may also be used to develop cause and effect or to show causal relationships. The reasons for, or the results of, a certain course of action are explained by cause

and effect. The analytical pattern is used in literary criticism. The writer studies parts of the selection he is analyzing. He may analyze plot, characters, language, style, or structure.

Henry David Thoreau analyzed the reasons for his back to nature experiment in *Walden*:



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