



Cornell University
John S. Knight Institute for Writing in the Disciplines

Document Title: Staying on Topic: Topic Sentence Exercise and Peer Response
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Course Title: Shakespeare

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Winner

Spring 2010 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

The Knight Award for Writing Exercises recognizes excellence in short exercises and/or handouts designed to improve student writing. Appropriate topics may be drawn from the whole range of writing issues, large scale to small scale, such as development of theses, use of secondary sources, organization of evidence, awareness of audience, attention to sentence patterns (e.g., passive/active voice, coordination/ subordination), attention to diction, uses of punctuation, attention to mechanics (e.g., manuscript formats, apostrophes). Exercises and handouts may be developed for use in and/or out of class.

Submissions should comprise three parts: (1) A copy of the handouts or instructions that go to students. (2) An explanation of the exercise/ handout and of the principles behind it addressed to future instructors who may use the material. (3) If possible, an example of a student response

Submissions may range in length from one to four or five pages.

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The two winning entries will receive \$350, honorable mentions (if any) will receive \$125.

Submissions are due in 101 McGraw Hall by Friday, May 14. No exceptions can be made.

Spring 2010 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

~Please Print Clearly~

Instructor's name

John Robbins

Department

English Course # and title 1127.101 : shakespeare

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the writing exercises, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I also grant the Knight Institute permission to deposit the writing exercises in a web accessible archive and make them available under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. I am prepared to send electronic versions of my text to the Knight Institute (knight_institute@cornell.edu) I understand that I will receive the award for my prize-winning essay upon submission of the electronic text.

Staying on Topic: Topic Sentence Exercise and Peer Response

Title of Writing Exercises

Instructor's signature

JL Robbins

Date

5/14/10

Topic Sentence Exercise

For this exercise, you will evaluate the structure of your essay draft with the help of your peers. In the spaces below, write the first sentence of each of the body paragraphs of the essay (excluding the introduction and conclusion), as well as the thesis. When you are done, these should form a rough skeleton in which you can see the paper's general argument. Look back over this and see how clearly your argument comes out. Bring this sheet to class on Wednesday the 20th, when we will be workshopping it for concrete suggestions.

Thesis:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

6.)

Topic Sentence Exercise Response

Read over the skeleton essay of topic sentences in front of you, then answer the following questions. Once you have finished, discuss your responses with the author.

In responding to these questions, please use complete sentences. Remember, your aim is to help your fellow students produce a better essay, and one-word responses are unlikely to be helpful.

1.) Briefly summarize the argument of the essay, based only on what appears in these sentences.

2.) What did the writer do well? What specifically made the organization and structure successful?

3.) How clear was this argument? Were there specific times when it was difficult to follow? Were there logical jumps? If so, where?

4.) What overall suggestions do you have for the writer?