

American History-Based Writing Texts

for use with the nine units of
Teaching Writing: Structure & Style

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Sample



Institute for Excellence in Writing

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Coffee or Tea ?

No doubt, everyone who reads this has heard of the Boston Tea Party. That's when colonists decided they'd had enough of the British taxing them, without a say in how the taxes were spent. So they dumped a boatload of taxed tea into the Boston Harbor. But have you heard of the Boston coffee party?

Well, it wasn't just the British that were being greedy and selfish. Some merchant colonists were hoarding the limited supplies of coffee, sugar, and other items. Then, when everyone else ran out, they'd sell them for a very high price. Now, this may have worked for awhile, but the colonists were mad already. With their husbands and sons off to war, the women decided that enough was enough!

One group of women who assembled regularly to sew shirts for their men in the war decided to take matters into their own hands. They would go after a particularly greedy merchant who was hoarding barrels of coffee. The women went to the merchant with pots, pans, cups and buckets and demanded that he give them the key to his warehouse. When he wouldn't, they loaded HIM into a cart and sent the cart going faster and faster. When he fell out, he gave them the key. Then, they went inside the warehouse, opened the barrels, and filled their trunks and pots and pans and cups with all the coffee inside. Thus, not only do we have the Boston Tea Party, but we also have the Boston Coffee Party!

Rappaport, Doreen. *The Boston Coffee Party*. NY: Harper Collins, 1988.



Many English colonists began thinking of themselves as patriots and Americans. They bristled at the new taxes that the new king instituted. England sent troops to keep the peace and force the colonists to obey. Colonists taunted this 'peacetime army' not only with words but also with stones and fists. In March 1770, a patrol of soldiers fired into a rowdy crowd killing five men. This incident became known as the "Boston Massacre".

This conflict of English citizen and monarchy carried on for years. Finally, fifty colonists met together in 1774 as the Continental Congress. They put into writing a request for their rights as Englishmen to be respected and they agreed not to buy goods made in England. Many colonists began to train as militia and began stockpiling gunpowder and ammunition. They felt that if King George knew they were determined, he would give them their rights again.

The British response to the patriots and their secret stock piles was to take action. A preemptive strike was planned. The plan was discovered and the minutemen of Lexington were ready to meet the British. No one knows who fired the first shot but it started the war. Would it be a war for their rights as Englishmen or a war for independence?

While life on the east coast became civilized and prosperous, the territories west of the Mississippi River were still wild and unsettled. Men who preferred living by their own rules made this land their home. Over time, population and progress began to encroach on their hunting grounds. The fickle public and over trapping had made the fur trade unprofitable. Soon these mountain men made their living by leading wagon trains through the wild lands. With their experience and survival skills, they made excellent guides.

Source 12: Stage Three Buffalo Bill – Mountain Man



Will Cody was born in 1846 in Iowa. He became the man of the house when he was just ten years old. He went to work carrying supplies and mail to the westward travelers heading to the California gold rush. Next he worked as a cowpoke taking supplies to Salt Lake City. He met the scouts Kit Carson and Jim Bridger. Will decided to become a scout too. Next he tried fur trapping instead but it came to a bad end. A jack of all trades, his next adventure had him riding for the Pony Express. He met Wild Bill Hickok and they became friends and remained so all of their lives.

Will was fifteen when the Civil War started. Will wanted to fight for the Union but his mother didn't want him to fight. Will took a job driving a team and carried messages for the Union Army. His mother died and his sister took the younger children. Will enlisted, and served as a scout and a spy. Later he was stationed in St. Louis and met his bride, Louisa Frederici. They were married two years later.

There was no work. Will tried different things but nothing succeeded. Will became a scout for General George Custer. Later, he scouted for the Buffalo Soldiers. Next he supplied meat for the railway company. This is how he earned his nickname, Buffalo Bill. Ned Buntline convinced him to come to New York and play himself in a play, Scout of the Plains. Then he started a Wild West Show. The Old West was gone but lived again in the show until Will died in 1917.

Stevens, Eden Vale. *Buffalo Bill*. NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1976.



After the United States became an independent nation in the 1770's, expansion accelerated. The settlers moved westward across the Appalachian Mountains into the Ohio Valley. The American government made treaties with the Woodland tribes. These tribes did not realize they were selling their land. President Jefferson wanted to push the Indians beyond the Mississippi River or have them become citizens. He did not consider that they had lived on these lands for generations, nor that there were tribes already living beyond the Mississippi. This situation would also cause wars between the tribes. Many tribes moved west on their own because they felt threatened by the white settlers.

Source 7: The Declaration of Independence



A second Continental Congress was held in 1775. It was decided America needed an army and they chose George Washington to lead it. Many representatives hoped that King George would change his mind. Soon they learned that the king had hired German mercenaries to help fight the colonists. It was obvious the king was determined to keep his colonies. The Congress then assigned five men to work together to write a declaration stating the reasons why the colonists wanted their independence.

Thomas Jefferson was the scribe for this great document. He was helped by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Roger Sherman and Robert Livingston. This would be a declaration of independence as well as treasonous act. These writers and signers could be hanged for the act. The members of the Congress discussed the document and changed a few words. The colonies' representatives voted to accept it. On July 4th, 1776 the document was signed by the members of the Continental Congress.

Copies of the Declaration were made and distributed to each colony. Communication in those days took place on horseback. Riders carried copies to settlements in the colonies. It took up to two months before some settlements heard the news. There were celebrations across the land for the new United States. Those who remained loyal to England and her king had much to consider. They were now caught in the middle.

Nardo, Don. *The Declaration of Independence*. CA: Kidhaven Press, 2003.

Over 150 years has passed since the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. The War for Independence is over. Those who were loyal to England have returned to England or gone to Canada. After the War of Independence the United States gained the Northwest Territory from England. The American settlers are free to spread across the Appalachian Mountains and settle in the Ohio Valley and in the Kentucky and Tennessee territories.

Source 8: Frontiersmen

Daniel Boone was the first great frontiersman of the United States. Leading the way across the Appalachian Mountains, he opened up a whole new world to early American settlers. This amazing man held many positions in his life. He was a surveyor, tavern owner, hunter, trapper, and officer in the militia. Carrying a long Kentucky rifle, the woodsman bravely fought Indians, courageously hunted wild animals, and built a road across the Cumberland Gap. Born in 1734, his expeditions coincided with the development of the colonies and the steps leading up to the Revolutionary War.

Boone married in 1756 and made his first major expedition in 1769. In 1773 he took steps to move his family to Kentucky territory. The price was too great. His son was killed by Indians near Cumberland Gap and he returned to North Carolina. In 1776, the year America won its independence, he again suffered at the hands of the Indians when his daughter and two friends were kidnapped. Boone was also kidnapped by the Shawnee Indians in 1778, but managed to escape within four months. Never giving up, he continued his expeditions. The lowest point in his life was when his son, Israel, was killed in an ambush in 1782.

Daniel persevered and a book was published about his discovery and settlement of Kentucky. This made him famous, and for awhile he led people into the new land. He charged one half of the land for his services, and became a wealthy landowner and member of the government of Virginia. Unfortunately, he did not manage his paperwork well and much of his fortune was lost. However, he was able to finish his life living once again on the land with his wife and two of his married daughters. He died at the age of 86.

Alter, Judy. *Daniel Boone: Frontiersman*. MN: Child's World, 2003.

The French Emperor Napoleon was ravaging Europe following the French Revolution. He desired to rule over all of Europe. He defeated Spain and came into possession of her colonies. To raise funds for his war, Napoleon sold the colonial area known as Louisiana to the United States.

Source 9: An Exciting Expedition

If you lived in a brand new land, but had only seen a small part of it, what would you do? Well, you might do just what President Thomas Jefferson did nearly 200 years ago. He decided to send a team to find out just what lay in the vast expanse to the West that he had purchased. So began the Corps of Discovery and the saga of Lewis and Clark as they explore and map the Louisiana territory.

Right away these two men encountered trouble. The boat builders, who were drunkards, were over one month late in completing the boat. Then, the pair had to find a traveling team and gather supplies for the rugged journey. Gathering supplies and finding faithful companions proved to be an exhausting, but worthwhile task. Lewis brought a faithful hound and companion, Seaman. More than once, he proved his worth. Not until the month of May, 1804, did the Lewis and Clark expedition begin by launching a boat on the Missouri River.

This was not your typical vacation, but actually a 7,689 mile trip to the Pacific Ocean and back. On this journey the customs, languages, and artifacts of more than 50 Indian nations were chronicled. Scores of plants and animals that were formerly unknown to the young Americans were described in detail. With the help of a French trapper, who acted as interpreter, and his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea and their new baby the explorers achieved their goal. The destiny of North America was changed forever by making a way for fur traders, mountain men, and many others to travel to and settle new lands. This exciting expedition became known as the most well-managed exploration in written history.

Johmann, Carol. *The Lewis & Clark Expedition: Join the Corps of discovery to Explore Uncharted Territory*. VT: Williamson Pub., 2003.



Unit IV: Summarizing References

Source 10: Stage One War of 1812

England was not happy to lose its colonies in the New World. To the monarchy, the experimental government seemed flawed. America was expanding geographically and appeared weak in its abilities to defend itself. England's Navy would harass America until it could focus its full attention on this new nation. They took U.S. ships and interfered with American trade. They captured Americans to serve on British ships. The United States thought the British were arming the Indians to attack settlers in the Northwest Territory. They also thought Britain was still interfering with its former colonies. The United States declared war on Britain in 1812. It wasn't strictly a matter of self-defense against an aggressor. They wanted to take Canada from Britain and Florida from Spain. The United States would aid France by stopping trade with Britain and the French would stop taking American ships. France was an unofficial ally. In a war, both sides plan to win. Do you know how the Americans changed the ending for the British?

Carter, Alden. *The War of 1812*. NY: Franklin Watts, 1996.

Transportation was a problem in this rough country called America. Road construction had not kept up with the spreading population. Farmers needed a way to get their produce to market. Those headed West needed supplies. The rivers were the logical roads for quick and safe transport. There were many rivers but they didn't connect. A big idea was needed.

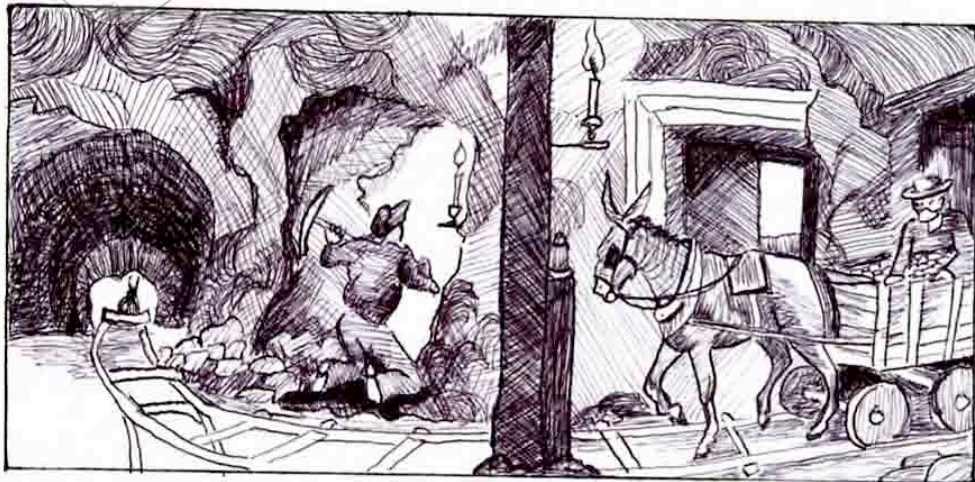
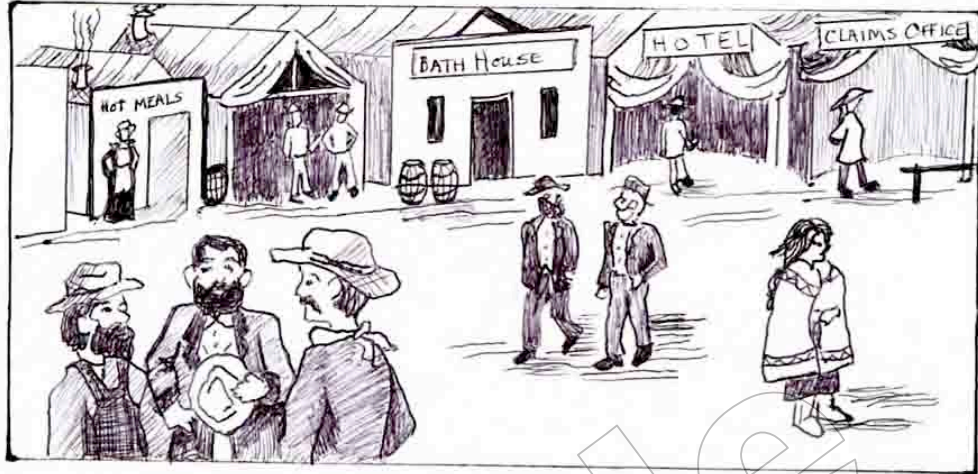
Source 11: Stage Two Clinton's Ditch

Before the Erie Canal was built, it took more than a month to get products from the shores of Lake Erie to the Hudson River. People wanted and needed a faster and safer route. DeWitt Clinton proposed a plan to connect New York's many rivers and lakes. Thus, the Erie Canal was born.

After much planning and debating, ground was broken for the Erie Canal on July 4, 1817. Eight years later, the 363-mile long canal was completed. Now governor, DeWitt Clinton took the maiden voyage on the canal, also known as Clinton's Ditch. People could now travel from the Hudson River all the way to Lake Erie in a week.

Horses and mules walked along the towpath next to the Erie Canal. Attached by a long rope, the animals would tow packets, or flat-bottom boats filled with passengers or products, down the river. Boats traveled through a series of locks, which adjusted the water levels. The Erie Canal cost over seven million dollars to build, and by the end of 1883, the canal had earned more than seventeen times that amount. For many years the Erie Canal was a vital tool for American commerce and an example of American ingenuity.

Harness, Cheryl. *The Amazing Impossible Erie Canal*. NY: Macmillan Books for Young Readers, 1995.



Unit VI: Research Reports

Source 18: Stage Four Underground Railroad

Before 1860 there were about four million slaves in America's South. Slaves that ran away were called fugitives and traveled the underground railroad to freedom. It was not a real railroad with a train but it was the way to freedom. This secret way was dangerous not only for those who traveled, but also for those who helped.

It got its name from a slave owner. As he chased his escaping slave, the slave seemed to disappear. He decided the slave had gone on an underground road. The name caught on and "railroad" was added because it seemed to run regularly and swiftly.

Slaves were valuable and were tirelessly pursued when they escaped. A slave must hide and eat what he found. Sometimes a "conductor" would come out looking for slaves and help them to a "station". The slaves would move from station to station until they reached freedom. Many people were involved to make the railroad work. If they were caught they could be put in prison, or even killed. They were just ordinary people who thought slavery was wrong. The Underground Railroad ended with the end of the Civil War.

Levine, Ellen. . . *If You Traveled on the Underground Railroad*. NY: Scholastic, 1988.

Clever Clues and Creative Escapes

During the days of the Underground Railroad, slaves used many different methods to run away from harsh treatment and find freedom in the Northern states or Canada. Many of us have heard of the incredible work of Harriet Tubman in leading slaves on foot to freedom. There were many others who helped, and many creative ways the slaves and their helpers found to escape the South.

Although many slave owners did not allow slaves to keep their old ways, they would allow them to sing as they worked. An old white man named Peg Leg Joe helped many escape by teaching them a song called "Follow the Drinking Gourd" as he worked alongside them. The Drinking Gourd represented the Big Dipper, or the North Star, so the slaves knew to follow it as they fled north. Then, Peg Leg would carve pictures of his peg leg on tree trunks that led to safe houses along the route, and many followed the signs to freedom. Nobody ever suspected Peg Leg Joe as a helper to the slaves.

Another trick was to hide clues in the quilts being made by the black slave women for their masters. There were ten quilt patterns that made up the code. When the quilts were hung out to dry, they signified a message. If a quilt had a house with smoke coming out of the chimney, then that meant the house where it hung was safe. A wagon-wheel pattern on a quilt told the slaves to pack up and get ready to go. Coded patterns were spoken as *oral history* from one slave to another and the bounty hunters never learned the code that sent many slaves to freedom. Disguises, mailing themselves to freedom, and other dangerous escapades also helped to free many slaves. The ingenuity of a man or woman who wants to be free is unlimited.

Williams, Carla. *The Underground Railroad, Journey to Freedom*. MN: The Child's World, Inc. 2002.

The First Lady of the Navy

When Secretary Josephus Daniels decided to enlist women in the Navy to boost numbers of military personnel available to fight on behalf of America in World War I, Joy Bright Hancock immediately signed up. Formerly a student attending secretarial school, Joy was excited about the opportunity to serve her country in this way. Once enlisted, she began working for a construction firm in New Jersey that was making ships for the Navy. Her enthusiasm as one of the first Yeomanettes led to her likeness being used on posters across America during the war. Women could serve, and serve effectively on behalf of the United States of America!



Photo # NH 63193-A-KN WWI poster by Christy

Joy Bright loved her work and continued to serve throughout the war. When victory was declared, she did not want to leave the Navy. But women were not allowed to stay in the reserves. Women were sent packing as soon as the war was over. They were wanted out of necessity, not desire. Joy, who wouldn't take "no" for an answer, soon found a position in the civilian corps. While serving in this position, she met and married Lieutenant Commander Lewis Hancock. This may have been the end of her story of service, but there was yet another war on the horizon.

When World War II began, Joy saw the opportunity to serve in the Navy's WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). She was one of only two women who could wear a victory ribbon on her uniform signifying that she had served in World War I. Working hard, she advanced through the ranks quickly as a leader and helped make the WAVES' skills most useful to the military and as opportunities for women to shine. It was her efforts after World War II that changed the rules so that women could permanently be accepted in the Navy. After her retirement in 1953 an award that is given yearly in her name, the Joy Bright Hancock Award was created.

This award is given to a Navy woman who shows outstanding leadership skills. Joy Bright Hancock was a victorious woman who never quit serving her country and the dedicated women of America.

Zeinert, Karen. *Those Extraordinary Women of World War I*. CT: The Millbrook Press, 2001.

With the end of World War I, death continued to stalk the earth. It started in an army camp in Kansas in the spring of 1918 and spread throughout the world. A civilian case showed up in Boston in September 3, 1918. By the end of the month, ten thousand citizens succumbed to the flu. By the time

the epidemic ended more Americans had died than in World War I, World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War combined. And yet we hear so little about this plague.

Expanded Essay / Source 27: The Purple Death

In 1918, before leaving for Europe to fight in World War I, many soldiers gathered their wives and children to celebrate. Why would they celebrate when many could expect to be killed or injured? The reason that they celebrated was because their base, Camp Sherman, had escaped the worst of the 1918 flu that killed millions of people. In this camp were more than 30,000 people between twenty and forty years old. The flu could easily be spread. But where had it come from and why? That is what scientists have been trying to discover for years. Many sad parents sent in telegrams trying to suggest things to the doctors, but these men knew that nothing could help. The hunt began.

1918 flu specialists were like policeman, searching for a culprit and until he was caught the town could not be guaranteed safety. They did experiments on jailed enemy prisoners willing to risk their lives, yet they could not find how it was transmitted. There were many steps that were needed to find and make a vaccine for this killer disease but none of these happened until the 1930's. Experiments were conducted on ferrets but still it could not be found how the illness had been transmitted, at least not until 1936. A ferret sneezed on a lead doctor on an experimental team and he became seriously ill. They had found the flu! But why was it not as big as the 1918 flu? What had gone on then that was not going on now? The quest began in Alaska.

The 1918 flu had hit Alaska and perhaps the bodies were still buried beneath the permafrost, the sickness still preserved in their lungs. There was only one danger; what if the 1918 flu was released from its icy grave? There would be a whole new epidemic. A team of scientists traveled to Alaska in search of answers, digging up bodies of flu victims and using fire extinguishers (which have the same chemical make-up as dry ice) to keep the body parts frozen! They tested these, trying to grow the virus again, but with no success. Because of its dangerous properties, the program was terminated. Again, in 1995 research was done on tissue from Alaska and elsewhere and this time, some of the properties of the flu were discovered. Not all of them, but it is a beginning. As research continues, and medical advances arise, it is hoped that new discoveries will lead to an answer for the 1918 flu and protection against it in the twenty-first century.

Gertz, David. *The Purple Death*. NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2000.

Death Continues to Stalk

The environment was perfect for the dread virus to spread in America. Families lived in crowded apartments. Children played in the streets. Raw sewage was thrown in the alleys. Restaurants made soup from the food left on customer's plates. Transportation was crowded with thousands of people sneezing, coughing and interacting every day. New laws were passed to try and halt the epidemic. There were fines for spitting in public and sneezing or coughing without a handkerchief. Public meeting places were closed. Even though you could no longer go to school or the library, church, movie theatres or a pub, the flu continued to kill.

Doctors and nurses worked long hours treating patients and searching for a cure. They worked in hospitals, traveled to the homes of the sick, and also tended to the needs of the farms or homes. Coffin makers and grave diggers could not keep up with the needs caused by the flu. Nearly everyone either had the flu or was taking care of someone with the flu. Hotels, churches, and private clubs were transformed into emergency hospitals. The wealthy loaned their cars for ambulances. The Boy Scouts