

Nonfiction Writing  
Characteristics  
and Types

Reading: Distinguish Fact from Opinion

Assess

Identify each of the following statements as fact or opinion. On the blank, write **F** if the sentence is a statement of fact or **O** if it is a statement of opinion.

1. \_\_\_\_ It's a fact that most people think football should be considered the national pastime.
2. \_\_\_\_ The news team on Channel 36 is much better than the team on Channel 42.
3. \_\_\_\_ Retail sales figures show that the holiday season brought in much more money this year than last year.
4. \_\_\_\_ Despite a bad review in the paper, the show will run for at least a year.
5. \_\_\_\_ Yesterday's storm dumped 6 inches of rain in town and produced golf-ball-sized hail in the hills.
6. \_\_\_\_ Golf is absolutely the most boring sport to watch on television.
7. \_\_\_\_ Twenty-five percent of the people who live in Texas speak Spanish and English.
8. \_\_\_\_ The Sahara desert was once a pleasant place to live.
9. \_\_\_\_ The weather has been too hot for comfort this year.
10. \_\_\_\_ Scientists offer theories to explain how the universe began.
11. \_\_\_\_ Marie Curie was awarded a Nobel Prize in two different fields.
12. \_\_\_\_ Chemistry is a difficult subject to understand.

## Reading: Evaluate the Author's Credibility

### Assess

**A** For each question, circle the letter of the best answer.

1. What does it mean to say an author has *credibility*?
  - A. The author writes well.
  - B. The author's writing may be believed.
  - C. The author is paid well.
  - D. The author knows what is popular.
2. Which is the best definition of *bias*?
  - A. a good assumption
  - B. an opinion formed before looking at the evidence
  - C. a logical argument
  - D. a lengthy quotation presented to support an opinion

**B** Read each item. Write *Knowledgeable* if the writer described is probably knowledgeable about his or her topic. Write *Lacks Knowledge* if not.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Bret Landers used to work as a guide for people on fishing and hunting trips. He has won a number of fishing trophies and has invented a special fishing lure of his own. He writes reviews of books on fishing for a sports magazine.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Last month, Chad Holmes started surfing. So far, he loves the sport. He got excited when he heard that there was a new book on the topic. He bought a copy and read most of it. Then, he posted his review of the book on his Web site.

**C** Write *Biased* if the item describes a likely case of bias. Write *Unbiased* if it does not.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Susan Green, a book reviewer, writes a review of Sam Black's new history book. In her review, she says that Sam's book is "full of mistakes." However, she does not give any examples of these mistakes.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Abby Lock, a book reviewer, is a big supporter of the mayor and his ideas. Samantha Ward, a reporter, is a strong critic of the mayor. Samantha writes a book about ways to make the city better. Abby writes a negative review of the book. In her review, she writes that "Ward thinks our city is a terrible place to live." In fact, the book says, "Life in our city could be improved," not that it is a terrible place to live.

# Literary Analysis: Expository Essay

## Practice

An **expository essay** is a short piece of nonfiction writing. A writer might write an expository essay for one or more of these reasons:

- to give readers information on a topic of general interest
- to explain how something works or why something happens
- to present an idea, such as a suggestion about how to reduce crime

Writers of expository essays may include writing of these types:

- **Description:** To help you imagine what something is like, writers use description, created with sensory language, such as “icy cold.”
- **Comparison and contrast:** To explain a topic, writers may compare and contrast two or more things, showing their similarities and differences.
- **Cause and effect:** To explain how something happened, writers show the connections between causes and effects. A cause is a thing or event that makes something happen. An effect is the event or situation that comes from a cause.

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For each question, circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Which of the following is an example of an expository essay?

- A. a book about a famous person
- B. a made-up story about dogs
- C. a short article discussing reptiles
- D. a poem full of descriptions

2. Which of the following is an example of description?

- A. The melted iron ore flows in a red, fiery river.
- B. Adding limestone helps clean out other materials
- C. To make steel, workers add oxygen to the iron.
- D. Steel is much stronger than iron.

3. Which of the following is an example of a comparison?

- A. Both snakes and lizards have scales.
- B. Snakes swallow prey whole.
- C. Most snakes slither from side to side.
- D. A heavy snake moves by expanding and contracting its body.

4. Which of the following is an example of a cause-and-effect relationship?

- A. The king lied to the colonists.
- B. The colonists did not have representatives in Parliament.
- C. The colonists were taxed anyway.
- D. When the British put a tax on tea, it caused the colonists to revolt.

## Reading: Cause and Effect

### Assess

Read the selection, and then circle the letter of the best answer for each question.

Life was hard for most people who lived in Russia in the 1800s. Until 1861, most Russians were serfs—people bound to the service of a small group of wealthy land-owning nobles. The czar, or ruler, of Russia declared emancipation of the serfs in 1861. As a result, the laws that bound serfs to masters came to an end. Still, most Russians lived lives of poverty and lacked freedom.

Some people challenged Russia's unfair social system. They were dealt with harshly, often being sent into icy exile in Siberia. Eventually, however, people's desire for reform led to the Revolution of 1905. The revolution forced the Russian czar to provide greater political freedom. A parliament, in which representatives of the people met, was founded. Change was not happening fast enough, and the people were still unhappy. In 1917, their discontent led to another revolution. Workers and peasants led by a man named Lenin fought against the czar. The czar lost. He was removed from power and was later killed.

1. According to the selection, which event or fact caused the Russian Revolution of 1905?
  - A. Change was not happening fast enough.
  - B. A parliament was founded.
  - C. The czar was killed.
  - D. People wanted to reform an unfair social system.
2. According to the selection, which event or fact was an effect of the czar's emancipation of the serfs?
  - A. Most Russians lived in poverty.
  - B. Serfs were bound to the service of landowners.
  - C. The laws that bound serfs to masters came to an end.
  - D. People wanted to reform an unfair social system.
3. According to the selection, what was a possible effect of a person's challenging the social system?
  - A. being sent into exile in Siberia
  - B. being bound to the service of a landowner
  - C. unfair social conditions
  - D. the rule of czars

1. Which of the following is an example of biographical writing?
  - A. a book about jazz in the 1940s
  - B. an essay on the life of singer Ella Fitzgerald
  - C. a made-up story about Ella Fitzgerald
  - D. a book about the songs sung by Ella Fitzgerald
  
2. Which is a statement of fact about saxophonist Wayne Shorter's life?
  - A. Shorter was the main reason jazz musicians started playing to a rock beat.
  - B. I love the mood of mystery in Shorter's pieces.
  - C. Shorter played in the Jazz Messengers, a band led by Art Blakey.
  - D. Shorter is the most original composer in jazz.
  
3. Which is an interpretation of pianist Thelonious Monk's life?
  - A. Monk was born in North Carolina on October 10, 1917.
  - B. Monk used notes, rhythms, and silences that startled listeners.
  - C. Through music, Monk celebrated the beauty that even ugliness can have.
  - D. For a while, Monk played with the famous saxophonist John Coltrane.

# Literary Analysis: Narrative Essay

## Practice

A **narrative essay** is a short piece of nonfiction. It has these characteristics:

- It tells a true story about a real person or event.
- It includes **significant details** that help move the story forward or that help make the writer's point about the subject.

For each question, circle the letter of the best answer.

1. In a short work, a writer describes a friend of hers, Kayla Jeffers, who became a champion gymnast. If the work is a narrative essay, then which of the following must be true?
  - A. Kayla Jeffers has broken many world records.
  - B. The writer has written best-selling biographies.
  - C. Kayla Jeffers is a real person.
  - D. The characters in the essay are fictitious.
2. The essay about Kayla includes this significant detail: Kayla once helped the writer by lifting a log that had rolled onto the writer's foot. What point might this detail help the writer make?
  - A. Kayla is friendly.
  - B. Kayla is strong.
  - C. Kayla is smart.
  - D. Kayla is famous.
3. Which of these details is likeliest to help move the story of Kayla forward?
  - A. Kayla has brown eyes.
  - B. Kayla was born in October.
  - C. A college coach comes to watch Kayla at a gymnastics meet.
  - D. Kayla's grandmother is from North Carolina.
4. Why might the writer include a detail about Kayla's father's athletic achievements?
  - A. to tell the complete story of his life
  - B. to compare his achievements with those of professional athletes
  - C. to show that he works hard
  - D. to show that athletic ability runs in the family

For each paragraph, write *Hyperbole* if it uses hyperbole. Write *Understatement* if it contains understatement.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ As soon as Tom arrives, Sara's dog starts growling. As soon as Tom sits down, the dog starts barking savagely at him. When Tom gets up, the dog snaps at him, ripping the sleeve of his shirt. Tom says, "Gee, I'm not sure he likes me."
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Brittany has just finished her diet, and she decides to treat herself. She goes to a restaurant, where she orders ice cream. Brittany expects to be served a small scoop. When the ice cream arrives, though, she sees it is five scoops with a mound of whipped cream on top. "Who ordered Mt. Everest?" she says. "I thought I ordered something to eat, not something to sled down!"
3. \_\_\_\_\_ There were a few problems at Mrs. Smith's picnic. First, there were the ants that came and got in people's clothing. Then, a small storm started. It must have been some sort of tornado, because it blew away most of the food and one of the picnic tables. Mrs. Smith felt bad for her guests and sent flowers to everyone who ended up in the hospital. She hopes the picnic will be a little more relaxing next year.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I was sitting in my room when I heard a huge noise. It sounded as if a herd of elephants was running through the living room. Then, I realized it was my brother and his noisy friends.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ When Rodney really gets behind his bat and hits the baseball, the ball travels far. You will not see that baseball again. I heard that in outer space, just past Pluto, scientists have found a mysterious small object. When scientists finally see this object up close, I know exactly what they'll find—an old baseball, hit out of the park by Rodney.

## Literary Analysis: Persuasive Essay

### Assess

For each question, circle the letter of the best answer.

1. Which of the following is an appeal to reason?
  - A. Aren't you fed up with all the trash lying around the park?
  - B. Studies show that fewer people use the park if it is littered.
  - C. People who litter are acting like five-year-old children.
  - D. How would you feel if someone came over to your house and littered?
  
2. Which of the following is an appeal to emotion?
  - A. There are garbage cans along every path in the park.
  - B. Litter feeds pests and adds to our health problems.
  - C. Show some pride in our town and do not litter.
  - D. It costs the town extra money to pay for extra cleanup.
  
3. Read the statement below. Then, choose the sentence that best supports it.

We should not allow skateboarding in front of the library.

  - A. Many people prefer in-line skates to skateboards.
  - B. None of my friends go skateboarding.
  - C. Recently, there have been three skateboarding accidents by the library.
  - D. The ramp in front of the library is a great spot for skateboarding.
  
4. Read the sentence. Then, choose the statement that it supports.

In a survey, 80% of bus riders said their regular bus was late by half an hour at least once last week.

  - A. The town should make bus shelters more comfortable.
  - B. The town should buy faster buses.
  - C. The town should improve bus service.
  - D. The town should buy larger buses.