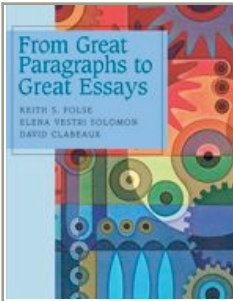


<i>From Great Paragraphs to Great Essays</i>		
Author:	Keith S. Folse, Elena Vestri Solomon, & David Clabeaux (2007)	
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From Great Paragraphs to Great Essays is designed to guide intermediate students through the process of writing paragraphs and developing essays. It equips students with the necessary training to ultimately produce a well-structured 700-word essay. The book is supplemented by a website with additional quizzes that complement the topics studied in every unit.

The Book

This textbook provides an extensive and clear Table of Contents. It lists every topic heading within every unit. Similarly, the index at the end of the book offers easy and direct access to specific information.

The book comprises two complementary parts:

- Part 1 focuses on the basic process of writing a body paragraph. There are three units devoted to composing such a paragraph. The first introduces the components of paragraph writing (topic sentences, controlling ideas, brainstorming, supporting sentences, concluding sentences). The second unit concentrates on paragraph purpose, clarity, unity, audience, and coherence. Unit 3 introduces four types of paragraphs: description, compare-contrast, cause-effect, and classification. This section provides students with the tools to write correct paragraphs.
- Part 2 concentrates on forming specific essays out of these types of paragraphs. Unit 4 serves as a transition between paragraphs and essays by comparing the two. The authors emphasize the similar order and organization in a paragraph and an essay. Then they go on to say that the essay provides

additional detailed information about the topic, with each paragraph within the essay elaborating the essay's focus. The next three units focus on various types of essays: compare-contrast, cause-effect, and classification. This section shows students how to select and develop the appropriate essay type for their subject.

Though the two parts complement each other, instructors need not follow the unit ordering in the second part of the volume. This gives teachers following different curricula flexibility. While I believe the three units in Part 1 constitute a whole, they could serve separately for review, as needed, before tackling the essay. Moreover, though the main purpose of the book is essay development, the authors have chosen to include crucial, often challenging, grammar and language sections in each unit. These Language Focus activities serve to complement the aim of every chapter. For instance, Language Focus 9 and 10 of Unit 5, "Compare and Contrast Essays," respectively deal with Forming the Comparative and Superlative, and Parallel Structure. These are essential for any student required to write this type of essay. Other topics include, but are not limited to, sentence fragments, noun forms, descriptive language, pronoun references, subject-verb agreement, and word forms.

The first page of every unit follows a similar pattern: four focus points in a box at the top of the page. To illustrate this, I'll use Unit 1 as a paradigm:

Unit 1: Introduction to Paragraphs	
Writing Goal:	Understanding paragraph parts
Language Focus 1:	Identifying verbs and fragments
Language Focus 2:	Nouns and noun forms
Examples:	Paragraphs 1-9

Every lesson helps explain the focus points listed in the box and is followed by a variety of activities that reinforce the learning process. The activities are pertinent to the lessons and are diverse. They require students to be attentive and active, but the exercises are also systematic. For instance, Units 1 to 3 provide students with the right steps to build a paragraph. Students must follow the guidelines learned in these chapters, from brainstorming to proofreading, and apply them to every paragraph they will write. Such structure trains students to be methodical and efficient.

Some exercises require individual work, while others direct students towards group work. Clearly, the authors endorse such activities, since every unit has at least one peer editing exercise. An appendix at the end of the book provides students with detachable peer-editing sheets where partners must answer specific questions. This collaborative feedback allows the student writer to reconsider some of the choices they have made. The quality of advice given allows teachers to gauge to what extent students understand a specific paragraph or essay building component: whether, in fact, they are capable of rephrasing, explaining, and answering. Such peer feedback also offers students guidance from someone other than the teacher. Group exercises change the momentum of the classroom, and often prove to be quite fun.

The Websites

Don't be put off by the fact that the websites listed in the book are no longer accessible. When I discovered this, I contacted Heinle's technical support and promptly received the new address:

http://college.hmco.com/esl/folse/fgpge/1e/student_home.html

Under General Resources students can find ACE Quizzes, no login code required. These are interactive quizzes, divided by unit, that nicely complement each chapter from the book. The exercises vary in type. While they are predominantly multiple choice items that vary in number, there are some that require students to write in their own answers. Below you will find an example for each.

Quiz 1 "Identifying Good Topic Sentences" in Unit 1 has ten multiple choice questions:

1. a) It is easy to make Italian Wedding cookies when using these simple steps.
b) Italian Wedding cookies are a tasty treat.

Students must type in their lower case a or b answer (case sensitive) in the box provided. Once done answering all the questions, students click on the Submit Quiz button and get a percentage mark and the answers immediately:

Correct a
Correct a
Correct!

An incorrect answer is explained:

Incorrect b
Correct a

Incorrect answer. A topic sentence must be specific. Generalized (nonspecific) words like *nice, good, ugly, tasty*, etc. do not give controlling information.

Incorrect answer explanations are generally short, to the point.

Longer answers work somewhat differently. Quiz 4 "Classification Transitions Practice" in Unit 7 requires students to add the right connector or transition word:

1. ____ *student is an outcast that no one wants to associate with.*

Student Answer: First,

2. ____ *how much you may want to be nice to this type of student, it would be social suicide.*

Student Answer: No matter

Whether the answers are correct or not, these exercises are not marked and no explanation is provided because many answers are possible, making correction difficult. However, while the directions invite students to "Then compare your sentence to the model provided," there is no model. Instead, two buttons at the bottom give students the option of either sending their answers to their teacher or printing them. A model or a suggestion would help guide students through the exercise. As they are, a teacher might want to do them in class.

The publisher provides further assistance with their Smarthinking Tutoring Center. This is a time controlled live tutoring center that requires a student account. Teachers also need to open one. Additionally teachers are offered access to ESL instructor sites when they call the phone number listed.

Student writers are well looked after in this book through the ample guidance and effective practice the authors provide. They use simple language in presenting the means to write an essay, from brainstorming to proofreading.

What the authors totally omit, however, is any guidance for writing academic papers. Plagiarism, for instance, is a subject not addressed at all. Even a brief discussion of it could have been incorporated within the unit on supporting ideas. Though not all the types of essays presented might require students to go beyond personal experience, some do. In fact, in "Step 6: Developing Supporting Details" of the "Eight Steps in Writing an Essay" listed in Unit 4, the authors begin their sample introductory paragraph with an external reference: "According to a recent survey, approximately forty-one percent of Americans fear speaking in public" (p. 88). Providing such a model opening sentence suggests that students in the class have to do some secondary reading--and need to acknowledge that. Moreover, in the example the authors give of the point-by-point method in the unit on compare-contrast essays, they prompt students to compare-contrast "Life in New York City in 1900 and 2000." Such a focus would require students to research the topic, but again no guidance is given about how to incorporate and give credit to others' opinions. The aim of this book--to help students write coherently structured paragraphs in order to produce an essay--should have encompassed ethical writing issues. The authors should have said something about the difference between quoting and paraphrasing--and the plagiarism that could result if that difference is unclear in student writers' minds.

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