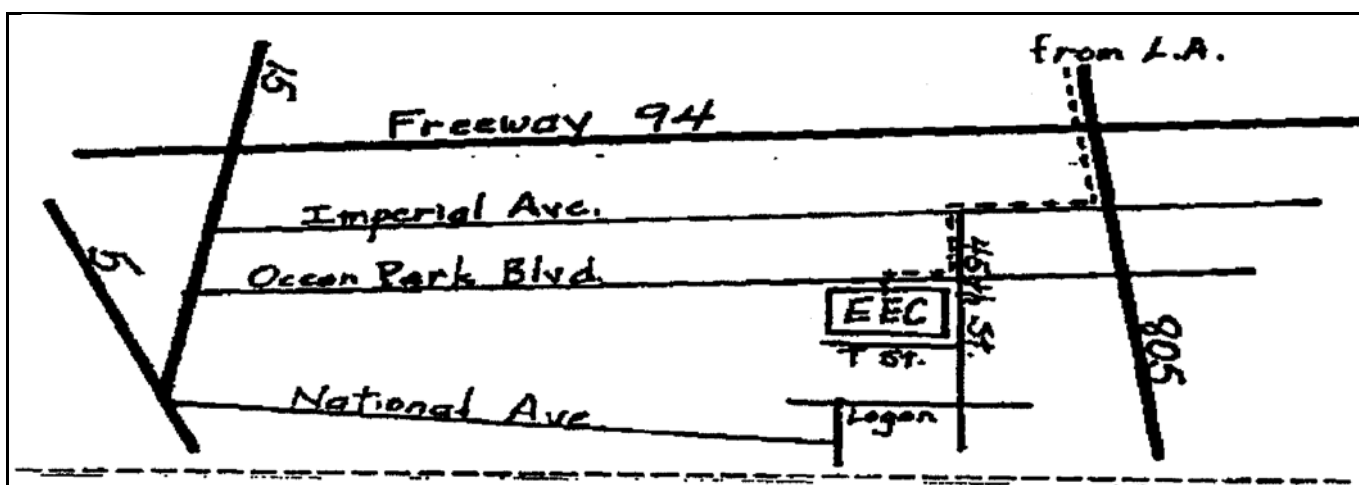


P
CHAIN
WRITING
WITH VISUALS

In real life tasking, the purpose of nearly all written language is—or at least is supposed to be—to convey or communicate essential, useful, or interesting information, ideas, and thoughts.

Help your students get across their messages efficiently and effectively by presenting writing activities that provide immediate and real feedback. You and they will enjoy the many creative variations of this CHAIN WRITING (WITH VISUALS) activity.

- ➔ SPECIFIC TOPIC OF IDEA P: Hand-drawn street maps with written driving directions
- ➔ MATERIALS: Paper to draw and write on, preferably elongated (8.5 x 14”) sheets



If you are coming from Los Angeles, take Freeway 805 south to the Imperial Avenue exit. Turn right onto Imperial. After 1.2 miles, turn left on 45th Street. (There's a mini-mall on the corner.) Go 3 blocks to Ocean Park Boulevard, where there is a stop sign, and turn right. The EEC (Educational Cultural Complex) is on the left. There is a large parking lot directly in front of the school.

In the event that GPS (Global Positioning System), downloaded, or phone directions are unavailable or inconvenient, it might suffice to draw a street map by hand and to handwrite walking/driving directions.

ABOVE: This visual and text are adapted from a flier mailed out by an educational organization. It is a typical example of the first step of a CHAIN WRITING activity—on street directions—in progress.

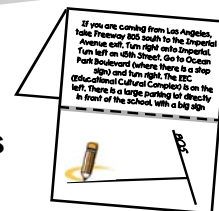
INSTRUCTIONS

1. Each participant divides his/her paper into equal thirds. On the first third, s/he draws a street map illustrating how to get from one place to another, such as from school to his/her home or vice versa. If distances are long, s/he might condense some parts of the route by putting them on a different scale.
2. In the second third of his/her long paper, each person describes his/her drawing in writing, making sure that the paragraph or list of steps s/he is formulating corresponds comprehensibly to the visual. If s/he thinks of useful details such as landmarks while writing sentences, s/he can add these to the picture.

Teaching Tips

To help learners draw reasonably accurate street maps, you could provide (sections) of printed paper maps—perhaps pages from big-city map books—for them to refer to. On screen or printed out, downloaded “navigation tools” like maps corresponding to text and/or audio driving directions might also serve as sketching and writing models. Pointing out common features of street-direction language, such as imperative-verb sentence patterns, expressions of location and distance, and clear sequential order, may also help. It could also apply to the written description of other types of visuals.

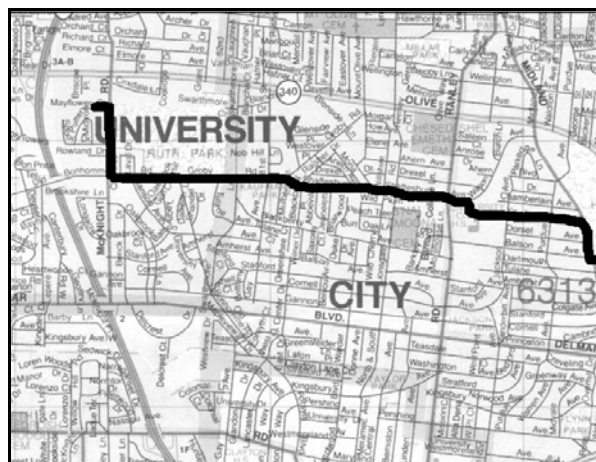
3. Next, everyone folds the first third of his/her paper (the map drawing) over so it cannot be seen; s/he passes his/her paper to someone else, who—in the last third of it—sketches a directions map that corresponds to the words in the paragraph or list of directives above.
4. Each partner compares his/her drawing at the bottom of the paper to the original in the top third. If they are *not* the same or adequately similar, students figure out how communication broke down: was it in the writing, reading, or drawing? Participants make necessary improvements and hand in their pairs of papers for comment, correction, and/or grades.



LEVELS = HIGH BEGINNING TO LOW ADVANCED

⚡ SUGGESTIONS FOR ADAPTATION ⚡

- ⚡ If accurate drawing by hand or machine seems too difficult, provide print copies of local maps for developing writers to indicate their directives on. Instead of sketching a “directions diagram” from scratch, they simply draw a “route line” on an already printed map. Then they write sentence directions in a list of steps or paragraph. On an identical map, their partners try to reproduce the route according to the verbiage they read. Finally, they compare the two route lines.

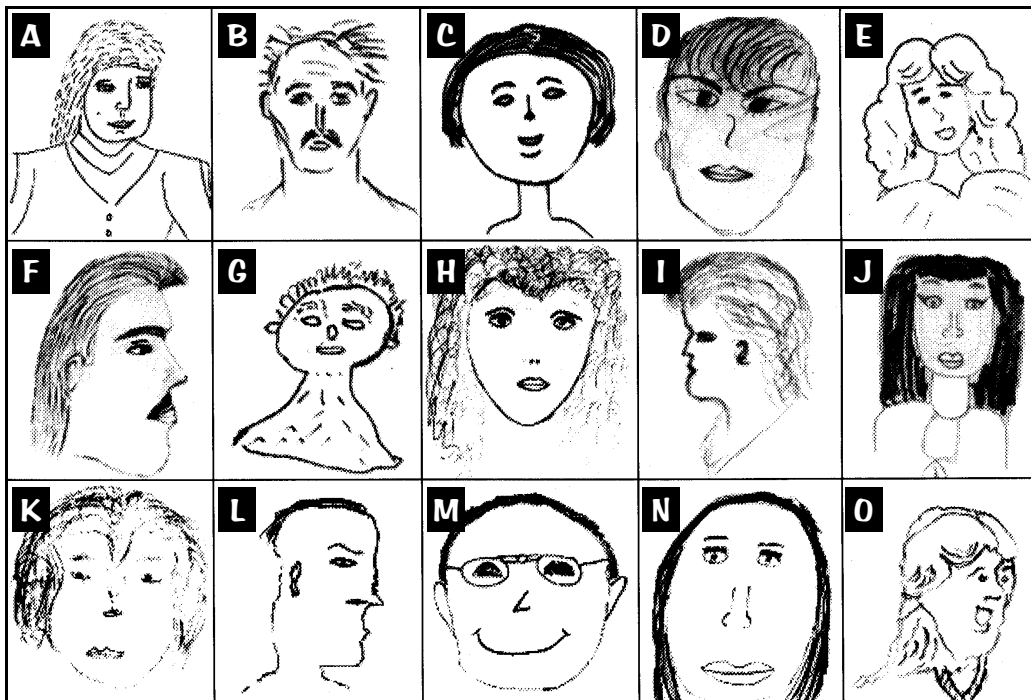


If *academic* language-instruction in *for-credit writing programs* is still organized around *rhetorical forms* and/or *writing-as-a-process* procedures, these CHAIN WRITING WITH VISUALS activities might fit right in. The targeted *forms* could be *process* or *picture description*. Proficient writers could analyze some *kinds* of descriptive language, phrasing, and vocabulary. They might also make use of more *steps* in the writing process: *pre-writing, organizing, drafting, editorial feedback, cutting/adding, revising, and the like*.

POSSIBLE VARIATION

➔ Instead of having students *draw* maps, diagrams, or other schematic illustrations to describe in words, you can provide sets of *pictures* for CHAIN WRITING activities. The larger of these, such as magazine photos, could be mounted on separate numbered pages of equivalent size and shape; smaller visuals could be displayed in organized or random arrangements on the *same* page, perhaps lettered.

Each student chooses one or more pictures to describe in a written paragraph. All papers are collected, mixed up, and redistributed to participants other than their writers. Everyone reads the paragraph(s) of the paper s/he has received for descriptive detail. S/he finds the matching picture(s) and jots down its/their letter(s). Then she shows the visual to the group and reads aloud the written description(s), making corrections if necessary and/or improvements if possible. Listeners summarize the content, doing further “peer editing” of the language.



LEFT: Examples of one kind of graphic useful for CHAIN WRITING activity. These simple line drawings are student self-portraits from the cover of *L.A. Mosaic* (1992), compiled by Laura Silagi.

For *people* description, the kinds of phrasing relevant to accuracy include sizes/shapes of facial and body features, coloring, clothing (accessories), and so on. Visuals of other kinds require other types of language/vocabulary.

OTHER AREAS OF APPLICATION: Visuals with any relevant content for which detailed *description* contributes to meaning and usefulness. Kinds of hand-crafted line drawings could include maps, designs, floor plans, graphs, diagrams, etc. If photos or other kinds of illustrations are involved, they should be pictures of various items of *the same kind*—such as furnished rooms, buildings, styles of clothing, different models of equipment, kinds of fruit, and many others. As usual, the content chosen will depend on students’ fields of study, interests, and abilities—and curriculum requirements.