

Heritage Fair

Lesson 4: Writing Your Research Paper

Culminating Task

Students will:

- Organize their research into a structured research paper.
- Incorporate text features to enhance their writing.
- Write and revise a first draft that adds voice and style to their nonfiction writing.

Materials:

- Chart paper/markers
- Whiteboard/chalkboard
- Heritage Fair Research Notes Worksheets (from Lesson 3)
- **Writing Your Research Paper** PowerPoint
- **Heritage Fair Introduction Paragraphs** worksheet
- **My Heritage Fair Introduction** worksheet
- **Adding Voice to Your Writing** worksheet
- **Body Paragraph Organizer** worksheet

Definitions

- Within the lesson, please see the definitions for the following terms: **Hook, Background Information, Thesis Statement**

*Note: This lesson is completely available through the **Writing Your Research Paper** PowerPoint, which therefore is not specifically referenced throughout the lesson.*

Setting the Stage

Begin by reminding students that now that they have completed their research, the next step of their Heritage Fair project is to write their research paper. Ask students what they think a research paper entails – many may find it intimidating and perceive it as a massive undertaking. Explain that their paper is simply an opportunity to organize their findings and share their topic in a clear, engaging way.

Write the following question on the board:

What makes a great research paper?

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Ask students to brainstorm characteristics of strong research papers. While there will be many valid answers to record, make sure the following are included:

- **Clear structure (introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion).**
This helps keep ideas organized so the reader can easily follow along.
- **Informative and focused content.**
Including accurate details makes the paper clear and helps teach the reader about the topic.
- **Proper use of text features (headings, subheadings, captions, etc.).**
These features make the paper easier to read and understand.
- **A personal voice that makes the writing interesting.**
Adding your own style keeps the reader engaged while still sharing important facts.

Record these ideas on the board and discuss how each contributes to a successful research paper. The italicized may be recorded, or serve as discussion points so students understand the purpose of each.

Direct Instruction – Parts of a Paper

Explain the structure of a research paper by breaking it into three main sections: introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion. Each section has a clear purpose:

- **Introduction:**
 - Grabs the reader's attention with an interesting fact, question, or statement.
 - Provides background information on the topic.
 - Includes a thesis statement summarizing the main idea of the paper.
 - *Example: "Maple syrup production is an important part of Canadian heritage due to its history, traditional methods, and cultural significance."*
- **Body Paragraphs:**
 - Organized by themes or subtopics (e.g., "How Maple Syrup is Made" or "Tools Used in Production").
 - Each paragraph should:
 - Begin with a clear topic sentence.
 - Provide supporting details from research.
 - Include text features, such as headings, to organize information clearly.
- **Conclusion:**
 - Summarizes the key points of the paper.
 - Reflects on the importance of the topic.
 - Ends with a thought-provoking idea or takeaway.

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Introduce the purpose and structure of the introductory paragraph. Explain that the introduction sets the stage for the paper by grabbing the reader's attention, providing background information, and presenting the thesis statement. Each part of the introduction has a specific purpose:

- **Hook:** Captures the reader's interest (e.g., an interesting fact, question, or bold statement).
- **Background Information:** Gives context for the topic and prepares the reader for what's to come.
- **Thesis Statement:** Summarizes the main idea of the paper and previews the body paragraphs.

Display the following example paragraph on the board to illustrate these elements:

"Long before it was paired with our breakfast pancakes, maple syrup was cherished by Indigenous peoples of North America, who used it as a sweetener and in cooking. Maple syrup is an important part of Canadian heritage. Its rich history ties to both Indigenous peoples and early settlers, who developed methods of collecting and processing sap. Today, modern techniques make production more efficient, but the cultural significance remains strong. Quebec leads the world in maple syrup production, highlighting its role in Canada's economy and identity."

Ask students to identify the different parts of the paragraph by underlining or circling them on the board:

- The **hook** ("Long before it was paired with our breakfast pancakes...").
- The **background information** ("Its rich history ties to both Indigenous peoples and early settlers"; "Today, modern techniques make production more efficient"; "Quebec leads the world in maple syrup production.").
- The **thesis statement** ("Maple syrup is an important part of Canadian heritage.").

Discuss why each part is important and how it prepares the reader for the rest of the paper. Emphasize that a well-crafted introduction sets the tone for the entire piece and helps readers know what to expect.

Hand out the "**Heritage Fair Introduction Paragraphs**" worksheet. Have students read and identify the three elements of a strong introduction paragraph. When they have completed and the class has reviewed the worksheet, students may write an introductory paragraph based on their own Heritage Fair topic and research using the **My Heritage Fair Introduction** worksheet.

After completing their introductory paragraphs, allow students to share with a partner or in a small group. They should take turns reading each other's paragraphs and provide constructive feedback, focusing on whether the hook grabs attention effectively, if their thesis clearly explains the topic of the paper, and how well the three topics are introduced.

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Direct Instruction – Adding Student Voice

After students have completed their introductory paragraphs, discuss how to add voice and style to nonfiction writing. Show them the following example paragraph:

"Maple syrup is made by boiling sap from sugar maple trees. The sap is collected in the spring when temperatures are ideal for sap flow. After collection, it is boiled to remove water, leaving behind a thick, sweet syrup that is can be used as a topping for pancakes and waffles."

Ask students if they understand the paragraph and if it provides all the necessary information about the topic. Guide them to consider whether it effectively captures the reader's attention or if something feels missing. Then, ask, "What do you think is the problem with this paragraph?" Encourage responses that identify the paragraph as lacking engagement or excitement.

Explain that while the paragraph includes the key facts, it feels flat and uninteresting. Highlight how adding voice can make even factual writing more engaging and relatable. Share these techniques for students to try:

- **Use descriptive language:** Adding vivid details helps readers visualize the topic. For example: "Golden maple syrup flows like liquid sunlight, a sweet reward for months of hard work."
- **Ask rhetorical questions:** Questions can spark curiosity and connect with the reader. For example: "Did you know it takes 40 liters of sap to produce just one liter of maple syrup?"
- **Share personal reflections:** Including personal thoughts or reactions can make writing more relatable. For example: "I never realized how much effort goes into making maple syrup—it gave me a new appreciation for this Canadian tradition."

Show an example paragraph to illustrate these techniques in action (using voice):

"Making maple syrup is an art. Farmers collect sap from sugar maples and carefully boil it down, removing water until only the rich, golden sweetness remains. Did you know it takes about 40 liters of sap to make just one liter of syrup? That's a lot of work for a little sweetness!"

Ask students to identify how descriptive language, a rhetorical question, and a personal tone were used to make the second version more engaging. Hand out the "**Adding Voice to Your Writing**" worksheet. Have students read each paragraph and then use the different voice techniques to make each more interesting. When they have completed and the class has reviewed the worksheet, have students return to their introductory paragraphs and encourage them to experiment with these techniques in their own writing.

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Guided Activity

Now that students have created their introductory paragraphs, shift the focus to helping them organize and begin drafting their body paragraphs. Begin by asking students to revisit their Heritage Fair Research Notes worksheets. Guide them in identifying 2-3 themes or subtopics from their research that will become the basis of their body paragraphs. Hand out the “**Body Paragraph Organizer**” worksheet to use as graphic organizer / outline template to help them structure their ideas.

Walk students through expanding their outlines:

- **Body Paragraphs:**
 - Each paragraph should focus on one subtopic or theme (e.g., "How Maple Syrup is Made" or "Cultural Significance of Maple Syrup").
 - Remind students to include:
 - A topic sentence that introduces the main idea of the paragraph.
 - Supporting details and evidence from their research.
 - Optional: Subheadings to help organize the paper further.

Once students have their outlines, provide time for them to start writing their first body paragraph. Offer these steps to guide their work:

- Write a clear topic sentence to introduce the subtopic.
- Use specific details and evidence from their notes to support the paragraph.
- Experiment with voice by adding descriptive language or rhetorical questions to make the writing more engaging.

As students work, circulate around the room to provide feedback. Help them refine their topic sentences, ensure their evidence is relevant, and encourage them to try out voice techniques they practiced earlier. For students needing support, suggest sentence starters like, "An important step in this process is..." or "One way this impacted Canada was..."

After students have drafted one body paragraph, pair them up for peer feedback. Provide a simple checklist to guide their review:

- Is the topic sentence clear and related to the subtopic?
- Does the paragraph include relevant evidence from research?
- Are there attempts to make the writing engaging with voice techniques?

Once students have worked through their body paragraphs, shift the focus to the concluding paragraph. Explain that the conclusion is their opportunity to leave a lasting impression on the reader and tie everything together. Review the purpose of the conclusion:

- **Restate the thesis:** Remind the reader of the paper’s main idea.

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- **Summarize key points:** Briefly review the most important themes or subtopics covered in the body paragraphs.
- **End with impact:** Leave the reader with a thought-provoking question, reflection, or call to action.

Provide an example of a concluding paragraph:

"Maple syrup is more than just a sweet treat—it's a symbol of Canada's history, culture, and innovation. From its origins with Indigenous peoples to its role in today's economy, maple syrup continues to connect Canadians to their heritage. As we enjoy it on our breakfast tables, we carry forward a tradition that has shaped our country for centuries."

Explain the parts of this paragraph and how they align with its purpose:

- **Restate the thesis:** The opening sentence reinforces the central idea of the paper—maple syrup as a symbol of Canadian heritage.
- **Summarize key points:** The paragraph briefly touches on the themes discussed in the body, such as its historical origins and modern economic role.
- **End with impact:** The final sentence leaves the reader with a reflective thought, emphasizing the lasting cultural importance of maple syrup.

Ask students to brainstorm ideas for their own conclusions based on their topics. Have them draft their concluding paragraphs and, if time allows, share with a partner or small group for feedback.

Finally, reconvene as a class to reflect on the drafting process. Ask students to share one thing they did well and one thing they found challenging. Use their feedback to highlight effective strategies and address common difficulties they might encounter in completing the rest of their papers.

Reflection

Ask students to reflect on their writing process so far. Use the following questions to guide discussion or display and use as an exit slip:

- What part of your research paper are you most proud of so far?
- What was the biggest challenge in starting your first draft?
- What is one thing you'd like to improve in your writing during the next session?

Encourage students to share their thoughts with the class or in small groups, emphasizing that writing is a process that involves drafting, revising, and improving.

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Evaluation

This lesson connects to many English Language Arts outcomes, including planning and creating written communication for specific audiences and purposes, developing and organizing ideas through research, and evaluating the effectiveness of their writing. It emphasizes strategies for writing with clarity, accuracy, and engagement, while encouraging students to reflect on and revise their work to improve communication.

While the focus for this lesson is on how to write their research paper and creating their first draft, it may be of value to share the rubric found in Lesson 5 with students to provide target goals for them to achieve. It may be of value to have them to self-assess their work on the rubric now to help guide them through their editing and revising steps in the next lesson. The following criteria may be used to assess their progress:

1. Organization:

- Does the paper have a clear introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion?
- Are ideas grouped logically by themes or subtopics?

2. Use of Text Features:

- Are headings, subheadings, and other text features used effectively?
- Do text features enhance the readability of the paper?

3. Content Accuracy:

- Is the information accurate and based on research?
- Are key facts and details paraphrased appropriately?

4. Voice and Style:

- Does the writing reflect the student's unique voice?
- Is the paper engaging and interesting to read?

5. Effort and Progress:

- Has the student demonstrated effort in organizing their research and starting their draft?
- Have they made improvements based on peer or teacher feedback?

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Heritage Fair Introduction Paragraphs

An introductory paragraph is the first paragraph of your research paper. Its purpose is to grab the reader's attention, introduce the main idea of your paper, and outline what will be discussed. A strong introduction includes three key elements: a hook to capture interest, a thesis statement to explain the focus of the paper, and a preview of the main topics that will be explored.

Instructions: Below are three introductory paragraphs from heritage fair research papers. Read each paragraph carefully. Then, answer the questions that follow by identifying:

- The **hook** (a sentence designed to grab the reader's attention).
- The **thesis** (a sentence explaining what the overall paper is about).
- The **topics** (the three main points that will be discussed in the paper).

Paragraph 1: Did you know that the Halifax Explosion of 1917 was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions in history? This tragic event changed the city forever, leaving thousands injured and many homeless. In this paper, I will explore how the explosion happened, the immediate response from people and organizations, and how Halifax rebuilt itself after the disaster.

Questions:

1. What is the hook?
 2. What is the thesis?
 3. What are the three topics that will be discussed?
-

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Paragraph 2: Imagine living in a world where you couldn't vote because of your gender. This was the reality for women in Canada until the early 20th century. This paper will discuss the struggles women faced in fighting for the right to vote, the key figures who led the suffrage movement, and how gaining the vote changed Canadian society.

Questions:

1. What is the hook?
2. What is the thesis?
3. What are the three topics that will be discussed?

Paragraph 3: Every February, Black History Month reminds us of the incredible contributions Black Canadians have made to our country. From freedom seekers escaping slavery to leaders in arts, science, and politics, their stories are an essential part of our heritage. The journey includes the history of the Underground Railroad in Canada, notable Black Canadian figures, and the ongoing fight for racial equality, all of which highlight the rich and complex legacy of Black Canadians.

Questions:

1. What is the hook?
2. What is the thesis?
3. What are the three topics that will be discussed?

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My Heritage Fair Introduction

Now that you have analyzed these paragraphs, write your own introductory paragraph for your heritage fair research paper. Be sure to include a hook, a thesis, and at least three topics you will discuss.

Peer Review Activity: After completing your introductory paragraph, share it with a partner or in a small group. Take turns reading each other's paragraphs and provide constructive feedback. Focus on:

- Whether the hook grabs attention effectively.
- If the thesis clearly explains the topic of the paper.
- How well the three topics are introduced. Work together to suggest improvements and refine each paragraph to make it as strong as possible.

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Adding Voice to Your Writing Worksheet

What is Voice in Nonfiction Writing?

Voice is what makes your writing unique and interesting to read. It's the personality and style that shines through your words. Even when writing about facts, adding voice can help you connect with your readers and make your work stand out.

Here are three ways to add voice to your writing:

- **Use descriptive language:** Help your reader imagine the topic with vivid details.
- **Ask rhetorical questions:** Spark curiosity and invite the reader to think.
- **Share personal reflections:** Make your writing relatable by adding your thoughts or reactions.

Your Task

Below are three paragraphs that contain factual information but lack voice. Rewrite each paragraph to make it more engaging, using the techniques above. Be creative and try to bring the topic to life for your reader!

Paragraph 1: Without Voice

"Beavers are important to Canada's identity. They are known for building dams in rivers and streams, which creates wetland habitats. The beaver has been a national symbol of Canada since the 17th century."

Your Rewrite: (Add descriptive language, a rhetorical question, or personal reflection to make it more engaging.)

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Paragraph 2: Without Voice

"Canada's national flag was adopted in 1965. The design features a red maple leaf in the center, with two red bars on each side. The flag is a symbol of unity and pride for Canadians."

Your Rewrite: (Make this paragraph more interesting by adding vivid details, a question, or your own perspective.)

Paragraph 3: Without Voice

"Poutine is a popular dish in Canada. It is made with fries, cheese curds, and gravy. Poutine is often served in restaurants, diners, and festivals across the country."

Your Rewrite: (Bring this paragraph to life by using one or more techniques for adding voice.)

Reflection

After rewriting the paragraphs, reflect on the changes you made:

1. Which technique (descriptive language, rhetorical questions, or personal reflections) did you enjoy using the most? Why?
2. How do you think adding voice improves nonfiction writing?
3. What is one thing you will try to do when adding voice to your Heritage Fair project?

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Body Paragraph Organizer

Instructions

Use this organizer to plan and draft your body paragraphs. Write your subtopic or theme at the top of each section, then fill in the details below to structure your writing.

Subtopic/Theme 1: _____

Topic Sentence:

(What is the main idea of this paragraph?)

Supporting Details:

1. _____
1. _____
1. _____

Evidence from Research Notes:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Concluding Sentence:

(How will you wrap up this paragraph?)

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Subtopic/Theme 2: _____

Topic Sentence:

(What is the main idea of this paragraph?)

Supporting Details:

1. _____

2. _____

1. _____

Evidence from Research Notes:

• _____

• _____

• _____

Concluding Sentence:

(How will you wrap up this paragraph?)

Subtopic/Theme 3: _____

Topic Sentence:

(What is the main idea of this paragraph?)

Supporting Details:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Evidence from Research Notes:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Concluding Sentence:

(How will you wrap up this paragraph?)

Reflection

Once you have filled out this organizer, review it to ensure:

- Your topic sentences clearly introduce the main ideas of each paragraph.
- Your supporting details and evidence are relevant and well-organized.
- Each paragraph has a concluding sentence that ties the information together.