

# 11-Minute Essay Draft

Wolpert-Gawron, H. *Writing Behind Every Door*. Routledge, New York: 2014. Print.

adapted from an  
OCTELA 2016 “I Hate  
Writing” presentation by  
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PRACTICING INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY WRITING &  
EASING WRITING ANXIETY ON STANDARDIZED TESTS

### STEP ONE Getting Ready

Display a visual (piece of artwork, picture, graphic, etc.) with a truism/saying that correlates to piece(s) of literature and/or informational text(s) students are reading/have read. Ask students to look at the visual and read the truism. Ask the students to think about the truism and write it down onto their papers as their first sentence in the opening paragraph. Tell them to be sure to indent.



*Power Corrupts.*

### STEP TWO: The First Minute

Have students brainstorm and write for **one minute** to answer the question “what does this mean?” in response to the artwork and truism. The writer will be interpreting the statement and/or the picture in terms of his/her own knowledge and experiences. He/she will be finishing the introductory paragraph. Be sure to tell them when the minute is almost finished so they can wrap up their final thought/sentence. A sample response to the picture and saying above could be:

*Power Corrupts. When people are afforded a sense of entitlement, they begin to treat others as if they are beneath them. They believe they are better than others and therefore, more powerful. They are deserving of better things. This allows them to treat others unfairly. It distorts their sense of self and others. If this goes unchecked, the entitlement will not only destroy those that they deem unworthy, it will make them rotten to the core.*

### **STEP THREE: Three Minutes**

Have the students brainstorm and write for **three minutes** answering the question “how do you know that’s true?” The writer should think of one or more of the texts from class that prove the truism. He/she should write about how the novel/short story/article/other supports the idea stated in the first paragraph. Remind them to indent before they start. Be sure to tell them when the three minutes are almost finished so they can wrap up their final thought/sentence. An example is:

*In Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Captain Auld is corrupted by power. His was born poor and became a slave owner by marriage. When he suddenly had slaves to wait upon him, the power went to his head and he grew mean. He does not question his authority over the slaves because he believes that scriptures from the Bible justify the whippings.*

### **STEP FOUR: Three Minutes**

Have the students brainstorm and write for **three minutes** about a visual text that also proves the idea. Tell them to use the name of the movie/video/speech/play as they write about it. Remind them to indent before they start. Be sure to tell them when the three minutes are almost finished so they can wrap up their final thought/sentence. An example is:

*A video parallel would be “Somalia’s Child Soldiers” where young boys with no authority at birth are turned into cruel, power-wielding soldiers. They carry AK47s and kill people like any adult soldier. These boys get their identity from their power. They have the power that toting a gun gives to them. They have the power to take life away from others. This power goes to their heads and gives them a corrupted view of the world.*

### **STEP FIVE: Three Minutes**

Have the students brainstorm and write for **three minutes** about how the idea has been proven true in their life experiences. Remind them to indent before they start. Be sure to tell them when the three minutes are almost finished so they can wrap up their final thought/sentence. An example is:

*In my life, this truism was illustrated when my coach made us run until we threw-up. We had to listen to him because we wanted to be on the football team. He used his authority to make us do his bidding. He should have seen that he was pushing us too hard in the hot sun.*

### **STEP SIX: The Final Minute**

Have the students brainstorm and write for **one minute** about one question that remains. They could tie the truism to the bigger world, look at it again with fresh eye, take another stance, etc. They could answer the question “so what?” in response to their essay, thus far. This will be the concluding paragraph. Remind them to indent before they start. Be sure to tell them when the minute is almost finished so they can wrap up their final thought/sentence. An example is:

*On the other hand, power could be confused with control. Maybe it is not power that corrupts. Maybe people become corrupted when they have control over others. This would be true for all three of the examples used in this essay. Covey has control over the slaves, the boy soldiers have control over anyone they target with the guns, and the coach controlled our fate concerning making the team.*

## **HOW TO USE THE DRAFT**

- Process can be repeated as practice for standardized tests**
- Can be developed into a formal essay**
- Can be used to teach correct formatting for in-text citations**
- Can be used to evaluate strength of paragraphs, supports, reasoning, etc.**
- Can be used with mini/lesson (workshop model) to teach mastery of any/all of the following 6-8 standards:**
  - 6: Introduce a topic; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect**
  - 7, 8: Introduce a topic clearly, previewing what is to follow; organize ideas, concepts, and information, using strategies such as definition, classification, comparison/contrast, and cause/effect**
  - 6, 7, 8: Develop the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples**
  - 6: Use appropriate transitions to clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts**
  - 7: Use appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts**
  - 8: Use appropriate and varied transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.**
  - 6, 7, 8: Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic**
  - 6, 7, 8: Establish and maintain a formal style**
  - 6: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the information or explanation presented**
  - 7, 8: Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented**
  - 6, 7, 8: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience**
  - 6, 7, 8: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach**
  - 6, 7, 8: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis and reflection**
  - 6, 7, 8: Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text**