

Writing Effective Sentences

Name: _____

First, read chapters eight and nine in Writing History: A Guide for Canadian Students. Then, tackle each of the following questions and bring the completed assignment to class with you.

1. For the following sentences, circle every use of the verb “to be” (a passive verb of being) and underline every use of the passive voice. Rewrite the sentences to fix these problems and make the text more direct and active.

Medieval homes were often dark, cold places. Sometimes they were infested by bugs. Many peasants were oppressed and harshly treated by their landlords. The fear of hell was a torment to many. Others were worried by poor crop conditions. Yet, medieval life was not always bleak. Singing, dancing, and community festivals were common features of daily life.

2. Identify the common diction problems in the following passage, some of which are explained in the Writing History book. Circle the double negative and three clichés, and identify at least six other problems.

Because medieval society is so different than our own, it is not unlikely that we will have trouble understanding what people then thought. Due to the many dissimilarities between there attitudes and our own, its possible that we will misinterpret their actions. To stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of the past requires thinking outside the box. To lay the foundations of a proper understanding is the task of the historian; his job is to effectively promote empathy. History is an interesting subject, but sometimes it’s conclusions are just wrong.

3. *Being concise is important, so learn to trim extraneous words. Revise the following sentences by reducing the number of words while keeping the sense intact.*

a. In my opinion it is not an unjustifiable assumption that the Crusades began because of economic turmoil within Europe itself.

b. In spite of the fact that the plague killed so many people, in some ways it helped medieval society.

c. Europe was devastated by the plague.

d. At this point in time, advance planning for the writing of one's essay is essential.

e. Upon the invention of printing presses, numbers of books really increased.

4. *Rewrite each of the following sentences, remembering the rules that you should keep related words together, keep pronouns close to the words they represent, and keep subjects and verbs close together.*

a. The Roman Empire, after hundreds of years of relative peace and success, fell into decline by the late 400s.

b. The Pope's conflict with the Emperor meant he had to travel to Lombardy.

c. Covered in rags and lice, the king refused to talk to the beggar.

d. The Pope wrote his address to the Crusaders while traveling from Rome to Avignon on the back of an envelope.

e. I bought a castle from a man with large turrets.

5. *Sentence fragments and comma splices are two recurring problems in writing. A sentence needs to express a complete thought, and to include both a subject and a verb. If it does not, it's called a sentence fragment. Comma splices occur when two independent clauses are joined by a comma, instead of leaving them as two separate sentences or joining them with a conjunction or semi-colon. Beside the passages, write 'SF' for sentence fragment, 'CS' for comma splice, or 'OK' for no problems.*

- a. _____ The Holy Roman Empire extended throughout central Europe. From north to south, and from east to west.
- b. _____ The Roman Empire in the west gradually declined, the Empire in the east continued until 1453.
- c. _____ The western church became known as the Catholic Church, while the church in the east became generally known as the Orthodox Church.
- d. _____ Medieval universities were open only to men. Only convents provided advanced education for women.
- e. _____ Saints were people considered to be especially holy. Devoted to God above all others.
- f. _____ Medieval Europeans lacked a uniform currency, they often bartered goods instead.

6. *After reviewing the section on common diction problems, circle the correct word to fill in each blank.*

- a. Kings in medieval Europe needed the help of _____ (their/they're/there) nobility to rule well.
- b. Notable _____ (effects/affects) of the Crusades included greater exposure to Arabic scholarship amongst educated Europeans.
- c. _____ (It's/Its) best days behind it, the castle collapsed from neglect.
- d. Greed for territory constituted the _____ (principal/principle) cause of the 100 Years War.