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Eng 574

**Image Grammar**  
**Chapter 6: Toward a Grammar of Passages**

A very important area of grammar to focus on with students concerns large portions of text, such as paragraphs, or a body of text that encompasses multiple paragraphs. It is important to extend the language of grammar to include the *wholeness* of a body of work (Noden 109). The “grammar of passages” is meant to be a building block, another level of thinking about grammar in a larger sense than mere sentences. The next three activities are effective ways to introduce this topic.

**Activity 1: Variation of Strategy 4**

1. Students will get into groups of 4 or 5.
2. Each group will be given a copy of the first page of *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut. All paragraph punctuation (i.e. indents) will be eliminated so that it is one large portion of text.
3. The group will read the passage and then attempt to arrange the text into as many paragraphs as they see fit.
4. Groups will discuss with the class their rationale for arranging the text the way they did.
5. The class will look at Vonnegut's original text and see how their arrangement differs from his. This can lead to a discussion of *why* Vonnegut chose to arrange the text this way.

**Activity 2: Organizing and Elaborating on Text Creatively**

1. Students will get into groups of 4 or 5.
2. Groups will be given identical sets of text that need to be arranged in a more fluid fashion.
3. Using transitional words and creative language, students will reorganize and elaborate on the original text based on a specific point of view.
4. Groups will come together to discuss how they needed to alter the original text (what became more important, what became unnecessary, etc).

## **Activity 1 Handout. *Cat's Cradle* by Kurt Vonnegut**

Call me Jonah. My Parents did, or nearly did. They called me John. Jonah--John--if I had been a Sam, I would have been a Jonah still-not because I have been unlucky for others, but because somebody or something has compelled to certain places at certain times, without fail. Conveyances and motives, both conventional and bizarre have been provided. And, according to plan, at each appointed second, at each appointed place this Jonah was there. Listen: When I was a younger man--two wives ago, 250,000 cigarettes ago, 3.00 quarts of booze ago... When I was a much younger man, I began to collect material for a book to be called *The Day the World Ended*. The book was to be factual. The book was to be an account of what important Americans had done on the day when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan. It was to be a Christian book. I was a Christian then. I am a Boknonist now.

**Note: For the original organaization of this particular text, please refer to the first page of Chapter 1 (The Day the World Ended) of *Cat's Cradle*.**

*This document is part of "Grammar Central" website, the course project of English 574: Grammar in Teaching Writing, Western Michigan University, Fall 2004. We encourage fair-use application of this material. For questions, please contact Dr. Jonathan Bush at [jbush@wmich.edu](mailto:jbush@wmich.edu).*

**Activity 2 Handout. Give one copy to each group.**

**I was hungry. I decided to go to the store. It was hot outside. I bought apples. The store was big. I dropped two cans of chicken broth. My pants ripped on a display. I wanted to make beef stroganoff for dinner. I needed to buy all the ingredients to make the meal. Someone hit my car with a shopping cart. The store was very old. The floor was dirty. Smashed grapes covered the fresh fruit section. The cashier was very nice to me. An old man cut in front of me in line. Two panes of glass in the front of the store were broken. My cart was in perfect condition. I left the store with all the essentials. I drove home thinking about dinner.**

## **Activity 2 Point of View Options.**

**Distribute one point of view to each group and have students organize and elaborate on the original story according to the point of view they receive. Some details of the original story will become more important than others, some will become less important, and some will not need to be used at all. Encourage students to add any details they think will help develop the story to fit their specific point of view. After all groups have completed the activity, instruct each group to read their new story out loud to the rest of the class. The rest of the class will then have a chance to guess who is telling the story, according to the clues given by the group's revision. The point of this activity is to illustrate how much point of view, voice, and context affect a written work, as well as demonstrate the various ways a single story or idea can be expressed. The exact same story can be written in many different ways as can be imagined.**

- 1. You are a health and safety inspector out buying food for dinner. Even though you are not working, your eye is trained so that you can't help but notice health and safety violations everywhere you go.**
- 2. You are a trained chef picking up food for dinner. You work in a very prestigious restaurant and take pride in your skills as a chef. Food is one of the most important aspects of your life.**
- 3. You are a poor college student who hardly has enough money to survive. You are on a strict budget and can't afford any luxuries.**
- 4. You are a commercial architect who just landed a job designing a new grocery store for a large company. Even though you are only there as a shopper, you can't help but take note of how the grocery store is built and maintained. You focus on the flaws, the strengths, and the possibilities to make your design unique.**
- 5. You are a young child out with a parent as they pick up groceries. You don't care about prices, cleanliness, or other people. You are simply along for the ride.**

**Note: The instructor may create as many new point of view scenarios as he or she deems fit.**