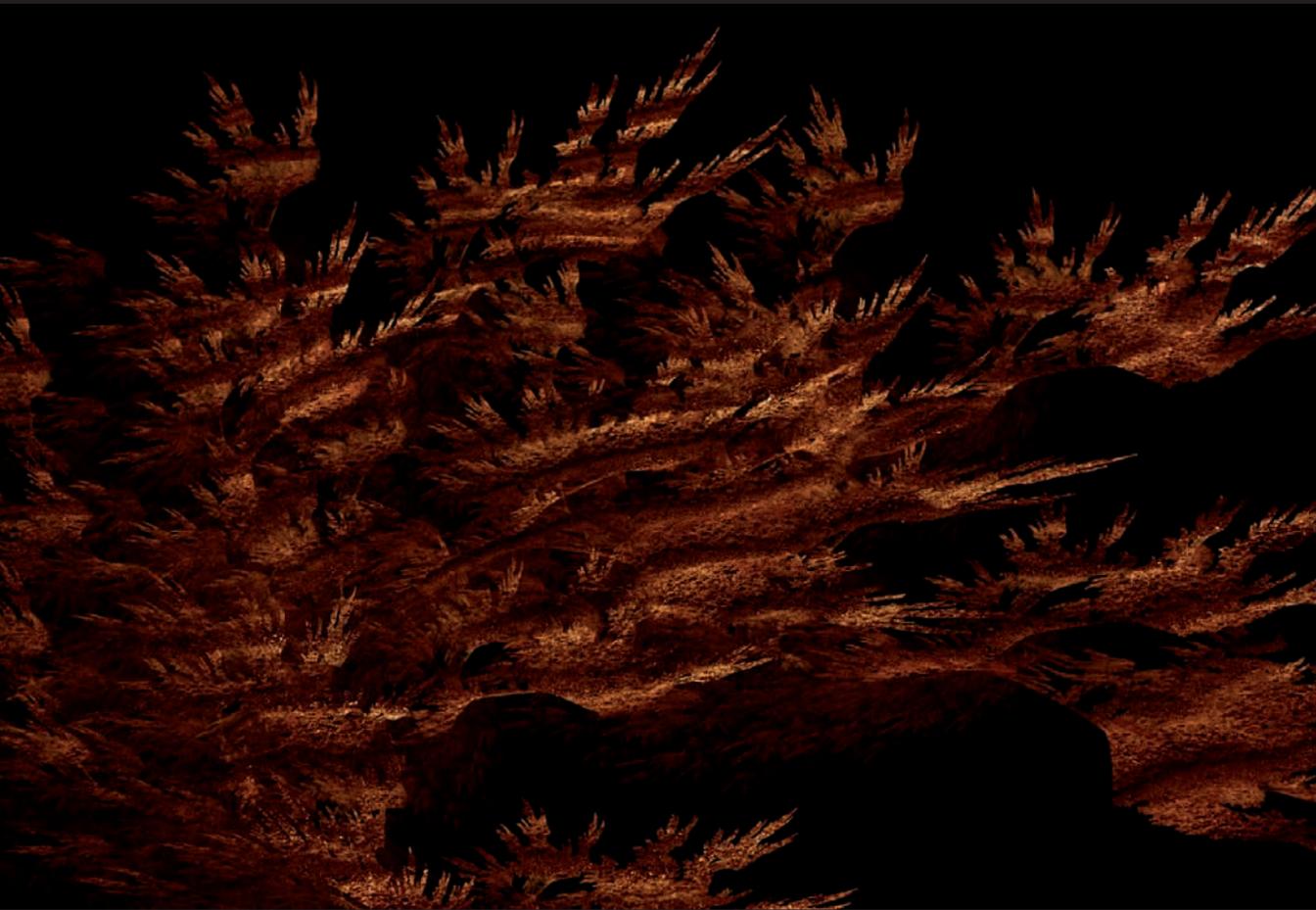


REASON TO WRITE



GINA L. VALLIS

- Two main characters are often in physical contact, or in a position indicating the initial nature of their relationship (e.g.: antagonistic)
- Male tends to be higher in visual field than female.
- Third figure may be present, if it is a “love triangle” story.
- Other visual elements tend to be minimal, with second most typical visual element being setting (office, beach, etc.).
- Often includes catchphrase that highlights main dilemma.

Horror:

- Most likely to have no fully represented human figure present
- Any depiction of visible full-body human is usually in shadow or masked
- Least explicitly informative, most implicit
- Very typical to offer a single body part either entering visual field (an arm, etc.), or filling substantial portion of visual field.
- Body part (arm, leg, and often eye) is often mixed with other imagery implying violence to the body, such as wires, knives, etc.
- Least likely to include informative text.
- Often has catchphrase that offers a direct address to the viewer, sometimes in the form of a threatening invitation.
- More likely to have a minimalist background.
- Rarely includes supplementary visuals.

After establishing these details across all four genres, primarily visually, and often according to implicit cues that the audience has learned to expect, this student then examined posters that “didn’t fit” the dominant categories of his analysis.

This part of his analysis included hybrid genres (e.g.: a romantic-comedy), as well as crossovers; films that seemed like they should be in one genre, but that contained visual cues that indicated that they were in another genre.

In this way, this student was able to establish that while a film such as *Twilight* (2008) could be considered a part of the horror genre, since it depicts supernatural creatures traditionally a part of that genre (i.e.: vampires and werewolves), his analysis suggested that it is visually depicted, in film posters, as a part of the romance genre—which it is.



CHAPTER 6

FINDING COMMON GROUND

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1 THE ORGANIZING PRINCIPLE

Sometimes, the organization of a paper is obvious; one can simply start at the beginning, and work through one's question to arrive at an answer. However, once one has performed a thorough analysis, one can also feel as if one is looking at a map in which the arrow that indicates that "You are Here" is missing.

When this happens, one can have a lot of ideas and conclusions, all linked together in different ways. Each seems to lead in a different direction, connected in different ways. How does one choose which single path to follow? How does one turn that map back into a linear progression of words on a page, without wandering off, or getting lost?

One of the most useful products of analysis is that details suggest patterns, and patterns suggest conclusions. Yet these patterns also suggest something else: an *organizing principle*.

The conclusions produced from analysis tend to combine in a particular way, because the question demands certain kinds of patterns in order to be answered. In other words, if one can identify major points on the map, and how they relate to other major points, one can find a way to organize the chaos.

Let us say, for example, that one were the first person to become interested in canine behavior, and formed the question:

How do dogs communicate through body language?

One might draw a series of conclusions from one's analysis, and those conclusions would also tend to break down in specific ways.

For example, one might find oneself looking into this question in relationship to specific actions connected to a breakdown of different parts of the dog's body: ear position; eye contact; tail movement; coat appearance; stance of legs; etc.

At that point, the "parts" becomes a *group*. The thing that binds this group together is the ways in which the dog uses different parts of its body to communicate. In this way, by concentrating on how these details are broken down, and the pattern they produce, one can organize one's paper in a sensible sequential order for each item within that group.

As one deals with each conclusion within the group, one get more information in regard to the question. As one reaches each conclusion, one can then return that conclusion to the original question that was posed, adding a new layer to a growing

series of reasonable statements based upon one's analysis. Eventually, these conclusions result, cumulatively, in an answer to the original question that was posed. This is called ***recursive writing***.

Or, one might find that one's analysis has drawn upon a breakdown of dog and human communication, and the grouping may organize itself by analysis of a dog's typical behavioral response to a variety of human behaviors (e.g.: a person's approach; voice modulation; position of a person's hands, etc.)

Or, one might find that one's analysis has drawn upon a breakdown involving the comparison of dogs to another species. In this case, the grouping may be organized by indicating similarities and differences between those two species (e.g.: in both dogs and cats, a fixed, direct stare is a challenge).

Or, one might find that one's analysis has drawn upon linking body language to social groupings found in packs, in which case each conclusion drawn would be classified under that connection (e.g.: a dog displays affection and indicates submission to a fellow pack member by licking, which is a grooming behavior).

Anticipating an Organizing Principle

While one is performing analysis, one should be looking for the way one has broken things down, and what it says about how one's conclusions might be organized.

Someone asking a question regarding popular representations of disability might break down his or her analysis into four categories that account for all of the samples he or she has found up to that point:

1. Using disability as an inspirational story of overcoming adversity (e.g.: Helen Keller)
2. Using disability as a sign of hidden knowledge or abilities that would inspire awe (e.g.: the blind prophet)
3. Using visible disability to indicate a villain (e.g.: a wooden leg, eye patch, or scarring)
4. Using disability as a source of humor (mental disability)

An essay is, in many ways, an organized record of someone's thinking on a given question. Staying conscious of how you break down elements in analysis, and even

DEFINITION

recursive writing: although this technique can be used in several ways, in this sense it means returning individual conclusions that one finds in an analysis to the initial question that one is answering. Each conclusion builds an overall series of reasonable statements that support the final answer.

telling a reader why you made a certain choices in regard to organization, is not unprofessional, and often helpful.

For example, in the sociological study “The Cocktail Waitress,” James P. Spradley and Brenda J. Mann document their initial difficulty in finding a way to organize the data that they collected. These data were the result of extensive interviews in which they asked cocktail waitresses about the names given to types of customers that come into a typical bar in the United States.

Their original list was as follows:

girl	regular	cougar ¹	party	Annie
jock	real regular	animal	female	obnoxo
person off street	waitress	bartender	loner	Hustler
businessman	policeman	greaser	zoo	Slob
drunk	redneck	bore	Johnny	Bastard
Bitch	Pig	Hands	Creep	Couple
king and court				

The writers not only reported struggling with how to organize this list, but admitted further confusion when they “discovered that a *regular* could be an *obnoxo* or a *bore*, a *party* could be a *zoo*, a *cougar* was always a *jock*, but a *jock* could also be a *regular* or *person off the street*” (255–56).

The important thing to understand is that if the content of your analysis does not determine the structure of your writing, an inconsistent structure will serve to determine your content for you. This will often result in simply *listing*, which is superficial analysis when one is looking for patterns. The writers of “The Cocktail Waitress” knew this, and pushed further until they found a solution regarding a reasonable way to break down their list.

In further analysis, they came to understand that the labels on this list could be grouped in important ways. They were not the same. Some were fixed, and some varied.

For example, certain labels, such as *hands*, *pig*, *boor*, or *obnoxo*, were based upon the behavior of the customer, and therefore could shift as behavior changed.

Others, such as *Annies* or *Cougars*, were fixed, based upon social identities outside the bar, in this case related to the local college.

¹ The term “cougar” does not have the same cultural connotation that it has now, this study having predated the current use of the term in which it indicates an older woman who is attractive to, or attracted to, younger men.

As criteria emerged from these groupings, an organizing principle developed. In this case, the organizing principle was one of *taxonomy*: types and subtypes.

Common Organizational Principles

The following catalogues typical kinds of organizing principles that one finds in academic writing. They are not the only kinds of ways to organize a paper, but understanding how they function can be useful in determining what kind of organization is called for in translating the analysis that you perform into written form.

Categories: The most straightforward of the structures, an organizing principle that would identify the major points on the map and take them one by one, returning each conclusion to the question.

Example:

In *Men, Women, and Chainsaws* Carol Clover asks a question regarding the hero in relationship to the slasher film genre in the 1970's.

She analyzes approximately thirty slasher films according to the categories of: 1) killer; 2) locale; 3) weapons; 4) victims; 5) shock-effects.

Comparison: An organizational structure that locates specific points of similarity or difference between two things, or among three or more things.

This organizing principle would result in a paper that would compare elements in a specific area, draw a conclusion, return that conclusion to the original question, and move on to the next area of comparison.

Example:

In "Professing History: Distinguishing Between Memory and the Past," Elliot J. Gorn asks a question regarding the challenges and importance of teaching history.

He uses the juxtaposition between:

- History as a record of past events
- National mythos, such as the story of Betsy Ross making the American flag, which she did not do.

Causality:

An organizational structure that outlines a chain of reasoning that is logical in nature and related to a conditional structure

DEFINITION

protasis/apodosis: the two parts of a conditional statement, where the second statement depends on the conditions of the first.

Example: “If it rains, then I will bring an umbrella.” In this case, the act of bringing an umbrella (*apodosis*) is dependent upon whether or not it rains (*protasis*).

of *protasis/apodosis*. That is, movement in the writing is based upon a series of claims that if x (*protosis*) is so, then y (*apodosis*) would be so.

This organizing principle will result in a paper that would begin with the most obvious conclusion to draw from analysis, and then make the next conclusion a condition of the previous, etc. This could become monotonous, after awhile, and should be used with care.

Example:

In *Broca's Brain: Reflections on the Romance of Science*. Carl Sagan asks a question as to whether humans can know all of the universe.

He demonstrates that if we try to understand every bit of information about the universe in separate bits of information, then we would not have enough memory to know even the smallest part. However, if we can determine natural laws that are regular in the universe, then we can know a portion of the universe.

Student example:

If we cannot separate the differences between individualism and collectivism, then we do not understand forms of government. If we do not understand the idea of government, then we are not educated enough to choose who will lead our country.²

Taxonomy:

An organizational structure wherein one introduces a *type* of thing, and then identifies *subtypes* of that thing, and relationships between, and among, types and subtypes.

This organizing principle would result in a paper that would identify criteria by which a type would be identified, and then specify criteria by which other things would belong to that type, or fail to belong, according to those criteria.

² Writing 2. Spring 2009. UCSB.

Example:

In “The Egg and the Sperm: How Science has Constructed a Romance based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles,” Emily Martin asks a question regarding how analogy based upon gender is used to describe scientific processes in textbooks.

The author uses a subtype of scientific discourse (biology) in order to answer a question regarding how a type of discourse (science) treats this issue in textbooks.

Focus:

An organizational structure wherein one uses something external to what is being analyzed as a kind of lens through which to organize conclusions.

This organizational principle would result in a paper that would focus conclusions through a single issue, and that single issue would become an anchor through which one returns conclusions to the question.

Example:

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Paulo Friere asks a question regarding the type of education that relies primarily on the memorization of information outside of context.

He uses the extended metaphor of banking, including the ideas of *deposit* and *withdrawal* of information, as a focus to describe the consequences of this form of education.

Chronology:

An organizational structure in which conclusions are presented as spanning established time periods, from most recent to earliest, or earliest to most recent.

Example:

In *A Chorus of Stones* Susan Griffin asks how historical events, instead of beginning and ending, actually remain connected with one another, over time.

She uses the analogy of a train that begins in the present, and moves backward in time to 1945, and then returns to the present, to illustrate these connections.

When people talk of creating an “outline,” they are often engaged in the act of locating an organizing principle for their writing. While outlining can be very useful for this, and for other reasons, it is not included as a step for writing within this text.

It is not included, in this way, because writers tend to divide up primarily into two groups: pre-writers or re-writers. While people who write a great deal spend a goodly amount of time doing both, they will usually favor one or the other. Some people pre-write to the point where the final paper is merely a matter of starting at the top of an outline and working one’s way down. Others like to get their ideas down, right away, and then shape the final product.

In either case, recognizing the structure that one’s content suggests, once one has performed analysis, is necessary in order to guide a reader through one’s map. It does not mean that one has to meticulously chart every turn; it just means finding an entrance, or opening, from which to begin, and a general idea of where one will go from there.

2 FIRST THINGS FIRST: THE TITLE

For the opening of an essay, it might be helpful to begin with the most obvious element: the title.

The role of the title for an essay in academic writing is often misunderstood. It has a specific function related to the reason that academics write: publication. When someone performs secondary-source research, on what other people have published, they do not stumble around the stacks hoping to chance upon the information they would like to have. They tend to use a keyword search.

Since articles and chapters are catalogued according to titles, it is important that any title that you give to what you write have the proper keywords that would allow the article to be accessed in a search.

The convention in academic writing, for a title of an essay or article, is for it to have two lines, separated by a colon. The first line is often snappy, in that it represents some kind of play on words. The second line is usually explanatory, and holds important keywords for a catalogue search. Following are some titles that include these elements:

We Were Always Happy:
The Distortion of Personal Histories in Personal Photograph Albums

Missing the Butch:
Representations of Lesbianism on Television

Whiteface/Blackface:
Representation and Race in American Film

Taking a Shot:
The Role of Imbedded Journalism, from Vietnam to Iraq

If the Jeans Fit:
The Use of the Image of Individualism in Product Marketing

The third example, above, for example, would ensure that any person seeking articles that concern issues of “race,” “American,” or “film” would be able to access that article if he or she entered those keywords into a library database, whether at a physical library, or a virtual one.

3 **EXORDIUM: “YO!” OR “LO!”**

Exordium means introduction, or beginning. In rhetoric, it serves the purpose of preparing an audience for the content that will follow. In some ways, the opening to an essay is just like meeting someone face-to-face, for the first time. The reader is going to make a lot of judgments, conscious and unconscious, about the writer, based upon that initial encounter.

While there are several strategies for opening a paper that will be covered in this chapter, remember that the main point of your introduction is to establish common ground with the reader. This means resisting the urge to sum up your whole paper in one go.

The easiest, and often the most successful, openings, offer straightforward statements that are very specific, directly related to the question at hand, and that a typical reader would find reasonable and fair. Three to five such statements, in relationship to your question, will build a foundation from which to begin to answer it, and create an initial impression of the writer as a patient, trustworthy thinker.

In planning her opening, the student who was writing about Reality TV gathered together a series of key points. Each point was something with which a typical reader would probably agree, and each laid the groundwork for the way in which she would begin her analysis. She ended the opening with a question. Her statements were:

1. Reality TV is a genre that is a mixture of documentary, drama, and game show