Handout 3

Student Sample: Grade 8, Informative/Explanatory

This essay was written about a favorite activity. The writer wrote for one entire class period the first day and revised his essay the second day after discussing ideas for revision with a partner.

Football

What I like doing best is playing football, mainly because it is one of my best sports. One of the greatest things about it, in my opinion, is the anticipation, wondering what the other players are thinking about what you might do. Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.

At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore. That is true for everyone, but in time you get used to the aches and pains. After awhile, you develop mental discipline, which allows you to ignore some of the pain. The mental discipline then allows you to go all out, to unload everything you have, every play. That's how you win games, everyone going all out, giving 110%.

The game takes concentration, just as much as any other sport, if not more. You develop this aspect in practice. That is why it is so important to have hours and hours of it. Mentally, you have to get over the fear, the fear of eleven madmen waiting for chance to make you eat dirt. And that comes through practice. Once you overcome the fear, you can concentrate on the more important things, like anticipating the other guy's next move. Studying the playbook and talking with other players also helps.

During the game, your mind clears of all thoughts. These thoughts become instinct. You have to react, and react quickly, and you develop reactions and instinct in practice. For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled. But, you should react instinctively to that situation by increasing your momentum.

Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard. Right when you unload for a stick, all your body tightens. Then you feel the impact. After you regain your thoughts, you wonder if you're all right. You wait for your brain to get the pain signal from the nerves. Even so, if you do get that signal, which is always the case, you keep right on playing. You can't let that experience shake your concentration.

On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back as you're concentrating on catching the ball. What separates the men from the boys is the one who "hears" the footsteps but doesn't miss the ball. That's mental discipline, concentration.

Football is very physical or else it wouldn't be fun. But it is also a mental game and that is why it's challenging. You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.

Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces the topic clearly, previewing what is to follow.**
  - *What I like doing best is playing football . . . Football is a physical game, of course, but it's the mental aspect that I appreciate the most.*
- **organizes ideas, concepts, and information into broader categories.**
  - Information is organized into three components of the mental aspect of football: discipline, concentration, and instinct.

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- **develops the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples.**
    - *At times football can get grueling, which makes the game even more exciting. The first time you make contact with another player (even with all that equipment) you get very sore.*
    - *For example, when you're carrying the ball or about to make a tackle, you want to make sure you have more momentum than the other guy. If you don't you'll be leveled.*
- **uses appropriate transitions to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among ideas and concepts.**
    - *At times . . . The first time . . . After awhile . . . During the game . . . For example . . . But . . . Playing defense . . . After . . . However . . .*
    - *On offense, while playing receiver, you can actually "hear" the footsteps of the defensive back . . .*
- **uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.**
    - *. . . playbook . . . defense . . . offense . . . receiver . . . defensive back*
- **establishes and maintains a formal style (with occasional lapses into cliché and undefined terms).**
- **provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented.**
    - The conclusion emphasizes the importance of the controlling idea (the mental aspect of football) by putting it in a new light: *You can get hurt in football if you screw up and ignore the right way to do things. However, mental discipline and concentration, which you develop during hours of practice, helps you avoid such mistakes.*
- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with some errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message) and some stylistically effective constructions (e.g.,** *Playing defense, all you want to do is hit the man with the ball, hit him hard***).**