

Handout 4 (Writing): Cohesion & Coherence

In-Class Exercise

Read these two passages, which present essentially the same information. Which passage do you like more? Why do you like this one more, and what are some things you don't like about the other one?

1a) The safeguard of democracy everywhere – an educated citizenry – is being threatened by college costs that have been rising fast for the last several years. Increases in family income have been significantly outpaced by increases in tuition at colleges and universities during that period. Only the children of the wealthiest families in our society will be able to afford a college education if this trend continues. Knowledge and intellectual skills, in addition to wealth, will divide us as a people, when that happens. Equal opportunity and the egalitarian basis of our democratic society could be eroded by such a divide.

1b) In the last several years, college costs have been rising so fast that they are now threatening the safeguard of democracy everywhere: an educated citizenry. During that period, tuition has significantly outpaced increases in family income. If this trend continues, a college education will soon be affordable only by the children of the wealthiest families in our society. When that happens, we will be divided as a people not only by wealth, but by knowledge and intellectual skills. Such a divide will erode equal opportunity and the egalitarian basis of our democratic society.

(Both passages are from Williams & Bizup, Lesson 5.)

Exercises

These exercises come from Lesson 5 in Williams & Bizup.

Exercise 1

Revise this passage to improve its flow by putting old information first in each sentence. Start by assuming that “in the president's mind when he assumed office” is old information.

Two aims – the recovery of the American economy and the modernization of America into a military power – were in the president's mind when he assumed office. The drop in unemployment figures and inflation, and the increase in the GDP testifies to his success in the first. But America's increased involvement in international conflict without any clear set of political goals indicates less success with the second. Nevertheless, increases in the military budget and a good deal of saber rattling pleased the American voter.

Exercise 2

Revise this passage to give it more consistent topic strings. Identify words that name what the passage comments on, and use those words as subjects of most of the sentences. A suggestion for words that could be consistent subjects/ topics is “vegetation” and “plants”.

Vegetation covers the earth, except for those areas continuously covered with ice or utterly scorched by continual heat. Richly fertilized plains and river valleys are places where plants grow most richly, but also at the edge of perpetual snow in high mountains. The ocean and its edges as well as in and around lakes and swamps are densely vegetated. The cracks of busy city sidewalks have plants in them as well as in seemingly barren cliffs. Before humans existed, the earth was covered with vegetation, and the earth will have vegetation long after evolutionary history swallows us up.