

# Guided Writing Exercise

By Jennifer Stevens



## A Rough "Front-of-the-Book" Outline to Follow:

- I. Strong Headline
- II. Snappy lead to draw reader in (sentence or two)
- III. Restate your "headline" idea... that is, tell your reader the point of your piece (sentence)
- IV. Provide facts and details (several sentences)
  - a. May include relevant quote or two
- V. Include practical follow-up information (could be in a sidebar at the end)

## Examples of Short Pieces

ExpressLane, July 2008 (304 words)

Colorado Springs Excursion...

High Country Drama: Mueller State Park, Colorado

By Jennifer Stevens

Down at your feet in the meadow grass, impossibly purple wildflowers and white yarrow-blossom bouquets... look up, and you'll see range after range of snow-capped peaks and the ridges of the Continental Divide, mountains to the horizon... overhead, a cobalt blue sky... and the rustle of aspens, like the sound of paper bells...

Just 45 minutes from downtown Colorado Springs, up and around the back side of Pikes Peak, you'll find yourself well into the Rockies at Mueller State Park. It's the easiest, most-rewarding, most undiscovered way to experience Colorado's mountain drama.

With 5,000 acres of untouched wilderness and 50 miles of trails, Mueller makes for an ideal high-country excursion -- whether you've got just three hours or a full day to spare. (Even if you don't plan to hike, this scenic trip is worthwhile.)

Begin by ducking into the Visitor's Center, where kids can make animal-footprint rubbings and test out the grip on a mountain goat's hoof. Be sure to walk to the gazebo outside. The view will take your breath away. And not just because you're at 10,000 feet.

Stretched out before you is an awe-inspiring collection of Colorado's "fourteeners," including Mt. Elbert and Mt. Massive, the state's tallest peaks.

The trails offer great variety in both difficulty and length. Mueller is expansive. And so while you'll see other cars parked at the trailhead lots, you'll seldom run into more than one or two people on the trails. Often not a soul.

Outlook Ridge is one our favorites walks -- a relatively gentle, 1.4-mile trail with a rewarding view to the distant peaks over conifer forest and aspen stands. Perfect for a morning out. Hike to the overlook, recharge with lunch or a snack on the rocky outcrop, and walk back through the quaking Aspens to your car. Rocky Mountain drama, guaranteed.

Gourmet, August 2009 (200 words)

### FILL 'ER UP WITH MAKI IN MEMPHIS

At the eastern edge of Memphis, on Poplar Avenue, a blocky sign sits outside a BP gas station. "Regular. 2.05," it reads. "Fresh Sushi." Inside the gas station's mini-mart, tucked in a corner not far from the Bubble Yum and Marlboro Lights, a sushi chef expertly crafts *maki*, *nigiri sushi*, and the house specialty: a roll that contains Louisiana crawfish. In this southern city where barbecue borders on religion, the sushi bar was a curiosity when it first opened in 2002. These days, though, it has a devoted following, including a substantial lunch crowd from nearby offices. Among them, an attorney: "And I'm kind of a food snob." The sushi bar is the brainchild of Anna Lee, a Korean who hoped to boost business at her family's gas station with good take-out food. As far as the Lees knew, theirs would be the only gas-station sushi bar in the country. "A lot of gas stations have Burger King or McDonald's," explains J.J. Lee, who now manages the business. "I was very skeptical. Who eats sushi at a gas station?" A bunch of Memphians, apparently. The sushi bar sells about 300 boxes of sushi a day, taking in up to \$1,500. "And," says Lee, "it all came from a small idea." (6121 Poplar Ave.; 901-681-0111) —Georgina Gustin

American Way, July 2009 (269 words)

### The Greening of the Santa Monica Pier

by Terry Gardner

THE SANTA MONICA PIER'S Ferris wheel has held reign as the world's only solar-powered wheel for the last decade -- but last year the California amusement got even more energy efficient when it was replaced with the nine-story \$1.5 million Pacific Wheel, which lifts riders more than 130 feet above the Pacific Ocean, lights up the sky with 160,000 energy-efficient LED lights, and generates more than 71,000 kilowatt hours of renewable photovoltaic power from sunlight.

Not to be left on its (not) green behind, the Heal the Bay Santa Monica Pier Aquarium also underwent an eco-friendly makeover to become a certified green business. Its eco-lift included installing more environmentally friendly, low-mercury fluorescent bulbs; improving the energy efficiency of the animal life-support system; and using 100 percent recycled post consumer plastic (like milk and margarine containers) for the new sandy-colored aquarium display bases. Popular exhibits that feature plant and animal life from the Santa Monica Bay include three touch tanks, a shark exhibit, and a kelp forest exhibit.

Among its other treasures the Pier has taken care to maintain is the circa-1922 all-wooden carousel that's housed by the 1916 Hippodrome. It's one of fewer than 70 merry-go-rounds of its kind that are still operating worldwide, and each horse on the carousel was dismantled, repainted, and restored back in 1980, while its machinery was replaced in 2006. You can just go to observe, like Marilyn Monroe herself (she spent many a day in the 1960s watching the horses go round), or you can climb on up for a spin. You're guaranteed a smooth ride. Corner of Ocean and Colorado avenues, [www.santamonicipier.org](http://www.santamonicipier.org)