

WRITING DEVELOPMENT

In her book, *The Writing Revolution* Judith Hochman tells us that students' problems with reading comprehension, as well with writing essays, occur because they have not been taught systematically to write ... to which her book gives a step-by-step guide.

The Writing Development exercises here are adapted from her programme.

Sioux Lifestyle

7. Questions II

One of the biggest problems for GCSE students is sticking to the question.

When I was at school, I was made to write in capital letters ATBQ: 'Answer the Bloody Question!' And when I was a teacher, I used to say to my pupils: "At the end of every paragraph, look at the question, look at what you have written, and ask yourself: 'Am I still answering the question?'"

One neat trick when you are planning your answer is to think of different ways to phrase the question.

If I want to go to York, for instance, I can ask: 'How do I get to York?' But I could also phrase the question: 'In what ways can I get to York?' 'What are the directions to York?' 'Which roads lead to York?' 'In what different ways can I travel to York?' ... and that is before I start asking questions like: 'Which is the best way to get to York?' 'How long will it take?' 'How much will it cost?'

Each different way of asking the question helps me understand different aspects of my answer, and clarifies what it is I have to describe/explain.

Before you put pen to paper, you MUST be sure that you understand what the question is asking, and what you need to say to sufficiently answer that question.

This following exercise will work best if you do it with a friend, and talk about it as you do it.

AQA students: think of as many different ways you might ask the following AQA-style questions:

1. Describe two problems faced by the Plains Indians in the Great Plains environment.
2. In what ways were the lives of the Plains Indians affected by the buffalo?
3. Which of the following was the more important reason for the successful way of life of the Plains Indians:
 - the buffalo herds
 - the Plains Indians' beliefs and society?

Edexcel students: think of as many different ways you might ask the following AQA-style questions:

1. Explain two consequences of the Sioux's community spirit for their culture.
2. Write a narrative account analysing the key features of the Plains Indians way of life.
3. Explain the importance of the buffalo for the Plains Indians' success in living on the Plains.

WARNING!! You do not have to answer the questions. Be careful that you are not actually devising different questions. Your task is to think of different ways to ask the same question.

When you have run out ideas, discuss: 'what have we learned about the question from this exercise?'