


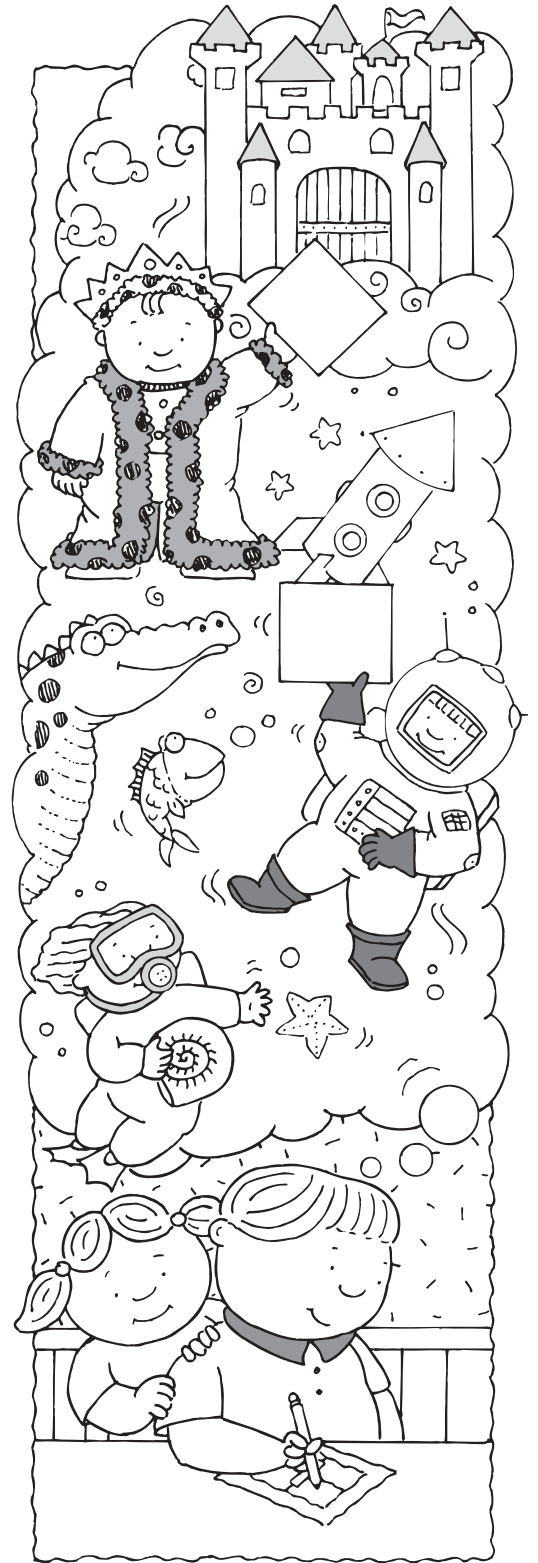
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Pages Included on the Enhanced CD:

- Additional examples of primary Four Squares and resulting paragraphs
- Additional examples of intermediate Four Squares and resulting essays
- Fill-in-the-blank exercises
- Scrambled Four Squares
- Lead exercises
- Ending exercises
- Vivid vocabulary exercises
- "How To Four Square" PowerPoint Presentation



Step 1

Understanding Relationships

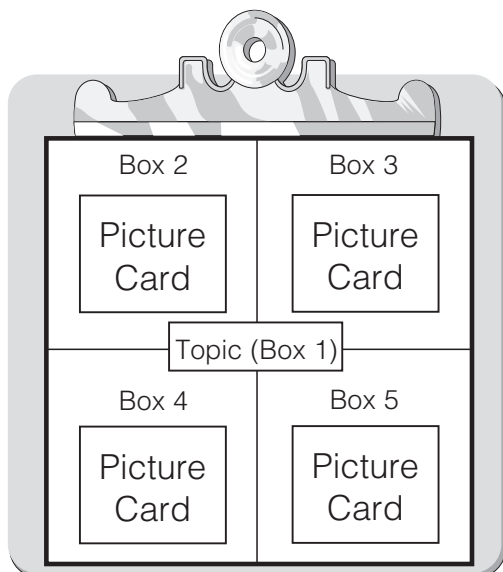
Writing is evidence of thinking. Now if we can only get our students to think! If our desired outcome is a focused, organized, and detailed composition, we must begin practicing focused, organized and detailed thought, even with our youngest students. Chances are you do this already. Classifying and categorizing items in our everyday world helps build the very same thought patterns existing in logical, organized writing.



The initial activities done in categorizing are best done with actual manipulative materials. A “brown bag” activity works great for this. Give each group of students a brown bag with random items in it. Maybe the bags have toys, books, pencils, food, or other common items. Each group must separate the items into different groups. There must be one thing that is the same about all items in the group. Modeling this activity for your students before they try it might be a good idea. Remember, sorting on color, size and shape can work too!

After several repetitions with real items, this activity can be repeated with picture cards. This moves the activity up one level of abstraction and a bit closer to written thought (after all, isn’t writing really just using symbols to represent objects and ideas?). At this stage, the Four Square graphic organizer can be introduced using a felt or magnetic board with the appropriate backing on the picture cards.

The Four Square itself is an organizer that combines the best of the outline, web, semantic map, and oldies-but-goodies like the hamburger paragraph. Feel free to use the reproducible pages in this book for pre-made Four Squares for your students. You may prefer to have

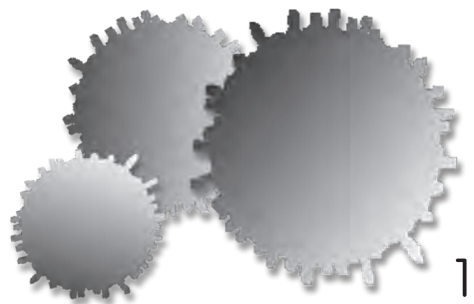


students make their own, a symbol of how easy it is to use this tool. Any piece of paper can become a Four Square. Make one “hamburger fold” and one “hotdog” fold, open it up, and you have four squares (ok, they’re rectangles, but they look like the old playground game Four Square). We draw a rectangle in the middle for our CENTRAL topic, the BULLS-EYE, CENTER, HEART, CORE (you get the idea) and the other boxes stay close to that central topic. The hands-on property of the Four Square makes it a hit with your kinesthetic learners!

Introducing the Four Square early in writing instruction can help your students to be confident in using this tool as they build fluency in their writing. This will become a friendly and familiar tool for organization and classification.

Name _____

Snacks I like to eat



For further practice in developing specific, quantifiable, concrete details, encourage students to PROVE the central topic. Even our young writers can learn the specific reasoning required for persuasive and expository writing.

A “Prove It!” reproducible page is provided on page 22 for extra practice and discussion.

A Four Square at Step 3 may look something like this. Remember, everything from pretend writing, to making spaces, to complete sentences may be developmentally appropriate for your students.



Students should still be encouraged to illustrate their Four Squares. In fact, for many young writers they will need to illustrate before they can determine the words for their ideas. This is okay! You may choose to use a word bank or a word wall to facilitate spellings. For example, if making a Four Square about the zoo, brainstorm a list of things from the zoo, and write these on chart paper. Post this in a place your writers can easily see while writing. This will help your writers to feel more confident about using complicated, hard-to-spell words.

As you model for the students, be sure to read through the Four Square as a fluent paragraph. Reading the Four Square as contiguous text will help your students to see how it will transfer to paragraph form later on. At this point, our paragraph reads:

School is a great place. We learn here. We meet friends. We play in school. I love school.

Note that a specific effort is made to start our sentences with different words. Challenge your superstar students to do this too. Writing is more interesting when we can vary our sentences.

Consider making these Four Squares into mini-books. Cut a piece of construction paper in half (hamburger-style), and then fold it. When the Four Square is cut apart, the center box becomes the title for the front and boxes 2 to 5 become the content of the book. You'll only need to staple and it's a book!

Reproducible practice pages and book templates follow.

