

TIRÉ À PART

2^e année du 1^{er} cycle
2^e secondaire

Topics for every occasion

2



Topics for Every Occasion

2

*Subject ideas
for various written and oral situations*

Topics for Every Occasion 2

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FOREWORD

Providing different writing and oral situations is necessary in every classroom to help students develop their writing and oral skills. Diversifying topics within these situations is equally important to encourage personal expression and creativity.

If varying the situations by having students write short paragraphs, compositions, letters, articles, poems, song lyrics, design posters or flyers and do orals, debates or discussions seems like a relatively simple task, finding a wide range of topics within each one is not often the case. It is not always easy for the teacher to come up on a regular basis with a list of topics that are both diversified and interesting to the class as a whole. *Topics for Every Occasion* seeks to help teachers in this task by suggesting varied topics in an array of writing and oral situations.

Teachers can of course transform any given topic to meet the class' interests and/or needs more fully. With their teacher's approval, the students can do the same, provided it increases their overall motivation by making the writing or oral exercise more enjoyable for them.

The topic suggestions can therefore be used as proposed or in whichever way needed to make written and oral expression a more fulfilling and pleasant classroom experience for students and teachers alike.

The author

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ESL CORE PROGRAM AND COMPETENCIES

Learning English gives the ESL students access to a wealth of information and entertainment available in the media. It also broadens their opportunity to communicate with people who speak the language in Quebec, Canada and throughout the world and so enables them to construct their understanding of other cultures and their world-view.

The Secondary Cycle One ESL program builds on language skills learned in the Elementary ESL program. Its focus is on the continued development of the three following competencies initiated at the elementary level:

- *The student interacts orally in English.*
- *The student reinvests understanding of texts (by using any form of English communication i.e. spoken, written or visual).*
- *The student writes and produces texts.*

From closely guided second language learners at the elementary level, the Secondary Cycle One ESL students progress, becoming more autonomous and confident learners in their work to further develop those competencies.

The Secondary Cycle One ESL program is based on the communicative approach, strategy-based learning, cooperative learning and cognitive approaches to language learning. As in the elementary school program, evaluation at the secondary level has a double purpose, namely to support learning and recognize the competencies.

Previously, the secondary school objective-based program taught listening, speaking, reading and writing skills separately for specific purposes. The new ESL program transcends the sum of those skills by developing the three competencies within an interactive learning environment. Unlike the former individually-taught skills, the three competencies draw upon each other as their reinvestment is carried through each other.

To maximize the development of each of the three competencies, certain conditions must ideally be put into place:

- Cooperation and collaboration in a trusting and respectful classroom environment are required between the students and their English teacher to better develop communicative competence.
- A stimulating English class environment where an array of visual and auditory stimuli, material resources and human support and feedback are a must to properly immerse the learner and help him/her eventually attain a good command of English.
- The active participation of the students in their language development and competency evaluation supported by the constant encouragement and guidance of the teacher are also crucial in the English learning process.

Topics for Every Occasion helps the core and enriched ESL students to focus mostly on the development of the third competency brought forth by the new ESL program by which they will develop additional means to communicate. Where the core students' focus is on attaining eventual written accuracy and effectiveness throughout the development of the competency, the enriched students' interest lies in the further pursuit and

enrichment of their already high level of written proficiency. *Topics for Every Occasion*, also touching the other two competencies, is clearly competency-oriented:

- The students are prompted to *interact orally in English* through the various proposed oral and debate/discussion topics.
- When asked to rewrite lyrics to well-known songs the students work on *reinvesting their understanding of texts*.
- The various popular and information-based writing situations geared towards different audiences and purposes, give the students the incentive and opportunity to expand their knowledge of internal and external features of texts and *write and produce* meaningful and creative *texts* of their own.

Worked on at a beginner's level or at a more advanced level, the *Topics for Every Occasion* writing and oral activities are a step toward making the ESL present-day students more aware of their responsibility in developing proper learning strategies and getting interactively involved in their language learning experience.

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Whenever needed and if your teacher doesn't provide you with specific ones, refer to these general guides for writing a composition:

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A COMPOSITION

TITLE

- Write the title of the composition on the first line.
- Space the title so that it is in the middle of the line.
- Capitalize the first and last words and all other words except short prepositions (at, in, on...), conjunctions (and, but, nor, or...) and articles (a, an, the).
- Do not put a period at the end of the title.

BODY OF THE COMPOSITION

- Skip a line between the title and the body of the composition.
- Indent the first word of each paragraph.
- The title is not part of the body of the composition. You must introduce your subject at the beginning of the composition and not depend on the title being at the top.
- Each new important idea you introduce and develop warrants the starting of a new paragraph.
- The concluding paragraph should summarize your topic or add a new idea.
- If a word must be divided at the end of a line, do so between syllables. Use a hyphen at the end of the first line.
- Write complete sentences.
- Write the composition the length asked for by your teacher. **If the writing pages provided in this booklet are insufficient, use their flip side for added space.**
- Write as legibly as possible in a neutral color: black or blue. Remember that you are writing something that somebody else will read.
- Proofread your composition. Grammar and spelling mistakes distract from the content.



1

Topic THEMES

Choose an idea among the following two. Follow the content development proposed for each one. Select an appropriate short title.

COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD

Setting the scene

There are so many different and exciting places in our world. Find a country you are particularly attracted to and write about it.

Body of the message

- Mention what and where the country is,
- write about the geographical characteristics (climate, particular landscape, flora, fauna...),
- say as much as you can about the people and their customs,
- say why you find this country so appealing and
- conclude by talking about your future plans to visit it or your past experience of having been there.

RACISM

Setting the scene

Having racist views is considered an anti-social and unacceptable behaviour. You will expand on this statement.

Body of the message

- Give your definition of racism,
- explain how people become racists (e.g. lack of acceptance or understanding of other cultures, bad parental example...),
- say how a racist attitude makes the targeted person feel,
- estimate the devastating impact of widespread and accepted racist behaviour on a country (think of the Holocaust and of American Black slavery),
- say how a tolerated racist conduct would encourage and reinforce other forms of discrimination (e.g. discrimination against the handicapped, against women, against poor people...),
- explain why a culturally diversified population enriches a country and
- imagine what living in a culturally unified and loving world would be like.

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**WRITING SONG LYRICS**

There is no set way to write the lyrics to a song, but there are a few basics that you will need to know:

- Write down the subject of the song, the idea or its message.
- Write down the words to the chorus of the song. The chorus is a bridge from one verse to the next. It must make sense to sing the words of the chorus in between the verses.
- From the chorus, you will also need to make up a catchy title for your song.
- Write a rough draft of the first verse of your song. This verse should draw attention to your song and make your audience want to listen.
- Write the second verse. In this part you will need to continue to tell the story and explain what the action is.
- In the third verse, tell more about your story. Add relevant information to your story to make the story even more interesting.
- Close the song by writing the fourth verse and bring it all together.
- Finally, read over your lyrics and change your sentences into lines. (OPTIONAL: After you have lines, go back and change the ending words so they rhyme. Do this with the chorus too.) Every lyric should be of relatively equal length so the song will glide along and not be choppy.
- After you have completed writing your song, edit it.



Here is a theme that can be used as the basis of a song. To make your song writing experience easier and more pleasant for you, simply change the lyrics* to an already existing song to give it an entirely new and interesting dimension.

*** NOTE**

If completely changing a song's lyrics is difficult for you, another solution lies in slightly transforming them. You will thus keep some of the song's original message and basic ideas while introducing a few original and interesting ones of your own.

If you are artistically-inclined and feel up to it, composing both lyrics and melody could prove to be a challenging and greatly rewarding experience.

Follow the preceding song writing guidelines and the following content development proposed.

BEAUTY

Setting the scene

Beautiful lyrics and a wonderful melody to carry them straight into someone's heart and soul is what a song is all about. You will experience this new challenge of becoming a song writer by translating *beauty* into the lyrics of a song.

Body of the message

- Define *beauty*,
- say where it is found (i.e. in nature, in good people, in a healthy body, in meaningful relationships, in children...),
- write about inner and outer beauty:
 - define each one and
 - say which one is longer-lasting and supersedes the other in importance and
- reflect on how lovers appear beautiful to one another regardless of the imperfections of their features: *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.*



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