

## UNIT 2: Informative Essay



© Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company • Image Credits: ©Dmitry Pichugin/Fotolia

# Ancient Civilizations

## UNIT 2

# Informative Essay

### STEP

1

## **ANALYZE THE MODEL**

*Evaluate informative essays on Cuzco, Peru, and Machu Picchu.*

An informative essay, also called an expository essay, is a short work of nonfiction that informs and explains. Unlike fiction, nonfiction is mainly written to convey factual information, although writers of nonfiction shape information in a way that matches their own purposes. Nonfiction writing can be found in newspaper, magazine, and online articles, as well as in biographies, speeches, movie and book reviews, and true-life adventure stories.

The nonfiction topics that you will read about in this unit discuss real facts and events about ancient civilizations and structures.

**IN THIS UNIT,** you will analyze information from nonfiction articles, graphics, and data displays. You will study a variety of text structures that are frequently used in the writing of informative text. You will use these text structures to plan and write your essays.

### STEP

2

## **PRACTICE THE TASK**

*Write a comparison/contrast essay on how the Mayan and Egyptian pyramids are alike and different.*

### STEP

3

## **PERFORM THE TASK**

*Write an informative essay about the successes of the Maya, the Aztecs, and the Inca.*

# ANALYZE THE MODEL

## *Exploring Peru*



### You will read:

- ▶ **AN INSTRUCTIONAL ARTICLE**  
*Chart a Course That Works!*

### You will analyze:

- ▶ **TWO STUDENT MODELS**  
*Cuzco, Peru*  
*Machu Picchu*



## Source Materials for Step 1

Ms. Margolis' students read the article below to help them learn strategies for structuring informative essays. As you read, underline information that you find useful.

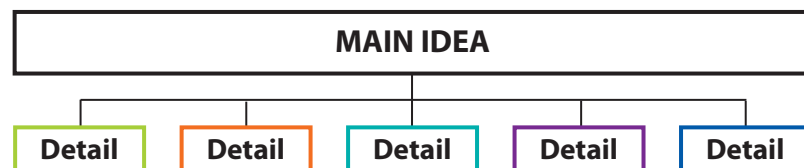
### NOTES

## Chart a Course That Works!

You probably have already had tough writing assignments that required you to plan, research, and write an informative essay. Whether the subject is science, history, or another nonfiction topic, you should decide in advance how you will structure your essay. Don't just start somewhere and keep on writing until you have met the page requirement. Structure first! What do I mean by structure? A structure is a system in which the parts all have a function. When you write an informative essay, each part should support your message. Graphic organizers can help you plan your organizational structure.

### Main Idea and Supporting Details

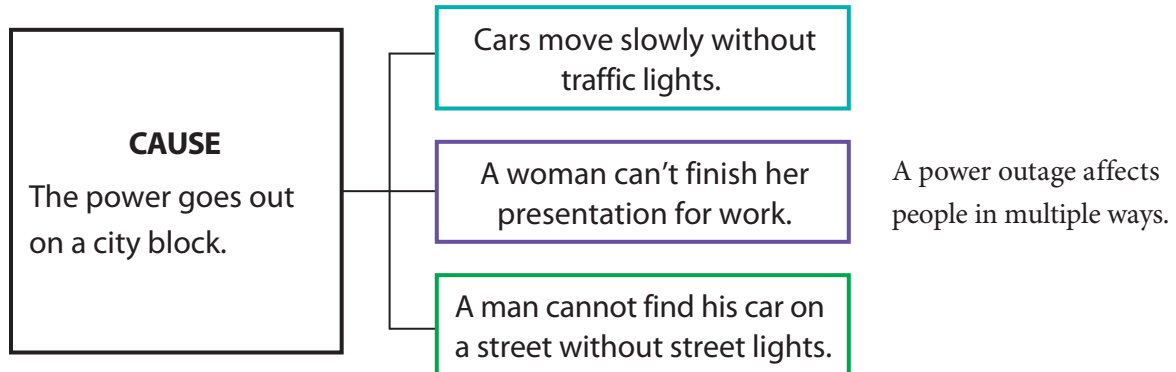
The purpose of any informative essay is to give your reader more information about a topic, whether that be explaining a topic or describing a process. Use a graphic organizer like the one below to focus on your main idea and the details or descriptions to support it. Jot down your main idea or central point. Then identify the details you will use to support or explain your main idea. To keep on track, refer regularly to your graphic organizer as you write.



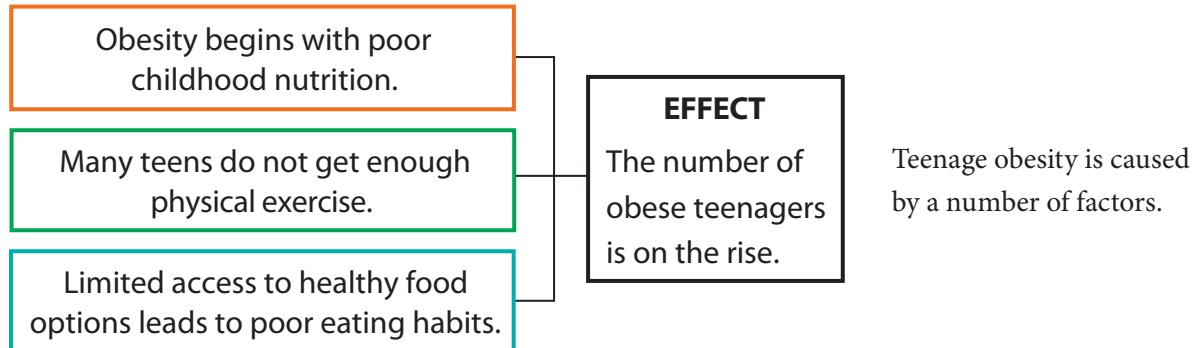
## Developing Your Topic

Many scientific and historical essays revolve around cause-effect relationships. Sometimes multiple factors contribute to one event. Sometimes a single event can lead to multiple outcomes. In some situations, one event triggers the next event to happen, and that causes another event to occur.

### 1. Cause-to-Effect Organization



### 2. Multiple-Causes Organization



### 3. Chronological Order

Events happen in chronological order, which means that one event follows another. There is a sequence of events that occur in time order.

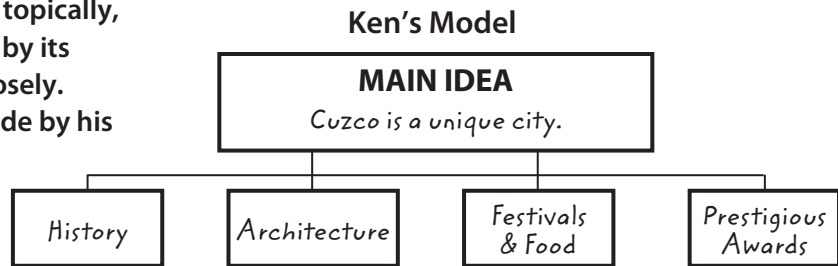


### Discuss and Decide

What are some events that can be told in chronological order?

## Analyze Two Student Models for Step 1

Ken structured his informative essay topically, relating the main idea first, followed by its supporting details. Read his essay closely. The red side notes are comments made by his teacher, Ms. Margolis.



Ken Norris  
Ms. Margolis, English  
March 15

### Cuzco, Peru

In southeastern Peru, nestled in the Andes at a height of 11,200 feet above sea level, is one of the world's most amazing cities. It's Cuzco, or *Qosqo* as it was called in ancient Incan times, a name which means "navel of the earth."

*good chronological  
account of the history  
of the area*

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Cuzco is its history. The city is said to be one of the oldest inhabited developments in the Americas. The earliest inhabitants were the Killki; their culture was dominant in the area for over a thousand years. The next important group in the area were the Incas. Their civilization began in the 12th century, and by the early 1400s the Inca Empire began to expand very quickly. Sometime around 1450, the Inca (king) Pachacutec developed Cuzco into the capital of the empire. The city was designed in the shape of a puma, and two rivers were diverted with canals to prevent flooding. By 1500, Cuzco was one of the richest and most important cities in the Americas.

But then something new happened on the continent. Spanish conquistadors arrived. The Incas were involved in civil war, many fell victim to European diseases, and their warriors were no match for Spanish armored horseback cavalry. In 1533, a Spanish force of just 180 men under Francisco Pizarro took the city. Three

years later, a force of between 10,000 and 100,000 Incas tried unsuccessfully to reclaim it. Cuzco remained under Spanish rule until 1821, when Peru declared independence.

One of the results of the Spanish conquest was the remarkable mix of architecture in Cuzco. The Inca stonework and precious metals were like nothing Spaniards had ever seen. Great blocks of stone were so accurately cut that there was no need for mortar. One such block that remains as part of a wall weighs over 30 tons. The Spanish took the precious metals, including 700 gold panels from the Qorikancha temple that each weighed nearly five pounds. They destroyed the Inca's religious and political buildings, but built their own churches and palaces on the Inca foundations. The city retains its Inca layout and numerous examples of both Inca stonework and Spanish baroque architecture.

A modern visitor to Cuzco will delight in the city's festivals, its indigenous foods (such as the famed "cuy," roasted guinea pig), its temples and palaces, and its sacred history.

For these and many other reasons, Cuzco is a most amazing city. It is no wonder that it has been called the archaeological capital of the Americas, has been named to UNESCO's Cultural Heritage List, and is also a World Heritage Site.

*very interesting to learn how the Spanish and Incan influences both remain in the city*

*Did the Spanish conquerors have an influence on these festivals?*

### Discuss and Decide

Discuss at least two reasons why Cuzco is considered a World Heritage site. Cite text evidence in your discussion.

Claudia chose to use a chronological text structure for her essay. In this essay, Claudia describes the history of Machu Picchu, from its discovery to its classification as a World Heritage site. Ms. Margolis made her notes in red.

#### Claudia's Model



Claudia Zhang  
Ms. Margolis, English  
March 15

## Machu Picchu

### Machu Picchu's Beginnings

Machu Picchu, “The Lost City of the Incas,” is the site of one of the most well-known set of ruins in the world. Historians believe that Machu Picchu was constructed during the height of the Inca Empire in the 15th century. About 100 years after it was built, Machu Picchu was abandoned, though historians are not sure of the exact reason why. The Spanish had arrived in South America around this time, so some consider this a possible explanation for its abandonment. However, there is no evidence that the Spanish ever entered Machu Picchu. Some historians believe a smallpox epidemic forced the Inca to leave Machu Picchu.

*That is quite the mystery! Are there any other theories to account for its abandonment?*

Another mystery that surrounds Machu Picchu is what its purpose was. Some archaeologists believe that the city was a royal estate for Inca nobles and emperors. Other guesses have included a women’s retreat, a city created solely for the coronation of kings, a prison, or a site for testing new crops. The belief that Machu Picchu might have been a religious site is supported by its geographic location, close to the mountains and other natural features that were important to the Inca.

### Hiram Bingham and Machu Picchu

Hiram Bingham, an American archaeologist, was searching for the Incan city of Vilcabamba when he arrived at Machu Picchu in



the summer of 1911. Bingham and his team of explorers walked on foot and traveled on mules to journey from Cuzco to the Urubamba Valley in Peru. A farmer told them of the ruins at the top of the mountain. On July 24, led by a small group of peasants and an 11-year-old boy, Bingham first saw Machu Picchu.

Bingham excavated artifacts from the site and brought them to Yale University. He also wrote a book called *The Lost City of the Incas* that prompted many eager tourists to travel to Peru and make the same journey Bingham had made along the Inca Trail. Machu Picchu was no longer known to just the local peasants, but had become a travel destination for the world.

In the history books, Bingham is listed as the person who made Machu Picchu known to the world, but it is believed that missionaries and other explorers had arrived at Machu Picchu in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

### Location

Machu Picchu is located in the mountain forests of the Peruvian Andes. Terraces, walls, and stairways peek out from the sloping mountains, creating a sight that is beautiful to the eye. The Incas used stones to hammer the larger stones together snugly, without mortar.

The site has terraced fields and a complex irrigation system that would have been useful in the different sectors of the city, including a farming zone, a royal district, a sacred area, and a residential neighborhood.

### Machu Picchu in the Present

In 2007, Machu Picchu was named one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. It is Peru's most visited site, as well as South America's most famous ruins. To protect the ruins and prevent mountainside erosion, the government has taken steps to ensure that tourists exercise proper care when visiting the site.

*Think about including more detail in this paragraph: how long did the trip take?*

*I see why he wouldn't be named as the person to "discover" Machu Picchu, since it had never been lost!*

*The Inca were an advanced society. Strong facts support the theories you presented about the site's purpose.*

## Discuss and Decide

Why is Machu Picchu known as the "Lost City of the Incas"?

# Terminology of Informative Essays

Read each term and explanation. Then look back and analyze each student model. Find an example to complete the chart.

| Term                              | Explanation   | Example from Student Essays |
|-----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>topic</b>                      | The <b>topic</b> is a word or phrase that tells what the essay is about.  |                             |
| <b>text structure</b>             | The <b>text structure</b> is the organizational pattern of an essay.  |                             |
| <b>focus</b>                      | The <b>focus</b> is the controlling, or overarching, idea that states the main point the writer chooses to make.  |                             |
| <b>supporting evidence</b>        | The <b>supporting evidence</b> is relevant quotations and concrete details that support the focus.  |                             |
| <b>domain-specific vocabulary</b> | <b>Domain-specific vocabulary</b> is content-specific words that are not generally used in conversation.  |                             |
| <b>text features</b>              | <b>Text features</b> are design elements that help organize the text, such as headings, boldface type, italic type, bulleted or numbered lists, sidebars, and graphic aids including charts, tables, timelines, illustrations, and photographs. |                             |

**Prose Constructed-Response** Which essay provided more details to support its main idea? Support your claim by citing text evidence.

---



---



---