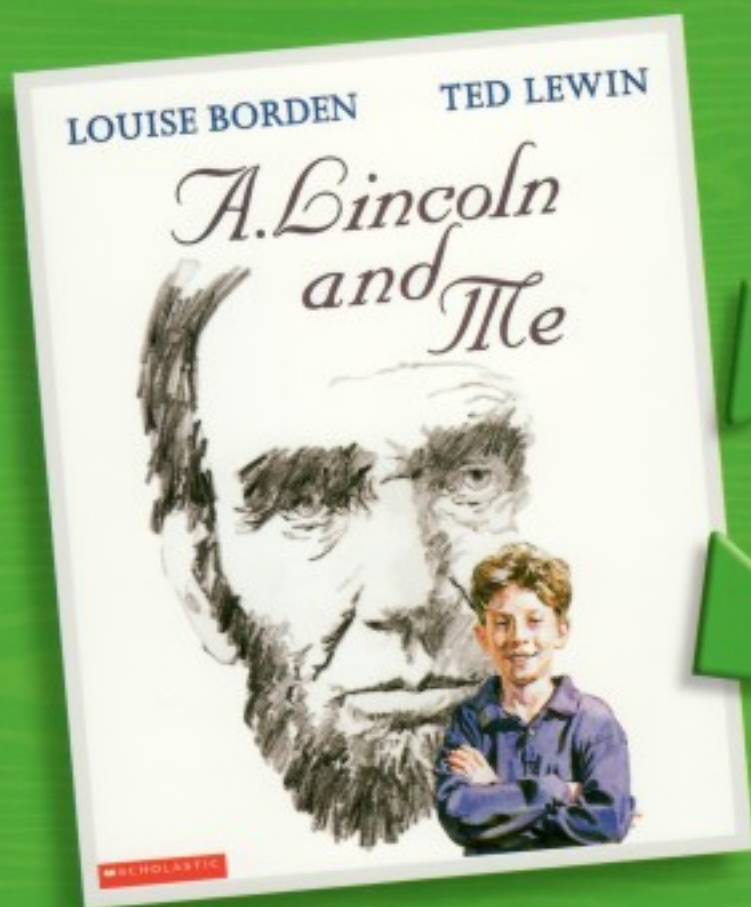


The Trait Crate™

# TEACHING ORGANIZATION

USING *A. Lincoln and Me*

**RUTH CULHAM**

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an excellent text to share with students to inspire them to write comparison/contrast essays comparing their physical and emotional characteristics and life goals to those of an important historical figure.

## Introducing the Organization Trait

Organization is the internal structure of the writing. In expository writing that informs or explains, the writing can be structured in several different ways: point-by-point analysis, comparison/contrast, deductive logic, or development of a central theme. The writing should unfold purposefully and logically, with details tied together that artfully lead the reader through the writer's thinking to a new understanding of the topic. That's a lot for fifth graders to master, but it's never too early to introduce them to the key concepts that make organization in writing effective and strong. You may choose to introduce this trait by displaying the Key Qualities of the Organization Trait transparency (reproducible version on page 9) and saying something like the following:

The organization of your paper is like the skeleton or bones of the body. You need strong organization to keep the ideas and details in shape and make them shine. How you begin your writing, put the details in order, and wrap up your piece are important skills that good writers develop over time. To be strong in this trait, we look for the following qualities:

- The writing has a brilliant beginning.
- The writing has a mighty middle that develops logically.
- The writing concludes with an excellent ending.
- The details tie together so the writing is easy to follow.

To write well in the organization trait you will need to figure out a structure that suits the ideas you plan to develop, so that the details can be tied together. In this lesson, we're going to read a book that uses a comparison/contrast structure, and later, in a writing activity, you'll try using this organizational pattern in a piece of your own.



### Key Qualities of the Organization Trait

- The writing has a brilliant beginning.
- The writing has a mighty middle that develops logically.
- The writing concludes with an excellent ending.
- The details tie together so the writing is easy to follow.

## Prereading to Consider Patterns of Organization

- 1 To help students think about possible organizational structures to use in their writing, ask them to open a nonfiction textbook that is used regularly in class. It might be a science, social studies, or math textbook.
- 2 Have students examine the textbook for its organizational structure. Ask students to thumb through the book and see what organizational clues are



Think About:

# Grouping Details Logically

- Are the details in an order that makes sense?
- Do all the details tie together?
- Is the writing easy to follow?

# Organization of Nonfiction Texts



## **Point-by-point analysis**

EXAMPLE: may be found in a sportscaster's text to break down a game, play by play.

## **Compare/contrast**

EXAMPLE: may be found in a science textbook as authors show differences and similarities among types of animals.

## **Deductive logic**

EXAMPLE: may be found in an essay where the author explains his or her point of view on an issue such as the environment.

## **Development of a central theme**

EXAMPLE: may be found in a text written to explain the history of the American flag.

# Gathering Information to Write



Who is the person you will write about?	Was this person poor, of modest means, or rich as he/she grew up?
Where did you find information about this person? (Please cite your sources.)	Why is this person well known?
What are this person's physical characteristics?	What is one personality trait of this person that you admire?
Who else would know this person?	What things does this person like to do?
What would this person's best friends say about him/her?	What is special or unique about this person?
In what ways are you and this person most alike?	In what ways are you most different?
What surprises did you find as you researched information about this person?	Other areas to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• favorite music, movies, colors, time of the year</li><li>• pets and favorite animals</li><li>• brothers and sisters or an only child</li><li>• favorite foods</li><li>• best subject in school</li></ul>