Unit 2: Finding Your Voice

“Security represents your sense of worth, your identity, your emotional anchorage, your self-esteem, your personal strength or lack of it.”

Stephen R. Covey

Everyone has a valuable opinion that needs to be shared with others. This is how families are developed, communities emerge and countries are formed. Finding the right way to express these views and then to combine them in such a way that peace and civilization transpire in a productive way becomes the goal of many members of those families, communities or countries. As you observed in the previous unit, this task does not always move as successfully as one would hope. There are many factors that affect the success of the best of plans. In this unit, you will be given the opportunity to draw on various forms of expressing beliefs and of creating security within yourself as well as in the global communities.

You will read a variety of informational and fictitious material dealing with disasters, self-esteem and values. You will learn how to use rhetorical devices like euphemisms, analogies, and other persuasive techniques while you create regimented pieces (i.e. descriptive paragraph, persuasive essay) and more personal writing (i.e. responses, eulogy).

Good luck as you move toward the midpoint of this course.

Each lesson will take between three and five hours to complete, although some individuals may take more or less time. For each lesson, there will be material to read and study and assignments to complete and submit to your instructor. Take your time, review the marking criteria before you begin each written assignment, and be sure to edit and revise your work.
Lesson 6: Dealing with tragedy (100 marks)

We all encounter different levels of tragedy as we pass through life and we all handle these events differently. In this lesson, you will use the 1992 calamity at the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia as the backdrop for your writing. You will be given the chance to reflect on the feelings of the people who were involved in the tragedy as you write a personal response to a commentary and use euphemisms to pay tribute to someone who may have been lost in the tragedy.

This lesson has three Key Questions that must be submitted for evaluation.

Key Questions:

Key Question #12: Complete a response to “Westray Diary” by Sheree Fitch
Key Question #13: Compose four euphemisms based on the Westray Mine disaster
Key Question #14: Write a eulogy for one of the miners at Westray Mine

Evaluation Overview:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Question</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Response</td>
<td>Knowledge/Understanding</td>
<td>40 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Euphemisms</td>
<td>Application</td>
<td>20 marks</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Eulogy</td>
<td>Thinking/Inquiry</td>
<td>40 marks</td>
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Expectations

- select and read texts for a variety of purposes, with an emphasis on extending knowledge of the elements of literary genres and the organization of informational materials, collecting and assessing information, responding imaginatively, and relating literary experiences to personal experience;
- consider the characteristics of the intended audience in selecting the form and developing the content for each piece of writing;
- select first or third person and an appropriate level of language to suit the form, purpose, and audience of their writing;
- use a single, controlling idea and connecting words and phrases to structure a series of paragraphs;
- consider reactions of teachers, peers, and others in revising and editing written work;
- construct a variety of complete and correct sentences, using adjective and adverb phrases and noun, adjective, and adverb clauses;
- use a variety of resources to correct errors in spelling (e.g., dictionaries, electronic spell checkers);
- use punctuation correctly;
• use appropriate concrete and figurative language from a variety of sources to make writing vivid, precise, and interesting to its intended audience

The day the mine blew up…

At 5:18 a.m. on Saturday May 9, 1992, the Westray Mine in Pictou County, Nova Scotia blew up, killing all 26 men who were working underground. The explosion was so strong it blew the top off the mine entrance, more than a mile above, and blew away steel roof supports throughout the mine. In the nearby towns, windows shattered and houses shook. Many families in the small community were affected because they had family, friends or neighbours who worked the mines.

The radio commentary you are about to read focuses on the feelings of someone who might not have been living directly in the community, but who, nonetheless, experienced anxiety and grief as a result of the explosion.

Key Question #12 (40 marks)

Read the radio commentary “Westray Diary” by Sheree Fitch on page 147 in Sightlines and complete a two page double-spaced response about it.

Comment on the story itself as well as your reactions. Explain how you might you feel if you lost a relative to a similar disaster? Explain the emotions you might express at such a time.

Euphemisms

Euphemisms are words or phrases that are not as expressive or direct but are considered less distasteful or less offensive than stating something plainly. They are often thought of as "sayings".

For example, if you were to tell someone that she looked poor, fat and old, it would often be considered impolite. Therefore, these words are often euphemized in English. Some possible euphemisms for “poor” might be low-income, working class or living on modest means. “Fat” can be stated more gently as overweight, stout, portly or husky. “Old” might sound nicer if you were referred to as elderly, mature or traditional. Political leaders are notorious for their use of euphemisms because they always want to put a positive “spin” or feeling on negative news they might have to deliver.
Support Question #1

1. Consider the following euphemisms and suggest a word or phrase which each might be representing:
   
   a) substance abuser
   b) house of ill repute
   c) passed away or deceased
   d) dentures
   e) downsize
   f) sanitation person
   g) incarcerated
   h) make love
   i) unmotivated
   j) perspire

2. Consider the following words or phrases and suggest a euphemism which might be less harsh:
   
   a) sick
   b) stupid
   c) used
   d) toilet
   e) unemployed
   f) noisy
   g) ugly
   h) secretary
   i) victim
   j) one room apartment

Key Question #13 (20 marks)

Imagine if you had to deliver the news of the Westray mine disaster to a very young child or a very ill or elderly relative. What euphemisms could you use to try and capture the mood of the situation, but to soften the blow of the devastating news? **Come up with four euphemisms and explain what you mean in each case.**

Writing a eulogy

A **eulogy** is a speech that is delivered at a funeral or a memorial to remember the person who has passed away. There are a few considerations you should make before you begin to write your tribute.

**Gather your facts:** Speak to family members, friends and co-workers of the deceased and ask them to share their stories and memories about the deceased.
Organize your ideas: Decide which stories you want to share. Look for similarities in the ideas. For example, several people might remember that the deceased was a great joker or a very kind person or a fabulous cook. Try to group the stories into categories.

Just start writing: Obviously, you do not want to leave the audience with the impression that the deceased was a very nasty person (even if this may have been so at times). Start putting your thoughts down on paper, according to your plan, and worry about making it “audience appropriate” after you are finished getting all of the stories down.

Clean up time: Now go through your thoughts and eliminate any truly negative comments. If you feel that you can’t eliminate them, then choose euphemisms that will make the memory less harsh. Be sure that you have a clear introduction and conclusion that focus your writing and let the audience know who the deceased person was, your connection to them and some significant things about them.

Practice, practice, practice: It’s always easier to talk about something with which you are very familiar so whenever you need to deliver a speech, always rehearse it several times before you must present it. You do not need to memorize these things, but do be sure that you have gone through it several times and do not need to read the entire piece.

Key Question #14 (40 marks)

Write a two page double-spaced eulogy for one of the dead miners. Consider what you might want others to remember about the miner and the disaster. You may wish to review some of the stories about the Westray Mine disaster at the library or on the Internet so you get a feel for the type of people who worked in the mine.

Submit your polished eulogy for evaluation.

Evaluation: Your eulogy will be evaluated using the rubric that follows this assignment.

Rubric: Writing a Eulogy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Level 1 50 – 59%</th>
<th>Level 2 60 – 69%</th>
<th>Level 3 70 – 79%</th>
<th>Level 4 80 – 100%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Understanding</td>
<td>No attempt has been made to relate the eulogy to the person.</td>
<td>Some of the eulogy is related to the assigned topic, but the reader does not learn much about the person.</td>
<td>Most of the eulogy is related to the assigned topic. The story wanders off at some points, but the reader can still learn something about the person.</td>
<td>The entire eulogy is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the person.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thinking/Inquiry</strong></td>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>Application</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Use of creativity and description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ideas seem to be randomly arranged. There has been little attempt made to group memories according to common threads.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uses the writing process with limited competence. There are more than 5 errors in grammar or spelling</strong></td>
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<td>(10 marks)</td>
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<td>(10 marks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The reader has trouble figuring out what the eulogy is about (1 specific example is offered).</td>
<td>The eulogy is a little hard to follow. Stories and memories are grouped with some common threads. The transitions are sometimes not clear.</td>
<td>Uses the writing process with moderate competence. There are 4-5 spelling and punctuation errors in the final draft.</td>
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<td>The eulogy is fairly well organized. Stories and memories are grouped well according to common threads. There is some insight provided. Clear transitions are used.</td>
<td>Uses the writing process with considerable competence. There are 3-4 spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft.</td>
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<td>Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell what the eulogy is about (5+ specific examples are offered). Euphemisms are used very effectively.</td>
<td>Uses the writing process with a high degree competence. There are no spelling or punctuation errors in the final draft.</td>
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