

“Best in Class” by Margaret Talbot BELLRINGER

Naming a valedictorian is a long-standing and treasured academic custom. And yet the increased competition and deliberate gaming of the system has made it into a contentious issue. Consider the issues surrounding the naming of a valedictorian. Then write an essay in which you take a position on the issue, supporting your view with appropriate evidence.

***What is your thesis statement?

Margaret Talbot is correct/incorrect in her assertion that
_____.

OR The process of having valedictorians proves effective...

OR While some may argue that..., _____

Reason One:	Reason Two:	Reason Three:
Example 1	Example 1	Example 1
Example 2	Example 2	Example 2
Example 3	Example 3	Example 3

SUPER SENTENCE NOTES:

Appositives

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that tells you more about a nearby noun or pronoun. In each sentence below, the appositive is bracketed. The arrow shows the noun or pronoun that the appositive describes.

It turned out that one of the top students, **Denny Davies**, had learned of this rule.

—MARGARET TALBOT

Kennedy, **a wiry fifty-nine-year-old who has a stern buzz cut**, was in 1997 the principal of Sarasota High School.

—MARGARET TALBOT

In 1981, two professors . . . began following the lives of eighty-one high-school valedictorians—**forty-six women and thirty-five men** from Illinois.

—MARGARET TALBOT

Rhetorical and Stylistic Strategy

An appositive serves two rhetorical and stylistic functions:

- First, an appositive can *clarify* a term by providing a proper noun or a synonym for the term, by defining or explaining the term, or by getting more specific.

PROPER NOUN Its hero is Scout's father, **the saintly Atticus Finch**.

—FRANCINE PROSE

SYNONYM . . . an automaton, **a machine**, can be made to keep a school so.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

LONGER DEFINITION First published in 1970, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is what we have since learned to recognize as a “survivor” memoir, a first-person narrative of victimization and recovery.

—FRANCINE PROSE

EXPLANATION [O]ne might suppose that teenagers might enjoy the transformative science-fiction aspects of *The Metamorphosis*, a story about a young man so alienated from his “dysfunctional” family that he turns . . . into a giant beetle.

—FRANCINE PROSE

SPECIFICITY Yet in other genres—fiction and memoir—the news is far more upsetting.

—FRANCINE PROSE

- Second, an appositive can *smooth* choppy writing. Note how stilted each of the following items is compared with the preceding versions.

Its hero is Scout’s father. His name is Atticus Finch. He is saintly.

An automaton is a machine. An automaton can be made to keep a school so.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings was first published in 1970. It is what we have since learned to recognize as a “survivor” memoir. A “survivor” memoir is a first-person narrative. The narrative deals with victimization and recovery.

[O]ne might suppose that teenagers might enjoy the transformative science-fiction aspects of *The Metamorphosis*. *The Metamorphosis* is a story about a young man.

Yet in other genres the news is far more upsetting. Other genres are fiction and memoir.

Each of the following sentences includes one or more appositives. Identify the appositives, explain their effect, and then write a sentence of your own using that sentence as a model.

So to regard the young child, the young man, requires, no doubt, rare patience: a patience that nothing but faith in the medial forces of the soul can give.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Education*

In their classes, we wrote essays about our families, friends, hobbies, future dreams—personal subjects we had not written about at school since third grade.

—Kyoko Mori, *School*