Level 1: A Focus on Literal Reading and Paragraph Writing

A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

Ashley Womble lives in New York City. In the following article, which first appeared in Salon magazine in July 2010, the author writes about Jay, her mentally ill brother who became homeless.

Steps to Understanding What You Read

Step 1: Preview the reading; when you have finished complete the following items:
Indicate whether each statement is true (T) or false (F).

___T___ a. This reading is about mental illness and homelessness.
___T___ b. The tragic event that led to Jay’s manic belief in “the Cahoots” was 9/11.

Step 2: Connect the reading to your own experience by thinking about homelessness. What experience have you had with homeless people? How do you feel when you pass by them on the street? Do you ever wonder about their family? Have you ever tried to help someone who did not want your help?

Reading Tip
We often make assumptions about a certain group of people until we meet a member of that group who challenges us to re-examine our preconceived ideas. Oftentimes, we miss out on opportunities to broaden our circle of friendship because we ignore or shun those folks whose lives do not conform to our societal norms. As you read "A Brother Lost," notice how the author’s perception of homelessness changes.

A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

1 Like any New Yorker, I was no stranger to homeless people. I passed by them on my way to the shiny glass tower where I worked for a glossy women’s magazine: the older lady perched
atop a milk crate in the subway station, the man curled up in a dirty sleeping bag and clutching a stuffed animal. They were unfortunate ornaments of the city, unlucky in ways I never really considered...

UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING THE READING

A. Building Vocabulary

Context

Using context and a dictionary if necessary, determine the meaning of each word as it is used in the selection.

1. ravaged (paragraph 3)
   a. starved to death
   b. invaded forcefully
   c. teased mercilessly
   d. caused terrible damage

2. sanity (paragraph 18)
   a. strong desire
   b. mental illness
   c. courage
   d. mental soundness

Word Parts

A Review of Prefixes

ANTI- means against
DIS- means not, apart or away

Use your knowledge of word parts and the review above to fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

1. Antipsychotic medications (paragraph 4) are medications that work against psychosis to improve a person’s mental health.
2. The therapist who *discouraged* (paragraph 17) the author did not encourage her to let her brother stay with her.

**B. Understanding the Thesis and Other Main Ideas**

*Select the best answer.*

**b** 1. The best statement of the thesis or central thought of “A Brother Lost” is
   a. people who suffer from mental illness are lost.
   b. one’s preconceived notions about groups of people are oftentimes shattered after one gets to know and understand someone in the group.
   c. love for one’s family member cannot be extinguished by the ravages of a mental illness.
   d. it is futile to try to help someone who does not want to be helped.

**c** 2. The topic of paragraph 4 is
   a. the Cahoots.
   b. busing tables.
   c. Jay’s abnormal behavior.
   d. the antipsychotic medicine.

**C. Identifying Details**

*Select the best answer.*

**c** 1. In which state did Jay live before he disappeared?
   a. Arizona
   b. New York
   c. Texas
   d. Florida

**c** 2. The purpose of the Jay’s imagined New World Order was to
   a. control the thoughts of all people.
   b. monitor the actions of all people.
c. overturn Christianity.
d. abolish all government.

D. Recognizing Transitions

Select the best answer.

___a___ 1. Which transitional word or phrase is a clue to the dominant organizational pattern of paragraph 2?
   a. in the days that followed
   b. created and contacted
   c. even the FBI
   d. still living in our hometown

E. Reading and Thinking Visually

Select the best answer.

___d___ 1. The author likely chose to include the photo on page 00 to
   a. illustrate the threat that a woman feels when she walks the streets of New York.
   b. illustrate the juxtaposition of good and evil.
   c. illustrate the differences between living in light and living in darkness.
   d. illustrate the indifference people have toward the homeless.

WRITING IN RESPONSE TO THE READING

F. Reviewing and Organizing Ideas with a Paraphrase

Complete the following paraphrase of paragraph 3 of the reading by filling in the missing words or phrases.

The author says that since her brother now struggles with mental illness___, she no longer expects much from him. Instead of going to college___ to pursue his dream of becoming a lawyer___, he became totally absorbed with 911 conspiracy theory___. He was obsessed with the idea and convinced that "the Cahoots____", the group who planned 911____, were using a television_____ station to watch and control him day and night. As time passed, he came to
believe that the Cahoots were a part of the New World Order, and as an appointee of God, his job was to stop the Cahoots from overturning Christianity.

For paragraph 4 of the reading, write your own two sentence paraphrase.

His paranoid behavior affected the way he acted at home and in public, and he was not able to hold down a job. Because he didn't want to give in to the Cahoots, he refused medication, and as a result, he had no friends.

G. Examining the Issue

1. Is the author qualified to write on the topic? Why or why not? How do her own experiences inform the article?
2. Identify at least three issues presented in this reading. Then phrase each issue as a question that the author raises, discusses, or answers.

H. Writing Paragraphs

Write a paragraph in response to the following prompts.

1. Think of a situation in which you tried to help someone who was unwilling or unable to be helped. Write a paragraph describing that experience.
2. Do you agree with the author that the news media would have been more interested in her disappearance than that of her mentally ill brother? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.
3. Try to put yourself in the author’s shoes and imagine what you would have done. Do you think you would have been able to let your loved one go? Write a paragraph explaining your answer.
Level 2: A Focus on Critical Thinking and Essay writing

A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

Ashley Womble lives in New York City. In the following article, which first appeared in Salon magazine in July 2010, the author writes about Jay, her mentally ill brother who became homeless.

Steps to Understanding What You Read

Step 1: Preview the reading using the guidelines on page 00. When you have finished complete the following items:

Indicate whether each statement is true (T) or false (F).

___T___ a. This reading is about mental illness and homelessness.
___T___ b. The tragic event that led to Jay’s manic belief in “the Cahoots” was 9/11.

Step 2: Connect the reading to your own experience by thinking about homelessness. What experience have you had with homeless people? How do you feel when you pass by them on the street? Do you ever wonder about their family? Have you ever tried to help someone who did not want your help? Write a paragraph answering one of more of these questions.

Reading Tip

We often make assumptions about a certain group of people until we meet a member of that group who challenges us to re-examine our preconceived ideas. Oftentimes, we miss out on opportunities to broaden our circle of friendship because we ignore or shun those folks whose lives do not conform to our societal norms. As you read "A Brother Lost," notice how the author’s perception of homelessness changes.

A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

Like any New Yorker, I was no stranger to homeless people. I passed by them on my way to the shiny glass tower where I worked for a glossy women’s magazine: the older lady perched
atop a milk crate in the subway station, the man curled up in a dirty sleeping bag and clutching a stuffed animal. They were unfortunate ornaments of the city, unlucky in ways I never really considered . . .

UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING THE READING
A. Building Vocabulary

Context
Using context and a dictionary if necessary, determine the meaning of each word as it is used in the selection.

b 1. warrant (paragraph 2)
   a. cause
   b. justify
   c. offer
   d. document

c 2. eccentric (paragraph 3)
   a. inborn
   b. extreme
   c. odd
   d. challenging

Word Parts

A Review of Prefixes

ANTI- means against
DIS- means not, apart or away

Use your knowledge of word parts and the review above to fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

1. Antipsychotic medications (paragraph 4) are medications that work against _____ psychosis to improve a person’s mental health.
2. The therapist who discouraged (paragraph 17) the author did not encourage her to let her brother stay with her.

B. Understanding the Thesis and Other Main Ideas

Select the best answer.

_____b 1. The best statement of the thesis or central thought of “A Brother Lost” is
   a. people who suffer from mental illness are lost.
   b. one’s preconceived notions about groups of people are oftentimes shattered after one gets to know and understand someone in the group.
   c. love for one’s family member cannot be extinguished by the ravages of a mental illness.
   d. it is futile to try to help someone who does not want to be helped.

_____c 2. The topic of paragraph 4 is
   a. the Cahoots.
   b. busing tables.
   c. Jay’s abnormal behavior.
   d. the antipsychotic medicine.

_____a 3. What is the implied main idea of paragraph 19?
   a. We cannot help someone who does not want to be helped.
   b. Everyone who is homeless has chosen to be homeless.
   c. Most homeless people have families who love them.
   d. Homeless people are dirty, thin, and sickly.

C. Identifying Details

Select the best answer.

_____c 1. In which state did Jay live before he disappeared?
   a. Arizona
   b. New York
   c. Texas
2. The purpose of the Jay’s imagined New World Order was to
   a. control the thoughts of all people.
   b. monitor the actions of all people.
   c. overturn Christianity.
   d. abolish all government.

D. Recognizing Methods of Organization and Transitions

Select the best answer.

1. The organizational pattern used in paragraph 2 is
   a. listing/enumeration.
   b. classification.
   c. order of importance.
   d. chronological order.

2. What is the dominant organizational pattern of paragraph 3?
   a. comparison-contrast
   b. illustration
   c. cause-effect
   d. definition

3. Which transitional word or phrase is a clue to the dominant organizational pattern of paragraph 2?
   a. in the days that followed
   b. created and contacted
   c. even the FBI
   d. still living in our hometown
E. Reading and Thinking Visually

Select the best answer.

The author likely chose to include the photo on page 00 to
a. illustrate the threat that a woman feels when she walks the streets of New York.
b. illustrate the juxtaposition of good and evil.
c. illustrate the differences between living in light and living in darkness.
d. illustrate the indifference people have toward the homeless.

F. Figuring Out Implied Meanings

Indicate whether each statement is true (T) or false (F).

1. Before the encounter with her brother, the author ignored the homeless people that she passed each day. T
2. The author implies that all homeless people are mentally ill. F
3. According to the author, mentally ill people are not able to hold down a job. F
4. The author implies that the news media are not interested in the plight of the mentally ill. T
5. The author believes that her brother’s life would have been different if he had taken his medication. T

G. Thinking Critically about the Reading

Select the best answer.

The author’s main purpose in “A Brother Lost” is to
a. motivate others to volunteer with organizations that serve the mentally ill and the homeless.
b. tell the story of her mentally ill and homeless brother in hopes that others will have a greater understanding of this segment of the population.
c. provide a detailed psychological explanation of what happens to the mentally ill when they do not take their medication.
d. tell the story of how she lost her brother to mental illness.
2. The tone of the reading selection can best be described as
   a. serious and introspective.
   b. comic and dismissive.
   c. nostalgic and critical.
   d. admiring and informative.

3. To support her thesis and main ideas, the author uses all of the following types of evidence except
   a. research citations.
   b. personal experience.
   c. examples of bizarre behavior.
   d. description.

4. With which of the following statements would the author of “A Lost Brother” be most likely to disagree?
   a. Homeless people are real people.
   b. Love transcends a body caked in dirt and a mind ravaged by mental illness.
   c. Homeless people are unfortunate ornaments of the city.
   d. No matter how difficult it may be, allowing a person to choose his own path is often the right thing to do.

5. In paragraph 15, the author states that her brother answered proudly when asked if he were homeless. Why does the author use this word to describe the manner in which he answered?
   a. She wants the reader to understand that all people have value.
   b. She is implying that her brother is too sick to realize what a dangerous lifestyle he has chosen to live.
   c. She wants to send the reader a message about the pride that comes from choosing one’s own path in life.
   d. She wants to encourage others to be proud of their family members no matter what path in life they may choose.
6. With which of the following statements would the author of “A Lost Brother” be most likely to disagree?

a. Homeless people are real people.
b. Love transcends a body caked in dirt and a mind ravaged by mental illness.
c. Homeless people are unfortunate ornaments of the city.
d. No matter how difficult it may be, allowing a person to choose his own path is often the right thing to do.

7. What does the author mean in paragraph 18 when she writes that she “tried to quiet her own inner voice”?

a. She is hinting that she, too, is a paranoid schizophrenic.
b. She is implying that her conscience is speaking to her.
c. She is suggesting that the ideas she has were spoken to her by her psychiatrist.
d. She means that the voice she hears in her head is so loud that she cannot hear her brother speak.

WRITING IN RESPONSE TO THE READING

H. Reviewing and Organizing Ideas with a Map

*Draw a map of the reading that includes all the main points of the reading.*

I. Thinking Critically about the Issue

1. Is the author qualified to write on the topic? Why or why not? How do her own experiences inform the article?

2. Identify at least three issues presented in this reading. Then phrase each issue as a question that the author raises, discusses, or answers.

3. Consider the author’s choice of descriptive words such as *ravaged* and *curdled*. What do these words connote? What is the author’s reason for using these words?

4. Do you find any evidence of bias in the reading? Explain.
J. Writing Essays

Write an essay in response to the following prompts.

1. Before her brother became homeless, the author viewed homeless people as “unfortunate ornaments of the city.” Her experience shows that each homeless person is someone’s brother, sister, daughter, or son. Write an essay explaining how you viewed homeless people before reading this article, and how you view them now, after reading the article.

2. The title of this piece, “A Brother Lost,” has multiple meanings. Write an essay discussing at least three of these meanings.

3. In this article, the author must come to terms with letting her brother make his own choice about what is the “right path” for him. Write an essay about freedom of choice. You may focus on a difficult choice you made for yourself, or one that you believe represented the right path for another person. How did the choice work out in the end?
A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

Ashley Womble lives in New York City. In the following article, which first appeared in Salon magazine in July 2010, the author writes about Jay, her mentally ill brother who became homeless.

Steps to Understanding What You Read

Step 1: Preview the reading using the guidelines on page 00. When you have finished, write a list of topics you predict the reading will address.

Step 2: Connect the reading to your own experience by thinking about homelessness. What experience have you had with homeless people? How do you feel when you pass by them on the street? Do you ever wonder about their family? Have you ever tried to help someone who did not want your help?

Step 3: As you read the selection, highlight and annotate the text so that you can answer the detailed questions that follow the reading.

Reading Tip

We often make assumptions about a certain group of people until we meet a member of that group who challenges us to re-examine our preconceived ideas. Oftentimes, we miss out on opportunities to broaden our circle of friendship because we ignore or shun those folks whose lives do not conform to our societal norms. As you read "A Brother Lost," notice how the author’s perception of homelessness changes.

A Brother Lost
Ashley Womble

1 Like any New Yorker, I was no stranger to homeless people. I passed by them on my way to the shiny glass tower where I worked for a glossy women’s magazine: the older lady perched atop a milk crate in the subway station, the man curled up in a dirty sleeping bag and clutching a
stuffed animal. They were unfortunate ornaments of the city, unlucky in ways I never really considered. . .

UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYZING THE READING
A. Building Vocabulary

Context

Using context and a dictionary if necessary, write a definition of each word as it is used in the selection.

1. coherent (paragraph 4)
2. reverent (paragraph 7)

Word Parts

A Review of Prefixes

ANTI- means against
DIS- means not, apart, or away.

Use your knowledge of word parts and the review above to fill in the blanks in the following sentences.

1. Antipsychotic medications (paragraph 4) are medications that work against ___ psychosis to improve a person’s mental health.
2. The therapist who discouraged (paragraph 17) the author did not ___ encourage her to let her brother stay with her.

B. Understanding the Thesis and Other Main Ideas

Select the best answer.

b 1. The best statement of the thesis or central thought of “A Brother Lost” is
   a. people who suffer from mental illness are lost.
   b. one’s preconceived notions about groups of people are oftentimes shattered after one gets to know and understand someone in the group.
   c. love for one’s family member cannot be extinguished by the ravages of a mental illness.
d. it is futile to try to help someone who does not want to be helped.

___a__2. What is the implied main idea of paragraph 19?
   a. We cannot help someone who does not want to be helped.
   b. Everyone who is homeless has chosen to be homeless.
   c. Most homeless people have families who love them.
   d. Homeless people are dirty, thin, and sickly.

C. Identifying Details

Answer each of the following questions using a complete sentence.

1. In which state did Jay live before he disappeared?
2. What is the purpose of the Jay’s imagined New World Order?
3. Why did Jay lose his job?
4. What does Jay believe about 9/11?

D. Recognizing Methods of Organization and Transitions

Select the best answer.

___d__1. The organizational pattern used in paragraph 2 is
   a. listing/enumeration.
   b. classification.
   c. order of importance.
   d. chronological order.

___b__2. What is the dominant organizational pattern of paragraph 3?
   a. comparison-contrast
   b. illustration
   c. cause-effect
   d. definition
3. Which transitional word or phrase is a clue to the dominant organizational pattern of paragraph 2?
   a. in the days that followed
   b. created and contacted
   c. even the FBI
   d. still living in our hometown

E. Reading and Thinking Visually
If no photo were included in the reading, suggest a photograph that could have been included and indicate the section of the reading that it illustrates.

F. Figuring Out Implied Meanings
Indicate whether each statement is true (T) or false (F).

   T 1. Before the encounter with her brother, the author ignored the homeless people that she passed each day.
   F 2. The author implies that all homeless people are mentally ill.
   F 3. According to the author, mentally ill people are not able to hold down a job.
   T 4. The author implies that the news media are not interested in the plight of the mentally ill.
   T 5. The author believes that her brother’s life would have been different if he had taken his medication.

G. Thinking Critically about the Reading
Answer each of the following questions using a complete sentence.

1. What is author’s main purpose in “A Brother Lost”?
2. Describe the tone of the reading.
3. What types of supporting evidence does the author use?
4. Identify one statement of fact and one statement of opinion and write a paraphrase of each.
5. In paragraph 15, the author states that her brother answered proudly when asked if he were homeless. Why does the author use this word to describe the manner in which he answered?
6. Explain why he author of “A Lost Brother” would most likely to disagree with the
following statement: Homeless people are unfortunate ornaments of the city.

7. What does the author mean in paragraph 18 when she writes that she “tried to quiet her own inner voice”?

WRITING IN RESPONSE TO THE READING

H. Writing a Summary

Write a summary of the entire reading.

I. Analyzing the Issue

1. Is the author qualified to write on the topic? Why or why not? How do her own experiences inform the article?

2. Identify at least three issues presented in this reading. Then phrase each issue as a question that the author raises, discusses, or answers.

3. Consider the author’s choice of descriptive words such as ravaged and curdled. What do these words connote? What is the author’s reason for using these words?

4. Evaluate the reading on the following criteria:
   a. Is the reading timely?
   b. Has the author provided sufficient evidence to support his main ideas? What other types of evidence might she provide to strengthen the reading?
   c. Do you find any evidence of bias in the reading? Explain.

5. The theme of Chapter 18 is “Conformity and Nonconformity: Following and Breaking the Rules.” Analyze the reading by addressing the following questions:
   a. What examples of conformity has the author provided?
   b. What examples of nonconformity has the author provided?
   c. What rules does Jay, the nonconformist, break?
   d. How is he treated by those who encounter him?
   e. How does he feel about his nonconformist lifestyle?
   f. What does the author learn from her relationship with her brother, the nonconformist?
J. Writing Essays

Write an essay in response to the following prompts.

1. The author of "A Brother Lost" said that the news media would have been more interested in her disappearance than that of her mentally ill brother. She also said that before her brother became homeless, she actually viewed homeless people as "unfortunate ornaments of the city." From these two statements, you can see that there are multiple perspectives on the issue of the homeless and mental illness. Your task for this essay is to present three differing perspectives on the issue. You must consult at least five sources, format your paper according to MLA standards, use in-text citations, and include a Works Cited page.

2. Jay, the main character in "A Brother Lost" is a "20-year-old guy with paranoid schizophrenia." The purpose of this essay is for you to explain this mental disorder and how it defined Jay's life. In your essay, you will discuss the mental disorder, the characteristic behaviors of a paranoid schizophrenic, and three manifestations of the disorder that Jay exhibits in "A Brother Lost." In preparation for writing, you will conduct research on paranoid schizophrenia. Your evidence will consist of specific examples from the reading selection and your research findings. You must consult at least five sources, format your paper according to MLA standards, use in-text citations, and include a Works Cited page.