

Image taken from Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1-3 by Gould & Gould, p. 52

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2002 - 2003*

Credits

The step-by-step Four Square Writing Method, as described in this presentation, is based on the book, Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1 – 3: A Unique Approach to Teaching Basic Writing Skills, written by Judith S. and Evan Jay Gould, and illustrated by Mary Galan Rojas (1999, published by the Teaching & Learning Company, Carthage, IL)

Ms. Camp's Third Grade Students, 2002 – 2003

- ▶ The students jumped into the Four-Square Writing Method at Step 6, and created their first 5-paragraph essay in only 1 – 2 days! Their prerequisite knowledge and experience included the ability to create a “Main Idea – Detail” graphic organizer, and to turn that organizer into a paragraph where the first sentence is the main idea of the paragraph, and the following sentences are supporting details. The students were also familiar with the terms “introductory sentence,” “concluding sentence,” and “transitional words” for paragraph writing.
- ▶ Of the 19 students in the class, 6 are identified as “resource room” students (primarily learning disabled), with one having autism. In addition to these students, there are 4 – 5 students who have a significantly difficult time maintaining focus on a task or in their writing.

Preface

I created examples for Steps 1 – 5 to go with the same theme that my students did for Steps 6 – 9. My reason for doing this is to show how each step builds upon the one before, and, in this way, creates a type of scaffolding for young writers.

A note about the Christmas theme: We began this 2-day project shortly before Christmas. With each and every one of my students celebrating Christmas, and with that being what was on each of their minds, using it as a theme in writing was not only a great source of motivation for the students, it also caught and held their attention. There were no reluctant writers! Before I began guiding the students through the process, I modeled it for them using [“Thanksgiving”](#) as the favorite holiday.

A week following this project, on the last two days before the Winter Break, each of the students used the Four Square to create a 5-paragraph Persuasive Essay, with an intended audience of their parents or guardians, for the purpose of convincing them what would be the perfect present for him or her – and why!

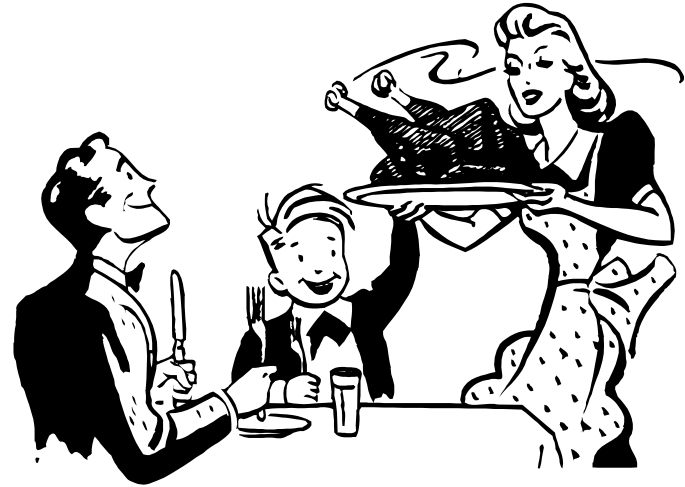
Most recently, we have been using the 4-Square along with the Story Map for designing and organizing fictional stories that have a problem and solution (creative writing).

We are also experimenting with the use of graphic organizers, such as the 4-Square and the Story Map, for aiding in the students’ understanding and solving of story problems in math.

*Caryn Camp
March, 2002*

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Christmas



Presents

Family

Christmas

Decorations

Feeling Sentence:

I love the Christmas holiday.

3/9/2003

We get presents at Christmas.

We spend time with our family at

Christmas.

My favorite holiday is
Christmas .

My family and I put up decorations
at Christmas.

Feeling Sentence:

I love the Christmas holiday.

STEP 4: Writing a Paragraph:
(Taking it off the organizer)

My favorite holiday is Christmas.
We get presents at Christmas. We
spend time with our family at
Christmas. My family and I put up
decorations at Christmas. I love the
Christmas holiday.

We get presents at Christmas.

Detail: They are under the tree.

We spend time with our family at Christmas.

Detail: We have a great

Christmas dinner together.

My favorite holiday is
Christmas .

My family and I put up decorations at Christmas.

Detail: We hang a wreath on the
front door.

Feeling Sentence:

I love the Christmas holiday.

STEP 5a: Writing a Paragraph

(Taking it off the “Step 5” Four-Square organizer)

My favorite holiday is Christmas.
We get presents at Christmas.
They are under the tree. We spend
time with our family at Christmas.
We have a great Christmas dinner
together. My family and I put up
decorations at Christmas. We hang
a wreath on the front door. I love
the Christmas holiday.

Wall Poster

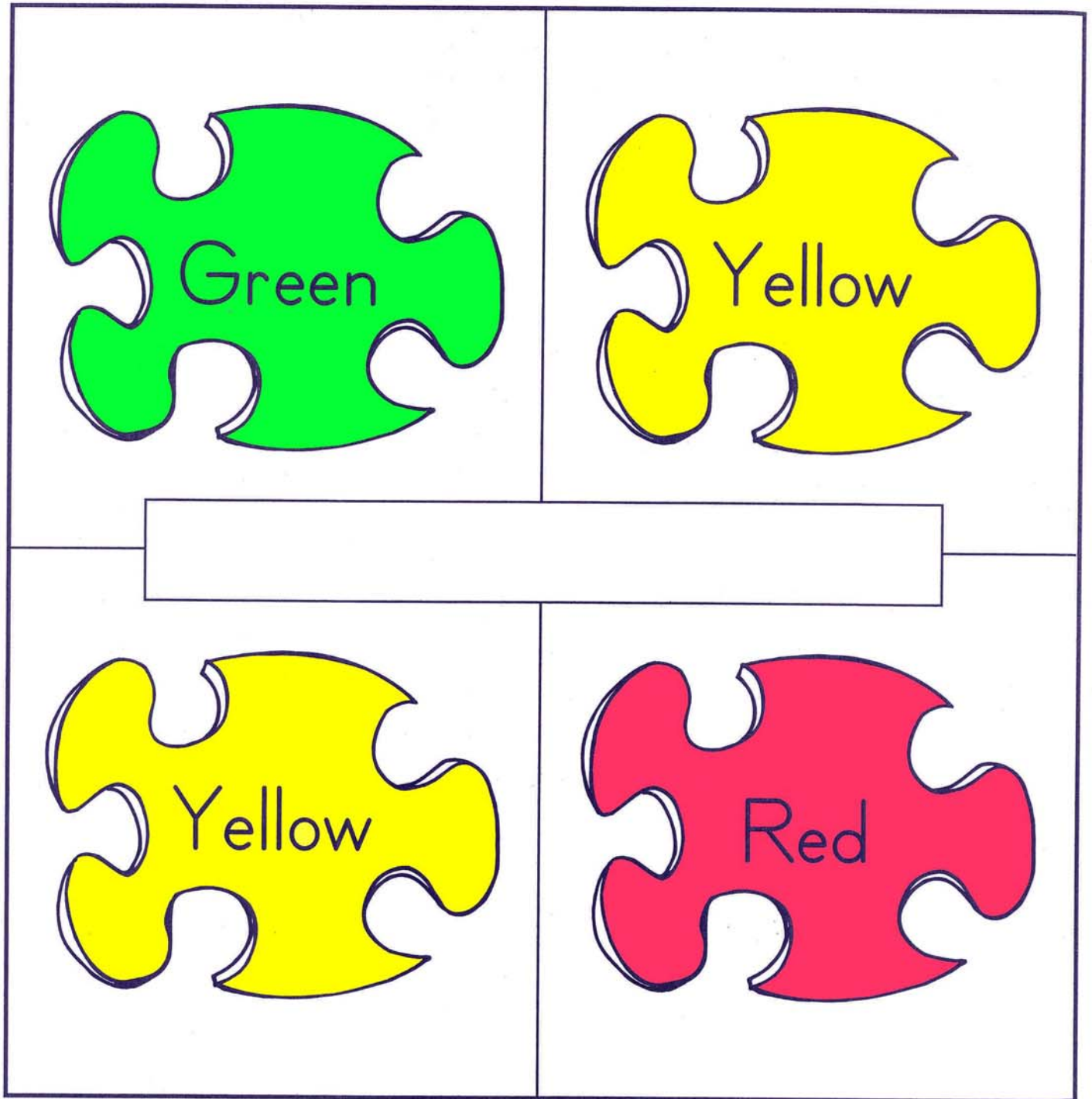
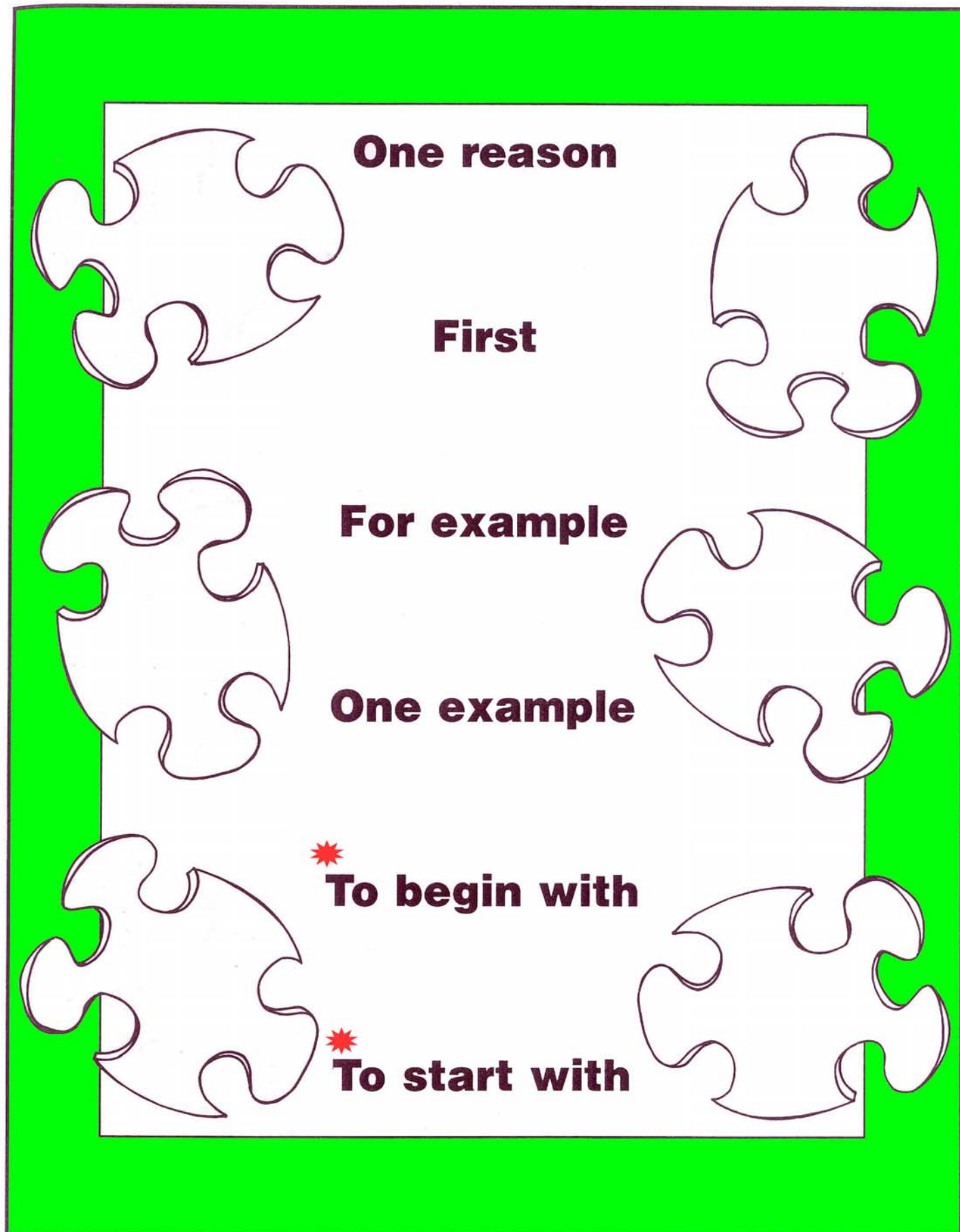
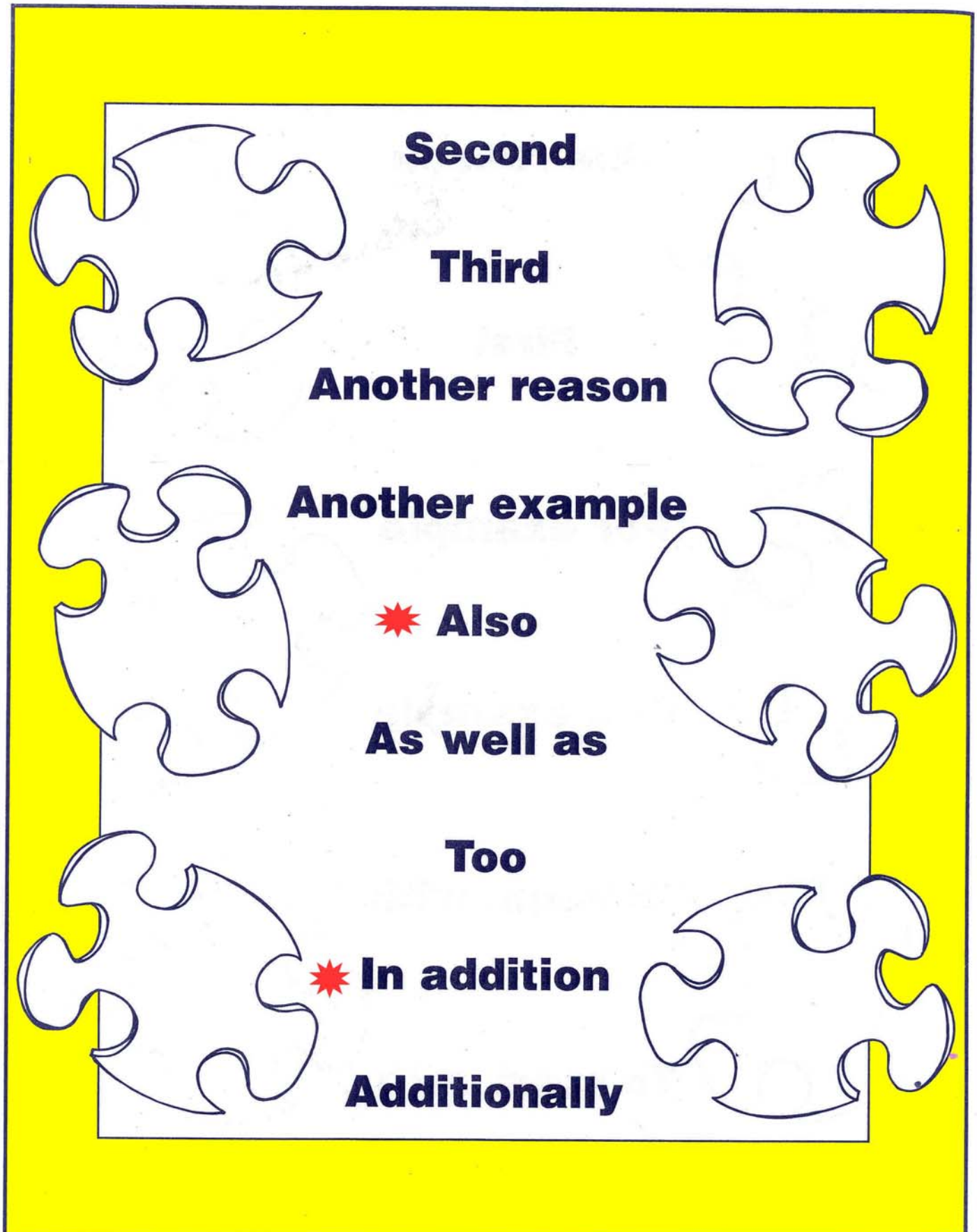


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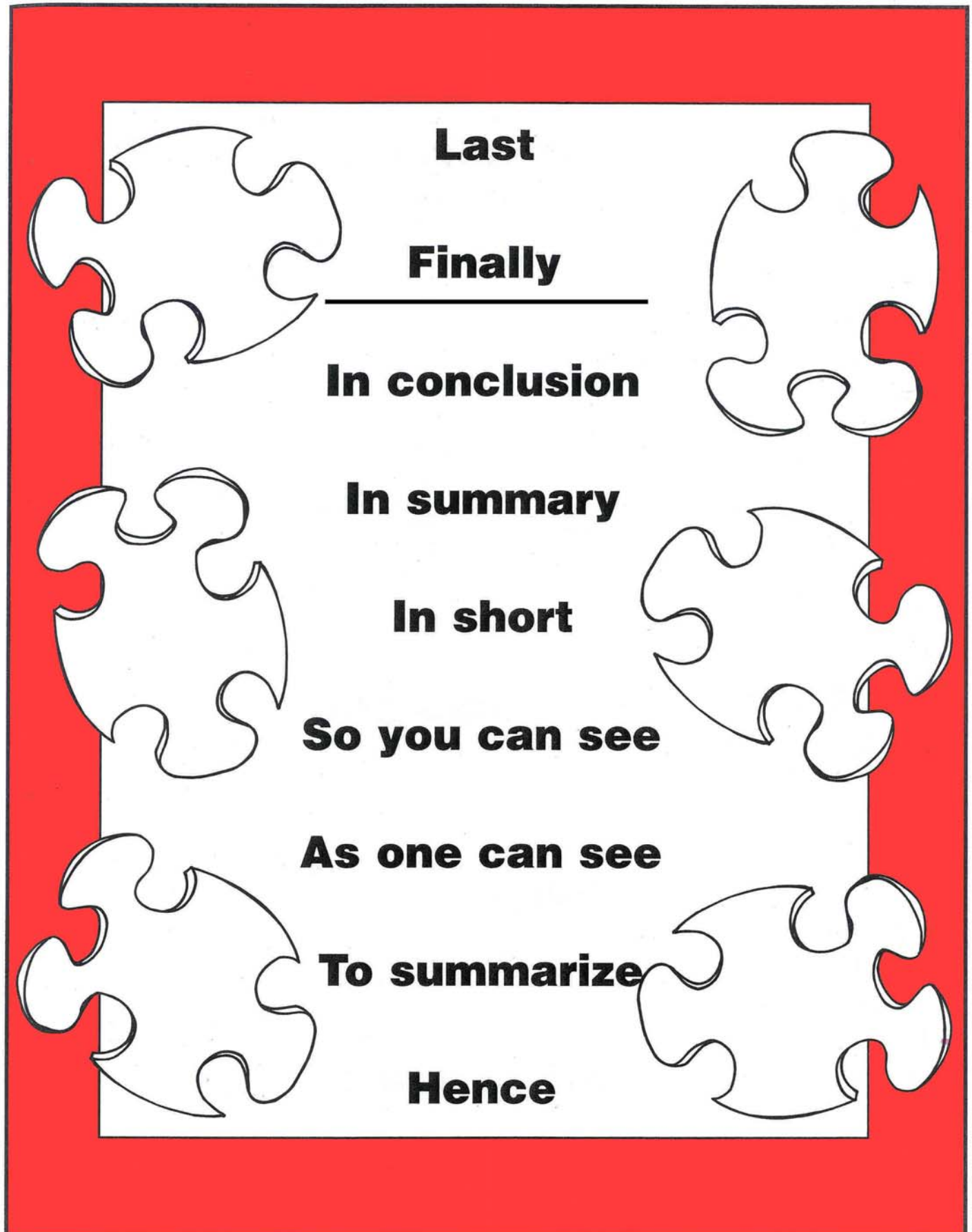
Color the border of this poster green

Image taken from Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1-3 by Gould & Gould, p. 53



Color the border of this poster yellow.

Image taken from Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1-3 by Gould & Gould, p. 54



Color the border of this poster red.

Image taken from *Four Square Writing Method for Grades 1-3* by Gould & Gould, p. 55

To begin with

We get presents at Christmas.

Detail: They are under the tree.

In addition

We spend time with our family at Christmas.

Detail: We have a great

Christmas dinner together.

My favorite holiday is
Christmas .

Also

My family and I put up decorations at Christmas.

Detail: We hang a wreath on the
front door.

Feeling Sentence:

I love the Christmas holiday.

Step 5c: Writing a Paragraph

(Taking it off the “Step 5b” Four-Square organizer)

My favorite holiday is Christmas.

To begin with, we get presents at Christmas. They are under the tree.

In addition, we spend time with our family at Christmas. We have a great Christmas dinner together.

Also, my family and I put up decorations at Christmas. We hang a wreath on the front door. I love the Christmas holiday.

Presents

Family

My favorite holiday is
Christmas .

Decorations

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

Presents

- candy
- toys
- under the tree or in a stocking

Family

- eat a special dinner
- visit relatives
- open presents together

My favorite holiday is
Christmas

Decorations

Christmas tree with ornaments

wreath on the door

Christmas lights

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

To start with

Presents

- candy
- toys
- under the tree or in a stocking

In addition

Family

- eat a special dinner
- visit relatives
- open presents together

My favorite holiday is
Christmas

Also

Decorations

- Christmas tree with ornaments
- wreath on the door
- Christmas lights

In conclusion

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

A Note about Color-Coding

When turning the 4-Square Organizer into a 5-paragraph essay, color-coding provides a helpful visual for many students.

According to research, Organization, Details, and Language occur in the left side of the brain. The Use of Color occurs in the right side of the brain. Writing with colors, then, may be a way to turn writing into a whole-brain activity.

When turning the 4-Square Organizer into a 5-paragraph essay, there are two different avenues for color-coding.

- 1) Color each of the first three squares a different color. These squares represent the 3 supporting details for the main idea of the essay, and they become paragraphs 2, 3, and 4 (as each of these details becomes the main idea of its own paragraph). If the green square equals the green paragraph, and the red square equals the red paragraph, etc., the use of color helps the student to visually see when to indent for a new paragraph. The big picture will show, visually, how each square equals its own paragraph in the essay. (see pages [21](#) – 22 for the 4-Square, and then page 23 for the essay.)
- 2) Color-code according to the jobs of each sentence. (The main idea is one color; the details a second color, the transition words a third color.) In this way, the student will visually see that, consistently in each paragraph, the transition word comes first, the main idea comes second (both in the first sentence of the paragraph), and the details come next. (see page [24](#) for the 4-Square, and page 25 for the essay.)

To start with

Presents

- candy
- toys
- under the tree or in a stocking

In addition

Family

- eat a special dinner
- visit relatives
- open presents together

*Color-coded
by paragraph*

My favorite holiday is
Christmas

In conclusion

Also

Decorations

- Christmas tree with ornaments
- wreath on the door
- Christmas lights

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

To start with

Presents

- candy _____
- toys _____
- under the tree or in a stocking _____

In addition

Family

- eat a special dinner _____
- visit relatives _____
- open presents together _____

*Color-coded
by paragraph*

My favorite holiday is
Christmas _____ .

In conclusion

Also

Decorations

- Christmas tree with ornaments _____
- wreath on the door _____
- Christmas lights _____

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

Christmas

*Color-coded
by paragraph*

My favorite holiday is Christmas.

To start with, we get presents at Christmas.

One of the presents I get is candy. Other presents I get are toys. The presents are under the tree or in a stocking.

In addition, we spend time with our family at Christmas. My family and I eat a special dinner. We also visit our relatives. On Christmas we open presents together.

Also, my family and I put up decorations a few days before Christmas. First, we put up a Christmas tree with ornaments. Next we hang a wreath on the door. Then we hang up Christmas lights.

In conclusion, on Christmas we open presents, get together with family, and put up decorations.

To start with

Presents

- candy
- toys
- under the tree or in a stocking

In addition

Family

- eat a special dinner
- visit relatives
- open presents together

*Color-coded
by job*

My favorite holiday is
Christmas .

In conclusion

Also

Decorations

- Christmas tree with ornaments
- wreath on the door
- Christmas lights

On Christmas we open presents, get
together with family, and put up
decorations.

Christmas

*Color-coded
by job*

My favorite holiday is Christmas.

To start with, we get presents at Christmas.

One of the presents I get is candy. Other presents I get are toys. The presents are under the tree or in a stocking.

In addition, we spend time with our family at Christmas. My family and I eat a special dinner. We also visit our relatives. On Christmas we open presents together.

Also, my family and I put up decorations a few days before Christmas. First, we put up a Christmas tree with ornaments. Next we hang a wreath on the door. Then we hang up Christmas lights.

In conclusion, on Christmas we open presents, get together with family, and put up decorations.

Note: Only the first student example is included with this document. To see the remainder of the student examples, click on "back" in your web browser, and then navigate to Standard 1, Social Studies, Christmas Fall 2002.

Student Examples (Grade 3)

Student	About the Student	About the Essay	Page
1	Slow worker	Notice the first draft – changed colors correctly but no indenting. Colors made it visually easier to indent for final draft.	27 – 29
2	Learning disability, poor handwriting	His first draft is the first time he has put a period at the end of every sentence. Graph paper used to help him with writing.	30 – 33
3	Learning disability	Progressed from modeling, to guiding, to student working independently. Huge confidence builder.	34 – 35
4	Learning disability, difficulty w/focusing	Modeled writing the paragraph for first square, independent after that. Concluding paragraph broken into 3 sentences.	36 – 37
5	Slow worker	Changed colors for new paragraphs, but didn't indent. The colors were a scaffolding step toward paragraphing.	38 – 40
6	Learning disability	Low comprehension so depends on step-by-step procedure. Colors helped. Checking one sentence at a time helped.	41
7	Autistic	Interesting that he did not write from a first person point of view. Wrote about what "people" or "you" like to do on Christmas.	42 – 43
8	Average 3 rd grade level	Solid example.	44
9	Learning disability	Depends on step-by-step procedure. Checking one sentence at a time helped. Chose to personalize info in first square.	45 – 46
10	Slow worker	Solid example.	47
11	Average 3 rd grade level	First copy – some trouble with paragraphing, did not notice lack of periods even though complete sentences.	48 – 49
12	Poor handwriting	Used graph paper for final copy to help with handwriting.	50 – 52

To Start with

1 Presents ✓

2 • Candy ✓

3 • Clothes ✓

4 • under tree or in
a stocking

In addition

Family ✓

✓ • eat a special dinner

✓ • visit relatives

✓ • open presents
together

My favorite holiday is

Christmas

~~Also~~

Decorations ✓

✓ • Christmas tree with
ornaments

✓ • wreath on the door

• Christmas lights

~~Finally~~
On Christmas

we open presents, get
together with family,
and put up decorations.

Writing
Holiday Essay

Student 1
(first draft)

Dec. 5, 2002

Christmas

X My favorite holiday is
Christmas.

~~X To start with~~ ^{I get presents.} I get candy
for Christmas when I sit with my
family. I get clothes for Christmas
because I like clothes. I get presents
under the tree or in a stocking.

In addition, ~~me and my family~~
~~eat a special dinner~~ my family and I
have fun together. We eat a special
dinner. My family ~~goes~~ goes
to visit relatives. We ~~open~~ open
presents together at Christmas.

x Also, My family ~~decorates~~ decorates around
the house. We put ornaments on
the Christmas tree. My family
puts a wreath on the door.

We hang Christmas lights
outside. In conclusion, on Christmas
we open presents, get together
with family, and put up decorations.

writing

Student 1

(final draft)

Holiday essay

Dec 6, 02

Christmas

X My favorite holiday is Christmas.

X To start with, I get presents. I get candy for Christmas when I sit with my family. I get clothes for Christmas because I like clothes. I get presents under the tree or in a stocking.

X In addition, my family and I have fun together. We eat a special dinner. My family goes to visit relatives. We open presents together at Christmas.

X Also, my family decorates around the house. We put ornaments on the Christmas tree. My family puts a wreath on the door. We hang Christmas lights outside.

X In conclusion, on Christmas we open presents, get together with family, and put up decorations.