

the radical write

teacher's manual

chapter 5
assignment | 6

Searching for a unique angle

Based on the information provided, a write a feature story about Lou Paschal, who teaches automotive technology at your school. Paschal is 59 years old. He has taught for 21 years, including the past nine here. He is a former automobile mechanic. Every day, he drives 111 miles to work, 111 miles home. On a good day, the drive takes him just under two hours. On a bad traffic day, the drive can take as long as three hours.

He drives a white 2002 Chevy pickup.

"I try to be at school by 7:45 each day, which means I get up around 5 and hit the road by 5:45. My wife has my coffee in the thermos, ready to go. And she packs me a biscuit and a slice of ham or maybe a cinnamon roll.

"The morning drive isn't so bad. I've always been an early riser. I love watching the sun come up in the east, although there are days when I'm driving right into it, and that's no fun. Usually, I listen to a book on tape or to music. I don't listen to the radio any more. I can't stand all that screaming and silliness. Also, I like to take some time to plan my lessons.

"I enjoy the afternoon drive as well. After being with kids all day, it's nice to relax and enjoy the silence. The drive gives me time to relax and clear my head. Even if something went wrong that day, I'm usually pretty relaxed by the time I get home.

"I don't let the traffic bother me. I used to yell a lot. I'd get upset if people were driving too fast or too slow — or rather, if I thought they were driving too fast or too slow. These days, I just take whatever the road gives me. Lately, I've been chewing up books on tape. Just finished Charles Darwin's *The Bleak House*. I know what you're thinking. 'Bubba reads literature?' Well, I do.

"I guess the obvious questions is, 'Why don't you live closer to your work?' Well, my wife and I own a little ranch, and we love the place. Other teachers tell me I'm crazy, but there's too much hustle and bustle in the city. If I had a bad day at home, I have time to leave it behind before I get to work. And if I have a bad day at work, I can leave it behind before I get home. Plus our kids grew up on the ranch, and my and grandchildren look forward to coming out there to fish and hunt and chase the chickens.

"I suppose I could look for a job closer to home, but the fact is, I love teaching here. I have a lot of friends here. I've built the program to fit my needs, and the administration has been extremely supportive, so I figure I owe them.

"If I get tired, I'll pull over and grab a cup of coffee or maybe even take a little power nap. And if I'm late for a class because of traffic or the weather, well the kids have my cell phone number. They'll call me, and I'll tell them what we're working on that day, and they'll get started. I don't worry about them a bit.

"I enjoyed working on cars but I love teaching auto mechanics even more. It's a class where kids want to be there. We get to do a lot of cool stuff. And the young people who go through my program are prepared to enter the work force when they graduate. They can find a job that pays a decent salary, enough to get them started in life."