

PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS

1. Definition

Paragraph analysis is the process of examining the way in which a paragraph is organised and recognising the technique(s) used by the author to achieve the purpose for which the piece of writing has been produced. Analysing a paragraph means understanding how its parts make up a whole.

2. Purpose

The purpose behind analysing a paragraph is to become familiar with the different patterns of organisation and the language used in writing, as well as the purposes which can be achieved using these patterns. For example, a writer whose purpose is to discuss an idea will organise his/her paragraph in a way that s/he thinks is the most convincing for the reader. S/he will also use language that s/he thinks is appropriate for achieving his/her purpose. (In our case, the purpose is also to recognise the characteristics of a well written paragraph so that it may be used as a model.)

3. Stages of paragraph analysis

3.1. Purpose

In the first stage of paragraph analysis, we try to state what the purpose of a paragraph is and how this purpose is achieved. For example, the purpose of a writer may be to convince the reader of the dangers of careless driving through describing an accident, discussing the causes and effects of such driving or comparing the way drivers behave in two different countries. Thus, the same purpose may be achieved through the use of various techniques of writing (narration, description, argumentation, etc.)

3.2. Organisation

In discussing the organisation of a paragraph, we consider how its different parts (clauses, sentences, etc.) are related and whether they make up a coherent whole. In this stage of the analysis, we also try to understand the functions of different sentences in the paragraph. For example, a sentence whose function is to introduce the theme of the paragraph is its '**topic sentence**' and a sentence that summarises it is its '**reworded topic sentence**'.

3.3. Coherence and Unity

3.3.1. Coherence

Coherence refers to the relationships that link the meanings of parts of sentences (e.g. clauses) and sentences in a piece of writing. Thus, a coherent paragraph is one in which these relationships are logical and clearly expressed and in which the **supporting sentences** develop the main topic of the paragraph. This main topic (idea) is stated in the **topic sentence**.

Coherence may be realised through the use of :

a) **intersentential** (between sentences) or **intrasentential** (within sentences) **linking devices** such as 'therefore', 'however', 'so', 'because', 'finally', etc. ;

b) **pronoun reference** : anaphoric (referring backward) or cataphoric (referring forward), using pronouns ('he', 'it', etc.)

c) **reminders of the topic** (i.e. words and groups of words which repeat, or are related to, the main topic);

d) sentences which clarify supports in the paragraph by elaborating on, explaining, or illustrating the support sentences.

3.3.2. Unity

Unity in a piece of writing is closely related to coherence, so that a coherent paragraph is a **unified** one. This characteristic of a paragraph is achieved through the use of reminders of the topic and **unity of theme** (i.e. when all sentences in the paragraph deal with one and the same theme).

3.4. Language

The language used in a piece of writing contributes to achieving the purpose of the writer. **Diction** (words and expressions) and the **type of sentences** (long, short, simple or complex) may help to strengthen the coherence and unity of a paragraph when used effectively.

Note : Paragraph analysis is **NOT** a comprehension exercise meant to check your understanding of a paragraph. Rather, it is a test of your ability to see how a paragraph is organised and how its different parts relate to each other. It is also meant to get you to recognise the different purposes of writing and how they may be effectively achieved.

Paragraph Analysis : Practice

Write a tentative analysis of the following paragraph, considering its purpose, organisation, coherence and unity, and language.

Love and hate are two very distinct and powerful emotions, but surprisingly they share several important similarities. First, both of these emotions develop from a concern for self. For instance, a mother's love has a selfish motive because through reproduction she is extending her power to create life in her own image. Similarly, hate is clearly linked to selfish motives. One way to make oneself feel superior is to despise people who are different racially, religiously or economically; most prejudice can be described in this way. A second similarity between these extremes is their destruction of rational thinking. The powerful love between American divorcee Mrs. Simpson and King Edward VIII eventually led him to abdicate the throne of England. This action was irrational because it was guided by his emotions. Hate too has this power over people. Violent acts like child abuse and most murders are motivated by hate and are irrational acts. Finally, love and hate share the ability to inspire major changes. Often, due to the insight gained from love, people make dramatic changes in their beliefs and lifestyles. Likewise, hate can deeply alter our beliefs and influence our actions. Realising that because of their complexity love and hate do have much in common, people should cultivate love and defend themselves against hate.

Now, compare this analysis with yours.

Purpose

The purpose of the paragraph to be analysed is to show how love and hate, two seemingly distinct emotions, may still be considered as similar. This purpose is achieved through listing and illustrating similarities that exist between the two emotions.

Organisation

The paragraph contains fourteen sentences of which the first one is the topic sentence and the last one the reworded (NOT REWARDED) topic sentence. Sentences 2, 6 and 11 are the three supports of the topic sentence. Each of these supports is followed by a number of sentences which serve either as illustrations or elaborations on each support.

Coherence and unity

Coherence is achieved in the paragraph through the use of a number of devices. For example, the author used listing words ('First', 'Second' and 'Finally'). He used linking words to achieve intersentential coherence ('For instance', 'One way...', 'Likewise') and intrasentential coherence ('but', 'because', 'and'). There are also examples of anaphoric reference ('they' in sentence one, and 'she' in sentence three).

Unity is also achieved in the paragraph through the frequent use of reminders of the topic ('emotions', 'love', 'hate', 'despise', 'violent acts', etc.) and the fact that all sentences are related to the topic of the paragraph.

Language

Overall, the language used in this paragraph is simple to understand for the general reader. Therefore, we may say that it is not addressed to any specific audience, although most of the vocabulary is related to the field of psychology.

Some vocabulary items are typical of the words used in comparison and contrast ('distinct', 'similarities', 'similarly', 'share', etc.)

Except for two or three sentences, the sentences follow a rather short and simple pattern, which adds to the simplicity and clarity of the paragraph.

2. Write your own analysis of the following paragraphs :

2.1. Charity is much more than an occasional generous act of giving. Because most people think that giving is the meaning of the word, charity needs to be more clearly defined. It is not dropping off a bag of used clothes at a local community center. It is not buying a chocolate bar in order to send a child to camp. It is not signing the pay-roll deduction card at the office. An important reason for giving charity is not pressure but the personal desire to help others. A charitable person does not seek praise or reward but shows a genuine concern for all people. He or she gives time in addition to material items. Sharing an artistic talent by teaching a young child is an example. Signing a form to donate vital organs after death illustrates charity. It is also using occupational skills to help others --for example, a lawyer giving free legal advice or a doctor free medical advice. So charity is caring enough about others to regularly share one's assets --both monetary and intangible.

2.2. The definition of equality varies from woman to woman. For some women, equality means being equal to men politically and socially. They feel that the traditional codes of chivalry are no longer applicable and resent men who open their doors, pull out their chairs, and help them with their coats. On the other hand, for some women, equality means that they should have the same opportunities and benefits as men yet also enjoy the tradition of chivalry. These women, though they may hold prestigious positions in government, education or medicine, don't resent a man who opens the door for them. Still for other women, equality is little more than a public interest story which has no effect upon their lives. They are secure in their lifestyles, whether domestic or not, and tend not to question the issue. Perhaps there is no one definition of equality for women but many, since each woman must decide how important equality is to her own self-esteem before she can determine what equality means.

PARAGRAPH ANALYSIS- PRACTICE 2

Because cell phones and driving are a deadly mix, I am in favor of a ban on cell phone use by drivers. The most obvious reason for this ban is to save lives. Every year, thousands of drivers are killed because they are talking on cell phones instead of watching the road while they are driving. The first reason should be enough to support a ban on cell phones when driving, but I have two other reasons. My second reason is that these drivers cause accidents that kill other people. Sometimes these drivers kill other drivers; sometimes they kill passengers or even pedestrians. These drivers certainly don't have the right to endanger others' lives! Finally, even in cases where there are no injuries or deaths, damage to cars from these accidents costs us millions of dollars as well as countless hours of lost work. To me, banning cell phones while driving is common sense. In fact, a wide range of countries has already put this ban into effect, including Australia, Brazil, Japan, Russia, and Turkey. Driving car is a privilege, not a right. We must all be careful drivers, and talking on a cell phone when driving is not safe.

A successful job interview depends on being prepared in three equally important areas: mental, emotional, and physical. Mental preparation includes learning as much as you can in advance about the position and the company. It also includes being mentally alert, so be sure to get enough sleep the night before the interview. The second area of preparation is emotional, which means having a positive attitude. You can express this through good posture, a smile, and a firm handshake. Thinking positively about the interview will help you avoid nervous mannerisms: unnecessary movement that suggests that you are ill at ease. The third way to prepare yourself for the interview is to be well groomed and to wear appropriate clothes, neither too formal nor too casual. Knowing that you are prepared mentally, emotionally, and physically will help you feel confident, and that will help make your interview a success.

Finding a reliable used car at an affordable price requires both planning and persistence. A good starting point is narrowing down the type car you want or need. Be realistic. You may envision yourself cruising around town in a little convertible, but that won't leave much room for the kids. Once you've settled on the basic vehicle, do some research to find out which vehicles have good reliability ratings. The internet can help you pick out the high maintenance turkeys. The next step is finding the model you are looking for. Used car lots will give you an idea of price, but they can be expensive and full of used car salesmen. Check your local paper, car buyers' magazines and the internet. When you finally track down what looks like the perfect car, the last step is the test drive and inspection. If the car drives well and looks good, arrange to have your mechanic inspect it. Never omit this step. After your mechanic gives the car the OK, all that's left is to haggle over the price.