

Aula 9

TYPES OF PARAGRAPH

META

Improve knowledge about the types of paragraph.

OBJETIVOS

At the end of this class, it is expected that the students:
Improve their knowledge about writing good paragraphs;
Raise awareness about types of paragraph;
Write clear and concise ideas considering the different types of paragraph.

PRERREQUISITOS

Knowledge acquired from previous classes about paragraph structure and topic sentence.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to class 09! Let us continue our studies about the Paragraph. Right at the very beginning of our classes, I asked you to think of the different reasons why people/you write, remember that? We express our views of the world through texts (oral, written, visual) and, depending on what we want or need to express, ideas are organized into different types of paragraph, which will be the focus of our studies now.



http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/images/Yellows_and_oranges_g331-Retro_Backdrop_With_Pen_And_Paper_p53453.html. Photo by digitalart. Published on 10 August 2011
Stock photo - Image ID: 10053453. Last access on May 25th, 2016.

TYPES OF PARAGRAPHS

There are different types of paragraph, but for the purpose of this course, we will focus on 04 of them, which are considered to be essential when dealing with writing: descriptive, narrative, expository and persuasive.

To better explain this subject, besides the explanation about each type of paragraph, you will find some examples to help you better understand the difference between them. Before we start, though, it is important to say that it is common to find paragraphs that are a combination of all types. How about starting by answering the activity below?



Match each type to an explanation:

- a) The Descriptive Paragraph...
- b) The Narrative Paragraph...
- c) The Expository/Informative Paragraph...
- d) The Persuasive Paragraph...

- () ... informs the reader about directions, explain ideas, define terms etc.
- () ... presents a sequence of action, giving details of an experience or event in the form of a story.
- () ... helps the reader understand the details/characteristics of someone or something.
- () ... tries to convince the reader about a particular point of view when building an argument.

COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITIES

Let's check your answers! To do so, read the following definitions of the four types of paragraph by Sebranek; Meyer; Kemper (1995, pp.68-78):

“A **descriptive** paragraph gives a single, clear Picture of a person, place, thing, or idea”. The authors recommend that when writing about a person, it is a good idea to talk about someone you know well or about someone you want to know well. Why? Because the more information you provide the reader with the better. The same is true about places and objects. They also point out that it is a good idea to ask for the person's permission before you start writing about him/her.

“A **narrative** paragraph gives the details of an event or experience in story form or in order they happened”. In this case, when writing, we not only describe facts but we also mention how we feel about them: about the place, the people and objects involved in your narration.

“A **expository/informative** paragraph gives facts or directions, explain ideas, or define terms. It is often used for writing assignments”. The authors highlight that this type of paragraph/text is very common in schools. They are build when teachers often explain in several different ways: defining, reviewing, demonstrating, clarifying, etc. When you explain something in writing, you too are teaching – trying to make something easier to understand.

“A **persuasive** paragraph expresses an opinion and tries to convince the reader that this opinion is correct”. First of all, if you want to persuade someone to agree with you, you need to present strong arguments. Therefore, you need to gather as much information about what you are talking about. You must present clear ideas based on strong facts and reasons to be able to convince your reader.

Some examples - It is always a good idea to share your answers and/or doubts with your teachers and classmates. Now, How about analyzing some examples of each type of paragraph? While doing so, pay attention to some elements we've been studying this semester: the way the paragraphs are structured, organized, and also try to identify the topic sentence of the examples provided.

Descriptive paragraph

To illustrate this type of paragraph, I've chosen two very different examples: 1. It is a paragraph extracted from an authentic text about a terrible event that happened in Brazil. 2. The other example is an excerpt from a novel written by the famous North American writer Francis Scott Fitzgerald.

Example #1 - The Picture and the paragraph below were taken from the online newspaper THE GUARDIAN. The title of the article is: **Brazil's mining tragedy: was it a preventable disaster?** It was posted on November 25th, 2015.

The text was adapted for the purpose of our studies. It is about one of the worst disasters/tragedies that has ever happened in our country. Thus, it is not acceptable to use the text only for the purpose of training about the parts and characteristics of the paragraph, don't you agree with me?

Important tip: Teaching English must be understood as another powerful tool to help build profiles of critical readers/citizens. We cannot use texts only to focus on linguistic elements. The message carried by them should be analyzed to do both: deal with the language and motivate people to think critically about the various life events.



<http://www.theguardian.com/> Photograph: Ricardo Moraes/Reuters

Back to the message, as we all know, that mining tragedy has affected the lives of entire communities, forever. Unfortunately, most likely, that area won't be recovered ever again and we do not need to be specialists to know that, right? Not much is being said about it anymore, have you noticed that? Why? Here is an important topic for your discussions with you family, friends, teachers, and your classmates. The article begins this way:

The recent collapse of a mining dam in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais is one of the biggest environmental disasters in the country's history.

Apocalyptic images of communities swallowed by mud and a river flooded by mining waste have shocked a population that has become hardened to tragedy. Between 40-62m cubic metres of the water and sediment from iron ore extraction sluiced down a mountainside more than two weeks ago when the Fundão tailings dam failed at an open-cast mine operated by Samarco, a joint venture between mining giants BHP Billiton and Vale. Concern that two further dams may yet collapse – one of which ruptured during the accident – suggests the unfolding tragedy may yet worsen.

Our analysis...

The paragraph starts by stating the main idea of the discussion, as you know, the **topic sentence**:

The recent collapse of a mining dam in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais is one of the biggest environmental disasters in the country's history.

All the other sentences are there to support that idea and what we see is a description of the terrible event:

Apocalyptic images of communities swallowed by mud and a river flooded by mining waste have shocked a population that has become hardened to tragedy.

Between 40-62m cubic metres of the water and sediment from iron ore extraction sluiced down a mountainside more than two weeks ago when the Fundão tailings dam failed at an open-cast mine operated by Samarco, a joint venture between mining giants BHP Billiton and Vale.

And this is the concluding sentence:

Concern that two further dams may yet collapse – one of which ruptured during the accident – suggests the unfolding tragedy may yet worsen.

Example #2 - What you are going to read is an excerpt of the famous novel by Francis SCOTT Fitzgerald, "The Great Gatsby". It is an amazing story about the Jazz Age, in the U.S., and it portraits the tragic story of J. Gatsby. It is a criticism of the idea of the American Dream as the perfect profile of a society. It is worth it reading the book!

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motorboats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On weekends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before.

Our analysis...

Have you noticed how rich this text is in details? The description is so vivid that we can almost “see and hear” what is being described. It shows the ability of the writer in conducting the reader into the wonderful world of Literature.

The Narrative Paragraph

As we’ve said before, this type of paragraph must present a topic sentence that calls the reader’s attention. Something that is/was part of the writer’s life and experiences, and it should be organized according to the time the event occurred. It can be about an adventure, an event, some scene or happening with plenty of nice and interesting details show be used to build this type of text. With that in mind, let’s analyze the following paragraph that was taken from the book *Write 2000* (SEBRANEK; MEYER; KEMPER, 1995):

Mr. Brown does not allow any fooling around in his gym class. Unfortunately, two guys learned this the hard way. At the end of the first day of flag football, Mr. Brown blew his whistle. Most of us know enough to stop and fall in line. He had made it very clear to us on the first day that when he blew his whistle; we had to stop our activity. Immediately! Kerry Schmidt and Jeremy Johnson ignored the whistle and continued throwing a football. With fire in his eyes, Mr. Brown quickly sent us in and went after them. We all watched from the locker room doorway while Mr. Brown made them duckwalk on the football field. By the time they reached the 50-yard line, they were really struggling. HE sent them in after another 20 yards when their duckwalk had turned into more of a crawl. We couldn’t help giving a few duck calls when Kerry and Jeremy limped into the locker room, but we didn’t “quack” very loudly. We didn’t want Mr. Brown to make us walk like a duck or any other type of animal for that matter.

Our analysis...

As you could observe, the paragraph is about something that happened between a school coach and his students, at a gym class. He is described as a tough trainer who does not accept when his students break his rules and it is stated to the reader at the very beginning, through the first sentence (the topic sentence): “Mr. Brown does not allow any fooling around”.

Even though the paragraph presents some characteristics of the descriptive paragraph, the event is told in the form of a narrative. It tells the reader when the fact happened: “At the end of the first day of flag football, Mr. Brown blew his whistle”. It mentions who are involved: Mr. Brown, students, and two guys, in particular: Kerry Schmidt and Jeremy Johnson. And the happening: the two students did not follow the couch’s instructions and suffered the consequences of it.

Expository/Informative paragraph

The paragraph below is a good example of this type of paragraph because it presents an explanation about paragraph writing. It was extracted from the website: OWL Purdue Online Writing Lab (online source - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/>. Last access on May 27th, 2016.). It informs about an important and basic rule related to paragraph writing: to “keep one idea to one paragraph”:

The basic rule of thumb with paragraphing is to keep one idea to one paragraph. If you begin to transition into a new idea, it belongs in a new paragraph. There are some simple ways to tell if you are on the same topic or a new one. You can have one idea and several bits of supporting evidence within a single paragraph. You can also have several points in a single paragraph as long as they relate to the overall topic of the paragraph. If the single points start to get long, then perhaps elaborating on each of them and placing them in their own paragraphs is the route to go.

Persuasive Paragraph

The example you are going to read was taken from *Pattern Based Writing: Quick and Easy Essay* (Online source: http://patternbasedwriting.com/elementary_writing_success/paragraph-examples/. Last access on May 27th, 2016.). Here, someone is trying to persuade his/her neighbours to buy tickets to a school fair:

The school fair is right around the corner, and tickets have just gone on sale. We are selling a limited number of tickets at a discount, so move fast and get yours while they are still available. This is going to be an event you will not want to miss! First off, the school fair is a great value when compared with other forms of entertainment. Also, your ticket purchase will help our school, and when you help the school, it helps the entire community. But that’s not all! Every ticket you purchase enters you in a drawing to win fabulous prizes. And don’t forget, you will have mountains of fun because there are acres and acres of great rides, fun games, and entertaining attractions! Spend time with your family and friends at our school fair. Buy your tickets now!

**ACTIVITY**

Read the paragraph below and mark which type best represents it:

- a. () expository
- b. () narrative
- c. () descriptive
- d. () persuasive

The reason I was standing way up on Thomsen Hill, instead of down at the game, was because I'd just got back from New York with the fencing team. I was the goddam manager of the fencing team. Very big deal. We'd gone in to New York that morning for this fencing meet with McBurney School. Only, we didn't have the meet. I left all the foils and equipment and stuff on the goddam subway. It wasn't all my fault. I had to keep getting up to look at this map, so we'd know where to get off. So we got back to Pencey around two thirty instead of around dinnertime. The whole team ostracized me the whole way back on the train. It was pretty funny, in a way. (an extract from the novel *The Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D.Salinger).

COMMENTS ON THE ACTIVITIES

Go back to the explanations about the four types of paragraph presented in this class. Remember that a paragraph might carry different characteristics but one usually stands out. Share your answer with your teachers and classmates.



SUMMARY

To help you improve the way you write, this class presented the four main types of paragraph: descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive. Besides the definitions, you have analyzed some paragraphs from different sources: novels, newspaper article, texts about literature and others so you could better understand the topic of this class.

You reviewed points from the previous class about Paragraph Structure and Topic Sentence. We've been pointing out that writing is a process that requires preparation, and that comes from reading about the topics we are writing about. Besides that, we improve our writing through a lot of practice. Remember: everybody can write good texts! Here are some suggestions of websites that are dedicated to Paragraph studies:

<http://study.com>

<http://www.learnamericanenglishonline.com>

<http://www.indiana.edu>

<http://www.learnamericanenglishonline.com>



SELF-EVALUATION

Did I increase my knowledge related to paragraph writing?
 Am I able to identify the different types of paragraph?
 Have I consolidated the knowledge about Topic Sentence?
 Has my knowledge of the English language improved considering the studies and practices of previous semesters?



NEXT CLASS

Next class, the focus of your studies will be on *Paragraph development*. See you then!

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