

PARAGRAPH WRITING

Well-organized paragraphs have four components that work together to produce a coherent, unified product. Think of each paragraph as a mini-essay endeavoring to prove one aspect of your thesis statement. That is, each paragraph should

- **make a debatable claim (the topic sentence)**
- **provide proof for that claim (the evidence or support)**
- **show how the evidence supports the claim (the analysis or elaboration)**
- **contain effective transitions both within the paragraph and between paragraphs so that the reader can follow the logic of the argument (transitions)**

Let's break these components down and define each one.

The Prompt: Did Mr. Peters make the right decision to help him resolve his internal conflict?

First, you must be clear on what the internal conflict is. Check your literary elements notes (yellow) for this if you can't remember.

Topic Sentence: The topic sentence is to the paragraph what the thesis is to the entire paper. A paragraph's topic sentence states the claim or argument of that paragraph.

The topic sentence should address your answer/argument to this question.

- **Example:** In "The Third Wish," Mr. Peters is faced with a difficult decision of keeping Leita as a human or letting her go back to living as swan. This decision helps him resolve his inner conflict and is the right choice for everyone involved.

Evidence/Support: Support or evidence usually refers to quotations from or summary of the literary work.

Without support, your topic sentence will go unproven and your paragraph will fall flat. (If your topic sentence does not seem to require support, it probably isn't an effective topic sentence to begin with).

This is where you will use your evidence chart to build your case that defends your topic sentence/argument. You must use two pieces of textual evidence. Remember, this has to be textual evidence which means it is a quote of paraphrase from the text.

- **Example:** The text states, "Then he knew that it was hopeless and she would never be happy as a human" ("The Third Wish" 203).

Here is a list of sentence starters that help introduce evidence:

- In the text...
- The text states...
- According to the passage...
- One example from the text...
- The author states...

Because the task asks you to use two pieces of evidence, you will repeat by introducing another quote or passage from the text that supports your topic sentence. Make sure to use another sentence starter to create a smooth transition.

Analysis: After you have two strong pieces of evidence to support your argument, you need to elaborate and help the reader make the connection as to why your evidence proves your argument. This is often the hardest part. With analysis, you tell your reader how you want him or her to understand the quotation or summary you have provided as support. As a writer, you can't necessarily assume that your reader will draw the same conclusions you have drawn from the evidence. Thus, support and analysis go hand in hand.

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- **Example:** This proves that Mr. Peters cares about Leita and her unhappiness. He cannot truly be happy if he knows she is unhappy.

You will also want to use sentence starters for analysis. Here is a helpful list:

- This quote shows how _____.
- From _____, we see that _____.
- By using _____, the reader understands _____.
- This proves that _____.

Concluding Sentence: A concluding sentence asserts the main idea of the paragraph and, while elaborating the conclusion, it connects the topic sentence and the ideas presented in the supporting details. It sums up the information that is presented in a paragraph. It completes the paragraph and restates the main idea. While approaching the conclusion linking words or phrases like therefore, thus, resulting, hence, in brief, to sum up, on the whole and in the end are very often used.

- **Example:** Therefore, Mr. Peter's internal conflict is resolved by the end of the story because he has recognized that although he wanted to keep Leita as a companion, she was much happier living as a swan. He understands true happiness cannot be forced. Ultimately, he is content with his final choice and made the right choice for both himself and Leita.

Notice: There is no "I" in this paragraph. No "I think" or "I believe." We are stepping up our writing. If I see any of these phrases with personal pronoun "I," your paragraph will automatically receive an F!

So the paragraph would read:

In "The Third Wish," Mr. Peters is faced with a difficult decision of keeping Leita as a human or letting her go back to living as swan. This decision helps him resolve his inner conflict and is the right choice for everyone involved. The text states, "Then he knew that it was hopeless and she would never be happy as a human" ("The Third Wish" 203). [INSERT SECOND PIECE OF EVIDENCE]. This proves that Mr. Peters cares about Leita and her happiness. He cannot truly be happy if he knows she is unhappy. Therefore, Mr. Peter's internal conflict is resolved by the end of the story because he has recognized that although he wanted to keep Leita as a companion, she was much happier living as a swan. He understands true happiness cannot be forced. Ultimately, he is content with his final choice and made the right choice for both himself and Leita.

One helpful acronym is **MAAM**:

Me: Topic sentence = my claim/argument.

Author: 1st piece of Support/Evidence= requires going back to the text and the author.

Author: 2nd piece of Support/Evidence= requires going back to the text and the author.

Me: Analysis: Back to you! This is YOUR interpretation of how the text supports your claim.