

ASMS/Fall 99  
Junior English Composition  
**Paragraph Writing Unit (Student Copy) by George West**

**Objectives**

- Define good writing as good thinking (show parallels with scientific inquiry)
- Develop questioning/thinking strategies
- Review elements of effective paragraph
- Introduce 4 types of paragraphs
- Practice writing the different paragraph types
- Introduce peer editing
- Relate paragraph forms to essay

**Readings/Materials**

- Display of masks
- \**Elements of Writing* 64-81; 82-89
- Practice sheet: Identify paragraph types
- Poem by Paul Lawrence Dunbar (“We Wear the Mask”)
- Paragraph Peer Edit Checklist

**Assignment**

- Classwork: Observation notes + rough drafts with peer editing (25 pts)
- Final drafts (100 pts)

**Activities**

Aug 16

Discuss what makes a “good” paragraph. Read/compare with text\*. Note how ways of organizing supporting details leads to 4 types of paragraphs. In pairs, practice identifying paragraphs.

Aug 17/18

In response to a series of questions, observe different details and qualities of masks on display. Next read poem to think about mask as a metaphor, not just an object. Make note of observations then start writing the simplest type of paragraph, *spatial order*. Use transition words (EOW 80) to link sentences. Complete rough draft by next class.

Aug 19/20

Develop a 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph using *chronological order*, using details from the memory recalled during the questioning exercise. Again, use transition words (EO! 80) to give clear order to supporting sentences. Complete rough draft by mid-class. Discuss then draft the remaining two paragraph types: *order of importance* and *logical order*. (If you need more help, read EOW 82-89 about using strategies of classification for developing *logical order* paragraphs or using evaluation for *order of importance*.) Complete all remaining drafts before start of next class.

Aug 30

Recall original discussion of effective writing, then use Peer Edit Checklist to critique work. Write final draft of paragraphs. Label each paragraph type! Underline revisions in the final copy; staple with Peer Editors’ critique and rough draft; put final draft on top. Due start of next class.

Aug 27-28

In groups of four, do a round-robin reading. Pick “Best Of” example of each paragraph type. As whole class, read selections for each category. Briefly not parallels between paragraph types and essay forms (e.g. *chronological order* relates to *narrative essays*, our next assignment.)

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### **Readings/Materials**

- Display of masks
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- Practice sheet: Identify paragraph types
- Poem by Paul Lawrence Dunbar (“We Wear the Mask”)
- Paragraph Peer Edit Checklist

### **Assignment**

- Classwork: rough drafts with peer editing (25)
- Final drafts (100)

### **Activities**

Day 1 (55 min)

Aug 16

Brainstorm a list of what makes a “good” paragraph, then read/compare with text\* (topic sentence, supporting sentences, clincher; unity; coherence.) Note how ways of organizing supporting details leads to 4 types of paragraphs (spatial, chronological, order of importance, logical.) In pairs, practice identifying paragraph types with sheet of samples.

Day 2 (60 min)

Aug 17/18

Display 4-6 masks as prompts for writing assignment. Use a list of questions in succession to observe different details and qualities of the masks and then read poem by Paul Lawrence Dunbar, “*We Wear the Mask*”, to think metaphorically about the topic of masks. Write your observations in notebook. Recall 4 types of paragraphs, then start writing the simplest type of paragraph, *spatial order*. Use the chart of transition words (EOW 80) to link sentences. Complete rough draft by next class.

Day 3 (90 min)

Aug 19/20

Use the memory recalled (during questioning session) to develop a 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph using *chronological order*. Again, use transition words (EOW 80) to order supporting sentences. Complete rough draft by mid-class. Then discuss the remaining two paragraph types: *order of importance* and *logical order*. Students select the details/attributes from their original list of observations that best suit these paragraph types, then begin rough drafts. (If more help is needed, read EOW 82-89 about using strategies of classification for developing *logical order* paragraphs or using evaluation for *order of importance*.) Complete all remaining drafts before start of next class.

## **JEC/Paragraph Unit**

### **Page 2**

Day 4 (55 min)

Aug 30

Discuss peer editing process. Recall original discussion of effective writing, then use Peer Edit Checklist to critique work. Write final draft of paragraphs. Label each paragraph type! Underline revisions in the final copy and staple with both Peer Editors' critique and your rough draft. (Put items in "sedimentary" order = latest item on top!) Be ready to turn in work at start off next class.

Day 5

Aug 27-28

Finish revising, printing, stapling (10min.) Then, in groups of four, do a round-robin reading of each student's work. Pick the "Best Of" example of each kind of paragraph. As whole class, read examples of best work in each category. Finally, note how each paragraph type may be expanded into a parallel essay form. Indicate that the next unit be a narrative essay.

## TYPES OF DETAILS USED TO DEVELOP PARAGRAPHS

Read the sample paragraphs below. In conference with a partner, select the topic sentence and clincher. Decide which type of detail is used to develop each paragraph.

There are two basic types of hearing loss. One type, known as sensory neural loss, involves damage to the auditory nerve. Most profound deafness is associated with this kind of damage. The second type, conductive loss, is caused by problems or defects in any of the structures of the ear that function in the transmission of sound waves. Common causes include blockage of the external ear canal with wax, perforation of the eardrum, or damage to the delicate bones of the middle ear. Conductive loss is far more treatable than sensory neural, and many of the major advances in the treatment of hearing loss have addressed themselves to conductive losses.

Cesar was right. Thin people need watching. I've been watching them for most of my adult life, and I don't like what I see. When these narrow fellows spring at me, I quiver to my toes. This people come in all personalities, most of them menacing. You've got your "together" thin person, your mechanical thin person, your condescending thin person, your tsk-tsk thin person, your efficiency-expert thin person. All of them are dangerous.

I looked at the rolling country, and at the pale ribbon of road in front of us, stretching out as grey as lead in the light of the moon. Then suddenly I saw a steeple that shone like silver in the moonlight, growing into sight from behind a rounded knoll. The tires sang on the empty road, and, breathless, I looked at the monastery that was revealed before me as we came over the rise. At the end of an avenue of trees was a big rectangular block of buildings, all dark, with a church crowned by a tower and a steeple and a cross. The steeple was as bright as platinum and the whole place was as quiet as midnight and lost in the all-absorbing silence and solitude of the fields. Behind the monastery was a dark curtain of woods, and over to the west was a wooded valley, and beyond that a rampart of wooded hills, a barrier and a defense against the world.

It's amazing how parents continue to pass their own hang-ups on to their children. It reminds me of the story about the young bride who cooked a ham for her new husband. Before putting it into the pan, she cut off both ends. When her husband asked her why she did that, she replied that her mother had always done it that way. At a later date, when they were having baked ham at her mother's home, he asked her, casually, why she cut off both ends of the ham. The mother shrugged and said she really didn't know, except that her mother had always done it that way. Finally, he asked the grandmother why she always cut the ends off the ham before she baked it. She looked at him suspiciously, replying, "Because my baking dish is too small."

## TYPES OF DETAILS USED TO DEVELOP PARAGRAPHS

Read the sample paragraphs below. In conference with a partner, select the topic sentence and clincher. Decide which type of detail is used to develop each paragraph.

<p><b>Classifying Facts</b> ? Logical Order paragraph</p>	<p><u>There are two basic types of hearing loss.</u> One type, known as sensory neural loss, involves damage to the auditory nerve. Most profound deafness is associated with this kind of damage. The second type, conductive loss, is caused by problems or defects in any of the structures of the ear that function in the transmission of sound waves. Common caused include blockage of the external ear canal with wax, perforation of the eardrum, or damage to the delicate bones of the middle ear. <u>Conductive loss is far more treatable than sensory neural, and many of the major advances in the treatment of hearing loss have addressed themselves to conductive losses.</u></p>	
<p><b>Examples</b> ? Logical Order Paragraph</p>	<p>Cesar was right. Thin people need watching. I've been watching them for most of my adult life, and I don't like what I see. When these narrow fellows spring at me, I quiver to my toes. <u>Thin people come in all personalities, most of them menacing.</u> You've got your "together" thin person, your mechanical thin person, your condescending thin person, your tsk-tsk thin person, your efficiency-expert thin person. <u>All of them are dangerous.</u></p>	
<p><b>Sensory Details</b>  Starts with Chronological Order but shifts to Spatial Order Paragraphs</p>	<p>I looked at the rolling country, and at the pale ribbon of road in front of us, stretching out as grey as lead in the light of the moon. Then suddenly I saw a steeple that shone like silver in the moonlight, growing into sight from behind a rounded knoll. The tires sang on the empty road, and, <u>breathless, I looked at the monastery that was revealed before me as we came over the rise.</u> At the end of an avenue of trees was a big rectangular block of buildings, all dark, with a church crowned by a tower and a steeple and a cross. The steeple was as bright as platinum and the whole place was as quiet as midnight and lost in the all-absorbing silence and solitude of the fields. <u>Behind the monastery was a dark curtain of woods, and over to the west was a wooded valley, and beyond that a rampart of wooded hills, a barrier and a defense against the world.</u></p>	<p><b>Often, a topic sentence is not explained in simple descriptive paragraphs</b></p>
<p><b>Anecdotes</b> ? Chronological Order Paragraphs</p>	<p><u>It's amazing how parents continue to pass their won hang-ups on to their children.</u> It reminds me of the story about the young bride who cooked a ham for her new husband. Before putting it into the pan, she cut off both ends. When her husband asked her why she did that, she replied that her mother had always done it that way. At a later date, when they were having baked ham at her mother's home, he asked her, casually, why she cut off both ends of the ham. The mother shrugged and said she really didn't know, except that her mother had always done it that way. Finally, he asked the grandmother why she always cut the ends off the ham before she baked it. <u>She looked at thin suspiciously, replying, "Because my baking dish is too small."</u></p>	

## TYPES AND METHODS USED TO DEVELOP PARAGRAPHS

Read the sample paragraphs below. In conference with a partner, select the topic sentence and clincher. Decide which method is used to develop each paragraph.

1. When we watch a person walk away from us, his image shrinks in size. But since we know for a fact the he is not shrinking, we make an unconscious correcting and “see” him as retaining his full stature. Past experience tells us what his true stature is with respect to our own. Any sane and dependable expectation of the future requires that he have the same stature when we next encounter him. Our perception is thus a prediction; it embraces the past and the future as well as the present.

2. I stepped into the cabin and secured the throne of command beneath the hodgepodge of dials, switches, gauges, and controls. A muffled roar grew and the great bird began to tremble as I switched on each of its eight mighty engines. As I increased the throttle, the aircraft crept forward. Once on the airstrip, I threw the eight turbine engines into full power. At first the weighted Jet seemed to resist the tremendous thrust, but gradually it gained momentum. At last the jet was rolling at a steady clip and tilting gently from side to side. As optimum ground speed was achieved, I pulled up the flaps. The nose lightened, then lifted. The aircraft strained under the weight of our cargo, but finally the rear wheels left the ground, and we began to climb.

3. Today, as in certain other periods of United States history, it has become popular to disparage politicians. By doing so, however, we do severe damage to our ability to govern ourselves. To begin with, the criticism is demoralizing to the vast majority of political leaders, who are thoroughly honest and trustworthy. Even more damaging is the effect that our clinical attitude has on the young people who must lead the country in the future. Certainly the public’s lack of respect for politicians is bound to discourage many qualified young men and women from pursuing political careers. Worst of all, though, is the mentality of helplessness and indifference that the notion of general corruption breeds. When citizens come to believe that, regardless of whom they vote for, the result is the same, then they either vote carelessly or do not vote at all. Disparaging politicians may be popular, but it is not wise.

4. I once took a picture from the window of a Spanish cafe during an otherwise uneventful day. This picture, an especially beautiful image of a late afternoon, sits before me now. The view is down the hillside, toward the sea. A fog bank is rolling in, obscuring the beach and beginning to climb up toward the town. As I watched, the fog grew thicker and the view vanished, and chilled, I retreated into the cafe.

## TYPES AND METHODS USED TO DEVELOP PARAGRAPHS

Read the sample paragraphs below. In conference with a partner, select the topic sentence and clincher. Decide which method is used to develop each paragraph.

<p><b>Logical Order</b></p>	<p>1. When we watch a person walk away from us, his image shrinks in size. But since we know for a fact the he is not shrinking, we make an unconscious correcting and “see” him as retaining his full stature. Past experience tells us what his true stature is with respect to our own. Any sane and dependable expectation of the future requires that he have the same stature when we next encounter him. Our perception is thus a prediction; it embraces the past and the future as well as the present.</p>	<p><b>You could argue the opposite roles for these sentences</b></p>
<p><b>Chronological Order</b></p>	<p>2. I stepped into the cabin and secured the throne of command beneath the hodgepodge of dials, switches, gauges, and controls. A muffled roar grew and the great bird began to tremble as I switched on each of its eight mighty engines. As I increased the throttle, the aircraft crept forward. Once on the airstrip, I threw the eight turbine engines into full power. At first the weighted Jet seemed to resist the tremendous thrust, but gradually it gained momentum. At last the jet was rolling at a steady clip and tilting gently from side to side. As optimum ground speed was achieved, I pulled up the flaps. The nose lightened , then lifted. The aircraft strained under the weight of our cargo, but finally the rear wheels left the ground, and we began to climb.</p>	<p><b>Topic sentences is implied in this chronological order ??? of paragraph</b></p>
<p><b>Order of Importance</b></p>	<p>3. Today, as in certain other periods of United States history, it has become popular to disparage politicians. By doing so, however, we do severe damage to our ability to govern ourselves. To begin with, the criticism is demoralizing to the vast majority of political leaders, who are thoroughly honest and trustworthy. Even more damaging is the effect that our clinical attitude has on the young people who must lead the country in the future. Certainly the public’s lack of respect for politicians is bound to discourage many qualified young men and women from pursuing political careers. Worst of all, though, is the mentality of helplessness and indifference that the notion of general corruption breeds. When citizens come to believe that, regardless of whom they vote for, the result is the same, then they either vote carelessly or do not vote at all. Disparaging politicians may be popular, but it is not wise</p>	
<p><b>Spatial Order</b></p>	<p>4. I once took a picture from the window of a Spanish cafe during an otherwise uneventful day. This picture, an especially beautiful image of a late afternoon, sits before me now. The view is down the hillside, toward the sea. A fog bank is rolling in, obscuring the beach and beginning to climb up toward the town. As I watched, the fog grew thicker and the view vanished, and chilled, I retreated into the cafe.</p>	<p><b>??What ??? This last sentence concludes the anecdote but is only distantly related to the topic sentence. What could be ???</b></p>

# **We Wear the Mask**

by Paul Lawrence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
We wear the mask.  
We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
We wear the mask.

**Checklist for Effective Paragraphs**

Recall the reading notes and class discussion on the questions, *what makes a good paragraph?* or *what makes a paragraph effective?* Use the following criteria to evaluate your work, then get feedback from other peer editors, as well. Score each item on a 1-5 basis, one being low and five being top.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Spatial ¶</b>	<b>Chrono. ¶</b>	<b>Order Imp ¶</b>	<b>Logical Order ¶</b>
(Structure) has topic sentence (when needed)				
Has supporting details: facts/stats, sensory, examples, anecdote				
Has unity; all details related to the main idea				
Uses clear organization: logical order, order of importance, spatial order, chronological order				
Uses transitions to add flow or clarify mood and meaning				
Finishes with clincher				
(Mechanics) words spelled correctly				
Uses correct punctuation				
Avoids run-on sentences				
(Style) ... Think about this dimension of good writing. Is the passion or creativity or individual voice in your writing in this paragraph? Which of the terms below might be used to identify these ingredients?: active verbs, fresh vocabulary, sentence variety, mood, rhythm and cadence of words, use of metaphor and imagery ... What else? What instead? What items on a checklist will help you improve your writing the most?				
Signature of Peer Editors: Peer Editor #1. Peer Editor #2.				

## Linking Words Useful in Paragraph Types

<b>Transitional Word and Phrases</b>			
	<b>Comparing Ideas/Classification and Definition</b>		
<b>Logical Paragraph</b>	also and	another moreover	similarly too
	<b>Contrasting Ideas/Classification and Definition</b>		
<b>Order of Importance Paragraph</b>	although but however	in spite of instead nevertheless	on the other hand still yet
	<b>Showing Cause and Effect/Narration</b>		
	as a result because	consequently since	so that therefore
	<b>Showing Time/Narration</b>		
<b>Chronological Paragraphs</b>	after at last at once before	eventually finally first meanwhile	next then thereafter when
	<b>Showing Place/Description</b>		
<b>Spatial Paragraphs</b>	above across around before beyond	down here in inside into	next over there to under
	<b>Showing Importance/Evaluation</b>		
<b>Order of Importance Paragraphs</b>	first last	mainly more important	then to begin with

**Transitional expressions can help give your writing coherence. But don't overdo them. The result can be writing that sounds artificial and stilted.**