

cluster – number of things of the same kind being closely together

dual – double; which is intended to serve two purposes

frugal – economical

Perusal – the act of reading closely

prodigal – wasteful; spending too much

reticent – in the habit of saying little

snobbish – who pays too much respect to social position or wealth

teetotaler – person abstaining from alcoholic drink

EXERCISES

Write paragraphs on the following topics using the method of comparison and contrast:

- Road and Railway communications
- Islam and Christianity
- Table tennis and Lawn Tennis
- Public and Private universities
- College and University

A Handbook of Paragraph Writing

The Definition Paragraph

The definition paragraph is developed by using the technique of definition. But the act of defining a term entails a number of other techniques. When you are asked to define an unfamiliar phenomenon, you have to describe, explain or clarify it by relating it to something familiar. Sometimes you have to compare and contrast it with a thing which is already known. Sometimes you are required to give concrete examples of the thing you define. As a result, a definition paragraph becomes composite in character. Although it is said to be developed by a single technique (the technique of definition), it is usually developed by a combination of several techniques.

In the definition paragraph, the first sentence usually gives the literal meaning of the term to be defined and the other sentences following it give a logical explanation and clarification of that term. The concluding sentence sometimes summarizes the important features of the term. It is, therefore, obvious that the beginning and the ending of a definition paragraph do not conform to the beginning and the ending of the other kinds of paragraph. It does not have a typical topic sentence introducing the main idea and containing a controlling idea. Neither does it have a concluding sentence paraphrasing the topic sentence.

Read the following pair of paragraphs carefully paying close attention to how they are started, developed and concluded.

1. The Bildungsroman

Literally, the *bildungsroman* means 'a development novel.' It deals with the growth of a single individual, usually a talented and sensitive person, from his childhood through adolescence to maturity. It is a kind of psychological novel which attempts to make a psychological analysis of a person's mind and motives. Like a 'case study' it familiarizes us with almost every stage of the person's life with reference to his social milieu. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* is a genuine example of the *bildungsroman*, which presents a complete and vivid picture of Paul Morel's life.

2. The Paragraph

The paragraph is a unified piece of writing. It is a series of sentences developing a single idea. Like the essay, it also has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning or the topic sentence introduces the main idea. The sentences in the middle establish that idea by giving supporting evidence. And the ending sentence restates the idea by referring back to the topic sentence. The sentences in a paragraph are all linked with one another in some way or other. And they should all be about the same subject for the sake of unity.

These two model paragraphs show that the definition paragraph does not follow any definite pattern. The topic sentence in the first paragraph gives a meaning of the term to be defined, while that in the second assigns it to a class. In the first paragraph, the last sentence does not echo the first sentence. This paragraph ends rather abruptly with an example of the unfamiliar thing. But the last sentence of the second paragraph presents the most important feature of the defined

thing with a partial echo of the topic sentence. The developers in this paragraph are descriptive. There is also an analogy in it. The method of comparison is followed also in the first paragraph. It is, therefore, obvious that this kind of paragraph contains a combination of techniques and it does not follow any hard and fast principle.

MAIN POINTS

- i) The definition paragraph is developed by definition.
- ii) The purpose of a definition paragraph is to familiarize an unfamiliar term.
- ii) It is often developed by a combination of different techniques.
- iv) The definition paragraph does not follow any definite rule.

VOCABULARY ENRICHMENT

adolescence – Period of life between childhood and maturity

analogy – partial likeness or agreement

composite – made up of different materials

(to) conform – be in agreement (with)

echo – sound reflected or sent back from a wall; copy or repetition

(to) entail – make necessary; impose

(to) familiarize – make well known

literal – not figurative; usual and obvious

milieu – environment; social surroundings

phenomenon – unusual thing or happening

sensitive – easily hurt in the spirit; easily offended

typical – representative or characteristic; serving as a type

EXERCISES

1. Read the following paragraph carefully and answer the questions below it:

The Sonnet

The sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines written in Iambic Pentameter. It was introduced in the fourteenth century by an Italian poet named Petrarch. In England it was first written by Shakespeare. The Petrarchian sonnet consists of two parts: the Octave of eight lines and the Sestet of six lines. On the other hand, the Shakespearean sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a couplet at the end. The two forms also follow different rhyme schemes. For instance, the rhyme scheme of the Petrarchian sonnet is abba abba-cd cd cd / cde cde, while that of the Shakespearean sonnet is ab ab-cd cd-ef ef-gg. However, both the two forms of the sonnet deal with only one thought or emotion just as there is only one main idea in a paragraph. The sonnet is a short, unified piece of verse.

- a) What kind of paragraph is this?
- b) Apart from the technique of definition, what other techniques have been followed in it?
- c) What is the function of the topic sentence in this paragraph? If it defines the unfamiliar concept, what is the function of the developers then?
- d) What purpose does the concluding sentence serve? Does it restate the idea in the topic sentence?
- e) In this paragraph, an analogy has been drawn between the sonnet and the paragraph. Are they really similar? If not, what are the differences between them?

2. Write a definition paragraph on each of the following topics:

- a) Utilitarianism
- b) Socialism
- c) The Tragedy
- d) The Tragic Protagonist
- e) Television

The Classification Paragraph

As the paragraphs in this book have been classified according to the developmental techniques used in them, it is needless to say that the classification paragraph is developed by using the technique of classification. However, we will say a few words here about the purpose and organization of a classification paragraph.

The word "Classification" suggests two meanings-(a) dividing a thing into its component parts and (b) putting things into groups. Hence, the purpose of a classification paragraph is either to divide a subject into its individual parts and explain them one by one or to bring a large number of items under a small number of groups or classes and examine the characteristics of each of those groups. For example, if we divide a complete paragraph into its constituent parts, we will get Introduction, Development and Conclusion. On the other hand, the sentences (let us say fifteen sentences) in a paragraph can be classified as The Topic Sentence, The Developers, The Context Modulator and The Concluding Sentence. In the first case, the classification paragraph will explain the parts of a whole thing, while in the second it will point out the nature of each group of several things.

As usual, the classification paragraph has the Topic Sentence, the Developers and the Terminator at the beginning, in the middle and at the end respectively.

The function of the topic sentence/s in this case is to declare how many parts the whole thing is broken into or how many groups the great number of things fall into. The number of parts or groups may be definite or indefinite. If definite, they are named either in the very first sentence or sometimes in a second topic sentence. If indefinite, only a few of them are named and explained in the developers.