



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **9th Grade** | Unit 4

SAMPLE

Language Arts 904

Reading with Skill

1. BASIC READING SKILLS **5**

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA | **5**

UNDERSTANDING THE SUPPORTING DETAILS | **12**

SELF TEST 1 | **20**

2. SHORT STORY FUNDAMENTALS **23**

CONFLICT | **24**

CHARACTERIZATION | **25**

PLOT | **27**

THEME | **27**

LANGUAGE | **28**

SETTING | **29**

SYMBOLISM | **30**

SELF TEST 2 | **32**

3. TWO SHORT STORIES **35**

THE SLIP-OVER SWEATER | **35**

FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON* | **46**

SELF TEST 3 | **49**



LIFEPAC Test is located in the center of the booklet. Please remove before starting the unit.

1. BASIC READING SKILLS

In the first section of this LIFE·PAC, you will be working on particular reading skills that will improve your reading comprehension. An understanding of paragraph organization and the ability to make generalizations based on what you read will help you to understand

more of what you read and to study more efficiently. You will also find that reading for pleasure is more enjoyable if you do not have to reread sentences or paragraphs in order to understand the author's message.

SECTION OBJECTIVES

Review these objectives. When you have completed this section, you should be able to:

1. Locate the main idea of a paragraph.
2. Write an appropriate topic sentence for a paragraph that has no stated main idea.
3. Recognize the common patterns for organizing details in a paragraph.
4. Identify signal words that suggest the pattern of paragraph development.
5. Make generalizations based on the information given in a paragraph.

VOCABULARY

Study these words to enhance your learning success in this section.

generalization (jen' ur u lu zā shun'). A general statement inferred from particular facts.

perspective (pur spek' tive). A mental view, outlook or prospect.

secretary (sek' ru ter' ē). A writing desk with a set of drawers and, often, with a shelf for books.

spatial (spā' shul). Of or having to do with space or area, occupying space.

Note: All vocabulary words in this LIFE·PAC appear in **boldface** print the first time they are used. If you are not sure of the meaning when you are reading, study the definitions given.

Pronunciation Key: hat, āge, cāre, fār; let, ēqual, tērm; it, īce; hot, ōpen, ōrder; oil; out; cup, pūt, rüle; child; long; thin; /ʒh/ for then; /zh/ for measure; /u/ represents /a/ in about, /e/ in taken, /i/ in pencil, /o/ in lemon, and /u/ in circus.

FINDING THE MAIN IDEA

Most prose, whether found in a newspaper, a novel, or a textbook, is divided into paragraphs. To understand completely what you are reading, you must learn to understand the structure of paragraphs and the logic that this structure lends to the meaning of the work as a whole. The two basic parts of a paragraph are the *main idea* and the *supporting details*.

The author's point or purpose, the main idea, is usually stated in a single sentence. The other sentences in the paragraph which support, explain, or prove the main idea, are called supporting details. The main idea and the supporting details form a cohesive unit.

The sentence that states the main idea in a paragraph is called the *topic sentence* because it announces a topic, or subject, of the paragraph.

Each time a new topic is discussed, a new paragraph must be introduced. If you were assigned an essay on “The Disadvantages of the Automobile,” you might wish to discuss three different topics: cost, safety, and environmental considerations. The body of your essay would have three paragraphs. Each paragraph would have its own topic sentence stating the purpose or main idea. Each paragraph would have supporting details relevant to its own topic sentence. In the paragraph on cost, for example, you would present your main idea on cost and support it with appropriate points. You would

not discuss either safety or environment in the paragraph on cost.

Usually the topic sentence is the first sentence in the paragraph. It announces the subject to be discussed and is followed by details that expand and explain the main idea. Suppose that you were keeping a diary and sat down to make your daily entry. Your first sentence might be, “I certainly had a good day.” You might then tell about your *A* on the history exam, the part-time job you found, and the game your team won. The sentences containing this information would serve as supporting details explaining why your day was good.



Write the correct answer in the blank.

- 1.1 The main idea is usually stated in the _____ .
- 1.2 The sentences that expand or explain the main idea are called _____ .

Complete this activity.

- 1.3 Turn back to the section introduction. Study the first three paragraphs to determine which sentence is the topic sentence. Compare your answers with a friend’s. If the friend disagrees with you, defend your answer.

Friend’s name _____

Journalists often use the *topic-sentence-first* pattern, beginning their newspaper articles with the main idea so that readers can know immediately whether they want to read the entire story. The topic sentence in the following paragraph is shown in boldface type.

Topic Sentence: **Okeen, Oklahoma’s Rattlesnake Roundup is more popular every year.** Daredevils love the challenge of bringing deadly diamondbacks in alive. Prizes are awarded for the longest and heaviest specimens. Roundup visitors from all over the world bring business to the community. The annual Roundup helps to hold down the snake population so that the cattle herds remain safe. Finally, the poison extracted from the fangs is used to make life-saving antivenin.

Supporting Details:

Not all paragraphs begin with a topic sentence. Several patterns of paragraph organization may be used. The location of the main idea depends on the purpose of the paragraph. To analyze a paragraph’s structure, think of paragraphs as shapes. Because the topic sentence makes a broad, general statement that covers or includes the details, it is the widest part of the paragraph. The paragraph you have just read had its topic sentence at the beginning. The details became less important as the paragraph neared its end. A paragraph of this type may be pictured as an upside-down triangle, wide (or heavy) at the top and small at the bottom. A topic sentence also may be found at the end of a paragraph. When the purpose of a paragraph is to convince or persuade a reader, a topic sentence is often used at the end, particularly when a difficult or unpopular idea is discussed. Often if the reasons and details gradually lead up to the new idea, readers are more willing to accept the idea than they would be if that

Topic Sentence:

Okeen, Oklahoma’s Rattlesnake Roundup is more popular every year.

Supporting Details of Less and Less Importance:

Daredevils love the challenge of bringing deadly diamondbacks in alive. Prizes are awarded for the longest and heaviest specimens. Roundup visitors from all over the world bring business to the community. The annual Roundup helps to hold down the snake population so the cattle herds remain safe. Finally, the poison extracted from the fangs is used to make life-saving antivenin.

idea were presented immediately. Sometimes a writer uses final topic sentences simply to give variety to his writing so that every paragraph is not structured in the same way.

When a topic sentence comes last, the paragraph can be given the shape of a *regular triangle*. (Δ). Read the following paragraph. Notice how the writer gives the details first to convince the reader that the main idea in the last sentence should be believed.

Supporting sentences:

Termites can chew through shelves of books in a library. They ruin valuable crops. Telephone poles often need to be replaced because these ravaging insects have weakened them. Wood from homes can be completely destroyed by these pests. (Particularly in the South.)

Topic Sentence:

From painful experience we have come to regard termites as extremely harmful pests.



Complete this activity.

1.4 Find a “regular triangle” paragraph in a book or magazine and copy it here.

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

Notice that supporting details become increasingly important as the paragraph nears its end. This structure prepares the reader for the main idea contained in the topic sentence.

A topic sentence will not always be the first or the last sentence in a paragraph. The topic sentence will sometimes come in mid-paragraph. A paragraph with its most important part in the middle has a *diamond* shape.

Supporting Sentences:

Topic Sentence:

Supporting sentences:

Anyone who loves to read becomes curious about the authors of his favorite books and stories. The avid reader assumes that authors, like their characters, are as adventurous, exciting, amorous, or saintly as the characters they create. **The author, however, often has little in common with the character he creates.** A shy, retiring spinster could produce adventure stories, and a swarthy sailor may create tender poems.

The topic sentence in this paragraph pattern does not always come exactly in the middle as it does in this example. Even if the topic

sentence is the second sentence or the next to the last sentence, the paragraph is considered to be diamond-shaped.



Complete these activities. Underline the main idea in each of the following paragraphs, then draw the shape of the paragraph on the line.

1.5 _____

In the late seventeenth century a Turkish garrison was using the Parthenon for an ammunition storehouse. During an attack by the Venetians, a bomb ignited the gunpowder blowing up the center section. Since then the building has been a glorious ruin. Were it not for this relatively recent incident, the Parthenon would be standing intact today.

1.6 _____

People say the necessities of life are food, water, shelter and clothing, but I think a fifth item should be added to the list: scotch tape. Hardly a day passes that I do not use this sticky cellophane for some beneficial purpose. When I get so excited about my world history class that I tear a page in the book, scotch tape comes to my rescue. At night when

SELF TEST 1

List the six common patterns of paragraph organization (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.01 _____
- 1.02 _____
- 1.03 _____
- 1.04 _____
- 1.05 _____
- 1.06 _____

Study each group of signal words, then write on the line the name of the pattern in which these signal words would probably be used (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.07 first, next, finally _____
- 1.08 since, because _____
- 1.09 on the left, behind, to the side _____
- 1.010 in addition, also, another _____
- 1.011 one thing, next, of most importance _____
- 1.012 however, on the other hand _____
- 1.013 as a result _____

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

- 1.014 The two basic parts of a paragraph are the
 a. _____ and
 b. _____.
- 1.015 The sentence which states the main idea is called _____.
- 1.016 If a main idea is not stated directly in a paragraph then it is _____ by all the sentences in the paragraph.
- 1.017 The purpose of the supporting details is _____

- 1.018 The most common position for the main idea in a paragraph is _____



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