



LANGUAGE ARTS

STUDENT BOOK

▶ **9th Grade** | Unit 4

Language Arts 904

Reading with Skill

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Reading with Skill

Introduction

Proverbs 4:7 says, "...with all thy getting get understanding." To read without understanding is to throw time away. Time is too valuable to spend rereading material you did not comprehend the first time. The development of reading skills is essential to reading with understanding.

In this LIFE PAC® you will further develop the reading skills that will make reading easier and more enjoyable. You will learn to recognize the main idea in a paragraph and to understand the ways in which supporting details are organized. You will be able to determine whether a writer has used order of *importance*, *chronological order*, *spatial order*, *cause and effect*, or *comparison and contrast* as the basis of his paragraph organization. You will learn to draw conclusions based on what you have read.

When you have mastered the application of these reading skills, you will learn more about the elements of a short story. You will study plot, setting, characterization, theme, and language to gain a new appreciation of this literary form.

Objectives

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFE PAC. When you have finished this LIFE PAC, 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.
6. List and define the elements of a short story.
7. Identify "flat," "round," "static," and "dynamic" characters.
8. Follow the plot of a short story.
9. Identify the theme of a short story.
10. Appraise the author's use of imaginative and descriptive language.
11. Explain the contribution of setting to a story.
12. Identify symbols in a story and relate them to the story as a whole.

1. BASIC READING SKILLS

In the first section of this LIFEPAAC, 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 LIFEPAAC 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. Daredevils love the challenge of bringing deadly diamond-

Supporting Details of Less and Less Importance:

backs 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.

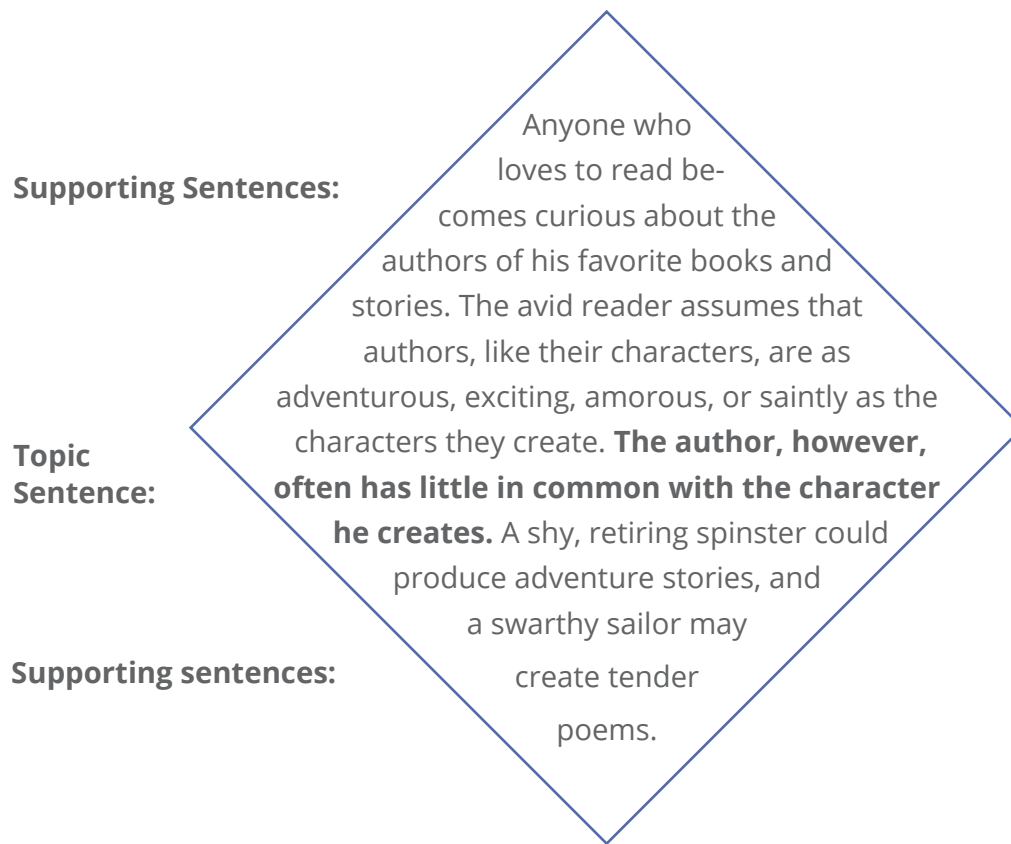
TEACHER CHECK

_____ 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.



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

I don't feel like rolling my hair, what do I do? I tape it in place, of course. I may look like a twentieth century mummy, but the purpose is accomplished. Have you ever been dressed up to eat at a big, fancy restaurant? Just as you get out of the car someone cheerfully announces, "Your hem is down!" No need to panic, just stick it up with—you guessed it—scotch tape! So as you see, I may need food to eat, water to drink, a roof over my head, and a shirt on my back, but when it comes to downright convenience, scotch tape takes the cake.

1.7 _____

What is amnesia? Most of us think of a dramatic, total loss of memory brought on by a severe blow to the head. Amnesia is, however, a very subtle and sometimes sinister illness. While amnesia can result from a head injury, overwork and worry can also lead to memory lapses. In some cases diagnosis is difficult because these lapses are intermittent, rather than constant.



Complete these activities.

1.8 Find an "inverted triangle" paragraph in a book or magazine. Copy it below. Underline the topic sentence.

1.9 Find a diamond-shaped paragraph in a book or magazine. Copy it below.

TEACHER CHECK

_____ initials

_____ date

Some paragraphs have no directly stated topic sentence. Their main idea must be inferred by the reader from the supporting details as a whole. Since no part of the paragraph is more important than any other, the paragraph pattern is best depicted as a *rectangle*. The following paragraph is an example.

Everyone who has something to sell in a Mexican marketplace announces his wares at the top of his lungs. Booths, stalls, and blankets

covered with goods line crowded paths where people barter for meat, vegetables, kitchen-ware, and jewelry. One tourist joked that he always wore earplugs when he went shopping.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, a careful reading of the facts presented suggests a main idea that could be stated in a topic sentence such as this: A Mexican marketplace is very noisy and busy.



Complete this activity.

Read the following paragraph and draw its shape on the line. Underline the topic sentence. If the paragraph has no topic sentence, write a sentence that summarizes the main idea on the lines following the paragraph.

1.10 _____

The old saying, “lightning never strikes twice in the same place,” is not true. Ranchers see bolts flash many times among isolated trees or on a strand of barbed wire. Forest rangers manning fire towers report that every thunderstorm brings several flashes to their lofty outposts. Lightning rods are a necessity for radio towers and skyscrapers.

Complete these activities.

1.11 a. Which paragraph shape would be best to use for a joke? _____

b. Why? _____

1.12 Suppose you are writing a letter to the principal asking him to extend school lunch break from thirty to forty-five minutes. You know he is not in favor of this idea.

a. Which paragraph shape would be most appropriate? _____

b. Why _____

1.13 Suppose you have been assigned by the school newspaper to cover an important football game.

a. Which paragraph shape would you use in writing up the story? _____

b. Why? _____

1.14 Write a persuasive paragraph in which you try to convince the reader to take a certain action or to agree with your point of view. Underline the topic sentence when you are finished.

UNDERSTANDING THE SUPPORTING DETAILS

Learning to find the main idea in a paragraph is of little value unless you are able to put this skill to use. In this section you will learn different ways in which facts and details support the main idea of a paragraph. You will then be able to form generalizations from the facts and details by drawing out information or ideas not directly stated to the writer. Making a generalization involves putting together all the pieces of information supplied by the writer in order to form a broad picture of what the facts suggest. Understanding the writer's ideas is essential if these ideas are to be remembered and applied.

Recognizing patterns. The job of putting facts together is easier for the student who understands the organization of facts and ideas in writing than it is for the student who does not understand this organization. A writer does

not scribble down his thoughts at random. He spends many hours trying to organize his ideas and to develop them so that they will be clear to the reader and so that they will support his point effectively. Main ideas and details in a paragraph usually fit into one of several patterns. Familiarity with these patterns makes reading easier because it enables the reader to follow what is being said.

Among the patterns writers use to organize their paragraphs are these:

- *Simple listing,*
- *order of importance,*
- *time order,*
- *spatial development,*
- *cause and effect, and*
- *comparison and contrast.*

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 _____

Answer these questions (each answer, 3 points).

1.019 Which paragraph shape is often used by journalists for their newspaper articles?

1.020 When the purpose of a paragraph is to convince or persuade the reader, which shape is usually best? _____

1.021 If the topic sentence is in the middle of a paragraph, the paragraph is said to have which shape? _____

1.022 Which shape describes a paragraph with no stated topic sentence?

Answer true or false (each answer, 1 point).

1.023 _____ The topic sentence states the main idea of a paragraph.

1.024 _____ When a writer wants to explain why things happened in a certain way, he uses comparison and contrast.

1.025 _____ Slowing down to make generalizations increases reading comprehension.

1.026 _____ The use of dates in a paragraph is a clue to a spatial order pattern.

1.027 _____ A key word repeated throughout a paragraph may substitute for a topic sentence as a means of unifying a paragraph.

Read the following paragraph. Underline the topic sentence. In the first blank write the shape of the paragraph. In the second blank write the pattern of paragraph organization (each part, 3 points).

1.028 a. The art of written discourse seems to have declined sharply in recent years. Perhaps the rising cost of stationery and postage is a factor. Most people today are so busy with their jobs, their families, and their hobbies that they do not feel they have time to write letters. To a certain extent, television and personal computers have replaced communicating with friends as a form of entertainment. The advent of telephone, however, is probably the most significant factor in the decrease of letter-writing, because it gives instant access to friends and loved ones.

b. Shape _____

c. Pattern _____

66

83

SCORE _____

TEACHER _____

initials

date



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