

Paragraphs for Elementary School

Paragraphs for Elementary School

A Sentence-Composing Approach

A Student Worktext

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To elementary school teachers for laying the foundation for lifelong
learning through teaching reading and writing.

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Thanks, deep and wide, to the hundreds of authors within—your trainers in this writing fitness program—for modeling good writing by showing you the way to build stronger sentences and paragraphs.

Their names are on pages 162–169. Mind your manners. Thank them—and of course also your teacher—for helping you become a better writer.

HELLO

PLAYING WITH SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPHS

*In writing sentences or paragraphs
there should always be an element of play.*

—Thornton Wilder, *writer*

Host of the children's TV show *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*, Fred Rogers said, "Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning, but for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood."

Authors play with sentences and paragraphs, trying different lengths, arrangements, and styles to seriously discover their best writing. Playing is actually creating because it results in something new, different, interesting.

Like those authors, within the exercises of this book, you'll play with sentences and paragraphs to seriously learn how to build better sentences and paragraphs.

PARAGRAPH TRAINING PROGRAM

Do you remember how you learned to talk? As a baby, you used your voice to make sounds, to coo, and sometimes to cry, but, at first, you couldn't use it to talk. You may have heard the saying, "You have to crawl before you can walk." Well, you have to coo before you can talk, too.

What helped you to go from crawling to walking, from cooing to talking? You had teachers who showed you how. They were probably your parents or others who loved you and wanted to help you. For walking, they modeled how to walk as you watched them, guided you, and held you up when you took your first steps, picked you up when you fell, and coached you and cheered you until you were walking on your own. Through imitating your parents, who modeled how to walk, you went from baby steps to walking.

How did you learn to go from cooing to talking? You had teachers there, too, who modeled how to talk. As you listened, they mentored you by pronouncing words and then listening to you say them and correcting you when you made mistakes. You went from gibberish to language.

Walking uses muscles. Learning to walk requires training those muscles to behave in ways that allow confident walking, without falling. Think of the exercises in this worktext as a training program to strengthen your writing muscles so that you can build better sentences and paragraphs. Like any successful athlete, you'll go through rigorous practice sessions. Those sessions will help you build your writing muscles and learn how to imitate your expert trainers in writing better sentences and paragraphs.

A trainer is someone who knows very well how to do something and can show you how to do it, too. In learning to write better, those trainers in the exercises in this book are authors. In your training program, you'll be trained by authors of successful books like *Charlotte's Web*, *The Secret Garden*, *Harry Potter*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Hunger Games*, *Ender's Game*, *Matilda*, and hundreds more.

Set your goal to learn to build your sentences and paragraphs like those of your trainers. Like any training, sometimes it won't be easy, but it will

always be helpful, and sometimes fun, too. The goal is worth it because learning to write better is important in and beyond school.

Good writers say more. In this worktext, you will train to learn the sentence-composing tools they use to say more. As a result, you will build strong sentences and paragraphs. *Paragraphs for Elementary School: A Sentence-Composing Approach* gives you a toolbox to take with you whenever you write.

Read these two paragraphs. The weak one doesn't use those tools. The strong one does.

WEAK PARAGRAPH

(1) He ran down the mountain path. (2) Several times he fell, but was on his feet again in the next breath. (3) He fell hard onto his face.

STRONG PARAGRAPH

(1) Blindly, he ran down the mountain path, heedless of the rocks and shrubs. (2) Several times he fell, but was on his feet again in the next breath, stumbling, tripping, skidding in a head-long descent. (3) When at last he reached the point where the path leveled out, he fell hard onto his face, the dirt mixing with his tears, his teeth cutting into his top lip, causing him to spit blood. (adapted)

Linda Sue Park, *A Single Shard*

The underlined parts add information. (The word for saying more is *elaboration*.) Elaboration builds more detailed sentences, like ones by authors. You can use the same tools as authors to say more in your sentences and paragraphs. Through their sentences and their paragraphs, those hundreds of authors are ready to train you with the equipment and tools you'll need to build stronger sentences and paragraphs.

Often, students don't say more because they don't have the tools for elaboration. A major goal of *Paragraphs for Elementary School: A Sentence-*

Composing Approach is to help you learn tools for elaboration within your sentences and paragraphs.

In the exercises in this book, you'll see how over three hundred authors shaped and built their sentences and paragraphs. You'll learn how you can shape and build your own sentences and paragraphs like theirs. Those authors are your invisible fitness trainers in building stronger writing muscles.

*I threw words all over the place,
and none of them landed right.*

—Pat Conroy, *My Reading Life*

Learn everything you can from your writing fitness trainers, as they train you to build better sentences and paragraphs using sentence-composing tools like the ones they use. If you do, your words, after you throw them, will land right.

In the writing Olympics, your trainers are gold-medal winners. As you begin your writing fitness program, train like an Olympic athlete. Sometimes it will be hard work, but getting a gold medal is worth it.

PARAGRAPH PRIMER

What does a paragraph look like? It's the block of text with the first line indented. That indentation says to readers, "Here's something new and different from the last paragraph." That's what a paragraph looks like.

What does a paragraph do? It contains sentences all linked to the same topic: an idea, a place, a person, a process, a story, an explanation, a description. That's what a paragraph does.

How is a paragraph built? It is built like a tree, with branches attached to the trunk. The trunk is the topic the paragraph is about, and the branches are the sentences linked to that topic. That's what a paragraph is built like.

Look at the above three paragraphs. The topic of the first is what a paragraph looks like, with a series of linked sentences telling you what it looks like. The topic of the second paragraph is what a paragraph does, with a series of linked sentences telling you what it does. The topic of the third paragraph is what a paragraph is built like, with a series of linked sentences telling you about that topic.

Sometimes the first sentence of a paragraph previews what the paragraph is about, the way a trailer previews what a movie is about. That sentence announces the topic of the paragraph, so it's called a "topic sentence." After the paragraph's topic sentence are sentences linked to that topic.

Here is an example with two paragraphs, a description of why Hazel misses her old school and dislikes her new school. The preview sentences tell the topic of each paragraph, and the linked sentences fill in the details.

Hazel's first year at Lovelace Elementary was very different from her old school. In her other school, the classrooms didn't have desks. They called their teachers by their first names. Hazel tried that with Mrs. Jacobs on her first day at Lovelace. It did not go over well. The good thing was she now went to the same school as Jack.

The bad thing was everything else. Hazel did not like sitting at a desk. She did not like having to call her teacher Mrs. Anything. She did not like homework and work sheets and fill-in-the-blank and

multiple-choice. In her old school teachers said she was so creative and imaginative, and now all she heard was that she did not do assignments and needed to learn to follow school rules.

Anne Ursu, *Breadcrumbs*

The topic of the first paragraph is in its first sentence: differences between Hazel's old school and her new school. Notice how the sentences after the preview sentence link to that topic. The linked sentences tell what things Hazel liked about her old school, how those things were unwelcome in her new school, and how there was just one thing she liked about her new school.

The topic of the second paragraph is also previewed in its first sentence: things in the new school she doesn't like. Notice how the sentences after the preview sentence link to that topic. The linked sentences list all the "bad things" about the new school.

EXERCISE 1: SELECTING PARAGRAPH TITLES

As a way to tell whether you understand what the paragraph says, select the best title for the paragraph. The title you select should sum up most of what the paragraph says. Jot down reasons for your choice.

PARAGRAPH ONE

It snowed fluffy white flakes big enough to show their crystal architecture, like perfect geometric poems. It was the sort of snow that transforms the world around it into a different kind of place. You know what it's like when you wake up to find everything white and soft and quiet, when you run outside and your breath suddenly appears before you in a smoky poof, when you wonder for a moment if the world in which you woke up is not the same one that you went to bed in the night before. Things like that happen, at least in the stories you read. It

was the sort of snowfall that, if there were any magic to be had in the world, would make it come out.

Anne Ursu, *Breadcrumbs*

What is the best title for this paragraph?

- a. Winter Snow
- b. Lovely White
- c. White Magic

PARAGRAPH TWO

Papa handed Esperanza the knife. The short blade was curved like a scythe, its fat wooden handle fitting snugly in her palm. This job was usually reserved for the eldest son of a wealthy rancher, but since Esperanza was an only child and Papa's pride and glory, she was always given the honor. Last night she had watched Papa sharpen the knife back and forth across a stone, so she knew the tool was edged like a razor.

Pam Muñoz Ryan, *Esperanza Rising*

What is the best title for this paragraph?

- a. Esperanza's Sharp Knife
- b. A Knife to Honor Esperanza
- c. Preparations of Esperanza's Knife

PARAGRAPH THREE

When I think back on it, I'd have to say that it all started with the Golden Lotus. The Golden Lotus is a famous Chinese restaurant, about two hours away from where I live. It is a long way to go for

dinner, as Mom pointed out to Dad when his cousin first invited us to come for a birthday party.

Wendy Wan-Long Shang, *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu*

What is the best title for this paragraph?

- a. A Wonderful Birthday Party
- b. Fun at Golden Lotus
- c. Looking Back

PARAGRAPH FOUR

The wheels of the skateboard made a rumbling hum as they rolled over the pavement at the little town park. I loved that sound. The world rushed by me as I zipped across the blacktop. I could feel how smooth or rough it was right through my sneakers, and it was like I was watching the park in fast-forward. The greens and browns of the grass and trees flashed by on the sides as I kept my eyes on the little concrete path in front of me, looking for the next good, flat spot. I was trying to get this one trick down, but the board wasn't cooperating. It slipped out from under me again and went bouncing across the ground.

Amar'e Stoudemire, *STAT: Home Court*

What is the best title for this paragraph?

- a. Through My Sneakers
- b. Skateboarding in the Park
- c. Finding a Flat Spot

PARAGRAPH FIVE

He was overweight, and the kids at his middle school often teased him about his size. Even his teachers sometimes made cruel comments

without realizing it. On his last day of school, his math teacher, Mrs. Bell, taught ratios. As an example she chose the heaviest kid in the class and the lightest kid in the class, and had them weigh themselves. Stanley weighed three times as much as the other boy. Mrs. Bell wrote the ratio on the board, 3:1, unaware of how much embarrassment she had caused both of them.

Louis Sachar, *Holes*

What is the best title for this paragraph?

- a. Overweight Children
- b. Last Day of School
- c. A Bad Math Class

EXERCISE 2: CREATING PARAGRAPH TITLES

To test your understanding, give each paragraph a title that sums up what the paragraph is mainly about. For each paragraph, create a good title, and share it with classmates to see how they titled the same paragraph. Maybe the class could hold a contest to choose the best titles. *Be sure to correctly capitalize your titles.*

PARAGRAPH ONE

Luke went over to the kitchen window and peered out at the woods, trying for the umpteenth time to picture rows and rows of houses where the firs and maples and oaks now stood—or rather had stood. Luke knew that half the trees were now toppled. Some already lay on the ground. Some hung at weird angles from their former lofty positions in the sky. Their absence made everything look different, like a fresh haircut exposing a band of untanned skin on a forehead. Even

from deep inside the kitchen, Luke could tell the trees were missing because everything was brighter, more open, but scarier.

Margaret Peterson Haddix, *Among the Hidden*

PARAGRAPH TWO

The bell rang. Everyone signed off their desks or hurriedly typed in reminders to themselves. Some were dumping lessons or data into their computers at home. A few gathered at the printers while something they wanted to show was printed out. Ender spread his hands over the child-size keyboard near the edge of the desk and wondered what it would feel like to have hands as large as a grown-up's. They must feel so big and awkward, thick stubby fingers and beefy palms. Of course, they had bigger keyboards—but how could their thick fingers draw a fine line, the way Ender could, a thin line so precise that he could make it spiral seventy-nine times from the center to the edge of the desk without the lines ever touching or overlapping. It gave him something to do while the teacher droned on about arithmetic.

Orson Scott Card, *Ender's Game*

PARAGRAPH THREE

It is a neat office. It has a desk tucked snug under the hot-water pipe and walls covered in pegboard. Uncle Potluck in his office hangs his tools on those walls. He's drawn white lines around them, too, like the ones they draw around dead bodies on TV shows, except dead-body lines are about mysteries, and Uncle Potluck's lines are about things being for sure where they belong, the broom in the broom spot, the wrench in the wrench spot. There's even a white outline for Uncle Potluck's hat, although that spot mostly stays empty. Things that don't belong on the walls have shelf spots or drawer spots, all of them neatly labeled.

Linda Urban, *Hound Dog True*

PARAGRAPH FOUR

It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. If you could keep awake, you would see your own mother doing this, and you would find it very interesting to watch her. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kite, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.

J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

PARAGRAPH FIVE

The rain poured down on London so hard that it seemed that it was dancing spray, every raindrop contending with its fellows for supremacy in the air and waiting to splash down. It was a deluge. The drains and sewers were overflowing, throwing up the debris of muck, slime, and filth, the dead dogs, the dead rats, cats, and worse, bringing back up to the world of men all those things that they thought they had left behind them, jostling and bubbling and churning like some nameless soup boiling in a dreadful cauldron.

Terry Pratchett, *Dodger*

EXERCISE 3: ARRANGING PARAGRAPHS

Underneath the paragraph are two sentences. What sentence should be the paragraph's first sentence? What sentence should be the paragraph's last sentence?

PARAGRAPH ONE (from "The Scarlet Ibis" by James Hurst)

Summary: The younger brother, nicknamed Doodle, almost died after being born.

(1) It was, though, a nice crazy, like someone you meet in your dreams. (2) He was born when I was six and was, from the outset, a disappointment. (3) He seemed all head, with a tiny body which was red and shriveled like an old man's. (4) Everybody thought he was going to die. (5) Daddy had Mr. Heath, the carpenter, build a little mahogany coffin for him. (6) But he didn't die, and when he was three months old, Mama and Daddy decided they might as well name him. (7) They named him William Armstrong, which was like tying a big tail on a small kite.

Choices

- a. Such a name sounds good only on a tombstone.
- b. Doodle was just about the craziest brother a boy ever had.

PARAGRAPH TWO (from *Barrio Boy* by Ernesto Galarza)

Summary: A Mexican, new in America, comments on a difference between Mexicans and Americans.

They did not listen if you did not speak loudly, as they always did. In the Mexican style, people would know that you were enjoying their jokes tremendously if you merely smiled and shook a little, as if you were trying to swallow your mirth. In the American style there was little difference between a laugh and a roar.

Choices

- a. Until you got used to them, you could hardly tell whether the boisterous Americans were roaring mad or roaring happy.
 - b. We had to get used to the Americans.
-

PARAGRAPH THREE (from *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo)

Summary: Told from the point of view of a horse, this is the first meeting between that horse and his young owner Albert.

(1) I jumped at first when he touched me but could see at once that he meant me no harm. (2) He smoothed my back first and then my neck, talking all the time about what a fine time we would have together, how I would grow up to be the smartest horse in the whole wide world, and how we would go out hunting together. (3) After a bit, he began to rub me gently with his coat. (4) He rubbed me until I was dry and then dabbed salt water onto my face where the skin had been rubbed raw. (5) He brought in some sweet hay and a bucket of cool water. (6) I do not believe he stopped talking the whole time.

Choices

- a. Albert was about my height, and talked so gently as he approached me that I was immediately calmed and a little intrigued so stood where I was against the wall.
- b. As he turned to go out of the stable, I called out to him to thank him, and he seemed to understand for he smiled broadly and stroked my nose.

PARAGRAPH FOUR

(from *The Talking Earth* by Jean Craighead George)

Summary: A huge alligator attempts to attack a boat containing a young girl.

(1) It was sheathed in heavy armor and spiked with sharp ridges. (2) The monstrous tail came straight toward her. (3) She dropped to the bottom of the dugout as a mammoth alligator struck the stern of the boat and catapulted it forward. (4) It rocked, tipped, but not quite over, then hit the beach with a crack. (5) She jumped ashore as a fifteen-foot alligator slammed his jaws closed on the rear of the boat.

Choices

- a. The wood splintered.
- b. Out of the water in the everglades rose a tail so large it could have belonged to a whale.

PARAGRAPH FIVE (from *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins)

Summary: Older sister Katniss describes the cat belonging to Prim, her little sister.

(1) Prim named him Buttercup, insisting that his muddy yellow coat matched the bright flower. (2) He hates me. (3) I think he still remembers how I tried to drown him in a bucket when Prim brought him home, a scrawny kitten, belly swollen with worms, crawling with fleas. (4) The last thing I needed was another mouth to feed. (5) But Prim begged so hard, cried even, I had to let him stay. (6) It turned out okay. (7) My mother got rid of the vermin and he's a born mouser. (8) Even catches the occasional rat. (9) Sometimes, when I clean a kill, I feed Buttercup the entrails. (10) He has stopped hissing at me.

Choices

- a. This is the closest we will ever come to love.
- b. Sitting in bed at Prim's knees, guarding her, is the world's ugliest cat, with mashed-in nose, half of one ear missing, eyes the color of rotting squash.

REVIEW

A paragraph is a block of information with linked sentences telling about the same topic. It's like an Internet search for a topic, with all hits.

PREVIEW

The sentences in a paragraph tell more about the paragraph's topic in a meaningful arrangement of well-built sentences. It's like a cluster of grapes connected to the same stem.

PARAGRAPH LINKS

Containers hold things. Boxes, crates, baskets, drawers contain things: a box of candy, a crate with furniture, a basket of fruit, a drawer for socks, and so forth. A paragraph contains a series of *linked* sentences. A series is one thing occurring after another thing. In a paragraph, one sentence occurs after another. If sentences are linked, they all are connected to the topic of the paragraph. To be a paragraph, sentences must be linked in a clear arrangement and share the same purpose. If they are not linked nor clearly arranged, there is no paragraph—just a jumble of unlinked sentences making no sense and having no clear purpose.

Notice that the preceding paragraph has clearly linked and arranged sentences all on the same topic—paragraphing.

EXERCISE 1: IDENTIFYING PARAGRAPHS

Only one group links sentences in a clear arrangement to make a good paragraph. Which group is it, A or B?

PARAGRAPH ONE (from *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness)

Group A	Group B
<p>(1) Conor could see raggedy teeth made of hard, knotted wood in the monster’s open mouth, and he felt hot breath rushing up toward him. (2) It swung him out of his room and into the night, high above his backyard, holding him up against the circle of the moon, its fingers clenching so hard against Conor’s ribs he could barely breathe. (3) The last thing Conor remembered was the monster’s mouth roaring open to eat him alive. (4) The monster roared even louder and smashed an arm through Conor’s window, shattering glass and wood and brick. (5) A huge, twisted, branch-wound hand grabbed Conor around the middle and lifted him off the floor.</p>	<p>(1) The monster roared even louder and smashed an arm through Conor’s window, shattering glass and wood and brick. (2) A huge, twisted, branch-wound hand grabbed Conor around the middle and lifted him off the floor. (3) It swung him out of his room and into the night, high above his backyard, holding him up against the circle of the moon, its fingers clenching so hard against Conor’s ribs he could barely breathe. (4) Conor could see raggedy teeth made of hard, knotted wood in the monster’s open mouth, and he felt hot breath rushing up toward him. (5) The last thing Conor remembered was the monster’s mouth roaring open to eat him alive.</p>

PARAGRAPH TWO (from *The Giver* by Lois Lowry)

Group A	Group B
<p>(1) He had seen it both times. (2) Squinting toward the sky, he had seen the sleek jet, almost a blur at its high speed, go past, and a second later heard the blast of sound that followed. (3) Frightened meant that deep, sickening feeling of something terrible about to happen. (4) Then one more time, a moment later, from the opposite direction, came the same plane. (5) Frightened was the way he had felt a year ago when an unidentified aircraft had overflown the community twice. (6) Jonas was beginning to be frightened.</p>	<p>(1) Jonas was beginning to be frightened. (2) Frightened meant that deep, sickening feeling of something terrible about to happen. (3) Frightened was the way he had felt a year ago when an unidentified aircraft had overflown the community twice. (4) He had seen it both times. (5) Squinting toward the sky, he had seen the sleek jet, almost a blur at its high speed, go past, and a second later heard the blast of sound that followed. (6) Then one more time, a moment later, from the opposite direction, came the same plane.</p>

PARAGRAPH THREE (from *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster)

Group A	Group B
<p>(1) Without stopping or looking up, Milo dashed past the buildings and busy shops that lined the street, and, in a few minutes, reached home, dashing through the lobby, hopping onto the elevator and off again, opening the apartment door, rushing into his room, flopping dejectedly into a chair, and grumbling softly. (2) He looked glumly at all the things he owned, including the books that were too much trouble to read, the tools he'd never learned to use, the small electric automobile he hadn't driven in months, and the hundreds of other games and toys, and bats and balls, and bits and pieces, all scattered around him. (3) Then, to one side of the room, just next to the stereo, he noticed something he had never seen before, something larger than almost any other big package that he'd ever seen.</p>	<p>(1) Then, to one side of the room, just next to the stereo, he noticed something he had never seen before, something larger than almost any other big package that he'd ever seen. (2) He looked glumly at all the things he owned, including the books that were too much trouble to read, the tools he'd never learned to use, the small electric automobile he hadn't driven in months, and the hundreds of other games and toys, and bats and balls, and bits and pieces, all scattered around him. (3) Without stopping or looking up, Milo dashed past the buildings and busy shops that lined the street, and, in a few minutes, reached home, dashing through the lobby, hopping onto the elevator and off again, opening the apartment door, rushing into his room, flopping dejectedly into a chair, and grumbling softly.</p>

PARAGRAPH FOUR (from *The False Prince* by Jennifer A. Nielsen)

Group A	Group B
<p>(1) I raced away from the market with a stolen roast of meat tucked under my arm. (2) It was very difficult to hold a chunk of meat while running because it was more slippery than I'd anticipated. (3) If the butcher didn't catch me with his cleaver first, and literally cut off my future plans, I vowed to remember to get the meat wrapped next time, and then steal it. (4) He was only a few paces behind now, chasing me at a better speed than I'd have expected for a man of his weight. (5) He yelled loudly in his native language, one I didn't recognize. (6) He was originally from one of the far countries, undoubtedly a country where killing a meat thief was allowed. (7) It was this sort of thought that encouraged me to run faster.</p>	<p>(1) It was this sort of thought that encouraged me to run faster. (2) He yelled loudly in his native language, one I didn't recognize. (3) It was very difficult to hold a chunk of meat while running because it was more slippery than I'd anticipated. (4) He was originally from one of the far countries, undoubtedly a country where killing a meat thief was allowed. (5) I raced away from the market with a stolen roast of meat tucked under my arm. (6) If the butcher didn't catch me with his cleaver first, and literally cut off my future plans, I vowed to remember to get the meat wrapped next time, and then steal it. (7) He was only a few paces behind now, chasing me at a better speed than I'd have expected for a man of his weight.</p>

PARAGRAPH FIVE (from 39 Clues by Peter Lerangis)

Group A	Group B
(1) They must have wanted some other nerdy kid with a plaid shirt. (2) His head banged against a row of metal shelves. (3) In all his eleven years, Atticus Rosenbloom never imagined he'd die on a bed of fresh rolls and sticky buns. (4) He jerked his body left and right, trying to loosen the ropes around his wrists. (5) This had to be a mistake. (6) Breads and pastries cascaded to the floor, their sweet yeasty smell seeming to mock him. (7) He never had imagined being tied up, shoved into a sack.	(1) In all his eleven years, Atticus Rosenbloom never imagined he'd die on a bed of fresh rolls and sticky buns. (2) He never had imagined being tied up, shoved into a sack. (3) This had to be a mistake. (4) They must have wanted some other nerdy kid with a plaid shirt. (5) He jerked his body left and right, trying to loosen the ropes around his wrists. (6) His head banged against a row of metal shelves. (7) Breads and pastries cascaded to the floor, their sweet yeasty smell seeming to mock him.

EXERCISE 2: FINDING THE MISSING LINK

Underneath the paragraph are three sentences. Identify the only sentence that links well with the rest of the paragraph in both what it says (*content*) and how it says it (*style*). Then identify the sentence that links poorly in content, and the sentence that links poorly in style.

USE THESE LETTERS FOR YOUR ANSWERS

- A = sentence that links well with rest of the paragraph
- B = sentence that links poorly because of its **content**
- C = sentence that links poorly because of its **style**

PARAGRAPH ONE (from *Finn Flanagan and the Fledglings* by Kip Taylor)

The angel spreads her arms, and a pair of enormous wings, fanning out at least four feet on either side, cascade from her shoulders to the floor, each feather pristine white. **FIND THE MISSING LINK.** A yellow circle glows above her head. It's her sapphire-blue eyes that finally penetrate my dense brain. She is the one who caught me as I fell from the mouth of the monster.

1. A stranger approached the group and asked directions to the planet.
2. The light from her radiant presence is terrific.
3. Bright pink light surges from her body and pulses over us.

PARAGRAPH TWO (from *Whittington* by Alan Armstrong)

The cat was the color of old metal, broad-faced with thick whiskers and dark lines that ran from his nose to his forehead and down his back and sides. His coat was rumpled and slack. His paws were black, his tail thick and ringed with black circles. **FIND THE MISSING LINK.** When he stood or sat, he rocked slightly from side to side like a punch-drunk fighter. He was stiff and walked low to the ground. His left ear hung down like a loose flap. He wasn't old, but he looked beaten up.

4. The tail was really amazing when it moved.
5. After the dog barked at the cat, the cat ran away.
6. It swelled out at the end like a fox's brush.

PARAGRAPH THREE (from *A Monster Calls* by Patrick Ness)

FIND THE MISSING LINK. Other branches twisted around one another, always creaking, always groaning, until they formed two long arms and a second leg to set down beside the main trunk. The rest

of the tree gathered itself into a spine and then a torso, the thin, needle-like leaves weaving together to make a green, furry skin that moved and breathed as if there were muscles and lungs underneath. Already taller than Conor's window, the monster grew wider as it brought itself together, filling out to a powerful shape, one that looked somehow strong, somehow mighty. It stared at Conor the whole time, and he could hear the loud, windy breathing from its mouth. It set its giant hands on either side of his window, lowering its head until its huge eyes filled the frame, holding Conor with its glare.

7. Along the driveway were many trees standing tall like soldiers at attention.
8. Conor saw the tree branches make a face with a mouth, a nose, and eyes.
9. As Conor watched, the uppermost branches of the tree gathered themselves into a great and terrible face, shimmering into a mouth and nose and even eyes, peering back at him.

-----**PARAGRAPH FOUR (from *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle)**-----

In the kitchen, a light was already on, and Charles Wallace was sitting at the table drinking milk and eating bread and jam. He looked very small and vulnerable sitting there alone in the big old-fashioned kitchen, a blond little boy in faded blue flannel pajamas, his feet swinging a good six inches above the floor. **FIND THE MISSING LINK.** Fortinbras had arrived on their doorstep, a half-grown puppy, scrawny and abandoned, one winter night. He was part setter and part greyhound, and he had a slender, dark beauty that was all his own.

10. From under the table where he was lying at Charles Wallace's feet, hoping for a crumb or two, Fortinbras raised his slender dark head, and his tail thumped against the floor.

11. School had been cancelled that day because of the heavy snow clogging the roads in the small community.
12. Fortinbras was under the table and wagged his tail and hoped for a crumb.

----- PARAGRAPH FIVE (from *All American* by John R. Tunis) -----

From the stands you saw the ball carrier, blotted out by a mass of tacklers, while some player on the ground held one shoe. He was almost down. Suddenly, without warning, as if by magic, he shot from that mass of arms and legs and bodies and headguards and torn jerseys. He was free again. Someone slapped at him and missed. Someone else grabbed out, caught his headguard and ripped it off. His blonde hair shone in the autumn sunshine. He picked up speed, outraced one open-mouthed, groping enemy at his elbow, and reversing his field cut across in a kind of sweeping motion. The whole pattern on the grass dissolved into a number of units, all chasing one man. Hands pawed at him, reached for him, struck at his poised body, jumped at his head and shoulders. He whirled completely around, side-stepped a burly figure, slapped off another, when someone jarred his body and upset his stride. The blonde head stumbled forward. The body tripped and almost fell. His face was close to the ground, yet his feet kept moving like pinwheels. Once again he appeared to be finished. **FIND THE MISSING LINK.** His body control perfect, he swung back instinctively into open territory almost without raising his head. From behind a huge shape came after him, fast, faster. Ronald glanced back, his mouth wide open in fatigue. Just ahead was the goal. He saw the pursuer gaining slowly. The body came through the air and leaped for him. Ronald stepped deftly aside at the right moment. The tackler rolled over and over harmlessly on the turf.

- 13. The sky opened and there was a deluge of pounding rain.
- 14. Somehow he kept in motion, kept on running, stumbling, head down, until he managed to recover balance.
- 15. He looks like he was in a drunken stupor.

EXERCISE 3: MATCHING

Each paragraph is missing a sentence. It might be the preview (topic) sentence, or one of the linking sentences. Match the sentence with its paragraph.

Paragraphs	Missing Sentences
<p>1. My hair stands on end and the lightning strikes the tree. A flash of white runs up the wire, and for just a moment, the dome bursts into a dazzling blue light. (MISSING SENTENCE)</p> <p>Suzanne Collins, <i>Catching Fire</i></p>	<p>a. Each time I picked myself up and rushed on, panting, crying.</p>
<p>2. I rushed off toward the forest. Barely aware of the earth beneath my feet or the roof of trees above, I paid no mind into what I ran, or that my sole garment, a gray wool tunic, tore on brambles and bushes. Nor did I care that my leather shoes, catching roots or stones, kept tripping me, causing me to fall. (MISSING SENTENCE) Deeper and deeper into the ancient woods I went, past thick bracken and stately oaks, until I tripped and fell again.</p> <p>Avi, <i>Crispin: The Cross of Lead</i></p>	<p>b. The pilot sat large, his hands lightly on the wheel, feet on the rudder pedals.</p>

3. **(MISSING SENTENCE)** He seemed more a machine than a man, an extension of the plane. On the dashboard in front of him Brian saw dials, switches, meters, knobs, levers, cranks, lights, handles that were wiggling and flickering, all indicating nothing that he understood and the pilot seemed the same way: part of the plane, not human.

Gary Paulsen, *Hatchet*

4. The first thing you would notice about our island, I think, is the wind. **(MISSING SENTENCE)** All the winds except the one from the south are strong. Because of them, the hills are polished smooth, and the trees are small and twisted, even in the canyon that runs down to Coral Cover.

Scott O'Dell, *Island of the Blue Dolphins*

5. The pen didn't look like much, just a regular cheap ballpoint, but when Percy uncapped it, it grew into a glowing bronze sword. The blade balanced perfectly. The leather grip fit his hand like it had been custom designed for him. **(MISSING SENTENCE)**

Rick Riordan, *The Son of Neptune*

- c. It blows almost every day, sometimes from the northwest and sometimes from the east, once in a long while out of the south.

- d. I'm thrown backward to the ground, body useless, paralyzed, eyes frozen wide, as feathery bits of matter rain down on me.

- e. Etched along the guard was an ancient word Percy somehow understood: *Riptide*.

EXERCISE 4: CREATING

Read each paragraph slowly several times to learn its topic. Create a new sentence that links to that topic. Build your sentence like an author builds sentences so yours blends into the paragraph.

1. Dan loved collecting things. He collected baseball cards, autographs of famous outlaws, Civil War weapons, rare coins. **(YOUR SENTENCE)** At the moment, what he liked collecting best were charcoal rubbings of tombstones. He has some awesome ones back at the apartment.

Rick Riordan, *A Maze of Bones*

2. Alone in Room 215 of the hotel and unaware that he was being watched, the boy began to explore. He got down on his hands and knees and looked under the bed. He leaned out the open window as far as he could and greedily inhaled deep breaths of pine-scented air. **(YOUR SENTENCE)** Under the window he discovered a knothole in the pine wall down by the floor and, squatting, poked his finger into the hole. When he felt nothing inside, he lost interest.

Beverly Cleary, *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*

3. **(YOUR SENTENCE)** A little dog with skinny legs was between his feet. Beside them was a tin can with a few coins in it. Ben reached into his pocket, bent down, and added all of his change. The city seemed to swirl and explode around them, and even though New York City had to be the loudest place on earth, the man and his dog slept through it.

Brian Selznick, *Wonderstruck*

4. Way out at the end of a tiny little town was an overgrown garden, and in the garden was an old house, and in the house lived Pippi

Longstocking. She was nine years old, and she lived there all alone. She had no mother and no father. **(YOUR SENTENCE)**

Astrid Lindgren, *Pippi Longstocking*

5. **(YOUR SENTENCE)** The eyes were greenish and narrow and the eyebrow line above them ran straight across the bridge of the nose, giving the effect of a monkey rather than a man. One cheek was marked with a buttonlike scar, the scar of the button plague so common in the lands. The ears were low set and ugly. The mouth looked like the slit that boys make in the pumpkins they carry on Halloween. Above the mouth was a cropped mustache which hung down at the ends and straggled into a scanty beard.

Eric P. Kelly, *The Trumpeter of Krakow*

SUMMARY: WHAT'S A PARAGRAPH?

A paragraph is a series of linked sentences on the same topic. It's like a sentence, only longer. A sentence has a topic (*its subject*) and a comment about that topic (*its predicate*).

EXAMPLE

A red bolt flashed from his palm toward the elven lady and illuminated the trees with a bloody light.

Sentence Topic: The subject is *a red bolt*

Comment About Topic: The predicate tells two things the red bolt did (*flashed from his palm toward the elven lady and illuminated the trees with a bloody light*).

A paragraph also has a topic and comments about that topic, but needs more comments (sentences) to tell about that topic. In the example paragraph, from a fantasy story, the topic is an attempt to kill an elven lady. That topic is in the first sentence of the paragraph, often called a *preview sentence* or *topic sentence*. Each sentence after the first sentence links to that topic by telling new information.

EXAMPLE

(1) A red bolt flashed from his palm toward the elven lady and illuminated the trees with a bloody light. (2) It struck her steed, and the horse toppled with a high-pitched squeal, plowing into the ground chest-first. (3) She leapt off the animal with inhuman speed, landed lightly, glancing back for her guards.

Christopher Paolini, *Eragon*

Paragraph Topic: *attempt to kill an elven lady*

Comments About Topic:

The first sentence tells what was used in the attempt to kill her (*a red bolt*).

The second sentence tells what the bolt did (*toppled the lady's horse*).

The third sentence tells what happened to the lady (*survived the attempt*).

PARAGRAPH WORKOUT

- You've learned that a paragraph sometimes starts with a preview (topic) sentence, followed by sentences that link to it.
- In this exercise, an author provides a preview sentence, and, as that author's partner, you compose at least five sentences that link to it.

- Before you start, look back at how the authors' sentences in the paragraphs in exercises in this section are built. Build your sentences the way authors build theirs.
- After revising your paragraph, give it a title that sums it up.

PREVIEW (TOPIC) SENTENCES

1. Earth, our little blue and green planet, the one with the fluffy white clouds and all, is under attack.

K. A. Applegate, *Animorphs: The Underground*

2. Mr. President was a well-fed cat who always wore a collar with his name and number on a tag.

Esther Averill, *Jenny and the Cat Club*

3. Coraline dreamed of black shapes that slid from place to place, avoiding the light, little black shapes with little red eyes and sharp yellow teeth.

Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*

4. Unable to find a bat for a four-year-old, my father bought a standard-size Louisville Slugger and then took a saw to it.

Jerry Spinelli, *Knots in My Yo-Yo String*

5. More than anyone, he had cause to fear the king.

Megan Whalen Turner, *The King of Atollia*

6. Good thing the plane had seat belts and we'd been strapped in tight before takeoff.

Rita Williams-Garcia, *One Crazy Summer*

7. That afternoon the Kid felt he learned as much baseball sitting beside Dave Leonard as he had learned all season.

John R. Tunis, *World Series*

8. As she headed down the hall to her next class, Geraldine remembered that she hadn't done the homework for English.

Toni Cade Bambara, "Geraldine Moore the Poet"

9. In a minute, the faded red double doors of the lunchroom swung open, and Sistine Bailey came marching through them, her head held high.

Kate DiCamillo, *The Tiger Rising*

10. Terrified, she heard a lot of creaking.

Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*

REVIEW

A paragraph is a container for linked sentences on the same topic. Each linked sentence says more about the paragraph's topic.

PREVIEW

Since paragraphs are made up of sentences, you'll learn the basics required for every sentence: a subject and a predicate.