

# The Descriptive Paragraph

WS# 1.4

*Concentrate on conveying a single, effective picture to the reader.*

## Topic Sentence

In a descriptive paragraph, the topic sentence should “overview” the scene or summarize the content of the paragraph. In doing so it should help establish the author’s tone. **The tone of a literary work is the writer’s attitude toward his or her subject, characters, or audience.** The tone is crucial in establishing a paragraph’s mood.

## Literature Model

Hard and cruel and bitter was the land that met his gaze. Before his feet the highest ridge of Ephel Dúath fell steeply in great cliffs down into a dark trough, on the further side of which there rose another ridge, much lower, its edge notched and jagged with crags like fangs that stood out black against the red light behind them: it was grim Morgai, the inner ring of the fences on the land. Far beyond it, but almost straight ahead, across a wide lake of darkness dotted with tiny fires, there was a great burning glow, and from it rose in huge columns a swirling smoke, dusky red at the roots, black above where it merged into the billowing canopy that roofed in all the accursed land.

J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*

## Sensory Details

What vivid words help to create a picture of Tolkien’s world and to express the author’s tone?

## Mood

Your descriptive paragraph will have a greater impact if it evokes a particular mood rather than just describe details that aren’t unified. **Mood is the feeling created in the reader by a literary work or passage.** Perhaps you want to inspire fear or horror, as Tolkien does. Maybe you intend to communicate a happy light-hearted feeling or a sad, nostalgic one.

# The Narrative Paragraph

WS# 1.4

*A successful narrative involves realistic characters and situations brought to life with specific details.*

## Literature Model

When my mother, at sixteen, after quarreling with her father, left his house in the Dominica and came to Antigua, she packed all her things in an enormous wooden trunk that she had bought in Roseau for almost six shillings. She painted the trunk yellow and green outside, and she lined the inside wallpaper that had a cream background with pink roses printed all over it. Two days after she left her father's house, she boarded a boat and sailed for Antigua. It was a small boat, and the trip would have taken a day and a half ordinarily, but a hurricane blew up and the boat was lost at sea for almost five days. By the time it got to Antigua, the boat was practically in splinters, and though two or three of the passengers were lost overboard, along with some of the cargo, my mother and her trunk were safe.

Jamaica Kincaid, The Circling Hand

### Topic Sentence

Present a brief introductory statement that introduces the "set of events" that will be elaborated upon in the sentences to follow.

### Basics of Narrative

- Characters
  - real
  - fictional
- Setting
  - time
  - place
- Plot
  - beginning
  - middle
  - end

### Conflict

Narratives generally contain a conflict, a struggle that triggers the action. Universal conflicts are either external or internal and may include a problem with another person, nature, society, technology, or one's self.

# The Expository Paragraph

WS# 1.4

*The expository writer provides a clear, concise explanation that readers will find interesting and informative.*

## Topic Sentence

McKnight introduces this paragraph with a clear statement of what he will explain.

## Literature Model

The flower, one of nature's many miracles, is created through a series of complex steps. With an embryo, a supply of stored food, and a protective covering, the seed begins its process. Most seeds remain dormant at first, usually because conditions are not favorable for growth. Seeds have been known to stay dormant from one week to fifty years and still germinate properly. Germination occurs when there is an abundant supply of water, an adequate amount of oxygen, and the proper temperatures. Crucial to the plant's life, water begins the next step in the process. The seed absorbs large amounts of water, causing the protective coating to soften. The internal tissues swell and break through the coating. This new life, this plant, immediately begins to burn food, and it produces the energy needed for growth. The vulnerable plant now becomes susceptible to sunlight. Too much or too little can harm it. However, the sun helps make the food for the plant to burn and receive energy. This process continues even after the first leaves develop. The plant grows stronger and more mature each day. Finally, the full-grown plant is ready to receive its crowning glory – the flower.

Billy McKnight, Jefferson Davis High School

Montgomery , Alabama

## Diction

The writer's choice of words, or diction, should be precise, active, and vivid in order to clearly communicate one's ideas while making the writing lively and interesting.

*Where does McKnight use precise nouns, active verbs, and vivid adjectives or adverbs?*

## Transitions

Notice how transitional words lead the reader through a sequence of events.

# The Persuasive Paragraph



*Effective persuasive writing uses strong, relevant evidence to support its claims.*

## Topic Sentence

Lewis' opening statement directly states the conclusion that he will argue and support logically.

Persuasive arguments utilize logical and emotional appeals to make a point.

## Literature Model

Although they may not seem as harmful, cigarettes are just as addictive and deadly as heroine or cocaine. C. Everett Koop, the Surgeon General, concludes in his report that the “pharmacological and behavioral processes are similar [in cigarettes] to those that determine addiction to drugs such as heroine and cocaine.” Users become dependent on the habit, and breaking it can be extremely difficult. Of those who try to give up smoking, 80 percent have relapsed by the end of the year. Heroin users who also try to give up their addiction have the same rate of failure. There is one profound difference, however, between heroin and nicotine addiction. Tobacco kills 80 times as many people in this country. About 320,000 Americans die every year as a result of using tobacco products, while 4,000 die from the effects of heroin or related drugs. Nevertheless, both of these substances should be avoided.

Anthony Lewis, “Merchants of Death,”  
*New York Times*

## Using Evidence

- ❑ Cite **experts** who know about what they are talking.
- ❑ **Facts / statistics** should be up-to-date.
- ❑ If the **link** between **your claim and evidence** is obvious and clear, then you must need to

## Constructing an Argument

Present your evidence logically by taking the readers through your argument step by step:

- ❑ Identify Your Purpose
- ❑ State Your Central Claim
- ❑ Identify Supporting Evidence
- ❑ Explain How the Evidence Supports Your Claim
- ❑ Reaffirm Your Claim