

## Workshop: Body Paragraph Development

Topic sentence and body paragraph. The development of the thesis consists of body paragraphs. Body paragraphs develop major aspects of the thesis, expressed in a sentence called the **topic sentence**.

An effective topic sentence

- a) is complex enough to support development in at least 125-175 words,
  - b) is correctly placed,
  - c) provides a coherent link to the previous part of the essay, and
  - d) previews how the body paragraph will develop the topic.
- a) An effective topic sentence invites the reader to ask not just the question what, but also how, and/or why? Consider the two following topic sentences:
    1. The boy lives in Dublin. (Now what?)
    2. As the boy comes to dislike Dublin, he longs to belong to a more romantic world.
  - b) The direct pattern places the topic sentence early in the body paragraph, preferably as the first sentence.
  - c) Unless it is the first body paragraph after the thesis paragraph, the topic sentence should include a built-in transition referring back to the previous paragraph or section. (See Example 1 below)
  - d) An effective topic sentence builds in methods of development that the paragraph will follow:

Example 1:

Several examples from the story show that the boy fantasizes about Mangan's sister as an exalted being. (examples, details, illustrations)

Example 2:

Some familiarity with the code of chivalry helps to shed light on the boy's fantasy of going to the Araby fair (definition; analysis; requires a bit of research)

Three characteristics of an effective body paragraph: focus, coherence, and unity.

**Focus:** Topic sentence should be neither too broad nor too narrow in scope. Test by imagined reader and by potential for development in 125-175 words, not factoring in direct quotations.

**Coherence:** The order of statements is clear; statements are clearly related to one another. Establish patterns for each paragraph—such as examples, analyzing, comparison, definition, causes, result, and analogy; include some complex sentences; standardize terms; and use transitions.

**Unity:** Every statement contributes directly to developing topic sentence. Test sentence by sentence for digression. Remember that the reader knows the plot already; your job is to develop your thesis and its topic sentences.