

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 1

NAME (FIRST AND LAST): _____ GRADE: _____

PARAGRAPH WRITING

(Adapted from Teresa D. O' Donnell's *Independent Writing*)

Most writing is made up of smaller units called paragraphs, identified by visual representation and by contents. The first line of a paragraph, especially if handwritten, is indented to indicate the beginning of the paragraph.

A paragraph can also be identified by its contents, a group of related sentences that support the writer's main idea. Here is an example.

Automobiles are expensive and often inconvenient necessities in modern life. It is true that living without a car is almost impossible in many American cities because public transportation is often expensive and not very accessible, and distances between businesses and residential areas are too great for people to commute by bicycle or by walking. However, there are also disadvantages to automobiles ownership. In the first place, people pay a lot of money, often including high sales tax, to buy an automobile; insurance, licenses, gas, oil, and maintenance fees are also expensive. After all these bills are paid, drivers often have trouble finding parking spots. Once they do, they pay high parking fees at downtown lots near their offices. Worst of all, if the "dream machines" break down, as they inevitably do, the drivers not only have to pay high repair bills, but they are once more without transportation while the cars are in the repair shop. Maybe life was easier when a person could hop outside the front door onto a friendly horse and trot down to Main Street!

What are the essentials of a paragraph?

Topic sentences

A paragraph has a main idea expressed in a topic sentence. This sentence may appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a paragraph.

1. Return to the preceding sample paragraph about automobiles. Where is the topic sentence? Copy it down.

2. Does the topic sentence introduce the main idea of the paragraph? Explain your response.

3. A topic sentence limits the topic of the paragraph. The choice of words controls the idea and indicates the focus of the topic. Does the topic sentence in the sample paragraph limit the topic? Explain.

4. The topic sentence often suggests how the paragraph will be developed. Does the topic sentence in the sample paragraph anticipate the paragraph's development?

Supporting sentences

A paragraph has main supporting ideas, all relating to the topic sentences. What did the writer of the sample paragraph on page 1 choose as supporting ideas? List nine supporting ideas.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

v. _____

vi. _____

vii. _____

viii. _____

ix. _____

Details

The supporting ideas may themselves be further supported by facts, details, or statistics. Is it possible to add facts, details, or statistics to one of the nine points listed above? Explain.

Logical order

The ideas in the paragraph must be presented in logical order. Chronological, or time, order is especially important in a paragraph showing a process (how something is done), but all ideas are presented in some logical idea. Are the ideas in the sample paragraph presented in order? Explain.

Logical connectors

To indicate this progression of ideas and to provide an orderly connect between the ideas (coherence), writers use logical connecting words, also called “transition” words. These words not only help the flow of ideas, but also indicate the relationship between ideas (chronological, causal, etc.). Underline the logical connectors in the following example:

Buying a car requires special planning. First, we need to arrange for the money to pay for the car. We may take out a bank loan, borrow from our parents, or save money from our salaries. Next, we must find a car that suits our pocketbook and our needs. After making our purchase, we must then arrange for auto insurance. In addition, we must buy a license plate and pay for car inspection.

Concluding sentence

A paragraph may have a concluding sentence that restates the main idea in a different way. Where is the concluding sentence in the first sample paragraph? Copy it down.

In your opinion, is the concluding sentence in the first sample paragraph well written? (Is it direct or indirect? Is it amusing or flat in tone?)

Unity and coherence

When a paragraph includes a sequence of sentences that are all related to the topic sentence, it is *unified*. A paragraph that has a continuous line of thought that passes from sentence to sentence is *coherent*. The introductory paragraph about buying a car has unity because all of the sentences relate to the topic sentence. Transitional words, such as *however* and *after all*, and pronoun references, such as *these bills* and *they*, give the paragraph coherence. An effective paragraph is both unified and coherent.

READING COMPREHENSION AND WRITING SKILLS

Read the following review of a multiplayer online battle arena and answer the questions that follow.

LEAGUE OF LEGENDS REVIEW

<http://ca.ign.com/articles/2014/02/13/league-of-legends-review-2>

FEBRUARY 13, 2014

It was one of the first big free-to-play games, and one of the first big multiplayer online battle arenas, or MOBAs. But going on five years later, League of Legends still holds firm as an example of excellence. With its amazing variety of Champions, rewarding progression systems, and fast but intensely strategic team play, it easily hooked me and refused to let go. That addictiveness and competitive spirit, combined with a generous free-to-play approach and frequent updates from developer Riot Games, has created one of the biggest and liveliest gaming communities anywhere.

Like most MOBAs, League of Legends' main attraction is its five-on-five matches on its staple three-lane map. Called Summoner's Rift, this map is brightly and colourfully designed, and it creates a distinct playstyle with the way its dense brush allows you to conceal yourself and surprise enemies. I particularly love how the distinctive jungles on either side of the central river are filled with NPC monsters that give buffs to players who take a break from battle to go on the hunt – it's a constant temptation to risk venturing into the other team's territory to attempt to steal their buffs. The choice between engaging the other team directly or attacking their resources allows for interesting strategies and depth beyond simply fighting until one Champion or turret is dead.

Inside each team's base also lies an Inhibitor which, if destroyed, causes the opposing team's side to start spawning super minions. It's an extra strategic objective to target in the enemy base, and having one more building to take down often leads to exciting and game-ending team fights.

From Ziggs, the bomb-loving little rat, to Jinx, the blue-pigtailed maniac, it's electrifying to coordinate with your team to mow down your opponents and push lanes with League's characterful and cartoony Champions. They each have an innate passive ability that helps make them more dynamic without increasing the already-complex management of active abilities.

Teemo's passive Camouflage power, for example, is a great way to sneak up on unsuspecting enemies. Plus, the quirky things they say and their flashy active abilities make the Champions memorable. I can't help but laugh every time the adorable Lulu says, "Yep! That tasted purple!"

As free-to-play games go, League of Legends is a model of generosity. Though it doesn't give everything away like Dota 2 does, it serves up a weekly rotating selection of 10 Champions for free, and you can purchase and play with any of the 117-character roster for a reasonable price of between two and eight dollars each. Yes, that adds up to a princely sum if you intend to buy every single character, but there's no need to buy more than you intend to actually play. The Champion rotation is a nice way to try before you buy, and helped me to pace myself by learning just a few characters at a time.

You can also unlock every Champion at a satisfying rate without spending a penny, which is not only fulfilling, but it sets League apart from the type of free-to-play game that deliberately makes it impractical to play at a competitive level for no cost. Since many players opt for a completely free experience, it's exciting when the roster changes and pushes the community to try out fresh characters and new strategies.

If you want to go a step further, you can buy cosmetic skins for every character. They can be pricey, but each skin has tons of detail, and it's impressive that most of them come with unique spell effects and animations. My Panda Annie skin, for example, changes the little pink-haired girl into a mini-geisha of sorts, and her ultimate ability calls down a panda version of her grizzly bear, Tibbers. (Yay, Tibbers!)

In the opening minutes of a match, League's Champions distinguish themselves with lots of low-level area-of-effect abilities that make killing minions quick and easy. Unlike some other MOBAs, there's no way to attack your own minions to deprive your enemy the experience and gold, making it simpler to focus on other tasks, like getting last hits. The absence of those "denial" tactics definitely takes a competitive aspect away from League, but it's one that's often frustrating. I don't miss it. Relative to other MOBAs where management of special-ability juice (magic points, in this case) is key, I also enjoy how often abilities are available for use in League. It's awesome being able to constantly harass opponents with spells rather than having to worry about conserving them all for one crucial moment. But that doesn't mean abilities don't matter. Some of the strongest attacks are skill shots (projectiles requiring precise manual aim), and failing to hit your target can have catastrophic, game-changing consequences in team fights. From simple slows to huge Super Mega Death Rockets that travel across the whole map, snagging enemies with these moves while dodging theirs is a giddy thrill. The importance League of Legends places on these skill shots helps set its style of action apart.

You don't lose any money when you die in League, making it easier to save up for new weapons and armour in the item shop. The item selection is decent, but most

players always seem to rely on you to build your character using expected items, like The

Bloodthirster or Rabadon's Deathcap. Straying from the recommended builds doesn't make you useless, but some of these might as well be called required items instead of recommended, considering their power. On the bright side, this means spending less time shopping and more time playing. Also, the recent addition of a variety of Support items, like The Frost Queen's Claim and Talisman of Ascension which grant passive gold, are a good move in the right direction for diversifying builds.

It might be easier to coordinate unusual item builds if League had built-in voice chat. Unless you've set up a TeamSpeak/Ventrilo/Mumble/Skype/etc call with your pre-arranged team before joining a game, the only ways to communicate are via text, which often goes unnoticed, or through four alerts to indicate danger, on my way, missing, or assist me. Nothing sucks more than watching a crucial surprise attack slip through my fingers because a teammate was too busy to see me pinging. At least when your team falls so hopelessly behind 20 minutes into a 40-ish minute match that four of five teammates agree it's all over, the handy surrender option prevents you from wasting time fighting a losing battle.

Win or lose, earning both experience and Influence Points (IP) to unlock and customize Champions is rewarding. Building up my persistent profile (called a Summoner profile) outside a match was good motivation to keep playing, as along the way to the max level of 30 you'll unlock crucial Summoner spells to use in game. Flash, for example, teleports you a short distance, sometimes giving you just enough range to strike or dodge a killing blow. Deciding which two to take into each match adds an interesting extra strategic layer, and their long cooldown timers make it tough to be sure when someone will have extra tricks up their sleeve.

Each level-up also unlocks Masteries, which are free points to spend on specific bonuses from offensive, defensive, and utility trees. But considering there are obvious choices for how you should spend them when you're playing each role, this system feels redundant. Likewise, you can also use IP to purchase Runes that enhance a Champion's stats, but this never amounts to much. The illusion of progression is nice, but games still almost always come down to player skill rather than a few extra stats.

Where League of Legends really shines is on the competitive level. Once you reach level 30 (which took me about 160 wins), as long as you have 16 Champs earned or bought and have played some placement matches, you can compete in Ranked play with the most serious players. The fantastic ladder system ensures you'll play against people on the same skill level (until periodic resets, and the process begins anew). Making your way up the ranks is a serious achievement, and knowing that ladder points are on the line makes the competition in every match even more fierce.

At the other end of the spectrum, League's excellent tutorial is gentle way to ease into MOBA mechanics, and its AI bot players give a judgement-free way of learning to

play new characters. One major feature that's missing, though, is a means of watching match replays to better learn from mistakes. Considering they're a great training tool in other MOBAs and competitive games of all genres, it's a shame they aren't included.

When you need a break from Summoner's Rift, there are other, faster-paced modes to choose from. Dominion and All Random All Mid (ARAM) are both quick, usually lasting about 25 minutes rather than 45 to 60. Using the Champions to sprint around a small map to capture points in Dominion is silly yet competitive, and ARAM forces everyone to use a random Champion on a one-lane map and is more about catching the other team off guard and pushing your advantage. I had a great time purchasing strange item combinations from the increased amount of gold you get in these modes, and the consistent action-packed brawls are a breath of fresh air relative to the slow and steady gold farming and item building of Summoner's Rift.

While the gameplay is intensely fun and the Champions are fantastic, the main thing holding League of Legends back is its Adobe Air client. With such an incredible visual finesse throughout the entire stylized MOBA, it's unfortunate how dated the slow, buggy client is. The incredibly long load times are nice when you need a drink, but ultimately waiting two minutes before each game gets annoying. You can't even change your in-game settings before you hop into a match. Updating the client and servers will take some incredible technical prowess, but they're undoubtedly the weakest links of an otherwise very strong chain.

1. What is the writer's main argument? (Restate the writer's thesis statement.)

2. What sets League apart from the type of free-to-play game that deliberately makes it impractical to play at a competitive level for free?

3. How do skill shots distinguish League from other MOBAs?

4. List one way mentioned in the article in which League involves strategic thinking. Explain how strategic thinking is involved.

WRITING

Respond to one of the following questions. If you like, respond to both.

What's your favourite MOBA? Discuss a specific aspect of this MOBA that you enjoy the most?

What is your favourite game? Discuss a specific aspect of this game that you enjoy the most. The game does not have to be online! Discuss any game that you enjoy playing. (If you do not play games, describe something a friend plays.)

GRAMMAR

AGREEMENT WITH SPECIAL SUBJECTS

Key Information

A **collective noun** names a group. Consider a collective noun singular when it refers to a group as a whole, and plural when it refers to each member of a group individually.

Certain **nouns that end in -s** look plural but take singular verbs (*measles, news*), but certain other nouns that end in -s take plural verbs (*pliers, scissors*).

A **noun of amount** is singular when it refers to a total considered as one unit, and plural when it refers to a number of individual units.

A **title** is always singular, even if a noun within the title is plural.

A **compound subject** that is joined by *and* or *both...and* is plural unless its parts belong to one unit or refer to the same person or thing.

When a compound subject is joined by *or* or *nor* (or by *either...or* or *neither...nor*), the verb always agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

When *many a*, *every*, or *each* precedes a compound subject, the subject is considered singular.

■ A. Making Verbs Agree with Special Subjects and Compound Subjects

Underline the subject in each of the following sentences. Then underline the form of the verb in parentheses that agrees with that subject.

1. I still think six hours (is/are) a long time to play video games every day.
2. The office staff (make/makes) a large donation to charity every year.
3. *Twelve Angry Men* (remain/remains) popular among movie fans to this day.
4. When even a few quarters (is/are) jingling in my pocket, I feel good.
5. Two hundred dollars (is/are) in that two-inch pile.
6. Neither the fans nor the air conditioner (was/were) working.
7. Many a chair, table, and sofa (was/were) destroyed in the warehouse fire.
8. The videocassette recorder and the camcorder (has/have) become popular items.

■ B. Using Verbs That Agree with Special Subjects and Compound Subjects

Each of the following sentences contains an error in subject and verb agreement. Rewrite each sentence correctly in the space provided.

1. Scalloped potatoes goes well with both ham and meat loaf.

2. The staff is arriving one at a time.

3. Politics are always more widely publicized during major election years.

4. Peaches-and-cream describe a clear, healthy-looking complexion.

THE END