

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 12**NAME (FIRST AND LAST):** _____ **GRADE:** _____**Cause and Effect in Stories**

(Instructions from Michel Basilières's introduction to creative writing course at University of Toronto's Continuing Education department. Fall 2016. Adapted for education purposes.)

Try writing a very short story in which at least ten events are linked to two ideas: (A) time moves forward, and (B) for something to happen, something else must cause it. When something does happen, it has consequences – it changes the story in some way. Each event must cause the next event. The events are linked like a chain from first to last.

If we subscribe to this notion, it follows (see the cause and effect?) that all we need to do is define our character and situation and then set them in motion. From there, we can follow where the chain of events leads. In other words, we do not have to know the outcome of our story before starting it. We simply have to give our character a push and see what they do in response. Even when we plot our stories backwards – when we know what's going to happen and write scenes to get us there – we want the reader to believe the chain of events. We present them as a series of dominoes falling, each one pushing the next. If we leave out important steps we may confuse the reader, although minor or obvious things need not be stated. But if we show a result that doesn't follow from previous event, or contradicts common sense, we lose the reader's belief in our story.



So, try writing a scene or very short story in which each event causes the next. This is pure plotting practice, and requires you to specifically think about how action plays out in real life. It does not have to be highly dramatic or action-packed. For instance, it could simply be a set piece in a single room, someone getting ready for bed, or going through a morning routine.

Before you begin, use the boxes and arrows on the next few pages to outline the main events in your very short story.

--



--



--



--



--



--



--



--





Now, writing your short story in prose (continuous writing). Use the cause-and-effect transitions words or phrases that you learned in class.

ESSAY-WRITING SKILLS

Writing Topic Sentences

A topic sentence (also known as a focus sentence) encapsulates or organises an entire paragraph, and you should be careful to include one in most of your major paragraphs. Although topic sentences may appear anywhere in a paragraph, in academic essays they often appear at the beginning.

It might be helpful to think of a topic sentence as working in two directions simultaneously. It relates the paragraph to the essay's thesis, and thereby acts as a signpost for the argument of the paper as a whole, but it also defines the scope of the paragraph itself. For example, consider the following topic sentence:

Many fast-food chains make their profits from adding a special ingredient called "forget sauce" to their foods.

If this sentence controls the paragraph that follows, then all sentences in the paragraph must relate in some way to fast food, profit, and "forget sauce":

Made largely from edible oil products, this condiment is never listed on the menu.

This sentence fits in with the topic sentence because it is a description of the composition of "forget sauce."

In addition, this well-kept industry secret is the reason why ingredients are never listed on the packaging of victuals sold by these restaurants.

The transitional phrase "In addition" relates the composition of "forget sauce" to secret fast-food industry practices.

"Forget sauce" has a chemical property which causes temporary amnesia in consumers.

Now the paragraph moves on to the short-term effect on consumers:

After spending too much money on barely edible food bereft of any nutritional value, most consumers swear they will never repeat such a disagreeable experience.

This sentence describes its longer-term effects:

Within a short period, however, the chemical in "forget sauce" takes effect, and they can be depended upon to return and spend, older but no wiser.

Finally, I finish the paragraph by "proving" the claim contained in the topic sentence, that many fast-food chains make their profits from adding a special ingredient called "forget sauce" to their foods.

Analysing a Topic Sentence

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements. Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must be the unifying force in the paragraph. Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way. Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

Consider the last paragraph about topic sentences, beginning with the topic sentence itself:

Topic sentences often act like tiny thesis statements.

This is my claim, or the point I will prove in the following paragraph. All the sentences that follow this topic sentence must relate to it in some way.

Like a thesis statement, a topic sentence makes a claim of some sort. As the thesis statement is the unifying force in the essay, so the topic sentence must be the unifying force in the paragraph.

These two sentences show how the reader can compare thesis statements and topic sentences: they both make a claim and they both provide a focus for the writing which follows.

Further, as is the case with the thesis statement, when the topic sentence makes a claim, the paragraph which follows must expand, describe, or prove it in some way.

Using the transitional word "further" to relate this sentence to those preceding it, I expand on my topic sentence by suggesting ways a topic sentence is related to the sentences that follow it.

Topic sentences make a point and give reasons or examples to support it.

Finally, I wrap up the paragraph by stating exactly how topic sentences act rather like tiny thesis statements.

Written by Dorothy Turner

The following groups of sentences can be rearranged to form paragraphs. Make a note of the order in which they should be placed (e.g. b., d., c., a., e.) and put a ring around the letter that corresponds to what you think is the topic sentence.

Paragraph 1

- a. Next, add antifreeze to your windshield washer fluid; otherwise, the fluid will freeze and possibly break the container.
- b. First, put on snow tires if you plan to drive on snowy, icy roads very often.
- c. Driving in winter, especially on snowy, icy roads, can be less troublesome if you take a few simple precautions.
- d. Finally, it is also a good idea to carry tire chains, a can of spray to unfreeze door locks, and a windshield scraper in your car when driving in winter weather.
- e. Second, check the amount of antifreeze in your radiator and add more if necessary.

Paragraph 2

- a. A breakthrough in one of these areas will hopefully provide a means of relieving both the overstretched oil market and the environment.
- b. Researchers in the automobile industry are experimenting with different types of engines and fuels as alternatives to the conventional gasoline engines.
- c. One new type of engine, which burns diesel oil instead of gasoline, has been available for several years.
- d. Finally, several automobile manufacturers are experimenting with methanol, which is a mixture of gasoline and methyl alcohol, as an automobile fuel.
- e. A further type is the gas turbine engine, which can use fuels made from gasoline, diesel oil, kerosene and other petroleum distillates.
- f. The increasing depletion of oil reserves, along with environmental concerns, have prompted some radical developments in car design over the past few years

Paragraph 3

- a. Later on, people began to write on pieces of leather, which were rolled into scrolls.
- b. In the earliest times, people carved or painted messages on rocks.
- c. In the Middle Ages, heavy paper called parchment was used for writing and books were laboriously copied by hand.
- d. With the invention of the printing press in the middle of the fifteenth century, the modern printing industry was born.
- e. Some form of written communication has been used throughout the centuries

THE END