

Coherence

Definition of Coherence

Coherence is a Latin word, meaning “to stick together.” In a composition, coherence is a literary technique that refers to logical connections, which listeners or readers perceive in an oral or written text. In other words, it is a written or spoken piece that is not only consistent and logical, but also unified and meaningful. It makes sense when read or listened to as a whole. The structure of a coherent paragraph could be general to particular and particular to general or any other format.

Types of Coherence

Local Level Coherent Text

In this type of text, coherence occurs within small portions of a passage or a text.

Global level Coherent Text

In this type of text, coherence takes place within the whole text of a story or [essay](#), rather than in its few parts.

Examples of Coherence in Literature

Example #1: *One Man's Meat* (by E.B. White)

“Scientific agriculture, however sound in principle, often seems strangely unrelated to, and unaware of, the vital, grueling job of making a living by farming. Farmers sense this quality in it as they study their bulletins, just as a poor man senses in a rich man an incomprehension of his own problems. The farmer of today knows, for example, that manure loses some of its value when exposed to the weather ... But he knows also that to make hay he

needs settled weather – better weather than you usually get in June.”

This is a global level coherent text passage in which White has wonderfully unified the sentences to make it a whole. He has started the passage with a general topic, scientific agriculture, but moved it to a specific text about farmers and their roles.

Example #2: *A Tale of Two Cities* (by Charles Dickens)

“The wine was red wine, and had stained the ground of the narrow street in the suburb of Saint Antoine, in Paris, where it was spilled. It had stained many hands, too, and many faces, and many naked feet, and many wooden shoes. The hands of the man who sawed the wood, left red marks on the billets; and the forehead of the woman who nursed her baby, was stained with the stain of the old rag she wound about her head again. Those who had been greedy with the staves of the cask ... scrawled upon a wall with his finger dipped in muddy wine-lees—BLOOD.”

Taken from the novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, this passage’s emphasis is on the idea of staining, and scrawling the word “blood,” which further brings coherence into the lines. The connection is thus made through the appearance of Wood-Sawyer, a man who scares Lucie later. This is how it achieves coherence.

Example #3: *Animal Farm* (by George Orwell)

“Now, comrades, what is the nature of this life of ours? Let us face it: our lives are miserable, laborious, and short. We are born, we are given just so much food as will keep the breath in our bodies, and those of us who are capable of it are forced to work to the last atom of our strength ...

“No animal in England knows the meaning of happiness or

slavery: that is the plain truth.”

Through the speech of the Old Major, Orwell starts the passage about the miserable nature of the life of animals on the animal farm, and then he inspires them to think about how to safeguard their interests on the farm. The entire paragraph is an example of coherent speech.

Example #4: *Unpopular Essays* (by Bertrand Russell)

“The word “philosophy” is one of which the meaning is by no means fixed. Like the word “religion,” it has one sense when used to describe certain features of historical cultures, and another when used to denote a study or an [attitude](#) of mind which is considered desirable in the present day. Philosophy, as pursued in the universities of the Western democratic world, is, at least in intention, part of the pursuit of knowledge, aiming at the same kind of detachment as is sought in science ...”

See how brilliantly Russell has connected the ideas of philosophy and politics, by moving from a general to a specific topic, with sentences connecting one to another, creating coherence.

Function

Coherence links the sentences of a work with one another. This may be done with paragraphs, making sure that each statement logically connects with the one preceding it, making the text easier for the readers to understand and follow. Also, ordering thoughts in a sequence helps the reader to move from one point to the next smoothly. As all of the sentences relate back to the topic, the thoughts and ideas flow smoothly.