

The logo features the text 'Fetch me a pen' in a blue, cursive font. The text is positioned between two horizontal lines. A blue pen is shown at the end of the top line, with its tip pointing towards the right and its body extending upwards and to the right.

Paragraph Structure for Key Stage 5: moving beyond Point, Evidence, Explanation (PEE)

Students often begin KS5 using the Point, Evidence, Explanation paragraph structure which they relied on during KS3 and KS4. This workshop will explore ways for teachers to broaden discussions of paragraph structure, enabling students to move beyond simplistic formulas in their written work.

This workshop will be of particular interest to KS5 teachers but can also be adapted for use with other age groups. Participants will work through several activities designed for students from a range of subjects, before reflecting on how they might be adapted for use in their own lessons.

Activity 1: The Naming of Parts

In this activity, students are given a selection of paragraphs (ideally from essays on the same question). In small groups students put the paragraphs in order of how successful they think they are. It does not matter if students pick different orders as long as they can justify their choice: as they are paragraphs from real essays they will all have merits and problems. Teachers should try to encourage discussion. After deciding on an order as a class, students will pick the 'best' of the paragraphs and all work on naming each sentence according to the function it is performing. Students will then use this to develop a paragraph of their own, or to improve the paragraph they identified as the weakest.

How to teach this activity

- Handout 3 paragraphs to the class. In this case, these are paragraphs from AS English coursework. Coursework tends to have different problems from exam writing: coursework is usually long and off-topic, exams answers are more often under-developed.
- Ask students to work in small groups to place the paragraphs in order of how successful they think they are. Encourage students to discuss the paragraphs in depth and to move beyond answers such as 'it's more descriptive' or 'it sounds better'
- Feedback as a class and agree which is best. It might not be perfect, or even especially good, but that does not matter as later students will have an opportunity to edit it.
- Ask students what sorts of different sentences might appear in a paragraph. Teachers can begin the discussion if students are struggling by writing 'point, evidence, explanation' on the board. Then ask students to come up with other types of sentences. Credit everything possible and add them to the list.

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- Ask students to label the sentences in the paragraph in pairs. Emphasise that there is no single right answer and that some sentences might be both evaluative and analytical, or partly make a point but also analyse language.
- Project the paragraph on the board and feedback, discussing why people decided on those labels.
- At this stage it might be useful to discuss PEE paragraphs and look at the one labelled on the board. Ask students whether this is a PEE paragraph or not. Emphasise that in many ways this is a PEE paragraph (as that structure is often a useful way to make and then develop a point) but that it is also a lot more varied. The key is not to replace PEE with a new more complex acronym but to get students to see that each paragraph will be different, depending on what is being written and the point they are trying to make. Students will have to decide what sentences they need to make their point.
- Teachers can now ask students if the 'best' paragraph needs editing or if there is anything they might move around. Encourage students to see all writing as in process: even the best work can be edited. Teachers might offer some of their own ideas, or even just suggest some parts which could be worded more eloquently
- Students can now label the weakest paragraph and rewrite it, adding in the information that is missing, or reordering the ideas (or even deleting sentences that go off topic). Or students might have some of their own work that they can edit.
- Feedback and emphasise the variety of the paragraphs

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Resources

Teachers should select paragraphs from essays from their own class. Here is an example from AS English students at Mulberry School for Girls. All three paragraphs are taken from the essay: 'Both Aravind Adiga and Kiran Desai are concerned with the negative effects of colonialism and globalisation.' Discuss to what extent you agree or disagree with this statement with reference to *The White Tiger* and *The Inheritance of Loss*.'

Paragraph X

Both Adiga and Desai present their protagonists in different situations and show them both achieving different things through globalisation. Adiga presents his protagonist Balram as a very ambitious but bad servant. He shows Balram as being very clever and sly, because of the way he becomes rich and how he behaves with different types of people depending on what he can get from them and how it will benefit him. However, Desai presents one of her main characters Biju as a weak and feeble immigrant worker. Desai presents Biju as being an adolescent who just wants to fit in with the people around him as he feels he is different to the other workers at the restaurants he works at. Both Desai's and Adiga's characters are very different from each other, they are almost the opposite. Adiga shows Balram as being successful through globalisation and Desai presents Biju as making himself a servant of globalisation. Although Balram believes that there is no success through globalisation he does find success through it. He also believes that success is only gained through criminal acts. This view is not challenged because most of the rich people around him gained wealth through criminal acts, especially through corruption; this is shown by the bus conductor, Vijay, who throughout the whole book keeps on changing his job, going higher up and working for corrupt government people "each time you saw him he had done better for himself" (P.99). Although globalisation does make Balram successful it means that he gained it through many bad things; he murdered, stole and abandoned his family to gain wealth, he became corrupted through wealth which is all that globalisation stands for and the main principle of globalisation, to gain wealth. Desai however shows Biju failing through



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globalisation. He goes to another country to make himself richer but it does not work out for him, he overworks himself in incredibly poor conditions and he gets less than minimum wage. He makes himself a servant of globalisation, he goes to another country to benefit from it but makes himself their servant, he serves them with no chance of bettering himself, he doesn't leave any room for himself to gain anything from globalisation.

Paragraph H

Both Biju and Balram are products of British colonization; however Balram saw success through colonization whilst Biju became a servant to it. Biju is an illustration of a man with high hopes, attempting to rise from the darkness through globalisation; however globalisation is the reason for his uncertainty, poverty and homelessness. Biju's continuous change of jobs reflects mass globalisation as it highlights the immense number of different ethnic minorities working together in different working environments to create a "fusion trend". However though the union between so many nationalities produced tasteful products, the likes of "basil samosa" and "mango margarita", there lay a far more important underlying message in the existence of so many nationalities in a single restaurant basement. This diversity is not just about globalisation of food rather it is about the fact that "business was business. The fittest one wins and gets the butter". This harsh portrayal of the lives of illegal immigrants allows the reader to understand the reason for Biju's negative perception of American culture. His continuous change in jobs at "Baby Bistro", then at "Le Colonial" may imply liberated movement and an opportunity for the uneducated. But Biju gives the audience an insight into the reality of his life. The freedom of leaping from job to job is not an advantage, rather "this instability is a raw illustration of the difficulties Biju and his fellow migrants face in earning a steady income and settling down. The critic Khan describes how "in him Kiran Desai portrayed the impact of the politics of globalisation and post colonialism on the economic

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structure of the once colonised nation." Despite these difficulties, the dominance and superiority of the western world has been driven into the migrants, to such an extent that they'd endure tribulations in America and be nearer to their dream, rather than enjoy the comfort of their homeland.

Paragraph B

Globalisation has had a huge contribution to how Balram changed from "a sweet, innocent village fool" turning into "citified fellow full of debauchery, depravity, and wickedness. He is exposed to things that he generally wouldn't consider in life, and consequently he becomes a whole new person who is self-centred. His connections with fellow drivers, the reading of books and newspapers the corrupt practices played by his master of bribing the ministers, his experience of accepting responsibility of an accident which he himself has never committed, Adiga typifies that globalisation and colonialism satirises the insensible development of it and how much it plays a huge part in peoples life. Balram describes how difficult it was for him to escape from the rooster coop as he states that "a rooster was escaping from the coop! A hand was thrust out - I was picked up by the neck and shoved back into the coop". This may imply that every time Balram had tried to escape from the rooster coop there seemed to have been something that was stopping him, thus he had to carry out such a vengeful act of killing his own master, the one he worshiped and respected more than a God. Aravind Adiga explores an individualistic society through Balram's eyes, as different individuals see the corrupted Indian government as an advantage for them to get into the India of lightness, leaving behind the India of darkness.

How to use this activity in other subjects

- Each subject teacher will have different ideas about what needs to go into a good paragraph. Sometimes this is dictated by mark schemes, sometimes by personal preference. Try to begin by finding paragraphs that work well in your subject area and then see how they are



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- constructed. It is a good idea to find different models of successful paragraphs so that students do not replace PEE with another formula.
- After this activity has been taught once, teachers can use variations of this activity as a starter. For example, teachers might project a paragraph that is not successful and ask students to work in groups to identify the problems before rewriting it. These activities work best when they are repeated regularly so that students practice writing all the time. Wherever possible copy students' work so that they are discussing writing that is relevant and at the correct level.
- When first tackling academic writing problems, teachers might choose to edit all other mistakes (such as grammar and problems introducing quotations) out of the paragraphs. However, once students are used to the activity and have been thinking about their writing for a number of months, they might benefit from having a few minutes to edit out these problems themselves.



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Activity 2: Beginning a new paragraph

This activity helps students to consider what each paragraph is going to cover. Teachers should take a random sample of the first sentences of paragraphs in students' essays and copy them. Students then have to consider whether these are effective paragraph openings. If they are not, then students should rewrite them. Finally, students should look at the beginnings of their paragraphs in a recent essay and improve them.

How to teach this activity

- Look at the best paragraphs from Activity 1 (or any similar task) and ask your class to establish what makes a good opening to a paragraph in your subject. I often call these 'topic sentences' rather than 'points' as students tend to work in PEE as soon as they hear 'point'. However, you might have another name for them.
- Hand students a list or table with a selection of first sentences from an essay and ask them to work in pairs to decide whether these are good openings or not. You may need to work through an example together the first time students try this exercise.
- To help them, students can ask themselves these questions: Does this sentence give me a clear idea of what will follow in the paragraph? Is it a brief summary rather than a detailed description? Can subsequent sentences easily start exploring the thesis of the topic sentence?
- Feedback from pairs or small groups. Emphasise variety and try to credit a range of different responses. It is important for students to see writing as a process, rather than as having a 'right' or 'wrong' answer.
- This activity is best completed after a practice essay. Then, to consolidate the task, students can work on their own essay and improve the openings of their paragraphs.

Resources

Teachers should compile their own lists of sentences from relevant essays from the class. Here is an example from AS Geography.

'WITH REFERENCE TO ONE OR MORE LOCATED EXAMPLES, EXAMINE THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES CREATED BY THE EXPLOITATION OF ENERGY RESOURCES.'

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Are these good topic sentences or not? If not, can you change/re-write them to make them more effective?

99% of Norway's electricity is supplied via hydro-electricity (HEP) which, in comparison to other energy sources, is a cheap alternative.

There were also many social benefits for example a greater satisfaction of the population with services provided to them.

Norway has benefitted, first and foremost, economically through exploiting energy resources.

Norway is a country that has experienced a lot of social and economic growth; this is because of the discovery of oil and gas that was exploited in the 1960s, that provided the push needed for Norway to become a sustainable country.

Nigeria is another located example where eco/socio opportunities arise from the exploitation of energy resources.

This is currently the case in Nigeria.

In reference to Norway the exploitation of energy resources, mainly hydro-electric power, has created economic development as it has a secure and semi-sustainable energy programme, meaning that it doesn't have to import any energy and even exports most of its fossil fuels, making it one of the few nations with a positive budget deficit.

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Answer Guide

99% of Norway's electricity is supplied via hydro-electricity (HEP) which, in comparison to other energy sources, is a cheap alternative.

This is not a good topic sentence because it is too detailed. It would be more appropriate as an example later in a paragraph

REWORKED TOPIC SENTENCE: Norway relies on exploiting energy resources for its energy needs.

There were also many social benefits for example a greater satisfaction of the population with services provided to them.

This is not a good topic sentence; again, it is too detailed as it specifically names one example. At the same time, it is also too vague: social benefits to what? A topic sentence should be complete in itself with all the information present.

REWORKED TOPIC SENTENCE: Exploiting energy resources has provided Norway with many social benefits.

Norway has benefitted, first and foremost, economically through exploiting energy resources.

This is a good topic sentence. It is general enough for the candidate to develop in the paragraph.

Norway is a country that has experienced a lot of social and economic growth; this is because of the discovery of oil and gas that was exploited in the 1960s, that provided the push needed for Norway to become a sustainable country.

This begins well but goes into too much detail. The first part would make a good topic sentence.

REWORKED TOPIC SENTENCE: Norway is a country that has experienced a lot of social and economic growth.

Nigeria is another located example where eco/socio opportunities arise from the exploitation of energy resources.

I think this works well as a topic sentence.

This is currently the case in Nigeria.

This is not a good topic sentence as the reader can only follow it if they have read the preceding paragraph. Students should avoid beginning sentences with 'this', 'it' or 'they'.

REWORKED TOPIC SENTENCE: The poor management of Nigeria's energy exploitation means the country has seen few benefits.

In reference to Norway the exploitation of energy resources, mainly hydro-electric power, has created economic development as it has a secure and semi-sustainable energy programme, meaning that it doesn't have to import any energy and even exports most of its fossil fuels, making it one of the few nations with a positive budget deficit.

This is far too long to be an effective topic sentence.

REWORKED TOPIC SENTENCE: The exploitation of energy resources in Norway has created economic development.



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How to use this activity in other subjects

- This activity is easily adapted for any subject. Even for shorter written answers, teachers can compile lists of students' first sentences.
- Once students are used to this activity, students can revise by writing topic sentences for practice questions rather than the whole essay. Obviously, this is not a substitute for writing whole essays but can be used as a planning method.