

Paragraph Structure: Exercise

The sentences below comprise a paragraph in George Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language." Here, however, the sentences have been scrambled. Put them in proper sequence to recreate Orwell's original, coherent and well structured paragraph. As you work on this, note your reasons for placing each sentence or pair of sentences where you do.

(a) And this is not altogether fanciful.

(b) And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favorable to political conformity.

(c) Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line."

(d) Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style.

(e) When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases -- *bestial atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder* -- one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them.

(f) In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing.

(g) A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine.

(h) If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church.

(i) The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself.

(j) The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestoes, White papers and the speeches of undersecretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech.

Instructor:

This exercise will require students to . . .

- identify the topic sentence that links every part of the paragraph
- notice transitional phrases linking sentences to each other (“And this . . .”). You might suggest other transitional words or phrases the students can start to use in their own writing.
- notice sub-topics that smaller groups of sentences address and hypothesize about the relationships of these sub-topics to each other.
- identify the last sentence in the paragraph and reason out what its function is in relation to the rest of the paragraph.

The correct order is **f c d j e a g i h b**.

Here is Orwell’s paragraph:

(f) In our time it is broadly true that political writing is bad writing. **(c)** Where it is not true, it will generally be found that the writer is some kind of rebel, expressing his private opinions and not a "party line." **(d)** Orthodoxy, of whatever color, seems to demand a lifeless, imitative style. **(j)** The political dialects to be found in pamphlets, leading articles, manifestoes, White papers and the speeches of undersecretaries do, of course, vary from party to party, but they are all alike in that one almost never finds in them a fresh, vivid, homemade turn of speech. **(e)** When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases -- bestial atrocities, iron heel, bloodstained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder -- one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy: a feeling which suddenly becomes stronger at moments when the light catches the speaker's spectacles and turns them into blank discs which seem to have no eyes behind them. **(a)** And this is not altogether fanciful. **(g)** A speaker who uses that kind of phraseology has gone some distance toward turning himself into a machine. **(i)** The appropriate noises are coming out of his larynx, but his brain is not involved as it would be if he were choosing his words for himself. **(h)** If the speech he is making is one that he is accustomed to make over and over again, he may be almost unconscious of what he is saying, as one is when one utters the responses in church. **(b)** And this reduced state of consciousness, if not indispensable, is at any rate favorable to political conformity.