

JOHNSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

EXAMPLE/ ILLUSTRATION

Illustration presents material to the reader in the form of action, expressed or implied. The quality of action makes illustration or example particularly different from detail and reason as basic material for building better paragraphs. A paragraph may have as its basic material one or more illustrations or examples. Whether you employ one or several will depend, to a large extent, on the complexity of the thought expressed in the controlling idea and on your own ingenuity. One long, well-constructed, vivid illustration may be sufficiently persuasive of the point of your paragraph. However, the more involved or difficult your central idea is, the more illustrations or examples you may need, each varying slightly in subject matter but tending toward the same objective--namely, effective support of the topic sentence.

Sample ILLUSTRATION paragraphs

When the child has acquired some language, we get some extraordinary glimpses of this fantastic world: When my friend David was two and a half years old, he was being prepared for a trip to Europe with his parents. He was a very bright child, talked well for his age and seemed to take in everything his parents had to say with interest and enthusiasm. The whole family would fly to Europe (David knew what an airplane was), they would see many unusual things, they would go swimming, go on trains, meet some of David's friends there. The preparation story was carried on with just the right amount of emphasis for a couple of weeks before the trip. But after a while David's parents noticed that he stopped asking questions about "Yurp" and even seemed depressed when he heard his parents talk about it. The parents tried to find out what was troubling him. He was most reluctant to talk about it. Then one day, David came out with his secret in an agonizing confession. "I can't go to Yurp!" he said, and the tears came very fast. "I don't know how to fly, yet!"

Selma H. Fraiberg *The Magic Years*

As children crowd around, Anai-Anai tells of the shark's capture: "We left two nights ago. The wind was strong. The boat flooded, and we thought we would capsize. We didn't sleep. We bounced on the black sea all next day and night. But this morning the sea was flat. We started looking for him. We dropped a hook baited with stingray in the sea. Then we rattled in the water coconut shells tied to a pole and we sang: 'Come you Kalitan, show us your fin that slices the water like a sharp blade. Come, we have been waiting. You are beautiful, you must be ours.' He came. When he caught the hook, Jawarani hurled the harpoon into his side. He battled furiously. Finally he surrendered."

Anne De Henning Singh "Sea Gypsies of the Philippines"

It is a commonplace observation that work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion. Thus, an elderly lady of leisure can spend the entire day in writing and dispatching a postcard to her niece at Bognor Regis. An hour will be spent in finding the postcard, another in hunting for spectacles, half-an-hour in a search for the address, an hour and a quarter in composition, and twenty minutes in deciding whether or not to take the umbrella when going to the pillar-box in the next street. The total effort which would occupy a busy man for three minutes all told may in this fashion leave another person prostrate after a day of doubt, anxiety and toil.

C. Northcote Parkinson *Parkinson's Law*

Sample EXAMPLE paragraphs

All good readers know, of course, that they are living instead of merely reading. In other words, they know that they are adding untold knowledge and understanding to their lives, becoming wiser, more experienced in the ways of the world. Don Quixote shows them the transforming power of the human imagination--how dreams can make life not only bearable, but exciting, no matter what one pays for such excitement. King Saul proves to them how costly goodness itself can be and alas! often is; for Saul was a good man, even a noble one, who paid dearly and ironically for his very sense of honor. No tragic hero in any Greek play is more tragic than Saul. Tess of the D'Urbervilles brings all good readers not only to tears, but to a new understanding of outraged innocence, a new pity for all who live. Destoyevsky shows them through his three Karamazov brothers how dangerous a mere intellect can be, how much more perilous is the mind than are the affections, no matter how misguidedly one loves. Life may well be circumscribed for many of us; but it is never circumscribed for any of us once we learn how to read.

Mary Ellen Chase "Why Teach Literature?"

Major-league baseball is one of the most difficult and precise of all games, but you would never know it unless you went down on the field and got close to it and tried it yourself. For instance, the distance between pitcher and catcher is a matter of twenty paces, but it doesn't seem like enough when you have a catcher's mitt and try to hold a pitcher with the speed of Dizzy Dean or Dazzy Vance. Not even the sponge that catchers wear in the palm of the hand when working with fast-ball pitchers and the bulky mitt are sufficient to rob the ball of shock and sting that lames your hand unless you know to ride with the throw and kill some of its speed. The pitcher, standing on his little elevated mound, looms up enormously over you at that short distance, and when he ties himself into a coiled spring preparatory to letting fly, it requires all your self-control not to break and run for safety. And as for the things they can do with a baseball, those major-league pitchers...! One way of finding out is to wander down on the field an hour or so before game-time when there is no pressure on them, pull on the catcher's glove, and try to hold them.

Paul Gallico "The Feel"

Beware of nouns of very general meaning, like *circumstances*, *cases*, *instances*, *aspects*, *factors*, *relationships*, *attitudes*, *eventualities*, etc. In most circumstances you will find that those cases of writing, which contain too many instances of words like these, will in this and other aspects have factors leading to unsatisfactory relationships with the reader resulting in unfavorable attitudes on his part and perhaps other eventualities, like a grade of "D." Notice also what *etc.* means. It means: "I'd like to make this list longer, but I can't think of any more examples."

Understanding English

Common Nouns

One of the many ways in which the English language continues to grow is by making into common nouns the names of people who were in some way connected with the discovery of something. For instance, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, who lived in England during the eighteenth century, was an incessant gambler. So that he would not need to take time from his card playing, the Earl invented a meal which would not require the usual dining implements--a dining table, plates, and utensils. Thus the word *sandwich* came to be. A second example of a word taken from a name is *maverick*. Samuel Maverick, a Texas rancher, pastured his cattle on an island in the 1840s, thus not having to follow the general custom of branding them. The word was then extended throughout the cattle industry to mean "an unbranded calf." In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the word was applied to anyone who did not fit into a particular category, usually political. Today, the word applies especially to congressmen who will wear no party's political brand.

John Mack Lynch

Words That Have Shaped American History

Many people believe that only wars, discoveries, and people have shaped American history. This is a partially false notion. Words, also, whether written or spoken, have helped to shape American history. For example, Patrick Henry, one of the most outspoken leaders of the American Revolution, made his famous speech, "Give me liberty or give me death" in March of 1775. Henry's words sparked the beginning of the Revolutionary War and resulted in American independence. Tom Paine, the most influential writer of the period, argued for independence in his pamphlet *Common Sense*. Paine joined Washington's army, and when the war was going badly, he wrote a series of pamphlets, *The Crisis*. The first of the series was written in a soldiers' camp after a

serious setback in the war. Paine's writings encouraged the colonists to go on fighting. The next famous words were written by Julia Ward Howe during 1861, after a visit to a Union Army camp near Washington. Mrs. Howe was one of the leading New England reformers of Civil War days. Probably the most famous speech ever made in America was President Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address," given at the dedication of the military cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. People everywhere came to admire these words as both a speech and as a piece of thoughtful philosophy. Last, because he is most recent, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., became known as a respected civil-rights leader in large part because of his powerful rhetoric. The march on Washington in August 1963, was the occasion of Dr. King's famous speech-sermon, "I Have a Dream." By voicing his dream that some day all men will be equal, King's words join the powerful words that have changed history. Although there are many other important words that have shaped American history, these are among the most famous and important.

Beverlee Mueller

Movies and Fads

Many famous movies in the past have had a definite effect on the fads which take hold of the viewers. A recent example of such a condition can be witnessed in the box office block-buster, *Jaws*. Author Peter Benchley made the entire country shark crazy. People are hoarding everything from shark teeth to shark repellent, boosting the sagging economy of the United States and giving inflation a bite where it counts. A year ago people saw *The Towering Inferno*, *The Poseidon Adventure*, and *Earthquake*. After these movies left their scars on Americans, a craze developed for disaster games. These were soon marketed for folks who gathered around the boards to see who could survive the biggest disaster and be, therefore, declared the winner. An earlier "disaster" film, *Bonnie and Clyde*, gave birth to an incredible revival of the pin-striped suit and long skirt. This craze was renewed in 1974 by Robert Redford's wardrobe in *The Great Gatsby*. Such fads and fashions look pretty dull, however, as the movie industry jumps into UFO's and casts Dustin Hoffman as the captured Martian. Perhaps Americans will begin to build saucer-shaped homes and dye their freckles green.

Gabe Quintanilla

PRACTICE EXERCISE

Write three topic sentences that could be developed into example or illustration paragraphs.