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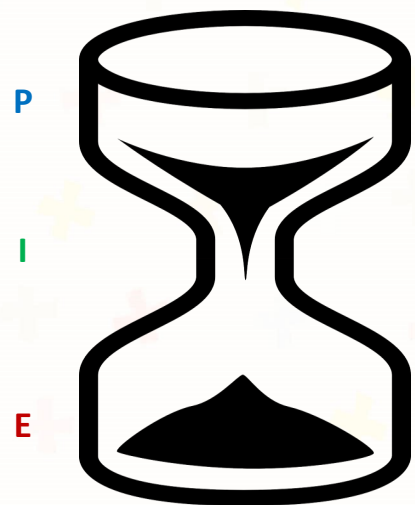
Grades 4 and up: Paragraph Organization

- What exactly is a paragraph? Some teachers say it is a group of 5-7 sentences about the same topic. A paragraph has **one main idea**, but paragraphs can be shorter or longer depending on what the author wants to express.
- A **paragraph is like an hourglass**. It **starts out broad**, **narrows down in the middle**, and **then becomes broad again**. It has three main parts: **POINT**, **ILLUSTRATIONS**, and **EXPLANATION**, or P-I-E for short.

At the top is our main **POINT**. We should express this point in a **clear topic sentence** (usually the first or second sentence within the paragraph).

In the middle are our **ILLUSTRATIONS**: one or more **examples or concrete details** to support our point.

At the bottom is the **EXPLANATION**. We **explain how the illustrations help support our point and wrap up** the paragraph.



Here is an example of a well-organized paragraph. Can you find the **POINT**, **ILLUSTRATIONS**, and **EXPLANATION**?

One of the most controversial animals in the western United States is the wolf. In a *Los Angeles Times* news article from 2019, Richard Read describes the tension between ranchers who want to keep their livestock safe and environmentalists who want to protect shrinking wolf populations. Ranchers interviewed for the article claim that wolves cost them huge amounts of money by killing cattle, but environmentalists say that killing wolves is harmful (Read). Similarly, Oregon State University scientists argue that wolves create an important “culture of fear” and should be protected (Ripple). When wolves die out, other animals lose their fear and change their behaviors in a way that harms the ecosystem as a whole. It is understandable that ranchers want to protect their livestock and way of life, but environmentalists want to protect the bigger ecosystems that include other animals and plants.

Works Cited

Read, Richard. “One Ranch, 26 Wolves Killed: Fight over Endangered Predators Divides Ranchers and Conservationists.” *Latimes.com*, The Los Angeles Times, 18 Dec. 2019, www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2019-12-18/endangered-wolf-killings-ranch.

Ripple, William. “The Ecology of Fear: Wolves Gone, Western Ecosystems Suffer.” *Oregon State University Newsroom*, Oregon State University, 18 Jun. 2009, today.oregonstate.edu/archives/2004/dec/ecology-fear-wolves-gone-western-ecosystems-suffer.

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