

How can you develop a strong analysis of a paragraph?

Analysis means to break down into parts. The parts might be characters in a story, specific ideas in an argument, or other components. This lesson focuses on analyzing paragraph structure by breaking the paragraph into parts. The excerpts are from Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*.

Step 1: Identify the key concept of a paragraph.

Step 2: Analyze how particular sentences develop or refine the key concept.

Step 3: Determine whether the paragraph has a concluding statement.

Step 1: Identify the key concept of a paragraph.

A paragraph usually expresses one key concept. Often, it is stated in the first sentence of the paragraph. In the following paragraph, the key concept is highlighted in yellow. Dieldrin and aldrin are two chemicals used as pesticides.

Like dieldrin, aldrin is extremely toxic [deadly]. It produces degenerative changes in the liver and kidneys. A quantity the size of an aspirin tablet is enough to kill more than 400 quail. Many cases of human poisonings are on record, most of them in connection with industrial handling.

Analyzing Paragraph Structure

Cluster 2 page 45

Directions: Identify the key concept in the following paragraph.

Aldrin, like most of this group of insecticides, projects a menacing shadow into the future, the shadow of sterility. Pheasants fed quantities too small to kill them nevertheless laid few eggs, and the chicks that hatched soon died. The effect is not confined to birds. Rats exposed to aldrin had fewer pregnancies and their young were sickly and short-lived. Puppies born of treated mothers died within three days. By one means or another, the new generations suffer for the poisoning of their parents. No one knows whether the same effect will be seen in human beings, yet this chemical has been sprayed from airplanes over suburban areas and farmlands.

The first sentence states the key concept: aldrin might cause sterility.

Step 2: Analyze how particular sentences develop or refine the key concept.

In a well-written paragraph, all sentences help readers understand the key concept. They might provide examples, list details, or explain the key concept's significance. In the following paragraph, the sentences that support the key concept are highlighted in yellow.

Like dieldrin, aldrin is extremely toxic [deadly]. It produces degenerative changes in the liver and kidneys. A quantity the size of an aspirin tablet is enough to kill more than 400 quail. Many cases of human poisonings are on record, most of them in connection with industrial handling.

Analyzing Paragraph Structure

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Directions: Explain how the sentences highlighted in yellow in the following paragraph develop the key concept.

Aldrin, like most of this group of insecticides, projects a menacing shadow into the future, the shadow of sterility. Pheasants fed quantities too small to kill them nevertheless laid few eggs, and the chicks that hatched soon died. The effect is not confined to birds. Rats exposed to aldrin had fewer pregnancies and their young were sickly and short-lived. Puppies born of treated mothers died within three days. By one means or another, the new generations suffer for the poisoning of their parents. No one knows whether the same effect will be seen in human beings, yet this chemical has been sprayed from airplanes over suburban areas and farmlands.

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Possible Response: The first highlighted sentence, about pheasants, develops the key concept by providing a specific example to demonstrate it.

The second highlighted sentence, about new generations, develops the key concept by providing a generalization that supports it.

Step 3: Determine whether the paragraph has a concluding statement.

Some paragraphs conclude with a sentence that restates the key concept in another way. It might be restated

- more memorably, through a quotation or startling fact
- more concisely, through a shorter sentence
- more generally, through an application to other conditions

In some cases, a paragraph may not have its own concluding statement. It might be part of a series of related paragraphs that end with a concluding statement in the final paragraph.

Analyzing Paragraph Structure

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Directions: Explain how the sentence highlighted in yellow at the end of the following two paragraphs provides a conclusion for both.

Like dieldrin, aldrin is extremely toxic [deadly]. It produces degenerative changes in the liver and kidneys. A quantity the size of an aspirin tablet is enough to kill more than 400 quail. Many cases of human poisonings are on record, most of them in connection with industrial handling.

Aldrin, like most of this group of insecticides, projects a menacing shadow into the future, the shadow of sterility. Pheasants fed quantities too small to kill them nevertheless

continued

laid few eggs, and the chicks that hatched soon died. The effect is not confined to birds. Rats exposed to aldrin had fewer pregnancies and their young were sickly and short-lived. Puppies born of treated mothers died within three days. By one means or another, the new generations suffer for the poisoning of their parents. **No one knows whether the same effect will be seen in human beings, yet this chemical has been sprayed from airplanes over suburban areas and farmlands.**

Analyzing Paragraph Structure

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Possible Response: Instead of saying what it had done to animals, the final sentence raises the issue of what aldrin might do to humans. This concludes the previous two paragraphs by applying the information in a new context.

Note: In 1987, the federal government banned most uses of aldrin.

Analyzing Paragraph Structure

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Directions: Explain each sentence's role in the following paragraph.

The plain truth is that this critically important subject of the ecology of the soil has been largely neglected even by scientists and almost completely ignored by men. Chemical control of insects seems to have proceeded on the assumption that the soil could and would sustain any amount of insult via the introduction of poisons without striking back. The very nature of the world of the soil has been largely ignored.

First Sentence

states the paragraph's key concept

Second Sentence

develops the key concept with details

Third Sentence

restates the key concept concisely