

#### 4. DEVELOPMENT OF PARAGRAPHS.

**Modes of Development.** — Paragraphs are developed from a topic sentence just as periods are developed from a proposition. The same methods, therefore, are employed in amplifying the thought that were employed in the case of periods.

1. **Paraphrase.** Definition and repetition may, for practical purposes, be considered as particular kinds of paraphrase, and since they are commonly employed in developing a paragraph, especially at its beginning, they may be conveniently treated of here.

*Definition* in composition is a statement that explains or describes the nature of anything; as, —

Wit, after all, is a mighty tart, pungent ingredient, and much too acid for some stomachs; but honest good humor is the oil and wine of a merry meeting. — *The Christmas Dinner.*

By *repetition* in a paragraph is meant the statement of the same thought in many different forms of expression.

What has been said in general terms is repeated in more particular terms, or in figurative language, or in

obverse iteration. Obverse iteration is the denial of the opposite of a proposition.

In the following paragraph the topic stated in the first sentence is repeated in particular terms in the second, in figurative language in the third, by obverse iteration in the fourth, and finally in still other terms in the last sentence.

To an American visiting Europe, the long voyage he has to make is an excellent preparative. The temporary absence of worldly scenes and employments produces a state of mind peculiarly fitted to receive new and vivid impressions. The vast space of waters that separate the hemispheres is like a blank page in existence. There is no gradual transition, by which, as in Europe, the features and population of one country blend almost imperceptibly with those of another. From the moment you lose sight of the land you have left, all is vacancy, until you step on the opposite shore, and are launched at once into the bustle and novelties of another world. — *The Voyage*.

The following paragraph is an illustration of a topic developed by paraphrase.

There is a sad dreariness in this magnificence, this strange mixture of tombs and trophies, these emblems of living and aspiring ambition close beside mementos which show the dust and oblivion in which all must sooner or later terminate. Nothing impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness than to tread the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant. On looking round on the vacant stalls of the knights and their esquires, and on the rows of dusty but gorgeous banners that were once borne before them, my imagination conjured up the scene when this hall was bright with the valor and beauty of the land, glittering with the splendor of jewelled rank and military array, alive with the tread of many feet and the hum of an admiring multitude. All had passed away; the silence of death had settled again upon the place, interrupted

only by the casual chirping of birds which had found their way into the chapel and built their nests among its friezes and pendants—sure signs of solitariness and desertion.—*Westminster Abbey*.

*Analysis:* The topic is stated in the opening words. "Magnificence" is paraphrased by definition into "this strange mixture of tombs and trophies." "Tombs and trophies" are defined in the reverse order. The latter are "emblems of living and aspiring ambition"; the former are "mementos which show the dust and oblivion in which all must sooner or later terminate." The second sentence repeats the topic, expanding "sad dreariness" into "nothing impresses the mind with a deeper feeling of loneliness," and developing "magnificence" into "the silent and deserted scene of former throng and pageant." The third sentence amplifies "the silent and deserted scene" by going into details, "the vacant stalls of the knights and their esquires," "the rows of dusty but gorgeous banners"; while "the former throng and pageant" becomes "this hall bright with the valor and beauty of the land, glittering with the splendor of jewelled rank and military array, alive with the tread of many feet and the hum of an admiring multitude." The last sentence repeats the topic once more in other words, introducing the circumstance of the birds building their nests, as a proof of the leading idea of the paragraph.

The student will see from this paragraph that, in paraphrasing, the thought should not "mark time," but should advance by becoming more definite and detailed. Notice how each succeeding statement seems to grow out of what precedes.

2. **Enumeration.**—The small birds were taking their farewell banquets. In the fulness of their revelry they fluttered, chirping and frolicking, from bush to bush and tree to tree,

capricious from the very profusion and variety around them. There was the honest cock robin, the favorite game of stripping sportsmen, with its loud querulous note; and the twittering blackbirds flying in sable clouds; and the golden-winged woodpecker, with his crimson crest, his broad black gorget, and splendid plumage; and the cedar-bird, with its red-tipt wings and yellow-tipt tail and its little monteiro cap of feathers; and the bluejay, that noisy coxcomb, in his gay light-blue coat and white underclothes, screaming and chattering, nodding and bobbing and bowing, and pretending to be on good terms with every songster of the grove. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

3. **Causes or Effects.** — In the following paragraph the topic is stated in the first sentence, is repeated in definite terms and figurative language in the second sentence, and is stated again in obverse iteration in the third sentence. The cause of Ichabod's credulity is hinted at in these repetitions, and in the fourth sentence it is declared expressly. Then follow two sentences in which the effects of the reading of Mather's tales are enumerated.

He was, in fact, an odd mixture of small shrewdness and simple credulity. His appetite for the marvellous and his powers of digesting it were equally extraordinary, and both had been increased by his residence in this spellbound region. No tale was too gross or monstrous for his capacious swallow. It was often his delight, after his school was dismissed in the afternoon, to stretch himself on the rich bed of clover bordering the little brook that whimpered by his schoolhouse, and there con over old Mather's direful tales until the gathering dusk of the evening made the printed page a mere mist before his eyes. Then, as he wended his way by swamp and stream and awful woodland to the farmhouse where he happened to be quartered, every sound of nature at that witching hour fluttered his excited imagination — the moan of the whippoorwill from

the hillside, the boding cry of the tree-toad, that harbinger of storm, the dreary hooting of the screech-owl, or the sudden rustling in the thicket of birds frightened from their roost. The fireflies, too, which sparkled most vividly in the darkest places, now and then startled him as one of uncommon brightness would stream across his path; and if by chance a huge block-head of a beetle came winging his blundering flight against him, the poor varlet was ready to give up the ghost with the idea that he was struck with a witch's token. His only resource on such occasions, either to drown thought or drive away evil spirits, was to sing psalm tunes; and the good people of Sleepy Hollow, as they sat by their doors of an evening, were often filled with awe at hearing his nasal melody, "in linked sweetness long drawn out," floating from the distant hill or along the dusty road. — *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.*

4. **Circumstances.** — The following paragraph shows how the English in former days were particularly observant of Christmas, by mentioning the various circumstances that marked its observance.

The English, from the great prevalence of rural habit throughout every class of society, have always been fond of those festivals and holidays which agreeably interrupt the stillness of country life; and they were in former days particularly observant of the religious and social rites of Christmas. It is inspiring to read even the dry details which some antiquaries have given of the quaint humors, the burlesque pageants, the complete abandonment to mirth and good-fellowship with which this festival was celebrated. It seemed to throw open every door and unlock every heart. It brought the peasant and the peer together, and blended all ranks in one warm, generous flow of joy and kindness. The old halls of castles and manor-houses resounded with the harp and the Christmas carol, and their ample boards groaned under the weight of hospitality. Even the poorest cottage welcomed the festive season with green decorations of bay and holly — the cheerful fire

glanced its rays through the lattice, inviting the passengers to raise the latch and join the gossip knot huddled round the hearth, beguiling the long evening with legendary jokes and oft-told Christmas tales. — *Christmas*.

5. **Comparison.**—In the following paragraph the author compares himself to an artist, both in his travels and in his choice of subjects.

It has been either my good or evil lot to have my roving passion gratified. I have wandered through different countries, and witnessed many of the shifting scenes of life. I cannot say that I have studied them with the eye of a philosopher; but rather with the sauntering gaze with which humble lovers of the picturesque stroll from the window of one print-shop to another; caught sometimes by the delineations of beauty, sometimes by the distortions of caricature, and sometimes by the loveliness of landscape. As it is the fashion for modern tourists to travel pencil in hand, and bring home their portfolios filled with sketches, I am disposed to get up a few for the entertainment of my friends. When, however, I look over the hints and memorandums I have taken down for the purpose, my heart almost fails me at finding how my idle humor has led me astray from the great object studied by every regular traveller who would make a book. I fear I shall give equal disappointment with an unlucky landscape-painter, who had travelled on the Continent, but, following the bent of his vagrant inclination, had sketched in nooks and corners and by-places. His sketch-book was accordingly crowded with cottages and landscapes and obscure ruins; but he had neglected to paint St. Peter's or the Coliseum, the cascade of Terni or the bay of Naples, and had not a single glacier or volcano in his whole collection. — *The Author's Account of Himself*.

• 6. **Development by Contrast.** — To these modes of development may be added that of development by contrast, which consists in proving or explaining a proposition by



his weapons in his hands. As the ship careers in fearful singleness through the solitudes of ocean, as the bird mingles among clouds and storms and wings its way, a mere speck, across the pathless fields of air, so the Indian holds his course, silent, solitary, but undaunted, through the boundless bosom of the wilderness. His expeditions may vie in distance and danger with the pilgrimage of the devotee or the crusade of the knight-errant. He traverses vast forests, exposed to the hazards of lonely sickness, of lurking enemies, and pining famine. Stormy lakes, those great inland seas, are no obstacles to his wanderings; in his light canoe of bark he sports like a feather on their waves, and darts with the swiftness of an arrow down the roaring rapids of the rivers. His very subsistence is snatched from the midst of toil and peril. He gains his food by the hardships and dangers of the chase; he wraps himself in the spoils of the bear, the panther, and the buffalo, and sleeps among the thunders of the cataract.—*Traits of Indian Character.*

*Comparison.*

*Comparison.*

*Enumeration of expeditions.*

*Repetition of topic, entering into particulars.*

*Enumeration of parts of "subsistence," food, clothing, sleep.*

Other modes of development may be found in books of rhetoric. The methods commonly employed and suitable for imitation are treated of here.