


**READER**



# **66 PASSAGES**

**TO LEARN  
TO READ BETTER**  
**SECOND EDITION**

A series of stories and short passages of fact and opinion, arranged in order of difficulty. Accompanying questions help the student to find subject matters, main ideas, and details.

**ALLAN SACK and JACK YOURMAN**

**College Skills Center**

# 66 PASSAGES

## TO LEARN TO READ BETTER

Second Edition

A Course for Understanding  
The Basic Structure Of  
The Sentence  
The Paragraph  
The Short Passage

By

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**Note:** For answers to the questions, analyses of the passages, and grade levels, see the *Teacher's Manual for 66 Passages*.



# PART ONE: WHAT THE STUDENT NEEDS TO KNOW TO READ BETTER

## Instruction Page

These left-hand pages give instructions for what the student is to do. The student carries out these instructions on the right-hand pages. These instructions for teaching Part One have been taken directly from the *Teacher's Manual*. This provides the more advanced student an opportunity to work through Part One independently of the teacher. However, the teacher should be certain before the section is assigned on a self-administered basis that the student's decoding and vocabulary skills are adequate for the job. Instructions for subsequent lessons will be found in the *Manual*.

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### 1. TEACHER:

"Someone once said that "when you read, you think."

Once you know what the *words* mean, reading is mainly putting them together — putting them into thoughts.

If reading is mainly thinking, and you want to read better, it will pay you to understand how the thinking in reading works. So let's look at how a person thinks when he reads.

► Look at the sentence in Part 1 on page 5: "The horse has helped man do his work."

Now, before this sentence could be written for you to read, the author had to start with a TOPIC — he had to have something to write about.

► Find the topic in this sentence. Draw one line under the topic.

Answer: The topic is "the horse."

Once the writer knows what he wants to write about, the next thing he needs to know is: "What am I going to say about it?" In this sentence he needs to make a STATEMENT about "the horse."

► Draw two lines under the statement about the topic, horse.

- 
2. ► Look at Part 2. The sentence breaks down into two parts: the topic, plus the statement about the topic.

"The horse" "has helped man do his work."

- 
3. The TOPIC, as you know, is also called the SUBJECT of the sentence. Look at Part 3. You see three sentences.

► Read each sentence. Then draw one line under the subject of each sentence. Answers: The dog. A house. A car.

# **PART ONE: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT READING**

*Student's Page*

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1.

The horse has helped man do his work.

**Directions:** Read the sentence above.  
Draw one line under the topic.  
Draw two lines under the statement about the topic.

---

2.

**TOPIC                    +                    STATEMENT ABOUT THE TOPIC**

The horse                    has helped man do his work.

---

3.

**Directions:** Read each sentence below.  
Draw one line under the subject of each sentence.

The dog is a smart animal.

A house needs to be kept up.

A car needs tune-ups.

4.

Sentences, of course, are the basic building blocks for writing something that will be read. A sentence always is *about* something — its SUBJECT — and always has a STATEMENT about the SUBJECT. The form of a sentence may vary. But the SUBJECT — and the STATEMENT about it — are always there.

Now you also know that what you read doesn't just have single sentences, coming at you one by one on a page. The sentences come at you in groups which you know as paragraphs.

### THE PARAGRAPH

So, how do get from the sentence to the paragraph?

► Look at Part 4. Read the sentences. Then answer the questions.

Do they all tell about the same subject?	No.
Do they all tell about different subjects?	Yes
Are these sentences a paragraph?	Of course not.

The item in Part 4 is just a bunch of hit-or-miss sentences that have nothing to do with each other. A paragraph must have sentences that *are connected with each other in some logical way.*

5.

Let's go back to the original sentence again. Look at Part 5.

We have here a perfectly good sentence. But as it stands, we may believe what it says, or not. We don't see any *proof* that what it says is true.

It also isn't really clear. What kind of work? *All* man's work? Some of it? We don't know. And the sentence isn't all that interesting. "The horse has helped man do his work." So what else is new? This sentence, then, as a communication between two human beings, is pretty incomplete.

What's needed is some "for instances," some specifics — some **EXAMPLES** of the work the horse helped man do.

So, let's make a paragraph based on our sentence that might improve its communication value.

6.

► Look at Part 6. Read the paragraph. What do sentences 2, 3, and 4 tell about?

Answer: Sentences 2, 3, and 4 tell what *specific kinds* of work the horses did. In other words, sentence 1 makes a general statement about the horse. Sentences 2, 3, and 4 give **DETAILS** about that general statement.

---

4.

The horse has helped man do his work. Cars go faster than horses. Bridges help man to cross rivers. My father bought a dog yesterday. In these days the moon isn't that far off.

**Directions:** Read the sentences above.

Do they all tell about the same subject?      Yes      No

Do they all tell about different subjects?      Yes      No

Are these sentences a paragraph?      Yes      No

---

5.

The horse has helped man do his work.

---

6.

(1) The horse has helped man do his work.  
(2) On Western ranches the horse has helped round up the cattle. (3) Horses moved railroad cars in the early days of the railroad. (4) Horses have pulled brewery trucks.

**Directions:** Read the paragraph above.  
What do sentences 2, 3, and 4 tell about?

---



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7.

► Look at Part 7, "How Our Paragraph is Built."

Now, let's think about the structure of our paragraph, how it is built, how it is put together.

Our paragraph has a general statement. It has three detail sentences. Each sentence in the paragraph has something to do with what it is about — its SUBJECT.

We call the subject of the paragraph its "SUBJECT MATTER," or "SM."

We call the general statement the "G."

We call the sentences that give details, D's."

Notice that by adding the three DETAILS, we gave the message more "body." The original sentence is now more believable. It is quite clear as to the kinds of work meant. And it might even be a bit more interesting than the sentence we started out with.

---

8.

Actually, even a *sentence* can have DETAILS. In fact, most sentences do.

For example, let's take the sentence in Part 8.

"They found peace in Shangri-la."

► Read the directions and underline your answers.

The SUBJECT is "They."

The STATEMENT about the SUBJECT is "They found peace."

Now, where did "they find peace?" "In Shangri-la." The phrase "in Shangri-la" is a DETAIL which gives more "body" to the sentence, and makes it clearer and more believable.

---

9.

► Look at the sentence in Part 9:

"They fell in love in the springtime."

SUBJECT: "They"

STATEMENT: "They fell in love"

DETAIL (answers "when?"); "in the springtime"

So the SM-G-D format applies to sentences as well as to paragraphs.

7.

**HOW OUR PARAGRAPH IS BUILT**

- |                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| SUBJECT MATTER    | (SM) "The horse"   |
| GENERAL STATEMENT | (G) The horse has helped man do his work.                          |
| DETAIL SENTENCES  | (D) On Western ranches the horse has helped round up the cattle.   |
|                   | (D) Horses moved railroad cars in the early days of the railroads. |
|                   | (D) Horses have pulled brewery trucks.                             |

8.

They found peace in Shangri-la.

**Directions:** Read this sentence. What is the subject?  
Draw *one* line under the subject.  
What is the statement?  
Draw *two* lines under the statement.  
Where did they find peace?  
Draw *three* lines under the words that tell where.

9.

They fell in love in the springtime.

SUBJECT: They  
STATEMENT: They fell in love.  
DETAIL: in the springtime.

10.

A.

Let's look at our paragraph once again. You can see it in Part 10A. It has a SUBJECT MATTER, a GENERAL STATEMENT, and DETAILS; in other words, it has *parts*. We are saying that a paragraph is built up of parts.

Anything that is built up of parts is a STRUCTURE.

A paragraph is a structure that's built up of thoughts — the kinds of thoughts that we are talking about here.

Each of the "thought-parts" in a paragraph is related to the other parts of the paragraph:

The GENERAL STATEMENT and the DETAILS are about the SUBJECT MATTER.

The DETAILS support (prove, clarify, or make interesting) the GENERAL STATEMENT.

And the G — the general statement — is related to its supporting DETAILS in a certain way.

## B. VISUALIZING THE PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

If you look at Part 10B, you will see one way of visualizing the structure of a paragraph.

Notice that the SUBJECT MATTER is what is being talked about, in this case, "the horse."

So everything inside the outer border is about "the horse."

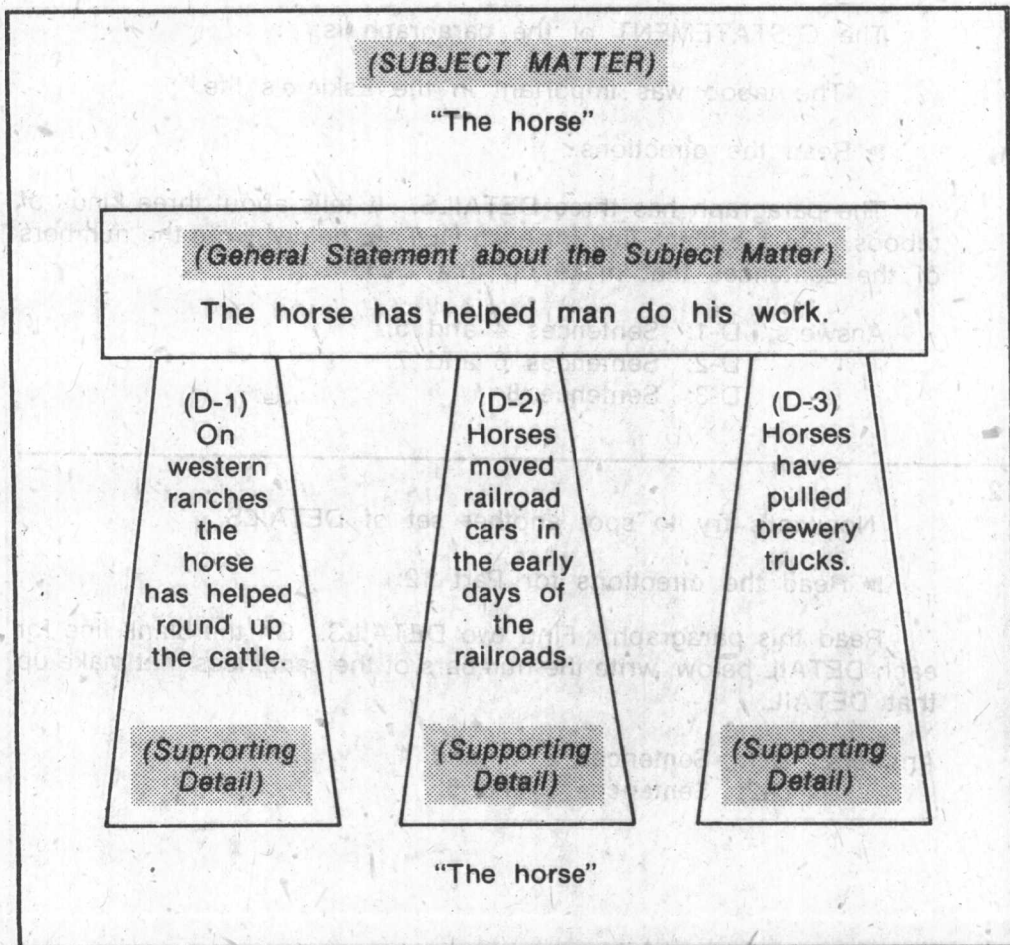
The horizontal block is the GENERAL STATEMENT, (G). It is a statement about the SUBJECT MATTER and is written inside the area of the subject matter.

The D's, or DETAILS, support the GENERAL STATEMENT block. Take away the D-supports, and the G-block falls.

10.

**A. A Paragraph**

The horse has helped man do his work. On Western ranches the horse has helped round up the cattle. Horses moved railroad cars in the early days of the railroads. Horses have pulled brewery trucks.

**B. A paragraph has structure.**

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

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11.

Now let's see how you can use this SM-G-D idea about how a paragraph is constructed. Let's start with DETAILS.

- Look at the paragraph in Part 11.

When you read this, you will see that it is about the taboo in the life of Eskimos... A taboo, if you don't know this word, is a "no-no." If a taboo is placed on some act, that act cannot be done. It is forbidden. Sometimes it cannot even be mentioned or discussed.

- Read the paragraph and then we'll talk about it.

.....

The SUBJECT MATTER of the paragraph is:

"The taboo in the Eskimo's life."

The G-STATEMENT of the paragraph is:

"The taboo was important in the Eskimo's life."

- Read the directions.

The paragraph has three DETAILS. It tells about three kinds of taboos. On the blank line for each DETAIL below, write the numbers of the sentences that make up that DETAIL.

Answers: D-1: Sentences 4 and 5.  
D-2: Sentences 6 and 7.  
D-3: Sentence 8

---

12.

Now let's try to spot another set of DETAILS.

- Read the directions for Part 12:

Read this paragraph. Find two DETAILS. On the blank line for each DETAIL below, write the numbers of the sentences that make up that DETAIL.

Answers: D-1: Sentences 2, 3, and 4.  
D-2: Sentences 5 and 6.

11.

(1) Taboos were an important part of the Eskimo's life. (2) They were rules that came from the spirits around him. (3) He feared the spirits, so he obeyed the taboos. (4) If his wife were sick, it was taboo to spear the salmon. (5) If he did, the salmon would not let itself be caught. (6) If a person died, it was taboo to touch the body with bare hands. (7) If he did, he would sicken and die. (8) He would never, no matter how many days he had gone without food, eat the animal of his totem; it was taboo.

**Directions:** The paragraph has three DETAILS. It tells about three kinds of taboos. On the blank line for each DETAIL below, write the numbers of the sentences that make up that DETAIL.

<p>(SUBJECT MATTER)</p> <p style="font-size: 1.2em;">"The taboo in the Eskimo's life."</p>		
<p>(G - STATEMENT)</p> <p style="font-size: 1.1em;">The taboo was important in the Eskimo's life.</p>		
<p>(D-1)</p> <p>Sentences:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>(D-2)</p> <p>Sentences:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>(D-3)</p> <p>Sentences:</p> <p>_____</p>

12.

**Directions:** Read this paragraph. Find two DETAILS. On the blank line for each DETAIL below, write the numbers of the sentences that make up that DETAIL.

(1) "Bulls by nature are dangerous to a cowboy. (2) A bull like Mighty Mouse, or Double Ought, weighs about 1,700 pounds. (3) I weigh 150 pounds. (4) I could get crushed. (5) Their horns go through guys. (6) I've seen it happen."

<p>(D-1)</p> <p>Sentences:</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>(D-2)</p> <p>Sentences:</p> <p>_____</p>
---	---



13.

Now let's talk about THE SUBJECT MATTER.

We said that the SUBJECT MATTER of a paragraph is "What the paragraph is about."

It will pay you to break down this idea of "what it is about" a bit further so that you can open up a number of passages that might otherwise give you trouble. If you understand the SUBJECT MATTER idea clearly, it will also help you later on to study better.

In other words, if you can see the *exact* SUBJECT MATTER of a paragraph, it can be the most important step you can take in understanding the paragraph.

► Look at Part 13. Our "Eskimo" passage is, of course, about "Eskimos." That is, it's not about Indians, white trappers, wolves, or seals. You can think of the SUBJECT MATTER of a paragraph as creating a world of its own.

Our SUBJECT MATTER, or SM, is the hunk of the world that we are concerned about when we read the paragraph. We are not talking about anything outside that world. If we do pull in something from outside, it's pulled in only as it affects, or concerns, or is in some way connected with, our SM world.

14.

But when we say "Our SM is Eskimos," we are talking about a pretty large world. Stories and facts about Eskimos could fill a lot of books. In a paragraph — or a short passage — we can really only talk about one little part of the Eskimo world.

There are all kinds of divisions within the world of "Eskimos." We could talk about the different Eskimo tribes, about their language, about their foods, their religion, and so on.

► In Part 14 you can see these parts, or divisions of the *general* SUBJECT MATTER "Eskimos." Each title in the "Eskimos" box is a little SUBJECT MATTER in itself. Can you add one more division to "Eskimos"—one *more* smaller SUBJECT MATTER? Write it in the empty box.

15.

So it will help in comprehending our paragraph if we decide on *the particular part* of the Eskimo world that the paragraph concentrates on. That particular part is, of course, the "taboo" in the Eskimo's life. So now our SM can be shown more precisely:

► Look at Part 15. The area taken up by "taboo" is a part of the large area taken up by "Eskimos." "Taboo" is the *specific* SUBJECT MATTER.

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16.

So, when you have spotted the DETAILS, and are starting to look for the SM, first ask yourself:

"What is the *overall* SUBJECT MATTER?" Second, ask yourself:

"What division, what phase, what part, of the overall SM is the paragraph really concentrating on?"

► To make this idea crystal clear, do the exercise in Part 16. Read the paragraph. Then answer questions 1 and 2.

Answers: 1. The overall Subject Matter is "jockeys."  
2. The specific Subject Matter is "the pay of jockeys," or "the earnings of jockeys," or "jockey's pay," etc.

### The G and the D's

Once you have the SM of the paragraph clear in your mind, it's easier to go to the next step — finding the G.

If you know that the passage is about "the pay of jockeys," you can then ask the question:

"What does the author say about the "pay of jockeys?"

► Look in the paragraph now at the DETAIL. What does the DETAIL show about the "pay of jockeys"? That is question 3. Write your answer on the line.

Answer: Jockeys earn large sums.

► Question 4 is, "What is the GENERAL STATEMENT?" Put the SM together with the D, and you get the G. Write your answer.

Answer: Our G is: "Jockeys are well paid."

17.

### The "G"

We said before that the G is related to—or based on—the D's in "a certain way."

Let's start by saying that to find the G takes thought. It's not easy. It's not "cut-and-dried." The only way to become good at this part of comprehension is to practice doing it. That's why you will find 66 passages to practice on after this Part One.

If you are going to be looking for the G (and what could be more important in reading?), it helps to understand what kind of thinking is called for on your part when you do it.