

### Paragraph construction exercise.

1. Topic sentence – serves two purposes in nonfiction writing: it sums up the primary point of the paragraph, it contributes an element to the larger argument
2. An expansion and explanation of the idea of the topic sentence – think of this as directly speaking to your reader. You are elaborating and expanding the main idea of the topic sentence. Maybe background information, connections to previous points, defining a key term.
3. Examples – sometimes an example might be more than one sentence. Students wonder sometimes how they can ever reach a word count for an assignment. Here's how you do it – more examples.
4. Analyze the evidence and offer an answer to the “so what” question. Explain to the reader the significance of your evidence and your point. \
5. Transition to the next point.

Let's break one down that's largely descriptive in nature:

The front-runner in the race was Amarillo's own competent and capable Ernest O.

Thompson, one of the most well-regarded men in Texas. A solid member of the booster class, Thompson was a lawyer, a bona-fide war hero, founder of the American Legion, owner of the Amarillo Hotel, Texas Tech Regent, and former reform mayor of Amarillo who oversaw that city's rapid growth in the 1920s. Appointed to the Railroad Commission in 1932, Thompson was widely hailed for his fairness and balance in bringing order to the chaotic oil industry.<sup>1</sup>

Thompson's well-considered platform of protecting social security, lowering taxes and spending, reducing utility rates, protecting independent business, greater state control of oil production, along with his pro-labor, investment-seeking approach to the economy blended practical Texas economic nationalism with small p populism. He was, in short, about what sort of candidate one would expect Amarillo to produce back then – a booster ideal in candidate form. And in in any other election . . . . Also in the race was state attorney general William

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<sup>1</sup> The was the same Commission established by the Hogg Administration in 1891. Governing the oil business was added to its responsibilities in the Progressive Era. Thompson would serve on the Commission until 1965.

McGraw whose platform was so similar to Thompson's that the two men often campaigned together. The conservative in the race was perennial candidate Tom Hunter, an oil man from Wichita Falls whose previous campaigns seemed designed primarily to troll the Fergusons. Rounding out the field was a menagerie of also-rans and wannabes. Most observers placed O' Daniel's campaign firmly in this group. It was such an obvious stunt to sell flour, no one took it seriously.<sup>2</sup> Not a single major newspaper in Texas endorsed Pappy.

Or one that makes a particular point:

His appointments were even worse. O' Daniel nominated a host of barely-qualified right-wingers, fans, and cronies to seemingly every position. He named Dallas oilman, anti-labor zealot, and ultraconservative E. B. Germany as head of the state Democratic Party. Without even meeting with state labor leaders, he nominated a twenty-nine-year-old desk jockey from Southwestern Bell Telephone for state labor commissioner whose only qualification seemed to be the fact that he had written a fan letter to O' Daniel. For Adjutant General, over the objections of the American Legion, he appointed one of Texas's largest grocery distributors (and Hillbilly Flour's biggest customer), a man with limited military experience. His failed appointments to the State Highway Commissioner are the stuff of Texas legend. First O' Daniel tried to appoint benefactor Carr Collins, the Senate, afraid that it might mean losing New Deal highway money, rejected him. The governor then turned to West Texas oil man/banker J. C. Hunter who also faced fierce resistance and withdrew before he was rejected. Undeterred O'

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<sup>2</sup> They were curious, however. The O' Daniel phenomenon, in the days before he actually began campaigning, was the main topic of conversation at a meeting of small-town newspapers in early June. *Waco News Tribune* 13 June 1938.

Daniel tried to name Jeffersonian Democrat Big Jim West to the post. The Senate voted West down as well. He tried to appoint militant dries (including the president of the WCTU) to head the state liquor control board and he named his personal secretary as Life Insurance Commissioner.<sup>3</sup> He named right-wing reactionaries like lawyer/oil man/railroad magnate Orville Bullington and oil man/rancher Dan J. Harrison to the UT Board of Regents. Frustrated over the parade of hacks and hangers-on, one solon complained: "What the governor has done has shown a reckless disregard for everything political, everything precedental and everything traditional. . . everything reasonable." He further warned that if "the legislature is not careful, if the people are not careful, more crimes by committed under the guise of protecting the common people than this state every dreamed of."<sup>4</sup>

Assignment:

Craft a paragraph that demonstrates the idea that cowboy songs portray the working life of the cowboy in a glamorous way, often emphasizing the freedom of the cowboy or his relationship to animals, or working within nature.

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<sup>3</sup> These appointments, from his second term, went about as well as the first. Green, *Establishment*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> McKay, *W. Lee O'Daniel*, 146-166, 358-360, 397-399 quote in 160. He would also try to name J. Evetts Haley as Livestock Sanitary Commissioner two years later, but he too was rejected for his Jeffersonian Democrat ties. See also Green, *Establishment*, 25-30 and Volanto, "The Far Right in Texas Politics," 80