

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

TEACHER NOTES

Age: Young adults
Level: Intermediate (B1)
Time: 70 minutes
Focus: writing
Materials: One copy of the worksheet per student; set of word cards (you will need to prepare these before class)
Overall Aim: In this lesson, students will:

1. develop an awareness of definition paragraphs in English;
2. write a definition paragraph following the conventions of English academic writing.

2. Congratulate the students for their creative definitions. Announce that you will now focus on formal definitions. Distribute the worksheet and go over the information up to the exercises. As you teach how to write a simple definition, you may want to give a few examples other than the one in the worksheet, e.g.:

DEFINED WORD	CATEGORY	FEATURES
A slow city	is a place	which promotes a slow and conscious lifestyle.
A collective	may be defined as a group	which works together for a common goal.
Initiative	is an action	that starts a process.

THE ANATOMY OF A DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

Aim: to familiarize students with the components of a definition paragraph

Approximate time: 25 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. As a warmer, play a game of taboo with words from the series (or other topics you have covered in your class). The game requires the players to guess words based on clues given by their teammates. The most obvious clues for each word are 'taboo' or forbidden. The game demands creativity, lateral thinking and a quick mind.

Before the game, prepare cards with a word written on top of each and a set of forbidden clues listed underneath. Put the students in two groups. Ask each group to nominate a clue-giver and decide which group will go first. Tell the first clue-giver to choose a card and start giving their teammates an idea of the word without using the taboo words. Gestures and sound effects are also forbidden. If the clue-giver uses one of the taboo words or their time runs out, they don't get a point and the other team continues. Here is an example card:

entrepreneur
boss
invest
business

WRITING EXERCISES

Aim: to get students to write a definition paragraph; to give them a chance to share their paragraphs and offer each other honest and constructive feedback

Approximate time: 45 mins

PROCEDURE:

1. First, get the students to do the awareness-raising exercise about paragraph organization. Check the answers when they finish. You may want to emphasize that a definition does not always have to be a single sentence. It may sometimes be given in several sentences, as in the paragraph here.

Answers:

Topic Sentence: Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to social issues. They are society's change agents. In other words, they specify social issues to fight against, and then develop solutions.

Major Support 1: An important characteristic of social entrepreneurs is having ambition.

Minor Support: Without ambition, it would be impossible for them to undertake tasks such as increasing literacy rates or fighting poverty.

Major Support 2: The second characteristic of social entrepreneurs is having a mission,

Minor Support: which means that they do what they do for social value, not for money.

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

TEACHER NOTES

Major Support 3: Third, social entrepreneurs put great emphasis on humans.

Minor Support: For instance, Indian social activist Sunitha Krishnan has made it the purpose of her life to help trafficked girls in India find a safe shelter.

Concluding Sentence: As can be seen, social entrepreneurs try to make the world a better place and deserve our respect for doing so.

- Now, have a brief discussion of selfies. Ask the students if they take a lot of selfies, their reasons for (not) doing so and where their selfies end up.

TEACHING TIP: You may want to mention that the word 'selfie' is believed to have first been used by an Australian person on an online forum in 2002 (Australians like shortening their words and ending them with the suffix -ie, such as 'barbie' for barbecue or 'sunnies' for sunglasses or 'mozzie' for mosquito). The word 'selfie' was chosen as the word of the year in the English language in 2013.

After the discussion, ask the students to write a definition paragraph about what a 'selfie' is. Give them around 20 minutes.

- When the students have finished, put them in pairs. Ask them to read each other's paragraphs and give honest and constructive feedback. Go around the room to monitor what is being said. This should take around 15 minutes.

TEACHING TIP: If you do not feel comfortable with peer feedback, you may ask for a few volunteers to read their paragraphs aloud and feed back to them with the students. This way, it will be easier to monitor the feedback and students will also be able to hear teacher feedback.

and assign the paragraph. The terms below may lead to fun paragraphs, some of them about 'untranslatable concepts' from different cultures:

- Portugal: Saudade
- Germany: Weltschmerz, fernweh, schadenfreude
- Sweden: Resfeber, gökotta
- Spain: Duende, sobremesa, merienda
- Greece: Metanoia
- Russia: Toska
- Turkey: Yakamoz
- France: Dépaysement
- Japan: Wabi-Sabi, komorebi

LESSON 8 WORD LIST

General Academic Vocabulary Review:

Answers:

A.

- categories
- task
- emphasis
- individuals
- issues

B.

- define
- undertake
- specify
- emphasize

C.

- In her welcome speech, the dean put/placed particular emphasis on the importance of equal opportunity in education.
- Could you define the Portuguese term 'saudade' for me?
- The purpose of the event is to inspire design students to innovate new products for the future.

INDEPENDENT STUDY / GLOCALISATION IDEA

If you work with students from different countries, ask them to choose a term/concept unique to their culture and write a paragraph to define it for their classmates. If you work with students from a single country, you may prefer to choose the concept yourself

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

WORKSHEET

THE ANATOMY OF A DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

A definition paragraph explains the meaning of a term and gives facts, details and examples to make it clear for the reader. A simple definition has three parts: the defined word, its category and feature(s). E.g.:

DEFINED WORD		CATEGORY		FEATURE(S)
An entrepreneur	is	a person	who	starts a business

A definition paragraph starts with a definition and continues with facts, details and examples.

How to Write an Effective Definition Paragraph

Definitions are important in academic writing. You may be asked to write an entire paper to define a concept, or you may need to give a definition as a part of your paper.

In order to write an effective definition paragraph:

- Start your paragraph with a topic sentence that defines the term you are writing about.
- Your topic sentence should include:
 - the defined word,
 - its category, and
 - its features.
- Follow the topic sentence with supporting details.
- Supporting details may include further details, facts and examples.
- You may use the following transitions as well as enumeration transitions:

For example, . . .

For instance, . . .

To illustrate, . . .

An example of this is . . .

. . ., such as . . .

In other words, . . .

. . ., which means that . . .

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

WORKSHEET

WRITING EXERCISES

1. Now let's see this in action. Read the following definition paragraph and:

- Underline its topic sentence(s).
- Circle the transitions showing facts, details, examples and enumeration.
- Find its major and minor supports.

Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to social issues. They are society's change agents. In other words, they specify social issues to fight against, and then develop solutions. An important characteristic of social entrepreneurs is having ambition. Without ambition, it would be impossible for them to undertake tasks such as increasing literacy rates or fighting poverty. The second characteristic of social entrepreneurs is having a mission, which means that they do what they do for social value, not for money. Third, social entrepreneurs put great emphasis on humans. For instance, Indian social activist Sunitha Krishnan has made it the purpose of her life to help trafficked girls in India find a safe shelter. As can be seen, social entrepreneurs try to make the world a better place and deserve our respect for doing so.

2. You will now write a definition paragraph of approximately 150 words. The topic is given below.

Define what a 'selfie' is. (Why do people take selfies? Where do people use them?)

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

WORKSHEET

LESSON 8 WORD LIST

Key Words	Academic Words
selfie	category
	define
	emphasis
	feature
	individual
	innovative
	issue
	specify
	task
	undertake

LESSON 8 GENERAL ACADEMIC VOCABULARY REVIEW

A. Use the nouns below to complete the sentences:

categories	issues	task	emphasis	individuals
------------	--------	------	----------	-------------

- Currently, the Academy Awards or Oscars are given in 24 _____.
- The _____ of writing a definition paragraph is actually an easy one.
- Modern schools put _____ on collaborative learning.
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) is a system with which _____ can transfer money from one bank to another.
- Poverty is among the most serious _____ that the country must solve.

B. Use the verbs below to complete the sentences. Do not change them:

emphasize	undertake	define	specify
-----------	-----------	--------	---------

- Could you _____ the word 'crowdfunding' for me?
- Police officers _____ a variety of tasks for the safety the public.
- The manager left after lunch but she did not _____ when she would return.
- Writers sometimes use italics to _____ a certain word in their text.

LESSON 8: DEFINITION PARAGRAPH

WORKSHEET

C. Paraphrase (=rewrite) the following sentences by replacing the underlined word with the one in parentheses. Do not change the meaning of the sentence. Change the grammar where necessary:

1. In her welcome speech, the dean particularly emphasized the importance of equal opportunity in education.

(emphasis) _____

2. Could you tell me the definition of the Portuguese term 'saudade'?

(define) _____

3. The purpose of the event is to inspire design students to become innovative individuals creating products for the future.

(innovate) _____