**Paragraph Structure, Topic Sentences and Transitions**

**Post-Class Activities**

These post-class activities have been designed to give you further practice in spotting paragraphs with a good structure, that feature appropriate topic sentences, and which are bound together by effective transition words and phrases.

**Question 1 (5 marks)**

Imagine that you conducted a detailed experiment to see whether certain plant species were more effective than others at suppressing the spread of an invasive plant species that has negative consequences for British Columbia grasslands. Read the ‘original’ draft below. You have been provided with three ideas for stylistic ‘alterations’ that you could make to improve this paragraph. Your task is to rank these in order from the one that would make the biggest improvement to the smallest (3 marks).

Once you have done this, cut and paste the original paragraph and put your first choice alteration into practice by editing the paragraph in this way (2 marks).

*The spread of Bromus tectorum (cheatgrass) throughout grasslands in British Columbia (BC) has many negative effects on these habitats. For example, cheatgrass reduces biodiversity, leads to more frequent wildfires, and causes health problems for cattle that eat it. Also, negative effects on ecosystems are financially costly; it costs a lot of money to restore a habitat after fire and it is expensive to buy food for lots of cattle. One way to reduce the environmental and financial effects of cheatgrass growth is to introduce another plant species that will reduce the growth rate of cheatgrass. In order to know which plant species has the greatest negative effect on cheatgrass growth rate, I grew cheatgrass plants in different treatment groups each featuring one other plant species that was common in BC grasslands. Following this method, I tested three other species and found that crested wheatgrass significantly reduced the growth rate of cheatgrass; it reduced growth rate by approximately 65%. Bluebunch wheatgrass did not significantly affect cheatgrass growth rate, whereas Idaho fescue significantly increased the growth rate of cheatgrass by approximately 39%. Naturally, I recommend grassland managers promote the growth of crested wheatgrass and discourage the growth of Idaho fescue.*

**Alteration A:** Improve transition words/phrases.

**Alteration B:** Split information into more than one paragraph.

**Alteration C:** Improve the topic sentence.

**Questions 2, 3 and 4 (3 marks each, 9 marks total)**

For each of the following topics, choose the suitable topic sentence and **match** the reasons that make the others unsuitable to the unsuitable topic sentences. In all cases, when choosing your suitable topic sentence, imagine that you are just beginning to write an essay on the topic.

**Question 2 (3 marks)**

**Topic 1: Antiviral resistance in viruses.**

**Topic Sentence 1:**  Of the 1,344 influenza viruses tested during the 2012-2013 flu season, 99.9% were resistant to the antiviral drug amantadine.

T**opic Sentence 2:** Antiviral resistance presents many different problems for patients, healthcare professionals, and drug developers.

**Topic Sentence 3:** Antiviral resistance may develop in viruses spontaneously or while in the presence of an antiviral.

**Option A:** Information is too specific for a topic sentence.

**Option B:** The focus is too broad for the information that could follow in one paragraph about this topic.

**Option C:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Question 3 (3 marks)**

**Topic 2: Correlation doesn’t imply causation**

**Topic Sentence 1:** People often wrongly imply that a correlation between two variables means there is a cause and effect relationship between them.

**Topic Sentence 2:** Although many people wrongly infer that a conclusion is definitive if it is based on statistical data from extraneous variables, many more assume that an association between two variables can never indicate a causal relationship.

**Topic Sentence 3:** In certain cities, many people assume that colder temperatures result in more traffic accidents, suggesting that correlation implies causation.

**Option A:** Too difficult to interpret.

**Option B:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Option C:** Too narrow in focus for the information that should follow about this topic.

**Question 4 (3 marks)**

**Topic 3: Using giant solar powered “sails” to power spacecrafts.**

**Topic Sentence 1:** Solar energy might one day power spacecraft and astronauts into deep space.

**Topic Sentence 2:** Scientists believe that building giant "sails" in space could help astronauts explore the deeper parts of the universe.

**Topic Sentence 3:** "Sails" that catch solar energy and transfer photons with incredible kinetic potential into forward thrust might one day allow astronauts to explore the depths of the universe.

**Option A:** Suitable topic sentence.

**Option B:** Information is too specific for a topic sentence.

**Option C:** Information is too broad for a topic sentence.

**Question 5 (5 marks)**

Read the paragraph about cleaning up oil spills below, and try to fill in the blanks by choosing the most suitable transitional word/phrase for each question.

*Researchers have developed a new way to clean up difficult oil spills using a method based on the function of cactus needles.* ***[A]****, synthetic and copper spikes were designed as smaller versions of cactus needles, which draw moisture out of the air. Cactus needles cause water droplets to aggregate before they are carried to the base of the needle via surface tension.* ***[B]****, tests confirmed that the synthetic and copper spikes were able to mimic this phenomenon as micrometer-sized oil droplets collected on the needle surfaces and were drawn along the length of the spike.* ***[C]****, clean-up methods focus only on removing oil from the surface.* ***[D]****, researchers are excited by the new possibility because the spikes could be used for cleaning up denser droplets that sink below the surface and are difficult to remove.* ***[E]*** *this method is said to be a cheaper alternative to traditional methods, other experts warn that the technology may not be practical in real situations. For example, the amount of needles that would be required to clean a large oil spill is huge.*

Fill in the blanks by choosing from:

**A:** **Apparently, Initially, Obviously, Naturally**

**B: Subsequently, Nonetheless, Secondly, Conversely**

**C: These days, Nevertheless, Previously, Presently**

**D: In addition, Despite this, Consequently, However**

**E: Because, Since, Although, Despite the fact that**

**Question 6 (6 marks)**

Read the paragraph about wolves in Yellowstone National Park below, and pay special attention to the CAPITALIZED transition words/phrases linking the different sentences together. Copy and paste this paragraph and then **bold** the three transitions that are particularly poor (3 marks). Then, below this, copy and paste the same paragraph and change those three transitions so as to make them more suitable (3 marks). Again, **bold** these in the paragraph to make it easier to see what you have changed.

*The reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone National Park has had a surprisingly positive effect on grizzly bear populations. [OBVIOUSLY] many scientists were worried that fewer bears would be supported by the ecosystem [BECAUSE] the wolves were expected to enhance competition for food and living resources, but the opposite effect has been documented. Research has shown that the wolves are driving down excessively large populations of grazing mammals, such as elk and deer. [IN ADDITION], many shrub species that provide berries as a food resource for bears have become much more common, and the bears are supplementing their diets accordingly. [HOWEVER], scientists have warned that this could be a short-term effect; they cannot yet be sure that the presence of the wolves is responsible for increasing bear numbers, [OR] can they be certain that bear populations will remain this high in years to come. [NEVERTHELESS], the early signs are very positive that bringing wolves back to Yellowstone has helped to stabilize a delicate, complex food web.*