

Structuring a Definition Paragraph

Definition Paragraphs are like other paragraphs: they use **Primary and Secondary Supporting Sentences** in the body of the paragraph to introduce and explore aspects of the topic. The “hard” part about building a **Definition Paragraph** is that you want to put the **Primary Supporting Sentences** in an order that makes sense to the reader, who we will assume knows nothing about the topic. Sometimes, it’s easier to build your **Paragraph Skeleton** first, and then think about how to order the **Primary Supporting Sentences**.

On the back of this page is a complete **Paragraph Skeleton** with a problem: the **Primary Supporting Sentences** aren’t in the best order for understanding. Work with a partner to re-order them, and then make any changes you think are necessary to the Primary and Secondary Supporting Sentences to fit this new order.

TOPIC SENTENCE: Space opera is an important type of science fiction.

Primary Supporting Sentence: (*Who has written space operas?*) Many authors have written space operas.

- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** Historically, many famous writers from the Golden Age of Science Fiction wrote space operas, including Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, and Arthur C. Clarke. During their time, the space opera was one of the dominant forms of SF.
- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** More recently, authors like Alastair Reynolds, Iain M. Banks, and Ann Leckie have popularized the space opera again.

Primary Supporting Sentence: (*What are some common tropes in space operas?*) Space operas feature a wide variety of tropes, but a few things are especially common in the genre.

- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** Spaceships are almost always important in space opera stories, and sometimes spaceships are even characters themselves.
- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** Aliens are also common in space opera. Many stories feature conflict or cooperation between humans and other alien beings.
- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** In addition, “exploration” is a common theme or trope in space opera. Many space opera stories feature characters exploring space, the universe, or the solar system.

Primary Supporting Sentence: (*Are space operas popular?*) Space operas have fluctuated in popularity over the years.

- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** Modern space operas began to appear in the late 1920s in “pulp” magazines like *Amazing Stories*. They remained popular until the 1960s, when other forms of science fiction gained popularity.
- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** In the 1970s, a group of mainly British writers began to reinvent the space opera, changing its style and outlook significantly. In the years that followed, space opera slowly became popular again.

Primary Supporting Sentence: (*Why is it called space “opera”?*) Space operas are called by this name for a few obvious reasons.

- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** They are called *space* operas because they are set in outer space, usually on spaceships or space stations.
- **Secondary Supporting Sentences:** As for *opera*, this word doesn’t mean the genre is musical. Instead, “opera” refers to how dramatic and epic classical operas were. Space operas often have a similarly dramatic style and epic scope. They are big adventures featuring colorful characters.

Concluding Sentence: As you can see, space opera is an important part of science fiction literature.