

Writing Good Paragraphs

Look at the paragraphs below and mark the level of generality in the sentences as we did in the power point, with 10 being the most general, 9 a little more specific, 8 a little more specific than that, etc. (Your results should look like a string of numbers—i.e. 10, 10, 9, 9, 8, 8, or whatever you come up with).

Paragraph 1: The 80s may be remembered as the era when millions of people became obsessed with fitness. For most people, this is the decade in which they think continually about how their bodies function. A preoccupation with one's body is a sign of the times. It is very fashionable to talk about how important it is to be fit.

List your string of numbers here:

Paragraph 2: The 1980s may be remembered as the era when millions of people became obsessed with fitness. Ambitious young people took up aerobics and weight lifting as a flat belly and strong shoulders became assets on the career ladder. Others took up running, as comparing marathon times became the approved cocktail party talk. Even the cocktail parties themselves were affected. The boss began drinking Perrier water instead of white wine, and the really strong stuff like martinis brought raised eyebrows from everyone. Smoking at any party made the offending culprit feel like a pariah.

List your string of numbers here:

Paragraph 3: The Mexican War, slavery, and majority rule are reasons why Thoreau does not pay his taxes. He feels he should not support what he does not agree with. Thoreau was thrown into jail as punishment for not paying his taxes. Jail was the only just place at that time. Although Thoreau was in jail he did not feel confined. Jail only confines your body, not your mind. Thoreau is very strongly against taxes.

List your string of numbers here:

Paragraph 4: Thoreau blamed statesmen, legislators, and lawyers for several of the government's problems. He complained that these men did not look at situations from a moral point of view. Rather, they followed ideas that had already been established. For example, Thoreau criticized a lawyer named Webster, who was a strict follower of the Constitution. Webster believed slavery should not be abolished, because it was a part of the original Constitution. Webster did not try to change the situation by doing what was morally just, but instead stated, "Because it was a part of the original compact, let it stand" (1369).

List your string of numbers here: