Edit Your Historical Fiction for Paragraph Indentation

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn to edit a historical fiction story to include indented paragraphs.
• Edit practice text and share edits with the class.
• Discuss how they can apply this skill to their own independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Student dictionaries
• Chart paper and markers
• Historical Fiction Checklist
• Editing/Proofreading Symbols BLM (from Making Sense of the Writer’s Workshop)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text (without indentations) and the practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

Explain Editing for Paragraphing and Indenting

Say: When you read historical fiction, you will notice that there are several paragraphs on each page. Good writers use paragraphs to organize their writing and help it flow smoothly. A paragraph is a group of related sentences that all have something in common. Writers indicate the start of a new paragraph by indenting the first line. You indent a paragraph by starting your writing a few spaces in from the left.

Model Editing for Paragraphing and Indenting

Display the modeling text (without indentations) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to listen as you read the section of text aloud and think about where the text might be divided into paragraphs.

Modeling Text

1️⃣ Panting, she caught up to Khaba. ¶ “Go home, Mery,” he said. ¶ “I will if you will.” ¶ Khaba paused just long enough to grab his sister by the shoulders, turn her around, and shove her toward home. Then he started walking again. ¶ Almost immediately Mery was back at his side. “Khaba, you can’t rob the pharaoh’s tomb.”

After sentence 1. Say: Since this is the first sentence of a paragraph, we know we need to indent. I’ll put a symbol to show that we are going to indent here. Use the traditional ¶ symbol or other designated symbol.

After sentence 2. Say: There is a change of speakers in this sentence. Any time you change speakers, you need to start a new line and indent to make a new paragraph. So, let’s put a paragraph mark here.

After sentence 3. Say: Here we have another change of speakers, so the third sentence is indented. Let’s put a paragraph mark here.

After sentences 4 and 5. Say: Notice that the next two sentences describe what Khaba is doing. Because the third sentence was Mery speaking and these are about Khaba, we need to put a paragraph mark before the fourth sentence.

After sentences 6 and 7. Say: Now we have Mery doing something. What Mery is doing is a different subject, so we need to indent the beginning of this sentence. We’ll put a paragraph mark here. Now Mery is saying something. Since it is the same speaker, we don’t need to indent what she says.
2. Rehearse

Practice Editing for Paragraphing and Indenting

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

They were close enough now to make out the individual blocks of the pyramid. The pale limestone seemed to glow in the moonlight. “If you’re caught,” Mery whispered, “you’ll be executed.” “I’m not going to get caught,” Khaba whispered back.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with partners to edit the text for proper paragraphing and indentation. Partners should write down their edited text and be prepared to read it to the class, explaining how their changes improved the passage.

Share Practice Edits

Invite partners to share their passages and explain how their paragraphing and indentations improved the passage. Make the changes to the passage on chart paper or on the interactive whiteboard to model how to use proofreading symbols during the editing process. Discuss and support students’ use of proofreading symbols.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: While editing our historical fiction, we learned that we must make a new paragraph every time there is a change of subject or a change of speaker. We learned that we make a new paragraph by starting a new line with an indentation. Good writers divide their writing into paragraphs so that it will flow and be interesting for others to read.

Review the Historical Fiction Checklist (page 65) and encourage students who are at the editing stage of their independent writing to focus on editing for paragraph indentation and other conventions of good writing. During conferences, use the prompts on your conferring flip chart to support students’ independent or peer editing.

4. Share

Bring the class together. Invite volunteers to discuss errors they found and were able to correct in their historical fiction stories.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Work one on one with beginning ELs. Show them a familiar text. Point to a paragraph. Say: This is a paragraph. How do we know where the paragraph begins? (Allow responses.) Right! We can tell where the paragraph begins because of the indent. Have students point to the indent and say “indent.”

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity. Provide the following sentence frames to support oral language:

I indent a paragraph when ______.
Indenting is important because ______.

All Levels

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate: edit/editar.