PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE: COMPARISON

In this type of paragraph development, the reader learns the meaning of the main idea (also called the topic idea) by its comparison to a functional idea (a person, place, or thing) which is

- familiar,
- simple,
- concrete, and
- visual.

The functional idea is chosen because its characteristics resemble those of the main idea. Since the reader easily perceives the qualities of the functional idea, he or she transfers them to the main idea and understands it better.

EXAMPLE:

A good teacher is like a successful door-to-door salesperson. At first the customer is not particularly interested in what he or she has to sell; the customer may indeed be actively belligerent. But the salesperson gets a customer to listen. The salesperson gets on the customer’s good side by acting as though both the seller and the customer have the same interests. He or she gives the impression that this customer is the one customer the seller had most in mind for a particular product. The salesperson points out that the product is not hard to understand or to use. In fact, with just a little time and attention, the customer will find the product useful, reliable, and indispensable in many surprising situations. Now, if the customer has any questions, the salesperson will be glad to answer them. Before the customer knows it, he or she has bought the product, and now the buyer has something that will grow in its significance through use. In this way, too, a good teacher sells his educational product.

WRITING EXERCISE:

Develop a paragraph of your own in which you help your reader get hold of one idea (your main idea) by comparing it to another (the functional idea). This type of development is especially helpful when your main idea is somewhat abstract or difficult and you aid your reader by comparing it to something more common.