PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT EXERCISE: ILLUSTRATING THE IDEA

The word *illustration* means to shed light on something. Sometimes a writer wants to develop the topic sentence (in this case, usually a broad generalization) with a number of specific examples in order to “show” the reader his or her idea. In a paragraph developed through illustration, the writer uses good details to help the reader “see” the truth of a general statement.

EXAMPLE:

In southern California, the car makes the person. For example, one would not expect to find a successful business professional driving a run-down, thirty-year-old Pinto. On the other hand, the successful business professional who drives a thirty-year-old Mustang in top condition is sporting more personality than one who, in keeping with his or her status, drives a late-model Mercedes or BMW. Not too many years ago, the word “van” often referred to an aging 1960s Volkswagen bus, and the driver might well be someone whose very act of holding onto the vehicle suggested a tie to the idealism of the hippie generation. Now middle-class families tool around town in shiny vans and minivans of many varieties and makes, demonstrating their slice of the American pie. Sports cars remain popular in this youth culture, the red Mazda Miata suggesting freedom and energy as it zips by on the freeway. In fact, in southern California, when a person chooses a car, that person is selecting an image that will speak as loudly as the clothes he or she wears.

WRITING EXERCISE:

Now write a paragraph of your own that is developed through illustration. Put the topic sentence (the generalization) first. Then provide five or six good specific illustrations to help your reader “see” what you mean.