

## Paragraph 1

<sup>1</sup>Stories have the magic to focus our attention and maintain our interest. <sup>2</sup>The politician or preacher who says, "That reminds me of a story . . ." has an audience's attention immediately. <sup>3</sup>Consider the success of television's *60 Minutes*, the longest-running and most profitable prime-time show in the history of television. <sup>4</sup>The person behind its success, producer Don Hewitt, says, "The secret of our show is so simple I can't believe the formula hasn't been followed by others. <sup>5</sup>It's four words that every kid knows: 'Tell me a story.' <sup>6</sup>I look at things in screening rooms and I say, 'That's an interesting guy and those are some great scenes you've got, but what's the story?'" <sup>7</sup>Without the "story," Hewitt knows the audience is leaving.

1. What is the *topic* of the paragraph? In other words, what (in one or more words) is the paragraph about? \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. What point is the writer making about this topic? In other words, what is the *main idea* of the paragraph? In the space provided, write the number of the sentence containing the main idea. (Remember that the main idea will be supported by the other material in the paragraph.)

## Paragraph 2

<sup>1</sup>Extrasensory perception, or ESP, is an area that fascinates people. <sup>2</sup>However, ESP is not documented by any convincing evidence. <sup>3</sup>For instance, it would seem that ESP would be an excellent way of winning at games of chance, such as those played at gambling casinos. <sup>4</sup>But casino owners in Las Vegas and Atlantic City report no problem with "psychics" winning great sums of money. <sup>5</sup>Also, although great publicity is generated when a psychic seems to help police solve a crime, the value of such help has never been scientifically proven. <sup>6</sup>Tips from psychics are usually worthless, and almost all cases are solved through traditional police work. <sup>7</sup>And while audiences may be amazed at the feats of "mind readers," the fact is that mind readers use simple psychological tricks to exploit their audiences' willingness to believe.

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## Paragraph 3

<sup>1</sup>Though some people still stubbornly resist the winds of change, Americans are becoming increasingly supportive of the idea of gay marriage. <sup>2</sup>The numbers alone are astounding. <sup>3</sup>In 1996, only 27 percent of Americans thought that gay people should be allowed to marry. <sup>4</sup>Not even twenty years later, the majority of people in this country, 53 percent, feel that allowing gay people to marry is the right thing to do. <sup>5</sup>Why the change? <sup>6</sup>Some people say that they're better informed than they used to be. <sup>7</sup>Others just shrug and say it's not as big a deal as it used to be. <sup>8</sup>But the vast majority of people say it's because they know and care about someone who is gay. <sup>9</sup>Nearly 80 percent of Americans have a gay friend, family member, or coworker. <sup>10</sup>"Their love is no different from mine," said an 80-year-old woman who once opposed gay marriage. <sup>11</sup>"Their rights should be no different." <sup>12</sup>Perhaps most important, however, is the overwhelming support of young people. <sup>13</sup>Three out of four people aged 18–29 are pushing for equal rights for gay people. <sup>14</sup>That's a sure indicator that the winds of change are blowing ever more strongly.

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## Paragraph 4

<sup>1</sup>Some people persist in believing that they can drink and be alert drivers. <sup>2</sup>Yet alcohol is estimated to be a factor in at least half of all fatal highway accidents. <sup>3</sup>Another poor attitude about driving is the refusal to wear seat belts. <sup>4</sup>Statistics show that the chances of being seriously hurt or dying in a car accident are greater when a seat belt is not worn. <sup>5</sup>Also potentially deadly is the view that the best driving is fast driving. <sup>6</sup>Again, statistics contradict this attitude—fast driving is more likely to be deadly driving. <sup>7</sup>After speed limits are lowered, traffic fatalities fall significantly. <sup>8</sup>A final mistaken attitude is that speaking on a cell phone will not detract from a driver's attention and response time to unexpected traffic conditions. <sup>9</sup>Studies prove otherwise, with the result that many have called for a ban on cell phones while driving. <sup>10</sup>There is simply no question that poor attitudes about driving contribute to the high rate of traffic accidents and their brutal effects.

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## Paragraph 5

<sup>1</sup>In some ways, dark chocolate is a health food. <sup>2</sup>Rich in iron, magnesium, and fiber, it's also loaded with flavonoids, compounds known to reduce cell damage. <sup>3</sup>Medical journals report that regularly eating a moderate amount of dark chocolate (about 3 ounces a day) reduces blood pressure both in healthy people and in patients with high blood pressure. <sup>4</sup>Lower blood pressure means less risk of irregular heartbeat, heart attack, and heart failure. <sup>5</sup>Continuous moderate consumption of dark chocolate also lowers bad cholesterol (the type that clogs arteries) and raises good cholesterol (the type that counters clogging). <sup>6</sup>In addition, dark chocolate helps prevent blood clots and arterial plaque, and so protects against stroke. <sup>7</sup>Dark chocolate even boosts the body's ability to metabolize sugar, thereby reducing the risk of diabetes.

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1. <sup>1</sup>Nearly every day, we all use expressions that have unusual and not commonly-known origins. <sup>2</sup>For example, if you've ever said or heard that someone is the "spitting image" of someone else, here's some news: it has nothing to do with spit! <sup>3</sup>The original phrase, "spirit and image," was used by slaves hundreds of years ago to describe a child who was so similar to another family member that it was believed that the same spirit occupied both people. <sup>4</sup>Over the years, the words have run together to give us "spitting image." <sup>5</sup>And everyone knows that to "live high on the hog" implies living well, but where did such a phrase come from? <sup>6</sup>This expression originally referred to those who could afford the more expensive cuts of meat higher up on a hog, such as the shoulder roasts and the ribs, as opposed to the cheap "lower" parts, the pig's feet and the bacon from the belly. <sup>7</sup>Finally, when we say that someone "takes the cake," we don't really mean that that person is going to receive a cake. <sup>8</sup>However, originally, that's exactly what it meant! <sup>9</sup>In the 1800s, a dance that made fun of stuffy ballroom dancing became so popular that eventually contests were held to see who could look the most ridiculous. <sup>10</sup>Over time, this dance became known as the "Cakewalk" because winners were awarded cakes. <sup>11</sup>So those who really stood out in a comical and memorable way did, in fact, "take the cake."

2. <sup>1</sup>Recently while I was sitting in a small auditorium waiting for a play to begin, I saw three audience members chatting on cell phones. <sup>2</sup>In fact, people converse on their cell phones while they drive, shop, walk down the street, use public transportation, eat in restaurants, or go to the bathroom. <sup>3</sup>Let's face it: in the 21st century, cell phones are everywhere. <sup>4</sup>In addition to using cell phones to talk, people use them to e-mail, text-message, surf the Web, organize their day, take photos, listen to music, watch videos, play games, and, by means of the phone's light, find something in the dark, such as a keyhole. <sup>5</sup>More than 200 million Americans, including about half of those aged thirteen to sixteen, carry a cell phone. <sup>6</sup>In a 2005 survey of U.S. cell-phone users, 26 percent said they would rather leave home without their wallet than without their cell phone. <sup>7</sup>Almost three-fourths of U.S. households have at least one cell phone; many have three or more. <sup>8</sup>In the United States, cell phones now far outnumber wired phones. <sup>9</sup>Americans clearly love cell phones, right? <sup>10</sup>Wrong. <sup>11</sup>A survey asked U.S. adults which invention they most hate. <sup>12</sup>The most frequent reply? <sup>13</sup>The cell phone.



- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. <sup>1</sup>Caffeine is a natural ingredient in coffee, tea, colas, cocoa, and chocolate, and is added to some prescription and non-prescription drugs. <sup>2</sup>Despite being "natural," caffeine is also a powerful drug which greatly affects the body. <sup>3</sup>In healthy, rested people, a dose of 100 milligrams (about one cup of coffee) increases alertness, banishes drowsiness, quickens reaction time, enhances intellectual and muscular effort, and increases heart and respiratory rates. <sup>4</sup>Drinking one to two cups of coffee an hour before exercise encourages the body to preserve glycogen and burn fat—something that results in greater endurance. <sup>5</sup>In addition, caffeine masks fatigue. <sup>6</sup>In doses above 300 milligrams, caffeine can produce sleeplessness, nervousness, irritability, headaches, heart palpitations, and muscle twitches. <sup>7</sup>Caffeine is also habit-forming, and those who try to suddenly stop after heavy use may experience such withdrawal symptoms as headaches, lethargy, irritability, and difficulty in concentrating.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. <sup>1</sup>Queen Isabella of Spain, who died in 1504, boasted that she'd had only two baths in her life—at birth and before her marriage. <sup>2</sup>In colonial America, leaders frowned on bathing, because it involved nudity, which, they feared, could lead to loose morals. <sup>3</sup>Indeed, laws in Virginia and Pennsylvania either limited or outright banned bathing—and for a time in Philadelphia, anyone who bathed more than once a month faced jail. <sup>4</sup>Furthermore, some of the early Christian churches discouraged sudsing up because of its association with the immorality common in the Roman baths. <sup>5</sup>Clearly, the notion that cleanliness is next to godliness has not always been a popular one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. <sup>1</sup>Research has demonstrated our self-centered tendency to rate ourselves more favorably than others rate us. <sup>2</sup>In one study, members of a random sample of men were asked to rank themselves on their ability to get along with others. <sup>3</sup>Defying mathematical laws, all subjects—every last one—put themselves in the top half of the population. <sup>4</sup>Sixty percent rated themselves in the top 10 percent of the population, and an amazing 25 percent rated themselves in the top 1 percent. <sup>5</sup>In the same study, 70 percent of the men ranked their leadership in the top quarter of the population, whereas only 2 percent ranked their leadership as below average. <sup>6</sup>Sixty percent said they were in the top quarter in athletic abilities, whereas only 6 percent said they were below average.