

Name: _____ Date: _____

Paragraph Structure Practice

Your English class has just finished more than half of the texts in Unit 1, in which you and your classmates have begun exploring the concept of personal and social identity while reading a collection of poems, short stories, and nonfiction. You will now write an informative paragraph in which you reflect on how one text from the unit thus far is a mirror, reflecting back something about your own personal identity, or a window offering insight into an unfamiliar experience that, in turn, reveals something about your identity, leading you to a deeper understanding of the first essential question of the unit, "Who are you?"

A: Identify each section of T-E-E-L in a student sample and highlight the sentence(s) with the corresponding color:

- **T**opic Sentence: highlight in green
- **E**vidence: highlight in yellow
- **E**xplanation: highlight in orange
- **L**ast Sentence: highlight in blue

A Window into My German Identity

"(citizen) (illegal)" provides a window into the lives of people who feel torn between their families' "illegal" cultural identity and their society's "citizen" cultural identity, a foreign experience for me, whose family has lost its traditional culture. Throughout the poem, the speaker describes the tension between his Mexican identity and American identity, such as in the third stanza in which he questions if someone is a citizen or illegal "If they have a baby and the baby looks white enough to pass (citizen). / If the baby grows up singing Selena songs to his reflection (illegal)" (Olivarez, lines 15–16). On one hand, the speaker wonders if he is more American than Mexican, since he can pass as white, but on the other hand, he wonders if he is more Mexican than American because he sings songs from the Mexican-American singer Selena. This speaker's experience is a window for me because it is quite different from my own, as my family immigrated from Germany more than 100 years ago. Throughout my childhood, I remember my mother often singing a few lines of rhyming German to me as I was falling asleep. Just recently, I finally asked my mother the name of the song and its meaning. However, besides the three lines passed down through the generations, my mother knew neither the name nor the meaning of the silly rhyme. My family felt immense pressure to become "American," which at the time meant speaking and singing in English. Consequently, I've realized that my family has lost so much of our traditional culture, such as music and language. All in all, on one hand, I feel dismayed by how much my family has lost in regards to culture, but at the same time, I've never questioned if I belong in the United States, a tension the speaker of Olivarez's poem grapples with.

