PARAGRAPH COHERENCE: EXERCISE #1

ORDER THE FOLLOWING GROUPS OF SENTENCES SO THAT THEY FORM COHERENT PARAGRAPHS.

1. The boffo is the laugh that kills.
2. Then, after the shortest possible time out for recuperation, he would feel the first tickling of the comedian’s whip once more and start up a new ladder.
3. In the language of screen comedians four of the main grades of laugh are the titter, the yowl, the belly-laugh, and the boffo.
4. An ideally good gag, perfectly constructed and played, would bring the victim up this ladder of laughs by cruelly controlled degrees to the top rung, and would then proceed to wobble, shake, wave, and brandish the ladder until he groaned for mercy.
5. The yowl is a runaway titter.
6. Anyone who has ever had the pleasure knows all about a belly-laugh.

sentences from James Agee, “Comedy’s Greatest Era”

1. The old structure of the upper class, the middle class, and lower class is on the wane.
2. My wife’s grandmother, the wife of a distinguished lawyer, once declined to dine with the Cartiers of jewelry fame because they were, as she put it, “in trade.”
3. We are replacing it with another kind.
4. It’s high thinking.
5. It isn’t wealth or family that makes prestige these days.
6. Life for grandmother was relatively simple where social distinctions were concerned, but while there are still a few people who think and act much as she did, the passage of time has eliminated a great deal of that particular kind of snobbishness from American society.

sentences from Russell Lynes, “High, Lowbrow, Middlebrow”

1. The children probably suffered, though they have since been kind enough to deny it, and in this way I read Uncle Tom’s Cabin and A Tale of Two Cities over and over again; in this way, in fact, I read just about everything I could bet my hands on—except the Bible, probably because it was the only book I was encouraged to read.
2. I was born in Harlem thirty-one years ago.
3. As they were born, I took them over with one hand and held a book with the other.
4. The story of my childhood is the usual bleak fantasy, and we caa dismiss it with the restrained observation that I certainly would not consider living it again.
5. I began plotting novels at about the time I learned to read.
6. In those days my mother was given to the exasperating and mysterious habit of having babies.

sentences from James Baldwin, Notes on the Native American
Quiz on Paragraphing

I. Explain the function of each of the following, transitional words and phrases. (To save time, group phrases with the same function together, so that you need to explain the function only once.)

Accordingly However Consequently
But For instance furthermore
In addition Instead of
Therefore Instead
Moreover On the other hand
Instead

II. Revise the following paragraphs. Rephrase and provide transitions as needed.

A Senate committee yesterday recommended a $1.9 billion public works bill. The "action was almost without precedent. This was the statement of Senator Thomas Smith. It suggests that further increases will be requested in the near future, he said.

Transportation by train is becoming a thing of the past. Travelers now take to the highway or to the air. Highway travel gives a freedom not found in either train or airplane travel. Air Travel is no longer more expensive than comfortable travel by train. It is much quicker than train travel. Fewer and fewer people travel by train today.

III. (1) Listening to music is a very difficult act to describe. (2) Does one leave out the time--sometimes the greater part of the concert--when one is actually not listening? (3) I mean the times when the pleasant sounds carry one away in thought to something or some place far removed from the concert hall. (4) I mean the times when one is
wool-gathering. (5) One can't do that in 'an art' gallery, where the eye forces close attention on the pictures; yet the concert hall seems to encourage it. (6) Of course, most modern art isn't worth looking at anyway, and only art critics trying to make a name for themselves pay much attention to it. (7) Professional music critics actually listen as consistently and as steadily as if they were reading an absorbing book. (8) This is an amazing feat for one like me to contemplate, for I fly off every other minute. (9) Only the sound of the cymbal is sure to make me crash-land in the meadow of music. (10) I might expect thoughtless people to be inattentive at a concert. (11) My sister never pays attention to the music, but she is always scatterbrained, so that's not surprising. (12) I, who pride myself on my interests and my "culture," am always mortified when that cymbal signals the end of another flight.

A. Which is the topic sentence?

B. Which sentences destroy the unity of the paragraph?

C. Cross out the sentences which do not develop the topic sentence.

Provide transitions between the remaining sentences, rephrasing if necessary, to create a unified, well-written paragraph.
The Headless Paragraph, or What happens when you don't cue your reader

Read the following details from a student paragraph.

Students aren't practicing. 
College atmosphere produces tension. 
Students are afraid of getting a "D."
Writing is time consuming. 
Writing is usually done under time pressure. 
Writing courses are not required, so students must take a heavy course load to learn how.

Now, in a sentence or two, write down what you think the main point of the student's paragraph was:

(Accepted from Flower, p. 145).
Possible solutions to the Headless paragraph:

- Students have difficulty in writing due to the pressures imposed on them by grades, time, and the tension of college life. (3)

- Students in college are under a lot of pressure. (3)

- Students don't have enough time.

- Students aim to please teachers.

- There is too much competition in college.

- Writing should not be required.

- Writing should be required in college.

- Students are more interested in grades than in learning. Their selfishness produces artificial pressures.

How do these differ from the student's intention???

Students often have trouble writing in college because of a combination of bad habits and high pressure. To start with, students don't practice. This is partly because of time limitations: learning how to write is time consuming, and since writing courses are not required, students have to take a heavy load in order to learn how. Some students do have the time to practice, but fail to do so because writing in the high-pressure atmosphere of college produces anxiety and tension. Many students are so afraid of getting a "D" that they avoid writing altogether - until the day before the paper is due. Furthermore, college papers are usually done under time pressure, which simply increases the tension of writing.
Jargon, Euphemisms and Cliches: An Exercise

Decide which pairs of sentences state the same ideas. Determine which one uses language more effectively by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses in diction.

1. He was asked to resign because he demonstrated poor work habits.

2. Objective considerations of contemporary phenomena compel the conclusion that success or failure in competitive activities exhibits no tendency to be commensurate with innate capacity, but that a considerable element of the unpredictable must invariably be taken into account.

3. After flunking Biology 101 with flying colors I was ready to blow my brains out.

4. He was fired because he refused to do the work.

5. Kennedy was our twentieth-century Lincoln.

6. This is a blowfish of a novel. It tries to swim the depths, only to puff itself up with false vanity and empty rhetoric, rising pathetically to the shallows to show itself off as the bloated creature it is.

7. I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, not yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

8. I refused to reveal the secret.

9. In their simple-mindedness children are free of racial and religious prejudice.

10. I tore up the report card. My parents were not going to know that I, a pre-med student, had failed Biology 101.

11. Because of their innocence children are free of racial and religious prejudice.

12. It was a deep dark secret that I would not for the life of me have revealed to a soul; certainly not to any Tom, Dick, or Harry that happened by, like a ship passing in the night.

13. One of the most memorable American presidents in the twentieth century was Kennedy.

14. This novel tries to scale the heights only to run out of gas before it reaches the timberline. It then continues its flight on the hot air of false vanity and empty rhetoric.
**Transitional Expressions**

1. *add*  
   furthermore  
   or  
   *also*  
   *moreover*  
   *indeed*  
   *in fact*  
   *first, second . . .*  
   You are adding something.

2. *similarly*  
   *likewise*  
   *for instance*  
   *for example*  
   *first, second . . .*  
   You are adding a point or expanding one with an illustration.

3. *therefore*  
   *thus*  
   *finally*  
   *on the whole*  
   *all in all*  
   *in other words*  
   *in short*  
   You are showing consequences, summarizing points, or restating a point for emphasis.

4. *frequently*  
   *in general*  
   *especially*  
   *usually*  
   *specifically*  
   *occasionally*  
   *in particular*  
   You are adding a qualifying point or illustration.

5. *of course*  
   *no doubt*  
   *doubtless*  
   *to be sure*  
   *granted (that)*  
   *certainly*  
   You are conceding a point to the opposition or recognizing a side point.

6. *but*  
   *however*  
   *not at all*  
   *surely*  
   *on the contrary*  
   You are reversing the line of thought, usually back to your own side.

7. *still*  
   *nevertheless*  
   *notwithstanding*  
   You are returning the thought to your own side after a concession.

8. *a 1 though*  
   *whereas*  
   *though*  
   *even though*  
   *on the contrary*  
   You are attacking a concession to one of your points. Do not use *whereas*.

9. *because*  
   *for*  
   *since*  
   You are connecting a reason to an assertion.

10. *if*  
    *unless*  
    *provided*  
    *in case*  
    *lest*  
    *least*  
    *when*  
    You are qualifying or restricting a general idea.

11. *as if*  
    *as though*  
    *even if*  
    *even if*  
    You are glancing at a hypothetical condition that strengthens your point.

12. *on the one hand*  
    *on the other hand*  
    The first sets up a point later to be contrasted with another point. The second introduces the contrasting point.
Integrating Quotes: An Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS: Examine the following passages, Are the quotes effectively integrated into the paper? Why or why not? Rewrite the passages you find awkward.

EXAMPLE 1:
The Pathet Laos camp was one of the camps where prisoners were mistreated. This was the case with Lt. Dieter Dengler. He was asked to sign some papers that said the United States was bombing innocent women and children. "When I said no they pummeled my face with their fists."2

EXAMPLE 2:
One of the differences was the form of interrogation used at a camp in Hanoi compared to one in Pathet Laos. This is one man's account of what happened while being interrogated in Hanoi. "He smiled very pleasant. When I did not answer, he would smile, inhale on his cigarette and go to another question. He never got really harsh."3

EXAMPLE 3:
Shakespeare's Hamlet is a play that clearly demonstrates what Freud called the Oedipus Complex. Hamlet's inaction cannot be explained in any other way, as Professor Hamilton clearly describes in Hamlet's Inaction:

Of course, Hamlet cannot kill Claudius. How could he kill a man for sleeping with his brother's wife when he wanted to sleep with the same woman--his mother? This is Hamlet's problem; he has shown that he is perfectly capable of murder by slaying Polonius. He is not in a moral suspension in the play--he is confronting incest consciously for the first time in his fictive life. This can also be said of other Shakespearean murderers; Macbeth, for example, kills more than the "Father of Scotland" when he kills Duncan; this is the reason Shakespeare carefully builds the "father-Son" image in the play.15

EXAMPLE 4:
Preceding Part One, interrupting part Two, and ending the book are three sections called "On the Porch," which together form a continuous lyric meditation and a framework for the whole, a center of consciousness "in relation to which all other parts...are intended as flashbacks, foretastes illuminations and predictions."28

EXAMPLES:
Here is an excerpt from my brother's letter: 'Today in class Mr. Blair quoted Wordsworth's line 'A three-months darling of a pigmy size,' and said it appeared in one edition as 'A three-months darling of a pig my size.'"