

Developing Beyond Plot Summary: Body Paragraphs

Here are two sample body paragraphs from papers that examine Mulan through a gender lens. Please read through both and then answer the questions on this handout in groups of three. Assume that both body paragraphs are intended to support the central claim below.

Central Claim: The sexist views of her culture motivate Mulan to break the mold and stand up for men and women to have equal opportunities and value.

A. The film begins with Mulan getting ready to meet her matchmaker. Mulan tries to prepare herself and make herself beautiful and charming, but she doesn't do a good job. Her father tries to comfort her after she fails, but then the army comes and forces Mulan's father to go to war. Mulan dresses up like a man and goes to the army in his place because he has a disability from another war. Mulan goes to war and tries to act like a man, but she ends up starting a fight. She is also not very good at her training routine and is eventually told to go home, but she will not give up. Mulan eventually rescues the Emperor, and he gives her a crest. She returns home, and her father says he is proud of her.

B. In the first twenty minutes of this movie we see Mulan is trying to become Empress of China. In order to do this, she must have poise and grace as a woman should, according to this Chinese culture. The older women paint her face with make up and tie ribbon around her waist to make it look smaller. Mulan is not the typical female, meaning she doesn't like to wear make up, or have poise, nor is she graceful. When she arrives at her evaluation, she is scorned for being clumsy and speaking when she is not spoke to. She has to read notes that she wrote on her forearm to remember the things she must do in order for her to be a success. Unfortunately, she fails miserably and is returned to her family while being warned of never earning her family's approval, honor, and pride.

Questions: Please answer these questions in groups. Feel free to use the back of this handout if you need more space for your responses.

1. Describe the similarities and differences between these two body paragraphs.
2. Which paragraph provides more specific details from the movie? List two details that this paragraph provides.
3. Which paragraph provides more explanation of how characters and events relate to the central claim? Circle an example of this in the paragraph you chose.
4. Which paragraph provides more information about the movie?
5. Which paragraph does a better job of supporting the central claim? Why do you think this? Underline any and all parts of this paragraph that you think help to support the central claim.

6. What could the writer add to/change in the paragraph you chose in question #5 that would make the body paragraph even more supportive of the writer's argument?