Writing a literary paragraph: step-by-step guide.

**Assignment: Write a literary paragraph for the characters George and Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*.**

Sample topic: Compare and contrast the characters of Scout and Jem from Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* in a literary paragraph of 300-400 words.

1. Come up with a thesis statement that relates to the topic.

In Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the characters of Scout and Jem can be viewed as character foils, since, even though they are siblings who enjoy many of the same games, they are opposite to one another in many ways.

1. State the first **point** that supports the thesis:

The first difference between them is an obvious but important one: Scout is a girl and Jem is a boy.

1. Describe the **evidence** from the text that supports this point:

In the time period in which the story is set, the gender difference leads to differing expectations for each child: no one questions Jem playing active games outdoors, whereas Scout is asked by her Aunt Alexandria to come and “speak to these ladies” and made to feel shame if she is “mud-covered”, as she usually is (p. 149).

1. **Explain** the evidence you have included and how it illustrates your point.

Scout clearly doesn’t fit into the ideas her Aunt has about being a lady. Jem, on the other hand, is left alone to play outdoors because he is a boy.

1. Include a **transition** to your next point.

Also unladylike, and also contrasting to Jem…

1. Repeat transitions and **point-evidence-explanation** two more times to thoroughly explain your thesis. (**POINTS are in bold;** *EXPLANATIONS are in italics)*

…also contrasting to Jem is Scout’s impulsivity. **Where Scout is impulsive, Jem is thoughtful.** For example, when Scout rubs Walter Cunningham’s nose in the dirt for getting her in trouble at school, Jem stops her. Where Scout is quick to dismiss Walter, Jem reflects on who Walter is and invites him to their house for lunch when he realizes that Walter is the son of their father’s friend. *Jem’s thoughtfulness counters Scout’s impulsivity, and leads to a change in heart about Walter by Scout as well.* **This thoughtfulness of Jem’s also leads him to be a leader in their games, and in life, where Scout generally follows Jem even if she disagrees with him.** An example of this can be seen when Jem and Scout are walking home together in the dark after their school performance and realize they are being followed. Though both children hear noises, it is Jem who understands that this could be a real threat to them, and Jem who tells Scout to “Run Scout, run!” (p. 300). *He takes a leadership role in trying to protect his sister at his own expense.*

1. Write a conclusion that summarizes your main point and, if possible, explains the significance of the discussion.

Clearly, though Jem and Scout are siblings, they have opposing qualities that make them an interesting pair. Their opposite natures provide the reader with examples of two characters who, through their differences, show that people who are opposite from one another may in fact bring out one another’s positive qualities.

**All in all, when you are done, the paragraph should look something like this:**

In Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the characters of Scout and Jem can be viewed as character foils, since, even though they are siblings who enjoy many of the same games, they are opposite to one another in many ways. The first difference between them is an obvious but important one: Scout is a girl and Jem is a boy. In the time period in which the story is set, the gender difference leads to differing expectations for each child: no one questions Jem playing active games outdoors, whereas Scout is asked by her Aunt Alexandria to come and “speak to these ladies” and made to feel shame if she is “mud-covered”, as she usually is (p. 149). Scout clearly doesn’t fit into the ideas her Aunt has about being a lady. Jem, on the other hand, is left alone to play outdoors because he is a boy. Also unladylike, and also contrasting to Jem, is Scout’s impulsivity: where Scout is impulsive, Jem is thoughtful. For example, when Scout rubs Walter Cunningham’s nose in the dirt for getting her in trouble at school, Jem stops her. Where Scout is quick to dismiss Walter, Jem reflects on who Walter is and invites him to their house for lunch when he realizes that Walter is the son of their father’s friend. Jem’s thoughtfulness counters Scout’s impulsivity and leads to a change in heart about Walter by Scout as well. This thoughtfulness of Jem’s also leads him to be a leader in their games, and in life, where Scout generally follows Jem even if she disagrees with him. An example of this can be seen when Jem and Scout are walking home together in the dark after their school performance and realize they are being followed. Though both children hear noises, it is Jem who understands that this could be a real threat to them, and Jem who tells Scout to “Run Scout, run!” (p. 300). He takes a leadership role in trying to protect his sister at his own expense. Clearly, though Jem and Scout are siblings, they have opposing qualities that make them an interesting pair. Their opposite natures provide the reader with examples of two characters who, through their differences, show that people who are opposite from one another may in fact bring out one another’s positive qualities.

(389 words)