

Do You Hear What I Hear?

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Grade Level: 6-8; can be adapted for high-school review purposes

Time Allotment: 3 – 45 minutes class periods

Overview:

This lesson is designed to serve as a remediation for instruction already received on punctuation. Students will be provided with examples of poorly punctuated paragraphs. Discussion will also lead students to explore misinterpretations as a result of improper punctuation.

Subject Matter: Language Arts and Business Education

Learning Objectives:

The students will be able to:

- describe the types and uses of punctuation for writing
- correctly punctuate a variety of sentence types
- express feeling and emotion through use of proper punctuation

Standards:

This lesson addresses the following Virginia SOL's which can be found at:
<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>

SOL 4.8, SOL 5.9, SOL 6.7, SOL 7.9, SOL 8.8

Media Components:

Video:

Rules of Punctuation

This video can be obtained through United Streaming at
www.unitedstreaming.com

Websites:

<http://eatsshootsandleaves.com/ESLquiz.html>

<http://www.dwu.edu/careers/cover.htm>

<http://www.distinctiveweb.com/writing2.htm>

<http://jobguide.thegoodguides.com.au/book.cfm?contentfile=3-4-advertisement.htm>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/resumes/a/resumproof.htm>

<http://tameri.com/edit/punctuation.html>

<http://www.monster.com>

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverlettersamples/a/covertemplate.htm>

Materials:

Introductory Activity:

- [Poorly punctuated paragraph](#) (see copy)
- Display device or paper copies to distribute the paragraph

Learning Activity:

- Video, “Rules of Punctuation” from United Streaming
- Computer with projection and audio capabilities

Culminating Activity:

- One computer per student or classroom computer with projector
- Microsoft Power Point
- *Poisonous Punctuation* WebQuest
- Web access to websites listed above
- [Poisonous Punctuation worksheet](#)

Prep for Teachers:

Introductory Activity:

- Prepare the [paragraph](#) to be used for the activity. Make copies for each student, prepare a transparency to use on an overhead projector or have the paragraph typed and projected on a large screen.
(* Please note: the paragraph provided may be substituted with an appropriate replacement. *)
- Connect any media equipment needed, such as an overhead or computer with projector, depending on availability.

Learning Activity:

- Download the United Streaming video listed above.
- Locate all pause, stop and fast forward points prior to use with students.
- Connect any media equipment needed, such as a computer with projector, depending on availability.

Culminating Activity:

- Bookmark websites listed above or direct students to your portaportal.com account where websites are available.
- Check computers for correct programs and PowerPoint version.
- Copy WebQuest file to each student computer.
- Prepare copies of the [Poisonous Punctuation](#) worksheet.
- Connect any media equipment needed, such as a computer with projector, depending on availability.

Introductory Activity:

Step 1: **Say** “How many of you have written an e-mail, received an e-mail or been involved in an instant messenger conversation which resulted in confusion, anger, fights or problems with friends because you read the message differently than it was intended?” Briefly discuss situations with students.

Step 2: **Say** “Quite often, conversation pieces, such as e-mail or instant messages, are written with little or no attention to punctuation. This becomes a problem because many sentences may be misinterpreted based on the type or lack of proper punctuation. The results become miscommunication among the two parties and potentially create serious problems with friends and relationships. Let us begin today by taking a look at a letter written to a friend. We will first discuss the meaning you derive and then look at some possible alternate interpretations. Finally, we will change the punctuation and compare how meanings may change based on the placement of punctuation.”

Step 3: Provide each student with a copy of the incorrectly punctuated paragraph (see paragraph at end of lesson). **Say** “I would like for you to read the paragraph on the paper you have just been given. At the bottom of the page, in the blank space, jot down some notes regarding your interpretation of the paragraph. Think about things such as what the author is trying to communicate, the main subject of the paragraph, who the audience might be, etc. Record any thoughts you have about what you have read.” Give students several minutes to read the paragraph and provide comments.

Step 4: Discuss reactions to the paragraph and compare interpretations. You may have a student at the board recording responses to more easily make comparisons.

Step 5: **Say** “Now, let’s take a look at the very same paragraph but with some alternative placement of punctuation marks. I will now provide you with a revised version of the paragraph with different placement of punctuation to deliver a different message.” Distribute or project the corrected paragraph and discuss differences and interpretations with students.

Learning Activity:

Step 1: **Say** “Considering the amount of time most of you spend writing e-mails and having conversations on Instant Messenger, we are going to spend some time today reviewing the most common types of punctuation and the correct use of each in your writing. I am going to show you a short video which highlights the major uses of punctuation and you’ll be given several examples. The video itself is about 15 minutes long but I will be pausing, fast forwarding and stopping to allow for some conversation. While we are watching the video, I will be asking you to write down a few things, so be prepared with a piece of paper and a writing utensil.”

Step 2: **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “In this first clip, you will see only an introduction to the program which highlights nine forms of punctuation. I want you to pay attention to this; when I pause the clip, I want each of you to be able to tell me

at least three types of punctuation contained in the video.” **Begin** the video at 0:40 where you see the end of the opening credits. The opening scene will show a juggler. **Play** until the video counter reaches 1:14 and **pause** where you see the title of the video, “Rules of Punctuation” and two girls with several sheep. **Say** “What are the types of punctuation?” Record each answer on a display device such as a chalkboard, whiteboard, computer screen, etc. (Answers should include: period, exclamation mark, question mark, comma, apostrophe, quotation marks, colon and semicolon.) Discuss any questions which may accompany the responses.

Step 3: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss some differences between spoken language and written language.” **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “I want you to pay attention to the items he mentions regarding how we get our message across by speaking versus writing. What do we do when we speak or write that helps us communicate? Pay attention to the comparison and be able to provide at least one response.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 1:50 and **pause**, immediately after you see a boy with glasses in front of a computer screen. The narrator will say, “Good punctuation helps you get your message across to the reader.” **Say** “What is at least one difference between written communication and spoken communication?” Allow students time to respond. (Answers may include: speech uses pauses and writing uses punctuation marks; speech allows us to change our tone of voice or stop speaking, punctuation places emphasis on or clarifies what we mean, punctuation makes reading easier.)

Step 4: **Fast forward** the clip to 2:19, where you see a girl sitting in front of a computer with a brown background and foreign writing. This will begin the section on period. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “In this next clip you will see a discussion on the period. The narrator will name several ways to use a period mark. After the clip, I want each of you to be able to tell me at least one use for a period mark.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 3:34 and **pause** after the narrator discussion on the outline. **Say** “On your paper, write down at least one use for a period mark. In addition, provide at least one example of using a period correctly.” Discuss these answers as a class. (Possible answers include: stop signal at the end of a complete thought, after an initial, to end abbreviations, as a decimal point, to separate dollars and cents, in an outline) Ask students if there are other uses for a period mark and discuss answers, if any.

Step 5: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the exclamation mark.” **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “Pay attention to some specific directions he provides for using exclamation points. There are some common errors we make when writing for fun that we should avoid with the exclamation point. Listen carefully to the narrator’s explanation and be able to provide at least one common error.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 4:26 and **pause** after the narrator discusses using exclamation points too frequently. **Say** “What are some uses for exclamation points?” (Answers may include: to show strong emotion or reactions or with an interjection.) **Say** “What are some common errors with exclamation points?” (Answers may include: using more than one at a time or using them frequently.) **Say** “On your paper, write one sentence that

includes the correct use of an exclamation point.” Ask students for questions or comments about the exclamation point. You may choose to discuss some additional proper uses.

Step 6: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the question mark.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 4:37 (this will avoid the same introduction shown before each clip). **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “Pay attention to how a question mark is used. He will explain a few ways and they may not be as obvious as we think. Be able to provide at least one use for a question mark.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 5:41 and **pause** after the narrator asks the question about visiting Washington, D.C. **Say** “What are the uses for question marks discussed by the narrator?” (Answers may include: when the writer is looking for information, at the end of a direct question, following incomplete questions or statements meant to be questions). **Say** “The narrator also discussed the use of a question mark with an abbreviation. What happens when you end a question with an abbreviation? What other symbol do you use and where does it go?” (Answer: a period is used for the abbreviation and then a question mark.) Ask students for questions or comments about the question mark. You may choose to discuss some additional proper uses.

Step 7: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the comma.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 5:53. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “The narrator will describe the major purpose for using a comma and show several examples. Following the clip, I want you to provide at least one of your *own* examples for using a comma by modeling the examples in the clip. Write your example on your paper.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 7:51 and **pause** after the narrator reads the sentence about winning the race. **Say** “What is the major purpose of a comma?” (Answer: to show a pause. Other answers may include: in dates, listing, using several adjectives, in quotations, etc.) **Say**, “Now, I want you to provide me with at least one example of using a comma correctly.” You may choose several students to do this simultaneously at the board or call on several students to describe their example.

Step 8: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the apostrophe.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 8:03. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying, “The narrator will discuss several placements for an apostrophe. Following the clip, be able to describe where we should place an apostrophe if we are talking about someone possessing something.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 9:11 and **pause** when the narrator says, “Brian received three 6’s and three 7’s.” **Say** “How are apostrophes used?” (Answers may include: to show possession, to write contractions, to make letters or numbers plural.) **Say**, “Where should we place the apostrophe if we are showing possession? Think about this and provide two examples on your paper.” Discuss examples as a class. (Answers may include: between the end of the item and the “S” which make it plural, after the “S” if the “S” is part of the item possessing something.) Rewind the video as needed.

Step 9: **Say** “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the quotation marks. We know quotation marks are most commonly used to show exactly what a person said or to write

dialogue.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 9:23. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “There are other uses for quotation marks. Pay attention to the narrator’s descriptions of using quotation marks. Be able to discuss at least one other use for quotation marks. Write an example on your paper and be prepared to share.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 10:38 and **pause** after the narrator reads the sentence about *Moby Dick*. **Say**, “What kind of quote requires quotation marks?” (Answers may include: a direct quote, a person’s exact words). **Say**, “What are some other uses for quotation marks?” (Answers may include: to write a short title of a book, song, movie, etc., using words in a special way or to show emphasis). **Say**, “We sometimes use single quotation marks. When did the narrator say to use quotation marks this way?” (Answers may include: to quote something within a quote). Rewind the video as needed.

Step 10: **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “In this next clip, the narrator will discuss the use of a colon. We are all aware of using a colon for telling time, but when should we use one in written language? Pay attention to the narrator’s description of using a colon and be able to discuss uses other than for time.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 10:50 and **play** until the video counter reaches 11:17 and **pause** after the narrator reads the sentence about buying vegetables. **Say**, “When should we use a colon, other than to show time?” (Answers may include: to introduce a series following a complete sentence). Ask students for questions or comments about the colon. You may choose to discuss some additional proper uses.

Step 11: **Say** “A semicolon may look like a colon but is used for a different purpose. Think of the semicolon as a combination of a comma and a colon; it almost combines the purpose of the two punctuation marks.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 11:30. **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “The narrator will now describe how to use a semicolon properly. After the clip we will discuss some examples and be able to provide an example of your own. Write this example on your paper.” **Play** until the video counter reaches 12:09 and **pause** after the narrator lists the dates of birth. **Say**, “What is the major purpose of a semicolon?” (Answers may include: to join two independent clauses, to separate items already containing a comma). Ask students to provide an example and demonstrate using a semicolon.

Step 12: **Say** “The final clip will describe correct use of punctuation marks. You will see several uses which may not be as obvious as others. Some of the placements the narrator discusses are rarely of use to us.” **Provide a focus for media interaction** by saying “Even though you may rarely use some of these placements, pay close attention to using parentheses and be able to provide at least one example.” **Fast forward** the clip until the video counter reaches 12:21 and **play** until the video counter reaches 13:22. **Pause** after you see the windsurfer. **Say** “What situations will call for us to use parentheses?” (Answers may include: to enclose words that clarify, to add an interruption to a sentence, to enclose numbers of items). **Say** “When does a period go inside parentheses?” (Answers should include: when an entire sentence is enclosed by the parentheses). Rewind the video as needed.

Step 13: Show the final portion of the video clip and discuss any additional reactions or questions with the students. The student papers may be collected and graded for accuracy or participation.

Culminating Activity:

Step 1: In the computer lab or through classroom computer projected on the screen, visit the website: <http://eatsshootsandleaves.com/ESLquiz.html>

On the title screen, press “Play” to begin playing the game. Students will be led through several activities requiring the proper placement of apostrophes and commas. If the students are on individual computers, allow them to work through the quiz on their own to achieve an individual score. After each student completes the quiz, revisit the questions as a class and discuss the answers to each question.

Step 2: Students will now be engaging in a WebQuest to find their perfect job. The issue however, is to avoid rejection simply based on improper punctuation found throughout their cover letter. Provide each student with the WebQuest PowerPoint and explain the purpose and task. Each student will work individually and produce the final document for assessment.

Cross-Curricular Activities:

- Career and Tech. Ed: complete business letters, cover letters, job applications
- Mathematics: rewrite word problems for alternative meaning and outcome

Community Connections:

- Invite a newspaper editor or journalist to discuss the importance of proper punctuation and how learning punctuation plays a role in their profession.
- Invite a member of the personnel board from a local company or school division to discuss interview issues and problems based on punctuation.
- Invite older students (high school or college) to discuss the problems they’ve encountered as a result of using improper punctuation.

Sample Paragraph from Introductory Activity

Paragraph 1:

Dear Jack,

I want a guy who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other guys. I yearn for you; I have no feelings whatsoever when we are apart. I can be forever happy – will you let me be yours?

Jill

Paragraph 2:

Dear Jack,

I want a guy who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior! You have ruined me. For other guys, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we are apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?

Yours, Jill

Poisonous Punctuation

Task 1: Locate a job

1. What is the job you located?

2. What are the job requirements? (ex. schooling level, special skills, etc.)

3. What should you include in your application?

4. Where do you mail your application?

5. List at least three talents you will highlight in your cover letter:

Task 2: Explore cover letters

6. List the six pieces to include in a cover letter

Task 3: Cover letter consequences

Website 1: Locate the area in the site titled “Outline for Letter of Application”. Below the template provided, read the paragraph about cover letters and resumes.

7. What is the purpose of a good cover letter or resume?

8. What will happen if your cover letter has poor grammar or punctuation?

9. If your cover letter has punctuation mistakes, what excuse can you provide?

Website 2: Scroll down on the site where you see “Writing the job application”. Scan through the discussion on cover letters and read about what should be included in your cover letter.

10. If the employer is in a hurry, what will they look for in 30 seconds: (list 5 items)

11. What will happen to your cover letter during those 30 seconds if you have poor punctuation?

Website 3: Read the first few paragraphs.

12. What should a cover letter highlight?

13. What does a poorly written letter communicate about you?

Website 4: Locate the “Punctuation Mistakes” section of the site.

14. List the 4 items to check for when proofreading your cover letter.

Task 5: Get Hired!

15. Which classmate did you review for employment?

16. What are three of their talents?

17. What is one thing that impressed you about them?

18. Was all of their punctuation used correctly?

19. Would you hire this candidate? (Why or why not?)

20. Did you get hired? (YES or NO)