



Polly's
PUNCTUATION
Primer

By Susan Ioannou

**WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
BY STEFAN IOANNOU**

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Polly's Punctuation Primer

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**“Punctuation marks help
a story make sense.”**

INTRODUCTION

Polly Discovers The Bookworm

“Who messed up my story?” Polly cried. She bounced upright on her bed and stared at the opened notebook. “The whole page is sprinkled with squiggles and dots!”

“I did,” puffed a bright green bookworm, wriggling from behind the next page. “You ought to thank me. What a job, adding so much punctuation!”

“Adding what?” Polly asked.

“Punctuation,” repeated the bookworm, straightening his large, round glasses with his tail. “That’s the name of those squiggles and dots.”

“But what are they for?” asked Polly, bending closer

to trace their odd shapes with her finger.

The bookworm's eyes sparkled. "Punctuation marks help a story make sense. Look," he curled across the words, "this dot shows where one sentence ends and another begins. The squiggle here divides a question from an answer. And this mark shows that the thoughts are excited, not calm."

Polly blinked at the page. "Punctuation does all that? I never knew."

"Well, why not learn now?"

Polly shook her head. "School is closed."

"Not my school." The bookworm winked. "Use your imagination. We'll slip between the lines of your story, right into the sentence forest."

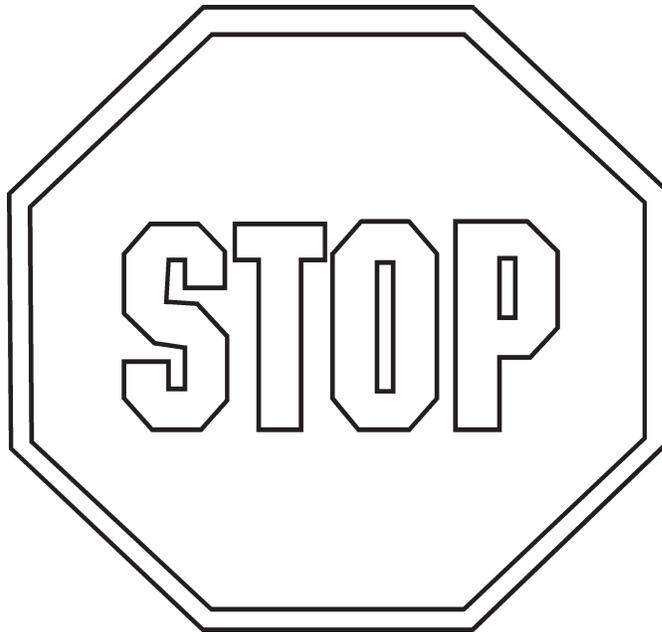
When Polly opened her eyes, around her towered the huge sentence forest. She stared up at the tall shadows. "These aren't trees!" she cried in delight. "They're giant letters. Rows and rows!"

"Of course," the bookworm nodded. "Now let us start with something simple and begin at the end."

Part 1

**Polly meets the period, question mark,
exclamation mark, commas,
and quotation marks.**

. Period



ends a sentence
that states facts.

CHAPTER 1

Full Stop Ahead

The bookworm wriggled along the trunks of the giant letters. Polly skipped after him. Soon, up ahead, she spotted a small clearing.

“We are nearing the end of the sentence,” the bookworm announced.

Polly frowned at the open space. “But the end looks so empty.”

“Just wait,” the bookworm replied.

Polly stared. Into the open rolled what looked like a big black beach ball. “Dawp,” a muffled voice said. As it came to rest, out popped the head, two hands, and two feet of a short but very fat fellow. “Stop. Stop,” he repeated.

“Say hello to your first punctuation mark, Polly.” The bookworm nudged her forward. “The period is very important in the sentence forest. A statement can’t end without him.”

Polly stepped closer.

“Stop,” the period said again. He took a deep breath and leaned forward, as if trying to bow.

“Is that all he can say?” Polly whispered over her shoulder.

Curling beside her, the bookworm nodded. “The period *is* a man of few words.”

Polly laughed. “Like a stop sign on a street.”

“Exactly,” said the bookworm. “The period tells us that one whole idea is finished. We must stop before we begin a new one.”

“Stop,” the period agreed.

“I think I understand,” said Polly. “Every time I write a statement, I add a period to show where it ends. For example, *The sky is blue. Period.*” She bent down and winked at the round punctuation mark.

“Stop.” The period’s little mouth curved up between pudgy cheeks.

The bookworm beamed. “A very good example, Polly. The period is the correct punctuation mark to end that sentence.”

“Stop,” the period agreed again.

Polly blinked. “You mean there are other ways to end sentences too?”

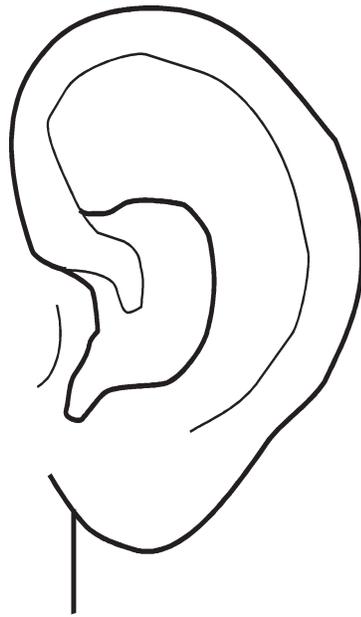
“Of course,” said the bookworm. “Not all sentences are statements. Let us move on. You’ll see.”

The period leaned forward. “Stop. Stop,” he said in farewell. Tucking in his head, hands, and feet, back he rolled to let Polly and the bookworm pass by.

“He’s blunt, but I like him,” said Polly, as they walked deeper into the sentence forest. “I shall write him a poem.”

*A period is short and round
just like a polka dot.
I write it when a statement ends.
It tells me time to stop.*

? Question Mark



ends a sentence
that asks for an answer.

CHAPTER 2

Any Questions ?

Polly and the bookworm crossed into a new row of letters. As she skipped along, far down the trunks Polly saw something move. She stood still and squinted into the distance. Out of the shadows hobbled a large humpbacked figure, shaking her head to one side. “Why is she doing that?” Polly asked. “Is something stuck in her ear?”

The bookworm chuckled. “That is the question mark,” he explained. “She is the period’s sister.”

Polly laughed. “You mean punctuation marks have families, too?”

“Why not?” The bookworm sniffed. “After all, the period and the question mark both end sentences.”

“Do they fight like my brother and sister?” Polly stuck out her tongue and wagged her fingers.

“No, indeed,” the bookworm replied. “Each stays far away from the other. Remember, a period stops a sentence that states facts. However, the question mark waits at the end of a different kind of sentence, one that asks for an answer.”

Polly grinned. “You mean the question mark just ends a question. That’s easy.”

The bookworm nodded. “It is. Can you make up an example to show me?”

Polly thought for a moment. Her eyes lit up. “Here’s my example. *Does the question mark tug at her ear to hear the answer better?*”

“Good.” The bookworm leaned closer. “In fact,” he whispered as they entered the clearing, “she is a bit deaf. Say hello in a very loud voice.”

Polly held out her hand and took a deep breath. “Pleased to meet you,” she bellowed.

The question mark jumped. She turned and stared at Polly. “What? Eh?”

“How do you do?” Polly shouted again.

“Pardon? A friend of whom?” The question mark

shook her head to one side. She glared at Polly. “Can’t you speak up? Who are you anyway?” She stamped her foot. “Hmph! Why do I waste my time?”

Before Polly’s mouth could close, the question mark swung around. Tugging her ear, she hobbled away.

Polly gulped. “She sure is different from the period!” she said, as they left the clearing. “I’m glad she’s not my sister!”

“Now, now,” the bookworm chided. “Let’s hear another poem.”

Polly sighed. “Very well.” She began.

*Do you have a sister?
Do you understand her?
Is she like the question mark
asking for an answer?*

! Exclamation Mark



ends a sentence
full of excitement.

CHAPTER 3

Too Much Excitement

A short time later, as Polly and the bookworm rounded a bend, the tall letters started to shake. Polly held her breath.

Above the rumbling, “Oh, babe!” a sharp voice screamed. “You turn me on!”

Polly jumped back. It was hard to keep her balance with the letters around her shaking. Her eyes darted about the clearing.

From the tossing shadows, a tall, skinny figure bounded up and down toward her on one foot. “Let’s dance up a storm!” he howled, and his hair stood on end. With every jump closer, the letters shook harder. “Move it, girl! Light some sparks!”

“Stand still!” Polly gasped, pulling back.

“Can’t! Energy, babe! Energy! You zap me like lightning!” The mark crackled closer.

Glasses jiggling, the bookworm wriggled between them. “Leave the young lady alone,” he commanded. “Can’t you see you are frightening her? Besides, Polly has better things to do than dance with an exclamation mark.”

“Hey worm!” the exclamation mark shouted, “I’ll knock off those glasses!”

“And I’ll pull out your plug!” the bookworm bellowed. He puffed himself to his full height and thumped his bright green tail. The ground shook harder.

Polly grabbed onto the trunk of a giant *L* for balance.

“O.K., worm! Cool it! I’m gone!” sputtered the exclamation mark. As he backed away, the shaking grew less and less.

Polly stepped out from behind the trunk.

“That punk,” muttered the bookworm. “I’m sorry he startled you.” He nudged Polly in the opposite direction. “If only the exclamation mark acted more like his older brother, the period.”

Polly blinked. “Is he part of the family too?”

“Yes.” The bookworm sniffed. “Like it or not, the exclamation is the third punctuation mark that can end a sentence, but only if that sentence shows strong feeling.”

“His sentences certainly burst with excitement!” Polly wiped her forehead. “He’d be perfect to end one like *The house is on fire!*”

“Hmph!” The bookworm peered over the tops of his round glasses.

“Oh, don’t be too hard on him.” Polly grinned. “Sometimes I feel like bursting, myself.”

I am so excited!

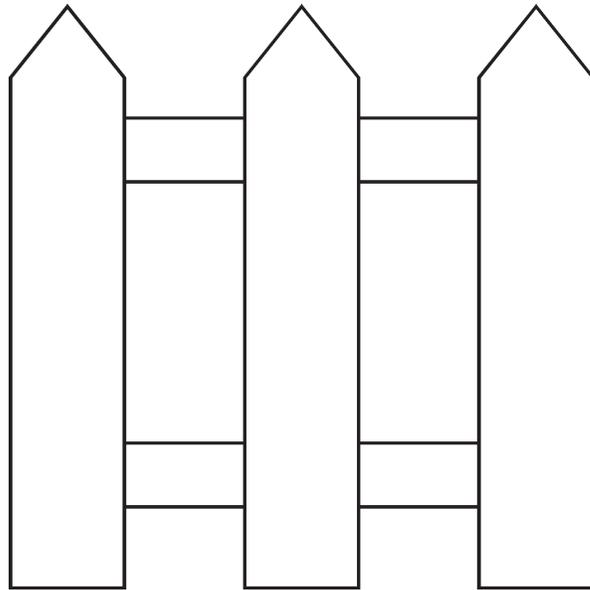
Thump! Thump! Hear my heart!

*Help! I need to write a skinny
exclamation mark!*

“Settle down, please!” The bookworm scowled. “One live wire is enough at the end of a sentence. We’d better move on to the middle.”

Hiding her grin with one hand, Polly followed him out of the clearing and into the tall branching letters.

, Commas ,



separate the words in a list,
or the extras from the
important parts.

CHAPTER 4

Fenced Off

The shadowy forest rose peaceful and still. “Wait!” Polly cupped her ear. “Do you hear that sound? It’s like somebody breathing.”

The bookworm turned. He listened for a moment. “It must be one of the comma kids,” he replied. “They’re scattered all over the sentence forest.”

Polly stepped forward. “Here he is,” she bent down, “right under my nose, hiding between the *O* and the *G*.”

Curled tight, a black dot with a tail glared up at her. “Go away,” he growled. “Go, go, go. This is my place.”

Polly stumbled back, and tripped. As she sprawled onto the ground, a second comma squirmed out from

under her knee.

“Big, clumsy, mean person,” he hissed, “you’re spoiling our game.”

“Yeah,”

“Right,”

“Scram,” three other commas piped from their hiding places.

“I didn’t know they were playing hide-and-seek,” Polly apologized, as she scrambled to her feet.

“They’re not,” the bookworm corrected her. “The commas are separating.”

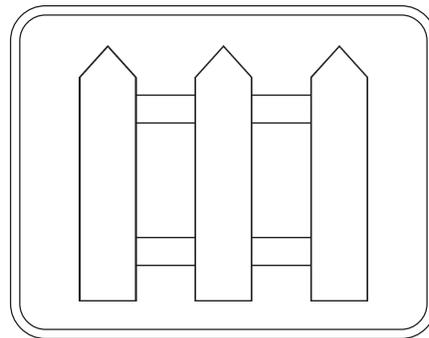
Polly shrugged. “Separating what?” She looked around her. “We’re in the middle of a sentence now.”

“Precisely.” The bookworm nodded. “Commas separate certain words inside a sentence,” he explained. “They work like little fences.

See, along here in the list?

Between each word a comma is curled up to separate the words *big*, *clumsy*, and *mean* from each other.”

Polly pointed to two commas several trunks further



down the row. “But what about the twins over there?” she asked. “Each looks so alone. And one has curled up so tight, I can barely see his tail. Oh, no, he’s strating to cry.”

Polly rushed over and crouched beside him. “Don’t cry,” she soothed.

Huddling even lower, the small comma shook with sniffles and sobs. “Please, don’t take my extra!”

Gently Polly lifted him onto her knee. “Why aren’t you playing with the commas back there in the list?” she asked, “or with your twin? He’s only a few letters away.”

“You can’t take my extra, no you can’t, not ever!” the comma wailed louder. “I got to fence it off.”

“The extra?” Polly frowned.

“You can’t, you can’t,” the comma howled again.

The bookworm wriggled over. He winked. “Let me explain. An extra is something a sentence doesn’t need. It might be just one word. It might be a group of words. It can even be a whole idea.”

“What if you took an extra right out?” Polly asked, as she rocked the comma on her knee.

“Oh, the sentence would still make sense,” the bookworm assured her. “What’s left would be the most

important parts.”

“So, suppose I wrote a sentence like this: *I ll give you my favourite red ball, the one I play with most, as a birthday present*. The part that says *the one I play with most* is the extra. That’s why it’s got commas on either side. I could cut it out and the rest would still make sense: *I ll give you my favourite red ball as a birthday present*.”

“Boo hoo!” the comma sobbed louder.

Polly hugged him. “Don’t worry,” she soothed, “we won’t take your extra away. Come, dry your tears on my sleeve. Now down you go and play fence.”

The comma smiled shyly, slipped off her knee, and curled back into his place.

“Let me see if I understand,” Polly said as they strolled away. “Commas act like fences. Some commas separate the different words in a list. Other commas separate the extra in the middle from the important parts of a sentence.”

“That is almost correct,” the bookworm replied. “Extras are found not just in the middle, but anywhere in the sentence.”

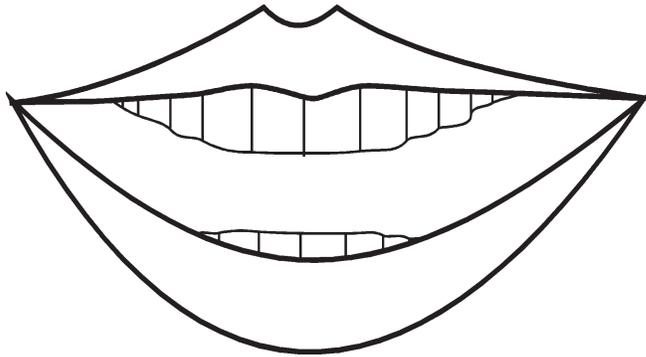
“Even at the beginning, or at the end?” Polly asked.

“Exactly.” The bookworm beamed.

“Now all I need is a rhyme to help me remember,” Polly said, wrinkling her brow.

*Commas, just like little fences,
make me pause inside a sentence.
Some, between the words, like this,
one, two, three, divide a list,
while twins can separate an extra
from the main part it is next to.*

“Quotation Marks”



surround the exact
words spoken.

CHAPTER 5

Yakety Yak

“Mama!” Another comma darted from behind Polly. Past the bookworm she dashed. “Mama, Papa, where are you?” she wailed. In a clump of letters ahead, she stopped and stared upward.

Even from a distance Polly could hear the hubbub. Atop the branches several couples turned this way and that, calling back and forth through the shade. “Those must be the parents,” Polly said. “They look like pairs of commas, except they’re so high up.”

“Gossips!” snorted the bookworm. “Page after page the quotation marks babble, while their children play who knows where.”

“I can help the comma find her parents,” Polly offered. She approached the bottom of a tall capital Y, and stood on tiptoe. “Hello! Hello!” she called up to a pair of quotation marks.

The quotation marks paid no attention. “Yakety yak,” they chattered to each other.

From the tops of some letters further along, another pair shouted to them.

“Guess what we heard!”

“Yes, she told him, then he told me.”

Above Polly, two more pairs of quotation marks leaned across the branches.

“It sounds exciting! Tell us too!”

“Hello!” Polly called again. “Hello!”

“O.K., but promise not to tell.”

“Why not?”

“Because what he said is a secret.”

Polly flopped against the trunk of the capital Y. She stared up and sighed. “It’s no use.” She looked around. The lost comma was nowhere in sight. She shook her head. “Those quotation marks didn’t even notice I was here. They’re too busy talking.”

“That *is* their job,” admitted the bookworm, curling beside her. “Quotation marks signal that someone is speaking. Tilted like the number 66, they show the place where the exact words spoken begin. Turned like a 99, they show the place where the words finish.”

Polly blinked. “Let me try that again.” She thought hard. “To signal that someone is starting to speak, first I write a pair of quotation marks that looks like a 66.”

The bookworm nodded.

“Then I copy down the exact words the person said, like *Yakety yak*,” Polly continued. “To show that the speech is done, I write a second pair of quotation marks, but these are turned the other way, like the number 99.”

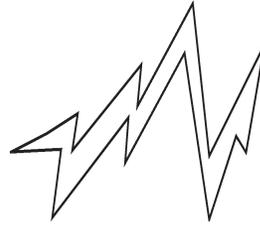
“Excellent!” the bookworm praised her.

Polly rubbed her ear. “Let’s go sit by ourselves, away from this racket. I need peace and quiet to think up my rhyme.”

*“When it’s time to write,” I said,
“a little conversation,
around the words each person speaks
like 66 and 99
draw two pairs of quotations.”*

Part I Review

! Exclamation Mark



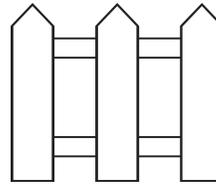
ends a sentence
full of excitement.

• Period



ends a sentence
that states facts.

, Commas ,



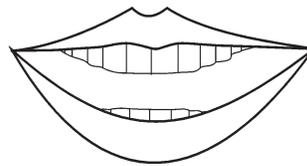
separate words in a list,
or the extras
from the important parts.

? Question Mark



ends a sentence that
asks for an answer.

“ Quotation Marks ”



surround the exact
words spoken.

CHAPTER 6

Time Out

At the foot of a capital *M*, the bookworm unwound himself in the shade. “This might be a good time to sum up what you’ve learned.”

Sitting down beside him, Polly leaned back against the smooth trunk. She closed her eyes. “Let me try to remember,” she said. A few moments later, she blinked and sat up straight. “Ready.” The summary began.

- “A period looks like a polka dot. It does the job of a stop sign. It ends a sentence that states facts.”

- “A question mark is a dot with a curve on top. Its shape reminds me of an ear. It ends a sentence that asks for an answer.”

! “An exclamation mark is tall and thin. It startles me like lightning. It ends a sentence full of excitement.”

, “A comma looks like a dot with a tail on the bottom. Like fences, some commas separate the different words in a list. Twin commas separate an extra from the important parts of a sentence.”

“” “Quotation marks look like pairs of commas high up. They make me think of a big mouth that won’t stop talking. Tilted like a 66, they mark the beginning of the exact words someone is saying. Turned like a 99, they show where the speech finishes.”

“Bravo!” cheered the bookworm. “How fast you’ve learned the main punctuation marks.”

“Do we have to go home now?” Polly asked. She stared at her shoes.

“That depends entirely on you.” The bookworm peered over the tops of his round glasses. “You know enough punctuation marks to get by. But there are others that make writing even more exact and colourful.”

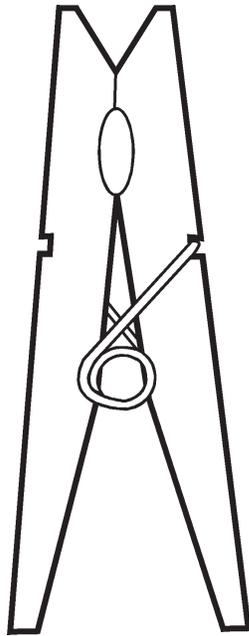
Polly jumped up. “Let’s meet them too. Then I can really sprinkle my stories with squiggles and dots.”

“Indeed!” the bookworm sniffed.

PART 2

**Polly meets the parentheses, dash,
ellipsis, colon, and semicolon.**

(Parentheses)



pin extra ideas
inside a sentence.

CHAPTER 7

An Extra Load

After a short rest, the bookworm thumped his tail on the ground. “Time to move along.”

Polly scrambled to her feet. Through the tall, shaded letters, she skipped beside the bookworm, deeper into the sentence forest.

“Look at that!” She stopped and stared ahead. In a patch of light, two giant curves bent up and down over a huge laundry basket. “That couple seems to be pinning up something on a line. Oh, I see now. It’s a capital letter *N*.”

“Yes, indeed.” The bookworm nodded. “The parentheses are hard at work again.”

“Oh, oh,” Polly cried, “I think one is hurt.”

Polly and the bookworm hurried over.

“My back aches!” the giant parenthesis groaned, arching to rub his sore muscles.

“Stop your complaining,” the second parenthesis scolded. “We still have three more loads to hang. (No time to grumble, that’s for sure.)”

“Can I help?” asked Polly. She stood on tiptoe, but couldn't reach the top of the *N*.

“A little thing like you?” The second chuckled. Grabbing the capital letter by a corner, the parenthesis hoisted it into place. “Thanks, dearie, but there’s life enough in my arches yet.”

“We’re grateful to get any job we can.” The first parenthesis bent closer. “Times are tough, in our line of work. (Some days we wait page after page, but there’s not one word to pin up.)” He shook his head, then leaned into the basket for another letter.

“We won’t interrupt you further,” the bookworm called upward. With his bright green tail, he beckoned Polly away.

“Poor parentheses,” she sighed, as they ambled along in the shade. “Those letters look heavy.”

“Nonsense!” The bookworm glared through his glasses. “Don’t let those bent backs fool you. The giant parentheses are strong. They can easily pin a few extra ideas in place.”

Polly turned and looked him in the eye. “I thought commas took care of extras.”

“Commas are just children,” the bookworm reminded her. “For them, separating words is a game. But extra ideas can come in big loads. Here’s an example. (*Some extras are the size of this sentence.*) It takes strength to pin them on lines. Those giant parentheses are built for hard work. Naturally they get the job.”

“And bring their clothespins along,” Polly joked.

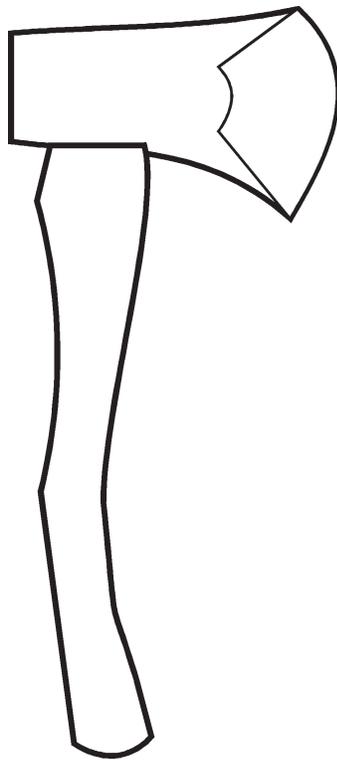
Parentheses (though somewhat bent)

work in pairs just fine.

They pin ideas (extra ones)

in place upon a line.

— Dash



cuts a sentence apart.

CHAPTER 8

Timber!

Polly blinked. Around her rustled the pleasant shade of the sentence forest. Yet up ahead, light bobbed and flashed among the letters.

“Wow! What’s that?” Polly cried. “I’m going to take a look!” She darted ahead.

“Wait!” the bookworm shouted.

“I’ll be right back,” Polly called.

“No! No!” the bookworm shrieked. “Don’t go any farther!”

Polly skidded to a stop. As she waited for the bookworm to catch up, she stared around her in dismay. This was no clearing, but a huge, jagged rip through the forest. Everywhere letters dangled this way and that. Some hung broken in half.

“What a terrible sight!” she gasped, and shook her head.

Puffing hard, the bookworm wriggled to her side.

“Look,” Polly cried. “Letters are chopped up all over the place!”

Through misty glasses, the bookworm peered at the damage. “Some weren’t even capitals yet!”

“But why?” Polly held up her hands.

The bookworm sighed. “It’s the dash. He’s on the loose again, breaking up sentences.”

“Oh, oh!” Polly gulped. “That must be him over there!” She pointed to a shaking clump of letters.

Swinging an axe, a squat, wild-eyed fellow darted back and forth, his head sunk almost out of sight between his wide shoulders. “I will—I don’t care—and no one can stop me!” he screamed. Light flashed off the sharp steel.

Polly froze. The bookworm paled from green to faint yellow.

The dash ran nearer and hacked at another word. “Cut, cut—the whole thing—I’ll chop it apart!”

“We’d better get out of here!” Polly squealed. “Before he runs our way!”

“Good idea!” The bookworm puffed after her. “The dash cuts up sentences, but girls or worms—I’m not sure. Hurry—this way!”

Polly bounded back through the rows of letters. “Will any sentences be left?” she called over her shoulder.

“The dash—he doesn’t go on the rampage—not often,” the bookworm panted, wriggling after her. “You can read pages and pages—never see him at all.”

“Thank goodness!” cried Polly, but she kept on running as fast as she could.

I see—

Oh no—

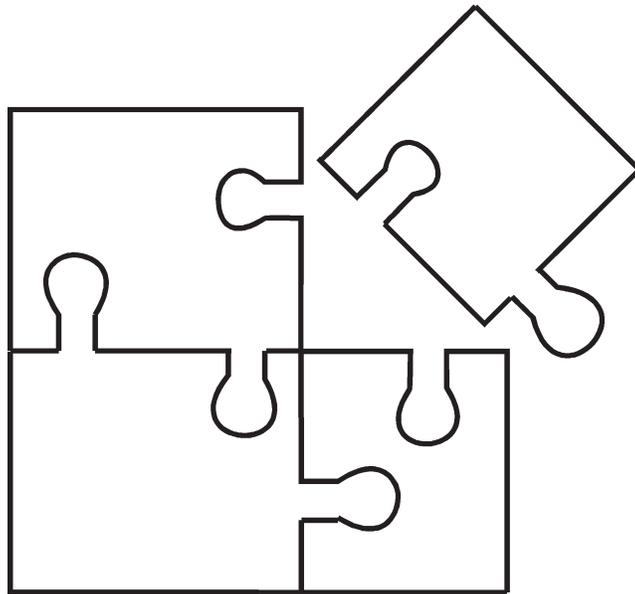
I’d better rush

to get this rhyme all done.

The dash might cut my sentence off

right after I’ve begun.

... Ellipsis



shows where words
are left out of a sentence.

CHAPTER 9

Missing

“Whoops!” Polly tripped and fell flat. “What happened?” she gasped. Rising on one elbow, she looked behind her. At the end of a word her shoe lay caught in the folds of a long, dotted ruffle. Above the ruffle swayed an elegant figure.

“Why, I do declare, child . . .” The figure bent and untangled the hem of her flowing dress. She smiled distractedly at Polly. “Wherever are you rushing . . . My, my, just like . . . Well, I can hardly imagine . . .”

Polly struggled to her feet. From behind her, the bookworm wriggled forward. “Ellipsis, my dear,” he greeted her over Polly’s shoulder. His lopsided glasses sparkled. “I hope we didn’t startle you. We just had a narrow escape.”

“Why, how dreadful . . .” The ellipsis turned pale.

Polly smoothed back her hair. “We’re all right now.”
“Well, bless you . . .” the ellipsis beamed. “Now me,” she patted her brow with a hanky, “I too have a . . . I just can’t find . . . I mean, it surely is gone . . .”

“What are you looking for?” Polly asked.

The ellipsis fluttered her hanky and glanced around at the trunks. “It’s very sad . . . Such a long time . . . and still missing . . .” she murmured, shaking her head.

“May we help you look?” the bookworm offered.

“Why, thank you, kind sir . . .” The ellipsis curtsied. “I am in such a dither . . . Can’t tell where to begin . . .” She turned around and around. She looked behind the thick trunk of a letter. She gazed up at the clouds. “No, it couldn’t be . . .” Forgetting Polly and the bookworm, she trailed her dotted ruffle away through the letters.

“She’s beautiful.” Polly sighed.

“Yes indeed.” The bookworm nodded his glasses back into place. “She’s a distant cousin of the period, but three times more graceful.”

“That’s for sure,” Polly agreed. She sat down to retie her shoelace. “But the two are different in another way also. The period ends a sentence that’s already stated the facts,”

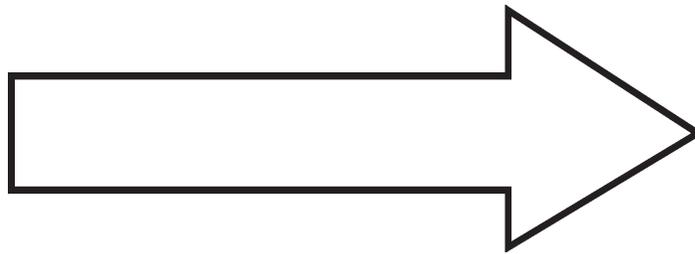
she recited. “The ellipsis can’t even finish what she starts. Her conversation is like a puzzle with a piece missing.”

“True,” the bookworm agreed, and curled beside her, “but that is the ellipsis’ purpose. Her dotted ruffle shows where words are left out of a sentence.”

Polly giggled. “At least no one can complain that she tells too much.”

*What does that spotted sentence mean?
A guess . . . a puzzle . . . words left out . . .?
Ellipsis’ three dots fill the space,
but still I am in doubt.*

: Colon



points to important thoughts
and explanations coming next
in the sentence.

CHAPTER 10

Next Attraction

After resting in the shade for a while, Polly and the bookworm set out again. It wasn't long before a shortcut led them into a new row of letters. Waiting to greet them they saw a neat short fellow. Above his rounded stomach smiled an equally plump, very large face.

He waddled out to Polly. "This way, if you please!" his deep voice announced. He nudged her to the right. "Directly ahead is our next attraction."

Polly giggled. "Is this another punctuation tour?" she asked. She peered where the fellow had pointed.

"Just a moment, colon." The bookworm pushed between them. "I am Polly's guide on this tour, not you."

The colon gave him a cold stare. Thrusting past, he bellowed, “There is an old saying in our forest: he who understands punctuation will never—”

The bookworm wriggled in front. “That’s enough!” He smacked his tail on the ground. “I said this was my tour, not yours. I will introduce the sights to Polly, in my own way, thank you. Go stand yourself somewhere else.”

The colon coughed. He glared at the bookworm. “Very well.” His voice swelled again, “But as I had begun to point out, about the letters to your right: a fine old legend—”

“Go!” howled the bookworm, swelling to his richest green. “Go!”

“Nasty, dull worm,” the colon sniffed. With a roll of his large, round head, he waddled away.

“That show-off,” the bookworm grumbled. “The colon always points out the sights to everyone he meets.”

“It’s too bad you don’t like him,” Polly replied. She watched the colon disappear through the letters. “He did seem to know a lot.”

The bookworm studied his tail. He sighed. “I admit that the colon is just doing his job. In a sentence he is supposed to point to important thoughts and explanations that are

coming next.”

“What you mean is: like an arrow pointing the way,” Polly added, to show that she understood.

The bookworm nodded.

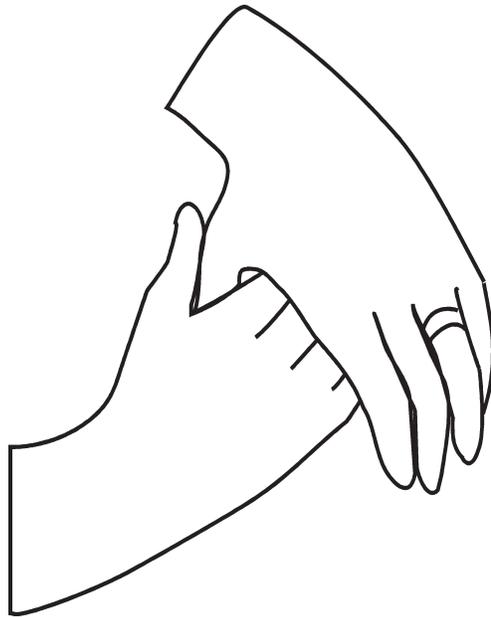
Polly smiled. “So if I want to tell an idea that’s special, writing a colon first shows everyone to pay attention. For example, *These are my three favourite foods: ice cream, chocolate cake, and pudding.*”

“Exactly,” the bookworm agreed. He frowned. “But it is *not* the colon’s job to butt in and take over, as if I can’t run my own tour!”

Polly helped the bookworm straighten his glasses. “His feelings are hurt,” she thought. This once she would keep her rhyme to herself.

*The colon points just like a guide:
it shows that straight ahead
important thoughts and explanations
are waiting to be read.*

; Semicolon



joins two sentences
close in meaning.

CHAPTER 11

Hand in Hand

“Well,” the bookworm curled to a halt, “we are near the end of our travels.”

Polly glanced about. Far ahead, a shaft of light caught her eye. Through the tall letters it shone down, opening into a golden circle on the ground. “Are there any more punctuation marks to meet?” she asked.

“Just one,” the bookworm replied, his glasses twinkling. “Ah,” he nodded to his left, “here comes the holy gentleman now.”

Polly watched as from the trunks a figure paced toward them. “Is he the colon’s brother?” she asked. “They look almost alike. Both are stately and plump, except this one

wears a trailing robe.”

The bookworm lowered his voice. “I’m glad to say they are cousins only. Despite their similar shapes, they do very different jobs.” He wriggled forward and nodded in greeting. “Good day, semicolon!”

The semicolon replied softly, “Bless you my son; bless you my daughter.” He bowed his large, round head. “Let us give thanks. A glorious day has been given unto us; may the heavens shine always on those no pen puts asunder.” He looked up and smiled.

The bookworm hummed a few notes from the Wedding March. “And who are the happy couple today?” he asked.

The semicolon beamed. “Two fine young sentences, so well suited to each other.” He gazed toward the sky and nodded. “They shall become as one; they shall be Word and Wife.”

“I love weddings!” Polly cried, dancing around.

The semicolon chuckled. “Be our guest, my child; enter our page with rejoicing.” With a sweep of his robe, he led the way.

Polly hopped behind. “How romantic,” she crooned, “a marriage between two sentences.”

“Yes,” agreed the bookworm, wriggling beside her. “The semicolon does the most joyful work in the forest; he joins sentences that are close to each other in meaning.”

Polly hopped to a stop. “So suppose I had two sentences. 1) *The sky is cloudy.* 2) *It looks like rain.* Since both talk about bad weather coming, a semicolon could join them into one long sentence. *The sky is cloudy; it looks like rain.*”

“Very good,” the bookworm said, “but I hope your weather forecast is wrong.”

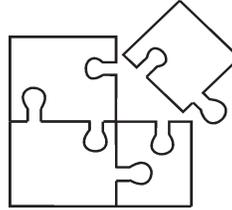
In the sunny space where two long rows of letters met, they sat on the ground and waited for the ceremony to start.

Polly grinned and hugged her knees. “My story has a happy ending. I can almost hear the wedding bells now.”

*The semicolon shows
that thoughts go hand in hand;
two sentences join into one
as if they wore a wedding band.*

Part II Review

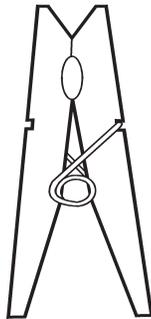
• • • **Ellipsis**



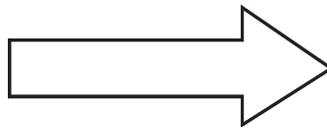
shows where
words are left out
of a sentence.

() **Parentheses**

pin
extra ideas
inside a
sentence.

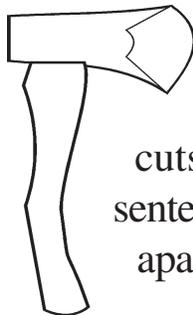


: **Colon**



points to important
thoughts and
explanations coming
next in the sentence.

— **Dash**



cuts a
sentence
apart.

; **Semicolon**



joins two sentences
close in meaning.

CHAPTER 12

A Last Look

At the edge of the sentence forest, Polly turned to face the bookworm. “I had a wonderful time,” she thanked him. “I’ve learned so much too!”

“Do you promise to punctuate all your stories?” asked the bookworm, wiping his glasses with his tail.

“I promise.” Polly crossed her heart. “Let me make sure I remember the new punctuation marks.” She took a deep breath and began to sum up.

() “Parentheses work in pairs. They look like backs bent over. A clothespin reminds me of their job. They pin extra ideas in place in a sentence.”

— “A dash looks like a cut-off line. I think of it

swinging an axe. It cuts a sentence apart.”

••• “Ellipsis means three dots in a row. It makes me think of a puzzle with a piece missing. It shows where words are left out of a sentence.”

⋮ “A colon is written as two dots, one above the other. It works like an arrow pointing the way. It points to important thoughts and explanations coming next in the sentence.”

⋮ “A semicolon looks like a comma with a dot above. Two clasped hands remind me of what it does. It takes two sentences that are close in meaning and joins them into one.”

“Excellent!” cheered the bookworm. “I wish all my students learned so fast.”

Polly leaned closer. “Do you teach other kids to punctuate too?” she asked.

“Of course.” The bookworm puffed out his chest. His glasses sparkled. “In the sentence forest, I have an important job, like everyone else.”

Polly stroked his head. “Will I see you again?”

“Oh, you won’t need me.” He grinned. “You’ve been such a good student.” He bowed one last time and wriggled away.

“Goodbye!” Polly called. “Goodbye!” She blinked

back a tear.

When Polly opened her eyes, she lay curled on her bed. She sat up and looked around. Nobody else was in the room, but at her feet lay the notebook with the story she'd written. She picked it up. Holding her breath, she turned the cover.

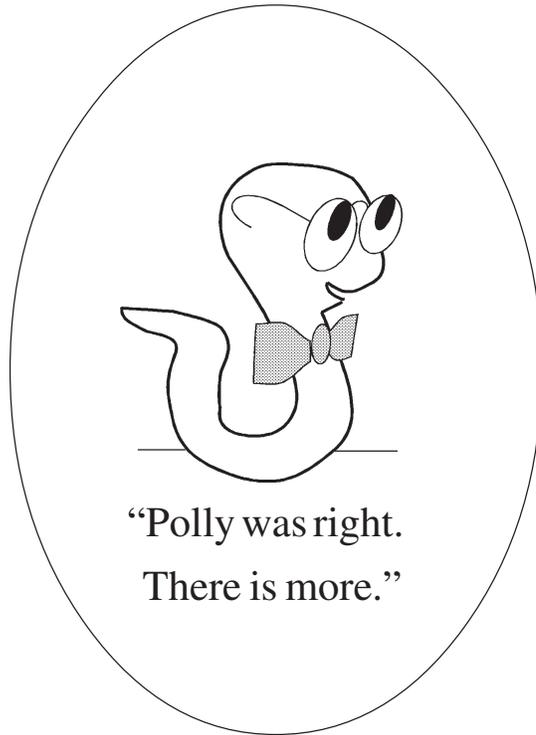
“Yes!”

Punctuation marks still dotted the page, as the bookworm had made them before. In the bottom corner, beside the initials “B.W.”, she spied something new.

“The bookworm left his glasses behind!” Polly exclaimed. Now she knew she would see him again.

The End





“Polly was right.
There is more.”

Appendix

**Punctuation practice,
projects, and games.**

Draw Each Punctuation Mark

Period

Parentheses

Question Mark

Dash

Exclamation Mark

Ellipsis

Comma

Colon

Quotation Marks

Semicolon

Period

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does a period look like?
b) Draw a period.
2. a) What kind of sentence needs a period?
b) Where is the period placed in the sentence?
c) Why is the period placed there?
d) What picture reminds you of the period's job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Full Stop Ahead*
 - a) Find three sentences that use a period.
 - b) Explain why a period is needed for each sentence.

Question Mark

What Do You Remember?

1. a) Tell what a question mark looks like.
b) Draw a question mark.
2. a) Tell what kind of sentence needs a question mark.
b) Tell where the question mark is placed in the sentence.
c) Tell what picture reminds you of the question mark's job.

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Any Questions?*
 - a) Find three sentences that use a question mark.
 - b) Explain why a question mark is needed for each sentence.

Exclamation Mark

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does an exclamation mark look like?
b) Draw an exclamation mark.
2. a) What kind of sentence uses an exclamation mark?
b) What picture reminds you of the exclamation mark's job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Too Much Excitement*
 - a) Find three places where an exclamation mark is used.
 - b) Explain why the exclamation mark is needed in each place.

Brain Teaser

Why can an exclamation mark also be used in different places inside a sentence, not just at the end?

Practice 1

Try What You Know

1. At the end of each sentence below
 - a) Write a period, or a question mark, or an exclamation mark.
 - b) Explain why you chose each punctuation mark.

Sentences

1. Look out
2. Why did the period say just one word
3. The question mark tugged at her ear
4. Couldn't the question mark hear Polly
5. Surprise

Make Up Your Own

Write a story about one of the ideas below, or about an idea of your own. Take special care to end each sentence the right way with a period, or a question mark, or an exclamation mark.

Story Ideas

1. Why the period could not say more than one word.
2. The question mark gets a hearing aid.
3. If I were deaf.
4. What happened when the exclamation mark bumped into the question mark.
5. Quiet, please!

Comma

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does a comma look like?
b) Draw a comma.
2. a) What key word sums up the work the comma does?
b) What picture reminds you of the comma's job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Fenced Off*
 - a) Find two examples of commas used in a list.
 - b) Explain how the commas do their job in each list.
2. a) Find two examples of commas used with an extra.
b) Explain how the commas do their job with each extra.

Practice 2

Try What You Know

1. In each sentence below
 - a) Write commas where they are needed.
 - b) Explain the job each comma does.

Sentences

1. In the peaceful dim forest Polly heard breathing.
2. One two three four five commas hid in the letters.
3. Were the commas playing a game the one called hide-and-seek when Polly found them?
4. An extra which may be only a few words or a whole idea can make a sentence more interesting.
5. The comma cried boo hoo hoo hoo.

Make Up Your Own

Write a story about one of the ideas below, or about an idea of your own. Take special care in using your commas.

Story Ideas

1. What was that sound in the forest?
2. I found it right under my nose.
3. Here's a new game to play.
4. If I were a comma.
5. Left out!

Quotation Marks

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What two numbers do quotation marks look like?
b) Draw the two different pairs of quotation marks.
2. a) When are quotation marks used?
b) Where are quotation marks placed in the sentence?
c) What picture reminds you of the quotation marks' job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Yakety Yak*
 - a) Find three different sentences where pairs of quotation marks are used.
 - b) Explain why each pair of quotation marks is placed there.

Brain Teasers

1. On page 24, notice how every time a different person speaks, a new paragraph begins.
 - a) Find three paragraphs in a row that contain quotation marks.
 - b) Name the speaker in each.
2. Why is it a good idea to start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes?

Practice 3

Try What You Know

1. In each sentence below
 - a) Write pairs of quotation marks where they are needed.
 - b) Explain why the pairs of quotation marks are used in these places.

Sentences

1. I want my mama, a little comma cried.
2. Polly asked, Are those the parents high in the letters?
3. Those chatterboxes, the bookworm said, gossip all day!
4. They're too busy talking to hear me, Polly sighed.
5. Polly suggested, Why don't we rest on the grass?

Make Up Your Own

Using quotation marks where needed, write a short conversation between two characters. Choose an idea from the list below, or an idea of your own. Remember that each time a different person speaks, a new paragraph must begin.

Story Ideas

1. Two quotation marks share the latest gossip.
2. Polly and the bookworm compare their favourite punctuation marks.
3. I ask my best friend.
4. This conversation will scare you!
5. "Pardon me," he said.

Parentheses

What Do You remember?

1. a) What do parentheses look like?
b) Draw a pair of parentheses.
2. a) When are parentheses used?
b) Where are parentheses placed in the sentence?
c) What picture reminds you of the parentheses' job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *An Extra Load*
 - a) Find two sentences that use parentheses.
 - b) Explain how parentheses do their job in each sentence.

Practice 4

Try What You Know

1. In each sentence below
 - a) Write a pair of parentheses where needed.
 - b) Explain the job each pair of parentheses does.

Sentences

1. When pinning up letters parentheses must bend over a lot that's just part of the job.
2. One parenthesis strained his back that's what he said anyway and had to stop work to rub his muscles.
3. It was Polly of course the bookworm had no arms who offered to help hang up the letters.
4. The parenthesis she didn't need the help thanked Polly.
5. Parentheses take the big jobs commas are somewhat small of pinning extra ideas on a line.

Dash

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does a dash look like?
b) Draw a dash.
2. a) What does a dash do in the sentence?
b) What picture reminds you of the dash's job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Timber!*
 - a) Find three sentences where a dash is used.
 - b) Describe what the dash does in each sentence.

Practice 5

Try What You Know

1. In each sentence below
 - a) Write a dash wherever one is needed.
 - b) Explain why a dash belongs in that spot.
- Sentences*
1. Polly was so she was plain upset.
 2. The dash oh that maniac why did he split the forest apart?
 3. "I'll you'd better believe me I'll chop it all down!" hollered the dash.
 4. The dash doesn't chop girls or worms or
 5. The bookworm wriggled away faster than no it was even faster than that.

Ellipsis

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does the ellipsis look like?
b) Draw an ellipsis.
2. a) What is the job of the ellipsis?
b) What picture reminds you of the ellipsis' job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Missing*
 - a) Find three sentences that use an ellipsis.
 - b) Explain why the ellipsis is needed in each sentence.

Practice 6

Try What You Know

1. a) Rewrite the scene below, using the ellipsis five times. You may change or take out any words you need to.
b) Read your version out loud with feeling, like an actor.

Scene

Polly almost crashed into a beautiful lady.

“Goodness me, who are you?” the lady asked.

“Sorry,” Polly replied. “We were running from the dash.”

“That dash is terrifying!” The lady shook her head sadly. “I have a problem too. I’ve lost an important possession.”

“We can help you look for it,” the bookworm offered.

“Thank you for such a kind offer,” the lady replied. “I’ve been so worried. At times I barely remember where I am!” Fluttering her hanky, she wandered away through the forest.

Make Up Your Own

Write a story about one of the ideas below, or about an idea of your own. Use the parentheses, dash, and ellipsis at least once each to make your story more dramatic.

Story Ideas

1. Oh my aching back!
2. The dash meets a psychiatrist.
3. Lost! Lost!
4. When I'm all alone in the dark.
5. How I kept the secret.

Colon

What Do You Remember?

1. a) What does a colon look like?
b) Draw a colon.
2. a) When is a colon used?
b) Where is the colon placed in the sentence?
c) What picture reminds you of the colon's job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Next Attraction*
 - a) Find three sentences that use a colon.
 - b) Explain how the colon does its job in each sentence.

Practice 7

Try What You Know

1. In each of the sentences below
 - a) Write a colon in the proper place.
 - b) Explain why each colon is needed.

Sentences

1. Polly was startled to hear these words “Come this way, please.”
2. Polly liked her guide for these reasons his neat appearance, his politeness, and his knowledge of the sights in the forest.
3. The bookworm showed his anger this way he smacked his tail on the ground.
4. The result of the bookworm’s shouting was as follows the colon rolled his head, sniffed, and strutted away.
5. The cause of the bookworm’s rudeness was plain his feelings were hurt when the colon took over the tour.

Semicolon

What Do You Remember?

1.
 - a) What does a semicolon look like?
 - b) Draw a semicolon.
2.
 - a) When is a semicolon used?
 - b) Where is the semicolon placed?
 - c) What picture reminds you of the semicolon’s job?

Find and Explain

1. In the chapter *Hand in Hand*
 - a) Find three sentences that contain a semicolon.
 - b) Explain why a semicolon is the right punctuation mark to use in each case.

Practice 8

Try What You Know

1. In each sentence below
 - a) Write a semicolon in the proper place.
 - b) Explain how the semicolon does its job.

Sentences

1. The semicolon bowed his head he prayed.
2. The semicolon was the last punctuation mark for Polly to meet there were no more to come.
3. Polly was just in time the wedding would start very soon.
4. “I adore brides I love weddings,” cried Polly.
5. Music filled the air the wedding bells rang happily.

Make Up Your Own

Write a story about one of the ideas below, or about an idea of your own. In it, use at least one colon and one semicolon properly.

Story Ideas

1. The colon describes the bookworm.
2. Let’s be friends.
3. Polly writes a letter to a friend, telling about the wedding.
4. Good ways to soothe hurt feelings.
5. The semicolon says goodbye to Polly.

Punctuation Projects

Writing

1. Create an issue of the sentence forest's newspaper. Include items of news, sports, entertainment, business, family life, and other features about or of interest to punctuation marks.
2. Prepare a tourist's guidebook to the sentence forest, complete with descriptions of local customs and maps of the sights.
3. Write a make-believe history of punctuation marks telling how you think they might have started.
4. Publish a class anthology of your own poems and stories about punctuation marks.

Art

1. Design and label a family tree of the punctuation marks.
2. Draw a punctuation mark portrait gallery.
3. Invent a new punctuation mark of your own.
 - a) Draw a picture of it.
 - b) Underneath, explain the job it does when used in a sentence.

Drama

1. Stage a TV "talk show" where the host interviews some famous punctuation marks.
2. Using dolls, toys, or your own characters made from paper or cloth, present a punctuation puppet show.
3. Create and stage a short play based on one chapter from *Polly's Punctuation Primer*.

Punctuation Games

Charades

The class must guess which punctuation mark one student is silently acting out.

Detective

A punctuation mark has committed a crime. Two teams take turns asking questions about the suspect's appearance and actions. The first team to find the "criminal" is the winner.

Job Interview

One student plays the sentence manager. Another is a punctuation mark applying for a job. The two talk about why the punctuation mark should or shouldn't be hired to fill this particular position.

Match Cards

Players take turns drawing cards from two different piles, trying to match a card that pictures a punctuation mark with a card that explains its job. The first to find a correct match wins.

Punctuation Bee

Two teams compete for points in answering short, factual questions about punctuation.

Your Game

Invent a punctuation game of your own.

Notes

About the Author

Susan Ioannou has devoted her life to words.

After taking her Honours B.A. and M.A. in English Language and Literature at the University of Toronto, she taught as an English specialist at Bloor Collegiate Institute and became Vice President of the Ontario Council of Teachers of English.

In 1980, she joined *Cross-Canada Writers' Magazine* and served almost a decade as columnist and Associate Editor. From 1982 to 1994, she led adult creative-writing workshops for local groups as well as for the Toronto Board of Education, University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, and Ryerson University Literary Society.

Through her company Wordwrights Canada, she published several handbooks for writers, including *A Magical Clockwork: The Art of Writing the Poem* and *Holding True: Essays on Being a Writer*, and now provides an online poetry course, *Lessons in Writing the Poem*. Hundreds of her essays, poems, and stories have appeared in literary magazines from coast to coast. She is also the author of several collections of poetry, most notable *Clarity Between Clouds* (Goose Lane Editions), *Where the Light Waits* (Ekstasis Editions), *Coming Home* (Leaf Press), and *Looking Through Stone: Poems about the Earth*, as well as the young people's novels *A Real Farm Girl* (Hodgepog Books) and *The Hidden Valley Mystery* (Wordwrights Canada).

Susan Ioannou has made Toronto her home with her husband and two children, now grown, Stefan, whose illustrations are contained in this book, and Polly (also a teacher), who was its inspiration.

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