

Getting Started with High School Sentence Composing

A Student Worktext

Don and Jenny Killgallon

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The sailors caught an enormous shark, thrashing on deck wickedly in its death throes, **while no one dared go near enough to club it.**

—Isabel Allende, *Daughter of Fortune*

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—George Orwell, "A Hanging"

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—Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*

THE TOOLBOX 126

To get the job done right in your sentences, use the right tools. You've learned the right tools: *the extender*, *the identifier*, *the describer*, *the elaborator*, *the combo*. Those power tools are in your toolbox. Now get ready to use them in this section by building strong sentences with those tools. When you finish, admire your work, done right with the right tools, and take a bow.

Nothing is more satisfying than to write a good sentence.

—Barbara Tuchman, historian

QUICKSHOTS FOR NEW WORDS

Sentences sometimes contain unfamiliar words. Take this sentence by Rudolph Giuliani, then mayor of New York City, condemning the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

*There's no moral way to sympathize
with grossly immoral actions.*

The meaning of the sentence is roughly this: *There's no [SOMETHING] way to sympathize with grossly [SOMETHING] actions.* What way? What actions? There's no way to tell—other than that something is pretty bad. Maybe it's time for a dictionary to find out what *moral* means, and its opposite *immoral*.

Good news: In this worktext, you don't need a dictionary. Instead, a quickshot will immediately tell you the meaning of *moral* and *immoral*. Throughout this worktext when individual words are **bold** [*darkened*], a fast definition—a quickshot—will be **adjacent** [*beside it*]. If you already know the word, just keep reading. If you don't, a quickshot will keep you reading without stumbling.

With quickshots, you can skip the dictionary and keep reading, stumble-free. Now reread the sentence, this time with quickshots for *moral* and *immoral*.

*There's no **moral** [right] way to sympathize
with grossly **immoral** [wrong] actions.*

Quickshots are fast and easy, but not perfect. For example, you now know that *moral* means *right*, *immoral* means *wrong*, but only for human behavior that's right or wrong.

On a spelling test, if you got most of the words right, you wouldn't say, "I got most spellings moral, but some immoral." Spellings aren't human behavior. People behave, not words, so only people can behave morally (rightly) or immorally (wrongly).

QUICKSHOTS IN THIS WORKTEXT

If a word might be a stumbling block, there's a quickshot to help you keep reading. The quickshot unlocks the word's meaning. Knowing the word's meaning often also unlocks the meaning of the sentence.

Following is a paragraph about Esperanza, a Mexican girl age twelve who lives on a farm where grapes are grown. To honor his daughter, her father asks her to cut down the first cluster of grapes to celebrate the start of the harvest. You'll see the paragraph first without quickshots, and then with quickshots.

Description Without Quickshots

(1) Her father **extended** the knife to Esperanza. (2) The short blade was curved, its fat wooden handle fitting **snugly** in her hand. (3) This job was usually **reserved** for the **eldest** son of a wealthy rancher, but since Esperanza was an only child, she was always given the **honor**. (4) The grape **clusters** were heavy on the vine. (5) Esperanza's parents stood by, Mama, tall and **elegant**, her hair in braids, and Papa, **barely** taller than Mama, his graying mustache twisting up at the sides. (6) He pointed his hand toward the grapevines, **signaling** Esperanza. (7) When she walked toward the vines and **glanced** back at her parents, they both smiled and nodded. (8) When she reached the vines, she separated the leaves and carefully **grasped** a thick stem. (9) She put her knife to it, and with a quick **swipe**, the heavy grapes dropped into her hand to give to Papa, who kissed it, then held it up for all to see.

—Pam Muñoz Ryan, *Esperanza Rising* (adapted)

Description with Quickshots

(1) Her father **extended** [*banded*] the knife to Esperanza. (2) The short blade was curved, its fat wooden handle fitting **snugly** [*tightly*] in her hand. (3) This job was usually **reserved** [*saved*] for the **eldest** [*oldest*] son of a wealthy rancher, but since Esperanza was an only child, she was always given the **honor** [*privilege*]. (4) The grape **clusters** [*bunches*] were heavy on the vine. (5) Esperanza's parents stood by, Mama, tall and **elegant** [*beautiful*], her hair in braids, and Papa, **barely** [*hardly*] taller than Mama, his graying mustache twisting up at the sides. (6) He pointed his hand toward the grapevines, **signaling** [*directing*] Esperanza to come. (7) When she walked toward the vines and **glanced** [*looked*] back at her parents, they both smiled and nodded. (8) When she reached the vines, she separated the leaves and carefully **grasped** [*held*] a thick stem. (9) She put her knife to it, and with a quick **swipe** [*cut*], the heavy grapes dropped into her hand to give to Papa, who kissed it, then held it up for all to see.

Description with Just the Easier Words

(1) Her father handed Esperanza the knife. (2) The short blade was curved, its fat wooden handle fitting tightly in her hand. (3) This job was usually saved for the oldest son of a wealthy rancher, but since Esperanza was an only child, she was always given the privilege. (4) The grape bunches were heavy on the vine. (5) Esperanza's parents stood by, Mama, tall and beautiful, her hair in braids, and Papa, hardly taller than Mama, his graying mustache twisting up at the sides. (6) He pointed his hand toward the grapevines, directing Esperanza to come. (7) When she walked toward the vines and looked back at her parents, they both smiled and nodded. (8) When she reached the vines, she separated the leaves and carefully held a thick stem. (9) She put her knife to it, and with a quick cut, the heavy grapes dropped into her hand to give to Papa, who kissed it, then held it up for all to see.

*I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, **encountered** [met] the word in a **context** [sentence] that made its meaning clear.*

—Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

With quickshots, you don't need to look up new words, or struggle to figure them out.

QUIZ: QUICKSHOTS

Directions: Quickshots are very short, so they are easier than dictionary definitions to remember. See how many you remember. Match the word with its definition.

1. Bullying on the playground by pushing or punching smaller kids is **immoral**.
a. fun b. wrong c. right d. easy
2. After deciding not to copy Angelina's homework, Arlene was happy with her **moral** choice.
a. unusual b. right c. difficult d. final
3. The principal **extended** the diploma to Enrique.
a. threw b. handed c. flew d. tossed
4. During the blizzard, inside the house, Grandma wore a wool blanket **snugly** around her body.
a. loosely b. poorly c. tightly d. easily

5. As the **eldest** daughter, Janna often felt that she was given more responsibility than her sisters.
a. smartest b. strongest c. oldest d. nearest
6. It is an **honor** to be selected for any kind of reward or accomplishment.
a. privilege b. payment c. challenge d. treat
7. Cranston could **barely** touch the bottom of the basketball net.
a. easily b. amazingly c. always d. hardly
8. A **cluster** of flowers was planted at the entrance to our house.
a. mixture b. bunch c. mound d. vase
9. Many girls who were considered cute would rather be considered **elegant**.
a. beautiful b. smart c. funny d. holy
10. In the crowded cafeteria line, he **glanced** at the clock to see if he had enough time.
a. stopped b. stood c. looked d. stared

SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

A sentence is a comment about a topic. The topic is called *a subject*. The comment about the topic is called *a predicate*. Every sentence needs both a subject and a predicate. Look at these sentences about octopuses.

SUBJECT (topic)	PREDICATE (comment about the topic)
1. All octopuses	can squeeze through tight openings impossible to other sea creatures because octopuses have no skeleton.
2. Their body parts	include two eyes, eight arms, and one hard beak used to crush the shells of crabs they eat.
3. Coral reefs	are shelters where octopuses can live safer from enemies.
4. Only one kind of octopus	can kill a human through its deadly venom.
5. Black ink that they spray	defends octopuses against attackers and allows them to move to safety.

ACTIVITY 1: MATCHING SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

Directions: Match the subject with its predicate to make a sentence. Write out each sentence.

SUBJECTS	PREDICATES
1. Several spiders ^ — <i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</i>	a. came suddenly out of the shadows.
2. The snake ^ — <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone</i>	b. were thrown onto their backs with their endless legs waving in the air.
3. A voice ^ — <i>Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban</i>	c. sat back down on the sofa, which sagged [<i>sank</i>] under his weight.

<p>4. The giant ^ —<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone</i></p>	<p>d. was about as safe as poking a sleeping dragon in the eye.</p>
<p>5. Misbehavior [<i>doing wrong</i>] in Snape’s class ^ —<i>Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets</i> (adapted)</p>	<p>e. raised its head until its eyes were on a level with Harry’s.</p>

ACTIVITY 2: CREATING SUBJECTS

Directions: Write interesting subjects for these predicates to make a complete sentence. Make your subjects several words long as in the following example.

EXAMPLE

Predicate: . . . stood in a semicircle wearing red scarves round their throats.

POSSIBLE SUBJECTS

- a. **A bunch of my friends at the corner for the school bus** stood in a semicircle wearing red scarves round their throats.
- b. **Derek and the rest of the basketball team** stood in a semicircle wearing red scarves round their throats.
- c. **The teachers at the school entrance** stood in a semicircle wearing red scarves round their throats.

Author’s Sentence

Some eight or ten little field-mice stood in a semicircle wearing red scarves round their throats.

—Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*

1. . . . made them stir but not wake.
—Toni Morrison, *Beloved*
2. . . . would just look at you and smile and show her yellow teeth.
—Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing*
3. . . . began **scavenging** [*searching for food*] by pulling pizzas out of the dumpster behind a pizza delivery shop.
—Lars Eighner, “On Dumpster Diving”
4. . . . burst into the room again, wearing old jeans and a torn T-shirt.
—Maya Angelou, *The Heart of a Woman*
5. . . . came in from the dry country in search of a drink, and sometimes fell into the swimming pool and found themselves trapped by walls of shiny, unclimbable tiles.
—Wallace Stegner, *Crossing to Safety* (adapted)

ACTIVITY 3: CREATING PREDICATES

Directions: Write interesting predicates for these subjects to make complete sentences. Make your predicates several words long as in the following example.

EXAMPLE

Subject: The faded red doors . . .

SAMPLE PREDICATES

- a. were removed by the carpenter.
- b. faced a large window in the restaurant.
- c. needed a fresh coat of paint.

Author's Sentence

The faded red doors swung open.

—Kate DiCamillo, *The Tiger Rising*

1. Big, rough teen-agers. . . .

—Robert Lipsyte, *The Contender*

2. The baby's eyes. . . .

—Anne Tyler, *Digging to America*

3. The factories. . . .

—Keith Donohue, *The Stolen Child*

4. Our fist-fight at recess. . . .

—Jon Katz, “How Boys Become Men”

5. A great many old people. . . .

—Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea*

QUIZ: SUBJECTS AND PREDICATES

Directions: Jot down whether the statement is true or false.

1. Sometimes complete sentences contain only a subject (topic) but no predicate (comment about that topic).
2. Sometimes complete sentences contain only a predicate but no subject.
3. The following sentence contains a subject with two parts, not one.

Dead rats and frogs started appearing in his locker about three months earlier.

—Gary Paulsen, *The Time Hackers*

4. The following sentence contains a predicate with exactly three parts.

An arrow squealed out of the dark, sliced a wedge from his ear, nicked the horse of the man riding behind him, and skittered away like a bat.

—Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*

5. All complete sentences contain both a subject, which is a topic, and a predicate, which is a comment about the topic.

MY WRITING: INFORMATIONAL SENTENCES

Pretend you are writing a pamphlet about animals in a zoo to provide visitors facts. Online or offline, find out lots of interesting information about *one* of these: lions, bears, zebras, elephants, tigers, giraffes—or some other animal.

Then write five sentences between ten and twenty words long about your creature. Make sure each sentence has an informative subject and predicate.

SENTENCE-COMPOSING TOOLS

What makes the best hamburger? First, you'll need two basics: bread and meat. Then you'll want more: maybe cheese, catsup or mustard, onions, tomato, lettuce, pickles, and so forth. Add-ons make it tastier, and the best.

What makes the best sentence? First, you'll need two requirements: a subject and a predicate. Although those two parts are necessary, they are not the most important parts of the best sentences.

The most important parts are sentence-composing tools. They add detail to your sentences, providing information beyond the subject and predicate. Like hamburgers, add-ons also make sentences tastier, and the best.

Take a look at the following examples. The first sentence in each pair has just a subject and predicate. The second sentence has the same subject and predicate but also sentence-composing tools. Tools are bolded.

On the Mark: Tools need commas that separate them from the rest of the sentence.

EXAMPLES

1a. The snakes lay with their chins resting on their own coils.

1b. **In the rattlesnake cage**, the snakes lay with their chins resting on their own coils, **looking straight ahead out of their black eyes**.

—John Steinbeck, *Cannery Row* (adapted)

What the Tools Add: The first tool tells readers where the snakes were (*in the rattlesnake cage*). The tool at the end of the sentence tells what the snakes were doing (*looking straight ahead out of their black eyes*).

- 2a. Spectators at the huge fire responded by chopping up wooden fences and sidewalks.
- 2b. Spectators at the huge fire, **who were asked to help**, responded by chopping up wooden fences and sidewalks, **hoping to deprive the fire of fuel**. (*Contains two tools*.)

—Jim Murphy, *The Great Fire*

What the Tools Add: The first tool tells readers what the spectators were asked to do (*who were asked to help*). The tool at the end of the sentence tells why the spectators were chopping up things (*hoping to deprive the fire of fuel*).

- 3a. The earthen floor and the path get flooded and muddy and wet for several days.
- 3b. **When it rains**, the earthen floor and the path get flooded and muddy and wet for several days, **giving off a smell that reminds you of rotting fish**. (*Contains two tools*.)

—Richard Kim, *Lost Names*

What the Tools Add: The first tool tells readers when the event happens (*when it rains*). The tool at the end of the sentence tells what odor results from the flooding (*giving off a smell that reminds you of rotting fish*).

- 4a. Kiser Pease was creating clouds of dust.
- 4b. **In the distance**, Kiser Pease, **on his tractor**, was creating clouds of dust.

—Bill and Vera Cleaver, *Where the Lilies Bloom*

What the Tools Add: The first tool tells readers where the event happens (*in the distance*). The tool in the middle of the sentence tells where Kiser was (*on his tractor*).

5a. He arrived home each day filthy.

5b. **Although each night Big Ma prepared a pot of hot soapy water for him to wash out his clothing**, he arrived home each day filthy, **looking as if his pants had not been washed in more than a month**.

—Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

What the Tools Add: The first tool tells readers how the mother tried to help her son (*although each night Big Ma prepared a pot of hot soapy water for him to wash out his clothing*). The tool at the end of the sentence tells that his pants got dirty anyway (*looking as if his pants had not been washed in more than a month*).

ACTIVITY 1: IDENTIFYING SENTENCE PARTS

Directions: Jot down the letter for the kind of sentence part.

S for subject

P for predicate

T for tool

Note: There is a subject (S) and a predicate (P) in each list. The other sentence parts are tools (T).

EXAMPLE (*Commas separate tools from the rest of the sentence.*)

- a. Although he became famous playing baseball,
- b. Jackie Robinson
- c. preferred football and starred on UCLA's team.

—Barry Denenberg, *Stealing Home*

ANSWERS

- a. T
 - b. S
 - c. P
-

PART ONE

These sentences contain a subject and a predicate and just one tool.

1a. I

1b. loved school with a desperate passion,

1c. which became more intense when I began to realize what a **monumental** [*big*] struggle it was for my parents and brothers and sisters to keep me there.

—Eugenia Collier, “Sweet Potato Pie”

2a. Trying to look like the ball players he had seen the time his father had taken him to the Polo Ground,

2b. Marty

2c. ran into the outfield and took the position near the curb

—Murray Heyert, “The New Kid” (adapted)

3a. When black powder is too dry or mixed in the wrong formula,

3b. almost anything

3c. can set it off without warning.

—John Fleischman, *Phineas Gage*

- 4a. Mama
4b. offered Mr. Morrison Grandpa Logan's chair,
4c. a cushioned oak rocker skillfully crafted by Grandpa himself

—Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

- 5a. Sandy and Dennis,
5b. the ten-year-old twin brothers who got home from school an hour earlier than she did,
5c. were disgusted.

—Madeleine L'Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time*

PART TWO

These sentences contain a subject, a predicate, and more than one tool.

- 6a. Suddenly,
6b. Gollum
6c. sat down and began to weep,
6d. a whistling and **gurgling** [*bubbling*] sound horrible to listen to.

—J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*

- 7a. When the thirteen colonies were first settled,
7b. most immigrants
7c. came from England, Holland, and France,
7d. followed soon afterwards by Scandinavians, Welsh, Scots, Scot-Irish, Irish, and Germans.

—Ellen Levine, *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*

- 8a. Luckily,
8b. Leo,

- 8c. the snow leopard cub,
8d. was rescued by a kind goatherd and his family,
8e. who hand-fed Leo and kept him safe.

—Craig and Isabella Hatkoff, *Leo the Snow Leopard*

- 9a. Sometimes,
9b. the dinosaurs
9c. reared up on their **hind** [*back*] legs,
9d. resting their forelegs on the tree trunks
9e. so that they could reach the leaves on higher branches.

—Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*

- 10a. In my opinion,
10b. a truly great quarterback
10c. plays at a very high level on the field and off the field as well,
10d. a guy who plays like a champion,
10e. not only on Sundays but also on every other day of the week.

—Mark Brunell and Drew Brees, *Coming Back Stronger*

Question: What two sentence parts cannot be removed without destroying the sentence? What sentence parts can be removed without destroying the sentence?

Answer: The subject and the predicate cannot be removed because if you take out either, the sentence is destroyed. Tools can be removed, but good writers don't remove them because they add information and tastiness to sentences.

SENTENCE-COMPOSING TOOL FACTS

A tool is a sentence part that adds detail to a sentence.

<p>1. Tools can be placed in the <i>beginning</i>, <i>middle</i>, or <i>end</i> of a sentence.</p>	<p>They can appear in the beginning, with a <i>comma after the tool</i>.</p> <p>When one of its arms is missing because of an accident or attack, an octopus can quickly grow a replacement.</p> <p>They can appear in the middle, with a <i>comma before and after the tool</i>.</p> <p>The octopus with the longest life, the giant Pacific octopus, doesn't live long enough after the young are born to teach them very much.</p> <p>They can appear at the end with a <i>comma before the tool</i>.</p> <p>An octopus has three hearts, two of which pump blood into its gills and one of which pumps blood into the rest of its body.</p>
<p>2. A tool can be a <i>word</i>.</p>	<p>Amazingly, a female octopus lays 20,000 to 100,000 eggs.</p>
<p>3. A tool can be a <i>phrase</i>. A phrase is a group of words without a subject and predicate.</p>	<p>Octopuses, dependent on their need for salt water, live only in oceans.</p>
<p>4. A tool can be a <i>dependent clause</i>. A dependent clause is a sentence part containing a subject and predicate, but it is not a sentence, only a part of a sentence.</p>	<p>After the male octopus mates, he dies.</p>

<p>5. Sentences can have several tools, together or apart.</p>	<p>Tools Together</p> <p>Equipped with a sense of smell, housed in the sensors at the end of their arms, octopuses by inserting an arm into a crevice detect what might be lurking there.</p> <p>Tools Apart</p> <p>At the end of its arms, an octopus has suction cups, which allow it to taste food, accepting or rejecting the food according to whether it likes the taste.</p>
<p>6. Tools can be short, medium, or long.</p>	<p>Short</p> <p>To protect itself, an octopus ejects a thick black cloud to hide in and then escape.</p> <p>Medium</p> <p>Octopuses also use camouflage for protection, produced by skin cells that can change the skin's apparent color.</p> <p>Long</p> <p>Injecting poison into the shellfish to dissolve the shell to make eating the soft tissue possible, an octopus can get to and eat the food.</p>

QUIZ: SENTENCE-COMPOSING TOOLS

Directions: Jot down whether the statement is true or false.

1. Tools are complete sentences.
2. Tools can be placed at the beginning or end of a sentence but not in the middle of a sentence.
3. This sentence contains exactly three tools.

About a year after the incident, Tommy talked to a former gang member named Felix, a young man he'd known as a baby.

—Tracy Kidder, *Home Town*

4. The following sentence contains a subject and a predicate but no tools.

Daring not to glance at the books, I went out of the library, fearing that the librarian would call me back for further questioning.

—Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

5. In the following sentence, the sentence part with the fewest words is the subject:

The young Italian, who had called to her earlier in the evening and who was now apparently setting out on his own Sunday evening's adventures, came along the sidewalk and walked quickly away into the darkness.

—Sherwood Anderson, "Unlighted Lamps"

MY WRITING: INFORMATIONAL SENTENCES

Find out more information about some other fascinating animal. Then write five sentences between ten and twenty words long about your animal. In each sentence, be sure to include a subject and predicate and one or more sentence-composing tools.

REVIEW

- For subjects and predicates, reread the five sentences about octopuses on page 6.
- For sentence-composing tools, reread more sentences about octopuses on pages 17–18.

FRAGMENTS

A fragment is a big problem. A fragment looks like a sentence because it has a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end, but it is not a sentence. It is a broken sentence, only a sentence part, just a fragment of a complete sentence.

EXAMPLES

- 1a. Complete Sentence:** When he lived in the city, he had a lot of friends.
—Lorenz Graham, “Hitchhiker”
- 1b. Fragment:** When he lived in the city.
- 2a. Complete Sentence:** A man stood in the doorway, his suit as black as oil.
—Rick Riordan, *A Maze of Bones*
- 2b. Fragment:** His suit as black as oil.
- 3a. Complete Sentence:** Muscles flexing tightly against his thin shirt, he lifted the truck in one powerful motion until the front was off the ground.
—Mildred D. Taylor, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*
- 3b. Fragment:** Muscles flexing tightly against his thin shirt.
- 4a. Complete Sentence:** Because the eyes of the china rabbit were painted on and he could not close them, he was always awake.
—Kate DiCamillo, *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*
- 4b. Fragment:** Because the eyes of the china rabbit were painted on and he could not close them.
- 5a. Complete Sentence:** Mr. Murry, who had been sitting, rose.
—Madeleine L’Engle, *A Wrinkle in Time* (adapted)
- 5b. Fragment:** Who had been sitting.

Plates accidentally broken into fragments can be repaired; so can sentences broken into fragments. In this section, you will learn how to fix broken sentences, or—even better—avoid them completely.

ACTIVITY 1: SPOTTING AND GLUING FRAGMENTS

Directions: Each group has a sentence and two fragments. Tell which is the sentence and which are the two fragments. Then glue the fragments back into the sentence at the beginning or the end—whichever makes more sense.

On the Mark: When you glue fragments into sentences, commas are needed.

EXAMPLE

- a. When she finished crying. (*fragment*)
- b. She wiped her face with the palms of her hands. (*sentence*)
- c. Feeling no better but out of tears. (*fragment*)

Good Arrangements

When she finished crying, she wiped her face with the palms of her hands, feeling no better but out of tears. (*One is glued at the beginning of the sentence, and one at the end of the sentence.*)

OR

When she finished crying, feeling no better but out of tears, she wiped her face with the palms of her hands. (*Both are glued at the beginning of the sentence.*)

—Lynne Reid Banks, *One More River*

1a. He stared in amazement at a small purple hole in it.

1b. Moving his arm only a little.

1c. Halfway between his wrist and his elbow.

—Robb White, *Deathwatch*

2a. To make him **docile** [*obedient*].

2b. They would have done an operation on his brain.

2c. To stop him being **rebellious** [*disobedient*].

—John Christopher, *The Guardians*

3a. Shielding the lenses of their flashlights.

3b. The boys began a thorough search of the wooded section.

3c. So that the light beams would not be easily **detected** [*seen*] by anyone **lurking** [*hiding*] in the **vicinity** [*area*].

—Franklin W. Dixon, *The Secret of the Old Mill*

4a. Its front two clutching him tightly below a pair of shining black **pincers** [*claws*].

4b. Harry saw that what had hold of him was marching on six long, hairy legs.

4c. His head hanging below.

—J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

5a. He didn't have any real enemies unless you counted the entire football team.

5b. Who seemed to think he was some kind of toy and were constantly playing catch with him.

5c. Throwing him up in the air or stuffing him into containers.

—Gary Paulsen, *The Time Hackers*

ACTIVITY 2: GLUING BROKEN SENTENCES BACK TOGETHER

Directions: The following paragraph, about how the Egyptian pharaoh King Tut died at age nineteen, has fragments that make reading bumpy. Glue each fragment to the sentence where it belongs—the sentence before the fragment, or the one following the fragment, whichever makes more sense. When you finish, you will have *twelve* complete sentences and no fragments. Then, reading will be smooth, not bumpy.

On the Mark: When you glue fragments into sentences, commas are needed.

Mysterious Death of Young Egyptian Pharaoh

(1) Although much has been learned about the ancient pharaoh of Egypt called King Tut. (2) One mystery remains. (3) Despite many **theories** [*ideas*] about how the pharaoh died. (4) No one is actually sure. (5) The theories include that he was murdered by enemies, that he died of an infection. (6) And that he was crushed by a hippopotamus. (7) Backed up by forensic x-rays and explanations. (8) The newest theory suggests that he was run over by a chariot. (9) Using special equipment to solve crimes. (10) The crime lab examined all of the evidence to create a **virtual** [*realistic*] **autopsy** [*a study of the cause of death*]. (11) Revealing that King Tut's body on his left side is missing eight ribs. (12) Plus part of his pelvis. (13) Usually left inside a mummy. (14) The heart was also missing. (15) To **simulate** [*recreate*] the accident as it might have happened. (16) The scientists used a chariot made for the movies. (17) After talking about what types of objects could cause this kind of damage. (18) Experts think the most likely object is a chariot wheel. (19) They collected **data** [*information*] on how the chariot moved at top speed. (20) Passing their findings on to specialists who create different computer **simulations** [*recreations*]. (21) The first simulation showed King Tut falling off his chariot, and the second

showed him crashing the chariot, but neither simulation matched King Tut's injuries. (22) The final simulation showed him on his knees as he fell under the wheel of an oncoming chariot. (23) Even though the injuries line up in that simulation. (24) No one is ready to close the case.

ACTIVITY 3: SOLVING A FRAGMENT PUZZLE

Directions: The following paragraph, about a dangerous trip into unexplored land along the Amazon River in South America, has to be put back together. Underneath the paragraph are broken sentences (fragments) that are parts of sentences in the original paragraph. While copying the paragraph, glue each fragment to the sentence where it belongs.

Hint: The fragments are listed after the paragraph in the order they occur in the original paragraph.

On the Mark: When you glue a fragment into a sentence, use a comma.

Attack of Piranha

Note: A piranha is a deadly South American fish with sharp teeth.

(1) Their suffering began in full force. (2) They had exhausted all their food. (3) The rivers were filled with piranha, which the men could eat, but the piranha sliced through the men's fishing line and hooks. (4) Out of desperation one man finally threw dynamite into a pond with the deadly fish. (5) He made the mistake of holding a piranha in his mouth while his hands were busy scooping up others. (6) It attacked. (7) The piranha took a bite out of his tongue. (8) He would have bled to death had the doctor not stopped the bleeding with moss.

—Candice Millard, *The River of Doubt* (adapted)

FRAGMENTS

Note: A capitalized fragment begins a sentence in the paragraph. Other fragments end a sentence in the paragraph.

- a. As the men hacked their way through the deepening jungle
- b. By late August
- c. using their knife-blade teeth
- d. So difficult were piranhas to catch
- e. As he splashed through the water to gather dead piranhas
- f. At first stunned by the dynamite and motionless between the man's teeth
- g. as soon as the piranha recovered
- h. Before the man had time to react

ACTIVITY 4: REPAIRING BROKEN SENTENCES

Directions: Make the fragment a part of a complete sentence.

EXAMPLE

Fragment: because the weather was unbearably hot

SAMPLE REPAIRS

- a. Because the weather was unbearably hot, **Tamara stopped jogging and walked the rest of the way back to the dorm.**
 - b. **The corn in the field started to wilt** because the weather was unbearably hot.
-

Directions: Make the fragment into a sentence part *at the beginning* of a complete sentence.

1. **Fragment:** When our school's winning team appeared.

Sample Repair: When our school's winning team appeared, the fans yelled and cheered for the champion.

2. **Fragment:** To decide if it was worth the price.

Sample Repair: To decide if it was worth the price, I did as much research as I could on the Internet and by talking to friends.

3. **Fragment:** Early in the misty morning as we approached the car.

Sample Repair: Early in the misty morning as we approached the car, we saw a cat with kittens in the back seat.

4. **Fragment:** Warning the class about the cruelty of bullying.

Sample Repair: Warning the class about the cruelty of bullying, our teacher gave us examples from when he was in high school.

5. **Fragment:** Sometimes veering off the road while driving.

Sample Repair: Sometimes veering off the road while driving, the student driver was told by the teacher to pay more attention.

Directions: Make the fragment into a sentence part *at the end* of a complete sentence.

6. **Fragment:** One of the most terrifying experiences I've ever had.

Sample Repair: I once mistook the sound of a car backfiring for a gunshot, one of the most terrifying experiences I've ever had.

7. **Fragment:** Resulting in almost losing a finger.

Sample Repair: When I first began woodworking in class, I didn't know what I was doing, resulting in almost losing a finger.

8. **Fragment:** Which teachers forbid during class.

Sample Repair: In the back of the classroom some kids were secretly playing with their phones, which teachers forbid during class.

9. **Fragment:** A slug slimier than the eel in biology class.

Sample Repair: When we were barefoot in the mud, my right foot felt something, a slug slimier than the eel in biology class.

10. **Fragment:** Signaling smoke from the burned pie in the oven.

Sample Repair: The smoke detector sounded, signaling smoke from the burned pie in the oven.

QUIZ: FRAGMENTS

Directions: Jot down whether the statement is true or false.

1. Fragments are always sentence parts instead of complete sentences.
2. Fragments cannot be repaired.
3. Putting a capital letter at the beginning of a fragment and a period at its end sometimes repairs a fragment.
4. Fragments can always be joined to the sentence that comes before them, but never to the sentence that comes after them.
5. The following paragraph contains two fragments.

Gilly **obligingly** [*obediently*] took the gum out of her mouth. While Miss Ellis's eyes were still in the rearview mirror. When the social worker turned her attention back to the traffic, Gilly carefully spread the gum under the handle of the car door. As a sticky surprise for the next person who might try to open it.

—Katherine Paterson, *The Great Gilly Hopkins*