CHARACTERS & CONNECTIONS

Engaging with Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing Literary Analysis

Nancie Kahan

OXFORD

Contents

	Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	
Reading	The Cask of Amontillado	Jabberwocky Humpty Dumpty	A Scandal in Bohemia	Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat	
Literary or Poetic Elements	Irony Mood	Metre Rhyme	Genre: The Detective Story	Hyperbole Foreshadowing Characterization	
Responding and Analyzing	• **First reading** Explain context, setting, and characters' motivation, • **Second reading** Explore plot details, use of irony, and characters' state of mind • **Analyze** use of irony, tone, mood, and symbolism	• **First Reading** Identify speakers; give first impressions of characters; explain final event • **Second Reading** Assess characters' social skills; explore surprising content • **Analyze** use of poetic techniques/nonsense words; adventure genre; metre/rhyme schemes; what makes poem memorable	• **First reading** Discuss plot details • **Jigsaw: Second Reading and Analyzing the Story** Describe key characters; discuss Holmes's methods and the details of the case, examine setting, historical context	• **First reading** Discuss contextualization and plot details • **Second reading** Describe the main characters and their marriage; find examples of foreshadowing • **Analyze** hyperbole, story structure, characterization, changing perspectives and irony; debate story's misogyny	
Grammar	Inverted Syntax	Past Unreal Conditional	Present Perfect Tense	Sentence Structure	
Vocabulary	Archaic Words and Phrases	Portmanteau Words	Guessing Meaning from Context	British and American Expressions	
Speaking	• Brainstorm sound effects for a radio dramatization • Describe your response • Explain popularity of Poe's work • Discuss similar contemporary writers • **Oral presentation** Poe's life/works; carnival tradition; freemason history; dark romanticism vs. transcendentalism	• Describe film adaptations of *Alice* • Imagine application of Humpty's theory of language • Explain Carroll's enduring appeal • **Oral presentation** Carroll's life/works; adaptations and cultural influence of *Alice*; dark aspects of children's stories	• Compare film and TV adaptations of Sherlock Holmes • **Oral presentation** Conan Doyle's life/works; detective fiction; film and TV. portrayals of Holmes; spiritualism	• Explain your response to opening paragraphs • Discuss social power of clothing • Role play dialogues • **Oral presentation** Dahl's life/works; changing attitudes about divorce/alimony and wearing fur; British, American, and Canadian English	
Analytical Writing	• Provide evidence of Montresor's state of mind • Discuss use of irony • Explain whether "unity of effect" is achieved	• Explore dark aspects of traditional fairy tales • Argue how Humpty Dumpty illustrates a Biblical proverb	• Explain origins and enduring appeal of Sherlock Holmes • Explore whether "Scandal" is a typical detective story • Compare characters with those in TV/film adaptations	• Argue that the story is misogynistic • Argue that the story does not follow the archetypal pattern outlined in the introduction • Discuss the power of clothing	
Creative Writing	• Write a story featuring revenge and irony • Rewrite from another point of view • Write a police report	• Write a nonsense poem • Write a dialogue • Rewrite in contemporary language	• Write a story featuring Holmes and Irene Adler • Write a detective story • Write a dialogue	• Write a story about a marriage or Mrs. Bixby's revenge • Write a narrative essay about the narrator's point of view • Write a story about clothing	

	Chapter 10	Chapter 11	Chapter 12	Chapter 13	
Poem	Shakespeare's Sonnets 18 and 130	The Tyger	The Cremation of Sam McGee	Living in Sin	
Poetic Elements	Sonnet Form Poetic Metre Personification	Imagery Repetition Symbolism	Internal Rhyme Consonance, Alliteration, Assonance	Free Verse Similes and Metaphors	
Responding and Analyzing	• **First reading** Explain references and meaning; scan for stressed syllables; respond to nature of portrait • **Analyze** tone, personification; ambiguous language, inverted syntax, imagery, idealized beauty, and continued relevance	• **First reading** Paraphrase question; examine rhyme scheme and scan metre; find examples of inverted syntax and personification; • **Analyze** imagery, rhythm, sound, repetition; discuss Blake's view of God; discuss mood and symbolism; compare poem to "The Lamb"	• **First reading** Examine mood, metre, and rhyme scheme • **Analyze** alliteration, consonance, assonance, imagery, and tone; assess the poem's artistic merit	• **First reading** Compare expectations with reality; examine imagery; speculate on narrator's feelings • **Analyze** use of ellipses, imagery, rhythm, metaphors, and similes; discuss irony	
Oral Presentation	Shakespeare's life/works; sonnets and love poems; film adaptations	Blake's life/works and enduring influence; romanticism	Service's life/works; Klondike Gold Rush	Rich's life/works; American feminism of the 1960s and '70s	
Analytical Writing	• Compare and contrast Sonnets 18 and 130	• Compare and contrast "The Lamb" and "The Tyger"	• Argue for or against the artistic merits "Sam McGee"	• Write an essay about relationships based on the poem's insights • Analyze the poetic elements in "Living in Sin"	
Creative Writing	• Write a love poem in sonnet or free verse • Paraphrase sonnet in contemporary English • Write response poem or song from mistress's perspective	• Write a poem that asks a profound question • Write hip-hop version of "The Tyger"	• Write a poem or short story (relating to the theme of "Sam McGee") • Rewrite stanzas in rap or hip-hop style	• Write a story, poem, narrative essay, or song about falling out of love or unfulfilled expectations • Write a poem from another point of view	

	Chapter 5	Chapter 6	Chapter 7	Chapter 8	Chapter 9
	Everyday Use	Prue	Powder	Mother Interrupted	Roman Berman, Massage Therapist
	First-Person Narration Reliable and Unreliable Narrators Descriptive Language	Third-Person Narration Showing vs. Telling	Setting Imagery	Genre: The Narrative Essay Repetition Subtle Humour	Symbolism
	• **First reading** Discuss characters, plot details, and mood. • **Jigsaw: Second Reading and Analyzing the Story** Examine the characters' attitudes and feelings; discuss characterization; determine whether narrator is reliable; discuss descriptive language, symbolism, irony, setting, historical context and tone	• **First reading** Describe characters and their relationship • **Second reading** Examine characters and relationships more deeply • **Analyze** characterization, symbolism, and changing perceptions; explore showing vs. telling, narrative perspective, and vocabulary choices	• **First reading** Discuss plot details • **Second reading** Describe characters and their relationships; discuss irony; examine dialogue and key turning point • **Analyze** use of imagery, alliteration, consonance, and repetition; discuss the order of events and the story's ending	• **First reading** Describe events, their causes, and responses • **Second reading** Examine narrator's character, her treatment, and her response; discuss irony and tone • **Analyze** use of repetition, irony, and subtle humour; discuss the essay's introduction and ending	• **First reading** Discuss plot details • **Jigsaw: Second Reading and Analyzing the Story** Assess the characters; examine the business venture and the events of the Friday night dinner; analyze point of view, irony, subtle humour, mood, repetition, symbolism, and imagery
	Non-Standard Grammar	Past Perfect Tense	Sentence Fragments	Active vs Passive Voice	Direct and Reported Speech
	Phrasal Verbs	Nouns Used as Adjectives; Compound Adjectives	Colloquialisms	Vibrant Words and Expressions	Guessing Meaning from Context
	• Discuss portrayal of the Black Power movement; discuss race relations in the US • Respond to the characters • **Oral presentation** Walker's life/works; African-American sharecroppers; Black Power movement; AAVE; quilting	• Speculate about true self vs. idealized images • Articulate opinions about Prue • **Oral presentation** Munro's life/works; Southern Ontario Gothic; kleptomania	• Discuss characterization and relationship Brainstorm ideas for a radio or film dramatization • **Oral presentation** Wolff's life/works; Thelonious Monk; jazz music; personality types; colloquialisms	• Discuss postpartum depression and attitudes toward mental illness • Brainstorm ideas for a radio dramatization • **Oral presentation** Mental illness; resilience; group therapy; life writing	• Describe portrayal of the immigrant experience, including family dynamics • Respond to the ending; speculate about what might follow • Discuss Roman's business venture • **Oral presentation** Bezmozgis's life/works; Soviet anti-Semitism; Jewish Sabbath
	• Explore whether the story contrasts city and country people • Argue that Mama is more intelligent than Dee • Compare the text with the film adaptation	• Write a character sketch • Contrast Prue's persona with her true self • Examine narrator's attitude toward the characters • Discuss symbolism	• Compare and contrast characters • Discuss imagery • Describe evolution of character and relationships	• Explain how essay helps readers empathize with mothers experiencing postpartum depression • Discuss author's writing skills • Describe changing attitudes toward depression	• Compare and contrast father–son relationships in "Powder" and "Roman Berman" • Analyze use of contrast and irony • Explain symbolism
	• Write a letter from Dee to a friend • Write a story about Maggie • Write a story about someone who rejects her heritage or feels superior to her family	• Write a psychological report • Write a dialogue • Write a story about a similar character	• Write a story about a transformational moment • Write a description • Write an alternative ending	• Write a narrative essay about a profound personal experience	• Write a story about an immigrant family or a child with conflicted feelings • Write a story involving superstition • Write a journal entry from a minor character's point of view

	Chapter 14	Chapter 15
	Travel	Ethics
	Irregular Rhyme Scheme Contrast	Tone and Mood
	• **First reading** Identify rhyme scheme, alliteration, consonance, and assonance; discuss poet's feelings, motivation, and insights • **Analyze** contrasting images and types of love; examine repetition, irony, mood, imagery, and metaphors; debate whether this is a love poem	• **First reading** Discuss details of the poem and the significance of autumn • **Analyze** imagery, symbolism, tone, mood, and repetition; examine use of contrast and the poet's epiphany
	Cohen's life/literary works/music; analysis of a song or poem by Cohen	Pastan's life/works; Rembrandt's life/works
	• Write an essay about the ideas/insights in the poem • Compare and contrast the poem with a Cohen song • Analyze the poetic elements in "Travel"	• Analyze poetic elements in "Ethics" • Argue whether or not the question addressed is effective or suitable for children
	• Write a response poem, song, journal entry, or letter from the lover's point of view • Write a poem, song, short story, or narrative essay about a romantic relationship • Write a poem or song in rap or hip-hop style	• Write a free verse poem, short story, a narrative essay • Describe a school exercise • Summarize an interview with an older person

SECTION 1

Short Stories

CHAPTER 1

The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe (1846)

About the Author

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809–1849) was born in Boston, the son of actors who travelled around the country. He lost both parents before he was three years old and was taken in by the family of John Allan, a wealthy businessman in Richmond, Virginia.

Poe was a rebellious youth who had a strained relationship with his foster father. Although an excellent student, he was forced to leave university when John Allan cut off his funds. After a brief career in the army, Poe began publishing poetry in 1827. He worked in several American cities as an editor, writer, and literary critic. While his brilliance and originality were recognized in his lifetime, Poe never made much money, and his life was marked by alcoholism, depression, instability, and loss. His wife Virginia, whom he married when she was 13, died of tuberculosis in 1847.

Best known for his poem "The Raven" and his short stories ("The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," among others), Poe is considered the father of the detective story and also wrote one of the earliest science fiction tales. His classic stories and poems often deal with death, murder, horror, fantasy, revenge, and terror; as well, he wrote thoughtful literary criticism and was a skilled satirist.

Poe died in Baltimore at age 40, under mysterious circumstances.

The Cask of Amontillado

1   The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne[1] as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to[2] a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitively settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

2   It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont,[3] to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.[4]

3   He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary,[5] Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack,[6] but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; —I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

4   It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season**,**[7] that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley.[8] He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

5   I said to him—"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking today! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado,[9] and I have my doubts."

6   "How?" said he. "Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

7   "I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

8   "Amontillado!"

9   "I have my doubts."

10   "Amontillado!"

11   "And I must satisfy them."

12   "Amontillado!"

13   "As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If anyone has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me—"

14   "Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.[10]"

15   "And yet some fools will have it[11] that his taste is a match for your own."

---

1. *borne*: past participle of *to bear*, meaning to carry or tolerate
2. *gave utterance to*: to utter, meaning to speak out loud
3. *as was my wont*: as was my habit
4. *immolation*: sacrifice or destruction; in contemporary English it usually means destruction by fire.
5. *gemmary*: the science of gems, jewellery
6. *quack*: charlatan; someone who pretends to have knowledge or qualifications, but in fact knows little or nothing
7. *the carnival season:* Carnival is a joyous celebration that takes place in Catholic countries before Lent; people eat and drink a great deal, wear colourful costumes, play music, and generally behave with abandon on city streets, before the solemn observances of Lent and Easter.
8. *motley*: a costume of many bright colours; Fortunato is dressed like a court jester for the carnival celebrations.
9. *a pipe of Amontillado*: a *pipe* is a large cask (barrel) that contains about 130 gallons (492 litres); *Amontillado* is an aged and very expensive sherry (a wine from Spain).
10. As Amontillado is sherry, Fortunato means that Luchresi would not know an excellent sherry from an inferior one.
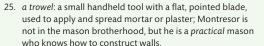11. *some fools will have it*: some people will say

16   "Come, let us go."

17   "Whither?"

18   "To your vaults.[12]"

19   "My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—"

20   "I have no engagement; —come."

21   "My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.[13]"

22   "Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

23   Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a *roquelaire*[14] closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

24   There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry[15] in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to ensure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

25   I took from their sconces[16] two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs[17] of the Montresors.

26   The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

27   "The pipe," he said.

28   "It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

29   He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum[18] of intoxication.

30   "Nitre?" he asked, at length.

31   "Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

32   "Ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh! —ugh! ugh! ugh!"

33   My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

34   "It is nothing," he said, at last.

35   "Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi—"

36   "Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

37   "True—true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draft of this Medoc[19] will defend us from the damps."

---

12. *vaults*: the storerooms where food, drink, and valuables are kept, often underground
13. *encrusted with nitre*: covered with nitre, a short name for potassium nitrate; the presence of nitre indicates that water is seeping into the walls.
14. *roquelaire*: a cloak or overcoat
15. *absconded to make merry*: ran off to have a good time
16. *sconce*: holder (of a candle or torch) attached to a wall
17. *catacombs*: underground caves and tunnels filled with skulls and bones of the dead; the ones in this story are modelled on the famous catacombs in Paris.
18. *rheum*: discharge of liquid; Fortunato's eyes are watering from drunkenness.
19. *Medoc*: an excellent wine; Médoc is the wine area north of Bordeaux.

38 Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

39 "Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

40 He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

41 "I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

42 "And I to your long life."

43 He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

44 "These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

45 "The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

46 "I forget your arms.[20]"

47 "A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs[21] are embedded in the heel."

48 "And the motto?"

49 *"Nemo me impune lacessit."*[22]

50 "Good!" he said.

51 The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons[23] intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

52 "The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—"

53 "It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draft of the Medoc."

54 I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grâve. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

55 I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

56 "You do not comprehend?" he said.

57 "Not I," I replied.

58 "Then you are not of the brotherhood."

59 "How?"

60 "You are not of the masons.[24]"

61 "Yes, yes," I said; "yes, yes."

62 "You? Impossible! A mason?"

63 "A mason," I replied.

64 "A sign," he said, "a sign

---

20. *arms*: coat of arms
21. *fangs*: long, sharp teeth
22. *Nemo me impune lacessit*: No one provokes me with impunity.
23. *puncheons*: large wine casks

24. *masons*: the Freemasons began as a secretive fraternity of stone masons and cathedral builders, dating back to the Middle Ages. Freemasonry lives on as a social organization, noted for many symbols and rituals, including a secret hand signal.

65   "It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire* a trowel.[25]

66   "You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

67   "Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

68   At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circum-scribing walls of solid granite.

A trowel. © iStock/EddWestmacott

69   It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

70   "Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi—"

71   "He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered[26] him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples,[27] distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended[28] a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

72   "Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."

73   "The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

74   "True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

75   As I said these words, I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

76   I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it[29] with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

---

25. *a trowel*: a small handheld tool with a flat, pointed blade, used to apply and spread mortar or plaster; Montresor is not in the mason brotherhood, but he is a *practical* mason who knows how to construct walls.
26. *fettered*: chained
27. *staples*: iron rings attached to the wall
28. *depended*: hung (from the French *pendre*)
29. *hearken to it*: (archaic) hear or listen to

77   A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier,[30] I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

78   It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

79   "Ha! ha! ha! —he! he! he! —a very good joke, indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he! —over our wine—he! he! he!"

80   "The Amontillado!" I said.

81   "He! he! he! —he! he! he! —yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

82   "Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

83   *"For the love of God, Montresor!"*

84   "Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

85   But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud—

86   "Fortunato!"

87   No answer. I called again—

88   "Fortunato!"

89   No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*[31]

---

30.   *unsheathing my rapier*: to unsheathe means to take out of a holder; a rapier is a thin, light, sharply pointed sword.

31.   *In pace requiescat:* May he rest in peace.

LITERARY ELEMENTS: Irony and Mood

Irony

Irony refers to language that means something different from what it may seem to mean on the surface, or to situations or events that turn out differently from what might be expected. There are different types of irony, including verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony.

Irony in a literary text or an essay is sometimes subtle rather than immediately apparent. You may need to read a text several times before you catch on to the irony; your ability to recognize an ironic statement or situation improves with practice.

Verbal irony occurs when someone uses words that mean the opposite of, or something quite different from, what they literally signify. For example, in paragraph 36, when Montresor expresses alarm at Fortunato's cough and insists they turn back, Fortunato refuses, saying "I shall not die of a cough." Montresor's reply, "True—true," is ironic because he knows exactly how Fortunato will die but seems only to be agreeing that the cough is not life threatening.

> **EXERCISE**   What are some obvious examples of verbal irony in "The Cask of Amontillado"?

Situational irony refers to a detail or an event in a story that is incongruous or unexpected. For example, Fortunato's name could be considered ironic because he is not fortunate at all in this story.

Dramatic irony occurs when the reader of a story or the audience in a play knows something the character does not. In "The Cask of Amontillado" the reader is aware from the beginning that Montresor is seeking revenge on Fortunato by manipulating him into going down to the catacombs under his *palazzo* to taste the Amontillado. This irony creates suspense and emotional engagement in the reader, who wonders what Montresor has in store for his victim.

Mood

Mood refers to the atmosphere of a story and the emotional responses the reader feels. A story can be joyful, sad, humorous, surprising, uplifting, depressing, frightening, thoughtful—or any combinations of these moods.

Writers use many devices to create a mood: setting, description, imagery, choice of words (diction), suspense, irony, humour, and tone (the author's attitude).

Verbal irony is different from sarcasm. Sarcasm is usually intended to be mocking or hurtful (e.g., when someone says or does something you think is silly, and you say, "Oh, that's brilliant!"). Irony is often more subtle and not necessarily hurtful.

First Reading—At a Glance

1. Who is telling the story? To whom might he be telling it? When is he telling it?

   _____

   _____

2. Why does the narrator want revenge on Fortunato?

   _____

3. What is the setting of the story? (Where and when does it take place?)

   _____

4. What is Fortunato wearing? What is Montresor wearing?

   _____

5. How does Montresor manipulate Fortunato into going down to the catacombs under his *palazzo*? What weak point of Fortunato's does he exploit? Why does he keep mentioning someone named Luchresi?

_____

_____

6. How does Montresor murder Fortunato?

_____

7. What is your response to the story after your first reading?

_____

_____

Second Reading—Going Deeper

1. How does Montresor make use of the "supreme madness of the carnival season" to commit his crime? What steps has he already taken before meeting Montresor on the street? (For example, why does Montresor wear a black mask and a dark cloak [*roquelaire*] when he takes Fortunato to his *palazzo*?)

_____

_____

_____

2. How is it ironic that Fortunato is dressed like a court jester, in multi-coloured clothes and a cap with jingling bells, when he descends into the catacombs?

_____

3. Fortunato is already drunk when he meets the narrator, and yet Montresor gives him more wine from the vaults. How does the victim's drunkenness help Montresor commit his murder? What is ironic about his telling Fortunato that the Medoc is a precaution that will "defend (them) from the damps"?

_____

_____

_____

4. We never learn what "injuries" and "insults" have led Montresor to seek revenge on Fortunato. However, does Fortunato say anything insulting to him as they walk through the catacombs to find the Amontillado? If so, what?

_____

_____

_____

5. How is it ironic that Montresor produces a trowel when Fortunato asks him for a sign he is in the mason brotherhood? How is Fortunato's response ("You jest") ironic?

    _____

    _____

6. When Fortunato begins screaming (para. 77), Montresor echoes his screams and "surpasse(s) them in volume and in strength." What might this show about Montresor's state of mind?

    _____

7. What is your response to the story after your second reading?

    _____

    _____

    _____

Analyzing the Story

1. In the opening paragraph, the narrator tells us that "a wrong is . . . unredressed [unavenged] when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong." At the end of the story, does Fortunato know why Montresor has walled him into the niche? Is there any irony in this fact?

2. When Montresor pretends to be urging Fortunato to leave the catacombs, he tells him, "You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter" (para. 35). Does this speech give us any hint of why Montresor wants to murder Fortunato? How is Montresor's tone different in this speech than in his other utterances?

3. Montresor's family coat of arms is "a huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are embedded in the heel" (para. 47). How does this image symbolize the relationship between Montresor and Fortunato?

4. In the final paragraph, Montresor realizes that Fortunato is unconscious when he hears "only a jingling of the bells." He tells us, "My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so." How is this statement ironic, and what does it show about Montresor's feelings after having buried his enemy alive?

5. What is the mood of "The Cask of Amontillado"? How does Poe achieve this mood?

Looking at Language
Grammar in Context
Inverted Syntax

Syntax refers to the order in which words are placed within a sentence. To master a language, you must master its syntax.

The pattern of a typical English sentence is **subject + verb + complement**.

This pattern is seen in "The Cask of Amontillado."

> subject verb   complement
> He had a weak point . . .

> subject verb   complement
> I drink to the buried that repose around us.

> subject verb   complement   subject verb   complement
> It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close.

Sometimes writers employ **inverted syntax** to get the reader's attention or to create a particular effect. Generally, the words or phrases placed at the beginning or the end of a sentence have more impact than those found in the middle of a sentence.

Consider the opening sentence of the story:

> complement   subject verb
> The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult
> I vowed revenge.

A more conventional syntax would be:

> subject verb   complement
> I had borne the thousand injuries of Fortunato as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult
> I vowed revenge.

Read the two sentences out loud. Which one sounds better to you? What effect does placing "the thousand injuries" at the beginning of the sentence have on the reader?

Another example of inverted syntax is found in paragraph 65.

> "It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

A more conventional syntax would be:

> "It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire.*

Most of the time, verbs are not separated from their complements by other words or phrases. We say, "The detectives found several clues at the crime scene," not "The detectives found at the crime scene several clues."

However, Poe's sentence ("It is this," I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my *roquelaire* a trowel.") does not sound jarring or clumsy but rather fluid and elegant. What is the effect of ending the sentence with "a trowel"?

Inverted syntax is often used in poetry for poetic effect or to fit a particular rhyme or metre.

> **EXERCISE** There are several other examples of inverted syntax in "The Cask of Amontillado."
> Find and highlight five examples of inverted syntax. Hint: three of them are in the description of
> the Montresor coat of arms.

Vocabulary in Context

Archaic Words or Phrases

Clearly, some of the language Poe used in 1846 differs from the language used in contemporary stories and novels. Consider how different the following two sentences would sound if written by a modern author.

> 1. "He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much."

A contemporary paraphrase of this sentence might be

paraphrase: to rewrite or say something in different words

> He greeted me rather too enthusiastically, for he was quite drunk. OR
>
> He was overly friendly, as he had been drinking a lot. OR
>
> He greeted me a little too enthusiastically because of how much he'd had to drink.
>
> 2. "For the most part [Italians'] enthusiasm [about wine] is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires."

This sentence could be paraphrased

> For the most part, Italians pretend to be wine experts only when there is money to be made by cheating rich British and Austrian tourists.

Many readers would say that the paraphrased sentences lack the charm of the originals. One of the joys of reading literature from earlier eras is discovering what a language sounded like in the past and how it has evolved over time.

EXERCISE Paraphrase the following words or sentences into contemporary English.

1. "My dear Fortunato, you are **luckily met**" (para. 5).

   _____

2. "**Whither**?" (para. 17)

   _____

3. "**My own fancy grew warm** with the Medoc" (para. 51).

   _____

4. "Come, we will go back **ere** it is too late" (para. 52).

   _____

5. "The noise lasted for several minutes, **during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours** and sat down **upon** the bones" (para. 76).

   _____

Speaking Activities

Discuss the following in a small group.

1. Pretend you are producing a radio play of "The Cask of Amontillado," and your group is responsible for sound effects. Read through the story to find and highlight all the sounds that would be needed. What kind of music would you use to create the proper mood?

2. Is Montresor insane? Or is he a brilliant psychopath who has committed the perfect crime? Whatever your opinion, provide evidence from the story to support it.

3. What is your emotional response to the story? What specific details in the story caused this response?

4. Have you read other stories or poems by Poe? Tell your group about them. Why do you think Poe's writing is still so popular with contemporary readers?

5. Are there any contemporary writers who remind you of Poe? Tell your group about them.

Writing Activities
Analytical Writing

Choose one of the following topics and write a short essay. Remember to use quotation marks when quoting from the story.

1. Montresor is telling the story 50 years after it happened; some critics think it may be a death-bed confession. In your essay, provide evidence that Montresor feels guilty about what he did.

2. Present arguments to support the view that Montresor feels no guilt about his crime, that he is in fact proud of and satisfied by what he did.

3. Discuss Poe's use of irony in "The Cask of Amontillado." You can focus on verbal, situational, or dramatic irony, or any combination of the three. (See Literary Elements on page xx.)

4. Poe believed that every element of a short story—plot, character, setting, conflict, diction (choice of words), tone (the writer's attitude), imagery, symbolism, mood—should contribute to what he called "unity of effect." By this he meant the ultimate emotional response felt by the reader. In Poe's view, there should be no detail in a story that does not help to advance the emotional effect.

   In your opinion, does Poe achieve "unity of effect" in "The Cask of Amontillado"? In your essay, explain whether or not Poe achieved his objective.

Creative Writing

Choose one of the following.

1. Write a short story that features revenge and irony.

2. Tell the story of "The Cask of Amontillado" from Fortunato's point of view.

3. Imagine you are the person to whom Montresor is telling the story and you decide to report his crime to the police. Write a brief statement in which you recount what Montresor told you, explain why you have decided to report the crime, and offer your impression of Montresor's state of mind.

Oral Presentation Topics

Your teacher will provide instructions about the length and structure of your oral presentation, as well as details of what sources and visual aids are acceptable. See Section 4 (page xx) for advice about preparing and delivering an effective oral presentation.

1. The life and works of Edgar Allan Poe

2. Poe: The father of the detective novel

3. The carnival tradition in Catholic countries

4. History of the freemasons

5. Dark romanticism versus transcendentalism

SECTION 2
Poems

CHAPTER 13

Living in Sin

Adrienne Rich (1955)

About the Poet

ADRIENNE RICH (1929–2012) was born in Baltimore and educated at Radcliffe College, the women's liberal arts college affiliated with Harvard University. Her father, a renowned pathologist at Johns Hopkins University, encouraged her to write poetry from an early age, and she published her first collection in 1951 while still at university. In 1953, she married Alfred Conrad, a Harvard economist with whom she had three sons. In the 1960s, Rich became heavily involved in the anti-war, civil rights, and feminist movements. During this period, her poetry changed a great deal, reflecting her evolving identity and her deep commitment to lesbian and women's issues. She and her husband separated in 1970, and she was deeply shaken when he committed suicide a few months later. In 1976, she began a relationship with writer and editor Michelle Cliff, who remained her partner until Rich's death in 2012.

Rich had a long career as a poet, essayist, and teacher and won many prestigious awards for her work. She published 32 books of poetry and essays and is considered an influential writer and activist. The following poem is from her second collection, *The Diamond Cutters* (1955).

Living in Sin[1]

1   She had thought the studio[2] would keep itself;
    no dust upon the furniture of love.
    Half heresy,[3] to wish the taps less vocal,
    the panes[4] relieved of grime.[5] A plate of pears,

5   a piano with a Persian shawl, a cat
    stalking the picturesque amusing mouse
    had risen at his urging.
    Not that at five each separate stair would writhe[6]
    under the milkman's tramp;[7] that morning light

10 so coldly would delineate the scraps
    of last night's cheese and three sepulchral bottles;
    that on the kitchen shelf among the saucers
    a pair of beetle-eyes would fix her own—
    envoy from some village in the moldings . . .

15 Meanwhile, he, with a yawn,
    sounded a dozen notes upon the keyboard,
    declared it out of tune, shrugged at the mirror,
    rubbed at his beard, went out for cigarettes;
    while she, jeered[8] by the minor demons,

20 pulled back the sheets and made the bed and found
    a towel to dust the table-top,
    and let the coffee-pot boil over on the stove.
    By evening she was back in love again,
    though not so wholly but throughout the night

25 she woke sometimes to feel the daylight coming
    like a relentless[9] milkman up the stairs.

---

1. *living in sin:* a relationship in which a couple live together without being married; this term is almost never used now, as social norms have changed since the 1950s.
2. *studio:* a one-room apartment
3. *heresy:* unorthodox or unconventional opinion
4. *panes:* window glass
5. *grime:* dirt, grease
6. *writhe:* make an uncomfortable twisting motion
7. *tramp:* heavy steps, noisy walk
8. *jeered:* mocked, taunted
9. *relentless:* unceasing, without a break; the word has negative connotations.

POETIC ELEMENTS:
Free Verse; Similes and Metaphors

Free Verse

"Living in Sin" is written in **free verse**, a style favoured by many contemporary poets. In free verse (a translation of the French *vers libre*), there is no regular metre, rhythm, or rhyme. The poet is free to use language in a more natural way.

If you read "Living in Sin" out loud, however, you will notice that it sounds like a poem and not like a story or a letter or a newspaper article. You will also notice poetic elements like alliteration, imagery, and symbolism.

Similes and Metaphors

Similes and metaphors are figures of speech in which two things are compared for literary or poetic effect. A **simile** is an explicit comparison that features the words *like* or *as*. A **metaphor**, by contrast, is an indirect comparison that does not use these words.

An example of a simile is found in "The Cremation of Sam McGee" (Chapter 12).

> Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold it stabbed **like a driven nail**.
> The sensation of cold is compared to the sensation of being stabbed by a nail.

An example of a metaphor is found in Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 (Chapter 10).

> But **thy eternal summer** shall not fade . . .
> The subject's beauty is compared to the beauty of summer.

First Reading—At a Glance

1. Reread lines 1 to 14, in which the young woman compares her expectations of living with her lover in a studio apartment with the reality. Then complete the chart.

What she imagined (pleasant things)	The reality (not so pleasant)
the studio would keep itself	noisy water taps

2. What visual image do we have of the lovers' studio apartment? What do the items in it reveal about the couple's lifestyle?

_____

_____

3. Find four examples of auditory imagery in the poem. Are they pleasant sounds?

_____

_____

4. Reread lines 15 to 26. What image do we get of the man in the relationship? Why do you think the poem's narrator falls out of love with him during the day but is back in love by evening?

_____

_____

5. What is your initial response to this poem? Do you sympathize with the young woman? Why or why not?

_____

_____

_____

Analyzing and Responding

1. Carefully reread lines 1 to 14. Line 8 begins with "Not that . . . " and line 12 begins with "That . . . " What words are missing from each of these lines? (You will find them earlier in the poem.) Why do you think the poet removed these words?

2. What is the mood of lines 1 to 14? How does the imagery (visual and auditory) help create this mood?

3. Reread lines 15 to 22 and circle all the past tense verbs. Then read these lines out loud. What effect do all the final *d* and *t* sounds (along with the many commas) have on the mood of these lines? How do these lines sound different from lines 1 to 14 and lines 23 to 26? You may have to read the whole poem out loud to hear the difference.

4. How is the phrase "furniture of love" a metaphor for the couple's relationship? What might the studio symbolize in this poem?

5. Comment on the images of the out-of-tune piano and the coffee-pot boiling over, which can be seen as metaphors for aspects of the couple's relationship. (What else might be out of tune or boiling over?)

6. In line 13, the young woman talks about "a pair of beetle-eyes" staring at her, an "envoy from some village in the moldings." What might these eyes represent for her? What does this image reveal about her true feelings?

7. The images of daylight and the milkman are repeated twice in the poem, and in the final simile the daylight is "like a relentless milkman [coming] up the stairs." What does the daylight symbolize in the poem, and why does Rich compare it to a "relentless milkman?" What does this simile suggest about the couple's future together?

8. How is the title "Living in Sin" ironic?

9. After having analyzed and discussed "Living in Sin," what is your response? Has your opinion changed from your first reading? If so, how?

Writing Activities

Creative Writing

Choose one of the following.

1. Write a short story, poem, or song about falling out of love.

2. Write a poem as a counterpoint[10] to "Living in Sin" from the man's point of view.

3. Write a narrative essay about an experience in which you had certain expectations about someone or something but were disappointed.

4. Write a short story or narrative essay about the joys and challenges of moving in with a romantic partner.

You may want to experiment with using similes and metaphors; if you write a poem, you may want to write it in free verse.

---

10. *counterpoint*: something that contrasts with something else

Analytical Writing

Write a short essay on one of the following topics.

1. What insights about relationships are offered in "Living in Sin?" Are these insights as valid in the twenty-first century as they were in 1955?

2. Using what you have learned about similes, metaphors, imagery, and mood, write an analysis of "Living in Sin." Consider some of the following questions: How is the studio in "Living in Sin" a metaphor for the couple's relationship? How does the poet use imagery to show us the issues they are dealing with? What do the mood and the final simile suggest about the couple's future?

Oral Presentation Topics

Your teacher will provide instructions about the length and structure of your oral presentation, as well as details of what sources and visual aids are acceptable. See Section 4 (page xx) for advice about preparing and delivering an effective oral presentation.

1. The life and works of Adrienne Rich

2. The American feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s

Writing Skills

The Writing Process

If you are like most students, you have probably—at least once—left a writing assignment to the last minute. Then you hurriedly wrote something the night before the due date, leaving yourself no time to reconsider, revise, and carefully edit the text before you handed it in. Sound familiar?

Were you happy with the result of this last-minute effort? Probably not. Writing is a process that requires time for reflection, revision, and polishing. A last-minute composition is nothing more than a first draft—and first drafts, by definition, are never very good. If you want your writing to be effective, it is essential to leave yourself time to get feedback, revise, edit, and proofread.

In this section, you will learn more about the writing process as well as some strategies that will help you become a better writer.

Process versus Product

When accomplished singers, musicians, actors, dancers, or athletes perform, what you hear and see is the result of a great deal of training, rehearsal, practice, and hard work. You seldom see the process that led to the performance, but the product would not exist without it.

The same is true of effective writing. Writing is not one skill but a complex combination of several skills. The more you practise writing, the stronger your skills become. Writing experts advise focusing on the process rather than the product when you write; in other words, do not expect good results at the beginning of the process but keep working until you achieve a text you are satisfied with.

To write an effective essay, you have to

- choose and define a topic;
- come up with ideas about the content (this requires reflection and possibly research);
- decide on the structure;
- write a rough draft;
- get feedback (ideally);
- revise the draft until it is in the best shape possible; and
- edit and proofread for grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary choice, and clarity.

Sometimes the writing process goes step by step, generally following the order described above. More often, writing is a messier business that involves a lot of problem solving. As you work through the process, new ideas will occur to you and your perspective on the topic may change. You may end up deciding to adjust your focus, change some of the content, or revise the structure. These types of changes are all natural to writing. When you put in the effort of working through the process, you will have a product you are proud of. The process gets easier with practice, so every writing assignment is an opportunity to become a better writer.

The strategies below are tools to help you with writing. Everyone's writing process is different, and strategies that work well for others may not be for you (and vice versa). Try as many strategies as possible, more than once, until you discover which ones work best for you. Writing is a creative act—approach it with an open and experimental attitude.

A Writer's Toolbox

Prewriting

Thinking, Brainstorming, Freewriting, and Mind Mapping

The process of writing begins before the first draft and before pen touches paper or a blank Word document appears on the screen. The first step in writing occurs in your head. Begin thinking about what you want to write about or, if the topic is already chosen, start thinking about your response to it. Writers report that good ideas come to them while walking, swimming, cleaning the house, taking a shower, daydreaming—great ideas often flow freely when your brain is engaged in something other than staring at a screen or a piece of paper.

Three effective prewriting strategies are

- brainstorming—writing down ideas quickly, in words or phrases;
- freewriting—setting a timer and writing down whatever comes to your mind, in sentences; and
- mind mapping—organizing your material in a visual way, connecting main ideas to supporting ideas).

See pages xx, xx, and xx for details and examples of these strategies.

Defining and Narrowing Your Topic

You may have done this before you began working on your text, or you may need to do some prewriting to find your focus. This aspect of the writing process is crucial. Some topics are too broad and thus impossible to work with; some are too narrow, so there will be little to say about them. A well-defined and workable topic is essential and will save you time and frustration.

If you are unsure about whether your topic is workable, ask your teacher for feedback.

Outlining

An outline is a plan for the structure of your text: it sets out the order in which you'll make your points. Many writers like to start with a plan (knowing they may deviate from it later on), whereas others prefer to begin drafting without a detailed plan. Some outlines are very detailed, others more general. There is no right way to make an outline, so do what works well for you and revise as necessary.

See page xx for a brief outline of the compare-and-contrast essay and page xx for a template of a detailed outline.

Drafting

Drafting is the core of the writing process in which you begin to compose your text for the reader. Some writers prefer to begin drafting on paper, then type up their texts; others do everything on-screen.

There are advantages to both methods. Writing by hand engages your brain in a way that typing does not, and many writers say that pen and paper beats the keyboard when it comes to creativity. Typing is a bit faster, and your draft looks a lot neater. (Remember that a word processed document can look a lot more finished than it really is.) Try experimenting with each approach to see what works best for you.

Introduction
Introduce topic; grab reader's attention: _____
_____
Thesis statement: _____
_____

Body Paragraph 1
Topic sentence: _____
Support (facts, anecdotes, metaphors, analogies, quotes, ideas, expert opinions, reflections, etc.):
_____
_____
_____
_____

Body Paragraph 2
Topic sentence: _____
Support (facts, ideas, anecdotes, metaphors, analogies, quotes, expert opinions, reflections, etc.):
_____
_____
_____
_____

Body Paragraph 3
Topic sentence: _____
Support (facts, ideas, anecdotes, metaphors, analogies, quotes, expert opinions, reflections, etc.):
_____
_____
_____
_____

Body Paragraph 4
Topic sentence: _____
Support (facts, ideas, anecdotes, metaphors, analogies, quotes, expert opinions, reflections, etc.):
_____
_____
_____
_____

Conclusion
Restate thesis; signal ending _____

First drafts are—and should be—messy and tentative texts. In an online interview Tobias Wolff, author of "Powder," says that "My first drafts are awful . . . If I ever let anybody see the rough drafts of the stories that I write, they would wonder why I ever decided that I was a writer" (02:25–02:37). Wolff is hardly the first writer to say this. He explains that his "awful" first drafts don't bother him because he knows he will continue to work on them and that, several weeks later, he will have a story he is proud of. So do not be discouraged by a first draft with a lot of problems; any accomplished writer will tell you that a bad first draft is a valuable and necessary part of the writing process.

An interview with Tobias Wolff titled "On Doing Poorly in School" (and other videos featuring Tobias Wolff) can be found on YouTube.

Getting Feedback

It is difficult to be objective about your own writing, and what is clear to you may not be clear to a reader. An important part of the writing process, therefore, is to ask someone else to read your drafts and give you specific and constructive feedback. Ask the reader to tell you which parts work well, which parts need revision, and what suggestions they have for improving the text. Take all feedback seriously but remember that, as the writer, you have the final decision on any changes.

You may be asked to give and receive feedback in class; your teacher will provide instructions on how to do this constructively.

Revising

To revise means "to see again." Read your text carefully and try to imagine how a reader would respond to it, then begin to make changes as appropriate.

Most writing experts will tell you it is crucial to get some distance from your text between the first draft and the second. Put the text away for a day or two, so you can look at it with fresh eyes. It may not seem as wonderful—or as horrible—as you thought when you first wrote it.

You may find it easier to see your writing with fresh eyes if, rather than revising on-screen, you work with a double-spaced hard copy. The extra spacing allows you to make changes in the margins and between the lines and easily see your revisions. Working with pen and paper may also help with focus and creativity.

If you prefer to work entirely on-screen, using Track Changes in Word—especially the "balloon" view—is an effective way to clearly see all of your revisions. You can also use the Comments feature to write notes to yourself. (If you do not use Word, your writing software will have a similar feature.)

Although revising a text may seem like a complicated task, there are really only three things you will be doing during this process.

1. **Adding** words, sentences, paragraphs, examples, definitions, explanations, metaphors, comparisons, transition words, and so on.

Based on feedback and your own objective re-viewing of your text, you may realize that parts of your text need development. Adding definitions, examples, metaphors, images, or anecdotes will make your writing clearer and more vivid.

2. **Changing** words, syntax (word order), sentence order, paragraph order, ideas, examples, and so on.

Anything in a text can be changed, and changed again until you are happy with the result. You may replace a dull word with a more evocative one or a vague word for something more precise.

For information about sentence structure, see page xx.

The syntax (word order) can be revised for conciseness and elegance. You may decide to combine two or more sentences or break up a long sentence. The order in which you present information or ideas can be changed as necessary. You may also revise for content: a weak or irrelevant idea or example can be replaced by a better one.

3. **Removing** words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, ideas, examples, and so on.

Many writers find it difficult to delete text. They are oh so willing to add things and quite happy to change things but reluctant to delete anything. However, a first draft often contains unnecessary elements. Cut irrelevant information, sentences that break paragraph unity, or paragraphs that go off topic or don't support your thesis statement. The same applies to redundancies and overused intensifiers (e.g., *very*, *extremely*, *amazingly*).

Editing

Editing is the process of reading your text carefully to correct errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You may also edit for repeated words, and to ensure your sentences don't all begin the same way.

Do not rely on spellcheckers because they cannot distinguish between homophones and will only correct words they don't recognize. (The spellcheck program doesn't know you meant *banker* when you typed *baker* or *there* when you typed *their*.) Grammar checkers are notoriously unreliable, too.

Be concise. If you can say something in fewer words, do it!

It is often hard to see your own mistakes, so ask someone else to read your text for errors.

Proofreading

Proofreading (also called *proofing*) is the last step in the writing process, after revising and editing. When you proofread, you reread your finished text very slowly and carefully for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and errors in sentence structure.

Read the text multiple times: once for grammar, once for punctuation, and once for sentence structure. (Reading your text out loud will alert you to problems with sentence structure or missing words.)

As with revision, it is important to read the text with fresh eyes. Allow a day or two between editing and proofing.

Sentences

Sentences are the building blocks of writing, so the ability to compose clear and effective sentences is essential. If readers can follow your sentences, they can follow your paragraphs, essays, articles, reports, stories, blogs, emails, or anything else you write.

Sentence Strategy: Identify Subjects and Verbs

There are four sentences types: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex. For examples of each sentence type, see Chapter 4, page xx.

A sentence must have a subject and a verb. The subject tells the reader *who* or *what* the sentence is about; the verb indicates what the subject *does* or *is* (action or state). In compound and compound-complex sentences, there are more than one subject and verb.

> subject   verb
> <u>Cybersecurity experts</u> **have been warning** the public about identity theft for years. (simple sentence)

> subject   verb   subject verb
> <u>The sun</u> **was shining**, so <u>Bill</u> **decided** to call in sick. (compound sentence)

Sentence Strategy: Know Where to Place the Subject and Verb

Readers will understand a sentence more easily if the subject (the *who* or *what*) is identified early and is placed close to the verb (the action or state). A sentence that takes too long to get to the subject may lack clarity.

Compare these two sentences. Which one is easier to understand?

> A. Confused by all the choices available and unsure of what career would be the best fit for them, many students delay going to university and decide to work or travel beforehand.

> B. Many students delay going to university and decide to work or travel beforehand, confused by all the choices available and unsure of what career would be the best fit for them.
> **Sentence B is clearer because the subject, *students*, is made clear from the start.**

The subject and verb should be close together in a sentence. Anything that separates them can make the sentence unclear.

Compare these two sentences. Which one is clearer?

> A. People in the helping professions, discouraged by cutbacks, bureaucracy, and lack of support from their institutions, often burn out.

> B. People in the helping professions often burn out, discouraged by cutbacks, bureaucracy, and lack of support from their institutions.
> **Sentence B is clearer because the subject (*people in the helping professions*) and the verb (*burn out*) are close to each other.**

> **TIP** Identify the subject early in the sentence and keep the subject and verb close together.

Sentence Strategy: Use Sentence Variety

Vary the length and structure of your sentences: mix long and short sentences and do not begin every sentence the same way.

Revise Short, Choppy Sentences

A series of short sentences can sound choppy and even childish.

> Irene Adler was an opera singer. She was wealthy and independent. Actresses and singers had a low social status in Victorian times. They were not considered respectable. The King could not marry her.

Instead combine short sentences that are related to each other. For example, the above paragraph can be written in two sentences.

Although Irene Adler's career as an opera singer made her wealthy and independent, her social status was low. Actresses and singers were not considered respectable in Victorian times and therefore the King could not marry her.

There are three ways to combine sentences—with a coordinating conjunction, a subordinating conjunction, or a relative pronoun.

Coordinating Conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions combine two complete sentences. Remember the coordinating conjunctions with the acronym FANBOYS—*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*.

> The temperature was −27°C. Daniel went out for his morning run.
>
> The temperature was −27°C **and/but/yet** Daniel went out for his morning run.

When two complete sentences are combined by a coordinating conjunction, both sentences have equal weight.

Subordinating Conjunctions

Another way to combine sentences is to subordinate one of the sentences, using a **subordinating conjunction**.

> **Although** the temperature was −27°C, Daniel went out for his morning run.

In this example, there is a main clause (*Daniel went out for his morning run*) and a subordinate clause (*although the temperature was −27°C*). The main clause (also called an independent clause) can stand on its own, whereas the subordinate (or dependent) clause needs to be part of a longer sentence.

Some common subordinating conjunctions are listed below.

after	as though	provided	until	whether
although	because	since	when/whenever	while
as	before	so that	where	why
as if	if	than	whereas	
as soon as	in order that	though/even though	wherever	

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns—*who*, *whom*, *which*, or *that*—can also be used to combine sentences.

> My aunt is a judge in BC. She has invited me to visit her this summer.
>
> My aunt, **who** is a judge in BC, has invited me to visit her this summer.
> **The relative pronoun *who* replaces *she*.**

In a complex sentence using a relative pronoun, the independent clause is generally the idea the writer wishes to emphasize.

Consider these two sentences:

> A: My aunt, who is a judge in BC, has invited me to visit her this summer.
> **The main idea in Sentence A is the invitation to visit.**
>
> B: My aunt, who has invited me to visit her this summer, is a judge in BC.
> **The main idea in Sentence B is the fact that the aunt is a judge in BC.**

For more about conjunctions, see Section 5, Grammar, page xx.

TIP Do not overuse coordinating conjunctions. Too many sentences combined with *and*, *so*, or *but* can sound monotonous. There are usually other ways to say the same thing, often using fewer words.

TIP When you are revising your writing, be sure you have not put your key message in a subordinating clause. The information in the main clause carries more weight.

Revise Long, Rambling Sentences

Sentences that pack in too many phrases, clauses, and ideas are hard to follow.

> The graffiti artists who spread their tags all over the city believe they are creating edgy, urban art that brightens up dull surfaces like walls, overpasses, and train cars and, even more importantly, in their opinion, sends a message to middle-class commuters and workers about the importance of self-expression.

Dividing long, rambling sentences into shorter, more manageable ones will make your writing clearer and easier to follow. Here is one possible revision of the above sentence: divided into three shorter sentences, each with only one idea.

> The graffiti artists who spread their tags all over the city believe they are creating edgy, urban art. They are convinced their "work" brightens up dull surfaces like walls, overpasses, and train cars. Even more importantly, they think their graffiti sends a message to middle-class commuters and workers about the importance of self-expression.

Revise for Concision

Delivering your message in the fewest words possible makes for effective and elegant writing. Wordy sentences often lack clarity and power. There are several ways to reduce wordiness in English.

Techniques to reduce wordiness	Examples
1. Reduce clauses to phrases.	*clause* Kevin quit his job **because he was bored by the lack of challenge**. *phrase* **Bored by the lack of challenge**, Kevin quit his job.
2. Reduce phrases to words.	*phrase* Linda is a legal consultant **with a lot of experience**. *word* Linda is an **experienced** legal consultant.
3. Use nouns as adjectives. Note: When plural nouns become adjectives, they become singular; "an apartment with three bedrooms" becomes "a three-bedroom apartment."	*noun* *Elle* is a magazine that focuses on **fashion**. *adjective* *Elle* is a **fashion** magazine. *noun* The ice storm, which happened in **1998**, affected millions of Quebec and Ontario residents. *adjective* The **1998** ice storm affected millions of Quebec and Ontario residents.
4. Use compound subjects and/or verbs to avoid redundancy.	The **minister promised** to invest in infrastructure. **She** also **promised** to hire more inspectors. *The minister* and *she* refer to the same subject, and the verb *promised* is repeated. **The minister promised** to invest in infrastructure and hire more inspectors.
5. Avoid using *There is/ are* and *It is* to begin a sentence if you can begin with the subject instead.	It is unknown how much damage has been done. The extent of the damage is unknown. *The clause* how much damage has been done *has been reduced to the phrase* the extent of the damage.

A **clause** is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb, whereas a **phrase** is a group of words that works together but lacks a subject and/or verb.

For more examples of how to reduce wordy phrases, see Section 5, Vocabulary Choices, page xx).

6. Do not begin a sentence with *This* if you can link the sentence to the previous one.	The Canadian dollar fell last winter. **This** resulted in fewer Canadians travelling abroad. The Canadian dollar fell last winter, **resulting** in fewer Canadians travelling abroad.
7. Use the possessive rather than a wordy phrase.	The **struggle that his uncle had with alcoholism** has made Brent avoid drinking. His **uncle's struggle** with alcoholism has made Brent avoid drinking.
8. Eliminate intensifiers like *very* and *many*; use a strong word to convey the same meaning.	After her **extremely busy** work week, Elise was **very tired**. After her **challenging** work week, Elise was **exhausted**.
9. Replace the passive with the active.	The reputation of the company **is being hurt** by the negative reviews online. Negative online reviews **are hurting** the company's reputation.

Sentence Strategy: Fix Common Sentence Structure Problems

The most common sentence structure problems are sentence fragments, comma splices, run-on sentences (or fused sentences), parallel structure problems, dangling or misplaced modifiers, and illogical shifts (in tenses or pronouns).

TIP When revising your writing, reduce whenever possible.

Sentence Fragments

Fragments can look like sentences but are incomplete, missing either a subject or a complete verb. While fragments can be used effectively in creative writing, they are usually a major mistake in formal or academic texts.

Fragments	Sentences
Some of my best friends. Without a verb, we don't know if *some of my best friends* is the subject or the complement of the sentence.	subject **Some of my best friends** disagree with my decision. complement I told **some of my best friends** the secret.
The last time I saw her. There's a verb, but we have no idea what this phrase means. Is it the subject, the complement, or an adverbial clause?	subject **The last time I saw her** was at Bill's Halloween party. complement I can't remember **the last time I saw her**. adverbial clause Heidi seemed content **the last time I saw her**.
Cruising around town with the gas gauge near Empty. *Cruising* could be the subject (gerund) or part of the verb (present participle).	subject (*cruising* is a gerund) **Cruising around town with the gas gauge near Empty** doesn't make Pete nervous. verb (*cruising* is a present participle) The boys were **cruising around town with the gas gauge near Empty**.
Although their divorce was not final. This is a subordinate clause; a main clause is needed to make a complete sentence. We can also simply remove the subordinating conjunction.	subordinate clause main clause **Although their divorce was not final,** Diana and Jorge were both planning weddings to their new partners. independent (main) clause **Their divorce was not final.**

Comma Splices

A **comma splice** occurs when two independent (main) clauses are joined by a comma. It is a common error, easily corrected.

>   The train was late, I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour.

There are four ways to correct a comma splice.

Techniques to correct a comma splice	Examples
1. Make two sentences.	The train was late**.** I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour.
2. Combine the two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction.	The train was late, **so** I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour.
3. Turn one of the independent clauses into a dependent (subordinate) clause.	**Because** the train was late, I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour. I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour **because** the train was late.
4. Separate the sentences with a semicolon (if the sentences are closely related).	The train was late**;** I called the babysitter to stay another half-hour.

Run-on Sentences

Run-on sentences (also called **fused sentences**) interfere with the reader's comprehension. Whereas comma splices contain a comma, run-ons contain no punctuation whatever. Correct them using the same four methods used to correct comma splices (see page xx).

>   A run-on sentence is a sentence that runs on when it should stop it is a major sentence structure error because it creates confusion.

Parallel Structure Errors

Items in a series should have **parallel structure** (the same grammatical structure).

	gerund infinitive
Incorrect	In winter, Sheila likes **skiing** and **to skate.**
Correct	In winter, Sheila likes **skiing** and **skating.**
Correct	In winter, Sheila likes to **ski** and (to) **skate.**
	noun infinitive phrase
Incorrect	In the workshop we learned about **balanced diets**, **how to meditate**, and
	verb
	we need to get rid of negative emotions.
Correct	In the workshop we learned **how to have** a balanced diet, **how to meditate,** and **how to get rid** of negative emotions.
Correct	In the workshop we learned about a **balanced diet**, **meditation,** and **positive emotions**.
Correct	In the workshop, we learned **to balance** our diet, (to) **meditate,** and (to) **get rid** of negative emotions.

Comparisons using *as* or *than* must also be parallel.

	adjective verb
Incorrect	This film is more **disturbing** than **it scared us**.
Correct	This film is more **disturbing** than **scary**.
Correct	The film **disturbed** us more than (it) **scared** us.

Errors in parallelism commonly occur with the **correlating conjunctions** *both . . . and*, *either . . . or*, *neither . . . nor*, and *not only . . . but*.

	verb noun
Incorrect	The city *both* **raised** taxes *and* **social programs** were cut. (Also one verb is active, the other passive.)
Correct	The city *both* **raised taxes** *and* **cut social programs**.

	verb pronoun
Incorrect	The inspector will *either* **close down** this rat-infested restaurant *or* **he** will order the owner to call an exterminator immediately.
Correct	The inspector will *either* **close down** this rat-infested restaurant *or* **order** the owner to call an exterminator immediately.
Correct	*Either* **the inspector** will close down this rat-infested restaurant *or* **he** will order the owner to call an exterminator immediately.

	verb noun
Incorrect	*Not only* **did he lose** his wallet *but also* **his cell phone and laptop**.
Correct	He lost **not only** his wallet but **also** his cell phone and laptop.

Correlating conjunctions link equal grammatical items (nouns to nouns, verbs to verbs, adjectives to adjectives, and so on).

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a phrase or clause placed too far from the subject it is modifying, making the sentence difficult to understand. These are common errors that can make your sentence unclear and even comical.

> Laying over 250 eggs, Patty was proud of her prized hen.

> Lost for several decades, Joseph has found the missing manuscript.

Patty laid 250 eggs? Joseph was lost for several decades? That's what these sentences mean, because of the dangling participles (*laying, lost*); the words they are supposed to modify are either missing or in the wrong place.

When a dependent clause with a participle begins a sentence, the noun that follows the comma is the subject of the clause (e.g., Patty or Joseph). Dangling modifiers can be corrected by changing the sentence structure or revising the sentence completely.

Corrected	Laying over 250 eggs, Patty's prized hen made her proud.
Better	Patty was proud of her prized hen, which laid over 250 eggs.
Corrected	Lost for several decades, the missing manuscript has been found by Joseph.
Better	Joseph has found the manuscript that was lost for several decades.

In a sentence beginning with *not only*, the subject and verb are inverted.

> Not only is too much sun bad for your skin, but it can also damage your eyes.

The same is true after *neither* and *so*.

> Neither did I.

> So will he.

TIP Reading your text out loud will help you notice fragments, comma splices, run-ons, and errors in parallel structure.

The following sentence contains a dangling infinitive.

> To understand the real causes and effects of climate change, a background in science and geography is essential.

A background wants to understand climate change? As with participles and gerunds, whatever comes after the comma following an infinitive clause is the subject of the clause.

Formal	To understand the real causes and effects of climate change, **one** needs a background in science and geography.
Informal	To understand the real causes and effects of climate change, **you** need a background in science and geography.
Imperative	To understand the real causes and effects of climate change, **get** a background in science and geography.

Misplaced modifiers (adverbs, phrases, clauses, negatives, and possessives) are another source of confusion. Be careful about their placement in a sentence; try to keep them as close as possible to the words they modify.

Confusing	She loves him **only** because he has a lot of money. Does she love *only* him and no one else, or is his money her *only* reason for loving him?
Clear	She loves **only** him because he has a lot of money. She's a material girl and isn't interested in anyone else.
Clear	She **only** loves him because he has a lot of money. Apart from his money, there's nothing she loves about him.
Confusing	**In danger of being demolished**, **the Heritage Foundation** bought the old manor house and restored it to its original condition. Was the Heritage Foundation about to be demolished?
Clear	**In danger of being demolished, the old manor house** was bought by the Heritage Foundation and restored to its original condition.
Clear	The Heritage Foundation bought the **old manor house, in danger of being demolished**, and restored it to its original condition.
Confusing	Rachel put all the clothes in the laundry basket **that she had worn on her camping trip.** She wore a laundry basket on her camping trip?
Clear	Rachel put all the clothes (that) **she had worn on her camping trip** in the laundry basket.
Confusing	Please consult the attached **farmers'** letter of complaint. Are the farmers attached?
Clear	Please consult the attached letter of complaint **from the farmers**.

Phrases with *and* can be confusing as well.

Confusing	The emergency room was filled with coughing patients, nurses, **and** doctors. Were the nurses and doctors coughing?
Clear	The emergency room was filled with nurses, doctors, **and** coughing patients. More probable.
Clear	The emergency room was filled with nurses, doctors, **and** patients, **all coughing**. Disaster scenario!

TIP Sometimes dangling or misplaced modifiers are difficult to spot in your own writing, so you may want to ask someone to read your text to look for any errors.

Illogical Shifts

Changing tenses or pronouns within a sentence for no reason is confusing to the reader.

Compare these two sentences.

> A: Although Dennis usually **doesn't spend** money on himself, last week he **bought** some new clothes.

> B: Penelope and Edward **meet** at work, **fall** in love, and **got** married two years later.

In Sentence A, the shift from present to past tense is logical; the contrast is between what Dennis usually does (present) with what he did last week (past). No revision is needed.

In Sentence B, however, the narrative begins in the present tense (*meet, fall*) but switches to the past tense (*got*) for no logical reason.

| Correct | Penelope and Edward **meet** at work, **fall** in love, and **get** married two years later. |
| Correct | Penelope and Edward **met** at work, **fell** in love, and **got** married two years later. |

Avoid shifting from one pronoun to another in the same sentence or using a pronoun that doesn't match the noun it represents.

Incorrect	If **we** added up how many hours **we** spend on social media, **you** would be shocked.
Correct	If **we** added up how many hours **we** spend on social media, **we** would be shocked.
Correct	If **you** added up how many hours **you** spend on social media, **you** would be shocked.
Incorrect	**Anyone** can learn to play a musical instrument if **you** practise.
Correct	**Anyone** can learn to play a musical instrument if **he or she** practises.
Correct	**You** can learn to play a musical instrument if **you** practise.

Anyone is not a gendered pronoun, and so *he or she*, however inelegant, is a correct form here. It would be more natural to say "anyone can learn to play a musical instrument if they practise." The use of the singular *they* is becoming more and more acceptable but some style guides do still discourage its use in formal writing. See the discussion of gender-neutral pronouns in Section 5, Agreement, page xx.

TIP Edit carefully for illogical shifts. They can cause confusion and make your writing seem careless.

Paragraphs

A text with no paragraph breaks is very hard to follow. A new **paragraph** is a visual signal to the reader to pause and prepare for a new topic or idea or a shift in focus.

Paragraphs can vary in length, depending on their content and function in the larger text. A topic or idea that needs a lot of development may require a paragraph four to eight sentences long, whereas a transitional paragraph may need only one or two sentences. An important idea may merit a very short paragraph of its own; very long paragraphs should probably be broken up into smaller units.

Typically, a paragraph in an essay or article needs three elements: a topic sentence, supporting details (facts, examples, definitions, analogies, descriptions, anecdotal evidence, and so on), and a concluding sentence.

Topic Sentences and Paragraph Structure

A topic sentence generally has two parts: the topic and the controlling idea.

topic   controlling idea
Learning a new language provides many cognitive benefits.

SECTION 4

Oral Presentations

An oral presentation is a performance and, like any performance, requires thought, planning, and rehearsal.

Presenting in front of your class or in a small group is excellent practice for the kind of public speaking you may have to do in your future studies or career: university seminars, business presentations, conferences, training sessions, speeches, interviews, and so on. School presentations may also help you to overcome any fear you have about public speaking. Every oral presentation is a valuable learning experience that will make you a more confident and effective public speaker.

The work you do to prepare for a presentation helps you deepen your knowledge and understanding of a topic. There's an old adage that if you want to learn something, teach it to someone else—this is what you do when you present to an audience.

These guidelines will help you prepare and deliver an effective oral presentation.

Choose and Define a Topic

Sometimes a topic is assigned to you; sometimes you get to choose. In either case, it is important to narrow the topic down to a manageable size so you can respect the time limits. If your topic is something vast like "English colloquialisms" (a suggested topic from Chapter 7) and you have only ten minutes, your first task is to decide what colloquialisms you want to focus on. For example, you could talk about slang expressions from the 1940s, '50s, and '60s (*geezer*, *moxie*, *burn rubber*, *far out*) and differentiate the expressions that lasted from the ones that didn't. Another option is to focus on a few colloquialisms and discuss their origins. You could also describe colloquialisms that arose from jazz or rap music, detective fiction, or Internet culture. Perhaps you prefer to concentrate on colloquialisms related to sports.

Don't be surprised if the focus of your presentation becomes clear only after you have begun researching. As with writing, your focus may change as you research and prepare. This is part of the intellectual excitement of research—you never know what fascinating information you will discover.

Research

Begin researching as soon as the presentation is assigned to you. Leaving it to the last minute is stressful and makes the task unnecessarily difficult.

Whether your research involves print material or online sources, it is important to evaluate a source before you use it. This is especially true when you are researching online, where anyone can say anything and there are few filters.

Reliable online sources	Unreliable online sources
• are written by experts or established authors • originate from credible institutions (universities, government agencies, professional organizations, etc.) • are factual and balanced • are written to inform, not influence • contain up-to-date information • are well written and edited	• are written by someone with no real expertise (e.g., a student's Prezi presentation; an uninformed or unprofessional blogger) • are biased • are trying to sell you something or promote a political agenda • are overly emotional and may contain irrational conspiracy theories or hysterical ranting • contain out-of-date information • contain grammar and spelling mistakes and poor writing

Start your research with an open mind and let yourself be guided by what you learn. Focus on the information that you find most interesting and that your listeners would most enjoy learning.

Plan the Presentation

Once you have gathered your information, you must carefully plan the presentation. Make an outline that contains

- an **introduction** that will elicit interest in your topic;
- the **main points** you want to cover;
- a **conclusion** that wraps everything up; and
- an **interactive component** that gets the audience involved. (Consider questions, a short quiz on the material, or an invitation to do something creative.)

Once you've planned and organized your presentation, you can prepare cue cards and visual aids.

Cue Cards

The worst thing you can do in an oral presentation is read from a script. Ideally, you should know your material well enough that you don't need notes. However, no one's memory is perfect and it is normal to feel nervous when speaking before an audience, so cue cards (cardboard index cards, 3″ × 5″ or 4″ × 6″) can help keep you focused on key points and organization.

The cue cards should not contain sentences—just brief notes to cue your memory. You should be familiar enough with your material that all you have to do is glance at the card to see the next item you are going to speak about.

Good cue card	Bad cue card
Examples of 1950s slang: • *I dig* • *Give me a bell* • *kooky* • *Nowheresville* • *queen*	Some examples of 1950s slang are *I dig*, which meant "I get it" or "I like it." *Give me a bell* meant "call me." *Kooky* meant crazy or offbeat. To be in *Nowheresville* indicated you were in a boring place (people also said *Dullsville*). Whereas today a *queen* usually refers to a flamboyant drag artist, in the 50s a queen was a popular girl.

Visual Aids

It doesn't matter whether you use PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, or another presentation software, whether you tape a poster or two to the wall or simply write a few words on the board during your presentation. The important thing to remember about visual aids is that they are merely aids— they are not the presentation. The key to the presentation is what you say, not what the audience is looking at. That said, visual cues can be helpful if used effectively. If you are using presentation software, experts recommend

- no more than one slide per minute;
- a title for each slide;
- maximum of four or five bullet points (like the Good Cue Card above);
- a large, easy-to-read font (titles: 36 to 44 pt; text: 28 or 32 pt);
- high-contrast for legibility (e.g., light text on dark background or vice versa); and
- a consistent background for all slides.

You should also

- avoid using moving texts and pointers, which are distracting; and
- proofread your work (eliminate all errors or typos).

The following is a bad presentation slide. However, the advice it contains is valid.

Example of a BAD Presentation Slide

PowerPoint, Keynote, Prezi, and other presentation software are great for projecting images and brief outlines or lists, but they are lethal when presenters project long texts, face the screen, and read from them. Listeners do not need you to read to them what they can read for themselves. If you are going to use presentation software, use it sparingly and intelligently. Above all, DO NOT READ from the screen. Whatever you project should be a visual aid to enhance what you are saying, nothing more. Keep in mind that sometimes posters, handouts, and words written on a whiteboard can be just as effective as presentation slides.

Rehearse

Once your cue cards and visual aids are ready, rehearse, rehearse, rehearse. If possible, present your talk to someone close to you and ask for feedback. The more you rehearse, the better you will know the material and the more comfortable you will feel in front of the group. Remember, a presentation is a performance; performing requires rehearsal.

Present

Do	Don't
• Set up equipment, visual aids, etc. before you begin; test your equipment. • Make eye contact with your audience; look around the room during your presentation. • Smile and look confident (even if you're a little nervous). • Stand in the middle of the room; use a remote or arrange to have someone work the PowerPoint so you are not stuck behind the computer. • Glance at your notes when you need to. • Speak loudly enough to be heard at the back of the room; speak clearly and at a moderate pace. • Invite questions and comments when you have finished. • Look enthusiastic about your topic. Your positive attitude will help the audience engage with your presentation—and help you enjoy your performance!	• Read from a script: WHAT'S READ IS DEAD! • Read from the screen. • Look at your feet, the floor, the desk, the board, your notes, the screen. • Hide behind the computer. • Turn your back on the audience. • Shift from side to side, cross your arms, or fidget. • Mumble. • Speak too softly, too quickly, or too slowly. • Look like you don't care. • Rush to sit down as soon the talk is over.

When you watch presentations—in person or online (e.g., TED talks)—notice the techniques used by effective speakers. Just as importantly, pay attention to the detracting elements in less successful presentations.

Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling, and Vocabulary

The Fundamentals of English Grammar

This section will focus on items that are problematic for advanced learners of English (and often for native speakers). A more extensive overview of English grammar is available to your teacher on the website.

Parts of speech refer to categories of words and their function within a sentence. The chart below sets out the nine parts of speech.

Part of speech	Function	Examples
noun	names an object, place, person, or concept	book, cat, Hawaii, Samuel, democracy
verb	expresses an action, a state of being, or an occurrence	talk, run, be, feel, happen, forget
pronoun	represents or refers to a noun or noun phrase	I, they, him, your, mine, herself, each, everybody, both, none, which, those
adjective	modifies a noun, pronoun, or another adjective	enormous, spicy, Japanese, shining, black, this, any, both, many
adverb	modifies a verb, adjective, or another adverb	quickly, extensively, downtown, now, never, too, maybe, at least, however
conjunction	links words or phrases to each other	and, but, although, because, when
article	modifies a noun	the, a/an
preposition	connects words, showing relationships in time and space; introduces an object	about, in, over, to, with, beside, except, for, like, of
interjection	expresses an emotion or attitude	Wow! Yummy! Please! Darn!

Nouns

A noun is a word that names an object, place, person, or abstract concept. There are different types of nouns and some nouns will fit into more than one category; for example, *book* is a common, concrete, countable noun.

Type of noun	Used for	Examples
common	things, places, categories of people, animals, concepts	book, city, doctor, woman, antelope, dimension, freedom
proper	specific person, place, thing	Dr. Smith, William Shakespeare, Arcade Fire, the Taj Mahal, New York, Parliament
concrete	things, people, places that can be perceived by the senses	printer, spaghetti, perfume, princess, J.K. Rowling, The White House, desert island
abstract	ideas or qualities not perceivable by the senses	love, pain, slavery, comedy, fear, intelligence
countable	things or people that can be counted	phone, ski hill, dollar, child, artist
uncountable	things or abstract concepts that cannot be counted	water, air, sand, hair, money, bread, time, serenity
collective	group or collection of people, animals, or things acting as a unit	class, team, committee, jury, family, group, audience, flock, herd, swarm, fleet

Countable and Uncountable Nouns

Countable nouns are things that can be counted (we say "one dollar" or "two dollars"), whereas uncountable nouns are things that can be measured but cannot be divided or counted (we don't say "one money" or "two monies"). For that reason, the word *number* is used with countable nouns ("the number of trucks on the road"), but the word *amount* is used with uncountable nouns ("the amount of gasoline consumed"). Some determiners can be used with both, but in English certain determiners are reserved for countable nouns and others for uncountable nouns.

Type of noun	Determiners
Countable	many, (a) few, fewer, fewest
Uncountable	much, (a) little, less, least

Example sentences	
Countable nouns	**Uncountable nouns**
Many accidents are caused by inattention.	Hurry! We don't have **much** time.
How many times have you checked your email this morning?	**How much** (money) does this data plan cost?
We have **so many** blessings to count.	She has had **so much** luck in her life.
We invited **a few** friends for dinner.	There's **a little** wine left in the bottle.
That's a dead-end job with **few** opportunities for advancement.	The boss has very **little** sympathy for employees' personal problems.
There were **fewer** people at the meeting than we expected.	Henry makes **less** money than his brother.
We tried to find the software with **the fewest** bugs.	Terry's co-workers are annoyed that she always tries to do **the least** work possible.
The **number** of women on the board of directors has not increased.	The **amount** of energy we spent on this is out of all proportion to its importance.

Many English speakers misuse *fewer* and *fewest*. You will hear people say, "There are less students in the program than last year," when they should say "fewer students."

Pay attention to *number* and *amount*. You will hear phrases like "the amount of consumers who complain online" when it should be "the number of consumers." If you can count it, it's a number; if you can't count it, it's an amount.

Verbs

A verb is a word that expresses an action, a state of being, or an occurrence. There are different types of verbs and some verbs will fit into more than one category; for example, *walk* is a regular, intransitive, dynamic verb.

Type of verb	Explanation	Examples
regular	Regular verbs take *-ed* (added to the base form) in the past tense and past participle.	climb/climbed/climbed watch/watched/watched repeat/repeated/repeated
irregular	Irregular verbs follow no fixed pattern for conjugation in the past tense; they need to be memorized. (See the chart on page xx for a list of irregular verbs.)	go/went/gone see/saw/seen think/thought/thought
transitive	Transitive verbs require an object and cannot stand alone.	We **brought** a salad to the picnic. You cannot simply say "We brought." You brought what? Laura **likes** jazz.

intransitive	Intransitive verbs do not need an object.	Accidents **happen**.
		Josephine **smiled**.
		Our brilliant plan **works**!
main	Apart from the simple present and simple past, English verb tenses consist of both a main verb and an auxiliary verb.	*aux main* It <u>was</u> **raining**.
auxiliary	*Be* and *have* are the most common auxiliary verbs; other auxiliaries include the modal verbs *will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, *should*, *ought to*, *may*, *might*, and *must*.	*aux main* The prisoner <u>has</u> **escaped**. *aux main* The coach <u>can</u> **help** you. *aux main* Your kindness <u>will not be</u> **forgotten**.
dynamic	Dynamic verbs express actions or processes that have a beginning and an end.	She **has watered** the plants.
		I **will memorize** all the irregular verbs.
		Pedro **scored** a goal.
stative	**Stative** verbs express a state of being, an emotion, a perception, or a relationship.	My aunt **believes** in ghosts.
		They **wanted** to rent a cottage.
		Ella **has known** him for years.

Verb Tenses: A Brief Overview

There are three basic tenses in English: *present*, *past*, and *future*. Each tense has a *progressive* (continuous) aspect and a *perfect* aspect.

Simple present	Present progressive	Present perfect	Present perfect progressive
I **work** every weekend.	I'**m working** outside today.	I **have worked** here for three years.	I **have been working** hard since this morning.
Simple past	**Past progressive**	**Past perfect**	**Past perfect progressive**
He **worked** all day yesterday.	He **was working** outside when the rain began.	He **had worked** there for several years before he was promoted.	He **had been working** very hard and needed a holiday.
Simple future	**Future progressive**	**Future perfect**	**Future perfect progressive**
This summer she **will work/is going to work** in a day camp.	She **will be working/is going to be working** with kids with special needs.	By the end of the summer, **she will have worked** for ten weeks.	By September, **she will have been working** all summer without a break.

Stative (Non-Progressive) Verbs

The following verbs are not normally used in the progressive tenses:

like/dislike	think* (opinion)	doubt	remember*	wish
want/desire	believe	forgive	satisfy	own/possess
need	prefer	guess* (suppose)	suppose	agree
have* (possess)	be	realize	understand	seem

*See the chart below.

The verb *be* is non-progressive, except when it means that someone is deliberately or temporarily behaving in a particular way.

He is being very nice about this.

She was not being cooperative.

Some verbs, including those asterisked in the list above, have more than one meaning and are sometimes stative, sometimes dynamic.

Stative usage	Examples	Dynamic usage	Examples
have (to possess)	She has green eyes.	**have** (in certain expressions: "have a good time," "have a party")	He is having a great time in Spain. We were having a party.
think (to have an opinion)	I think that's ridiculous.	**think** (to ponder)	I'm thinking about selling my car.
guess (to suppose)	I guess he's not coming.	**guess** (to make a guess)	I was guessing all the wrong numbers.
remember (to have awareness of something from the past)	I remember your father very well.	**remember** (to actively think about a memory)	She was remembering all the good times she had as a teenager.

The following **verbs of perception** are stative when they refer to how something or someone seems or appears but dynamic when they refer to someone performing an action.

Stative usage	Examples	Dynamic usage	Examples
look (to seem or appear)	You look happy.	**look** (to actively look at something)	We were looking out the window.
sound (to seem or appear)	He sounds tired.	**sound** (to actively cause a sound)	The smoke alarm was sounding because I burned my toast.
feel (to seem or appear)	We feel relieved.	**feel** (to actively touch something)	She was feeling her way through the dark hall.
smell (to seem or appear)	That perfume smells awful.	**smell** (to actively sniff something)	Mom is smelling the roses in the vase.
taste (to seem or appear)	The sauce tasted too salty.	**taste** (to actively taste something)	The chef had been tasting the sauce.

Active and Passive Voice

In the **active voice**, the subject performs the action. In the **passive voice**, the subject of the sentence is the object of the action. All verb tenses can be expressed in the passive voice.

The passive voice is formed by the verb *to be* + the **past participle** of the main verb.

Active voice	Passive voice
The mechanic **checked** the brakes.	The brakes **were checked** by the mechanic.
Many economists **have criticized** this theory.	This theory **has been criticized** by many economists.
Many people **read** this newspaper.	This newspaper **is** widely **read**.

Pronouns

Pronouns represent nouns (or groups of words that act as nouns). Without pronouns, language would be very repetitive.

Jon will not be able to look Jon in the mirror if Jon betrays Jon's friend.

Jon will not be able to look **himself** in the mirror if **he** betrays **his** friend.

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns have four cases:

- the **subject** case, in which the pronoun is the subject of the sentence or clause;
- the **object** case, in which the pronoun is the object of the verb or preposition;
- the **possessive** case, which indicates possession; and
- the **reflexive/intensive** case, which emphasizes or refers back to its noun or pronoun.

		Case		
		Subject	**Object**	**Possessive (adjective/pronoun)**	**Intensive/Reflexive**
Person	**First person singular**	I	me	my/mine	myself
	Second person singular	you	you	your/yours	yourself
	Third person singular	he/she/it	him/her/it	his/his; her/hers; its/—	himself/herself/itself
	First person plural	we	us	our/ours	ourselves
	Second person plural	you	you	your/yours	yourselves
	Third person plural	they	them	their/theirs	themselves

The following example sentences show the variety of ways in which the four cases of pronouns can be used.

> **I** promised **her** that **we** would invite **them**.
> **I myself** would never say this.
> **You** can't do this **yourselves**.
> This tablet is **his**; **hers** is upstairs.
> The car didn't start—**its** battery was dead.
> **Our** house doesn't clean **itself**—**we** have to clean **it**.
> **They** gave **it** to **us**.

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns are used when the subject and object of the sentence are the same.

Function	Examples
Refers back to the subject (noun or pronoun)	Cindy promised **herself** she would stick to the diet. **Cindy promised Cindy**
Provides emphasis	The victims **themselves** expressed forgiveness for his actions. **themselves emphasizes victims**
Means alone, often used with *by*	I went to the concert **by myself**. You can't do this **yourselves**.

Relative Pronouns

The relative pronouns *who* and *whom* refer to people; *which* and *of which* refer to things; *that* can refer to both people and things. *Whose*, the possessive form of *who*, is usually used for people but can sometimes be used for things.

Relative pronoun	Refers to	Examples
who, whoever	• the subject of the sentence or clause (only for people, never things)	I never trust anyone **who** has lied to me. She will tell **whoever** will listen about her new diet.

whom, whomever	• a direct or indirect object of a verb (only for people, never things)	The suspect, **whom** police had never seen before, ran away. Mr. Daley, with **whom** I have had little contact, signed the letter. We will approve of **whomever** you choose to hire.
whose	• something or someone that owns something (possessive)	The boy **whose** bicycle was stolen is upset. The store **whose** wall was sprayed with graffiti has been a target before.
which (of which), whichever	• things, never people	Margaret's diamond bracelet, **which** once belonged to her mother-in-law, is worth $10 000. Don's secret, **of which** he had never spoken until now, shocked his family. Take **whichever** chair you like.
that	• things or (sometimes) people	The yoga class **that** she likes was cancelled. He doesn't like people **that** talk about themselves all the time. (You could also use *who*.)

Who or *Whom*

Whom is used when the noun it represents is the **object**, not the subject, of a verb. *Whom* can be used with both direct and indirect objects. Although *whom* is seldom heard in spoken language, it is still part of formal writing.

> The nurse **who** cared for my mom showed me how to change a bandage.
> **Who** refers to *nurse*, who is the subject of *cared*.

> The suspect, **whom** the police charged with murder, had never been arrested before.
> **Whom** refers to *suspect*, who is the direct object of *charged*.

> The doctors to **whom** you spoke are orthopaedic surgeons.
> **Whom** is the indirect object of *spoke*.

In spoken language, *whom* can sound overly formal, and the last example would probably be expressed as "The doctors you spoke to are orthopaedic surgeons."

An easy way to determine whether to use *whom* is to restate the sentence replacing *who* or *whom* with *he/they* or *him/them*. If you would use *him/them*, you need the *m* in *whom*. If you would use *he/they*, the correct pronoun is *who*.

Referring back to the previous examples,

> Nurse—**he** cared for my mom = **who**

> Suspect—the police charged **him** with murder = **whom**

> Doctors—you spoke to **them** = **whom**

Many native speakers of English are unsure how to use *whom*, and some experts predict it will someday disappear from the language. In the meantime, it is still necessary to use it properly in formal written English.

Incorrect   Jason's new boss, **whom** he says is a genius, is coming for dinner.

   Incorrect because *whom* refers to *boss*; we would not say "him is a genius."

Correct   Jason's new boss, **who** he says is a genius, is coming for dinner.

   He is a genius.

Incorrect   Michelle's cousin, **who** she admires greatly, taught her to fly fish.

   Incorrect because *who* refers to *cousin*; we would not say "she admires he greatly,"
   so we need the *m* in *whom*.

Correct   Michelle's cousin, **whom** she admires greatly, taught her to fly fish.

   She admires him.

Which or *That*

They may sound equivalent, but *which* is used with non-restrictive (non-essential) clauses, whereas *that* is used with restrictive (essential) clauses.

A **non-restrictive** clause contains information that is not essential to identify the subject; it is separated from the rest of the sentence by commas and can be removed without interfering with the main idea.

   My apartment, which is close to the train station, costs $1200 per month.
   The apartment has been identified, and the clause about its location is non-essential. We can remove it and still know which apartment is referred to.

A **restrictive** clause contains essential information required to identify the subject. It begins with *that* and the clause is not separated by commas.

   The house that I grew up in burned down.
   The clause *that I grew up in* is essential to identifying the house. If we remove it, we don't know which house is referred to.

In some cases, *that* can be removed from the sentence.

   The house I grew up in burned down.

Who or *That*

The general rule is that *who* is used for people and *that* for animals and things.

   The Spy Who Loved Me is a 1977 James Bond film starring Roger Moore.

   The Mouse That Roared is a 1959 satirical British film starring Peter Sellers.

Of course, animals we think of as part of our families, or who we feel have human qualities, are often referred to by *he* or *she*, and therefore *who* is appropriate.

   My cat, Sheba, is the type of pet **who** makes you happy to be **her** servant.

Gender Issue: The Third-Person Singular Pronoun

Historically, the masculine pronouns *he*, *him*, *his*, and *himself* were to be used as the third-person singular pronouns even when they referred to women as well as men; the rationale was that, grammatically speaking, "the masculine included the feminine." Thus, one would say "Everyone is entitled to his opinion," and *his* was to include *her*.

This rule is no longer accepted, but English lacks a gender-neutral third-person singular pronoun. There are several ways to avoid using these masculine pronouns, none of them completely satisfactory.

1. Use *they/them/their* as a third-person singular pronoun.

> A political figure has to be careful about what **they** say on the record.
> If anyone calls, tell **them** I'll be back after lunch.
> Everyone expressed **their** opinion.

Using *they* for the third-person singular sounds natural in spoken language and has long been used. It is logical with pronouns like *everyone*, which are grammatically singular but express a plural.

Many writers advocate for the singular *they*, and some dictionaries already use it. However, some grammar experts insist that the singular *they* is still incorrect in formal writing.

2. Use **he or she** (or she or he); **him or her** (her or him); **his or her** (her or his).

> Each investor must decide how much risk **he or she** can tolerate.
> A patient needs to feel someone is listening to **her or him**.
> No one ever imagines **his or her** tweet will go viral.

Use this construction sparingly. Too much *he or she*, *him or her*, and *his or her* is awkward and distracting. In particular, avoid sentences like this: "A good spy must never forget that his or her government is relying on him or her to gather information on the enemy without anyone suspecting he or she is doing so."

The constructions *He/she* or *S/he* may also be used but are even more awkward than *he or she*.

3. Use a plural noun instead.

> All **investors** must decide how much risk **they** can tolerate.
> **Patients** need to feel someone is listening to **them**.
> **People** never imagine **their** tweets will go viral.

Plurals are a good solution in many instances, but overusing them can be monotonous. Also, in some situations you want to emphasize the individuality of the subject, so the singular is preferable.

4. Alternate *he* and *she*.

> Any athlete who tests positive for illegal drug use will immediately lose **his** place on the team. As well, **she** may be suspended from the sport for a period of time.

Some publications use *he* and *she* in alternating sentences, paragraphs, or chapters. This may work well for case histories (about individuals), but many readers find this approach distracting.

5. Rewrite the sentence to avoid the pronoun altogether.

> Any athlete who tests positive for illegal drug use will be removed from the team immediately and may be suspended from the sport for a period of time.

In cases where pronouns are avoidable, this may be the best option—until English has a gender-neutral pronoun!

Adjectives

An adjective modifies a noun, a pronoun, or another adjective. It is always placed **before** a noun (a *juicy* orange) or **after** a stative verb (Helen looks *calm*).

In English, adjectives do not need to agree in gender and number with the nouns they modify (a *big* boy; a *big* girl; *big* boys; *big* girls).

Order of Adjectives

When multiple adjective are used, they are placed in a particular order.

Adjective order
1. number/quantity: *one, 15, many, few*
2. opinion: *nice, cute, stupid, wonderful, exciting*
3. size/weight: *big, small, tall, fat, narrow, tiny, enormous*
4. physical quality: *clean, dirty, broken, shining*
5. age: *old, young, new, ancient*
6. shape: *round, square, cylindrical*
7. colour: *orange, blue-grey*
8. origin: *French, Asian, Indigenous, immigrant*
9. material: *leather, plastic, woollen, concrete*
10. type or purpose: *swimming* pool, *power* drill; *rock* concert

Native English speakers are almost never aware of this order but use it instinctively. For example, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* would never be changed to *My Fat Greek Big Wedding.*

The following examples show well-written sentences with multiple adjectives.

> That's a beautiful Italian sports car.
> **not a "sports beautiful Italian car"**

> We need a big round serving plate for the nachos.
> **not a "round serving big plate"**

> Mrs. Bixby adored her luxurious new black mink coat.

> Her new boyfriend is an intellectual French soccer player.

Adjectives that go in a specific order are called **cumulative** adjectives and represent different categories (shape, age, colour, etc.) When adjectives are of the same category and of equal importance, they are called **coordinate** adjectives and are separated by commas (for example, *a nasty, inappropriate comment*). For more information, see Commas, page xx.

Compound Adjectives

Sometimes adjectives are made up of two or more words that work together to modify a noun. When these compound adjectives precede the noun, they are usually hyphenated; however, when the same two words come after the noun, they are not hyphenated.

For more examples of compound adjectives, see Chapter 6, page xx.

He has a **full-time** job.	He works **full time**.
They chose a **beige-taupe** colour.	The colour they chose was **beige taupe**.
Her poetry has a nineteenth-century style.	Her style of poetry is nineteenth century.

Sometimes a compound adjective includes an adverb that modifies an adjective (*well-designed software*, *a fast-talking salesperson*). An adverb that ends in *-ly* is never hyphenated (*a fully developed plan*).

Conjunctions

Conjunctions link words or groups of words to one another, showing their relationship. English has three types of conjunctions: **coordinating**, **subordinating**, and **correlating**.

Type of conjunction	Function	Examples
coordinating *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* (FANBOYS)	combines two complete sentences (of equal weight)	There was an intense thunderstorm, **and** we lost electricity. She knows it's a lost cause, **yet** she soldiers on.
subordinating *after, although, because, before, since, than, when, wherever, why,* etc.	combines a main clause and a subordinate clause (unequal weight)	**Because** Jeremy failed two algebra exams, his parents got him a tutor. They decluttered the house **before** they put it up for sale.
correlating *not only . . . but also* *either . . . or* *neither . . . nor*	combines words or clauses of equal rank	Sarah **not only** wrote and directed the play **but also** sewed the costumes. Our choices were **either** the 12-day Alaskan cruise **or** the two-week Florida vacation. He is **neither** happy **nor** unhappy.

Agreement

Subject–Verb Agreement

Verbs must agree with their subjects in **person** (first, second, third), **number** (singular or plural), and **gender** (masculine, feminine, neuter). While it may seem simple enough to say that a singular noun requires a singular verb and a plural noun requires a plural verb, the problem often lies in determining whether the subject is singular or plural. Some of the more challenging situations are addressed in the following pages.

Agreement (subject–verb, pronoun–antecedent) is quite complex in English, and the source of many writing errors. Subscribers to *The New York Times* online have access to a feature called "Copy Edit This," a quiz in which readers are invited to find the error in sentences that were recently published in the newspaper. (In other words, the *Times'* copy editors had missed these grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure, or punctuation mistakes.) A surprising number of the items in the quiz contain exactly the kind of error you will learn about in this section.

Compound Subjects

Compound subjects joined by *and*	Examples
• two or more subjects (separate things) = **plural** verb	A book and a cup of tea **are** all she needs.
• compound subject refers to a single person or thing = **singular** verb	My colleague and mentor **helps** me more than I can say. **The colleague and mentor are the same person.** Fish and chips **is** delicious but **has** a lot of calories. **Fish and chips is one dish, like macaroni and cheese.**
• *each* or *every* precedes the subject = **singular** verb	Each fork, knife, and spoon **has** been sterilized. Every player and coach in this league **is** giving 100 percent.
• *each* follows the subject = **plural** verb	The dog and the cat **have** each been fed.
Compound subject joined by *or* or *nor*	**Examples**
• singular or plural verb; the verb agrees with the closer subject	Garlic or garlic powder **is** needed in this recipe. Garlic or onions **are** needed in this recipe. Neither the students nor the teacher **likes** this rule. Neither the teacher nor the students **like** this rule.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronoun	Singular or plural?	Examples
one each either/neither everyone/everybody/everything anyone/anybody/anything someone/somebody/something no one/nobody	singular	The **one** we want **is** very simple. **Each** of the essays **has** a different point of view. **Neither** of them **agrees** with this theory. **Everyone** we know, including our next-door neighbours, **is** opposed to the bylaw. **No one**, not even his staunchest supporters, **thinks** what he did was right.
both few many	plural	**Both** of the nurses **were** helpful. **Few have** been able to perform this feat.
all any most none some	singular or plural (depending on which word the pronoun refers to)	The volunteers worked hard, and all **were** given a thank-you gift. *All refers to **volunteers**.* Her cake was delicious. All of it **is** gone. *All refers to **cake**.* We bought $120 worth of cheese. None **is** left! *None refers to **cheese**.* Seven candidates were interviewed. None **were** suitable. *None refers to **candidates**.*

It is important not to be misled by phrases or clauses that separate the indefinite pronoun from the verb.

> **Either** <u>of the lawyers</u> **is** able to argue this case.
> **Ignore *of the lawyers*. The subject *is either*.**

Nouns That Are Difficult to Classify as Singular or Plural

Type of noun	Singular or plural?	Examples
Collective nouns: group, class, team, committee, audience, family, jury, crowd, flock, staff	singular or plural (depending on whether the action is collective or individual)	The jury **meets** every morning at 9:00. **The jury is acting as one unit.** The jury **are** struggling to agree. **The jury members discuss the case as individuals.**
Nouns that have different singular and plural meanings: statistics, tactics, ethics	singular if it refers to a field of study or business; plural in all other cases	Statistics **is** a branch of mathematics. The statistics about obesity **are** surprising. Ethics **was** my favourite philosophy class. The company's ethics **were** questionable.
Singular nouns that look plural: • diseases—measles, mumps, hives, shingles • academic subjects—physics, mathematics, economics, linguistics • games—checkers, dominoes, horseshoes, billiards • customs (the government border-control agency); politics; news; the United States	singular	Measles **is** on the rise. The news **was** both good and bad. Physics **fascinates** her. Checkers, a seemingly simple game, **requires** thinking ahead.
Two-part objects: pants, glasses, binoculars, scissors, pliers, tweezers	plural, except with "a pair of"	These binoculars **are** very powerful. A pair of sunglasses **was** found on the table.

Intervening Word Groups

Groups of words—parenthetical phrases, intervening clauses, and such—that come between the subject and verb can cause errors in subject–verb agreement. The trick is to identify the true subject and ignore the intervening words. (In the following chart, <u>subjects</u> are underlined, and **verbs** are bolded. The intervening word groups are in blue.)

Intervening word groups	Examples
intervening phrases	The <u>box</u> **of tools** **is** on the workbench.
	<u>One</u> of **my prize horses** **wins** every race.
	The <u>instructions</u> **in the online manual** **are** very clear.
intervening clauses	The <u>lamp</u>, **which Tess bought years ago with several other antiques**, **was** found in the attic.
parenthetical phrases	Trevor's <u>agent</u>, **as well as Trevor's girlfriend, Cecily**, **is** travelling to Los Angeles to meet him.
	Many baseball <u>fans</u>, **like my friend Joe who knows every baseball statistic imaginable**, **collect** memorabilia from their favourite team.

Linking Verbs

A linking verb does not express an action but merely connects the subject (which comes before the verb) and its complement (which comes after it.) In English, the main linking verb is *to be*. Other linking verbs are *seem*, *appear*, *remain*, *become*, *grow*, *turn*, *prove*, and the sense verbs *look*, *sound*, *feel*, *taste*, and *smell*.

When you have a linking verb, make the verb agree with the subject, not the complement.

In the following examples, the <u>subject</u> is underlined, the **verb** is in bold, and the complement is *italicized*.

His best <u>feature</u> **is** *his kissable lips*.　　His kissable <u>lips</u> **are** *his best feature*.
Medical <u>expenses</u> **are** *my only tax deduction*.　　My only tax <u>deduction</u> **is** *medical expenses*.
Her constant <u>complaints</u> **were** *the reason I left that job*.　　The <u>reason</u> I left that job **was** *her constant complaints*.

Relative Pronouns

When dealing with relative pronouns, the antecedent (the noun to which the pronoun refers) determines whether the verb will be singular or plural. The trick is finding the antecedent of the relative pronoun, which might not be the subject of the sentence.

In the following examples, the <u>subject</u> is underlined, the <u><u>antecedent</u></u> is double underlined, and the **verb** is in bold.

<u><u>Art</u></u> is the only <u>one</u> of my subjects that **interests** me.
<u><u>Art</u></u> is one of several <u>subjects</u> that **interest** me.

There is/There are and Inverted Order

When a sentence starts with *there is* or *there are*, the subject follows the verb. In other words, *there* is never the subject of the sentence. To find the subject, try rewriting the sentence without *there is* or *there are*.

There is a raccoon in our tree. (Rewrite as "A raccoon is in our tree.")
There is not the subject; the subject is ***raccoon***, which comes after the verb.

With a **simple subject**, the words following the verb determine whether it is singular or plural.

> There **is** <u>a coffee cup</u> on the table.
> There **are** <u>six coffee cups</u> on the table.

With a **compound subject** joined by *and*, use a plural verb.

> There **are** <u>a coffee cup </u>and<u> a dirty plate</u> on the table.

With a **compound subject** joined by *or* or *nor*, the verb agrees with the closest subject.

> There **was** no <u>paint</u> or paintbrushes in the art room.
> There **were** no <u>paintbrushes</u> or paint in the art room.

Any sentence with inverted order (**verb-subject** rather than **subject-verb**) follows the same rule as sentences that start with *there is* or *there are*.

> Coming down the aisle **was** the woman he loved.
> The subject is *woman*.

> Sitting on the steps **were** my long-lost friends from Grade 8.
> The subject is *friends*.

You will hear people say things like "There's a watermelon and some yogourt in the refrigerator." In spoken English this is acceptable (and quite natural), but in writing it's an error.

It was

The expression *it was [something]*, followed by a relative clause, is always singular, even if the complement of *was* is plural.

> **It was** our <u>mistake</u> that caused the problem.
> **It was** our <u>mistakes</u> that caused the problem.

On the other hand, you would say

> Our mistakes **were** what caused the problem.

Terms of Quantity

Plural nouns that refer to quantities of time, money, or distance are usually **singular**, because they are thought of as one unit.

> Three days **is** too long to spend in that town.
> Stuffed in the gym bag **was** forty thousand dollars.
> Sixty-five kilometres **seems** like a long commute to work.

However, if the individual hours, dollars, or kilometres are the focus of the sentence, they can be considered **plural**.

> The two hours I spent waiting for the doctor **were** long and stressful.
> There **are** six one-hundred-dollar bills in the envelope.
> The two kilometres we walk every day **keep** us in shape.

Other Useful Agreement Rules

One of the is always followed by a plural noun.	She was one of the best **skaters** on the team.
a number of + noun = **plural**	A number of people **were** caught smuggling.
the number of + noun = **singular**	The number of dieters who swear by this diet **is** impressive.
more than one + noun = **singular**	More than one singer **has** quit because of the director's attitude.
one or more + noun = **plural**	One or more permits **are** needed to demolish this house.
titles of literary or artistic works = **singular**	*Great Expectations* **is** a much-loved Dickens novel.
words as words = **singular**	*Monies* **is** the plural of *money*, used only in specific financial contexts.

Pronoun–Antecedent Agreement

As with subject–verb agreement, a pronoun must agree with its antecedent (the word to which it refers) in **person**, **number**, and **gender.** (In the following examples, the <u>antecedent</u> is underlined and the **pronoun** is in bold.)

<u>Everyone</u> in the women's choir sang **her** best.
Everyone **is singular, and as it's a women's choir, the feminine pronoun is used.***

Most <u>people</u> don't want **their** neighbours to snoop on them.
People **is plural.**

Watering plants looks easy, but <u>each</u> has **its** own needs.
Each **is singular.**

The kickboxing <u>class</u> is having **its** annual picnic on Thursday.
The class is acting as one unit.

The kickboxing <u>class</u> are putting on **their** flashy shorts and tank tops.
The class members are acting as individuals.

Let's ask the interns or the office <u>manager</u> what **she** thinks.
Let's ask the office manager or the <u>interns</u> what **they** think.
The pronoun should agree with the closer antecedent.

*If it were a mixed choir, the choice would be more difficult. For suggestions on how to deal with the issue of gendered pronouns, see page xx.

Common Pronoun–Antecedent Problems

Illogical Pronoun Shifts

Incorrect	**I** like crossword puzzles because they help **you** improve **your** vocabulary.
Correct	**I** like crossword puzzles because they help **me** improve **my** vocabulary.

Vague, Ambiguous, or Intervening Antecedents

Vague	Charlotte was planning to go to the gym, drive her mother to a doctor's appointment, bake cookies for the book club meeting, and bathe the dog, all in one morning. **This** was not realistic.
	Which of these activities does *this* **refer to?**
Better	Charlotte was planning to go to the gym, drive her mother to a doctor's appointment, bake cookies for the book club meeting, and bathe the dog, all in one morning. **This to-do list** was not realistic.
Ambiguous	As the dog chased the cat, **it** growled.
	Which growled, the dog or the cat?
Better	Growling, the dog chased the cat.
	The cat growled at the dog that was chasing it.
Intervening antecedent	Nurses are not as well paid as doctors, but the care they provide is essential to patients. Without **them**, our health care system would collapse.
	The last noun is *patients*, **the one before that** *doctors*. **It is unclear what** *them* **refers to.**
Better	Nurses are not as well paid as doctors, but the care they provide is essential to patients. Without **nurses**, our health care system would collapse.