

Syntax and Persuasion High School Lesson

Activity One: In the activity below are ten quotations by famous people, but part of each quotation is missing. First, answer the questions following the quotes. Then find the phrase or clause in the Answer Bank that best completes the statement. Use the “Syntactical Terms” handout as a resource. The first one is done for you as an example.

Answer Bank

- A. do we not live in dreams
- B. dreams are private myths
- C. education is life itself
- D. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not
- E. Not to have tried is the true failure
- F. others to break records
- G. really made of gold
- H. that is why I succeed
- I. the key to failure is trying to please everybody
- J. tomorrow's questions

1. **Education is not preparation for life;** _____. —John Dewey
 - anaphora: The first word of the missing phrase will probably be education
 - antithesis: The second phrase may suggest that education is living life
(Think of something that contrasts with preparation.)
 - The correct completion is probably C
2. **Dreams are true while they last, and** _____. —Alfred, Lord Tennyson
 - epanalepsis: The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
3. **Dreams are today's answers to** _____. —Edgar Cayce
 - antithesis: The opposite of answers is _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
4. **Myths are public dreams,** _____. —Joseph Campbell
 - anadiplosis: The first word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - antimetabole: What is the opposite of a public dream? _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____

5. **There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why...** _____?—Robert Kennedy
- epistrophe: The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - antithesis: The second phrase may suggest the speaker looks at things _____ and asks _____ (Remember that antithesis expresses opposites.)
 - The correct completion is probably _____
6. **Defeat is not the worst of failures.** _____. —George E. Woodberry
- epistrophe: The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
7. **I don't know the key to success, but** _____.—Bill Cosby
- anadiplosis: The first word of the missing phrase will probably be _____ or possibly _____
 - antithesis: What is the opposite of success? _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
8. **I've failed over and over and over again in my life and** _____.—Michael Jordan
- antithesis: What is the opposite of failed? _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
9. **Adversity causes some men to break;** _____. —William A. Ward
- epistrophe: The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - ellipsis: the second phrase will leave a word or words out. What is the most important word in the first section that might be implied in the second? _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____
10. **Gold medals aren't** _____. **They're made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts.** —Dan Gable
- epanalepsis: The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____
 - The correct completion is probably _____

Activity Two:

1. Choose one quote that includes **reversal** and write the complete quotation:

What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? _____

What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) _____

What kind of reversal is it? _____

How can you tell? _____

Explain HOW the reversal of ideas reinforces the claim the author makes. _____

2. Choose one quote that includes **repetition** and write the complete quotation:

What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? _____

What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) _____

What kind of repetition is it? _____

How can you tell? _____

Explain HOW the repetition reinforces the claim the author makes. _____

Activity Three: The following activity takes a closer look at the structure of the syntax in “America Needs Its Nerds” and “All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Nerd” to analyze how the structure of the sentences reinforces the meaning. In the following activity, the underlined and shaded parts of the sentence create a syntactically rich pattern. Answer the questions. Then use your answers to the questions to help complete the fill-in-the-blank analysis of the effect. Some answers have been provided to get you started.

from “America Needs its Nerds”

1. *Nerds are ostracized while athletes are idolized.*

- Are “nerds” and “athletes” similar or different? different
- What is the opposite of “ostracized”? idolized

The words “nerds” and “athletes” are contrasts. This creates a structure of reversal (antithesis). Because the ideas/words are opposite, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is opposite.

2. *Children who prefer to read books rather than play football, prefer to build model airplanes rather than get wasted at parties with their classmates, become social outcasts.*

- Which words/phrases are repeated? “Prefer to” and “rather than”
- What activities are listed? Read books and play football/build model airplanes and get wasted at parties
- What is the relationship between the activities? They are contrasts.

The words _____ and _____ are repeated and then followed by a verb. This creates a structure of _____. The activities listed, read books rather than play football and _____, are _____. Because the ideas/words are opposite, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is _____.

from “All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Nerd”

3. *Just as Harvard, as a whole, reflects diversity in the racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds of its students, each student should reflect a diversity of interest as well.*

- What shaded words are repeated? _____
- What do these repeated words refer to in the sentence? _____
- What other words are repeated? _____

- d. What do you notice about their location in the sentence? _____

The words _____ and _____ are repeated. This creates a structure of _____. This structure helps reflect the idea that the diversity seen in the university should also be seen in _____.

4. *A “nerd” or “geek” is distinguished by a lack of diverse interests, rather than by a presence of intellectualism.*

- a. Where do you see contrasts in this sentence? _____
b. What is the structure of those contrasting words? _____
c. What is being defined here? _____
d. What is the point being made in this sentence? _____

By using the contrast of _____, the author suggests that _____. The structure of _____ emphasizes this by _____.

5. *Thus, a nerd or geek is not, as Mr. Fridman states, a student “for whom pursuing knowledge is the top priority” but a student for whom pursuing knowledge is the sole objective.*

- a. What is the relationship between the underlined words? _____
b. What words are repeated in the sentence? _____
c. How are those repeated words structured? _____
d. What is the main difference being emphasized with the two parallel clauses? _____

The words “_____” create _____ (name of the structure)
to emphasize that _____

6. *This is an unfair comparison because Mr. Fridman's first reference is to how the East Asian child is viewed by teachers, while his second reference is to how the American child is viewed by fellow students.*

- What is the same in the underlined clauses? _____
- What is different in the underlined clauses? _____
- What are the two syntactical techniques used here? _____ and _____
- What is the relationship between the highlighted phrases? _____
- How do the differences in these phrases and clauses strengthen the claim of "an unfair comparison" in the sentence? _____

The author's use of _____ and _____ strengthens his claim of _____ by _____

7. *Nerdism may also be criticized because it often leads to the pursuit of knowledge not for its own sake, but for the sake of grades.*

- What word is repeated? _____
- What is the antecedent of "its"? _____
- What type of repetition is being used here? _____
- By repeating the word in this order, what does the author achieve? _____

By using _____ in the repetition of the word _____, the author emphasizes _____

