



Identifying and Writing Loose and Periodic Sentences

Grammar Lesson

A loose or cumulative sentence is one in which a *main* or *independent clause* comes first, followed by further *dependent* grammatical units. A loose sentence makes sense if brought to a close before the period.

A periodic sentence has its main clause at the end of the sentence with additional grammatical units leading up to the point. A periodic sentence does not make sense until the end.

Read the underlined portions of the following sentences aloud, noting how they each make sense even if you do not read the entire sentence. These are all loose/cumulative sentences.

“One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it.” “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe

“As I spoke, a light came over him, as though the setting sun had touched him with the same suffused glory with which it touched the mountains.” “A Mother in Manville” by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings

“Arnie hollered, arguing that some people were meant to work and others to come up with brilliant ideas.” “Born Worker” by Gary Soto

Read the underlined portions of the following sentences aloud, noting how they do not make sense unless you read the entire sentence. These are all periodic sentences.

“Still, Arnie explained that since he himself was so clever with words, and that his best cousin in the whole world was good at working with his hands, that maybe they might start a company.” “Born Worker” by Gary Soto

“In fact, as they came down the long walk from their home to where the Wright automobile was parked, George leaned toward his wife and breathed into her ear.” “Rain, Rain, Go Away” by Isaac Asimov

“After ten years on your planet, I’ve learned to smell trouble.” “Future Tense” by Robert Lipsyte



Identifying Loose and Periodic Sentences

Read the sentences below, and place an L by the loose sentences and a P by the periodic sentences. Leave blank the sentence(s) that do not fit either pattern.

1. _____ “You should have seen how wisely I proceeded – with what caution – with what foresight – with what dissimulation!” “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe
2. _____ “And while Arnie accompanied him, most of the time he did nothing.” “Born Worker” by Gary Soto
3. _____ “So I opened it – you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily – until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.” “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe
4. _____ “The details of packing my personal belongings, loading my car, arranging the bed over the seat, where the dog would ride, occupied me until late in the day.” “A Mother in Manville” by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
5. _____ “In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table he laughed at his fears.” “The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs
6. _____ “He did for me the unnecessary thing, the gracious thing, that we find done only by the great of heart.” “A Mother in Manville” by Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings
7. _____ “Their faces blurred as the rain hit; blurred and shrank and ran together.” “Rain, Rain, Go Away” by Isaac Asimov
8. _____ “The king and his court were in their places opposite the twin doors – those fateful portals so terrible in their similarity.” “The Lady or the Tiger?” by Frank Stockton
9. _____ “He began to talk, the little family circle regarding with eager interest this visitor from distant parts, as he squared his broad shoulders in the chair and spoke of wild scenes and doughty deeds; of wars and plagues and strange people.” “The Monkey’s Paw” by W. W. Jacobs
10. _____ “Along one margin, in a perfect script, Mr. Smith had written: You can do better.” “Future Tense” by Robert Lipsyte

