



Parts of Speech, Phrases, Clauses, and Sentences Foundation Lesson

Read the following excerpt from *Night* by Elie Wiesel carefully. Then explore the author's use of language by identifying and analyzing the effect of various grammatical elements in the piece, as directed below.

One Sunday, when half of us – including my father – were at work, the rest – including myself – were in the block, taking advantage of the chance to stay in bed late in the morning.

At about ten o'clock, the air-raid sirens began to wail. An alert. The leaders of the block ran to assemble us inside, while the SS* took refuge in the shelters. As it was relatively easy to escape during a warning – the guards left their lookout posts and the electric current was cut off in the barbed-wire fences – the SS had orders to kill anyone found outside the blocks.

Within a few minutes, the camp looked like an abandoned ship. Not a living soul on the paths. Near the kitchen, two cauldrons of steaming hot soup had been left, half full. Two cauldrons of soup, right in the middle of the path, with no one guarding them! A feast for kings, abandoned, supreme temptation! Hundreds of eyes looked at them, sparking with desire. Two lambs, with a hundred wolves lying in wait for them. Two lambs without a shepherd – a gift. But who would dare?

Terror was stronger than hunger. Suddenly, we saw the door of Block 37 open imperceptibly. A man appeared, crawling like a worm in the direction of the cauldrons.

Hundreds of eyes followed his movements. Hundreds of men crawled with him, scraping their knees with his on the gravel. Every heart trembled, but with envy above all. This man had dared.

He reached the first cauldron. Hearts raced: he had succeeded. Jealousy consumed us, burned us up like straw. We never thought for a moment of admiring him. Poor hero, committing suicide for a ration of soup! In our thoughts we were murdering him.

Stretched out by the cauldron, he was now trying to raise himself up to the edge. Either from weakness or fear he stayed there, trying, no doubt, to muster up the last of his strength. At last he succeeded in hoisting himself onto the edge of the pot. For a moment, he seemed to be looking at himself, seeking his ghostlike reflection in the soup. Then, for no apparent reason, he let out a terrible cry, a rattle such as I had never heard before, and, his mouth open, thrust his head toward the still steaming liquid. We jumped with the explosion. Falling back onto the ground, his face stained with soup, the man writhed for a few seconds at the foot of the cauldron, then he moved no more.

*the Nazi police who ran the prison camp



Parts of Speech

First paragraph

1. What is the effect of the lack of action verbs?
2. Why does the state of being verb “were” seem appropriate for these sentences?

Second paragraph

3. Note the nouns associated with the SS officer.

Third paragraph

4. Write the nouns that have a figurative rather than literal meaning.
5. How do these nouns differ from the nouns with a literal meaning?

Fourth paragraph

6. Write two sentences that imitate the first and second sentence.
 - a. (first sentence) Begin and end with nouns.
 - b. (second sentence) Begin and end with adverbs.

Fifth paragraph

7. Write the verbs associated with the prisoners who watch the man who is trying to get to the soup.
8. Write the verb phrase associated with this man. Why the contrast?

Sixth paragraph

Wiesel tends to avoid the use of conjunctions between independent clauses and phrases. Therefore, the prose has a choppy, disjointed quality.

9. Why is this the effect he is trying to create?
10. Join as many of the sentences with conjunctions as you can.
What about the rhetorical effect now?

Seventh paragraph

11. Find the adjectives in each sentence.

#1 – one adjective (participial phrase)	#5 – six adjectives
#2 – two adjectives (one is a participial phrase)	#6 – none
#3 – none	#7 – four adjectives (two are participial phrases)
#4 – one adjective (participial phrase)	
12. Substitute your own adjectives for those in the sentences.

This paragraph contains more prepositional phrases than does the rest of the passage. These phrases add descriptive detail to the paragraph, making the scene come alive in our minds. Even though prepositions are small words, they provide an important way to provide rich detail in writing.

13. Write two sentences explaining this connection between the author's use of prepositions and the effect he is trying to create.

Phrases

participial	absolute	infinitive
prepositional	gerund	appositive

14. In lines 9-10, if the sentence fragment "A feast for kings, abandoned, supreme temptation!" were added to the previous sentence, what kind of phrase would it be? What is the effect of writing this phrase as a complete sentence when it is, in fact, a fragment?
15. In line 10, write the independent clause in this sentence after removing all the phrases: "Hundreds of eyes looked at them, sparking with desire." Rewrite the participial phrase as a complete sentence, changing the participle to a verb.
16. In lines 10-11, the two sentence fragments beginning with "Two lambs" could function as appositive phrases. Combine sentences in the passage to create appositive phrases.
17. In line 13, is this a cumulative or periodic sentence? "A man appeared, crawling like a worm in the direction of the cauldrons." What kind of phrase is "crawling like a worm in the direction of the cauldrons"? What is the effect of having the phrase at the end of the sentence, after the independent clause?
18. Look at lines 21-22. Write the two-word independent clause left after all the phrases are removed from this sentence: "At last he succeeded in hoisting himself onto the edge of the pot." How many phrases does this sentence contain? What types are they? What is the effect of adding these phrases to the simple subject and verb?

Look at this sentence in lines 22-23: "Then, for no apparent reason, he let out a terrible cry, a rattle such as I had never heard before, and, his mouth open, thrust his head toward the still steaming liquid."

19. Which phrase renames the man's cry? What kind of phrase is it? (Notice that this phrase ends with a clause.) Write another one of these phrases renaming the cry.
20. Label the phrase "his mouth open." Rewrite this phrase as an independent clause, as a separate sentence. What word must be added to create this independent clause? Why did Elie Wiesel include this detail as a phrase rather than writing it as a separate sentence?
21. The sentence ends with a phrase that contains a single participle. Label the phrase and underline the participle. Write your own alternate phrase which includes a participle, making sure that it modifies the word "head" and makes sense in the sentence.



22. Look at the last sentence of the passage: “Falling back onto the ground....” Write the two independent clauses, stripped of all phrases and other modifiers. One contains three words, one two words. Isolate and label each of the phrases in this sentence. (You should have seven. Some phrases contain embedded phrases.) Explain Wiesel’s rhetorical purpose for adding all these phrases. How do these phrases make this passage more effective?

Clauses and Sentences

First sentence

23. Isolate the dependent and independent clause in this sentence.
24. Find the simple subject and verb of each.
25. What do the verbs have in common?

Second paragraph

26. What type of sentence is the second sentence? Why would Wiesel write this? (In other words, what is the rhetorical effect of the fragment?)
27. Wiesel extends sentences by using dashes. What do you think is the purpose of the dashes?

Third paragraph

28. Identify all the sentence fragments in this paragraph.
29. What emotional feeling is conveyed by the many fragments?

Fifth and sixth paragraphs

30. Identify the sentence structure of each sentence (simple, complex, etc.). Other than one compound sentence and one fragment, the rest of the sentences are the same in structure. As Wiesel used fragments in paragraph three to convey a certain feeling, how does he use simple sentences to do the same here?

Last Paragraph

31. The sentences in this paragraph are much longer than the previous two paragraphs. What is the effect of the longer sentences? What grammatical structures cause the sentences to be longer?
32. Identify the sentence that contains a dependent clause.

Writing Assignment A

Write one-half to one page of a narrative, using fragments to express a particular feeling: fear, panic, anxiety, exhaustion, or any other strong emotion. Write the emotion you are trying to evoke at the top of the page. Underline your fragments. Make sure the fragments are interspersed with full sentences.

Writing Assignment B

Write one-half to one page, using descriptive language and only simple sentences to convey a certain emotion. Write the emotion you are trying to evoke at the top of the page. Make sure that you have no dependent clauses, though you can have compound verbs and/or compound subjects. Do not join two independent clauses, for then you would have a compound sentence.