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Content Area Learning: Teaching in an Online World

Parallel Proficiency and the ACT Connection

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Saturday, October 4, 2008

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Overall purpose of lesson:

The ACT English test usually includes questions designed to see if students can recognize and correct examples of faulty parallelism, including examples of parallelism within correlative conjunctions. The final purpose of the lesson, therefore, is to enable students to recognize and correct in order to improve their ACT scores. However, I would also like to see students effectively use parallel structures in their own writing.

Websites referenced in handout:

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jfkinaugural.htm>

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/figures/parallelism.htm>

<http://www.towson.edu/ows/modulePARALLELex5.htm>

Activity One—Define and read example text

1. Parallelism is the repetition of words and/or grammatical structures in order to add rhythm and balance to images/text.
2. Read *Kitten's First Full Moon* by Kevin Henkes while students write down examples of parallelism.
3. Discuss student examples.
4. Listen to [John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech](#)
5. Each student should choose one example of parallelism he or she feels is very effective and write it down.
6. Discuss.

Activity Two—Share example texts and model

1. Hand out worksheet with parallelism examples.
2. Discuss examples with parallelism underlined.
3. Students work in pairs to identify parallelism in unfinished examples.
4. Discuss
5. Go to [Rhetorical Figures in Sound: Parallelism](#) website, choose one of the speeches, and find other examples of parallelism.
6. Students pick two exemplars from worksheet or text version of chosen speech and write sentences/paragraphs mimicking the parallel structures used.

Activity Three—Present more difficult constructions

1. Present rules about either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, both/and constructions.
2. Go to [Townson University Online Writing Support Website](#). Have students work in pairs to correct sentences 1-3.
3. Discuss sentences 1-3 as a group.
4. Students correct sentences 4-9 individually and then class discusses.

Activity Four—Reconnect

1. Find three or four sentences to use as examples of parallel structure which have not previously been used in class.
2. Divide sentences into chunks, write chunks on index cards, and laminate.
3. Pass out cards to students and tell them their job is to reconnect the chunks into sentences that make sense and include parallel structures.
4. Once students have reconnected, the group should decide how they will present their sentence to the rest of the class.
5. Presentation and discussion of sentences.

Activity Five—Apply concept

1. Students choose a picture to write about.
2. Students write at least a paragraph in which they use parallel structures.
3. Students share in groups, identifying parallelism and then choosing at least one piece of writing from the group to be shared with the entire class.
4. Students then identify and/or add at least three examples of parallelism to their current writing project.

Parallelism

Parallelism is

Examples from *Night* by Elie Wiesel

Several days passed. Several weeks. Several months. Life had returned to normal. A wind of calmness and reassurance blew through our houses. The traders were doing good business, the students lived buried in their books, and the children played in the streets. (p. 4)

One by one they passed in front of me, teachers, friends, others, all those I had been afraid of, all those I once could have laughed at, all those I had lived with over the years. They went by, fallen, dragging their packs, dragging their lives, deserting their homes, the years of their childhood, cringing like beaten dogs. (p. 14-15)

Examples from the *Bible*

Wither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God. Ruth 1:16

Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
You understand my thoughts from afar.
You observe my travels and my rest;
You are aware of all my ways.
Before a word is on my tongue,
You know all about it, Lord.
You have encircled me;
You have placed your hand on me. Psalm 139: 1-5

From television

Space, the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship Enterprise. Its continuing mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no one has gone before. *Star Trek: the Next Generation*

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears, and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call . . . THE TWILIGHT ZONE.
The Twilight Zone

One I just like

Like every great river and every great sea, the moon belongs to none and belongs to all. It still holds the key to madness, still controls the tides that lap on shores everywhere, still guards the lovers that kiss in every land under no banner but the sky. *New Yorker, E.B. White*

Quotes Used for Activity Five

I used a / mark to show how I chunked each quote. Feel free, however, to choose different quotes. Number four is very challenging, so you may want to tell the person who gets the first chunk that it is first even though the author starts the sentence with the word “and.”

1. Not everything / that can be counted counts, / and not everything / that counts can be counted. (Albert Einstein)
2. The Germans were already in the town, / the Fascists were already in power, / the verdict had already been pronounced, / yet the Jews of Sighet continued to smile. (Elie Wiesel in *Night*)
3. For love is never wasted, / love is never lost; / love lives on / and sees us through sorrow. (President Reagan’s comments on the *Challenger* tragedy)
4. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested / I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, / a sentence that burns with energy / and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, / the crash of the symbols, / the roll of the drums, / and sounds that say / listen to this, / it is important. (Gary Provost in *Make Your Words Work*)