



# SENTENCE STRUCTURE

You need to know at least seven types...

# LISTS

- As with every other language feature, it's not enough to merely identify – you need to explain how the list conveys/enhances an idea or suggests a particular feeling.
- Mere identification gets you **nothing**
- There are different types of lists...



# POLYSYNDETTIC LISTS

- Where there are conjunctions between each item
- The effect is usually to stress that each item carries equal importance
- They can create a cumulative effect as well
- They can also suggest that the items are significantly and/or casually linked



- To say that Trident submarines are unnecessary is an understatement. In fact, in a recent 'Unnecessary Things' competition Trident came first and here's why: they are ridiculously expensive and don't provide as many jobs as we are led to believe and they do nothing to prevent a few nutters hijacking a plane and our best pal (the good old US of A) has loads of them and most people (the people that have to pay for the bloody things – the tax payer) don't want them and the people that control them (the government) would never use them!



## HOW DOES THE AUTHOR USE SENTENCE STRUCTURE TO CONVEY HIS OPPOSITION OF TRIDENT SUBMARINES?

- The polysyndetic list after the colon conveys the range and extent of objections the author has. This type of list suggests that there is reason after reason, one after the other as to why we should not have them – each reason having equal validity.
- The use of brackets to include his contemptuous parenthetical asides further emphasises his anger at having to pay for unnecessary items and also tells us of his mordant attitude towards a country that supports their use.



# ASYNDETIC LISTS

- Where there are no conjunctions between each item
- The effect is usually to suggest range and/or extent of whatever is being discussed
- Also used to generate a climactic feel to a sentence, sometimes delaying the climax for better effect



- ‘...could do worse than examine the lessons of Ireland, where attempted compulsion via immersion in schools, regional development policies, civil-service publications and standardisation of spelling and usage stubbornly failed to restore the primacy of Irish Gaelic.’
- The asyndetic list helps express the extent and variety of places where compulsory immersion has been introduced and failed; the list also helps delay the climax, making it all the more effective by drawing attention to her main point that the compulsory introduction of immersion fails.



- Where I really quarrel with Harry Potter is not in the quality of the writing but in the marketing. This Harry – Harry the brand – really is a monster of the first order. Somewhere along the line the author waved bye bye to her creation and saw it become a global money-making colossus, one which exploited the thrill of the chase and the tribal yearning to be part of something. It wasn't a book; it was a badge of belonging; a cult, Warner Bros. And more than 70 million Google entries. "I've got mine. Have you got yours?"





## SHOW HOW THE WRITER'S LANGUAGE CONVEYS HER ATTITUDE TO THE MARKETING OF HARRY POTTER.

- Word choice, imagery and tone could also be used to answer this question as the question refers to the writer's language.
- The sentence 'It wasn't a book...Warner Bros' is structured as an asyndetic list, building up to the climax of 'Warner Bros', suggesting contemptuously that this is what Potter is now about - a cult created by them in order to extend the market. Followed by 'And more...entries' which also conveys her contempt – beginning with 'and' draws attention to her tone, a further thought added on to her list of objections



# LISTS IN PARALLEL STRUCTURE, WHERE THE PATTERN OF EACH ITEM IS REPEATED

- This one is easier to demonstrate using an example...
- *To be beaten upon by the winds, to be drenched by the perpetual rain, to be surrounded in enveloping fog.*
- The effect is often climactic with each item in the list becoming more dramatic
- The repetitive pattern of such lists can also add a sense of infinity to a sentence which, in turn, conveys a never ending feeling to whatever situation is being discussed



# REPETITION

- Can also generate climax – building up to an important and final point
- The repetition of key phrases or words can also add emphasis on a particular idea.



*“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.”*

The above use of repetition is quite effective in placing emphasis on the idea of collective responsibility; the fact that this is something that will happen and in building up to the final climactic point.



# LONG SENTENCE FOLLOWED BY A SHORT SENTENCE

- The dramatic sentence often falls on the short sentence
- Used also for climax and anti-climax

*“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender.”*



# WORD ORDER

- Look out for word order which seems a little odd or unusual, adverbs or verbs at the beginning of sentences. For example...
- 'Deathly pale he looked upon reaching the boulder strewn summit.'
- The word order here places emphasis on the condition of the climber and makes it somewhat more dramatic.
- It also gives the sentence an archaic feel to it – not always relevant - depends on the context.



# PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

- Prepositions are the words that indicate location (on, in, beside...); prepositions can also show location in *time* (At midnight, during the marathon, in the Winter...)
- Used at the beginning of sentences, they can guide the reader through a series of stages in the argument
- They can also indicate a time sequence.

Read the paragraph that follows which illustrates the use of prepositional phrases to show sequence in time.



In March 1698 a notice went up in the coffee houses of Edinburgh, Leith and Glasgow asking for volunteers to settle the new colony. In the end 1200 were selected from the thousands who applied. They boarded five ships and set sail from Leith on July 14<sup>th</sup> 1698.

It was a sadly depleted group that arrived at Darien in November. Within a matter of weeks there were 200 graves in the cemetery. The grave diggers were the busiest men in Darien.

By June 1699 more than 400 people were dead. The living were emaciated and yellow with fever. Demands to return to Scotland had reached such a pitch that the councillors could not ignore them. As soon as the last ship had...





# QUESTIONS

- A series of repeated questions can imply confusion, doubt, frustration, disbelief...
- Used in a patterned series they can also build up to a climax
- Rhetorical questions can establish a point, idea or attitude (tone) firmly
- Depending on where they are positioned, they can be used to aid structure...
- Used at the beginning of a paragraph to introduce the idea to be explored – basically the question is answered in the following paragraph
- Used at the end of a paragraph they can prepare the reader for the content of the next paragraph (often used in this way to facilitate a change of some sort)



- So how do you know if you are one of the millions targeted each year by identity fraudsters? What are the signs? First of all you need to check your inbox. If you have...
- Parents' information evening, open day, newsletter, guidance staff, interim reports, formal reports, parents' night, school website, notes in planners...do parents really need or want more information about their little darlings?
- And what do we do if cutting tax doesn't work? Do we cut social welfare? Do we make cuts in education? Do we take risks with public safety and make cuts to police and defence? Do we stop random people in the street and say 'give us a couple of quid, will you?'



# COMMANDS

- A series of imperatives or commands reinforce the point being made
- They also convey the writer's strong feelings

*Sit down. Now!*

*You do not need to pay. You simply don't. Read the terms and conditions (the small print). The company is lying.*

