

SENTENCE COMBINING #2

Blocking Characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Combine the following elements into a coherent paragraph that explains the function of *blocking* characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

- 1 The climax of many comedies is the marriage of young lovers.
- 2 A good plot requires this.
- 3 The marriage is delayed.
- 4 This delay or suspense is usually achieved by characters.
- 5 They are called blocking characters.
- 6 They consciously oppose the marriage.
- 7 Their folly somehow stands in the marriage's way.
- 8 Parents are most frequently blocking characters.
- 9 Parents represent practical, puritanical, and antiromantic forces in society.
- 10 The marriage is often blocked.
- 11 It is blocked by some folly or fault.
- 12 The fault or folly is in one or both of the lovers.
- 13 This happens in
- 14 This is the plays' primary plot.
- 15 Jack's plan to marry Gwendolen is initially blocked by the girl's mother.
- 16 The mother is Lady Bracknell.
- 17 Lady Bracknell is concerned with Jack's family background.
- 18 She is more concerned with this than with her daughter's desires.
- 19 Gwendolen herself also threatens to be a block.
- 20 Gwendolen is in love with Jack and willing to marry him.
- 21 She can only love someone named Earnest.
- 22 This is what she says.
- 23 Jack uses the name Earnest when he is with her in London.
- 24 The audience believes this.
- 25 The hero's name is Jack.
- 26 Gwendolen's infatuation with the name of Ernest seems likely to become an obstacle.
- 27 This happens at the end of Act 1.
- 28 The audience is led to expect this.
- 29 Jack will discover a respectable set of parents.
- 30 Jack will get a new name.
- 31 This will satisfy the aristocratic conditions of Lady Bracknell.
- 32 This will satisfy the romantic expectations of Gwendolen.

Sentence Combining

The original line from *The Importance of Being Earnest*:

Lady Bracknell: Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

The sentences to combine:

Lady Bracknell says that Algernon cannot be untruthful.

He is her nephew.

She says it is because he is an Oxonian.

Her statement is nonsense.

Absolute Phrases

a group of words that modifies an independent clause as a whole; it has no finite verb

Her statement nonsensical, Lady Bracknell declares that her nephew Algernon cannot be untruthful because he is an Oxonian.

Adjective Clause

any clause which modifies a noun or pronoun

Lady Bracknell says nonsensically that her nephew Algernon, *who is an Oxonian*, cannot be untruthful.

Adverb Clause

any clause which modifies a verb, an adjective, or an adverb

Lady Bracknell again talks nonsense *when she says that her nephew Algernon cannot be untruthful because he is an Oxonian*.

Appositives

a noun, noun phrase, or series of nouns used to rename or identify another noun, noun phrase, or pronoun

An Oxonian, Algernon is incapable of being untruthful, his aunt Lady Bracknell says nonsensically.

Participial Phrases

one built on a past or present participle; it always modifies the subject of the main clause, whether the writer intends it to or not

Lady Bracknell, *lapsing again into nonsense*, says that her nephew Algernon is incapable of being untruthful because he is an Oxonian.

Prepositional phrases

one beginning with a preposition, ending with the preposition's object, and working as an adjective or as an adverb

Lady Bracknell says, *in another example of nonsense*, that her nephew Algernon cannot be untruthful because he is an Oxonian.

Two Resources

Kilgallon, Don. *Sentence Composing for High School*. Boynton/Cook Heinemann, 1998. Print.

Strong, William. *Sentence Combining: A Composing Book*. McGraw-Hill, 1994. Print.

Using Peer Response one way to do it

Procedure:

- Students bring in two copies of their draft—copies, not their original
- The teacher collects the copies and redistributes them, giving two different drafts to each student.
- The teacher models the writing of questions for a paragraph of an essay draft.
- As homework, students “work through” each of the two essay drafts.

(Alternatively, the students bring in one copy. The teacher redistributes the copies, one to a student. At the next class meeting, the teacher collects the drafts and the peer responses, then redistributes the drafts to a second student reviewer. The second reviewer should not see the review of the first to avoid being “blinded” by it.)

Student reviewers:

1. write their response questions on separate paper and do not mark the original essay.
2. make no suggestions about ‘cosmetic’ changes, such as style, diction, spelling, syntax, or the like. The questions address content only.
3. write questions only, no comments.
4. make no judgments about the essay or any of its parts.
5. write a minimum of fourteen valid and helpful questions for each essay:
 - Student reviewers write the questions paragraph by paragraph.
 - *Valid* here means questions that help a writer think about making changes.
 - *Helpful* here means that the question is intended to help improve the content.
 - There are no “yes/no” questions.
 - Student reviewers may well *not* know the answer to a question they ask.
 - Questions do not state or imply evaluation, as in ‘Why didn’t you...’ or ‘What the heck is this supposed to mean?’

Assessment:

- Students must comment on the whole essay to get credit.
- Students’ own essay grades are lowered one letter for each peer response not completed.
- Students are penalized for making cosmetic suggestions in writing.

Peer Response Sample Student Essay

The following first draft was written by a ninth-grade student on the following assignment on *Romeo and Juliet*. It is typed as written.

ROMEO AND JULIET	"The Valid and the Helpful"
<p>Juliet is only 14, but by meeting Romeo, she virtually becomes an adult. Her attitude changes dramatically as does her outward appearance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who are Juliet and Romeo?2. Why and how does she become an adult by meeting Romeo?3. What was her attitude before? after?4. What was her outward appearance before? after?
<p>Through the start of Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet" Juliet is constantly being pressured by others to get married and find the right person for herself. She doesn't know what to do about the unwanted pressure because she hasn't really found the right man and she doesn't want to be forced into anything.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who is pressuring Juliet to get married?2. Why is she being forced to marry?3. Why is she getting married so young?
<p>When she meets Romeo, her attitude shifts toward him. She can never stop thinking of him. This change brought about happiness, because her search for him had ended, yet it also brought about misfortune, because it was apparent that there would be trouble with them being in different families. Juliet eventually becomes so obsessed with his presence, that she is willing to do anything to stay with him, even kill herself. This was the very sad part of her change. She was unable to control it, and her love for Romeo backfired.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How does her attitude shift?2. What examples from the story show she can't stop thinking of him?3. What is the change that brought about happiness?4. What misfortune happened?5. Why would there be trouble because they were in different families?6. Did they get married or not?7. What wasn't she able to control?
<p>Juliet's change was an important one. It gave "Romeo and Juliet," happiness, theme, and tragedy.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Why was the change an important one?2. What themes did it give <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>?3. What tragedy took place?4. How did the change give people happiness?

Draft of Student Essay for Peer Revision

Just as Edna in The Awakening, Ginny in Thousand Acres sets out on a quest of self discovery and independence. Though Edna is searching for women's rights and Ginny aspires to become a more assertive and strong individual, both share the common struggle of leaving their family and old customs.

Both women wanted to rid themselves of their passive wife roles and gain the freedom to become a respected individual. Edna was bored of her meaningless life as a wife and mother. She felt her days were filled with trivial tasks and yearned to feel useful and important. Her husband who felt women were created to have babies and serve their husbands and didn't support Edna in her search of self-sufficiency. Ginny's husband Ty was quiet and passive, and like Edna's spouse believed women should keep their opinions to themselves. He was angered by Ginny's new aggressive stand she took against her father and didn't think it was appropriate for her to act in such a way. Also like Edna's husband Ty didn't support Ginny in her quest of self discovery and independence. Though both women longed for the freedom to be an individual, neither received any assistance from their husband.

Edna and Ginny each had an affair with a younger man they felt understood them and helped them where their husbands had failed. Joe (??) was the only one who actually treated Edna as a person rather than a mother or wife. He liked to talk with her and respected her opinion, something no one else had ever done. He made her feel important and that her feelings really mattered, leading her to fall in love with him. Her love for Joe however, was not necessarily with him as a person, but rather the idea that someone saw her as an individual and treated her with respect. Ginny had an affair with Jess Clark, an old childhood playmate who left the farm years before and returned an exciting yet mysterious stranger. Jess was daring. He became a vegetarian and wanted to try new methods of farming. Jess was the antithesis of Ty as he didn't hesitate to speak his opinion or do things his own way. Like

Edna, Ginny wasn't truly in love with Jess, but the excitement and change he brought to the life she was tired and bored of. Both Ginny and Edna have an affair with men who seem to fit the change they are yearning for in their unsatisfying lives.

As each succeeds in breaking away from their original unhappy lifestyle, they discover that although they gained freedom, they failed in their attempts of finding a life that would bring them solace. Edna was unhappy because Joe left her, for he knew their love was forbidden, and she was left with no one who understood or supported her individual lifestyle. Her husband and society thought she was going insane and believed her dreams and aspirations were inappropriate and weird. She was a woman ahead of her times trapped in a world that supported old-fashioned beliefs. With no strength or support from other Edna saw no other solution to her dilemma than to commit suicide which admitted her defeat in her efforts to find happiness through independence. Ginny lives her dream of being out on her own and raising Rose's daughters, but like Edna she is not content with her new life. Her nieces don't trust her and there's a strained and uncomfortable feeling in their lives. Although she broke all ties with her family like she had originally wanted to, things still felt unfinished and problems unresolved as the entire family either left or died without making amends. Ginny no longer had Rose to talk to or to understand or support her, all she did was work and sleep. Edna and Ginny both wanted freedom unaware that it would also bring lonely solitude.

Edna and Ginny were both trapped in boring unsatisfying lives. They wanted independence from their husbands who they believed were keeping them from escaping from their miserable lives and preventing them from being free. As each broke away and attained control of their own life, they discovered that complete independence from everyone is not what they needed, but someone who understood that they wanted to be respected as an individual.

Sample Student Questions for Peer Revision

Reviewer: Jane Quickly • Writer: Harry LeRoy

- ¶1 1. What causes their self-realizations?
2. What are some of the old customs they leave?
3. Why do they feel they have to leave their family? memories? Do they feel trapped?
- ¶2 4. Why was Edna so bored?
5. What were the trivial tasks that she did everyday?
6. What would have made Edna feel useful and important? self-worth, dignity?
7. What was the relationship between Edna and her husband? Was it love or just convenient?
8. Did the relationship between Ginny and Ty change? Why? When?
- ¶3 9. What was an example when Robert made Edna feel important?
10. Did Robert really love Edna? Why did he leave her?
11. Why wasn't Ginny truly in love with Jess? What is an example to support this?
- ¶4 12. In what ways did Reiz support Edna? What did Edna learn from the wise woman?
13. Do you think suicide was an act of courage, or a sign that she had given up? Why?
14. Why did Edna want to break the ties with her family?
15. What were some of the problems unresolved?
- ¶5 16. What led Edna and Ginny to find themselves trapped in a boring life?
17. What did Edna and Ginny do in order to break away?
18. Was their discovery a positive or negative influence on their lives? Why?

Reviewer: Jennifer Schaffer • Writer: Harry LeRoy

- ¶1 1. Does either one of the women succeed in this quest?
2. What is it about Edna's family that binds her? What is it about Ginny's?
3. What old customs must Edna leave? Which ones must Ginny leave?

- ¶2 4. What type of "respected individual" did Edna strive to become? What type did Ginny strive for?
5. What sort of things did Edna do to make herself feel important? Were these the same or different from what Ginny did?
6. What "trivial tasks" did Edna (and Ginny?) resent so much?
7. Though their husbands were not supportive of their liberation, was society?
8. Did either woman resent her husband for his attitude and/or lack of support?
- ¶3 9. What did Joe (real name Robert) do to treat Edna as a person?
10. What did Jess do for Ginny that Ty no longer did? Did he make her feel beautiful or special again?
11. What made Jess exciting and mysterious?
12. Does Ginny "love" Jess because he has all that Ty doesn't?
- ¶4 13. What kind of solace are Edna and Ginny truly searching for? Does it have anything to do with men?
14. What is Kate Chopin saying about trying to live with no support whatever?
15. Was Edna's liberation worth death?
16. Why does total emotional freedom not satisfy Ginny?
17. What causes the "strained & uncomfortable" feeling? Could it be the way Rose & Ginny's relationship ended?
18. Is making amends necessary for personal resolution?
19. Was Rose's "support"
20. Was Ginny's liberation worth it?
- ¶5 21. What was unsatisfying about the women's lives in the beginning? How about in the end?
22. Were the husbands truly the root of their problems?
23. Was there any way Edna or Ginny could find someone who truly would respect them as an individual? Or were they stuck with a choice between degrading husbands vs. lonely solitude? Did they think they saw this person in Robert & Jess?

Revision of Student Essay after Peer Revision

Just as Edna in *The Awakening*, Ginny in *A Thousand Acres* realizes through the influence of her adulterer that life as a housewife doesn't bring satisfaction or contentment. Each yearning for self-identity and respect as an individual, they set out on a quest of self-discovery and *freedom*. Though Edna is searching for women's rights and Ginny aspires to become a more assertive and strong woman, both share the common struggle of **escaping the grasps of a husband unsympathetic to their feelings or needs who binds them to their dismal life**.

Both women wanted to rid themselves of their passive wife roles and gain the freedom to become a woman respected as an individual **instead of identified as their husband's faithful spouse**. Edna was bored of her meaningless life as a wife and mother. She felt her days were filled with trivial tasks **such as preparing meals and caring for children** and yearned to feel useful and important. **Edna's marriage was one of convenience, not love. The two never really spent time together, her husband would go off and do his own thing, knowing that when he returned home, his obedient wife would be waiting. He thought Edna was insane and stubborn when she expressed she was unhappy with her life and wanted some independence.** Her husband thought women were created to have babies and serve their husbands and didn't support Edna in her search of self-sufficiency. Ginny's husband Ty was quiet and passive, and like Edna's *spouse* believed women should keep their opinions to themselves. **Not one to be an assertive attacker himself**, he was angered by Ginny's new aggressive stand she took against her father and didn't *feel* it was appropriate behavior. Ty's **philosophy of life was not to get involved in disputes and let people do their own thing in attempt to keep peace. He believed in following the rules and not breaking tradition which is why he couldn't empathize with Ginny's plight of being dissatisfied with her role as a farmwife. Because of his own beliefs, he didn't understand why Ginny wanted to break away from the typical farmwife stereotype and didn't support her in her quest of self-discovery and independence.** Though both women longed for the freedom to be an individual, neither received any assistance from their husband.

Edna and Ginny each had an affair with a younger man they felt understood them and helped them where their husbands had failed. *Robert* was the only one who actually treated Edna as a person rather than a mother or wife by really listening to her when she talked and respecting her opinion, something no one else had ever done. He made her feel important **by spending all his free time with her, encouraging conversation and true expression of her feelings**. Her love for Robert however, was not necessarily with him as a person, but rather the idea that someone saw her as an individual and treated her with respect. Ginny had an affair with Jess Clark, an old childhood playmate who left the farm years before and returned an exciting yet mysterious stranger. Jess was **educated and well traveled and seemed to spread jovialness and gaiety whenever he was around**. He was the antithesis of Ty as he didn't hesitate to speak his opinion or do things his own way. **The land was Ty's first love and priority, not Ginny. Jess made Ginny feel beautiful and special again by treating her with respect and making her believe that someone loved her above anything else.** Like Edna, Ginny wasn't truly in love with Jess, but the excitement and

change he brought to the life she was tired and bored of and the idea that someone loved her more than the land. Both Ginny and Edna have an affair with men who seem to fit the change they are yearning for in their unsatisfying lives.

As each succeeds in breaking away from their original unhappy lifestyle, they discover that although they gained freedom, they failed in their attempts of finding a life that would bring them solace. Edna was unhappy because Robert left her, **for he knew their love was forbidden**, and she was left with no one who understood or supported her individual lifestyle. Her husband and society thought she was going insane and believed her dreams and aspirations were inappropriate and weird. She was a woman ahead of her times trapped in a world that supported old-fashioned beliefs. **In those times it was uncommon for a woman to want her own identity or break away from her husband's protective care.** With no strength or support from others **except Mme Reiz who taught Edna to follow her dreams no matter what people thought, Edna only succeeded in secluding herself even more, for the wise Mme Reiz was also an outcast of society.** Edna saw no other solution to her dilemma than to commit suicide **which admitted her defeat in her efforts to find happiness through independence.** Ginny lives her dream of being out on her own **and separated from a husband whose passiveness she had outgrown and was tying her down**, but like Edna she is not content. **[—] Betrayed by both Jess and Rose as Jess left Ginny for her sister, Ginny is hurt that her lover no longer loves or is interested in her and Rose who has been her best friend since childhood traded their special love for the affection of a man. Ginny no longer has someone who cares for her or offers emotional support.** Although she broke all ties with her family like she had originally wanted to, things still felt unfinished and problems unresolved as the entire family either left or died without making amends. **Society looked down on Ginny because of the harsh manner in which she treated her father. It was rumored that she and Rose drove Larry insane and she receives only bitter resentment and hostility from the public. Without a friend in the world, all Ginny did was work and sleep. She had nothing to live for or bring joy in her life. Ginny won the battle of escaping her unhappy life as a farmwife but lost the war as she discovers independence also brings discontent.** Edna and Ginny both wanted freedom unaware that it would also bring lonely solitude.

Edna and Ginny were both trapped in boring unsatisfying lives. They wanted independence from their husbands who they believed were the reason they were without their own identity and kept them from escaping from their miserable lives. As each broke away and attained control of their own life, **the one person who they had trusted and depended on for strength and support along the way left them isolated and alone in a world that didn't expect or understand their thirst for freedom.** They discovered that complete independence from everyone is not what they needed, but someone who understood that they wanted to be respected as an individual.

CRISP Method of Style Revision

by Dixie Dellinger, MA

Students work on these steps individually and independently. This is the final edit— <i>before proofreading</i> :	First	CUT WORDS	Cut out every word that can be spared. Remove “due to the fact that” and “in order to” and all other wordy constructions and empty expressions that don’t say anything.
	Next	REDUCE CLAUSES	Almost all clauses can be reduced in some way; to appositives or phrases, etc.
	Then	INTENSIFY VERBS	Circle all verbs and intensify the weak ones. This will take care of excessive use of passive voice.
	After that	SHARPEN DICTION	Find the <i>best</i> words for the audience and the purpose. Diction creates tone.
	Finally	PACK PHRASES	Move them behind the nouns. Instead of “A proposal presented by Derek Bok, the president of Harvard, was defeated,” (12 words) pack it to “Harvard president Derek Bok’s proposal failed.” (6 words)

REVISION STRATEGIES: + X ÷ —

Revision usually works like arithmetic and in this order: Being process, any of these can be — and usually is, with skilled writers — recycled and used again... and again. Students can work on these steps independently or with others.	First	ADD	adding something that is not there: facts, logical argument, details, examples, illustrations, statistics, <i>ad infinitum</i> .
	Next	MULTIPLY	increasing what is already there; twice as many facts, logical arguments, details, examples, illustrations, and so on.
	Then	DIVIDE	“chunking” into paragraphs, moving things around, organizing the parts in a different way, and so on.
	Finally	SUBTRACT	taking out unnecessary words, material, sharpening diction, working on tone and audience consciousness, honing arguments, working on stylistic devices.

Adjectival Forms

Knowing the adjective form of a noun will often help you eliminate unnecessary words and write with more economy and directness. For the italicized nouns or nominal phrase in each of the following, decide what you think the adjectival form should be. Then substitute the adjective for the phrase in which the noun appears and combine the two sentences into one. Use a dictionary *only after* you have made your own decisions. There are right answers for the adjective forms, but you will come up with differing changes in the structure of the sentences. No. 0 is done as an example.

0. She is a scholar of *literature*. She has published two books on Pushkin.

A literary scholar, she has published two books on Pushkin.

1. His writing is *like poetry*. It uses many figures of speech.
2. Her life was like a *drama*. It had a happy ending.
3. We are finishing a study of the *theme* of Hamlet. We are studying the madness in the play.
4. The sea here is a *symbol*. It stands for the dangers of the unknown.
5. There are clues in the *context*. They suggest the writer owes a debt to Milton's Paradise Lost.
6. She uses two devices as *transitions*. They are conjunctions and word repetition.
7. King Arthur may have been a person from history or a character from *fiction*. He has inspired many stories.
8. This whole scene has *irony*. It suggests that Kate may have done some taming of her own.
9. This novel is written in the form of *letters*. It follows Kim's life over sixty-five years. (*This one's a trick; you'll have to go back to the Latin word for 'letter.'*)
10. The scenery looks very *real*. It stands in contrast to the events of the plot.
11. This story is an *allegory*. It would speak to people of nearly all cultures.
12. Her speech features many examples of *hyperbole*. As a result, she becomes comical.
13. The situation here contains a *paradox*. It is that inaction becomes a form of action.
14. The poem has a pattern of *rhythm*. The pattern reinforces the theme.
15. The verse is made up of *syllables*. It is not metrical in the traditional English way.
16. Many Victorian novelists used direct comment by the *author* in their novels. The comment seems intrusive to many modern readers.

Synonyms

from a dictionary of synonyms:

foretell, predict, forecast, prophesy, prognosticate mean to tell before hand.

Foretell applies to the telling of a future event by any procedure or from any source of information <seers *foretold* of calamitous events.>

Predict commonly implies inference from facts or from accepted laws of nature <astronomers *predicted* the return of the comet.>

Forecast adds the implication of anticipating eventualities and differs from *predict* in being usually concerned with probabilities rather than certainties <*forecast* a snowfall of six inches.>

Prophesy connotes inspired or mystic knowledge of the future, especially as the fulfilling of divine threats or promises, or implies great assurance in predicting <preachers *prophesying* a day of divine retribution.>

Prognosticate suggests prediction based on the learned or skilled interpretation of signs or symptoms <economists are *prognosticating* a slow recovery.>

caustic, mordant, acrid, scathing mean stingingly incisive.

Caustic suggests a biting wit <caustic comments about her singing ability>. **ant.** genial

Mordant suggests a wit that is used with deadly effectiveness <*mordant* reviews put the play out of its misery.>

Acrid implies bitterness and often malevolence <a speech marked by *acrid* invective>. **ant.** benign, kindly.

Scathing implies indignant attacks delivered with fierce or withering severity <a *scathing* satire of corporate life.>

proud, arrogant, haughty, lordly, insolent, overbearing, supercilious, disdainful mean showing superiority toward others or scorn for inferiors.

Proud may suggest a feeling or attitude of pleased satisfaction in oneself or one's accomplishments that may or may not be justified and may or may not be demonstrated offensively <a *proud* man, unwilling to admit failure>. **ant.** humble, ashamed

Arrogant implies a claiming for oneself of more consideration or importance than is warranted and often suggests an aggressive, domineering manner <an *arrogant* business executive used to being kowtowed to>. **ant.** meek, unassuming

Haughty suggests a blatantly displayed consciousness of superior birth or position <a *haughty* manner that barely concealed his scorn>. **ant.** lowly

Lordly implies pomposity or an arrogant display of power <*lordly* indifference to the consequences of their carelessness.>

Insolent implies insultingly contemptuous haughtiness <suffered the stares of *insolent* waiters>. **ant.** deferential

Overbearing suggests a tyrannical manner or an intolerable insolence <wearied by demands from her *overbearing* in-laws>. **ant.** subservient

Supercilious implies a cool, patronizing haughtiness <*supercilious* parvenus with their disdainful sneers.>

Disdainful suggests a more active and openly scornful superciliousness <*disdainful* of their pathetic attempts>. **ant.** admiring, respectful

adapted from *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary of Synonyms and Antonyms*,
Springfield: Merriam-Webster, 1992. Print.