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Sentences to Copy and Parse

Opening Sentences

(and others)

Directions

First, copy each sentence on your own paper.

Next, parse the sentence. Is it simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex? What is the subject and verb of the main clauses? You might discuss this with your instructor, your group, or the class.

Finally, compose a sentence of your own that fits the pattern of the copied sentence.

1. “All happy families are like one another; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

Anna Karenina (1873-77), by Leo Tolstoy. Trans.
David Magarshack.

2. “The tropical rain fell in drenching sheets, hammering the corrugated roof of the clinic building, roaring down the metal gutters, splashing on the ground in a torrent.”

Jurassic Park (1990), by Michael Crichton.

3. “Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.”

The Social Contract (1762), by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
Trans. Maurice Cranston.

4. “Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot.”

A notice at the beginning of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), by Mark Twain.

5. “We get so much in the habit of wearing a disguise before others that we finally appear disguised before ourselves.”

The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680). No. 119.
Trans. Louis Kronenberger.

6. “I had the story, bit by bit, from various people, and, as generally happens in such cases, each time it was a different story.”

Ethan Frome (1911), by Edith Wharton.

7. “The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring fogs revealed an army stretched out on the hills, resting.”

The Red Badge of Courage (1895), by Stephen Crane.

8. “To the red-country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth.”

The Grapes of Wrath (1939), by John Steinbeck

9. “Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.”

Emma (1815), by Jane Austen.

10. “In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I’ve been turning over in my mind ever since.”

The Great Gatsby (1925), by F. Scott Fitzgerald.

11. “He was an inch, perhaps two, under six feet, powerfully built, and he advanced straight at you with a slight stoop of the shoulders, head forward, and a fixed from-under stare which made you think of a charging bull.”

Lord Jim (1899), by Joseph Conrad.

12. “A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below.”

“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” (1890), by
Ambrose Bierce.

13. “It was Paul's afternoon to appear before the faculty of the Pittsburgh High School to account for his various misdemeanors.”

“Paul’s Case” (1906), by Willa Cather.

14. “The leaves were so still that even Bibi thought it was going to rain.”

“The Storm” (1898), by Kate Chopin.

15. “In the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one.”

“The Birth-Mark” (1846), by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

16. “There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck.”

“The Rocking-Horse Winner” (1926), by D. H. Lawrence.

17. “When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun.”

Far from the Madding Crowd (1874), by Thomas Hardy.

18. “The story had held us, round the fire, sufficiently breathless, but except the obvious remark that it was gruesome, as on Christmas Eve in an old house a strange tale should essentially be, I remember no comment uttered till somebody happened to note it as the only case he had met in which such a visitation had fallen on a child.”

The Turn of the Screw (1898), by Henry James.

19. “Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great or small: to wit, a workhouse; and in this workhouse was born, on a day and date which I need not trouble myself to repeat, inasmuch as it can be of no possible consequence to the reader, in this stage of the business at all events, the item of mortality whose name is prefixed to the head of this chapter.”

Oliver Twist (1837-39), by Charles Dickens.

20. “We were in study-hall when the headmaster entered, followed by a new boy not yet in school uniform and by the handyman carrying a large desk.”

Madame Bovary (1857), by Gustave Flaubert. Trans. Francis Steegmuller

21. “The great fish moved silently through the night water, propelled by short sweeps of its crescent tail.”

Jaws (1974), by Peter Benchley.

22. “While the present century was in its teens, and on one sunshiny morning in June, there drove up to the great iron gate of Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, on Chiswick Mall, a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour.”

Vanity Fair (1847-48), by William Makepeace
Thackeray

23. “‘I have been here before,’ I said; I had been there before; first with Sebastian more than twenty years ago on a cloudless day in June, when the ditches were creamy with meadowsweet and the air heavy with all the scents of summer; it was a day of peculiar splendor, and though I had been there so often, in so many moods, it was to that first visit that my heart returned on this, my latest.

Brideshead Revisited (1945), by Evelyn Waugh.

24. “Half-way down a by-street of one of our New England towns stands a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely peaked gables, facing towards various points of the compass, and a huge, clustered chimney in the midst.”

The House of the Seven Gables (1851), by Nathaniel Hawthorne.

25. “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way--in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.”

A Tale of Two Cities (1859), by Charles Dickens.

26. “A destiny that leads the English to the Dutch is strange enough; but one that leads from Epsom into Pennsylvania, and thence into the hills that shut in Altamont over the proud coral cry of the cock, and the soft stone smile of an angel, is touched by that dark miracle of chance which makes new magic in a dusty world.”

Look Homeward, Angel: A Story of the Buried Life
(1929), by Thomas Wolfe.

27. “Just after passing Caraher's saloon, on the County Road that ran south from Bonneville, and that divided the Broderson ranch from that of Los Muertos, Presley was suddenly aware of the faint and prolonged blowing of a steam whistle that he knew must come from the railroad shops near the depot at Bonneville.”

The Octopus: A Story of California (1901), by Frank Norris.

28. “On a hill by the Mississippi where Chippewas camped two generations ago, a girl stood in relief against the cornflower blue of Northern sky.”

Main Street (1920), by Sinclair Lewis.

29. “From a little after two o’clock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield still called the office because her father had called it that—a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty three summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as wind might have blown them.”

Absalom, Absalom (1936), by William Faulkner.

30. “A green hunting cap squeezed the top of the fleshy balloon of a head.”

A Confederacy of Dunces (1980), by John Kennedy Toole.

31. “If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll really want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.”

The Catcher in the Rye (1951), by J. D. Salinger.

32. “The North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance agent promised to fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior at three o'clock.”

Song of Solomon (1977), by Toni Morrison.

33. “I was thirty-seven then, strapped in my seat as the huge 747 plunged through dense cloud cover on approach to the Hamburg airport.”

Norwegian Wood (2000), by Haruki Murakami. Trans. Jay Rubin.

34. “The play—for which Briony had designed the posters, programs and tickets, constructed the sales booth out of a folding screen tipped on its side, and lined the collection box in red crepe paper—was written by her in a two-day tempest of composition, causing her to miss a breakfast and a lunch.”

Atonement (2003), by Ian McEwan.

35. “You would have searched a long time for the sort of winding lane or tranquil meadow for which England later became celebrated.”

The Buried Giant (2015), by Kazuo Ishiguro.

36. “The news about Walter Berglund wasn’t picked up locally—he and Patty had moved away to Washington two years earlier and meant nothing to St. Paul now—but the urban gentry of Ramsey Hill were not so loyal to their city as not to read the *New York Times*.”

Freedom: A Novel (2010), by Jonathan Franzen

37. “When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.”

“The Metamorphosis” (1915), by Franz Kafka. Trans. Stanley Corngold.

38. “Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond.”

Things Fall Apart (1958), by Chinua Achebe.

39. “Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice.”

One Hundred years of Solitude (1942), by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Trans. Gregory Rabassa.

40. “A wide plain, where the broadening Floss hurries on between its green banks to the sea, and the loving tide, rushing to meet it, checks its passage with an impetuous embrace.”

The Mill on the Floss (1860), by George Eliot.

41. “I was the shadow of the waxwing slain / By the false
azure in the windowpane;”

Pale Fire (1962), by Vladimir Nabokov.

42. “It was a quiet, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn’t know what I was doing in New York.”

The Bell Jar (1971), by Sylvia Plath.

43. “When he woke in the woods in the dark and the cold of the night he’d reach out to touch the child sleeping beside him.”

The Road (2006), by Cormac McCarthy.

44. “At sixty miles an hour, you could pass our farm in a minute, on Country Road 686, which ran due north into the T intersection at Cabot Street Road.”

A Thousand Acres: A Novel (1991), by Jane Smiley.

45. “Around quitting time, Tod Hackett heard a great din on the road outside his office.”

The Day of the Locust (1939), by Nathanael West.

46. “‘So of course,’ wrote Betty Flanders, pressing her heels rather deeper in the sand, ‘there was nothing for it but to leave.’”

Jacob’s Room (1922), by Virginia Woolf.

47. “I used to have a cat, an old fighting tom, who would jump through the open window by my bed in the middle of the night and land on my chest.”

Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (1974), by Annie Dillard.

48. “He lay flat on the brown, pine-needled floor of the forest, his chin on his folded arms, and high overhead the wind blew in the tops of the pine trees.”

For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), by Ernest Hemingway.

49. “In a city swollen by refugees but still mostly at peace, or at least not yet openly at war, a young man met a young woman in a classroom and did not speak to her.”

Exit West (2017), by Mohsin Hamid.

50. “There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”

Last line of *The Origin of Species* (1859), by Charles Darwin.