

Name: _____ Date: _____

Do Punctuation Marks Have Personalities? 9th Grade Syntax Quiz

Rhetorical pause management, em-dash versatility, and nuances of the colon. Practice using punctuation as a stylistic tool for sophisticated voice and clarity.

1. Consider the nuances of the em-dash (—). Which sentence uses em-dashes correctly to amplify an internal contradiction within a character?

- A. He was a man of great wealth—though he lived in a shack—and little empathy.
- B. He was a man—of great wealth—though he lived in a shack—and little empathy.
- C. He was a man—of great wealth, though he lived in a shack and little empathy.
- D. He was a man of great wealth though—he lived in a shack—and little empathy.

2. In formal academic writing, a colon can be used to join two independent clauses if the second clause directly explains or illustrates the first.

- A. True
- B. False

3. Choose the correct sequence of punctuation to complete this complex sentence: 'The expedition faced three daunting obstacles ___ sub-zero temperatures ___ unpredictable terrain ___ and dwindling morale.'

- A. ; , ,
- B. : ; ;
- C. ; , ,
- D. , ; ;

4. Which sentence demonstrates the 'Oxford Comma' (serial comma) used to prevent ambiguity in a complex list?

- A. We invited the global activists, Malala Yousafzai, and Greta Thunberg.
- B. We invited the global activists, Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg.
- C. We invited the global activists: Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg.
- D. We invited the global activists; Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg.

5. A semicolon is required when joining two independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb like 'nevertheless' or 'consequently.'

- A. True
- B. False

6. Select the correct punctuation for the following reference to a short story: 'In her analysis of Shirley Jackson's ___The Lottery___ she explores the theme of blind tradition.'

- A. " , "
- B. " " ,

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- C. ' , '
- D. — —

7. Identify the sentence that uses a semicolon correctly to separate items in a series that already contains internal punctuation.

- A. The itinerary includes Cairo, Egypt; Tokyo, Japan; and Lima, Peru.
- B. The itinerary includes Cairo; Egypt, Tokyo; Japan, and Lima; Peru.
- C. The itinerary includes Cairo, Egypt, Tokyo, Japan, and Lima, Peru.
- D. The itinerary includes: Cairo, Egypt; Tokyo, Japan; and Lima, Peru.

8. The use of ellipsis (...) at the end of a sentence in a literary analysis should always be followed by a period, totaling four dots.

- A. True
- B. False

9. Identify the correct punctuation for a parenthetical citation in MLA format: 'The protagonist felt a sense of ___melancholy___ ___Smith 42___.'

- A. " () .
- B. " . ()
- C. , () .
- D. " () ,

10. Which of the following uses punctuation to create a specific 'staccato' tone, common in modernist prose?

- A. The engine died. The wind howled. Silence fell.
- B. The engine died; the wind howled and silence fell.
- C. As the engine died, the wind howled, and silence fell.
- D. The engine died (and the wind howled) until silence fell.