

The Bizarre Mystery of Horribly Hard Middle School

Unlike the other Caught'ya books, each of which contains three totally different stories turned into Caught'ya sentences, this book includes only one story that is broken up into three parts. The story, "The Bizarre Mystery of Horribly Hard Middle School," is long enough to produce more than three years' worth of Caught'ya sentences. A group of kids (whose personalities you will recognize in your own students) progress through three years at Horribly Hard Middle School doing the usual middle-school things and suffering from typical middle-school-kid dilemmas and problems. They write awful poetry, deal with obnoxious miscreants, live in a world where magic is possible, and try to figure out what is wrong with many of their teachers who don't seem quite normal.

I felt it would be better to have a story that would span the three years of middle school because middle-school students need continuity. They like books in a series with the same characters. They enjoy reading about themselves (thinly disguised) and their lives at school, and they love reading about adults with foibles—hence the popularity of *Harry Potter* and other *series* of books about pre-teens and teens.

As you read, you will notice that each year's worth of Caught'yas has a basic introduction repeated almost verbatim at the beginning. Obviously this would not be done in a regular children's novel, but I wanted to re-introduce the story and the main characters to the students each year. After all, summers are long, and adolescent memories are short. While they never forget lyrics to a popular tune, middle-school kids tend to forget anything having to do with school in a break of more than a few days. In addition, students will not have a personal copy of the story to read and reread as they so often do with beloved books before the next in the series appears.

Some sentences in the story may sound stilted and others may seem repetitious or redundant. This is because the primary purpose of this story is to teach English grammar, mechanics, usage, vocabulary, literary devices, spelling, etc. Obviously, while retaining the story's appeal to middle-school students, the main purpose had to take precedence.

Everything You Never Wanted to Know about Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics, but I'm Going to Tell You Anyway

Introductory Notes

Those of us who are familiar with some topic or idea sometimes forget that not everyone else has the same knowledge. This is why I included this guide. Unless you have taught English for a year at the eighth-grade level or higher, unless you have had a teacher somewhere along the way who has successfully taught you all the terms, or unless you have studied a grammar book from cover to cover and have kept up with all the changes, there is no way that you can know the rules of English grammar and usage and their many technical terms.

Complex as the language is, even we English teachers have trouble with some of the picky mechanical points of the language. We also disagree!

English is a fluid language. It changes with use. Thirty years ago we strewed commas with near abandon. Now we are eliminating many of them. People begin sentences with conjunctions. I have real trouble with this. Conjunctions are for joining ideas, not starting them. What teachers once called a "dependent clause" is now lumped under the heading of "subordinate clause," and so on. Because of this, we all do not follow identical rules and terms, yet all of us still can be officially correct at the same time.

Do not be afraid to disagree with me. Many points of mechanics, especially the use of some commas, are highly debatable, extremely personal, and sometimes linked to a particular generation. When I participated in writing the English curriculum for the middle schools in my county, seven English teachers sat around a table and argued various points. Each of us always could find a book that would support a specific opinion. After a few hot debates, we finally had to agree to use one standard book for reference.

When Maupin House asked me to include a section that could serve as a reference for the grammar, mechanics, and usage terms, frankly, I was apprehensive. It seemed to be a dangerous task for one person to attempt. Grammar books are usually written by committees and still have errors in them. I solicited the help of my mother and several of my colleagues, all excellent grammarians, to ensure accuracy.

Do not feel inadequate or undereducated if you find yourself frequently referring to this Appendix. Many of you, like me, probably did not major in English in college and do not read grammar textbooks for pleasure. This guide will help you understand the whys and wherefores of a sentence so that you can explain it to your children in a way that makes sense to them. Once students understand the underlying concept of a rule, they can apply that rule to their own sentences when they write.

The terms are listed in alphabetical order for easier reference. If you do not fully understand a term used in one explanation, you can look it up under its own heading. All the terms that a non-English major might need for clarity are cross-referenced. Also included in the guide are some tips for teaching some of these

concepts. I hope you find these suggestions useful. All of these teaching tips have proven successful with students.

Examples are included for each concept. If, after reading the explanation of a concept, you still do not feel comfortable with it, study the examples. Right here, I feel the need to apologize for the truly uninspired examples. The majority of them concern my dogs and cats. They are always present when I write, like furry muses.

I am aware that the current trend is to abandon the teaching of certain concepts and terms, such as the parts of speech. As a former foreign language teacher, however, I know that students need to be familiar with these terms to learn the new language. If a student is aware of the difference, for example, between a subject pronoun and an object pronoun, then French pronouns do not hold much horror.

In my French classes, I often found myself having to teach the parts of speech just so my students and I could have a common frame of reference. It is hard enough to learn a different vocabulary in another language. If, in addition, students have to learn basic grammar terms, it makes the task much more difficult. The grammar of languages based on Indo-European is basically similar. The verb may come at the end of a sentence in German or at the end of a subordinate clause in Dutch, or there may be an extra verb tense to learn in Spanish and French. The basic concepts and parts of speech, however, are the same in all these languages.

I believe, too, in the teaching of sentence diagramming to help students to think and to use logic. Diagramming reaches some left-brain students who otherwise might never understand sentence structure.

After teaching rudimentary sentence diagramming through the Caught'yas, I almost could see the light bulb go on in some students' eyes. I do not believe, however, in teaching all the picky points of English, like infinitive phrases, gerund phrases, etc., unless there is a reason for learning them, like learning the appropriate placement of commas.

Even then, when teaching the picky points is unavoidable, I advise trying to avoid using the abstruse, esoteric grammar terms. Instead, explain these points in simpler terms, using the eight parts of speech for reference. I don't say to students, for example, "If a participial phrase begins or interrupts a sentence, you need to set it off by commas. You need to know that a participial phrase is . . ." Even after you explain what a participial phrase is, your students probably are gazing out the window, minds elsewhere.

Try something like this instead. "Look at this phrase. What part of speech is it? An adjective? Right! You know the parts of speech! Well, look at it. It contains a form of a verb. If you see a group of words like this at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle of a sentence, you need to put commas after it or around it." That gets their attention because it is

something that makes sense to them. I do mention the words “participial phrase” so that students may recognize the term in the future in case other English teachers use it, but I stress the concept and not the specific term.

Other examples: instead of talking about “gerunds,” you can teach your students to use a verb or a verb phrase as a noun. In teaching verbs like “lie” and “lay,” “sit” and “set,” and “rise” and “raise,” a teacher can explain the use of each verb by talking about verbs that take direct objects and verbs that do not, instead of introducing new labels like “transitive” and “intransitive.”

Basically, the bottom line is to write correctly, not to memorize the names for everything or to identify certain phrases or clauses. When a student writes a sentence, the labels are useless. The task of English teachers is not to teach rules and technical terms, but to teach correct writing and editing skills.

Those of you who teach basic-skills classes or younger children will want to avoid the more complicated concepts anyway. Use your own judgement as to how much your students can comprehend and transfer to their writing. Each class is different. Each group has different needs. You know them best.

If you are writing your own sentences, make certain that you include in your story the grammar, mechanics, and usage that you know your students can grasp comfortably. This list is comprehensive so that this book can be used at any level. I hope that all of you find this guide a useful tool in teaching this beautiful language of ours.

Abbreviations

Most abbreviations are followed by a period.

Examples: Mr., Mrs.

If, however, all the letters of the abbreviation are capitals, a period is not used. These often are acronyms, words formed from the initial letters of a name.

Examples: NATO, USSR, USA

Usually abbreviations begin with a capital letter. Abbreviations of units of measure, however, do not begin with capital letters. They also do not require periods. The only exception is the abbreviation for inch.

Examples: mph, hp, l, km, and so on.

Exception: in.

Common abbreviations: Mr., Mrs., Ms., Dr., St., Rd., Ave., Co., Inc., days of the week, months of the year, A.M., P.M., O.K., etc.

State abbreviations: The United States Postal Service uses special abbreviations for each state. These are always two letters, both capitalized, without any periods. The postal code of twenty-nine states is the first two letters of the state. If the state has two words, the first letter of each word is used.

States that follow this rule: AL, AR, CA, CO, DE, FL, ID, IL, IN, MA, MI, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, OR, RI, SC, SD, UT, WA, WV, WI, and WY

Exceptions: Alaska (AK), Arizona (AZ), Connecticut (CT), Georgia (GA), Hawaii (HI), Iowa (IA), Kansas (KS), Kentucky (KY), Louisiana (LA), Maine (ME), Maryland (MD), Minnesota (MN), Mississippi (MS), Missouri (MO), Montana (MT), Nevada (NV), Pennsylvania (PA), Tennessee (TN), Texas (TX), Vermont (VT), and Virginia (VA).

Accept/Except

These two words often are confusing for students since they are so close in sound. Every time one of them appears in a Caught'ya, you can explain the difference.

1. Accept is a verb that means “to receive willingly.”

Example: The fat Rottweiler surely **will accept** the bone.

2. Except is a preposition that means “excluding” or “other than.” It also can be used as a verb that means “to leave out” or “exclude.”

Examples: The fat Rottweiler eats everything **except** onions. (preposition)

The fire department will **except** men over seventy-two inches from that kind of duty. (verb)

Active vs. Passive Verb Voices

1. **Active:** In the active voice, the subject **does** the action. Active voice is always better for more effective writing.

Example: The owner **pets** the happy dog on the head.

2. **Passive:** In the passive voice, the subject **receives** the action. Encourage students to try to avoid passive voice if at all possible. It weakens writing and often muddies the meaning in a sentence.

Example: The happy dog **was petted** on the head by the owner.

Adjective

An adjective describes a noun; it gives information about a noun.

Examples: ugly, pretty, big, little, this, four

An adjective answers one of the following three questions about a noun:

1) Which one?

2) What kind?

3) How many?

Example: **The amazing English** teacher taught **two** grade levels. (Which teacher? **The English** teacher; What kind of teacher? An **amazing** teacher; How many grade levels? **Two** grade levels.)

Adjective Clauses

An adjective clause is any subordinate clause (a complete sentence made into an incomplete sentence by the addition of a subordinating conjunction) that acts as an adjective in a sentence.

Example: The house **where she lives** is filled with animals. ("She lives." would be a complete sentence without the addition of "where." "Where she lives" modifies the noun "house.")

Adjective clauses also can begin with a relative pronoun: who, whom, whose, which, that, where, or when.

Examples: The oven **which was small and dirty** could not be used.

This is the school **where my child is a student**.

The school **that my child attends** is a good one.

The teacher **who loves to laugh** has more fun.

Monday is the day **when we always write in our journals**.

The teacher **whom we admire** is retiring.

Jane Kiester, **whose dogs are obese**, teaches middle school.

(*See Subordinate Clauses and Subordinating Conjunctions.*)

Adverb

An adverb is any word, phrase, or clause that tells more about a verb; many of the single-word adverbs end in "ly."

An adverb also tells to what extent an adjective or another adverb is true (very, extremely, and so on). This is called an intensifier.

Examples: a **very** hungry dog, an **extremely** sleepy cat

An adverb answers one of the following six questions about a verb, an adjective, or another adverb: where, when, why, how, how often, or to what extent it happened.

Examples: Where? The students learned grammar **at home**. (phrase)

When? **Yesterday** the teacher was absent.

How? The students **quickly** intimidated the substitute.

How often? The student yawned **four times** during class. (phrase)

To what extent? The teacher was **very** angry. (modifies the adjective "angry")

Why? She yelled **because she was angry**. (clause)

(*See Intensifiers.*)

Adverb Clauses

In the "olden days," an adverb clause was called an adverbial clause.

An adverb (or adverbial) clause is a subordinate clause that cannot stand on its own in a sentence. It acts as an adverb in a sentence.

Adverb clauses begin with a subordinating conjunction (*see list under Subordinating Conjunctions*).

Examples: **Whenever the teacher taught grammar**, the students groaned. (When did the students groan? "Whenever the teacher . . .")

The students went home **when the last bell rang**. (When did the students go home? "When the last bell rang.")

(*See Subordinate Clauses.*)

Affect/Effect

"Affect" and "effect" are two more words that many people confuse. If students have trouble with the correct use of these two words, use them in the Caught'yas and discuss their meanings.

1. Affect is a verb that means "to influence." It cannot be used as a noun.

Example: The eating habits of the fat Rottweiler will **affect** her girth.

2. Effect can be a noun or a verb. As a noun it means "the result of an action." As a verb it means "to cause to happen."

Examples: The **effect** of overeating is obvious in the width of the dog's belly. (noun)

The fat dog's owner **will effect** a new rule this week — no more scraps. (verb)

Agreement

1. **Antecedent and pronoun:** It is important that everything agrees in a sentence. If the subject is singular, then the pronoun used later in the sentence also must be singular. If the subject is plural, the pronoun should be plural.

Example of incorrect agreement: **Everyone** ate **their** pizza. (The indefinite pronoun "everyone" is singular, and thus the possessive pronoun which refers to it also must be singular.)

Examples of correct agreement: **Everyone** ate **his** or **her** pizza.

Each finished **his** or **her** lunch.

The **teachers** ate **their** lunch.

The **teacher** ate **his** lunch.

2. **Subject and verb:** If the subject is singular, then the verb must also be singular. If the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural.

Examples: The **dog bays** at the full moon. (singular)

The **dogs bay** at the full moon. (plural)

3. **Verbs in a story:** When writing a story an author must keep all the verbs in the same tense. If the story starts in the present tense, it must continue in the present tense (unless, of course, there is a flashback or a reference to something general). If a

story begins in the past, it must remain in the past, and so on.

Among and Between

“Among” and “between” are two prepositions that students often confuse, but they cease to be a problem very quickly after you point out the difference.

1. **Between** refers to two people, things, or groups.

Example: The cat slept **between** the two huge dogs.

2. **Among** refers to more than two people, things, or groups.

Example: The foolish cat slept **among** the four dogs.

Antecedents

These are the words that come before a given word in a sentence, as in “antecedent/pronoun agreement,” and are referred to by the given word. Thus, they must agree with each other. If one is singular, the other also must be singular, etc.

Example: The **pack** (antecedent) of dogs forsook **its** (pronoun) mistress. (“**Pack**” is singular and thus must be followed by a singular pronoun.)

(See *Collective Nouns*.)

Apostrophes

1. Contractions always contain apostrophes. A contraction comprises two words that are combined into one by omitting one or more letters. (See *Contractions* for more information and examples.)

Common contractions: I’m, I’ve, can’t, don’t, haven’t, isn’t, it’s, let’s, they’re, we’re, we’ve, won’t, you’re

2. **Possessive nouns** always contain apostrophes. A possessive noun is a noun that shows ownership of something.

Singular: Always add **'s** to the noun.

Examples: The **dog's** growl is ferocious. (The growl belongs to the dog.)

The **glass's** rim is dirty. (The rim belongs to the glass.)

Plural: Add **'** after the noun if the noun ends in “s.”

Add **'s** to the noun if the plural does not end in “s.”

Examples: The **dogs'** growls are ferocious. (Several dogs “own” their growls.)

The **children's** laughter fills the room. (Several children “own” the laughter.)

3. **Plurals of letters:** Form the plural of single letters by adding **"s."**

Examples: You will find more **"Es"** in words than any other letter.

She received all **"As"** on her report card.

Appositive

An appositive is a noun or a noun phrase that means the same thing as the noun that comes before it.

1. Appositives are set off by commas if they occur in the middle or end of a sentence and are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.

Examples: Dino, **the Doberman with the floppy ears**, loves to eat bananas.

The dog who craves bananas is Dino, **the Doberman with the floppy ears**.

2. Appositives are set off by commas if the appositive is extra information and is not needed to complete the meaning of the sentence.

Examples: Jane Kiester, **an English teacher at Westwood**, loves dogs.

Always by her side are her two dogs, **a wimpy Rottweiler and an oversized Doberman**.

3. Appositives are not set off by commas if the information given is needed to identify the noun.

Example: Mrs. Kiester's son **John** loves to tease his mother.

(There are no commas to set off this appositive because Mrs. Kiester has more than one son. The name is necessary to determine to which son the sentence refers. Technically, this is called a restrictive modifier. If Mrs. Kiester has only one son, the comma is needed because the information is *not* necessary. This is called a non-restrictive modifier.)

(See *Modifiers and Misplaced Modifiers* for more information and examples.)

Articles

These are simply the three most commonly used adjectives. They are also called noun markers since they signal the arrival of a noun.

List of articles: a, an, the

These three adjectives answer the question “which one?” (See *Noun Markers*.)

1. Use **“a”** before a word that begins with a consonant.

Example: There is **a** lazy dog and **a** sleepy cat on the floor.

2. Use **“an”** before a word that begins with a vowel.

Example: **An** obnoxious black and white cat howled until someone let him out the door.

An exception to this rule is the letter **“h.”**

3. Use **“a”** before a word that begins with a pronounced, breathy **“h.”**

Example: She had **a** healthy baby.

4. Use **“an”** before a word that begins with an unpronounced **“h.”**

Example: They were **an** hour away from home.

Bad and Badly

These words often cause confusion. “Bad” is the adjective and should modify a noun. “Badly” is the adverb and should tell about a verb.

Examples: The **bad** dog begged for forgiveness. (adjective tells what kind of dog)

The poor dog **badly** wanted a bone. (adverb tells to what extent it wanted the bone)

When a sense verb such as “feel” functions as a verb of being, it is often followed by a predicate adjective. Thus, one would use the adjective form after such a verb.

Example: I feel **bad**. (Not “I feel badly,” since one would not say “I am badly.”)

Because and Since

If you never put a comma before “because” and “since,” you will be right ninety-eight percent of the time. While there are some exceptions to this, they are rare. The words “because” and “since” begin adverb clauses. An adverb clause that begins a sentence needs a comma, but an adverb clause that follows the independent clause usually does not need a comma. Saying the sentence aloud is a good test.

About the only exceptions to this would be with a quotation or in a series, in the case of “since” acting as a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence, or in one of the few subordinate clauses that takes a comma for clarity.

Examples: **Because I like books about cats**, I read *The Literary Cat*. (adverb clause at the beginning of the sentence)

I read *The Literary Cat* **because I like books about cats**. (adverb clause that follows the independent clause)

Between (*See Among and Between*)

Bibliographical Forms

These do vary. Use the Modern Language Association (MLA) form, and you will be safe. Most traditional grammar books have a large list explaining how to write any reference you may need in correct bibliographical form. Just make sure that you insist that students list the books, articles, etc. in their bibliographies in alphabetical order.

Business Letters (Correct Format)

Sender’s address
Sender’s city, state zip
Date

Receiver’s name
Receiver’s address
Receiver’s city, state zip

Dear Sir or Madam:

The bulk of the letter should be written in block style, skipping lines between paragraphs.

Sincerely yours,
Sign name here in cursive.
Print or type name here.

Capitalization

Capitalize the following:

1. Abbreviations (*See Abbreviations for the exceptions.*)
2. Beginnings of sentences
3. First word in the greeting and closing of a letter
4. I
5. Names of months, days, and holidays
6. Proper nouns and proper adjectives
7. Titles of long works (*see Titles*)
 - Capitalize first and last words.
 - Capitalize all other words in title except prepositions, noun markers (a, an, the), and short conjunctions.

Chronological Order

In writing stories and paragraphs, it is important to narrate the action in a logical order. Chronological order maintains a sequence of time.

Clauses and Phrases

1. **Phrase:** Simply stated, a phrase is a group of words that serves as one part of speech (like a noun or an adjective or an adverb). It lacks a subject or a verb or both. Prepositional phrases are the most common. These are phrases that begin with a preposition and end with a noun.

Examples: in the dog house, to the store, filled with anger, rubbing his ears

2. **Clause:** A clause, on the other hand, is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb. With the removal of a subordinating conjunction that begins it, it could stand on its own as a sentence.

Example: because the dog is lazy (The subject is the word “dog.” The verb is the word “is.”)

(*See Prepositional Phrases.*)

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are nouns that take a group of something (many) and make that group one thing.

Common collective nouns: crew, class, orchestra, chorus, committee, family, flock, herd, fleet, jury, group, team, majority.

1. Most collective nouns are singular and therefore require the singular form of the verb. Also, any pronoun that refers to such a collective noun must be singular.

Examples: A **flock** of big birds **flies** over her house every autumn. ("Fly" would be the plural form of the verb.)

The **group** applauded its leader. "Its" is the singular pronoun; "their" is the plural pronoun and thus is incorrect. This is one of the most common mistakes that people make in speech and in writing.

Example: The girl's **family** took **its** vacation in June.

2. A few collective nouns are plural.

Example: The **people** took **their** dogs to the veterinarian.

Colons

1. Use a colon before a list but never after a verb or a preposition.

Example: It is important to remember to bring the following to class: pencil, paper, and a big grin.

2. Use after the greeting in a business letter.

Examples: Dear Sir or Madam:

To Whom It May Concern:

3. Use a colon to separate the hour from the minute in telling time.

Examples: 5:45 P.M., 6:24 A.M.

4. If the wording that follows a colon forms a complete sentence, do not capitalize the first letter of the sentence.

Example: The question is as follows: do Dobermans like to eat broccoli?

Combining Sentences for Clearer, More Concise Writing

Combine two related sentences into one by making a compound subject and/or a compound verb or by adding an appositive. There are other ways to combine sentences. These are the most common.

Examples: Change "The teacher hated spelling. Her students hated spelling." to "The teacher and her students hated spelling." (compound subject)

Change "The Rottweiler loved to sleep. She liked to lick her owner's face in the morning." to "The Rottweiler loved to sleep and liked to lick her owner's face in the morning." (compound verb)

Change "The Doberman had floppy ears. He also had a sweet disposition." to "The Doberman, who had floppy ears, had a sweet disposition." (adding an adjective clause)

(*See Appositive, Compound Sentences, and Compound Subjects and Compound Predicates.*)

Comma Rules

1. Use commas to separate items in a series. There are many different kinds of series, one for each part of speech except conjunctions.

Examples: The teacher **entered** the class, **wrote** on the board, and **sat** down at her desk. (verb series)

The teacher ate **apples, bananas, and cherries.** (noun series)

The **nice, kind, and beautiful** teacher assigned no homework for the weekend. (adjective series)

The teacher sat down **quickly, quietly, and with great dignity.** (adverb series)

He went **to the store, down the aisle, and into the vegetable section.** (prepositional phrase series)

She sat with **him, her, and them.** (series of pronouns)

Oh boy, wow, and whoopee, the teacher had a great class! (series of interjections)

You also can have a series of predicate nouns and adjectives. (These are just nouns and adjectives that are located after the predicate.)

2. Use commas between two or more adjectives that precede a noun unless one of the adjectives expresses a single idea with the noun (jet plane) or the last adjective tells color (green, etc.) or age (old, young).

Comma needed: The **cute, fuzzy** dog barked at everyone.

Comma omitted: The **cute brown** dog barked at everyone. (color adjective)

Examples: The **noisy jet** plane flew overhead. ("Jet plane" is one idea. The adjective is really part of the noun.)

The **ugly young** dog wolfed down its food. (age adjective).

The general "rule of thumb" is to use a comma if it sounds right to use the word "and" instead of a comma.

Examples: The **old oaken** bucket was covered with **wet green** moss. (No commas needed as it would be awkward to say "The old and oaken bucket was covered with wet and green moss.")

The **floppy-eared, lazy** Doberman slept all day. (Here you use a comma because it makes sense to say "The floppy-eared and lazy Doberman slept all day.")

3. Use commas to separate the simple sentences included in a compound sentence (*see Compound Sentences*).

Example: The teacher wrote the sentence, and she put in a comma because the sentence was compound.

4. Use commas after words, phrases, and clauses that come at the beginning of sentences. “No” and “yes” are included here. They always are followed by a comma.

Examples: **No**, you may not turn in your homework late.

Yes, you may do extra work if you wish.

Wow, the student earned an A+ on his test!

At the end of the phrase, there should be a comma.

If a subordinate clause is at the beginning of a sentence, you have to put a comma after it.

Suddenly, the teacher yelled. (This comma is often debated. Put a comma if a breath or a pause would help clarify the sentence or if you want to accentuate the adverb.)

Well, she said that she would come.

5. Use commas to separate interrupters such as parenthetical expressions, direct addresses, and unnecessary appositives in a sentence.

Examples: Parenthetical expression — The big dog, **of course**, was a wimp.

Direct address — You know, **parents**, it is important to write correctly.

Parents, you know it is important to write correctly.

Unnecessary appositive — My cat, **Skeeter**, likes to sit on my lap as I write. (I have only one cat; therefore his name is not necessary for the meaning of the sentence to be clear.)

My dog Dino has floppy ears. (No commas are needed because I have two dogs, and I need to identify to which dog I refer.)

6. Use commas to separate the month and the day from the year.

Example: September 15, 1945

7. Use commas between the city and the state and after the state as well if the address is within the sentence.

Example: The animal lover lives in **Gainesville, Florida**, and teaches English at a middle school.

8. Use commas after the greeting in friendly letters and after the closing in both friendly and business letters.

Examples: Dear Jane,

Sincerely yours,

9. Use commas with quotation marks to set off what is being said out loud.

Examples: “Get off my foot,” she whimpered to the heavy dog.

She whimpered to the heavy dog, “Get off my foot.”

“If you don’t get off my foot,” she said, “I’ll step on yours.”

(See *Appositive, Conjunctions, Direct Address, Interrupters, and Parenthetical Expressions.*)

Comparisons

Adjectives

1. If you are comparing two or more things and the adjective has fewer than three syllables, add “er” to the adjective.

Example: Florida is **warmer** than Maine in the winter.

2. If you are stating that something is the best (or worst), add “est” to the adjective if it has fewer than three syllables.

Example: Florida is the **warmest** state in the union.

3. Using “more” and “most”

Adjectives of three or more syllables almost always use the words “more” or “the most” to state comparison.

Examples: The Rottweiler is **more obnoxious** than the Doberman.

The black and white cat is **the most obnoxious** of all of the animals in her menagerie.

4. When comparing persons or things in the same group, use the word “other.”

Example: Jesse can run faster than **any other** boy in his club.

A few adjectives with irregular forms of comparison must be memorized: good-better-best; bad-worse-worst; many-more-most; much-more-most; little (quantity only)-less-least; far-farther-farthest.

Adverbs

1. If you are comparing two things, add “er” to the adverb. If you are saying that something is done better than anything else, add “est” to the adverb.

Examples: Planes travel faster than cars.

Rockets travel fastest of all.

2. Using “more” and “most”

There is no steadfast rule as to when you add “er” or “est” or when you use “more” or “most.” The best suggestion I can make is to go with what sounds correct. Most adverbs of two or more syllables form comparisons with “more” or “most.”

Example: comprehensively, more comprehensively, most comprehensively

Complex Sentences

A complex sentence is a sentence that has one or more independent clauses (a group of words that makes sense by itself) and a subordinate clause (a group of words with a subject and a verb but which does not make sense by itself).

The important thing to remember about a complex sentence is that if the subordinate clause begins the sentence, a comma must follow it.

Example: Although the dog sat on her foot, she did not say a word. (subordinate clause, independent clause)

(See also *Subordinate Clauses and Independent Clauses*.)

Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is composed of two complete sentences (related ideas only) joined together with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, so, but, yet) or a semicolon.

Examples: The big dog sat on her foot, **and** she gazed up at her mistress with love. "The big dog sat on her foot" and "She gazed up at her mistress with love" are complete sentences.

I tell my students to put their finger over the coordinating conjunction and check whether there is a complete sentence on either side of the finger. If there are two sentences, a comma has to precede the conjunction because the sentence is compound.

Examples: The big dog licked his paw, **or** he licked his leg.

The big dog did not lick his paw, **nor** did he lick his leg.

The big dog sat on her foot, **for** he loved her.

The big dog ate too much, **so** he was rotund.

The big dog sat on her foot, **but** he didn't put his full weight on it.

The big dog sat on her foot, **yet** he still felt insecure.

Sometimes a compound sentence does not have a coordinating conjunction joining the two sentences. Instead, it has a semicolon.

Example: The big dog sat on her foot; it then licked her knee.

A compound sentence does not occur when the word "that" is included or implied after the word "so." "So that" is a subordinating conjunction of a subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause comes at the end of a sentence, there is no comma.

Examples: She grabbed the bone **so that** the other dog could not get it. (**So that** the other dog could not get it, she grabbed the bone.)

She gobbled her food **so** the other dog could not get it. ("That" is implied)

A compound imperative sentence **does not** take a comma because the subjects, while implied, are not stated.

Examples: Get off my feet and go lie down elsewhere. (to the dog)

Stop clawing my legs and settle down. (to the cat)

(See *Conjunctions, Imperatives, Subordinate Clauses, and Subordinating Conjunctions*.)

Compound Subjects and Compound Predicates

These should be recognized if only to ensure that the students know the meanings of the words "compound," "subject," and "predicate." These words appear on the standardized tests. I usually taught these in my diagramming unit. Diagramming makes compound subjects and predicates much clearer.

1. A compound subject is simply more than one thing or person doing the action.

Example: **Rottweilers** and **Dobermans** make wonderful pets.

2. A compound predicate is more than one verb supplying the action.

Example: Rottweilers **love** to eat and **enjoy** being petted.

Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that joins words or groups of words together. Do not capitalize a conjunction in a title.

Example: The dog **and** the cat are friends.

1. **Coordinating conjunctions:** These are the conjunctions (joiners) which join two complete thoughts (independent clauses) together to form a compound sentence.

List of coordinating conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so. I call these FANBOYS.

It is a good idea to chant these with your students every time you encounter a compound sentence in a Caught'ya.

Example: She loves ice cream, **and** she loves candy, too.

Do not begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction since they are supposed to join, not begin. Many authors of fiction ignore this rule. This is fine, and it can make for very effective writing. I had to enforce this rule with those students who began almost every sentence with a conjunction.

2. **Correlative conjunctions:** These are used to join words or word groups. They appear in pairs.

Examples: **Either** you do your homework, **or** your grade will suffer.

Both Dobermans **and** Rottweilers make good companions.

List of correlative conjunctions: either/or, neither/nor, not only/but, both/and, just as/so.

3. **Subordinating conjunctions:** These conjunctions make a clause that was a complete sentence into a clause that cannot stand on its own. In other words, if a subordinating conjunction is placed before an independent clause (complete sentence), the clause becomes a dependent clause (subordinate clause).

Complete sentence: The dog licks the rug.

Dependent clause: **When** the dog licks the rug (no longer a complete sentence).

Subordinating conjunctions begin subordinate clauses. Always set off an introductory adverb clause (another word for a subordinate clause since subordinate clauses act as adverbs) with a comma.

Examples: **After the cat fell asleep**, he twitched his whiskers.

As the man shouted, the two dogs cringed.

Common subordinating conjunctions: after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, as though, because, before, even though, if, in order that, provided that, since, so that, than, till, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, while.

To make it easier for students to learn the subordinating conjunctions, I call them “A White Bus” words, and we memorize them. They are: **A**fter, although, as; **W**hen, while, where; **H**ow; **I**f; **T**han; **E**ven though; **B**ecause, before; **U**ntil, unless; **S**ince, so that.

(See *Adverb Clauses, Subordinate Clauses, and Subordinating Conjunctions*.)

Continued Quote

This is a sentence in a quote that is interrupted by identifying the speaker. It is important to recognize that when the quoted sentence continues, quotation marks are necessary, but the first letter should not be capitalized. This is also called an interrupted quote.

Example: “My Doberman is a lazy dog,” she said, “but my Rottweiler is even lazier.”

Contractions

A contraction is a word made by the shortening of two words into one, eliminating some letters in the process. The two words are then joined by an apostrophe.

1. Contractions can be made by shortening “not” to “n’t” and adding to a verb. Sometimes the spelling of the verb changes as when “n’t” is added to “shall,” “will,” or “can.”

Examples: is not/isn’t; does not/doesn’t; cannot/can’t; shall not/shan’t; will not/won’t.

2. It’s and its

“Its” is a possessive pronoun that shows that “it” owns something.

Example: The dog ate **its** food.

“It’s” is a contraction for “it is.”

Example: **It’s** a shame that she has so many animals to feed.

3. Contractions are also formed by joining nouns or pronouns with verbs.

Examples: I am/I’m; he is/he’s; he had/he’d; you are/you’re; she has/she’s, let us/let’s, they are/they’re.

Avoid contractions in formal writing. Contractions render writing informal, and unless a writer is

using dialogue or a truly informal style, the use of contractions probably should be avoided.

Dangling Participle

A dangling participle is a participle (present or past form of a verb) used as an adjective that is not adjacent to the noun that it modifies. Dangling participles should be avoided.

Example: **Snoring, the dog’s nose** twitched. (The dog’s nose did not do the snoring, the dog did. The word “dog” needs to follow the participle “snoring.”)

Snoring, the dog twitched his nose.

Dashes

A dash can be used to show a break or a shift in thought or structure. It also can signal an afterthought.

Examples: Now, when I was a boy — (break)

I found her most — well, I didn’t like her manner. (shift in structure)

The big Doberman — the one with the floppy ears — leans against walls and people. (break)

My floppy-eared Doberman often leans — you know, all Dobermans lean like that. (shift in thought)

It is important to limit the use of dashes when writing. Too many dashes make the writing seem confused and jerky.

Diagramming Sentences

Sentence diagramming takes every word in a sentence and places it, according to its use, in a diagram-like chart. It is a graphic picture of a sentence.

Diagramming sentences is a good skill for students to learn because it forces them to think logically. Diagramming sentences also teaches students good puzzle-solving techniques and makes them practice their knowledge of the eight parts of speech.

If you want students to diagram a few Caught’yas for practice, look at the section on diagramming sentences in any traditional grammar text.

The example on the following page shows how a diagram works for a compound sentence.

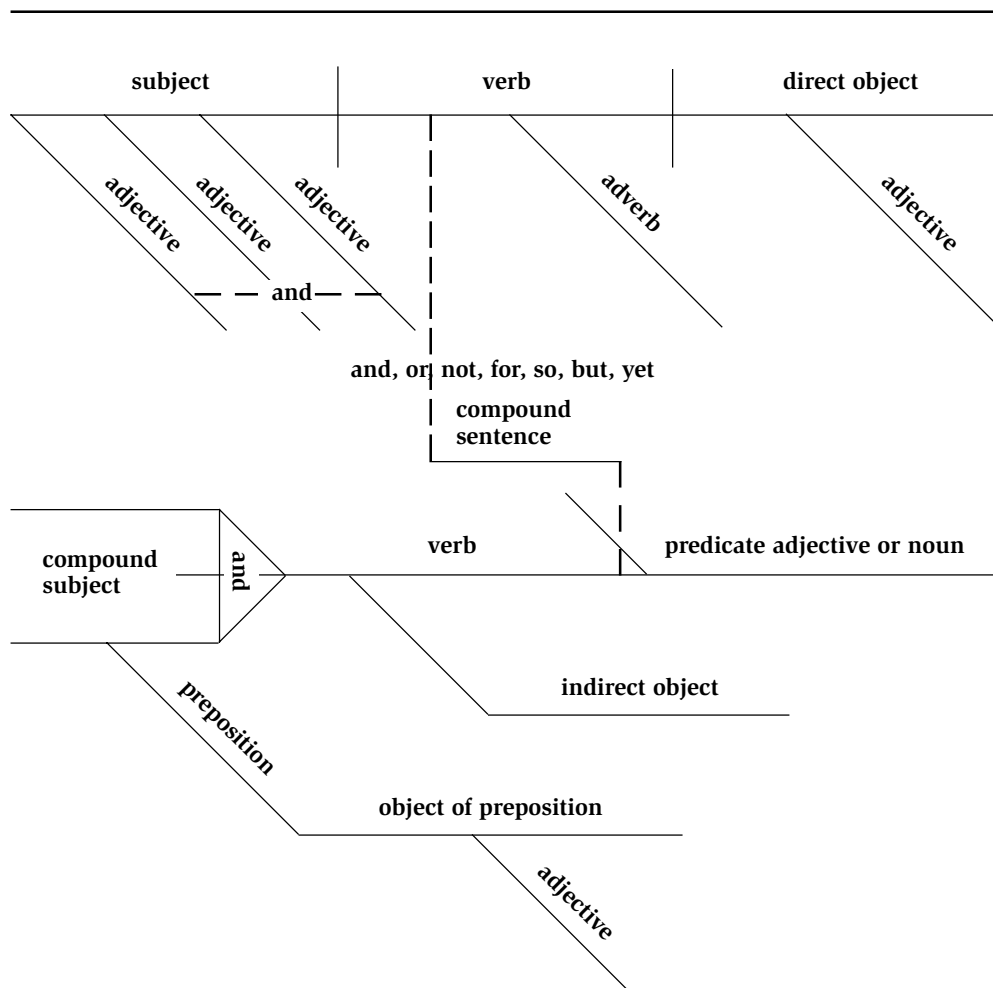
Dialogues

Begin a new paragraph every time a different person speaks. If a person’s speech includes more than one paragraph at a time, do not put quotation marks at the end of the first paragraph. Begin the next paragraph with quotation marks.

Example: (end of paragraph) “. . . and the teacher is always there.”

(new paragraph and speaker) “Students, on the other hand . . .”

Punctuation of quotes: Put quotation marks around what is said aloud. Capitalize the first letter of a quote



Basic example of a diagram for a compound sentence

unless the quote is a continued one. Set off the quote by commas or by end punctuation. Always put all punctuation inside the quotation marks.

Examples: "Close the window, you outdoor fanatic," she whimpered. "I'm freezing in here."

"Please close the window," she said, "or I'll become an icicle."

She pleaded again, "Close that window."

"Will you please close the window?" she asked.

"Close that window!" she yelled.

Direct Address

A direct address occurs when the writer is speaking directly to someone, telling someone something, and naming that someone.

Direct addresses also are called interrupters because they interrupt the flow of a sentence. Always set a direct address off by commas.

Examples: **Dog**, get off my foot. (talking to the **dog**)

If you don't get off my foot, **dog**, you are in big trouble.

Get off my foot, **dog**.

Direct and Indirect Objects

1. **Direct objects** are nouns or pronouns that directly receive the action of the verb. They, therefore, follow only transitive verbs. Direct objects answer the question "Whom or what receives the action of the verb?"

Examples: The dog licked the **teacher**. ("Teacher" answers the question "Whom?")

Students should do all their **homework**. ("Homework" answers the question "What?")

The dog licked **me**. (whom)

2. **Indirect objects** are nouns or pronouns that indirectly receive the action. The action happens to them or for them, but the indirect object does not

receive the action. This is an important concept to learn if anyone wants to learn a second language. Indirect objects follow only transitive verbs. You must have a direct object before you can have an indirect object. An indirect object answers the question "To whom or for whom is the action done?" (In English, "to" usually is implied for an indirect object, making it more difficult to identify.)

Examples: The teacher gave [to] **the children** (indirect object) **a short homework assignment** (direct object).

The dog gave [to] **me** (indirect object) **his paw** (direct object).

End Marks (Punctuation)

Make sure each sentence has one!

1. Use a period at the end of a statement (a sentence that tells something).

Example: Dobermans can be sweet dogs.

2. Use an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence that expresses powerful emotion or strong feeling. You also can use an exclamation mark after an interjection of strong emotion so that the interjection stands all by itself.

Examples: Get out of here!

Wow! I really like that.

3. Use a question mark at the end of an interrogative sentence (a sentence that asks a question).

Example: Will you please get out of here?

Except (*See Accept/Except*)

Exclamation Marks (*See End Marks*)

Extraneous Capital Letters

Make sure that students eliminate them. Some students throw capital letters around in their writing without any rhyme or reason. If any students do this, put a stop to it.

Farther/Further

These two words are sometimes used incorrectly, but it is really very easy to tell the difference between the two and, therefore, an easy mistake to correct. **Farther** talks about physical distance. **Further** talks about everything else.

Examples: Mark can throw a ball **farther** than Jesse can.

We will discuss this **further** after dinner.

Fewer and Less

Few, fewer, and fewest should be used with things that can be counted. Little, less, and least should be used with things that cannot be counted.

Examples: **Fewer** students are interested in literature these days. (You can count students.)

I have **less** interest in Poodles than I do in Dobermans. (You cannot count an abstract concept like interest.)

Finding and Identifying

It is extremely important that students be able to find and identify the following:

1. **Eight parts of speech:** Noun, verb, adjective, adverb, conjunction, interjection, preposition, pronoun. (*See* each part of speech under its own heading.)

2. **Predicates**

Simple — The main verb or the main verb with a helping verb

Complete — the verb and its complements or modifiers (adverbs, adverb phrases)

3. **Subjects**

Simple — the noun or pronoun that does the action

Complete — the noun or pronoun that does the action and its modifiers (adjectives, adjective phrases)

4. **Synonyms for better writing**

Encourage students to use in their writing the vocabulary words of the Caught'yas and to consult a thesaurus when they write.

Footnotes

Today, when a quote is used or referred to in the body of a paper, the trend is to list such a source in the bibliography rather than in footnotes or endnotes (footnotes at the end of a paper). The quote or reference in the text is followed by parentheses containing the author's name and the date of publication. When an author has published two sources within one year, list the title also.

Example: The section on footnotes in Kiester's book says that the trend is not to have footnotes or endnotes in a paper (**Kiester, 1992**).

Fragments

A sentence fragment is an incomplete thought (either lacking in subject or verb) that is used and punctuated incorrectly as a complete sentence. This is an egregious error. Help students overcome this habit. If students write fragments, then they probably don't understand what a subject and verb are. Frame your discussions accordingly.

Examples: A rather chubby dog on the floor. (no verb)

Slept on the floor by her side. (no subject)

Sticking his paws into the air. (no verb or subject)

Friendly Letters (Correct Format)

Sender's address
Sender's city, state zip
Date

Dear Jane,

The bulk of the letter goes here written without skipping lines between paragraphs.

With love,
Sign name here

Further (See Farther and Further)

Gerund

A gerund is a verb form that ends in "ing" and is used as a noun. A gerund can be used in any way that a noun can be used. Sometimes a gerund serves as the simple subject, direct object, or as the object of a preposition.

Examples: **Snorkeling** is my favorite sport. (subject)

I like **snorkeling**. (direct object)

I think of **snorkeling** a lot when I daydream. (object of the preposition)

Gerund Phrases

Depending on your point of view, gerund phrases are either fun or useless to learn. I believe that the understanding and recognizing of them serves no purpose since no placement of commas is involved. One of my colleagues, on the other hand, maintains that gerunds and gerund phrases are fun. She uses art work to teach the concept to her students. She may well be right.

A gerund phrase is a group of words that includes a gerund and other words that complete its meaning. It can be accompanied by an adjective, an adverb, a direct object, or a prepositional phrase.

A gerund phrase functions as a noun in a sentence. The gerund phrase can be a subject or an object.

Examples: **Speaking softly** was one of the rules. (subject)

She made **speaking softly** a requirement in her class. (object)

Good and Well

These two words often are confused.

1. "Good" is an adjective; it tells about the noun that must follow it.

Example: The **good** dog sat at her feet instead of on them. (adjective — tells what kind of dog)

2. "Well" is the adverb that modifies a verb; it often appears at the end of the sentence.

Examples: He did it **well**. (adverb — tells how he did it)

He did **well** on the test. (adverb — tells how he did)

You can, however, "feel good" because "feel" acts as a verb of being and thus "good" is a predicate adjective.

Example: **I feel good** when I pet my cat.

Helping Verbs

These verbs accompany a past or present participle in a sentence. My students and I called them "dead verbs" or "weak verbs." Help students limit them in their writing.

Common helping verbs: am, are, be, is, have, had, had been, has been, have been, was, were, will, and any form of "be" (such as could be, would be, might be, etc.).

Good writing uses strong, active verbs ("screamed" instead of "**was** screaming"). Look at literature!

Sense verbs (look, see, smell, feel, taste) can function as verbs of being or as action verbs.

Example: I **feel** loving today. (verb of being)

The boy **felt** the dog's broken leg. (action verb)

When a sense verb functions as a verb of being, it is often followed by a predicate adjective.

Example: I **feel** bad. (Not "I feel badly" since one would not say "I am badly.")

Homophones

Students need to be able to correctly use the most common ones.

Common homophones: there/their/they're; to/too/two; your/you're; no/know; its/it's; right/rite/write; threw/through; quiet/quit/quite; all ready/already; all together/altogether; hole/whole; pair/pare/pear; whose/who's.

Hyphens

1. Use a hyphen to divide a word at the end of a line. Divide only at syllables. Check a dictionary for syllables.

Example: The two huge dogs ran around the yard, **terrifying** the little girl.

2. Use a hyphen to separate the words in compound numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine and in fractions that are used as adjectives.

Examples: The teacher had **thirty-five** pupils in the class.

They ate ten and **one-half** pizzas for lunch.

3. Use a hyphen in a compound noun that serves as an adjective. More simply stated, use with two or more words that express one thought and serve as one adjective. To test whether a hyphen is needed, simply see if each word alone makes sense in describing the noun.

Examples: an **up-to-the-minute** report
two **star-crossed** lovers
a very **well-known** man
bell-bottom trousers

4. Use a hyphen after the following prefixes: all-, ex-, self-.

Examples: all-knowing, ex-husband, self-deprecating

5. Use a hyphen to separate any prefix from a word that begins with a capital letter.

Example: **pre-Civil** War

Imperatives

Imperatives are sentences that are orders. The subject is omitted.

Examples: Get off my feet. (The subject of the dog has been left out.)

Do your homework now! (Again, the subject has been omitted.)

Compound imperative sentences do not take a comma because the subjects are not stated.

Example: Get off my feet and go lie down elsewhere.

Independent Clauses

An independent clause is a sentence within a sentence.

Example: **She petted the dog**, and **she kissed the cat**.

Indirect and Direct Objects (*See* Direct and Indirect Objects)

Indirect Quote

An indirect quote is really a reference to a direct quote. The use of the word “that” turns a direct quote into an indirect one. In an indirect quote, no quotation marks are necessary because a direct quote is being paraphrased. No comma is necessary either.

Examples: The student said **that she was hot**.

He told me **that he had a lot of homework to do**.

We shouted to her **that we didn’t want to walk the dogs**.

Infinitive

An infinitive is formed from the word “to” together with the basic form of a verb.

Examples: to go, to snore, to eat, to type

Do not split an infinitive with the adverb as in the introduction to the television show *Star Trek*.

Example of what to avoid: “. . . **to** boldly **go** where no man has gone before.” (*Star Trek*)

Correction: “. . . **to go** boldly where no man has gone before.”

You might want to explain the use of “to” as a part of a verb. Most students think it functions only as a preposition.

Infinitive Phrase

This is an infinitive and the words that complete the meaning. An infinitive phrase can serve as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

Examples:

Noun — **To teach grammar** is sometimes fun. (noun, subject)

Most students hate **to study grammar**. (object)

The goal of my first book was **to make grammar fun**. (predicate noun)

Adjective — It is now time **to learn your grammar**.

Adverb — The dog turned around six times **to get ready for his nap**.

Intensifiers

An intensifier is an adverb that tells to what extent an adjective or another adverb is true. The most common intensifiers are “very” and “extremely.”

Examples: an **extremely** angry (adjective) cat

a **very** placid (adjective) dog

The cat wanted to sit on his mistress’s lap **very** badly. (adverb)

She spoke **extremely** softly (adverb) because she was afraid to awaken the cat.

Interjection

An interjection is a word or group of words that expresses feeling (anger, surprise, happiness, pain, relief, grief).

Common interjections: ah, aha, awesome, bam, boom, bravo, good grief, goodness, hey, hooray, hurrah, oh, oh boy, oh dear, oh my, oh yes/no, okay, ouch, ow, phew, pow, shhh, ugh, uh-oh, well, whee, whoopee, whoops, wow.

Interjections that are at the beginning of the sentence can be followed either by a comma or by an exclamation mark. If an interjection is followed by an exclamation mark, the next word must begin with a capital letter.

Examples: **Well**, what are you doing there?

Okay, let’s finish going over your homework.

Wow! Those dogs are big.

Interrupted Quote (*See Continued Quote*)

Interrupters

An interrupter is any word, expression or phrase that interrupts the flow of a sentence. These can be appositives, direct addresses, parenthetical expressions, or any word, phrase, or clause that breaks the flow of a sentence.

Examples: The dog, **however**, refused to get off her foot.

The dog, **I think**, is stubborn.

The black and white cat, **by the way**, is obstreperous.

She loved her only cat, **Skeeter**, very much.

Intransitive Verbs

An intransitive verb never has a direct object. In a sentence where the verb is intransitive, the subject does the acting and does not do anything to anything or anyone else.

Examples: Dogs **bark**.

The teacher **sits** in the chair.

The class **sleeps** during long messages on the loud speaker.

The class **risers** with respect (dream on, fellow teachers) when the teacher enters the room.

The dog **lies** on the floor.

Introductory Words and Phrases

These are simply words and phrases that begin a sentence. The comma after some of these is hotly debated. Using commas makes sentences easier to understand because they signal a separation or a pause between parts. It sounds better to put a comma after an adverb that comes at the beginning of a sentence if that adverb has to do with time. It also helps clarify a sentence if one puts a comma after an introductory prepositional phrase that acts as an adverb and refers to time that has passed in some way.

1. **Adverb** (one-word adverbs): We commonly use a one-word adverb that indicates when the action (the verb) took place. Put a comma after it if you hear a pause when the sentence is spoken aloud.

Examples: **Meanwhile**, the dog's stomach growled.

Tomorrow, she will be fed again.

2. **Adverbial clauses** (subordinate clauses): A comma is needed after an adverbial clause that introduces a sentence.

Example: **After I feed the chubby Rottweiler**, I will feed the rotund Doberman.

3. **Participial phrases**: A comma is needed after a participial phrase that comes at the beginning of a sentence.

Example: **Traveling away from the city**, you can tour some of the beautiful antebellum homes in the country.

4. **Prepositional phrases**: The comma after these, too, is debatable. Many old-fashioned people, like my mother and I, put a comma after a longish prepositional phrase that comes at the beginning of a sentence, particularly if the phrase refers to time. This also can be called an "adverbial phrase."

Examples: **In about two weeks**, she will need to get her shots.

For a very long time, he will be able to exist on the food on the shelves.

A comma is needed after two or more prepositional phrases that follow each other at the beginning of a sentence.

Examples: **At the end of the day**, the fat dog tries to curl up on her "blankey" to go to sleep.

In one hour in the kitchen, the hungry dog will receive a dog biscuit.

In the fall of 1992, a presidential election was held in this country.

5. **Words**: A comma is needed to show a pause after an introductory word. The most common introductory words are "yes" and "no."

Examples: **Yes**, it is necessary to have a comma after introductory words.

No, many dogs do not receive five dog biscuits a day.

Irregular Verb Forms

Instead of forcing students to memorize a list which somehow never transfers to their writing, I taught each verb as it came up in students' writing. This makes it real to them. They know they made a mistake in a verb and are more receptive to learning the forms of that verb. Plus, overkill (there are so many irregular verbs) only confuses students.

Verbs to stress in Caught'yas: be, do, have, lay, lie, raise, rise, see, set, sit. If you want to teach a unit on irregular verbs, any traditional grammar book will have a complete list for you.

Lay/Lie

Few adults use these verbs correctly. Think about the trouble students must have with them!

1. **Lay:** **Lay**, used in the present tense, always has an object, and **laid**, in the past tense always has an object. You lay something on the table. You can't "lay" yourself on the table. That would be awkward as well as ungrammatical.

Principal parts of "lay":

lay (present)

laid (past)

laid (past participle)

Examples: The dog **lay** his head in his owner's lap. (present)

The dog **laid** his head on the rug yesterday. (past)

The dog always **has laid** its bone beside its bed. (past participle)

2. **Lie**: Lie means to recline. Lie never takes a direct object. You lie on a bed, but you can never “lie” something on that bed. The confusion **lies** when the past tense of **lie** is used; **lay** used as the past tense of **lie** does not take a direct object.

Principal parts of “lie”:

lie (present)

lay (past)

lain (past participle)

Examples: The dog **lies** on the floor today. (present)

The dog **lay** on the floor yesterday. (past)

The dog **is lying** on the floor right now. (present participle)

The dog **has lain** on the floor every day of its life. (past participle)

Less and Fewer (*See Fewer and Less*)

Metaphors

A metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things without using “like” or “as.”

Example: The tree **is a ballerina in green**.

Use metaphors in *Caught’yas*. Have your students write a “Metaphor Paper.” (*See Chapter 5 in Caught’ya Again!*) Encourage students to write metaphors. They make for beautiful writing. Emily Dickinson used metaphors in almost every poem. Metaphors are a wonderful tool to make writing more sophisticated.

Modifiers and Misplaced Modifiers

1. **Modifiers**: A modifier is simply another word for an adjective. A modifier may be classified as non-restrictive (non-essential) or restrictive (essential). A modifier can be a word, a phrase, or a clause.

An adjective, adjective phrase, or adjective clause is non-restrictive/non-essential when it is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence. The clause gives additional information. Use commas to set off non-restrictive modifiers.

Example: Dino, **who has floppy ears**, won a prize in obedience class. (The name of the dog has been identified, and it is not necessary to add more information about him.)

An adjective, adjective phrase, or adjective clause is restrictive/essential when it is necessary to the meaning of the sentence. Do not set off a restrictive modifier with commas.

Example: The dog **who won a prize in obedience class** has floppy ears. (This information is necessary since there are millions of dogs in the world.)

2. **Misplaced modifiers**: These are simply adjective phrases or clauses that are in the wrong place in a sentence so that they seem to modify the wrong noun. When you use modifiers in sentences, make sure that they are properly placed. The general rule to follow is this: place modifiers as close as possible to the sentence parts they modify.

Examples: The lady watched her dog **driving down the road**. (The dog is not driving down the road; the lady is.)

Corrected sentence: Driving down the road, the lady watched her dog.

After purchasing a skirt, her money was all gone. (The clause “her money was all gone” does not tell more about the skirt. It tells about the **person** “her” refers to and therefore should not come immediately after “skirt.”)

Corrected sentence: **After purchasing a skirt**, she had no more money.

Negatives

A negative is a word that expresses the lack of something.

Common negatives: no, not, neither, never, nobody, none, no one, nothing, nowhere, barely, scarcely, hardly.

All you need to stress about negatives is the importance of avoiding the use of two negatives in the same sentence like “don’t got no” or “don’t have nobody.” There should be only *one* negative word per sentence unless you are using the correlative conjunction “neither . . . nor.”

Only one negative word is necessary to convey the meaning. There are two ways to correct a sentence with a double negative.

Example: The telephone **isn’t no** new instrument.

Corrected sentence: The telephone is **no** new instrument. Or, The telephone is **not** a new instrument.

Noun

A noun is a person, a place, a thing, or an idea. It is important for students to recognize this part of speech and its function as a subject or object. Teach the difference between common and proper nouns.

Common nouns are terms for persons, places, things, or ideas.

Proper nouns are the names of particular persons, places, or things.

Examples:

Common nouns — girl, school, city

Proper nouns — Jane, Westwood School, Gainesville

Nouns have several functions in a sentence.

Subject — the person, place, or thing doing the action

Example: The **dog** yawned.

Direct object — the person, place, or thing who receives the action

Example: She stroked the **cat**.

Object of preposition — the person, place, or thing affected by the preposition

Example: He gave the bone to the **dog**.

Indirect object — the person, place, or thing for whom or to whom the action is done

Example: She gave the **dog** a big bone. (“to” is implied)

Noun Clause

A noun clause is a subordinate clause which is used as a noun. It can be used as a subject, direct object, indirect object, predicate noun, or object of a preposition in a sentence.

Noun clauses usually begin with the following words: how, if, that, what, whatever, where, when, wherever, whether, which, whichever, who, whom, whoever, whomever, why.

Noun clauses take the place of a noun anywhere in a sentence that a noun can be used (subject, direct or indirect object, object of a preposition, predicate noun).

Examples:

Subject — **What the dog intended** was obvious.

Direct object — I still don’t know **why he did it**.

Indirect object — Please give **whichever dog comes up to you** a pat under the chin.

Object of preposition — She tells her stories **to whoever will listen**.

Predicate noun — That is not **what the dog** intended to do.

Noun Markers

This is the term for the three demonstrative adjectives “a,” “an,” and “the.” When I introduced these to the students, I first made my hand into a trumpet, said “Toot-te-toot,” and then announced, “Noun coming!!!!!!” Students quickly got the idea, and we moved on to other things. Young students especially loved the drama of the hand trumpet and seemed to remember these three little words when they were presented in this fashion.

Example: The lady gave **an** old bone to **a** hungry dog.

Use “a” before a word that begins with a consonant and “an” before a word that begins with a vowel. These demonstrative adjectives are also called “articles.” (See *Articles* for more information and the rule about “h.”)

Objects

There are two kinds of objects, direct and indirect. Objects are nouns, noun clauses, or noun phrases that receive the action of the verb either directly or indirectly. They answer the following questions:

1. Whom? (direct object)
2. What? (direct object)
3. To or for whom? (indirect object)
4. To or for what? (indirect object)

(See *Direct and Indirect Objects* for further information about objects and for examples.)

Paragraphs

Discuss the need for a paragraph each time you do a Caught’ya. Correct paragraphing can be learned only through constant practice. While various writers may disagree as to the exact placement of a paragraph, there are some general rules.

1. In general, a new paragraph is needed if there has been a lapse of time, a change of subject, or a change of place. A paragraph is supposed to be about one basic idea. It needs a topic sentence and a concluding sentence (unless it is a quotation).
2. Use a new paragraph in conversations each time a new person speaks. This seems like such a simple thing to grasp, but students have a hard time learning it.

Example:

“Get out of here, you beastly dog!” cried the lady to the big brown Doberman cowering in the kitchen.

“You’re messing up my floor!”

“Rowrf, Rowrf!” barked back the dog as it slinked sheepishly away.

“Oh, come back here, you poor thing,” called the lady. “I’m sorry I yelled at you.”

“Rowrf!”

“I like you, too,” said the lady.

Parallel Construction

Parallel structure is the use of similar grammatical constructions. Similar forms of phrases, words, and clauses are used for items that are alike in a sentence.

Parallel construction means that if you begin with a word or a certain part of speech, you have to continue it if you have a series. It can, however, be implied, as in a series of infinitives.

Examples: The big Doberman likes **bananas, tomatoes, and broccoli**. (words — these are all nouns)

The two dogs liked **sleeping and eating**. (words — gerunds)

The chubby Rottweiler went **to her bowl, to her water dish, and then to her bed**. (phrases — prepositional)

She felt **that she was unloved** and **that she was unwanted** because there was no food in her bowl. (clauses)

He likes **to eat**, (to) **sleep**, and (to) **play**. (infinitives)

Parentheses

(As you may have noticed, I abuse these.)

Parentheses enclose information that isn't vital to the meaning of a sentence, but that is nevertheless important to include. Parentheses also can contain information that some of the readers of the sentence already know.

Examples: The author of this book (Jane Kiester) has a thing about animals.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) is her favorite poet.

Frequent use of parentheses is not desirable. (Do as I say, not as I do.)

Parenthetical Expressions

Parenthetical expressions are phrases that are thrown into sentences as asides to the reader. They are not necessary to the meaning of the sentence and often interrupt a sentence's flow. Parenthetical expressions also are called interrupters.

Common parenthetical expressions: of course, however, for example, on the contrary, on the other hand, I suppose, in fact, by the way, in my opinion, to tell the truth, nevertheless, I believe, I think, etc.

Parenthetical expressions always are set off by commas no matter where they occur in a sentence.

Examples: The dog, **in fact**, was too chubby for her collar.

To tell the truth, two faithful dogs are a handful.

The cat, **however**, is quite a dapper fellow.

Cats are smarter than dogs, **of course**.

Participial Phrases (also called Participle Phrases)

These are groups of words that have the "ing," the "ed," or the special past form of the verb in them. In other words, they are phrases that contain a participle and its complement and modifiers. Participial phrases can come before or after the word that they modify and can give more information about a noun or an adjective. The participle will be present or past.

1. A **present participle** is the "ing" form of a verb. It can be used as an adjective by itself or in a participial or gerund phrase.

Examples: The **snoring** (adjective) **dog sleeping on the floor** (participial phrase) is the gentlest of animals.

Cramming before a test is a poor practice. (gerund phrase)

2. A **past participle** is the past tense form of a verb which usually ends in "ed." It can be used with a helping verb or as an adjective or in a participial phrase.

Examples: The chef served the fish **fried in butter**.

That **trained** (adjective) dog who didn't learn anything has barked all morning long.

Participial phrases act as adjectives.

Examples: **Rapidly gaining confidence**, the new teacher taught about participial phrases. (more about "teacher")

The new teacher, **feeling more sure of herself**, taught about participial phrases.

If the participial phrase begins the sentence or comes in the middle of the sentence, it usually is set off by commas. If, however, it is at the end of the sentence, it requires no comma.

Examples: **Groaning softly**, the dog kicked out in his sleep.

The dog, **groaning softly**, kicked out in his sleep.

She spied a dog **groaning softly in its sleep**.

Participle

A participle is just a fancy name for a verb form that is used as an adjective. It can be the present participial form of the verb ("-ing") or the past participial form of the verb (usually "-ed").

Examples: The **sleeping** dog blocked the doorway. (present)

A **trained** dog supposedly obeys better than an **untrained** one. (past)

(See *Participial Phrases and Dangling Participle*)

Parts of Speech

The eight parts of speech are the eight functional categories into which we can divide words. It is important that students learn the eight parts of speech to have a frame of reference and to have a way to understand the finer points of grammar.

The eight parts of speech: adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, verbs, interjections, nouns, prepositions, pronouns.

I liked to use the mnemonic device **NIPPAVAC** to teach them to my students.

Passive Voice (See *Active vs. Passive Verb Voices*)

Periods (See *End Marks*)

Plural

A plural is more than one of a noun. In the Caught'yas I covered the common mistakes students make. This is

another skill that should be taught individually. When one of your students makes a mistake with the plural of a word, include that word or a similar word in a Caught'ya and teach it.

Basic plural rules.

1. Add "s" to most singular nouns.

Examples: dog-dogs; piano-pianos; monkey-monkeys; cat-cats

2. Add "es" to singular nouns that end in ss, x, ch, sh, or z.

Examples: church-churches; mix-mixes; glass-glasses; buzz-buzzes; wish-wishes

3. Most nouns that end in "o" add "s" in their plural form, but a few that end in "o" and are preceded by a consonant form their plurals with "es." Some can end in either one.

Examples: tomato-tomatoes; potato-potatoes; BUT hero-heros or heroes

4. Change singular nouns that end in a consonant and a "y" to plural by changing the "y" to an "i" and adding "es." This rule does not apply to proper nouns that end in a consonant and a "y."

Examples: party-parties; baby-babies; BUT Mary-Marys

5. To form the plural of some nouns that end in "f" or "fe," change the "f" to a "v" and add "es."

Examples: calf-calves; knife-knives

6. To form the plural of any proper name, no matter what the end letters, add "s."

Examples: Brady-Bradys; Finch-Finchs

7. There are so many exceptions to these rules that it boggles the mind. If you want a complete list, see a traditional grammar text. Few people can memorize a list one day and then apply it to their writing a month later. Plurals are best taught on the spur of the moment, at the time they are written incorrectly.

Examples: foot-feet; mouse-mice; deer-deer; child-children

Plurals vs. Possessives

For some reason, this is a skill many students find beyond them. No general explanations seem to clear up this problem. Only specific focuses help. I told my students who put apostrophes on plural nouns to eliminate every apostrophe in their writing for a month. We then slowly put them back in possessives and in conjunctions. This worked better than anything else I had tried. I also kept plugging away in the Caught'yas by frequently inserting apostrophes correctly and incorrectly in the sentence that was put on the board. This forced students to think each time, "Does that apostrophe belong there? Is the word plural or possessive?" This way, students eventually got the hang of it.

Possessive Nouns

A possessive noun is a noun (a person, place, or thing) that shows ownership of something. Ownership is shown by the use of an apostrophe.

Examples: the dog's bone, the dogs' bones

The rules of possessive nouns are quite simple for something that gives students such anguish.

1. **Singular possessive nouns:** Add "'s" to any singular possessive noun no matter what letter ends it.

Examples: glass's, dog's, cat's, box's, church's, calf's, child's

2. **Plural possessive nouns:** Add an **apostrophe** to all plural possessive nouns that end in "s."

Examples: glasses', dogs', cats', boxes', churches', calves'

Add "'s" to any plural noun that does not end in "s."

Examples: children's, men's, mice's

Predicate

A predicate is the verb in a sentence and all the words that modify it.

Example: The black and white cat **sat on his mistress's lap.**

Preposition

A preposition is a little word that, with its object, acts either as an adjective or as an adverb in a sentence.

Examples: in the doghouse, on the roof, under the bed

List of prepositions: aboard, about, above, across, after, against, along, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, between, beyond, by, down, during, except, for, from, in, into, like, of, off, on, onto, over, past, since, through, throughout, to, toward, under, underneath, until, up, upon, with, within, without.

Students should memorize the basic list for quick reference. Repeated daily in class, these prepositions are learned in about three weeks. Teach the prepositions early in the year, write poems where every line has to begin with a different preposition, and refer to them often. Once students have memorized the prepositions, they can begin to use them more effectively and capitalize them (or not) correctly in titles.

Do not end a sentence with a preposition. It is uncouth! Do not capitalize a preposition in a title unless it is the first word of that title.

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase is a preposition and a noun or pronoun plus the adjectives that modify it. It is a group of words that functions as a single word. Prepositional phrases can serve as adjectives to modify a noun or as adverbs to modify a verb.

Examples: I gave a bone **to the dog.** (adverb)

The dog **with the floppy ears** ate the bone. (adjective)

An adjective phrase usually follows the word it modifies.

Example: The dog **on the right** is snoring.

An adverb phrase, like adverbs, may shift position.

Examples: **In the middle**, lies the cat.

The cat lies **in the middle**.

Pronouns

Pronouns are words that take the place of nouns and cause much trouble. They are hateful but necessary. If you think these are bad, try teaching French pronouns!

Especially stress the difference between subject and object pronouns.

Subject pronouns: I, you, he, she, it, we, they

Object pronouns: me, you, him, her, it, us, them.

Include in many Caught'ya's "My friend and I did something." and "Someone did something to my friend and me."

Students experience much difficulty differentiating subject and object pronouns. They misuse them because they hear them misused all the time in common speech. Model the correct use as often as you can.

Examples of common errors: My friend and **me** went . . .

It is **me**.

She is better than **me**.

Correct examples: My friend and **I** went . . . ("I" is the subject of "went.")

It is **I**. (Implied here is "It is I who does something." "I" is a subject.)

She is better than **I** . . . (Again, something is implied. The word "am" has been left out. "I" is the subject of "am.")

Teach the correct use of the different kinds of pronouns. It is not the name of each that is important; it is recognizing the differences among them.

1. **Personal pronouns:** These are the subject and object pronouns listed above.
2. **Possessive pronouns:** These are pronouns that show ownership of something.

Singular possessive pronouns: my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its

Plural possessive pronouns: our, ours, your, yours, their, theirs

3. **Interrogative pronouns:** These pronouns ask questions: Why? What? Which? Who? Whom?
4. **Demonstrative pronouns:** These pronouns point out people, places, or things and highlight them: this, that, these, those.

5. **Indefinite pronouns:** These are pronouns that refer to a person or a thing that is not identified. Some indefinite pronouns are singular. Some are plural. Some can act either way.

Singular: another, anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, none, nothing, other, one, somebody, someone, something

Plural: both, few, many, ones, others, several

Either: all, any, most, some

It is important to teach agreement with indefinite pronouns. Many students find it difficult to make a verb or another pronoun agree with the indefinite pronoun.

6. **Reflexive and intensive pronouns:** These usually end in "self" or "selves" and refer to the subject of the sentence. For your trivia information of the day, you need to know that reflexive pronouns are necessary to the meaning of a sentence and cannot be left out. Intensive pronouns, on the other hand, are not necessary and can be left out without hurting the meaning of a sentence.

Examples: The teacher knows **herself** very well. (reflexive)

The teacher **herself** washed the blackboard. (intensive)

7. **Relative pronouns:** These are the pronouns that modify a noun: who, which, that.

There are two big problems with pronouns — using the correct one and making the rest of the sentence agree with it.

Punctuation

Each kind of punctuation is listed under its own heading.

Question Marks (See End Marks)

Quotation Marks (In Uses Other Than Conversation)

Use quotation marks around words referred to or letters referred to in the context of a sentence. Use them also with words that are meant tongue-in-cheek.

Periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.

Examples: If you wish to make plural the word "party," take off the "y" and add "ies."

He loves the poem "Mother to Son."

The corpulent Rottweiler has been nicknamed "Miss Tub."

Exclamation marks and question marks go outside the quotation marks unless they are part of the words in quotation marks.

Examples: She got an "A"!

Did he give an extra bone to “Miss Tub”?

Quotations can be avoided with the use of the word “that.” Instead of quotation marks, refer to what has been said with the word “that.” (See *Indirect Quote for more information*.)

Examples: She said that she was hungry and needed refreshments.

Despite her pleas, I told her that she was too chubby to get any more ice cream.

(See *Dialogues, Comma Rules, Indirect Quote, and Titles*)

Raise/Rise

These are two more verbs that confuse students. Again, as in “lie” and “lay” and “sit” and “set,” one takes an object and the other does not.

1. Raise means “to lift or to grow.” It requires an object that has to be “raised.”

Example: The cat **raised** his tail and stormed off when no food was offered.

2. Rise means “to get up.” It does not take an object.

Example: All students **rise** with a bow of respect when their English teacher enters the room.

Run-Ons

A run-on is a sentence that contains more than one thought. It goes on and on.

1. Sometimes run-on sentences simply lack punctuation.

Example: The dog lay on the floor she snored loudly.

Corrected: The dog lay on the floor. She snored loudly.

2. Sometimes run-on sentences are a group of sentences joined by coordinating conjunctions into one very long sentence.

Example: She lay on the floor, and she snored, but she didn’t groan, and she wiggled her ears.

Corrected: She lay on the floor. She snored, but she didn’t groan. She wiggled her ears.

Help your students avoid run-ons.

Semicolons

A semicolon is a punctuation mark (;) that is used to separate parts of a sentence.

1. Use semicolons in compound sentences instead of using a conjunction and a comma.

Example: The black cat nuzzled the big dog; it is either very friendly or very stupid.

2. Use semicolons in lists where the use of a lot of commas makes meaning difficult.

Example: Learn the meanings of these homophones: there, their, they’re; to, too, two; your, you’re; no, know; and hear, here.

3. Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses (two sentences within a sentence) when the second clause begins with however, nevertheless, consequently, besides, therefore, moreover, or furthermore.

Example: The Rottweiler may lick faces; however, she is charming.

4. To avoid confusion, use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses that have many commas within one or both of them.

Example: My Rottweiler likes to eat tomatoes, broccoli, and cucumbers; my Doberman likes to eat fruit, dog food, and cookies.

Set/Sit

These are two more verbs that students often use incorrectly.

1. Set means to put down. Set always takes an object. You set the sleeping cat in the chair or the milk on the table, but you never set yourself down anywhere. Tell students to think about it. You can’t put your hands under your feet and lift your entire body up and set it down on something.

Example: The dumb Doberman **set** his bone down on the floor, and the chubby Rottweiler grabbed it from under his nose.

2. Sit means to place yourself in a seated position. Sit does not take an object. You sit down, but you never sit something down.

Example: The stupid dog always **sits** on its owner’s foot.

Similes

A simile compares two unlike things and uses “like” or “as” in the comparison.

Examples: The cat sprawled on the rug **like a furry throw pillow**.

The leaves, **as agile as ballerinas**, seemed to dance in the wind.

Encourage students to use similes. I have included a plethora of them in the Caught’yas so that students can learn to recognize and use them. Point them out to students. Practice orally coming up with other similes.

Simple Sentence

A simple sentence is a sentence with one subject and one predicate. In a simple sentence, the subject and/or the verb can be more than one thing, as in a compound subject or a compound predicate, but only one idea is expressed.

Examples: The wimpy **Rottweiler sat** on her owner’s foot.

The wimpy **Rottweiler** and the brown **Doberman sat** by their owner's feet and **gazed** adoringly into their mistress's eyes. (Two subjects and two verbs, but it is still a simple sentence.)

Since (*See Because and Since*)

Spelling Errors (the Most Common)

1. All words with "ie" or "ei"

Examples: thief, relief, believe, weird, neighbor, receive

2. Plurals of nouns that end in "y"

Examples: parties, monkeys, babies

3. "A lot" (students write as one word)

Some teachers forbid the use of this in their classrooms. I agree. There are always ways to avoid the use of "a lot."

4. Doubling consonants in words that end in consonant/vowel/consonant plus a suffix that begins with a vowel (like "ed").

Examples: dropped, stopped, petted

5. Any grammar or spelling book will have a long list of commonly misspelled words, but very few people can memorize a long list of words and then remember the spelling of those words when they use them in their writing at a later date. It is better to attack these misspelled words as they appear in students' writings.

Spelling Rules

There are too many spelling rules and exceptions to the spelling rules to list here. See any standard spelling book for a discussion of this subject. The most common ones have been listed by the individual Caught'yas in which they appear.

Strong Verbs

These are verbs that are not helping verbs or sense verbs. They show rather than tell what is going on in a sentence. Use of these verbs fosters better writing. You will find the use of strong verbs in literature. There is even a language called E-Prime that is English minus the verb "to be." Try speaking or writing in E-Prime. The results are amazing, and the verb "to be" is only one of the "telling" verbs.

Examples: The dog **stretched** and **rolled** his big brown eyes at me.

He **ambled** to the door and **peaked** outside.

Dead verbs to avoid: to be — be, am, is, are, was, were; to have — has, have, had; become, became.

Sense verbs: sees, looks, feels, sounds, smells.

Any verb ending in "ing" is not a strong verb.

Subjects

A subject is the noun that performs the action in a sentence and everything that modifies it.

Example: The big black **cat** and his **mistress** like to snooze late on Saturday mornings.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is very important to the coherence of a sentence. The subject of a sentence must agree as to whether it is singular or plural with the verb of the sentence.

If the subject is singular, then the verb should be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb should be plural.

Examples: **He think** he is right. (incorrect)

We goes to the circus every year. (incorrect)

Corrected examples: **He thinks** he is right.

We go to the circus every year.

Subordinate Clauses

1. A subordinate clause is a part of a sentence that has a subject and a verb but cannot stand on its own to express a complete thought. A subordinate clause begins with a subordinating conjunction — a conjunction that makes the clause not a complete sentence. (*See Subordinating Conjunctions for a complete list of them.*)

Examples: **When the teacher was funny**, the students laughed. ("The teacher was funny" is a complete sentence with a subject and a verb. If you add the subordinating conjunction "when," it can no longer stand on its own, and it needs the addition of an independent clause to form a complete sentence.)

While we sit here, I shall tell you my story.

I shall tell you my story **while we sit here**.

2. Subordinate clauses serve in a sentence as adverbs or adjectives. Subordinate clauses that are adverbs (adverb clauses) tell more about the verb and describe one of the following about a verb: when it happened, where it happened, how it happened, how often it happened, why it happened.

Examples: See Adverb Clauses.

3. Subordinate clauses that are adjectives (adjective clauses) tell more about a noun and describe one of the following about it: which one, what kind, how many.

Examples: See Adjective Clauses.

4. Punctuation of subordinate clauses is easy. Put a comma at the end of the clause if the clause begins the sentence. Do not put any commas if the clause does not begin the sentence.

Examples: **If you pet the dog**, you will get hairs on your suit.

You will get hairs on your suit **if you pet the dog**.

Subordinating Conjunctions

These are words that make something that was a complete sentence into an incomplete sentence. Subordinating conjunctions begin subordinate clauses (see above).

Example: **After** the cat fell asleep, he twitched his whiskers.

Common subordinating conjunctions: after, although, as, as if, as long as, as soon as, as though, because, before, even though, how, if, in order that, provided that, since, so that, than, till, unless, until, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, while. (See Conjunctions for a teaching suggestion.)

Summarizing

To summarize something you write a condensed version of it. This is a skill that is necessary in almost any job. A repair man has to summarize each house call. A doctor has to summarize each patient's problems, and so on. It is a skill that is easily practiced with the Caught'ya's. (See #9 of the General Writing Ideas in Chapter 5 of *Caught'ya Again!* for ideas to teach summarization skills.)

That

"That" is a relative or a demonstrative pronoun (depending on how it is used). Use "that" in an indirect quote to avoid the use of quotation marks.

Example: She said **that** she was going to feed the dogs.

Do not use "that" as a substitute for "who" or "whom." "That" refers to an object or a thing. "Who" and "whom" refer to people. This is an extremely common mistake.

Example: She is the one **whom** (not "that") I love.

Is feeding two hungry dogs **that** complicated?

She gave the dog the bone **that** seemed the biggest.

Titles

1. Underline titles of long works — books, magazines, newspapers, plays, movies, paintings, and long musical works.
2. Put quotation marks around short works — short stories, poems, chapters of books, magazine articles, and songs. It also is important to recall that if a comma or a period follows the quoted work, it must be placed inside the quotation mark. If a question mark or an exclamation point is not a part of the cited work, then the question mark or the exclamation point goes outside the quotation mark.

Examples: Although she read the article "Sentence Diagramming," she still didn't understand the concept.

She read the article "Sentence Diagramming."

Did she read the article "Sentence Diagramming"?

3. Do not capitalize prepositions, noun markers, or conjunctions in a title unless they are the first word of the title.

Example: The (noun marker) Dog under (preposition) a (noun marker) Human Roof and (conjunction) the (noun marker) Cat on (preposition) the (noun marker) Lap

The Dog under a Human Roof and the Cat on the Lap

Transitive Verbs

A transitive verb takes a direct object. In other words, it always has to do something to something or someone.

Example: The dog **lay** his **head** on the carpet today.

The cat **set** his **paw** on the table before attacking the plate.

The dog **raised** his **paw** for inspection.

Verb Tense Shift in a Story

Make sure that students stick to the same tense they begin with in any story or paragraph they write. If a story starts in the present tense, it should remain in the present tense. If it begins in the past tense, it should continue in the past tense.

To practice this skill, I frequently have changed the verb tense in the Caught'ya sentences. All of the stories have been told in the past tense, so I sometimes put the verb in the present tense. In the margin I warn the teacher to make sure that the students practice correcting "verb tense shift."

Verbs

For lists of verbs and appropriate forms of regular and irregular verbs, please refer to a traditional grammar text. Otherwise, just correct students as they make the mistakes in their writing. The latter is more effective.

Try to keep students from splitting helping verbs and the participles that follow.

Example: The cat also **has lain** on the carpet all day. (Not "**has** also **lain**")

While splitting helping verbs and the participles that follow is sometimes unavoidable, it is not correct English. Although more rigid grammarians disagree with me on this point, many of my colleagues and I believe that if avoiding the split creates an awkward sentence, the rule should be ignored.

Well (See *Good and Well*)

Who, Whoever, Whom, Whomever

These are relative or interrogative pronouns that are used to refer to people. These four pronouns are so misused in general parlance that to some students the correct form sounds incorrect! Simply correct students every time you hear an error in the use of these four pronouns. You may be making verbal corrections until

students feel “grammatically abused,” but the more students hear the correct way to use these pronouns, the more they will use them correctly.

Here’s a general rule of thumb that works about ninety-five percent of the time. I tell my students to use “who” and “whoever” if the word after it is a verb. If the word is not a verb but a pronoun or a noun, then they must use “whom” or “whomever.”

Another rule that often works even better is to substitute “he” or “she” for “who” and to substitute “him” or “her” for “whom” and see if it makes sense. These rules fail when you have one of those weird sentences or phrases that can be turned around like “Who I am” or when you have something else like “I think” between the subject and the verb. (She is the one who **I think** did it.)

1. **Who and whoever:** Used as interrogative pronouns, “who” and “whoever” are the subject of a simple or compound sentence. They should be followed by a verb, the thing that “who” does. Tell students, if they are in doubt, to try substituting “he” or “she” for “who” to see if it makes sense.

Examples: **Who is** that?

Who is sitting on my foot?

All right, **who ate** the dog food?

Whoever broke into the bag and ate the dog food is in big trouble.

Whoever is sitting on my foot had better get off.

Used as a relative pronoun, “who” and “whoever” may be the subject or the predicate noun of a clause.

Examples: **Whoever finishes first** will get extra ice cream for dessert. (subject)

We shall serve **whoever arrives first**. (predicate)

2. **Whom and whomever:** Whom and whomever are relative pronouns that serve as objects of sentences or clauses. They can be direct objects of a verb, indirect objects, or objects of a preposition. Tell students to try substituting “him” or “her” for “whom” to see if it sounds correct.

Examples: He is the one **whom** I love. (object of verb)

With **whom** did you go out last night? (object of preposition)

I will pick the one **whom** I want. (object of verb)

For **whom** does the lady buy diet dog food? (object of preposition)

I will give a dog biscuit to **whomever** I please.

3. **That:** Do not use “that” instead of “who” or “whom.” “That” refers to objects or things. “Who” and “whom” refer to people.

Examples: (See That)

To reinforce the correct use of “who” and “whom,” I told students that I would give them one point extra credit (three of them erase a zero in my grade book) if they caught someone at home making a “who/whom” error. Students wrote down the offending sentence, coerced the person into adding a note that he/she did, in fact, make the error, and brought the paper to me. At first I was afraid that I would have angry parents, but it turned out that I received only positive phone calls from grateful parents who were delighted to see their children taking an interest in correct English grammar.

Caught'yas

for Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Grade

Sixth-Grade Caught'yas

1. horribly hard middle school did not look much different from their elementary school which was nearby in their town of **tedious** florida (**NOTE: Use your state**). a big one-story brick building set **nestled** among large trees and a **verdant** lawn and a small city of white portables dotted the field behind the school like white lily pads in a green pond
2. look **shrilled** isabelle **ingenuous** in her high voice as she nervously twirled the purple plastic butterfly that was perched in her wild curly **auburn** hair. always upbeat isabelle was dressed in her knew outfit of purple shorts and bright green top
3. all the lights are on and there is a teacher gazing out the window of each classroom isabelle ingenuous continued. i wish we were going to marvelously magic magnet middle school instead of this old ordinary **insipid** one groaned william **waggish** whom was not his usual teasing cheerful self
4. yeah sighed sam **sagacious** who was usually reserved behind his horn-rimmed glasses i hear the teachers their are great. and yes i hear they dont give much homework either added olivia **otiose** who hated homework with a passion
5. well we don't have enough magic in us so we cant go to MMMMS **retorted** felicia **fey** whose **meager** magic always went **awry**. if i were better at magic i would be going there with all the neat teachers and cool classes but i failed the entry test when i accidentally gave ms vice principal a big juicy zit right between her eyes

6. at least you *have* some magic even if it always screws up isabelle ingenuous reminded her freind as she twirled the purple butterfly that perched in her **mane** of auburn hare and the rest of us cant even open a classroom **portal** she concluded
7. suddenly right in front of this **sextet** stood a tall man who was dressed all in black with a shiny, new, black hat perched on his slick black hair. he peered down at the group and boomed in a loud **monotone** voice welcome to horribly hard middle school
8. the frightening man then announced that he was the dean of the school and his name was dean **dread**. pauline **puerile commenced** to **snivel** (she was such a baby and felicia fey muttered a “cheer-up spell” but only succeeded in frizzing her friends hare
9. dean dread a disturbing figure in his **somber** suit and tie directed the group to go too the cafetorium a combination of cafeteria and auditorium. there the freinds found other sixth graders who they already new from elementary school
10. what a bizarre dean whispers sam sagacious *sotto voce* to william waggish. me and you wouldnt want to cross him or meet him in a dark alley
11. from what **mausoleum** did he crawl out sam murmured william waggish **surreptitiously** so no one else could here. hey william look at the other weird teachers standing against the wall whispered always observant sam sagacious as he **surveyed** the room

12. as sam **uttered** this last statement dean dread suddenly appeared and loomed menacingly over the two boys. **loquacious** ones eh you two come here the dean ordered. his voice had the flatness of a cockroach crunching under a shoe
13. dean dread put one huge ham sized hand on the back of each boy and **ushered** them to the front of the “cafetorium.” all the other new sixth graders of course **tittered** at the sight of william and sam being caught talking
14. quiet students says dean dread in a deadly tone of voice as he placed william waggish and the **mortified** sam sagacious in the second row next to jesse **jocose** another talker. when dean dread said this he nodded his head and teachers lined up in the aisles to **quell** the noise with **proximity** control
15. the new sixth graders squirmed in fear and became **distraught** as they got a closer look at their new teachers. only a few of them had genuine welcoming smiles on their faces and most were **garbed** in grey or black too.
16. among the teachers only a few didn't look too mean or too **formidable** they just didn't look like the friendly teachers the kids had had in elementary school and most of them dressed in **somber** clothes that looked like they were stiff and uncomfortable
17. olivia otiose who was more **perceptive** than most sixth graders but lazy when it came to work saw that one teacher's smile was genuine. this teacher wore a **blousy** white shirt and a long pink skirt and she had stuck a pink flower in her thick blonde **tresses**

18. felicia that must be the art teacher isabelle ingenuous dared to whisper to her freind felicia fey. dean dread and 2 teachers glared at the two girls that **quailed** under there gaze
19. all the teachers still stood in the aisles like **sentries** most of them **glowering** at the kids as if daring them to speak. the principal stood up on the stage and dean dread joined him their
20. children i am the schools principal the captain of your ship said the principle. my name is mr **punctilious** principal and this is dean dread who will **mete** out any discipline for misbehaving students he continued as he put a hand on the deans broad right shoulder
21. william waggish always playfully humorous choose that moment to **subvocalize** a limerick under his breath his favorite way to deal with tension. he entitled it the mean dean. several people heard its **utterance** and jesse jocose who set nearby snorted in laughter

(Kentucky)

There was an old dean from Salt Lick
 Who made all the kids very sick.
 One look at his face
 And students would race,
 Well-aided by steps that were quick.

22. as william waggish **uttered** the last word of his limerick the teacher nearest him twitched and nodded his head. his eyelids fluttered his tongue protruded between his closed lips and **wisps** of smoke curled from his ears

23. jesse jocose pointed to that teacher with his one hand and held the other over his mouth to **muffle** his giggles. the other teachers turned and **glowered** at him as students **swiveled** theyre heads in the direction jesse pointed
24. only the teacher with the pink flower in her hair and the paint on her shirt smiled at the strange **phenomenon** of her eye-fluttering ear smoking tongue sticking out **colleague** and she somehow was different like a cool glacier breeze in a hot classroom
25. after that **incident** everyone quieted down turned his or her face towards the stage and **paid heed** to mr punctilious principal as he instructed students on where to go and what to do next. i hope me and my friends are in the same homeroom whispered isabelle ingenuous too her too freinds olivia otiose and pauline puerile
26. finally the assembly was over and teachers filed out directed the **striplings** to the homeroom lists on the walls of the sixth grade hall and then pointed the various classrooms out
27. the **intrepid** group who had begun their first day of school together found themselves in the same homeroom. there teacher was a very **stern** looking man mr math **martinet** who promptly announced that he was also their math teacher

28. he told the students too that he would tolerate no **shenanigans** and then he **confiscated** a headset from quincy **querulous** a student in the back of the room who made faces as his headset was taken opened his mouth as if to argue and then thought better of it. hey pauline thats the teacher who stuck his tongue out **articulated** felicia fey to her **puerile** friend who was silently crying

29. william waggish worried about pauline whispered another of his **inimitable** limericks this one about a **malevolent** math teacher entitled **wrathful** math and faint curls of smoke wisped from mr math martinets ears and his eyelids fluttered too

The nasty, male teacher of math
Was utterly filled with such **wrath**.
He yelled at the boys
And **stifled** their joys.
He took a malevolent path.

30. at this you could have heard a pin drop as the students mouths gaped open at their **peers** boldness and there teachers antics. the class waits for williams painful **demise** at the hands of their stern **uncompromising** teacher

31. nothing happened. absolutely nothing after fewer than three seconds mr math martinet **resumed** his announcements as if he neither had been interrupted or had wisps of smoke **emitting** from his ears

32. after he went over the school rules mr math martinet handed out a schedule and a map of the school to everyone. as soon as the students schedules were in theyre hands **pandemonium** broke out as everyone tried to see who was in their classes

33. the **intrepid** six compared notes and found that they shared some of the same classes math english and science. pauline isabelle jesse william and felicia had art with ms **amicable** artist and the other two had music with mr **melodious** music
34. the bell **pealed** signaling the end of homeroom. although the group were going to the same place pauline puerile got lost. things were not going good for her
35. first she became separated from her freinds and then she turned her map upside down and next the size of the eighth graders **daunted** her and finally she gets lost
36. as pauline puerile stood in the crowded hallway blubbering while others laughed and pointed fingers at her a kind **titanic** eighth grader took pity on her and pointed her in the right direction. meanwhile isabelle ingenuous and felicia fey found the girls bathroom but theyre were too many eighth graders for comfort in there so they left hurriedly
37. felicia and isabelle found their first class (which thankfully was only 10 steps further. before entering the classroom felicia fey who should have known better tried too fix her flyaway hair with a **petite** spell. as usual it backfired this time it turned her hair purple
38. at the same time william waggish finds a new friend jesse **jocose** the boy that had experienced the **wrath** of dean dread too. the too of them discovered there love for **jocular**ity and limericks

39. since like williams other friends they were headed for english class they composed an **appropriate** poem and entitled it awful teacher even though they had not yet **encountered** the teacher

An English teacher from Slade (Kentucky)
Confused the verbs “lay” and “laid.”
She did not know squat
And was put on the spot,
So she quit and didn’t get paid.

40. standing at her door there new english teacher ms grammar grouch heard the limerick. her eyes fluttered and she stuck out her tongue while curls of smoke wisped from her **proboscis** and rose to the ceiling
41. hey jesse look at that giggled william waggish pleased with their poetic efforts and their effect on the teachers. these teachers are **eerie**. maybe me and my friends are wrong and this year will be fun after all. and sam sagacious just makes a further notation in his pocket notebook
42. jesse jocose **queried** with a grin as they stepped into the room of the slightly smoking teacher i wonder what makes them do that. just then they spied felicia fey in her newly purpled hair
43. oh oh william I bet the teachers are not going to find *that* amusing said jesse jocose. ms grammar grouch *could* **differentiate** between the verbs “lay” and laid and much to the **consternation** of olivia otiose she loaded the class with a list of vocabulary words to learn

44. in addition ms grammar grouch did not permit any student to end a sentence with a preposition nor to split a verb. she was a true grammar grouch. she also was not very **amiable** and was going to send felicia fey to the dean with a **terse** note to call felicias parents about her coming to school with purple hair

45. wait, ms grouch i can fix it. its fixable **blurped** felicia as she muttered another spell which turned her hair back to its normal color but put a purple streak in ms grouchs **coiffure**. jesse jocose composed a limerick on the spot that he entitled my new friend felicia and sent it in a note to william waggish who whispered it to felicia who **tittered**

There was a young lady from Day (Florida)
Whose nature was quirkily fey.
She purpled her hair,
But she didn't care
And merrily did things her way.

46. at this **juncture** ms grammar grouch stuck out her tongue fluttered her eyelids and **emitted** smoke from her ears. she stopped teaching froze for fewer than 3 seconds mumbled that is unanswerable and then resumed her grammar lecture as if nothing had occurred

47. weirder and weirder **penned** william to jesse in another **furtive** note. i dont think i like that teacher very much said isabelle to her freinds as they exited the room at the peal of the bell and her and felicia dashed into the ladies room **micturated** quick washed their hands in the filthy sink and ran out to join their friends

48. i wonder if the science teacher will be any gooder. we already know what the math teacher is like said sam sagacious who liked the vocabulary lesson of ms grammar grouch but **loathed** the way the **latter** had wanted to send his friend to dean dread
49. well She couldn't be worser said felicia fey whos Narrow Escape had Scared them all farther. I hope She doesnt **perceive** that purple Streak in her hair until she gets Home
50. shes the one who deserved it **countered** felicias freinds william waggish and pauline puerile in **unison**. they shared a high five as william proceeded to happily recite another one of his **infamous** limericks this one entitled frigid english

Our grammar teacher is rigid.
On English rules, she's quite frigid.
She never splits verbs
And teaches hard words,
And errors make her quite **livid**.

51. nearby too teachers in unison flutter their eyelids stuck out theyre tongues between closed lips froze in place for less than 3 seconds and emitted wisps of smoke from there **nostrils**. sam sagacious noted the **anomalies** in there reactions

Almost Midterm Caught'ya Test

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over the Caught'yas. You will lose two points per error, so **be very careful** and be sure to check your work when finished. Ask your teacher for meanings of words you do not know. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's directions on how to do the test and read it again to yourself to help with punctuation.

Hint: There are five paragraphs. All periods are correct. Do not change any of them. Twice, the first quotation mark has been left in to help you. There are six spelling errors and one missing hyphen. Some words will need to be changed.

bizarre sam sagacious muttered to himself as he took notes. the rest of the day went pretty much the same. the teachers for the most part were **clad** in somber colors and they had no sense of humor. unfortunately in science class the freinds found there old **nemesis** orson **odious**. as they entered the room orson was "holding court in the back between many of the popular kids. ah guys look at the weird ones who just entered science class orson said **maliciously**. theres the witch that cant do a spell right the four eyed wise guy who knows it all the free spirit that even wears stupid plastic butterflies in her hair the crybaby the lazy one who never has her homework and the 2 that think there funny. what losers he stated and he chuckled too his audience and encouraged them to laugh. im sorry my parents made my buds and me late this morning and me

and my buds missed too of the "geeks getting caught by the dean **expounded** odious orson as he concluded his **verbal** attack. the intrepid 6 and jocose jesse heads down slunk into seats in the front of the room just as the science teacher entered and closed the door behind him. when the class saw their teacher silence **reigned** even from the back of the room where orsons gang sat.

Directions for Part 2:

First, number the eleven sentences on your corrected copy of the test so you don't lose track of the numbers. Then, use your corrected version of the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the eleven sentences in this exam—simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex.

Hint: Four are simple. Two are compound. Four are complex. One is compound/complex.

1. _____

7. _____

2. _____

8. _____

3. _____

9. _____

4. _____

10. _____

5. _____

11. _____

6. _____

12. _____

Directions for Part 3:

First, invent an imaginary obnoxious person who joins your English class. Next, give that imaginary person a name. Then, think of two or three things (actions) that this odious person might do that would make class miserable for you and your classmates. Finally, write down your ideas.

Now, write an essay explaining why the things that this odious person does would disrupt the class and make life miserable for everyone.

52. i am ms **stern** science the teacher said in a **monotone** voice. i believe in a lot of hard tests **a plethora of** homework and **a dearth of** student talking in my class but i also expect students to do good
53. at this olivia otiose **slumped** in her desk in **woe**. oh no she whined as she sank farther into her seat and this year is starting out bad
54. ms stern science stared at olivia otiose with his bird like beady eyes and she said in a low **ominous** tone there will always be silence in this classroom when i **pontificate**. olivia otiose thought she heard a snicker from orson odious in the back but the teacher did not catch it
55. as the 7 friends left the room they tried to **elude** orson odious who knew all the tricks of making other students lives **wretched** without getting caught by the teachers himself. william waggish and his new friend jesse jocose **commenced** composing another limerick this one about the stern science teacher and they entitled it crude science

Our old science teacher is rude.
She also is horribly crude.
She picks at her nose;
She sports ugly toes;
And always is in a bad mood.

56. isabelle ingenuous and her friends laughed imagining their teachers **unsightly** toes. they forgot about the toad orson odious and all that he liked too do too make theyre lives miserable

57. by her desk near the **portal** of the room ms stern science stuck out her tongue smoked slightly from her **proboscis** fluttered her eyes like a blinking lizard and froze mid-step for less than 3 seconds. stranger and weirder murmured sam sagacious whom noticed these things
58. lunch is the usual **boisterous pandemonium** typical of a middle school lunchroom. a fight broke out among 2 girls over something a **rumor-monger** had reported that the other had **purportedly** said and both were suspended on the spot
59. dean dread called theyre parents from the lunchroom right in front of the girls **peers**. after that incident dean dread stood on the stage with his ham sized hands on his hips glaring **forebodingly** at the students as if he dared them to try anything else accept talking and eating
60. its amazing he lets us talk at all sam said william waggish to his **compatriot** at the table. he also composed another limerick for the occasion entitled it mean green dean and caused everyone at his table to hoot with laughter like a bunch of hyenas
- The dean of students is mean.
His face in anger turns bright green.
He maintains his right
To stop any fight
And suspend those who are obscene.
61. after a brief flutter of his eyelids and one wisp of smoke curling from his left ear dean dread turned to stare at their table with a **malevolent** expression on his **visage marred** only by his tongue that still stuck out between his **pursed** lips

62. art and music was the only relief for the rest of the week. in art, the teacher ms **amicable** artist smiled alot and promised the class that they would release butterflies on earth day and celebrate the event farther with an art project of there own choosing as good
63. pauline isabelle jesse william and felicia who had **opted** to take art were delighted. this teacher seems almost human girlfriend whispered isabelle to felicia who nodded in agreement
64. with only a small frown at isabelle ms amicable artist quietly moved by the 2 girls and **commenced** a lecture about the **Impressionist** artists. william waggish took out a pencil and a peace of paper and he composed another limerick entitled art

We have a bizarre art teacher
Who **touts** painters like a preacher.
Cassat and Van Go
And Monet, now we know,
Are the ones who really reach her.

65. ms amicable artist still lecturing and **periodically** showing pictures from a stack in her hand **ambled** over to william confiscated the paper swiftly **perused** its contents smiled and said you spelled van goghs name incorrectly william. its spelled g-o-g-h not go
66. nothing else happened accept that the pink **hued** flower in her **coiffure** fell onto williams desk as she nodded her head at him handed back williams paper and continued her **spiel** on the impressionists. william waggish corrected the spelling of the dutch painters name and paid **rapt** attention for the rest of the period

67. hey **mused** william waggish to himself maybe the limerick has to be said out loud for it to effect the teachers. i must tell sam as he would want to make a note
68. meanwhile in music mr **melodious** music tells his class all about band and he let the untried **neophyte** sixth graders choose there instruments. sam sagacious played the guitar at home but wanted to take up a gnu challenge
69. he chose the oboe an **arduous** instrument too learn to play. olivia otiose who had not signed up for any exploratory class and whom had been randomly assigned to band by the schools computer wanted the instrument that was the easiest to play
70. she wanted to play the triangle but was given a clarinet. bummer she said. if i have to learn to play this instrument i will be forced to carry this home every day and my mother will **compel** me to practice
71. that day the 6 friends jesse jocose took a bus to school **plodded** home piled with science and math homework. olivia otiose was not pleased so she did none of it and lied to her mother when her mother asked if she had ever been assigned any
72. olivia's lying about homework was nothing knew. months passed in a similar **invariable** manner

73. the 6 walked to school met up with their friend's who bussed to school suffered through classes' with their bizarre teacher's and tried to avoid orson odious and his popular pal's the **comely** petra **pulchritudinous** lovely alessandra **amorous** and handsome danny **dapper**. accept in art and music the nasty annoying teachers' gave tons of homework
74. while middle school is alway's a wierd place they new that something strange was **afoot** at horribly hard middle school. sam kept note's on the effect's that william's and jesses' **atrocious** but **hilarious** limerick's had on there teachers'
75. one of their best a wicked limerick about the social studies teacher ms grumpy geography **evoked** more than smoke from her ears and fluttering eyes. in addition to the teachers usual reactions to hearing one of their **infamous** verses ms grumpy geography repeated over and over in a **monotone** voice for more than too seconds but less than 3 you must read the book great geography. you must read the book great geography

There is a teacher from Noodle (Texas)
 Whose hair looks like a French poodle.
 She paints her nails green;
 She taps on the screen;
 Her face looks like pale apple strudel.
(Pronounce "apple" as one syllable.)

76. as usual sam sagacious would take notes **apropos** of the incident but neither he or anyone else could draw any conclusions. there was just something different about there school but noone could put a finger on what its difference was

77. art continued to be awesome. band was challenging and even lazy **indolent** olivia otiose was getting into playing her clarinet good
78. then there was this **innovative** teacher who visited there english class from time to time to teach creative writing. her humor and enthusiastic inspired students to write good
79. usually **apathetic** olivia otiose wrote a personal narrative that won a prize. in addition william waggish even abandoned his favorite form of writing—the limerick and composed a **superlative** argumentative essay defending his position that school uniforms were an **noxious** idea
80. one day in science orson odious was particularly **insufferable**. his **taunts** provoke the usually cheerful jesse jocose to become **pugnacious** and swing at him in fury
81. orson **countered** with a blow too jesses **visage**. william jumped into the **fray** to support his freind and then ms stern science stepped into the act. you 3 **rapsallions** she said in a loud voice go to the deans office immediately
82. isabelle take this note and go see that they arrive in the appropriate place and get a return note from the dean she concluded punching the call button to inform the office that dean dread had some customers. as the group walked to the deans office orson **goaded** and teased jesse william and isabelle

83. your nothing but unpopular little geeks he **jeered**. the 3 remain **quiescent** at this insult for they dared not **exacerbate** the situation
84. everyone **loathes** your stupid poems he continued they are written bad. now youve gone to far growled the usually **pacifistic** william waggish as he rushed in on his tormentor
85. as if they had **orchestrated** it beforehand the 3 friends jump on orson all at the same time. orson fell to the ground and jesse william and isabelle set on him and called him an **obstreperous** jerk. orson odious was shocked into silence
86. at that moment dean dread appeared suddenly like a huge swooping bat and **ushered** all four **miscreants** into his office. orson odious tried to blame the 3 for the entire incident but ms stern science had luckily seen him take a swing at jesse jocose
87. dean dread would call everyones parents to come get there **miscreants** and then he would suspend all 4 of them for 2 days. william waggish didn't even have time to compose a limerick appropriate for the occasion
88. when the suspension had ended and all were back in school things got gooder for a while. orson odious remained unusually **docile**. he did however start targeting a girl named beth **bibliophilic** who had read harry potter more than 4 times and whom always **secreted** a book on her knees under her desk

89. orson also picked on a boy named mark **meticulous** a perfectionist that always rewrote his papers many times. these 2 of course were not **elated** with this turn of events
90. they to be sure prefer it when orson odious had ignored them as if they werent there. weirdos that set on people dont **warrant** my attention orson **scoffed**
91. bullies that taunt my friends deserve to be expelled **retorted** isabelle ingenuous the free spirit who even dean dread did not **daunt**. then in art and music ms amicable artist and mr melodious music joined there classes too present a **mutual** art/music project **nurturing** and releasing butterflies
92. we have ordered youre kits and you will rise painted lady butterflies said ms amicable artist. painted lady butterflies are probably the most **widespread** butterfly **species** and are found all over the world she said
93. they particularly like living in mountain's and flowery meadow's and they love the following flower's aster cosmos' thistle and buttonbush. after we release the butterfly's on earth day art student's will paint an appropriate **habitat** with there butterfly in it she lectured and music students' will compose a short tune
94. each student will rise their own butterfly from an caterpillar which is the **larvae** to the **chrysalis** in which the caterpillar **metamorphosis** will occur and finally into a painted lady butterfly mr melodious music concluded

95. this will be **stupendous** felicia fey informed her pals. than in her **exhilaration** she accidentally waved her hands the wrong way enacting a spell and a white maggot **oozed** out of sams left ear
96. eewww thats gross felicia **shrilled** isabelle and pauline in unison. sam sagacious and the other boys collected the discusting maggot felicias spell had produced and admired its properties
97. they plotted to leave it on some unsuspecting teachers desk. which teacher deserved their present. they couldnt **concur**
98. it came out of my ear so i get to decide insisted an **adamant** sam the three girls almost **retched** in disgust but they quickly turned there thoughts too butterflies. oh you guys i cant wait until the caterpillars arrive said isabelle her face **animated** by the thought of raising a butterfly
99. then on a day that had been particularly **problematical** the group arrived in art and music and they breathed a sigh of relief. boy pauline this has been a **horrendous** day said isabelle ingenuous
100. pauline puerile just nods in agreement as she didnt trust herself not to cry. yeah orson odious forgot his truce and he insulted sam about his **spectacles** groaned jesse jocose. we must make up a limerick about him william he grined **puckishly**

A nasty young **stripling** from Toast (North Carolina)
Was meaner and crueler than most.
His **barbs** were so cruel
That we hated school
Where he made his nastiest boasts.

101. ms grammar grouch and mr math martinet whom were passing by the group just as jesse jocose recited his **doggerel** stoped dead in their tracks one foot raised as if to take another step. there eyelids fluttered wildly
102. there lips clamped shut but theyre tongues still **protruded** like pink taffy. wisps of smoke curled from there ears as they stood their unmoving
103. their they froze **manifesting** their bizarre behavior for less than 3 seconds. it wasnt a pretty sight they looked like ugly stone **gargoyles**
104. stranger and stranger murmured sam as he made a note in his **omnipresent** notebook. during the peculiar **interlude** william dared to gently touch mr math martinet on the tip of his large pinocchio like **proboscis**
105. the **latter** did not even notice. william waggish quickly withdrew before both teachers resumed walking as if nothing **untoward** had occurred
106. as william and jesse continued to **regale** the rest with their account of theyre horrendous day the crew sees a big box being delivered to the art room. caterpillars **bellowed** felicia fey in her loud voice
107. future butterflies **articulated** isabelle ingenuous with **awe** in her tone. as usual she wore a plastic **replica** of one in her auburn **tresses** and it bobed as she spoke

108. the rest of the day past and the group remained **oblivious** to orsons verbal **barbs** and **jabs** their teachers love affair with homework and the usual battle to walk in the crowded halls with the bigger students. finally it was time for art and music
109. ms amicable artist and mr melodious music stood in the front of the art room as their students **crammed** theirselves into a room made for many less bodies. a **massive** opened box set on the front table
110. these are the caterpillars said ms amicable artist in a quite voice. the caterpillar to butterfly life cycle is **approximately** twenty one days so 3 weeks from now on earth day we will release butterflies
111. she added first you will choose a partner. murmurs erupted from the students as they searched for partners. silence students you may choose partners after you recieve all the instructions ms amicable artist gently **reproached** the kids
112. next each pear of you will recieve one of these cups she continued as mr melodious music held up several small covered cups in his hand. mr melodious music continued ms amicable artists **discourse**. each one of these he said indicating the covered cups contains 4 to 5 caterpillars
113. because not all of the caterpillars will live each pear of students will have among 3 to 5 butterflies to release. the caterpillar cup has all the food the caterpillars need to **metamorphose**. finally keep the lid on the cup until the caterpillars form theyr **chrysalises** he warned the students

114. completing the chrysalis will only take about ten days he concluded. awesome **marveled** isabelle ingenuous whom adored butterflies
115. ms amicable artist resumed the lecture with a **caveat** handle your cups as little and as gently as possible so that you do not disturb the caterpillars. occasionally you may open the lid to peer inside carefully but **refrain** from touching the caterpillars it will stop them from changing
116. even though there were 60 6th graders in the overcrowded room, silence **reigned**. suddenly one student coughed and the **mesmerized** crowd resumed their usual **clamor**
117. i cant wait 3 weeks **puled** pauline puerile in a **petulant** tone. a boy named quincy **querulous** echoed paulines whine. why cant we speed up the things he asked **peevisly**
118. nature takes its own time **mollified** sam sagacious. nature did take its own time. in 3 weeks each pear of students opens their box revealing several chrysalises on the sides and little green balls on the bottom
119. eewww what are those little green balls asked pauline puerile who was totally grossed out. there caterpillar poop you dummy piped up quincy **querulous** who had actually done his homework and he liked to insult his **peers** almost as much as orson odious but wasn't as **adept** at it

Passage to be read out loud to students

After the teachers sent Quincy Querulous out of the room for his **insensitive** remark, the rest of the class **warily** removed the small pieces of paper to which the chrysalis had **adhered**. They then taped them to the inside wall of one of the butterfly **abodes** that the art class had constructed. They also placed twigs inside the abode. Pauline Puerile, of course, dropped a chrysalis and cried with **consternation**.

In science, Orson Odious, who took P.E. instead of art or music, yanked the plastic butterfly from Isabelle's hair, put it in his **unruly**, uncombed mop, flapped his arms, and pretended to fly around the room like a butterfly to make fun of the students who were excited about the project. In reality, the **obnoxious** pest was jealous.

In art, each student drew a picture of his or her chrysalis, and in music, they played a **pastoral** piece with a **lilting** melody that gave the airy feeling of a butterfly in flight. Even Olivia Otiose practiced her part **assiduously** and played it beautifully. Everyone was anxious for the final metamorphosis to take place.

A little more than a week later, William Waggish arrived in art. To his amazement, he spied lovely Painted Lady butterflies in the butterfly **abode**. They clung to the side. Their wings looked as if they had been painted with black, brown, and orange paint with spots of white, red, and blue thrown in. They were lovely! They perched on the twigs and pumped their **frangible** wings to unfurl them.

“Oh, look, guys,” William Waggish gleefully **whooped** to his classmates, “the butterflies are emerging!”

As the class supplied the newly formed insects with food (sugar water), they impatiently waited for Earth Day which was two days **hence**, at the end of April.

120. finally earth day arrived. the entire sixth grade class orson odious included gathered around the butterfly houses that were on tables in the middle of the P.E. field. the weather was **balmy** and there was a slight breeze
121. orson odious pushed and pinched his way to the front of the crowd and ms amicable artist whom did not feel amicable towards **aggressive** bullies **banished** him farther back because dean dread was their
122. she then asked isabelle and william to come forward. pauline whined in disappointment and felicia danced in a circle of **vicarious** joy for her friends. too brown moths flew out of ms grammar grouchs hare
123. mr melodious music called upon sam sagacious and much to her surprise a **flabbergasted** olivia otiose. you sam are a talented and **diligent** student he said
124. orson odious made **noxious** faces from the last row of students. you olivia otiose have improved so much that i **deem** that you too deserve this honor mr melodious music stated as he beckoned with his finger for the too students too come up close too the butterfly **abodes**
125. then at a nod from the two teachers isabelle william sam and olivia **simultaneously** lifted the lid to a butterfly abode. as the crowd gasped ahhh in **unison** a fluttering cloud of brown black and orange **hues** rose from the boxes and **dispersed** in **diverse** directions

Passage to be read out loud to students

Orson Odious tried to catch one to crush it; thankfully, he failed. As the cloud of butterflies rose into the air and **dispersed** with the breeze, the sixth-graders craned their necks to watch their departure. This had been a truly **prodigious** experience for the **majority** of the sixth-graders. Even Orson Odious was impressed although he did not admit it.

The last six weeks of school sped by with **alacrity**. The band concert went well, and although she earned her usual “Ds” and “Fs” in the majority of her classes, Olivia Otiose and her clarinet wowed the audience. Sam Sagacious aced all the exams with ease, and Isabelle Ingenuous earned all “As” and “Bs” except for a “C” in math, the **bane** of her existence (besides Orson Odious). Her drawing of her butterfly astounded all at the **annual** art show. William Waggish and his new friend, Jesse Jocose, continued to compose **outlandish** limericks. Felicia Fey only let fly a few **inappropriate** spells that had minor, **insignificant** results, usually involving Ms. Grammar Grouch. Pauline Puerile still cried when frustrated, but even she **ameliorated** her grades. Thus, their sixth-grade year drew to a close.

One gorgeous morning at the end of May, the sextet **strolled** to school. They were unusually early. (Olivia Otiose, who had spent the night at Isabelle’s house, actually was on time!) They reached the parking lot at the school just as the custodian, Mr. **Adept** Fixit, got out of his blue pick-up truck. Mr. Adept Fixit waved at the group of friends, grabbed a strange-looking tool from his truck, and **scurried** into the building. He had an **apprehensive** look on his face.

Caught'ya Final Exam

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over Caught'yas. You will lose two points per error, so check your work. Ask your teacher for meanings of words if necessary. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's directions, and read the test again to yourself to help with punctuation.

Hint: There are ten paragraphs. All periods are correct except one that needs to be changed to a question mark. Only change that one. There are spelling errors and three missing hyphens. Some words need to be changed.

the friends watched in amazement as mr adept fixit **bustled** from room to room with only 1 tool. as he exits each room the lights went on quickly and the blinds rose. from their **vantage** point on the sidewalk the freinds could see good the outlines of their teachers in the rooms. where did they come from asked sam. i see less than 3 cars in the parking lot and the teachers arent moving too. this is a mystery to be solved next year when we are in the seventh grade said william in a rare serious tone. yes william i **concur** said sam. their are neither enough time or enough clues and i only want to think about my summer and the book the mystery of the terrible teachers he agreed. yeah said isabelle as she nodded her head in **assent** and her plastic butterfly bobbed **in accord**. i dont like this whined pauline. everyone else heaved their shoulders in **exasperation**. was pauline going to grow up and was she ever going too stop her

sniveling. i think i will wear all black next year in the seventh grade announced felicia that had not produced a single successful spell the entire sixth grade year. the freinds except sam of course promptly forgot about their strange teachers and concentrate on the end of year activities and there summer plans. on the last day of school (after all the students had left all was silent except for muffled sounds from the art and music rooms and the clack of computer keys in the main office

Directions for Part 2:

Use your corrected version to the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the fifteen sentences in this exam – simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex.

Hint: Seven of them are simple sentences. Three are compound. Three are complex, and two are compound/complex.

1. _____

9. _____

2. _____

10. _____

3. _____

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14. _____

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15. _____

8. _____

Directions for Part 3:

As clearly as you can, write a paragraph or two explaining what you think is the answer to the mystery of Horribly Hard Middle School. Be sure to support your theory. Include a topic sentence and a concluding sentence for each paragraph. Use transitions and similes. Vary sentence structure. Most importantly, put passion and flair into your answer.

Seventh-Grade Caught'yas

1. isabelle **ingenuous** always **animated** twirled in nervousness and a **excess** of energy. pauline **puerile** whined in a babyish manner about the **tardiness** of olivia **otiose** about having to return to horribly hard middle school for another year and about the homework the teachers loved to pile on her
2. another girl was **garbed** all in black. even her hair was dyed black. it was felicia **fey** who acted in a bizarre manner and whom was known for her spells that always went **awry**
3. felicia began to mutter words of a spell to encourage her friend olivia **otiose** to hurry. isabelle **ingenuous** put her hand over felicias mouth to stop her from **uttering** her spell and she warned her freind
4. you know it will backfire on you felicia warned isabelle ingenuous. you dont want to ruin youre new black hairdo or start the seventh grade with **putrid** purple streaks in your hair as you did in the sixth grade last year do you
5. william **waggish** made a tasteless but funny joke about girls and there wierd habits but no one listened. they were used to his **lame** limericks **vapid** jokes and strange sense of humor
6. the last member of the troop sam **sagacious** simply stood wisely and silently waiting for the **clamor** to die down. a **erudite** young man sam held a book in his hand the count of monte cristo by alexander dumas and he read as he waited

7. since his joke had fallen flat and no one had laughed william **waggish regaled** his freinds with a new limerick about girls whom wear black. brown faced with expressive dark pupils william composed mischievous poems to hide his real **aspiration** two be as **eloquent** and **articulate** a poet as his secret hero langston hughes

there once was a strange girl from mack (Colorado)
who's hair and clothes were all black.
she looked like a crow,
and she should have said no
to trying a magical act

8. sam **sagacious** put his book in his backpack and he laughed. felicia **fey** threatened to zap william with a spell but that didnt **deter** him
9. isabelle ingenuous smiled at williams poem and the image of felicia as a crow but she dared not laugh because she didnt want too **affront** her friend felicia felicia **glowered** stuck out her tongue at william and than muttered something rude under her breath
10. william cant you write anything accept those **insipid** limericks she snapped. how about giving us a break and trying another form of poetry for a change
11. isabelle ingenuous **deftly** changed the subject before a argument **ensued**. i dread going back to horribly hard middle school for another year she groaned. i dislike all the teachers except ms **amicable** artist and i dont want to be laughed at by orson **odious** and his stuck up freinds she concluded

12. yes im with you isabelle **concurred** sam sagacious with **fervor** but we also need to curb william and his limericks. doesnt he know any other form of poetry. would other types of poetry have the same effect on the teachers he **queried** further always curious
13. finally olivia **otiose** arrives late as usual shrugging on her knew **chartreuse** backpack as she hurried up to the door of isabelles **abode**. hola amigos she said in spanish she had learned over the summer am i late she queried as she approached her friends
14. arent you always olivia **sniped** felicia who still smarted from williams limerick about her magical **ineptitude**. are we ready to go face school for another year. she finished as she waltzed out the door and onto the sidewalk
15. as they slung there backpacks over their shoulders the **intrepid** freinds followed felicia out of isabelles **abode**. there was a **paucity** of talk as the group **trekked** the short walk to horribly hard middle school
16. at the edge of the campus each wondered **mutely** what their new school year in the seventh grade would be like. all two soon they had reached there school
17. at the school by the bus port they were joined by another freind jesse **jocose** who rode the school bus. each of them found their name on lists posted on the doors to the seventh grade wing of the school

18. oh no guys its bad. it looks like many of our sixth-grade teachers followed us to the seventh grade too moaned pauline **puerile** in **dejection**
19. i see alot of homework in our future and i see william getting into trouble with his **incessant** stupid limericks **predicted** felicia fey in an **eerie** spooky voice. hey wait up people chirped a soft cheery tone
20. its vivian **virtuous** whispered isabelle to her freinds. i remember her from last year as she was in a few of my classes. she always did her work and she got straight as. she was the one on who orson **odious** picked whenever he could she finished
21. remember me murmured the girl with a quite voice and carefully **coiffed** intricately braided **ebony** hair. she clutched a huge hard back book in her hand entitled war and peace by leo tolstoy
22. i was in your sceince class last year and i set in the last row as far away from orson **odious** and his **crony** danny **dapper** as i could get. they used too lay in wait for me between classes
23. orson always whispered **malevolent** things under his breath in my direction too she sighed and he called me a suck up. unfortunately the teacher never caught him doing it
24. danny on the other hand threatened and **coerced** me into doing his homework so that he could go to partys. know adult ever caught on to his **shenanigans** either

25. vivian virtuous joined the group of 7 seventh graders as each member searched for their correct homeroom. when everyone had found their **appropriate** classroom the friends found that they had different homerooms
26. when she arrived in her homeroom pauline puerile whined at the unfairness of it all. its not fair pauline **whimpered** to herself. its just not fair. not only do i have to go back to school, but my worst **nemesis** is in homeroom to **torment** me first thing every morning
27. orson **odious** whom indeed was in paulines homeroom grinned **maliciously** at her and **lobbed** a slimy spit wad in her direction. but pauline ducked and she incurred the **wrath** of the homeroom teacher mr math **martinet**
28. stop **fidgiting** young lady and sit still he ordered pauline in a menacing tone of voice. sam **sagacious ambled** to his new homeroom a few doors down from paulines. as he entered the rooms **portal** he froze mid stride
29. oh my sam sagacious muttered in awe as he spied a **comely** girl who sat **demurely** in the third row of desks. sam hastily grabed a seat in the fourth row write behind the **pulchritudinous** girl
30. the young **comely** lady wears a tight ribbed aqua top that barely meets the top of her equally tight jeans. her medium length black hair curled gently around her ears and flipped up in the back like birds tail feathers only softer. sam sagacious for once in his life was struck dumb

31. sam by the way new that He had Seen this **pulchritudinous** Girl before between other Students but he couldnt place Her. and he Sat their in the fourth Row right behind the Vision and Breathed in the fresh shampoo Scent from her cute **ebony tresses**
32. this is a **novel** twist. shes extremely hott' with two 'ts sam thought too himself as he copied the daily schedule busily writing
33. as the day progressed the 8 freinds met periodically in the hall to compare gossip and the latest news flashes me and my friend think that orson odious is worser than ever this year proclaimed isabelle and vivian almost in **unison**
34. danny **dapper** is worse than ever as well. most of the girls think he is so handsome and good but i think he is **abhorrent** and **vindictive** added isabelle with a **grimace**
35. to right said william whom had already experienced a **skirmish** with his arch **nemesis** the **obstreperous** orson and his pal danny. there *both* in my homeroom **carped** pauline puerile. its unfair
36. have you seen the new english teacher yet **queried** sam. shes one that even olivia otiose will work for. she does good
37. shes boss william concluded in the current **vernacular**. oh yeah william shes tubular **concurred** jesse **jocose** who was not to be outdone in his knowledge of **slang**

38. yeah shes not like ms grammar grouch at all **reiterated** felicia fey. shes like almost human and i think she has a touch of magic in her. she has such a way with words she almost paints pictures with them
39. at that moment orson odious past bye. theirs the girl that cant do anything right he **taunted**. your weird felicia. your **somber** outfit is ugly and your hair looks like a muddy broom. you dont got no class
40. felicia fey would **glower** at orson and would prepare to zap him with a spell but her friends warnings stoped her before she could mouth the first word. careful felicia counseled isabelle youre spells dont always work the way you want. its two **perilous** to try one
41. felicia held back and just stared in the direction of the rapidly retreating orson. youre going to get youre **comeuppance** some day she muttered
42. after that the first few months of school past in the usual fashion accept that sam was **enamored** of the girl in his homeroom and kept trying two get her to notice him too no **avail**. she seemed **oblivious** of his presence and very **aloof**
43. something was troubling her and she didnt seem to be two **blithe** and she always looked like something was wrong
44. teachers would assign a **plethora of** homework but less than at the end of the previous year. vivian virtuous would rise her hand no less then 3 times each period, even in science class. orson still calls her a suck up at every opportunity

45. as usual beth **bibliophilic** won the million minutes of reading contest and orson the **cad** picked on her as much as he could and he reduced her to tears on more than one but less than 10 occasions
46. petra **pulchritudinous** as beautiful as ever spent as much time as possible in the girls bathroom. and gossip **abounded** in the halls and students bathrooms which still smelled **atrocious**
47. orson odious and his main **sycophant** danny dapper attempted to make everyones life as miserable as possible and they were **incorrigible** and they made nasty comments to everyone
48. and the teachers with the exception of ms **amicable** artist mr. **melodious** music, and the new amazing english teacher ms **witty** writing wizard, were there usual stern selves. they also still did their usual routine when william or sam recited one of their **appalling** limericks stick out theyre tongues smoke slightly from there ears and noses and flicker their eyes
49. happily for the crew of friends whom were getting tired of William waggishs **deplorable** limericks the new english teacher ms **witty** writing wizard taught them a knew form of poetry **cinquain**. william thankfully abandoned limericks and began to rite cinquains
50. william waggish as soon as he was comfortable with the new poetic form **penned** several cinquains. williams first effort was about mr math **martinet** his least favorite teacher and he had the **audacity** to **utter** it as he entered class that same day

51. he entitled his poem mindless math

math class,
its deadly dull.
the old teacher **drones** on...
numbers, equations, formulas.
boring.

Almost Midterm Caught'ya Test

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over Caught'yas. You will lose two points per error, so check your work. Ask your teacher for meanings of words you do not know. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's directions, and read the test again to yourself to help with punctuation.

Hint: There are seven paragraphs. All periods are correct. Do not change any of them. Twice, the first quotation mark has been left in to help you. There are spelling errors and one missing hyphen. Some words will need to be changed.

out of the corner of his eye william spied mr math martinet that was standing at the front of the classroom. as william **uttered** the last few words of the poem mr martinets eyes fluttered less than 8 times his tongue would protrude and his ears **exuded** curls of smoke. "aha muttered william to no one in particular cinquains work as good as limericks on these **bizarre** teachers. sam sagacious pursued his new interest the girl in homeroom whose name was alessandra **amorous**. she was a former **sycophant** of orson odious. alessandra had become **disenchanted** with the **latter** when orson who secretly loved alessandra had popped her bra in the back right in front of everyone in the lunchroom. she hadnt spoken too orson since then. orson odious of course was not pleased with this turn of events and he went out of his way to embarrass alessandra every chance he got. alessandra also avoided danny dapper and petra pulchritudinous whom still hung with there leader orson. "still stuck up arent you alessandra

orson asked alessandra one day in front of sam and at least 9 other students as he past by. yes are you **spurning** me too queried petra **spitefully**. petra secretly missed the company of her former freind alessandra when she **primped** in the girls bathroom among every class but she would never let orson danny or alessandra know. alessandra muttered something **uncomplimentary** in spanish under her breath but no one else heard the **affront**. orson certainly wouldnt have understood it anyway.

Directions for Part 2:

First, number the fifteen sentences on your corrected copy of the test so you don't lose track of the numbers. Then, use your corrected version of the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the fifteen sentences in this exam—simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex.

Hint: Nine are simple. Two are compound. Two are complex. Two are compound/complex.

1. _____

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8. _____

Directions for Part 3:

First, invent an imaginary person who is really obnoxious. Next, give that imaginary person a name. Then, think of three or four things that this person might do that would drive you crazy (as Orson drives Alessandra crazy). Finally, write down your ideas.

Now, write a persuasive essay to this person, trying to persuade him or her to quit his or her obnoxious behavior. Be sure to support your arguments with good examples.

52. their in the middle of the lunchroom sam wanted to punch orson in his big ugly **proboscis** but he **refrained** from doing so. alessandra **cringed**
53. sam gently put his hand on her shoulder and said he is a bogus **cad** and no one listens to him and me and my friends pay him no **heed**
54. alessandra smiled at sam and grinning back sams heart sang with hope. meanwhile orson odious and his **sycophant** danny dapper who the girls thought handsome despite his mean nature have big plans for a particularly **noisome** event
55. ms stern sceince displayed a particularly **awe-inspiring** demonstration of teacher weirdness after william recited sotto voce one of his new cinquains to see how it would affect the teacher. sam concluded that cinquains had an even greater affect on the bizarre teachers than limericks
56. ms stern science had not only done the usual eye fluttering smoke curling and tongue **protrusion** but she had also raised and lowered both arms no less then 5 times during the recitation of the poem once with the **utterance** of each line

57. this poem is entitled ms. **monotonous** science because ms stern science would **drone** on and on about the days science topic which sounded like all the other days topics while covering the board with her notes. she would require each student to **laboriously** copy the **latter** into their notebook

science,
dreary subject...
monotonous drivel...
every day the same thing from one
dull prof.

58. wowzer man whispered jesse to his friend sam, who also had witnessed the effect of william's poem on the teacher. this rock's. i cant wait to **regale** the rest of our freind's with this latest affect of william's poem's

59. yes this was another piece to add to the puzzle of the bizarre teacher's. inspired by william's success' and by ms witty writing wizard's **fervent** teaching jesse rote a cinquain of his own

60. he dedicated his to his favorite teacher ms **amicable** artist, that he had a small crush on. he entitled his composition art in pink because ms **amicable** artist loved to ware that **hue**

frothy
teacher in pink.
daily we create and mold.
she guides our hands...creative things
spring forth.

61. when jesse repeated his poem **audibly** in art class within hearing of his favorite teacher he watched her actions. nothing happened. he said the poem again
62. thats a nice cinquain jesse said ms amicable artist but her eyes never fluttered her tongue never protruded and her ears and nose never **emitted** smoke. yes this gets weirder and weirder Jesse muttered
63. the group **unremittingly** continues to test their teachers with the knew poetry form. everybody wrote their own cinquain and than they tried it out
64. it was sweet to watch the **majority** of the teachers reactions to the poems. ms amicable artist mr melodious music and ms witty writing wizard however still did not react in any way accept to **critique** the poems
65. the crew were getting even more **perplexed**. the cinquain had the most **blatant** affect on ms stern sceince and dean dread. sam **pondered** this gnu development in the mystery
66. a few week's later though theyre was an **odoriferous** incident that distracted the group from their experiment's with the bizarre teacher's. one day as the student's **milled** about in the hall's between classe's a loud boom erupted from the boy's bathroom in the seventh grade hallway

67. the boom was immediately followed by a bad **noxious** odor that **reeked** bad of rotten eggs. the door to the boys bathroom suddenly burst open and **a plethora of noisome** grey smoke **billowed** out. 2 boys emerged from the smoke coughing hacking giggling and holding theyre noses
68. isabelle and felicia that were standing nearby thought they recognized orson and danny as they ran out of the bathroom. than all **perdition** broke lose as students scattered in all directions to flee the noxious smoke and the **dearth of** fresh air
69. a booming **stentorian** voice echoed from down the hall. who set off a stink bomb in the boys bathroom **bellowed** a tall black **garbed foreboding** looking man
70. it is the feared seemingly **ubiquitous** dean dread that was ever present in the halls and lunchroom. he **loomed** over and rushed between the scurrying seventh graders as he proceeded towards the still smoking bathroom
71. felicia for who spells never worked panicked. the **putrescent stench** of the stink bomb filled her nostrils and gaged her
72. without thinking she muttered an **incantation** to **dispel** the smoke and odor. of course it backfired bad
73. felicias fingernails turned **mauve**. the smoke changed from grey to **mauve** but it still **reeked** badly of rotten eggs

74. oddly enough their were mauve streaks in the hair of the two fleeing **culprits** orson odious and danny dapper. william waggish also on the scene muttered his newest cinquain entitled orson the **obstreperous**

there is
one bad person.
a mean boy...a troublemaker...
he loves to torment the helpless.
bad kid.

75. immediately dean dread waved his arms up and down in **cadence** with the poem as smoke curled from his ears and nostrils. his tongue protruded from his mouth and his eyes fluttered uncontrollable

76. in addition his legs seemed to completely buckle and he wobbled like the scarecrow from the movie the wizard of oz and it was a **stellar** performance of teacher wierdness

77. when dean dread recovered from his momentary **lapse** he took charge of the situation. get the custodian mr fixit he bellowed to a nearby teacher

78. than frowning his eyes bulged when he spied the mauve smoke that had been grey less than 4 seconds before. he also saw two **striplings** with matching mauve streaks in there hair sprint out the door of the seventh grade wing

79. he made a connection between the 2 in less then a second. you boys stop dean dread roared two the **receding** backs of orson and danny

80. all boys in the hallway stopped except the 2 in question that were headed for the sixth grade wing at a **brisk pace**. this **exacerbated** the possibility of their guilt
81. if they had run 5 steps further the **miscreants** might have escaped dean dread's eye. dean dread however moved quickly
82. quicker than the blink of an eye he had the **malefactors** by the back of their shirts. you two **reprobates** come with me to my office. we need to investigate this incident he said in a low menacing tone
83. orson and danny cringed. the crowd of seventh graders that witnessed this clapped their hands in delight and **jubilantly jeered** at the 2 **scalawags**
84. the class tormentors had finally been **apprehended** for something. farther they might even be **castigated** and then suspended for their **transgression**
85. setting off a stink bomb after all was a major offense. when the **putrescent** smoke had been cleared everyone **congregated** around felicia fey
86. you did good girlfriend praised isabelle ingenuous. you really nailed them felicia **extolled** sam sagacious. astounding felicia said vivian virtuous **diffidently**

87. way too go girl **lauded** jesse jocose as he **cuffed** her gently on her back. i take back all those poems about youre magic felicia william waggish apologized **contritely**
88. thats alright william returned felicia **magnanimously** for she really **loathed** williams teasing poems. what am i going too do with these mauve nails. they clash with my black **attire**
89. the **dénouement** of the entire stink bomb **incident** was that orson and danny over who all the girls still all drooled and for whom some still did an extra copy of there homework were suspended for 10 days. the **nefarious duo** was sentenced to cafeteria clean up for a month after theyre return too
90. after that incident dean dread and the rest of the teachers keep a watchful eye on the **reprehensible** pear for the remainder of the school year. orson still gave evil looks danny still **preyed** on the girls but the 2 ceased to be a major pain in the **posterior** of the **intrepid** freinds
91. now felicia **abruptly** became miss popular. one of the teachers even recommended her for the special school for magically gifted kids marvelously magic magnet middle school
92. on the day she was tested for admission to that school however felicias entry spell as usual went **awry**. instead of rising a pencil more than one foot but less then 2 feet off the desk as required felicia turned the pencil and her hair green

93. i didnt want to go theyre anyway she **rationalized** later to isabelle her best friend and i didnt want to leave all of you stuck here without me. who would william direct his **putrid** poems at she concluded
94. now that orson and danny were **relegated** to nasty stares only gnu problem students **cropped up**. carolyn **clamorous** became even more **obstreperous** with her persistent but pointed questions in math
95. john **jabbering** and his **incessant inane** chatter grew to be more **audible** and more annoying. quincy **querulous** who always would argue with everyone tried to pick more **quarrels**
96. he went so far as to complain **vociferously** to ms stern science about copying the notes from the board. she punished him by requiring him to make an extra copy of the notes for someone that was absent
97. even jesses usually **droll** jokes fall flater than usual. skateboarding steven **slovenly** provided a welcome break in the **monotony** of school when he accidentally dropped his saging jeans to his ankles as he jumped too touch the top of a doorway
98. it seemed that dean dread was rite behind he. steven **slovenly** thus **inadvertently** mooned dean dread with his bright orange and blue striped boxer shorts
99. he would maintain afterwards that the **retribution** of 3 days of in school detention was worth mooning the dean. everyone talks about the incident for weeks and steven became the new hero for that time

100. william jesse and sam intensified their **quest** to **unravel** the mystery of the bizarre teachers and their strange behavior. sam jesse and olivia **otiose** had taken music for the 2nd year
101. sam like he had the previous year played the oboe. olivia **loathe** to learn a new instrument stuck to her clarinet and jesse always the **buffoon** played the trombone which allowed him some tubular slides
102. for the most part the trio liked the subject and the teacher but classical music did not **pique** their interest. jesse whose attitude towards classical music was less than **fervent** directed a **pithy** cinquain at the music teacher mr melodious music
103. he entitled his **oeuvre** music misery

we play
poorly, off-key.
bach, beethoven, mozart,
3 ancient composers, long dead,
haunt us.

in spite of the mention of his favorite composers mr melodious music a **devotee** of classical music did not appreciate the **sentiment**

104. he sentenced jesse too playing bach on the trombone to **engross** the crowd at lunch for a day but he did not react in any other way to the poem. strange murmured sam

105. bogus your toast my friend whispered olivia for whom writing a poem for the fun of it would be **anomalous** even though she was good at it
106. bumper dudes said jesse jocose to his freinds as he **mulled over** the misery of having to play bach on his trombone before his **peers**. if only he had let me play jazz
107. in english ms witty writing wizard also did not react to the poems in any way except to analyze them for form. william waggish recited *sotto voce* one of his bestest efforts
108. he had entitled it writing wacko because the new english teacher was indeed a little crazy. ms writing wizard required her students to sing dead verbs and the **subordinating conjunctions** and chanting prepositions and the coordinating conjunctions
- writing
weird stuff.
poems, essays, stories;
singing “dead” verbs; chanting the preps.
strange class.
109. william **critiqued** ms writing wizard youre last line needs work. in social studies however the new teacher ms **stringent** social studies reacted in the **customary** fashion to the poems

110. isabelle ingenuous who didnt usually like to **mock** anyone wrote a cinquain for her least favorite class

history. (Say it in two syllables.)
we study dates, facts,
and people who are dead...
a good class to catch a good nap.
dreary.

towards the end of the period isabelle recited her poem under her breath when ms **stringent** social studies was walking the aisle to make sure noone was being **unethical** on their test

111. theyre was a immediate and **spontaneous** reaction by ms stringent social studies. not only did her eyelids flutter her tongue protrude and smoke curl from her ears but her **lank** grey hair stood on end for more than 2 but less then 3 seconds
112. oh wow that rocks said jesse who witnessed the event. what is all this whined pauline for who anything out of the ordinary **overtaxed** her ability to cope
113. i had gotten used to the smoke the flutter and the tongue but hare standing on end. whats next she moaned. sparks. jesse, william and sam then wrote and recited a **barrage** of **egregious** cinquains
114. alessandra also writes one that she gave to sam to **articulate**. sam for who alessandra was the **epitome** of female beauty was thrilled right down to his toes

115. of course he tried her cinquain on every teacher that he came into contact with. alessandras cinquain is entitled horribly hard middle school bites it goes like this

school “bites.”
teachers assign
piles of homework and projects.
bathrooms **reek**; lunchroom is noisy.
why us?

116. ms witty writing wizard **upbraided** sam for his use of the **pejorative** word bites. as you know young man your use of the verb to bite is improper she scolded

117. you have to bite something it is a transitive verb. your using it as a intransitive verb she finished with a **flourish** as she lay down the chalk. what is she **blathering** about whispered olivia too isabelle since she rarely listened in class when a teacher spoke

118. ms witty writing wizard overheard olivias question, and she **exuberantly** launches into an extensive **extemporaneous** lesson on verbs that take a object and verbs that do not. oh brother murmured olivia as she rolled her eyes upwards in **aversion** she really is a grammar book in the **guise** of a person

Passage to be read out loud to students

Isabelle and Sam just grinned; Olivia Otiose was being her usual **otiose** self. She was very intelligent, but somehow **abhorred** to do anything that might make her do homework or study.

Other teachers reacted differently to Alessandra's poem. Mr. Math Martinet, Ms. Stern Science, and Ms. **Stringent** Social Studies did the usual: fluttering eyes, smoking ears, protruding tongue. In addition, their hair either stood on end for fewer than three seconds, or they raised their arms in the air in **cadence** with each syllable of the poem. When Sam recited Alessandra's poem in the vicinity of Dean Dread in the cafeteria, he rewarded the seventh-graders with a startling show of silver sparks that **emanated** from the tips of his fingers. The show stopped as **abruptly** as it had begun.

"Wow, Pauline," said Jesse Jocose in admiration, "you called it! Sparks!"

Principal **Punctilious**, who had lunchroom duty that day and who did not show any overt reaction to the poem, promptly used his radio and called Mr. **Adept** Fixit. The **latter** arrived in fewer than five seconds and then exited with Dean Dread following behind him. Jesse Jocose recited the poem again as the two passed by his table, but while Dean Dread reacted in the usual manner, Mr. Adept Fixit did not even **grimace**.

The art and music teachers, like the new creative writing teacher, showed no **overt** reaction except utter disgust at the use of the **epithet** "bites."

One day at lunch, Sam, William, Jesse, Isabelle, Pauline, Vivian, Alessandra (who now hung around with her hero, Sam), Felicia, and

Pauline analyzed the new information that they were **amassing** on their bizarre teachers.

“This is getting stranger and stranger,” said Sam. “Why did our **intractable** English teacher last year react to the poems while the creative writing teacher this year does not?”

“Hey, guys, why are they all reacting more obviously this year?” asked Vivian Virtuous.

Jesse Jocose, who always looked for an excuse to be funny, suddenly stood up on the bench and recited a **spontaneous** cinquain in a **strident** voice.

There are
Five things I hate
About lunch: awful food,
Piercing noise, hard seats, no freedom,
Stale rolls.

When he had finished his poem, Jesse sat down on the **inflexible** seat mentioned in Jesse’s poem. Felicia (who secretly liked Jesse) **surreptitiously** threw a stale roll in Jesse’s direction. Jesse, laughing, pitched an apple core into Felicia’s lap.

William, not to be outdone and remembering that Dean Dread had left the room, flicked his tray and **launched** his uneaten, **sodden** vegetables into the air and yelled, “Food fight!”

Immediately, the air became **rife** with flying bits of food and trash. Bits of spaghetti dangled from the ceiling fans. Greasy sauce plastered everyone’s hair and smeared most **visages**. Bits of “mystery meat” lay in brown blobs on the now-filthy floor. The **cacophony** of shouting and laughing student voices drowned out Mr. Punctilious Principal who stood on stage and shrieked **futilely** into his microphone.

119. all at once the doors to the cafeteria flung open. a tall menacing figure stood there his **visage** a picture of righteous **wrath**
120. students stop this immediately he boomed over the **din**. even without **amplification** his **raucous** voice could be heard by all
121. amazingly the cafeteria was suddenly silent except for the drip of the spaghetti as it fell from the fans. students froze in place. they stood leaning or set mid hurl at the sound of dean dread's **stentorian** and **fearsome** voice and they stared in his direction
122. i will absolutely not tolerate such **appalling** behavior dean dread continued in a deadly low tone that **boded** disaster and punishment. set down children he ordered. they're will be **dire** consequences for this he **intoned**
123. everyone sat, stunned into silence. even john **jabbering** was **mute**. then quincy **querulous** who always had to argue with everybody broke the silence and said but. i said silence repeated dean dread as he **bristled** like an angry warthog
124. quincy **querulous** was **querulous** but he was not stupid. he did not attempt to speak again. dean dread stalked **ominously** to the front of the cafeteria where he stood hands on hips and glared at the **miscreants**

125. first he said classes will be **postponed** and you will stay here until every strand of spaghetti every drop of milk every piece of paper and every **gobbet** of sauce is cleaned and this cafeteria shines. second he **persisted** all end of the year field trips are cancelled for all seventh grade students instead your required to write a series of essays on how to **comport** yourselves in public. third he pronounced theyre will now be assigned seats in the cafeteria for the rest of the year

Caught'ya Final Exam

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over Caught'yas. You will lose two points per error, so check your work. Ask your teacher for meanings of words if necessary. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's directions, and read the test again to yourself to help with punctuation.

Hint: There are twelve paragraphs. All periods are correct except one which needs to be changed to a question mark. There are spelling errors and four missing hyphens. Some words need to be changed.

after dean dread made this pronouncement he crosses his arms in front of his enormous chest and just stared. the seventh graders cleaned the cafeteria under his watchful eye and noone opened his or her **maw**. and noone not even orson misbehaved in any way. even john **jabbering** was **mute** and beth bibliophilic didnt turn pages in her book little women by louisa may alcott until dean dread stoped talking. after they cleaned up the mess the seventh graders filed **mutely** out of the cafeteria. no one spoke until the cafeteria was no longer in sight. its not fair to cancel our field trips exclaimed william. why do we have to rite essays too complained olivia that hated to write. why is he so mean whines pauline to her freinds. hey you guys said isabelle that always calmed her friends when they were agitated we *were* guilty you know. we *did* throw food and in fact we began the food fight ourselves because we threw the first **salvo**. i know **retorted** sam but did he have to take away all our end of year field trips. its to much

he concluded. orson and his **sycophant** danny a to handsome young man chose that moment to angrily pass by. nice going losers **jeered** orson to who everyone who was not in his crowd were a loser. danny **aghast** at the thought of having to write a bunch of essays in front of the teachers which meant he actually would have to write them by himself was really **livid** at the thought. he **lashed** out. your nothing but unsightly stupid trash he hissed. your a pimple on dean dreads **posterior** too. everyone in the group of friends glared at orson with there best **withering** gaze. they still **loathed** orson and danny because the 2 were so mean. luckily the end of the school year quickly arrived. despite the lack of the much desired field trip to the amusement park and the extra essays they had to write the school year ended on a upbeat note. ms amicable artist mr melodious music and ms witty writing wizard got together and staged an afternoon in a nearby park. the HHMS jazz bands members provided music and they played good. students made impressions of leaves and flowers onto special paper. vivian recited some of her favorite poetry including i dream a world by langston hughes. all 3 subjects were covered so that it could be **dubbed** educational.

Directions for Part 2:

Use your corrected version of the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the first fifteen sentences in this exam—simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex. Number the sentences so you don't get confused. Sentence #15 ends with the comment about everyone who was not in Orson's crowd being a "loser."

Hint: Two are compound/complex. Two are compound. Four are complex. The other seven are simple sentences.

1. _____

9. _____

2. _____

10. _____

3. _____

11. _____

4. _____

12. _____

5. _____

13. _____

6. _____

14. _____

7. _____

15. _____

8. _____

Directions for Part 3:

Read the following end of the Caught'ya story. Then write the end of the story for Sam, Isabelle, and friends. How will they uncover the mystery in the eighth grade? Support your answers. Write as clearly as you can, and provide lots of details. Include a topic sentence and a concluding sentence for each paragraph. Use transitions and similes. Vary sentence structure. Most importantly, put passion and flair into your answer.

Soon the last day of school arrived. Exams had ended. The friends, except Sam Sagacious, of course, promptly forgot about their strange teachers and concentrated on their summer plans.

The girls had **diverse (different)** ideas about how to spend their summer. Isabelle Ingenuous had imaginative projects to do. Olivia Otiose had to go to summer school for math because she had been lazy and had not done her homework; nor had she studied for tests. She hoped to spend time with her new friend, Alessandra, though, because she also thought that learning more Spanish might be fun. Felicia Fey planned to **hone (improve by practice)** her magical skills (but she really didn't want to leave her friends to go to the school for **magics (wizards)**). Pauline Puerile didn't know what she was going to do that summer since no one yet had suggested anything that appealed to her. Alessandra Amorous and her family planned a trip to Puerto Rico to visit relatives. Vivian Virtuous had signed up for a writing course. Beth Bibliophilic would, of course, read as much as she could, but she hoped to travel with her family as well.

The boys had plans as well. William Waggish hoped to laze around in the morning, write poetry, and play sports at the local Boys Club in the afternoons. Sam Sagacious decided to go to the library daily for research

but also was on a baseball team with William and Jesse. Jesse Jocose was going to summer school by choice to learn about computers. He hoped to spend his afternoons playing basketball and baseball.

It looked as if it would be a good summer for all the friends. They didn't have to deal with Orson Odious or Danny Dapper (whose parents were going to send them to their grandmothers for two months), and homework (except for Olivia Otiose) already was a **vague (slight, unclear)** memory.

On the last day of school (after all the students had left), all was silent at Horribly Hard Middle School except for muffled sounds from the art, music, and seventh-grade language arts rooms, the “clack” of computer keys in the main office, and the muttered **epithets (swear words)** of Mr. Adept Fixit in the dean's office.

Eighth-Grade Caught'yas

1. felicia began to mutter words of a spell too encourage her freind pauline **puerile** to cheer up. isabelle **ingenuous** put her hand over felicias mouth two stop her from **uttering** her spell
2. you know it will backfire on you felicia cautions isabelle ingenuous. you dont want to **obliterate** youre knew hairdo do you
3. me and my other magic friends practiced all summer **retorted** a slightly **indignant** felicia. im getting a little gooder at it. im doing good
4. hey felicia how come your not **garbed** in black as you were all last year asks a boy whos **puckish** expression mirrored his **waggish** personality
5. felicia **fey** rolled her eyes and **retorted** hey william **waggish** i may dress weirdly and my spells may backfire but you right the most **egregious** poetry
6. to hide his admiration of felicia william waggish makes a tasteless but funny joke about girls. noone listened and everyone turned their head in alessandras direction to here her story. they too were used too williams **lame** poems **vapid** jokes and friendly **barbs**
7. the last member of the troop sam **sagacious** simply stood wisely and **mutely** as he waited for the **clamor** to die down. he held a huge heavy book nortons anthology of poetry in his hand and pretended to read it but he really was watching alessandra amorous who he liked

8. since his joke had fallen flat and noone had laughed william waggish **regaled** his friends with a knew limerick about girls that wear green. brown faced with expressive dark **pupils** williams composition of mischievous poems to hide his real aspiration to be as **eloquent** a poet as his secret hero langston hughes

9. he entitled it the heroine

their was a young lady in green
whose spells often cause a big scene.
shes “fey” as they come
but smarter than some
like orson who really is mean.

a faint wisp of smoke **emanated** from both ears of a teacher that was standing just barely within earshot

10. first her tongue **protruded** slightly and next she froze in place for less then 3 seconds. this wasnt nothing new. sam **sagacious** glanced at the teacher put his book in his backpack and laughed

11. its working. you haven’t lost youre touch william. yes you can still affect and **discombobulate** some of the teachers and last year in fact you recited cinquains which had an even greater effect on the teachers than the limericks. are you going to go back to limericks this year

12. nah says his friend william waggish i still like composing limericks just to be **exasperating** like a constant drip. i does good at annoying you all and besides its fun

13. six pairs of eyeballs rolled at this comment. felicia fey threatened to zap william but that didn't **deter** him. she then furrowed her brow stuck out her tongue at him and good naturedly muttered something rude under her breath as the rest of the girls **tittered**

14. for the benefit of your friends william can't you and your friend jesse write nothing except those **insipid** limericks and cinquains felicia teased. hey how about giving us a break and trying another form of poetry this year

15. isabelle ingenuous of course smiled at william's poem and felicia's friendly **jibe** but her smile immediately turned to a frown at the sight of a recognizable hulking figure that **loped** towards them with a **malevolent** grin on its face. it was orson **odious** followed by his 2 pals danny **dapper** and petra **pulchritudinous**

16. well if it isn't the super strange cast of weirdo incorporated and their famous witch **derided** orson **odious** the **nemesis** of the group. seen dean dread today orson asked sam sagacious wrinkling his nose against the **reek** of stale cigarette smoke that **wafted** from orson's clothes and breath

17. set off any **putrescent** stink bombs lately inquired william with a trace of sarcasm in his voice as he referred to the incident in the 7th grade when orson had been caught for his **misdeed** by dean dread. his **culpability** was revealed when a misfired spell of felicia's put mauve streaks in his hair that matched the smoke

18. suddenly orson's **sycophants** danny **dapper** and petra **pulchritudinous** came up behind him ready to back up there friend just as orson spies a teacher approaching
19. when orson and his **cohorts** strutted by Isabelle and friends they muttered a few nasty choice **epithets** and threats under their breathe as they past by. as he raised a fisted hand in the air orson threatened **ominously** me and my freinds will make toast of you later
20. me and my friends is trembling william said with false **bravado**. isabelle hushed him before he could **infuriate** orson any further. i see that petra **pulchritudinous** has already changed her clothes in the girls bathroom commented Isabelle **Ingenuous**
21. i no her family and her mother would never let her wear a skirt that short to school she finished. another **putrid** yellow school bus pulls up to the curb. jesse **jocose** leapt off the bus with **alacrity** he walked quickly up to his freinds
22. hey dudes and lades hows it going. i cant wait to **regale** you with all i learned at the tubular computer camp i attended this **sultry simmering** summer. now i can really hack. hey william he said as he thumped his buddy on the back got any new poems
23. everyone rolled their eyes and groaned. another girl exited her bus and **ambled** over to the group to. she had intricately braided **ebony** hair and a hardback book as usual in her hand. this one was entitled pride and prejudice

24. as she was greeted the usually shy vivian **virtuous** turned to the boys with excitement. william jesse i learned a gnu form of poetry in my summer writing course she bubbled. youll love it. its in your **bailiwick**. haiku
25. at least its different from limericks and cinquains **rejoined** isabelle whom really liked williams poems but pretended otherwise. on that note the 9 friends gathered there stuff walked to the double **portals** where eighth grade homerooms were posted checked out the lists found their names and then **lingered** together until the warning bell rang
26. oh no guys it looks like some of the most **insufferable** teachers followed us to the eighth grade moans pauline puerile in **dejection** as she frowned
27. hey vivian, tell me about haiku poetry. maybe we can really flip out the **intolerable** ones this year like we did last year and then we can discover why they react to our poems said william
28. yeah **reiterated** jesse who was always ready to try any prank that would **discombobulate** there teachers. ive herd of haiku its sweet. its only 3 lines too. thats 2 less lines then in a cinquain

29. i made up one this summer said vivian virtuous **diffidently**. lets hear youre poem said isabelle **earnestly**. vivian recited her haiku. it was about her new friend felicia and it was entitled my freind

my friend casts her spells
upon the wind, and she hopes
that one will go right.

30. isabelle pointed out youre spell on that **noisome** stink bomb sure worked good last year felicia! maybe less of your spells will go wrong this year. their are a few ive been practicing **alleged** felicia hopefully

31. pauline olivia and alessandra smiled. william and jesse whom stood between the girls **sniggered** but they were really impressed with vivians poem

32. sam that always was observant noticed that 2 teachers standing in nearby classroom doorways twitched **emitted** curls of smoke from their ears and noses **garbled** almost **incoherently** some phrase over and over sticking out there tongues with each word like lizards

33. sam couldn't **perceive** exactly what they muttered but he was determined to find out. indeed the group of freinds did have some of their same teachers from previous years

34. mr math **martinet** had followed them to the 8th grade much to olivias dismay. ms **amicable** artist and mr **melodious** music however taught 8th graders to

35. and their was a new teacher for social studies mr **scintillating** social studies. i wonder what he's like **pondered** isabelle as she played with one of the **omnipresent** plastic butterflys in her hair
36. its probably just another horrible **despicable** boring **automaton** moaned pauline who always saw only the negative. oh no that nice english teacher we had last year ms **witty** writing wizard stayed in 7th grade complained olivia
37. we have ms grammar grouch again and theirs ms stern science on the eighth grade list too olivia **griped** further. its going to probably be a **arduous** year
38. well between ms grammar grouch and mr math martinet i see lots of homework. i also see william and jesse getting into trouble with theyre **incessant** stupid poems **predicted** felicia fey in an **eerie** spooky voice
39. william and jesse wasted no time and after they recieved a few lessons from vivian virtuous they **promptly** composed a **plethora of** haiku which to **assess** their teachers reactions with. sam would keep notes on the various instructors reactions in his **omnipresent** notebook
40. one day when one particularly **astute** poem of jesses made mr math martinet freeze in his tracks and raise his arms in the air for no less then 2 entire minutes besides **manifesting** the usual ear smoke eye flutter and tongue **protrusion** sam knew that they were on the right track

41. jesse jocose entitled the poem no **mirth**. sam sagacious **speculated** that it be the **superlative** vocabulary that produced the added affect

numbers and homework
fill his mind that seems **devoid**
of **mirth** and **vision**.

42. sam also noted further that ms amicable artist had no reaction except a sweet **exasperated** smile for williams poem that was entitled brush magic

her brush strokes paper
and colorful images
appear like magic.

mr melodious music didnt react to the haiku either except to comment on there content. i wonder **mused** sam

43. surprisingly the gnu history teacher mr **scintillating** social studies didnt react to the poems either. usually he would simply **disregard** them as he went on with his lesson like no poem had been **uttered**

44. this is becoming more and more curious noted sam too william. since the students had even more homework 8th grade proved more **arduous** than 7th grade

45. orson odious was again up to his usual **malicious** tricks and this year he picked mainly on three victims isabelle ingenuous shy beth **bibliophilic** and of course felicia fey who had ratted on him the previous year

46. once again otiose danny **dapper** took advantage of his **comeliness** and would prey on super shy girls like beth **bibliophilic** to do his homework for him. petra pulchritudinous would show **derision** towards any girl that didnt dress like her
47. to make matters worse the most **malevolent** trio were joined by a new student dalbert **devious**. dalbert two liked to pick on anyone that he percieved as weaker more **insecure** or smaller than he

Almost Midterm Caught'ya Test

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over Caught'yas. Be very careful, and check your work when you're finished. Ask your teacher for meanings of words you do not know. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's instructions.

Hint: There are eight paragraphs, a few spelling errors, and two missing hyphens. Some words will need to be switched around.

one morning however just before school orson danny and dalbert were caught smoking behind the eighth-grade wing. this affected some **drastic** changes for the better and it got rid of a problem. it seems that just as orson was taking a last drag behind the 8th grade **edifice** dean dread came around the corner and he spied the **miscreants**. what do you think your doing he said in his deadly **monotone** voice. me and my freinds didnt do nothing coughed orson as he swallowed the cigarettes smoke. oh its nothing sir mumbled dalbert and danny in unison as danny stuck his hand with the still-lit cigarette which he held among 2 fingers into his **voluminous** trousers. ouch he yelps as the lit cigarette **scorched** his leg and he **inadvertently** revealed his guilt. dalbert **devious** living up to his sneaky personality had quickly crushed the evidence of his guilt under his shoe and dean dread saw nothing. but orson and danny on the other hand could not plead innocence. follow me you **varlets** snarled dean Dread as he marched them toward his office. your parents will be notified

immediately and your suspended for no less than 10 days. we do not **tolerate** illegal use of substances of any kind on this campus and your guilty. the result of this incident was that orson who had a long list of **egregious transgressions** in his records was sent to the alternative school. danny came back after 10 days of suspension a **subdued** young man that no longer made fun of others. dalbert escaped with a few days of in school detention because their was a lack of evidence in his case but he remained as **conniving** as ever. now the group of friends only had to contend with one of there tormentors and of course the ever-**haughty** petra pulchritudinous too. william and jesse continue to recite their haiku poems in an attempt to discover the mystery of theyre teachers reactions.

Directions for Part 2:

First, number the first fifteen sentences (up to “Now the group of friends”) on your corrected copy of the test so you don’t lose track of the numbers. Then, use your corrected version of the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the fifteen sentences in this exam—simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex.

Hint: Five are simple. Four are compound. Three are complex. Three are compound/complex.

1. _____

9. _____

2. _____

10. _____

3. _____

11. _____

4. _____

12. _____

5. _____

13. _____

6. _____

14. _____

7. _____

15. _____

8. _____

Directions for Part 3:

First, invent an imaginary person who does something that you think he or she shouldn't do, like smoke, be mean, get bad grades, etc. Next, give that imaginary person a name. Then, think of three or four arguments that you could give this person to convince him or her to quit doing this thing. Finally, write down your arguments and some supporting evidence.

Now, write a persuasive essay to this person trying to persuade him or her to quit his or her obnoxious habit. Be sure to support your arguments with good examples.

48. one day ms grammar grouch ever the **stickler** for correct punctuation and grammar **manifested** her usual symptoms froze for 10 seconds and **lisped** over and over for more than 30 seconds but for less than 60 seconds the following phrase there are 4 uses of semicolons there are 4 uses of semicolons

49. william had recited an **adroit** clever poem he entitled no fire

she likes correct **prose**.
wheres her imagination
her creative fire

dalbert devious whom sat in his usual place in the back row of ms grouchs class stoped **surreptitiously** poking beth **bibliophilic** with his feet that sat in front of him and he stared **dumbfounded** at the **antics** of their teacher

50. whoa he **pondered** this is really ‘bogus. maybe these ‘weirdo nerds arent so wierd after all. after they left the class dalbert asked william what he had said that had **discombobulated** there instructor and made her freeze

51. please tell me what you did to make the teachers do all that he **entreated** william. its to sweet for words. words thats all it is. its just poetry **rejoined** william waggish

52. when william **regaled** him about the limerick's affect's on the teacher's in the 6th grade the cinquain's effect's on the teacher's in the 7th grade and the even more **apparent** affect's of the haiku this year dalbert resolved to whole heartedly join in the effort to unravel the mystery of hhms's **bizarre** teacher's
53. he even politely **beseached** vivian virtuous to quickly teach him how to write a haiku poem. please vivian as i live and breath i **implore** you to teach me how to rite a haiku pleaded dalbert who was suddenly **affable**
54. dalberts first effort was not **shoddy**. its effect on ms **stern** sceince was amazing. not only did she do the usual smoking tongue wagging and freezing but she wobbled as well like she was going to **topple** over
55. this pleased dalbert to no end as he loved to be **wily**. dalbert entitled his poetic effort the **automaton**

science is her life.
facts figures **incessant** notes
she is not human

56. the affect of dalberts poem on dalbert himself was to focus his **deviousness** on composing haiku instead of **cogitating** how to torment his **peers**. writing haiku became the in thing between the 8th graders that year

57. even skateboarding steven **slovenly** wrote on his skateboard in huge block letters the phrase haiku rules. the year progressed and william jesse and the other freinds were joined in there efforts at haiku writing from a **unanticipated** source danny dapper
58. a **subdued** danny former **sycophant** of the **scurrilous** orson odious even composed a haiku himself. its easy he marveled. there short. use **superlative** vocabulary in it so that it has an even greater effect on the teachers instructed sam sagacious
59. i will said danny **fervently**. danny **heeded** sams advice and he asked beth bibliophilic in a nice tone for a change for some suggestions. he used the following words **foreboding** and **garbed**
60. he entitled his poem my favorite dean. it was the 1st peace of work danny had completed by himself all year
- a **foreboding** man
garbed in a black expression
looms over students
61. thats not bad **marveled** william whos dislike of danny was **palpable**. me and my friends is impressed with your **metaphor** and youre actually a good poet he **marveled**
62. in reaction to dannys poetic effort dean dread did the usual eye fluttering ear smoking and tongue protruding but he also rised his **mammoth** trunk like arms into the air and **wind-milled** them like he was a plane revving up to take off

63. in addition he also **lisped** the clause i am the **authority** i am the authority. he repeated this for more than 4 but less then 5 seconds. and he **buckled** at the knees to almost falling over
64. theyre is something wierd going on here said sam. theyre reactions are becoming more and more **blatant**. i never thought id say this but way to go danny
65. it wasnt nothing murmured danny as he blushed at the unaccustomed praise and **loped** off. alessandra amorous that had hung around with Danny in the 6th grade **gawked** at danny her mouth **ajar** in shock at his **uncharacteristic** behavior
66. es increíble. its unbelievable she said in spanish and then **reiterated** in english to anyone who listened. danny truely wrote something himself
67. danny may have written something on his own but petra **pulchritudinous** hadnt changed her *modus vivendi*. that same evening at the second school dance of the year there was a **episode** with petra **pulchritudinous** that temporarily at least pushed thoughts of the bizarre teachers out of the friends minds
68. the cafeteria was beautiful with **subdued** light. all the table's lined the wall's with red and blue paper draped over them. mound's of artfully arranged chip's cookies' cake's veggies' and fruit **adorned** tablecloth's in the school's color's

69. a fountain of pink punch **cascaded** into a huge bowl and **garlands** of paper flowers hung from the ceiling. a live band the **strident strummers** warmed up on a low platform
70. theyre **strident** music boomed from large speakers and the walls **reverberated** with the bass. ah breathed petra as she entered the room glanced around and herd the music
71. me and my friends is going to have a blast tonight she said as she ducked into the girls bathroom to change to her too short too tight black skirt and spaghetti string **azure** blouse **garments** that her mother would not let her ware because of there **inappropriateness** for her age.
72. since petra had plastered so much makeup on her now not so **comely** face she looked like she had been painted. petra whom thought she looked **pulchritudinous** exited the girls bathroom and found her freinds
73. orson no longer attended hhms but dalbert devious dressed in an **ebony** tank top and tight black leather pants found her without delay
74. he sweeps petra up in his arms to dance. as the dance moved to a slow tune dalbert **surreptitiously** moved his hands farther down petras back until they rested **perilously** close to her **posterior**. theyre improper behavior and **garb** were spotted immediately

75. stop that at once **shrilled** ms grammar grouch to the 2 students who farther **compounded** there guilt by ignoring her and continued to **gyrate** slow to the music
76. dean dread you must come see this. this is your **bailiwick**. these 2 students must leave this dance at once we must call their parents
77. as dean dread approached petra who already was in trouble with her mother panicked and ran. in her haste to farther the distance among herself and dean dread she triped over a tablecloth and toppled over a food **laden** table
78. she fell face down **amid** the food with her painted **visage** in a chocolate cake. as petra laid there between the cakes fruit and cookies she **wailed** her distress and **wrath**
79. why me im so beautiful and me and my friends is so popular and things like this dont happen to *me* she **sniveled** as dean dread and ms grammar grouch plucked her off the cake and than walked her to the office to phone her parents
80. dean dread firmly gripped dalberts arm with his other hand. i wish i had written a poem to use right about now dalbert muttered. your in big trouble young man and you must not speak unless spoken to said dean dread in an **ominous** tone

81. dalbert devious for once in his **wily** life couldn't think of a way to squirm out of trouble. he didnt even think he had done anything that **egregious**. the next weak all anyone could talk about was petra pulchritudinous
82. its amazing said vivian virtuous petra is actually wearing long pants and tops without any **décolletage**. she looks like the rest of us shes really **comely** without all that makeup. she should of done this sooner
83. wow i can't believe it said alessandra amorous. petras mother actually came to school every morning for a weak set in homeroom with her and **escorted** her to 1st period. i bet petra was **mortified** i certainly would be mucho humiliated
84. maybe shell be nice when we bump into her in the girls **lavatory** said felicia **optimistically**. dont get your hopes up said pauline puerile. she scofed at my blouse today so i think this is only going to make her more **intolerant**
85. shes not a **blithe** camper this week added Isabelle whom always looked for the best in everyone. soon as it usually happens with gossip talk about the **episode** at the dance and its aftermath died down
86. the knew topic of conversation centered around mr **scintillating** social studies and his living history day incident. mr scintillating social studies turned out to be an exciting creative teacher and he was certainly different from his **predecessor** ms **humdrum** history

87. his teaching methods were somewhat **bizarre** since he liked to spark lively discussions and hold panels instead of **unadulterated lackluster** study out of the text. he tubular murmured jesse whom always uses **vernacular**
88. his living history days had become legendary even though he only held one or 2 every unit or less then 4 every 6 weeks. on living history days mr scintillating social studies dressed up in a soldiers costume from his **extensive** wardrobe
89. if they were studying the revolutionary war then he **garbed** himself in the uniform of a foot soldier one day and than he came as a sergeant or a high ranking officer the next day. the 3rd day he arrived as a cavalry officer. he even brought the mess kit and an authentic unloaded of course rifle from the period
90. the class then held lively discussions or students **probed** the history of the **era** in an **innovative** manner. one morning mr scintillating social studies stepped out of his red chevy **clad** like a true soldier in the full uniform of a sergeant in the civil war
91. a duffel bag and mess kit hung from one shoulder and an authentic rifle **dangled** from the other. as he sauntered to the eighth grade wing of the school he passed by the bus port where **a plethora of** school buses were disgorging their students
92. oh boy its living history day enthused jesse as he descended from his public **conveyance** and spied his history teacher in full soldier **regalia**. hi mr s. suddenly a police car sirens blaring **careened** around the **crescent-shaped** driveway

93. 2 officers got out. they quickly surrounded mr scintillating social studies and there guns were drawn. your under arrest one of them says in a **ominous** tone. fire arms are not permitted on school grounds
94. your violating the law said the other **constable**. but its a **replica** of a antique gun spluttered mr s its only a **facsimile** and it dont have no bullets
95. well it looks like a rifle to my partner and i said one of the officers angrily. as the 2 officers prepared to drag mr s to there car a **horde** of students jesse in front of them surrounded the trio
96. you cant arrest mr s officers its living history day **implored** a bunch of students in **unison**. those are fun days and we learn a lot. no no you cant **incarcerate** mr s shouted jesse over the **cacophony** of protesting students and police sirens
97. hes one of the few good teachers that we have and we learn alot from him he added. please dont take our teacher he **beseached**
98. at that moment mr punctilious principal roused from his office by the **din** appears on the scene. he surveyed the situation made a quick **assessment** of the crisis made a decision and than he quietly spoke to one of the police officers

99. the **dénouement** of the incident was that the officers examined the gun replica carefully handed it to the principle saluted mr scintillating social studies whom saluted back and **chortled** in amusement while getting into their car. the students however talked about the near arrest for days
100. this calls for a haiku and i know just the person too help me rite one said jesse jocose to himself as he **sauntered** to his homeroom eager to **impart** the news to his friends
101. it was william waggish though that rote the haiku to **commemorate** the excitement even though he had only heard about it second hand from his freind jesse. he entitled his poem mr punctilious principle to the rescue

a fake gun of **yore**
affects near-arrest but lo,
principal saves day

102. william and jesse stood up between all there **peers** and recite the poem in **unison** at lunch at the top of there voices. there were 7 teachers in the room at the time
103. 4 of them and dean dread immediately rose on their toes emitted **ebony** smoke and silver sparks from their ears and **proboscises** rose theyre arms in the air and wind milled them. then 2 teachers **plummeted** to theyre knees and they kneeled theyre for less then 30 seconds blinking theyre eyes and muttering

104. each one muttered something **inaudible** under their breath. the students gasped in shock as mr punctilious principal **scurried** into the cafeteria, and then he sent everyone to their next class
105. but, i'm not finished with my lunch," **remonstrated** isabelle ingenuous. its not fare whined pauline puerile who had eaten only a bite of her sandwich
106. *life* is not fair **reiterated** ms amicable artist whom had overheard paulines comment. what do you want to bet they call in mr adept fixit **conjectured** sam sagacious
107. as the crowd hastily exited the cafeteria they indeed saw mr adept fixit **scurry** into the cafeteria toolbox in hand and a worried look on his **weathered visage**. this is getting more and more peculiar said sam to his pals jesse and william.
108. we must get to the bottom of this mystery. some of are teachers are truly **atypical** he concluded. so what middle school teacher is a normal adult asked jesse
109. who would ever want to teach a bunch of **rampant** living hormones for a career there all **eccentric** if you ask me jesse finished. some of them more than others **persevered** sam for who solving this mystery was a serious **endeavor**

110. as the end of the year approached, mr scintillating social studies ms amicable artist mr melodious music and mr punctilious principal of all people arrange a field trip to an amusement park as an end of the year **diversion** for the 8th graders
111. they proposed the treat as a reward for not having a single food fight the entire year and exhibited exemplary behavior in general after orson had left hhms and danny and dalbert had turned their **maliciousness** into trying to compose haiku with **superlative** vocabulary in order to effect theyre teachers
112. everyone was **elated** about their field trip. after all all there trips had been cancelled in the 7th grade due to a **colossal** food fight started by none other than william waggish who should of known better
113. youre field trip needs to be **correlated** to an **academic** subject said ms grammar grouch to the principle. otherwise its forbidden by the school board
114. it is pipes up ms witty writing wizard the 7th grade english teacher that had overheard the conversation. going to an amusement park provides a **plethora of** ideas for writing. we should of taken them earlier
115. the day of the field trip dawned brightly. 5 large shiny yellow school busses lined the side of the school. 8th graders **animatedly clambered** on them as they talked non stop about the rides they planed to take

- 116.** the **intrepid** freinds had all signed up for the same bus. they wanted to plot and plan how to **flummox** there teachers into revealing their true nature whatever it was
- 117.** the group spent their entire ride writing and **compiling** haiku and planning to try to get in the same area all the teachers who the poems effected. lets call this operation **stealth** volunteered vivian. does everyone have their **fabricated** excuse ready
- 118.** please include me said a familiar voice. it was john **jabbering** a nice enough fellow whose problem was that he was too **loquacious**. his tall lanky body with straw like limp hair was a familiar sight to the friends.
- 119.** me two please spoke a boy that sat nearby. your going to need a detail man too coordinate your excuses and that's my **forte** insisted mark **meticulous** his round glasses bobbing on his round face in **glee** at being included in the group

Passage to be read out loud to students

The group accomplished its **objective (goal)** on the **tedious (boring)** bus ride to the amusement park. Once there, they forgot all about their **clandestine (hidden)** plans as they swooped and swirled on the rides, **devoured (ate ravenously)** mounds of junk food, gossiped, laughed, and enjoyed a day of freedom with **peers (contemporaries)**. As the allotted time at the park approached, the students, **laden (piled high)** with purchases, slowly **meandered (wandered)** towards the parking lot where the busses had parked.

There, in the spaces where five yellow school **conveyances (vehicles)** marked with their county's name were supposed to be waiting, was nothing! Mr. Punctilious Principal, who had driven separately in his van in case a student had become ill or wasn't **punctual (on time)** for the return trip, took out his cell phone and made a frantic call.

"They're where?" he shouted in a **wrathful (angry)** tone with a **souçon (French word used in English meaning a suspicion or hint of panic)**. "Why didn't the rest remain? I see. One hour, you say? It's pushing their limits, you know. You'd better call Mr. Adept Fixit." With that **baffling (confusing)** remark, he hung up.

Sam Sagacious was intrigued by hearing the Principal's end of the conversation.

"I wonder what he meant by that," Sam said, *sotto voce* (**softly**) to his friends among whom he stood.

"Let's wait and watch the teachers," suggested Isabelle Ingenuous. "Hey, Alessandra, tell us another story about your "abuela" (grandmother) and your waggish younger "primos" (cousins) in Puerto Rico. Maybe that will take our minds off of standing here **sweltering (super hot and sweaty)** like hairy dogs in the **sultry (hot)** sun with no breeze to **mitigate (make less)** the heat."

“Yes, I just love hearing about Puerto Rico,” sighed Olivia whose usual otiose, **indolent (lazy)** nature did not apply to learning Spanish.

“I might be able to help,” offered Felicia Fey.

“No, Felicia,” said the rest of the group with **alacrity (quickness)**.

Felicia didn’t listen to her friends. She muttered something under her breath, waved her hands (despite the fact that Isabelle and Vivian tried to hold them down) and “poof.” A small, cool breeze **wafted (floated lightly)** by and rustled their **tresses (hair)**. A few birds flew by upside down. A white cloud turned slightly **chartreuse (yellow-green mix)**.

“At least its effects weren’t too **egregious (really bad)**,” said Vivian Virtuous, her ebony curls bobbing as she **gawked (stared)** upwards. “Birds flying upside down for a few moments never hurt anything, and no one saw the cloud but us.”

“Way to go, Felicia,” said Mark **Meticulous (super careful)**. “The **zephyr (light breeze)** feels good.”

“Don’t encourage her, Mark,” **asserted (said forcefully)** Pauline Puerile. “She’ll get into trouble when one of her spells doesn’t go so well and affects a teacher.”

Slightly less than an hour later, at 6 p.m., the busses pulled into the parking lot. As the students and teachers boarded them, Sam noticed that Ms. Stern Science, Mr. Math Martinet, and Ms. Grammar Grouch were moving more and more **lethargically (without energy)**. Their faces were **inert (not moving)** as if frozen. Unfortunately, each of the teachers boarded a different bus, so Jesse and William couldn’t try a haiku on them. Ms. Grammar Grouch got on the bus with the intrepid friends, told the students in a slow, **monotone (boring, no variation)** voice to sit down, perched herself **gracelessly (clumsily)** in a front seat, and motioned slowly to Mr. Scintillating Social Studies (who also was on the same bus) to take over with the students. The busses took off for Horribly Hard Middle School.

Vivian Vivacious and Beth Bibliophilic took books out of their book bags that they had **secreted (hidden)** under the seats and **commenced (began)** to read. Vivian read Their Eyes Were Watching God by the **eminent (well-known)** Florida author Zora Neale Hurston, and Beth read David Copperfield by the **illustrious (famous)** British author Charles Dickens. Most of the students dozed or quietly chatted.

“Let’s do it,” whispered Jesse Jocose to William and Sam.

“It’s now or never,” agreed William. “Wake up, girls. Put down those books. Get out the haiku we wrote and get ready to recite at my signal.”

Ms. Grammar Grouch sat unsuspecting in her seat. Mr. Scintillating Social Studies continued to chat **affably (nicely)** with a nearby student, unaware that a large group of students were about to **wreak havoc (cause great devastation)**.

“Now,” said William.

At his signal, a dozen students rose to their feet and shouted the following poem at the top of their voices:

Sparks, smoke **emanate (come out)**
From their **orifices (holes)** as
If they are on fire.

The bus driver ignored them.

Mr. Scintillating Social Studies commented, “**Incomparable (the very best)** use of vocabulary, students,” and laughed good-naturedly.

Ms. Grammar Grouch, on the other hand, reacted violently. Smoke and sparks did, as usual, **emanate (come out)** from all her **orifices (holes)**. She twitched, fluttered her eyes three times, threw her arms in the air, and then froze, **rigid (stiff)** as a marble statue, eyes open, arms raised in the air. There she sat in that position, immobile.

“She’s just having one of her spells,” **placated (tried to make feel better)** Mr. Scintillating Social Studies as he yanked out his cell phone and dialed frantically.

The bus pulled over next to the principal's van, and the two men carried the **inflexible (stiff)** Ms. Grammar Grouch (whose arms still stuck straight up) from the bus to the van and laid her **transversely (sideways)** across the back seat. They slammed the door shut, and Mr. Punctilious Principal **vaulted (leapt)** into the driver's seat and sped off.

"That was interesting," said Sam Sagacious.

"That's a gross **understatement (means less),**" **rejoined (said back quickly)** Isabelle Ingenuous.

"OK, guys," said Sam. "Now we go to the next step of 'Operation **Stealth (sneakiness).**' Can everyone sneak out Thursday night? Do you have your excuses ready for maximum **credibility (believability)**? Does everyone know what **comestibles (eats)** to bring so we don't starve or get caught carrying too much food in our lunch bags?"

"I will check everyone's excuse and coordinate who is supposed to be staying overnight with whom, so there should be no **glitches (problems occurring),**" said Mark **Meticulous (super careful, thorough)** with pride.

The friends spent the remainder of the long, **tedious (boring)** ride back to school **solidifying (making sure of)** their plans. Mark and Sam took **copious (lots of)** notes.

The following Thursday afternoon when school let out, Isabelle, Felicia, Olivia, Pauline, Vivian, Alessandra, William, Jesse, Sam, Dalbert, and the newest members of the group, John **Jabbering (talking non-stop)** and Mark **Meticulous**, hid, one-by-one, in a small, stuffy, seldom-used book room in the eighth-grade wing of the school. Beth Bibliophilic, a **timorous (shy)** girl, **opted (chose)** out of the adventure. The group had decided to ask Dalbert Devious to join them because he knew how to pick locks. Dalbert was **ecstatic (delighted)** to be included. Dalbert, being devious, had no problem giving his parents a **bogus (fake) pretext (excuse)** for where he was spending the night.

Isabelle had convinced their beloved, seventh-grade English teacher, Ms. **Witty (clever)** Writing Wizard (for whom she now worked as an aide), that she needed to get into a book room but wasn't sure which one.

“She didn’t know which book room either, so she gave me her master key that opens all the doors. I went to the book room, took out a book as my excuse, and left a thin book to block the door slightly **ajar (open)**,” she told her **cohorts (buddies)** in stealth, “but it proved **redundant (extra)**. When I went back to her room, Ms. Witty Writing Wizard forgot about the key, so I still have it.

“I’ve never done anything like this before. I know it’s for a good motive, but I’m nervous,” she whispered to her assembled friends with **trepidation (fear)**. “It was the scariest thing I ever did,” she added with a **quiver (shake)** that made the **omnipresent (always there)** plastic butterflies in her hair nod in agreement.

The group of twelve remained silent as they listened to someone open most of the classroom doors in the hallway. They **lingered (stayed) mutely (silently)** until that person’s footsteps echoed down the hall, and a door closed. Soon, there were no more sounds outside the book room, and Mr. Adept Fixit had left the school.

They **warily (cautiously)** exited the book room, checking to make sure the coast was clear. One by one, they checked all the classrooms in the hallway. To their **utter incredulity (absolute amazement)**, they found, in most rooms, an **immobile (unmoving)** teacher, standing like a statue in the middle of the room. Ms. Stern Science didn’t blink an eye when they touched her or said a haiku. Mr. Math Martinet remained rigid and unresponsive to every attempt to rouse him. Ms. Grammar Grouch stood like a silent **sentinel (watching soldier)** in the middle of her room, totally **oblivious (totally unaware)** to the twelve students who surrounded her, recited haiku, and waved their hands in her **static (unmoving) visage (face)**.

“This is really strange,” said Sam Sagacious as he wrote in his notebook. I **surmise (guess)** that these teachers are not human. I think that they are robots.”

“Let’s check for the controls,” said William.

“Where do we begin?” asked Isabelle. “I don’t want to undress a teacher, even if she is a robot, to find out.”

“We’ll look for a panel on the upper chest first. Have you noticed that all the teachers on whom the poems worked are always dressed in high-necked blouses or shirts and ties?” pointed out Sam.

The boys, since the chosen victim was a male teacher, loosened the teacher’s **cravat (tie)** and unbuttoned his shirt halfway. Sure enough, there was a panel.

“Wow! These teachers truly are robots,” **affirmed (agreed)** Jesse and Alessandra in **unison (together)**.

“Let’s open the panel and see what’s inside,” suggested Sam.

Dalbert took out one of his **diverse (different)**, little tools and pried open the panel on the teacher’s chest. Everyone twisted his or her head to peer inside. Wires branched out from switches and vanished into the **crevices (little cracks)** of his body. Little green lights blinked slowly along the wires. There was no question. The teacher was a robot.

“Tubular,” said Jesse. “Our teachers are robots!”

“Not all of them, I think,” argued Sam. “I think some of them are human. Neither Ms. Witty Writing Wizard, nor Mr. Scintillating Social Studies, nor Ms. Amicable Artist, nor Mr. Melodious Music ever were affected by the poems.”

“Oh, my gosh,” **interjected (added in)** Alessandra, “they are all the creative teachers – writing, new methods of studying history, art, music.”

“You’re right!” agreed William.

“They probably couldn’t make robots creative and **innovative (creative, imaginative)**,” added Vivian.

“Wait a minute. What about Principal Punctilious?” **queried (asked)** William. “He didn’t react to the poems either.”

“It’s a certainty that he’s human as well,” agreed Sam. They would need a human in charge to make all the decisions and to **assess (check out)** any situation that arose, like our field trip. Mr. Adept Fixit has to be human as well.”

“Yes, I’ve never seen him react to any of our poems,” said Jesse.

“I **deduce (figure out)** that it’s Mr. Adept Fixit who turns the robots on and off,” offered Sam.

“Well, we’ll find out in the morning, won’t we?” said Isabelle. “Now, let’s try to get a little sleep.”

“I set the alarm clock to wake us up on time,” said Mark Meticulous who was the detail guy.

Alessandra suggested, “Let’s lie down on the carpet in the teachers’ lounge with books for pillows and get some shut-eye. At least it’s larger than that tiny book room, and the carpet, even though it is **sullied (dirty)**, is better than the hard, **grubby (grimy)** floor.”

“Good idea, girlfriend,” said Felicia Fey. “Does anyone want me to try to soften those books or clean the carpet a bit?”

“No, Felicia,” eleven voices shouted together.

The group of friends lay on the carpet, heads **bolstered (propped up)** on books, and slept **fitfully (restlessly)** until 5 a.m. when Mark’s alarm rang with a **cacophonous (noisy and jangling)** sound.

The twelve students leapt up, went to do their morning **ablutions (washings)** in the boys’ and girls’ bathrooms respectively, scattered, each **secreting (hiding)** himself or herself in a different classroom, and lay in wait to see what would happen.

An hour later footsteps **resonated (echoed)** down the hall. Mr. Adept Fixit entered each classroom in turn. The students observed from their hiding spots as he opened the panel(s) on each robot teacher, flipped a switch, closed the panel, and **lingered (stayed)** fewer than ten seconds for the teacher to come to life.

As he or she awoke, each robot said graciously, “Thank you, Mr. Fixit. Good morning. Have a nice day,” in a **monotone (boring, no variation)** voice and proceeded to go to the blackboard to write the day’s date and lesson.

As the school became alive with a **myriad (lot of different kinds)** of students, the **intrepid (loyal)** twelve **mingled (mixed)** with the crowd and went to their homeroom as if they, too, had just arrived at school by foot, car, or bus. Like a bunch of **conspirators (people who get together to plan something secretly)** in a spy novel, they had big, **covert (secret)** plans for the upcoming eighth-grade awards ceremony.

News of the truth about the robot teachers spread like mosquitoes in **stagnant (non-moving)** water among the students. Not one eighth grader “ratted” that he or she knew the **appalling (horrible)** truth of the bizarre teachers to anyone not in his or her class. For once, everyone kept a secret.

The last few weeks of school dragged by like a slow-moving train. Everyone waited anxiously for the end-of-year awards ceremony. Every few days, someone would try out a haiku on the robot teachers. Superlative vocabulary in the poems **enhanced (intensified)** the effects on the robots. The eighth-graders’ **implausible (not explainable), exemplary (perfect)** behavior worried the principal. He knew they were up to something but had no clue what the kids were planning.

120. william waggish had the honor of composing the *coup de grace*. every 8th grader memorized the haiku and they were more than ready
121. finally the evening of the awards ceremony arrives. the administration and teachers set on the stage and parents and students filled the cafeteria to **capacity** with the **latter** spilling out into the hallway
122. all the 8th graders were poised for the signal and even beth bibliophilic lay down her **tome** the hunchback of notre dame as she watched william with **rapt** attention
123. william gave a **clandestine** sign to isabelle felicia olivia pauline vivian alessandra jesse sam dalbert john and mark. then just as mr punctilious principal had finished his welcoming speech the 12 stood up
124. this was the signal. every eighth grader in the room recited the following haiku entitled *coup de grace* in their loudest voice

why does the school board
use **egregious** robots when
good teachers **abound**

125. the robot teachers on stage spluttered. sparks and smoke billowed from every **orifice**. they through there arms into the air opened their mouths and stared out at the audience without blinking or **uttering** a sound

Caught'ya Final Exam

Directions for Part I:

Students, correct the following long Caught'ya. This test will show how carefully you listen when your teacher goes over Caught'yas. You will lose two points per error, so be very careful and check your work when finished. Ask your teacher for meanings of words if necessary, but most difficult ones have been provided. This is not a vocabulary test. Follow your teacher's directions, and read the test again to yourself to help with punctuation.

Hint: There are seventeen paragraphs, not including the poem. All periods are correct except three, two of which need to be changed to exclamation marks and the other one to a question mark. There are a few spelling errors and four missing hyphens. Some words need to be changed.

the 8th graders led by the intrepid 12 quickly followed this poem by a 2nd haiku. they entitled it we want human teachers and than they shouted it at the top of there voices in perfect unison

we **merit (deserve)** real profs.
creativity will die.
without humanness.

no less than 12 of the robot teachers sparked and smoked once more emitted a huge dying sigh and fell flat on their faces. the cafeteria was totally silent for a moment and then all **perdition (heck)** broke loose. parents protested loudly and **vociferously (insistently)**. we want those abominable fake teachers replaced with real people as soon as you can do it they insisted. students smiled and gave each other high fives and said we did it. as the human teachers clapped enthusiastically to they joined in the

high fives with their students and they patted each other on the back. ms amicable artist murmured to mr melodious music thank heavens i couldnt take much more of those unfeeling **automatons (robots)**. after a quick phone call during which he was heard to say the jig is up mr punctilious principle banged the podium for the **pandemonium (craziness)** and **ruckus (disturbance)** to die down. finally as the **din (noise)** turned to silence and all eyes glared at the principal with dislike the truth emerged. beth even lay down her book little women and paid attention. first he said I no that this is no excuse but me and the human teachers fought the school boards decision to save money by replacing real teachers with robots. they used horribly hard middle school as an experiment. frankly I am surprised that the robots lasted this long before our clever students brains figured out the secret. i think the school boards little experiment is over. i for one am relieved and delighted. thank you students for uncovering the truth. and students keep ever **vigilant (watchful)** because you never know what money saving strategy they will try next. when mr punctilious principal finished and sat down a cheer arose from the assembled 8th graders. the long nightmare of hhms was over and the mystery of the bizarre teachers was solved. there was only 2 questions remaining. why did the robot teachers react to the poems and why did there reactions get even more intensified when the students incorporated great vocabulary in their poems. ive got it. sam exclaimed when they exited the cafeteria between the other students. you see the teachers who were creative and individualistic were human. they had to be. robots cannot be programmed to be individualistic or creative. they just react to the program in them. ms amicable artist whom taught art mr melodious music who taught music ms witty writing

wizard that taught creative writing and mr scintillating social studies that came up with all kinds of wierd ways to present history all taught creative subjects or taught in a creative manner. all the robot teachers taught us in a rote manner by using the book exactly as written by making us copy notes or by giving us ditto sheets. they couldnt be creative at all sam concluded. than why did the **superlative (super)** vocabulary enhance their reactions to the poems asked Isabelle. well suggested jesse i think that using super vocabulary is like being creative. it takes thought. i think your rite said sam. the robots were obviously programmed only with the basic vocabulary of middle-school students. when we added those big juicy vocabulary words to our poems they only confused the robots more since those words did not compute. i think we've solved the entire mystery concluded william waggish with an air of relief and excitement. i wonder what next year in high school will be like...

Directions for Part 2:

Use your corrected version to the test to identify the types of sentences of each of the first fifteen sentences in this exam—simple, compound, complex, or compound/complex. *Do not include the poem.* You might want to number the sentences on your exam so you don't get confused. Sentence #15 ends with "brains figured out the secret" and is in the middle of a paragraph.

Hint: Two are compound/complex. Three are compound. Three are complex. The other seven are simple sentences.

1. _____

9. _____

2. _____

10. _____

3. _____

11. _____

4. _____

12. _____

5. _____

13. _____

6. _____

14. _____

7. _____

15. _____

8. _____

Directions for Part 3:

The story of William, Isabelle, and their friends in middle school has ended with the students triumphing over the school board by discovering their little secret. Now they, like you, are ready for high school. Will they remain friends?

What about you and your friends? Will you remain friends in high school, or will your different interests, schools, and paths in life separate you? Write a brief essay to express how you think your relationship with your friends will change in high school (or not) and explain why.

Support your answers with specific details of personalities, interests, etc.

Write as clearly as you can, and provide lots of details. Include a topic sentence and a concluding sentence for each paragraph. Use transitions and similes. Vary sentence structure. Most importantly, put passion and flair into your answer.

You will recognize most of your students and some of their antics as the story unweaves. I based the characters on the beloved (and sometimes challenging) “characters” who have passed through my classroom over the years. Almost all the non-magical and non-robotic incidents that take place in the story have occurred at the middle school where I taught (like the accidental mooning of the dean or butterfly releasing or food fights, etc.). I wanted to keep the story “real” and amusing for students in a typical middle school.

I hope you enjoy a chuckle or two as you and your students read about the antics of Isabelle Ingenuous, William Waggish, and their friends and enemies.

NOTE:

The numbers in the margin of this chapter correspond with the Caught'yas in **Chapters 6, 7, and 8.**

Sixth-Grade Part of Story



Introduction

As the August morning sun chased the shadows from the roofs of houses and painted the sky gold, there was an **eerie** silence at Horribly Hard Middle School. In the dawning light, you could not see into the classrooms because of the dark curtains at every window. No early teacher rushed out of a car in the parking lot to set up a lab or to get an early start on preparation for the first day of school. Horribly Hard Middle School was like a spooky mansion: closed, dark, and abandoned.

In contrast, across town, as the sun rose a bit higher in the sky, Marvelously Magic Magnet Middle School (known popularly as MMMMS) burst with energy and noise. Coffee perked in the teachers' lounge. Cars roared into the parking lot, parked, and spilled out teachers of different sizes, shapes, and complexions. Boxes, books, bags, and piles of "stuff" filled their arms as they walked into the school early to be ready for the first day of classes for the year.

Finally, two cars drove up to the **dormant** and silent Horribly Hard Middle School; one a new mauve Lexus and the other an old blue Ford pick-up truck. A man stepped out of each. The man who exited the Lexus wore a suit and tie and carried a battered briefcase. His face mirrored anxiety. The owner of the pick-up climbed out of his truck and lifted a large black tool case out of the bed of his truck. He **sported** a denim shirt and overalls, a red handkerchief in his upper pocket, a wrench hanging out of his lower pocket, and an air of excitement and purpose.

The two men nodded solemnly to each other as they **trekked** in different directions, the suited one toward the school office and the man in overalls toward the sixth-grade wing and the custodian's office. No other human soul could be seen in the dim light of early morning.

Slowly, one after the other, classroom lights came on in HHMS. Soon the school was **ablaze** with light, and all classrooms were lit, but apart from Mr. **Adept** Fixit, the custodian, rushing from room to room to open the doors and turn on the lights, no sounds of people could be heard on the campus. If you listened carefully in the main office near the door to the principal's room, you could hear the faint click of computer keys as Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, a man who was always concerned with correct procedure, checked and rechecked the procedures which would be followed that first day as well as the list of students who would enter the **portals** of the HHMS in about an hour.

Half an hour later several more cars pulled up in front of the still silent Horribly Hard Middle School.

Introduction

A lady, dressed in a long pink skirt and a **blousy** white shirt spattered with paint, hurried towards one of the still-dark classrooms with rolls of paper under her arm and a **myriad** of paint brushes in her mouth and hands. A man **ambled** toward a nearby dark classroom. He was burdened with various-sized instrument cases. His purple tie, decorated with yellow musical notes, was **askew**, and his glasses perched unevenly on his large nose.

Meanwhile, in a house not far from Horribly Hard Middle School, a **gaggle** of sixth-graders had gathered to gossip about the upcoming first day of school. They stood in the **foyer** of Isabelle's house, waiting for Olivia **Otiose** whose lazy nature always made her late to everything. Isabelle **Ingenuous**, always **animated**, twirled in nervousness and an excess of energy. Pauline **Puerile** whined in a babyish manner about Olivia's tardiness. Felicia **Fey**, always acting in a bizarre manner, muttered words of a spell, parts of which she could not remember, under her breath to encourage her friend Olivia **Otiose** to hurry. William **Waggish** made a tasteless but funny joke that **evoked titters** from the gathered friends. The last member of the troop, Sam **Sagacious**, simply stood wisely and silently with his backpack in his hand, waiting for the **clamor** to die down.

Isabelle **Ingenuous** danced out the open door, swiftly followed by her friends, with Pauline **Puerile** taking up the rear as she picked up her teddy bear that had fallen from her backpack and tucked it into the front pouch. Another girl joined them as they walked down the steps of Isabelle's house onto the sidewalk. Olivia **Otiose** had arrived, hair half combed and wrinkled blouse hanging out of her jeans. The group was ready but **reluctant** to face their first day of their new middle school: Horribly Hard Middle School.

A **myriad** of thoughts echoed and **rebounded** in each student's mind as the six sixth-graders **trudged** to their new school, a mile away, as if walking the plank of a pirate ship to their doom.

What would the new school be like? Would the new teachers be mean and hard? Were they going to have too much homework? Were the big eighth-graders going to **harass** them? Would they be able to remember the combinations of those shiny new locks in their backpacks? Were they dressed appropriately? Were the teachers nice? Would middle school be much different from elementary school? How would they find all their classes? Would their friends be in their classes? Would they get lost? Was the dean mean?

These questions and many more circled around in the six friends' heads as they silently **ambled**

towards the place where they would find out all the answers. All too soon, the brick walls of Horribly Hard Middle School **loomed** in front of them.

Brown-faced with dark, expressive eyes, William **Waggish** recited a silly limerick to break the tension. (He always was composing poetry to try to **emulate** his hero, Langston Hughes.) The friends' steps matched the **cadence** of the hopeful poem.

There is a bizarre middle school
Where teachers are easy to fool.
They fall for our jokes
And don't call our folks
Even when we break every rule.

Horribly Hard Middle School did not look much different from their elementary school which was nearby in their town of **Tedious**, Florida. A big, one-story brick building sat **nestled** among large trees and a **verdant** lawn, and a small city of white portables dotted the field behind the school like white lily pads in a green pond.

"Look!" **shrilled** Isabelle **Ingenuous** in her high voice as she nervously twirled the purple, plastic butterfly that was perched in her wild, curly, **auburn** hair. Always upbeat, Isabelle was dressed in her new outfit of matching purple shorts and bright-green top. "All the lights are on, and there is a teacher gazing out the window of each classroom!" Isabelle Ingenuous continued.

"I wish we were going to Marvelously Magic Magnet Middle School instead of this old, ordinary, **insipid** one," groaned William **Waggish**, who was not his usual teasing, cheerful self.

"Yeah," sighed Sam **Sagacious**, who was usually reserved behind his horn-rimmed glasses, "I hear the teachers there are great!"

"Yes, I hear they don't give much homework, either," added Olivia **Otiose**, who hated homework with a passion.

"Well, we don't have enough magic in us, so we can't go to MMMMS," **retorted** Felicia **Fey** whose **meager** magic always went **awry**. "If I were better at magic, I would be going there with all the neat teachers and cool classes, but I failed the entry test when I accidentally gave Ms. Vice Principal a big, juicy zit right between her eyes."

"At least you *have* some magic, even if it always screws up," Isabelle Ingenuous reminded her friend as she twirled the purple butterfly that perched in her **mane** of auburn hair. "The rest of us can't even open a classroom **portal**," she concluded.

Suddenly, right in front of this **sextet**, stood a tall man who was dressed all in black with a shiny, new, black hat perched on his

slick black hair. He peered down at the group and boomed in a loud, **monotone** voice, “Welcome to Horribly Hard Middle School.”

The frightening man then announced that he was the dean of the school and that his name was Dean **Dread**.

Pauline **Puerile** commenced to **snivel** (she was such a baby), and Felicia Fey muttered a “cheer-up spell” but only succeeded in frizzing her friend’s hair.

Dean Dread, a disturbing figure in his **somber** suit and tie, directed the group to go to the “cafetorium,” a combination of cafeteria and auditorium. There, the friends found other sixth-graders whom they already knew from elementary school.

“What a bizarre dean,” whispered Sam Sagacious *sotto voce* to William Waggish. “You and I wouldn’t want to cross him nor meet him in a dark alley.”

“From what **mausoleum** did he crawl out, Sam?” murmured William Waggish **surreptitiously** so no one else could hear.

“Hey, William, look at the other weird teachers standing against the wall,” whispered always observant Sam Sagacious as he **surveyed** the room.

As Sam **uttered** this last statement, Dean Dread suddenly appeared and loomed menacingly over the two boys.

“**Loquacious** ones, eh? You two, come here,” the dean ordered. His voice had the flatness of a cockroach crunching under a shoe.

Dean Dread put one huge, ham-sized hand on the back of each boy and **ushered** them to the front of the “cafetorium.” All the other new sixth-graders, of course, **tittered** at the sight of William and Sam being caught talking.

“Quiet, students,” said Dean Dread in a deadly tone of voice as he placed William Waggish and the **mortified** Sam Sagacious in the second row next to Jesse **Jocose**, another talker.

When Dean Dread said this, he nodded his head, and teachers lined up in the aisles to **quell** the noise with **proximity** control. The new sixth-graders squirmed in fear and became **distraught** as they got a closer look at their new teachers. Only a few of them had genuine, welcoming smiles on their faces, and most were **garbed** in grey or black, too.

Among the teachers, only a few didn’t look too mean or **formidable**. They just didn’t look like the friendly teachers the kids had had in elementary school, and most of them dressed in **somber** clothes that looked as if they were stiff and uncomfortable.

Olivia Otiose, who was more **perceptive** than most sixth-graders but lazy when it came to work, saw that one teacher’s

smile was genuine. This teacher wore a **blousy** white shirt and a long pink skirt, and she had stuck a pink flower in her thick blonde **tresses**.

“Felicia, that must be the art teacher,” Isabelle Ingenuous dared to whisper to her friend Felicia Fey.

Dean Dread and two teachers glared at the two girls who **quailed** under their gaze.

All the teachers still stood in the aisles like **sentries**, most of them **glowering** at the kids as if daring them to speak. The principal stood up on the stage, and Dean Dread joined him there.

“Children, I am the school’s principal, the captain of your ship,” said the principal. My name is Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, and this is Dean Dread who will **mete** out any discipline for misbehaving students,” he continued as he put a hand on the dean’s broad, right shoulder.

William Waggish, always playfully humorous, chose that moment to **subvocalize** a limerick under his breath, his favorite way to deal with tension. He entitled it “The Mean Dean.” Several people heard its **utterance**, and Jesse Jocose, who sat nearby, snorted in laughter.

There was an old dean from Salt Lick (Kentucky)
Who made all the kids very sick.
One look at his face
And students would race,
Well-aided by steps that were quick.

As William Waggish **uttered** the last word of his limerick, the teacher nearest him twitched and nodded his head. His eyelids fluttered; his tongue protruded between his closed lips; and **wisps** of smoke curled from his ears.

Jesse Jocose pointed to that teacher with his one hand and held the other over his mouth to **muffle** his giggles. The other teachers turned and **glowered** at him as students **swiveled** their heads in the direction Jesse pointed.

Only the teacher with the pink flower in her hair and the paint on her shirt smiled at the strange **phenomenon** of her eye-fluttering, ear-smoking, tongue-sticking-out **colleague**. She, somehow, was different, like a cool, glacier breeze in a hot classroom.

After that **incident**, everyone quieted down, turned his or her face towards the stage, and **paid heed** to Mr. Punctilious Principal as he instructed students on where to go and what to do next.

“I hope my friends and I are in the same homeroom, too,” whispered Isabelle Ingenuous to her two friends, Olivia Otiose and Pauline Puerile.

Finally, the assembly was over. Teachers filed out, directed the **striplings** to the homeroom lists on the walls of the sixth-grade hall, and then pointed out the various classrooms.

The **intrepid** group who had begun the first day of school together found themselves in the same homeroom. Their teacher was a very **stern**-looking man, Mr. Math **Martinet**, who promptly announced that he was also their math teacher.

He told the students, too, that he would tolerate no **shenanigans**, and then he **confiscated** a headset from Quincy **Querulous**, a student in the back of the room who made faces as his headset was taken, opened his mouth as if to argue, and then thought better of it.

“Hey, Pauline, that’s the teacher who stuck out his tongue,” **articulated** Felicia Fey to her **puerile** friend who was crying silently.

William Waggish, worried about Pauline, whispered another of his **inimitable** limericks, this one about a **malevolent** math teacher entitled “**Wrathful Math.**” Faint curls of smoke wisped from Mr. Math Martinet’s ears, and his eyelids fluttered, too.

The nasty man, teacher of math,
Was utterly filled with such **wrath**.
He yelled at the boys
And **stifled** their joys.
He took a malevolent path.

At this, you could have heard a pin drop as the students’ mouths gaped open at their **peer**’s boldness and their teacher’s antics. The class waited for William’s painful **demise** at the hands of the stern, **uncompromising** teacher.

Nothing happened! Absolutely nothing! After fewer than three seconds, Mr. Math Martinet **resumed** his announcements as if he neither had been interrupted nor had wisps of smoke **emitting** from his ears. After he went over the school rules, Mr. Math Martinet handed out a schedule and a map of the school to everyone.

As soon as the students’ schedules were in their hands, **pandemonium** broke out as everyone tried to see who was in his or her classes. The **intrepid** six compared notes and found that they shared some of the same classes: math, English, and science. Pauline, Isabelle, Jesse, William, and Felicia had art with Ms. **Amicable** Artist, and the other two had music with Mr. **Melodious** Music.

The bell **pealed**, signaling the end of homeroom. Although the group was going to the same place, Pauline Puerile got lost. Things were not going well for her. First, she became separated from her friends. Then, she turned her map upside down. Next, the size of

the eighth-graders **daunted** her, and finally, she got lost. As Pauline Puerile stood in the crowded hallway blubbering while others laughed and pointed fingers at her, a kind, **titanic** eighth-grader took pity on her and pointed her in the right direction.

Meanwhile, Isabelle Ingenuous and Felicia Fey found the girls' bathroom, but there were too many eighth-graders for comfort in there, so they left hurriedly. Felicia and Isabelle found their first class (which, thankfully, was only ten steps farther). Before entering the classroom, Felicia Fey, who should have known better, tried to fix her flyaway hair with a **petite** spell. As usual, it backfired; this time it turned her hair purple.

At the same time, William Waggish found a new friend, Jesse **Jocose**, the boy who had experienced the **wrath** of Dean Dread, too. The two of them discovered their love for **jocularity** and limericks. Since, like William's other friends, they were headed for English class, they composed an **appropriate** poem and entitled it "Awful Teacher," even though they had not yet **encountered** the teacher.

An English teacher from Slade (Kentucky)
 Confused the verbs "lay" and "laid."
 She didn't know squat
 And was put on the spot,
 So she quit and didn't get paid.

Standing at her door, their new English teacher, Ms. Grammar Grouch, heard the limerick. Her eyes fluttered, and she stuck out her tongue while curls of smoke wisped from her **proboscis** and rose to the ceiling.

"Hey, Jesse, look at that," giggled William Waggish, pleased with their poetic efforts and their effect on the teachers. "These teachers are **eerie!** Maybe my friends and I are wrong, and this year will be fun after all."

Sam Sagacious just made a further notation in his pocket notebook.

Jesse Jocose **queried** with a grin as they stepped into the room of the slightly smoking teacher, "I wonder what makes them do that?"

Just then they spied Felicia Fey in her newly purpled hair.

"Uh oh, William, I bet the teachers are not going to find *that* amusing," said Jesse Jocose.

Ms. Grammar Grouch *could* **differentiate** between the verbs "lay" and "laid," and, much to the **consternation** of Olivia Otiose, she loaded the class with a list of vocabulary words to learn. In addition, Ms. Grammar Grouch did not permit any student to end a sentence with a preposition nor to split a verb. She was a true Grammar Grouch.

She also was not very **amiable** and was going to send Felicia Fey to the dean with a **terse** note to call Felicia's parents about her coming to school with purple hair.

"Wait, Ms. Grouch, I can fix it. It's fixable," **blurted** Felicia as she muttered another spell which turned her hair back to its normal color but put a purple streak in Ms. Grouch's **coiffure**.

Jesse Jocose composed a limerick on the spot that he entitled "My New Friend, Felicia" and sent it in a note to William Waggish who whispered it to Felicia who **tittered**.

There was a young lady from Day (Florida)
Whose nature was quirkily fey.
She purpled her hair,
But she didn't care
And merrily did things her way.

At this **juncture**, Ms. Grammar Grouch stuck out her tongue, fluttered her eyes, and **emitted** smoke from her ears. She stopped teaching, froze for fewer than three seconds, mumbled, "That is unanswerable," and then resumed her grammar lecture as if nothing had occurred.

"Weirder and weirder," **penned** William to Jesse in another **furtive** note.

"I don't think I like that teacher very much," said Isabelle to her friends as they exited the room at the peal of the bell, and Felicia and she dashed into the ladies' room, **micturated** quickly, washed their hands in the filthy sink, and ran out to join their friends.

"I wonder if the science teacher will be any better. We already know what the math teacher is like," said Sam Sagacious who liked the vocabulary lesson of Ms. Grammar Grouch but **loathed** the way the **latter** had wanted to send his friend to Dean Dread.

"Well, she couldn't be worse," said Felicia Fey whose narrow escape had scared them all further. "I hope she doesn't **perceive** that purple streak in her hair until she gets home."

"She's the one who deserved it," **countered** Felicia's friends William Waggish and Pauline Puerile in **unison**. They shared a "high five" as William proceeded to recite another one of his **infamous** limericks, this one entitled "Frigid English."

Our grammar teacher is rigid.
On English rules, she is frigid.
She never splits verbs
And teaches hard words,
And errors make her quite **livid**.

Nearby, two teachers in unison fluttered their eyelids, stuck out their tongues between closed lips, froze in place for fewer than three seconds, and emitted wisps of smoke from their **nostrils**. Sam Sagacious noted the **anomalies** in their reactions.

“**Bizarre**,” Sam Sagacious muttered to himself as he took notes.

The rest of the day went pretty much the same. The teachers, for the most part, were **clad** in somber colors, and they had no sense of humor. Unfortunately, in science class, the friends found their old **nemesis**, Orson **Odius**. As they entered the room, Orson was “holding court” in the back among many of the popular kids.

“Ah, guys, look at the weird ones who just entered science class,” Orson said **maliciously**. “There’s the witch who can’t do a spell right, the four-eyed wise guy who knows it all, the free spirit who even wears stupid, plastic butterflies in her hair, the crybaby, the lazy one who never has her homework, and the two who think they’re funny. What losers,” he stated, and he chuckled to his audience and encouraged them to laugh.

“I’m sorry my parents made my buds and me late this morning, and my buds and I missed two of the “geeks” getting caught by the Dean,” **expounded** Orson Odius as he concluded his **verbal** attack.

The intrepid six and Jesse Jocose, heads down, slunk into seats in the front of the room just as the science teacher entered and closed the door behind him. When the class saw the teacher, silence **reigned**, even from the back of the room where Orson’s gang sat.

“I am Ms. **Stern Science**,” the teacher said in a **monotone** voice. “I believe in a lot of hard tests, **a plethora of** homework, and **a dearth of** student talking in my class, but I also expect students to do well.”

At this, Olivia Otiose **slumped** in her desk in **woe**. “Oh, no,” she whined as she sank farther into her seat. “This year is starting out badly.”

Ms. Stern Science stared at Olivia Otiose with her bird-like, beady eyes, and she said in a low, **ominous** tone, “There always will be silence in this classroom when I **pontificate**.”

Olivia Otiose thought she heard a snicker from Orson Odius in the back, but the teacher did not catch it.

As the seven friends left the room, they tried to **elude** Orson Odius who knew all the tricks of making other students’ lives **wretched** without getting caught by the teachers himself. William Waggish and his new friend Jesse Jocose **commenced** composing another limerick, this one about the stern science teacher, and they entitled it “Crude, Rude Science.”

Our old science teacher is rude.
 She also is horribly crude.
 She picks at her nose;
 She sports ugly toes;
 And always is in a bad mood.

Isabelle Ingenuous and her friends laughed, imagining their teacher's **unsightly** toes. They forgot about the toad Orson Odious and all that he liked to do to make their lives miserable.

By her desk near the **portal** of the room, Ms. Stern Science stuck out her tongue, smoked slightly from her **proboscis**, fluttered her eyes like a blinking lizard, and froze mid-step for fewer than three seconds.

"Stranger and weirder," murmured Sam Sagacious who noticed these things.

Lunch was the usual **boisterous pandemonium** typical of a middle-school lunchroom. A fight broke out between two girls over something a **rumor-monger** had reported that the other had **purportedly** said, and both were suspended on the spot. Dean Dread called their parents from the lunchroom, right in front of the girls' **peers**.

After that incident, Dean Dread stood on the stage with his ham-sized hands on his hips, glaring **forebodingly** at the students as if he dared them to try anything else except talking and eating.

"It's amazing he lets us talk at all, Sam" said William Waggish to his **compatriot** at the table. He also composed another limerick for the occasion, entitled it "Mean Green Dean," and caused everyone at his table to hoot with laughter like a bunch of hyenas. After a brief flutter of his eyelids and one wisp of smoke curling from his left ear, Dean Dread turned to stare at their table with a **malevolent** expression on his **visage**, **marred** only by his tongue that still stuck out between his **pursed** lips.

The dean of students is mean.
 His face in anger turns bright green.
 He maintains his right
 To stop any fight
 And suspend those who are obscene.

Art and music were the only relief for the rest of the week. In art, the teacher, Ms. **Amicable** Artist, smiled a lot and promised the class that they would release butterflies on Earth Day and celebrate the event further with an art project of their own choosing as well. Pauline, Isabelle, Jesse, William, and Felicia, who had **opted** to take Art, were delighted.

"This teacher seems almost human, girlfriend," whispered Isabelle to Felicia who nodded in agreement.

With only a small frown at Isabelle, Ms. Amicable Artist quietly moved by the two girls and **commenced** a lecture about the **Impressionist** artists.

William Waggish took out a pencil and a piece of paper, and he composed another limerick entitled “Art.”

We have a bizarre art teacher
 Who **touts** painters like a preacher.
 Cassat and Van Go
 And Monet, now we know,
 Are the ones who really reach her.

Ms. Amicable Artist, still lecturing and **periodically** showing pictures from a stack in her hand, **ambled** over to William, confiscated the paper, swiftly **perused** its contents, smiled, and said, “You spelled Van Gogh’s name incorrectly, William. It is spelled ‘G-o-g-h,’ not ‘G-o.’”

Nothing else happened except that the pink-**hued** flower in her **coiffure** fell onto William’s desk as she nodded her head at him, handed back William’s paper, and continued her **spiel** on the Impressionists.

William Waggish corrected the spelling of the Dutch painter’s name and paid **rapt** attention for the rest of the period.

“Hey,” **mused** William Waggish to himself, “maybe the limerick has to be said out loud for it to affect the teachers. I must tell Sam as he would want to make a note.”

Meanwhile in music, Mr. **Melodious** Music told his class all about band, and he let the untried, **neophyte** sixth-graders choose their instruments. Sam Sagacious played the guitar at home but wanted to take up a new challenge. He chose the oboe, an **arduous** instrument to learn to play. Olivia Otiose, who had not signed up for any exploratory class and who had been randomly assigned to band by the school’s computer, wanted the instrument that was the easiest to play. She wanted to play the triangle but was given a clarinet.

“Bummer,” she said. “If I have to learn to play this instrument, I will be forced to carry this home every day, and my mother will **compel** me to practice.”

That day, the six friends (Jesse Jocose took a bus to school) **plodded** home, piled with science and math homework. Olivia Otiose was not pleased, so she did none of it and lied to her mother when her mother asked if she ever had been assigned any. Olivia’s lying about homework was nothing new.

Months passed in a similar, **invariable** manner. The six walked to school, met up with their friends who bussed to school, suffered

through classes with their bizarre teachers, and tried to avoid Orson Odious and his popular pals, the **comely** Petra **Pulchritudinous**, lovely Alessandra **Amorous**, and handsome Danny **Dapper**. Except in art and music, the nasty, annoying teachers gave tons of homework.

While middle school is always a weird place, they knew that something strange was **afoot** at Horribly Hard Middle School. Sam kept notes on the effects that William's and Jesse's **atrocious** but **hilarious** limericks had on their teachers. One of their best, a wicked limerick about the social studies teacher, Ms. Grumpy Geography, **evoked** more than smoke from her ears and fluttering eyes.

There is a teacher from Noodle (Texas)
 Whose hair looks like a French poodle.
 She paints her nails green;
 She taps on the screen;
 Her face looks like pale apple strudel.

In addition to the usual teachers' reactions to hearing one of their **infamous** verses, Ms. Grumpy Geography repeated over and over in a **monotone** voice for more than two seconds but fewer than three, "You must read the book Great Geography. You must read the book Great Geography."

As usual, Sam Sagacious took notes *apropos* of the incident, but neither he nor anyone else could draw any conclusions. There was just something different about their school, but no one could put a finger on what its difference was.

Art continued to be "awesome." Band was challenging, and even lazy, **indolent** Olivia Otiose was getting into playing her clarinet well.

Then, there was this **innovative** teacher who visited their English class from time to time to teach creative writing. Her humor and enthusiasm inspired students to write well. Usually **apathetic** Olivia Otiose wrote a personal narrative that won a prize. In addition, William Waggish even abandoned his favorite form of writing—the limerick—and composed a **superlative** argumentative essay defending his position that school uniforms were a **noxious** idea.

One day in science, Orson Odious was particularly **insufferable**. His **taunts** provoked the usually cheerful Jesse Jocose to become **pugnacious** and to swing at him in fury. Orson **countered** with a blow to Jesse's **visage**. William jumped into the **fray** to support his friend, and then Ms. Stern Science stepped into the act.

"You three **rapsCALLIONS**," she said in a loud voice, "go to the dean's office immediately. Isabelle, take this note, go see that they arrive in the appropriate place, and get a return note from the

dean,” she concluded, punching the call button to inform the office that Dean Dread had some “customers.”

As the group walked to the dean’s office, Orson **goaded** and teased Jesse, William, and Isabelle.

“You’re nothing but unpopular little geeks,” he **jeered**.

The three remained **quiescent** at this insult, for they dared not **exacerbate** the situation.

“Everyone **loathes** your stupid poems,” he continued. “They are written badly.”

“Now you’ve gone too far,” growled the usually **pacifistic** William Waggish as he rushed in on his tormentor.

As if they had **orchestrated** it beforehand, the three friends jumped on Orson, all at the same time. Orson fell to the ground, and Jesse, William, and Isabelle sat on him and called him an **obstreperous** jerk. Orson Odious was shocked into silence.

At that moment, Dean Dread appeared suddenly, like a huge, swooping bat, and **ushered** all four **miscreants** into his office. Orson Odious tried to blame the three for the entire incident, but luckily Ms. Stern Science had seen him take a swing at Jesse Jocose. Dean Dread called everyone’s parents to come get their **miscreants**, and then he suspended all four of them for two days. William Waggish didn’t even have time to compose a limerick appropriate for the occasion.

When the suspension had ended, and all were back in school, things got better for a while. Orson Odious remained unusually **docile**. He did, however, start targeting a girl named Beth **Bibliophilic** who had read Harry Potter more than four times and who always **secreted** a book on her knees under her desk.

Orson also picked on a boy named Mark **Meticulous**, a perfectionist who always rewrote his papers many times. These two, of course, were not **elated** with this turn of events. Beth Bibliophilic and Mark Meticulous, to be sure, preferred it when Orson Odious had ignored them as if they weren’t there.

“Weirdos who sit on people don’t **warrant** my attention,” Orson **scoffed**.

“Bullies who taunt my friends deserve to be expelled,” **retorted** Isabelle Ingenuous, the free spirit whom even Dean Dread did not **daunt**.

Then, in art and in music, Ms. Amicable Artist and Mr. Melodious Music joined their classes to present a **mutual** art/music project—**nurturing** and releasing butterflies.

“We have ordered your kits, and you will raise Painted Lady butterflies,” said Ms. Amicable Artist. “Painted Lady butterflies are probably the most **widespread** butterfly **species** and are found

all over the world,” she said. “They particularly like living in mountains and flowery meadows, and they love the following flowers: aster, cosmos, thistle, and buttonbush. After we release the butterflies on Earth Day, art students will paint an appropriate **habitat** with their butterfly in it,” she lectured, “and music students will compose a short tune.

“Each student will raise his or her own butterfly from a caterpillar (which is the **larvae**) to the **chrysalis** (in which the caterpillar **metamorphosis** will occur) and, finally, into a Painted Lady butterfly,” Mr. Melodious Music concluded.

“This will be **stupendous**,” Felicia Fey informed her pals. Then, in her **exhilaration**, she accidentally waved her hands the wrong way, enacting a spell, and a white maggot **oozed** out of Sam’s left ear.

“EEWW, that’s gross, Felicia,” **shrilled** Isabelle and Pauline in unison.

Sam Sagacious and the other boys collected the disgusting maggot Felicia’s spell had produced and admired its properties. They plotted to leave it on some unsuspecting teacher’s desk. Which teacher deserved their “present”? They couldn’t **concur**.

“It came out of my ear, so I get to decide,” insisted an **adamant** Sam.

The three girls almost **retched** in disgust, but they quickly turned their thoughts to butterflies. “Oh, you guys, I can’t wait until the caterpillars arrive,” said Isabelle, her face **animated** by the thought of raising a butterfly.

Then, on a day that had been particularly **problematical**, the group arrived in art and music and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Boy, Pauline, this has been a **horrendous** day,” said Isabelle Ingenuous.

Pauline Puerile just nodded in agreement as she didn’t trust herself not to cry.

“Yeah, Orson Odious forgot his truce, and he insulted Sam about his **spectacles**,” groaned Jesse Jocose. “We must make up a limerick about him, William,” he grinned **puckishly**.

A nasty young **stripling** from Toast (North Carolina)
Was meaner and crueller than most.
His **barbs** were so cruel
That we hated school
Where he made his nastiest boasts.

Ms. Grammar Grouch and Mr. Math Martinet, who were passing by the group just as Jesse Jocose recited his **doggerel**, stopped dead in their tracks, one foot raised as if to take another step.

Their eyelids fluttered wildly. Their lips clamped shut but their tongues still **protruded** like pink taffy. Wisps of smoke curled from their ears as they stood there, unmoving. There they froze, **manifesting** their bizarre behavior for fewer than three seconds. It wasn't a pretty sight; they looked like ugly, stone **gargoyles!**

"Stranger and stranger," murmured Sam as he made a note in his **omnipresent** notebook.

During the peculiar **interlude**, William gently dared to touch Mr. Math Martinet on the tip of his large, Pinocchio-like **proboscis**. The **latter** did not even notice. William Waggish quickly withdrew before both teachers resumed walking as if nothing **untoward** had occurred.

As William and Jesse continued to **regale** the rest with their account of their horrendous day, the crew saw a big box being delivered to the art room!

"Caterpillars!" **bellowed** Felicia Fey in her loudest voice.

"Future butterflies!" **articulated** Isabelle Ingenuous with **awe** in her tone. As usual, she wore a plastic **replica** of one in her auburn **tresses**, and it bobbed as she spoke.

The rest of the day passed, and the group remained **oblivious** to Orson's verbal **barbs** and **jabs**, the teachers' love affair with homework, and the usual battle to walk in the crowded halls with the bigger students.

Finally, it was time for art and music! Ms. Amicable Artist and Mr. Melodious Music stood in the front of the art room as their students **crammed** themselves into a room made for many fewer bodies. A **massive**, opened box sat on the front table.

"These are the caterpillars," said Ms. Amicable Artist in a quiet voice. "The caterpillar-to-butterfly life cycle is **approximately** twenty-one days, so three weeks from now, on Earth Day, we will release butterflies." She added, "First, you will choose a partner."

Murmurs erupted from the students as they searched for partners. "Silence, students, you may choose partners after you receive all the instructions," Ms. Amicable Artist gently **reproached** the kids. "Next, each pair of you will receive one of these cups," she continued as Mr. Melodious Music held up several small, covered cups in his hand.

Mr. Melodious Music continued Ms. Amicable Artist's **discourse**. "Each one of these," he said, indicating the covered cups, "contains four to five caterpillars. Because not all of the caterpillars will live, each pair of students will have between three to five butterflies to release. The caterpillar cup has all the food the caterpillars need to **metamorphose**. Finally, keep the lid on the cup until the caterpillars form their **chrysalises**," he warned the students. "Completing the chrysalis will take only about ten days," he concluded.

“Awesome,” **marveled** Isabelle Ingenuous who adored butterflies.

Ms. Amicable Artist resumed the lecture with a **caveat**. “Handle your cups as little and as gently as possible so that you do not disturb the caterpillars. Occasionally, you may open the lid to peer inside, but **refrain** from touching the caterpillars; it will stop them from changing.”

Even though there were sixty sixth-graders in the overcrowded room, silence **reigned**. Suddenly, one student coughed, and the **mesmerized** crowd resumed its usual **clamor**.

“I can’t wait three weeks!” **puled** Pauline Puerile in a **petulant** tone.

A boy named Quincy **Querulous** echoed Pauline’s whine. “Why can’t we speed up the things?” he asked **peevisly**.

“Nature takes her own time,” **mollified** Sam Sagacious.

Nature did take its own time. In three weeks, each pair of students opened a box, revealing several **chrysalises** on the sides and little green balls on the bottom.

“EWWWW! What are those little green balls?” asked Pauline Puerile who was totally grossed out.

“They are caterpillar poop, you dummy,” piped up Quincy **Querulous** who actually had done his homework. (He liked to insult his **peers** almost as much as Orson Odious but wasn’t as **adept** at it.)

After the teachers sent Quincy Querulous out of the room for his **insensitive** remark, the rest of the class **warily** removed the small pieces of paper to which the chrysalis had **adhered**. They then taped them to the inside wall of one of the butterfly **abodes** that the art class had constructed. They also placed twigs inside the abodes. Pauline Puerile, of course, dropped a chrysalis and cried with **consternation**.

In science, Orson Odious, who took P.E. instead of art or music, yanked the plastic butterfly from Isabelle’s hair, put it in his **unruly**, uncombed mop, flapped his arms, and pretended to fly around the room like a butterfly to make fun of the students who were excited about the project. In reality, the **obnoxious** pest was jealous.

In art, each student drew a picture of his or her chrysalis, and in music, they played a **pastoral** piece with a **lilting** melody that gave the airy feeling of a butterfly in flight. Even Olivia Otiose practiced her part **assiduously** and played it beautifully. Everyone was anxious for the final metamorphosis to happen.

A little more than a week later, William Waggish arrived in art. To his amazement, he spied lovely Painted Lady butterflies in the butterfly **abode**. They clung to the side. Their wings looked as if they had been painted with black, brown, and orange paint with spots of

**Read-aloud
passage**

white, red, and blue thrown in. They were lovely! They perched on the twigs and pumped their **frangible** wings to unfurl them.

**Read-aloud
passage**

“Oh, look, guys,” William Waggish gleefully **whooped** to his classmates, “the butterflies are emerging!”

As the class supplied the newly formed insects with food (sugar water), they impatiently waited for Earth Day which was two days **hence**, at the end of April.

Finally Earth Day arrived. The entire sixth-grade class, Orson Odious included, gathered around the butterfly houses that were on tables in the middle of the P.E. field. The weather was **balmy**, and there was a slight breeze. Orson Odious pushed and pinched his way to the front of the crowd, and Ms. Amicable Artist, who did not feel amicable towards **aggressive** bullies, **banished** him farther back because Dean Dread was there.

Ms. Amicable Artist then asked Isabelle and William to come forward. Pauline whined in disappointment, and Felicia Fey danced in a circle of **vicarious** joy for her friends. Two brown moths flew out of Ms. Grammar Grouch’s hair.

Mr. Melodious Music called upon Sam Sagacious and, much to her surprise, a **flabbergasted** Olivia Otiose. “You, Sam, are a talented and **diligent** student,” he said.

Orson Odious made **noxious** faces from the last row of students.

You, Olivia Otiose, have improved so much, that I **deem** that you, too, deserve this honor,” Mr. Melodious Music stated as he beckoned with his finger for the two students to come up close to the butterfly **abodes**.

Then, at a nod from the two teachers, Isabelle, William, Sam, and Olivia **simultaneously** lifted the lid to a butterfly abode. As the crowd gasped, “Ahhh,” in **unison**, a fluttering cloud of brown, black, and orange **hues** rose from the boxes and **dispersed** in **diverse** directions.

Orson Odious tried to catch one to crush it; thankfully, he failed. As the cloud of butterflies rose into the air and **dispersed** with the breeze, the sixth-graders craned their necks to watch their departure. This had been a truly **prodigious** experience for the **majority** of the sixth-graders. Even Orson Odious was impressed although he did not admit it.

The last six weeks of school sped by with **alacrity**. The band concert went well, and although she earned her usual “Ds” and “Fs” in the majority of her classes, Olivia Otiose and her clarinet wowed the audience. Sam Sagacious aced all the exams with ease, and Isabelle Ingenuous earned all “As” and “Bs” except for a “C” in math,

**Read-aloud
passage**

the **bane** of her existence (besides Orson Odious). Her drawing of her butterfly astounded all at the **annual** art show. William Waggish and his new friend, Jesse Jocose, continued to compose **outlandish** limericks. Felicia Fey only let fly a few **inappropriate** spells that had minor, **insignificant** results, usually involving Ms. Grammar Grouch. Pauline Puerile still cried when frustrated, but even she **ameliorated** her grades. Thus, their sixth-grade year drew to a close.

One gorgeous morning at the end of May, the sextet **strolled** to school. They were unusually early. (Olivia Otiose, who had spent the night at Isabelle's house, actually was on time!) They reached the parking lot at the school just as the custodian, Mr. **Adept** Fixit, got out of his blue pick-up truck. Mr. Adept Fixit waved at the group of friends, grabbed a strange-looking tool from his truck, and **scurried** into the building. He had an **apprehensive** look on his face.

The friends watched in amazement as Mr. Adept Fixit **bustled** from room to room with only one tool. As he exited each room, the lights went on quickly, and the blinds rose. From their **vantage** point on the sidewalk, the friends could see well the outlines of their teachers in the rooms.

"Where did they come from?" **astutely** asked Sam. I see fewer than three cars in the parking lot, and the teachers aren't moving, too.

"This is a mystery to be solved next year when we are in the seventh grade," said William in a rare serious tone.

"Yes, William, I **concur**," said Sam Sagacious. "There are neither enough time nor enough clues, and I only want to think about my summer and the book The Mystery of the Terrible Teachers," he agreed.

"Yeah," said Isabelle as she nodded her head in **assent**, and her plastic butterfly bobbed **in accord**.

"I don't like this," whined Pauline.

Everyone else heaved his or her shoulders in **exasperation**. Was Pauline going to grow up, and was she ever going to stop her sniveling?

"I think I will wear all black next year in the seventh grade," announced Felicia who had not produced a single successful spell the entire sixth-grade year.

The friends, except Sam, of course, promptly forgot about their strange teachers and concentrated on the end-of-year activities and their summer plans.

On the last day of school (after all the students had left), all was silent except for muffled sounds from the art and music rooms and the "clack" of computer keys in the main office.

Seventh-Grade Part of the Story



Introduction

As the August morning sun chased the shadows from the roofs of houses and painted the sky gold, once again there was an **eerie** silence at Horribly Hard Middle School. In the dawning light, you could not see into the classrooms because of the light-blocking curtains at every window. No early teacher rushed out of a car in the parking lot to set up a lab or to get an early start on preparation for the first day of school. Horribly Hard Middle School was like a spooky mansion: closed, dark, and abandoned.

In contrast, across town, as the sun rose a bit higher in the sky, Marvelously Magic Magnet Middle School (known popularly as MMMMS) burst with energy and noise. Coffee perked in the teachers' lounge. Cars roared into the parking lot, parked, and spilled out teachers of different sizes, shapes, and complexions. Boxes, books, bags, and piles of "stuff" filled their arms as they walked into the school early to be ready for the first day of classes for the year. Finally, three cars drove up to the **dormant** and silent Horribly Hard Middle School—a new mauve Lexus sedan, an old blue Ford pick-up truck, and an old, battered, tan Subaru station wagon that had seen better days. A middle-aged man, Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, stepped out of the Lexus. Another middle-aged man, the custodian, Mr. **Adept** Fixit, exited the blue pick-up.

The man who exited the Lexus wore a suit and tie, and carried a battered briefcase. The owner of the Ford climbed out of his pick-up, walked to the back, and lifted a tool chest from the bed of his truck. He **sported** a denim shirt and overalls, a red handkerchief in his upper pocket, a wrench that hung out of his lower pocket, and a purposeful air.

The door of the Subaru creaked open and out fell construction paper and magazines, followed by a **harried**-looking woman. She was dressed in a long, loose pink dress with a pink flower in her thick blonde hair and a **myriad** of new paint brushes in her mouth. The two men nodded solemnly to each other and smiled at the woman as she gathered the stuff that had fallen from her car.

The men **trekked** in different directions, the suited one toward the school office and the man in overalls toward the custodian's office. The woman gathered her materials from the pavement and **ambled** slowly to a building set slightly off from the main part of the school. No other human soul could be seen in the dim light of early morning.

Slowly, one after the other, classroom lights came on in HHMS. Soon the school was **ablaze**, and all classrooms were lit, but apart from Mr. **Adept** Fixit, the custodian, rushing from room to room to open the

Introduction

doors and turn on the lights, no sounds of people could be heard on the campus. This was the first day of school?

If you listened carefully in the main office near the door to the principal's room, you could hear the faint click of computer keys as Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, a man who was always concerned with correct procedure, checked and rechecked the procedures which would be followed that first day of school as well as the list of students who would enter the **portals** of the HHMS in about an hour. If you **strolled** over to the art room, and listened very carefully, you could hear faint singing of an old Beatles tune and the rustling of paper.

Ten minutes later another car pulled up in front of the still silent Horribly Hard Middle School. A man in a **dapper** suit who was humming a Mozart sonata **ambled** toward a nearby dark classroom. He was burdened with various-sized instrument cases. He wore his favorite purple tie that was decorated with yellow musical notes. His tie was **askew**, and his glasses perched unevenly on his nose, ruining the effect of his handsome suit.

Before the man with the instrument cases could close the trunk of his car, a final **vehicle**, an ancient white Volvo sedan, **careened** into the lot and parked next to the **decrepit** tan Subaru. A pleasingly-plump middle-aged woman with curly grey hair jumped **animatedly** out of the Volvo and dashed up to the man who hummed the Mozart sonata.

She spoke briefly to him, gesturing with both hands. The man pointed to a building, nodded **genially** in farewell (since his arms were filled), turned around, shifted his burden of instrument cases, and walked in the opposite direction from where he had pointed.

The **stout** woman returned to her car, opened the trunk, and removed an obviously heavy box that was **brimful** with books. She heaved the box for better **leverage** and trudged slowly with her heavy burden in the direction the Mozart-humming man had indicated. The staff parking lot of Horribly Hard Middle School once again fell silent. Only five cars awaited their drivers.

On another side of the school, school busses arrived, one by one. Each **disgorged** a bunch of chattering students. Other students who had walked to school **ambled** slowly onto the school grounds to join the mobs being let off by the busses. Horribly Hard Middle School came alive with voices. A new school year was about to begin.

Meanwhile, in a house not far from Horribly Hard Middle School, a group of five **diverse** seventh-graders had gathered to gossip about the upcoming first day of school.

They stood in the **foyer** of Isabelle **Ingenuous's** house, waiting for Olivia **Otiose** whose **languid** (yet delightful) nature usually made her late to everything, even the first day of seventh grade.

Isabelle **Ingenuous**, always **animated**, twirled in nervousness and an **excess** of energy. Pauline **Puerile** whined in a babyish manner about the **tardiness** of Olivia **Otiose**, about having to return to Horribly Hard Middle School for another year, and about the homework the teachers loved to pile on her.

Another girl was **garbed** all in black. Even her hair was dyed black. It was Felicia **Fey**, who acted in a bizarre manner and who was known for her spells that always went **awry**. Felicia began to mutter words of a spell to encourage her friend Olivia **Otiose** to hurry. Isabelle **Ingenuous** put her hand over Felicia's mouth to stop her from **uttering** her spell, and she warned her friend.

"You know it will backfire on you, Felicia," warned Isabelle Ingenuous. "You don't want to ruin your new black hairdo or start the seventh grade with **putrid** purple streaks in your hair as you did in the sixth grade last year, do you?"

William **Waggish** made a tasteless but funny joke about girls and their weird habits, but no one listened. They were used to his **lame** limericks, **vapid** jokes, and strange sense of humor. The last member of the troop, Sam **Sagacious**, simply stood wisely and silently, waiting for the **clamor** to die down. An **erudite** young man, Sam held a book in his hand, The Count of Monte Cristo by Alexandre Dumas, and he read as he waited.

Since his joke had fallen flat, and no one had laughed, William **Waggish** **regaled** his friends with a new limerick about girls who wear black. Brown-faced with expressive dark pupils, William composed mischievous poems to hide his real **aspiration**: to be as **eloquent** and **articulate** a poet as his secret hero, Langston Hughes.

There once was a strange girl from Mack (Colorado)
Whose hair and clothes were all black.
She looked like a crow,
And she should have said "No"
To trying a magical act.

Sam **Sagacious** put his book in his backpack and laughed. Felicia **Fey** threatened to zap William with a spell, but that didn't **deter** him. Isabelle Ingenuous smiled at William's poem and the image of Felicia as a crow, but she dared not laugh because she didn't want to **affront** her friend Felicia.

Felicia **glowered**, stuck out her tongue at William, and then muttered something rude under her breath.

“William, can’t you write anything except those **insipid** limericks?” she snapped. “How about giving us a break and trying another form of poetry for a change?”

Isabelle Ingenuous **deftly** changed the subject before an argument **ensued**. “I dread going back to Horribly Hard Middle School for another year,” she groaned. “I dislike all the teachers except Ms. **Amicable** Artist, and I don’t want to be laughed at by Orson **Odious** and his stuck-up friends,” she concluded.

“Yes, I’m with you, Isabelle,” **concurred** Sam Sagacious with **fervor**, “but we also need to curb William and his limericks. Doesn’t he know any other form of poetry? Would other types of poetry have the same effect on the teachers?” he **queried** further, always curious.

Finally Olivia **Otiose** arrived, late as usual, shrugging on her new **chartreuse** backpack as she hurried up to the door of Isabelle’s **abode**. “Hola, amigos,” she said in Spanish she had learned over the summer, “Am I late?” she queried as she approached her friends.

“Aren’t you always, Olivia?” **sniped** Felicia, who still smarted from William’s limerick about her magical **ineptitude**. “Are we ready to go face school for another year?” she finished as she waltzed out the door and onto the sidewalk.

As they slung their backpacks over their shoulders, the **intrepid** friends followed Felicia out of Isabelle’s **abode**. There was a **paucity** of talk as the group **trekked** the short walk to Horribly Hard Middle School.

At the edge of the campus, each wondered **mutely** what the new school year in the seventh grade would be like. All too soon, they had reached their school. At the school by the bus port, they were joined by another friend, Jesse **Jocose**, who rode the school bus. Each of them found his or her name on lists posted on the doors to the seventh-grade wing of the school.

“Oh, no, guys, it’s bad. It looks as if many of our sixth-grade teachers followed us to the seventh grade, too,” moaned Pauline **Puerile** in **dejection**.

“I see a lot of homework in our future, and I see William getting into trouble with his **incessant**, stupid limericks,” **predicted** Felicia Fey in an **eerie**, spooky voice.

“Hey, wait up, people,” chirped a soft, cheery tone.

“It’s Vivian **Virtuous**,” whispered Isabelle to her friends.

“I remember her from last year as she was in a few of my classes.

She always did her work, and she got straight ‘As.’ She was the one on whom Orson **Odius** picked whenever he could,” she finished.

“Remember me?” murmured the girl with a quiet voice and carefully **coiffed**, intricately braided, **ebony** hair. She clutched a huge hard-back book in her hand entitled War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy. “I was in your science class last year, and I sat in the last row as far away from Orson **Odius** and his **crony** Danny **Dapper** as I could get. They used to lie in wait for me between classes.

“Orson always whispered **malevolent** things under his breath in my direction, too,” she sighed, “and he called me a ‘suck-up.’ Unfortunately, the teacher never caught him doing it.

Danny, on the other hand, threatened and **coerced** me into doing his homework so that he could go to parties. No adult ever caught on to his **shenanigans** either.”

Vivian Virtuous joined the group of seven seventh-graders as each member searched for the correct homeroom. When everyone had found his or her **appropriate** classroom, the friends found that they had different homerooms.

When she arrived in her homeroom, Pauline Puerile whined at the unfairness of it all.

“It’s not fair,” Pauline **whimpered** to herself. “It’s just not fair. Not only do I have to go back to school, but my worst **nemesis** is in homeroom to **torment** me first thing every morning.”

Orson **Odius**, who, indeed, was in Pauline’s homeroom, grinned **maliciously** at her and **lobbed** a slimy spit wad in her direction. Pauline ducked, and she incurred the **wrath** of the homeroom teacher, Mr. Math **Martinet**.

“Stop **fidgiting**, young lady, and sit still,” he ordered Pauline in a menacing tone of voice.

Sam **Sagacious** **ambled** to his new homeroom a few doors down from Pauline’s. As he entered the room’s **portal**, he froze mid-stride.

“Oh, my,” Sam Sagacious muttered in awe as he spied a **comely** girl who sat **demurely** in the third row of desks. Sam hastily grabbed a seat in the fourth row, right behind the **pulchritudinous** girl.

The young, **comely** lady wore a tight, ribbed, aqua top that barely met the top of her equally-tight jeans. Her medium-length black hair curled gently around her ears and flipped up in the back like birds’ tail-feathers, only softer. Sam Sagacious, for once in his life, was struck “dumb.” (**pun—meaning for “dumb” = “silent, speechless”**)

Sam, by the way, knew that he had seen this **pulchritudinous** girl before among other students, but he couldn’t place her. He sat

there in the fourth row, right behind the “vision,” and breathed in the fresh, shampoo scent from her cute **ebony tresses**.

“This is a **novel** (meaning “new”) twist. She’s extremely ‘hott’ with two ‘Ts,’” Sam thought to himself as, busily writing, he copied the daily schedule.

As the day progressed, the eight friends met periodically in the hall to compare gossip and the latest news flashes.

“My friend and I think that Orson Odious is worse than ever this year,” proclaimed Isabelle and Vivian almost in **unison**.

“Danny **Dapper** is worse than ever as well. Most of the girls think he is so handsome and good, but I think he is **abhorrent** and **vindictive**,” added Isabelle with a **grimace**.

“Too right,” said William, who already had experienced a **skirmish** with his arch **nemesis**, the **obstreperous** Orson, and his pal Danny.

“They’re *both* in my homeroom,” **carped** Pauline Puerile. “It’s unfair.”

“Have you seen the new English teacher yet?” **queried** Sam. “She’s one for whom even Olivia Otiose will work! She does well.”

“She’s ‘boss,’” William concluded in the current **vernacular**.

“Oh, yeah, William, she’s ‘tubular,’” **concurred** Jesse **Jocose**, who was not to be outdone in his knowledge of **slang**.

“Yeah, she’s not like Ms. Grammar Grouch at all,” **reiterated** Felicia Fey. “She’s, like, almost human, and I think she has a touch of magic in her. She has such a way with words; she almost paints pictures with them.”

At that moment, Orson Odious passed by. “There’s the girl who can’t do anything right,” he **taunted**. “You’re weird, Felicia. Your **somber** outfit is ugly, and your hair looks like a muddy broom. You don’t have any class.”

Felicia Fey **glowered** at Orson and prepared to zap him with a spell, but her friend’s warnings stopped her before she could mouth the first word.

“Careful, Felicia,” counseled Isabelle, “your spells don’t always work the way you want. It’s too **perilous** to try one.”

Felicia held back and just stared in the direction of the rapidly retreating Orson. “You’re going to get your **comeuppance** some day,” she muttered to his back.

After that, the first few months of school passed in the usual fashion except that Sam was **enamored** of the girl in his homeroom and kept trying to get her to notice him—to no **avail**. She seemed **oblivious** of his presence and very **aloof**. Something was troubling her.

She didn't seem to be too **blithe**, and she always looked as if something was wrong.

Teachers assigned a **plethora of** homework but less than at the end of the previous year. Vivian Virtuous raised her hand no fewer than three times each period, even in science class. Orson continued to call her a “suck-up” at every opportunity. As usual, Beth **Bibliophilic** won the “Million Minutes of Reading” Contest. Orson, the **cad**, picked on her as much as he could, and he reduced her to tears on more than one but fewer than ten occasions.

Petra **Pulchritudinous**, as beautiful as ever, spent as much time as possible in the girls' bathroom. Gossip **abounded** in the halls and students' bathrooms (which still smelled **atrocious**). Orson Odious and his main **syccophant**, Danny Dapper, attempted to make everyone's life as miserable as possible; they were **incorrigible**. They made nasty comments to everyone.

The teachers, with the exception of Ms. **Amicable** Artist, Mr. **Melodious** Music, and the new, amazing English teacher, Ms. **Witty** Writing Wizard, were their usual, stern selves. They also still did their usual routine when William or Sam recited one of their **appalling** limericks: stick out their tongues, smoke slightly from their ears and noses, and flicker their eyes.

Happily for the crew of friends who were getting tired of William Waggish's **deplorable** limericks, the new English teacher, Ms. **Witty** Writing Wizard, taught them a new form of poetry—**cinquain**. William, thankfully, abandoned limericks and began to write cinquains. (**NOTE TO TEACHER: See Chapter 5 for definition of “cinquain” and how to write one.**)

William Waggish, as soon as he was comfortable with the new poetic form, **penned** several cinquains. William's first effort was about Mr. Math **Martinet**, his least favorite teacher, and he had the **audacity** to **utter** it as he entered class that same day. He titled his poem “Mindless Math.”

Math class,
It's deadly dull.
The old teacher **drones** on...
Numbers, equations, formulas.
Boring.

Out of the corner of his eye, William spied Mr. Math Martinet who was standing at the front of the classroom. As William **uttered** the last few words of the poem, Mr. Martinet's eyes fluttered fewer than eight times, his tongue protruded, and his ears **exuded** curls of smoke.

Midterm

“Aha,” muttered William to no one in particular, “cinquains work as well as limericks on these **bizarre** teachers.”

Sam Sagacious pursued his new interest, the girl in homeroom whose name was Alessandra **Amorous**. She was a former **sympathant** of Orson Odious. Alessandra had become **disenchanted** with the **latter** when Orson (who secretly loved Alessandra) had popped her bra in the back, right in front of everyone in the lunchroom. She hadn’t spoken to Orson since then.

Orson Odious, of course, was not pleased with this turn of events, and he went out of his way to embarrass Alessandra every chance he got. Alessandra also avoided Danny Dapper and Petra Pulchritudinous who still hung with their leader, Orson.

“Still stuck-up, aren’t you, Alessandra?” Orson said to Alessandra one day in front of Sam and at least nine other students as he passed by.

“Yes, are you **spurning** me, too?” queried Petra **spitefully**. Petra secretly missed the company of her former friend, Alessandra, when she **primped** in the girls’ bathroom between every class, but she would never let Orson, Danny, or Alessandra know.

Alessandra muttered something **uncomplimentary** in Spanish under her breath, but no one else heard the **affront**. Orson certainly wouldn’t have understood it anyway.

There, in the middle of the lunchroom, Sam wanted to punch Orson in his big, ugly **proboscis**, but he **refrained** from doing so. Alessandra **cringed**.

Sam gently put his hand on her shoulder and said, “He is a ‘bogus’ **cad**. No one listens to him. My friends and I pay him no **heed**.”

Alessandra smiled at Sam, and as he grinned back, Sam’s heart sang with hope.

Meanwhile, Orson Odious and his **sympathant**, Danny Dapper (whom the girls thought handsome despite his mean nature), had big plans for a particularly **noisome** event.

Ms. Stern Science displayed a particularly **awe-inspiring** demonstration of teacher weirdness after William recited *sotto voce* one of his new cinquains to see how it would affect the teacher. Sam concluded that cinquains had an even greater effect on the bizarre teachers than limericks. Ms. Stern Science not only had done the usual eye fluttering, smoke curling, and tongue **protrusion**, but she also had raised and lowered both arms no fewer than five times during the recitation of the poem, once with the **utterance** of each line.

This poem was entitled, “Ms. **Monotonous** Science” because Ms. Stern Science **droned** on and on about the day’s science topic

(which sounded like all the other days' topics) while covering the board with her notes. She required each student to copy the **latter laboriously** into his or her notebook.

Science,
Dreary subject...
Monotonous drivel...
Every day the same thing from one
Dull prof.

“Wowzer, man!” whispered Jesse to his friend Sam, who also had witnessed the effect of William’s poem on the teacher. “This ‘rocks.’ I can’t wait to **regale** the rest of our friends with this latest effect of William’s poems.”

Yes, this was another piece to add to the puzzle of the bizarre teachers. Inspired by William’s success and by Ms. Witty Writing Wizard’s **fervent** teaching, Jesse wrote a cinquain of his own. He dedicated his to his favorite teacher, Ms. **Amicable** Artist, on whom he had a small crush. He entitled his composition “Art in Pink” because Ms. **Amicable** Artist loved to wear that **hue**.

Frothy
Teacher in pink.
Daily we create and mold.
She guides our hands...Creative things
Spring forth.

When Jesse repeated his poem **audibly** in art class, within hearing of his favorite teacher, he watched her actions. Nothing happened! He said the poem again.

“That’s a nice cinquain, Jesse,” said Ms. Amicable Artist, but her eyes never fluttered; her tongue never protruded; and her ears and nose never **emitted** smoke.

“Yes, this gets weirder and weirder,” Jesse muttered.

The group **unremittingly** continued to test its teachers with the new poetry form. Everybody wrote his or her own cinquain and then tried it out. It was “sweet” to watch the **majority** of the teachers’ reactions to the poems. Ms. Amicable Artist, Mr. Melodious Music, and Ms. Witty Writing Wizard, however, still did not react in any way except to **critique** the poems. The crew was getting even more **perplexed**. The cinquain had the most **blatant** effect on Ms. Stern Science and Dean Dread. Sam **pondered** this new development in the mystery.

A few weeks later, though, there was an **odoriferous** incident that distracted the group from their experiments with the bizarre teachers. One day, as the students **milled** about in the halls between

classes, a loud “boom” erupted from the boys’ bathroom in the seventh-grade hallway. The “boom” immediately was followed by a bad, **noxious** odor that **reeked** badly of rotten eggs.

The door to the boys’ bathroom suddenly burst open, and a **plethora of noisome** grey smoke **billowed** out. Two boys emerged from the smoke, coughing, hacking, giggling, and holding their noses. Isabelle and Felicia, who were standing nearby, thought they recognized Orson and Danny as they ran out of the bathroom. Then, all **perdition** broke loose as students scattered in all directions to flee the noxious smoke and the **dearth** of fresh air.

A booming, **stentorian** voice echoed from down the hall. “Who set off a stink bomb in the boys’ bathroom?” **bellowed** a tall, black-**garbed, foreboding**-looking man. It was the feared, seemingly **ubiquitous** Dean Dread who was ever present in the halls and lunchroom. He **loomed** over and rushed among the scurrying seventh-graders as he proceeded towards the still-smoking bathroom.

Felicia, for whom spells never worked, panicked. The **putrescent stench** of the stink bomb filled her nostrils, and it gagged her. Without thinking, she muttered an **incantation** to **dispel** the smoke and odor. Of course, it backfired badly. Felicia’s fingernails turned **mauve**. The smoke changed from grey to mauve, but it still **reeked** badly of rotten eggs. Oddly enough, there were mauve streaks in the hair of the two fleeing **culprits**, Orson Odious and Danny Dapper.

William Waggish, also on the scene, muttered his newest cinquain entitled “Orson, the **Obstreperous**.”

There is
One bad person.
A mean boy...A troublemaker..
He loves to torment the helpless.
Bad kid.

Immediately, Dean Dread waved his arms up and down in **cadence** with the poem as smoke curled from his ears and nostrils. His tongue protruded from his mouth, and his eyes fluttered uncontrollably. In addition, his legs seemed to buckle completely, and he wobbled like the scarecrow from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*. It was a **stellar** performance of teacher weirdness. When Dean Dread recovered from his momentary **lapse**, he took charge of the situation.

“Get the custodian, Mr. Fixit,” he bellowed to a nearby teacher.

Then as he frowned, the dean’s eyes bulged when he spied the mauve smoke that had been grey fewer than four seconds before. He also saw two **striplings** with matching mauve streaks in their hair sprint

out the door of the seventh-grade wing. He made a connection between the two in less than a second.

“You, boys, STOP!” Dean Dread roared to the **receding** backs of Orson and Danny.

All boys in the hallway stopped except the two in question who were headed for the sixth-grade wing at a **brisk pace**. This **exacerbated** the possibility of their guilt.

If they had run five steps farther, the **miscreants** might have escaped Dean Dread’s eye. Dean Dread, however, moved quickly. Quicker than the blink of an eye, he had the **malefactors** by the back of their shirts.

“You two **reprobates**, come with me to my office. We need to investigate this incident,” he said in a low, menacing tone.

Orson and Danny cringed. The crowd of seventh-graders who witnessed this clapped their hands in delight and **jubilantly jeered** at the two **scalawags**! The class tormenters finally had been **apprehended** for something. Further, they even might be **castigated** and then suspended for their **transgression**. Setting off a stink bomb, after all, was a major offense.

When the **putrescent** smoke had been cleared, everyone **congregated** around Felicia Fey.

“You did well, girlfriend,” praised Isabelle Ingenuous.

“You really nailed them, Felicia,” **extolled** Sam Sagacious.

“Astounding, Felicia,” said Vivian Virtuous **diffidently**.

“Way to go, girl,” **lauded** Jesse Jocose as he **cuffed** Felicia gently on her back.

“I take back all those poems about your magic, Felicia,” William Waggish apologized **contritely**.

“That’s all right, William,” returned Felicia **magnanimously**, for she really **loathed** William’s teasing poems. “What am I going to do with these mauve nails? They clash with my black **attire**.”

The **dénouement** of the entire stink-bomb **incident** was that Orson and Danny (over whom all the girls still drooled and for whom some still did an extra copy of their homework) were suspended for ten days. The **nefarious duo** was sentenced to cafeteria clean-up for a month after their return, too.

After that incident, Dean Dread and the rest of the teachers kept a watchful eye on the **reprehensible** pair for the remainder of the school year. Orson still gave evil looks; Danny still **preyed** on the girls; but the two ceased to be a major pain in the **posterior** of the **intrepid** friends.

Now, Felicia **abruptly** became “Miss Popular.” One of the teachers even recommended her for the special school for magically gifted kids, Marvelously Magic Magnet Middle School.

On the day she was tested for admission to that school, however, Felicia's entry spell, as usual, went **awry**. Instead of raising a pencil more than one foot but fewer than two feet off the desk as required, Felicia turned the pencil and her hair green.

"I didn't want to go there anyway," she **rationalized** later to Isabelle, her best friend, "and I didn't want to leave all of you stuck here without me. At whom would William direct his **putrid** poems?" she concluded.

Now that Orson and Danny were **relegated** to nasty stares only, new problem students **cropped up**. Carolyn **Clamorous** became even more **obstreperous** with her persistent, but pointed, questions in math. John **Jabbering** and his **incessant, inane** chatter grew to be more **audible** and more annoying. Quincy **Querulous**, who always argued with everyone, tried to pick more **quarrels**. Quincy went so far as to complain **vociferously** to Ms. Stern Science about copying the notes from the board. She punished him by requiring him to make an extra copy of the notes for someone who was absent. Even Jesse's usually **droll** jokes fell flatter than usual.

Skateboarding Steven **Slovenly** provided a welcome break in the **monotony** of school when he accidentally dropped his sagging jeans to his ankles as he jumped to touch the top of a doorway. It seemed that Dean Dread was right behind him. Steven **Slovenly** thus **inadvertently** "moonied" Dean Dread with his bright, orange and blue, striped boxer shorts. Steven maintained afterwards that the **retribution** of three days of in-school detention was worth mooning the dean. Everyone talked about the incident for weeks, and Steven became the new hero for that time.

William, Jesse, and Sam intensified their **quest** to **unravel** the mystery of the bizarre teachers and their strange behavior.

Sam, Jesse, and Olivia **Otiose** had taken music for the second year. Sam, as he had the previous year, played the oboe. Olivia, **loathe** to learn a new instrument, stuck to her clarinet, and Jesse, always the **buffoon**, played the trombone which allowed him some "tubular slides." For the most part, the trio liked the subject and the teacher, but classical music did not **pique** their interest.

Jesse, whose attitude towards classical music was less than **fervent**, directed a **pithy** cinquain at the music teacher, Mr. Melodious Music. Jesse entitled his **oeuvre** "Music Misery."

We play
Poorly, off-key.
Bach, Beethoven, Mozart,
Three ancient composers, long dead,
Haunt us.

In spite of the mention of his favorite composers, Mr. Melodious Music, a **devotee** of classical music, did not appreciate the **sentiment**. He sentenced Jesse to playing Bach on the trombone to **engross** the crowd at lunch for a day, but Mr. Melodious Music did not react in any other way to the poem.

“Strange,” murmured Sam.

“‘Bogus,’ you’re toast, my friend,” whispered Olivia for whom writing a poem for the fun of it would be **anomalous** even though she was good at it.

“‘Bummer, dudes,’” said Jesse Jocose to his friends as he **mulled over** the misery of having to play Bach on his trombone before his **peers**. “If only he had let me play jazz...”

In English, Ms. Witty Writing Wizard also did not react to the poems in any way except to analyze them for form. William Waggish recited **sotto voce** one of his best efforts. He had entitled it “Writing Wacko” because the new English teacher was, indeed, a little crazy. Ms. Writing Wizard required her students to sing “dead” verbs and the **subordinating conjunctions** and to chant prepositions and the coordinating conjunctions.

Writing.

Weird stuff.

Poems, essays, stories.

Singing “dead” verbs; chanting the preps.

Strange class.

“William,” **critiqued** Ms. Writing Wizard, “your last line needs work.”

In social studies, however, the new teacher, Ms. **Stringent** Social Studies, reacted in the **customary** fashion to the poems. Isabelle Ingenuous, who usually didn’t like to **mock** anyone, wrote a cinquain for her least favorite class.

History (Say it in two syllables.)

We study dates, facts,

And people who are dead...

A good class to catch a good nap.

Dreary.

Towards the end of the period, Isabelle recited her poem under her breath when Ms. **Stringent** Social Studies was walking the aisle to make sure no one was being **unethical** on the test.

There was an immediate and **spontaneous** reaction by Ms. Stringent Social Studies. Not only did her eyelids flutter, her

tongue protrude, and smoke curl from her ears, but her **lank** grey hair stood on end for more than two but fewer than three seconds.

“Oh, wow, that ‘rocks,’” said Jesse who witnessed the event.

“What is all this?” whined Pauline for whom anything out of the ordinary **overtaxed** her ability to cope. “I had gotten used to the smoke, the flutter, and the tongue, but hair standing on end? What’s next?” she moaned. “Sparks?”

Jesse, William, and Sam then wrote and recited a **barrage** of **egregious** cinquains. Alessandra also wrote one which she gave to Sam to **articulate**. Sam, for whom Alessandra was the **epitome** of female beauty, was thrilled right down to his toes. Of course, he tried her cinquain on every teacher with whom he came into contact. Alessandra’s cinquain was entitled “Horribly Hard Middle School ‘Bites;”” it went like this:

School “bites.”
Teachers assign
Piles of homework and projects.
Bathrooms **reek**; lunchroom is noisy.
Why us?

Ms. Witty Writing Wizard **upbraided** Sam for his use of the **pejorative** word “bites.”

“As you know, young man, your use use of the verb ‘to bite’ is improper,” she scolded. “You have to bite something; it is a transitive verb. You’re using it as an intransitive verb,” she finished with a **flourish** as she lay down the chalk.

“What is she **blathering** about?” whispered Olivia to Isabelle since Olivia rarely listened in class when a teacher spoke.

Ms. Witty Writing Wizard overheard Olivia’s question, and she **exuberantly** launched into an extensive, **extemporaneous** lesson on verbs that take an object and verbs that do not.

“Oh, brother,” murmured Olivia as she rolled her eyes upwards in **aversion**, “she is a grammar book in the **guise** of a person.”

Isabelle and Sam just grinned; Olivia Otiose was being her usual **otiose** self. She was very intelligent, but somehow **abhorred** to do anything that might make her do homework or study.

Other teachers reacted differently to Alessandra’s poem. Mr. Math Martinet, Ms. Stern Science, and Ms. **Stringent** Social Studies did the usual: fluttering eyes, smoking ears, protruding tongue.

In addition, their hair either stood on end for fewer than three seconds, or they raised their arms in the air in **cadence** with each syllable of the poem.

When Sam recited Alessandra’s poem in the vicinity



**Read-aloud
passage**

of Dean Dread in the cafeteria, he rewarded the seventh-graders with a startling show of silver sparks that **emanated** from the tips of his fingers. The show stopped as **abruptly** as it had begun.

“Wow, Pauline,” said Jesse Jocose in admiration, “you called it! Sparks!”

Principal **Punctilious**, who had lunchroom duty that day and who did not show any **overt** reaction to the poem, promptly used his radio and called Mr. **Adept** Fixit. The **latter** arrived in fewer than five seconds and then exited with Dean Dread following behind him. Jesse Jocose recited the poem again as the two passed by his table, but while Dean Dread reacted in the usual manner, Mr. Adept Fixit did not even **grimace**.

The art and music teachers, like the new creative writing teacher, showed no overt reaction except utter disgust at the use of the **epithet** “bites.”

One day at lunch, Sam, William, Jesse, Isabelle, Pauline, Vivian, Alessandra (who now hung around with her hero, Sam), Felicia, and Pauline analyzed the new information that they were **amassing** on their bizarre teachers.

“This is getting stranger and stranger,” said Sam. “Why did our **intractable** English teacher last year react to the poems while the creative writing teacher this year does not?”

“Hey, guys, why are they all reacting more obviously this year?” asked Vivian Virtuoso.

Jesse Jocose, who always looked for an excuse to be funny, suddenly stood up on the bench and recited a **spontaneous** *cinquain* in a **strident** voice.

There are
Five things I hate
About lunch: awful food,
Piercing noise, hard seats, no freedom,
Stale rolls.

When he had finished his poem, Jesse sat down on the **inflexible** seat mentioned in Jesse’s poem. Felicia (who secretly liked Jesse) **surreptitiously** threw a stale roll in Jesse’s direction. Jesse, laughing, pitched an apple core into Felicia’s lap.

William, not to be outdone and remembering that Dean Dread had left the room, flicked his tray and **launched** his uneaten, **sodden** vegetables into the air and yelled, “Food fight!”

Immediately, the air became **rife** with flying bits of food and trash. Bits of spaghetti dangled from the ceiling fans. Greasy sauce plastered everyone's hair and smeared most **visages**. Bits of "mystery meat" lay in brown blobs on the now-filthy floor. The **cacophony** of shouting and laughing student voices drowned out Mr. Punctilious Principal who stood on stage and shrieked **futilely** into his microphone.

All at once, the doors to the cafeteria flung open. A tall, menacing figure stood there, his **visage** a picture of righteous **wrath**.

"Students, stop this immediately," he boomed over the **din**. Even without **amplification**, his **raucous** voice could be heard by all.

Amazingly, the cafeteria was suddenly silent except for the drip of the spaghetti as it fell from the fans. Students froze in place. They stood, leaned, or sat, mid-hurl, at the sound of Dean Dread's **stentorian** and **fearsome** voice, and they stared in his direction.

"I absolutely will not tolerate such **appalling** behavior," Dean Dread continued in a deadly, low tone that **boded** disaster and punishment. "Sit down, children," he ordered. "There will be **dire** consequences for this," he **intoned**.

Everyone sat, stunned into silence. Even John **Jabbering** was **mute**.

Then Quincy **Querulous**, who always had to argue with everybody, broke the silence and said, "But..."

"I said 'silence,'" repeated Dean Dread as he **bristled** like an angry warthog.

Quincy **Querulous** was **querulous**, but he was not stupid. He did not attempt to speak again. Dean Dread stalked **ominously** to the front of the cafeteria where he stood, hands on hips, and glared at the **miscreants**.

"First," he said, "classes will be **postponed**, and you will stay here until every strand of spaghetti, every drop of milk, every piece of paper, and every **gobbet** of sauce is cleaned, and this cafeteria shines. Second," he **persisted**, "all end-of-the-year field trips are cancelled for all seventh-grade students; instead, you're required to write a series of essays on how to **comport** yourselves in public. Third," he pronounced, "there will now be assigned seats in the cafeteria for the rest of the year."

After Dean Dread made this pronouncement, he crossed his arms in front of his enormous chest and just stared. The seventh-graders cleaned the cafeteria under his watchful eye, and no one opened his or her **maw**. No one, not even Orson, misbehaved in any way. Even John **Jabbering** was **mute**, and Beth Bibliophilic didn't turn pages in her book, *Little Women*, by Louisa May Alcott until Dean Dread stopped talking.

After they cleaned up the mess, the seventh-graders filed **mutely** out of the cafeteria. No one spoke until the cafeteria was no longer in sight.

“It’s not fair to cancel our field trips!” exclaimed William.

“Why do we have to write essays, too?” complained Olivia who hated to write.

“Why is he so mean?” whined Pauline to her friends.

“Hey, you guys,” said Isabelle who always calmed her friends when they were agitated, “we *were* guilty, you know. We *did* throw food, and, in fact, we began the food fight because we threw the first **salvo**.”

“I know,” **retorted** Sam, “but did he have to take away all our end-of-year field trips? It’s too much,” he concluded.

Orson and his **sycophant** Danny, a too handsome young man, chose that moment to pass by angrily. “Nice going, losers,” **jeered** Orson to whom everyone who was not in his crowd was a “loser.”

Danny, **aghast** at the thought of having to write a bunch of essays in front of the teachers which meant he would actually have to write them by himself, really was **livid** at the thought. He **lashed** out.

“You’re nothing but unsightly, stupid trash,” he hissed. “You’re a pimple on Dean Dread’s **posterior**, too.”

Everyone in the group of friends glared at Orson with his or her best **withering** gaze. They still **loathed** Orson and Danny because the two were so mean.

Luckily, the end of the school year quickly arrived. Despite the lack of the much-desired field trip to the amusement park and the extra essays they had to write, the school year ended on an upbeat note. Ms. Amicable Artist, Mr. Melodious Music, and Ms. Witty Writing Wizard got together and staged an afternoon in a nearby park. The HHMS Jazz Band’s members provided music, and they played well. Students made impressions of leaves and flowers onto special paper. Vivian recited some of her favorite poetry, including “I Dream a World” by Langston Hughes. All three subjects were covered so that it could be **dubbed** “educational.”

Soon the last day of school arrived. Exams had ended. The friends, except Sam Sagacious, of course, promptly forgot about their strange teachers and concentrated on their summer plans.

The girls had **diverse** ideas about how to spend their summer. Isabelle Ingenuous had imaginative projects to do. Olivia Otiose had to go to summer school for math because she had been lazy and had not done her homework; nor had she studied for tests. She hoped to spend time with her new friend, Alessandra, though, because she also thought that learning more

Spanish might be fun. Felicia Fey planned to **hone** her magical skills (but she really didn't want to leave her friends to go to the school for **magic**). Pauline Puerile didn't know what she was going to do that summer since no one yet had suggested anything that appealed to her. Alessandra Amorous and her family planned a trip to Puerto Rico to visit relatives. Vivian Virtuous had signed up for a writing course. Beth Bibliophilic would, of course, read as much as she could, but she hoped to travel with her family as well.

The boys had plans as well. William Waggish hoped to laze around in the morning, write poetry, and play sports at the local Boys Club in the afternoons. Sam Sagacious decided to go to the library daily for research but also was on a baseball team with William and Jesse. Jesse Jocose was going to summer school by choice to learn about computers. He hoped to spend his afternoons playing basketball and baseball.

It looked as if it would be a good summer for all the friends. They didn't have to deal with Orson Odious or Danny Dapper (whose parents were going to send them to their grandmothers for two months), and homework (except for Olivia Otiose) already was a **vague** memory.

On the last day of school (after all the students had left), all was silent at Horribly Hard Middle School except for muffled sounds from the art, music, and seventh-grade language arts rooms, the "clack" of computer keys in the main office, and the muttered **epithets** of Mr. Adept Fixit in the dean's office.

Eighth-Grade Part of the Story



Introduction

As the August morning sun chased the shadows from the roofs of houses and painted the sky gold, once again there was an **eerie** silence at Horribly Hard Middle School. In the dawning light, you could not see into the classrooms because of the light-blocking curtains at every window. No early teacher rushed out of a car in the parking lot to set up a lab or to get an early start on preparation for the first day of school. Horribly Hard Middle School was like a spooky mansion: closed, dark, and abandoned.

In contrast, across town, as the sun rose a bit higher in the sky, Marvelously Magic Magnet Middle School (popularly known as MMMMS) burst with energy and noise. Coffee perked in the teachers' lounge. Cars roared into the parking lot, parked, and spilled out teachers of different sizes, shapes, and complexions. Boxes, books, bags, and piles of "stuff" filled their arms as they walked into the school early to be ready for the first day of classes for the year.

Finally, four cars drove up to the **dormant** and silent Horribly Hard Middle School: a new mauve Lexus sedan, an old blue Ford pick-up truck, a new red Chevy sedan, and an old, battered, tan Subaru station wagon that had seen better days. A middle-aged man, Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, stepped out of the Lexus. Another middle-aged man, the custodian, Mr. **Adept** Fixit, exited the blue pick-up.

The man who exited the Lexus wore a suit and tie, and carried a battered briefcase. The owner of the Ford climbed out of his pick-up, walked to the back, and lifted a tool chest from the bed of his truck. He **sported** a denim shirt and overalls, a red handkerchief in his upper pocket, a wrench that hung out of his lower pocket, a purposeful air, and a worried look on his face.

The door of the Subaru creaked open and out fell construction paper and magazines, followed by a **harried**-looking woman. She was dressed in a long, loose purple dress with a purple flower in her thick blonde hair and a **myriad** of colored pencils in her mouth. The two men nodded solemnly to each other and smiled at the woman as she gathered the stuff that had fallen from her car.

The red Chevy parked next to the Subaru. The door swung open in **tandem** with the trunk. A man, dressed in a tri-corner hat and military uniform of 300 years ago, awkwardly stepped out of the car. He nodded to the lady in the purple dress, smiled, and walked to the open trunk. After lifting out the biggest of the boxes in the trunk and placing it on the ground, he closed the trunk, picked up the box, and headed towards the eighth-grade wing of the school.

Introduction

The men **trekked** in different directions: the suited one toward the school office, the man in overalls toward the custodian's office, and the one with the box towards the farthest wing of the school. The woman gathered her materials from the pavement and **ambled** slowly to a building set slightly off from the main part of the school. No other human soul could be seen in the dim light of early morning.

Slowly, one after the other, classroom lights came on in HHMS. Soon the school was **ablaze**, and all classrooms were lit, but apart from Mr. **Adept** Fixit, who rushed from room to room to open doors and turn on lights, no sounds of people could be heard on the campus. This was the first day of school?

If you listened carefully in the main office near the door to the principal's room, you could hear the faint click of computer keys as Mr. **Punctilious** Principal, a man who was always concerned with correct procedure, checked and rechecked the procedures which would be followed that first day of school as well as the list of students who would enter the **portals** of the HHMS in less than an hour.

If you **strolled** over to the art room, you could hear faint singing of an old Beatles tune and the rustling of paper.

Five minutes later another car pulled up in front of the still silent Horribly Hard Middle School. A man in a **dapper** blue suit who was humming a Mozart sonata **ambled** toward a nearby dark classroom. He was burdened with various-sized instrument cases. He wore his favorite purple tie that was decorated with yellow musical notes. His tie was **askew**, and his glasses perched unevenly on his nose, ruining the effect of his handsome blue suit.

Before the man with the instrument cases could close the trunk of his car, a final **vehicle**, an ancient white Volvo sedan, **careened** into the lot and parked next to the **decrepit** tan Subaru. A pleasingly-plump middle-aged woman with curly grey hair jumped **animatedly** out of the Volvo, nodded **genially** to the man who hummed the Mozart sonata, and turned back to her car.

The **stout** woman then opened the hatch and removed an obviously heavy box that was **brimful** with books. She heaved the box for better **leverage** and trudged slowly with her heavy burden in the direction of the seventh-grade wing of the school.

The staff parking lot of Horribly Hard Middle School once again fell silent. Only six cars awaited their drivers.

On another side of the school, forty-five minutes later, a long, curved line of school busses arrived, one by one. Each **disgorged** a bunch of chattering

students, each with his or her backpack. Other students who had walked to school **ambled** slowly onto the school grounds to join the **hordes** being let off by the busses. Horribly Hard Middle School came alive with voices, and a new school year began.

A young man, whose vast, faded, too-big trousers sat **precariously** low on his hips, rode a much-decorated skateboard on one of the sidewalks. Mysteriously, a **foreboding** figure appeared. It was the **dreaded** Dean **Dread**. As usual, he was **garbed** in black. His long, narrow face showed neither humor nor compassion.

Dean **Dread** raised his **menacing** voice so that the **miscreant** could hear, and he said in a deadly tone, “Steven **Slovenly**, give me that skateboard. Skateboards are **banned** on campus. Sagging pants without belts also are not allowed. Come to my office right now to get a piece of **twine** to use as a belt for those **outsized** pants you insist on wearing. Didn’t you learn anything last year when your pants dropped to your ankles right in front of me?”

Steven Slovenly knew he was **culpable**. He hung his head, mumbled something about “forgetting,” got off his board, put it under his right arm, gripped the waistband of his trousers, and followed Dean Dread to the **latter’s** office. Every few steps, Steven hitched up his pants with his left hand. A few students pointed at Steven and **jeered**.

Steven Slovenly kept repeating, “I forgot. I forgot,” as he **trudged dejectedly** after Dean Dread.

Meanwhile on the other side of the school, seven students, who had just walked to school together, stood on a corner of the sidewalk waiting for the bus of one of their friends to arrive.

Isabelle **Ingenuous**, an **animated**, perky young lady, twirled with an excess of energy. One of Isabelle’s friends, Olivia **Otiose**, slouched next to her. Another friend, Pauline **Puerile**, whined in a babyish manner about the summer being over, but she perked up when Alessandra **Amorous**, another member of the group, diverted her attention by recounting a story of her summer in Puerto Rico with her relatives. The fourth girl in the **assemblage** was dressed and **coiffed** in an odd manner. Her long hair was light sea green. Her shorts and t-shirt also were green, but their color was more like that of a lime. This was Felicia **Fey**, who was known for casting spells that always went **awry** (except once in the seventh grade when one of her spells **nabbed** the **perpetrators** of a stink bomb in the boys’ bathroom).

Felicia began to mutter words of a spell to encourage her friend Pauline **Puerile** to cheer up. Isabelle **Ingenuous** put her hand over Felicia’s mouth to stop her from **uttering** her spell.

“You know it will backfire on you, Felicia,” cautioned Isabelle Ingenuous. “You don’t want to **obliterate** your new hairdo, do you?”

“My other magic friends and I practiced all summer,” **retorted** a slightly **indignant** Felicia. “I’m getting a little better at it. I’m doing well.”

“Hey, Felicia, how come you’re not **garbed** in black as you were all last year?” asked a boy whose **puckish** expression mirrored his **waggish** personality.

Felicia **Fey** rolled her eyes and **retorted**, “Hey, William **Waggish**, I may dress weirdly, and my spells backfire, but you write the most **egregious** poetry.”

To hide his admiration of Felicia, William Waggish made a tasteless but funny joke about girls. No one listened, and everyone turned his or her head in Alessandra’s direction to hear her story. They, too, were used to William’s **lame** poems, **vapid** jokes, and friendly **barbs**.

The last member of the troop, Sam **Sagacious**, simply stood wisely and **mutely** as he waited for the **clamor** to die down. He held a huge, heavy book (*Norton’s Anthology of Poetry*) in his hand and pretended to read it, but he really was watching Alessandra Amorous whom he liked.

Since his joke had fallen flat, and no one had laughed, William Waggish **regaled** his friends with a new limerick about girls who wear green. Brown-faced with expressive dark **pupils**, William composed mischievous poems to hide his real aspiration: to be as **eloquent** a poet as his secret hero, Langston Hughes. He entitled it “The Heroine.”

There was a young lady in green
Whose spells often cause a big scene.
She’s “fey” as they come
But smarter than some,
Like Orson who really is mean.

A faint wisp of smoke **emanated** from both ears of a teacher who was standing just barely within earshot. First, her tongue **protruded** slightly, and next, she froze in place for fewer than three seconds. This was nothing new.

Sam **Sagacious** glanced at the teacher, put his book in his backpack, and laughed. “It’s working. You haven’t lost your touch, William. Yes, you still can affect and **discombobulate** some of the teachers, and last year, in fact, you recited cinquains which had an even greater effect on the teachers than the limericks. Are you going to go back to limericks this year?”

“Nah,” said his friend William Waggish, “I still like composing limericks just to be **exasperating**, like a constant drip. I do well at annoying you all, and, besides, it’s fun.”

Six pairs of eyeballs rolled at this comment. Felicia Fey threatened to zap William, but that didn’t **deter** him. She then furrowed her brow, stuck out her tongue at him, and good-naturedly muttered something rude under her breath as the rest of the girls **tittered**.

“For the benefit of your friends, William, can’t you and your friend Jesse write anything except those **insipid** limericks and cinquains?” Felicia teased. “Hey, how about giving us a break and trying another form of poetry this year?”

Isabelle Ingenuous, of course, smiled at William’s poem and Felicia’s friendly **jibe**, but her smile immediately turned to a frown at the sight of a recognizable, hulking figure that **loped** towards them with a **malevolent** grin on its face. It was Orson **Odious** followed by his two pals, Danny **Dapper** and Petra **Pulchritudinous**.

“Well, if it isn’t the super-strange cast of ‘Weirdo, Incorporated’ and its famous witch,” **derided** Orson **Odious**, the **nemesis** of the group.

“Seen Dean Dread today, Orson?” asked Sam Sagacious, wrinkling his nose against the **reek** of stale cigarette smoke that **wafted** from Orson’s clothes and breath.

“Set off any **putrescent** stink bombs lately?” inquired William with a trace of sarcasm in his voice as he referred to the incident in the seventh grade when Orson had been caught for his **misdeed** by Dean Dread. His **culpability** was revealed when a misfired spell of Felicia’s put mauve streaks in his hair that matched the smoke.

Suddenly, Orson’s **sycophants**, Danny **Dapper** and Petra **Pulchritudinous**, came up behind him, ready to back up their friend, just as Orson spied a teacher approaching. When Orson and his **cohorts** strutted by Isabelle and friends, they muttered a few nasty, choice **epithets** and threats under their breath as they passed by.

As he raised a fisted hand into the air, Orson threatened **ominously**, “My friends and I will make ‘toast’ of you later.”

“My friends and I are trembling,” William said with false **bravado**.

Isabelle hushed him before he could **infuriate** Orson any further.

“I see that Petra **Pulchritudinous** already has changed her clothes in the girls’ bathroom,” commented Isabelle **Ingenuous**. “I know her family, and her mother never would let her wear a skirt that short to school,” she finished.

Another **putrid** yellow school bus pulled up to the curb. Jesse **Jocose** leapt off the bus with **alacrity**; he walked quickly up to his friends.

“Hey, Dudes and Lades, how’s it going? I can’t wait to **regale** you with all I learned at the ‘tubular’ computer camp I attended this **sultry, simmering** summer. Now I can really ‘hack.’ Hey, William,” he said as he thumped his buddy on the back, “got any new poems?”

Everyone else rolled his or her eyes and groaned. Another girl exited her bus and **ambled** over to the group, too. She had intricately braided **ebony** hair and a hardback book, as usual, in her hand. This one was entitled Pride and Prejudice. As she was greeted, the usually shy Vivian **Virtuous** turned to the boys with excitement.

“William, Jesse, I learned a new form of poetry in my summer writing course,” she bubbled. “You’ll love it. It’s in your **bailiwick**. Haiku!”

“At least it’s different from limericks and cinquains,” **rejoined** Isabelle who really liked William’s poems but pretended otherwise.

On that note, the nine friends gathered their stuff, walked to the double **portals** where eighth-grade homerooms were posted, checked out the lists, found their names, and then **lingered** together until the warning bell rang.

“Oh, no, guys, it looks as if some of the most **insufferable** teachers followed us to the eighth grade,” moaned Pauline Puerile in **dejection** as she frowned.

“Hey, Vivian, tell me about haiku poetry. Maybe we really can flip out the **intolerable** ones this year as we did last year, and then we can discover why they react to our poems,” said William.

“Yeah,” **reiterated** Jesse who always was ready to try any prank that would **discombobulate** their teachers. “I’ve heard of haiku; it’s ‘sweet.’ It’s only three lines, too. That’s two fewer lines than in a cinquain.”

“I made up one this summer,” said Vivian Virtuous **diffidently**.

“Let’s hear your poem,” said Isabelle Ingenuous **earnestly**.

Vivian heard her haiku. It was about her new friend, Felicia, and it was entitled “My Friend.”

My friend casts her spells
Upon the wind, and she hopes
That one will go right.

Isabelle pointed out, “Your spell on that **noisome** stink bomb sure worked well last year, Felicia! Maybe fewer of your spells will go wrong this year!”

“There are a few I’ve been practicing,” **alleged** Felicia hopefully.

Pauline, Olivia, and Alessandra smiled. William and Jesse, who stood among the girls, **sniggered**, but they really were impressed with Vivian’s poem. Sam, who always was observant, noticed that

two teachers standing in nearby classroom doorways twitched, **emitted** curls of smoke from their ears and noses, **garbled** almost **incoherently** some phrase over and over, and stuck out their tongues with each word like lizards. Sam couldn't **perceive** exactly what they muttered, but he was determined to find out.

Indeed, the group of friends did have some of the same teachers from previous years. Mr. Math Martinet had followed them to the eighth grade, much to Olivia's dismay. Ms. **Amicable** Artist and Mr. **Melodious** Music, however, taught eighth-graders, too. And, there was a new teacher for social studies, Mr. **Scintillating** Social Studies.

"I wonder what he's like," **pondered** Isabelle as she played with one of the **omnipresent**, plastic butterflies in her hair.

"It's probably just another horrible, **despicable**, boring **automaton**," moaned Pauline who always saw only the negative.

"Oh, no, that nice English teacher we had last year, Ms. **Witty** Writing Wizard, stayed in seventh grade," complained Olivia. "We have Ms. Grammar Grouch again, and there's Ms. Stern Science on the eighth-grade list, too," Olivia **griped** further. "It's going to be an **arduous** year."

"Well, between Ms. Grammar Grouch and Mr. Math Martinet, I see lots of homework. I also see William and Jesse getting into trouble with their **incessant**, stupid poems," **predicted** Felicia Fey in an **eerie**, spooky voice.

William and Jesse wasted no time, and after they received a few lessons from Vivian Virtuous, they **promptly** composed a **plethora** of haiku with which to **assess** their teachers' reactions. Sam kept notes on the various instructors' reactions in his **omnipresent** notebook.

One day, when one particularly **astute** poem of Jesse's made Mr. Math Martinet freeze in his tracks and raise his arms in the air for no fewer than two entire minutes (besides **manifesting** the usual ear-smoke, eye-flutter, and tongue **protrusion**), Sam knew that they were on the right track. Jesse Jocese entitled the poem "No **Mirth**." Sam Sagacious **speculated** that it was the **superlative** vocabulary that produced the added effect.

Numbers and homework
Fill his mind that seems **devoid**
Of **mirth** and **vision**.

Sam also noted further that Ms. Amicable Artist had no reaction except a sweet, **exasperated** smile for William's poem that was entitled "Brush Magic."

Her brush strokes paper,
And colorful images
Appear like magic.

“Mr. Melodious Music didn’t react to the haiku either except to comment on their content. I wonder,” **mused** Sam.

Surprisingly, the new history teacher, Mr. **Scintillating** Social Studies, didn’t react to the poems either. Usually, he simply **disregarded** them as he went on with his lesson as if no poem had been **uttered**.

“This is becoming more and more curious,” noted Sam to William.

Since the students had even more homework, eighth grade proved more **arduous** than seventh grade. Orson Odious was again up to his usual, **malicious** tricks, and this year he picked mainly on three victims: Isabelle Ingenuous, shy Beth **Bibliophilic**, and, of course, Felicia Fey who had “ratted” on him the previous year.

Once again, otiose Danny **Dapper** took advantage of his **comeliness** and preyed on super-shy girls like Beth **Bibliophilic** to do his homework for him. Petra Pulchritudinous showed **derision** toward any girl who didn’t dress as she did. To make matters worse, the **malevolent** trio was joined by a new student, Dalbert **Devious**. Dalbert, too, liked to pick on anyone whom he perceived as weaker, more **insecure**, or smaller than he.

One morning, however, just before school, Orson, Danny, and Dalbert were caught smoking behind the eighth-grade wing. This effected some **drastic** changes for the better, and it got rid of a problem. It seems that just as Orson was taking a last drag behind the eighth-grade **edifice**, Dean Dread came around the corner, and he spied the **miscreants**.

“What do you think you’re doing?” he said in his deadly, **monotone** voice.

“My friends and I didn’t do anything,” coughed Orson as he swallowed the cigarette’s smoke.

“Oh, it’s nothing, sir,” mumbled Dalbert and Danny in unison as Danny stuck his hand with the still-lit cigarette, which he held between two fingers, into his **voluminous** trousers. “Ouch!” he yelped as the lit cigarette **scorched** his leg, and he **inadvertently** revealed his guilt.

Dalbert **Devious**, living up to his sneaky personality, quickly had crushed the evidence of his guilt under his shoe, and Dean Dread saw nothing. Orson and Danny, on the other hand, could not plead innocence.

“Follow me, you **varlets**,” (commonly known Shakespearean **insult meaning a knavish person, a rascal**) snarled Dean Dread as he marched them toward his office.

“Your parents will be notified immediately, and you’re suspended for no fewer than ten days. We do not **tolerate** illegal use of substances of any kind on this campus, and you’re guilty.”

The result of this incident was that Orson, who had a long list of **egregious transgressions** in his records, was sent to the alternative school. Danny came back after ten days of suspension a **subdued** young man who no longer made fun of others. Dalbert escaped with a few days of in-school detention because there was a **lack** of evidence in his case, but he remained as **conniving** as ever.

Now the group of friends only had to contend with one tormentor and, of course, the ever-**haughty** Petra Pulchritudinous, too. William and Jesse continued to recite their haiku poems in an attempt to discover the mystery of their teachers’ reactions.

One day, Ms. Grammar Grouch, ever the **stickler** for correct punctuation and grammar, **manifested** her usual symptoms, froze for ten seconds, and **liped** over and over for more than thirty seconds but for fewer than sixty seconds the following phrase: “There are four uses of semicolons; there are four uses of semicolons.”

William had recited an **adroit**, clever poem he entitled “No Fire.”

She likes correct **prose**.
Where’s her imagination,
Her creative fire?

Dalbert Devious, who sat in his usual place in the back row of Ms. Grouch’s class, stopped **surreptitiously** poking Beth **Bibliophilic** (who sat in front of him) with his feet, and he stared, **dumbfounded**, at the **antics** of the teacher.

“Whoa,” he **pondered**, “this is really ‘bogus.’ Maybe these ‘weirdo nerds’ aren’t so weird after all.”

After they left the class, Dalbert asked William what he had said that had **discombobulated** their instructor and made her freeze.

“Please tell me what you did to make the teachers do all that,” he **entreated** William. “It’s too ‘sweet’ for words.”

“Words, that’s all it is. It’s just poetry,” **rejoined** William Waggish.

When William **regaled** him about the limerick’s effects on the teachers in the sixth grade, the cinquain’s effects on the teachers in the seventh grade, and the even more **apparent** effects of the haiku this year, Dalbert resolved to join whole-heartedly in the effort to unravel the mystery of HHMS’s **bizarre** teachers. He even politely **beseached** Vivian Virtuous to teach him quickly how to write a haiku poem.

“Please, Vivian, as I live and breathe, I **implore** you to teach me how to write a haiku,” pleaded Dalbert who suddenly was **affable**.

Dalbert’s first effort was not **shoddy**. Its effect on Ms. **Stern Science** was amazing. Not only did she do the usual smoking, tongue-wagging, and freezing, but she wobbled as well as if she were going to **topple** over. This pleased Dalbert to no end as he loved to be **wily**. Dalbert entitled his poetic effort “The **Automaton**.”

Science is her life.
Facts, figures, **incessant** notes.
She is not human.

The effect of Dalbert’s poem on Dalbert himself was to focus his **deviousness** on composing haiku instead of **cogitating** how to torment his **peers**. Writing haiku became the “in” thing among the eighth-graders that year. Even Skateboarding Steven **Slovenly** wrote on his skateboard in huge, block letters the phrase “Haiku Rules.”

The year progressed, and William, Jesse, and the other friends were joined in their efforts at haiku writing from an **unanticipated** source—Danny Dapper.

A **subdued** Danny, former **sycophant** of the **scurrilous** Orson Odious, even composed a haiku himself. “It’s easy,” he marveled. “They’re short!”

“Use **superlative** vocabulary in it so that it has an even greater effect on the teachers,” instructed Sam Sagacious.

“I will,” said Danny **fervently**.

Danny **heeded** Sam’s advice, and he asked Beth Bibliophilic (in a nice tone for a change) for some suggestions. He used the following words: “**foreboding**” and “**garbed**.” He entitled his poem “My Favorite Dean.” It was the first piece of work Danny had completed by himself all year.

A **foreboding** man
Garbed in a black expression
Looms over students.

“That’s not bad!” **marveled** William, whose dislike of Danny was **palpable**. “My friends and I are impressed with your **metaphor**, and you’re actually a good poet,” he **marveled**.

In reaction to Danny’s poetic effort, Dean Dread did the usual eye-fluttering, ear-smoking, and tongue-protruding, but he also raised his **mammoth**, trunk-like arms into the air and **wind-milled** them as if he were a plane revving up to take off. In addition, he also **lisped**

the clause, “I am the **authority**; I am the authority.” He repeated this for more than four but fewer than five seconds. Dean Dread **buckled** at the knees, too, almost falling over.

“There is something weird going on here,” said Sam. “Their reactions are becoming more and more **blatant**. I never thought I’d say this, but ‘way to go,’ Danny.”

“It was nothing,” murmured Danny as he blushed at the unaccustomed praise and **loped** off.

Alessandra Amorous, who had hung around with Danny in the sixth grade, **gawked** at Danny, her mouth **ajar** in shock at his **uncharacteristic** behavior.

“Es increíble! It’s unbelievable!” she said in Spanish and then **reiterated** in English to anyone who listened. “Danny truly wrote something himself!”

Danny may have written something on his own, but Petra **Pulchritudinous** hadn’t changed her *modus vivendi*. That same evening at the second school dance of the year, there was an **episode** with Petra Pulchritudinous that, temporarily at least, pushed thoughts of the bizarre teachers out of the friends’ minds.

The cafeteria was beautiful with **subdued** light. All the tables lined the walls with red and blue paper draped over them. Mounds of artfully arranged chips, cookies, cakes, veggies, and fruit **adorned** tablecloths in the school’s colors. A fountain of pink punch **cascaded** into a huge bowl, and **garlands** of paper flowers hung from the ceiling. A live band, The **Strident Strummers**, warmed up on a low platform. Their **strident** music boomed from large speakers, and the walls **reverberated** with the bass.

“Ah,” breathed Petra as she entered the room, glanced around, and heard the music. “My friends and I are going to have a blast tonight,” she said as she ducked into the girls’ bathroom to change to her too-short, too-tight black skirt and spaghetti-string **azure** blouse, **garments** that her mother would not let her wear because of their “**inappropriateness** for her age.”

Since Petra had plastered so much make-up on her now not-so-**comely** face, she looked as if she had been painted. Petra, who thought she looked **pulchritudinous**, exited the girls’ bathroom and found her friends. Orson no longer attended HHMS, but Dalbert Devious, dressed in an **ebony** tank top and tight, black, leather pants, found Petra without delay.

He swept Petra up in his arms to dance. As the dance moved to a slow tune, Dalbert **surreptitiously** moved his hands further down

Petra's back until they rested **perilously** close to her **posterior**. Their improper behavior and **garb** were spotted immediately.

"Stop that at once!" **shrilled** Ms. Grammar Grouch to the two students who further **compounded** their guilt by ignoring her and continuing to **gyrate** slowly to the music. "Dean Dread, you must come see this! This is your **bailiwick**. These two students must leave this dance at once; we must call their parents."

As Dean Dread approached, Petra, who already was in trouble with her mother, panicked and ran. In her haste to further the distance between herself and Dean Dread, she tripped over a tablecloth and toppled over a food-**laden** table. She fell face down **amid** the food with her painted **visage** in a chocolate cake. As Petra lay there among the cakes, fruit, and cookies, she **wailed** her distress and **wrath**.

"Why me? I'm so beautiful. My friends and I are so popular. Things like this don't happen to *me*," she **sniveled** as Dean Dread and Ms. Grammar Grouch plucked her off the cake and then walked her to the office to phone her parents.

Dean Dread firmly gripped Dalbert's arm with his other hand.

"I wish I had written a poem to use right about now," Dalbert muttered.

"You're in big trouble, young man, and you must not speak unless spoken to," said Dean Dread in an **ominous** tone.

Dalbert Devious, for once in his **wily** life, couldn't think of a way to squirm out of trouble. He didn't even think he had done anything that **egregious**.

The next week all anyone could talk about was Petra Pulchritudinous.

"It's amazing," said Vivian Virtuous, "Petra actually is wearing long pants and tops without any **décolletage**. She looks like the rest of us; she's really **comely** without all that makeup. She should have done this sooner."

"Wow, I can't believe it," said Alessandra Amorous. "Petra's mother actually came to school every morning for a week, sat in homeroom with her, and **escorted** her to first period. I bet Petra was **mortified**; I certainly would be 'mucho' humiliated."

"Maybe she'll be nice when we bump into her in the girls' **lavatory**," said Felicia **optimistically**.

"Don't get your hopes up," said Pauline Puerile. "She scoffed at my blouse today, so I think this only is going to make her more **intolerant**."

"She's not a **blithe** camper this week," added Isabelle who always looked for the best in everyone.

Soon, as it usually happens with gossip, talk about the **episode** at the dance and its aftermath died down. The new topic of conversation centered around Mr. **Scintillating** Social Studies and his “Living History Day” incident.

Mr. Scintillating Social Studies turned out to be an exciting, creative teacher, and he certainly was different from his **predecessor**, Ms. **Humdrum** History. His teaching methods were somewhat **bizarre** since he liked to spark lively discussions and to hold panels instead of **unadulterated, lackluster** study out of the text.

“He’s ‘tubular,’” murmured Jesse who always used **vernacular**.

His “Living History Days” had become legendary, even though he only held one or two every unit, or fewer than four every six weeks. On “Living History Days,” Mr. Scintillating Social Studies dressed up in a soldier’s costume from his **extensive** wardrobe. If they were studying the Revolutionary War, then he **garbed** himself in the uniform of a foot soldier one day, and then he came as a sergeant or a high-ranking officer the next day. The third day he arrived as a cavalry officer. He even brought the mess kit and an authentic (unloaded, of course) rifle from the period. The class then held lively discussions, or students **probed** the history of the **era** in an **innovative** manner.

One morning, Mr. Scintillating Social Studies stepped out of his red Chevy, **clad**, like a true soldier, in the full uniform of a sergeant in the Civil War. A duffel bag and mess kit hung from one shoulder, and an authentic rifle **dangled** from the other.

As he sauntered to the eighth-grade wing of the school, he passed by the bus port where **a plethora of** school busses were disgorging students.

“Oh, boy, it’s ‘Living History Day!’” enthused Jesse as he descended from his public **conveyance** and spied his history teacher in full soldier **regalia**. “Hi, Mr. S.”

Suddenly, a police car, sirens blaring, **careened** around the **crenshaw-shaped** driveway. Two officers got out, and they quickly surrounded Mr. Scintillating Social Studies, guns drawn.

“You’re under arrest,” one of them said in an **ominous** tone. “Firearms are not permitted on school grounds.”

“You’re violating the law,” said the other **constable**.

“But, it’s a **replica** of an antique gun,” spluttered Mr. S. “It’s only a **facsimile**, and it has no bullets.”

“Well, it looks like a rifle to my partner and me,” said one of the officers angrily.

As the two officers prepared to drag Mr. S. to their car, a **horde** of students, Jesse in front, surrounded the trio.

“You can’t arrest Mr. S, Officers; it’s ‘Living History Day!’”
implored a bunch of students in **unison**. “Those are fun days, and we learn a lot!”

“No, no, you can’t **incarcerate** Mr. S.,” shouted Jesse over the **cacophony** of protesting students and police sirens. “He’s one of the few good teachers whom we have, and we learn a lot from him,” he added. “Please don’t take our teacher,” he **beseeked**.

At that moment, Mr. Punctilious Principal, roused from his office by the **din**, appeared on the scene. He surveyed the situation, made a quick **assessment** of the crisis, made a decision, and then he quietly spoke to one of the police officers.

The **dénouement** of the incident was that the officers examined the gun replica carefully, handed it to the principal, saluted Mr. Scintillating Social Studies (who saluted back), and **chortled** in amusement while getting into their car. The students, however, talked about the near-arrest for days.

“This calls for a haiku, and I know just the person to help me write one,” said Jesse Jocose to himself as he **sauntered** to his homeroom, eager to **impart** the news to his friends.

It was William Waggish, though, who wrote the haiku to **commemorate** the excitement even though he only had heard about it second-hand from his friend Jesse. He entitled his poem “Mr. Punctilious Principal to the Rescue.”

A fake gun of **yore**
Effects near-arrest, but lo,
 Principal saves day.

William and Jesse stood up among all their **peers** and recited the poem in **unison** at lunch at the top of their voices. There were seven teachers in the room at the time. Four of them and Dean Dread immediately rose on their toes, emitted **ebony** smoke and silver sparks from their ears and **proboscises**, raised their arms in the air, and wind-milled them. Then, two teachers **plummeted** to their knees, and they kneeled there for fewer than thirty seconds, blinking their eyes and muttering. Each one muttered something **inaudible** under his or her breath.

The students gasped in shock as Mr. Punctilious Principal **scurried** into the cafeteria, and then he sent everyone to his or her next class.

“I’m not finished with my lunch,” **remonstrated** Isabelle Ingenuous.

“It’s not fair,” whined Pauline Puerile who had eaten only a bite of her sandwich.

“*Life* is not fair,” **reiterated** Ms. Amicable Artist who had overheard Pauline’s comment.

“What do you want to bet they call in Mr. Adept Fixit,” **conjectured** Sam Sagacious.

As the crowd hastily exited the cafeteria, they, indeed, saw Mr. Adept Fixit **scurry** into the cafeteria, toolbox in hand and a worried look on his **weathered visage**.

“This is getting more and more peculiar,” said Sam to his pals Jesse and William. “We must get to the bottom of this mystery. Some of our teachers are truly **atypical**,” he concluded.

“What middle-school teacher is a normal adult?” asked Jesse Jocose. “Who ever would want to teach a bunch of **rampant**, living hormones for a career? They’re all **eccentric**, if you ask me,” Jesse finished.

“Some of them more than others,” **persevered** Sam for whom solving this mystery was a serious **endeavor**.

As the end of the year approached, Mr. Scintillating Social Studies, Ms. Amicable Artist, Mr. Melodious Music, and Mr. Punctilious Principal (of all people) arranged a field trip to an amusement park as an end-of-the-year **diversion** for the eighth-graders. They proposed the treat as a reward for not having a single food fight the entire year and for exhibiting exemplary behavior in general after Orson had left HHMS. Danny and Dalbert had turned their **maliciousness** into trying to compose haiku with **superlative** vocabulary in order to affect their teachers.

Everyone was **elated** about the field trip. After all, all their trips had been cancelled in the seventh grade due to a **colossal** food fight started by none other than William Waggish who should have known better.

“Your field trip needs to be **correlated** to an **academic** subject,” said Ms. Grammar Grouch to the principal. “Otherwise, it is forbidden by the school board.”

“It is,” piped up Ms. Witty Writing Wizard, the seventh-grade English teacher who had overheard the conversation. “Going to an amusement park provides a **plethora of** ideas for writing. We should have taken them earlier.”

The day of the field trip dawned brightly. Five large, shiny, yellow school busses lined the side of the school. Eighth-graders **animatedly clambered** on them as they talked non-stop about the rides they planned to take. The **intrepid** friends all had signed up for the same bus. They wanted to plot and plan how to **flummox** their teachers into revealing their true nature, whatever it was. The group spent the entire ride writing and **compiling** haiku and planning to try to get, in the same area, all the teachers whom the poems affected.

“Let’s call this ‘Operation **Stealth**,’” volunteered Vivian.
 “Does everyone have his or her **fabricated** excuse ready?”

“Please include me,” said a familiar voice. It was John **Jabbering**, a nice enough fellow whose problem was that he was too **loquacious**. His tall, lanky body with straw-like, limp hair was a familiar sight to the friends.

“Me, too, please,” spoke a boy who sat nearby. “You’re going to need a ‘detail man’ to coordinate your excuses, and that’s my **forte**,” insisted Mark **Meticulous**, his round glasses bobbing on his round face in **glee** at being included in the group.

The group accomplished its **objective** on the **tedious** bus ride to the amusement park. Once there, they forgot all about their **clandestine** plans as they swooped and swirled on the rides, **devoured** mounds of junk food, gossiped, laughed, and enjoyed a day of freedom with **peers**. As the allotted time at the park approached, the students, **laden** with purchases, slowly **meandered** towards the parking lot where the busses had parked.

There, in the spaces where five yellow school **conveyances** marked with their county’s name were supposed to be waiting, was nothing! Mr. Punctilious Principal, who had driven separately in his van in case a student had become ill or wasn’t **punctual** for the return trip, took out his cell phone and made a frantic call.

“They’re where?” he shouted in a **wrathful** tone with a **soupçon** (**French word used in English meaning a suspicion or hint of panic**). “Why didn’t the rest remain? I see. One hour, you say? It’s pushing their limits, you know. You’d better call Mr. Adept Fixit.” With that **baffling** remark, he hung up.

Sam Sagacious was intrigued by hearing the Principal’s end of the conversation.

“I wonder what he meant by that,” Sam said, *sotto voce* to his friends among whom he stood.

“Let’s wait and watch the teachers,” suggested Isabelle. “Hey, Alessandra, tell us another story about your “abuela” and your waggish younger “primos” in Puerto Rico. Maybe that will take our minds off of standing here **sweltering** like hairy dogs in the **sultry** sun with no breeze to **mitigate** the heat.”

“Yes, I just love hearing about Puerto Rico,” sighed Olivia whose usual **otiose**, **indolent** nature did not apply to learning Spanish.

“I might be able to help,” offered Felicia Fey.

“No, Felicia,” said the rest of the group with **alacrity**.

**Read-aloud
passage**

Felicia didn't listen to her friends. She muttered something under her breath, waved her hands (despite the fact that Isabelle and Vivian tried to hold them down) and "poof." A small, cool breeze **wafted** by and rustled their **tresses**. A few birds flew by upside down. A white cloud turned slightly **chartreuse**.

"At least its effects weren't too **egregious**," said Vivian Virtuous, her ebony curls bobbing as she **gawked** upwards. "Birds flying upside down for a few moments never hurt anything, and no one saw the cloud but us."

"Way to go, Felicia," said Mark **Meticulous**. "The **zephyr** feels good."

"Don't encourage her, Mark," **asserted** Pauline Puerile. "She'll get into trouble when one of her spells doesn't go so well and affects a teacher."

Slightly less than an hour later, at 6 p.m., the busses pulled into the parking lot. As the students and teachers boarded them, Sam noticed that Ms. Stern Science, Mr. Math Martinet, and Ms. Grammar Grouch were moving more and more **lethargically**. Their faces were **inert** as if frozen. Unfortunately, each of the teachers boarded a different bus, so Jesse and William couldn't try a haiku on them. Ms. Grammar Grouch got on the bus with the intrepid friends, told the students in a slow, **monotone** voice to sit down, perched herself **gracelessly** in a front seat, and motioned slowly to Mr. Scintillating Social Studies (who also was on the same bus) to take over with the students. The busses took off for Horribly Hard Middle School.

Vivian Vivacious and Beth Bibliophilic took books out of their book bags that they had **secreted** under the seats and **commenced** to read. Vivian read Their Eyes Were Watching God by the **eminent** Florida author Zora Neale Hurston, and Beth read David Copperfield by the **illustrious** British author Charles Dickens. Most of the students dozed or quietly chatted.

"Let's do it," whispered Jesse Jocose to William and Sam.

"It's now or never," agreed William. "Wake up, girls. Put down those books. Get out the haiku we wrote and get ready to recite at my signal."

Ms. Grammar Grouch sat unsuspecting in her seat. Mr. Scintillating Social Studies continued to chat **affably** with a nearby student, unaware that a large group of students were about to **wreak havoc**.

"Now," said William.

At his signal, a dozen students rose to their feet and shouted the following poem at the top of their voices:

**Read-aloud
passage**

Sparks, smoke **emanate**
From their **orifices** as
If they are on fire.

The bus driver ignored them.

Mr. Scintillating Social Studies commented, “**Incomparable** use of vocabulary, students,” and laughed good-naturedly.

Ms. Grammar Grouch, on the other hand, reacted violently. Smoke and sparks did, as usual, **emanate** from all her **orifices**. She twitched, fluttered her eyes three times, threw her arms in the air, and then froze, **rigid** as a marble statue, eyes open, arms raised in the air. There she sat in that position, immobile.

“She’s just having one of her spells,” **placated** Mr. Scintillating Social Studies as he yanked out his cell phone and dialed frantically.

The bus pulled over next to the principal’s van, and the two men carried the **inflexible** Ms. Grammar Grouch (whose arms still stuck straight up) from the bus to the van and laid her **transversely** across the back seat. They slammed the door shut, and Mr. Punctilious Principal **vaulted** into the driver’s seat and sped off.

“That was interesting,” said Sam Sagacious.

“That’s a gross **understatement**,” **rejoined** Isabelle Ingenuous.

“OK, guys,” said Sam. “Now we go to the next step of ‘Operation **Stealth**.’ Can everyone sneak out Thursday night? Do you have your excuses ready for maximum **credibility**? Does everyone know what **comestibles** to bring so we don’t starve or get caught carrying too much food in our lunch bags?”

“I will check everyone’s excuse and coordinate who is supposed to be staying overnight with whom, so there should be no **glitches**,” said Mark **Meticulous** with pride.

The friends spent the remainder of the long, **tedious** ride back to school **solidifying** their plans. Mark and Sam took **copious** notes.

The following Thursday afternoon when school let out, Isabelle, Felicia, Olivia, Pauline, Vivian, Alessandra, William, Jesse, Sam, Dalbert, and the newest members of the group, John **Jabbering** and Mark **Meticulous**, hid, one-by-one, in a small, stuffy, seldom-used book room in the eighth-grade wing of the school. Beth Bibliophilic, a **timorous** girl, **opted** out of the adventure. The group had decided to ask Dalbert Devious to join them because he knew how to pick

**Read-aloud
passage**

locks. Dalbert was **ecstatic** to be included. Dalbert, being devious, had no problem giving his parents a **bogus pretext** for where he was spending the night.

**Read-aloud
passage**

Isabelle had convinced their beloved, seventh-grade English teacher, Ms. **Witty Writing Wizard** (for whom she now worked as an aide), that she needed to get into a book room but wasn't sure which one.

"She didn't know which book room either, so she gave me her master key that opens all the doors. I went to the book room, took out a book as my excuse, and left a thin book to block the door slightly **ajar**," she told her **cohorts** in stealth, "but it proved **redundant**. When I went back to her room, Ms. Witty Writing Wizard forgot about the key, so I still have it.

"I've never done anything like this before. I know it's for a good motive, but I'm nervous," she whispered to her assembled friends with **trepidation**. "It was the scariest thing I ever did," she added with a **quiver** that made the **omnipresent** plastic butterflies in her hair nod in agreement.

The group of twelve remained silent as they listened to someone open most of the classroom doors in the hallway. They **lingered mutely** until that person's footsteps echoed down the hall, and a door closed. Soon, there were no more sounds outside the book room, and even Mr. Adept Fixit had left the school.

They **warily** exited the book room, checking to make sure the coast was clear. One by one, they checked all the classrooms in the hallway. To their **utter incredulity**, they found, in most rooms, an **immobile** teacher, standing like a statue in the middle of the room. Ms. Stern Science didn't blink an eye when they touched her or said a haiku. Mr. Math Martinet remained rigid and unresponsive to every attempt to rouse him. Ms. Grammar Grouch stood like a silent **sentinel** in the middle of her room, totally **oblivious** to the twelve students who surrounded her, recited haiku, and waved their hands in her **static visage**.

"This is really strange," said Sam Sagacious as he wrote in his notebook. I **surmise** that these teachers are not human. I think that they are robots."

"Let's check for the controls," said William.

"Where do we begin?" asked Isabelle. "I don't want to undress a teacher, even if she is a robot, to find out."

"We'll look for a panel on the upper chest first. Have you noticed that all the teachers on whom the poems worked are always dressed in high-necked blouses or shirts and ties?" pointed out Sam.

**Read-aloud
passage**

The boys, since the chosen victim was a male teacher, loosened the teacher's **cravat** and unbuttoned his shirt halfway. Sure enough, there was a panel.

"Wow! These teachers truly are robots," **affirmed** Jesse and Alessandra in **unison**.

"Let's open the panel and see what's inside," suggested Sam.

Dalbert took out one of his **diverse**, little tools and pried open the panel on the teacher's chest. Everyone twisted his or her head to peer inside. Wires branched out from switches and vanished into the **crevices** of his body. Little green lights blinked slowly along the wires. There was no question. The teacher was a robot.

"Tubular," said Jesse. "Our teachers are robots!"

"Not all of them, I think," argued Sam. "I think some of them are human. Neither Ms. Witty Writing Wizard, nor Mr. Scintillating Social Studies, nor Ms. Amicable Artist, nor Mr. Melodious Music ever were affected by the poems."

"Oh, my gosh," **interjected** Alessandra, "they are all the creative teachers—writing, new methods of studying history, art, music."

"You're right!" agreed William.

"They probably couldn't make robots creative and **innovative**," added Vivian.

"Wait a minute. What about Principal Punctilious?" **queried** William. "He didn't react to the poems either."

"It's a certainty that he's human as well," agreed Sam. They would need a human in charge to make all the decisions and to **assess** any situation that arose, like our field trip. Mr. Adept Fixit has to be human as well."

"Yes, I've never seen him react to any of our poems," said Jesse.

"I **deduce** that it's Mr. Adept Fixit who turns the robots on and off," offered Sam.

"Well, we'll find out in the morning, won't we?" said Isabelle.

"Now, let's try to get a little sleep."

"I set the alarm clock to wake us up on time," said Mark Meticulous who was the detail guy.

Alessandra suggested, "Let's lie down on the carpet in the teachers' lounge with books for pillows and get some shut-eye. At least it's larger than that tiny book room, and the carpet, even though it is **sullied**, is better than the hard, **grubby** floor."

"Good idea, girlfriend," said Felicia Fey. "Does anyone want me to try to soften those books or clean the carpet a bit?"

“No, Felicia,” eleven voices shouted together.

The group of friends lay on the carpet, heads **bolstered** on books, and slept **fitfully** until 5 a.m. when Mark’s alarm rang with a **cacophonous** sound.

The twelve students leapt up, went to do their morning **ablutions** in the boys’ and girls’ bathrooms respectively, scattered, each **secreting** himself or herself in a different classroom, and lay in wait to see what would happen.

An hour later footsteps **resonated** down the hall. Mr. Adept Fixit entered each classroom in turn. The students observed from their hiding spots as he opened the panel(s) on each robot teacher, flipped a switch, closed the panel, and **lingered** fewer than ten seconds for the teacher to come to life.

As he or she awoke, each robot said graciously, “Thank you, Mr. Fixit. Good morning. Have a nice day,” in a **monotone** voice and proceeded to go to the blackboard to write the day’s date and lesson.

As the school became alive with a **myriad** of students, the **intrepid** twelve **mingled** with the crowd and went to their homeroom as if they, too, had just arrived at school by foot, car, or bus. Like a bunch of **conspirators** in a spy novel, they had big, **covert** plans for the upcoming eighth-grade awards ceremony.

News of the truth about the robot teachers spread like mosquitoes in **stagnant** water among the students. Not one eighth grader “ratted” the **appalling** truth of the bizarre teachers to anyone not in his or her class. For once, everyone kept a secret.

The last few weeks of school dragged by like a slow-moving train. Everyone waited anxiously for the end-of-year awards ceremony. Every few days, someone would try out a haiku on the robot teachers. Superlative vocabulary in the poems **enhanced** the effects on the robots. The eighth-graders’ **implausible, exemplary** behavior worried the principal. He knew they were up to something but had no clue what the kids were planning.

William Waggish had the honor of composing the **coup de grace**. Every eighth-grader memorized the haiku, and they were more than ready.

Finally, the evening of the awards ceremony arrived. The administration and teachers sat on the stage, and parents and students filled the cafeteria to **capacity** with the **latter** spilling out into the hallway. All the eighth-graders were poised for the signal, and even Beth Bibliophilic laid down her **tome**, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, as she watched William with **rapt** attention.

William gave a **clandestine** sign to Isabelle, Felicia, Olivia, Pauline, Vivian, Alessandra, Jesse, Sam, Dalbert, John, and Mark. Then, just as Mr. Punctilious Principal had finished his welcoming speech, the twelve stood up. This was the signal. Every eighth-grader in the room recited the following haiku entitled “*Coup de Grace*” in his or her loudest voice.

Why does the school board
Use **egregious** robots when
Good teachers **abound**?

The robot teachers on stage spluttered. Sparks and smoke billowed from every **orifice**. They threw their arms into the air, opened their mouths, and stared out at the audience without blinking or **uttering** a sound.

The eighth-graders, led by the intrepid twelve, quickly followed this poem by a second haiku. They entitled it “We Want Human Teachers,” and then they shouted it at the top of their voices in perfect unison.

“We **merit** real profs.
Creativity will die
Without humanness.”

No fewer than twelve robot teachers sparked and smoked once more, emitted a huge dying sigh, and fell flat on their faces. The cafeteria was totally silent for a moment, and then all **perdition** broke loose. Parents protested loudly and **vociferously**.

“We want those abominable fake teachers replaced with real people as soon as you can do it,” they insisted.

Students smiled and gave each other “high fives” and said, “We did it!”

As the human teachers clapped enthusiastically, too, they joined in the “high fives” with their students, and they patted each other on the back.

Ms. Amicable Artist murmured to Mr. Melodious Music, “Thank heavens, I couldn’t take much more of those unfeeling **automatons**.”

After a quick phone call, during which he was heard to say, “The jig is up,” Mr. Punctilious Principal banged the podium for the **pandemonium** and **ruckus** to die down.

Finally, as the **din** turned to silence, and all eyes glared at the principal with dislike, the truth emerged. Beth even laid down her book, Little Women, and paid attention.

“First,” he said, “I know that this is no excuse, but the human teachers and I fought the school board’s

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decision to save money by replacing real teachers with robots. They used Horribly Hard Middle School as an experiment. Frankly, I am surprised that the robots lasted this long before our clever students' brains figured out the secret. I think the school board's little experiment is over. I, for one, am relieved and delighted. Thank you, students, for uncovering the truth. Students, keep ever **vigilant** because you never know what money-saving strategy they will try next."

When Mr. Punctilious Principal finished and sat down, a cheer arose from the assembled eighth-graders. The long nightmare of HHMS was over, and the mystery of the bizarre teachers was solved.

There were only two questions remaining. Why did the robot teachers react to the poems, and why did their reactions get even more intensified when the students incorporated great vocabulary in their poems?

"I've got it!" Sam exclaimed when they exited the cafeteria among the other students. "You see, the teachers who were creative and individualistic were human. They had to be. Robots cannot be programmed to be individualistic or creative. They just react to the program in them.

"Ms. Amicable Artist, who taught art; Mr. Melodious Music, who taught music; Ms. Witty Writing Wizard, who taught creative writing; and Mr. Scintillating Social Studies, who came up with all kinds of weird ways to present history, all taught creative subjects or taught in a creative manner. All the robot teachers taught us in a rote manner by using the book exactly as written, by making us copy notes, or by giving us ditto sheets. They couldn't be creative at all," Sam concluded.

"Then why did the **superlative** vocabulary enhance their reactions to the poems?" asked Isabelle.

"Well," suggested Jesse, "I think that using super vocabulary is like being creative. It takes thought."

"I think you're right," said Sam. "The robots were obviously programmed only with the basic vocabulary of middle-school students. When we added those big, juicy vocabulary words to our poems, they only confused the robots more since those words 'did not compute.'"

"I think we've solved the entire mystery," concluded William Waggish with an air of relief and excitement. "I wonder what next year in high school will be like..."