3.2 Punctuation for Effect: 30-minute Pack

about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. This pack is about punctuation used as a deliberate stylistic choice, not just an accuracy rule: examiners reward writers who choose a short sentence, a colon, a dash or an ellipsis on purpose, for a clear effect. Where a dash interrupts a sentence for effect, it is printed as a hyphen with a space on each side (-), in line with house style. An ellipsis is printed as three full stops with no spaces (...).

Source A and Source B: 'The Lock-up' and an extract from a charity speech

Both sources were written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). Source A is a short invented narrative extract. Source B is an invented extract from a persuasive speech to a school year group. Neither is adapted or copied from any published text, real speech or named author.

SOURCE A: 'The Lock-up' (a short original narrative extract)

Frank had worked the night shift at the boatyard for eleven years, and in all that time nothing had ever happened. Nothing at all. He liked it that way.

Tonight the tide was unusually high, the gulls were unusually loud, and the padlock on the old workshop was unusually - impossibly - hanging open.

He should have called it in there and then. He didn't.

Frank pushed the door. It gave without resistance, swinging back on hinges he had oiled himself only last month, and revealed exactly what he had feared it might reveal: nothing. An empty room, swept clean, not so much as a dust sheet out of place.

He almost laughed. Then he saw the note pinned to the workbench, and his laughter died somewhere in his throat. It read simply: we know what you did in 2019.

Frank stood very still. Somewhere behind him, in the dark of the yard, a footstep. Then another. He told himself it was nothing... but he did not quite believe it.

SOURCE B: extract from a speech given to Year 11 students by the head of the school's charity fundraising committee (an original transactional text)

Some of you will say that twenty-four hours of silence is impossible. Impossible.

Last year, three hundred and twelve students at this school stayed silent for a whole day, with no shouting in the corridors, no laughter in the canteen and no chatter on the bus home. And in that silence, they raised four thousand pounds for a single cause: a new sensory room for the children's ward at the county hospital.

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Ask yourself one question: what is twenty-four hours of your voice worth, set against a room that might calm a frightened child for years to come?

I will not stand here and pretend this will be easy. It will not be easy - not for the first hour, and certainly not for the last. But somewhere around hour fifteen, something remarkable tends to happen. You stop noticing the silence around you and start noticing everything else instead.

So here is my challenge to every single one of you: sign the sheet outside this hall by Friday... and find out what happens when a room full of teenagers finally stops talking.

1 Which of the following best explains why the writer places the fragment 'Impossible.' immediately after a longer sentence in Source B?

- ☐ A) It is a printing error and should be joined to the sentence before it.
- ☐ B) It creates a blunt, emphatic echo that mimics a defiant, dismissive tone.
- ☐ C) It shows that the speaker has run out of things to say.
- ☐ D) It signals that the speech is about to end.

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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2 This sentence uses a colon, but the words after it do not create a genuine revelation, so the effect is lost: 'She opened the box: it was a box.' Identify the problem and rewrite the sentence so that the colon builds to a real, surprising revelation.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Explain the effect of the colon in this sentence from Source A: 'It read simply: we know what you did in 2019.'

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Explain the effect of the dash in this sentence from Source B: 'It will not be easy - not for the first hour, and certainly not for the last.'

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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5 Here are eight statements about punctuation used for effect. Choose the FOUR statements that are TRUE.

A. A short sentence placed after a longer, more complex sentence can create a sudden, dramatic impact.

B. A colon can be used to build anticipation before a revelation, a list or a punchline.

C. A pair of dashes can interrupt a sentence to add drama or emphasise a surprising detail.

D. An ellipsis used for effect is best explained as a printing mistake that a proofreader should remove.

E. Overusing exclamation marks in every sentence is the most sophisticated way to build tension.

F. Formal transactional writing, such as a persuasive speech, can never use punctuation deliberately for effect.

G. Punctuation chosen for effect should suit the tone, audience and purpose of the writing around it.

H. A single dash used mid-sentence always functions in exactly the same way as a semicolon.

- ☐ A
- ☐ B
- ☐ C
- ☐ D
- ☐ E
- ☐ F
- ☐ G
- ☐ H

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 Add ONE short sentence of your own (no more than five words) to the end of this paragraph, to create a sudden sense of dread: 'The house had been empty for years. Ivy had swallowed the porch, and the windows were thick with dust. Maya pushed open the front door.'

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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7 Rewrite this sentence, using a pair of dashes to interrupt it and emphasise the bracketed detail for dramatic effect: 'The letter arrived (three years too late) and changed everything.'

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

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8 Write an extract from a persuasive speech or letter (approximately 90-120 words) to encourage your school or local community to support a cause of your choice.
Your extract must include: one short sentence used deliberately for impact and one colon used to build towards a revelation. You should also use at least one semicolon to hold a contrast in careful balance.

(Total for Question 8 is 12 marks)

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9 Write four sentences of your own on the theme of a stormy night at sea, each one demonstrating a different technique from this pack. Label each sentence with the technique it demonstrates: a short sentence for impact; a colon for revelation; a pair of dashes for interruption; an ellipsis for tension.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

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10 Evaluate which of the four techniques studied in this pack - the short sentence, the colon, the dash, or the ellipsis - you find most effective at creating tension. Use at least one example from either Source A or Source B to support your view.

(Total for Question 10 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 3.2 Punctuation for Effect: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

B **B1**

Answer: B

Question 2

identifies that 'it was a box' merely repeats information the reader already knows, so there is no genuine revelation **B1**

rewrite gives a specific, surprising detail after the colon that was not already known, cao **B1**

Answer: Sample answer (indicative, not the only acceptable response): 'She opened the box: inside was a single photograph she had never seen before.'

Question 3

identifies that the colon creates a pause or build-up before the revelation of the note's words (oe) **B1**

develops this with reference to effect on the reader, e.g. the pause makes the words that follow land with maximum shock, mirroring Frank's own delayed, dawning horror (oe) **B1**

Answer: The colon creates a brief pause of anticipation before revealing the exact, unsettling words of the note, so that the threat lands with full force on the reader, mirroring Frank's own delayed shock as he reads it.

Question 4

identifies that the dash interrupts the sentence to add emphasis to the honest admission that follows (oe) **B1**

develops this with reference to effect on the audience, e.g. the interruption makes the speaker sound more direct and trustworthy, since she does not smooth over the difficulty of the challenge (oe) **B1**

Answer: The dash interrupts the sentence to add weight to the honest detail that follows, making the speaker sound direct and trustworthy because she refuses to pretend the challenge will be easy, which makes her audience more likely to trust her later claims.

Question 5

A selected (true) **B1**

B selected (true) **B1**

C selected (true) **B1**

G selected (true) **B1**

Answer: A, B, C and G are true. D is false (an ellipsis used deliberately is a stylistic choice, not an error); E is false (repeated exclamation marks quickly lose their impact and read as unsubtle); F is false, as Source B itself proves that speeches and letters can use these techniques; H is false (a dash used alone usually marks an abrupt afterthought or interruption, which is a different effect from a semicolon's balanced link between two independent clauses).

Question 6

adds a grammatically complete or deliberately minor sentence of no more than five words **B1**

the sentence creates a clear, sudden sense of dread or unease that fits the build-up, oe **B1**

Answer: Sample answer (indicative, not the only acceptable response): 'Something moved upstairs.'

Question 7

opening dash (-) correctly placed before 'three years too late' **B1**

closing dash (-) correctly placed immediately after 'late', with the sentence still making sense if the dashed section is removed, cao **B1**

Answer: The letter arrived - three years too late - and changed everything.

Question 8

AO5: Content and organisation (AO5)

Level 1 Simple, limited attempt to persuade, with little sense of audience, purpose or organisation. **1-2**

Level 2 Some persuasive content matched to audience and purpose, with ideas generally organised clearly. **3-4**

Level 3 Clear, convincing persuasive writing, well matched to a chosen cause, audience and purpose, with confident, effective organisation. **5-6**

AO6: Technical accuracy (punctuation for effect) (AO6)

Level 1 One or two of the three required features are present, and these may be used inaccurately or with little real effect. **1-2**

Level 2 Most of the three required features are present and mostly accurate, with some genuine effect on the audience. **3-4**

Level 3 All three required features (short sentence, colon, semicolon) are present, clearly marked, accurate and used precisely for persuasive effect, alongside controlled Standard English throughout. **5-6**

Indicative content:

- A clear cause chosen and a persuasive, appropriately formal register maintained throughout, suited to a speech or letter.
- A short sentence used deliberately at a key moment, e.g. to state the central demand bluntly.
- A colon used to build towards a specific, striking fact or revelation that supports the argument.
- A semicolon used to hold two contrasting ideas in careful balance, e.g. contrasting the current situation with what could be achieved.
- Direct address to the audience, and a confident, memorable closing statement or call to action.

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Question 9

a correctly formed, accurately labelled short sentence used for impact	**B1**
a correctly formed, accurately labelled sentence using a colon to build to a revelation	**B1**
a correctly formed, accurately labelled sentence using a pair of dashes for dramatic interruption	**B1**
a correctly formed, accurately labelled sentence using an ellipsis for tension	**B1**

Answer: Sample answer (indicative, not the only acceptable response): Short sentence - 'The mast snapped.' Colon - 'Only one thing kept the crew calm: the lighthouse, still faintly visible through the spray.' Dash pair - 'The rope - frayed almost to nothing - held for one more terrible minute.' Ellipsis - 'The captain scanned the black water for any sign of the missing boat... but the sea gave nothing back.'

Question 10

Level 1 Simple, undeveloped preference stated, with little or no supporting textual reference.	**1-2**
Level 2 Clear, justified evaluation of one technique's effectiveness, supported by a well-chosen example from Source A or Source B, with some consideration of why it works better than the alternatives.	**3-4**

Indicative content:

- A clear, explicit judgement is reached about which technique the writer finds most effective, not just a description of what each technique does.
- At least one specific, accurately quoted example is used from Source A or Source B to support the judgement.
- The evaluation explains why the chosen technique creates tension more effectively than the others in this specific context, e.g. the ellipsis's lingering pause versus the dash's abrupt interruption.
- A strong answer may acknowledge that effectiveness depends on context, e.g. a dash works best for a sudden shock, while an ellipsis works best for a slow, dreadful pause.

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