6.5 Advanced Punctuation for Effect: 10-minute Pack

about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions in the spaces provided. Write in full sentences where asked.

The Understudy

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). Written specifically for this worksheet as a short narrative extract for practising advanced punctuation for effect.

Thursday, 11 p.m.

The theatre was empty now - the audience gone, the lights dimmed to a single working lamp centre stage. Mia stood in the wings, still in costume, listening to the building settle around her: creaking pipes, a distant door, the faint hum of the fire exit sign. She had waited three years for this moment; she was not about to let it slip past without noticing every second of it.

Tonight she had not simply understudied the lead - she had become her, note for note, gesture for gesture - and the audience (most of them, anyway) had never once suspected the swap. Was it nerves she felt now, or something closer to grief? The final curtain had fallen. It would not fall in quite the same way again.

She walked to the centre of the stage and looked out at three hundred empty seats: red velvet, gold trim, silence. Nothing moved. Nothing. Somewhere in row F, a forgotten programme lay open on a seat. 'One more minute,' she whispered, 'just one more...' Then she switched off the lamp and, at last, went home.

1 Look at these four extracts from the source text, each containing a piece of advanced punctuation shown in bold. Identify the punctuation device used in each case.

(a) 'The theatre was empty now **-** the audience gone, the lights dimmed to a single working lamp centre stage.' **(1)**

- ☐ A) Semicolon
- ☐ B) Dash
- ☐ C) Colon
- ☐ D) Ellipsis

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(b) 'She had waited three years for this moment **;** she was not about to let it slip past without noticing every second of it.' **(1)**

- [ ] A) Semicolon
- [ ] B) Dash
- [ ] C) Colon
- [ ] D) Bracket

(c) 'She looked out at three hundred empty seats **:** red velvet, gold trim, silence.' **(1)**

- [ ] A) Semicolon
- [ ] B) Dash
- [ ] C) Colon
- [ ] D) Ellipsis

(d) 'The audience **(most of them, anyway)** had never once suspected the swap.' **(1)**

- [ ] A) A pair of dashes
- [ ] B) A pair of brackets
- [ ] C) A single colon
- [ ] D) An ellipsis

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2 Punctuate this sentence correctly, using a colon to introduce the list: Mia checked everything before the curtain rose her costume her props and her lines

(2)

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3 Rewrite this sentence, adding a pair of brackets to mark the extra information as parenthesis: 'The stage manager who had worked at the theatre for over twenty years gave the signal.'

(2)

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4 'The theatre was empty now - the audience gone, the lights dimmed to a single working lamp centre stage.' Explain the effect of the dash here.

(2)

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5 Which sentence uses a pair of dashes correctly to add extra information?

- [ ] A) The old projector - dusty and forgotten sat in the corner of the booth.
- [ ] B) The old projector, dusty and forgotten - sat in the corner of the booth.
- [ ] C) The old projector - dusty and forgotten - sat in the corner of the booth.
- [ ] D) The old projector - dusty and forgotten, sat in the corner of the booth.

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6 Write one minor sentence (with no main verb) that could follow this sentence for dramatic effect: 'The curtain began to fall.'

(2)

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Mark scheme · 6.5 Advanced Punctuation for Effect: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) B) Dash — **B1**

(a) Answer: **B**

(b) A) Semicolon — **B1**

(b) Answer: **A**

(c) C) Colon — **B1**

(c) Answer: **C**

(d) B) A pair of brackets — **B1**

(d) Answer: **B**

Question 2

colon correctly placed after 'rose', immediately before the list begins — **B1**

list items correctly separated by commas, cao — **B1**

Answer: **Mia checked everything before the curtain rose: her costume, her props and her lines.**

Question 3

opening bracket correctly placed before 'who had worked at the theatre for over twenty years' — **B1**

closing bracket correctly placed after 'years', with the sentence still making sense if the bracketed section is removed, cao — **B1**

Answer: **The stage manager (who had worked at the theatre for over twenty years) gave the signal.**

Question 4

identifies that the dash marks a pause before an expansion of the general statement about the empty theatre (oe) — **B1**

links this to effect, e.g. the pause mirrors the quiet, drawn-out stillness Mia notices, slowing the reader down (oe) — **B1**

Answer: **The dash creates a brief pause before the detail that expands on the empty theatre, slowing the pace of the sentence to mirror the eerie stillness Mia notices around her.**

Question 5

C — **B1**

Answer: **C**

Question 6

response has no main verb and cannot stand as a full grammatical sentence on its own — **B1**

response is a plausible, effective continuation that fits the tone/context of the source text (oe) — **B1**

Answer: **Sample answer (indicative, not the only acceptable response): 'Silence, at last.'**

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