6.8 Speech Marks in Narrative Writing: 10-minute Pack

about 10 minutes

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions in the spaces provided. Write in full sentences where asked. You should already be confident with the basic rules of punctuating direct speech; this pack focuses on how writers use dialogue as a craft tool.

The Last Rehearsal

Source written for Revision Library (original, copyright-free). Written specifically for this worksheet as a short narrative extract for practising dialogue as a narrative craft tool.

Backstage, five minutes before curtain

Yusuf paced the narrow strip of floor behind the curtain. 'What if my mind just goes blank and everyone's staring and ...' He shook his head and kept pacing, running his lines under his breath.

Deja appeared at his elbow with a costume pin between her teeth. 'Stand still,' she said, tugging his collar straight. 'You've done this scene forty times.'

'Forty times in an empty hall,' Yusuf muttered. 'Not in front of three hundred people.'

'They're not looking at your collar,' Deja said, snapping the pin shut. 'They're looking at your face. So look confident, even if you don't feel it.'

Mr Vance swept in, clipboard under one arm, and clapped his hands twice. 'Two minutes, everyone. Yusuf, where's my nervous energy? Channel it - don't let it channel you.'

'I know, I just -' Yusuf's voice cracked and he turned away.

Deja caught his sleeve. 'Hey.' She waited until he looked at her. 'You know this play better than anyone in that hall. Better than Mr Vance, probably,' she teased.

'I heard that,' Mr Vance called from across the wings, though he was smiling.

Yusuf laughed despite himself, some of the tension easing out of his shoulders.

'Better,' Deja said. 'Now go and be brilliant.'

The headset on Deja's belt crackled. 'House lights going down. Places, please.'

Yusuf took one last breath, rolled his shoulders back, and walked out from behind the curtain into the dark.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

1 Rewrite each sentence so that an action beat completely replaces the reporting clause (no speech verb at all), correctly punctuated. Do not change the words spoken.

(a) 'I'm not scared,' he said, though his hands were shaking. **(2)**

(b) 'Wait for me!' she said, running to catch up. **(2)**

---

2 'Forty times in an empty hall,' Yusuf muttered. 'Not in front of three hundred people.' 'They're not looking at your collar,' Deja said... This exchange is made up of short, rapid lines. Explain how this short, back-and-forth pattern affects the pace of the scene, and why this suits the moment being described.

(2)

---

3 Which of these lines reveals a nervous character most effectively through word choice and sentence structure alone?

- ☐ A) 'I am fully prepared for this and I have no doubts whatsoever,' said the girl confidently.
- ☐ B) 'I just - I don't know if I - what if it all goes wrong?' the girl said, twisting her sleeve.
- ☐ C) 'The weather today is quite mild for the time of year,' said the girl.
- ☐ D) 'I have completed all of my revision,' said the girl.

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

4 Each sentence below wrongly uses a comma to introduce dialogue after an action that is not a speech verb. Identify the error and rewrite each sentence correctly.

(a) Sam slammed the door, 'That's it, I'm done.' **(2)**

(b) Maya threw her hands up, 'I can't believe you did that.' **(2)**

---

5 Continue this scene with TWO more lines: one from Elena, one from her coach. Your answer must include ONE action beat that completely replaces a reporting clause (no speech verb at all) and ONE reporting verb other than 'said'. Underline both required features.

Elena stood at the starting blocks, rubbing her hands on her shorts. 'This is it,' she whispered.

(4)

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk

Mark scheme · 6.8 Speech Marks in Narrative Writing: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

(a) the action beat (hands shaking) forms its own complete sentence with no speech verb **B1**

(a) correct punctuation: full stop after the action beat, dialogue correctly punctuated as its own sentence, cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **His hands were shaking. 'I'm not scared.'**

(b) the action beat (running to catch up) forms its own complete sentence with no speech verb **B1**

(b) correct punctuation: full stop after the action beat, dialogue correctly punctuated with its own exclamation mark, cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **She ran to catch up. 'Wait for me!'**

Question 2

identifies that short, rapid exchanges speed up the pace of the writing and create a sense of urgency or tension **B1**

links this to the moment being described, e.g. it mirrors the quick, nervous back-and-forth between Yusuf and Deja just before he must go on stage (oe) **B1**

Answer: **The short, quick-fire lines speed up the pace of the scene, creating a sense of urgency and tension; this suits the moment because it mirrors Yusuf and Deja's nervous energy in the last few minutes before he must go on stage.**

Question 3

B **B1**

Answer: **B**

Question 4

(a) identifies that 'slammed the door' is an action, not a speech verb, so a comma cannot correctly introduce the dialogue **B1**

(a) correct rewrite: Sam slammed the door. 'That's it, I'm done.', cao **B1**

(a) Answer: **Sam slammed the door. 'That's it, I'm done.'**

(b) identifies that 'threw her hands up' is an action, not a speech verb, so a comma cannot correctly introduce the dialogue **B1**

(b) correct rewrite: Maya threw her hands up. 'I can't believe you did that.', cao **B1**

(b) Answer: **Maya threw her hands up. 'I can't believe you did that.'**

Question 5

a new line of correctly punctuated direct speech from the coach, using a reporting verb other than 'said', appropriate to the context **B1**

a new line of correctly punctuated direct speech from Elena, attributed using an action beat with no speech verb at all **B1**

both required features (the varied reporting verb and the action beat) are clearly underlined **B1**

both new lines are grammatically accurate and punctuated correctly throughout, cao **B1**

Answer:Sample answer (indicative, not the only acceptable response): 'You've trained for this,' the coach murmured, crouching beside her.

Elena tightened her laces. 'I'm ready.'

© Revision Library | revisionlibrary.co.uk