

Rhetorical Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing

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STUDENT VERSION

MODULE 10: 1984

Participial Modifiers and Special Punctuation

Activity 1

Guided Composition

This activity is based on is based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section Two, Chapter V.

The purpose of this activity is for you to write a paragraph on the topic of *1984*. Your teacher will read a paragraph while you listen and then read it again while you take notes. You will then write your own paragraph based on what you heard using your notes.

Noticing Language

What different information do these three sentences communicate? How do they affect you differently as a reader?

1. Mr. Charrington would finger this scrap of rubbish or that.
2. With enthusiasm, Mr. Charrington would finger this scrap of rubbish or that—a bottle-stopper, the lid of a snuffbox, a locket—never asking that Winston should buy it, merely that he should admire it.
3. With a sort of faded enthusiasm, Mr. Charrington would finger this scrap of rubbish or that—a china bottle-stopper, the painted lid of a broken snuffbox, a pinchbeck locket containing a strand of some-long-dead baby’s hair—never asking that Winston should buy it, merely that he should admire it.

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

Note: The materials labeled Rhetorical Grammar Concepts are for your reference as you do the activities in this unit.

Participial Modifiers

Participial modifiers, with their potential for adding details and information, are a powerful tool for writers. They also enable writers to combine sentences, resulting in more varied and concise sentences with less repetition.

Examples of participial modifiers

Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions...

As he watched the eyeless face with the jaw moving rapidly up and down, Winston had a curious feeling that this was not a real human being but some kind of dummy.

Participles such as nuzzled and moving are forms of verbs that cannot be used alone as the main verbs of sentences, but they can be added to sentences to provide additional information. They perform a double job—they modify a noun or pronoun (identified with the wavy line), just as an adjective does, but they also describe an action in the same way a verb does. They can also be expanded with other modifiers (identified by underlining).

Participial modifiers have present and past forms.

- The present form, which has an *-ing* ending (for example, *moving*)
- The past form, which has an *-ed* ending (for example, *nuzzled*)
- Irregular past forms have various endings (for example, *given*).

Present participle: Turning round, Winston almost failed to recognize her.

“Turning round” describes the subject, “Winston.” “Turning” is the participle, and “round” completes the participial phrase. The information in the phrase could be in a separate sentence: “He was turning round.” However, combining it as shown above makes a single strong sentence.

Past participle: Roared out by hundreds of voices to the tramp of marching feet, it was terrifying.

“Roared out by hundreds of voices to the tramp of marching feet” modifies “it,” (the Hate song). “Roared” is the participle, and “out by hundreds of voices to the tramp of marching feet” completes the participial phrase. It could have been a separate sentence: “It was roared out by hundred of voices to the tramp of marching feet.” Combining the two sentences means Orwell did not have to repeat “it was.”

Misplaced modifiers

As useful as participial modifiers are, they nevertheless present some hazards to writers. If they modify the wrong noun or pronoun in a sentence, they can confuse and sometimes amuse readers, but they fail to fulfill the writer’s purpose in using them. A participial modifier at the beginning of a sentence modifies the subject.

Example of misplaced modifiers

Winston almost failed to recognize her, turning round.

By placing the modifier at the end of the sentence, the writer says that it is Julia who is turning round, not Winston.

Armed with jointed truncheons, even the streets leading up to its outer barriers were roamed by gorilla-faced guards in black uniforms.

Because the modifier comes at the beginning of the sentence, it sounds like the streets were armed with truncheons, not the gorilla-faced guards.

Activity 2

Identifying Participial Modifiers

This activity is based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section Two, Chapter V.

Circle the participles, and underline the words that complete the participial phrases in the following paragraph. Show which noun or pronoun the phrase modifies by drawing a wavy line under it. Then reread the paragraph, and discuss the rhetorical purpose for Orwell's use of participial modifiers. When you are finished, notice how he has punctuated them, and write the rule for punctuating participial modifiers.

Already the black instant of panic was half forgotten. Feeling slightly ashamed of himself, Winston sat up against the bedhead. Julia got out of bed and pulling on her overalls, made coffee. The smell rising from the saucepan was so intoxicating they shut the window lest anyone notice. Even better than the taste of the coffee was the silky texture given to it by the sugar. Used to saccharine, Winston had almost forgotten about sugar. Julia wandered about the room, glancing indifferently at the bookcase, pointing out the best way of repairing the gateleg table, plumping herself down in the ragged armchair to see if it was comfortable, and examining the absurd twelve-hour clock. She brought the glass paperweight over to the bed. He took it out of her hand, fascinated as always by the soft, rainwatery appearance of the glass.

Activity 3

Rhetorical Purpose: Now read the paragraph aloud to a partner, leaving out all the participial modifiers. How is it different? Why did Orwell choose to use so many participial modifiers for this paragraph?

Punctuation Rule for Participial Modifiers: How are participial modifiers punctuated in the passage above?

Combining Sentences Using Participial Modifiers

This activity is based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section One, Chapter I.

Combine each pair of sentences into a single sentence using participial modifiers. Punctuate the participial phrases with commas if needed. Notice that some pairs of sentences can be combined in two different ways while others can logically be combined in only one way.

- The people in the room were watching the Hate on the telescreen.
They were bursting with exclamations of uncontrollable rage.

Watching the Hate on the telescreen, the people in the room were bursting with exclamations of uncontrollable rage.

OR: The people, bursting with exclamations of uncontrollable rage, were watching the Hate on the telescreen.
- The thought of Goldstein produced fear and anger automatically.
Goldstein was hated more than either Eurasia or Eastasia.
- Goldstein was hated and despised by everybody.
The influence of Goldstein never grew any less.
- People were leaping up and down.
People were shouting at the tops of their voices.
- The dark-haired girl behind Winston had begun crying out
"Swine! Swine! Swine!"

She suddenly picked up a heavy Newspeak dictionary and flung it at the screen.

6. Winston was shouting with the others.
He was kicking his heels violently against the rungs of his chair.

7. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness seemed to flow through the whole group of people.
It was turning one into a grimacing, screaming lunatic.

8. But in the same moment, the hostile figure melted into the face of Big Brother.
Big brother was black-haired, black mustachio'd, full of power and mysterious calm.

Activity 4

Writing Sentences Using Participial Modifiers

These activities are based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section I, Chapter I.

Using information from Section One, Chapter I, rewrite the sentences below to make them more interesting and informative. You may add information to verbs, but focus on modifying nouns, and try to use at least one participial phrase in each sentence. Make sure that your sentences are accurate and express the correct logical relationship between the ideas. Edit for correct punctuation.

1. The poster depicted an enormous face.

The poster, appearing on walls all over the city of London, depicted an enormous face of a man observing the movements of people going about their business.

2. The instrument was called a telescreen.

3. It was a particularly beautiful book.

4. The diary was a compromising possession.

5. He sat.

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6. He began writing.
7. She was a bold-looking girl.
8. He disliked all women.

Special Punctuation for Adding Information

In addition to participial modifiers, writers have other resources when they want to add information to sentences. They can use special punctuation to show that they are adding information that is useful but not essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Colon: The colon is used to introduce a list, an example, or other information that explains what comes before. It can also be used to separate two closely related independent clauses in the same way as a semicolon.

But it was no use, he could not remember: **nothing remains of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux, occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible.**

It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: **the logic of their position demanded it.**

Dash: Dashes are used in place of commas or parentheses because they are slightly less formal. Dashes set off words that add information not essential to understanding the sentence. If the words are inserted in the middle of the sentence, dashes have to be used on both sides of the added information. A single dash can also precede a word or phrase that the writer wants to emphasize at the end of a sentence. Orwell also sometimes uses dashes to suggest pauses in spoken language.

You had to live—**did live, from habit that became instinct**—in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard.

(“Did live, from habit that became instinct” emphasizes how critical the assumption is that you are being spied on constantly.)

The Ministry of Truth—**Minitrue, in Newspeak**—was startlingly different from any other object in sight.

(“Minitrue, in Newspeak” provides additional information, but it is not essential to understand the sentence. Because it comes in the middle of the sentence, dashes are needed on both sides. It could have been punctuated with commas because it is an appositive: the Ministry of Truth = Minitrue.)

Perhaps the rumors of vast underground conspiracies were true after all—**perhaps the Brotherhood really existed!**

(“Perhaps the Brotherhood really existed” tells us what the consequence would be if the rumors were true. Setting this thought off with a dash emphasizes it as does the exclamation point.)

Parentheses: Like dashes, parentheses indicate that the information within them is not essential but further explains an element of the main sentence; however, parentheses do not provide emphasis in the way that dashes can.

As short a time ago as February, the Ministry of Plenty had issued a promise (a **“categorical pledge” were the official words**) that there would be no reduction of the chocolate ration during 1984.

(This sentence uses parentheses to give the Newspeak equivalent of “promise.” Orwell could have used dashes instead.)

Activity 5

Combining Sentences Using Special Punctuation—Dashes and Colons

This activity is based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section Three, Chapter VI.

Re-punctuate the paragraph below using punctuation that you think best serves Orwell’s rhetorical purpose. With your class, discuss the options that you have chosen and the purposes they serve.

A shrill trumpet call had pierced the air. It was the bulletin. Victory. It always meant victory when a trumpet call preceded the news. He could hear just enough of what was issuing from the telescreen to realize that it had happened as he had foreseen. A vast seaborne armada secretly assembled. A sudden blow in the enemy’s rear. The white arrow tearing across the tail of the black. Under the table Winston’s feet made convulsive movements. He had not stirred from his seat, but in his mind he was running, swiftly running. He looked up again at the portrait of Big Brother. The colossus that bestrode the world. The rock against which the hordes of Asia dashed themselves in vain. Much had changed in him since that first day in the Ministry of Love, but the final, indispensable, healing change had never happened until this moment. He loved Big Brother.

Comparing Literary Language with Academic Language

All writing can be placed on a continuum ranging from very informal (for example, text messages) to very formal (articles in academic journals). Orwell uses different levels of formality in *1984* for different purposes. The passages in Activities 1-5 come from parts of the novel in which Orwell is describing Winston's and Julia's doomed attempt to live a normal life in a world where every word, thought, and action is controlled by Big Brother. In these passages, his language is literary and somewhat informal. In other parts of *1984*, Orwell writes in a rather formal academic style to describe the political beliefs that are the foundation of a totalitarian state.

Activity 6

Comparing Literary Language with Academic Language

This activity is based on George Orwell, *1984*, Section One, Chapter VI, and Section Two, Chapter X.

Read and annotate the two passages below; then make notes on the chart about the differences that you observe in the two styles of writing.

Passage 1: Literary Description/Narrative (Section One, Chapter VI)

He picked up the children's history book and looked at the portrait of Big Brother which formed its frontispiece. The hypnotic eyes gazed into his own. It was as though some huge force were pressing down upon you—something penetrated inside your skull, battering against your brain, frightening you out of your beliefs, persuading you, almost to deny the evidence of your senses. In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it. It was inevitable that they should make that claim sooner or later: the logic of their position demanded it. Not merely the validity of experience, but the very existence of external reality was tacitly denied by their philosophy. The heresy of heresies was common sense.

Passage 2: Academic Language (Section Two, Chapter X)

Doublethink means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them. The Party intellectual knows in which direction his memories must be altered;

he therefore knows that he is playing tricks with reality; but by the exercise of *doublethink* he also satisfies himself that reality is not violated. The process has to be conscious, or it would not be carried out with sufficient precision, but it also has to be unconscious, or it would bring with it a feeling of falsity and hence of guilt. *Doublethink* lies at the very heart of Ingsoc, since the essential act of the Party is to use conscious deception while retaining the firmness of purpose that goes with complete honesty.

	Literary Description/ Narrative Passage 1	Academic Language Passage 2
Sentence length		
Descriptive details that call up images		
Pronouns		
Punctuation		

Rhetorical Purpose: These two passages both discuss how a totalitarian state exercises control over its members. Why did Orwell choose to use two different grammatical styles? What point was he making?

What level of formality should you use when writing assignments for your classes in school?

Editing Student Writing

This activity is based on a student essay from the *1984* module. Read the paragraphs below, and then make several more passes through the paragraphs.

- Combine sentences with participial modifiers wherever appropriate.
- Add details and information using any of the techniques you have learned during this course including using coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Insert special punctuation in places where it will be effective to set off or emphasize an idea.
- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.

1984 is a novel by George Orwell. It is written about a dystopian “future.” It involves a lot of oppression. The government is run by the Inner Party. Big Brother symbolizes the Party itself. If Big Brother says something is true, the population of Oceania is supposed to believe it. If our government were to control the media as absolutely as Big Brother, it could influence people’s thoughts. Winston is constantly bombarded with propaganda. If the government controls media, it also controls history. The government forces people to believe what Big Brother tells them. Big Brother can, and constantly does, change people’s beliefs and thought processes. In today’s society, torture can turn a person as well. Torture can break people. Torture can make them believe anything.

People think that no one can control our perception of reality. think that no one can control our perception of reality. We are individuals. We choose what we believe. We can only be influenced as much as we allow ourselves to be. However, when the media bombards people, they absorb the information. They believe things that defy the law of science. Media today is extensive. It is more

involved in our lives than it was in the world of Oceania. We rely on social media. It could be used against us. It could feed us lies. It could rewrite history. We accept the information of the internet as fact. Big Brother could decide what is real and what is not. Today's government has the power to do so as well.

Activity 8

Editing Your Guided Composition

Return to your guided composition from Activity 1.

- Revise your guided composition by reading the paragraph and making several more passes through the paragraphs.
- Combine sentences with participial modifiers wherever appropriate.
- Add details and information using any of the techniques you have learned during this course, including using coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Insert special punctuation in places where it will be effective to set off or emphasize an idea.
- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.
- Compare your edited version with the original.

What did you learn through this activity that you can apply to your own writing?

Activity 9

Editing Your Own Writing

Pick a paragraph from your essay on *1984*. Make several passes through your paragraph.

- Combine sentences with participial modifiers wherever appropriate.
- Add details and information using any of the techniques you have learned during this course, including coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Insert special punctuation in places where it will be effective to set off or emphasize an idea.
- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.

- Put a question mark in the margin next to any participial modifiers or punctuation you are unsure about.
- Exchange your paragraph with a partner and discuss your questions. Check with your teacher if you can't agree on an answer.
- Now edit the rest of your essay.