

Just a Dash of Punctuation

The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard

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Grade Level	9th – 12th Grade	**Time Frame**	80-90 minutes
Subject	English/Language Arts	**Duration**	2 class periods
Course	A.P. Language and Composition, A.P. Literature and Composition, American Literature, British Literature, Composition, Creative		

Essential Question

How do dashes impact writing?

Summary

A dash of this and a dash of that works in cooking, but does it work in writing? In this lesson, students will explore the use of em and en dashes. Through reading the short story "Cooking Time," students will get to explore the use of dashes. Students will also have the opportunity to write a response to the story correctly using dashes.

Snapshot

Engage

Students add punctuation to unique recipes and discuss punctuation that is missing.

Explore

Students read the story "Cooking Time," highlighting the dashes found in the story, then exploring the purpose of the dashes.

Explain

In small groups, students formalize their understanding of dashes.

Extend

Students examine sentences from the story and rewrite the sentences, omitting the dashes without changing the meaning of the sentences.

Evaluate

Students demonstrate their understanding by writing a response to the story using dashes appropriately.

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 11)

11.5.W.7: Use a colon or dash to reveal information in a sentence.

Attachments

- Lesson Slides—Just a Dash of Punctuation.pptx
- Note Catcher—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.docx
- Note Catcher—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.pdf
- Note Catcher—Just a Dash of Punctuation.docx
- Note Catcher—Just a Dash of Punctuation.pdf
- Recipes (Sample Responses)—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.docx
- Recipes (Sample Responses)—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.pdf
- Recipes (Sample Responses)—Just a Dash of Punctuation.docx
- Recipes (Sample Responses)—Just a Dash of Punctuation.pdf
- Recipes—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.docx
- Recipes—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.pdf
- Recipes—Just a Dash of Punctuation.docx
- Recipes—Just a Dash of Punctuation.pdf
- The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.docx
- The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard—Just a Dash of Punctuation - Spanish.pdf
- The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard—Just a Dash of Punctuation.docx
- The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard—Just a Dash of Punctuation.pdf

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- Recipes handout (attached; one per 12 students)
- Recipes handout (Sample Responses) (attached; one per class)
- Note Catcher handout (attached; one per student)
- The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard handout (attached; one per 5 students)
- CommonLit account (for teacher use)
- Highlighters (optional; one per student)

10 minutes

Engage

Teacher's Note: Lesson Preparation

Before beginning this lesson, you will need to print copies of the "Cooking Time" short story for students to read during the Explore portion of the lesson. To access the story, go to CommonLit.org and log in or sign up for a free account. Then click the "The Library" button. Search for *Cooking Time* and select the text, *Cooking Time* by Anita Roy. Lastly, select "Download PDF" and follow the directions to print this short story for your students.

For students whose first language is not English, CommonLit.org can provide translations. You must first create a CommonLit.org class in order for them to have access to a translated version of the story. The CommonLit tech tool can assist you with doing this. Once you have created a class, you can make the class code available to students who wish to read it in Spanish.

Teacher's Note: Activity Preparation and Purpose

The **Recipes** handout is a four-page handout with one recipe per page. Print enough copies so that each pair has one page.

In the following activity, students are given 5 minutes to add punctuation to their given recipe. Use student responses as a formative assessment to see if students need a review of basic punctuation like periods and commas before continuing the lesson and introducing dashes; this is not the time for perfection, which is why there is a timer on this activity. It is intended to be a brief activity. Use the attached **Recipes (Sample Responses)** document as needed.

Introduce the lesson by displaying the title **slide 2** from the attached **Lesson Slides**.

Transition through **slides 3-4**. Review the essential question and the learning objectives.

Have students find an Elbow Partner. Display **slide 5** and give each pair one page of the attached **Recipes** handout; each page has a different recipe. Explain to the class that they are to work with their elbow partner to add punctuation to their given recipe.

Move to **slide 6** and show students the pictures of the different dishes they will be reading about: Sarson ka Saag, Makki ki Roti, Langues de Chat, and Quail Consommé. These are recipes in the story that they will read during the Explore portion of the lesson. Let students know that they will have 5 minutes to work on this activity, then start the 5-minute timer on the slide. Encourage students to try their best to add punctuation but not to stress to "find them all."

While students are working, place each page of the **Recipes (Sample Responses)** document in each corner of the classroom. When the timer expires, have groups go to the page that matches their recipe. Have the four groups compare the punctuation they added to that of the sample responses and see how many they found or missed. Direct students to discuss in their groups how accurate they were in finding the punctuation errors. Let students know that there is often more than one correct answer.

If time allows, consider facilitating a brief discussion on how these recipes are similar or different to dishes that students eat in their own homes or what the dish reminds them of.

20 minutes

Explore

Distribute to each student a copy of the short story "Cooking Time." Then display **slide 7** and instruct students to highlight or circle all the dashes they see in the reading. Encourage students to look for a pattern in the dashes: What are they noticing? What patterns are they noticing?

Introduce students to the Inverted Pyramid strategy and display **slide 8**. Direct students to find a partner and discuss what they think the purpose of the different dashes is. Use the guiding questions on the slide to direct student conversations:

- What, if anything, are they replacing?
- How do they add to the meaning of the sentence or story?
- Was there anything predictable about how they were used?

20 minutes

Explain

Show **slide 9** and give students the vocabulary, but not the definitions of *hyphens*, *en* dashes, and *em* dashes. Have each pair find another pair to create a small group to attempt to "whip up" some rules for how to use *hyphens*, *en* dashes, and *em* dashes. As students are working, remind them to look back at the following paragraphs from *Cooking Time*: 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 27, 30, 34, 40, 42, 51, 55, 56, 60, which all have dashes in them. They do not need to explain every dash but encourage them to elaborate on the ones they know and discuss with their partner the ones they have lingering questions on.

Display **slide 10**. As a whole class, discuss and write out on the board some of the generated rules.

Move to **slide 11** and distribute the attached **Note Catcher** handout to each student. Facilitate a whole class discussion and confirm the correct uses of dashes throughout the reading.

Display **slide 12** and explain to students that the width of the *en* dash is the width of an "**N**," while the width of the *em* dash is the width of an "**M**." This will also help them remember which is which.

Transition through **slides 13-19** asking the class which dash: *en* or *em* would be the best for each given situation.

Teacher's Note: Guiding the Activity

- Slides 13, 16, and 17 are describing an *en* dash.
- Slides 14, 15, 18, and 19 are describing an *em* dash.

Keep in mind that MLA and APA require dashes without spaces around them. With journals, news articles, and pieces of literature, there is more freedom when using dashes.

20 minutes

Extend

Teacher's Note: Activity Preparation

The attached **The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard** handout is a five-page handout, each page with a variety of sentences from *Cooking Time*. Print enough copies so that each student has one page.

Display **slide 20** and distribute the attached **The Weirdest Sentence I'd Ever Heard** handout to students. There are five different pages with a variety of sentences from the short story. Distribute one page to each student so that each of the five different pages is basically even amongst the class. In preparation for the following activity, work together as a class to rewrite the sentence on the slide without any dashes. Consider showing students multiple correct answers. Have students write this example on the back of their handout.

Move to **slide 21**. Have students practice rewriting their sentences independently (on the front of their handout) without dashes. Once students have completed their own work, direct them to find a partner who had different sentences than they did. Have students share and talk about why they made those stylistic choices in rewriting their sentences.

As a whole group, ask for volunteers to share out orally or by writing their sentences on the board.

Sample Student Responses:

Answers will vary; below are a few examples:

- From Handout A, sentence #3: That my friend (who I saw this morning) was not dead, that she must have died a hundred years ago.
- From Handout A, sentence #4: "Well, surely if something had happened, then shouldn't we already know about it by now?"
- From Handout B, sentence #2: She didn't just love it, she was obsessed! She was addicted.
- From Handout B, sentence #3: What about the tracker that they had implanted in all the contestants before they entered the Portal?
- From Handout C, sentence #1: We used to call her "2D" because she'd vanish when she turned sideways.
- From Handout C, sentence #4: I put it down to nerves. I mean even Mandy has nerves or so I thought, but now I'm not so sure.
- From Handout D, sentence #4: All I do know is that I want to live my life. If I can't cook real food, I might survive, but I think I'll die.
- From Handout E, sentence #4: Of course I wanted Mandy to win, but it was impossible not to want them all to make it. I glanced back to Mandy's corner of the screen, and it was empty.

10 minutes

Evaluate

Teacher's Note: Typing Dashes

As you know, a standard keyboard does not have a button for an *en* or *em* dash. So, it is important to share with students how to type those characters.

In Google Docs, click "Insert" and select "Special characters." From there, use the drop-down menu to select "Categories;" then use the next drop-down menu to select "Punctuation;" then use the next drop-down to select "Dash/Connector." Hover over the characters to ensure you are selecting the one you want; then use "click the character" to insert it into the body of text. Watch this video for further assistance.

In Microsoft Word, click "Insert;" then click "Symbol" and select "More Symbols." From there, click the "Special Characters" tab and click the desired dash and press the "Insert" button.

For the following writing task, students can either type or write their response depending on your preferences. If students are typing, be sure to communicate how to type these special characters.

Display **slide 22** and ask students to write a paragraph using at least four dashes correctly to answer one of the questions:

- What do you think led up to this situation in "Cooking Time?"
- What would come after the end of "Cooking Time?"

After completing their paragraph, have students use the Fist to Five strategy by writing a number 0–5 on the top of their paper. Here zero indicates that they are still confused about the use of and difference between *en* dashes and *em* dashes.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Elbow Partners. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/116
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Fist to Five. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/68
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Google Docs. Tech Tool. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/tech-tool/2327
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Inverted Pyramid. Strategies. https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/173
- K20 Center. (2021, September 21). *K20 Center 5-minute timer*. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/EVS_yYQoLJg?si=fJvuvFWH3vJ3B0z9
- TheGoodocs. (2022, April 27). *How to create long dash EM dash in google docs*. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/yLwY4y5lHU0?si=q_bUO9sG12IaDtzh