SYNTAX: SENTENCE STYLES LES MISERABLES

**The Segregating Style Sentence**

**Definition:**

Grammatically simple, expressing a single idea. Consists of relatively short, uncomplicated

sentences

**Textual Examples:**

He writes, at most, 750 words a day. He writes and rewrites. He polishes and re-polishes. He

Words in solitude. He works with agony. He words with sweat. And that is the only way to work

at all.

**Advantages:**

Useful in descriptive and narrative writing. Analyzes a complicated perception or action into

its parts and arranges these in significant order. Simple yet effective, emphatic and offer variety.

**Disadvantages:**

Less useful in exposition, where you must combine ideas in subtle graduations of logic and

importance. Can become too simplistic and lose its character.

**Uses:**

Narratives, descriptive passages. Used for emphasis in longer sentences.

**The Freight-Train Style Sentence**

**Definition:**

Sentence consisting of 3 or more very short independent clauses joined by conjunction.

Couples short, independent clauses to make longer sequential statements.

*Multiple Coordination* (MC) – using ‘and’ to link coordinating clauses

*Parataxis* – independent clauses linked by semicolons

*Triadic Sentence* – 3 clauses using MC or Parataxis

**Textual Examples:**

And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and

it fell: and great was the fall of it.

MC – It was a hot day and the sky was bright and the road was white and dusty.

Parataxis – The habits of the natives are disgusting; the women hawk on the floor, the forks are

dirty; the trees are poor; the Pont Neuf is not a patch of the London Bridge; the cows are too

skinny.

**Advantages:**

Can link a series of events, ideas, impressions, feelings, or perceptions as immediately as possible, without judging their relative value or imposing a logical structure upon them.

**Disadvantages:**

Does not handle ideas subtly, and implies that all linked thoughts are equally significant. Cannot

show precise logical relationships (cause and effect). Can continue without stopping places.

**Uses:**

Children’s writings or childlike visions; Experience of the mind descriptions; ‘Stream of Conscience’

**The Cumulative Sentence**

**Definition:**

Initial independent clause followed by many subordinate constructions, which accumulate details

About the person, place, event or idea.

**Textual Examples:**

A creek ran through the meadow, winding and turning, clear water running between steep banks

of black earth, with shallow places where you build a dam.

She was then twenty-one, a year out of Smith College, a dark, shy quiet girl with a fine mind and a small but pure gift of her thoughts on paper.

**Advantages:**

Can handle a series of events; Can act as a frame, enclosing the details; Details may precede or follow the main clause using ‘these’, ‘those’, ‘this’, ‘that’ and ‘such as’ preceding nouns.

**Disadvantages:**

Open ended (like the freight-train sentences)

**Uses:**

Descriptions, character sketches; Less often in narration

**The Parallel Style Sentence**

**Definition:**

Two or more words or construction stand in an identical grammatical relationship to the same

thing. All subjects must be in the same form.

**Textual Examples:**

In its energy, its lyrics, its advocacy of frustrated joys, rock is one long symphony of protest.

**Advantages:**

Impressive and pleasing to hear; Economical – using one element to serve three or four others;

Enriches meaning by emphasizing subtle connections between words.

**Disadvantages:**

Suits only ideas that are logically parallel – three or four conditions of the same effect; Is formal for modern taste; Can be too wordy just by being a parallel structure.

**Uses:**

Can be used in all forms of writing for emphasis or descriptions – emotional or intellectural.

**The Balanced Sentence**

**Definition:**

Two parts, roughly equivalent in length. It may also be split on either side.

**Textual Examples:**

In a few moments, everything grew black, and the rain poured down like a cataract.

Visit either you like; they’re both mad.

Children played about her; and she sang as she worked.

**Advantages:**

The construction may be balanced and parallel; Pleasing to eyes and ears and gives shape to the

sentences; Uses objectivity, control and proportion.

**Disadvantages:**

Unsuitable for conveying the immediacy of raw experience or the intensity of strong emotion;

Formality is likely to seem too elaborate for modern readers.

**Uses:**

Irony and comedy or just about anything else

**The Subordinating Style Sentence**

**Definition:**

Expresses the main clause and arranges points or lesser importance around it, in the form of

Phrases and independent clauses:

*Loose Structure:* main clause comes first

*Periodic Structure:* main clause follows subordinate parts

*Convoluted Structure:* main clause is split in two, subordinate parts intruding

*Centered Structure:* main clause occupies the middle of the sentence

**Textual Examples:**

*Loose Sentence:* We must always be weary of conclusions drawn from the ways of social insects, since their evolutionary track lies so far from ours.

*Periodic Sentence:* There is no future for the black ghetto, the future of all Negroes is diminished.

*Convoluted Sentence:* White men, at the bottom of their hearts, know this.

*Centered Sentence:* Having wanted to walk on the sea like St. Peter, he had taken an involuntary

bath, losing his mitre and the better part of his reputation.

**Advantages:**

*Loose sentences:* Puts things first – like we talk; Expresses a complete idea or perception.

*Periodic sentences:* Emphatic – It delays the principle thought, increasing climax.

*Convoluted sentences:* Simply offers variety in style and emphasis for the words before and

after commas.

*Centered sentences:* Good in long sentences – can order events or ideas.

**Disadvantages:**

*Loose sentences:* Lack emphasis and easily becomes formless – no clear ending points.

*Periodic sentences:* Too long of a delay can be confusing; Less advantageous in informal

*Convoluted sentences:* Formal and taxing – interrupting elements grow longer and more

complicated

*Centered sentences:* Not as emphatic as periodic or as informal as loose.

**Uses:**

*Loose sentences:* Colloquial, informal, and relaxed

*Periodic sentences:* Formal and literal

*Convoluted sentences:* Formal writing, used sparingly

*Centered sentences:* Formal, for long and complicated subjects to include event as well as

Grammatical order

**The Fragment**

**Definition:**

Single word, phrase, or dependent clause standing along as a sentence.

**Textual Examples:**

I saw her. I saw her. *Going down the street.*

Sweeping criticism of this style throws less light on the subject than on the critic himself. *A light*

*No always impressive.*

**Advantages:**

Emphasis

**Disadvantages:**

Unsupported fragments become grammatical errors fixed by rejoining the modifier with the

sentence.

Only use occasionally.

**Uses:**

Formal and informal writing – for emphasis

Les Miserables Longest Sentence: 823 words…I think….Longest sentence in French Literature

“The son of a father to whom history will accord certain attenuating circumstances, but also as worthy of esteem as that father had been of blame; possessing all private virtues and many public virtues; careful of his health, of his fortune, of his person, of his affairs, knowing the value of a minute and not always the value of a year; sober, serene, peaceable, patient; a good man and a good prince; sleeping with his wife, and having in his palace lackeys charged with the duty of showing the conjugal bed of the bourgeois, an ostentation of the regular sleeping-apartment which had become useful after the former illegitimate displays of the elder branch; knowing all the languages of Europe, and, what is more rare, all the languages of all interests, and speaking them; an admirable representative of the “middle class,” but outstripping it, and in every way greater than it; possessing excellent sense, while appreciated the blood from which he had sprung, counting most of all on his intrinsic worth, and, on the question of his race, very particular, declaring himself Orleans and not Bourbon; thoroughly the first Prince of the Blood Royal while he was still only a Serene Highness, but a frank bourgeois from the day he became king; diffuse in public, concise in private; reputed, but not proved to be a miser; at bottom, one of those economists who are readily prodigal at their own fancy or duty; lettered, but not very sensitive to letters; a gentleman, but not a chevalier; simple, calm, and strong; adored by his family and his household; a fascinating talker, an undeceived statesman, inwardly cold, dominated by immediate interest, always governing at the shortest range, incapable of rancor and of gratitude, making use without mercy of superiority on mediocrity, clever in getting parliamentary majorities to put in the wrong those mysterious unanimities which mutter dully under thrones; unreserved, sometimes imprudent in his lack of reserve, but with marvelous address in that imprudence; fertile in expedients, in countenances, in masks; making France fear Europe and Europe France! incontestably fond of his country, but preferring his family; assuming more domination than authority and more authority than dignity, a disposition which has this unfortunate property, that as it turns everything to success, it admits of would be ranked among the most illustrious governors of history had he loved glory but a little, and if he had had the sentiment of what is great to the same degree as the feeling for what is useful.”