

Teaching Notes

The goal of L.11–12.3.A is for students to understand and use varying syntax for effect, apply their knowledge when reading complete texts, and know what resources to consult for reference. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classroom as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Ask students to bring in a piece of writing that they like to read in their spare time. It could be a story like a comic book or novel, or it could be an informational text like a printed web page or magazine. Have students analyze the syntax in a few paragraphs of the text they chose. How many techniques for varying syntax can they identify?
2. Direct students to conduct research, finding three texts that use different kinds of syntax. For example, Ernest Hemingway uses lots of short, terse sentences in his writing, while F. Scott Fitzgerald favors longer, more lavish sentences. As a result of differences like these, different authors can have wildly different writing styles. Ask students to think about how the authors' use of syntax helps establish such contrasts in their writing styles.

Writing Prompts

1. Assign students a grade-appropriate excerpt from a fictional text and ask them to identify uses of varied syntax. Direct students to write a brief paragraph for each example they find, explaining which technique the author uses and how. Encourage students to find three or more examples of varied syntax techniques.
2. Review with students some of the effects that can be achieved by varying syntax. Direct students to write a short story using syntax techniques both to create emphasis and to show relationships between two or more ideas. Ask students to explain which techniques they used and how they achieved each purpose in their story.

Additional Resources

Consider these additional resources when teaching L.11–12.3.A:

“Smart Words: Transition Words and Phrases”:

This resource provides a detailed list of transition words and phrases that can be used to vary syntax and create cohesion between ideas in text.

- <http://www.smart-words.org/linking-words/transition-words.html>



Sample Quizzes:

This resource provides teachers with sample questions and exercises that could be used to test students on how to vary syntax for effect and apply understanding of syntax while reading.

- <http://www.shmoop.com/common-core-standards/ccss-ela-literacy-l-11-12-3.html>



Self-Check: L.11–12.3.A

1. Which of the sentences in the table use syntax to emphasize details about the weather? Give your answer by writing Yes or No for each sentence.

Sentence	Yes/ No
On the chilly morning, Victoria stood shivering at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive.	
Veronica stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive, and it was chilly so she shivered.	
While Veronica stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive, she noticed that it was chilly.	
Shivering in the chilly morning air, Veronica waited at the bus stop for the bus to arrive.	
The bus stop was where Veronica waited on the chilly morning for the bus to arrive, and she was shivering while she waited.	

Item ID	ELA_L.11–12.3.A_MCQ_Q939	
DOK level	3	
Answer	Sentence	Yes/ No
	On the chilly morning, Victoria stood shivering at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive.	Yes
	Veronica stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive, and it was chilly so she shivered.	No
	While Veronica stood at the bus stop waiting for the bus to arrive, she noticed that it was chilly.	No
	Shivering in the chilly morning air, Veronica waited at the bus stop for the bus to arrive.	Yes
	The bus stop was where Veronica waited on the chilly morning for the bus to arrive, and she was shivering while she waited.	No



2. Edward is writing a narrative. He wants to make his narrative as gripping as possible. He consults Virginia Tufte's book, *Artful Sentences*, and reads that authors use some sentences to create a sense of drama. He writes the following paragraph.

"Maeve assumed that when she stepped off the ship in America, life would be immediately different. This is not how it happened. Her first days in her new life were strikingly similar to her life back in Ireland. She spent her days cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children."

Which sentence from Edward's narrative is the **most** dramatic? Select the correct option.

- A. "Maeve assumed that when she stepped off the ship in America, life would be immediately different."
- B. "This is not how it happened."
- C. "Her first days in her new life were strikingly similar to her life back in Ireland."
- D. "She spent her days cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children."

Item ID	ELA_L.11-12.3.A_CLO_Q940
DOK level	2
Answer	B; The most dramatic sentence in the paragraph is the shortest sentence: "This is not how it happened." Authors use short sentences in the midst of longer ones to create a sense of drama.

3. Which **two** revisions of sentence 3 in the following paragraph **best** vary the syntax and **best** draw attention to the ideas in the sentence?

(1) When Carlotta was out walking, she noticed footprints in the mud on the trail leading to the river. (2) She knew they were from some animal, but her lack of knowledge of rural life proved to be a disadvantage in this situation, since she had no more idea of the type of animal than she had of the type of crops planted in the fields. (3) Carlotta bent down to view the prints, looking at the shape and size, even running her fingers over the dried mud. (4) While she did so, she thought about all of the animals that she heard her cousins mention as living in the forest: deer, moose, bear, and bobcats among others.



Select all the correct options from the following.

- A. Carlotta examined the prints carefully.
- B. Carlotta crouched down in order to inspect the prints so she could see the shape and size and even touch the prints.
- C. Carlotta used her senses of sight and touch to analyze the prints more carefully.
- D. Carlotta bent her knees and squatted down so she could get closer to the prints and see and feel them.
- E. Carlotta took a close look at the prints.

Item ID	ELA_L.11–12.3.A_MCQ_Q941
DOK level	3
Answer	A, E; The two correct answers are the following: “Carlotta examined the prints carefully” and “Carlotta took a close look at the prints.” Revising the sentence to be concise with little description would make it stand out from the rest of the sentences in the paragraph, since they are all long and descriptive. Authors vary syntax in order to achieve certain effects like making an idea stand out.

