

Grade 8 Playlist: Ellipsis

Aligns with CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.2.B:

- Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.

Welcome

The ellipsis is a punctuation mark that looks like three equally spaced periods (. . .). In some cases, there are four equally spaced periods to indicate that the omitted content includes at least one sentence. Writers use ellipses for two specific purposes: (1) to indicate a lengthy pause in a conversation or explanation or (2) to indicate an omission of words and phrases when quoting another source. Ellipses can be placed anywhere in a sentence, depending on the effect the writer is trying to accomplish. Using the ellipsis is one way that writers can accentuate meaning, provide a dramatic pause, or quote or paraphrase only necessary information rather than the full text of a source.

Watch!

Watch the following video for an introduction to the two uses of the ellipsis in writing:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuLrP2f3akI>

Objectives

In this playlist, students will learn how to:

- use an ellipsis to indicate an omission.
- understand how ellipses can operate within sentences.

Exploring the Standard

When using an ellipsis to indicate an omission from another source, the writer has essentially chosen to include only the most vital, supportive, or relevant information in a given passage. Instead of quoting or paraphrasing the entire text, the writer can be more concise and leave out unnecessary words, phrases, or sentences, replacing the removed content with an ellipsis. The ellipsis lets the reader know that there is more to the quotation but the writer wishes to emphasize or focus on only parts of the original text.

Read!

Read the following to learn more about the ellipsis:

- <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/marks/ellipsis.htm>



A Closer Look: Using Ellipsis to Indicate an Omission

Imagine that a writer needs to provide a direct quote from a primary source that explains the overall intent of the U.S. Constitution, one of the most quoted documents in American history. However, the full text of the Constitution includes in-depth explanations of the purpose, structure, powers, and operations of each branch of government (judiciary, legislative, and executive). It also includes rich explanations of the basic rights of American citizens. In all, the Constitution contains approximately 7,591 words! But what if a writer needed only a specific selection from the document? An ellipsis would enable the writer to quote selectively.

Read the following full text of the Preamble of the Constitution. It is much like an introductory paragraph, outlining the establishment of the document and its purpose for American citizens.

Example 1

We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

While the full text may be a short one-sentence paragraph, the sentence may be too wordy for the writer's purposes. The tone may also be too formal and traditional. If a writer only needs the gist of the paragraph, he or she can use an ellipsis to indicate eliminated words.

Read how one writer used ellipses to remove parts of the Preamble in the following example.

Example 2

The Preamble of the U.S. Constitution states, "We the people . . . , in order to form a more perfect union . . . and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

Writers can also use an ellipsis to help maintain the flow and focus of their own words while using direct quotations. Read the following example.

Example 3

The U.S. Constitution seeks to "establish justice, . . . provide for the common defense, and secure the blessings of liberty" for every American citizen.



Teaching Notes: Ellipsis

The goal of L.8.2.B is for students to learn how to use an ellipsis to indicate an omission. The following information contains ideas that teachers can incorporate into their classrooms as well as additional resources to peruse and integrate into instruction as appropriate.

Activities

1. Set students into groups of two or three, and give each group the same passage. The passage should contain multiple points, reasons, or aspects of research on a subject of the teacher's choosing. Task each group with summarizing the information in a few sentences. The summary paragraph must include at least one direct quote that uses at least one ellipsis to indicate omission. Once groups are finished, have each group present their findings to the class. Afterward, discuss the various approaches groups used and compare the effectiveness of the ellipses. A successful paragraph would summarize all points while using the most important or supportive sentence(s) from the passage without mischaracterizing the original text.
2. Have students write a one-page response on a subject with which they are familiar. This response could be a narrative, a reflection on or a description of a memory or person of importance, or even a discussion of their favorite hobby. Once finished, have students switch papers with a partner. That partner must now condense the information while using a direct quote that also uses an ellipsis.

Activity for English Language Learners (ELLs): Invite students to research the anthem of their families' nations of origin or the anthems of their ancestors' countries. Students can then choose their favorite parts of the song and use ellipses to quote the anthem. The quotes can be posted throughout the classroom as visual displays, or students could present their anthems to the class. Use the following resource to find national anthems:

- <http://www.nationalanthems.info/>

Writing Prompts

1. Have students research and choose an informational article on a topic of their choice, or choose a topic to assign them. Task students with responding to that article with their own thoughts, reactions, or analysis of the information presented. In their response, students must use at least two direct quotes as a means of support, and each quote should use at least one ellipsis.
2. After Prompt 1 is finished, have students write a reflection piece that discusses the uses and purposes of ellipses. Use the following questions to guide their responses:
 - How does an ellipsis affect the reader's experience?
 - How do ellipses help the writer? In what ways?
 - What are some potential issues when using ellipses, and what techniques can writers use to avoid them?

