

Focus 7

Appositive Phrase

Here's a list of sentences, all written by professional writers, but with some parts deleted.

1. It went away slowly.
2. The land that lay stretched out before him became of vast significance.
3. However, I looked with a mixture of admiration and awe at Peter.
4. That night in the south upstairs chamber Emmett lay in a kind of trance.

Now compare the above sentences with the originals. Notice that the parts deleted account for the distinctiveness of the original sentences. The **boldface** phrases are appositives, another of the sentence parts that differentiate professional writing from student writing. They're frequently used by professional writers but rarely by students. Appositive phrases are an efficient way to combine related ideas in one sentence.

- 1a. It went away slowly, **the feeling of disappointment that came sharply after the thrill that made his shoulders ache.**

Ernest Hemingway, "Big Two-Hearted River: Part II"

- 2a. The land that lay stretched out before him became of vast significance, **a place peopled by his fancy with a new race of men sprung from himself.**

Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio

- 3a. However, I looked with a mixture of admiration and awe at Peter, **a boy who could and did imitate a police siren every morning on his way to the showers.**

Robert Russell, To Catch an Angel

- 4a. That night in the south upstairs chamber, **a hot little room where a full-leaved chinaberry tree shut all the air from the single window**, Emmett lay in a kind of trance.
Jessamyn West, "A Time of Learning"

Characteristics of Appositive Phrases

An appositive is a noun that identifies an adjacent noun or pronoun. An appositive phrase is the appositive noun plus any of its modifiers. Here are examples. The complete appositive phrase is in **boldface**.

1. Poppa, **a good quiet man**, spent the last hours before our parting moving aimlessly about the yard, keeping to himself and avoiding me.
Gordon Parks, "My Mother's Dream for Me"
2. The boy looked at them, **big black ugly insects**.
Doris Lessing, African Stories
3. Hour after hour he stood there, silent, motionless, **a shadow carved in ebony and moonlight**.
James V. Marshall, Walkabout
4. A man, **a weary old pensioner with a bald dirty head and a stained brown corduroy waistcoat**, appeared at the door of a small gate lodge.
Brian Moore, The Lonely; Passion of Judith Hearne
5. He had the appearance of a man who had done a great thing, **something greater than any ordinary man would do**.
John Henrik Clarke, "The Boy Who Painted Christ Black"

An appositive phrase can be used as a sentence opener subject-verb split, or sentence closer.

Sentence Openers

1. **One of eleven brothers and sisters**, Harriet was a moody, willful child.
Langston Hughes, "Road to Freedom"

2. **A balding, smooth-faced man**, he could have been anywhere between forty and sixty.
Harper Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird
3. **A short, round boy of seven**, he took little interest in troublesome things, preferring to remain on good terms with everyone.
Mildred D. Taylor, Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Subject-Verb Splits

4. Visitors, **friends of her parents or little girls her own age**, were always astonished when they first saw it.
Joyce Carol Oates, "The Doll" from Haunted
5. The Union commander, **a tall blond sunburned man named John Buford**, rode up the long slope to the top of the hill, into the cemetery.
Michael Shaara, The Killer Angels
6. Van'ka Zhukov, **a boy of nine who had been apprenticed to the shoemaker Alyakhin three months ago**, was staying up that Christmas eve.
Anton Chekhov, "Van'ka"

Sentence Closers

7. There was a sizable number of well-read inmates, **especially the popular debaters**.
Malcolm X, (with Alex Haley)
The Autobiography of Malcolm X
8. Lamp Trimmer Samuel Hemming, lying in his bunk, heard a curious hissing sound coming from the forepeak, **the compartment closest to the bow of the Titanic**.
Walter Lord, A Night to Remember
9. Ives and Ramirez parked, and upon approaching the entranceway saw Father Jimenez, **an old man now in wire-rim glasses peering out from behind the screen**.
Oscar Hijuelos, Mr. Ives' Christmas

Practice 1

Each of the professionally written sentences below contains an appositive phrase. For each sentence, do the following:

- Identify the appositive phrase.
- Name the word the appositive phrase identifies.
- State the position of the appositive phrase (sentence opener, subject-verb split, sentence closer).

Answers are in the References on page 169.

- The writer, an old man with a white mustache, had some difficulty in getting into bed.
Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio
- Halfway there he heard the sound he dreaded, the hollow, rasping cough of a horse.
John Steinbeck, The Red Pony
- Mr. Mick Malloy, cashier at the Ulster and Connaught Bank, draped his grey sports jacket neatly on a hanger and put on his black shantung work coat.
Brian Moore, The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne
- A self-educated man, he had accepted the necessary smattering of facts of science and a serene indulgence, as simply so much further proof of what the Creator could do when He put His hand to it.
Willbur Daniel Steele, "The Man Who Saw Through Heaven"

Practice 2

Identify the sentence part that is the appositive phrase and next unscramble each sentence to produce the most effective arrangement of the sentence parts. When you finish, compare your sentences with the originals in the References on page 170. Which do you like better? Why?

- struggled as usual
- she
- to maintain her calm, composed, friendly bearing

- a sort of mask she wore all over her body
D. H. Lawrence, "The Blind Man"
- an old, bowlegged fellow in a pale-blue sweater
- the judge
- and was reading over some notes he had taken
- had stopped examining the animals

on the back of a dirty envelope
Jessamyn West, "The Lesson"

- of a small gate lodge
- appeared
- a weary old pensioner with a bald dirty head and a stained brown corduroy waistcoat
- a man
- at the door
Brian Moore, The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne

Practice 3

Each scrambled sentence below contains more than one appositive phrase. Unscramble each sentence to produce the most effective arrangement of the sentence parts. Punctuate correctly. When you finish, compare your sentences with the originals in the References on page 170. Which do you like better? Why?

- talked continually of virginity
- the son of a jeweler in Winesburg
- one of them
- a slender young man with white hands
Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio
- went over to Tom Willy's saloon
- in the late afternoon

- c. Will Henderson
 - d. and editor of the *Eagle*
 - e. owner
Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio
- 3a. and the jingle of trace chains
- b. was louder
 - c. drag of brakes
 - d. the sound of the approaching grain teams
 - e. thud of big hooves on hard ground.
John Steinbeck, Of Mice and Men
- 4a. with the butt of a teamster's whip
- b. once Enoch Bentley
 - c. old Tom Bentley
 - d. struck his father
 - e. and the old man seemed likely to die
 - f. the older one of the boys
Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio
- 5a. with devil-may-care eyes and a long humorous nose
- b. Mr. Mick Malloy
 - c. tall cashier with a dignified face
 - d. a nice sort of fellow
 - e. tall, young secret gambler
 - f. a gentlemanly bank clerk
 - g. became Mr. Malloy
Brian Moore, The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne

Practice 4

Underneath the model sentence are two imitations. The model and the imitations contain appositive phrases. The imitations are presented as a list of scrambled sentence parts for you to

unscramble to duplicate the structure of the model. Unscramble each of the two sentences to produce a sentence similar in structure to the model. Identify the appositive phrases in the model and the two imitations. Compare your sentences with the ones in the References on page 170.

Model: Beside the fireplace old Doctor Winter sat, bearded and simple and benign, **historian and physician to the town**.

John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down

Scrambled Imitations

- 1a. president and valedictorian of the senior class
 - b. by the podium
 - c. intelligent and composed and smiling
 - d. scholarly Henrietta stood
- 2a. beaming and affectionate and happy
 - b. bride and groom in their finery
 - c. they danced
 - d. under the canopy

Practice 5

Read the model and then the list of sentences underneath it. Combine the list into one sentence having basically the same structure as the model. The order in which the sentences are listed is the order of the sentence parts of the model. In other words, convert the first sentence into the first sentence part of the model, the second sentence into the second part, and so forth. Compare yours with the ones in the References on pages 170–171. Finally, write an imitation of the model, with the same structure but your own content.

Example

Model: Mr. Catanzara, **a stocky, bald-headed man who worked in a change booth on an IRT station**, lived on the next block after George's, above a shoe repair store.

Bernard Malamud, "A Summer's Reading"

Sentences to Be Combined

- a. This is about Jan Carter.
- b. She is an unabashed, sun-tanned flirt.
- c. She had smiled at him in the cafeteria line.
- d. She transferred to the department near Tom's.
- e. She transferred for a "chance" meeting.

Combination

Jan Carter: **an unabashed, sun-tanned flirt who had smiled at him in the cafeteria line.** transferred to the department near Tom's, for a "chance" meeting.

Imitation

Tom Zengler, **the slower, more heavy-handed pianist who had studied under Professor Samione for a decade,** performed in the recital hall near Jacob's, with an obvious competitive attitude.

1. Model: Among the company was a lawyer, **a young man of about twenty-five.**

Anton Chekhov, "The Bet"

- a. She was near the statue.
- b. She was an obvious tourist.
- c. She was an older lady.
- d. She had a Kodak camera.

2. Model: Sady Ellison, **the daughter of Long Butt Ellison,** worked as a waitress for Turkey Plot in a defiant and condescending fashion.

Wayne Kernodle, "Last of the Rugged Individualists"

- a. This is about *Gone with the Wind*.
- b. That is the movie with the most re-issues.
- c. It originated as a novel.
- d. The novel was of the old South.

- e. The novel was by someone who was unglamorous.
- f. The someone was also unknown.
- g. The someone was an authoress.

3. Model: Captain Benick was a family man, **a lover of dogs and pink children and Christmas.**

John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down

- a. "Missouri" is a casserole.
- b. The casserole is special.
- c. It is a blend of several ingredients.
- d. It has potatoes.
- e. It has tomatoes.
- f. The tomatoes are stewed.
- g. It has hamburger.

4. Model: He was close to twenty and had needs with the neighborhood girls, but no money to spend, and he couldn't get more than an occasional few cents because his father was poor, and his sister Sophie, who resembled George, **a tall, bony girl of twenty-three,** earned very little, and what she had she kept for herself.

Bernard Malamud, "A Summer's Reading"

- a. We were far from our destination.
- b. In addition, we were making good time on the interstate.
- c. But there was no time to squander.
- d. In addition, Dad wouldn't stop more than twice a day.
- e. Although we kids were itchy, he wouldn't stop.
- f. In addition, Mom was the one who kept the peace.
- g. She was a shrewd, gentle arbitrator.
- h. She had Solomon's mind.
- i. She circumvented some flare-ups.

- j. And she did something with those she couldn't circumvent.
- k. She left those to Heaven.

Practice 6

Write an imitation of each of the models:

Sentence Openers

1. **One of eleven brothers and sisters.** Harriet was a moody, willful child.

Langston Hughes, "Road to Freedom"

2. **A self-educated man,** he had accepted the necessary smattering of facts of science with a serene indulgence, as simply so much further proof of what the Creator could do when He put His hand to it.

Wilbur Daniel Steele, "The Man Who Saw Through Heaven"

Subject-Verb Splits

3. One of these, **a young woman who turned to look,** called to Yakov, but by then the wagon was out of the marketplace, scattering some chickens nesting in the nuts of the road and a flock of jabbering ducks, as it clattered on.

Bernard Malamud, The Fixer

4. Henry Strader, **an old man who had been on the farm since Jesse came into possession and who before David's time had never been known to make a joke,** made the same joke every morning.

Sherwood Anderson, Winesburg, Ohio

Sentence Closers

5. In all the years which have since elapsed, she remains the woman I loved and lost, **the unattainable one.**
Henry Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird
6. It had a black spot on it, **the black spot Mr. Summer had made the night before with the heavy pencil in the coal-company office.**

Stirley Jackson, "The Lottery"

Practice 7

In the first sentence in each group, a slash mark (/) indicates that the original sentence has an appositive phrase at that place. Combine the sentences underneath into an appositive phrase that will fit smoothly into that place. Compare your results with the originals in the References on page 171. Write an imitation of the resulting sentence, using your own content but the structure of the model.

Example

- a. She was playing the Canteen at Aldershot at the time, /
- b. The theatre was grubby.
- c. The theatre was mean.
- d. The theatre was catering mostly to soldiers.

Combination with Appositive Phrase

She was playing the Canteen at the Aldershot at the time, **a grubby, mean theatre catering mostly to soldiers.**

Charlie Chaplin, My Autobiography

Imitation

He was inspecting a condemned school near Thorn Road around noon, **an old, stone building closing probably in June.**

- 1a. On this Sunday morning the postman and the policeman had gone fishing in the boat of Mr. **Corell, /**
- b. Mr. Corell was the storekeeper.
- c. He was popular.
From John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down
- 2a. The real estate agent, / , soon joined them.
- b. The agent was a man.

- c. He was old.
- d. He was a man with a smiling face.
- e. The face was hypocritical.

From *Willia Cather, "The Sculptor's Funeral"*

- 3a. They approached the domed synagogue with its iron weathercock, /, for the time being resting in peace.
- b. The synagogue was a yellow-walled building.
- c. It was pock-marked.
- d. It was a building with a door.
- e. The door was oak.

From *Bernard Malamud, The Fixer*

- 4a. Lieutenant Tonder was a poet, /.
- b. He was a bitter poet.
- c. He was a poet who dreamed of perfect, ideal love.
- d. The love was of elevated young men for girls.
- e. The girls were poor.

From *John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down*

Practice 8

Combine each list of sentences into one sentence containing an appositive phrase. Underline each phrase. You may eliminate words and change their form as long as the intended meaning remains. Punctuate correctly. When you finish, compare your sentences with the originals in the References on page 171.

- 1a. Something happens at the gate.
- b. There, I show the pass to a private.
- c. The private is young.
- d. The private is Japanese.

- e. The private is the sentry.

From *Richard E. Kim, Lost Names*

- 2a. It happened when he was twelve.
 - b. Then, his mother married an executive.
 - c. The executive was of a machine tool company.
 - d. The company was in Cleveland.
 - e. The executive was an engineer.
 - f. He was an engineer who had adult children of his own.
- From *Glendon Swarthout, Bless the Beasts and Children*

- 3a. My patient was a woman.
 - b. She was modern.
 - c. She was intelligent.
 - d. She with her five children seemed trapped.
 - e. She seemed as trapped as her forebears.
 - f. Her forebears were in Victorian times.
 - g. In Victorian times was before the emancipation of women.
- From *Rollo May, Love and Will*

- 4a. On the bark of the tree was scored something.
 - b. What was scored there was a name.
 - c. The name was of Deacon Peabody.
 - d. Deacon Peabody was a man.
 - e. He was eminent.
 - f. It was he who had waxed wealthy.
 - g. He did this by driving bargains.
 - h. The bargains were shrewd.
 - i. The bargains were with the Indians.
- From *Washington Irving, "The Devil and Tom Walker"*

Practice 9

Expand the sentences by adding approximately the same number of words the authors used for their appositive phrases. The number is next to the slash mark (/). To help you start, the beginning words of the appositive phrases are provided in **boldface**. Compare your appositive phrases with the originals in the References on page 172.

1. Thus, one noontime, coming back from the office lunch downstairs a little earlier than usual, he found her and several of the foreign-family girls, as well as four of the American girls, surrounding Polish Mary, / 10 **one of the . . .**, who was explaining in rather a high key how a certain "feller" whom she had met the night before had given her a beaded bag, and for what purpose.

Theodore Dreiser, An American Tragedy

2. The rest were standing around in hatless, smoky little groups of twos and threes and fours inside the heated waiting room, talking in voices that, almost without exception, sounded collegately dogmatic, as though each young man, in his strident, conversational turn, was clearing up, once and for all, some highly controversial issue. / 14 **one that**. . . .

J. D. Salinger, Franny and Zooey

5. Out in the distance the fans of windmills twinkled, turning, and about the base of each, about the drink tank, was a speckle of dark dots, / 17 **a herd of cattle**. . . .

Glendon Swarthout, Bless the Beasts and Children

4. Perhaps two or three times a year we would come together at a party, one of those teen-age affairs which last until dawn with singing and dancing and silly games such as "Kiss the Pillow," or "Post Office," / 21 **the game which**. . . .

Henry Miller, Stand Still Like the Hummingbird

Practice 10

Add an appositive phrase to each of the reduced sentences below, blending your content with the rest of the sentence. Each

of the sentences in its original, complete version had an appositive phrase in the place indicated by the slash mark. Compare your sentences with the originals in the References on pages 172–173.

1. My bed was an army cot, / .
James Thurber, "The Night the Bed Fell"
2. He, / , had fled because of superior perceptions and knowledge.
Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage
5. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and desire, seemed to me child's play. / .
James Joyce, "Araby"

4. There was Major Hunter, / , / . (two appositive phrases)
John Steinbeck, The Moon Is Down