



Terms Associated with Grammar

Terms related to the grammar portion of the eighth grade Skill Progression Chart are in bold face print. Additional terms and definitions are included for the sake of vertical team continuity and so that students who wish to go beyond their grade level standards may advance their knowledge of literary terminology at their own pace. Definitions contain an example from *A Wrinkle in Time* and an explanation of how the grammatical or syntactical structure contributes to meaning.

Phrases – See the Grammar Foundation Lessons for examples.

Clauses – See the Grammar Foundation Lessons for examples.

Sentences – Purpose

A **declarative sentence** makes a statement: e.g., “She waited, breathlessly, and after a moment she realized that she was alone in the column” (151).

An **imperative sentence** gives a command: e.g., “‘Look at him, in that column there. Get him out, Calvin’” (148).

An **interrogative sentence** asks a question: e.g., “Had it been the shadow, the Black Thing? Had they had to travel through it to get to her father?” (99).

An **exclamatory sentence** provides emphasis or expresses strong emotion: e.g., “‘How extraordinary! I could almost see the atoms rearranging!’” (151).

Sentences – Structure

Antithetical sentences contain two statements which are balanced, but opposite: e.g., “‘It’s a privilege, not a punishment’” (5). Here, Meg contrasts her attic room as it usually is (quiet and private) with how frightening it has become during the hurricane.

In a **balanced sentence**, the phrases or clauses balance each other by virtue of their likeness of structure, meaning, or length: e.g., “The window rattled madly in the wind, and she pulled the quilt close about her” (5). These two independent clauses create emphasis through repetition of the strong declarative statements about the stormy night.

A **complex sentence** contains an independent clause and one or more subordinate or dependent clauses: e.g., “As Charles Wallace gave Meg her sandwich, Fortinbras came out from under the table” (15). By placing the dependent clause first, L’Engle makes the reader first picture Charles Wallace’s action, then the dog’s, recreating how Meg saw what happened.

A **compound sentence** contains two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon: e.g., “The cocoa steamed fragrantly in the saucepan; geraniums bloomed on the window sills and there was a bouquet of tiny yellow chrysanthemums in the center of the table” (11). The similarity of these three independent clauses reflects the “regularity” of the family’s comfortable kitchen.

A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and one or more subordinate clauses: e.g., “The furnace purred

like a great, sleepy animal; the lights glowed with steady radiance; outside, alone in the dark, the wind still battered against the house, but the angry power that had frightened Meg while she was alone in the attic was subdued by the familiar comfort of the kitchen” (11).

A *loose* or *cumulative sentence* has its main clause at the beginning with additional grammatical units added after it. It is the normal structure of everyday English sentences: “A voice emerged from among turned-up coat collar, stole, scarves, and hat, a voice like an unoiled gate, but somehow not unpleasant” (16). This loose sentence adds depth to the description of the mysterious Mrs. Whatsit with each additional phrase after the main clause, “A voice emerged...”

A *periodic sentence* has its main clause at the end of the sentence with additional grammatical units leading up the point; e.g., “At the quiet of his voice she felt calmer”; “If they hadn’t walked upright they would have seemed like animals”; “From under the table where he was lying at Charles Wallace’s feet, hoping for a crumb or two, Fortinbras raised his slender dark head in greeting to Meg, and his tail thumped against the floor” (8). These periodic sentences delay the completion of their meaning and create temporary suspense for the reader.

A *simple sentence* consists of one independent clause; e.g. “Charles Wallace freed his hands from Meg and Calvin and plunked himself down on one of the chairs” (129). This simple sentence emphatically recreates Charles Wallace’s action.

Syntax Techniques

Syntax means the arrangement of words and the order of grammatical elements in a

sentence. In *A Wrinkle in Time*, Madeleine L’Engle uses short, clipped, “Dick and Jane”-type sentences to describe the jerky, uniform actions of the overly controlled citizens of Camazotz, as in the following passage describing children playing skip rope: “Down came the ropes. Down came the balls. Over and over again. Up. Down. All in rhythm. All identical. Like the houses. Like the paths. Like the flowers” (103). The author employs simple sentences and sentence fragments to show the fragmentary and overly simple existence of these citizens of a totalitarian government. She also uses a type of repetition (anaphora) to show the bleak similarity of all of their actions.

The techniques listed here are powerful strategies for using language. Students find it both interesting and valuable to identify these techniques in the works of authors and to use them in their own writing.

Juxtaposition is a poetic and rhetorical device in which normally unassociated ideas, words, or phrases are placed next to one another, often creating an effect of surprise and wit: e.g., “The silver light from the enormous moon poured over them, blending with the golden quality of the day, flowing over the children, over Mrs. Whatsit, over the mountain peak” (70). The mingling of night and day creates a beautiful setting for the children’s visit to the summit of the planet Uriel.

Natural order of a sentence involves constructing a sentence so the subject comes before the predicate: e.g., “She scowled down at the ground in sullen fury” (126). This sentence achieves the effect of most English sentences – we “see” the subject and then the action.



Omission

- **Asyndeton** (a-syn'-de-ton) is deliberate omission of conjunctions in a series of related clauses; it helps to speed the pace: e.g., “The kitten yawned, stretched, gave a piteous miaow, trotted out of the attic and down the stairs” (5). Sometimes, as in this sentence, the use of asyndeton means that all parts of the sentence receive equal weight because they are not separated.

Ellipsis (el-lip'-sis) is the deliberate omission of a word or words that are readily implied by the context: e.g., “Her eyes were bright, her nose [was] a round, soft blob, her mouth [was] puckered like an autumn apple” (17). The words L’Engle omits, those in the brackets, simply are not needed for the sentence to make sense; adding them would make the sentence wordier and less happy in tone.

Parallel structure (parallelism) refers to a grammatical or structural similarity between sentences or parts of a sentence. It involves an arrangement of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs so that elements of equal importance are equally developed and similarly phrased: e.g., “Calvin led the way to the wall, and then sat there, his red hair shining silver in the moonlight, his body dappled with patterns from the tangle of branches” (49). The two absolute phrases in the sentence are parallel and equally important in this description of Calvin.

Polysyndeton (pol-y-syn'-de-ton) is the deliberate use of many conjunctions for special emphasis – to highlight quantity or mass of detail, or to create a flowing, continuous sentence pattern; it slows the pace: e.g., “There was a gust of wind and a great thrust and a sharp shattering as she

was shoved through – what?” (79) What polysyndeton does in this sentence is capture the feeling of Meg’s unfolding arrival into another dimension, giving it a feeling of almost hypnotic power gripping her.

Repetition is a device in which words, sounds, and ideas are used more than once to enhance rhythm and to create emphasis. For example, in this sentence the repetition recreates the monotonous movement of people in and out of the building: “Six large doors kept swinging open, shut, open, shut, as people went in and out, in and out, looking straight ahead, straight ahead, paying no attention to the children whatsoever, whatsoever” (111-112).

Anadiplosis (an'-a-di-plo'-sis) is the repetition of the last word of one clause at the beginning of the following clause: e.g., “Quite calmly, as though this old woman and her boots were nothing out of the ordinary, Mrs. Murry pulled until the second boot relinquished the foot. This foot was covered with a blue and gray Argyle sock, and Mrs. Whatsit sat there, wriggling her toes, contentedly finishing her sandwich before scrambling to her feet” (20). Repetition of “foot” makes the reader focus on the humor of the scene when Mrs. Whatsit falls backwards in her chair yet continues to eat her sandwich.

Anaphora (a-naph'-o-ra) is the repetition of the same word or group of words at the beginning of successive clauses. For example, the repetition of “Let” at the beginning of each clause echoes the solemnity and awe of God’s word: “Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift their voice; let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give

glory unto the Lord!” (68). But the repetition of “Each” at the beginning of each of the following sentences makes the people seem like robots or automatons: “Each woman stood on the steps of her house. Each clapped. Each child with the ball caught the ball. Each child with the skipping rope folded the rope. Each child turned and walked into the house” (103-104).

Epanalepsis (ep’-an-a-lep’-sis) is the repetition at the end of a clause of the word that occurred at the beginning of the clause: e.g., “‘Eat!’ Meg exclaimed as Mrs. Murry went out through the lab. ‘How does she expect me to eat?’” (16). Meg’s shock is reflected in the repetition of “eat” at the beginning and end of the passage.

Epistrophe (e-pis’-tro-pee) is the repetition of the same word or group of words at the ends of successive clauses: e.g., “‘Your development has to go at its own pace. It just doesn’t happen to be the usual pace’” (9). And “She moved with great agility for such an old woman. At least Meg was reasonably sure that she was an old woman, and a very old woman at that” (20). Repeating pace and old woman at the ends of sentences places special emphasis on the words because they come in a powerful place in the sentences.

Reversal

Antimetabole (an’-ti-me-ta-bo-lee) is a sentence strategy in which the arrangement of ideas in the second clause is a reversal of the first: e.g., “To live is to read; to read is to live.” (There are no examples of antimetabole in *A Wrinkle in Time*.)

Inverted order of a sentence (*inversion*) involves constructing a sentence so the

predicate comes before the subject: e.g., “As the skipping rope hit the pavement, so did the ball” (103). This is a device in which typical sentence patterns are reversed to create an emphatic or rhythmic effect – exactly the effect of the skipping rope and the ball simultaneously hitting the pavement.

A *rhetorical question* is a question that requires no answer. It is used to draw attention to a point and is generally stronger than a direct statement: e.g., “How could they sleep?...How could they leave her up in the attic in the rickety brass bed, knowing that the roof might be blown right off the house, and she tossed out into the wild night sky to land who knows where?” (5). These questions run through Meg’s mind as she worries. Even if she had spoken them aloud, she would not have really expected answers – just someone to listen to her.

A *rhetorical fragment* is a sentence fragment used deliberately for a persuasive purpose or to create a desired effect: e.g., “A whirl of darkness. An icy cold blast. An angry, resentful howl that seemed to tear through her. Darkness again” (209). Here, Meg experiences a fast return to earth. The fragments capture the jolting confusion of what is happening to her.