

Rhetorical Grammar for Expository Reading and Writing

Developed by Roberta Ching

STUDENT VERSION

MODULE 9: LANGUAGE, GENDER, AND CULTURE

Adjectives, Adjective Phrases, Adjective Clauses, and Appositives

Activity 1

Guided Composition

This activity is based on is based on David Brooks, “Honor Code.”

The purpose of this activity is for you to write a paragraph on the topic of this module. Your teacher will read a paragraph while you listen, and then read it again while you take notes. You will then write your own paragraph based on what you heard using your notes.

Noticing Language

What difference do you notice between the first paragraph and the second?

Paragraph 1: By junior high, Henry V would lose interest in school. Then he’d rebel. He’d be crude. He’d devote his energies to video games and music. He’d exile himself into a subculture. He’d have ambitions but no way to realize them. Schools reward girls, not boys.

Paragraph 2: By junior high, young Henry V would lose interest in school, a place for wimps and softies. Then he would rebel. He’d be crude, not cooperative and sensitive. He’d devote his mental energies to violent video games and aggressive music. He’d exile himself into a lewd and unsupervised laddie subculture. He’d have vague high ambitions but no realistic way to realize them. Schools reward girls who are verbally sophisticated and who can control their impulses, not rambunctious boys.

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

Note: The materials labeled Rhetorical Grammar Concepts are for your reference as you plan instruction for this unit. Your students have an abbreviated version of these concepts in their materials.

Adding Information with Adjectives and Adjective Phrases

Writers expand their verbs with information and details, using adverbs, adverbial phrases, and adverbial clauses. In the same way, they expand nouns with adjectives, adjectival phrases, and adjectival clauses. Adjectives precede the noun they modify; adjectival phrases and clauses come after. Sometimes nouns can act as modifiers of other nouns, in which case they precede the noun they are modifying.

Skillful writers select their adjectives depending on their purpose. For description and reflection, they often use adjectives to create images. For informational or argumentative writing, they tend to use fewer adjectives and less colorful ones, but they may use adjectives to establish categories, contrast positions, or establish their stance. In all cases, writers use adjectives to add precision and interest to their writing, but they also are careful not to overuse adjectives or adjective phrases, especially when a strong verb can convey the same information.

Structures That Modify Verbs	Structures That Modify Nouns
They <u>talked</u> casually . (<i>adverb</i>)	They spoke a spicy black <u>lingo</u> . (<i>adjectives</i>)
They <u>walked</u> with that lanky dip . (<i>adverbial phrase</i>)	It was the <u>morning</u> of writing this prelude . (<i>adjectival phrase</i>)
I <u>was</u> at the barbershop because I wanted to get a fresh bald fade . (<i>adverbial clause—has a subject and verb</i>)	They talked with a <u>resonance</u> that reverberates in my hungry ears . (<i>adjectival clause—has a subject and verb</i>)

Adjectives also follow a special category of verbs: state of being verbs such as *am/is/are/were, become, seem, look, appear, taste, sound, remain*. Adjectives that follow a state of being verb (called predicate adjectives) modify the subject of the clause.

Examples

- I am **different** from other black men.
- They are **passionate** about sports, especially basketball.
- They appear **self-assured**.
- I feel **envious** of their black masculinity.

Activity 2

Identifying Adjectives and Adjective Phrases

This activity is based on Vershawn Ashanti Young, “Prelude: The Barbershop.”

Underline the adjectives and the adjective phrases in the following sentences. Circle the noun or pronoun that they modify.

1. I am different from a lot of other black men.

I am different from other black men

2. The men in the barbershop wore the latest two-hundred-dollar sneakers.

3. They were self-assured.

4. They talked with the deep resonance that reverberates in my hungry ears.

5. The men in the barbershop exemplified the stigmatized yet romanticized black male profile.

6. I mean, the barbers are only courteous.

7. I don’t converse much with the barbers and their customers about their racial and gender performances.

Rhetorical Purpose: Why does Young use these adjectives and adjective phrases to modify his nouns?

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

Identifying Adjective Clauses

Good writers add information to nouns by modifying them with adjectives and adjective phrases. They also add information by adding adjective clauses to other clauses. Just as adjectives and adjective phrases add information to nouns, adjective clauses can provide the same types of information and are simply larger building blocks with the same function.

Adjective

Adjective Phrase

Adjective Clause

Like adverbial clauses, adjective clauses have a subject and a verb, but the subject is always a pronoun that refers to a noun in another clause. These pronouns, which are called relative pronouns, are **who**, **whom**, **which** and **that**.

Examples

Who/Whom clauses: Many of the people **who** don't fit in are boys.
Schools reward people **who** can control their impulses, many of **whom** are girls.

Which/That clauses: The evidence **that** boys are falling behind is indisputable.

The evidence **which** shows that boys are falling behind, is indisputable.

Adjective clauses provide additional information about a noun in the independent clause or another clause in the sentence. Sometimes the additional information is essential to understand the noun; at other times the information is helpful but not essential.

Because adjective clauses can modify any noun in a sentence, they can appear near the beginning, the middle, or at the end of the sentence. However, they always come after the noun they modify.

Example

Schools **which** should engage people as they are, need leaders **who** insist on more cultural diversity.

Activity 3

Identifying Adjective Clauses

This activity is based on David Brooks, "Honor Code."

Underline the adjective clauses in the following paragraphs and circle the noun that the adjective clause modifies (in other words, the noun that the relative pronoun refers to).

Some of the decline in male performance, which has happened over the last few decades, may be genetic. The information age rewards people who mature early, who are verbally and socially sophisticated, who can control their impulses. Girls may, on average, do better at these things. But the big story here is cultural and moral.

Schools have to engage people as they are. That requires leaders who insist on more cultural diversity in school. That requires teachers who celebrate cooperation, but other teachers who celebrate competition; not just teachers who honor environmental

virtues, but teachers who honor military virtues; not just curriculums that teach how to share, but curriculums that teach how to win and how to lose; not just programs that work like friendship circles, but programs that work like boot camp. The basic problem is that schools that praise diversity have become culturally homogenous.

Activity 4

Combining Sentences Using Adjective Clauses

This activity is based on Deborah Tannen, "His Politeness is Her Powerlessness."

Combine each set of sentences below into single sentence using adjective clauses. Notice that the meaning and emphasis can change depending which sentence you use as the main clause and which you use as adjective clause.

1. Women tend to communicate indirectly.
Men prefer to communicate directly.
Women and men are judged differently.

Women, who tend to communicate indirectly, are judged differently than men, who prefer to communicate directly.
2. This tendency of women to speak indirectly makes mischief.
The mischief can cause women to be viewed as powerless.
3. A psychologist was quoted in a newspaper article.
A psychologist called a woman's style of speaking "covert."
This suggests that he thinks women are sneaky and underhanded.
4. Women prefer not to make outright demands.
Women have lower status than men in our society.
5. Indirection does not necessarily reflect powerlessness.
Indirection can be the prerogative of those in power.
6. Japanese culture has developed indirectness to a fine art.
Japanese culture operates on elaborate systems of indirectness.

Rhetorical Grammar Concepts

7. Harumi Befu explains that an invitation to lunch requires a delicate exchange of indirectness in Japan.
An invitation to lunch would be simple in America.

8. Far more cultures in the world value indirection rather than directness.
Directness is a priority in modern Western societies.

Combining Sentences Using Appositives

Appositives are an even more concise way to add information to sentences than adjective clauses. Appositives are formed when a noun or a noun phrase adds information to another noun or noun phrase (or the pronoun that stands for it). The noun or noun phrase can be deleted, and the sentence will still make sense. You can think of an equal sign between the noun and the appositive phrase that renames it: each side means the same as the other.

Henry V, one of Shakespeare's most appealing characters, was rambunctious when young and courageous when older.

"One of Shakespeare's most appealing characters" is an appositive; it refers to the same person as the noun "Henry V."

Henry V = one of Shakespeare's most appealing characters

An appositive is a reduced form of an adjective clause. Like an adjective clause, an appositive adds additional information about a noun or pronoun. However, it is nonessential. Without the adjective clause, we still know who the subject of the sentence is.

Henry V, *who was one of Shakespeare's most appealing characters*, was rambunctious when young and courageous when older.

Appositives can also come before the noun they refer to; good writers sometimes use this placement to add variety to their sentences.

One of Shakespeare's most appealing characters, Henry V was rambunctious when young and courageous when older.

Activity 5

Identifying Appositives

This activity is based on Vershawn Ashanti Young, “Prelude: The Barbershop.”

Underline the appositives in the following sentences and circle the nouns or noun phrases that they refer to.

1. “Prelude: The Barbershop,” an excerpt from *Your Average Nigga*, was written by Vershawn Ashanti Young.
2. Young, an assistant professor at the University of Iowa, worries about reading a novel in a black barbershop in town.
3. Mostly White Iowa, a state that leads in incarcerating black men, is a good place to think about the meaning of black masculinity.
4. Shawn Eversley, another professor at the university, wrote a book in 2004 called *The Real Negro*.

Punctuation of appositives: How are appositives punctuated in the sentence above?

Activity 6

Combining Sentences Using Appositives

This activity is based on Deborah Tannen, “His Politeness is Her Powerlessness.”

Combine each pair of sentences into a single sentence using appositives. Check that you have punctuated the appositives correctly.

1. Deborah Tannen is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University.
She has written the highly regarded book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*.

Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University, has written the highly regarded book You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation.
2. Indirectness is a linguistic strategy used by women.
It is often labeled “powerless” by men.
3. A couple are both psychologists.
They had two very different definitions of what it means to be polite.

Activity 7

4. The woman's style is called "covert,"
It is a term suggesting negative qualities like being "sneaky" and "underhanded."
5. Men are the gender that prefers the direct style.
They view it as "natural" and "logical."
6. Harumi Befu is a Japanese anthropologist.
She explains the delicate exchange of indirectness required by a simple invitation to lunch.

Editing Student Writing

Rewrite the paragraphs below from a student essay in response to the Language, Gender, and Culture module to make them more interesting and informative. You may add information to verbs, but focus on using adjectives, adjective phrases, adjective clauses, and appositives.

- Combine sentences, focusing on using adjective clauses and appositives wherever appropriate. You may also use coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Add details with adjectives and adjective phrases. What does someone or something look like or feel like or act like?
- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.

Depression is a disease. It affects the mind. It takes over your life. It can take over quickly. You spend your days under a burden. Under its weight, you cannot find the strength to speak out. "What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own until you sicken and die of them, still in silence?" (Audre Lorde, *The Cancer Journals*) One thing can push a person over the edge. The person is suffering from depression. The person has lost the will to live. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, depression is the third leading cause of death for young people. Depression is

a disease. It can be treated. We can stop this phenomenon. We can restore happiness and hope.

Happiness is a virus. It is powerful. It is addictive. Happiness is spread by people. Happiness comes from relationships. We form the relationships with each other. We can provide people with a community. The community can prevent suicides from happening. We need a place for people to go to feel alive again. We need festivals and gardens. We need psychologists. They can help us. Hope is all we need. "The world's a playground. You know that when you are a kid, but somewhere along the way everyone forgets it."
(Zoey Deschanel, *Yes Man*)

Activity 8

Editing your Guided Composition

Return to your guided composition from Activity 1.

- Combine sentences with adjective clauses and appositives wherever appropriate. You may also use coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Add details and information with adjectives and adjective phrases. What does someone or something look like or feel like or act like?
- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.
- Compare your edited version with the original.

What did you learn through this activity that you can apply to your own writing?

Activity 9

Editing Your Own Writing

Select a paragraph from your essay on Language, Gender, and Culture. Make several passes through your paragraph.

- Combine sentences with adjective clauses and appositives wherever appropriate. You may also use coordinating and subordinating words and transitions.
- Add details with adjectives and adjective phrases. What does someone or something look like or feel like or act like?

- Check that your sentences are correctly connected and punctuated.
- Put a question mark in the margin next to any adjectives, adjective phrases, adjective clauses, appositives, or punctuation you are unsure about.
- Exchange your paragraph with a partner and discuss your questions. Check with your teacher if you can't agree on an answer.
- Now edit the rest of your essay.