

Pendemonium

The Posse in Australia

Teacher's Guide



Grade Level: 3-5

Curriculum Focus: Language Arts

Lesson Duration: One class period

Program Description

Four writing implements must save the world from the clutches of a permanent marker gone bad. With his sidekick, Dottie, and his own small army, the evil Dark Marker makes a claim for global domination by stealing punctuation marks from a local newspaper and hiding out in Australia. Penny the pencil, Buzz the PDA, Florentina the fountain pen, and Arturo the gel pen discover Dark Marker's plot and solve clues about grammar rules to save the world from communication chaos.

Discussion Questions

- What is the purpose of punctuation marks when writing sentences?
 - When do you often use a period?
 - Where are commas often placed?
 - What is the difference between a comma and a period?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Explore the use of commas and periods.
- Compose a friendly letter.
- Apply rules of punctuation for commas and periods.
- Revise a composition.

Materials

- *Pendemonium: The Posse in Australia* video
- Paper and pencils
- United States atlases, one per student
- Print resources about punctuation marks

Procedures

1. After viewing the video, read aloud *Punctuation Takes a Vacation*, by Robin Pulver, or a similar book with a light-hearted look at punctuation.
2. In both the video and book, clues helped characters find missing punctuation marks. Explain that in this lesson students will also write and solve clues about missing commas and periods.
3. Encourage students to pretend that all the commas and periods in the class are missing, just like in the video and book. However, each student knows where some of the periods and commas are and will share clues to help others recover the lost punctuation marks.
4. To find all of the class's commas and periods, each student will write a friendly letter to a partner. The letter will contain at least three clues to the mark's location. But since all the commas and periods are now gone, the students' letters cannot contain any of these punctuation marks.
5. Begin the activity by having students select a state using a United States atlas. Their chosen state is where their commas and periods are located. Students need to note at least three features of the state to use as clues. Ask students to keep their state a secret. Their partners will have to determine the location based on the clues in their letters.
6. Next, assign partners. Have students write a friendly letter to their partner. These informal letters must contain the following:
 - Salutation or greeting
 - Three clues about the state; clues can include its climate, relative location, important geographic features such as mountains, rivers, and lakes, major cities, and famous buildings or bridges
 - One list of three or more items
 - One command
 - Closing
7. Remind students again that the letters cannot include any commas or periods.
8. Then have partners exchange letters. Ask student volunteers to read their letters aloud. Remind students to read without pausing or stopping.
9. Have students apply their knowledge of the use of commas and periods by revising their partners' letters. Ask students to add the missing commas and periods.
10. After revising the letters, students should use the clues to determine the location of the missing punctuation marks. Encourage students to refer to their atlases to confirm their guesses. When students have solved the clues, allow partners to meet and verify the mystery locations.
11. Bring the class together and ask volunteers to share clues that they found especially challenging or interesting because they were missing commas or periods, not because of their geographic location. Discuss how these punctuation marks helped readers better understand the meanings of their partners' letters.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students composed a friendly letter with all the required components, consistently applied the rules of commas and periods, and found all the missing periods and commas in their partner's letter.
- 2 points: Students composed a friendly letter with most of the required components, usually applied the rules of commas and periods, and found the majority of the missing periods and commas in their partner's letter.
- 1 point: Students composed a friendly letter with few of the required components, rarely applied the rules of commas and periods, and found only some of the missing periods and commas in their partner's letter.

Vocabulary

abbreviation

Definition: A shortened form of a word or phrase

Context: The rushing student text messaged BRB, a popular abbreviation for "be right back," to her friend.

comma

Definition: A punctuation mark (,) used in a phrase or sentence to show a separation of ideas, items, or elements

Context: When reading a gripping book, the teacher would build suspense by taking long pauses at some commas.

command

Definition: An order

Context: The children gave the command to blow out all the candles on the birthday cake.

posse

Definition: A search party

Context: The school quickly put together a posse of students to search for the missing basketball trophy.

period

Definition: A punctuation mark (.) placed at the end of declarative sentences and commands and after many abbreviations, which also indicates a full stop to a reader

Context: Instead of a simple dot for a period, the young artist drew hearts at the end of her sentences.

punctuation

Definition: Marks and signs that separate words into sentences, clauses, and phrases

Context: The letter's missing punctuation marks made it hard to understand.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp> .

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Language Arts: Viewing – Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media
- Language Arts: Writing – Uses grammatical and mechanical conventions in written compositions
- Language Arts: Reading – Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

The National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association have developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching the English language arts. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
- Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>



DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

Segment 1. Overview of Periods and Commas (6 min.)

Description

Dark Marker has stolen *The Point's* commas and periods. Without proper punctuation, a reader such as Arturo doesn't know when sentences end or begin. Penny explains how periods are used to end sentences.

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are some common punctuation marks?

A: Responses may include periods, commas, question marks, apostrophes, quotation marks, exclamation marks, colons, and semicolons.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why are periods and commas needed in writing and reading?

A: Answers will vary.



Segment 2. Commas in Letters, Dates, and Locations (4 min.)

Description

The four team members go to Australia where they learn to use commas in letters, dates, and locations.

Pre-viewing question

Q: Besides separating words in a list, where else might commas be used?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Where are commas placed in locations, dates, and letters?

A: Commas are placed between a city and a state, a city and a country, between the day and year, and at the end of greetings and closings in letters.

Segment 3. Periods after Commands and Abbreviations (5 min.)

Description

At the Opera House in Sydney, the Pentastic Foursome solve Dark Marker's clue by correctly placing periods after commands and abbreviations.

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does it mean to abbreviate a word?

A: To abbreviate means to shorten.

Post-viewing question

Q: Does your name have an abbreviation?

A: Responses will vary.

Segment 4. Review of Periods and Commas (4 min.)

Description

To keep Dark Marker from destroying *The Point*, Penny, Arturo, Florentina, and Buzz properly use periods and commas while scuba diving at the Great Barrier Reef.

Pre-viewing question

Q: What are some ways that periods and commas are used?

A: Periods show the end of sentences, commands, and abbreviations. Commas separate items in a list, are placed between cities and states or countries, and are used in letters.

Post-viewing question

Q: How do periods and commas help readers?

A: Periods and commas help readers know when to pause or stop.

Credit

Kay Jackson is an author, educational writer, and teacher.



