

7.7 Grammar, mechanics, and clarity

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS grammar and mechanics 语法与规范 • independent 独立分句

Objective

Build the skills to see where **grammar and mechanics** 语法与规范 change meaning.

You must be able to:

- identify a misplaced modifier and what it attaches to
- fix a comma splice and a run-on
- resolve an unclear pronoun reference
- explain when punctuation changes meaning rather than only form

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Misplaced modifiers

A modifier attaches to the nearest available noun. “Running for the bus, the rain soaked her coat” makes the rain run. The fix is to put the intended subject next to the modifier.

■ Splices and run-ons

Two independent clauses cannot be joined by a comma alone. Use a full stop, a semicolon, or a comma plus a coordinating conjunction. Which you choose signals how closely the ideas are related.

■ Pronoun reference

“The council told the union it had failed.” Who failed? Where the pronoun could attach to two nouns, replace it with the noun.

■ Punctuation and meaning

“The students, who had revised, passed” says all revised. “The students who had revised passed” says only some did. The commas carry the claim.

2 Practice

2.1 State what a modifier attaches to. [2]

2.2 State three ways to fix a comma splice. [3]

2.3 “The students, who had revised, passed.”

(a) State what this claims. [1]

(b) State what removing the commas would claim. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “Walking to school, the traffic seemed heavier” is faulty because [1]

- **A** it is too short
- **B** the modifier attaches to “the traffic”
- **C** it is a comma splice
- **D** the pronoun is unclear

3.2 Replacing an ambiguous pronoun with the noun is preferable because it [1]

- **A** shortens the sentence
- **B** removes the ambiguity
- **C** adds emphasis
- **D** creates parallelism

3.3 Correct and explain: “The report was late, the committee met anyway.” [4]

Solutions

2.1 the nearest available noun, which is why placement changes meaning.

2.2 a full stop; a semicolon; a comma plus a coordinating conjunction.

2.3 (a) that all the students had revised, and all passed. (b) that only those who had revised passed.

3.1 B. the traffic cannot walk to school.

3.2 B. the noun cannot be attached to the wrong antecedent.

3.3 identifies the comma splice; corrects it with a full stop, semicolon or conjunction; explains that two independent clauses cannot be joined by a comma alone.