Essential Skill: Complex Sentences

Dragon Boat Race

TRANSCRIPT

HOOK 1

Hi, writers. It's Margaret. My friend Kai invited me to watch her in the dragon boat race next month. I wanted to find out more before attending. So, I looked it up online. Here's what I saw.

DISCUSSION 1

Discuss: What did you notice about the dragon boat races?

HOOK 2

I noticed that the boats are shaped like actual dragons, and each boat has lots of people paddling. I also noticed the sound coming from the boats. I listened really closely and heard a beat. That beat was actually coming from a drummer on the boat.

After doing some research, I found out that these races started over 2,000 years ago in China. And the reason the boats are shaped like dragons is because dragons represent power, luck, and strength in the Chinese culture, which are all needed to win a dragon boat race.

I also found out that each boat usually has a steerer to call out directions, paddlers to paddle the boat, and a drummer to set the pace for the paddlers with a beat. So, the faster the drummer's drum, the faster the paddlers move all together.

My friend Kai gets to be the drummer. This will be Kai's first time as a drummer for the team. So, she was given a card with some tips for getting started. Take a moment to read this card silently to yourself.

DISCUSSION 2

Discuss: What differences do you notice in these two sentences?

HOOK 3

Maybe you noticed that the first sentence had two parts, and the second sentence only had one part, or that the first sentence had a comma, but the second one didn't. You may have noticed something else, and that's great.

Kai noticed that this sentence only has one part because the other part got wet. She can't read the second part because the words are smudged. Kai isn't sure what to do when she hears the horn. After you hear the horn, eat a sandwich? Or after you hear the horn, pet a llama?

This sentence begins with the word "After" but right now, there's nothing letting us know what happens after she hears the horn. This sentence needs two parts to make sense. We could even say that this part of the sentence *depends* on the other side—we call this part a *dependent clause*. No, not claws. A clause! It's a group of words that has a subject, "you," and a verb, "hear," and because this clause doesn't work on its own, we call it a dependent clause.

Let's take a look at the other sentence on the card that didn't get wet. It reads: "Once your life jacket is on, you can get onto the dragon boat." The part after the comma sounds like a complete sentence. "You can get onto the dragon boat." Since it makes sense on its own, we call it an *independent clause*.

But wait a minute, if all Kai read was this sentence, then she wouldn't know about the life jacket. That dependent clause gave Kai some pretty important information. Let's look back at the sentence that got wet. Kai found a video to help her finish this sentence. Let's take a look.

Here's how she finished this sentence. Notice how this dependent clause, and this independent clause, connected by a comma, work together to create a complete thought. This drummer card is fixed.

Now Kai's team needs your help with a different card that also got wet. It has some basic instructions for the paddlers. You'll watch videos and help complete the sentences.

I'll get you started, step by step.

STEP 1

Get your supplies.

STEP 2

In today's lesson, you'll need someone to share ideas with. This could be a partner or someone you sit near. When everyone knows who their talk partner is, move on to the next step.

STEP 3

Let's take a look at the first tip on the Paddler Tips card, "Before you get on the boat." This part of the sentence is the dependent clause. It needs something to come after the comma to make sense.

Watch this video to learn more about what needs to be done before getting on the boat.

Discuss with your partner: How would you write the rest of the sentence using an independent clause? Remember, an independent clause sounds like a complete sentence and makes sense on its own.

STEP 4

Look at number 1 on your worksheet.

Write an independent clause to finish this sentence.

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 5

Here's how Kai finished this sentence, "Before you get on the boat, put on your life jacket." Yours might sound a little different, and that's okay.

Let's look at the next tip, "As soon as your life jacket is on." Remember, this part of the sentence is the dependent clause—it needs something to come after the comma to make sense.

Watch this video to learn what the paddlers should do after putting on their life jackets.

Discuss with your partner: How would you write the rest of this sentence using an independent clause? Remember, an independent clause sounds like a complete sentence and makes sense on its own.

STEP 6

Look at number 2 on your worksheet.

Write an independent clause here.

When you're finished, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 7

Here's how Kai finished this sentence: "As soon as your life jacket is on, you can get on the boat." Yours might sound a little different, and that's okay.

The next tip reads, "After everyone is on the boat"—watch this video to learn more about what will happen after everyone is on the boat.

Discuss with your partner: How would you write the rest of this sentence using an independent clause?

STEP 8

Look at number 3 on your worksheet.

Write an independent clause.

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 9

Let's take a look at the next tip. This is an independent clause because it makes sense on its own.

Watch this video to learn more about when you can start paddling.

Discuss with your partner: How would you write the first part of this sentence using a dependent clause? Remember, this dependent clause will start with the word "Whenever" and will sound like an incomplete sentence.

STEP 10

Look at number 4 on your worksheet.

Write a dependent clause that starts with the word "Whenever."

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

STEP 11

This last one is missing both the dependent and the independent clause.

Watch this video to learn what happens when the paddlers crossed the finish line.

You may have noticed that there are two buoys floating in the water to mark where the race ends.

Let's watch it again.

Discuss with your partner: How would you write the rest of this sentence? If you're not sure how to start your sentence, here are some ideas.

STEP 12

Look at number 5 on your worksheet.

Write your sentence here. Remember to put a comma between your dependent and independent clauses.

When you're done, give a silent thumbs up.

WRAP UP

Wow! You fixed the Paddler's card. Your sentences might look different, and that's okay. Sentences that have dependent and independent clauses— like the ones you

wrote—are called complex sentences. Writers use complex sentences in their writing to give their readers more details and to add more variety and information to their writing. Thanks to you, all of these complex sentences are now complete and give the paddlers all the information they need.

Now Kai and her dragon boat team are ready for the races. With enough practice, maybe she'll one day be a drummer on the world's longest dragon boat.

See you next time, writers.