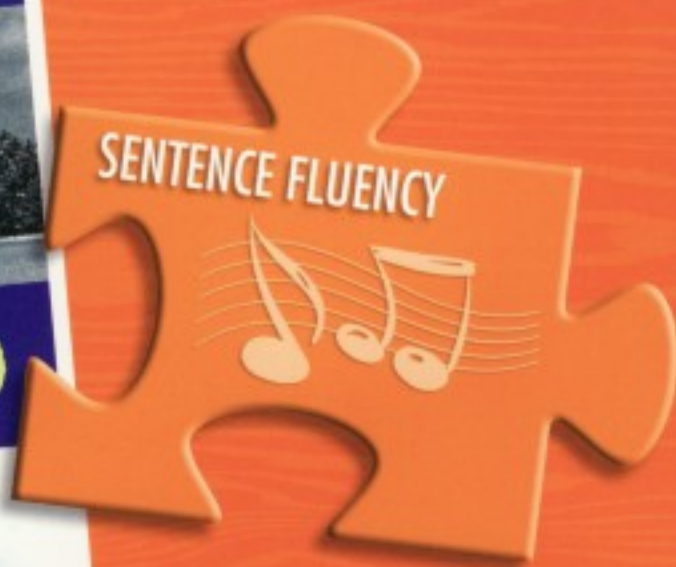
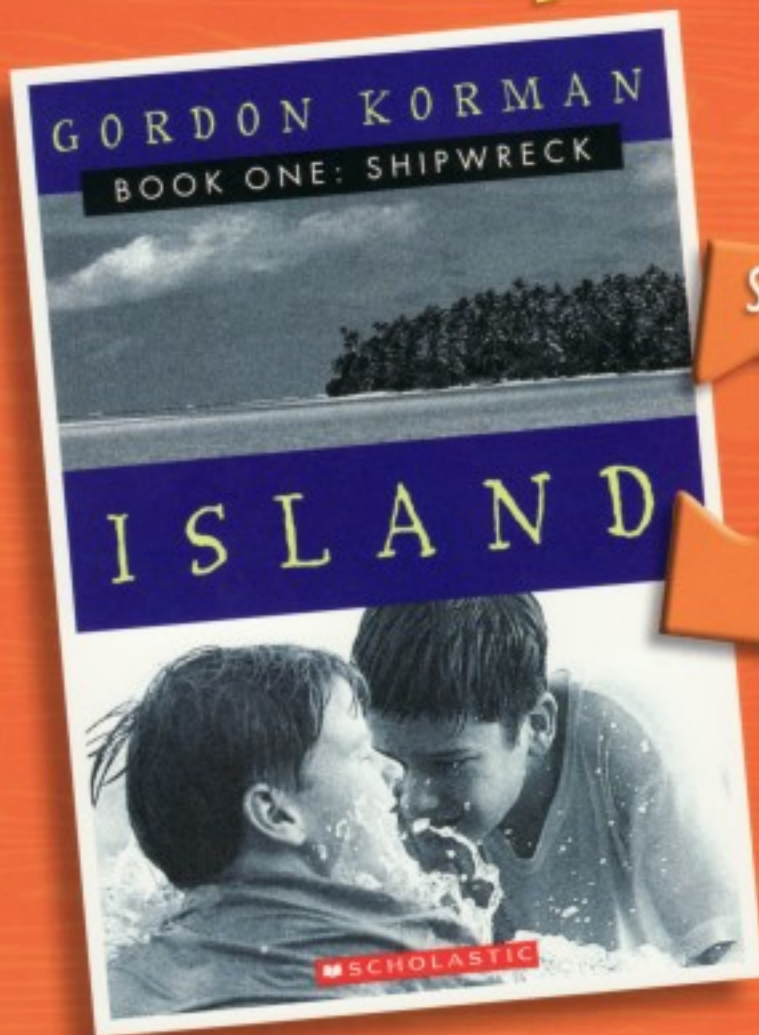


The Trait Crate®

TEACHING SENTENCE FLUENCY

USING *Shipwreck*



RUTH CULHAM
with Joanna Davis-Swing

Materials

SF_Passage_1 from CD
to project, or a class set

Chart paper and
markers

Class set of SF_Sheet_1
from CD or pages
11–12

LESSON 1

Key Quality: Crafting Well-Built Sentences

This lesson examines how writers can use coordinating conjunctions to combine sentences and parts of sentences effectively and show relationships between two equally important ideas. Students also compare compound sentences and simple ones, exploring how they each contribute to sentence fluency.

Introducing the Passage

This passage comes from the prologue, and it sets us down right in the middle of the action. A ship named the *Phoenix* is in trouble on the high seas.

Connecting the Key Quality: Crafting Well-Built Sentences

Listen to how the well-built sentences flow together and help create excitement and suspense.

From
page
1

For a heart-stopping moment, the bow of the *Phoenix* pointed straight up at the boiling black clouds of the storm. Then the wave broke in a cascade of spray, and the schooner was headed down, plummeting into the trough. Shakily, she righted herself and began the long climb up the next thirty-footer.

A streak of forked lightning silhouetted her against white water. She was two-masted, small for a schooner—her deck wasn't much longer than the tallest of the waves. Her sails were down and secured, and she moved under engine power, steered gamely into the oncoming seas.

Suddenly—a flash of white. The mainsail began to rise. It was unthinkable!

No vessel could survive such a storm-carrying sail.

Available as SF_Passage_1 on the CD

Teaching the Lesson

1. Project the passage or distribute copies; then read it aloud with expression.
2. Ask students to describe the scene. What is happening? What is the problem? You may need to remind students that the *bow* is the front of a boat, a *schooner* is a type of boat, and a *trough* is the low part of a wave. Help students create a vivid picture of the crisis described in the passage.
3. Turn students' attention to how the sense of urgency and suspense is created, focusing on sentence-level transitions. Say something like,

Gordan Korman has done an excellent job building suspense in this passage—I can't wait to read on and find out what happens to the ship! I'm sure there are people on board, and I'm anxious to see if they can survive this emergency. Let's take a closer look at just how Korman manages to build suspense here, paying attention to how he crafted the sentences.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mix It Up

DIRECTIONS: In Part I, label the sentence types: simple = S; compound = C; complex = CX; compound-complex = CC. Underline the participle phrases and prepositional phrases in each sentence.

In Part II, rewrite each string of sentences into a longer simple sentence using participle phrases and prepositional phrases on a separate piece of paper. You may alter the sentence in other ways, but keep the meaning the same and make sure it stays simple. Read each version aloud and decide which one sounds more fluent; circle it and be prepared to share.

Part I

1. "Heave!" bellowed Mr. Radford, untying the lines and pitching them onto the *Phoenix*.
2. Luke, Charla, and Lyssa stood on the edge of the deck, poles in hand, pushing against the dock to move the schooner away from its mooring.
3. "Put some back into it!" howled the mate.
4. Luke strained until he felt his spine was about to snap.
5. Water opened up between dock and boat.
6. Radford jumped on board.
7. He cupped his hands to his mouth.
8. "Clear!"
9. In the cockpit, Captain Cascadden engaged the engine.
10. The *Phoenix* began to pick her way delicately out of the harbor.

Part II

1. The first mate sounded the bell for dinner. He stood in the galley and eagerly awaited the sailors.
2. The sun shone brightly that morning. The captain wanted the sailors to swim. He called them on deck and gave them the news.
3. The grey clouds gathered ominously. The wind picked up. The waves grew taller. Luke was afraid.
4. The motor ignited the gas. Flames erupted. The cabin was consumed in fire.
5. Luke saw a bird. He knew that was impossible in the middle of the ocean. He must be hallucinating.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Shipwreck Readers Theater

DIRECTIONS: Prepare to read aloud the following scene with your group. Rehearse so that each member reads his or her part with fluency and expression, and so the transition between readers is smooth and maintains the feeling of drama.

[Reader 1]

Clinging to the wire at the starboard gunwale, Luke was the first to see the great wave. It was enormous—a forty-footer—curling over the high side of the *Phoenix* like a giant hand about to crush the small ship.

He shouted, "Captain--!"

[Reader 2]

And then the monster broke. To Luke it seemed like Niagara Falls raging down the upturned deck toward him.

Crack!

The mainmast snapped like a toothpick under the weight of the thundering sea. An avalanche of rope and canvas pelted down. As if in slow motion, the broken peak of the mast toppled over, striking Captain Cascadden across the shoulders.

[Reader 3]

Fierce lightning backlit a terrifying scene. Luke watched in horror as the captain was pitched from the deck into the foaming ocean.

"Man overboard!" he tried to shout.

But the force of the wave drove the gunwale of the *Phoenix*—and Luke with it—deep beneath the rampaging sea.

After the performance:

With another group, debrief on the readings and consider what made the passage easy or difficult to read fluently. Create a list of at least five characteristics of the writing that contributed to its fluency. Note any parts that caused readers to stumble and try to figure out why that part wasn't as smooth.

Student-Friendly Scoring Guide: Sentence Fluency

The way words and phrases flow through the piece. It is the auditory trait because it's "read" with the ear as much as the eye.

6

EXPERT

My piece is strong because I've written a variety of well-built sentences. I've woven those sentences together to create a smooth-sounding piece.

- I've constructed and connected my sentences for maximum impact.
- I've varied my sentence lengths and types—short and long, simple and complex.
- When I read my piece aloud, it is pleasing to my ear.
- I've broken grammar rules intentionally at points to create impact and interest.

5

WELL DONE

4

ALMOST THERE

Although my sentences lack variety or creativity, most of them are grammatically correct. Some of them are smooth, while others are choppy and awkward.

- I've written solid shorter sentences. Now I need to try some longer ones.
- I've created different kinds of sentences, but the result is uneven.
- When I read my piece aloud, I stumble in a few places.
- Any sentences that break grammar rules are accidental and don't work well.

3

MAKING STRIDES

2

ON MY WAY

My sentences are choppy, incomplete, or rambling. I need to revise my piece extensively to make it more readable.

- Many of my sentences don't work because they're poorly constructed.
- I've used the same sentence lengths and types over and over again.
- When I read my piece aloud, I stumble in many places.
- If I've broken grammar rules, it's not for stylistic reasons. It's because I may not understand those rules.

1

GETTING STARTED

HIGH

MIDDLE

LOW