

Max's Marvelous Punctuation Puzzle

Learning objective: To understand and use colons and semicolons to link related independent clauses and introduce lists.

Read the text carefully below. Use your knowledge of Grade 4 punctuation to answer the questions that follow. Remember to write in full sentences where required.

Max the monkey loves solving math puzzles, but he also enjoys organising his desk. He often says, 'I need three things to finish my homework: a sharp pencil, a sturdy ruler, and my trusty calculator.' Max uses a colon to introduce his list of items. When he is not counting, Max likes to write stories about the jungle. He wrote two sentences that he wanted to join together: 'The sun was setting behind the tall mahogany trees' and 'The monkeys prepared to sleep in their leafy nests.' Because both sentences are independent clauses and relate to the same idea, Max used a semicolon to join them. He wrote: 'The sun was setting behind the tall mahogany trees; the monkeys prepared to sleep in their leafy nests.' By using a semicolon instead of a full stop, Max showed that the two ideas were closely linked. Punctuation acts like a map for the reader, guiding them through the twists and turns of a sentence. Whether he is using a colon to start a list or a semicolon to link thoughts, Max knows that correct punctuation makes his writing much easier to understand.

Word bank: colon · semicolon · independent clause · list · punctuation · grammar

1. According to the text, which three items does Max need to finish his homework? (2 marks)

2. What punctuation mark does Max use to link two independent clauses about the jungle? (1 mark)

3. Why does Max choose to use a semicolon instead of a full stop when writing about the sun setting? (2 marks)

4. What does the author mean when they describe punctuation as a 'map for the reader'? (2 marks)

5. Do you think using different punctuation marks makes stories more interesting? Give a reason for your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a picture of Max the monkey sitting at his desk. On his desk, include a list _____ pinned to a noticeboard that starts with a colon, and write a sentence on his notepad that uses a semicolon.



Extension challenge: Write your own short paragraph about a day in the life of a zoo keeper. You must include one colon to introduce a list of animals and one semicolon to join two related sentences.