

Mastering Dialogue: A Punctuation Adventure with Max and Nova

Learning objective: To use inverted commas (speech marks) accurately to punctuate direct speech, including the use of reporting clauses and varied punctuation.

Read the story below featuring Max the monkey and Nova the owl. Pay close attention to where the speech starts and ends. Use the word bank to help you identify the reporting clauses, then complete the questions to show your mastery of dialogue.

Max the monkey swung down from the canopy, clutching a notebook filled with complex equations. 'I think I have finally calculated the total cost of the school's new library books,' Max declared excitedly. Nova the owl peered down from her branch, her large eyes blinking in the sunlight. 'Is the total amount exactly £452.75?' Nova inquired, tilting her head to the side. Max checked his notes and replied, 'Not quite, the final sum is actually £478.20.' Nova ruffled her feathers and muttered, 'Maths is truly a fascinating puzzle.'

Word bank: inverted commas · reporting clause · punctuation · dialogue · exclaimed · inquired · muttered · replied

1. Identify the direct speech in the second sentence. Rewrite it on the lines below, ensuring you place the inverted commas correctly. (2 marks)

2. Explain why a comma is placed after the word 'replied' in the fourth sentence, rather than a full stop. (2 marks)

3. Rewrite Nova's question ('Is the total amount exactly £452.75?') so that the reporting clause comes before the speech. (2 marks)

4. Justify why we must use inverted commas when writing a story. What might happen to the reader's understanding if they were missing? (3 marks)

5. Compare and contrast the verbs 'declared' and 'muttered'. How does the choice of verb change the tone of the character's speech? (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene featuring Max the monkey and Nova the owl sitting under an old oak tree. Include speech bubbles for each character, but remember to write their dialogue using correct punctuation (inverted commas) inside the bubbles!



Extension challenge: Write a short paragraph (50–70 words) describing a disagreement between Max and Nova regarding a new maths problem. You must include at least two examples of split speech (where the reporting clause interrupts the dialogue) and ensure your punctuation is precise.