

Exclamatory sentence: Probably your conception of the exclamatory sentence is that it ends with an exclamation mark. However, declarative and imperative sentences can also end in an exclamation mark. The exclamation mark's only function is to express strong emotion.

George's mother bought him a car for graduation! (declarative)
Close the door! (imperative)

So then, what *does* constitute an exclamatory sentence, if not the exclamation mark? An exclamatory sentence has had its syntax rearranged in order to highlight a noun or modifier by bringing it close to the beginning of the sentence. The two words capable of doing that in English are *how* and *what*. Although both words can begin an interrogative sentence as well, in this case they are not used to ask a question but to emphasize a quality.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Declarative: | The new professor seems obnoxious. |
| Exclamatory: | How obnoxious the new professor seems! |
| | How obnoxious the new professor seems. |
| | OR |
| | What an obnoxious professor she seems to be! |
| | What an obnoxious professor she seems to be. |

Notice that the exclamatory versions can end in either a period or an exclamation mark, depending on the tone of voice the writer wishes to indicate. What transforms the sentence from declarative to exclamatory is the rearrangement of the syntax. By beginning with "how" or "what" and then moving the modifier "obnoxious" near the beginning of the sentence—and thereby emphasizing the modifier—we have formed an exclamatory sentence.

EXERCISE 10.3

Label each sentence below as declarative (D), interrogative (IN), imperative (IM), or exclamatory (E). Remember that you should not rely on ending punctuation but on sentence syntax to make your determination.

1. E What a storyteller she turned out to be.
2. IN How many stories did she tell?
3. D I can remember three of the stories especially well.
4. IM Tell me one of those stories!
5. E How interesting it is that her stories draw on local folklore! ✓
6. D You never heard these tales before?
7. IM Did you learn anything about the art of storytelling?

This may make you doubt whether you have achieved parallelism. The example below illustrates the changes in syntax necessary to use the “not only / but also” construction as a way of combining two simple sentences into a compound sentence. It also illustrates how easily this construction might lead into a sentence error.

SIMPLE SENTENCES: Hamlet learned the truth. He avenged his father's death.

CORRECT: *Not only did Hamlet learn the truth, but also he avenged his father's death.* (compound sentence)

CORRECT: *Not only did Hamlet learn the truth, but he avenged his father's death.* (compound sentence)

CORRECT: Hamlet *not only learned the truth but also avenged his father's death.* (simple sentence with compound verb)

COMMA SPLICES: *Not only did Hamlet learn the truth, also he avenged his father's death.*
Hamlet not only learned the truth, he also avenged his father's death.

EXERCISE 10.11 *

Rewrite the following sentences so that they are in parallel form.

- Follow three rules when studying for an exam: start early, study for a short time each day, and you should get a good night's rest before the exam.

Follow the ^{three} rules when studying for an exam: study for a short time,
 start early, and get good sleep.

- Two good study techniques are to outline major points and testing yourself periodically.

Two good study techniques are outlining major points and testing yourself periodically.

- You will not only understand the material, also you will remember it.

You will not only understand the material, but also remember it.

4. Studying effectively should result in better grades, higher confidence, and having sharper critical thinking skills.

Studying effectively should result in better grades, higher confidence, and sharper critical thinking skills.

5. With better study habits, you should both study more effectively and efficiently.

With better study habits, you should both study more effectively and study more efficiently.

6. You will definitely need a notebook, pen, and attitude of determination.

You will definitely need a notebook, a pen, and an attitude of determination.

see answer keys pp. 478–79

MAXIMIZING SENTENCE IMPACT

Careful writers can manipulate sentence structure in order to direct readers' attention to specific words or phrases, to delay information in order to build up suspense, or to provide an emphatic summary of a sentence's meaning. Notice that most of the structures below—cleft sentences, anticipatory appositives, and sentence appositives—create periodic sentences, so that the sentences build to a climax.

Cleft sentence =

It + be + highlighted item

What (introducing a noun clause) + be + highlighted item

Cleft Sentences

One structure used to emphasize certain elements within a sentence is the cleft sentence. The cleft sentence is broken into two parts, the first part building to the climax of the second. A cleft sentence begins with one of two words, "it" or "what." Here is a shorthand formula of the two cleft structures:

It + be + highlighted item

Noun clause beginning with What + be + highlighted item

Let's look at an example.

Declarative:

The ghost of a sad woman visited my room last night.

Cleft with "it":

It + be + highlighted item

It was *the ghost of a sad woman* that visited my room last night.

It was *my room* that the ghost visited last night.

It was *last night* that the ghost visited my room.

Notice how, by varying what follows the stem "It was," a writer can vary the emphasis of each sentence. The suspense is built up even more in the cleft sentence beginning with "what." Versatility is limited here, but the climax of the sentence has a stronger effect.

Cleft with "what": Noun clause beginning with what + be + highlighted item

What visited my room last night was *the ghost of a sad woman*.

EXERCISE 10.12 *

Using the sentence below, form a cleft sentence beginning with "What" and as many cleft sentences as possible beginning with "It."

The butler dropped the rare porcelain vase on the marble floor.

What the butler dropped on the marble floor was the rare porcelain vase

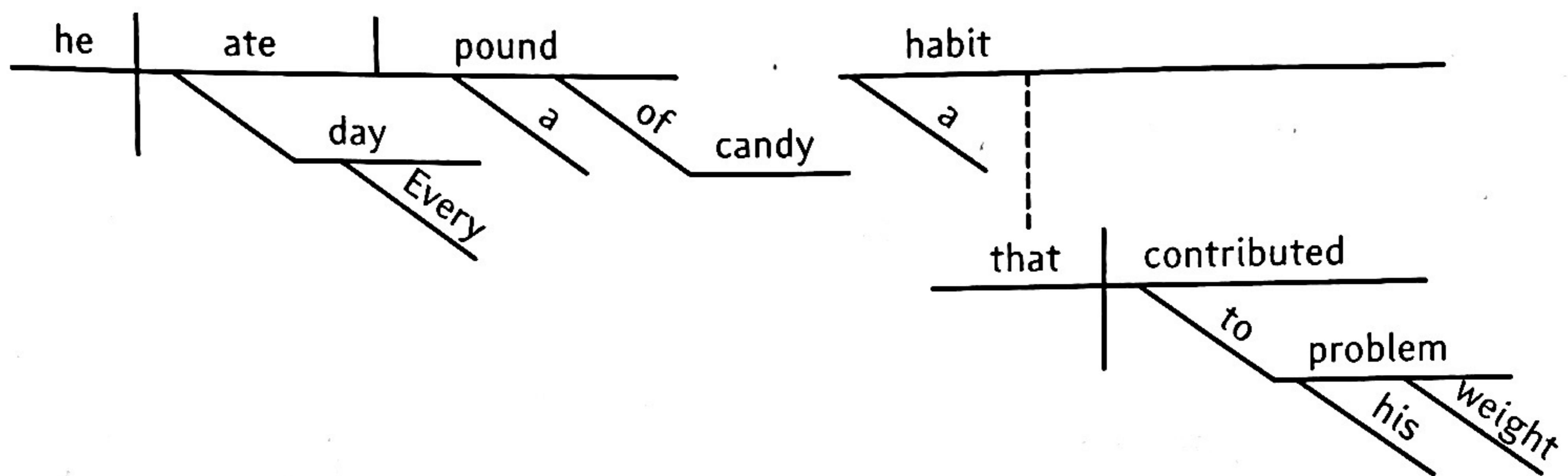
It was the butler that dropped the rare porcelain vase on the marble floor

It was the rare porcelain vase that the butler dropped on the marble floor

It was the marble floor that the butler dropped the rare porcelain vase onto

see answer key, p. 479

Now let's take a look at how to diagram a sentence appositive, using the sentence above. Notice that the sentence appositive occupies its own separate but equal structure, not joined in any way to the main diagram, to signal that it summarizes the idea of the entire sentence.

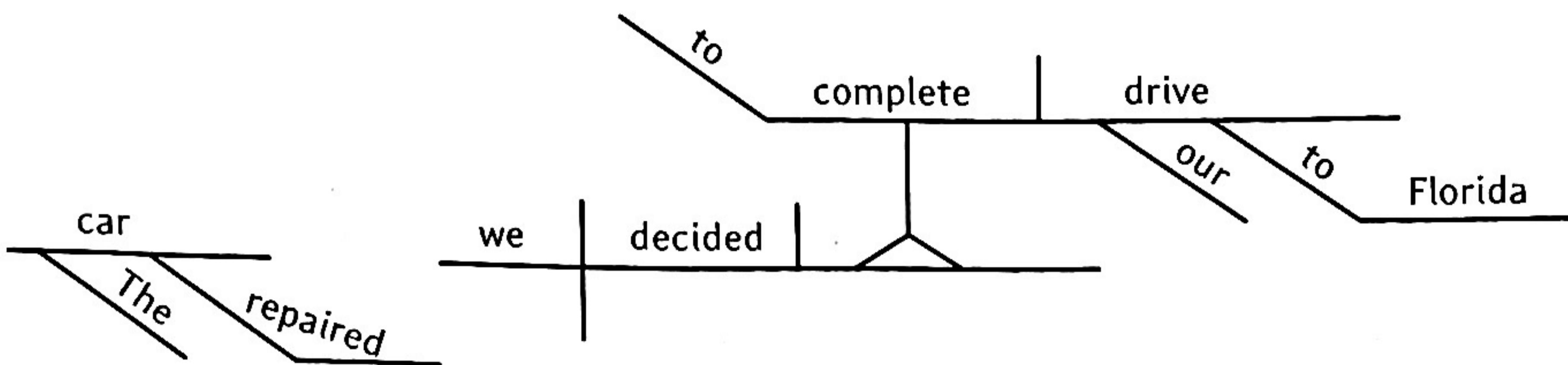


EXERCISE 10.15 *

In the following sentences, underline the sentence appositives and then diagram the sentences.

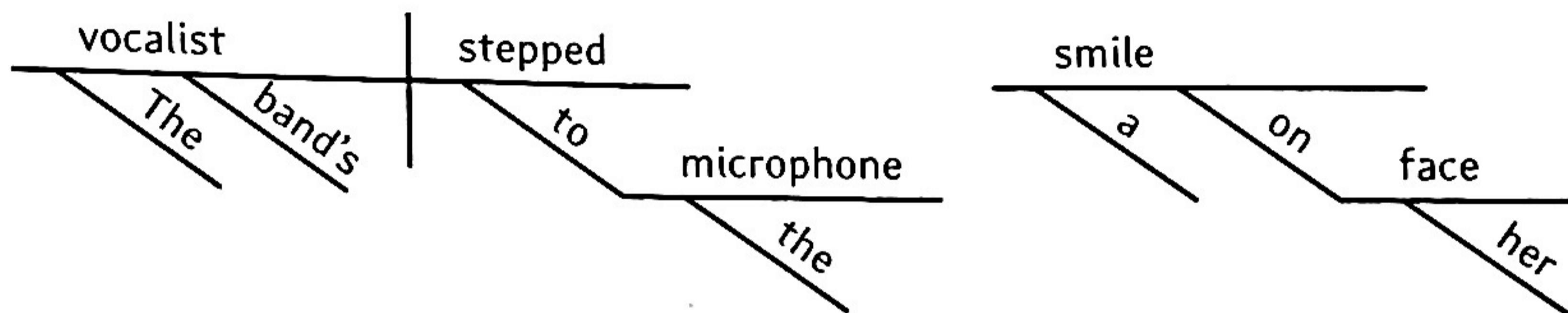
1. No one in class remembered the teacher's birthday—an oversight that led to trouble.
2. All of the players memorized the coach's instructions, an action resulting in victory.
3. The Smiths celebrated their fiftieth anniversary, an extraordinary event in our community.
4. Michael asked when his mother would feel better, a question that no one could answer.

The car repaired, we decided to complete our drive to Florida. (Here the nominative absolute explains the condition under which we decided to complete the drive.)



The band's vocalist stepped to the microphone, *a smile on her face.*

(Here the nominative absolute acts like the zoom lens on a camera, focusing on a particular detail.)

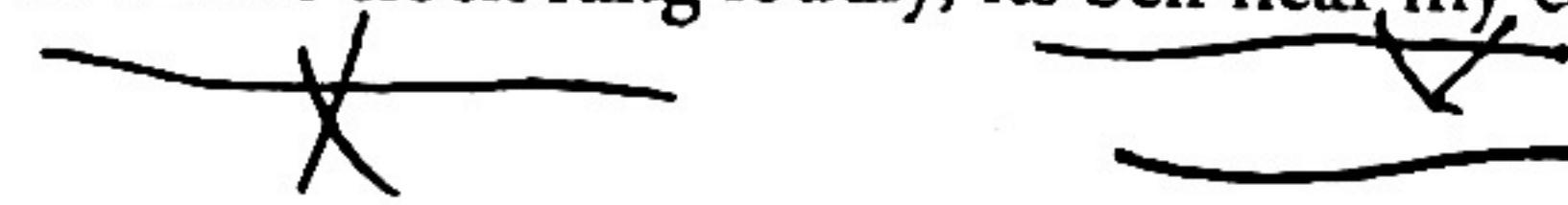


EXERCISE 10.17 *

In the following sentences, underline the nominative absolute. Then diagram each sentence.

1. The ink spilling onto the table, the words on the document gradually disappeared.
 2. Its fur wet, the puppy looked at me hopefully through the open door.

3. The alarm clock rang loudly, its bell near my ear.



4. Marcia walked forward, her hands shaking as she threw the bridal bouquet.

see answer key, p. 481

EXERCISE 10.18 *

Add a nominative absolute at the beginning or end of the sentences below, as indicated.
Remember to begin your answers with a noun!

1. Motivated by money, the contestants competed earnestly for the grand prize.
2. Putting himself on the back, the surgeon strode out of the operating room.
3. The bride appeared in a Cinderella-type ball gown, it clomed behind her as she ran.
4. The store manager gave her employees a stern lecture, upset with recent behaviors.
5. Boredom sinking in, the kittens waited impatiently for their mother to return.

see answer key, p. 482

“WEAK” SENTENCES

Once you have checked for sentence flow and variety, and have focused on how best to emphasize the ideas expressed by your sentences, you should read through your writing once again to root out unnecessarily weak sentences. In particular, look for these problem spots, which will be detailed below:

When possible, avoid

- passive voice;
- sentences that begin with “there” or “it” used as expletives;
- sentence “clutter.”

- sentences that use passive voice and expletive structures when they are unnecessary
- nouns that are strung together in too many prepositional phrases
- too many adjectives (often formed from nouns) preceding a noun
- phrases (often containing nouns) that can be streamlined and energized

Passive Voice

We will learn more about passive voice in Chapter 11. For now, here is what you need to know:

- When the subject performs the action of a sentence, the verb is in active voice.
The entire class *enjoyed* this book.
- When the subject does not perform the action but instead receives it, the verb is in passive voice. (In the same way, we can characterize people as passive when they do not take action.)
The book *was enjoyed* by the entire class.

As you can see by comparing the effect of the two sentences above, in most cases you should use active voice in your writing.

EXERCISE 10.19 *

- First, label the italicized verbs in the following sentences as either active (A) or passive (P) voice.
 - Next, rewrite the sentences containing a passive verb so that the verb will be in active voice. To do this, you will have to rephrase the sentence by changing the subject. Once the subject performs the action, notice how much more effective the sentence is with an active voice verb.
 - Finally, combine and rewrite the sentences so that they form a smoothly written paragraph.
1. I The peanuts *were thrown* to the squirrel by the young woman.

The young woman threw the peanuts to the squirrel

2. A She *walked* away slowly.
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3. PA The squirrel was following her.

4. I This scene was watched with interest by us.

We watched this scene with interest

5. A Suddenly the squirrel jumped onto the woman's back.

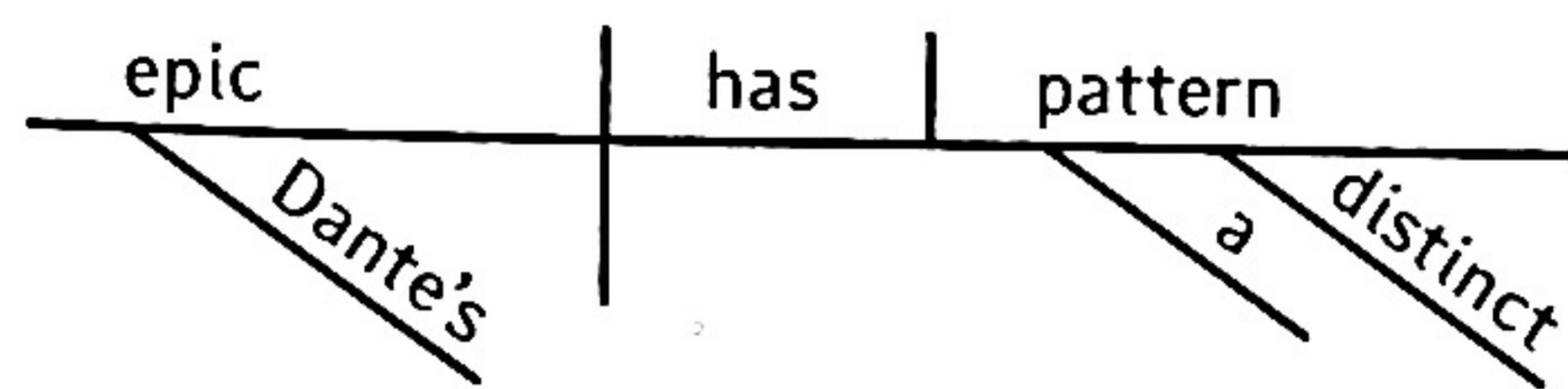
6. I Her scream of surprise was heard by several bystanders.

Bystanders heard her scream of surprise.

7. A Then she laughed.

8. A The squirrel scampered away in search of more peanuts.

The sentence is stronger if rephrased to eliminate the expletive, and even stronger if we can replace the *be* verb: Dante's epic has a distinct pattern. The diagram demonstrates that every word now counts.



EXERCISE 10.20 *

In the sentences below, determine whether "there" is used as an expletive (E) or as an adverb (A) indicating "where." If the sentence uses "there" as an expletive, rephrase it to eliminate "there." Which version sounds stronger?

Hint: If you read each sentence aloud, you will notice that you place greater emphasis on the word "there" when it is used as an adverb than when it is used as an expletive.

1. A E Were you there when the accident occurred?
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2. XA There were at least three witnesses standing on the street corner.

Standing on the street corner were at least 3 witnesses

3. E There was a malfunctioning traffic light at the intersection.

The traffic light at the intersection was malfunctioning
