

# Grammar 2 - Syntax

# Introduction

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Having a good grasp of the different types of sentences and sentence clauses is another important skill to master. You will have been introduced to some of the most basic while in KS3 and KS4 – but it's worth going over them again.

# Sentence types and clauses

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Create a table in which you offer a definition and an example for each of the sentence and clause types listed on the following slide. You could create a table as shown:

Type	Definition	Example
Main clause		
Subordinate clause		

# Sentence types and clauses

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Main clause

Subordinate clause

Simple sentence

Compound sentence

Complex sentence

Declarative sentence

Exclamatory sentence

Imperative sentence

Interrogative sentence

## Task - put it into practice

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Read the extract from 'Northern Lights' and identify the main sentence/clause types.

Once you have done that, explore what the syntax choices of the writer reveals about the characters.

“Lyra! What the hell are you doing?”

“Let go of me and I’ll tell you!”

“I’ll break your arm first. How dare you come in here?”

“I’ve just saved your life!”

They were still for a moment, the girl twisted in pain but grimacing to prevent herself from crying out louder, the man bent over her frowning like thunder.

‘Northern Lights’ Philip Pullman, Chapter One

**Consider:**

- **How could the sentence types here be used to draw comparisons between characters?**
- **What do the sentences choices here reveal about the relationship between the two characters?**

## Task 2 - put it into practice

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Now read the extract from Charlotte Bronte's 'Jane Eyre'. The analysis that follows demonstrates how the use of sentencing can enable us to interpret character and representation.

There was no possibility of taking a walk that day. We had been wandering, indeed, in the leafless shrubbery an hour in the morning; but since dinner (Mrs. Reed, when there was no company, dined early) the cold winter wind had brought with it clouds so sombre, and a rain so penetrating, that further out-door exercise was now out of the question.

‘Jane Eyre’ Charlotte Bronte, Chapter One



# 'Jane Eyre' - Syntax analysis

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This opens with a simple declarative sentence which is then followed by a complex sentence consisting of a conditional clause, three conjunctions, a compound sentence within parentheses, which is inserted into a subordinate clause. There is a large amount of information placed within this highly complex second sentence and arguable, it could be said to be superfluous, since the first sentence tells the reader what they need to know and the second sentence simply repeats this information.

The impact of this syntactic patterning is to reveal aspects of Jane's character right from the outset (these are the first lines of the novel). The first sentence is simple, straightforward, declamatory - as befits a governess who needs to teach children using simple, factual language. The second sentence acts as an outpouring of information, suggesting a mind teeming with knowledge that the narrator is desperate to express. It appears untidy and haphazard in contrast with the first sentence, perhaps to foreground how Jane is accustomed to keeping quiet and when she does speak it is almost frenetic.

## TASK 3 - put it into practice

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On the following slide is an extract from Tennessee Williams' play 'A Streetcar Named Desire'. Read it through then use the '**Consider**' task to enable you to interpret the character of Blanche.

### Consider:

- How does the use of exclamatory sentences suggest Blanche's personality?
- What is the significance of Blanche's interrogative sentences in showing the relationship between her and her sister, Stella, who she is addressing?
- How might the syntax here be functioning as a foreshadowing device?

BLANCHE: I, I, I took the blows in my face and my body! All of those deaths! The long parade to the graveyard! Father, mother! Margaret, that dreadful way! So big with it, it couldn't be put in a coffin! But had to be burned like rubbish! You just came home in time for the funerals, Stella. And funerals are pretty compared to deaths. Funerals are quiet, but deaths--not always. Sometimes their breathing is hoarse, and sometimes it rattles, and sometimes they even cry out to you, "Don't let me go!" Even the old, sometimes, say, "Don't let me go." As if you were able to stop them! But funerals are quiet, with pretty flowers. And, oh, what gorgeous boxes they pack them away in! Unless you were there at the bed when they cried out, "Hold me!" you'd never suspect there was the struggle for breath and bleeding. You didn't dream, but I saw! Saw! Saw! And now you sit there telling me with your eyes that I let the place go! How in hell do you think all that sickness and dying was paid for? Death is expensive, Miss Stella! And old Cousin Jessie's right after Margaret's, hers! Why, the Grim Reaper had put up his tent on our doorstep!... Stella. Belle Reve was his headquarters! Honey--that's how it slipped through my fingers! Which of them left us a fortune? Which of them left a cent of insurance even? Only poor Jessie--one hundred to pay for her coffin. That was all, Stella! And I with my pitiful salary at the school. Yes, accuse me! Sit there and stare at me, thinking I let the place go! I let the place go? Where were you! In bed with your--Polack!

‘A Streetcar Named Desire’ T. Williams, Act 1 Scene 1