

A dog howled, ~~breaking~~ the
stillness. Someone was behind me...

breaking (with arrow pointing to the word)

comma (with arrow pointing to the comma)

ellipsis (with arrow pointing to the ellipsis)

period (with arrow pointing to the period)

stillness. Someone was behind me...

Ellipsis



What is ellipsis?

Ellipsis is the omission of one or more words in a text.

The visual symbol for ellipsis is three consecutive dots (periods). ● ● ●

Ellipsis has a number of purposes. It can be used in stories to create suspense for the reader.

Do you know how?

Sometimes by not saying something, a writer can spark the reader's imagination.

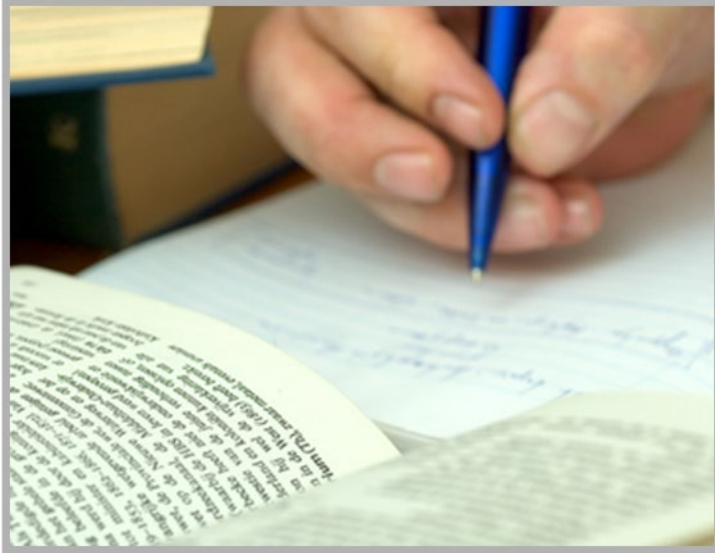


Using ellipsis to create suspense



Try writing a short piece of fiction using ellipsis to create tension or suspense.

Ellipsis is also very useful when using quotations in an essay.



Sometimes a passage of text or a character's speech may have important information spread throughout many sentences or lines. By using ellipsis, you can select only the exact words you want to use to make your point.

For example, imagine you are writing an essay on the novel *Frankenstein*. You are trying to show how Dr. Frankenstein feels when he first beholds the monster he has created. The extract on the next slide contains some important information for your point but it is much too long.

Which phrases would you choose?

‘How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.’



Once you narrow it down, you can link the phrases using ellipsis and present your quotation like this:

Dr. Frankenstein says, “How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe” and he describes his monster: “... yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; ... hair ... lustrous black, and flowing; ... teeth of a pearly whiteness; ... a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes...his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.”

The ellipsis shows the reader you have deliberately omitted sections of the text so they know you have not made an error or misquoted the story.

Ellipsis in everyday speech

Ellipsis isn't always used deliberately to create effects in writing, nor is it always shown by the visual symbol of three consecutive dots.

In fact, we use ellipsis quite commonly in our everyday speech! Using ellipsis (i.e. leaving out words) when we talk helps us to avoid repetition.



Listen to each piece of dialogue in which ellipsis is used.

How do you think each exchange would go if no ellipsis were used?



The sentences on the left contain ellipsis. Can you match each sentence to its full version without ellipsis?

What's for dinner?

Got the remote?

Wanna go down the park?

Not fair!

Can't come – been grounded.

It's not fair!

Do you want to go down to the park?

Have you got the remote control?

I can't come because I've been grounded.

What are we having for dinner?



solve



Rewrite the following pieces of dialogue using ellipsis to make them sound like everyday speech.

I cannot believe it!
I cannot believe it either!



What time is it?
The time is half past three.



Are you going to Vicky's party?
I'm not going to Vicky's party because I am busy.

