Dependent Clauses

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:

• Identify dependent clauses in sentences.
• Write sentences using dependent clauses.

Preparation

Materials Needed

• Chart paper and markers
• Dependent Clauses (BLM 7)
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text (with underlining) and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson. If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” onto chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain Dependent Clauses

Write the following sentence, with underlining, on chart paper or use the interactive whiteboard resources: “A boy from my neighborhood, whom I don’t really know, began talking to me.” Read the sentence aloud. Say: I’ve underlined a dependent clause in the middle of this sentence. A dependent clause is a phrase that can’t stand alone as a sentence. It needs other words within the same sentence to make sense. A dependent clause should have a comma before it and after it. If you take a dependent clause out of a sentence, the other words should still make a complete sentence. Knowing how to use dependent clauses is important for writing memoirs, as it is for writing other types of text.

Model Identifying Dependent Clauses

Display the modeling text (with underlining) on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

1. The guy, whom I had never seen before, pulled out a gun and shot me.
2. The army, which helped me pay for college, was an organization that I believed in.

Modeling Text

Read sentence 1. Say: This sentence tells about an important event in a memoir. I see a dependent clause in the middle of this sentence: “whom I had never seen before.” It has a subject and verb, but it cannot stand alone as a sentence. It has a comma before and after it. If I take it out of the sentence, the sentence is still complete: “The guy pulled out a gun and shot me.” However, keeping the dependent clause in the sentence adds information about the guy.

Read sentence 2. Say: I also see a dependent clause in the middle of this sentence: “which helped me pay for college.” The words around it form a complete sentence if I remove this clause. It provides more information about the army, but cannot stand alone as a sentence.
2. Rehearse

Practice Identifying Dependent Clauses

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources. Ask students to work with partners to identify the dependent clause in each sentence. (Students do not need to copy the sentences.)

If your class includes English language learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

| 1. All of the men in line, who were looking very brave, were joining the army. |
| 2. The civil rights movement, which became an important part of American history, helped end segregation. |

Practice Text

Share Dependent Clauses

Invite volunteers to share the dependent clause in each sentence. Discuss their choices as a class. Prompt with questions such as:
- What is the dependent clause in the sentence?
- How can you tell that this is the dependent clause?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We learned that dependent clauses are clauses that cannot stand alone as a sentence. They depend on other words in the sentence to make sense. If you remove a dependent clause from the middle of a sentence, the remaining words should form a complete sentence. When we write memoirs, we can think about the additional information we are trying to provide to readers. We can consider using dependent clauses in sentences to add information.

If you would like to give students additional practice using dependent clauses in sentences, have them complete BLM 7.

4. Share

Review and provide corrective feedback based on students’ answers to BLM 7. Ask students to share what they learned about dependent clauses in sentences.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Beginning ELs are not ready to work on this English grammar skill. While other students collaborate on the partner activity or write independently, meet one on one with students to support developmentally appropriate grammar skills based on their independent writing and language level. For example, you may want to work on students’ recognition of the parts of speech required for simple complete sentences: nouns and verbs.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair students with fluent English speakers to complete the practice sentences. Provide the following sentence frames to assist students with oral vocabulary:

______ is a dependent clause.
I can check if a clause is dependent by ______.