

## Teaching News Is Elementary

### June 16, 2016

Each week, this lesson will share some classroom activity ideas that use the newspaper or other NIE resources. You are encouraged to modify this lesson to fit the needs of your students. For example, some classrooms may be able to use this as a worksheet and others might need to ask and answer the questions in a class discussion.

**Materials you will need for this lesson:** The Seattle Times e-Edition, pencil, paper, dictionary, copies of the article, and (optional) a highlighter for the last activity

**Article: “Punctuation in peril: End may be nigh for period linguists say”**

**Page: Main, A4**

**Date: Friday, June 10, 2016**

#### Pre- Reading Discussion Questions:

What is punctuation? Why do we use it? How many of the 14 most common types of punctuation in the English language can you name?

#### **Answer:**

1. Period.
2. Question mark?
3. Exclamation point!
4. Colon:
5. Semi-colon;
6. The hyphen-
7. Dash—
8. (Parenthesis)
9. [Bracket]
10. ...ellipses
11. Apostrophe’
12. “Quotation marks”
13. /slash/
14. Comma,

#### Vocabulary:

Read the following quotes and determine the meaning of the word based on how it’s used in the sentence:

“The period — the full-stop signal we all learn as children, whose use stretches back at least to the Middle Ages — is gradually being **felled** in the **barrage** of instant messaging that has become synonymous with the digital age”

**Felled:** something that has been brought down, like a tree

**Barrage:** an overwhelming quantity or explosion, as of words, blows, or criticisms

“The conspicuous **omission** of the period in text messages and in instant messaging on social media, he says, is a product of the punctuation-free **staccato** sentences favored by millennials — and increasingly their elders — a trend fueled by the **freewheeling** style of Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter”

**Omission:** someone or something that has been left out or excluded

**Staccato:** short and not sounding connected

**Freewheeling:** act without concern for rules, conventions, or the consequences of one's actions

"We are at a momentous moment in the history of the full stop," Crystal, an honorary professor of **linguistics** at the University of Wales, Bangor, said in an interview after he **expounded** on his view recently at the Hay Festival in Wales"

**Linguistics:** the study of human speech including the nature, structure, and development of language or of a language or group of languages

**Expounded:** to explain in detail

"Can **ardent** fans of punctuation take heart in any part of the period's decline? Perhaps"

**Ardent:** enthusiastic or passionate

"The shunning of the period, Crystal said, has **paradoxically** been accompanied by spasms of overpunctuation."

**Paradoxically:** a statement that seems to contradict itself but may nonetheless be true

"At the same time, he said he found that British teenagers were increasingly **eschewing** emoticons and abbreviations such as "LOL" (laughing out loud) or "ROTF" (rolling on the floor) in text messages because they had been adopted by their parents and were therefore considered "uncool"'"

**Eschewing:** deliberately avoid using; abstain from.

### **Journal Writing Prompts:**

**"In fact, the understated period — the punctuation equivalent of stagehands who dress in black to be less conspicuous — may have suddenly taken on meanings all its own"**

If you were a punctuation mark, what would you be? Why? What kind of personality do you think different kinds of punctuation have?

*If you have a hard time thinking of the types of punctuation, look back on your list from the warm up.*

### **Discussion Questions:**

Read the two Dear John letters, available here:

<http://www.nationalpunctuationday.com/dearjohn.html>

What are the similarities between the letters? What are the differences between the letters? How does the punctuation affect the tone of the letters? Compare this to the punctuation in the article you just read (hint: something is missing). How important do you think punctuation really is? Are there some cases where punctuation is more important than other cases? Why or why not? How often do you use punctuation? Do you think the period will go away completely? What other types of punctuation do you think might go away?

### **Small Group Discussion and Activity:**

Working with a group or individually, see if you can put all the periods back into where you think they should be in the article. Compare your answers with the rest of the class. Where did you place periods differently? Where did you place periods in the same place? What helped you decide where the periods should go? Did you find that the placement of the periods changed the meaning of the article? How many other different types of punctuation can you find in the article?

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