

English Language Arts

Home Learning KIT

GRADES
6-8



Commas Usage Practice

Passage from *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller

Directions: The paragraph below is missing some commas. As you read it, add the missing commas back in to make this text more readable.

HINT: Remember the following comma rules.

- Use a comma to separate items in a list or series.
 - For example: I want **apples, kiwi, and grapes** in the fruit salad.
I'm taking **science, math, and art** this semester.
- Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives.
 - For example: I really like this **old, green** shirt.
John's is the **new, red** bike.
- Use commas to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements (or things that could be removed from a sentence without changing the meaning).
 - For example: Pizza, **which is my favorite food**, is on the menu today at school.
Emily, **who is my cousin**, will be here today.
- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence.
 - For example: I like to play soccer, **and** so does my brother.
My mom works at the school, **but** my aunt works at the hospital.
- Use a comma to separate an introductory word or phrase from the rest of the sentence.
 - For example: Well, I like the blue shirt best.
Yes, I would like a cookie!

The Story of My Life by Helen Keller

I lived up to the time of the illness that deprived me of my sight and hearing in a tiny house consisting of a large square room and a small one in which the servant slept. It is a custom in the South to build a small house near the homestead as an annex to be used on occasion. Such a house my father built after the Civil War and when he married my mother they went to live in it. It was completely covered with vines climbing roses and honeysuckles. From the garden it looked like an arbor. The little porch was hidden from view by a screen of yellow roses and Southern smilax. It was the favorite haunt of humming-birds and bees.

The Keller homestead where the family lived was a few steps from our little rose-bower. It was called "Ivy Green" because the house and the surrounding trees and fences were covered with beautiful English Ivy. Its old-fashioned garden was the paradise of my childhood.

Even in the days before my teacher came I used to feel along the square stiff boxwood hedges and guided by the sense of smell would find the first violets and lilies. There too after a fit of temper I went to find comfort and to hide my hot face in the cool leaves and grass. What joy it was to lose myself in that garden of flowers to wander happily from spot to spot until coming suddenly upon a beautiful vine I recognized it by its leaves and blossoms and knew it was the vine which covered the tumble-down summer-house at the farther end of the garden! Here, also, were trailing clematis drooping jessamine and some rare sweet flowers called butterfly lilies because their fragile petals resemble butterflies' wings. But the roses—they were loveliest of all. Never have I found in the greenhouses of the North such heart-satisfying roses as the climbing roses of my southern home. They used to hang in long festoons from our porch filling the whole air with their fragrance untainted by any earthy smell; and in the early morning washed in the dew they felt so soft so pure I could not help wondering if they did not resemble the asphodels of God's garden.

Commas Usage Practice

Passage from *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller

The Story of My Life by Helen Keller

I lived, up to the time of the illness that deprived me of my sight and hearing, in a tiny house consisting of a large square room and a small one, in which the servant slept. It is a custom in the South to build a small house near the homestead as an annex to be used on occasion. Such a house my father built after the Civil War, and when he married my mother they went to live in it. It was completely covered with vines, climbing roses and honeysuckles. From the garden, it looked like an arbor. The little porch was hidden from view by a screen of yellow roses and Southern smilax. It was the favorite haunt of humming-birds and bees.

The Keller homestead, where the family lived, was a few steps from our little rose-bower. It was called "Ivy Green" because the house and the surrounding trees and fences were covered with beautiful English Ivy. Its old-fashioned garden was the paradise of my childhood.

Even in the days before my teacher came, I used to feel along the square, stiff boxwood hedges, and, guided by the sense of smell would find the first violets and lilies. There, too, after a fit of temper, I went to find comfort and to hide my hot face in the cool leaves and grass. What joy it was to lose myself in that garden of flowers, to wander happily from spot to spot, until, coming suddenly upon a beautiful vine, I recognized it by its leaves and blossoms and knew it was the vine which covered the tumble-down summer-house at the farther end of the garden! Here, also, were trailing clematis, drooping jessamine, and some rare sweet flowers called butterfly lilies because their fragile petals resemble butterflies' wings. But the roses—they were loveliest of all. Never have I found in the greenhouses of the North such heart-satisfying roses as the climbing roses of my southern home. They used to hang in long festoons from our porch, filling the whole air with their fragrance, untainted by any earthy smell; and in the early morning, washed in the dew, they felt so soft, so pure, I could not help wondering if they did not resemble the asphodels of God's garden.

Vocabulary for Comprehension

Part 1

Read “A Llama’s Odd Job,” which contains words in **boldface** that appear in Units 1–3. Then answer the questions.



- For thousands of years, the llama has been a working animal. In fact, in the **barren**, rugged highlands of Peru, this **unique** animal has for centuries proved
- (5) to be a reliable beast of burden, carrying heavy packs to lowland markets.
- In just one day, a llama can travel 20 miles while carrying 50–75 pounds on its back. Sometimes hundreds of llamas
- (10) travel together like this. These vegetarians eat many different kinds of plants. Llamas are related to camels and do not need much water to survive, so they are well suited to their work in Peru’s mountains.
- (15) About one hundred years ago, the llama was brought to the United States. In this country, the llama has added to its **résumé** by gaining some unusual work experience, so strange in fact that here its “odd job”
- (20) has all but replaced its **customary** use as a pack animal.
- Because of its tendency to work hard, eat cheaply, go many miles without water, and get along well with people and other
- (25) animals, the llama has proved to be a match for many other working animals. Yet it is not just in **trivial** matters, such as carrying golf bags (although llamas do serve as caddies) or in maintaining hiking
- (30) trails (they do work for the National Park Service), that llamas have distinguished themselves in this country. In fact, in the United States, the llama’s true calling seems to be in “predator protection,”
- (35) acting as a kind of fantastic “sheepdog.”
- Interestingly, llamas make good “guard dogs” for the following reasons: They are quick studies, learning in a few days what might take a dog a year to master.
- (40) Also, llamas and sheep get along famously. Most important, llamas have a natural distaste for coyotes, the sheep’s main predator, and they don’t get frazzled in the face of danger. When brazen predators
- (45) approach the herd, llamas aggressively chase away the intruders. They also possess a **vicious** kick that they use should a predator come too close.
- So serious is this problem that in
- (50) the United States predators are said to have killed millions of dollars worth of sheep in the past few years. Although efforts have been under way to destroy the coyotes, the focus now is on protecting
- (55) the sheep. It would seem that the best way to do that is to “hire” a llama. In fact, when interviewed in an Iowa study, half the llama-owning sheep farmers reported sheep losses down to zero since getting
- (60) a llama, which just goes to show that there’s nothing like having a good guard dog, especially when it’s a llama.

1. Which sentence **best** states the author's purpose in "A Llama's Odd Job"?
 - A) The author explains the difference between llamas and sheepdogs.
 - B) The author informs the reader about a nontraditional use of llamas.
 - C) The author persuades the reader of the benefits of raising llamas.
 - D) The author describes the physical characteristics of a llama.
2. What does **barren** (line 3) most likely mean?
 - A) lush
 - B) unproductive
 - C) boring
 - D) fertile
3. What does the word **unique** in line 4 suggest about the llama?
 - A) It is distinctive.
 - B) It is friendly.
 - C) It is aggressive.
 - D) It is commonplace.
4. **Part A**
As it is used in this passage, what does the word **customary** (line 20) mean?
 - A) legal
 - B) traditional
 - C) untraditional
 - D) reliable

Part B
Which evidence from "A Llama's Odd Job" supports the answer to Part A?

 - A) "reliable beast of burden, carrying heavy packs" (lines 5–6)
 - B) "gaining some unusual work experience" (line 18)
 - C) "true calling seems to be in 'predator protection'" (lines 33–34)
 - D) "a natural distaste for coyotes, the sheep's main predator" (lines 41–42)
5. What does the word **résumé** most likely mean as it is used in line 17?
 - A) story
 - B) experience
 - C) work history
 - D) qualifications
6. According to the article, what are **trivial** matters?
 - A) insignificant matters
 - B) entertaining matters
 - C) important matters
 - D) exceptional matters
7. From paragraphs 1 and 2 (lines 1–14), what can you infer is a llama's usual work?
 - A) maintaining hiking trails
 - B) carrying golf bags
 - C) protecting sheep
 - D) carrying heavy burdens
8. Which sentence describes the overall structure of lines 36–48?
 - A) The text provides reasons llamas do a job well.
 - B) The text compares llamas and sheep.
 - C) The text contrasts llamas and coyotes.
 - D) The text describes llamas' predators.
9. According to the article, what is a **vicious** kick?
 - A) a swift kick
 - B) a painful kick
 - C) a warning kick
 - D) a natural kick
10. Why does the author **most likely** refer to an Iowa study in lines 56–60?
 - A) to explain how many farmers use llamas to protect sheep
 - B) to provide a theory about why llamas are good workers
 - C) to describe how llamas and sheep behave together
 - D) to give a statistic that supports other information

Vocabulary for
Comprehension

Part 1

ANSWER KEY

- Which sentence **best** states the author's purpose in "A Llama's Odd Job"?
 - A) The author explains the difference between llamas and sheepdogs.
 - B) The author informs the reader about a nontraditional use of llamas.
 - C) The author persuades the reader of the benefits of raising llamas.
 - D) The author describes the physical characteristics of a llama.
- What does **barren** (line 3) most likely mean?
 - A) lush
 - B) unproductive
 - C) boring
 - D) fertile
- What does the word **unique** in line 4 suggest about the llama?
 - A) It is distinctive.
 - B) It is friendly.
 - C) It is aggressive.
 - D) It is commonplace.
- Part A
As it is used in this passage, what does the word **customary** (line 20) mean?
 - A) legal
 - B) traditional
 - C) untraditional
 - D) reliable
 Part B
Which evidence from "A Llama's Odd Job" supports the answer to Part A?
 - A) "reliable beast of burden, carrying heavy packs" (lines 5–6)
 - B) "gaining some unusual work experience" (line 18)
 - C) "true calling seems to be in 'predator protection'" (lines 33–34)
 - D) "a natural distaste for coyotes, the sheep's main predator" (lines 41–42)
- What does the word **résumé** most likely mean as it is used in line 17?
 - A) story
 - B) experience
 - C) work history
 - D) qualifications
- According to the article, what are **trivial** matters?
 - A) insignificant matters
 - B) entertaining matters
 - C) important matters
 - D) exceptional matters
- From paragraphs 1 and 2 (lines 1–14), what can you infer is a llama's usual work?
 - A) maintaining hiking trails
 - B) carrying golf bags
 - C) protecting sheep
 - D) carrying heavy burdens
- Which sentence describes the overall structure of lines 36–48?
 - A) The text provides reasons llamas do a job well.
 - B) The text compares llamas and sheep.
 - C) The text contrasts llamas and coyotes.
 - D) The text describes llamas' predators.
- According to the article, what is a **vicious** kick?
 - A) a swift kick
 - B) a painful kick
 - C) a warning kick
 - D) a natural kick
- Why does the author **most likely** refer to an Iowa study in lines 56–60?
 - A) to explain how many farmers use llamas to protect sheep
 - B) to provide a theory about why llamas are good workers
 - C) to describe how llamas and sheep behave together
 - D) to give a statistic that supports other information

Vocabulary for Comprehension

Part 2

Read this passage, which contains words in **boldface** that appear in Units 1–3. Then choose the best answer to each question based on what is stated or implied in the passage. You may refer to the passage as often as necessary.

Questions 1–10 are based on the following passage.

- In December 1781, the Americans and French defeated the British at the Battle of Yorktown. This victory forced the British to surrender, ending the seemingly
- (5) **interminable** American Revolution. In April 1782, the Continental Congress selected five of its **constituents** to negotiate a treaty in Paris. These members were John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, John Jay,
- (10) Thomas Jefferson, and Henry Laurens. Henry Laurens, however, was captured by a British warship and held in the Tower of London until the end of the war. Thomas Jefferson did not leave the United States
- (15) in time for the negotiations. In order not to **hinder** the process, Laurens and Jefferson did not participate in negotiations for the Treaty of Paris.
- On September 3, 1783, John Adams,
- (20) Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay signed the Treaty of Paris with Great Britain. The Treaty of Paris was written to formally **culminate** the American Revolution. The Treaty of Paris had 10 articles that
- (25) responded to demands that the United States had made of Britain. Article 1 of the Treaty of Paris recognized the independence of the United States from the British **regime**. Article 1 stated: “His
- (30) Britannic Majesty acknowledges the said United States ... to be free sovereign and independent states.” This article also asserted that the king “relinquishes all claims to the government, propriety, and
- (35) territorial rights of the same and every part thereof.”

- Article 2 of the Treaty of Paris ceded British control over much of the land
- (40) **adjacent** to the 13 colonies. This territory included all land between the Allegheny Mountains in the east and the Mississippi River in the west. This expanded U.S. territory excluded Canada. By defining these boundaries, the Treaty of Paris
- (45) guaranteed American westward expansion. Article 2 of the Treaty of Paris also doubled the size of the young nation.

- Another provision of the Treaty of Paris was to ensure that American fishermen
- (50) had access to fisheries in Canadian waters. Article 3 of the Treaty of Paris stated: “It is agreed that the people of the United States shall continue to enjoy unmolested the right to take fish of every
- (55) kind on the Grand Bank and on all the other banks of Newfoundland, also in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence and at all other places in the sea, where the inhabitants of both countries used at any time
- (60) heretofore to fish.”

- Seven additional articles comprised the Treaty of Paris. These articles addressed
- (65) **miscellaneous** subjects ranging from navigating the Mississippi River to **recompensing** debts. The Treaty of Paris was an **indispensable** document in American history because it established the foundation of the United States.

1. According to the passage, why was the Battle of Yorktown important?
 - A) The Battle of Yorktown caused Henry Laurens's capture.
 - B) The Battle of Yorktown hindered treaty negotiations.
 - C) The Battle of Yorktown was the most interminable fight.
 - D) The Battle of Yorktown ended the American Revolution.
2. As it is used in line 5, the word "interminable" means
 - A) complicated.
 - B) endless.
 - C) strategic.
 - D) impossible.
3. What is the main idea of paragraph 2 (lines 19–36)?
 - A) Article 1 was the most significant article in the Treaty of Paris.
 - B) John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay signed the Treaty of Paris.
 - C) The Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution and recognized America's independence.
 - D) Each article in the Treaty of Paris responded to demands that the United States made of Great Britain.
4. As it is used in line 23, the word "culminate" means
 - A) to end.
 - B) to intensify.
 - C) to lengthen.
 - D) to force.
5. According to the passage, what land did Article 2 of the Treaty of Paris grant to the United States?
 - A) The original 13 colonies to the eastern border of the Allegheny Mountains
 - B) The Mississippi River to the west and Canada to the north
 - C) All land between the Allegheny Mountains in the east and the Mississippi River in the west
 - D) The Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi River, including Canada
6. Why does the author include lines 52–60?
 - A) The quotation provides direct evidence for the main idea of the paragraph.
 - B) The quotation reveals the specific fish that American fishermen can access.
 - C) The quotation names specific fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
 - D) The quotation compares the Grand Bank with the banks of Newfoundland.
7. As it is used in line 39, the word "adjacent" means
 - A) next to.
 - B) aligned with.
 - C) equal to.
 - D) owned by.
8. According to the author of this passage, the Treaty of Paris
 - A) caused the British to surrender at Yorktown.
 - B) would have been expedited if Laurens and Jefferson had attended.
 - C) granted land to Canada and the United States.
 - D) was one of the most important documents in American history.
9. As it is used in line 66, the word "indispensable" means
 - A) formally written.
 - B) absolutely necessary.
 - C) selectively enforced.
 - D) fairly negotiated.
10. What is the central idea of this passage?
 - A) The Battle of Yorktown was the final battle of the American Revolution.
 - B) Articles 1, 2, and 3 in the Treaty of Paris were more important than other articles.
 - C) The Treaty of Paris granted land, independence, and rights to the new United States.
 - D) The Treaty of Paris doubled the size of the United States and ensured westward expansion.

ANSWER KEY

- According to the passage, why was the Battle of Yorktown important?
 A) The Battle of Yorktown caused Henry Laurens's capture.
 B) The Battle of Yorktown hindered treaty negotiations.
 C) The Battle of Yorktown was the most interminable fight.
 D) The Battle of Yorktown ended the American Revolution.
- As it is used in line 5, the word "interminable" means
 A) complicated. B) endless. C) strategic. D) impossible.
- What is the main idea of paragraph 2 (lines 19-36)?
 A) Article 1 was the most significant article in the Treaty of Paris.
 B) John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and John Jay signed the Treaty of Paris.
 C) The Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution and recognized America's independence.
 D) Each article in the Treaty of Paris responded to demands that the United States made of Great Britain.
- As it is used in line 23, the word "culminate" means
 A) to end. B) to intensify. C) to lengthen. D) to force.
- According to the passage, what land did Article 2 of the Treaty of Paris grant to the United States?
 A) The original 13 colonies to the eastern border of the Allegheny Mountains
 B) The Mississippi River to the west and Canada to the north
 C) All land between the Allegheny Mountains in the east and the Mississippi River in the west
 D) The Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi River, including Canada
- Why does the author include lines 52-60?
 A) The quotation provides direct evidence for the main idea of the paragraph.
 B) The quotation reveals the specific fish that American fishermen can access.
 C) The quotation names specific fisheries in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
 D) The quotation compares the Grand Bank with the banks of Newfoundland.
- As it is used in line 39, the word "adjacent" means
 A) next to. B) aligned with. C) equal to. D) owned by.
- According to the author of this passage, the Treaty of Paris
 A) caused the British to surrender at Yorktown.
 B) would have been expedited if Laurens and Jefferson had attended.
 C) granted land to Canada and the United States.
 D) was one of the most important documents in American history.
- As it is used in line 66, the word "indispensable" means
 A) formally written. B) absolutely necessary.
 C) selectively enforced. D) fairly negotiated.
- What is the central idea of this passage?
 A) The Battle of Yorktown was the final battle of the American Revolution.
 B) Articles 1, 2, and 3 in the Treaty of Paris were more important than other articles.
 C) The Treaty of Paris granted land, independence, and rights to the new United States.
 D) The Treaty of Paris doubled the size of the United States and ensured westward expansion.

VOCABULARY LADDER

VOCAB ROCKS

Word 1 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Word 2 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 1 _____
 Word 2 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 1 _____
 Word 2 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 1 _____
 Word 2 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 1 _____
 Word 2 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

I LOVE LEXICON

Word 3 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Word 4 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 3 _____
 Word 4 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 3 _____
 Word 4 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 3 _____
 Word 4 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

WORDS ARE POWER

Word 5 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Word 6 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 5 _____
 Word 6 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 5 _____
 Word 6 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

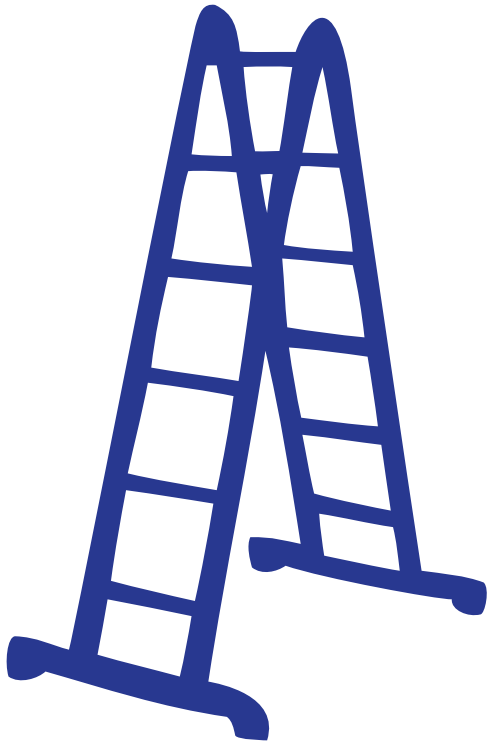
I'M A WORDSMITH

Word 7 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Word 8 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

Word 7 _____
 Word 8 _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____

WORD NERD

Word 9 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Word 10 _____
 Synonyms: _____
 Here is a sentence with them both: _____



© and Sadlier® are registered trademarks of William H. Sadlier, Inc. All rights reserved. May be reproduced for education use (not commercial use).

Homophone Dice Game!

Directions: Each of the following sentences is missing a homophone. Read through them all first. Then roll your dice and find the column that matches the number you rolled. Read one of the sentences from that column and decide which homophone fits in the blank. Keep rolling until you fill up the whole game board.

					
There/Their/They're	Which/Witch	Your/You're	Cents/Sense/Scents	Whether/Weather	Right/Write

1	2	3	4	5	6
I put my notebook over _____.	The scary _____ flew through the sky on her broom.	_____ my favorite teacher!	I'm getting so hungry from all the delicious _____ coming from the kitchen.	Do you know _____ you are going to the dance or not?	I only have three more sentences left to _____, and then I'll be done with my homework.
Who are those people? _____ my parents.	_____ one of these is your classroom?	I wish I could go to _____ house for a sleep over this weekend!	I'm trying to figure it out, but this math problem just doesn't make _____.	_____ you want to or not, you have to finish your homework.	I can't figure out the _____ way to solve this problem.
_____ was only one seat left on the bus when I got on.	I want to eat lunch, but I don't know _____ bag is mine.	I'm trying to make new friends, but _____ the only one I know in this class, so far.	Do you have fifty _____ I could borrow to get a drink?	This cold _____ is really strange for May.	What's the _____ direction to get to the gym?
My sisters left _____ toys all over the floor. See? _____ right over _____.	Last Halloween, I dressed up as a _____. _____ costume did you decide to wear?	Have you found _____ cat? I heard from _____ mom that she was lost!	Can you look at this map for me? I can't make _____ of it. I bought it for a few _____ at the thrift store.	Since the _____ has been so unpredictable lately, I wasn't sure _____ I should wear pants or shorts.	You were _____! Ms. Cole did make us _____ an essay today!

Homophone Dice Game!

ANSWER KEY

					
There/Their/They're	It's/Its	Your/You're	To/Too/Two	Son/Sun	One/Won

1	2	3	4	5	6
there	witch	You're	scents	whether	write
They're	Which	your	sense	Whether	right
There	which	you're	cents	weather	right
their, They're, there	witch, Which	your, your	sense, cents	weather, whether	right, write

BONUS FUN!

Like Bingo, students can color or put stickers on the boxes they have filled in correctly!

Vocabulary Paint Chips Activity

SIMILAR OR CONTRASTING WORDS

Directions: Choose four vocabulary words that you have a hard time remembering or that you can't seem to use appropriately in writing. On the paint chips below, write one of the four vocabulary words on the darkest shade (or square) on each paint swatch. Then, using a thesaurus, online or in print, choose three challenging words that are similar or have the opposite meaning. Write these three words on the other paint colors on the swatch. In the white spaces next to the paint colors, write the definition of each word and a sentence that uses the word in context.

© and Sadlier® are registered trademarks of William H. Sadlier, Inc. Copyright © William H. Sadlier, Inc. All rights reserved. May be reproduced for education use (not commercial use).

Movie Review

Grammar & Writing Activity



The *Movie Review* assignment is a great way to combine writing and grammar, adding relevance to learning and tapping into students' interests.

Directions

Students write a 250-word (age/grade appropriate) movie review with a focus on commas.

Students could be assessed on the following three common comma rules:

1. Use a comma to set off a dependent clause from an independent clause.
2. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction, joining two complete sentences.
3. Use a comma or commas, to set off interrupters.

Challenge

Have students write a movie review about a movie that was made from a book. In their review, they should compare and contrast the book with the movie. Teachers could assess on the comma rules.

Instructions

You are a renowned film critic whom has been asked to write a review on an old or new movie of your choice. Write a 250-word movie review. Focus on the use of commas in your review. Be sure to incorporate a comma based on each of these three comma rules: **1.** use a comma to set off a dependent clause from an independent clause; **2.** use a comma before a coordinating conjunction, joining two complete sentences; **3.** use a comma, or commas, to set off interrupters.

Remember, a good movie review should entertain, inform, and provide opinions without giving away too much of the plot!

Movie Review



Movie Title: _____

Starring: _____

Genre: _____

Movie Rating: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Review: _____
