

Reading:**Using Adverb Clauses
Middle School**

Language Arts Literacy Indicators:	3.1 [7, 12, 14]	3.2 [5-9]	3.3 [10-11, 13]
	3.4 [12, 20, 22]		
Cross-Content Workplace Indicators:	1 [1]	3 [1-3, 7, 9-10]	4 [1-3, 10]

In Mr. Whitney's seventh-grade class, the students were studying Native Americans, in this case, the Sioux. After reading Mari Sandoz's essay, *These Were the Sioux*, students had drafted magazine articles describing a modern-day visit from an 18th-century Sioux boy or girl. Mr. Whitney then saw the opportunity for a lesson on the use of adverbial clauses not only because of Sandoz's use of them, but because his students' writing lacked sentence variety. A revision session implementing this concept would follow the presentation.

Mr. Whitney began the lesson by reminding his students of previous lessons on adverbs and their importance to readers and writers. He then took the class through a review of the use of adverbs and the questions they answer. "What do adverbs modify?" questioned Mr. Whitney. A few students raised their hands hesitantly.

"Verbs?" asked Rachel.

"Yes. Can you remember the other kinds of words they modify?" coaxed Mr. Whitney.

"I think they modify adjectives, too," added Rachel.

"And other adverbs," Vera called out.

"Good thinking! Now, what questions will an adverb answer about the word it modifies?"

Students were puzzled at first. Mr. Whitney wrote this sentence on the chalkboard: *Yesterday we wrote a 'how to' manual.* "What question does *yes - terday* answer?" queried Mr. Whitney.

"When!" called out Jahmel.

"Right!" applauded Mr. Whitney. "Can we now think of the other questions?"

Several students recalled *Where? How? How often?* and *To what extent?* These questions were noted on chart paper for display. Mr. Whitney then explained that adverbial clauses are used in the same way that adverbs are used.



Focus

Review helps to reinforce previously learned concepts.

Through inductive questions, the teacher moves the students from understanding the practical value of adverbial clauses to identifying their structure.

Mr. Whitney reminded students that a clause contains a subject and a predicate as well as a subordinating conjunction. He then instructed the class to pair up to reread Mari Sandoz’s essay and to find five examples from the essay that contain adverbial clauses. Each pair was given a piece of chart paper and a box of markers with which to write the sentences down. “Remember to refer to our list of subordinate conjunctions when trying to locate the adverbial clauses,” said Mr. Whitney.

The students went to work identifying and writing examples of sentences with adverbial clauses, writing these on chart paper and underlining the clauses. As students began to finish up, Mr. Whitney instructed pairs to tape their findings on the board. With the class reassembled, Mr. Whitney directed students’ attention to the work.

“If he grew up like the Sioux of the old hunting days, he would be made equal to the demands of his expanding world,” read Mr. Whitney. “Good example, Andrew and Nina! How were you able to identify this as an adverbial clause?”

“Well, we just started skimming through the passage. When we came to a word that we thought was a subordinate conjunction, we checked to see if a subject and predicate followed,” responded Nina.

Andrew then chimed in, “Yeah, and the next thing we did was to check and see if the group of words answered one of the questions we listed for adverbs.”

“You mean the questions that an adverb can answer?” Mr. Whitney asked. “And what question does this clause answer?” Mr. Whitney further questioned.

“How?” both replied.

“Correct,” said Mr. Whitney.

The class continued this way with Mr. Whitney questioning and pairs of students explaining their choices. During the discussion, Mr. Whitney guided the students to recognize the difference between clauses and phrases. He concluded the lesson by saying, “Now that we understand how adverbial clauses can enhance and clarify an author’s meaning, we’re going to use them to improve our own writing. We will start this tomorrow.”

The next day during Writer’s Workshop, Mr. Whitney placed—with student permission—a typewritten transparency of the student’s essay on the overhead projector. “Today you will be helping a classmate to revise his essay by using adverbial phrases and clauses to create sentence variety. Remember, we want to focus on answering some of the questions an adverb answers,” directed Mr. Whitney. Mr. Whitney first located a sentence that could be revised by using an adverbial clause.

Working in pairs provides students with support for learning as they discover concepts.

By clearly defining the task, the teacher focuses the students’ learning.

Analysis of professional texts for stylistic devices can be used to improve student writing but should be used judiciously.

When students share strategies for learning, other students can adopt them.

Categorizing in this case represents higher-order thinking (synthesis), especially since students are expected to defend their choices.

Swiftly Runs was frightened by the television. I know he had never seen one before.

“How can these two sentences be revised to add variety and give more information by combining them using an adverbial clause?” questioned Mr. Whitney.

“Could the writer try, ‘He was frightened by the television because he had never seen one?’” questioned Ramona.

“Terrific!” said Mr. Whitney, and the class worked on a number of other sentences together. Students were then instructed to begin the same activity with their own essays. Mr. Whitney moved around the room, offering help and advice during this part of the Writer’s Workshop.

At the end of the period, Mr. Whitney brought the class back together. “Would someone like to share a revision with the class?” Several students read their initial revisions. Mr. Whitney wrote a number of the original sentences and revised sentences on an overhead transparency so that the class could discuss them. As a homework assignment, students were asked to complete their revisions.

“Look for ways to combine sentences by using adverbial clauses. Tomorrow we will be working on peer group responses. Our focus will be on the use of adverb clauses for elaboration in writing,” said Mr. Whitney.

By monitoring students’ learning, teachers can vary lessons to clarify and provide feedback.



Possible Evaluations:

1. Compare students' use of adverbial clauses in their first and second drafts of writing.
2. Use a rubric to assess students' revisions.
3. Assess students' ability to transfer their learning by providing copies of a newspaper article and asking students to underline all of the adverbial clauses.

Questions for Reflection:

1. How do Mr. Whitney's strategies differ from traditional textbook approaches?
2. What are the effects of using student-generated text in the teaching of grammatical concepts?
3. How might this lesson make students more conscious and articulate about their use of written language?

Extension Activities:

1. Present a lesson on the use of relative pronouns and adjective clauses as tools for writing revision.
2. Develop a companion lesson on the use of adverbial clauses as transitional devices.
3. Have students explore the change in meaning when they transpose the subordinate and independent clauses of complex sentences.
4. Have students look at a text they have enjoyed reading to note particularly effective use of adverbs and adverbial clauses.