

## Punctuating Dialogue – Grade Six

### Ohio Standards Connection

#### **Writing Applications**

##### Benchmark A

Use narrative strategies (e.g., dialogue and action) to develop characters, plot and setting and maintain a consistent point of view.

##### Indicator 1

Write narratives that maintain a clear focus and point of view and use sensory details and dialogue to develop plot, characters and a specific setting.

#### **Writing Conventions**

##### Benchmark B

Use conventions of punctuation and capitalization in written work.

##### Indicators:

2. Use commas, end marks, apostrophes and quotation marks correctly.
4. Use correct capitalization.

#### **Writing Process**

##### Benchmark F

Edit to improve fluency, grammar and usage.

##### Indicator 15

Proofread writing, edit to improve conventions (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization) and identify and correct fragments and run-ons.

### Lesson Summary:

*In this lesson, students create and accurately punctuate dialogue necessary to help the plot progress, reference setting and develop character.*

**Estimated Duration:** Five hours

### Commentary:

Using samples of narratives for teaching punctuation as opposed to exercises using worksheets is a strength of this lesson along with the opportunities it affords students to talk with one another about their skill development. Teachers who field tested the lesson also noted they were especially “impressed with the ease by which the lesson accommodated students’ different writing abilities. “

### Pre-Assessment:

Using *Dialogue (version one)*, Attachment A:

- Show improperly written dialogue on overhead projector and read it aloud or have a student do so.
- Ask the class questions found on *Suggested Questions/Answers*, Attachment A-2. **Do not** give answers until using *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B.
- Invite students to agree or disagree with these statements.
- Discuss why it is so hard to determine the answers, and ask if it should be this confusing.
- Ask students what is missing.

### **Instructional Tip:**

Be sure students correctly note the missing quotation marks and lack of indentation.

Using *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B:

- Show properly written dialogue and ask the same questions.
- Discuss the answers found on *Suggested Questions/Answers*, Attachment A-2, and emphasize why it is easier to tell who is speaking and who says what.
- Emphasize that only the indentation and quotation marks have changed.



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### **Scoring Guidelines:**

Informally assess the students through observation and discussion.

### **Post-Assessment:**

Tell students to write a short dialogue among three to four characters using proper conventions, revealing something about the characters, setting and plot without narration. See *Dialogue Assessment Requirements*, Attachment C. Collect and evaluate the students' drafts.

### **Scoring Guidelines:**

Evaluate student short dialogues using the *Scoring Guidelines for Post-Assessment*, Attachment D.

### **Instructional Procedures:**

#### **Day One**

1. Complete pre-assessment.

#### **Day Two**

#### **Instructional Tip:**

Review basic rules for capitalization and recognizing sentence types, run-ons and fragments prior to the start of the lesson.

2. Place *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B, on an overhead while asking questions from *Suggested Questions/ Answers*, Attachment A-2. State that there are rules for punctuating dialogue that never change.
3. Use *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B, to review the rules. Flip between *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B and *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E on the overhead but keep student attention on one rule at a time.
4. Start with Rule 1 of *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E, referring back to *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B, to show students how dialogue looks as they apply each rule.
5. Draw students' attention to the words inside and outside of the quotation marks in the dialogue of *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B. Discuss how they are different.
6. Discuss Rules 2 and 3.
7. Tell students to look closely at the dialogue of *Dialogue (version two)*, Attachment B, and ask them in how many different locations tag lines can appear.
8. Show students Rule 4 of *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E, and ask students to create four examples of their own – one for each of the four different ways tag lines can be used. Call on a few students to share their examples and discuss them with the rest of the class.
9. Hand out *Review and Practice*, Attachment F, to the students and have them punctuate each of the four lines using the four rules presented in class. After a few minutes, call for different volunteers to share with the class how they punctuated one of the four lines.
10. Place the answers on the overhead to the items on *Review and Practice*, Attachment F (see *Review and Practice Answers*, Attachment F-2). Instruct students to review the rules for the next day.

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### Day Three

11. Review *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E.
12. Place on the overhead *Punctuating Dialogue Practice*, Attachment G, showing only the first sentence.
13. Distribute copies of *Punctuating Dialogue Practice*, Attachment G, to students and have them coverup all but the first sentence with another sheet of paper.
14. Tell students they may use their copy of the rules for this practice.
15. Ask what type of tag line is shown. (Sentence one is an end tag line.)
16. Instruct students to properly punctuate and capitalize the sentence with colored pen/pencil.
17. Call for a student volunteer to come up and correct sentence 1 on the overhead.
18. Tell students to evaluate the student volunteer's changes.
19. Instruct students to correct their own papers if necessary.
20. Continue in this manner for all six sentences.

### Instructional Tip:

Students find middle tag lines the most difficult. Help students determine when a middle tag line separates two sentences or splits one sentence into two parts by covering up the tag line and reading the quote all the way through.

### Day Four

21. Review the rules of *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E.
22. Hand out the *Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz*, Attachment H.
23. Direct students to correct all four sentences on their own with a colored pen/pencil.

### Instructional Tip:

Decide in advance if students may refer to their notes during the quiz.

24. Review the quiz with the entire class using the *Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz Answers*, Attachment H-2.
25. Answer any questions and provide more examples if necessary.

### Day Five

26. Review with the entire class definitions and examples of setting, character development and plot.
27. Place on the overhead *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization, Setting and Plot*, Attachment I, showing only the first sentence.
28. Distribute copies of *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization*, Attachment I, to students and have them cover-up all but sentence 1 with another sheet of paper.
29. Tell students they may use their copy of the rules (*Punctuating Dialogue Rules*, Attachment E) for this practice.
30. Instruct students to properly punctuate and capitalize the sentence with colored pen/pencil.
31. Call for a student volunteer to come up and correct sentence 1 on the overhead.
32. Tell students to evaluate the student volunteer's changes.
33. Instruct students to correct their own papers if necessary.
34. Continue in this way for the whole dialogue.



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35. Place on the overhead the answers to the items on *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization, Setting and Plot Answers*, Attachment I-2. Ask students to double check their corrections against the answers on the overhead.

### Day Six

36. Review the definition of setting (physical location and/or time period) and ask students what the setting in this dialogue is and how they know. (Use Attachment I again.)
37. Review the definition of character development (trait, physical appearance, mood, speech and action) and ask students to identify the characters in this dialogue and to describe what they “know” about them already.
38. Review the definition of plot and ask how this dialogue adds to the plot.
39. Discuss the fact that “good” dialogue exists for a reason. It moves the plot along, develops the characters and reveals information about the setting.

### Instructional Tip:

Many students tend to write “bad” dialogue, dull and without purpose.

For example:

Ring, ring.

“Hello,” said Sue.

“Hello, it’s Mary,” said Mary.

“Hi, Mary, what are you doing?” asked Sue.

“I wondered if you wanted to go to the mall,” said Mary.

“Okay,” said Sue.

Explain that in story writing, authors often move characters from one place to another by using simple narration (e.g., Mary called and asked Sue to meet her at the mall).

40. Critique *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization, Setting and Plot*, Attachment I, and revise it according to the prior discussion of setting, plot and character.

### Instructional Tip:

The following game situation requires whole group participation. Some adjustments may be necessary if working with smaller groups.

41. Put a blank transparency on an overhead and assign students a dialogue that features four characters and shows something about character, setting and plot.

### Instructional Tip:

Limit the number of characters to four because too many characters can get confusing.

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42. Remind students of what makes a “good” dialogue (i.e., it has a reason to be written, moves the plot along, shows something about the characters and often reveals something about the setting).
43. Underline the names or the dialogue of each character using a different colored overhead marker. Tell students that each color represents a different character in the dialogue. Instruct students to do the same color coding with the characters they create in the coming dialogue writing assignment.
44. Put a dialogue “starter” on the transparency in one color. Remind students that that character’s quotes must be written in that color from that point on.

### **Instructional Tip:**

“Starters” help the students get ideas for the dialogue. Consider the following examples:

- “Look out! That boulder is rolling straight at you!” yelled Sue.
  - “Hmm,” said Larry, “I’ve never seen that guy in the neighborhood before.”
  - Joe said, “Okay, we meet at midnight.”
45. Direct students to consider the quote and to determine where the setting is, who the characters are, how they are related (family, friend, gang-member, stranger) and what the situation (plot) is in order to make the dialogue flow.
  46. Ask students one at a time to come up to the overhead and add to the dialogue. Emphasize they must make every sentence purposeful. Instruct students to try to reveal character or setting while moving the plot along. Remind them to make the dialogue sound like a natural conversation.
  47. After each addition, stop to have the class evaluate the new quote’s punctuation and purpose and whether it contributes to setting, character and/or plot.
  48. Help make changes where necessary, stressing that this is practice.

### **Instructional Tip:**

Students usually love this game and want to keep adding to it. Be prepared to carry it over to another day if time permits.

### **Day Seven**

49. Hand out *Dialogue Assessment Requirements*, Attachment C, and discuss them with the class, taking questions and clarifying any uncertainties.
50. Distribute *Scoring Guidelines for Post-Assessment*, Attachment D, and review its scoring guidelines and how they relate to the dialogue assignment.

### **Differentiated Instructional Support:**

Instruction is differentiated according to learner needs, to help all learners either meet the intent of the specified indicator(s) or, if the indicator is already met, to advance beyond the specified indicator(s).

- Some students will demonstrate a firm grasp of dialogue writing conventions prior to the fifth day of instruction. An alternative, creative exercise might be devised for them. Consider forming small groups of three or four of these students in an advanced activity. Depending on the time available, have these students search the Internet or the reference department in the

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school library for biographical information on notable figures in history or supply each small group with copies of bio-sketches of four famous figures in the history of medical or space science, military or political leadership or literature or visual art. (Names that may have some familiarity to the students might be: Florence Nightingale, Neil Armstrong, Joan of Arc, Abraham Lincoln, Judy Blume and Steven Spielberg.) Whether the bio-sketches are student generated or teacher generated, challenge the students to imagine being one of these historical figures and to compose a dialogue among three or four of them. Each student tries to capture some of the personality of his or her historical character in the dialogue and some of the differences between the world in which his or her historical character lived and the world of the other historical characters. Suggest the students develop a dialogue with these characters around a broad subject like Why should young people get physical exercise? When is it OK to take risks? or What qualities do you want to have in a friend? Invite the students to volunteer a “reading” of their dialogue before the class.

- Students who may struggle with dialogue writing conventions or with the more advanced skill of using dialogue to inform character development, setting and plot may benefit from more practice. Practice may take the form of providing clusters of these students with copies of dialogue from comics, cartoons or popular TV sit-coms in which they critique the copies for correctness of dialogue writing conventions and for success in conveying character development, setting and/or plot. (If the activity described above is used with students ready to advance early, the dialogues among historical figures they generate could be used as practice pieces with students who are performing at a basic or limited level.)

### Extensions:

- Identify three to four students who have an interest in drama or who have a more outgoing nature. Invite them to write a vignette that features a dialogue among them. Videotape and transcribe the dialogue into a script that has various dialogue writing convention errors. Share this transcript with the entire class (two pages maximum in length). Require students to edit the transcript as they watch the playback of the videotape. This extension may serve as a review or as a transition into a drama unit.
- Access radio and television interview broadcasts as video clips or as transcripts through the Internet. Use these sources to offer students examples of how dialogue sounds and appears in authentic forms. These may serve as models for how their own dialogue writing can more effectively inform character development, setting and plot.

### Home Connection:

Assign students to look for examples of dialogue in their independent reading (e.g., newspapers, magazines or works of fiction) or record short segments of dialogue between TV show characters. Instruct students to look for errors in the text of their independent reading, alerting their class to any finds. Or instruct students to practice using dialogue writing conventions by jotting down pairs of lines of dialogue between their favorite TV sit-com or cartoon characters.

### Interdisciplinary Connections:

**Content Area: Fine Arts**

**Standard: Creative Expression and Communication**

**Benchmark: D.** Create scripted scenes based on personal experience and heritage.



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This lesson emphasizes not only the proper punctuation of dialogue but focuses on the writing of “good dialogue.” Good dialogue in this case effectively informs character development, setting and plot. This would be a good preliminary lesson for students who are assigned or elect to write a fictional or dramatic work (e.g., a one act play or dramatic scene for a short story or commercial).

### **Materials and Resources:**

*The inclusion of a specific resource in any lesson formulated by the Ohio Department of Education should not be interpreted as an endorsement of that particular resource, or any of its contents, by the Ohio Department of Education. The Ohio Department of Education does not endorse any particular resource. The Web addresses listed are for a given site’s main page, therefore, it may be necessary to search within that site to find the specific information required for a given lesson. Please note that information published on the Internet changes over time, therefore the links provided may no longer contain the specific information related to a given lesson. Teachers are advised to preview all sites before using them with students.*

*For the teacher:* blank transparencies, transparencies of select copies of lesson attachments, transparency markers in four different colors and an overhead projector

*For the students:* select copies of lesson attachments and four different colored pens or pencils

### **Vocabulary:**

- Character
- Critique
- Plot
- Setting

### **Technology Connections:**

- Students may compose or revise their dialogues using word processing software.
- Students may explore online publishing.
- Students may find in public libraries VHS and DVD recordings of assorted productions featuring dialogue between fictional characters or actual historical figures in support of classroom work or homework assignments.

### **Research Connections:**

Atwell, Nancie. *In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning with Adolescents*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1987.

*Mini-lessons* are 15- to 30-minute direct-instruction lessons designed to help students learn literacy skills and become more strategic readers and writers. In these lessons, students and the teacher are focused on a single goal; students are aware of why it is important to learn the skill or strategy through modeling, explanation and practice. Then independent application takes place using authentic literacy materials.

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Calkins, L. M. “When children want to punctuate: Basic skills belong in context.” *Language Arts*, 57, (1980): 567-73.

- Decades of research demonstrate that teaching grammar as a school subject does not improve most students' writing nor even the "correctness" of their writing. What works better is teaching selected aspects of grammar (including sentence variety and style, punctuation and usage) in the context of students' writing -- that is, when they are revising and editing their writing.
- For improving editing skills, it is most effective and efficient to teach only the grammatical concepts that are critically needed for editing writing and to teach these concepts and their terms mostly through mini-lessons and writing conferences, particularly while helping students edit their writing.

Graves, Donald. *Bringing Life to Learning*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2000.

When teachers focused on developing characters in students’ reading and writing, the quality of the writing and their reading ability increased markedly.

Sousa, David A. *How the Brain Learns: A Classroom Teacher’s Guide*. Reston, VA: NASSP, 1995.

Sousa’s invaluable guide includes much more than the list below, but for our purposes, this list summarizes the lesson components he suggests using.

<b>Lesson Component</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Relationship to Research</b>
Anticipatory set	Focuses students on the learning objective	Establishes relevance and encourages positive transfer during first prime time
Learning objective	Identifies what learning outcomes are to be accomplished by the end of the lesson	Students should know what they should learn and how they will know they have learned it
Purpose	Explains why it is important to accomplish this objective	Knowing the purpose for learning something builds interest and establishes meaning
Input	Gives students the information and skills they need to accomplish the objective	Bloom’s knowledge level; Helps identify critical attributes
Modeling	Shows the process or product of what students are learning	Modeling enhancing sense and meaning to help retention
Check for understanding	Allows teachers to verify if students understand what they are learning	Bloom’s comprehension level
Guided Practice	Allows students to try the new learning with teacher guidance	Bloom’s application level; Practice provides for fast learning
Closure	Allows students time to mentally summarize and internalize the new learning	Last chance for attaching sense and meaning, thus improving retention
Independent Practice	Students try new learning on their own to develop fluency.	This practice helps make the new learning permanent



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### **Attachments:**

Attachment A, *Dialogue (version one)*

Attachment A-2, *Suggested Questions/Answers*

Attachment B, *Dialogue (version two)*

Attachment C, *Dialogue Assessment Requirements*

Attachment D, *Scoring Guidelines for Post-Assessment*

Attachment E, *Punctuating Dialogue Rules*

Attachment F, *Review and Practice*

Attachment F-2, *Review and Practice Answers*

Attachment G, *Punctuating Dialogue Practice*

Attachment G-2, *Punctuating Dialogue Practice Answers*

Attachment H, *Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz*

Attachment H-2, *Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz Answers*

Attachment I, *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization,  
Setting and Plot*

Attachment I-2, *Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization,  
Setting and Plot Answers*



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### **Attachment A Dialogue (version one)**

**I was walking through the mall one day when I met a group of my friends. Hey, what are you doing here? I asked. I thought you guys had to stay after school today. No, we got out of that detention, said Mary. Mrs. Jones decided we really didn't deserve it. Sue said, Are you here to shop or browse? A little bit of both, I replied, because I need to find a birthday card for my cousin, but I really want to check out the sales. And the boys! everyone laughed.**



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### Attachment A-2 Suggested Questions/Answers

#### Questions/Answers

1. Q: How many different speakers are there?  
A: Three – ‘I’ or the narrator, Mary, Sue and the three of them in unison
  
2. Q: Who says, “Hey, what are you doing here?”  
A: ‘I’ or the narrator
  
3. Q: Who says, “No, we got out of that detention”?  
A: Mary
  
4. Q: Who says, “Mrs. Jones decided we really didn’t deserve it”?  
A: Mary
  
5. Q: Who says, “And the boys!”?  
A: All three of the speakers in unison



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### **Attachment B Dialogue (version two)**

**I was walking through the mall one day when I met a group of my friends. “Hey, what are you doing here?” I asked. “I thought you guys had to stay after school today.”**

**“No, we got out of that detention,” said Mary. “Mrs. Jones decided we really didn’t deserve it.”**

**Sue said, “Are you here to shop or browse?”**

**“A little bit of both,” I replied, “because I need to find a birthday card for my cousin, but I really want to check out the sales.”**

**“And the boys!” everyone laughed.**



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### Attachment C Dialogue Assessment Requirements

Write a short dialogue different from the one finished in class during the punctuating dialogue game. Remember the dialogue is not a complete story and has no narration.

The dialogue must

1. be punctuated correctly,
2. have three or four different speakers (characters),
3. reveal something about the characters,
4. add to the plot or move the plot along in some way and
5. reveal something about the setting.

Use the **Scoring Guidelines** as a reference while writing and before turning in the dialogue for evaluation.

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### **Attachment D**

#### **Scoring Guidelines for Post-Assessment**

**4-**

- All punctuating dialogue conventions are correct.
- The dialogue is among three or four characters.
- The dialogue conveys something about each character (e.g., a trait, a distinctive way of speaking, etc...).
- The dialogue moves the plot in some way.
- The dialogue gives a clear indication of physical setting or time period.

**3-**

- Very few errors in dialogue conventions.
- The dialogue is among three or four characters.
- The dialogue conveys something about some of the characters.
- The dialogue moves the plot in some way.
- The dialogue gives clear indication of physical setting or time period.

**2-**

- dialogue conventions are inconsistent.
- The dialogue is among three or four characters.
- The dialogue conveys something about at least one of the characters.
- The dialogue adds something to the plot.
- The dialogue gives some indication of physical setting or time period.

**1-**

- Many errors in dialogue conventions.
- The dialogue is between only two characters.
- The dialogue conveys nothing about the characters.
- The dialogue adds nothing to the plot.
- The dialogue does not indicate physical setting or time period.

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### Attachment E

#### Punctuating Dialogue Rules

1. Indent for each new speaker.  
(New speaker = New paragraph)
2. Only the exact words of the speaker go inside quotation marks.
3. The words used to identify the speaker are called the tag line (e.g., Mary said or Jane replied). Words like said, replied, screamed, etc. are never capitalized in a tag line.
4. There are three types of tag lines
  - a. Before the quote: the comma always follows the tag line and the beginning letter of the quote is always capitalized (e.g., Jon asked, “Where did everyone go?”).
  - b. After the quote: the ending punctuation after the actual quote (before the tag line) can never be a period (e.g., “Every one decided to go,” said Jon.). If the sentence would normally end with a period, substitute a comma. An exception to this rule is end marks for questions or exclamations (e.g., “Where did everyone go?” asked Jon).
  - c. In the Middle of the quote:
    - 1) In between two separate sentences (quotes): a period follows the tag line and the beginning of the second sentence (quote) is capitalized (e.g., “I have a dog,” said Jane. “Do you have any pets?”).
    - 2) When the tag line splits one sentence (quote) into two parts: a comma follows the first part of the quote and the tag line (e.g., “I have two dogs,” said Jane, “that fight all the time.”).



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### Attachment F Review and Practice

1.peggy said i have two cats do you have any pets

2.i have two dogs three fish and seven snails said joe

3.i have two cats said peggy do you have any pets

4.i'm not sure said sue if i know how to do this test



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### Attachment F-2 Review and Practice Answers

1. **P**eggy said, “**I** have two cats. **D**o you have any pets?”
2. “**I** have two dogs, three fish and seven snails,” said **J**oe.
3. “**I** have two cats,” said **P**eggy. “**D**o you have any pets?”
4. “**I**’m not sure,” said **S**ue, “if **I** know how to do this test.”



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### Attachment G

#### Punctuating Dialogue Practice

1. has he brought any papers home asked mother
2. he shook the tree so hard said joan that the apples  
fell to the ground
3. we're going to write an editorial today said  
mr cumberland
4. get out of here she said before i call the police
5. dad said let's go to eagle park if it doesn't rain
6. i've never been to california remarked jane  
maybe my family will go this summer



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### Attachment G-2

#### Punctuating Dialogue Practice Answers

1. **“Has he brought any papers home?”** asked **Mother**.
2. **“He shook the tree so hard,”** said **Joan**, **“that the apples fell to the ground. ”**
3. **“We’re going to write an editorial today,”** said **Mr. Cumberland**.
4. **“Get out of here,”** she said, **“before I call the police. (or!)”**
5. **Dad** said, **“Let’s go to Eagle Park if it doesn’t rain.”**
6. **“I’ve never been to California,”** remarked **Jane**.  
**“Maybe my family will go this summer.”**



## Punctuating Dialogue – Grade Six

### Attachment H

### Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz

peggy said why are you here so early

i'm not sure said sue if i have a detention this  
morning or not

i don't think there are any detentions today said fred

are you kidding asked sue i can't believe i got up  
early for nothing



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### Attachment H-2

#### Punctuating Dialogue Practice Quiz Answers

Peggy said, “Why are you here so early?”

“I’m not sure,” said Sue, “if I have a detention this morning or not.”

“I don’t think there are any detentions today,” said Fred.

“Are you kidding?” asked Sue. “I can’t believe I got up early for nothing!”



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### Attachment I

#### Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization, Setting and Plot

get your room cleaned up mother said or you're not

going to the show

chris shouted that's not fair it's joe's room too

joe will be home later to take care of his half now are

you going to get started mother scolded

i guess so muttered chris why doesn't joe ever have

to do anything around here

he does plenty mom said

chris said i never see him do much of anything but

study

well answered mom you're never around very much



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### Attachment I-2

#### Dialogue for Punctuation Practice: Showing Characterization, Setting and Plot Answers

“Get your room cleaned up,” Mother said, “or you’re not going to the show!”

Chris shouted, “That’s not fair! It’s Joe’s room too!”

“Joe will be home later to take care of his half. Now are you going to get started?” Mother scolded.

“I guess so,” muttered Chris. “Why doesn’t Joe ever have to do anything around here?”

“He does plenty,” Mom said.

Chris said, “I never see him do much of anything but study.”

“Well,” answered Mom, “you’re never around very much.”