Punctuation Detectives

Find the marks that surround extra details.

6.LL.16.a "Identify commas, parentheses, and dashes that are used to set off nonrestrictive or parenthetical elements in texts from various genres."

NAME _____ DATE _____

SETS OFF AN EXTRA DETAIL

Commas, parentheses, or paired dashes surround a detail you can remove. The sentence still tells you which person or thing it means.

A comet (bright with ice and dust) crossed the night sky.

DOES ANOTHER JOB

The punctuation does not surround an extra detail. It might separate parts of a sentence or show a range.

At dawn, the bakery opened.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle EXTRA or OTHER for each numbered sentence; then, for Part 2, choose two items and explain how you knew where each belongs.

1. My aunt, a marine biologist, studies coral. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
2. The play (a comedy) starts at seven. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
3. The box holds pencils, markers, and tape. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
4. The mural – painted by local teens – covers the wall. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
5. After the bell rang, we lined up. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
6. The exhibit ran from 2018–2020. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
7. Our coach, who grew up nearby, leads the team. **EXTRA** **OTHER**
8. The river – quiet at sunrise – curls past town. **EXTRA** **OTHER**

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new sentence for EXTRA and one for OTHER; use punctuation correctly in both.

EXTRA _____

OTHER _____

CHALLENGE

Write one sentence with two removable details about the same thing; set off one detail with parentheses and the other with a pair of commas.

ANSWER KEY

Punctuation Detectives

GRADE 6 · 6.LL.16.a

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	My aunt, a marine biologist, studies coral.	**EXTRA**	The commas surround a removable detail about the aunt.
2	The play (a comedy) starts at seven.	**EXTRA**	The parentheses surround a removable detail about the play.
3	The box holds pencils, markers, and tape.	**OTHER**	The commas separate items in a list.
4	The mural – painted by local teens – covers the wall.	**EXTRA**	The paired dashes surround a removable detail about the mural.
5	After the bell rang, we lined up.	**OTHER**	The comma follows an introductory clause; it does not surround a detail.
6	The exhibit ran from 2018–2020.	**OTHER**	The dash shows a range of years.
7	Our coach, who grew up nearby, leads the team.	**EXTRA**	The commas surround a removable detail about the coach.
8	The river – quiet at sunrise – curls past town.	**EXTRA**	The paired dashes surround a removable detail about the river.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **EXTRA**: The kite – red and gold – flew over the field.
- **OTHER**: Maya bought milk, rice, and beans.

Challenge: The old bridge (built in 1920), a town landmark, spans the creek.

For Part 2, accept explanations that name the punctuation's job and, for EXTRA items, identify a detail that can be removed. The paired dashes in items 4 and 8 are spaced en dashes.