Voyager, Precisely

A model text for examining precise conventions in context.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.2 "Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline every semicolon, colon, and hyphen. Circle each possessive apostrophe, and box each proper name or official title to see how conventions make information precise.

A Message Beyond Earth

1 In 1977, NASA launched the Voyager 1 and Voyager 2 spacecraft to study the outer planets. Each craft carried a Golden Record, a gold-plated copper disc designed to introduce Earth to any future listener. The record contains 115 images, natural sounds, music from several cultures, and greetings in 55 languages. President Jimmy Carter included a written message, although the record was not intended as a direct conversation. Its makers faced a practical question: how could one small object represent a planet's immense and astonishing variety?

2 Scientists Carl Sagan, Ann Druyan, and their colleagues selected the record's contents; they also knew that no single collection could speak for everyone. A one-hour brainwave recording by Druyan appears on the disc, as do pieces by Bach, Beethoven, and Chuck Berry. One selection, "Johnny B. Goode," uses a period inside its abbreviated title, a detail that careful editors preserve. The project did not claim to summarize all human experience. Instead, it offered a deliberately limited portrait: a baby's cry, a train, a kiss, and a sequence of photographs showing daily life.

3 Voyager 1 entered interstellar space in 2012, and Voyager 2 followed in 2018. Both spacecraft still send data, but their power supplies weaken each year. Engineers expect the missions' instruments to shut down gradually during the 2030s; the spacecraft themselves will continue traveling long afterward. In April 2024, NASA reported that Voyager 1 was returning usable engineering data after a communication problem. At that time, the aging craft was about 15 billion miles from Earth. Its distance is remarkable, yet the mission's original label remains precise: Voyager is an exploration project, not a colony or a rescue mission.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 2, what punctuation mark joins the two independent clauses about the record's contents? Why is that mark appropriate?

2. In paragraph 3, what does the colon after “precise” introduce?

3. Write the music title exactly as it appears in paragraph 2. Name two convention choices shown in the title.

4. What does the apostrophe in “missions' instruments” show?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write two sentences for a museum label about an imagined artifact. Use a properly capitalized official name, a hyphenated compound modifier, a plural possessive apostrophe, a semicolon joining independent clauses, and a colon that introduces a list or explanation.

Voyager, Precisely

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline every semicolon, colon, and hyphen. Circle each possessive apostrophe, and box each proper name or official title to see how conventions make information precise. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 2, what punctuation mark joins the two independent clauses about the record's contents? Why is that mark appropriate?	**A semicolon. It joins two closely related independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction.**
2	In paragraph 3, what does the colon after “precise” introduce?	**It introduces an explanation that defines Voyager as an exploration project, not a colony or rescue mission.**
3	Write the music title exactly as it appears in paragraph 2. Name two convention choices shown in the title.	**“Johnny B. Goode.” The important words are capitalized, and the initial B is followed by a period.**
4	What does the apostrophe in “missions' instruments” show?	**It shows plural possession: the instruments belong to more than one mission.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Arctic Signal Archive preserves the explorers' carefully labeled recordings; its display includes a solar-powered receiver, maps, and photographs. The explorers' notes identify three sources: Iceland, Kenya, and Chile.

Accept original responses that include every required convention and use each mark correctly. A semicolon must join independent clauses, and a colon should follow a complete clause.