Dots With Purpose

Read how ellipses shorten quotations without changing meaning.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.8.2b "Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each ellipsis, number them 1 through 3, and draw a small bracket around the words immediately before and after it to show what the omission joins.

Quoting a Moon Speech

1. When historians quote a long speech, they sometimes leave out words that are not needed for the point. An ellipsis, three spaced dots, shows where material has been omitted. The dots do not mean that a speaker paused or became uncertain. They tell readers that the writer has shortened a source. A careful writer keeps the source's meaning intact and does not use an ellipsis to hide words that would reverse or distort the speaker's idea.

2. On September 12, 1962, President John F. Kennedy spoke at Rice University about the United States space program. He said, "We choose to go to the Moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard." A report could quote the key idea this way: "We choose to go to the Moon ... because they are hard." The ellipsis replaces the middle words, but the shortened quotation still shows that Kennedy described a difficult goal.

3. Ellipses should not remove words that change a statement's message. For example, Kennedy also explained that space exploration would continue "whether we join in it or not." Writing only "space exploration would continue ... not" would create a confusing and misleading quotation. Instead, writers can use an ellipsis when the words on both sides still connect clearly. In a caption about the speech, a writer might quote, "We choose to go to the Moon ... because they are hard."

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. In paragraph 2, what word comes immediately before the ellipsis, and what word comes immediately after it?

2. What words from Kennedy's full sentence does the ellipsis in paragraph 2 replace?

3. In paragraph 3, what words were omitted between “continue” and “not” in the misleading quotation?

4. Is “space exploration would continue ... not” a responsible use of an ellipsis? Explain why or why not.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write an original 18 to 25 word statement about a goal or decision. Then write a shortened quotation from your statement that uses an ellipsis to leave out words without changing the statement's meaning.

ANSWER KEY

Dots With Purpose

GRADE 8 · L.8.2b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each ellipsis, number them 1 through 3, and draw a small bracket around the words immediately before and after it to show what the omission joins. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	In paragraph 2, what word comes immediately before the ellipsis, and what word comes immediately after it?	**Moon comes before the ellipsis, and because comes after it.**
2	What words from Kennedy's full sentence does the ellipsis in paragraph 2 replace?	**“in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but”**
3	In paragraph 3, what words were omitted between “continue” and “not” in the misleading quotation?	**“whether we join in it or”**
4	Is “space exploration would continue ... not” a responsible use of an ellipsis? Explain why or why not.	**No. It leaves out words that make the original meaning clear, so the quotation becomes confusing and misleading.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Original statement: Our town will restore the riverbank, plant native trees, and create trails because clean water and safe habitats benefit everyone. Shortened quotation: “Our town will restore the riverbank ... because clean water and safe habitats benefit everyone.”

Accept responses that include an original statement of 18 to 25 words and a shortened quotation using three dots to show omitted words. The remaining words must connect clearly and preserve the original statement's meaning.