Punctuation With Purpose

See how colons and semicolons clarify a model text.

ELA.10.C.3 "Following Conventions"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each colon and underline each semicolon. In the margin, write what follows each mark, a list or a complete clause, to see how punctuation organizes connected ideas.

The Radio's Second Life

1 On Saturday, volunteers at the Riverton Repair Café gathered around a 1950s tabletop radio. Its walnut case was scratched, and its cloth speaker cover had torn, but the device still mattered to its owner. Maya Chen, a tenth-grade student, had found it in her grandfather's attic. She brought three items to the workshop: the radio, a handwritten station log, and a photograph of her grandfather beside the same set. The objects suggested a story about evenings when neighbors listened together before television became common in many homes.

2 At the café, an electrician tested the radio's power cord and replaced a brittle wire. The tuning dial moved again; however, the speaker produced only a faint hum. Maya recorded the repair steps in a notebook so that she could explain them at school. Her final display would include a clear sequence: inspect the case, test the electrical parts, replace damaged materials, and document each change. Careful punctuation helped her organize the instructions for visitors who had never repaired a radio in a public workshop.

3 During the school exhibition, Maya placed a small sign beside the radio. It gave visitors two choices: turn the dial gently or read the station log. She also added a warning about safety because old electronics can contain damaged wiring. The radio was not connected to an outlet; instead, a battery-powered audio clip played a recording of a broadcast from the period. By combining the repaired object with evidence from her family, Maya showed that technology can preserve personal history as well as sound for future visitors.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What does the colon after “workshop” introduce in the first paragraph?

2. Why is a semicolon used after “again” in the second paragraph?

3. How does the colon after “clear sequence” help the reader?

4. What relationship does the semicolon before “instead” show in the third paragraph?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write three sentences for a museum label about an object or a small exhibit. Use one colon to introduce a list and one semicolon to join two closely related complete sentences.

ANSWER KEY

Punctuation With Purpose

GRADE 10 · ELA.10.C.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each colon and underline each semicolon. In the margin, write what follows each mark, a list or a complete clause, to see how punctuation organizes connected ideas. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What does the colon after "workshop" introduce in the first paragraph?	**It introduces a list of three items: the radio, a handwritten station log, and a photograph.**
2	Why is a semicolon used after "again" in the second paragraph?	**It joins two complete, closely related clauses about the tuning dial moving and the speaker producing a hum.**
3	How does the colon after "clear sequence" help the reader?	**It introduces the list of repair steps.**
4	What relationship does the semicolon before "instead" show in the third paragraph?	**It shows a contrast between the radio not being connected to an outlet and an audio clip playing instead.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

For our museum label, I chose three artifacts: a compass, a map, and a logbook. The compass pointed north; the map showed the route. Together, they explain how travelers prepared for a long journey.

Accept answers that explain that a colon introduces a list and a semicolon joins complete, closely related clauses. The passage contains three colons and two semicolons; accept equivalent descriptions of the contrast marked by instead.