Dash Job Detective

Decide when a dash earns its place.

9.L.GC.1.60 "Mechanics: Use dashes appropriately. (Continue)"

NAME _____ DATE _____

CORRECT DASH

A correct dash creates a strong break or sets off extra interrupting words.

The canyon held a secret - an ancient carving.

INCORRECT DASH

An incorrect dash splits parts that should stay together, such as a verb and what follows it. It may also appear where no strong break is needed.

The painter - mixed blue paint.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle CORRECT or INCORRECT for each sentence; then, for Part 2, choose two item numbers and explain what makes each dash correct or incorrect.

1.	The library closed early - a broken pipe had flooded the lobby.	CORRECT INCORRECT
2.	My favorite snack - salted popcorn - was sold out.	CORRECT INCORRECT
3.	We packed - blankets, water, and maps for the hike.	CORRECT INCORRECT
4.	The team had one goal - to finish the mural before Friday.	CORRECT INCORRECT
5.	The violinist played - softly during the solo.	CORRECT INCORRECT
6.	I remembered - that the museum opens at ten.	CORRECT INCORRECT
7.	Only one person knew the answer - Jordan.	CORRECT INCORRECT
8.	The path - hidden behind tall reeds - led to the lake.	CORRECT INCORRECT

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 with a correctly used dash and one new sentence with an incorrectly used dash. Label each sentence CORRECT or INCORRECT.

CORRECT _____

INCORRECT _____

CHALLENGE

Write a two-sentence mini-scene. In the second sentence, use a correctly placed pair of dashes to add an interruption, then copy the interruption after the sentence in brackets.

ANSWER KEY

Dash Job Detective

GRADE 9 · 9.L.GC.1.60

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The library closed early - a broken pipe had flooded the lobby.	**CORRECT**	The dash introduces an explanation for the early closing.
2	My favorite snack - salted popcorn - was sold out.	**CORRECT**	The paired dashes set off extra information that renames the snack.
3	We packed - blankets, water, and maps for the hike.	**INCORRECT**	The dash incorrectly separates the verb "packed" from its direct objects.
4	The team had one goal - to finish the mural before Friday.	**CORRECT**	The dash introduces an explanation of the team's goal.
5	The violinist played - softly during the solo.	**INCORRECT**	The dash incorrectly separates the verb "played" from the adverb "softly."
6	I remembered - that the museum opens at ten.	**INCORRECT**	The dash incorrectly separates "remembered" from the clause that completes its meaning.
7	Only one person knew the answer - Jordan.	**CORRECT**	The dash introduces an emphatic identification of the person.
8	The path - hidden behind tall reeds - led to the lake.	**CORRECT**	The paired dashes set off extra descriptive information about the path.

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)

- **CORRECT**: The concert had one surprise - a guest drummer.
- **INCORRECT**: The concert - began at noon.

Challenge: The power failed without warning. Nia - nervous but prepared - switched on her lantern. [nervous but prepared]

For Part 2, accept any two choices if the student identifies the dash's job or identifies the sentence parts that the dash incorrectly separates. The spaced hyphens represent dashes because the worksheet is plain text.