Semicolon Detectives

Sort sentences a peer might ask you to edit.

8.LL.17 "Examine the use of conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling in a variety of texts. a. Correct improper usage of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, colons, semicolons, hyphens..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

CORRECT USE

A semicolon can join two related complete thoughts. Each side must be able to stand alone as a sentence.

The lantern flickered; shadows danced across the porch.

NEEDS EDITING

A semicolon does not belong between a complete thought and a phrase that cannot stand alone. Remove the semicolon or rewrite the phrase as a complete thought.

A violin rested; beneath the velvet curtain.

1 SORT

8 items

For Part 1 SORT, circle CORRECT or REVISE for each sentence; for Part 2 PROVE IT, choose one item from each category and explain how you knew.

1.	The bell rang; the students rushed outside.	CORRECT REVISE
2.	The crowd fell silent; when the speaker arrived.	CORRECT REVISE
3.	My backpack is heavy; because I packed three books.	CORRECT REVISE
4.	The clouds cleared; the stars appeared.	CORRECT REVISE
5.	Jamal took notes; Priya asked questions.	CORRECT REVISE
6.	We stayed indoors; during the thunderstorm.	CORRECT REVISE
7.	The recipe looked simple; the soup tasted amazing.	CORRECT REVISE
8.	The engine stalled; the driver called for help.	CORRECT REVISE

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Choose one item from each category and explain how you knew.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Part 3 MAKE YOUR OWN: Write one new sentence with a correctly used semicolon and one sentence with a semicolon that needs editing.

CORRECT _____

REVISE _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one REVISE item and rewrite it two ways: once without a semicolon and once with a semicolon between two complete thoughts.

ANSWER KEY

Semicolon Detectives

GRADE 8 · 8.LL.17

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	The bell rang; the students rushed outside.	**CORRECT**	Both sides of the semicolon are complete thoughts.
2	The crowd fell silent; when the speaker arrived.	**REVISE**	The words after the semicolon begin with 'when' and cannot stand alone.
3	My backpack is heavy; because I packed three books.	**REVISE**	The words after the semicolon begin with 'because' and cannot stand alone.
4	The clouds cleared; the stars appeared.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are complete, related thoughts.
5	Jamal took notes; Priya asked questions.	**CORRECT**	Each side can stand alone as a sentence.
6	We stayed indoors; during the thunderstorm.	**REVISE**	'During the thunderstorm' is a phrase, not a complete thought.
7	The recipe looked simple; the soup tasted amazing.	**CORRECT**	Both sides are complete, related thoughts.
8	The engine stalled; the driver called for help.	**CORRECT**	Each side can stand alone as a sentence.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Task: Choose one item from each category and explain how you knew.
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 library closed; our group met at the park.
- **REVISE**: The dog waited; near the front gate.

Challenge: We stayed indoors during the thunderstorm. We stayed indoors; the thunderstorm lasted all afternoon.

For Part 2, an explanation for item 1 can identify two complete thoughts; an explanation for item 6 can identify the phrase after the semicolon. The challenge sample revises item 6.