Break the Sentence

When does a fragment serve a purpose?

10.5.W.3 "Students will demonstrate their use of Standard American English (i.e., grammar, mechanics, and usage) in writing, presentations, and/or multimodal literacies to convey specific meanings and ideas..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

COMPLETE SENTENCE

A complete sentence has a subject and a verb and expresses a full thought. It follows standard sentence conventions.

Owls hunt at dusk.

INTENTIONAL FRAGMENT

A writer may deliberately use an incomplete sentence to create an effect, such as suspense or surprise. The context helps you tell a deliberate choice from a mistake.

To convey excitement: 'Fireworks overhead. Everywhere.'

1 SORT

8 items

For each item, circle COMPLETE or FRAGMENT, then choose two items, one from each category, and explain how you knew using the sentence structure and the writer's purpose.

1.	To slow a tense scene: 'A locked gate. No escape.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
2.	To show shock: 'My phone. Gone.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
3.	In a news report: 'Voters approved the new library.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
4.	To create urgency: 'Two minutes left. One chance.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
5.	In an essay: 'Rainfall has increased this decade.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
6.	In a lab report: 'The solution changed color overnight.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
7.	To mimic quick thoughts: 'Keys on the counter. Wallet in the car.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT
8.	To heighten dread: 'The hallway. Empty. Too quiet.'	COMPLETE	FRAGMENT

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Choose two items, one from each category, and explain how you knew using the sentence structure and the writer's purpose.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new complete sentence and one new stand-alone fragment used for an effect; name the effect after your fragment.

COMPLETE _____

FRAGMENT _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one COMPLETE item and rewrite it with a deliberate stand-alone fragment while keeping its central idea, then explain the effect in one sentence.

ANSWER KEY

Break the Sentence

GRADE 10 · 10.5.W.3

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	To slow a tense scene: 'A locked gate. No escape.'	**FRAGMENT**	Both stand-alone phrases lack verbs, and the pauses build tension.
2	To show shock: 'My phone. Gone.'	**FRAGMENT**	Neither stand-alone phrase is a complete sentence, and the breaks convey shock.
3	In a news report: 'Voters approved the new library.'	**COMPLETE**	Voters is the subject, approved is the verb, and the sentence expresses a full thought.
4	To create urgency: 'Two minutes left. One chance.'	**FRAGMENT**	The stand-alone phrases omit verbs, and their brief pauses create urgency.
5	In an essay: 'Rainfall has increased this decade.'	**COMPLETE**	Rainfall is the subject, has increased is the verb, and the sentence expresses a full thought.
6	In a lab report: 'The solution changed color overnight.'	**COMPLETE**	Solution is the subject, changed is the verb, and the sentence expresses a full thought.
7	To mimic quick thoughts: 'Keys on the counter. Wallet in the car.'	**FRAGMENT**	Both stand-alone groups lack verbs, and the breaks mimic quick thoughts.
8	To heighten dread: 'The hallway. Empty. Too quiet.'	**FRAGMENT**	The stand-alone groups are incomplete, and the pauses heighten dread.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Task: Choose two items, one from each category, and explain how you knew using the sentence structure and the writer's purpose. Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **COMPLETE**: Gardeners planted tulips near the fence.
- **FRAGMENT**: Not a single footprint. Effect: builds mystery.

Challenge: The solution changed color. Overnight. The fragment slows the moment and makes the change seem surprising.

For Part 2, accept any pair with one item from each category if the explanation identifies the complete sentence's subject and verb and explains how the fragment's break serves its stated purpose. For Part 3, the fragment must be intentional, not merely an uncorrected error.