Mechanics with Meaning

Sort ordinary conventions from expressive choices.

11-12.L.2.c "Understand the purpose or value of nonstandard English mechanics and conventions (e.g., artistic or stylistic choices in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

ARTISTIC CHOICE

A writer deliberately changes capitalization, punctuation, or spelling to create an effect. For example, a stretched word can make a sound seem longer.

On a space poster, 'sooooo far' makes the distance feel vast.

STANDARD CONVENTION

A writer uses familiar capitalization, punctuation, and spelling without changing them for an artistic effect.

A recipe says, 'Bake for twenty minutes.'

1 SORT

8 items

For Part 1, circle ARTISTIC or STANDARD for each item; for Part 2, choose one item from each category and explain how its mechanics helped you decide.

1.	In a poem about loneliness: 'i sit beside the empty chair.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
2.	In a comic about a leaking faucet: 'drip...drip.....DRIP!'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
3.	In a science report: 'The sample weighed 12 grams.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
4.	On a storm poster: 'thunderrrr shakes the hills.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
5.	In a school notice: 'The library closes at 5 p.m.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
6.	In a museum caption: 'The sculpture is made of bronze.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
7.	In a poem about panic: 'Run! Run!! RUN!!!'	ARTISTIC STANDARD
8.	In a poem about drumming: 'BOOMBOOMBOOM fills the street.'	ARTISTIC STANDARD

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 example of an ARTISTIC choice and one new example that uses STANDARD conventions.

ARTISTIC _____

STANDARD _____

CHALLENGE

Choose one STANDARD item and rewrite it with an intentional change to capitalization, punctuation, or spelling; then write one sentence explaining the effect.

ANSWER KEY

Mechanics with Meaning

HIGH SCHOOL · 11-12.L.2.c

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	In a poem about loneliness: 'i sit beside the empty chair.'	**ARTISTIC**	The lowercase 'i' is a deliberate poetic choice that can suggest the speaker feels small.
2	In a comic about a leaking faucet: 'drip...drip.....DRIP!'	**ARTISTIC**	The unusually long pause and capitalized final sound make the last drip stand out.
3	In a science report: 'The sample weighed 12 grams.'	**STANDARD**	The sentence uses conventional capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.
4	On a storm poster: 'thunderrrr shakes the hills.'	**ARTISTIC**	The stretched spelling suggests the rumble of thunder.
5	In a school notice: 'The library closes at 5 p.m.'	**STANDARD**	The notice uses conventional spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
6	In a museum caption: 'The sculpture is made of bronze.'	**STANDARD**	The caption follows conventional mechanics.
7	In a poem about panic: 'Run! Run!! RUN!!!'	**ARTISTIC**	The repeated exclamation points and capitals heighten the sense of panic.
8	In a poem about drumming: 'BOOMBOOMBOOM fills the street.'	**ARTISTIC**	The fused, capitalized sounds imitate rapid, loud drumbeats.

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)

- **ARTISTIC**: In a poem about a sleepy dog: 'snoooore echoes downstairs.'
- **STANDARD**: In a travel guide: 'The train arrives at noon.'

Challenge: Item 5: 'The library closes at FIVE p.m.' Capitalizing FIVE makes the closing time feel urgent.

For Part 2, students should cite a specific feature in each chosen item, such as the extra dots and capitals in item 2 or the conventional mechanics in item 3. Accept explanations that connect an artistic change to its effect or identify why standard mechanics fit the context.