Semicolon Sorting

Two jobs for one punctuation mark

9-10.L.2.a "Use a semicolon (and perhaps a conjunctive adverb) to link two or more closely related independent clauses and to link complex lists."

NAME _____ DATE _____

LINK CLAUSES

A semicolon can join two closely related independent clauses. Each clause could stand alone as a sentence, and a word such as "therefore" may follow the semicolon.

The moon rose; the harbor lights flickered.

SEPARATE LIST ITEMS

A semicolon can separate items in a list when those items already contain commas. It helps you see where one item ends and the next begins.

The basket holds peaches, ripe and fragrant; pears, firm and green; and plums, tart and juicy.

1 SORT

8 items

Circle CLAUSES or LISTS for each numbered item, then in Part 2 choose two items and explain how you knew.

1.	1. The timer rang; the debate continued.	CLAUSES LISTS
2.	2. Our bus was late; however, the concert began on time.	CLAUSES LISTS
3.	3. The exhibit features clay bowls, painted blue; woven mats, dyed red; and carved masks, stained black.	CLAUSES LISTS
4.	4. A thunderstorm rolled in; the soccer game ended early.	CLAUSES LISTS
5.	5. The cast includes Ava, the narrator; Leo, the detective; and Nia, the witness.	CLAUSES LISTS
6.	6. For the trip, bring a jacket, light and waterproof; shoes, sturdy and dry; and a bottle, full of water.	CLAUSES LISTS
7.	7. The schedule has a tour, led by Ms. Chen; a workshop, run by Mr. Diaz; and a quiz, given by Dr. Bell.	CLAUSES LISTS
8.	8. The library closed at six; therefore, we finished our research at home.	CLAUSES LISTS

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 in which a semicolon links two closely related independent clauses and one new sentence in which semicolons separate list items that contain commas.

CLAUSES

LISTS

CHALLENGE

Write a sentence that links two closely related independent clauses with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb, then underline both independent clauses.

ANSWER KEY

Semicolon Sorting

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-10.L.2.a

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	1. The timer rang; the debate continued.	**CLAUSES**	Both sides of the semicolon are independent clauses.
2	2. Our bus was late; however, the concert began on time.	**CLAUSES**	The semicolon joins independent clauses, with "however" introducing the second.
3	3. The exhibit features clay bowls, painted blue; woven mats, dyed red; and carved masks, stained black.	**LISTS**	The semicolons separate three list items that each contain a comma.
4	4. A thunderstorm rolled in; the soccer game ended early.	**CLAUSES**	Each side of the semicolon could stand alone as a sentence.
5	5. The cast includes Ava, the narrator; Leo, the detective; and Nia, the witness.	**LISTS**	The semicolons separate cast members whose names are followed by comma-set-off roles.
6	6. For the trip, bring a jacket, light and waterproof; shoes, sturdy and dry; and a bottle, full of water.	**LISTS**	The semicolons separate three items that have descriptions set off by commas.
7	7. The schedule has a tour, led by Ms. Chen; a workshop, run by Mr. Diaz; and a quiz, given by Dr. Bell.	**LISTS**	The semicolons separate three activities that each include a comma.
8	8. The library closed at six; therefore, we finished our research at home.	**CLAUSES**	The semicolon joins independent clauses, with "therefore" introducing the second.

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)

- **CLAUSES**: The paint dried overnight; the mural was ready by morning.
- **LISTS**: The menu offers soup, warm and spicy; salad, fresh and crisp; and bread, soft and buttery.

Challenge: The trail was flooded; therefore, we chose another route.

For Part 2, accept any two explanations that identify either a complete clause on each side of the semicolon or list items that contain commas. For Part 3, check that each student example uses semicolons for the specified job.