



Punctuation Takes a Vacation

By Robin Pulver (robinpulver.com)

Illustrated by Lynn Rowe Reed

Teacher Guide

About the book:

When Mr. Wright's classroom sends punctuation off on a vacation they learn how important those little marks can be for reading and writing!

About the author:

Robin Pulver is the author of a number of picture books including *Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day* and *Axle Annie, Author Day for Room 3T, Christmas for a Kitten*, as well as the popular Mrs. Toggle series. Visit her website at www.robinpulver.com

Author Interview

1. Where in the world did you get the idea for this book?

I got the idea from a dream! But not the whole idea.

I just dreamed about a sweet comma, wrapped in a shawl, sitting on a stair. It was waiting for me. When I woke up, I decided that comma was waiting for me to write a story about punctuation, but it didn't tell me HOW! It took three years to figure out how to write the story.

2. If you were a punctuation mark what would you be?

Oh, I'm sure I'd be an exclamation mark. I usually have trouble controlling my enthusiasm. Sometimes that's embarrassing. But on every other day, I'd have to be a question mark. How would I learn anything without asking questions?

3. What was the best vacation you ever had?

My most favorite recent vacation was a camping trip with my grown-up children and my son-in-law in Canada. It had been a long time since I'd slept in a tent, and I LOVE sleeping (and waking up) in a tent and sitting around a campfire.

Questions to consider:

1. What did punctuation put up with in Mr. Wright's class?
2. Describe what kind of day it was when punctuation took their vacation?
3. At first, how did the kids feel about the idea of giving punctuation a vacation?
4. How do you know their attitudes changed over time? What clues were you given?
5. What was the effect of reading and writing without punctuation?
6. Why is Take a Break Lake a great spot for punctuation to have a vacation?
7. Can you tell which punctuation mark wrote each postcard? What clues did you use to figure it out?
8. Compare Mr. Wright's class's use of punctuation to Mr. Rongo's class's use of punctuation.
9. How many punctuation mistakes can you find in Mr. Wright's class's letter?
10. Why did they mark their letter "urgent?" What does that word mean?
11. Discuss which punctuation mark you think is the most important. Does it depend upon which genre you're writing or not?
12. Which illustration is your favorite? Why?

Across the Curriculum

Answer each of the postcards using the punctuation they would use most often.

Create punctuation "flags" (perhaps from their vacation?) using a variety of colored construction paper triangles (one color for each type of mark) and a box of unsharpened pencils. Cut out two triangles of the same small shape and color. On one side, make a large picture of the punctuation mark and on the other a brief rule about when it is used (use the last page of Punctuation Takes a Vacation as a guide). Then, staple around the edges to secure to the eraser end of a pencil. Give each student a set of flags (or divide flags so each child has one). Then, display sentences without any punctuation (using an overhead or laptop) and have children raise their flag to decide which mark is needed.

Write letters to friends or relatives but without any appropriate punctuation. Then, have children trade and correct the letters.

Math:

Find out how much it costs to send a postcard. Next, figure out how much it cost all the punctuation to send postcards to Mr. Wright's class.

Next, calculate how much it would cost to reply to all of the postcards with as many letters. How much more does it cost to send one letter than a postcard? Why? How much more total would it cost?

Or

Pretend that you get a nickel for each punctuation mistake you discover in the letter written by Mr. Wright's class. How much would you earn?

Art:

Using all the punctuation marks and a variety of paper create a collage. You might consider recycling newsprint as an interesting background.

Drama:

Write a dialogue between two kids on the playground. Be sure to punctuate it appropriately (including quotation marks!) Then, as you read say which punctuation marks you used AS you read.

For example: Quotation mark, Capital "D," Do you know Paul question mark, end quotation mark.

It can get really zany fast! But it's fun on a Friday afternoon and warning: can be addictive!

Music:

Sing to: "She'll Be Coming Around the Mountain"

We'll be using punctuation as we write
We'll be using punctuation every night
We'll be using punctuation
We'll be using punctuation
We'll be using punctuation
As we write!

We won't forget the commas in a list
Or periods that finish sentences
Apostrophes can save us time
Or say that something's hers or mine
Oh we'll use punctuation as we write!

Exclamation points help us show surprise

Question marks ask the questions on our minds
Quotation marks can show who speaks
And colons tell the time to meet
Oh we'll use punctuation as we write!

Repeat first stanza.

Be sure to look for all the teacher's guides for Robin Pulver's books!

This guide was created by [Tracie Vaughn Zimmer](#), a reading specialist and author of Reaching for Sun. Visit her website to find hundreds of other guides to children's literature.