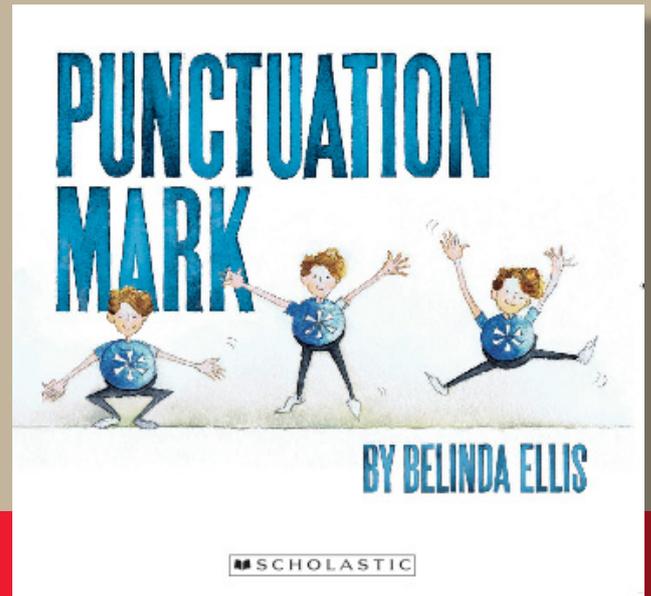


Punctuation Mark

Text and Illustrations

by Belinda Ellis



- Reading • Writing • Punctuation
- Listening • Art

About the Book

Punctuation Mark is both fun and informative. It stars a lively boy called Mark, who absolutely loves punctuation. He leaps his way through the pages, discovering the purpose of different punctuation marks as he goes. His teacher, Miss Take, and his classmates join him on the journey, bringing lots of humour and interest to a frequently neglected topic. The text often moves out of the body copy and into the illustrations, weaving the words and pictures together in a clever, eye-catching manner. Readers will learn more about punctuation, while also coming to understand why it matters. This sophisticated picture book makes an ideal introduction to the topic of punctuation and can be adapted for use with primary school children of any age or level.

About the Author and Illustrator

Belinda Ellis has 25 years' experience working as a graphic designer in New Zealand and London. She also has a passion for painting and illustrating. Recently, Belinda worked as a lead designer at Wellington's Designworks studio – one of Australasia's leading brand agencies. Her design work has won her a number of awards both in New Zealand and overseas. Currently she is working on a 'pure' design project of her own that will culminate in a coffee-table book and complementary merchandise, all to be launched in October 2014.

Punctuation Mark is Belinda's second book with Scholastic NZ. Her first was *Back-to-Front Bob*, another playful book in the same series. It cleverly combines words and visuals for a delightful dose of wordplay and fabulous fun with palindromes.

Writing Style

Punctuation Mark is work of fiction based on fact. It is written in the form of a past-tense narrative. The sentences are short, snappy and easy to understand, and large doses of child-friendly humour bring the explanations to life. For instance, when talking about the vital importance of commas, the sample sentences are: "Let's eat, Grandma!" and "Let's eat Grandma!" It is pointed out that without the comma, Grandma might lose her life.

Text that does not relate directly to Mark but is taught to him by his teacher, Miss Take, is shown on an old-fashioned blackboard, and the wry and informative comments made by Mark and his classmates appear as cartoon speech above their heads. The punctuation terms, such as *comma* and *ellipsis*, are typed in capital letters allowing readers to easily locate them. They are also explained in a handy glossary on the last page

Shared Learning and Discussion Points

ASK YOUR STUDENTS:

- Looking at the cover, what might this book be about? Can you think of two different meanings for the word 'Mark'?
- When do we use these punctuation marks? Can you give some examples? (pp.4–5)
- What is the proper name for brackets like these ones? The picture gives you a big clue. (pp.4–5)
- Which punctuation mark tells us to stop and take a breath? Which punctuation marks tell us to pause? How does this help us understand what we're reading? (pp.6–7)
- What is a quotation? Why do we sometimes call speech marks quotation marks? (p.7)
- How are dashes used in the text on this page? Read the whole sentence aloud. Where did you pause? (p.7)
- Have you ever used emoticons? Do you know any others? Why did Belinda Ellis draw Mark lying sideways? (pp.8–9)
- What is a dingbat? What is an asterisk? How are they useful? (pp.10–11) (If necessary, use an electronic whiteboard or other technology to demonstrate.)
- Where have you seen asterisks and other symbols used to stand for letters? (e.g., cartoons, graphic novels)
- How does the comma save Grandma's life?
- What terrible misunderstandings could arise if Cornelia used the wrong punctuation in her note? (pp.18–19)
- How does each picture of Matilda match its text?
- What is the role of the colon, the commas and the semicolons in this text about Matilda? (If necessary, use the glossary on the last page to help.)
- Can you find two other words with apostrophes in the text on this page? (p. 24) What missing letters does each one stand for? (can't, cannot; they're, they are)
- Why is *The cat's tails* an unusual thing to say? What would *The dog's noses* look like as a picture?
- If we knew the cat was female, how could we reword this sentence: *Its tail is fluffy?* (*Her tail is fluffy.*) How could we reword it for a male cat?
- Can you draw pictures to go with these phrases?
 - The boys' ice creams
 - The boy's ice creams
 - The boy's ice cream
- What is the double meaning of 'punctuation rules'?
- How does the full stop on these pages strengthen Mark's joke on the previous page? (pp.30–31) Why is this page a great page to fill up with a full stop?

Activities

ACTIVITY 1: FIND THE PUNCTUATION MARKS

Select a list of punctuation marks featured in the book. Ask your students to look through other books in the classroom or library to find an example of each punctuation mark. Tell them to carefully copy a sentence for each one.

Pair the students, and ask them to quiz one another on the punctuation marks in their sentences. For example, a student might say: *Where does the apostrophe go in this sentence? The ship's captain saw the iceberg looming ahead.* Then, discuss a sample of these sentences with the whole class.

ACTIVITY 2: MIXED MEANINGS

Discuss pages 12 to 17 with your students. Ensure they understand how the missing comma means the speaker now intends to eat Grandma rather than invite her to a meal. Talk about the meanings of similar sentence pairs, such as:

Let's leave, Fred. or *Let's leave Fred.*

Pour the sauce on, Milly. or *Pour the sauce on Milly.*

Invite Mary, Ann and Harry. or *Invite Mary Ann and Harry.*

Pat the dog. or *Pat, the dog.*

Ask the students to illustrate one of these pairs or a pair they have made up themselves. Tell them to fold or rule a sheet of paper in half. On the left side, they should write the sentence with the comma, and on the right side, they should write the sentence without the comma. They can then illustrate each sentence to show its meaning. The finished works can be shared and/or displayed on a wall.

ACTIVITY 3: VOICING THE PUNCTUATION

Talk about pages 22 and 23 with your students. Discuss how in writing, punctuation marks tell us if a sentence is a question or a statement, while in speaking, our tone of voice makes our meaning clear. Model saying 'really' as both a question and a statement. Let the students try this out for themselves.

Next, play a game where you say other words, such as *yes*, *lollies*, *correct* and *happy*, as either a question or a statement. You could also use sentences, such as: *This is the right address?* The students should write or copy the word/s and add the correct punctuation mark at the end.

ACTIVITY 4: EDIT THAT!

Select a familiar picture book or novel that your students particularly enjoy. Begin by reading the book, or a chapter of the book, to them. Then present them with a section of that material typed up without all the correct punctuation. Tell the students they are to 'copy edit' the text. That is, they need to go through it and write in all the missing punctuation. When they have finished, display a copy with all the correct punctuation in place so they can check their own work.



teacher toolkit

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