



English I: Writing: Module 8: Lesson 3: Section 7

Restrictive/Nonrestrictive Clauses and Punctuation of Contrasting Expressions

To Punctuate With Commas

Instructions: The following is an adaptation of “Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus,” an editorial in *The Sun* newspaper written by Francis P. Church in 1897. Read both letters below and then write whether the highlighted text on the next two pages is “Correct” or “Incorrect” and explain your answers in the provided boxes. Click on the Suggested Response button at the bottom of page 3 to see the sample responses.

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say that there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, “If you see it in the Sun, it is so.” Please tell me the truth. Is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia

Dear Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing, that is not comprehensible to their little minds, can exist.

All minds, men's, women's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to our life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light of childhood, which brightens the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your Papa to hire men, who would watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus. But even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus; however that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies whom we've watched frolic in our dreams dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle which is an object of very little consequence and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, or even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else as real and abiding. No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.



Source: Santa Claus, pamlane, Flickr



Dear Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing, that is not comprehensible to their little minds, can exist. All minds, men's, women's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.



Source: Jolly-old-saint-nick, Wikimedia

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to our life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light of childhood, which brightens the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your Papa to hire men, who would watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus. But even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?



Source: Santa Claus 2008, Doug Wallick, Flickr

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No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.

Suggested Response



Dear Virginia,

Your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see. They think that nothing, that is not comprehensible to their little minds, can exist.

Incorrect: The commas are misplaced in this sentence. “That” is used in restrictive, essential clauses and should not have commas.

All minds, men's, women's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to our life its highest beauty and joy.

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Incorrect: “Which” is a relative pronoun used with a nonrestrictive clause. The second comma is missing.

Not believe in Santa Claus? You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your Papa to hire men, who would watch all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus. But even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Incorrect: This restrictive clause beginning with 'who' is essential to the meaning of the sentence, so it does not need a comma.

Nobody sees Santa Claus; however that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies whom we've watched frolic in our dreams dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders that are unseen and unseeable in the world.

Incorrect: “However” is a contrasting expression and needs a comma after it.

Incorrect: The nonessential relative clause beginning with “Whom” needs to be enclosed in commas.

Correct: The essential relative clause beginning with “that” does not need to be enclosed in commas.



You tear apart the baby's rattle which is an object of very little consequence and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, or even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernatural beauty and glory beyond.

Incorrect: This nonrestrictive clause needs commas because it adds information that is nonessential to the meaning of the sentence.

Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else as real and abiding.

No Santa Claus? Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, maybe 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the hearts of children.