

For a long time he lay on his back smoking, staring into the blackness of the cavernous roof. The corporals' snores rose and fell in counterpoint. He was exhausted, but not sleepy. The wound throbbed uncomfortably, each beat precise and tight. Whatever was in there was sharp and close to the surface, and he wanted to touch it with a fingertip. Exhaustion made him vulnerable to the thoughts he wanted least. He was thinking about the French boy asleep in his bed, and about the indifference with which men could lob shells into a landscape. Or empty their bomb bays over a sleeping cottage by a railway, without knowing or caring who was there. It was an industrial process. He had seen their own RA units at work, tightly knit groups, working all hours, proud of the speed with which they could set up a line, and proud of their discipline, drills, training, teamwork. They need never see the end result—a vanished boy. Vanished. As he formed the word in his thoughts, sleep snatched him under, but only for seconds. Then he was awake, on his bed, on his back, staring at the darkness in his cell. He could feel he was back there. He could smell the concrete floor, and the piss in the bucket, and the gloss paint on the walls, and hear the snores of the men along the row. Three and a half years of nights like these, unable to sleep, thinking of another vanished boy, another vanished life that was once his own, and waiting for dawn, and slop-out and another wasted day. He did not know how he survived the daily stupidity of it. The stupidity and claustrophobia. The hand squeezing on his throat. Being here, sheltering in a barn, with an army in rout, where a child's limb in a tree was something that ordinary men could ignore, where a whole country, a whole civilization was about to fall, was better than being there, on a narrow bed under a dim electric light, waiting for nothing. Here there were wooded valleys, streams, sunlight on the poplars which they could not take away unless they killed him. And there was hope. I'll wait for you. Come back. There was a chance, just a chance, of getting back. He had her last letter in his pocket and her new address. This was why he had to survive, and use his cunning to stay off the main roads where the circling dive-bombers waited like raptors.

Later, he got up from under his greatcoat, pulled on his boots and groped his way through the barn to relieve himself outside. He was dizzy with fatigue, but he was still not ready for sleep. Ignoring the snarling farm dogs, he found his way along a track to a grassy rise to watch the flashes in the southern sky. This was the approaching storm of German armor. He touched his top pocket where the poem she sent was enfolded in her letter. In the nightmare of the dark, / All the dogs of Europe bark. The rest of her letters were buttoned into the inside pocket of his greatcoat. By standing on the wheel of an abandoned trailer he was able to see other parts of the sky. The gun flashes were everywhere but the north. The defeated army was running up a corridor that was bound to narrow, and soon must be cut off. There would be no chance of escape for the stragglers. At best, it would be prison again. Prison camp. This time, he wouldn't last. When France fell there would be no end of the war in sight. No letters from her, and no way back. No bargaining an early release in return for joining the infantry. The hand on his throat again. The prospect would be of a thousand, or thousands of incarcerated nights, sleeplessly turning over the past, waiting for his life to resume, wondering if it ever would. Perhaps it would make sense to leave now before it was too late, and keep going, all night, all day until he reached the Channel. Slip away, leave the corporals to their fate. He turned and began to make his way back down the slope and thought better of it. He could barely see the ground in front of him. He would make no progress in the dark and could easily break a leg. And perhaps the corporals weren't such complete dolts—Mace with his straw mattresses, Nettle with his gift for the brothers.

Guided by their snores, he shuffled back to his bed. But still sleep would not come, or came only in quick plunges from which he emerged, giddy with thoughts he could not choose or direct. They pursued him, the old themes. Here it was again, his only meeting with her. Six days out of prison, one day before he reported for duty near Aldershot. When they arranged to meet at Joe Lyons teahouse in the Strand in 1939, they had not seen each other for three and a half years. He was at the café early and took a corner seat with a view of the door. Freedom was still a novelty. The pace and clatter, the colors of coats, jackets and skirts, the bright, loud conversations of West End shoppers, the friendliness of the girl who served him, the spacious lack of threat—he sat back and enjoyed the embrace of the everyday. It had a beauty he alone could appreciate.

During his time inside, the only female visitor he was permitted was his mother. In case he was inflamed, they said. Cecilia wrote every week. In love with her, willing himself to stay sane for her, he was naturally in love with her words. When he wrote back, he pretended to be his old self, he lied his way into sanity. For fear of his psychiatrist who was also their censor, they could never be sensual, or even emotional. His was considered a modern, enlightened prison, despite its Victorian chill. He had been diagnosed, with clinical precision, as morbidly oversexed, and in need of help as well as correction. He was not to be stimulated. Some letters—both his and hers—were confiscated for some timid expression of affection. So they wrote about literature, and used characters as codes.

## Review Sentence Types

Structurally, English sentences can be classified four different ways, though there are endless constructions of each. The classifications are based on the number of independent and dependent clauses a sentence contains. An *independent clause* forms a complete sentence on its own, while a *dependent clause* needs another clause to make a complete sentence. By learning these types, writers can add complexity and variation to their sentences.

**Simple sentence:** A sentence with one independent clause and no dependent clauses.

- At noon on Tuesday during the summer Joe shoots at kittens and puppies with his bow and arrow.
- With or without make-up, jewelry, or expensive clothes, Joan always looks like a zombie.

**Compound Sentence:** A sentence with multiple independent clauses but no dependent clauses.

- The clown frightened the little girl; she ran off screaming.
- The Freedom Riders departed on May 4<sup>th</sup>, and they were determined to travel through many southern states.

**Complex Sentence:** A sentence with one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

- After Mary added up all the sales, she discovered that the lemonade stand was 32 cents short.
- While all of his paintings are fascinating, Hieronymus Bosch's triptychs, full of mayhem and madness, are the real highlight of his art.

**Complex-Compound Sentence:** A sentence with multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

- *Catch-22* is widely regarded as Joseph Heller's best novel, and because Heller served in World War II, which the novel satirizes, the zany but savage wit of the novel packs an extra punch.
- Since he was five, Frank has broken three fingers, two toes, and a knee cap; however, he still walks across ice-covered telephone lines in the winter time.