

# Writer's Craft: A Personal Perspective on Style

ACTIVITY  
4.14

## Learning Targets

- Analyze a writer's use of syntactical techniques.
- Apply syntactical techniques from examples to one's own writing.

## Before Reading

1. Like Fulghum, Krakauer's style is memorable and effective, not just because of the ideas, but because of his syntax.

Some elements of syntax are word order, sentence length, and punctuation. Punctuation can reinforce meaning, create a particular effect, and express the writer's voice. Look at the purpose of three stylistic techniques that manipulate syntax for effect: relative clauses, asyndeton, and the colon.

## Language and Writer's Craft: Relative Pronouns and Clauses

**Relative pronouns** are *that, who, whom, whose, which, where, when, and why*. They are used to join clauses to make a complex sentence. Relative pronouns are used at the beginning of the subordinate clause and gives specific information about the main clause.

Example: This is the house *that* Jack built.

In English, the choice of the relative pronoun depends on the type of clause it is used in. There are two types of clauses: **defining (restrictive) relative clauses** and **non-defining (nonrestrictive) relative clauses**. In both types of clauses, the relative pronoun can function as a subject, an object, or a possessive.

**Defining clauses** open with a relative pronoun and **ARE NOT** separated by a comma from the main clause.

Example: This is the house *that* my grandfather built.

**Non-defining relative clauses** (also known as non-restrictive, or parenthetical, clauses) provide some additional information that is not essential and may be omitted without affecting the contents of the sentence. All relative pronouns EXCEPT "that" can be used in non-defining clauses; however, the pronouns MAY NOT be omitted. Non-defining clauses ARE separated by commas.

Example: The house at the end of the street, *which* my grandfather built, needs renovating.

## During Reading

2. Reread Krakauer's text, this time annotating it for stylistic choices and punctuation, in particular. In the My Notes section, explain the effect of the choices.

LEARNING STRATEGIES:  
Graphic Organizer, Drafting

## My Notes

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## After Reading

3. Now use the graphic organizer below to explore how sentence length and punctuation contribute to tone or theme. Find specific examples of Krakauer's sentences that contain the element of syntax listed in the first column. Explain its function in the credo and how it advances the tone or theme of the text.

Element	Examples and Function of Krakauer's Syntax	Revision of a Sentence from Your Credo
Relative clause (uses <i>that, which, etc.</i> )		
Asyndeton		
Colon		
Colon		

## Check Your Understanding

In the last column, use the examples to guide a revision of a sentence in the draft of your credo.