Syntax and Persuasion
High School Lesson

About this Lesson:
Linking syntax to meaning is one of the most difficult skills for students to master. For this reason, many teachers are reluctant to attempt to teach this skill. However, recognizing and understanding the use of advanced syntax techniques is important for students not only for their ability to read and analyze the works of others but as an integral part of developing their own style and voice. The goal of this lesson is to help students move beyond merely identifying parts of speech and parts of sentences into knowing how and why authors write the way they do. Ultimately, students will incorporate these syntactical strategies into their own writing and will be able to articulate the reasons for their rhetorical choices.

This lesson is included in Module 10: Analyzing Organization and Syntax.

Objectives
Students will
- analyze effective sentence structures and syntactical devices in persuasive writing.
- create sentences and paragraphs that effectively use rhetorical and syntactical devices.

Level
Grades Nine and Ten

Connection to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts
LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

Explicitly addressed in this lesson

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<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
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<tr>
<td>L.3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
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<td>L.6</td>
<td>Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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<td>W.4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>Create</td>
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Implicitly addressed in this lesson

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
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**LTF Skill Focus**

The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

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**Close Reading**  
written, spoken, and visual texts

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<td><strong>Rhetorical Fragment</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Rhetorical Question</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Analysis of a Text</strong></td>
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Connections to AP*
Analysis of syntax and its effect on meaning is a key skill assessed by the multiple choice and free response sections of both the AP English Literature and AP English Language exams.

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Materials and Resources
- copies of the Student Activity
- copies of “Structure in Persuasion,” available in Module 10 training materials and on the LTF website
- handout: “Advanced Syntax Techniques”

Assessments
The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:
- fill-in-the-blank exercises
- frame statements
- guided questions
- multiple choice questions
- writing assignments

The following additional assessments are located on the LTF website under “Grade Level Assessments”:
- Seventh Grade: Rhetorical Analysis/Persuasion—Barack Obama’s “The Audacity of Hope”
- Eighth Grade: Rhetorical Analysis/Persuasion—“Chief Pushmataha’s Response to Tecumseh”
- Ninth Grade: Rhetorical Analysis/Persuasion—Barack Obama’s “The Audacity of Hope”
  o multiple choice
  o short answer
  o free response
- Tenth Grade: Rhetorical Analysis/Persuasion—“Columbus’ Letter on the Fourth Voyage”
- Tenth Grade: Rhetorical Analysis/Persuasion—Arnold Schwarzenegger’s “Speech to the 2004 Republican National Convention”

Teaching Suggestions
Activity One:
The lesson begins by using quotations to familiarize students with the patterns of advanced syntax. Each numbered quotation in Activity One is incomplete; students will refer to the gray answer bank at the beginning of the lesson to choose the correct clause or phrase to complete the quotation. Students should work through the first two or three examples as a whole class, and then they should complete the remainder individually or in small groups. The second part of the activity requires students to analyze the effect of the syntax on the quotation. Teachers should complete the first quote analysis with the whole class and then allow the students to complete the second quote analysis independently.
Activity Two:
This part of the lesson refers students to the Op-Ed piece and the letter to the editor found in the “Structure in Persuasion” lesson. The activity includes selected sentences that use advanced syntactical techniques. Teachers should review the completed answers for question one with the whole group, and they might wish to complete one or two more questions with the entire class. Students should then complete the remainder of the activity in small groups to take advantage of peer support. Teachers should discuss group answers with the whole class.

Extension activity:
Teachers might consider incorporating some of the syntax strategies into a revision lesson, having students choose a syntactical pattern to use as a model for a new or revised sentence in their own writing.

Answers
Answers for this lesson are subjective and will vary. To obtain the maximum benefit of the lesson, ask students to go beyond the expected responses. Possible answers are provided below.

Activity One:
2. dreams; A
3. questions; J
4. dreams; a private dream; B
5. why; the way they aren’t; why not; D
6. failures; E
7. success or key; failure; I
8. succeeded; H
9. break; adversity; F
10. gold; G

Activity Two:
1. Choose one quote that includes reversal and write the complete quotation:
   ________________
   I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.

   What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? ________________ Failure and success

   What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) ________________
   Success has come because he has failed in the past and has learned from those failures.

   What kind of reversal is it? ________________ antithesis

   How can you tell? ________________ The quote introduces opposite or constrasting ideas in an a-b-a-b structure (I’ve failed versus I succeed)

   Explain HOW the reversal of ideas reinforces the claim the author makes. We don’t expect ________________ success to come from failure, but because he says he’s done it over and over and over again, it suggests that trying and not succeeding is no time to stop trying. Eventually, the failure will reverse and become success. When a person fails, he learns from mistakes made and works to overcome them.
2. Choose one quote that includes repetition and write the complete quotation:

   ______________
   Adversity causes some men to break; others, to break records.
   ______________

What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? ______________

What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) ______________

What kind of repetition is it? ______________

How can you tell? ______________

Explain HOW the repetition reinforces the claim the author makes. ______________

Activity Three:
1. Nerds are ostracized while athletes are idolized.
   a. Are “nerds” and “athletes” similar or different? ______________ different
   b. What is the opposite of “ostracized”? ______________ idolized

   The words “nerds” and “athletes” are ______________ contrasts ______________. This creates a structure of ______________ reversal (antithesis) ______________. Because the ideas/words are ______________ opposite ______________, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is ______________ opposite ______________.

2. Children who prefer to read books rather than play football, prefer to build model airplanes rather than get wasted at parties with their classmates, become social outcasts.
   a. Which words/phrases are repeated? ______________ “Prefer to” and “rather than”
   b. What activities are listed? Read books and play football/build model airplanes and get wasted at parties
   c. What is the relationship between the activities? ______________ They are contrasts.

   The words ______________ “prefer to” ______________ and ______________ “rather than” ______________ are repeated ______________ and then followed by a verb. This creates a structure of ______________ parallelism ______________. The activities listed, ______________ read books rather than play football and ______________ build model airplanes rather than get wasted at parties ______________ are ______________ contrasts ______________. Because the ideas/words are ______________ opposite ______________, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is ______________ opposite ______________.

3. Just as Harvard, as a whole, reflects diversity in the racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds of its students, each student should reflect a diversity of interest as well.
   a. What shaded words are repeated? ______________ reflects diversity
b. What do these repeated words refer to in the sentence? *both Harvard and “each student”*

c. What other words are repeated? *students*

d. What do you notice about their location in the sentence? *They are close to one another, with “students” ending the first part of the sentence and beginning the second part.*

The words *reflects diversity* and *students* are repeated. This creates a structure of *antimetabole (balance and contrast)*. This structure helps reflect the idea that the diversity seen in the university should also be seen in the *students*.

4. A “nerd” or “geek” is distinguished by a lack of diverse interests, rather than by a presence of intellectualism.

   a. Where do you see contrasts in this sentence? *lack and presence*
   
   b. What is the structure of those contrasting words? *antithesis (which contains parallelism)*
   
   c. What is being defined here? *Nerd or geek*
   
   d. What is the point being made in this sentence? *A nerd is defined by what he lacks rather than what is present in his personality.*

By using the contrast of *lack and presence*, the author suggests that *a nerd or geek is defined by what he lacks rather than what is present in his personality*. The structure of *antithesis* emphasizes this by *balancing both sides of the definition in a way that is easy to compare.*

5. *Thus, a nerd or geek is not, as Mr. Fridman states, a student “for whom pursuing knowledge is the top priority” but a student for whom pursuing knowledge is the sole objective.*

   a. What is the relationship between the underlined words? *The role of knowledge in a “nerd’s” life.*
   
   b. What words are repeated in the sentence? *“a student for whom pursuing knowledge is”*
   
   c. How are those repeated words structured? *anadiplosis*
   
   d. What is the main difference being emphasized with the two parallel clauses? For one group, knowledge is important but only one aspect of life; for the other, it is the only issue.

The words *“a student for whom pursuing knowledge”* create *anadiplosis* to emphasize that, *though both groups pursue knowledge, for one group knowledge is important but only one aspect of life; for the other it is the only issue.*

6. *This is an unfair comparison because Mr. Fridman’s first reference is to how the East Asian child is viewed by teachers, while his second reference is to how the American child is viewed by fellow students.*
a. What is the same in the underlined clauses?  
   how the child is viewed  

b. What is different in the underlined clauses?  
   East Asian and American  

c. What are the two syntactical techniques used here?  
   parallelism (repetition) and antithesis (reversal)  

d. What is the relationship between the highlighted phrases?  
   Teachers and students are contrasting groups.  

e. How do the differences in these phrases and clauses strengthen the claim of “an unfair comparison” in the sentence?  
   The structure makes it easy to see that the “nerds” or intellectuals being compared are an East Asian child who is admired by teachers and an American child who is scorned not by teachers but by students.  

The author’s use of **parallelism (repetition)** and **antithesis (reversal)** strengthens his claim of an unfair comparison by making it easy to see that the “nerds” or intellectuals being compared are an East Asian child who is admired by teachers and an American child who is scorned not by teachers but by students.  

7. Nerdism may also be criticized because it often leads to the pursuit of knowledge not for its own sake, but for the sake of grades.  

a. What word is repeated?  
   sake  

b. What is the antecedent of “its”?  
   knowledge  

c. What type of repetition is being used here?  
   anadiplosis  

d. By repeating the word in this order, what does the author achieve?  
   By repeating “sake” close together, the author emphasizes that the reason a “nerd” pursues knowledge is for a different reason than it should be—not for the sake of knowledge but for another reason—grades.  

By using **anadiplosis** in the repetition of the word “sake,” the author emphasizes that the reason a “nerd” pursues knowledge is for a different reason that it should be—not for the sake of knowledge but for another reason—grades.
## Syntax and Persuasion
### High School Lesson

**Activity One:** In the activity below are ten quotations by famous people, but part of each quotation is missing. First, answer the questions following the quotes. Then find the phrase or clause in the Answer Bank that best completes the statement. Use the “Syntactical Terms” handout as a resource. The first one is done for you as an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Bank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. do we not live in dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. dreams are private myths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. education is life itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not</td>
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<tr>
<td>E. Not to have tried is the true failure</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. others to break records</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. really made of gold</td>
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<tr>
<td>H. that is why I succeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. the key to failure is trying to please everybody</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. tomorrow’s questions</td>
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1. **Education is not preparation for life; _____________** —John Dewey
   - **anaphora:** The first word of the missing phrase will probably be **_education_**
   - **antithesis:** The second phrase may suggest that education is **_living life_**
     (Think of something that contrasts with preparation.)
     - The correct completion is probably **_C_**

2. **Dreams are true while they last, and _____________?** —Alfred, Lord Tennyson
   - **epanalepsis:** The last word of the missing phrase will probably be _____________
   - The correct completion is probably _____________

3. **Dreams are today’s answers to _____________.** —Edgar Cayce
   - **antithesis:** The opposite of answers is ____________
   - The correct completion is probably ____________

4. **Myths are public dreams, ____________.** —Joseph Campbell
   - **anadiplosis:** The first word of the missing phrase will probably be ____________
   - **antimetabole:** What is the opposite of a public dream? ____________
   - The correct completion is probably ____________
5. **There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... _____?** —Robert Kennedy
   - **epistrophe:** The last word of the missing phrase will probably be ________________
   - **antithesis:** The second phrase may suggest the speaker looks at things ________________
     _____ and asks ________________ (Remember that antithesis expresses opposites.)
   - The correct completion is probably ______

6. **Defeat is not the worst of failures. _____**. —George E. Woodberry
   - **epistrophe:** The last word of the missing phrase will probably be ________________
   - The correct completion is probably ______

7. **I don’t know the key to success, but _____**. —Bill Cosby
   - **anadiplosis:** The first word of the missing phrase will probably be ________________
     or possibly ________________
   - **antithesis:** What is the opposite of success? ________________
   - The correct completion is probably ______

8. **I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life and _____**. —Michael Jordan
   - **antithesis:** What is the opposite of failed? ________________
   - The correct completion is probably ______

9. **Adversity causes some men to break; _____**. —William A. Ward
   - **epistrophe:** The last word of the missing phrase will probably be ________________
   - **ellipsis:** The second phrase will leave a word or words out. What is the most important
     word in the first section that might be implied in the second? ________________
   - The correct completion is probably ______

10. **Gold medals aren’t _____ . They’re made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts.** —Dan Gable
    - **epanalepsis:** The last word of the missing phrase will probably be ________________
    - The correct completion is probably ______
Activity Two:
1. Choose one quote that includes **reversal** and write the complete quotation:

What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? ______________________________________
What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) ______________
What kind of reversal is it? ______________________________________________________
How can you tell? ______________________________________________________________
Explain HOW the reversal of ideas reinforces the claim the author makes. ________________

2. Choose one quote that includes **repetition** and write the complete quotation:

What is the ABSTRACT SUBJECT of the quote? ______________________________________
What is the claim? (What does the author have to say about the SUBJECT?) ______________
What kind of repetition is it? _____________________________________________________
How can you tell? ______________________________________________________________
Explain HOW the repetition reinforces the claim the author makes. ________________

Activity Three: The following activity takes a closer look at the structure of the syntax in “America Needs Its Nerds” and “All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Nerd” to analyze how the structure of the sentences reinforces the meaning. In the following activity, the underlined and shaded parts of the sentence create a syntactically rich pattern. Answer the questions. Then use your answers to the questions to help complete the fill-in-the-blank analysis of the effect. Some answers have been provided to get you started.

from “America Needs its Nerds”

1. Nerds are ostracized while athletes are idolized.
   a. Are “nerds” and “athletes” similar or different? different
   b. What is the opposite of “ostracized”? idolized

   The words “nerds” and “athletes” are contrasts. This creates a structure of reversal (antithesis). Because the ideas/words are opposite, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is opposite.

2. Children who prefer to read books rather than play football, prefer to build model airplanes rather than get wasted at parties with their classmates, become social outcasts.
   a. Which words/phrases are repeated? “Prefer to” and “rather than”
   b. What activities are listed? Read books and play football/build model airplanes and get wasted at parties
   c. What is the relationship between the activities? They are contrasts.

   The words and are repeated and then followed by a verb. This creates a structure of . The activities listed, read books rather than play football and build model airplanes and get wasted at parties, are opposite. Because the ideas/words are opposite, this suggests that the way nerds and athletes are treated is opposite.

from “All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Nerd”

3. Just as Harvard, as a whole, reflects diversity in the racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds of its students, each student should reflect a diversity of interest as well.
   a. What shaded words are repeated?
   b. What do these repeated words refer to in the sentence?
   c. What other words are repeated?
d. What do you notice about their location in the sentence?  

The words ________________________ and ________________________ are repeated. This creates a structure of ________________________. This structure helps reflect the idea that the diversity seen in the university should also be seen in ________________________.

4. A “nerd” or “geek” is distinguished by a lack of diverse interests, rather than by a presence of intellectualism.

   a. Where do you see contrasts in this sentence? ________________________
   b. What is the structure of those contrasting words? ________________________
   c. What is being defined here? ________________________
   d. What is the point being made in this sentence? ________________________

By using the contrast of ________________________, the author suggests that ________________________. The structure of ________________________ emphasizes this by ________________________.

5. Thus, a nerd or geek is not, as Mr. Fridman states, a student “for whom pursuing knowledge is the top priority” but a student for whom pursuing knowledge is the sole objective.

   a. What is the relationship between the underlined words? ________________________
   b. What words are repeated in the sentence? ________________________
   c. How are those repeated words structured? ________________________
   d. What is the main difference being emphasized with the two parallel clauses? _________

The words “______________________________” create ________________________ to emphasize that ________________________.
6. **This is an unfair comparison because Mr. Fridman’s first reference is to how the East Asian child is viewed by teachers, while his second reference is to how the American child is viewed by fellow students.**

   a. What is the same in the underlined clauses? ____________________________
   b. What is different in the underlined clauses? ____________________________
   c. What are the two syntactical techniques used here? ______________________ and ______________________
   d. What is the relationship between the highlighted phrases? ________________
   e. How do the differences in these phrases and clauses strengthen the claim of “an unfair comparison” in the sentence? ____________________________

   The author’s use of __________________________ and __________________________ strengthens his claim of __________________________ by __________________________

7. **Nerdism may also be criticized because it often leads to the pursuit of knowledge not for its own sake, but for the sake of grades.**

   a. What word is repeated? __________________________
   b. What is the antecedent of “its”? __________________________
   c. What type of repetition is being used here? __________________________
   d. By repeating the word in this order, what does the author achieve? ________________

   By using __________________________ in the repetition of the word __________________________, the author emphasizes ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________