



## PENNY & THE PUNCTUATION BEE

by Moira Donohue

*Adapted for readers' theater by Kim Norman from the picture book ©2008 by Moira Donohue, published by Albert Whitman & Co., Park Ridge, Illinois, 2008*

**ROLES** - 11 total:

Narrators 1, 2 & 3; Penny, Quentin, Elsie, Connie, Mr. Dash, Mom, Dad, Principal Paragraph

### **SCRIPT**

NARR 1: Penny stopped short when she saw the sign on Mr. Dash's door.

NARR 2: Penny, a period, was good at stopping. That's why she was on the safety patrol.

NARR 3: The hallway was crowded with punctuation marks. Connie, a comma, and Penny's best friend, Quentin, a question mark, joined her to read the sign.

PENNY, CONNIE & QUENTIN: "Punctuation Bee, Friday, 2:00."

QUENTIN: Are you signing up? Should I?

PENNY: Save the questions for your next school newspaper article and just do it.

NARR 1: Quentin pulled a pencil from the spiral binding on his reporter's note pad. He wrote his name and handed the pencil to Penny.

NARR 2: Elsie, an exclamation point, bounced up in her cheerleader uniform.

ELSIE: Yay! The Punctuation Bee! An exclamation point has won for the last three years!

PENNY: Maybe it's time someone else won.

NARR 3: Elsie looked at the sign-up list.

ELSIE: Not likely, if *this* is the competition!

PENNY: Quentin, exclamation points are so loud. Let's go practice.

QUENTIN: Where? When? Should we get a snack?

PENNY: Quentin, stop asking questions. We have work to do.

NARR 1: As they walked away, a hyphen dashed by.

PENNY: Stop running,

NARR 2: said Penny in her best patrol voice.

NARR 3: At Penny's house, the two friends wrote words on note cards.

NARR 1: Quentin held up a card that said "WIN" and turned over the thirty-second timer.

NARR 2: Penny had to make a sentence using the word and her punctuation mark.

NARR 3: Penny stared at the word and thought hard.

PENNY: We won't let Elsie win.

QUENTIN: We won't?

NARR 1: Penny shook her head firmly.

PENNY: No, we won't.

NARR 2: Then Penny held up a card that said "CAT."

QUENTIN: The cat chased the dog.

NARR 3: Penny laughed.

PENNY: That's funny, but it's not a question.

NARR 1: Quentin tried again.

QUENTIN: Did you ever see a cat chase a dog?

PENNY: Good job.

NARR 2: They practiced for two hours. Finally, Quentin held up the word "PIE."

PENNY: (shouting) I love pie!

QUENTIN: No, that's an exclamation. Are you tired? Do you want to stop?

NARR 3: Before Penny could answer her mother announced:

MOTHER: Quentin, your dad is here to pick you up.

NARR 1: After dinner, Penny went to her bedroom to practice by herself.

NARR 2: She made declarative sentences about everything there.

PENNY: The picture is crooked. My cat's name is Dottie.

NARR 3: Penny's dad came into the room.

DAD: Penny, you should get some sleep.

NARR 1: He handed her hot cocoa and tucked her into bed.

PENNY: I have to practice if I want to beat Elsie.

NARR 2: She took a sip of the cocoa.

PENNY: The cocoa is hot. My pillow is...

NARR 3: Penny fell asleep in the middle of a sentence.

NARR 1: The next day...

NARR 2: at 2:00 on the dot...

NARR 3: the contestants lined up outside the gym.

NARR 1: Connie was first, followed by Collin, a colon; Stella, an asterisk; Penny; and Quentin.

NARR 2: The quotation mark twins, Quinn and Lynn, rolled up, chattering breathlessly.

NARR 3: Penny felt fizzy, like a shaken-up soda. Quentin tapped her on the shoulder.

QUENTIN: Are you nervous? Are you ready?

PENNY: I think I'm ready. Good luck!

NARR 1: They filed into the gym.

NARR 2: The entire school was squished together on the floor. Penny's mother waved from the audience.

MOM: Hi, Penny!

NARR 3: Mr. Dash said:

MR. DASH: Contestants, please sit down.

NARR 1: Penny noticed an empty chair. Where was Elsie?

NARR 2: Then Elsie came hopping into the gym.

ELSIE: Sorry I'm late! I just made cheerleading captain! Yay!

NARR 3: Penny didn't say it, but she thought:

PENNY: Bragger.

MR. DASH: Take your seat, Elsie,

NARR 1: Mr. Dash said.

MR. DASH: Contestants, when I call your name, please approach the microphone. Phrase your answer in the form of a sentence, and use your punctuation mark correctly.

NARR 2: Mr. Dash pointed to the shiny trophy.

MR. DASH: The winner will receive this prize. Good luck, everyone.

NARR 3: The first contestant was Connie the comma.

NARR 1: Mr. Dash held up the word

MR. DASH: "Peas."

NARR 2: Connie smiled.

CONNIE: My brother hates carrots, beans, and especially peas.

NARR 3: The school secretary typed the sentence. It appeared on a big screen.

MR. DASH: Well done. One point for- wait! That sentence has two commas. Let me check the official Punctuation Bee rules. Yes, Connie earns an extra point for using two commas.

NARR 1, 2 & 3: PING!

NARR 1: went the scoreboard, and the number "2" lit up next to Connie's name.

NARR 2: Then Quentin's turn came. Mr. Dash held up:

MR. DASH: "Pirates."

QUENTIN: Do pirates wear pajamas?

NARR 3: Everyone laughed. The other newspaper reporters whooped and whistled as the scoreboard lit up a "1" for Quentin.

NARR 1: Elsie just rolled her eyes.

NARR 2: That made Penny more determined than ever to win.

NARR 3: Penny was next. She got the word:

MR. DASH: "Street."

NARR 1: Penny tugged on her safety patrol belt. A thought flashed through her mind.

PENNY: Always wait behind the safety patrol before crossing the street.

NARR 2: The safety patrol squad applauded, and "1" lit up next to Penny's name.

NARR 3: Elsie jumped up to the microphone before her name was called. Mr. Dash held up the word:

MR. DASH: "Flip."

NARR 2: Elsie shouted:

ELSIE: I can do a flip!

NARR 3: And she did one.

NARR 1: The cheerleaders in the audience did flips, too.

NARR 2: Penny didn't say it, but she thought:

PENNY: Show-offs.

NARR 3: The bee continued.

NARR 1: One by one, punctuation marks dropped out.

NARR 2: Even Connie ran out of things to list.

MR. DASH: We're down to the final three contestants-Quentin, Penny, and Elsie. We'll continue until only one mark is left-but now you will each get the same word. I'll ask Penny and Elsie to turn around and cover their ears until called.

NARR 3: Quentin approached the microphone. Mr. Dash held up:

MR. DASH: "Teacher."

QUENTIN: Who is your teacher?

MR. DASH: Very good. This time, Elsie is next.

NARR 1: Elsie turned around.

ELSIE: (shouting) My teacher is terrific!

MR. DASH: Penny, you're next. You can turn around now.

NARR 2: Penny turned and looked at the word. She tapped her chin. Nothing came.

MR. DASH: Five seconds.

NARR 3: Penny looked at him and blurted:

PENNY: Mr. Dash is my teacher.

NARR 1, 2 & 3: PING!

NARR 1: Penny got another point.

NARR 2: Suddenly the loudspeaker hummed to life with the booming voice of the principal

PRINCIPAL PARAGRAPH: Students, the buses are here. Please return to your classrooms for dismissal.

MR. DASH: Well, it appears we have a three-way tie.

NARR 3: A tie? They hadn't beaten Elsie! Penny looked at Quentin. He was pointing to the screen.

QUENTIN: Mr. Dash? What about Penny's abbreviation?

PENNY: That's right.

NARR 1: Her class had just learned to make abbreviations.

PENNY: I used a period twice-once after "Mr." and once at the end of the sentence.

NARR 2: Penny held her breath.

MR. DASH: Penny and Quentin are right-Penny gets an extra point!

NARR 3: The scoreboard whistled...

NARR 1: and pinged...

NARR 2: and flashed...

NARR 1, 2 & 3: ...like fireworks on the Fourth of July!

MR. DASH: Congratulations to our champion!

NARR 3: Mr. Dash handed Penny the sparkling trophy.

ALL: Yay!!! Hooray!!!

NARR 1: Elsie drooped until she looked like a question mark.

NARR 2: Penny held out the trophy to Quentin.

NARR 3: And although it meant using an exclamation point, she said,

PENNY: Quentin, we *did* it!!



## Teacher Guidelines PUNCTUATION BEE TODAY!

Want to try a different approach to get your class excited about punctuation? Try running a Punctuation Bee! There are any number of ways you can structure it. Here are just a few ideas:

### PENNY-STYLE BEE:

- Assign a punctuation mark to each student (more than one child can have the same mark).
- Give each participant a laminated punctuation mark to hang or pin on.
- Call students one at a time.
- Hold up a large note card with a simple word.
- Set a timer for 30 seconds.
- Ask each student to make a sentence using the word and the punctuation mark at least once. Extra points for using the punctuation mark more than once (for example: the comma, apostrophe, period or quotation mark) are optional.
- Write the sentence on the board so students can see how the mark is used.
- Students who are unsuccessful are eliminated.
- Continue until only one student is left - the winner!

*Note* - For younger learners, limit the marks to the three final punctuation marks; for older learners, omit the word prompt.

### VARIATIONS:

- Instead of assigning a punctuation mark, hold up the word and a randomly selected punctuation mark and ask him or her to write a sentence using the mark and the word. For a second round, give the student two marks (or ask him or her to use the mark twice) *and* two words.
- Give each student a simple sentence, written on a board or a large sign. Ask the student to add the missing punctuation mark (For example: How are you). Continue until all but one student is eliminated.

**FOR MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS:** Set up teams. Have teams punctuate sentences or an entire paragraph and see how many marks they use correctly. You can use sentences from books the children are likely to have read.

**FOR BEGINNING PUNCTUATION LEARNERS:** Ask students draw animals using only punctuation marks!



Not sure how to proceed? I am available for workshops on how to set up a Punctuation Bee and other ways to make punctuation come alive for young students. Or invite me to your school to do one of my programs, detailed on my website at [www.moirarosedonohue.net](http://www.moirarosedonohue.net). If you try a Punctuation Bee, I'd love to hear about it—you can email me at [moirawrite@cox.net](mailto:moirawrite@cox.net).



## WHAT PUNCTUATION MARK ARE YOU?

1. Which job would you like best?
  - (a) Newspaper reporter.
  - (b) Movie star.
  - (c) Cheerleader.
  - (d) Clockmaker.
  - (e) Um, well, I'm not sure.
  
2. In class, do you...
  - (a) ask a lot of questions?
  - (b) know all the answers?
  - (c) encourage others?
  - (d) watch the clock?
  - (e) wait and answer carefully?
  
3. You are invited to a party...
  - (a) You first find out where and when.
  - (b) You put on your sparkliest clothes.
  - (c) Yay!
  - (d) What time?
  - (e) You make a list of who's invited.
  
4. Which food do you like best?
  - (a) spaghetti
  - (b) ring pops and candy necklaces
  - (c) hot dogs
  - (d) fried eggs
  - (e) shrimp
  
5. Your dream vacation would be...
  - (a) Visiting Presidential birthplaces.
  - (b) Hollywood.
  - (c) Someplace with a great sports team.
  - (d) Greenwich, England
  - (e) Um, I have to make a list.

How to score the quiz:

If you have three or more (a)'s - ? (question mark)

If you have three or more (b)'s - \* (asterisk)

If you have three or more (c)'s - ! (exclamation point)

If you have three or more (d)'s - : (colon)

If you have three or more (e)'s - , (comma).

If you don't have three or more of any one letter, you are an interrobang ???!!!