

## Semicolons: An Extension

In the section below, you'll find three passages whose authors either choose to use the semicolon or choose not to use the semicolon. Read the excerpts closely and answer the questions following each passage.

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### Stephen Chbosky – *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

After the dance, we left in Sam's pickup. Patrick was driving this time. As we were approaching the Fort Pitt Tunnel, Sam asked Patrick to pull to the side of the road. I didn't know what was going on. Sam then climbed in the back of the pickup, wearing nothing but her dance dress. She told Patrick to drive, and he got this smile on his face. I guess they had done this before.

Anyway, Patrick started driving really fast, and just before we got to the tunnel, Sam stood up, and the wind turned her dress into ocean waves. When we hit the tunnel, all the sound got scooped up into a vacuum, and it was replaced by a song on the tape player. A beautiful song called "Landslide." When we got out of the tunnel, Sam screamed this really fun scream, and there it was. Downtown. Lights on buildings and everything that makes you wonder. Sam sat down and started laughing. Patrick started laughing. I started laughing.

And in that moment, I swear we were infinite.

1. Chbosky obviously chooses to forgo all use of the semicolon in this passage. Choose two sentences he could have combined with a semicolon and explain what the punctuation mark would have added to the text.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why do you think Chbosky chose to separate all of his sentences with periods or commas? What does this decision add to the voice and style of the passage? What does it take away?

## **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – “The Red-headed League”**

What a time it seemed! From comparing notes afterwards it was but an hour and a quarter, yet it appeared to me that the night bus have almost gone, and the dawn be breaking above us. My limbs were wearing and stiff, for I feared to change my position; yet my nerves were worked up to the highest pitch of tension, and my hearing was so acute that I could not only hear the gentle breathing of my companions, but I could distinguish the deeper, heavier breathing of the bulky Jones from the thin, sighing note of the bank director. From my position I could look over the case in the direction of the floor. Suddenly, my eyes caught the glint of a light.

1. Doyle uses just one semicolon here. Do you think that this semicolon was wisely placed? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does the semicolon add to the sentence that a comma or period could not?

## **John Steinbeck – *The Pearl***

He listened again, an animal light in his eyes. He stood up then, silently; and crouched low, he treaded his way through the brush toward the road. But he did not step into the road; he crept into the cover of a thorny tree and peered out along the way he had come.

1. In this short paragraph, Steinbeck uses the semicolon twice. How do you think that the frequency of the Steinbeck’s semicolon use takes away or adds to the effect of the semicolon?