Sentence Composing Activities  
“Snow” By Julia Alvarez

Skill Focus

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Materials and Resources
- “Snow” by Julia Alvarez

Lesson Introduction
This lesson provides practice with the four sentence composing techniques described in Don Killgallon’s Sentence Composing for Middle School:
- sentence unscrambling
- sentence imitating
- sentence combining
- sentence expanding

Students will unscramble, imitate, decombine, combine, and expand various sentences from the short story “Snow,” by Julia Alvarez. After completing activities, students will read the story, during which time they will find the original sentences and compare those sentences with the ones they have created.
Sentence Composing Activities
“Snow” by Julia Alvarez

**Sentence Unscrambling:**
1. Unscramble the following sentence parts to create one logical sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

   hefty women in long black gowns and bonnets
   like dolls in mourning.
   Our first year in New York
   taught by the Sisters of Charity,
   that made them look peculiar,
   we rented a small apartment
   with a Catholic school nearby,

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

2. Unscramble the following sentence parts to create one logical sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

   apart from the other children
   As the only immigrant in my class,
   could tutor me
   I was put in a special seat
   in the first row by the window,
   so that Sister Zoe
   without disturbing them.

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

   __________________________________________

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Sentence Imitating:
3. Write a sentence that imitates the following sentence. Make all of your sentence parts match the parts in the original sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

   Sister Zoe explained to a wide-eyed classroom what was happening in Cuba.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

4. Write a sentence that imitates the following sentence. Make all of your sentence parts match the parts in the original sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

   Russian missiles were being assembled, trained supposedly on New York City.

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Sentence Decombining
5. Express the content of the following sentence in shorter sentences.

   Sister Zoe jerked around, her full black skirt ballooning as she hurried to my side.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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6. Express the content of the following sentence in shorter sentences.

   All my life I had heard about the white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter.

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Sentence Combining
7. Combine the following list of sentences to create one sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

President Kennedy was on the television.
President Kennedy was looking worried too.
The television was at home.
President Kennedy explained something.
He explained that we might have to go to war.
The war would be against the Communists.

8. Combine the following list of sentences to create one sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

A bell would go off.
The bell was ominous.
We would file into the hall.
We would fall to the floor.
We would cover our heads with our coats.
We would imagine our hair falling out.
We would imagine some bones going soft.
The bones were in our arms.
Sentence Expanding

9. Complete the following sentence by adding your own words. Try to add approximately the number of words in parentheses. Write your sentence in the space provided.

She drew a picture of a mushroom on the blackboard (15).

10. Complete the following sentence by adding your own words. Try to add approximately the number of words in parentheses. Write your sentence in the space provided.

One morning as I sat at my desk daydreaming out the window, (21)

Additional Activities

11. Unscramble the following sentence; then write a sentence that imitates the unscrambled sentence. Write your sentences in the space provided.

- each flake was different
- irreplaceable and beautiful
- like a person
- Sister Zoe had said
12. Combine the following sentence parts into one sentence; then write a sentence that imitates this sentence. Write your sentences in the space provided.

   From my desk I watched something.
   I watched the fine powder.
   The powder dusted the sidewalk.
   The powder dusted the parked cars.
   The cars were below.

________________________________________________________________________

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13. Unscramble the following sentence to match the model sentence. Then write an original sentence that imitates the model. Write your sentences in the space provided.

   **Model sentence:** It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school.

     angry
     during the night
     frightened
     I was
     on the line
     when I heard the dial tone
     when the telephone rang

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Our first year in New York we rented a small apartment with a Catholic school nearby, taught by the Sisters of Charity, hefty women in long black gowns and bonnets that made them look peculiar, like dolls in mourning. I liked them a lot, especially my grandmotherly fourth-grade teacher, Sister Zoe. I had a lovely name, she said, and she had me teach the whole class how to pronounce it. Yo-lan-da. As the only immigrant in my class, I was put in a special seat in the first row by the window, apart from the other children so that Sister Zoe could tutor me without disturbing them. Slowly, she enunciated the new words I was to repeat: laundromat, corn flakes, subway, snow.

Soon I picked up enough English to understand holocaust was in the air. Sister Zoe explained to a wide-eyed classroom what was happening in Cuba. Russian missiles were being assembled, trained supposedly on New York City. President Kennedy, looking worried too, was on the television at home, explaining we might have to go to war against the Communists. At school, we had air-raid drills: An ominous bell would go off and we’d file into the hall, fall to the floor, cover our heads with our coats, and imagine our hair falling out, the bones in our arms going soft. At home, Mami and my sisters and I said a rosary for world peace. I heard new vocabulary: nuclear bomb, radioactive fallout, bomb shelter. Sister Zoe explained how it would happen. She drew a picture of a mushroom on the blackboard and dotted a flurry of chalkmarks for the dusty fallout that would kill us all.

The months grew cold, November, December. It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school. One morning as I sat at my desk daydreaming out the window, I saw dots in the air like the ones Sister Zoe had drawn—random at first, then lots and lots. I shrieked, “Bomb! Bomb!” Sister Zoe jerked around, her full black skirt ballooning as she hurried to my side. A few girls began to cry.

But then Sister Zoe’s shocked look faded. “Why, Yolanda dear, that’s snow!” She laughed. “Snow.”

“Snow,” I repeated. I looked out the window warily. All my life I had heard about the white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter. From my desk I watched the fine powder dust the sidewalk and parked cars below. Each flake was different, Sister Zoe had said, like a person, irreplaceable and beautiful.