

Books by the Author

- *Alfie the Apostrophe*. Scholastic, Inc. 2006. ISBN: 978-0-9075-0355-6.
- *Penny and the Punctuation Bee*. Albert Whitman & Company. 2008. ISBN: 978-0-8075-6477-6.

About the Author

[from www.moirarosedonohue.net]

Moira Rose Donohue, a lawyer, playwright, and dancer, is the author of two children's books. She has been fascinated by writing and punctuation since she was a small child growing up in New York. She has lived all over the country but currently lives in Northern Virginia with her husband, their two children, and two dogs.

Suggested Activities

Note to Teacher: These books are directed toward students in grades 1-3 but would be very suitable for making grammar and punctuation accessible to older students. They can be used together to introduce or reinforce study of all punctuation marks. All activities can be used for either book.

Alfie the Apostrophe

In this book, Alfie is nervous about the school punctuation mark talent show, where each punctuation mark is going to show the audience his or her best quality. Alfie has been practicing all summer but is afraid that he will not do well.

1. Read the book aloud to the class. Talk about the elements of the plot:
 - a. A talent show, with everyone doing their best.
 - b. Differences among students, with each person having unique skills and talents.
 - c. Persevering through fear and trepidation to do your best work.
2. Read the book again, identifying the various punctuation marks in the pictures and writing them down.
3. Analyze the jokes built into the text, such as "It's all Greek to me" and "Quotation marks were often filled with hot air."
4. With props such as a SMART board or chart paper, direct a student to demonstrate Alfie's tricks—changing words into contractions or possessives.
5. Over time, create a list of words on the word wall that can be changed into contractions or possessives, highlighting Alfie with color.
6. Use a SMART board, or a paper handout, to direct the students to match the words with their contractions: will not and won't, can not and can't, etc. For example:
Could not — Couldn't Do not —Don't Had not —Hadn't
Will not —Won't Have not —Haven't

7. In your daily message, leave out punctuation marks or use incorrect punctuation marks and ask the children to identify the mistakes and correct them. For more examples of this activity, see *Postcards for Learning*—an Apple Learning Interchange exhibit about using postcards to teach grammar and punctuation at <http://edcommunity.apple.com/ali/story.php?itemID=460&version=225&pageID=616>.

Vocabulary words for *Alfie the Apostrophe*

apostrophe	dash	parenthesis	question mark
asterisk	exclamation point	period	question mark
comma	Greek and Greece	possessive	transform
contraction	hyphen	punctuation	volunteer

Penny and the Punctuation Bee

In this book, Penny, a period, signs up for the punctuation bee held by her reading teacher, Mr. Dash. All her schoolmates are eager to win, although the exclamation point has won for the last three years. Penny is determined to break this streak.

1. Read the book aloud to the class. Explain the premise behind the punctuation bee—a competition in which each student has to use his or her mark correctly and has to use as many as are appropriate.
2. Read the book again, stopping to identify the various marks and their uses. Write each mark and give a short example of its use. Note the contestants' names because they were carefully chosen by the author to exemplify the marks (on the chalkboard in the pictures of the bee). For example, Quentin is a question mark, Connie is a comma, Stella is an asterisk, etc.
3. Consider focusing on a punctuation mark of the week, and direct students to draw each week's mark, to name it, and to bring in or point out examples that they find in reading or in daily life. Create a bulletin board of examples of each mark, and take pictures before the board is changed each week.
4. Write a sentence on a SMART board or chalk board. Use different punctuation marks to change the meaning of the sentence. A good place to find examples of this is in Lynne Truss' book, *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: Why, Commas Really Do Make a Difference!* After awhile, students will be able to make up their own examples or recognize them in their reading.
5. Use spelling or word study words, and direct each student to draw a word out of a tub of known words and to make a sentence using the punctuation mark of the week.

6. Consider having a punctuation bee similar to the one in the book. Consider the skill level of the students in your class and make sure that this will not penalize the students who are learning English or have special needs.

Vocabulary words for *Penny and the Punctuation Bee*

abbreviation	comma	hyphen	question mark
asterisk	competition	patrol	quotation mark
champion	contestant	period	trophy
colon	exclamation mark	punctuation bee	

Suggested Internet Resources

Alien Punctuation

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize/literacy/punctuation/index.shtml

An interactive game to help students with punctuation

Eats, Shoots and Leaves Punctuation Game

www.eatsshootsandleaves.com/ESLquiz.html

An interactive game based on the book by Lynne Truss

Edit Dan's Copy Game

teacher.scholastic.com/activities/adventure/grammar2.htm

Students practice editing copy for capitalization and punctuation errors

Literacy Teaching Ideas—Writing (Punctuation and Grammar)

www.teachingideas.co.uk/english/contents09writingpunctuationgrammar.htm

Punctuation and grammar ideas and resources

National Punctuation Day

nationalpunctuationday.com/index.html

Web site that celebrates the importance of proper punctuation

Punctuation Games

www.gamequarium.com/punctuation.html

Online educational games with emphasis on punctuation and grammar

Sentence Clubhouse Game

www.harcourtschool.com/activity/clubhouse/index.html

Online game to help students with grammar and punctuation