Name:

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Polysyndeton

Polysyndeton is the repetition of conjunctions in close succession, often without commas, to create a particular effect.

For example, in Ernest Hemingway's short story *After the Storm*, he writes:

"I said, 'Who killed him?' and he said, 'I don't know who killed him, but he's dead all right,' and it was dark and there was water standing in the street and no lights and windows broke and boats all up in the town and trees blown down and everything all blown and I got a skiff and went out and found my boat where I had her inside Mango Key and she was right only she was full of water."

The repeated use of "and" in this passage is a clear example of polysyndeton.

Here's another example from the *Book of Joshua* in the King James Bible:

"And Joshua, and all of Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his donkeys, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had."

Once again, the repetition of "and" highlights the use of polysyndeton.

Writers use polysyndeton for a variety of purposes, depending on the tone or rhythm they want to create. One common effect is that it slows the reader down and gives equal importance to each item in a list. By doing so, it allows the audience to absorb information more deliberately—especially when the writer wants certain details to stand out.

In Hemingway's paragraph, polysyndeton adds a kind of weight or exhaustion to the moment. The piling of "and"s mirrors the piling of tragedy, chaos, and destruction. It forces the reader to take in each detail individually, building a vivid and heavy atmosphere.

In the passage from Joshua, polysyndeton gives each item—whether person, animal, or object—equal weight. This creates a sense of totality, showing that nothing was spared or left out.

Polysyndeton can also be used to convey excitement, urgency, or even a character's rapid thoughts. For example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen writes:

"Mrs. Hurst and her sister allowed it to be so—but still they admired her and liked her, and pronounced her to be a sweet girl, and one whom they would not object to know more of."

Here, the polysyndeton suggests a flurry of judgments and social observations, adding rhythm and momentum to the sentence.

Now it’s your turn.

Write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. Somewhere in your paragraph, include a sentence that uses polysyndeton. Afterward, explain why you chose to use it and what effect you hoped to create.