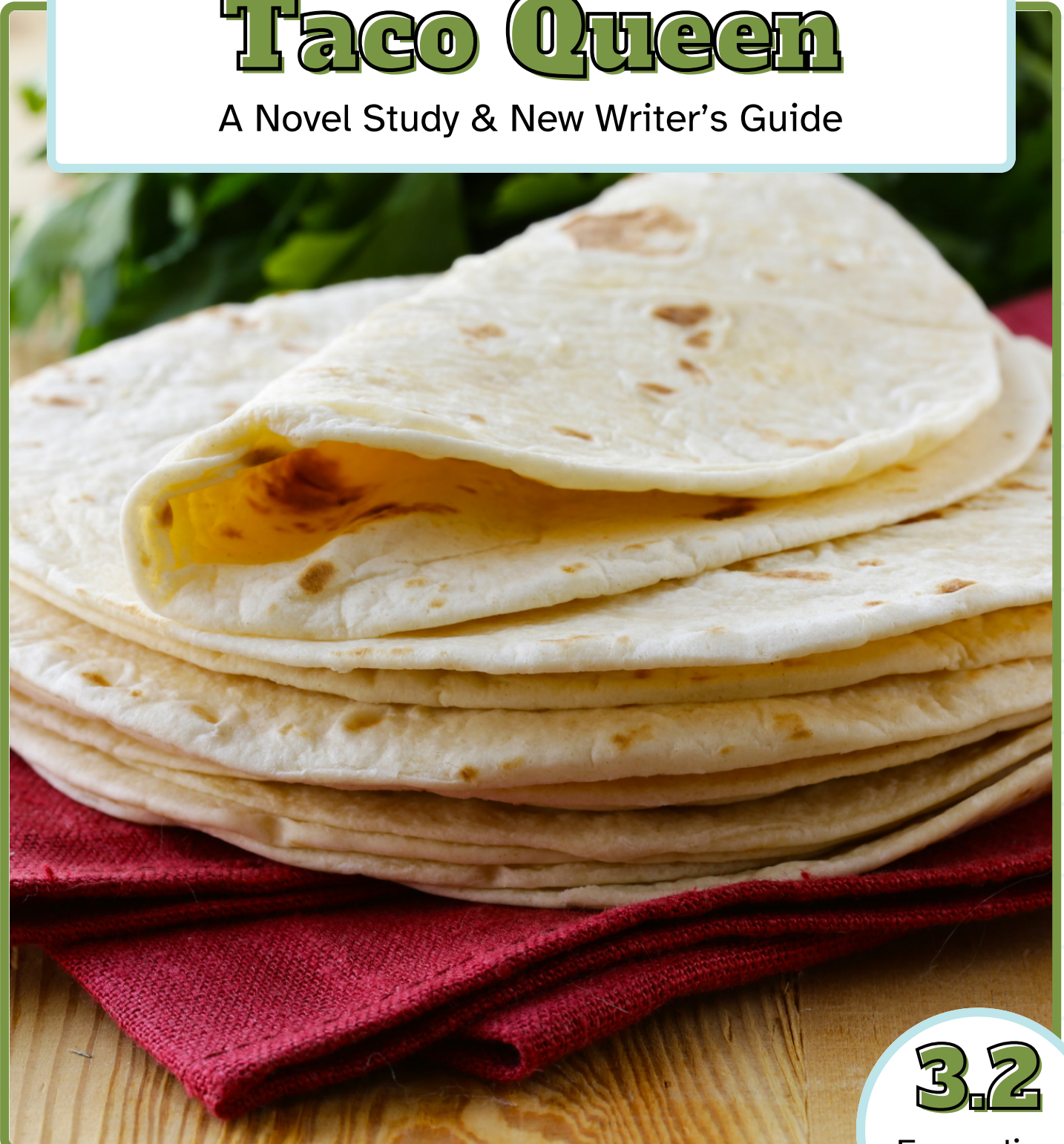


Stef Soto, Taco Queen

A Novel Study & New Writer's Guide



3.2

Expanding
Sentences

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TERMS OF USE

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WELCOME!

In this unit, you and your learner will follow Stef Soto as she discovers confidence, community, and her own voice when it's needed the most. Through discussion, short writing exercises, and hands-on activities, your learner will strengthen comprehension, critical thinking, and creativity. Take your time, enjoy each step of the journey, and maybe even share a taco or two along the way!

How this Guide is Structured:

Stef Soto, Taco Queen is 36 chapters long and the full guide is scheduled over the course of 20 days. Chapters are chunked together 2 at a time, for an average of about 10 pages of reading per day. The final chapters of the book move quickly, so week 4 only includes 2 days of reading for the final 6 chapters, and 5 days of writing review.

Daily flow includes novel reading, followed by comprehension questions and a discussion topic, then 1-2 pages of writing instruction. Every 5th day, writing instruction is swapped for a unit-long project.

Reading Recommendation:

How you and your learner digest the reading is up to you. Every learner is different and many third graders are still completing their phonics instruction and building the stamina to read longer passages of text. Feel free to take turns reading, completing the entire book as a read aloud, or listening to the audiobook. Whatever method you choose, know that *this guide was written to be completely adult-led*.

Modifications:

All learners are different and you may be working with learners of various abilities. Feel free to make modifications as needed. Scribe for your learner, have them answer comprehension questions out loud instead of writing them down, go off paper and use a whiteboard, spread a single lesson out over 2 days! You know what is best.

What You'll Study:

Beginning writer's guides focus on reading comprehension, critical thinking skills, and beginning writing concepts. Grammar instruction beyond what is necessary to practice the focused writing concepts is NOT included. Spelling is not included and sentence writing activities in this guide will not instruct you to correct spelling mistakes. The Abundant Freedom philosophy is that heavier grammar and spelling instruction is better delayed until after all phonics instruction is complete. If you feel different, please feel free to supplement these subjects.

Covered Topics

Writing

- Sentence Review
- Basic editing
- Sentence Expansion
- Connecting sentences

Grammar

- Pronouns
- Adverbs
- Conjunctions
- Appositives

Literary Devices

- Flashbacks
- Foreshadowing
- Irony
- Theme

Appendix:

This guide includes an appendix in a separate file. The appendix contains additional information on pursuing deep dives, additional support cards, and additional practice pages.

Answer Key:

This guide includes an answer key in a separate file. The answer key contains expected or common answers to all of the material in the workbook, as well as some points to consider for discussion questions. There are no right or wrong answers for discussions, encourage your learner to lead the way as to how much to answer. I recommend keeping the Answer Key on hand during lessons for examples where writing lesson answers are more open-ended.

Note: *Additional guidance and references to the Answer Key are NOT included in regular lesson pages.*

Secular Disclaimer:

While this guide is secular, please note that the main character attends a private school and there are brief mentions of church and Sunday school. No religious scenes are depicted in the book.

Note: *Please screen all media and links to be sure they align with your family values.*

All QR codes in this document are also clickable.

Supply List

- Pencil
- A copy of the novel [Stef Soto, Taco Queen](#) by Jennifer Torres
- Scissors
- A highlighter
- A children's thesaurus
- An “editing pen”
At this age, a great fun tool for this is one of those multi-colored pens.
- A 6-sided die
- Access to the internet
If you are using this guide digitally, all QR codes are clickable.

Project/ Craft Supplies

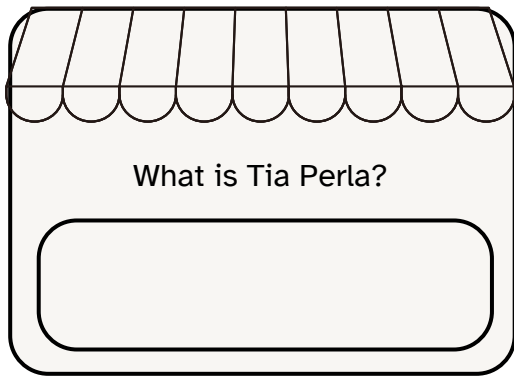
- Glue/Glue sticks
- Colored pencils/markers/crayons
- Cardstock
- Recipe Ingredients: (see page 52/53)
- **Optional:** Access to Canva, Slides, or other presentation software (see page 22) *This project can also be completed on paper with general art supplies.*



Lesson 1

☐ Read chapters 1 and 2

☐ Reading Comprehension



Who is Stef's best friend?

☐ Discussion

“

I've been negotiating for months, trying to persuade Mami and Papi to let me walk alone – not even all the way home, just to the gas station a few blocks away from Saint Scholastica where Papi parks the truck most afternoons.

~Stef, pg. 2

”

Why doesn't Stef want to be picked up in the taco truck?

What does Papi do for Arthur? What does this tell us about who Papi is?

Stef's parents don't want her to walk home alone or stay home by herself. Stef is 11 years old and in 7th grade and she feels embarrassed and wishes she could have more freedom, like other kids her age.

Why do you think parents make certain rules, even when kids don't like them? Do you think Stef should have more independence?



Lesson 1: Writer's Corner

Sentence Review

Let's review **sentences**. Remember, a sentence is like a puzzle with three pieces: a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. If any piece is missing, the puzzle is incomplete and you have a **fragment**.

Look at the following sentences. Which ones are complete sentences? Which ones are fragments? If it is a fragment, make it a complete sentence.

- The truck moved.
- Papi made a burrito.
- The food smelled good.
- Stef and her family.
- Sells delicious food.
- The truck parks near the school.

Great! Now that you can write strong sentences, let's learn how to connect them to make them even stronger! Read the following sentences out loud:

Stef rides on the taco truck. Arthur rides on the truck too.

These are both sentences, but they sound choppy when you read them. Watch what happens when you connect them. Read the sentence out loud:

Stef **and** Arthur ride on the taco truck.

This sounds better, right? You used the word **and** to connect them! The word **AND** adds information *and* connects ideas that go together.

Put these sentences together using and:

My mom waited in line. I waited in line.

Jaime walked to school. Miguel walked to school.

Lesson 1: Writer's Corner

More Practice with 'AND'

Sometimes you can use **and** to combine two complete sentences, in order to make your writing flow better. Like this:

Stef woke up early. She got dressed for school.

Stef woke up early, **and** got dressed for school.

Since both sentences are about Stef, use **and** to put them together. You will also put a comma before **and** because you are connecting two *complete sentences*.

Combine these sentence pairs using **and**. Don't forget the comma!

I packed my lunch. I grabbed my backpack.

The customers lined up early. They waited patiently.

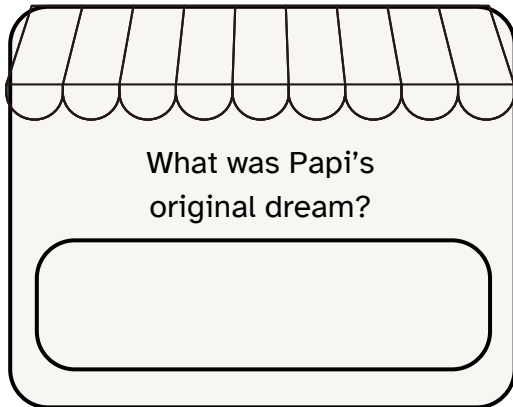
Stef finished her homework. She helped on the truck.

The tortillas were warm. The butter melted.

Lesson 2

☐ Read chapters 3 and 4

☐ Reading Comprehension



How long did the family save before buying Tia Perla?

How long has the family owned Tia Perla?
Who named it?

Why is Stef jealous of Maddie?

What does '**reputation**' mean? (pg. 22)

☐ Discussion

“

Our grandparents were friends back in Mexico, and it was Julia's dad who owned the construction company where Papi used to work.

~page 18

”



Stef remembers when she and Julia used to be close friends. Even though their families are very different now, her and Julia's grandparents were friends back in Mexico.

How do you feel about Julia? Think about what happened between the girls at school (page 20). Based on how Stef describes each girl's family and their father's jobs, why do you think they aren't friends any more?

Lesson 2: Writer's Corner

More Combining Words

Let's learn two more connecting words that show different relationships between ideas. You already learned that **and** adds information.



BUT shows a difference, opposite, or surprise

Stef loves her family, **but** she feels embarrassed by the truck.



OR gives a choice between two things

We can go now, **or** we can wait until later.

Just like when we use *and*, we put a comma before **but** and **or** when connecting *two complete sentences*.

Put the following sentences together using but or or:

We can eat now. We can eat later.

Stef likes art. Amanda likes soccer.

Highlight the connecting word that fits best in each sentence:

The team felt tired, and / but / or they kept running.

Should we open early, and / but / or should we wait?

I woke up late, and / but / or I missed my bus.

I wanted to sleep, and / but / or my dog barked all night.

Avi picked a book, and / but / or their brother read it out loud.

Do you want to go outside, and / but / or stay in and watch a movie?

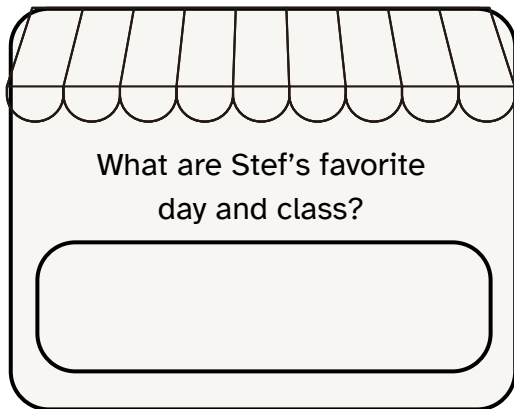
Write a sentence about lunch or dinner that uses a connecting word:

Lesson 3

☐ Read chapters 5 and 6

☐ Reading Comprehension

What does Julia have in class that other kids don't? Why? Do you think this is fair?



Why does she like this class so much?

What is the name of the singer coming to town?

☐ Literary Device

A **flashback** is when a story jumps back in time to show something that happened *before* the current events. Authors may use flashbacks to:

- Explain why a character feels a certain way
- Show what life used to be like
- Help us understand a memory or friendship better



1



2

Stef recalls how her family saved money to buy Tía Perla, and she describes all of the sacrifices they made and how everyone pitched in. These moments help us understand Papi's struggles and dreams, and also show us Stef's excitement for Tia Perla when they first bought it -- which is very different than how she feels about it today.

Watch the linked flashback scenes. If you have seen the movies, *why* are these scenes important to the story? If you *haven't* seen the movie, what do you think the flashback is showing based on the clip you saw?

Lesson 3: Writer's Corner

Pronouns as Shortcuts

Another way to combine sentences to make them flow better, is by using **pronouns**. These words replace names so we don't sound repetitive when we talk or write.

Riley went to the store. Riley bought milk.

This sounds choppy and boring because we keep saying 'Riley' over and over. We can use pronouns instead.

Pronouns are shortcut words:

- **I** = yourself
- **you** = the person you're talking to
- **he/him** = a male, **OR** someone who chooses these pronouns
- **she/her** = a female, **OR** someone who chooses these pronouns
- **they/them** = more than one person, **OR** someone who chooses these pronouns, **OR** when we don't know someone's pronouns
- **it/that** = an object or animal
- **we** = yourself AND other people

Riley went to the store. They bought milk.

Note: *Pronouns are also an important part of how we refer to people respectfully. Just like people have names they want to be called, people also have pronouns they want to be used.*

Read the following sentences out loud. Then replace the underlined words with pronouns:

Papi likes tacos. Papi makes them every day.

The taco truck is busy. The taco truck parks near school.

Stef and Mami work hard. Stef and Mami help save money.

Rose and I went swimming. Rose and I had fun.

Amanda plays soccer. Amanda scored a goal.

The book was interesting. The book had great pictures.

Ash worked quietly. Ash finished early.

Lesson 3: Writer's Corner

Combining Sentences with Pronouns

Now that you can use pronouns, let's use them to combine sentences with and, but, and or.

Should you and I draw pictures? Should you and I read a book?

We can combine these sentences because they are about the same subjects. In this case, the pronoun **we** is the best one to use. And because we are making a choice between two things, the connecting word **or** is the one we'll use. Remember to use a comma, since we are combining two complete sentences.

Should you and I draw pictures, or should we read a book?

Read the following sentences. Highlight the repeated noun. Then combine the sentences using and/but/or and a pronoun:

Jamie wants to play outside. Jamie has to clean up.

Should Dr. Garcia arrive early? Should Dr. Garcia come at noon?

My mom made bacon. My mom made toast with jam.

Draw one of your sentences.

Stef Soto, Taco Queen

A Novel Study & New Writer's Guide

**LESSON GUIDE
ANSWER
KEY**

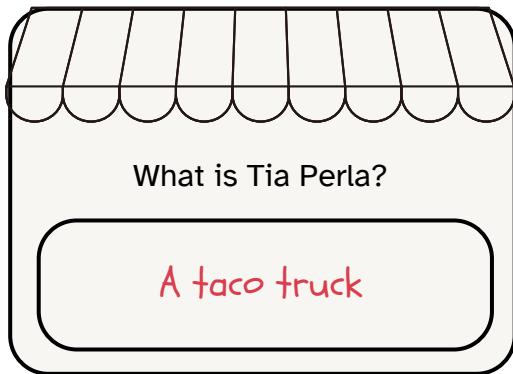
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Expanding
Sentences

Lesson 1

☐ Read chapters 1 and 2

☐ Reading Comprehension



Who is Stef's best friend?

Amanda Garcia

Why doesn't Stef want to be picked up in the taco truck?

She thinks she's too old to still

be picked up from school. She

wants to walk home.

What does Papi do for Arthur? What does this tell us about who Papi is?

He makes him a special burrito.

It shows how kind he is.

☐ Discussion

“

I've been negotiating for months, trying to persuade Mami and Papi to let me walk alone – not even all the way home, just to the gas station a few blocks away from Saint Scholastica where Papi parks the truck most afternoons.

~Stef, pg. 2

”

Stef's parents don't want her to walk home alone or stay home by herself. Stef is 11 years old and in 7th grade and she feels embarrassed and wishes she could have more freedom, like other kids her age.

Why do you think parents make certain rules, even when kids don't like them? Do you think Stef should have more independence?

Consider the following points for discussion:

- *Parents often make rules to keep kids safe and protect them from things they might not understand.*
- *Stef may be ready for more independence in some areas, but her parents' rules reflect their concerns and experiences as immigrants.*

Lesson 1: Writer's Corner

Sentence Review

Let's review **sentences**. Remember, a sentence is like a puzzle with three pieces: a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. If any piece is missing, the puzzle is incomplete and you have a **fragment**.

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Put these sentences together using and:

My mom waited in line. I waited in line.

My mom and I waited in line.

Jaime walked to school. Miguel walked to school.

Jaime and Miguel walked to school.

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Since both sentences are about Stef, use **and** to put them together. You will also put a comma before **and** because you are connecting two *complete sentences*.

Combine these sentence pairs using **and**. Don't forget the comma!

I packed my lunch. I grabbed my backpack.

I packed my lunch, and grabbed my backpack.

The customers lined up early. They waited patiently.

The customers lined up early, and they waited patiently.

Stef finished her homework. She helped on the truck.

Stef finished her homework, and she helped on the truck.

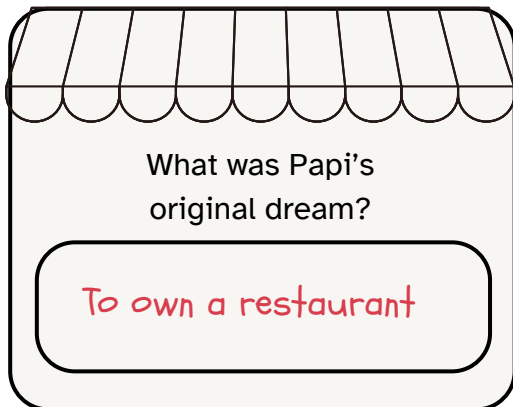
The tortillas were warm. The butter melted.

The tortillas were warm, and the butter melted.

Lesson 2

☐ Read chapters 3 and 4

☐ Reading Comprehension



How long did the family save before buying Tia Perla?

Over a year

How long has the family owned Tia Perla?
Who named it?

They've had Tia Perla for 5 years.

Stef named it.

Why is Stef jealous of Maddie?

Because she is new and doesn't have a reputation yet.

What does '**reputation**' mean? (pg. 22)

How other people see you

☐ Discussion

“

Our grandparents were friends back in Mexico, and it was Julia's dad who owned the construction company where Papi used to work.

~page 18

”



Stef remembers when she and Julia used to be close friends. Even though their families are very different now, her and Julia's grandparents were friends back in Mexico.

How do you feel about Julia? Think about what happened between the girls at school (page 20). Based on how Stef describes each girls family and their father's jobs, why do you think they aren't friends any more?

Consider the following points for discussion:

- Julia's family is wealthier now than Stef's family.
- Julia may feel like she's better than Stef now.
- Sometimes friends just grow apart, but that's no reason to be mean.

Lesson 2: Writer's Corner

More Combining Words

Let's learn two more connecting words that show different relationships between ideas. You already learned that **and** adds information.



BUT shows a difference, opposite, or surprise

Stef loves her family, **but** she feels embarrassed by the truck.



OR gives a choice between two things

We can go now, **or** we can wait until later.

Just like when we use *and*, we put a comma before **but** and **or** when connecting *two complete sentences*.

Put the following sentences together using but or or:

We can eat now. We can eat later.

We can eat now, or we can eat later.

Stef likes art. Amanda likes soccer.

Stef likes art, but Amanda likes soccer.

Highlight the connecting word that fits best in each sentence:

The team felt tired, and / but / or they kept running.

Should we open early, and / but / or should we wait?

I woke up late, and / but / or I missed my bus.

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Avi picked a book, and / but / or their brother read it out loud.

Do you want to go outside, and / but / or stay in and watch a movie?

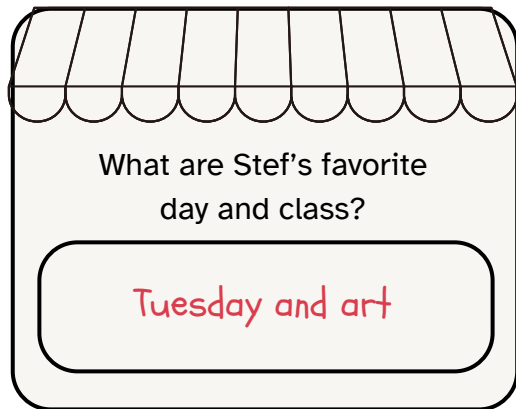
Write a sentence about lunch or dinner that uses a connecting word:

Answers will vary. Encourage the learner to write a complete sentence with proper punctuation and proper use of their connecting word.

Lesson 3

☐ Read chapters 5 and 6

☐ Reading Comprehension



What is the name of the singer coming to town?

Viviana Vega

What does Julia have in class that other kids don't? Why? Do you think this is fair?

Julia has a phone because her
parents insisted on it in case of
an emergency.

Secondary answers will vary.

Why does she like this class so much?

Because there are no rules or
restrictions with art.

☐ Literary Device

A **flashback** is when a story jumps back in time to show something that happened *before* the current events. Authors may use flashbacks to:

Watch the linked flashback scenes. If you have seen the movies, why are these scenes important to the story? If you haven't seen the movie, what do you think the flashback is showing based on the clip you saw?

Consider the following points for discussion:

1

Anton Ego in Ratatouille:

- *This flashback reminds him of his childhood*
- *It shows us he's not just mean*
- *It shows how a simple meal can trigger powerful emotions and memories*

2

Rumi in K-Pop Demon Hunters:

- *The flashback reveals Rumi's sadness and insecurity about being half demon*
- *It gives context for her personality and choices later*
- *It helps us understand that she still feels like she doesn't belong anywhere.*



1



2

Lesson 3: Writer's Corner

Pronouns as Shortcuts

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This sounds choppy and boring because we keep saying 'Riley' over and over. We can use pronouns instead.

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Riley went to the store. They bought milk.

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Papi likes tacos. He makes them every day.

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The taco truck is busy. It parks near the school.

Stef and Mami work hard. Stef and Mami help save money.

Stef and Mami work hard. They help save money.

Rose and I went swimming. Rose and I had fun.

Rose and I went swimming. We had fun.

Amanda plays soccer. Amanda scored a goal.

Amanda plays soccer. She scored a goal.

The book was interesting. The book had great pictures.

The book was interesting. It had great pictures.

Ash worked quietly. Ash finished early.

Ash worked quietly. They finished early.

Lesson 3: Writer's Corner

Combining Sentences with Pronouns

Now that you can use pronouns, let's use them to combine sentences with and, but, and or.

Should you and I draw pictures? Should you and I read a book?

We can combine these sentences because they are about the same subjects. In this case, the pronoun **we** is the best one to use. And because we are making a choice between two things, the connecting word **or** is the one we'll use. Remember to use a comma, since we are combining two complete sentences.

Should you and I draw pictures, or should we read a book?

Read the following sentences. Highlight the repeated noun. Then combine the sentences using and/but/or and a pronoun:

Jamie wants to play outside. Jamie has to clean up.

Jamie wants to play outside, but she has to clean up.

Should Dr. Garcia arrive early? Should Dr. Garcia come at noon?

Should Dr. Garcia arrive early, or should she come at noon?

Note: ANY pronoun can be used here.

My mom made bacon. My mom made toast with jam.

My mom made
bacon, and toast
with jam.

Draw one of your sentences.