

# Is there a reason?

## Learning objective

Semi-colons to separate or balance explanations or comparisons

## Preparation

Talk with your pupils about sentences that offer explanations for events or people's feelings, such as:

*Not many people came to the fête; it rained all day and the field was very muddy.*

*They didn't enjoy their walk; it was very cold and windy.*

Discuss how sentences can contain comparisons (in any tense), such as:

*Last winter was very cold; this winter has been warmer.*

*The maths exam is very difficult; the history exam is easier.*

*Going to work in the morning will be simple enough; coming back in the dark will be harder.*

## Activity

Divide the pupils into three equal groups. Ask each pupil in the first group to make up the first half of a sentence, describing something that happened or how somebody felt. Ask each pupil in the second group to make up the second half of a sentence, giving a description or an explanation. Ask the pupils in the third group to represent semi-colons by holding out a fist above a bent forearm.

Invite the pupils of the first group, in turn, to stand up and speak their phrases aloud. After each one, ask a semi-colon to stand beside him

and then ask the second group for a volunteer to complete the sentence by standing beside the semi-colon and speaking his phrase aloud. These pupils must listen carefully and think about which phrases might be good matches for theirs, as the two parts need to be at least vaguely relevant and must make sense. (Remind them that their phrases must not begin with *because*, as the semi-colon is the connective.)

Ask the three groups to swap roles and repeat the activity, then swap again and repeat it again, until each pupil has taken a turn in each role. (This could happen within one session or spread over two or three consecutive sessions.)

## Extension/challenge

Once all of the pupils have fully grasped the concept of using semi-colons correctly within sentences that contain relevant explanations or comparisons, allow them to have fun by putting together irrelevant ones, so that they can see that both words and punctuation are important and must work together. For example, they may create crazy sentences, such as:

*Dogs don't like carrots; flowers go to sleep when it snows.*

*Camels dance in the deserts; people eat woolly hats in winter.*

For crazy sentence ideas and to develop pupils' confidence in using more varied vocabulary, provide access to a selection of books by Dr Seuss and collections of nonsense poems by various authors.