

# Syntax Surgery

PROBLEM STUDENTS ENCOUNTER	EXAMPLE OF THIS PROBLEM
<p><b>Don't see the antecedent</b></p> <p>The problem: Often, inattentive readers will think the antecedent for a pronoun is the nearest noun. That's not always true.</p> <p>Other times, these readers see pronouns that are similar (<i>they, them, theirs</i>) and think they all refer to the same noun.</p>	<p>A geometric proof is a step-by-step explanation that uses definitions, axioms, postulates, and previously proved theorems to draw a conclusion about a geometric statement. There are two of <u>them</u>: direct and indirect.</p> <p>The platoon began marching south. <u>They</u> were tired and <u>their</u> backs hurt. But <u>their</u> orders were clear and <u>they</u> had been delivered with some urgency.</p>
<p><b>Don't recognize synonyms or similar terms</b></p> <p>This is a typical problem with social studies texts as authors describe a single event, or a group of people, or a landmass with synonyms or similar terms.</p>	<p>The Americans who remained loyal to the British Crown were often called <u>Tories</u>. These Loyalists stood in opposition to those who wanted independence from England. Seen as "royalists," the King's Men fought against the Patriots, even though <u>they</u> lived alongside <u>them</u>.</p>
<p><b>Don't recognize context clues</b></p> <p>We find that trying to define an unknown word with context clues is sometimes easier if students first do Sketch to Stretch (see page 221) and then from their sketch, draw lines that connect words.</p>	<p>The big rock rose straight up from the middle of the fast-flowing water. The boaters had to paddle hard to one side to avoid hitting the <u>monolith</u>.</p>
<p><b>Don't infer omitted words</b></p> <p>Authors will omit words that are implied by the context. Struggling readers do not realize that all they need to do is insert the words as they read.</p>	<p>Twelve men volunteered for the mission. Several <u>were</u> chosen.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">men</span></p>
<p><b>Don't use signal words to help with meaning</b></p> <p>Noticing what signal words actually signal is a critical context clue. Too often we forget that explicitly showing students how signal words work solves many comprehension problems. Here are a few types of signal words you should teach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Restatement signal words</li> <li>Illustration signal words</li> <li>Category signal words</li> </ul>	<p>An isthmus is also called a peninsula.</p> <p><u>By way of demonstration</u>, the teacher circled all the pronouns.</p> <p>There were several <u>species</u> of dogs: collies, labs, poodles, and Rhodesian ridgebacks.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">clue!</span></p>
<p><b>Don't understand role of dashes, commas, parentheses, or colons</b></p> <p>Often terms are defined, illustrated, or expanded in information that is found between dashes, commas, or parentheses or after a colon. While highly skilled readers often seem to intuit what these punctuation marks signal, less skilled readers benefit from our showing (not telling) them how they work.</p> <p>NOTE: These same symbols work differently in math, and students need to be taught that. A dash in a math problem is a minus sign. Parentheses suggest which operation occurs first.</p>	<p>Dactylonomy, <u>counting on one's fingers</u>, is what young children might resort to if they forget their math facts. [We could have as easily put dashes or parentheses around "counting on one's fingers"].</p> <p>Two outcomes were critical: <u>food shortage</u> and <u>water shortage</u>.</p>

**Figure 35** This chart shows some of the more common types of connections we teach. For your specific discipline, you might want to add others.