

Absolute Phrases

. An **absolute phrase** is a two-word combination—a **noun** and an *-ing* or *-ed* verb added to a sentence.

A: The cat climbed the tree.

B: **Claws digging, feet kicking,** the cat climbed the tree.

A: The mountain climber edged along the cliff.

B: The mountain climber edged along the cliff, **hands shaking, feet trembling.** (*Or in reverse order*)

. Although adding 3 absolutes overloads the picture and diminishes the effect, one or two creates a far more dynamic image than the original.

A. Each morning my students drowsily entered my classroom.

Table Practice: Discuss a possible absolute phrase to insert into this sentence and improve the image.

B. Feet dragging, heads and eyes drooping, each morning my students drowsily entered my classroom.

Directions: Read each of the following triggers to scenes we will study while enacting the dramas Julius Caesar and Antigone. Creatively rewrite a description of the depicted scene using **absolute**s to add sensory detail.

1) From Caesar, Act II: Portia begs Brutus to tell her his secret.

Voice trembling , eyes pouring tears , lowered to her knees , Portia desperately begs Brutus to tell her his secret.

2) From Caesar, Act II: The conspirators murder Caesar.

Sweat pouring into their eyes, hearts beating with anxious fright at the deed they were about to commit, the conspirators pressed in closer to Caesar, raising their daggers with fury, and murdered him.

3) From Caesar, Act V: Brutus gives up as he asks Strato to hold out his sword for him.

Eyes scouring the field for a helpful soul, Brutus longingly looks up at Strato. His heart and soul aching for a righteous deed gone bad, his white knuckles firmly grasping his sword, Brutus asks Strato to hold the weapon for him, whilst he run on it.

4) *From Antigone, Prologue*: Antigone begs Ismene to help her bury their dead brother.

Her heart throbbing with love for her brother, her mind racing with the dangers of the deed she was committing to, Antigone approached Ismene. Arms outstretched, tear-stained face pleading, Antigone begged her sister to help her bury Polyneices.

5) *From Antigone, Exodus*: Eurydice curses Creon just before stabbing herself.

Wandering aimlessly through the chamber, tears streaming down her face, Eurydice quietly cursed her husband and the deaths he evoked on their family before guiding her dagger into her breast.

Formative Assessment: Identify the absolute phrase(s) in each sentence.

- 1) Engine smoking, gears grinding, the car slid into the parking lot.
- 2) The rabid dog, mouth foaming, rambled up the street.
- 3) James hurtled toward the finish line, chest panting futilely.
- 4) Muscles writhing and knotting, the Olympian lifted the heavy barbell.
- 5) Jaws clipping together, he struggled to remain silent.