

Hypotaxis and Parataxis

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No colours except green and black the walls are green the sky is black (there is no roof) the stars are green the Widow is green but her hair is black as black. The widow sits on a high high chair the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's hair has a centre-parting it is green on the left and on the right black. High as the sky the chair is green the seat is black the Widow's arm is as long as death its skin is green the fingernails are long and sharp and black. Between the walls the children green the windows are green the Widow's arm comes snaking down the snake is green the children scream the fingernails are black they scratch the Widow's arm is hunting see the children run and scream the Widow's hand curls round them green and black. Now one by one the children mmff are stifled quiet the Widow's hand is lifting one by one the children green their blood is black unloosed by cutting fingernails it splashes black on walls (of green) as one by the curling hand lifts children high as sky the sky is black there are no stars the Widow laughs her tongue is green but see her teeth are black. And children torn in two in Widow hands which rolling rolling halves of children roll them into little balls the balls are green the night is black. And little balls fly into night between the walls the children shriek as one by one the Widow's hand. And in the corner the Monkey and I (the walls are green the shadows black) covering crawling wide high walls green fading into black there is no roof and Widow's hand comes onebyone the children scream and mmff and little balls and hand and scream and mmff and slashing stains of black. Now only she and I and no more screams the Widow's hand comes hunting hunting the skin is green the nails are black towards the corner hunting hunting while we shrink closer into the corner our skin is green our fear is black and now the Hand comes reaching reaching and she my sister pushes me out of the corner. . . .

—Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*, New York: Bard/Avon, 1980, p. 249

The child has a fever. Sitting as he does with his knees drawn up, staring, he suddenly pitches over and lies in a faint, but when I move to cover him, he wakes, and almost immediately begins shivering. Huge beads of sweat break out upon his brow, his hair drips with it, his whole body streams. And in between the periods of burning, he freezes. I think he has never known before what it is to be cold. His whole body clenches on it, this new feeling, this discovery within himself of what winter means, what it is to be snow and ice, to feel oneself enter the realm of absolute cold, that polar world at the body's limits. He draws his knees up, closing upon himself. Every muscle in his limbs, his shoulders, his neck, goes rigid, his fists clench, his jaws tighten. He looks terrified, and when the convulsions begin I have to hold him, forcing a knife handle between his teeth, while he jerks, stiffens, goes through a whole series of spasms, and then sinks exhausted into a kind of nerveless sleep. Then again, the sweating. As I raise him to my arms and try to force a few drops of water between his lips, I am reminded of my brother, and realize what he means to me, this child, what it might mean to lose him.

—David Malouf, *An Imaginary Life*, New York: Vintage, 1996, p. 114.

	Hypotaxis	Parataxis
	Subordinating	Additive
	Writerly	Conversational
	Spectator	Participant
Vocabulary	Formal	Colloquial
Tone	Cool (I–he/she/it)	Warm (I–you)
Punctuation	Complex	Simple
Sentence Structure (1)	Parallel	Varied
Sentence Structure (2)	Front-loaded	Back-loaded
	Left-branching, periodic	Right-branching, loose
	Subject-verb near end	Subject-verb near beginning
Overall Effect	Control, precision	Spontaneity, immediacy

Hypo *Beneath*; elements of sentence are unequal; complex sentences with “main” and “supporting” clauses; explicit transitions

Para *Beside*; elements of sentence are equal; simple or compound sentences with clauses connected by *and* or *but* (or no connectives); transitions implied or abrupt

Taxis *Arrangement*

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anyone else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning of my life, I record that I was born (as I have been informed and believe), on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously.

In consideration of the day and hour of my birth, it was declared by the nurse, and by some sage women in the neighborhood who had taken a lively interest in me several months before there was any possibility of our becoming personally acquainted, first, that I was destined to be unlucky in life; and secondly, that I was privileged to see ghosts and spirits; both these gifts inevitably attaching, as they believed, to all unlucky infants of either gender, born towards the small hours on a Friday night.

— Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all—I'm not saying that—but they're also touchy as hell. Besides I'm not going to tell you my whole goddamn autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas.

—J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*