

What are Absolute Constructions?

Worksheet

An absolute construction is a phrase that modifies an entire clause without being grammatically attached: 'Les mains tremblantes, elle ouvrit la porte' (Her hands trembling, she opened the door). The participial phrase stands alone.

Questions

1. Which is an absolute construction?

- A) The woman, tired and weary, sat down.
- B) Exhausted, she sat down.
- C) Her fatigue was obvious.
- D) She was tired, so she sat down.

2. What does an absolute construction modify?

- A) A single noun only
- B) The entire main clause
- C) A prepositional phrase
- D) An adjective

3. 'Les nuages noirs approchant, nous rentrâmes.' What is the absolute?

- A) Les nuages noirs
- B) approchant
- C) nous rentrâmes
- D) noirs approchant

4. Which sentence uses an absolute correctly?

- A) The man saw the window broken.
- B) The window broken, he stepped through.
- C) He saw it, the window broken.
- D) The broken window was visible.

5. Identify the absolute construction: 'Le soleil couchant, le paysage prenait une teinte d'or.'

6. Translate using an absolute construction: 'Because the door was locked, she couldn't enter.'

7. Explain the role of the absolute in: 'Tous les invités partis, la maison était silencieuse.'

8. Define: What is an absolute construction?

9. Define: Example of absolute construction in French?

10. Define: How does an absolute differ from an appositive?

Answer Key

1. B) Exhausted, she sat down. — 'Exhausted' is an absolute — a participial phrase modifying the entire clause independently.
2. B) The entire main clause — Absolute constructions modify the whole clause, not just one word.
3. A) Les nuages noirs — 'Les nuages noirs approchant' (the black clouds approaching) is the absolute phrase.
4. B) The window broken, he stepped through. — 'The window broken' is an absolute modifying the entire clause about stepping through.
5. 'Le soleil couchant' = absolute construction (The sun setting = participial phrase) It modifies the entire clause 'the landscape turned golden.' No grammatical link — it stands alone.
6. Create participial phrase: 'La porte fermée, elle ne pouvait pas entrer.' 'La porte fermée' is the absolute construction. It replaces the causal clause for conciseness.
7. 'Tous les invités partis' = absolute (all guests departed) Modifies: 'the house was silent' Expresses simultaneous condition.
8. A participial or nominative phrase that independently modifies an entire clause.
9. 'La tête haute, elle quitta la salle.' (Head high, she left the room.)
10. Absolute modifies the whole clause; appositive renames a single noun.

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