

9. TITLE:

**If, if, if, then**

## SENTENCES

### EXAMPLES:

- a. If the alarm had gone off, if the bus had been on time, if the road repairs had been completed, then his life would not have been destroyed. \*
- b. If Hannibal hadn't lost, if Rome hadn't won, if Carthage hadn't fallen, then the Mediterranean would be very different today.
- c. If I hadn't found that watch, if the alarm hadn't gone off, if it hadn't scared those burglars, then I wouldn't be sitting here today. \*\*

*\* This example would have formed an effective opening to a story if it was followed by a flashback.*

*\*\* This example demonstrates how the form may be used to end a story by summarising the key/pivotal moments.*

### EXPLANATION:

*If, if, if, then* sentences are constructed from three dependent clauses in series.

Winston Churchill used a similar structure in his speeches, though he often chose three dependent sentences rather than clauses. This speech-writing technique became known as the Churchillian triplet.

The *If, if, if, then* sentence is an extremely useful way of starting or ending a story or idea. It encapsulates a range of themes (which are later developed) in a single sentence. If used to end an idea/story, it acts as a means of summarising the dramatic points of what has gone before.

### **TEACHING TIPS:**

In terms of punctuation, the obvious point to emphasise is the necessity of using a comma after each of the three clauses beginning with *if*.