

Non sequitur: Worksheet

Directions: Read the scenarios below. Identify and underline any non sequiturs used. Provide an explanation for why each statement is a non sequitur.

Exercise 1.

Bianca shifted at the witness stand. "I think Patrick had to have done the crime."
"And why is that?" the prosecutor asked.
"It happened at the pizzeria. Patrick was the last person to close up the pizzeria. He's the only one who could've done it."
The jury murmured amongst itself.
The prosecutor sent the defense attorney a sly smile as the chaos erupted.
"Cat lover," the defense attorney muttered.
The judge banged his gavel. "Order!"
"No further questions, Your Honor." The prosecutor took his seat.
"Defense, the witness is yours."
"Thank you, Your Honor." The defense attorney gave Patrick an encouraging smile.
"Do you think we still have a chance?" He asked.
"I'll treat you to ice cream after." With that, she got up and approached the witness stand.

Exercise 2.

"Miss Bianca, you work the morning shift at the pizzeria in question, correct?" The defense attorney questioned.
"Yeah," Bianca replied. "Mr. Leo always says I'm his favorite gal. I won't complain about opening the place in the morning like some of the other employees."
"That's very agreeable of you. Now, tell me: when did you notice the priceless artwork was missing?"
"About ten past seven. I was getting the shop ready, so I turned on the light and poof! The painting was gone!"
The jury gasped. The judge waved his gavel in warning to quiet them. "I wonder when the bookstore opens," he murmured.
"So you're saying," the defense attorney began, "that you were the first person at the scene of the crime? And the person who reported the theft?"
"Yes?" Bianca answered hesitantly. She didn't like the sound of the lawyer's question but couldn't figure out what was objectively wrong with it.
The defense attorney spun on her heels to face the jury. "Ladies and gentlemen, it is a known fact that the person who reports the crime is often the culprit. Bianca admitted to being the first one to notice the missing painting. Therefore, she is the true culprit!"

Exercise 3.

Bianca sat with her hands cuffed to the table. Patrick took the seat in front of her.

"I see they let you out already," Bianca stated.

"Yep. They get you out fast when the true culprit is revealed in court. Apparently. I bought some roses for you earlier today, but they died on the way over."

"Ominous."

"I don't believe in that sort of superstitious stuff."

"You should." Bianca leaned back into her seat - as far back as her handcuffs would allow. "Cuz when I get out of here, you're a dead man, Patrick."

"Good luck with that."

"The back."

"What?"

"I should stab you in the back. Since you did that to me."

"Come on, Bianca. We both knew one of us was going to take the fall while the other got off. You're just mad your set-up for me didn't work."

"Yeah, you're right. That's why I told the cops I'd get you to confess on tape." Bianca pointed to the glass behind her. "One-way mirror with a camera on the other end. If I go down, you go down."

Patrick frowned. "I should have never babysat kittens."

Non sequitur: Worksheet Answer Key

Exercise 1:

"He's the only one who could've done it." - Just because Patrick was closing up the pizzeria and the crime took place at the pizzeria does not mean he's the only suspect. Someone could have broken into the place or stolen the key. This is an example of a non sequitur as a logical fallacy.

"Cat lover" - The prosecutor's smugness has nothing to do with him loving cats.

"I'll treat you to ice cream after." - This does not answer Patrick's question. It could be a congratulatory or consolidatory treat.

Exercise 2

"Mr. Leo always says I'm his favorite gal." - While Bianca connects her relationship with Mr. Leo to her working the morning shift, she only does so *after* this statement. There is nothing prior to this statement that connects it to the rest of the conversation, so it is still a non sequitur.

"I wonder when the bookstore opens," - The bookstore's hours have nothing to do with the trial.

"Therefore, she is the true culprit!" - Much like the example in Exercise 1, this is an example of a logical fallacy. Just because many crimes are committed by the person who reports them does not mean that Bianca committed this crime.

Exercise 3

"I bought some roses for you earlier today, but they died on the way over." - George and Bianca were talking about the trial when George randomly brings up roses.

"The back." - Again, while Bianca explains her logic later, this outburst does not follow the flow of the conversation

"I should have never babysat kittens." - A blatant non sequitur. Babysitting kittens has no bearing on the current actions of the story.