

FINDING AND FIXING SENTENCE FRAGMENTS WORKSHEET ANSWER KEY

By Barbara Thaden

To make it easier to check your work, the fragments are in red on this answer key.

Belle is a 2013 British film which I highly recommend. Directed by Amma Asante, it stars Gugu Mbatha-Raw as the illegitimate mixed-race daughter of a Royal Navy officer in Britain. The officer's name is Captain Sir John Lindsay. The movie takes place in the middle of the 18th century when slavery was still legal in England and the British were conducting a very profitable slave trade between Africa and the New World. Sir John Lindsay has met and fallen in love with a slave whom he rescues from a French slave ship. He names their child Dido Belle. After her mother dies, Sir John Lindsay brings the eight-year-old Belle back to Britain. He asks his great uncle William Murray, who is the 1st Earl of Mansfield and the Lord Chief Justice of England, to raise her because he must return to the Navy. The Lord Chief Justice is a very wealthy man with a huge mansion and many servants. He has no children of his own. At first the Lord Chief Justice is reluctant to take the child because she is a mulatto. Sir John Lindsay says that Belle is his blood, his daughter and his heir, and has the right to be raised in England. The Lord Chief Justice and his wife are already raising another grand-niece, Elizabeth Murray, whose father has put her out of the house because he has re-married. Elizabeth Murray is the same age as Dido. Because Elizabeth needs a companion, the Lord Chief Justice decides to raise Belle as his own. The two nieces grow up to be beautiful young women. Belle has a fortune of her own, while Elizabeth's father won't give her a penny for a dowry.

The two girls are introduced to society and put on the “marriage market.” Each is expected to find a husband of suitable social class and wealth. They are introduced to the Ashfords, who have several sons. The oldest, James, will inherit the estate and wealth of his family, because of the law of primogeniture, which held that estates cannot be divided, but must be inherited by the oldest son. The younger one, Oliver Ashford, will be a career military officer and can offer his noble name.

Oliver Ashford is fascinated by Dido because she is “exotic.” Elizabeth thinks that the older brother, James, is in love with her, because he flirts with her the entire evening. But when Lady Ashford discovers that Elizabeth has no dowry, she absolutely forbids James to have anything to do with her. James agrees. He is a selfish and cruel man only interested in wealth and power. Oliver proposes to Dido, who hardly knows him. However, she accepts his proposal, because that is what is expected of her.

At a party a week later, Oliver’s brother James physically assaults Belle for “ensnaring” his brother. Belle is shocked and afraid. At the same time, Elizabeth is jealous that Belle is engaged, and heartbroken that she has heard nothing more from James. Belle tries to convince Elizabeth that James is not the man for her. Elizabeth can’t believe that James put his hands on Belle and assaulted her. They two girls fight. Elizabeth says she is better than Belle because Belle is illegitimate. Belle says that her father did not marry her mother but her father acknowledged Belle and left her all his money, while Elizabeth’s father won’t acknowledge Elizabeth or give her any money. Therefore it is Elizabeth who is inferior. Elizabeth runs away in tears.

The day after being manhandled by James, Dido tells her aunt and uncle that she no longer wants to marry Oliver. Reluctantly her aunt and uncle bring her to the Ashton estate to explain this to Lady Ashton. Lady Ashton is furious. She thinks that her son was already making a sacrifice to marry a half-black girl and that Belle should be grateful to be admitted into such a noble family who is willing to accept such a half-breed. Belle answers that she doesn't want to belong to a family that thinks she is lower than they are.

Another important character is John Davinier. a young lawyer who wants the Lord Chief Justice to be his mentor. John and Dido meet while John is visiting with her great uncle. John Davinier is very concerned with a legal case that is before the courts. A slave ship, the Zong, has cast all its slaves, shackled together, overboard to drown because there was no more water on the ship. The owners of the ship want to collect insurance on the dead slaves. The insurance company does not want to pay, because it says the captain ordered the slaves killed because they were sick, not because the ship was out of water. This case is before the Lord Chief Justice, Dido's great uncle. John Davinier thinks it is wrong to be able to insure human beings like cattle and collect money for their deaths. He tells Dido about the case and she becomes very interested in it because her mother was a slave. Dido searches her great-uncle's desk and finds papers showing that the Zong sailed by many ports where it could have collected water for the slaves and crew. The real reason the slaves were thrown overboard was because they were sick and would not command high prices at the slave market. They were sick because the ship was overpacked with slaves. Everyone knew that "tight packing" increased the likelihood that slaves would sicken and die. However, slave ships practiced this method because they could fit more slaves in the ship and make more money on their sale. Dido hopes that her great-uncle will rule

against the slave ship and for the insurance company. All the politicians of England think that the Lord Chief Justice should rule for the slave ship, because slavery was the source of England's great wealth in the 18th century. Dido shows John Davinier the papers she found in her uncle's desk. John says that the Chief Justice must rule according to what he thinks is right because only he has legal access to that information.

Dido and John are starting to fall in love. John is not of the same social class as Dido. He is an aspiring lawyer who has a long way to go before he starts making money. Dido is an heiress and related to a noble family. But they are both concerned with the evil of slavery and the slave trade. When the Lord Chief Justice finds out that John has been talking politics with Dido, he is furious. But when he realizes that the two are really in love, and that John is a man of noble character, if not noble birth, he decides to let them marry. He will mentor John in his law career to insure that he is successful and attains the rank he deserves. The Lord Chief Justice also rules against the slave ship, and declares that there is no legal justification for slavery or the slave trade in British law. His ruling does not stop the slave trade immediately. But it was an important first step in the eventual banning of slavery in England and the international slave trade