

## The Boy Who Taunted the Bull is Dead

Carl Miller wore a red cape into a bullring and was killed by an angry bull. Nobody else was careless enough to wear a red cape and nobody else was killed. The title of this handout describes the only boy who didn't understand the dangers of taunting the bull. We could identify the boy as "Carl Miller," as "the boy who wore the red cape into the bull ring," as "the boy who was killed by the bull," or as, "the boy who taunted the bull," among others.

### The boy who taunted the bull is dead.

#### Essential Information

"who taunted the bull" is an adjective clause that modifies the noun "the boy." It provides information essential to our understanding of the sentence. Grammar experts call such clauses **Restrictive Adjective Clauses**. They require no commas.

### The boy, who was wearing a blue shirt, was killed by a bull.

#### Nonessential Information

Poor dead Carl Miller was wearing a blue shirt when he taunted the bull, but his shirt is completely irrelevant to the story, to the bull, and to Carl's fate. The essential information about the boy is, "was killed by a bull." The adjective clause "who was wearing a blue shirt" modifies the noun "the boy," with information not essential to our understanding of the sentence. Grammar experts call such clauses **Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses**. They require commas.

### The boy who wore a red cape into the bullring is dead.

#### Essential Information

One item of clothing Carl Miller was wearing is very relevant. Matadors risk death in a bullfight by taunting the bull with a red cape. Whether he knew it or not, the Carl Miller was taunting the bull with his red cape. Therefore, "who wore a red cape into the bullring" provides us with essential information about the boy because it identifies the boy and distinguishes him from all others. The **Adjective Clause** in this case is **Restrictive** and requires no commas.

### Careless Carl Miller, who wore a red cape into the bullring, is dead.

#### Nonessential Information

The red cape is completely relevant to careless Carl's situation, but in the sentence above, it's not required to identify Carl, whose name is given. So in this case again, "who wore a red cape into the bullring" is nonessential, and the nonrestrictive adjective clause requires commas.

### The Carl Miller who wore a red cape into the bullring is dead.

#### Essential Information

If there are several Carl Millers, but only one wore a red cape into the bullring, then "who wore a red cape into the bullring" provides essential information that identifies which Carl Miller you're talking about. The other Carl Miller, still very much alive, has never been to a bullfight.