

BECAUSE

Peter Titlestad

In this article Peter Titlestad questions the rule that it is always wrong to start a sentence with a conjunction.

There is fake news running in some classrooms, and it has been on the go for generations, that one may not start a sentence with because. Mallory, when asked why he wanted to climb Everest, made the famous reply, “Because it is there.” Apparently Everest is now a little higher, not that this makes much difference. Mallory had no oxygen, his PPE was oiled cotton and woollens, and no Sherpas took him on the final ascent. Everest was there all right.

Mallory’s subordinate clause without a main sentence as anchor is actually perfectly fine in conversation. So is the reply of sweet little Clytemnestra when asked why she was twisting poor little kitty’s neck, uttered with a gaze of limpid innocence: “Because...” Irrefutable girlish logic, resulting in a momentary impulse to wring her wretched little neck. Her “because” shows that Calvin was right in his interpretation of the *Book of Genesis*, and why Genghis Khan laid waste to Asia. The parental impulse was, of course, divine justice.

Consider: Because human nature is inherently squiffed, little Clytemnestra torments poor kitty and Genghis Khan laid Asia waste. Who says one cannot start a sentence with because? Put the adverbial clause of reason before the main clause, and you will see that you can. Some teachers (pardon, “educators,” the old-time word is not good enough) don’t want all that syntax jazz too much for the little sheep. What they want is a quick-fix rule. (That human nature, again!) “You can’t start a sentence with because.” So the little sheep go out bleating the same little motto into home and work-place.

And sentence fragments in conversation are perfectly fine, like Mallory’s. And it is perfectly fine to start a sentence with and, just now and then, though not all the time, although James Joyce does it for a whole magnificent chunk in Molly

Bloom's soliloquy at the end of *Ulysses*. If you've never read it, try it-it's an education.