

EAE 0422 A	Sujet Jury	Sujet Candidat	Code Sujet	CLG 12
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Your main commentary should be focused on *coordinating conjunctions*. Other topics may also be addressed.

Every year, when you're a child, you become a different person. Generally it's in the fall, when you re-enter school, take your place in a higher grade, leave behind the muddle and lethargy of the summer vacation. That's when you register the change most on, just the same. For a long while the past drops away from you easily and, it would seem, automatically, properly. Its scenes don't vanish so much as become irrelevant. And then there's a switchback, what's been all over and done with sprouting up fresh, wanting attention, even wanting you to do something about it, though it's plain there is not on this earth a thing to be done.

Marlene and Charlene. People thought we must be twins. There was a fashion in those days for naming twins in rhyme. Bonnie and Connie. Ronald and Donald. And then of course we – Charlene and I – had matching hats. Coolie hats, they were called, wide shallow cones of woven straw with some sort of tie or elastic under the chin. They became familiar later on in the century, from television shots of the war in Vietnam. Men on bicycles riding along a street in Saigon would be wearing them, or women walking in the road against the background of a bombed village.

It was possible at that time – I mean the time when Charlene and I were at the camp – to say *coolie* without a thought of offense. Or *darkie*, or to talk about *jewing* a price down. I was in my teens, I think, before I ever related that verb to the noun.

So we had those names and those hats, and at the first roll call the Counselor – the jolly one we liked, Mavis, though we didn't like her as well as the pretty one, Pauline – pointed at us and called out, "Hey, Twins," and went on calling out other names before we had time to deny it.

Even before that we must have noticed the hats and approved of each other. Otherwise one or both of us would have pulled off those brand-new articles and been ready to shove them under our cots, declaring that our mothers had made us wear them and we hated them, and so on.

I may have approved of Charlene, but I was not sure how to make friends with her. Girls nine or ten years old – that was the general

range of this crop, though there were a few a bit older – do not pick friends or pair off as easily as girls do at six or seven. I simply followed some other girls from my town – none of them my particular friends – to one of the cabins where there were some unclaimed cots, and dumped my things on top of the brown blanket. Then I heard a voice behind me say, "Could I please be next to my twin sister?"

It was Charlene, speaking to somebody I didn't know. The dormitory cabin held perhaps two dozen girls. The girl she had spoken to said, "Sure", and moved along.

Charlene had used a special voice. Ingratiating, teasing, self-mocking, and with a seductive merriment in it, like a trill of bells. It was evident right away that she had more confidence than I did. And not simply confidence that the other girl would move and not say sturdily, "I got here first." Or – she was a roughly brought up sort of girl (and some

of them were that, having their way paid by the Lions Club or the Church and not by their parents) she might have said, "Go poop your pants, I'm not moving." No. Charlene had confidence that anybody would *want* to do as she asked, not just agree to do it. With me too she had taken a chance, for could I not have said, "I don't want to be twins," and turned back to sort my things? But of course I didn't. I felt flattered, as she had expected, and I watched her dump out the contents of her suitcase with such an air of celebration that some things fell on the floor.