

April 20, 2010 - Entailment

1.

- (a) It's been an amazing year for Crystal Palace over the past 12 months
- (b) The robbery was committed by a pair of identical twins, both are said to be about age 20.
- (c) Send in your competition answers with your name, age and how old you are.
- (d) So you're a housewife and a mother. Do you have any children?

2.

- (a) My mother is a woman.
- (b) My mother is a doctor.
- (c) The tiger is unhappy.
- (d) The tiger is an animal.
- (e) My mother is a boy.
- (f) The tiger is a reptile.

3.

- 1(a) Annie caught a trout.
- 1(b) Annie caught a fish.

- 2(a) Annie is thin.
- 2(b) Annie is not fat.

- 3(a) Annie baked a cake.
- 3(b) Annie baked something.

4.

- 1(a) Goldilocks saw a bear.
- 1(b) Goldilocks saw an animal.

- 2(a) This porridge is too cold.
- 2(b) this porridge is not too hot.

- 3(a) Baby Bear cried.
- 3(b) Baby Bear wept.

- 4(a) Mama Bear is in front of Papa Bear.
- 4(b) Papa Bear is behind Mama Bear.

5.

- (a) Tom: What's your stepmother like?
Bob: Well, she's a woman and she married my father.
- (b) Dave: There's your Uncle George.
Lucy: That man's a snake.
- (c) Jane: You ate all the cookies!
Steve: I ate some of the cookies.

6.

The painters broke the window

7.

Utterance (a): Annie RUINED the sweater.

Entailment 1: `Someone ruined the sweater.'

Utterance (b): Annie ruined the SWEATER.

Entailment 2: `Annie did something to the sweater.'

Utterance (c): ANNIE ruined the sweater.

Entailment 3: `Annie ruined something.'

8.

- (a) My hamster is a mammal.
- (b) My cousin is a girl.
- (c) My sister is a girl.
- (d) My sister is female.
- (e) I saw a female rock.
- (f) I saw a female tortoise.
- (g) My cat likes ice-cream.
- (h) My sick cat is not well.

9.

Ed caught a trout → Ed caught a fish
Original sentence Entailment

The blimp was over the house → Something was over the house
Original sentence Entailment

Ed caught a trout ↔ Ed captured a trout
Original sentence Entailment

The blimp was over the house ↔ The house was under the blimp
Original sentence Entailment

- (a) My sister-in-law grows roses.
- (b) Steve is furious.

- (c) Tom sold a computer to Mark.
- (d) My brother repaired my car.

10.

Write three analytic sentences, e.g. My mother is a woman. For each sentence, think of a context where the utterance of that apparently 'uninformative' sentence would be quite informative to the hearer.

11.

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12.

- (a) All creatures are imperfect beasts. Man alone is the perfect beast.
- (b) The brain of a woman is almost as heavy as a human brain.
- (c) A coroner's duty is to decide whether a person died a fatal death.
- (d) We do not have censorship. What we have is a limitation on what newspapers can report.
- (e) Snakes are two sexes, poisonous and non-poisonous.
- (f) I have reiterated over and over again what I have said before.

13.

Look at these pairs of utterances. The sentences being uttered in each pair are arguably semantic paraphrases of each other (in a relationship of mutual entailment). Do you think they communicate the same information?

- 1(a) That food was delicious.
- 1(b) That grub was yummy.

- 2(a) She designs clothes for adult male humans.
- 2(b) She designs clothes for men.

- 3(a) That guy's a bachelor.
- 3(b) That guy never got married.

14.

We noticed that heavy stress on a word can be used to foreground a particular entailment. Certain kinds of sentence structure can also do this and are particularly useful in written language where stress is not available. The second sentence here is called a CLEFT SENTENCE:

- (a) The PAINTERS broke the window. (spoken)
- (b) It was the painters who broke the window. (written)

When the cleft construction is used in spoken language combined with heavy stress, some interesting meaning differences can emerge. Compare:

- (c) It wasn't ME who burnt the toast.
- (d) It WASN'T me who burnt the toast.

15.

“... the entailments of a sentence can be regarded as those propositions that can be inferred from it in any context’ (my underlining, Simpson, 1993: 122). What problems, if any, are posed for this definition by a sentence like *George saw a nut?*