Worksheet 1: The Participle System at the Edges

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: Where Categories Leak

At C2, the interesting questions concern the **edges** of the participle system — where participles shade into prepositions, conjunctions, adjectives, and idiom.

Phenomenon	Examples	Analysis
Participle → preposition	*regarding, concerning, following, including, excluding, barring, given, granted*	fully grammaticalised; no attachment requirement; take NP complements
Participle → conjunction	*provided (that), supposing, assuming, seeing (that/as), considering (that)*	introduce finite clauses; participial origin inert
Fossilised absolutes	*all told, that said, present company excepted, God willing, weather permitting*	fixed expressions; unproductive patterns
Converted adjectives with meaning drift	*a calculated risk, a guarded response, a measured tone, strained relations*	meanings not predictable from the verb; lexicalised
Unergative/unaccusative asymmetry	*the fallen leaves, an escaped prisoner, a retired teacher* vs **the slept child, *the laughed man*	only verbs whose subject undergoes change of state allow attributive past participles

Part A – Grammaticalisation Tests

> **For each item, decide whether the -ing/-ed form functions as a live participle or a grammaticalised preposition/conjunction. Give one piece of evidence (e.g. attachment behaviour, substitutability, mobility).**

1. "Following the announcement, shares fell sharply."

2. "Following her guide closely, she navigated the old town."

3. "Given the constraints, the outcome was impressive."

4. "Provided the data are anonymised, consent is not required."

Part B – The Attributive Past Participle Puzzle

> **Explain why the starred forms fail. What generalisation covers the pattern? Test it against the additional data.**

*Data: ✓ the fallen leaves · ✓ an escaped prisoner · ✓ the departed guests · ✓ a grown man · ✗ *the slept child · ✗ *the worked man · ✗ *the swum swimmer*

*Additional test data: a collapsed lung · a failed writer · *a dined guest · vanished civilisations — does your generalisation hold?*

Part C – Lexicalised Meaning

> **For each participial adjective, state (i) its lexicalised meaning and (ii) why that meaning is not fully predictable from the verb.**

1. *a measured response*

2. *a calculated insult*

3. *strained relations*

4. *a finished performer*

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Participles in Discourse and Information Structure

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: Position, Weight and Flow

The placement of a participle clause is an information-structural decision. Each position does different discourse work:

Position	Discourse function	Example
Initial	Frames what follows; links back to prior discourse (given information); sets cause/time before result	*Having examined the evidence, the court ruled…*
Medial	Suspends the main clause; inserts background without a full stop; formal, parenthetical	*The minister, pressed on the point, declined to answer.*
Final	Adds elaboration, consequence, or simultaneous detail after the main assertion; the workhorse of narrative	*The crowd dispersed slowly, muttering about the verdict.*

Weight principle: long, heavy participle clauses gravitate to final position; short ones tolerate any position. A heavy initial clause taxes the reader — the main verb is delayed and working memory strains. Skilled writers exploit that delay deliberately (suspense) or avoid it (clarity).

Part A – Position and Effect

The same participle clause is placed differently in each version. Describe the difference in emphasis, flow, or reading experience.

1. **a.** Exhausted by the campaign, the candidate cancelled her final appearances.
   b. The candidate, exhausted by the campaign, cancelled her final appearances.
   c. The candidate cancelled her final appearances, exhausted by the campaign.

2. **a.** Having reviewed all submissions, the committee will publish its decision on Friday.
   b. The committee will publish its decision on Friday, having reviewed all submissions.

Part B – Cohesion Chains

Rewrite this choppy passage into two or three flowing sentences, using participle clauses to manage the given–new flow. Then annotate: which clause carries given information, which new?

The manuscript was discovered in 2011. It had been stored in a monastery archive. Scholars examined it. They dated it to the ninth century. This dating overturned the accepted chronology. The chronology had been unchallenged for decades.

Part C – The Suspended Main Clause

Analyse how the following sentence uses participle structures to delay its main clause. Count the words before the main verb, name each pre-verbal structure, and evaluate whether the suspension is effective or self-indulgent.

"*Orphaned at seven, raised by a grandmother who sold vegetables at the roadside, taught to read by a neighbour lending her one battered book at a time, she became the first person in her village to attend university.*"

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Narrative and Rhetorical Technique

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Reference: The Participle as a Narrative Instrument

Technique	How it works	Risk
Simultaneity layering	Final -ing clauses stack concurrent actions onto one main event: *She ran, coat flapping, keys jangling.*	Overuse produces breathless "participle prose"
Camera movement	Absolutes shift focus to a detail without a new sentence: *He waited, his eyes fixed on the door.*	Mechanical repetition (his X doing Y, her A doing B)
False simultaneity	An -ing clause used for a sequential action: **Opening the door, he crossed the room and sat down* — you cannot sit while still opening	A genuine error of craft, common in unedited fiction
Rhetorical accumulation	Parallel participle clauses build a case or portrait: *Ignored by critics, dismissed by his peers, sustained only by stubbornness, he kept painting.*	Rhythm can override logic if the clauses aren't truly parallel

Part A – Craft Diagnosis

> **Each excerpt misuses participles as a matter of craft (not grammar). Diagnose the problem and rewrite.**

1. "Grabbing her bag, running down the stairs, hailing a taxi, arriving at the station, she caught the train."

2. "Unlocking the door, he made dinner and watched a film."

3. "He sat by the fire, his pipe glowing, his dog sleeping, his thoughts wandering, his tea cooling, his book lying unopened."

Part B – Controlled Imitation

> **Write single sentences to the following specifications.**

1. A sentence using two final -ing clauses to layer simultaneous sensory detail onto one action.

2. A sentence using an absolute construction to move the "camera" from a person to an object.

3. A three-part rhetorical accumulation of past participle clauses building to a main clause.

Part C – Register Boundaries

> **Decide whether each participle technique suits the genre named. Justify briefly.**

#	Sentence + genre	Verdict + reason
1	"The defendant, having been cautioned, made no reply." *(police report)*	
2	"Sales rose 8%, driven by strong demand in Asia." *(earnings summary)*	
3	"The moon hung low, bleeding silver into the harbour." *(instruction manual)*	
4	"Stir constantly, taking care not to let the mixture boil." *(recipe)*	

Score: _____ / 30

Worksheet 4: Scholarly Analysis and Extended Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: C2 (CEFR)

Part A – Scholarly Text Analysis

Stripped of its terminology, the dispute over the dangling participle is a dispute about what grammar is for. Those condemning the construction treat attachment as a logical requirement, the participle being, on their account, a predicate in search of a subject. Those defending it — or at least declining to condemn it wholesale — observe that readers, guided by sense rather than syntax, rarely mis-parse the offending sentences. Considered as evidence, this fact cuts deep: a rule routinely violated without loss of meaning is not describing the language, whatever else it may be doing. That granted, the prescriptivist has one argument left standing, and it is a social one: certain readers, having been taught the rule, will judge the writer who breaks it. The dangling participle, then, survives not as a crime against logic but as a tax on reputation — levied unevenly, collected by the educated, and paid, knowingly or not, by every writer.

Questions

1. Catalogue the participle constructions in the passage (there are at least nine distinct instances). Classify each by type: initial -ed clause, absolute, reduced relative, grammaticalised form, perfect participle, final participial elaboration.

2. "the participle being, on their account, a predicate in search of a subject" — analyse this construction fully. What is unusual about the placement of the parenthetical?

3. "Considered as evidence, this fact cuts deep" — is this participle correctly attached, dangling, or a borderline case? Argue both sides briefly, then adjudicate.

4. "That granted" — identify the construction type and its function in the argument's structure.

5. The final sentence closes with three past participle clauses: "levied unevenly, collected by the educated, and paid… by every writer". Analyse how the triplet's grammar reinforces the tax metaphor and the essay's conclusion.

Part B – Extended Scholarly Writing

Write the opening **two paragraphs** (**230–270 words**) of an essay on one of the following:

A: "*The participle is English's most versatile grammatical instrument. Discuss with reference to at least three registers.*"
B: "*Rules that careful writers routinely break are not rules. Discuss with reference to the dangling participle.*"

Requirements: (1) an initial past participle clause framing the essay's perspective; (2) an absolute construction; (3) a grammaticalised participle (preposition/conjunction) used with awareness; (4) a rhetorical accumulation of parallel participle clauses; (5) a final -ing elaboration closing a sentence; (6) no unintended danglers — any dangler must be deliberate and defensible.

Topic: ___ A ___ B Word count: _____ Features: _____ / 6

Score: _____ / 35

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — C2 Level, Participles

Worksheet 1 – Part A

#	Analysis
1	**Grammaticalised preposition — no attachment to *shares* required (shares weren't following anything); substitutable by *after*.**
2	**Live participle — attaches to *she* (she follows the guide); takes an adverb (*closely*); retains verbal force.**
3	**Grammaticalised preposition — substitutable by *in view of*; no subject "gives" anything; passes no attachment test.**
4	**Grammaticalised conjunction — introduces a finite clause; substitutable by *if*; the participial origin (provide) is semantically inert.**

Worksheet 1 – Part B

Generalisation: attributive past participles of intransitive verbs are possible only with **unaccusative** verbs — those whose subject undergoes the event or a change of state/location (fall, escape, depart, grow, collapse, vanish, fail). **Unergative** verbs — whose subject is an agent performing an activity (sleep, work, laugh, dine, swim) — reject the construction. The additional data conform: *a collapsed lung* (the lung underwent collapse ✓), *a failed writer* (underwent failure ✓), *vanished civilisations* ✓, but **a dined guest* ✗ (dining is agentive activity). The attributive past participle of an intransitive denotes a resulting state — only change-of-state verbs supply one.

> *This is a genuinely satisfying piece of grammar for advanced students: a seemingly arbitrary pattern with a clean underlying generalisation. Let students attempt the rule themselves before revealing it; the unaccusative/unergative terminology is a bonus, not a requirement.*

Worksheet 1 – Part C

1 Deliberate, proportionate, restrained — not merely "which was measured". **2** Deliberately planned to wound — the arithmetic sense has drifted to intentionality. **3** Tense, difficult (of relationships) — not literally subjected to strain by an agent. **4** Fully accomplished, polished — near-opposite of the "used up" reading of *finished*; meaning is lexeme-specific.

Worksheet 2 – Part A

1a Initial: exhaustion frames the whole event; causal reading foregrounded. **1b** Medial: the fact is slipped in parenthetically — measured, reportorial; the sentence's spine (candidate cancelled) stays primary. **1c** Final: cancellation is asserted first; exhaustion arrives as explanation or afterthought — most conversational.
2a Initial perfect participle: the review is given/completed background; the announcement is the news. **2b** Final: the announcement leads; the review reads as reassurance or justification appended. Choose (a) for process-focused institutional prose, (b) for news-focused.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (model answer)

> *Model: "Discovered in 2011 in a monastery archive, the manuscript was examined by scholars, who dated it to the ninth century — a dating that overturned a chronology unchallenged for decades." Annotation: Discovered…archive = given/background (initial -ed); main clause = new (the dating); unchallenged for decades = reduced relative packing old information into the final noun phrase. Accept any version that uses initial -ed clause for given information and pushes the overturning into focus.*

Worksheet 2 – Part C

Analysis: ~34 words precede the main verb *became*. Pre-verbal structures: three parallel past participle clauses (*Orphaned…, raised…, taught…*), the third containing a reduced relative with an -ing clause (*a neighbour lending her one battered book at a time*). Effective: the accumulation enacts the biography — hardship is stacked before the triumph arrives with the delayed main verb; the parallel passives also cast her early life as things done *to* her, against which *she became* lands as her own act. A defensible judgement either way, but the craft case for effectiveness is strong.

Worksheet 3 – Part A

1 False simultaneity chain — four sequential actions dressed as simultaneous. Fix by sequencing: "She grabbed her bag, ran down the stairs and hailed a taxi; at the station, she caught the train (with seconds to spare)."
2 False simultaneity — unlocking is momentary; dinner and film cannot overlap with it. Fix: "After unlocking the door / Once inside, he made dinner and watched a film." (or "Having unlocked…", though the perfect is heavy for so trivial an action)
3 Camera-movement overuse — five absolutes in a row become an inventory; the device parodies itself. Fix by pruning to the two most telling details: "He sat by the fire, his pipe glowing, his book lying unopened."

Worksheet 3 – Part C

1 Suits: legal-institutional register expects the formal perfect passive participle; "having been cautioned" is near-formulaic in police prose.
2 Suits: final -ed elaboration ("driven by…") is the standard idiom of financial reporting — compresses causation without asserting agency.
3 Does not suit: poetic personification and metaphor ("bleeding silver") are wildly out of register for procedural text.
4 Suits: the final -ing clause of accompanying caution ("taking care not to…") is a conventional recipe pattern.

Worksheet 4 – Part A

#	Construction / type
1	**Stripped of its terminology — initial past participle clause (attaches to *the dispute*)**
2	**Those condemning the construction — reduced relative (-ing) on *those***
3	**the participle being…a predicate — absolute construction (own subject: *the participle*)**
4	**declining to condemn it wholesale — -ing participial coordination modifying *those defending***

5	**guided by sense rather than syntax — medial past participle clause on *readers***
6	**Considered as evidence — initial -ed clause (borderline attachment; see Q3)**
7	**routinely violated without loss of meaning — reduced relative (-ed) on *a rule***
8	**whatever else it may be doing — free relative with progressive (bonus if identified)**
9	**That granted — fossilised absolute (concessive); having been taught the rule — perfect passive participle on *certain readers*; levied / collected / paid — final past participle triplet elaborating *a tax*; knowingly or not — elliptical adverbial (bonus)**

Q2: Absolute construction: subject *the participle* + *being* + predicate NP. The parenthetical "on their account" splits *being* from its complement — an unusually deep interruption that flags the claim as reported, not endorsed, at exactly the point where endorsement would otherwise be implied.
Q3: Strictly, *this fact* did not do the considering — a reader or arguer did — so by the mechanical rule it dangles. But *considered as X* functions as a framing formula (like *taken as a whole, viewed in this light*) well down the grammaticalisation path. Adjudication: acceptable — the passage itself argues that the test is whether a construction misleads, and this one cannot mislead.
Q4: Fossilised absolute (*that* + past participle), concessive: it concedes the preceding point and pivots to the remaining argument — a discourse-structuring hinge.
Q5: The triplet applies three passive participles to *a tax*, each extending the fiscal metaphor (levy, collect, pay) with an agent phrase that maps the social analysis: no agent (unevenly), the educated (who enforce), every writer (who bears the cost). The passives keep the tax grammatically the patient throughout — reputation is something done to writers — which is precisely the essay's conclusion, enacted in syntax.

Worksheet 4 – Part B: Marking Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor at C2	Marks
Initial -ed frame	Frames the essay's stance; attachment impeccable or knowingly formulaic	0–5
Absolute construction	Own subject; advances argument, not decoration	0–5
Grammaticalised form	Used with metalinguistic awareness (ideally remarked upon if topic B)	0–5
Rhetorical accumulation	Genuinely parallel; rhythm serves logic	0–5
Final -ing elaboration	Adds consequence/simultaneity; closes a sentence with control	0–5
Dangler discipline	No accidental danglers; any deliberate one defensible	0–5

> *The C2 benchmark: participle structures should be doing argumentative or narrative work — framing, sequencing, layering, accumulating — rather than appearing as trophies. A script that meets all six requirements mechanically but reads as a checklist should score lower on the accumulation and elaboration criteria than one where the structures feel inevitable.*