Parallelism is the expression of similar details using similar grammatical structures. By placing similar details near one another and using words, phrases, or clauses that sound alike, writers create powerful, lasting images.

Consider Guy de Maupassant’s use of parallelism in these passages from “The Necklace.”

Parallel Verbs:
She had no dowry, no hopes, not the slightest chance of being appreciated, understood, loved, and married by a rich and distinguished man. . . .

Parallel Phrases:
The poverty of her rooms—the shabby walls, the worn furniture, the ugly upholstery—caused her pain.

A. Practice: Identify the examples of parallelism in the following passages from the selections.

1. She would weep for whole days at a time from sorrow, regret, despair, and distress.

2. She would have so loved to charm, to be envied, to be admired and sought after.

3. She was the prettiest woman there—resplendent, graceful, beaming, and deliriously happy.

4. If she had noticed the substitution, what would she have thought? What would she have said?

5. It was Madame Forestier, still young, still beautiful, still charming.

B. Writing Application: Add one additional parallel word or phrase to each item from the preceding exercise.

Example: sorrow, regret, despair, loneliness, and distress

1. 