



An appositive phrase is an interrupting definition.

Appositive phrase: An appositive is an interrupting definition. For good writers the appositive phrase is often Plan A; it offers an elegant, intelligent way to insert valuable information. Some view appositives as nouns because they seem to repeat the noun, but others view them as adjectives because they seem to modify or complement the noun. The appositive is called an *appositive* because it is put (*pos*) beside (*ap*) what it defines. It is apposed. The idea of an appositive is: “WE INTERRUPT THIS SENTENCE TO BRING YOU A DEFINITION.” An appositive may consist of only one word, or it may consist of an entire phrase. We usually enclose appositives and appositive phrases in commas, unless they are exceptionally short and clear by themselves:

**Theodora, the Byzantine empress, was powerful and influential.
Her husband Justinian changed a law so that he could marry her.**

We always enclose **appositive states** and **appositive years** in commas:

**Ravenna, Italy, is the site of splendid mosaics of Theodora and Justinian.
June 28, 548, is the date of Theodora’s death.**

Two commas: Notice that we put commas before and after appositives. We say that appositives are **enclosed** by commas. Appositives take two commas or none, unless the appositive is at the end of the sentence: *I went to see the mosaics in Ravenna, Italy.* The comma can make all the difference in the meaning of the sentence:

Wrong: **Justinian, the emperor is represented in the mosaics.**

Right: **Justinian, the emperor, is represented in the mosaics.**

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Yes, Herodotus, the discerning historian, recorded the events.

interj. n. adj. adj. n. v. adj. n.

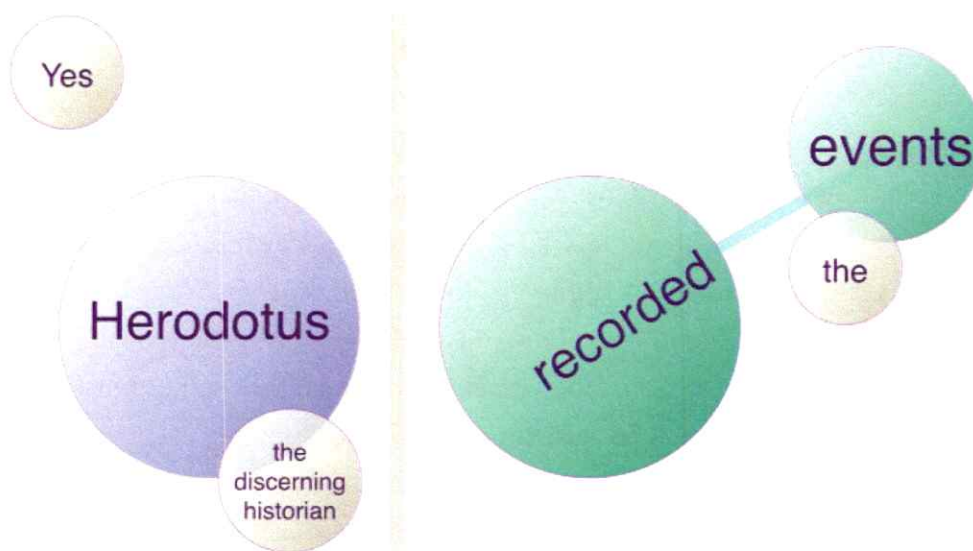
subj.

AVP

D.O.

-----appositive phrase-----

It is not unusual for an appositive phrase to intervene between the subject and the verb. Without the second appositive comma, the sentence's meaning changes, and the result is often a disaster.



Notice that interjections such as *yes* are separated from the rest of the sentence. This makes sense because interjections do not have any grammatical function; they do not modify, or join, or replace. Appositives often seem to act more like adjectives, modifying how the mind sees the noun:

Maximilian, my spotted retriever, slept all night long.