In Ron Hawkins's third-period class on Monday, he began a unit on pronoun cases with one of his Standard English classes. The tardy bell rang at 9:10 as Ron began, "All right, listen, everyone. Today, we're going to begin a study of pronoun cases. Everybody turn to page 484 in your text.... We see at the top of the page that we're dealing with pronoun cases. This is important in our writing because we want to be able to write and use standard English correctly, and this is one of the places where people often get mixed up. So, when we're finished with our study here, you'll all be able to use pronouns correctly in your writing."

He then wrote the following on the chalkboard:

Pronouns use the nominative case when they're subjects and predicate nominatives.
Pronouns use the objective case when they're direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of prepositions.

"Let's review briefly," Ron continued. "Give me a sentence that has both a direct and indirect object in it.... Anyone?"

"Mr. Hawkins gives us too much homework," Amato offered jokingly.

Ron wrote the sentence on the chalkboard amid laughter from the students and then continued, smiling, "Okay, Amato. Good sentence, even though it's incorrect. I don't give you enough work.... What's the subject in the sentence?"

"..."

"Go ahead, Amato."

"Mr. Hawkins?"

"Yes, good. Mr. Hawkins is the subject," Ron replied as he underlined "Mr. Hawkins" in the sentence.

"Now, what's the direct object? ... Helen?"

"... Homework."

"All right, good. And what's the indirect object? ... Anya?"

"... Us."

"Excellent, everybody." Ron then continued by reviewing predicate nominatives and objects of prepositions.

"Now let's look at some additional examples up here on the overhead," Ron continued.

He then displayed the following four sentences:

1. Did you get the card from Esteban and (I, me)?
2. Will Meg and (she, her) run the concession stand?
3. They treat (whoever, whomever) they hire very well.
4. I looked for someone (who, whom) could give me directions to the theater.

"Okay, look at the first one. Which is correct? ... Omar?"

"... Me."

"Good, Omar. How about the second one? ... Lonnie?"

"... Her."

"Not quite, Lonnie. Listen to this. Suppose I turn the sentence around a little and say, 'Meg and her will run the concession stand.' See, that doesn't sound right, does it? 'Meg and she' is a compound subject, and when we have a subject, we use the nominative case. Are you okay on that, Lonnie?"
Lonnie nodded and Ron continued, "Look at the third one... Cheny."
"... I don't know... whoever, I guess."
"This one is tricky all right," Ron nodded. "When we use whoever and whomever, whoever is the nominative case and whomever is the objective case. In this sentence, whomever is a direct object, so it is the correct form."

Ron then continued with the rest of the sentences as he had with the first four. After he finished, he gave the students another list of sentences in which they were to select the correct form of the pronoun.

On Tuesday, Ron first reviewed the exercises the students had completed for homework and then continued with some additional examples of using who, whom, whoever, and whomever. He then discussed the rules for pronoun–antecedent agreement (pronouns must agree with their antecedents in gender and number). Then he again had students work examples as he'd done with pronoun cases.

He continued with pronouns and their antecedents on Wednesday and began a discussion of indefinite pronouns as antecedents for personal pronouns—anybody, either, each, one, someone—and had students work examples as done before.

Near the end of class on Thursday, Ron announced, "Tomorrow, we're going to have a test on this material: pronoun cases, pronouns and their antecedents, and indefinite pronouns. You have your notes, so study hard... Are there any questions? ... Good. I expect you all to do well. I'll see you tomorrow."

On Friday morning as students filed into class and the bell rang, Ron picked up a stack of tests from his desk. The test consisted of 30 sentences, 10 of which dealt with case, 10 with antecedents, and 10 with indefinite pronouns. The final part of the test directed the students to write a paragraph. The following are some sample items from the test:

Part I. For each of the items below, mark A on your answer sheet if the pronoun case is correct in the sentence, and mark B if it is incorrect. If it is incorrect, supply the correct pronoun.

1. Be careful who you tell.
2. Will Rennee and I be in the outfield?
3. My brother and me like water skiing.

Part II. Write the pronoun that correctly completes the sentence.

11. Arlene told us about ______ visit to the dentist to have braces put on.
12. The Wilsons planted a garden in ______ backyard.
13. Cal read the recipe and put ______ in the file.
14. Each of the girls on the team wore ______ school sweater to the game.
15. None of the brass has lost ______ shine yet.
16. Few of the boys on the team have taken ______ physicals yet.

The directions for the final part of the test were as follows:

Part III. Write a short paragraph that contains at least two examples of pronouns in the nominative case and two examples of pronouns in the objective case. (Circle and label these.) Include also at least two examples of pronouns that agree with their antecedents. Remember!! The paragraph must make sense. It cannot just be a series of sentences.
Ron watched as his students worked, and he periodically walked up and down the aisles. Seeing that 15 minutes remained in the period and that some students were only starting on their paragraphs, he announced, "You only have 15 minutes left. Watch your time and work quickly. You need to be finished by the end of the period."

He then continued monitoring students, again reminding them to work quickly when 10 minutes were left and again when 5 minutes were left.

Luis, Simao, Moy, and Rudy were hastily finishing the last few words of their tests as the bell rang. Luis finally turned in his paper as Ron's fourth-period students were filing into the room. "Here," Ron said. "This pass will get you into Mrs. Washington's class if you're late.... How did you do?"

"Okay, I think," Luis said over his shoulder as he scurried out of the room, "except for the last part. It was hard. I couldn't get started."

"I'll look at it," Ron said. "Scoot now."

On Monday, Ron returned the tests, saying, "Here are your papers. You did fine on the sentences, but your paragraphs need a lot of work. Why did you have so much trouble with them, when we had so much practice?"

"It was hard, Mr. Hawkins."

"Not enough time."

"I hate to write."

Ron listened patiently and then said, "Be sure you write your scores in your notebooks.... Okay.... You have them all written down? ... Are there any questions?"

"Number 8," Enrique requested.

"Okay, let's look at 8. It says, 'I didn't know to (who, whom) to give the letter.' There, the pronoun is the object of a preposition, so it's whom.

"Any others?"

A sprinkling of questions came from around the room, and Ron responded, "We don't have time to go over all of them. I'll discuss three more."

He responded to the three students who seemed to be most urgent in waving their hands. He then collected the tests and began a discussion of adjective and adverb clauses.