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ABSTRACT

This unit of study introduces high-ability intermediate-grade students to the aspect of grammar which is usually missing from technically oriented studies of grammar, namely, the wonder and pleasure of grammar or grammar appreciation. It presents grammar as a powerful way for one's mind to make ideas out of language, and a way of inspecting one's own ideas. Many of the facts and concepts of grammar are mentioned to give students a concrete sense of what grammar is and how its elements operate, with the goal of creating an enlightened enthusiasm for the study of ideas in language. There is no strict series of assignments or procedures. The primary activity is for the student to read and to think. The role of the teacher is to act as an encouraging and appreciative mentor, in a manner that is more artistic than methodic. The unit recommends that, after the student completes a reading session, the student and teacher come together and talk about the elements of grammar. Sections of the unit of study address: ideas, language, and grammar; the sentence; clauses; parts of speech; and phrases. A grammar pretest and posttest are provided. (JDD)

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# *Inspecting Our Own Ideas*

## A Grammar Self-Study Program for High Ability Students

### A Grammar Unit for Grades 4-6

by  
*Michael Clay Thompson*

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## Inspecting Our Own Ideas A Grammar Self-Study Program for High Ability Students

by Michael C. Thompson

### Teacher Instructions

This grammar study, although it does explore numerous technical details of grammar, is not designed to teach technical details. Rather, the primary purpose of the study is to introduce students to the aspect of grammar which is usually missing from all of the technically oriented studies of grammar which are so abundant, namely, the wonder and pleasure of grammar.

In order to accomplish this deeper purpose, many of the facts and concepts of grammar must be mentioned, since in discussing the power of grammar we must give students some concrete sense of what grammar is, and some sense of how its elements operate to accomplish their deeper purposes.

But the object of attention, which I want to bring to sharpest focus in the middle of my lens, is that grammar is lovely, and exciting, and irresistible, and that it takes very little imagination to demonstrate these qualities. I am aware that popular misconceptions exist about grammar being an arid and uninteresting subject, but these are unenlightened and uninformed prejudices which are easily discarded, or in the case of the youngest students, easily prevented.

And so the goal of the study is to create an enlightened enthusiasm for the study of ideas in language; it is not to construct a stern gauntlet of terms to be memorized. The goal is to bring students' attention to the most introspective and human aspects of grammar.

Accordingly, the process of study itself must be human, pleasant, and flexible. There is no strict series of assignments or procedures. The primary activity is for the student to read and to think. The role of the teacher is to act as an encouraging and appreciative mentor for the student, by studying the unit and viewing it in its best light, by introducing the grammar study to the student warmly and optimistically, by working closely with the student in frequent conversation to build comprehension and appreciation. All of this should be accomplished in a manner that I can only describe as more artistic than methodic.

As a practical procedure, look through the unit with the student, and agree upon an appropriate place to stop the first reading session, based on the length of time available in your own circumstances and on the student's abilities. Allow the student to read, think, and make notes if appropriate. When the student is ready, come together and talk, with as much mutual enjoyment as possible, about the elements of grammar included in the reading. Review any written exercises that the student has done. Then agree on the extent of the next reading, and continue in this fashion. It will be important, at the end of the unit, to have a summary conversation which extracts all of the best ideas which have been gained.

As a professional educator, you should not hesitate to use this study as a flexible resource which you can supplement with your own creativity; the only danger would be to bury the positive spirit of the unit in a well intentioned but counterproductive series of technical exercises. There will be plenty of time for such activities in the students' lives--the purpose of this unit is grammar appreciation.

## Inspecting Our Own Ideas A Grammar Self-Study Program for High Ability Students

by Michael C. Thompson

### Student Instructions

As you begin to read this short study of grammar and to think about the ideas you will find here, you should know that there is one important purpose for what you are doing. It is not to learn a large number of facts, or to memorize terms, or to score points. Lots of grammar books can help you learn facts and terms. This study is different. Its purpose is to show you the deeper meaning of grammar that is usually missing from the grammar fact books—the part that many people never understand.

What is this deeper meaning?

It is that grammar is a kind of magic lens, a secret thinking method we can use to peek inside our own minds and to detect the designs of our own ideas.

Using grammar this way, we can learn about ourselves, learn about what makes us human, learn about why some ideas are clear and others are confused, learn about beautiful ways to share our thoughts with other people.

In order to make the most of what you will read, you should understand from the beginning that even though there will be facts and details to learn, the facts are not the point. The point is the point. And so as you read, do what the coaches always tell you: keep your eye on the ball.

Do not forget that you are concentrating on the deep thinking, the deep meaning, the ability to appreciate the real power of grammar.

The best way to do this is to begin by previewing the study with your teacher. Look over it together, and agree on how much you should read in your first session. Then go read, and think, and reread. Make notes on your ideas and on the questions you have that the reading doesn't answer. Then meet with your teacher to talk about what you have learned and to look over any of the written exercises you may have done. Keep working in this way until you have read the entire grammar study, and can discuss it completely with your teacher or other students, depending upon your class situation.

Remember that grammar is a kind of higher order thinking, like logic or mathematics. Grammar can show us secrets that no other thinking method can show us. If you read and think carefully, you will never forget that grammar is a wonderful tool for the mind.

## Grammar Pre-Test - Grades 4-6

### 25 Questions, 4 Points Each

#### Fill in the Blank

1. A group of words that has a subject and a predicate is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The noun or pronoun that the sentence is about is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The part of the sentence that says something about the subject is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. How many kinds of words are there in our language? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A word that names a person, place, or thing is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. A word that modifies a noun or pronoun is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
7. A word that shows action is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. A word that joins two words into a pair is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A word that shows emotion is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
10. A word group acting as a single part of speech is a \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Underline the Subjects of These Sentences

11. The engineer designed a building.
12. Leonardo painted a beautiful painting.
13. Yes, the boy and the girl became friends quickly.
14. The explorer Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean.
15. Caesar and his Roman legions defeated the Gauls in France.

#### Circle the Correct Answer

16. In the sentence "The engineer designed a building" the word *engineer* is a  
a. noun                      b. pronoun                      c. adjective                      d. adverb
17. In the sentence "The engineer designed a building" the word *designed* is a  
a. noun                      b. verb                      c. adjective                      d. adverb
18. In the sentence "The engineer designed a building" the word *a* is a  
a. conjunction                      b. adverb                      c. preposition                      d. adjective
19. In the sentence "Yes, the boy and the girl became friends quickly" the word *and* is a  
a. conjunction                      b. preposition                      c. interjection                      d. adverb



## Grammar Pre-Test - Grades 4-6

### Answer Key

#### Fill in the Blank

1. A group of words that has a subject and a predicate is called a **sentence**.
2. The noun or pronoun that the sentence is about is called the **subject**.
3. The part of the sentence that says something about the subject is called the **predicate**.
4. How many kinds of words are there in our language? **eight**.
5. A word that names a person, place, or thing is called a **noun**.
6. A word that modifies a noun or pronoun is called an **adjective**.
7. A word that shows action is called a **verb**.
8. A word that joins two words into a pair is called a **conjunction**.
9. A word that shows emotion is called an **interjection**.
10. A word group acting as a single part of speech is a **phrase**.

#### Underline the Subjects of These Sentences

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18. In the sentence "The engineer designed a building" the word *a* is a  
a. conjunction                      b. adverb                      c. preposition                      d. **adjective**
19. In the sentence "Yes, the boy and the girl became friends quickly" the word *and* is a  
a. **conjunction**                      b. preposition                      c. interjection                      d. adverb



## 1. Ideas, Language, and Grammar

How do we talk to each other?

How do we write to each other?

How do we read what someone else has written?

We use **language**. Language is our way of putting words together to make our **ideas**.

Any time we use words to **say something about something**, that is an idea!

We have to **say something . . . about something**.

In other words, an idea is made of **two parts**. One part is **what we are talking about**, and the other part is **what we are saying** about it.

We might say something about ourselves. Or we might say something about an object, such as a distant spiral galaxy in deep space, or a glowing hologram, or a thundering Triceratops. We might say something about wispy white cirrostratus clouds in a blue summer sky. If we did that, we might say, "Wispy white cirrostratus clouds in a blue summer sky floated high over my head."

Do you see the two parts of that idea?

What we are talking about:

Wispy white cirrostratus clouds in a blue summer sky

What we are saying about it:

floated high over my head.

In this idea, we are using words in language to make an idea about cirrostratus clouds.

Of course, if wispy white clouds in a blue summer sky floated high over our heads, there would probably be a bird—high, high up—flying near the cloud. This would be a strong bird indeed, since cirrostratus clouds are found at 20,000 feet and higher! And there would probably be summer insects buzzing around, eating fresh leaves and drinking nectar from the flowers. And the grass would probably be cool and feel good on our bare feet. It would be nice.

But back to language and ideas. Another idea could be, "I'm nobody." In this idea, we are saying something about something. Part one: we are talking about ourselves. Part two: what are we saying about ourselves? That we are nobody. Of course, this idea comes from a very famous poem by

Emily Dickinson, one of America's very greatest poets. And when she said "I'm nobody," she was using **irony** to change the meaning from bad to good! If you read the rest of the poem, you will see how quickly Emily Dickinson accomplishes this change of meaning.

So, ideas have two parts.

But guess what? We have a very special way to study ideas that we make out of words in language. This special way to study language is called **grammar**.

**Grammar is a way of thinking about language.**

Using grammar, we can inspect one of our own language ideas, and see how it is made! We can do lots of things with grammar. We can find an idea's two parts, and we can find all of the groups of words in the idea, and we can even look at each word by itself and see what it does to make the idea work. This helps us to understand ourselves, and to understand how we think! In the pages that follow, you will learn about grammar, and about how grammar helps us to understand our own ideas.

**REVIEW:** Let's look again at the ideas we have discussed. Think carefully about each of these points:

**language:** our way of putting words together to express our ideas

**idea:** a two-part thought about something

**the two parts of an idea:** what we are talking about, and what we are saying about it

**grammar:** a special way of thinking about language

## 2. Sentence—A Subject and Its Predicate

In grammar, we have a special word to describe an idea that is made of two parts. This special word is *sentence*. A sentence is an idea. We sometimes say that a sentence is a **complete thought**, but this is just a different way of saying the same thing—that a sentence is an idea.

Would you like to know an interesting fact? Our English word *sentence* comes from a very old word, *sententia*, which was a word used thousands of years ago in an ancient language called *Latin*. Latin was the language spoken by the ancient Romans of Italy. To the ancient Romans, the word *sententia* meant "way of thinking." Latin was also the source of our English word *cirrostratus*, which we saw in the first section of this discussion. The word *cirrostratus* comes from the Latin stems *cirrus*, meaning "curl," and *stratus*, meaning "layer." Cirrostratus clouds form a thin, "curly layer" of clouds. We will see that many of the words used in grammar have very logical meanings that are based on ancient Latin or Greek words.

Now, we learned that a sentence is an idea that is complete. But what makes a sentence's idea complete?

It is complete because it has **both** of the two parts that it needs to make sense to someone. Until it has both of these two important parts, it is not finished, not complete.

Let's think about this for a minute. If I wish to understand you, then there are two things that I need to know:

I need to know **what you are talking about**.

and

I need to know **what you are saying about it**.

If I do know these two things, then I can understand you. But if I do not know what you are talking about, or if I do not know what you are saying about it, then I will not understand you.

Grammar gives us names for these two parts of the sentence. The first part of the sentence, what it is about, is called the **subject**. The second part of the sentence, what we are saying about the subject, is called the **predicate**. Let's look at some examples:

<b>Subject</b> (What the idea is about)	<b>Predicate</b> (What we are saying about the subject)
The crane.....	fishes patiently in the lake.
They .....	would banish us.
The people.....	could fly.
Crick and Watson .....	discovered DNA.
I.....	loved my friend.
Lenny.....	is a boy in my class.
That day.....	was one of the coldest.
He.....	had several beds of zinnias.
She.....	had a little thin face.
I.....	am.

Notice that a sentence does not have to be long. Sometimes a sentence only has two words in it. "Pterodactyls landed" is a sentence. Even though it is short, it has a subject, *Pterodactyls*, and a predicate, *landed*.

Do you know what **pterodactyls** were? They were flying dinosaurs that had wings of skin, and that became extinct at the end of the Mesozoic era. In Arizona fossil pterodactyls have been found that had 40-foot wingspans. They are called *pterodactyls* because they had clawed fingers in the middle of their wings, and so their scientific name comes from the ancient Greek *pter*, which means wing, and *dactyl*, which means finger. A second question: do you know what the **Mesozoic** era was? Well, *meso* means middle, and *zo* means animal. The Mesozoic era was a geologic era in the earth's history that occurred after the Paleozoic era and before the Cenozoic era, from 230,000,000 years ago until 65,000,000 years ago. The Mesozoic era featured the rise and fall of the dinosaurs, the appearance of birds, grasses, and flowering plants. Now, if you are really adventurous, you will go back to the Paleozoic era, and see what happened then!

Now, let's make some new sentences! I will give you a subject or predicate to start with, and then you can think of your own way to finish the sentence. Sometimes I will give you a subject, and leave the predicate blank, and sometimes I will give you a predicate and leave the subject blank. Fill in the blanks with subjects or predicates that help the sentence make sense. For example, if I give you a subject, such as "The star cruiser," you could fill in the predicate blank with a predicate that you imagine. You might complete the sentence by writing, "rumbled toward the icy planet." (Of course, nothing *rumbles* in space, since sound does not carry in a vacuum.)

### New Sentences

Subject (What the idea is about)	Predicate (What we are saying about the subject)
1. F.L. Wright, the famous architect.	_____
2. Egyptian hieroglyphics	_____
3. The red laser beam	_____
4. _____	shone across the Mediterranean.
5. _____	quietly munched the bamboo shoots.
6. _____	climbed aboard the <i>Hispaniola</i> .
7. The people of ancient Carthage	_____
8. Beethoven's best symphony	_____
9. _____	is my favorite work of art.
10. _____	littered the laboratory.

Notice that until you completed the subject or predicate, none of your sentences made sense. A subject or a predicate by itself is not an idea; it is only a **fragment**, or piece, of an idea. A **sentence fragment** is a piece of a sentence that only makes an incomplete thought. A sentence

fragment needs to be finished, just like the subjects and predicates above needed to be finished. How would I have finished the ten sentences you just worked on? Well, I might have finished them this way:

Subject (What the idea is about)	Predicate (What we are saying about the subject)
1. F.L. Wright, the famous architect,	<i>designed houses to match the landscape.</i>
2. Egyptian hieroglyphics	<i>are made of little pictures.</i>
3. The red laser beam	<i>could be seen from the moon.</i>
4. <i>The ship's festive lights</i>	shone across the Mediterranean.
5. <i>The panda bear</i>	quietly munched the bamboo shoots.
6. <i>The wide-eyed young boy</i>	climbed aboard the <i>Hispaniola</i> .
7. The people of ancient Carthage	<i>waved good-bye to Hannibal.</i>
8. Beethoven's best symphony	<i>is a musical masterpiece.</i>
9. <i>Van Gogh's self-portrait</i>	is my favorite work of art.
10. <i>Empty pizza boxes</i>	littered the laboratory.

By the way, the *Hispaniola* was the sailing ship in Robert Louis Stevenson's wonderful classic, *Treasure Island*, about young Jim Hawkins and his adventures with the dastardly pirates led by Long John Silver. If you have not read this masterpiece, you are in for a great time. And I know you would enjoy looking up the famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright (find photographs of his buildings), as well as the ancient general Hannibal, the great composer Ludwig Van Beethoven (listen to a recording of his famous Fifth Symphony), and the Dutch painter Vincent Van Gogh (look at a reproduction of his painting *Starry Night*).

Now, you can make up some sentences of your own. Write the subjects in the blanks at the left, and write the predicates in the blanks at the right. Use your creativity and imagination to write some unexpected and interesting sentences.

### Sentences

Subject (What the idea is about)	Predicate (What we are saying about the subject)
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

**REVIEW:** Now, let's look again at the new ideas we have learned about language and sentences.

Our way of putting words together to make our ideas is called **language**.

A two-part thought about something is called an **idea**.

What we are talking about, and what we are saying about it are the **two parts of an idea**.

A special way of thinking about language is called **grammar**.

In grammar, we call a two-part idea a **sentence**.

The two parts of the sentence are called the **subject** and the **predicate**.

What the sentence is about is called the **subject**.

What we are saying about the subject is called the **predicate**.

A piece of a sentence that is not complete yet is only a **fragment**.

**What is a sentence like?** Now that you understand that a sentence is made of two parts, a subject the sentence is about and a predicate that says something about the subject, think of some other things that also have two parts. For example, an egg has both a white and a yolk inside. A basketball goal has a backboard and a rim. A bicycle wheel has a center and a rim. A person has a first name and a last name. Make a list of things that, like sentences, have two parts. After my first examples, fill in your own.

<b>The Thing</b>	<b>Part One</b>	<b>Part Two</b>
egg	white	yolk
mouth	upper lip	lower lip
shooting an arrow	pull back	let go
echo	sound goes away	sound comes back
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Now that you have a list of things that have two parts, which one of these things in your list do you think is really most like a sentence, with its two subject/predicate parts? What is the best comparison? Think about it carefully, and then explain your choice:

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Did you enjoy thinking that way? Thinking up comparisons between two different things is a special and important kind of thinking, called **synthesis**. Synthesis is the ability to see connections, or similarities, or relationships between things that seem unconnected at first. But when we use synthesis to see hidden connections, we are often surprised to learn how similar things are, and how much everything is connected.

**A Vocabulary Note:** The word **subject** contains two ancient Latin word pieces, or stems, that we see in many words, **sub**, and **ject**. The stem **sub** means "under," and we see **sub** in words such as **submarine** and **submerge**. The stem **ject** means "throw," and we see **ject** in words such as **eject** and **dejected**. So the word **subject** actually contains a picture: the **subject** of a sentence is the part that is "thrown down" for discussion. Look up some of the following example words in your dictionary, and see if you can understand why they mean what they mean:

stem	meaning	example words
sub	under	submarine, submerge, subdue, subtract, subside, subordinate
ject	throw	reject, dejected, interject, eject, conjecture, project, adjective, object

### 3. Clauses: the Sentences within Sentences.

There is another surprising fact about the way we make our ideas into sentences. Many of the sentences that we use are just like the ones we studied above. They have a subject, and then a predicate, and then the sentence ends. But sometimes our ideas get so connected that we like to join simple ideas together into a longer, more complicated idea. In other words, sometimes, we join little related sentences together into a big sentence. For example,

We might have these two sentences:

**Congress passed the bill. The president signed it into law.**

Each of these sentences has its own subject and predicate. But since these two sentences describe something that happened in a connected event, we can connect the sentences together into a longer sentence:

**Congress passed the bill, and the president signed it into law.**

Now the two little sentences make one long sentence, and it has one subject and predicate, followed by a second subject and predicate, all in one sentence!

Congress passed the bill, and the president signed it into law.  
subject                      predicate                      subject                      predicate

When we join little sentences this way into a longer sentence of subject/predicate chains, we call each little subject/predicate group a **clause**.

Congress passed the bill, and the president signed it into law.  
first clause                      second clause

When there is only one subject/predicate set in the sentence, we say that the sentence has **one clause**.

Our word *clause* comes from the ancient Latin word *claudere* which meant "to close" to the Romans. This makes sense even now, because a clause is a group of words in which an idea gets opened, and closed! The idea is opened when we introduce a subject, and then it is closed when we provide the predicate. In a long sentence made of many clauses, we open and close a number of related ideas in a row. Let's look at some examples of clauses in sentences. Notice that each clause has its own subject and its own predicate:

15A

## Clauses in Sentences

1. Our forefathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation.  
subject predicate

---

a one-clause sentence

2. I will arise. and I will go now.  
subj. predicate subj. predicate

---

first clause

---

second clause

---

a two-clause sentence

3. Robert Frost has miles to go before he sleeps.  
subject predicate subject predicate

---

first clause

---

second clause

---

a two-clause sentence

4. When the attack finally begins. you sneak up quietly. and the gang will throw balloons.  
subject predicate subj. predicate subject predicate

---

first clause

---

second clause

---

third clause

---

a three-clause sentence

See? We can make long sentences out of any number of related ideas!

But why is it important to know this?

By using grammar to inspect our own ideas, we have discovered that our wonderful brains can understand ideas and the relationships between different ideas so well and so quickly that we can connect these ideas into sentences of clauses faster than we can even speak. We can do it without even knowing we are doing it, and before we even have a name for it. It is only now, when we use grammar to inspect our ideas, that we begin to realize what powerful things our minds are. The grammar of clauses shows us how our minds build beautiful structures of ideas.

#### 4. Parts of Speech: the Kinds of Words

One thing you have noticed about all ideas or sentences: every sentence is made of **words**. A word is a group of sounds/letters that means something. In the sentence, "The famous author Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894) wrote the novel, *Treasure Island*," there are eleven words. For example, *Robert* is a word, and *the* is a word. We always put blank spaces between words in a written sentence. If you look at a college dictionary, you will see that we have many thousands of words in our language. In fact, there are far more words than anyone could ever learn!

But just imagine that you traveled to a land far, far away.

(One faraway land is Nepal, near Tibet in the continent of Asia, where Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world, is. Mount Everest is 29,028 feet high, and it is in the Himalayan mountain range. It is so high that it has only been climbed a few times. Nepal's high-altitude capital is Katmandu. There is a wonderful novel you will want to read one day, *Lost Horizon*, written by James Hilton in 1932, that depicts Nepal under the fictitious name of "Shangri-La.")

Now, just imagine that you travel to a land far, far away, and the gray-bearded King of the land says, "You may have all of the treasures in my kingdom if you can tell me how many kinds of words there are." The king then looks down to the green valleys far, far below, and an icy wind comes down from the frozen peaks above, and blows through your hair.

What would you say? There are thousands and thousands of words in the dictionary. Are there thousands of kinds of words? Are there hundreds of kinds of words?

Well, you are in luck, because when you set off on your adventure one day, you will be prepared with the knowledge that there are only eight kinds of words! Just imagine! All of those words in the dictionary can be put into only eight piles, and the eight different kinds of words are easy to learn. We call the eight kinds of words the **eight parts of speech** because all of our speech can be *parted* into only eight piles of words.

The names of the eight parts of speech are the *noun*, *pronoun*, *adjective*, *verb*, *adverb*, *preposition*, *conjunction*, and *interjection*. In a sentence, each part of speech has something different to do. And since a sentence might only have two words in it, you can tell that not every sentence uses all eight parts of speech. The only parts of speech that have to be in a sentence are the noun or pronoun and the verb. Can you guess why? Let's learn about the eight parts of speech and their functions (uses). As you read the following pages, study the definitions, examples, and discussions of the eight parts of speech carefully and slowly.

## The Parts of Speech

Part of Speech	Function	Examples
noun (n.)	name of something	<i>Mary, dog, garden, sound</i>
	<p>A noun is the name of a person, <i>Picasso</i>, or the name of a place, <i>Amsterdam</i>, or the name of a thing, <i>aurora</i>. The sentence <i>The wind in the willows whispered in the leaves</i> has three nouns: wind, willows, and leaves. Nouns give us names for things!</p> <p>Nouns can be <b>singular</b>, like <i>dog</i>, or <b>plural</b>, like <i>dogs</i>. <b>Proper nouns</b>, like <i>Istanbul</i>, are capitalized, but <b>common nouns</b>, like <i>boat</i>, are not capitalized.</p>	
pronoun (pron.)	replaces a noun	<i>I, she, him, it, them</i>
	<p>A pronoun is a short word that replaces a usually longer noun so that we can speak faster. For example, instead of always saying a person's name, such as <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> in a sentence, we can say <i>he</i>. In the sentence "<i>He was born in a log cabin in Illinois</i>" the nouns <i>Abraham Lincoln</i> have been replaced by the short pronoun <i>he</i>. Pronouns make language fast!</p> <p>Two common kinds of pronouns are the <b>subject pronouns</b>: <i>I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they</i> and the <b>object pronouns</b>: <i>me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them</i>.</p> <p>We have learned that every sentence has a subject and a predicate. And every subject contains either a noun or a pronoun. This noun or pronoun that the sentence is about is sometimes called the <b>simple subject</b>.</p>	
adjective (adj.)	modifies a noun or pronoun	<i>red, tall, fast, good, the</i>
	<p>To modify is to <i>change</i>. An adjective is a word that changes the meaning of a noun or pronoun. For example, for the noun <i>tree</i>, we can change it by saying <i>tall tree</i>, or <i>Christmas tree</i>, or <i>cherry tree</i>, and each of these different adjectives changes (we sometimes say <i>modifies</i>) the noun and gives us a different picture in our minds. Another example: the noun <i>garden</i> could be modified by either the adjective <i>flower</i> or the adjective <i>secret</i>. We could talk about a <i>flower garden</i>, but we could use a different adjective and talk about a <i>secret garden</i> instead, and that would modify the idea. Some adjectives are the opposites of one another: a <i>fast car</i> is the opposite of a <i>slow car</i>.</p>	

The most common adjectives are the three little words *a*, *an*, and *the*. These three adjectives are called the **articles**. The word *the* is called the **definite article**, and the words *a* and *an* are called the **indefinite articles**.

Notice that the noun, pronoun, and adjective go together, work together. The nouns name things, the pronouns replace the nouns, and the adjectives modify either nouns or pronouns. You could say that the noun, with its supporting pronouns and adjectives, forms a little noun system, like the sun with its planets.

verb (v.)

an action or equals word      *jumps, fell, is*

Every sentence contains a verb, which is sometimes called the **simple predicate**. There are two kinds of verbs.

**Action verbs** show action; they show people and things doing things. Look at the action verbs in these sentences: The dog *barked*. The tail man *grinned*. My best friend *reads* lots of books. We *drove* to Florida. Mary *opened* her brown eyes.

**Linking verbs** are equals words; they show that two things are the same. For example, in the sentence "Siegfried *is* a good student," the verb *is* means that Siegfried and the good student are the same person. Siegfried **IS** the good student.

Action: Michelangelo *ran* after the ball.  
Linking: Michelangelo *is* good at soccer.

Action: Donatello *drew* a sketch.  
Linking: Donatello *is* a genius.

Action: Raphael *plays* baseball in the spring.  
Linking: Raphael *is* a pitcher on the baseball team.

My favorite linking verb sentence is by the poet Marianne Moore, who said that poems *are* imaginary gardens with real toads in them. Don't you like that idea?

**Parts of the Sentence:** We have learned about two parts of the sentence already, the **simple subject** and the **simple predicate**, or verb. Well, there are two other parts of the sentence you can identify if you know what kind of verb you have. When an action verb sentence shows the subject doing something **to something**, as in the sentence "The dog bit the mailman," we call the noun or pronoun that receives the action a **direct object**. But when a linking verb sentence shows that the subject is **equal to** something else, as in the sentence "The dog is a poodle," we call the noun or pronoun that is linked to the subject a **subject complement**.

Direct Object: Achilles grabbed the **warrior**.  
Subject Complement: Achilles was a **warrior**.

Notice that the only way to tell whether the second noun in these sentences is a direct object or a subject complement is to look at the verb. If a sentence contains an action verb, it might have a direct object, but if the sentence contains a linking verb, it might have a subject complement. This is a very advanced grammar idea, and it gives us deep insight into the way we form our own ideas.

**Tense:** Another very important fact: verbs change, according to the *time* they are describing. The time of the verb is called the verb **tense**. The three most familiar verb tenses are the **present tense**, the **past tense**, and the **future tense**. The verb *to believe*, for example, takes these forms:

Present tense: I believe that it is true.

Past tense: I believed that it is true.

Future tense: I will believe that it is true.

**adverb (adv.)**      **modifies a verb, adj., or adv.**      *quickly, slowly, well*

An adverb is a word that modifies or changes the meaning of a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.

Adverb modifies verb: I swam *quickly*.

Adverb modifies adverb: I swam *very* quickly.

Adverb modifies adjective: I saw a *very* red star.

Before you continue reading, study these three examples very carefully, and make sure you understand every part of speech in every sentence.

Notice that many adverbs end in *ly*, such as *quickly, slowly, loudly, nearly, badly, and hungrily*.

Notice that the verb and adverb form a little system together. Just as the noun is often accompanied by an adjective, the verb is often accompanied by an adverb that gives it new meaning.

Just as adjectives help us adjust the meanings of nouns when the nouns are not quite what we mean, adverbs help us adjust the meanings of verbs. Adjectives and adverbs are **modifiers** that help us adjust the meanings of nouns and verbs.

**preposition (prep.)**      **shows relationship**      *in, on, beside, after*

A preposition is a word that shows how two things are **related** to each other in space or time. Space examples: The dog was *on* the dock. The book is *in* the drawer. The boy was *inside* the secret garden. The garden was *behind* the wall. Time examples: The movie is *after* the news. My birthday is *before* yours. She got sick *during* the game. Prepositions are little words, but they are very important because they show where everything is in space and time.

Prepositions let us make ideas that show how the world is arranged!

Another interesting fact about prepositions is that they are always found in little word groups, such as **in** the box, **on** the dock, **under** the bed, **around** the world, and **over** the rainbow. These little word groups always begin with prepositions, and they are called **prepositional phrases**.

In fact, the word *preposition* is made of the Latin *pre*, which means *before*, and the word *position*. A preposition is called a preposition because its **position is always before** the other words in the prepositional phrase! It has the pre-position.

conjunction (conj.) joins words *and, or, but, so, yet*

A conjunction is a word that joins two other words together into a pair. **Michael and David** ate many hot dogs. By using the conjunction *and*, we can join the two nouns *Michael* and *David* together, so we can talk about them both at once, as a pair. We can use a conjunction to join two pronouns: Give the lithograph to him *or* her. If we want to, we can even use a conjunction to join two verbs: Mary thought *and* wondered. We can use a conjunction to join two adverbs: He spoke quickly *but* confidently. Or we can use a conjunction to join two adjectives: The wall was high *and* dark. Conjunctions let us join things into pairs!

Would you like one more very interesting example? You can even use a conjunction to join two **groups of words** together! For example, you can use a conjunction to join two prepositional phrases together: The albatross flew **over the ship and around the mast**.

interjection (interj.) shows emotion *Oh, wow, yes, no, well*

Interjections do not do anything special, such as join words, or modify words, or replace words. All they do is show emotion. If we say, "Wow, you look nice!" the word *wow* just shows happiness or excitement. The most common interjections are the words *yes* and *no*. Another very common interjection is the word *oh*: *Oh, yes, I like interjections. Do you?*

**A Vocabulary Note:** The word **preposition** contains two ancient Latin word pieces, or stems, that we see in many words, **pre**, and **pos**. The stem **pre** means "before," and we see **pre** in words such as **predict** and **prepare**. The stem **pos** means "put," and we see **pos** in words such as **position** and **depose**. So the word **preposition** contains a picture: the **preposition** is the part that is "put before" the other words in the phrase. The word **conjunction** also contains stems which appear in many other words: **con** and **junct**. The stem **con** means "together," and the stem **junct** means "join." In the words **adverb** and **adjective** we see the stem **ad** which



**REVIEW:** Let's look again at what the eight kinds of words do. Study the parts of speech until you have their functions memorized. Make sure that you can remember some examples of each one.

<b>noun</b>	name of something	Mike, dog, tree, sound The <i>boy</i> listened to the <i>music</i> of <i>Verdi</i> .
<b>pronoun</b>	replaces a noun	I, she, him, it, them <i>She</i> and <i>I</i> saw <i>him</i> and <i>her</i> at the Museum of Modern Art.
<b>adjective</b>	modifies a noun or pronoun	red, tall, fast, good, the Isaac Newton, a <i>famous</i> mathematician, discovered <i>the natural</i> law.
<b>verb</b>	an action or equals word	jumps, fell, is I <i>lost</i> the Byron poem yesterday, but I <i>have</i> it now.
<b>adverb</b>	modifies a verb	quickly, slowly, well The pianist played her Chopin solo <i>beautifully</i> .
<b>preposition</b>	shows relationship	in, on, beside, after The government is <i>of</i> the people, <i>by</i> the people, and <i>for</i> the people.
<b>conjunction</b>	joins words	and, or, but I saw the doctor, <i>and</i> she gave me some medicine.
<b>interjection</b>	shows emotion	Oh, wow, yes, no, well <i>Oh, yes</i> , I always vote in the elections.



You try it. Here are some more sentences. Study each one carefully, and imitate the five examples above by writing the abbreviation for the part of speech above each word, and by underlining the subject and predicate of each sentence. Identify any direct objects or subject complements you see.

1. The scientist used a microscope.
2. Rembrandt slowly painted the canvas.
3. Yes, he and she were members.
4. De Soto floated down the Mississippi.
5. Spartacus and his force of gladiators lost.

Check your answers from the answer key on the next page.





#### 4. Phrases: The Clever Teamwork

We all know what teams are. Five players work together on a basketball team, and each player has his or her own part in executing a well-practiced play. Cheerleaders work together to make a single pyramid, with each cheerleader standing on the shoulders of two cheerleaders below. Lawyers can work as a team to win a single case. Computer programmers work in teams to write programs, with each programmer specializing in writing a different part of the computer code.

Well, by inspecting our own ideas with grammar, we have discovered a remarkable thing. Sometimes, a whole group of words will team together to imitate a single part of speech! A team of words acting as a single part of speech is called a **phrase**. We learned a bit about **prepositional phrases** when we studied the parts of speech, but now we are ready to learn more. Here is a more complete definition of the phrase: *a phrase is a group of words that acts as a single part of speech, and that does not contain a subject and its predicate*. For example, notice that a prepositional phrase can behave as though it were an adverb, modifying a verb:

An ordinary adverb: The penguin sat *there*.

A phrase: The penguin sat *on the iceberg*.

In each case, the verb *sat* is being modified by something, but in the first example the verb is being modified by a simple adverb, *there*, whereas in the second example, the verb is being modified by **a group of words, on the iceberg, acting as a team to make an adverb**. That is what phrases are: word groups imitating other parts of speech. It is interesting, by the way, to note that our English word *phrase* comes from a very ancient Greek word, *phrazein*, which meant "to speak."

A prepositional phrase can also act as an adjective:

An ordinary adjective: The **top** book is a classic.

A phrase: The book **on the top** is a classic.

There are different kinds of phrases. Let's look at some other phrases, and see some of the interesting forms that phrases can take in sentences. Remember to notice that the phrase never contains both a sentence's subject and its predicate, and that a sentence can contain more than one phrase, or no phrase at all.

#### Phrases

*Carmen*, **my favorite opera**, is by the composer Bizet.

**Not remembering names** is my problem.

Birds fly **over the rainbow**.

I pledge allegiance **to the flag**.

The assault team climbed the north face of **Mount Everest**.

The problem's solution was very difficult, but we became determined.

Magellan sailed **around the world**.

Newton loved **to study mathematics**.

The painting **on the museum's north wall** was painted by the French painter Monet.

## Conclusion

Now let's think carefully about all of the things that we have learned. We have learned a very important secret about the way we think and express our ideas about the world. The secret is that our ideas, which we sometimes call **sentences**, are only complete when they are made of two parts. These two parts are the **subject** that the sentence is about, and the **predicate** that says something about the subject. If we do not have both of these parts in our ideas, we will not have a complete thought, and we will not make any sense to anyone else. Other people have to know both of these parts in order to understand our ideas: they have to know what we are talking about, and they have to know what we are saying about it.

We also learned that sometimes simple sentences can be connected together into more complicated ideas, and then we say that each little subject/predicate group inside the long sentence is a **clause**.

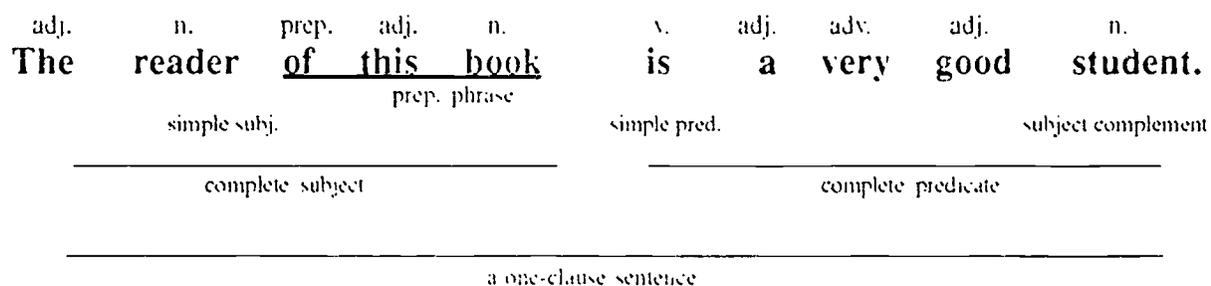
We have also learned an amazing secret about the thousands and thousands of words in our English language: there are only eight kinds! We call these eight kinds of words the **parts of speech**. We have learned that each kind of word has a special purpose, a function, that it does in a sentence. Two of the parts of speech, the **noun** and the **verb**, are special, because they are in almost every sentence. The **subject** of a sentence usually has a **noun** (but it might have a **pronoun** instead to take the noun's place), and the **predicate** of the sentence always (yes, always) has a verb.

In studying the parts of speech, we learned that they are used as **parts of the sentence**. The **simple subject** is the noun or pronoun that the sentence is about. The **simple predicate** is the subject's verb. The **direct object** is a noun or pronoun that receives the action of the action verb, and the **subject complement** is the noun or pronoun linked to the subject by the linking verb.

We have learned that our minds are clever enough to collect little groups of words together into

phrases that imitate other parts of speech, and we have seen examples of phrases acting as adverbs, as adjectives, and even as nouns (if you did not notice that, go back and look closely at the examples of phrases).

Finally, verbs have taught us a very important secret about ideas. Since there are two kinds of verbs, the **action** kind and the **equals** or **linking** kind, this means that there are two main kinds of ideas. We can either say that the **subject is doing something**, or we can say that the **subject is something**. For example, we can use an action verb and say, "The reader of this book saw a very good student." But if we use a linking/equals verb, we can say something even better: "The reader of this book is a very good student."



See if you can analyze the following sentence as I analyzed the one above:

We            inspect            ideas            with            grammar.

Check the next page for an analysis of this sentence.

pronoun	verb	noun	preposition	noun
<b>We</b>	<b>inspect</b>	<b>ideas</b>	<b>with</b>	<b>grammar.</b>
simple subject	simple predicate	direct object		
subject	-----complete predicate-----			
-----a one-clause sentence-----				

**The last word:** As you see, grammar is a fascinating way to think about our own thinking. Using grammar, we can examine our thoughts, and we can see how we have made them. If we did not have grammar, we would never really be able to understand how powerful our minds are. But after this short introduction to grammar, you have begun to understand how powerfully your mind makes ideas out of language. As you learn more and more about grammar in the future, you will gain a greater insight into how wonderful it is to be a human being, an idea-maker. I hope that you will always look forward to the wonderful study of grammar. It is truly a way of inspecting our own ideas.

## Grammar Post Test - Grades 4-6

### 25 Questions, 4 Points Each

#### Fill in the Blank

1. A group of words that has a subject and a predicate is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The noun or pronoun that the sentence is about is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The part of the sentence that says something about the subject is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
4. How many kinds of words are there in our language? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. A word that names a person, place, or thing is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
6. A word that modifies a noun or pronoun is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
7. A word that shows action is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
8. A word that joins two words into a pair is called a \_\_\_\_\_.
9. A word that shows emotion is called an \_\_\_\_\_.
10. A word group acting as a single part of speech is a \_\_\_\_\_.

#### Underline the Subjects of These Sentences

11. The mathematician solved a problem.
12. Raphael painted a beautiful mural.
13. Oh, the owl and the pussycat went to sea quickly.
14. The explorer Columbus discovered the New World.
15. Hannibal and his army defeated the Romans in Italy.

#### Circle the Correct Answer

16. In the sentence "The mathematician solved a problem" the word *mathematician* is a  
a. noun                      b. pronoun                      c. adjective                      d. adverb
17. In the sentence "The mathematician solved a problem" the word *solved* is a  
a. noun                      b. verb                      c. adjective                      d. adverb
18. In the sentence "The mathematician solved a problem" the word *a* is a  
a. conjunction                      b. adverb                      c. preposition                      d. adjective
19. In the sentence "Oh, the owl and the pussycat went to sea quickly" the word *and* is a  
a. conjunction                      b. preposition                      c. interjection                      d. adverb



## Grammar Post Test - Grades 4-6

### Answer Key

#### Fill in the Blank

1. A group of words that has a subject and a predicate is called a **sentence**.
2. The noun or pronoun that the sentence is about is called the **subject**.
3. The part of the sentence that says something about the subject is called the **predicate**.
4. How many kinds of words are there in our language? **eight**.
5. A word that names a person, place, or thing is called a **noun**.
6. A word that modifies a noun or pronoun is called an **adjective**.
7. A word that shows action is called a **verb**.
8. A word that joins two words into a pair is called a **conjunction**.
9. A word that shows emotion is called an **interjection**.
10. A word group acting as a single part of speech is a **phrase**.

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