Grammar Town

Once upon a time, far away and yet not so far, there was a town called Grammar Town, with shady streets and good shops and nice places to walk.

In Grammar Town people talked, and lived, and did their work. With everyone they knew, the people of Grammar Town communicated with words.

Let us go visit Grammar Town....
There are many words in Grammar Town.
There are nouns for things, such as window, and roof, and bus, and there are verbs for actions, like walked, or read, or ate.
There are all kinds of words, and the words work together to make language.

Language is what we call all of the words that we combine to express ideas.
Each idea is a sentence, but we will talk about that later.
When we think about language, that is called GRAMMAR.

We think about language in FOUR ways.

These four ways of thinking about language are called:

1. parts of speech
2. parts of the sentence
3. phrases
4. clauses
We will learn more about the four ways of thinking about language later, but here are the four levels:

1. **parts of speech:**
   the eight kinds of words

2. **parts of the sentence:**
   how words make ideas

3. **phrases:**
   little groups of words

4. **clauses:**
   simple or complicated ideas

These are the four sections of the orchestra in the symphony that makes a sentence. They play in unison and in harmony.
Level One:
The Parts of Speech

Level One, the parts of speech, is critical to effective vocabulary instruction because the parts of speech provide the instructions for vocabulary usage. Notice that dictionaries use the abbreviations of the parts of speech as usage instructions.
Nouns are words that name things, like train, smoke, track, and land. Nouns can even be names of people, like Shorty Hawkins.
The word noun comes from the Latin nomen, meaning name.

**Proper nouns**, like England and Jane, are capitalized.

**Common nouns**, like country, person, and sandwich, are not capitalized.

A noun naming one thing, like tree, is **singular**.

A noun naming more, like trees, is **plural**.

**ASSIGNMENT:** Close the book, and discuss everything you have learned about nouns.
2. PRONOUNS

Pronouns are quick words we use when we do not want to repeat a whole long noun. Instead of saying Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain), we can just say he.

Pronouns make language fast!

The word pronoun means “for the noun.” The pronoun is a quick short-cut sound, like a beep.
One important group of pronouns is the **SUBJECT** pronouns:

I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they

Another important group of pronouns is the **OBJECT** pronouns:

me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them

**ASSIGNMENT:** Memorize, then do a speed challenge:

ME - object!
SHE - subject!
US - object!

The subject pronouns are set apart by their high, bright vowels: eee, eye, eee.... This is the song of the subjects. This helps the mind spot the subject easily.

These lists MUST be memorized. If you cannot use pronouns correctly, then you cannot write academic English.
Subject and object pronouns are used for different things.

Subject pronouns are for grammar subjects.
\[ I, \ you, \ he, \ she, \ it, \ we, \ you, \ they \]

Object pronouns are for grammar objects.
\[ me, \ you, \ him, \ her, \ it, \ us, \ you, \ them \]

You must memorize these two groups of pronouns. Repeat them until they will be in your mind forever.

We will discuss this later, but notice the pronouns in this sentence:

I saw him, and he saw me, but she gave him and her the tomatoes.

The first glimpse: subjects are made of subject pronouns, and objects are made of object pronouns. That is why they are called what they are called.
So, how do the eight kinds of words work together?

Usually the noun, pronoun, and adjective say what we are talking about, and the verb, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection say something about it. This complete, two-part idea is called a SENTENCE.

Every sentence has two parts: what it is about, called the SUBJECT, and what we say about the subject, called the PREDICATE.

These two parts must make a complete thought, or else it is not a sentence but only a sentence fragment.
Do you remember that the noun and the verb are the two main parts of speech? Well, now we see these two in a new way. In a sentence the noun or its pronoun becomes the basis of the subject, and the verb becomes the basis of the predicate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>PREDICATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>is the owner of the shop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angelena</td>
<td>walked down Main Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old priory</td>
<td>is a huge building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blue cab</td>
<td>stopped at the corner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The water supply</td>
<td>comes from the mountain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The canal</td>
<td>was good for commerce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His countenance</td>
<td>seemed grim and tragic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The blue sky</td>
<td>looked serene.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notice that the verb is always in the predicate. We call the verb the *simple predicate*. The *complete predicate* is the verb and all other words that talk about the subject. When we say *predicate*, we usually will mean simple predicate—the verb.
Now we can examine a sentence in two different ways. If we want to see what kinds of words are in the sentence and what each word is doing, we look at the parts of speech, but if we want to understand the whole idea in action, what the idea is about, and what we are saying about it, then we look at Level Two, the parts of the sentence, which are in two sides: the subject side and the predicate side.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The tall boy</th>
<th>rode his bicycle down the path.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adj.</td>
<td>v.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adj.</td>
<td>adj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>n.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>prep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td>adj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

subject | predicate

In this sentence the complete subject is *The tall boy*, and the complete predicate is *rode his bicycle down the path*. The simple subject is the noun *boy*, and the simple predicate is the verb *rode*. Remember that when we talk about the subject and the predicate, we usually will mean the simple subject and the simple predicate.
Level Three: Phrases

A phrase is a group of words, but it acts like one word, like a single part of speech. It can act like an adjective, or an adverb, or a noun. Phrases do not contain subjects and verbs, though sometimes an entire phrase can be a subject.
Three Kinds of Phrases

Prepositional Phrases
Prepositional phrases always begin with prepositions, and they act like modifiers (like adjectives or adverbs).
Like an adjective: the bus at the corner
Like an adverb: they swam after school
Like an adjective: the letter for him and her

Appositive Phrases
Appositive phrases are interrupting definitions that are put (pos) beside (apo) what they define. They act like nouns or adjectives.
Robert, the new student, arrived late.
The viaduct, an old Roman design, was still in use.

Verbal Phrases
Verbals are verby words that are not used as verbs.
There are three kinds of verbals: gerunds, participles, and infinitives.

Gerunds: nouns made out of -ing verbs
Thinking is fun.

Particples: adjectives made out of verbs
Thinking quickly, the ice cream man filled the cone.
Completely broken, the gate swung freely.

Infinitives: nouns or modifiers made from the to form of the verb
To think is fun. (noun)
The man to see is Howard. (adjective)
He lived to read. (adverb)

Note: We think of the infinitive as one word.
Example: To think is regarded as one word.

Do not fall prey to the evil stereotypes about how difficult the phrases are. The verbal phrases are learnable; there are only three kinds, and each one can be defined in one sentence. Students learn harder things than this every day in math. The verbals are critical to understanding the other three levels of grammar.
Level Four: Clauses
Follow the trail....

First we learned that the noun and the verb are the two most important parts of speech. Then we learned that the noun and verb become the subject and predicate, the most important parts of the sentence. Then we learned that the subject/predicate is exactly what is never in a phrase. Now we see where it leads: the noun and verb pair is the nucleus that is the heart of every clause. It is as though the noun/verb pair is always the key in all four levels of grammar.
Memorizing
Learning by Heart

There are times when memorization is out of favor in education. Some might say that “rote memorization” is not appropriate as a teaching strategy. “Rote memorization,” however, is loaded language, biased against the discipline and effort required to learn things permanently. There is nothing wrong with challenge. We must remember that the alternative to remembering is forgetting, and when we teach something as important as grammar, which will be needed for one’s entire life, the ban on memorization makes little sense. There are areas of knowledge that should be memorized, and in the past, there was a better term for it: to learn by heart.

Students must learn the basic elements of grammar by heart. They should commit to memory the definitions of the parts of speech, parts of sentence, phrases, and clauses.

As you go through the four levels of this book, spend some time playing memory games to help the students learn their definitions. Reinforce the positive value of this knowledge, stressing that students will need to know it in all their years of school and when they grow up.

All of the time students spend learning their grammar definitions by heart will be time well spent.
Applying Four-Level Analysis

After you complete Grammar Town early in the year, you are ready to apply grammar, to use it as a way of thinking about language throughout the year. Some good techniques for application include:

- When you read something, such as a poem or play or story, find a short sentence that is within the grammar of Grammar Town, and write the sentence on paper or on a blackboard.

- After you write the sentence on the board, draw four lines below it, as you have seen in previous pages of this book.

- Then, using only questions, go through the four levels of grammar together. Ask what grammar is (a way of thinking about language), how many levels are there (four), and what the first level is (parts of speech), and then figure out the part of speech of each word. If the response is *adverb* for an adjective, rather than saying no, just ask what an adverb is, or similar questions, until the student realizes that the word is an adjective. In the same way, do the second level, parts of the sentence, and then phrases, and then clauses. As the answers emerge in the analysis, you can write the standard parts of speech abbreviations (this prepares students to use a dictionary) between the lines, as in the examples in previous pages. Then ask what the most interesting thing about this sentence is; what does it illustrate?

- Do this entire process with a smile and a sense of fun and discovery.

- Every time you do a four-level analysis, it will be a review of all of the grammar the students have learned, and the way of thinking will become more deeply understood and appreciated.

- If you are in a classroom setting, after doing the analysis this way for a week or two, let a student come up to the front of the room and take the class through the analysis.