Table of Contents

Prologue ........................................................................................................1

Chapter One: Nouns................................................................. 13

Chapter Two: Pronouns......................................................... 21

Chapter Three: Adjectives............................................... 27

Chapter Four: Verbs............................................................ 39

Chapter Five: Adverbs ....................................................... 55

Chapter Six: Prepositions ............................................... 69

Chapter Seven: Conjunctions........................................ 89

Chapter Eight: Interjections........................................... 103

Instructor Section................................................................. 115
Prologue:
Poodle and What?

There once was a chicken named Poodle who called a cool cock-a-do-doodle. He ate not just any old noodle but gobbled the kit and caboodle, including the strudel; it’s trudle. He ate oodles.

Chicken Poodle liked sweets, which in bird-world is rare, but what did he care? He clucked with such flair, eating his treats and increasing the heat to his beets and his wheats and steamed soups, which he scooped as they thickened like glue, like goops.

assonance: noodle oodles caboodle strudel soups scooped glue goops

vocabulary: CABOODLE the whole quantity
Chicken Poodle liked dogs—at least one. Not every bird does (it’s not done). His best friend, he thought, was a beagle named What?. Wait, what was that name? It was What?.

Yes.

Yes, What? was What?’s name. It was always the same, for the word *what* means What? all the time.

What? wiggled and waggled and struggled to bark, but all that came out was a barky remark, such as “What?” and then “What?” and then “What?” like a rhyme, like “What-what-what-what-what-what-what?” like a sound in an arc, like a chime in quick time, and when Poodle asked why, the beagle barked, “What?” Poodle sighed.
Was What? asking a question?  
A doggy expression?  
In every new session,  
What? only said, “What?  
What-what-what-what-what?”

Sometimes What?’s flopping ears  
were flapping in fear,  
with his tongue dangling out  
to the right  
and his eyes open wide—what a sight—  
but Poodle would settle What?’s fears  
with green spears of asparagus,  
ready to bite.
Poodle loved words, as you’ve probably heard—even copied the words of the birds: *tweety tweet!*

Herds of birds (we call flocks) all worried and scurried as Poodle spoke bird-words in talks. Hear that birdy-bird sound?

*Tweedle-deet.*

When birdies said, “Tweet,” he’d repeat. It was sweet because *tweet* is a word to a bird.

What? only barked, “What?” You see it?

Poodle loved bird-tweety words.
Poodle loved words for their beautiful looks, like small sculptures in books, like *thirst* with its *th* and its *t* rising up. Up *th*, down *irs*, up *t*—it makes *th-irs-t*.

But *poof* and *goof* both go low at the start, with the *p* and the *g* hanging down: little art.

Some ups, some downs—here’s the proof: *thptgfpthg*. That sounds like *thah-paht-gaff-paht-ha-gah*. What?

It is important to grow up seeing what words look like. Only hearing words provides no idea of spelling or of the beauty of word shapes.

We love the beauty of the ascenders such as *h* and *f* and the descenders such as *p* and *j*. 
Poodle also liked bumpy old $m$’s—
that was him—
and liked all the la-dee-da-$l$’s
that rolled off so well
when they swung
off his chickeny tongue.
He liked $oo$’s that go $hoo$ in the night
like blue circles: $oo$-$oo$!
What a fright, right?

Poodle liked $z$’s,
with their zig-zags—oh please—
turning right and then left
with a zip like a wheeze.

What? saw none of that.
What? just barked, “What?
What-what-what-what-what?”

When Poodle asked, “What?”
with his tongue in the breeze,
in the air like the bees.
Poodle just sighed and sank to his knees.
Oh, Poodle loved words for their beautiful vowels, such as a, e, i, o, and then u (that’s all of them—whew), for the vowels loved by fowls—that’s different from fouls—like the ooo howl in soon, or the eee vowel in wheel, or the oh sound in home, or the ow sound in growl or in owl or in prowl, or the eee sound in peel. It was such a big deal.

He loved scratchity words, like snicker and snake, and chicken and quicken, and shaking and fake, and caulk and block, and gawk and, yes, loch, which sounds just like lock when we talk.
He loved growly-grr words that begin with a grrr, like gravel and grotto and grubby and gear, like gruffly and grunt and grody and grub, like grimly and grabbing and grub-a-dub-dub.

Not What?.


“Words,” Poodle told him. “Words,” Poodle said. “I’m talking ’bout words; there are eight kinds ahead in the language,” he pled.

What? said, “What?”

What? was hopeless.
There are **eight kinds of words**, to be clear, and the nouns are the first—not the worst—to appear. They won’t burst, not these words, oh never you fear. It means there are eight kinds to hear! Let’s rehearse.

So here’s a noun: **thirst**. We make this admission: **thirst** names a condition, so dry. Nouns name things, aye; that’s their mission. See why?

What? (nope) saw nothing; he only barked, “What?” and his tail waggled left and then right like a shot.
“Words,” said the bird, but the beagle, confused, seemed so unenthused. How could he choose among words such as bruise, or blues, or dues, or fuse, or cruise, or shoes? He was only a beagle, whose mind quickly blurred.

What? was a beagle, not a seagull or eagle, not legal or regal, not a beetle—just a beagle. “What-what-what-what-what?”

What? barked, “What?
What-what-what-what what?”
like a croaky big frog
with big froggy eyes,
and Poodle just mourned
for What?’s one-word replies.

Poodle felt so forlorn.
His thinking was worn.

That’s our prologue
of Poodle the chicken and What? the dog.

As the prologue ended,
Poodle looked down
and noticed
the bottom of the page.

“See?” said the author.
“It’s right below this sentence.”
noun

The name of a person, a place, or a thing:

Fred, Florida, flapjack
Chapter One: Nouns

It happened this way, one wind-willowy day, that Poodle did say to What?, “What?, let us survey the noun. Let us weigh some with sounds like bouquet, or beret, or affray.”

Nouns are names, Poodle thought. The language has got an array of them, lots, as it ought, but What? had not caught this plot. His mind was in knots.

Instructor Section
As instructors of young children, we are in a position to accomplish something extraordinary, something beautiful: to introduce the elements of language (the eight parts of speech, in this case) to children in a way that transcends their definitional puddle and reveals to them the deeper ocean of language.

Learning the profound relationships of language involves far more than memorizing definitions or circling parts of speech on a page. It means noticing the stunning simplicity of language, the fact that we articulate the universe with only two main kinds of words, the noun and verb, and we use that beautifully simple pair to talk about space and mathematics, life and love, growing up and finding ourselves. We filter everything through a two-term system of noun and verb. There are six other parts of speech, but they are support terms only. They modify and join and relate the primary words to one another. The noun and verb are the great lens, the instrument through which we respond to everything we know.

Teachers and parents who understand this gorgeous, elegant simplicity can illuminate the parts of speech for children in a unique way, infusing instruction with appreciation and wonder. The universe is almost impossibly complex—ininitely complex—and yet we capture it with our minds in a noun-verb logic. This little eight-word system, with its two main terms at the center, is what we use to say *everything*. We can bring the wonder of language—we can call that *grammar* if we like, but it is language—to children.

This introductory grammar book strikes a joyful note, creating a new experience both for children and their instructors. The book is childlike but rigorous. It is a rich world full of animals, and poetry, and rhymes, and meter, and words, and knowledge, and imagination. It is a mind-broth of vowels and consonants. It is a combination of song and thought. It is rich in vocabulary. It is a place children where will love to be. It is for them.

*Poodle Knows What?* reveals the absolute joy of grammar. Grammar is full of fun because—among other reasons—it is full of knowledge about ourselves. With grammar, we see our inner selves, our own thoughts rendered in words, and we come to know ourselves in a thrilling internal awakening. It