

Royal Fireworks

Language Arts

by Michael Clay Thompson

# Grammar Town

*Third Edition*



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## Introduction

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

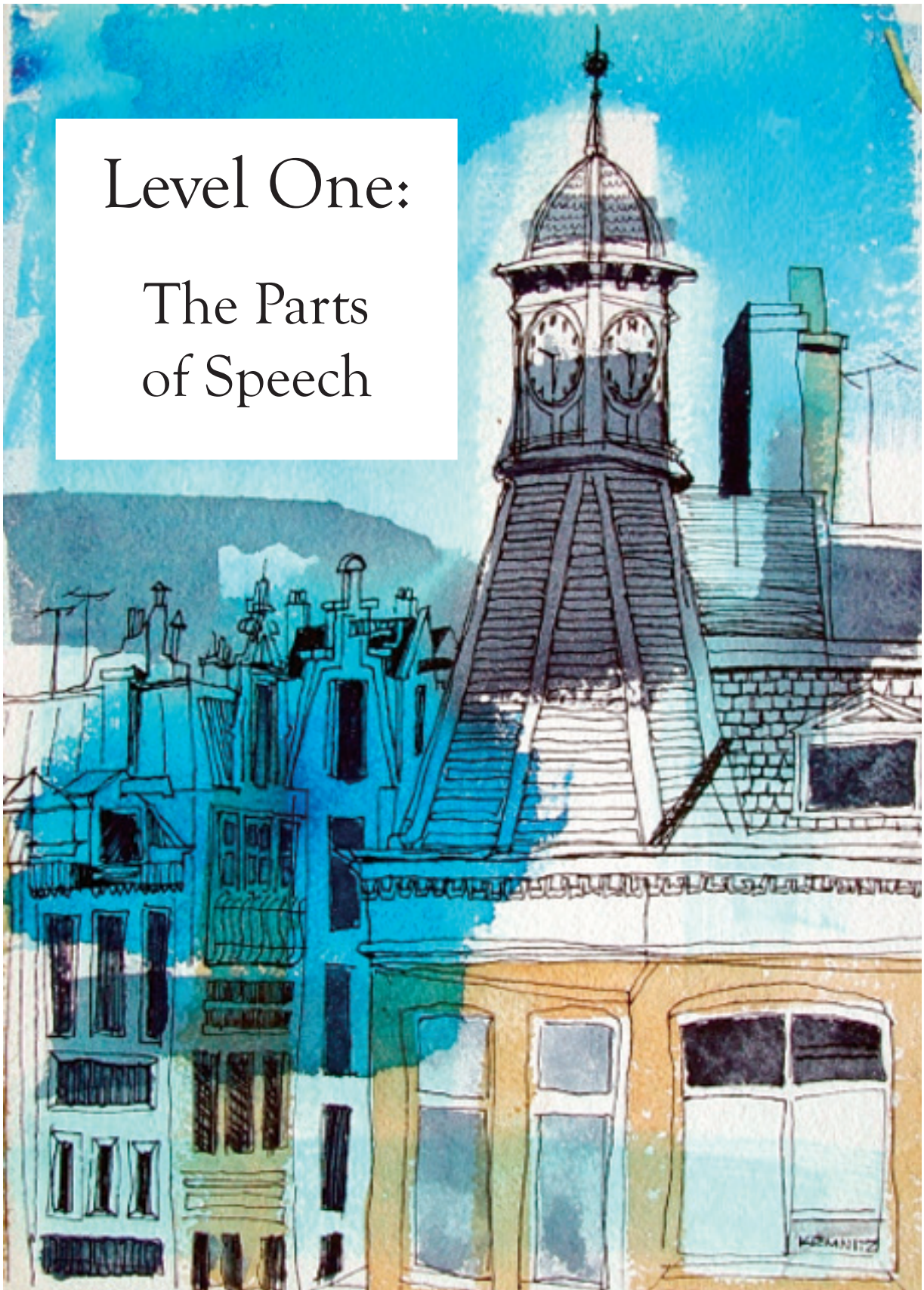
2. **parts of the sentence:**  
how words make ideas

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

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

Level One:

The Parts  
of Speech

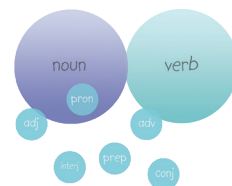




## 1. NOUNS

Nouns are words  
that name things,  
like *train*, *smoke*, *track*, and *land*.

Nouns can even be names  
of people, like *Shorty Hawkins*.



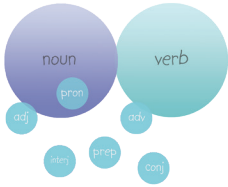
The word *noun*  
comes from the Latin *nomen*,  
meaning name.

**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**.



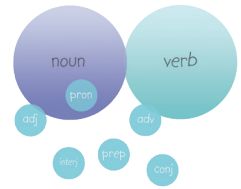
## 2. PRONOUNS

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  
shortcut sound, like a beep.

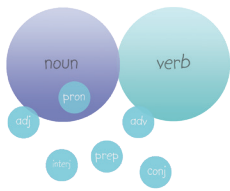


One important group  
of pronouns  
is the **SUBJECT** pronouns:

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

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

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



Subject and object pronouns  
are used for different things.

Subject pronouns are for grammar subjects.

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

Object pronouns are for grammar objects.

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

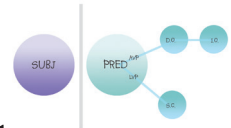
You must memorize  
these two groups of pronouns.  
Repeat them until  
they will be in your mind forever.

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.

## Level Two: The Parts of the Sentence



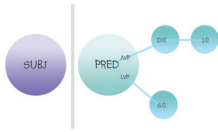


So, how do the eight kinds of words  
work together?

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.

## SUBJECT

Carlos  
Angelena  
The old priory  
The blue cab  
The water supply  
The canal  
His countenance  
The blue sky

## PREDICATE

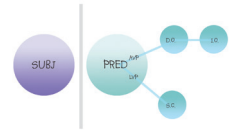
is the owner of the shop.  
walked down Main Street.  
is a huge building.  
stopped at the corner  
comes from the mountain.  
was good for commerce.  
seemed grim and tragic.  
looked serene.

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.

The	tall	boy		rode	his	bicycle	down	the	path.
adj.	adj.	n.		v.	adj.	n.	prep.	adj.	n.
subject				predicate					

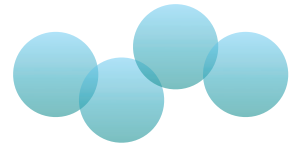
In this sentence the complete subject is *The tall boy*, and the complete predicate is *rode his bicycle down the path*. The simple subject is the noun *boy*, and the simple predicate is the verb *rode*. Remember that when we talk about the subject and the predicate, we usually will mean the simple subject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

**Participles:** 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)

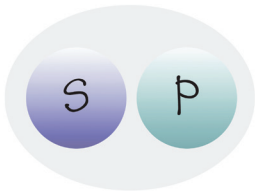
He lived *to read*. (adverb)

Note: We think of the infinitive as one word.

Example: *To think* is regarded as one word.

A watercolor illustration of a city scene. In the foreground, a small boat with a striped canopy is on a river. A bridge with a central tower and arches spans the river. In the background, there are several tall buildings, including a prominent skyscraper on the left. The sky is a deep blue, and the water is a lighter blue. The overall style is artistic and painterly.

## 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.