

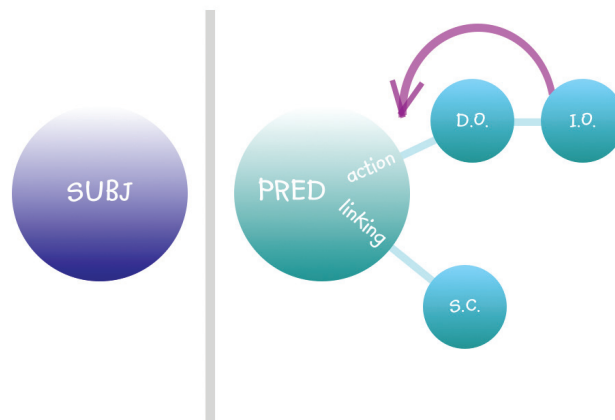
Royal Fireworks

Language Arts

by Michael Clay Thompson

Grammar Voyage

Third Edition



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A GRAMMAR VOYAGE

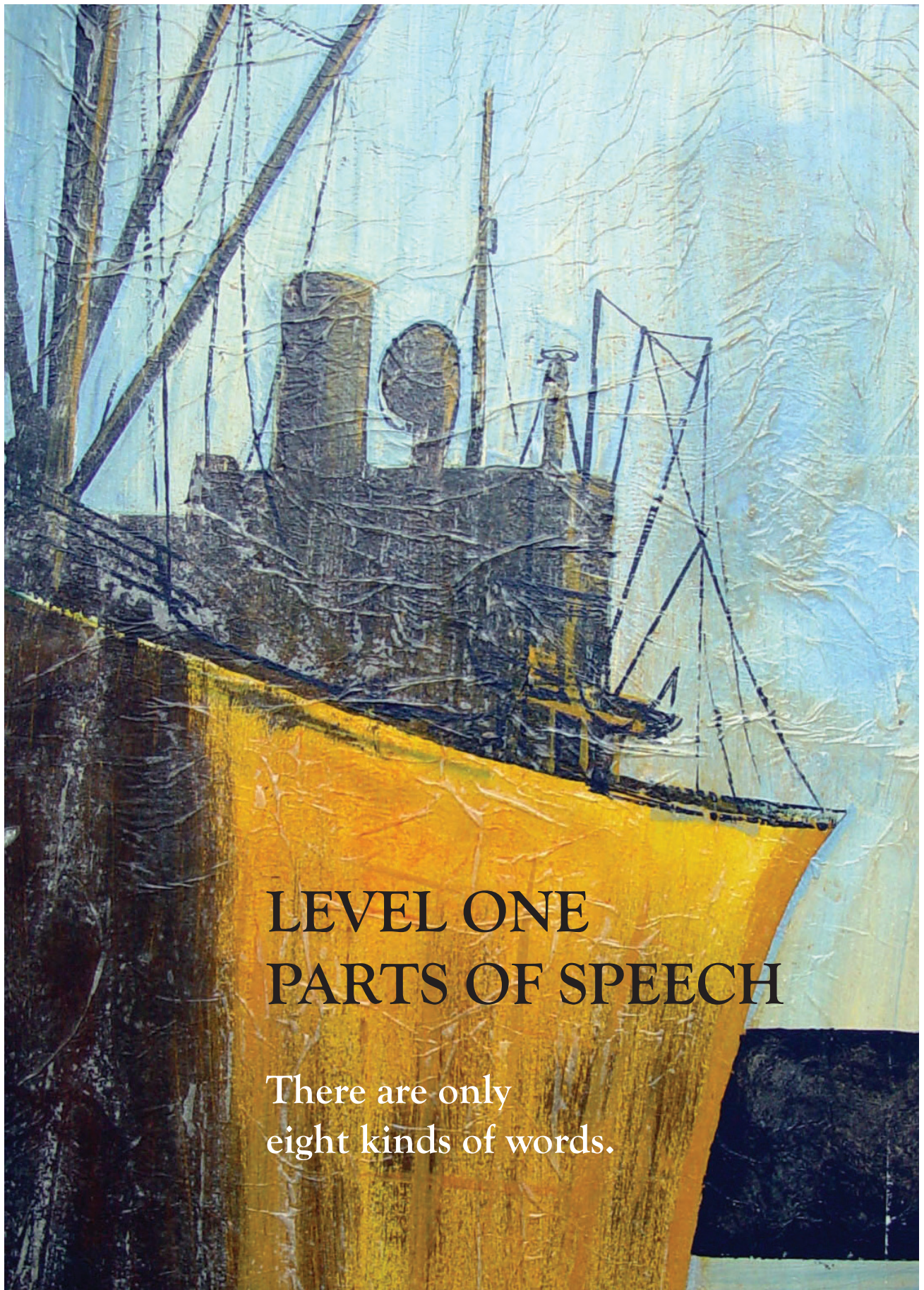
We set sail now on rolling seas
that fall on beaches far and near.

Like passengers on rusty ships,
we scan the water, trying to hear
the sound, the voice, the mystery,
the whispery report, the words,
the clear austere details.

Around the seas we search,
inspecting every port of call,
the harbors, inlets, most of all
the coastal cities on the far
horizons, distant and inviting our
arrival. In the misty night we sail,
in the sea we make our trail
until the vivid dawn reveals
our destination. Now we feel
it drawing near, we hear the sounds,
the voices, words, clamor of birds
and people walking toward the pier.

We steer, we cast our ropes,
and we are here.

On any grammar voyage,
wild words pervade the world,
like *freighter*, *storm*, and *cable*,
later, *form*, *affable*, and *able*.
There are words like *strike*,
and *flake*, and *croak*, *opaque*,
and words like *sudden*,
sodden, and *red*.
Happily is a word, and *snappily*,
and *mug*, and *log*, and *dog*.
There are names for *seagulls*,
and *seaweeds*, and *seashores*,
and *more*. The wind might *roar*,
a bird might *soar*, the knocking *oar*
might dip into the water of the *port*,
and row us to the *dock*.
We climb up from the rocking *boat*
and step into a new
world full of language.
There are voices, and tacit choices,
and faces behind the words
that rise and fall and tell us all
the secrets of the heart.
So let us start.



LEVEL ONE PARTS OF SPEECH

There are only
eight kinds of words.



1. NOUNS

Nouns name persons, places,
and things—a world of things....

The **ship** chugged up the torpid **Congo**,
gray **smoke** long ago passing the **stern**,
the sharp **bow** cutting unconcerned
the flowing **blue**, indolent **crew** knowing
they will see the lurid **lights** of **Kisangani**
bright beneath the vast and vivid **sunset**.

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

PROPER nouns, such as *Madagascar* and *Titanic* and *Bombay*, are capitalized.

COMMON nouns, such as *fuel*, *dishes*, *foam*, and *horizon*, are not capitalized.

A noun naming one thing, such as *rail*, or *tide*, or *smokestack*, or *buoy*, or *quay*, is **SINGULAR**.

A noun naming more than one thing, such as *sails*, or *shores*, or *cultures*, or *ports*, or *songs*, or *seamen*, is **PLURAL**.

Micronesia is a singular proper noun.
Ships is a plural common noun.

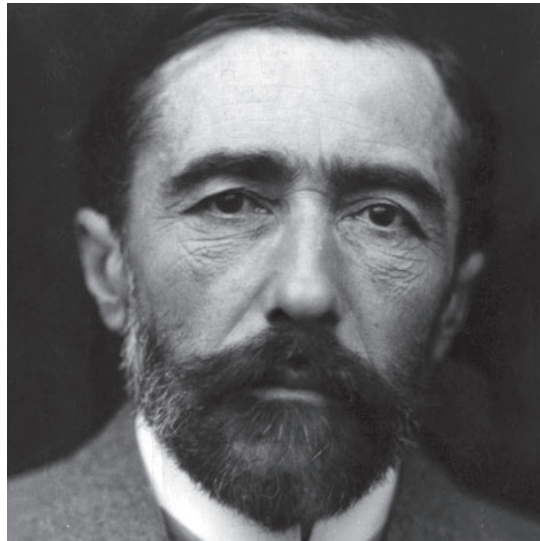
There are also **POSSESSIVE** nouns:
We watched *John's* ship.

But many nouns, such as *Micronesia* and *bioluminescence*, are long words and take energy and time to say, so... we use a short word that means the noun, and it is called the *pronoun*.

2. PRONOUNS

Pronouns are quick words, code beeps,
speedy shortcuts we use when we do not
want to repeat a long noun.

Instead of saying
Joseph Theodore Conrad,



the author of *Heart of Darkness*,
whose real name was
Jozef Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski,
we can just say

he.

The noun the pronoun replaces is called the **ANTECEDENT**.
Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number.

There are several groups, or **CASES**, of pronouns.

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

I you he she they it
we you they

He sailed west across the Pacific
toward the Solomon Islands.

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

me you him her them it
us you them

She gave *him* the map of Polynesia
and taught *him* how to navigate
by the stars at night.

MEMORIZE

SUBJECT PRONOUNS

	singular	plural
first person	I	we
second person	you	you
third person	he she they it	they

OBJECT PRONOUNS

	singular	plural
first person	me	us
second person	you	you
third person	him her them it	them

Notice that the subject pronouns *you* and *they* and the object pronouns *you* and *them* can be either singular or plural.

These pronouns are not gender-specific.

You must memorize these two groups of pronouns.

Keep repeating them until you feel certain that you will know them for the rest of your life.

We will think more about this later, but do you notice anything now about how we use these pronouns?

I saw **him**, and **she** saw **me**,
but **we** gave **him** and **her** the squid.

Notice that subject pronouns have *ieee* sounds, and object pronouns have *mrrmr* sounds, and that helps us keep them apart.

There are other kinds of pronouns, too.

We use **demonstrative** pronouns
to demonstrate:

this, that, these, those.
This is a good harbor.

We use **possessive** pronouns
to show possession:

mine, yours, his, hers, theirs, its, ours, yours, theirs.
Mine is the new ship at the dock.
The word *its* is a possessive pronoun;
it's is a contraction of *it is*.

We use **interrogative** pronouns
to interrogate (to question):

who, whose, whom, which, what.
Who stowed the grub today?

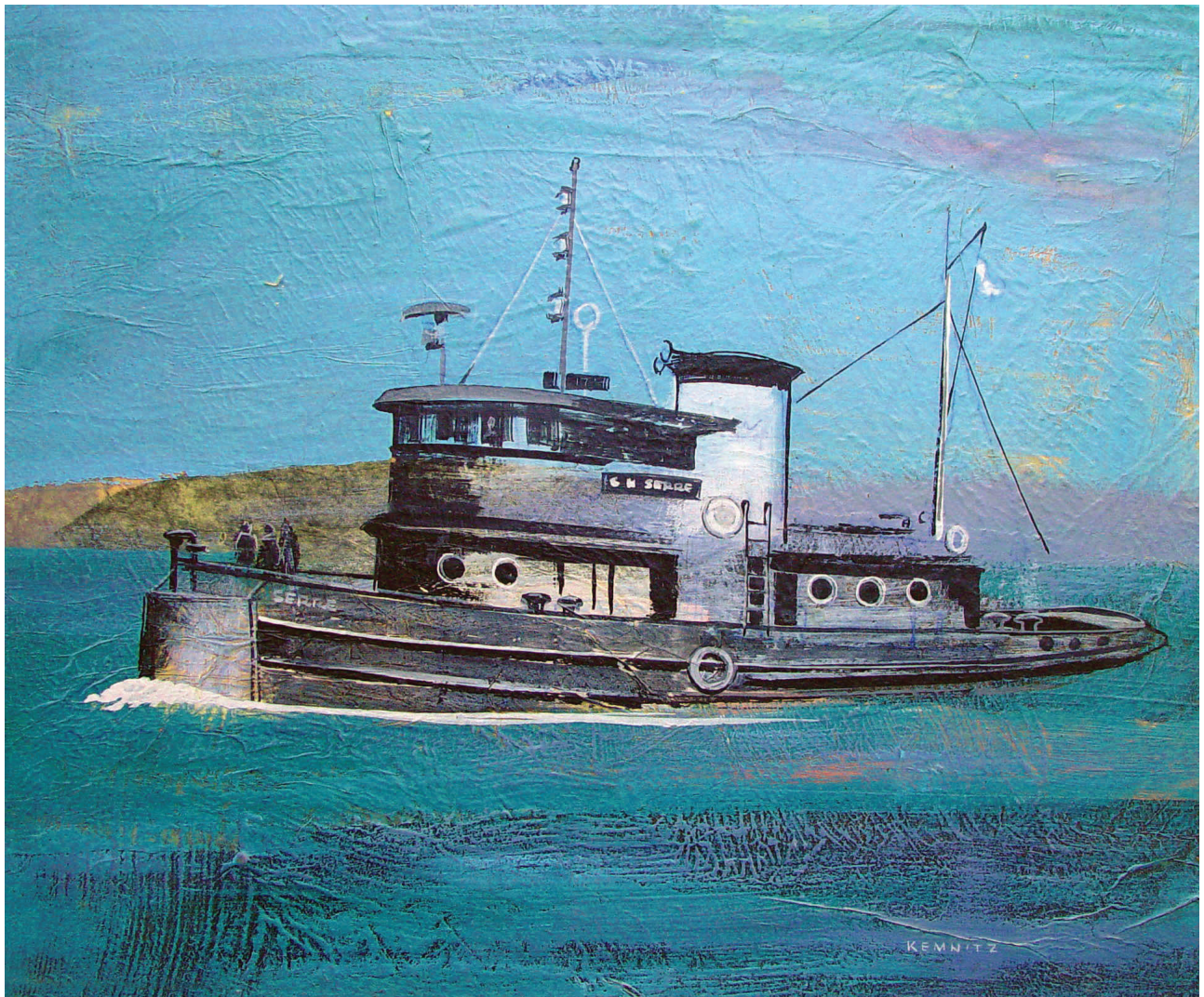
We use **indefinite** pronouns
for unspecified references:

anybody, anyone, everybody, everyone,
somebody, someone, many, few, etc.
Someone ate the potato.

His It

One purple morning in San Juan harbor,
there was a tugboat, the *G.W. Seagle*,
splashing through the water toward the sea,
which glowed and shone in the salty wind,
and the pelicans dove for breakfast,
and the first fingers of the sun
spread red on the ocean clouds.
The captain of the *G.W. Seagle*, José Borges,
halted before the harbor mouth,
where the foaming waves rolled in,
and waited for *The Nostromo*, an old
and melancholy freighter, coming from the
west coast of Africa. *The Nostromo* was
a blue speck on the horizon, a feather of smoke
far out and just visible in the new light,
and the captain of *The Nostromo*, Eduardo,
would not spot the waiting tugboat
for thirty more minutes.

But soon they would see each other,
and he would signal him that he should
bring his boat alongside his, where he
would help him steer it toward it,
and he would guide it toward his pier,
where he would work with him
to do his job right, which he did.



ANTECEDENT

ante - before *cede* - go

The antecedent is the noun that goes (*cede*)
before (*ante*) the pronoun;
it is the noun the pronoun replaces.

First **José** laughed; then he smiled.

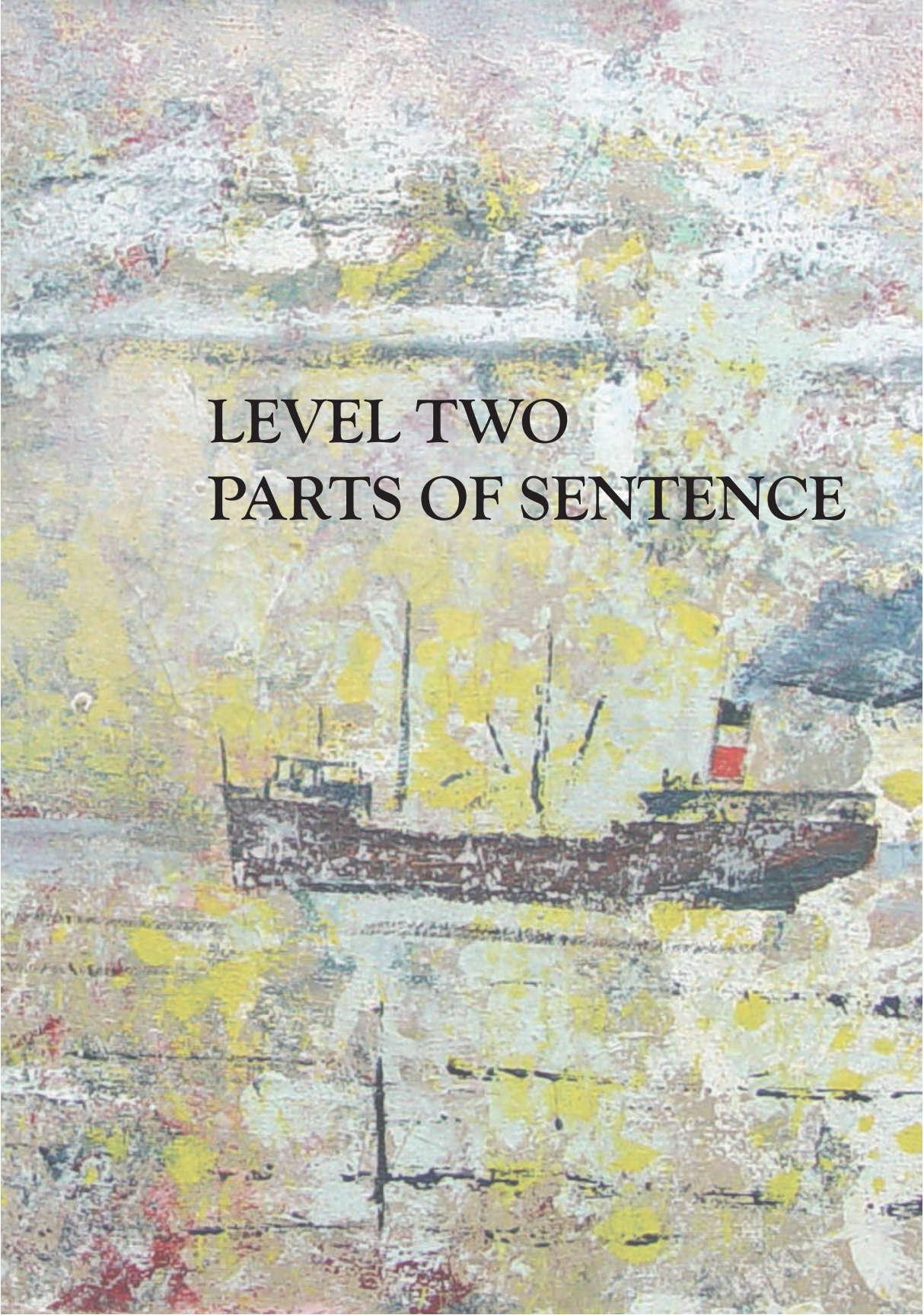
Look at the second stanza on the previous page.
What is the problem with the pronoun usage?

So nouns and pronouns let us name everything.

But the world is big, and the waters
are wide, and the ports hum with tugboats,
and we would need **millions of nouns**
for the **millions of things** we would find...



...or would we? Well, no....

An impressionist painting of a ship on a sea. The sky is filled with soft, blended colors of white, yellow, and light blue, suggesting a bright, hazy day. The sea is depicted with horizontal brushstrokes in shades of yellow, white, and light blue, creating a sense of movement and light. A dark brown ship with a red and white striped sail is visible in the middle ground. The overall style is characteristic of the Impressionist movement, focusing on light and color over fine detail.

LEVEL TWO
PARTS OF SENTENCE

THE VERB DETERMINES THE SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Do you remember that some verbs show action,
and other verbs are linking, like equations?

1. **ACTION** verbs show action:
The tugboat **pushed** the barge.

2. **LINKING** verbs show that something **IS** something:
The harbor **is** deep. The ship **was** an old Italian cruise liner.

The sentence is made of a **complete subject**
and a **complete predicate** about it.

The **simple subject** is the noun or subject pronoun
that the sentence is about.

The **simple predicate** is the verb.

If the verb is **ACTION**, it might act on a **direct object**.

A direct object is a noun or object pronoun
that receives the action of the action verb.

The captain saw the **island** in the distance.

If you have a direct object, you might have an **indirect object**.

An indirect object is a noun or object pronoun
that is located between the action verb and the direct object,
and it is indirectly affected by the action.

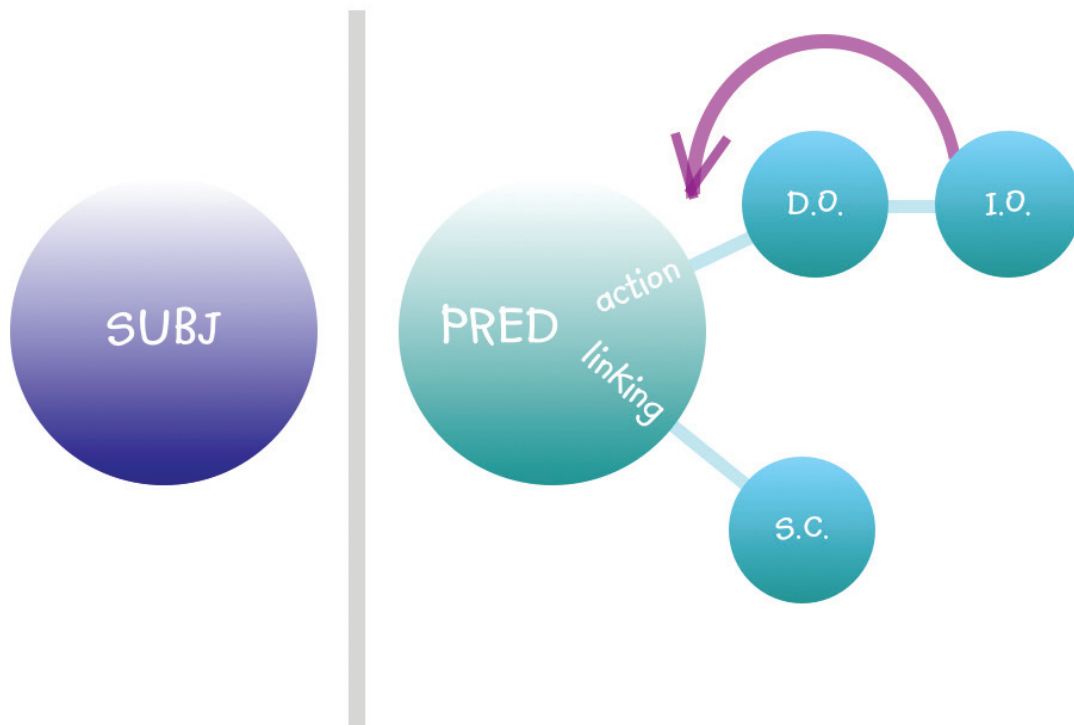
The captain gave the **seaman** a direct order.

If the verb is **LINKING**, you might have a **subject complement**.

A subject complement is a noun, subject pronoun, or adjective that is linked to the subject by a linking verb and that completes our knowledge of the subject.

Roberto is the **captain** of the red tugboat.

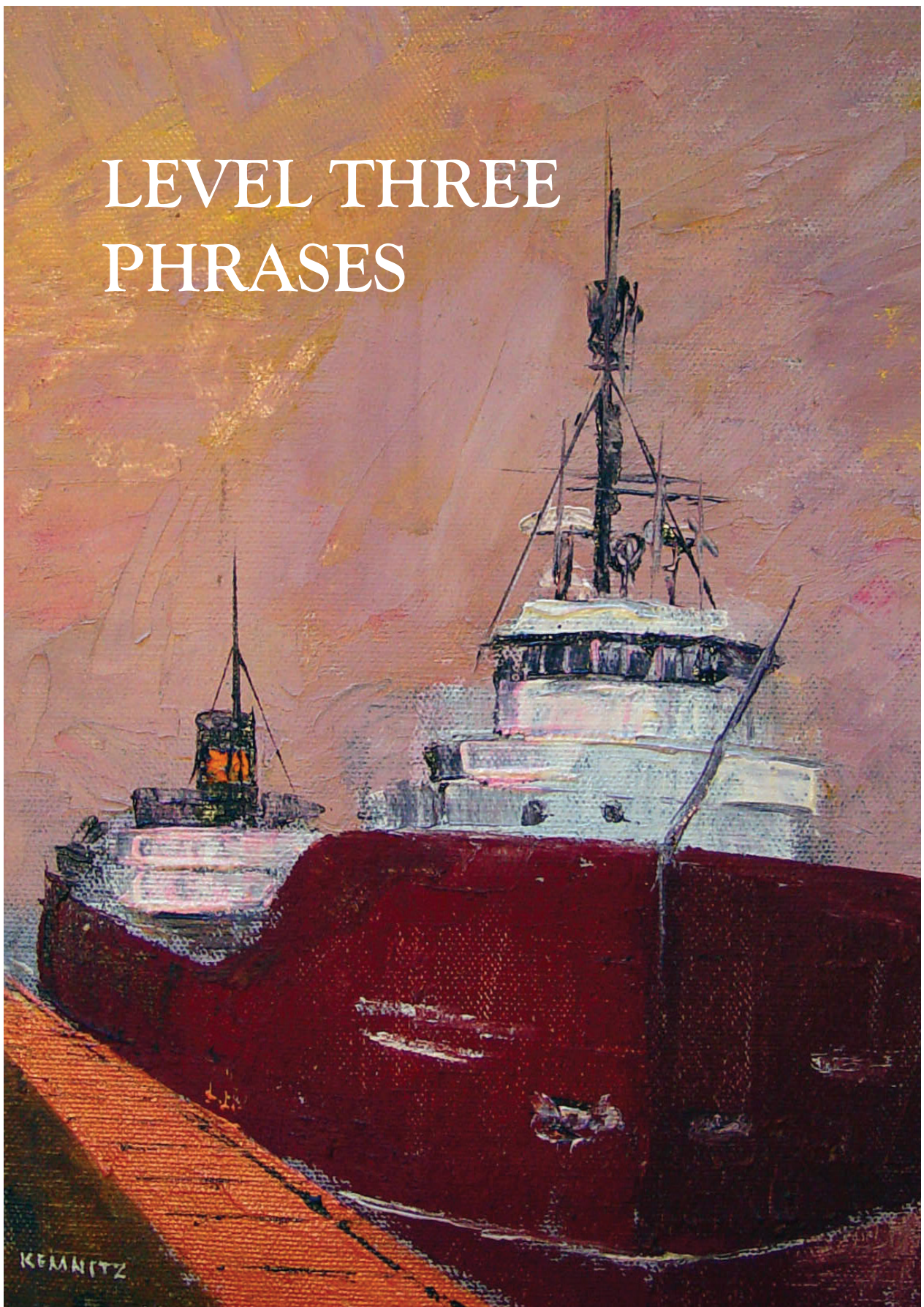
Roberto is **he**. Roberto is **old**.



Notice the sequence if you have an action verb:
subject - predicate - indirect object - direct object.

Roberto gave Vásquez the coffee.

LEVEL THREE PHRASES



THREE KINDS OF PHRASES

prepositional • appositive • verbal

A **phrase** is a group of words, but it acts like **one** word, like a *single* part of speech. It does a one-word job.

A phrase cannot have a subject and verb.

Some phrases act like nouns, others like adjectives or even adverbs.

A whole phrase, for example, can be a noun/direct object.

I	love	eating swordfish steaks.
subj.	AVP	-----D.O.-----

This is like “I love dogs” except that the direct object is a three-word phrase.

1. PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

Prepositional phrases always begin with prepositions, and they act like **modifiers** (like adjectives or adverbs):

like an adjective: The ship **at the dock** sank.

like an adverb: It sailed **after sunset**.

like an adjective: It’s a letter **for him and her**.

like an adverb: **From the forecastle** he shouted commands.

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition that shows the relationship between its object, which is usually a noun or an object pronoun, and some other word in the sentence. Prepositional phrases are always modifiers. If a prepositional phrase acts as an adjective, it comes immediately after the noun or pronoun it modifies:

The main **hold of the ship** needed repairs.

See how *of the ship* modifies the noun *hold*, just as an ordinary adjective would? The phrase begins with the preposition *of* and relates its object *ship* to another word in the sentence, *hold*. If a prepositional phrase acts as an adverb, it can come in a number of different places, including at the beginning of the sentence:

From the start the trawler led the fleet.

In this case, *From the start* modifies the verb *led*. Notice that prepositional phrases do not have subjects and predicates. No phrases do. Many prepositional phrases start with a preposition, then have an adjective that modifies a noun: *on the deck*, prep.-adj.-n. Notice also that we do not put a comma after a single, short introductory prepositional phrase.

One of the problems that prepositions can cause occurs when a prepositional phrase modifies the subject of the sentence and therefore comes between the subject and its verb: *The leader of the people is benevolent*. The problem comes when we mistakenly match the verb to the object of the preposition instead of to the subject. We will examine this again in a few pages, but here is an example:

RIGHT: The captain **of the pirates** is cruel.
WRONG: The captain **of the pirates** are cruel.



2. APPOSITIVE PHRASES

Appositive phrases are interrupting definitions. Enclosed in commas, they are put (*pos*) beside (*apo*) what they define. They act like nouns or sometimes like adjectives.

Roberto, **the captain's poodle**, came on board early.
The canal, **an old lake system**, was still used by ships.

Appositive phrases are called *appositives* because they are apposed—put beside what they define. An appositive phrase is a graceful way of inserting a quick explanation or definition so that your reader is not confused for the rest of the sentence.

The *Franca C*, **a vintage passenger liner**, was in port.

Because appositive phrases are interruptions, there is a comma rule for them; there should be commas before and after the appositive or appositive phrase:

Calle del Cristo, **the street by the plaza**, is beautiful.

Notice that appositive phrases do not have subjects and predicates. Also, there can be a one-word appositive, such as a state appositive or date appositive. It is not always a phrase (group of words), but it still needs two commas:

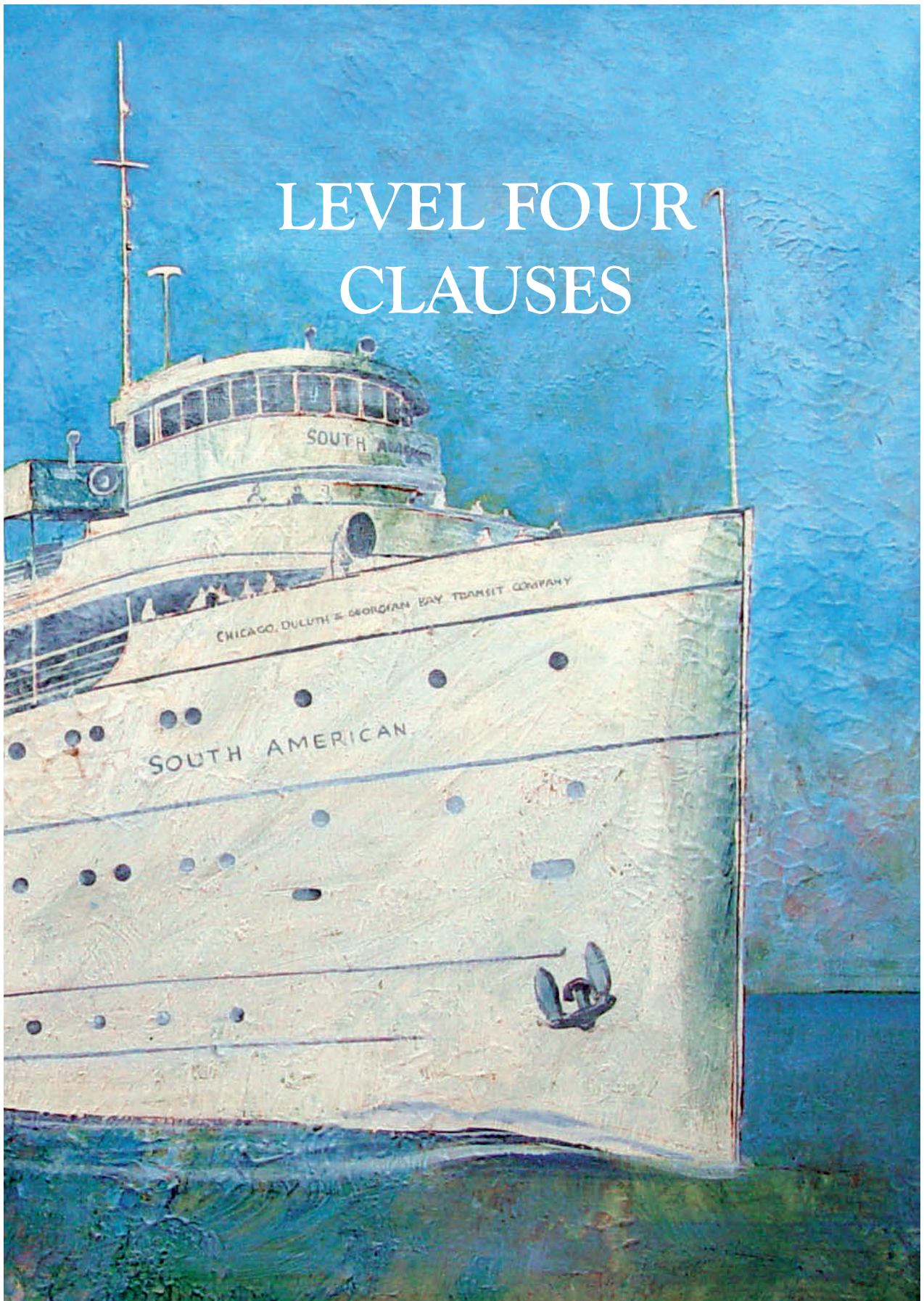
My old friend, **Hernandez**, arrived on the afternoon ferry.

On March 10, **1837**, the harbor was sunny and calm.

Veracruz, **Mexico**, is a seaside town.

New Orleans, **Louisiana**, is on the Gulf of Mexico.

LEVEL FOUR CLAUSES



THREE KINDS OF DEPENDENT CLAUSES

adverb clause • adjective clause • noun clause

The dependent clauses we have seen in these complex sentences are **adverbial** in effect. They act like adverbs to modify the verbs in the independent clauses.

There are also dependent clauses that act like **adjectives** and follow the nouns that they modify:

The **captain** **who sold the boat** left the harbor.

There are also dependent clauses that act like **nouns**:

I know **who broke the anchor**.

In this sentence the dependent clause *who broke the anchor* acts as a noun/direct object. Here is another noun clause:

Whoever defied the captain is a mutineer.

In this complex sentence, the noun clause acts as the subject of the sentence.