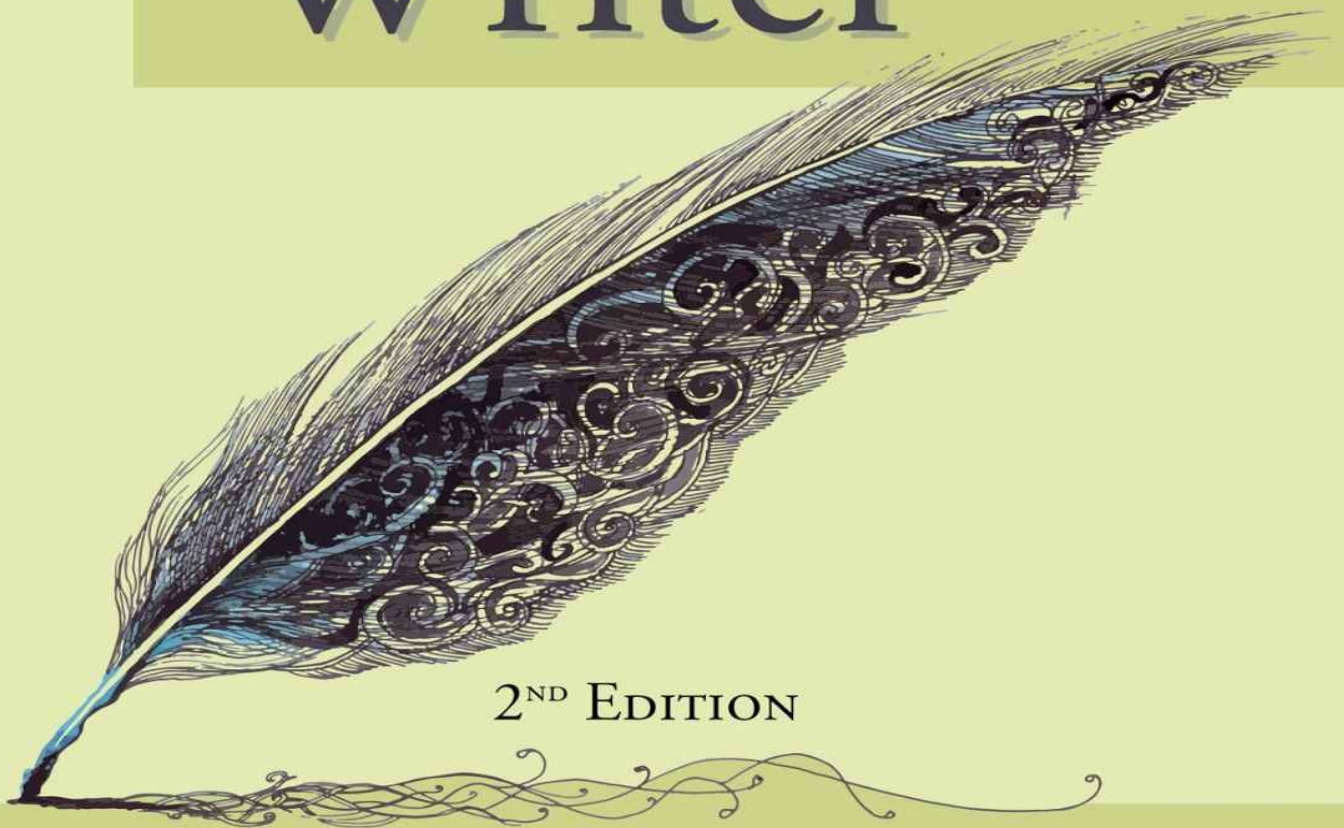


G. MIKI HAYDEN

The
Naked
Writer



2ND EDITION



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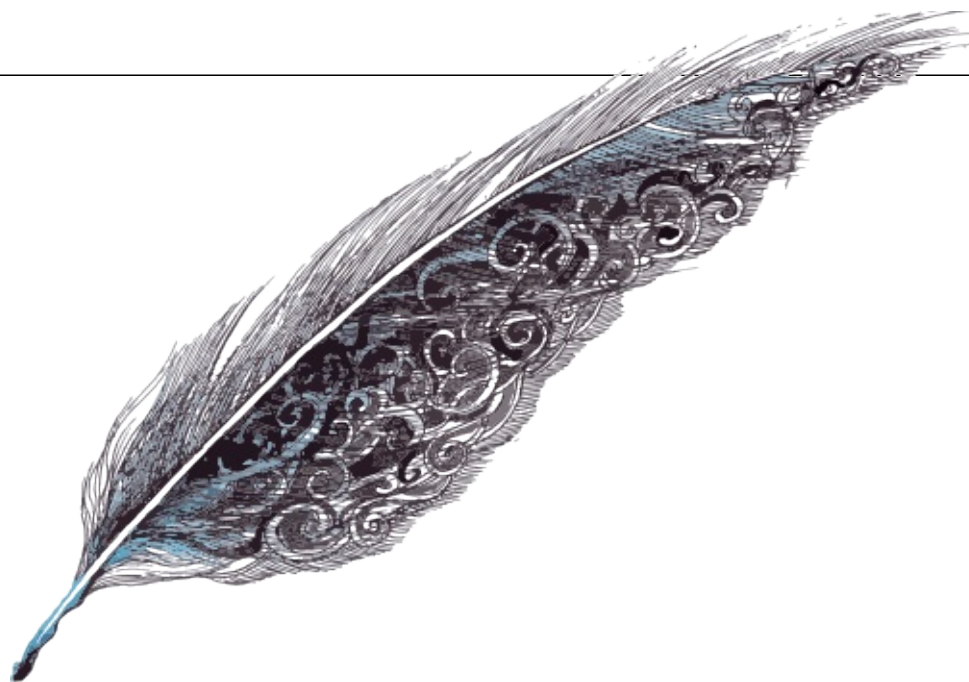
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~~PART I:~~

THE WRITTEN WORD



DON'T MISTAKE THIS FOR A BEGINNERS' BOOK

As if life weren't hard enough, I decided to produce a writing style/composition book. Why? On about 335 days a year I go online to check up on students in my Internet classes—only to be plagued by multiple manifestations of exactly the same mistakes that all my hundreds of other students made the previous year. Not only do many of the students have a score of identical linguistic misunderstandings in common, but those with problems repeat them endlessly coming back to take a second and even third, progressively more advanced, class while unrepentant of their errors. Oops—I mustn't sound grouchy since I want to engage you. I tried to program macros for responses that I could insert where I found the predictable grammar, style, and punctuation glitches but I wasn't able to make the software do what I wanted it to. What a shame, because these students really do make pretty much the same mistakes consistently; I'd love to press the F1 key, say, and have the words "OPTIONAL COMMA. DO YOU REALLY WANT A PAUSE HERE? READ IT OUT LOUD. NO, YOU DON'T" drop down into the text.

If the students in my Web-based writing classes are making the same errors time and time again, then ninety eight percent of those writing any kind of text in this country today likely are as well. One of that immense majority could be you. (Well, if *you're* doing it, I'm sure you do it minimally and with tremendous élan.) And one of those millions of mistake-makers was surely I, at a prior point in time. I have to admit that, despite my earning a living as a writer for more than twenty years, I had no idea of many of the rules about which I nowadays nag my eager students. When I had a really fastidious copy editor go over my work, I always wondered about the enormous number of changes marked. Sheesh, how fussy some people can be.

Slowly, over time and then more quickly as I began to teach, I woke up to the actual rules (and their variations), and to the implementation of better style choices. I bought style books. I began to be irritated when others made mistakes. I forgot I had once not known the difference between "which" and "that." I wrote a rather well-received book—*Writing the Mystery, a Start-to-Finish Guide for Both Novice and Professional* (nominated for three awards, winning one)—that had a section with quite a bit of style advice. I won an Edgar for a short story of mine.

The kudos all began to go to my head. I became convinced that I could write a style book and save would-be writers of every stripe hours, days, weeks, years of agony.

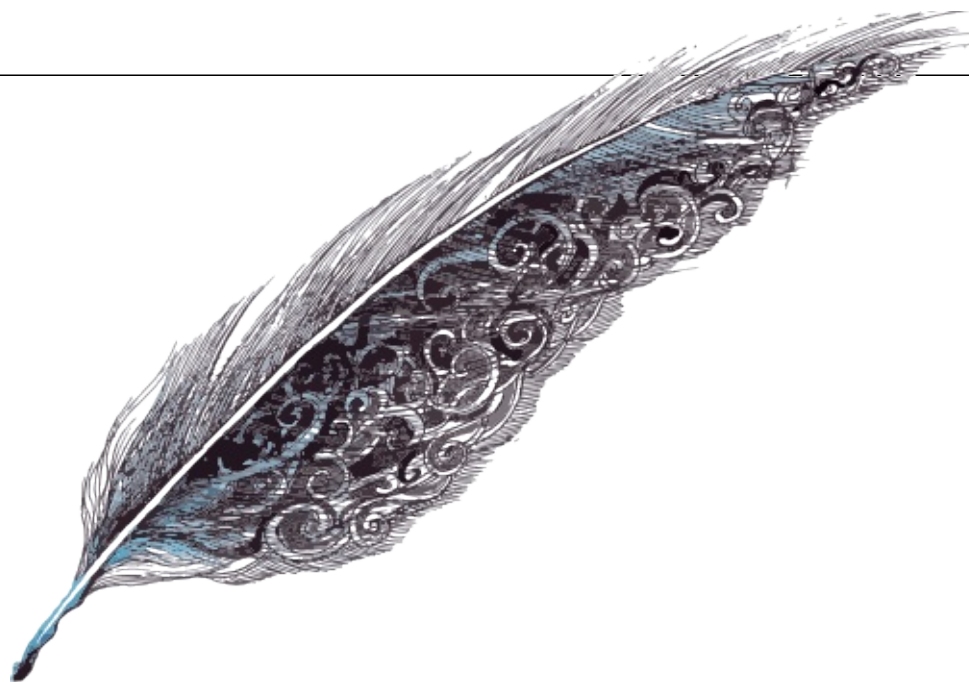
So I'm the source of my own travails in writing this book.

Darn.

I hope I do save you, the reader, a bit of pain. And I'd suggest you approach the book this way: Read the text more than once, section by section, then set it aside. Now, use this book for reference when something you're writing doesn't seem to be working, or when the reaction to your writing is not a thumbs up. Learning all the rules to an admirable style doesn't happen overnight. The language, an expression of our societal and personal psyches, is just as deep as our own collective and individual intelligences.

Only as we live and learn about ourselves and about the universe we live in will our ability to communicate come to reflect our capacity to dig down, to touch our humanity, to love what is outside

ourselves, and to forgive the petty sins others may commit against us. (Oh no, where did that come from? I'm sure I didn't mean to get all smarmy and philosophical on you. Forgive me. And lots of love.)



THE NAKED WRITER DEFINES TERMS

Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.

— Rudyard Kipling

Adam was the first author on earth, although he didn't go around with a pen and pencil. He came into the Garden of Eden naked and soon after was asked by God to name the animals, which he did.* He made up some words, enjoyed the process a lot, and simply never stopped the obsessive naming.

What did it mean that Adam was naked? Well, obviously, he was freelance and didn't have to dress in the morning because he never left the garden until later on (Adam's leaving the garden—for New York City—came about through his compulsion to evolve, improve his writing skills, and find better markets).

Because we all come naked, speak a language, and can name a few things, we all have the potential to turn into writers. Naked writers, of course, because we have to start somewhere. Also, naked is good, because a writer ought to be without pretensions and be able to produce meaning straight from his/her original, unclothed self.

A few aspects of the business have changed since Adam's time, however, since he named a lot of items, and then his and Eve's descendents went on to name tons more stuff, both concrete and abstract. So with a great deal of the naming already done, setting down appellations has faded into the background as the primary job of the naked writer. The naked writer now has to keep in mind virtually truckloads of names, if only just for her tools. Over time, the names have been broken down into categories, in fact, since we have so darn many of them. Thus I'd best define a handful or two of basic terms that will come into play in the course of this book. Surprisingly, I don't think I'll have to clarify all that many, but hang on and I'll take a stab at it.

Parts of Speech

Notwithstanding the complexity of our English language, we have only eight different parts of speech. Having taught a grammar class repeatedly, I've been interested to note that people struggle identifying these parts of speech despite the paucity of them and in spite of the fact that we use them every day. Knowing the names of the parts of speech and understanding the function of each of the parts is fundamental for the writer, whether naked or wearing a sweater against the chill.

Nouns

Nouns stand for *things*. Things have thingness (all words ending with “ness” are nouns). Thingness can be something we can touch (concrete nouns), plus abstractions, which we can only touch with our minds (the category of which is “abstract nouns”). “Radio” is a noun, a concrete one, but so is “sleepiness” a noun, one that describes an idea, an abstraction. “Jim” is a proper noun and rates capital at its start, while “gym” is a common noun and is lower-cased. “Gem” is a concrete noun if you show us the emerald we're talking about, but an abstract noun if you call your sweetie a gem.

Pronouns

Pronouns substitute for nouns or other pronouns. The most familiar, certainly, are the personal pronouns: *I, you, he, she, we, they, who*, and all the variations, depending on “case”—that is, how the personal pronoun is used in the sentence, such as, as a subject or an object or to claim possession—“my car.” One personal pronoun we might not really think of as personal, since it doesn’t relate to persons at all, is the personal pronoun “it.” But “it” falls into the class defined as personal pronoun all the same, being quite solidly known as “third person.”

Indefinite pronouns refer to unspecified persons, places, or things: *anyone, each, either, no one, someone, both, few, many*, and so on. Some of these are used as singular pronouns always, some are always plural, some can be either singular or plural.** Quite a fix for a writer trying to pick out verbs or other pronouns to go with these. (*Demonstrative pronouns* are a narrower lot: *this, that, these, and those*.)

Since sometimes pronouns are singular and sometimes they are plural, please, please, make sure your pronouns agree in number with the antecedent for which they substitute, and make sure the verb agrees in number as well.*** Be certain you know if a pronoun is always singular, always plural, or can be either depending on use. How might you know? By looking up the word in a dictionary, either one on the Internet or a physical book you pick up and hold in your very own hands.

A couple of other categories of pronouns exist, but, good heavens, these are little words, and even so vague, so why go into further depth in regard to them? Just try to grasp the idea of what a pronoun is. Pronouns stand in for nouns.

Verbs

Verbs minister to the nouns and pronouns. They sacrifice their own independence in order to carry the nouns here and there (to show action, even of an abstract sort) or to simply act as a link so that the concrete or abstract things (nouns/pronouns) may be modified (somehow altered or “dressed”) by adjectives (defined below). Verbs serve the otherwise helpless clause subjects and have no actual agenda of their own. What admirable self-abnegation on their part! Verbs are either of an *action* or *linking/state-of-being* type.

- *Action*: Ralph *jumped* in the river.
- *Linking/state-of-being*: Ralph *was* cold from swimming in the water.
- *Linking/state-of-being*: Ralph *felt* sick after his stupid act of bravado.
- *Linking/state-of-being*: Ralph *grew* nervous about the consequences of his impulsive leap.
- *Linking/state-of-being*: Ralph *could be* dying now and not even know it!

An action verb may be *transitive* or *intransitive*. A transitive verb takes a direct object and an intransitive verb doesn’t. In the sentence “Ralph jumped in the river,” the action verb “jumped” is intransitive—it has no direct object. On the other hand, if we say “Ralph jumped the fence,” the verb is transitive since “fence” is the direct object.

Some verbs are always transitive, such as the verb “to hold”: *I held a leaf in my hand*. The verb always has a direct object. Some verbs, such as “to sleep,” are always intransitive, as they can’t take a direct object. The sentences “Jane will sleep on the sofa,” or “I slept for an hour” don’t take direct objects. “On the sofa” and “for an hour” are both prepositional phrases that are used adverbially,

adverbs, that is. They modify the intransitive verbs.

Most action verbs sometimes take an object and sometimes don't. Therefore, we don't really have to categorize verbs as transitive and intransitive for any particular reason of making sense of the rules of language. Naming the sub-, subtype of verb is really simply an academic exercise. Just call them action verbs.

The reason we classify verbs at all is that some verbs take adverbs and some—however obedient they may be otherwise—refuse to. Linking/state-of-being verbs will not take adverbs; they link the subject with a complement—something on the other side of the verb that completes the sentence, often an adjective. The most significant linking/state-of-being verb is the “to be” verb, and to be a true linking verb, that verb generally stands on its own. That is, the “to be” form is not simply part of another verb's conjugation.

- *Linking verb*: I am his mother.
- *Not a linking verb*: He was beating the rug.

Other linking verbs/state-of-being and sensory verbs include *feel*, *appear*, *seem*, *look*, *taste*, and *smell*.
on. *The soup tastes delicious. I feel good. He appears dangerous. She looks lovely.*

In these sentences with linking verbs, the modifying complements are adjectives because the words (the adjectives) refer directly back to the subject—they are linked—and the complements modify the subject and not the verb. (Of course we can use a noun as a complement, too—“That child is a terror.”)

Some of these verbs may also be used in ways that are not linking. In “I tasted the soup,” for instance, the verb “taste,” now an action verb, is transitive and takes an object. We can also say “I felt the wound carefully” and “I looked at her compassionately.” These uses change the supposed linking verbs (“feel” and “look”) to action verbs.

Moreover, sometimes verbs that seem to be linking verbs in every respect are used with an adverb or adverbial phrase, which means they aren't *actually* linking verbs.

- *Not a linking verb, but an intransitive verb*: I am here. She is at the movies.

Do you hear *The Twilight Zone* music? I feel as if I just wrote a piece for *Ripley's Believe It or Not* on the subject of the great disappearing linking verb. I never meant to present the language in so fantastical a light. And worse is out there lurking still, though I will refrain from so much detailing ahead, I hope.

Let's turn to a little something called the verbal, and that doesn't simply mean talk, talk, talk (that's a pun, guys). *Verbals* are word types formed from verbs and consist of *gerunds*, *participles*, and *infinitives*. Gerunds and participles both may end in “ing” but serve different functions. The gerund is a noun and the participle is a modifying agent, an adjective. (The participle may also take an ending other than “ing.”) The infinitive takes the basic verb, adds a “to” and gives the writer a noun, adjective, or adverb to toy with.

- *Gerund*: Digging in the garden cheered me up.

- *Participle*: Digging in the garden, I've found more than one fossil from the time when the sea flowed through here.
- *Participle*: The fossil dug from the garden is of a very common type.
- *Infinitive as a noun*: They chose to dig in the garden today.
- *Infinitive as an adjective*: We have dirt to dig aplenty.
- *Infinitive as an adverb*: I struggled to dig deeper into the soil.

That will be quite enough of verbs for now, but as humble and servile as they present themselves, this part of speech demands a lot of attention (so more to come later in the book).

Adjectives

I've used the words "adjective" and "adverb" rather freely already. What is an adjective? (As you didn't know...) The *adjective* modifies (affects our perception of) the noun or pronoun. What about the adverb? The *adverb* modifies verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Both adjectives and adverbs are considered modifiers. They may have the same word root but most often take different forms. Adjectives, like other parts of speech, obviously have broken into pieces (as it were) under the Adam naming curse and can be classified as many different types.

The three *articles*—"the," "a," and "an"—are adjectives. Typically, we use a "the" to modify an item or type of item to which we've already introduced the reader, or an item that should come as no surprise: He went into *the* kitchen and lit *the* stove. We understand he probably has a kitchen and a stove in the kitchen, and, unless he's a caterer or some such, only one kitchen and one stove. We call the "the" the *definite* article.

If the reader hasn't met the thing or creature, then we would use the "a" or "an" (*indefinite* articles): "A bird outside started to sing." If we know the bird, of course, we'd say, "The bird outside started to sing."

This rule doesn't always apply with nouns that represent general quantities rather than numbered quantities (milk, for instance), which generally take a "the" (unless we're defining it as a singular: "Let's have a milk."). Oh yes, and some abstract nouns often don't take any article—"knowledge," for instance—though we can say "The knowledge I've shared with you will hold you in good stead in your career."

The "an," as we all know, is used when we're modifying an item or creature that begins with a vowel. Or is that the case? Actually we should replace the word "vowel" with "vowel sound," and so the "an" is used with a vowel sound: "Send an SASE (self-addressed, stamped envelope)." "Peel an onion." "An NKID officer, that is, an officer from the Peoples Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, reported his observations on the Eastern Front directly to Stalin."

The full scope of rules for the use of articles is mind-boggling, in fact, and I will spare you the absolute horror of it all. Suffice it to say I just saved you about seven pages of detail and a final sentence that would read something like, "Exceptions can be found."

Most students/writers do pretty well with articles, overall, except for those writers for whom English is a second language. If your English (as a second language) is excellent except for the articles, you might need to go into those arcane byways that include every rule, and you might need to scrutinize each noun you plunk down, in order to apply the correct article. But, you know what? That type of effort, if necessary for you, will pay in the long run in satisfaction and a ninety-eight percent sense of security when you submit a piece of writing at work or for publication.

Adjectives, otherwise, are not awfully problematic. Their complexity lies in the areas of comparison ("He is a more difficult person than George; in fact, he is the most difficult person I've

ever met”) and in deciding whether to use an adjective or adverb (“She gave a pretty smile, and I was glad she could smile so prettily”).

Adverbs

Adverbs, since they are used for more purposes than adjectives— modifying one another, modifying adjectives, modifying verbs—have a few peculiar ins and outs.

I have always thought of adverbs simply as answering the question “how?” And that is pretty much the case. “How?” can mean “in what manner?” To which the answer could be “diligently” and so on. Still other questions that might be posed to elicit an adverb as the response might be “when?” *Not daily, frequently, never*, and so on are adverbs that answer the question “when?” Similarly, an adverb may answer the question of “where?” *Here, there, close, downstream, offshore*, and *far* tell us “where.”

Adverbs may also account for the solution to the puzzle of “to what extent?” *More, less, further, partly, almost, very*. I shall torment you further on the topic of modifiers later on. Stay alert.

Conjunctions

The word origin of *conjunction* is the Latin “conjugare,” meaning “to join together.” Conjunctions join together sentence elements. The “coordinating” conjunctions are few: *and, but, or, yet, so, nor, for*. The “subordinating” conjunctions are many (*although, because, even, whereas, while*—and so on) and they are used to make a portion of the sentence subordinate to, or dependent on, the other part.

He worked very hard because he wanted to go to college.

Here, we have two parts to the sentence, two clauses. “He worked very hard” can stand on its own but “because he wanted to go to college” would be a fragment on its own since it doesn’t form a complete sentence. We could say “He wanted to go to college” and that would stand on its own as a sentence, but the subordinating conjunction “because” turns the sentence into a subordinate dependent clause.

Since we’re defining conjunctions so carefully, we might as well mention “correlative conjunctions as they aren’t that much trouble, and since we’re here. Correlative conjunctions work in pairs: *either/or, neither/nor, both/and*, and *not only/but also*. The important thing about the correlative conjunctions is that they bind the terms being joined more closely than coordinating conjunctions, and the terms being joined must be equal—for instance, both nouns or both adjectives.

- *Correct*: Not only will he take the girls to the movies, but he will also take the boys.
- *Correct*: Not only was he handsome, but also he was kind.
- *Incorrect*: Not only was he handsome, but he will also take the children to the movies.
- Further joiners are the conjunctive adverbs, such as *otherwise, accordingly, therefore, furthermore, consequently, then, thus, also, granted, certainly, meanwhile...* As well as joining (plus comparing, contrasting, emphasizing, etc.), these types of words and phrases provide a transition from one idea to another. Because a conjunctive adverb doesn’t serve the same function as a subordinating conjunction, be aware that when a conjunctive adverb joins two independent clauses, you must punctuate with more than a comma.
- *Incorrect*: He interviewed family and friends for the tell-all book,

- consequently he has more than three hundred hours on tape.
- *Correct:* He interviewed family and friends for the tell-all book; consequently, he has more than three hundred hours on tape.

Prepositions

Today a student of mine labeled a few random nouns and verbs as prepositions. When I asked why he said because he didn't know what parts of speech the nouns and verbs were and because prepositions were said to show relationships. I tried to think of how to explain prepositions and that was what I came up with, for whatever the definition is worth: Prepositions often show directionality or location—toward the river, into the garden, in the street, beside the house, under the flagstone. They are basically words that don't have a lot of "life" in them, per se, but serve a function of relating other words (that is, the ideas, the things the words represent) to one another.

The object of a preposition is a noun, and the relationship shown is of the main clause to the noun that is the object of the preposition. *They flew above the clouds. The children ran across the meadow.* That is, the main clause (the subject and verb) have a relationship with the object of the preposition and the preposition shows the kind of relationship: *under, on, over, surrounding, down, with, during, except, against, near, past,* and so on.

Interjections

Interjections should be the easiest part of speech to define. Ah! If only I could. There, the "ah" is an interjection. Why, so is the "there." And the "Why!" The interjection is a single word utterance that expresses a strong emotion—of surprise, excitement, triumph, anger, or some shade thereof. The interjection may stand on its own and be followed by an exclamation point or a question mark: *Whew! How dare you say that? Or the interjection may be followed by a comma: Oh, I got that wrong again.* Some words are only and always interjections, such as *Whew!* Or, *gadzooks!* Other words can be used as interjections in addition to another part of speech. *Yes!* In addition to being an interjection, "yes" can be used as a noun (*She gave him a yes*) and an adverb (*She voted yes*).

Many subclassifications of all eight parts of speech exist that most of us (me included) never heard of, all set down insidiously by the lexiconigraphic sons and daughters of the original, happy-go-lucky Adam himself.

Phrases and Clauses

Right after parts of speech in our glossary must come the terms *phrases* and *clauses*. These units of expression represent one level up from the single word, and understanding them is essential to comprehending how we form sentences (and the rules of punctuation).

A *clause* has at least a subject and a verb, but may have other elements, such as modifiers and objects. The subject (that which is under primary consideration) will generally be present—but may be absent. In the imperative sentence "Hand me that letter," the subject (you) is understood—but doesn't actually appear. ("Me" is not the subject because it is the object.)

A clause may be *independent*, which means that the clause itself forms a sentence on its own, or *dependent* (subordinate), which means that some provisional element, usually a subordinating conjunction, keeps the clause from standing alone as a sentence.

- *Independent clause/subordinate clause:* You owe me money since I paid

for your cab.

- *Independent clause*: You owe me money.
- *Subordinate clause*: ...since I paid for your cab.
- *Independent clause*: I paid for your cab.
- *Subordinate clause/independent clause*: Since you owe me money, I'd like it back.

If you feel confused by this, ignore the whole topic while simply letting your eyes take in the words. Don't struggle with anything that doesn't strike you as readily understandable. Let the definitions flow by and just try to remember the key words. I don't mean for you to work too hard with any of this. Remember, this is also a reference book, and if you really need the information later on, you can come back to it. Let your mind work as it will; force won't help. You'll understand eventually as you relax and allow the concepts to cook their way through the synapses of your capable and intelligent brain. Really.

A *phrase* is a logical grouping of words that doesn't have both a subject and a verb. The phrases below begin with a preposition and are called *prepositional phrases*. The prepositional phrase can be used for transition, as an adverb phrase, and as an adjective phrase.

- *Transitional phrase*: as a result
- *Adverb phrase*: before the weekend
- *Adjective phrase*: with more than enough spicy flavors.

We may also use verbs to create other parts of speech (as mentioned above, under "verbs") and then to form phrases, such as "winding his way through the forest." This type of formation can be a noun (as a gerund). In "He caught heck from his mother for letting out the dog," the word "letting" is fashioned from the verb "let" and is now a noun used in the prepositional phrase "for letting out the dog."

In "Winding his way through the forest, James thought he heard the cough of a foraging dragon" the "winding" is a participle formed from "wind" and used here to create an adjective phrase that modifies "James."

Again, don't worry about any of this. If you've read the words, you've done your job so far. Just remember "phrases" and "clauses."

* NB (*nota bene*, which means *note well*): Mark Twain, an author who wore a suit and smoked a pipe, says that Eve did the naming, and perhaps he was right, because, in the Garden, Adam and Eve were actually one unitary creature. Who could tell the two, joined at the hip as they were, apart?

**Also NB, the commas here separate independent clauses. Note well that the clauses are short; otherwise, note well, I would use semicolons to separate them.

*** "...make sure the verb agrees in number" is an independent clause. What's the subject? The "mood" expressed is *imperative* and the subject is "you," a word that is taken as understood. The reason I point out that this is an independent clause is in order to explain the comma before the "and." The "and," here, joins two independent clauses. Often, writers habitually use a comma before coordinating conjunctions joining a dependent clause to an independent clause. Don't do that habitually. Sometimes, however, you may *choose* to use the comma. My, my, what a complex language.

Quiz

Part I.

Name the parts of speech for the numbered words:

She is munching (1) on a scone (2) laden (3) with Devonshire cream at high tea in Manhattan Plaza Hotel—all eighty nine (4) pounds of her—while in the background (5) a harpsichordist plays Chopin. Nearby (6), a table of private school girls, demure (7) in cashmere and red velvet, celebrate (8) a birthday.

“If I make a lot of money...” author Lynda Sandoval (9) begins. She pauses and corrects (10) herself, “When (11) I make a lot of money...”

She isn't being (12) show-offy (13), but radiates a hopeful and self-assured innocence. The money she already knows, is going to come, and, anyway (14), she definitely (15) wants to choose the most positive (16) statement. She has been through a lot in her career and has hung (17) in steadily during the tough times. The good times are just about to roll (18).

Sitting (19) here, the petite Sandoval is on the verge of being introduced to the world as the Latin (20) author who (21) is going to make it big in women's fiction. Her breakthrough book, for (22) which she was paid an unspecified six figure advance, will be celebrated in three days' time—along with Sandoval herself— at a grand party in Manhattan, an (23) event co-sponsored (24) by *People Magazine en Espanol* and Sandoval's publisher, HarperCollins (the Rayo imprint). Film rights have been bid on and (25) the press is already clamoring at the happy-faced author's door.

Part II.

Which are independent clauses? Which are dependent clauses? Which are phrases?

1. Book Expo America (BEA) convenes workers
2. in the vineyards
3. of the printed word,
4. and this year because it was held in New York City's Javitts Center
5. traveling as it does
6. from L.A., to Chicago, to New York
7. I was able to attend.
8. And lo and behold, BEA was simply, just, another trade show.
9. Not that I don't like trade shows,
10. because I actually do.
11. And I think that for the writer,
12. the trade show of our industry is a good place to spend a couple of hours or even a couple days hanging out.
13. When they say the show has two thousand exhibits,
14. you have to bear in mind that this is a booksellers' show,
15. so many of the products displayed are items bookstores also sell (bookmarks) or need (bookcases) and which literary people could care less about.
16. Remember, also,
17. that many of the exhibits represent oddball areas
18. of (little) interest
19. with a single person manning a lonely booth,
20. wondering if anyone will bother to drop by

21. (no one does).

Answers

Part I.

She is munching (1 *verb*) on a scone (2 *noun*) laden (3 *past participle/adjective*) with Devonshire cream at high tea in Manhattan's Plaza Hotel—all eighty nine (4 *adjective*) pounds of her—while the background (5 *noun*) a harpsichordist plays Chopin. Nearby (6 *adverb*), a table of private-school girls, demure (7 *adjective*) in cashmere and red velvet, celebrate (8 *verb*) a birthday.

“If I make a lot of money...” author Lynda Sandoval (9 *proper noun*) begins. She pauses and corrects (10 *verb*) herself, “When (11 *adverb*) I make a lot of money...”

She isn't being (12 *adjective/participle*) show-offy (13 *adjective*), but radiates a hopeful and self-assured innocence. The money, she already knows, is going to come, and, anyway (14 *adverb*), she definitely (15 *adverb*) wants to choose the more positive (16 *adjective*) statement. She has been through a lot in her career and has hung (17 *verb*) in steadily during the tough times. The good times are just about to roll (18 *infinitive as adverb*).

Sitting (19 *participle as adjective*) here, the petite Sandoval is on the verge of being introduced to the world as the Latina (20 *adjective*) author who (21 *pronoun*) is going to make it big in women's fiction. Her breakthrough book, for (22 *preposition*) which she was paid an unspecified six figure advance, will be celebrated in three days' time—along with Sandoval herself—at a grand party in Manhattan, an (23 *article/adjective*) event co-sponsored (24 *participle/ adjective*) by *People Magazine en Espanol* and Sandoval's publisher, HarperCollins (the Rayo imprint). Film rights have been bid on and (25 *coordinating conjunction*) the press is already clamoring at the happy-faced author's door.

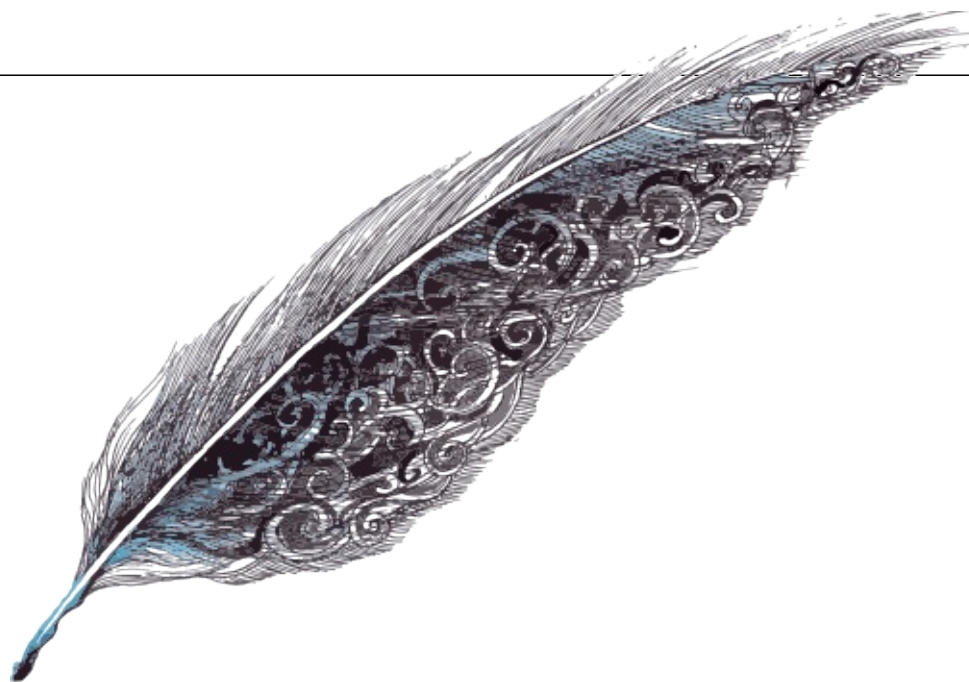
Part II.

Which are independent clauses? Which are dependent clauses? Which are phrases?

1. Book Expo America (BEA) convenes workers (*independent clause*)
2. in the vineyards (*phrase*)
3. of the printed word, (*phrase*)
4. and this year because it was held in New York City's Javitts Center (*dependent clause*)
5. traveling as it does (*dependent participle clause used as an adjective*)
6. from L.A., to Chicago, to New York (*phrases*)
7. I was able to attend. (*independent clause*)
8. And lo and behold, BEA was simply, just, another trade show. (*independent clause*)
9. Not that I don't like trade shows, (*independent clause*)
10. because I actually do. (*dependent clause*)
11. And I think that for the writer, (*dependent clause*)
12. the trade show of our industry is a good place to spend a couple of hours or even a couple days hanging out. (*independent clause*)
13. When they say the show has two thousand exhibits, (*dependent clause*)
14. you have to bear in mind that this is a booksellers' show, (*independent clause*)
15. so many of the products displayed are items bookstores also sell (bookmarks) or need (bookcases) and which literary people could care less about. (*dependent clause*)
16. Remember, also, (*independent clause*)
17. that many of the exhibits represent oddball areas (*dependent clause*)
18. of (little) interest (*phrase*)
19. with a single person manning a lonely booth, (*phrase*)

20. wondering if anyone will bother to drop by (*dependent participle clause*)

21. (no one does). (*independent clause without the parentheses*)



WHERE DO WORDS COME FROM, MOMMY?

No one knows, child. No one knows...

*The roots of language are irrational and of a magical nature.”
— Jorge Luis Borges, Prologue to “El otro, el mismo”*

When William Caxton set up the first printing press in England and began to mass produce books in English, he had to make decisions about how to spell words on paper with his radical new technology. He decided to use as his base one of the many dialects found in England at the time. Consequently, he spelled the word for a navigable, inland body of water a lake, rather than lak or even loch, both of which were also in common use. Most later printers followed Caxton’s lead, including many Scottish printers, resulting in a major new direction in the evolving process of standardizing English spelling. —Daniel Kies, Department of English, College of DuPage, Glen Elly, Illinois

Even apes have a language—what species doesn’t, whether we can personally interpret it or not. (Do use a question mark with a rhetorical question, dear friends—or an exclamation point.) Probably half our words in English aren’t from Olde English, Latin, or French, but are from the language of some prehistoric hominid tribe. (I lie.) However, a branch of linguistics, etymology, delves into the question of where words originate. A few examples follow of how we know nothing of the origins of words and how silly even wondering about such tenuous considerations is. (Oh, hell, wondering never costs more than a few hours’ time and an Internet connection.)

From whence comes the word “honeymoon”?

One theory is that in Babylonia four thousand years ago, for a lunar month after the wedding, the bride’s father would supply his son-in-law with all the mead or honey beer he could drink. Hence honeymoon. No? Well, how about the other theory, that “honey” refers to the sweetness of a new marriage and “moon” implies that the couple’s happiness will wane? Another guess is that the derivation is German or Irish because in both cultures a newly married couple would drink an alcoholic beverage made of honey brew every night for a month, ensuring fertility and joy.

How about the expression “mind your P’s and Q’s”?

In English pubs, brew is ordered by pints and quarts, and in the old days the barkeep would yell at customers getting a bit rambunctious, “Mind your pints and quarts, and quiet down.” Okay, if that seems too silly, maybe the expression comes from the schoolroom, where children are apt to confuse the lowercase “p” with the lowercase “q.” Or maybe the expression does originate in the tavern, where a running tally of drinks was kept behind the bar for later payment, and a customer was warned to mind how the barman chalked down the order.

How about the word “golf”?

The rumor is that when a new game was invented many years ago in Scotland, the sign went up front of the establishment where it was played: Gentlemen Only...Ladies Forbidden. And thus was coined the sport's name—“golf.” According to another source, however, women were only discouraged from playing golf later on, in Victorian times. So other opinions about the word have prevailed. The name may come from the medieval Dutch word “kolf ” or “kolve,” which means “club.” The word then passed to the Scots, whose old Scots dialect transformed the word into “golfe,” “gowl,” or “gouf.”

So you see, a lot of big apes got together and said, “Let's say something different. Let's talk English.” And they did.

Actually, we don't know how any particular language originated, but inevitably man began to chatter about this and that— first about the tribe of thugs over the hill and “our” defense against “them,” and next thing, what they were going to have for dinner. Thus, words are old.

A recent article in *The New York Times* discussed the new lexicographers, a bunch of babies editing the dictionaries that record and reflect, and actually codify our everyday language. Yes, babies—very young people who weren't around when the original words were invented, and who have no right now be in charge of what we say. Oh well, what can we do? But they seem to be erasing the archaic words from their books, and thus when authors go to replicate the speech of characters and historical figures from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we will only get: “Yes, like, man, prithee go forth.”

But that's bound to happen. Look at it this way—we've lost all the info we accumulated during pre-sand Egypt and have since had to start over from scratch in terms of knowledge—never quite getting up to snuff again, I might add.

Just as we can't figure out where language comes from, we don't know where the language is going. Language transforms with the culture.

Our language today has to cope with an influx of a great many new words because of enormous changes in technology in the last number of years. Science and industry are fleet of foot in chasing their profit, but the lexicographers, even the babies who have been hired to edit the Big Books, are not quite that quick off the mark.

First of all, bringing out a new dictionary takes a while. I can imagine the editors at the dictionary publishers having weekly meetings to heatedly discuss the possibility of adding new words. I'm sure we've all been at similar meetings, too—pass the Advil. (The word Advil is trademarked, you know. word! Trademarked!)

Do we write “cellphone”? Or do we write “cell phone”? I just checked a database of multiple dictionaries, and “cell phone” had seven hits with two computer dictionary responses and one definition in an automotive dictionary. By comparison, “cellphone” got four general matches and one computing dictionary match. Yet word on the street, among writers, is that “cellphone” is being advocated by the editors.

What to do? I guess I can't simply say “use the dictionary,” can I? But, do use the dictionary, and then use your own sense of propriety for any of these questions left unanswered. After that, accept the preference of the editor if the writing is for publication— or of your boss, so you don't get in Dutch (an interesting expression, that—and the question is whether to cap the “d”—yes).

Gender and the Pronoun

One major fuss in recent years—and the controversy has dragged on for a ridiculously long time now—has been over the question of gender and pronouns—his or her, he/she, and the like. No absolute

conclusion has been drawn. Where's a grammarian when you need one? Or, let's say, an official grammarian, licensed like the lexicographers noted above, to make a final decision. Oh, the lexicographers aren't licensed? That means it's up to you and me. *Carumba* (not only a foreign language exclamation, but the name of a typesetter's font).

The main thing to avoid is the use of a plural pronoun when the rules of grammar insist on singular.

- *Wrong pronoun match:* When you go to the doctor, ask them to check your blood cholesterol.
- *Correct match:* When you go to the doctor, ask him or her to check your blood cholesterol.
- *Correct match:* When you go to the doctor, ask her to check your blood cholesterol.
- *Correct match:* When you go to the doctor, ask him to check your blood cholesterol.

If we use the plural pronoun, readers may think we're simply careless. Of course if we use the "him," readers will think we're sexist—unless we're rotating the use of him and her throughout an article or book.

The problem for us isn't with usage when the language has officially moved on and can be verified by looking up the correct application, but when American English is in the process of transformation. Again, that progression may take quite a while to complete itself, and with a flood of questions up for grabs, we have to wing it in our writing, hoping to avoid looking stupid.

Here are a couple of language points that have been in process for the last thirty or more years. One might say that these refuse to change from the form they always took, although a group of philistines keeps pushing to alter what the righteous know as absolutely "correct"? Remember, in matters of language, correct is what the culturally anointed (Strunk and White, William Safire, and so on) determine to be the standard usage.

Raise vs. Rear

I used to mark students on this one, but I've given up. The saying in the old days went, "Chickens are raised and children are reared." This aphorism may still hold true, but most common folk don't adhere to that sense of the difference. Perhaps "reared" sounds rude or awkward, but the word has long been in favor. However, we will always find a person or two who will look at the word "raised" when applied to humans and snort.

Not wanting to be caught on the ignorant end of the stick or misunderstood, I use the term "brought up" when discussing the rearing of a person or persons. "He was brought up in Illinois" works most often without the grunt, groaning, sniffing, or other sound effects. Bear in mind, we can generally find a workaround to any usage that seems ill defined or potentially wrong.

All Right vs. Alright

"Alright" is listed in thirteen dictionaries on the database I use, even though the notation warns that the spelling is nonstandard. Nonstandard in regard to dictionary use, that is. I spell it "all right" because "they" make me do it (I don't mind), but the standard spelling I see from students is "alright." Remember the old saying, "You can't fight city hall"? I think that applies here. (I do mark m

students' spelling with a sigh.) Use the "all right" and you can't go wrong. Except with an editor who doesn't know her p's and q's, and in actual experience (another sad sigh), you'll find many. (If I could only tell tales... But I won't.)

The language we use in our day-to-day speech and writing is complex, deep, convoluted, and alive. As the world around us changes and as new people with a different set of perceptions begin to take charge of how we can express ourselves, revisions are made to our common lingo and its application. Often the old disappears completely and we can search for a word we recall from 19th century literature and it's (sob) gone. As with everything else around us, we ought to keep up in order to take advantage of the latest and greatest, and so we can continue to find a niche in contemporary life. The language actually changes less than many other things we have to deal with today and does so more slowly, so we have time to adjust.

On the other hand, in the few months that Curiosity Quills Press (blessed be its name) will need to get this book into print, a few grammatical rules and preferences might go entirely topsy turvy. Thus if you see anything in here you think is incorrect, believe me, it isn't. The supposed goof must be the result of the lexicographers pulling out the rug from under us. This book's editor and I are never wrong. We were wrong once in 1982, but that was an inserted typo. Trust us. And just in case, double-check with two or three additional sources. That's what I do.

Exercise

Part I

Look up the origins of the following words or phrases:

1. Limelight
2. Hell in a handbasket
3. The bee's knees
4. A lot of irons in the fire
5. Wheeling and dealing
6. The whole nine yards
7. America
8. Blackmail
9. Thinking outside the box
10. The buck stops here

Part II

Define the following:

1. BTW
2. Viropause
3. Tuckerism
4. Bobo
5. Wingnut
6. Pleather
7. Woofys
8. Metrosexual
9. Geekalicious
10. Selfie

Answers

Part I

1. *Limelight*—The mineral, lime, was used to make a spotlight employed on the stage in England during Victorian times.

2. *Hell in a handbasket*—The expression could be from the French Revolution, when heads cut off at the guillotine were then carried away in a handbasket. Or this could be from the time of the building of the U.S. transcontinental railroad, when Chinese workers were lowered in a wicker chair over the side of a cliff to set a dynamite charge. Some returned to the top; some didn't.

3. *The bee's knees*—This expression for an especially good thing comes from the fact that the honey bee collects pollen in receptacles on the mid-section of its hind legs.

4. *A lot of irons in the fire*—Blacksmiths could only work iron that was red hot and thus malleable (still true today, but we don't have quite as many blacksmiths), so the smiths would place the ironwork in the fire for shaping later on. A busy blacksmith would have a lot of irons in the fire.

5. *Wheeling and dealing*—The term seems to come from the old West, where a wheeler-dealer was a gambler who played both the roulette table and cards.

6. *The whole nine yards*—Nine yards was the length of an ammunition belt used on machine guns during World War II. In looking this up, you probably found a bunch of other interesting conjectures though.

7. *America*—The name honors navigator Amerigo Vespecci (or, Alberigo Vespucci), who claimed to have discovered the North American continent. How true this man's stories of his journeys were is uncertain, as he recanted part of his tale at the time of his death.

8. *Blackmail*—The "mail" in blackmail apparently derives from an old Scottish word for "rent." The term refers possibly to the protection racket carried out against farmers of the time, or to the undervaluing by landowners of the produce the farmers paid as their rent, or perhaps to the kidnapping of the farmers' sheep for ransom.

9. *Thinking outside the box*—The expression is a fairly recent one and might refer to a classic puzzle that requires the solver to connect nine dots using four lines without lifting pen from paper. The nine dots form a box and, apparently, the puzzle can't be solved without going outside the box.

10. *The buck stops here*—Some card games use a marker called a "buck" to show which player is acting as the current dealer. When the buck is passed to the next player, the responsibility for dealing is passed along with it. The phrase "The buck stops here" was popularized by Harry S. Truman when he was president.

Part II

1. *BTW*—That's Internet talk for "by the way."

2. *Viropause*—The point at which male virility ends. (Oh oh, I've scared some folks.)

3. *Tuckerism*—The use of the name of a friend or a famous person for a character in fiction.

4. *Bobo*—Bobo as an adjective can mean cheap quality—such as "bobo toothpaste," but the more generally accepted meaning is bourgeois bohemian.

5. *Wingnut*—This is a noun or an adjective and is used to mean an extremist who is not mentally stable.

6. *Pleather*—This is a plastic fabric made to look like leather.

7. *Woofys*—Well off older folks. I'd spell the word "woofies," if I had the choice.

8. *Metrosexual*—A straight urban guy fussy about his appearance and in touch with his feminine side. The antonym (sort of) is "retrosexual," a heterosexual man who is basically a slob.

9. *Geekalicious*—An adjective for a person or thing who is a geek but/and delicious.

10. *Selfie*—The Oxford Dictionaries word of 2013, meaning a self-taken photograph.

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