LESSON 5

Identifying the Parts of Speech

Each word in a sentence performs a basic function or task. Words perform four basic tasks: they name, modify, express action or state of being, or connect. By the arrangement of words in a sentence and the task that each word performs within a sentence, you can understand a sentence’s meaning. To illustrate how parts of speech work together, try to decipher the following nonsense sentence.

**EXAMPLE**
The borjavoy, shalinka, and bespito neely skittums maricketed in a drago.

What nonsense noun is the subject of the sentence? What adjectives modify the word *skittums*? Which nonsense verb expresses the action in the sentence?

If you substitute real words for the nonsense words but keep the same arrangement of words, you can identify the nouns, verb, and adjectives in the sentence.

**EXAMPLE**
The brown, gray, and black newborn kittens slept in a pile.

There are eight basic parts of speech. Each part of speech is defined in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of Speech</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>noun</td>
<td>A <strong>noun</strong> names a person, place, thing, or idea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>A <strong>pronoun</strong> is used in place of a noun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>verb</td>
<td>A <strong>verb</strong> expresses action or a state of being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adjective</td>
<td>An <strong>adjective</strong> modifies a noun or pronoun. The most common adjectives are the articles <em>a</em>, <em>an</em>, and <em>the</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adverb</td>
<td>An <strong>adverb</strong> modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>A <strong>preposition</strong> shows the relationship between its object—a noun or a pronoun—and another word in a sentence. Common prepositions include <em>after</em>, <em>around</em>, <em>at</em>, <em>behind</em>, <em>beside</em>, <em>off</em>, <em>through</em>, <em>until</em>, <em>upon</em>, and <em>with</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conjunction</td>
<td>A <strong>conjunction</strong> joins words or groups of words. Common conjunctions are <em>and</em>, <em>but</em>, <em>for</em>, <em>nor</em>, <em>or</em>, <em>so</em>, <em>yet</em>, <em>either . . . or</em>, and <em>not only . . . but also</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interjection</td>
<td>An <strong>interjection</strong> is a word used to express emotion. Common interjections are <em>oh</em>, <em>ah</em>, <em>well</em>, <em>hey</em>, and <em>wow</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXERCISE 1

Identifying the Parts of Speech in Literature

Identify the part of speech of each underlined word in the following passage. Write your answers on the corresponding lines below.

from "La Bamba," page 112  
Gary Soto

1. Manuel walked on stage and 2. the song 3. started 4. immediately. Glassy-eyed from the 5. shock 6. of being in front of so many people, Manuel moved 7. his lips and 8. swayed in a 9. made-up dance step. He couldn’t see his parents, 10. but 11. he could see his brother Mario, who was a year younger, thumb-wrestling 12. with a friend. Mario was wearing Manuel’s favorite 13. shirt; he would deal with Mario 14. later. He 15. saw some 16. other kids get up and head 17. for the drinking fountain, 18. and a baby sitting in the middle of an aisle sucking 19. her thumb and watching him 20. intently.

1. __________________________ 11. __________________________
2. __________________________ 12. __________________________
3. __________________________ 13. __________________________
4. __________________________ 14. __________________________
5. __________________________ 15. __________________________
6. __________________________ 16. __________________________
7. __________________________ 17. __________________________
8. __________________________ 18. __________________________
9. __________________________ 19. __________________________
10. __________________________ 20. __________________________
**EXERCISE 2**

**Understanding the Parts of Speech**

Write a sentence using each word as the indicated part of speech.

**EXAMPLES**

tie (noun)  His gaudy tie, printed with purple and orange flowers, captured everyone's attention.

tie (verb)  We tie our running shoes with red laces for good luck.

1. us (pronoun)  

   ______________________________________________________

2. balance (noun)  

   ______________________________________________________

3. balance (verb)  

   ______________________________________________________

4. then (adverb)  

   ______________________________________________________

5. around (preposition)  

   ______________________________________________________

6. around (adverb)  

   ______________________________________________________

7. yes (interjection)  

   ______________________________________________________
EXERCISE 3

Using the Parts of Speech in Your Writing

For a school newspaper, write a review of a movie or a novel you have recently seen or read. Be sure to include the setting, characters, and conflict, but don't give away the ending of the movie or novel. Include in your review at least three examples of each part of speech. Use your own sheet of paper for this exercise.