

Name: _____ Date: _____

LESSON 2

Subjects and Predicates: The Basic Building Blocks in a Sentence

Just as the sentence is the basic building block of the English language, the subject and predicate are the basic building blocks in a sentence. Every sentence has two basic parts: a subject and a predicate. The **subject** tells whom or what the sentence is about. The **predicate** tells information about the subject—what the subject is, what the subject does, or what happens to the subject.

EXAMPLE

sentence The tired old horse | stumbled on the rough road.
(subject) (predicate)

To find the subject, ask who or what performs the action of the verb.

EXAMPLE

What stumbled on the rough road? (*the tired old horse*; subject)

To find the predicate, ask what the subject does or is.

EXAMPLE

What did the tired old horse do? (*stumbled on the rough road*; predicate)

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Subjects and Predicates in Literature

For each sentence in the literature passage, draw a vertical line between the subject and predicate.

They waited in the green-floored corridor outside Sandy's room. The door was half-shut. Bert and Jean were inside. Everything was terribly quiet. A nurse came out. The white-coated man asked her something and she shook her head. She had left the door ajar. . . . Sandy lay there, very flat under the covers, very still. Her

head was turned away. All Lob's attention was riveted on the bed. He strained toward it, but Granny Pearce clasped his collar firmly.

*from "Lob's Girl," page 21
Joan Aiken*

EXERCISE 2

Understanding Subjects and Predicates

Items 1–5 include a list of subjects; items 6–10 include a list of predicates. Write a sentence for each subject or predicate listed, adding the missing part and any other details to create a clear, complete sentence.

1. An ugly billboard

2. The most important reason

3. The loose, baggy sweater

4. Futuristic and dazzling, the glass and steel structure

5. The stream that ran along the side of the house

6. needed to be washed

7. was leaving the gift behind on the table

8. caught on the thorns of a rosebush

9. spoke only in generalities

10. provide filtered light

EXERCISE 3

Using Subjects and Predicates in Your Writing

For an article in the school newspaper, describe the best or worst journey you've ever taken. You might write about a field trip, vacation, errand, or any other outing. Make sure each sentence in your description includes a subject and predicate and contributes to the impression you want to convey about your trip. Use your own sheet of paper for this exercise.