

LESSON 6

Common and Proper Nouns

A **noun** is a part of speech that names a person, place, idea, or thing. In this lesson, you'll learn about the different kinds of nouns and what they name.

EXAMPLES

- people** Chester, surgeon, grandmother, technician
- places** home, zoo, Kennywood Park, Luigi's Pizzeria
- ideas** kindness, heroism, beauty, feeling
- things** zebra, computer, game, iron

Type of Noun	Definition	Examples
common noun	names a person, place, idea, or thing	brother, guest, house, belief, window
proper noun	names a specific person, place, or thing; begins with capital letter	Woody Guthrie, Georgia, Bill of Rights
singular noun	names one person, place, idea, or thing	cousin, beach, democracy, country
plural noun	names more than one thing	cousins, beaches, democracies, countries
possessive noun	shows ownership or possession of things or qualities	Beth's, doctors', puppies', Mrs. Kirwin's
compound noun	is made up of two or more words	songwriter, high school, New Mexico, great-uncle

EXERCISE 1

Identifying Nouns in Literature

In the following passage, ten of the nouns are underlined. Identify each as common, proper, singular, plural, possessive, or compound. Note that many of the nouns belong to more than one category. Write your answers on the corresponding lines.

The wisest ¹women (generally ²wisdom was equated with age) often sat in tribal councils. Furthermore, most Kaw ³legends revolve around ⁴"Good Woman," a kind of ⁵supersquaw, a ⁶Joan of Arc of the high plains. Good Woman led Kaw ⁷warriors into battle after battle from which they always seemed to emerge victorious. And ⁸girls as well as boys were required to undergo Ta-Na-E-Ka. The actual ⁹ceremony

varied from tribe to tribe, but since the ¹⁰Indians' life on the plains was dedicated to survival, Ta-Na-E-Ka was a test of survival.

from "Ta-Na-E-Ka," page 160
Mary Whitebird

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

A **common noun** names *any* person, place, thing, or idea. Common nouns are usually not capitalized.

EXAMPLES

common nouns

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| any person | The speaker waited for the audience to stop applauding. |
| any place | The room had a wonderful view of the woods . |
| any thing | A candlestick was the only object on the mantel . |
| any idea | The philosopher asked, "What is truth ?" |

A **proper noun** names a *specific* person, place, or thing and begins with a capital letter.

EXAMPLES

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| common nouns | state, island, girl, explorer |
| proper nouns | Texas, Tahiti, Sarah, Robert Peary |

EXERCISE 2

Identifying Common and Proper Nouns in Literature

Identify the underlined nouns as either common or proper. Write your answers on the corresponding lines.

¹Monday, when the ²principal of ³Blue Hill Street School left me in Mr. Morrisey's ⁴classroom, I knew what I'd been waiting for. In that room full of strange ⁵kids, there was one ⁶person I knew. She smiled her square smile, raised her ⁷hand, and said, "She can sit next to me, ⁸Mr. Morrisey."

"Very nice of you, ⁹June M. Okay, ¹⁰June T. take your ¹¹seat. I'll try not to get you two ¹²Junes mixed up."

from "Tuesday of the Other June," page 135
Norma Fox Mazer

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 12. _____ |

EXERCISE 3

Understanding Common and Proper Nouns

For each common noun listed below, write two proper nouns.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------|
| 1. language | _____ | _____ |
| 2. scientist | _____ | _____ |
| 3. book | _____ | _____ |
| 4. country | _____ | _____ |
| 5. mountain | _____ | _____ |
| 6. city | _____ | _____ |
| 7. street | _____ | _____ |
| 8. month | _____ | _____ |
| 9. holiday | _____ | _____ |
| 10. ocean | _____ | _____ |
| 11. athlete | _____ | _____ |
| 12. leader | _____ | _____ |
| 13. music group | _____ | _____ |
| 14. state | _____ | _____ |

- 15. actor/actress _____
- 16. planet _____
- 17. car _____
- 18. building _____
- 19. author _____
- 20. magazine _____

EXERCISE 4

Using Common and Proper Nouns in Your Writing

Write to a pen pal a description of your favorite place. It may be anything from a vacation spot to your own backyard. In your description, include the location of your favorite place, the main sights to see, and why it is special to you. Use at least five common and five proper nouns. Underline each noun that you use.
