

PATTERN IN ENGLISH

A Fresh Approach to Grammar

W. H. Mittins

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IN ENGLISH

*A FRESH APPROACH
TO GRAMMAR*

BY

W. H. MITTINS

B.A.

LONDON

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FOREWORD

This book includes what seems to me the minimum of English grammar relevant to efficient communication in language. The scope was determined by collecting from children's writings examples of common faults and weaknesses susceptible of treatment in grammatical terms. Certain concepts emerged as fundamental—predication, word-order, proximity, equivalents, variety and repetition. Other notions helped towards the clear exposition of these fundamentals—parts of speech, phrases, clauses, link-words. Some time-honoured ideas—notably the classification of the parts of speech into categories: concrete and abstract nouns, demonstrative and possessive adjectives, and so on—seemed unnecessary.

Apart from a few matters relegated to appendices, this material is organised on a simple plan which, while easy for reference, provides a progressive course, leading from the structure of the simple sentence to problems of literary style.

The Simple Sentence is shown to be an assembly, according to one of a well-defined range of patterns, of various items. These items are certain Parts of Speech or their equivalents. Equivalents include other Parts of Speech (acting, as it were, out of character), Phrases, and Clauses.

The assembling of the items involves the principle of Proximity and the use of Conjunctions and other

link-words. The notions of Co-ordination and Subordination and the earlier reference to Clauses as Equivalents lead to an examination of Multiple Sentences, with their Main and Subordinate Clauses.

Finally, the various word-clusters (Phrases and Clauses) are seen at work in passages from competent authors. The stylistic principles of emphasis, variety and repetition are associated with the distribution of phrases and clauses in consecutive prose.

To keep the central sequence of the argument clear, some important considerations are denied separate treatment. There are not, for instance, separate chapters on the Parts of Speech. A few minor points—Person and Number, for instance—are not introduced in the text at all, but in the exercises.

There are, I suppose, never enough exercises in a text-book. The teacher should have no difficulty, however, in expanding those given here. It is to be hoped, moreover, that they will be linked with an examination both of the pupils' own writing and of the literature being studied.

The practical core of the exercises is analysis. Some teachers deplore the schematic approach. Others who like schemes have their own favourite systems. The stencil method outlined in Chapter XXXI is, I believe, original and may appeal to those who, like myself, find that the more popular systems fail effectively to expose the bare bones of a sentence. Not wishing, nevertheless, to dogmatise in so controversial a matter, I have confined the stencil suggestion to an appendix, to which unobtrusive references are made in the course of the text.

Opinions vary considerably as to the age at which grammar should be taught. I have aimed primarily at the middle and upper forms of grammar schools. But, suitably diluted, the book should be usable both by junior grammar school forms and by other secondary pupils. A fair amount of guidance from teachers is assumed, but older students—in evening classes, for instance—should be able to manage unaided.

W. H. M.

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PART ONE
SIMPLE SENTENCES

CHAPTER I
SENTENCE AND PREDICATION

Read this passage aloud:—

As I reached the inn door I heard voices raised in angry argument. I hesitated a moment. Then I gently pushed the door open and peered in. The room was crowded. A tall strong man, with a tarry pigtail hanging over his shoulders. The landlord was crouching in the corner.

Correct the statement that sounds wrong, by adding to it.

EXERCISE

Similarly, make sentences of the following :—

- (i) The house on top of the hill near Dunscombe
 . . .
- (ii) The mudguards of the dilapidated old bicycle
 . . .
- (iii) Novels like the Biggles series by Capt. W. E. Johns . . .
- (iv) Tigers, leopards and cheetahs . . .
- (v) The railings round the football ground . . .

- (vi) Mr. Winston Churchill . . .
- (vii) Coal-miners, whose work is very hard and unpleasant, . . .
- (viii) Feeling weary after his long day in the hot sun, John . . .
- (ix) One of the drawbacks of fishing as a pastime . . .
- (x) The man to whom Captain Flint gave his sea-chest when he was dying at Savannah . . .

* * *

You have in the above exercise made sentences by saying something about the things mentioned. The thing mentioned is called the **SUBJECT**; the statement about it is the **PREDICATE**. The two together—Subject plus Predicate—may be called a **PREDICATION**.

Every sentence should contain at least one Predication.

Usually the Subject comes first, but sometimes this order is reversed :—

(a) Round the corner came *an errand boy on a bicycle*.

Sometimes the Subject is sandwiched in the middle of the Predicate :—

(b) The next day *the two boys* returned to the beach.

Sometimes the Predicate is sandwiched between parts of the Subject :—

(c) The Captain *leapt to his feet*, indignant at the interruption.

Notice that: in (b) 'the next day' belongs with 'returned';
 in (c) 'indignant at the interruption' belongs with 'captain'

EXERCISES

A. Divide the following sentences into Subjects and Predicates :—

- (i) Playing with fire is a dangerous occupation.
- (ii) The horse suddenly bolted down the street.
- (iii) At the cross-roads it narrowly missed a tram.
- (iv) Underneath the heap of rubble was an iron-bound chest full of documents.
- (v) The negro shrank into the corner, terrified by the approaching flames.
- (vi) Mr. Johnson always sat in the armchair under the window.
- (vii) Every morning John and Mary practised their duet.
- (viii) Mr. and Mrs. Smith and their family sat fascinated by the performance.
- (ix) At the end of the programme came a trumpet solo.
- (x) Near the end of the fight the favourite collapsed.

B. Punctuate the following passage so that each Predication forms one sentence :—

The performance was timed to begin at seven o'clock parents and friends took their seats well before the actors were ready and in a state of high excitement behind the curtain the stage hands were checking the properties in the wings the electrician was standing by to turn out the house lights at a signal from the stage-manager he pressed a switch in the hall the audience stopped talking amid a hush of expectancy the curtain rose.

C. Express as short Predications the meaning of the following:—

No Litter.	Out of Bounds.
Free Air.	All Change!
Adults Only.	Unsafe for Bathers.
No Circulars.	One Way Only.
Low Bridge Ahead.	
No Admittance except on Business.	

D. Make five sentences by linking each Subject with its Predicate, dovetailing them where necessary:—

SUBJECTS	PREDICATES
the three boys	are in the wood-wind section of the orchestra
the chairman . . . irritated by the interruption	at ten o'clock exactly . . .
feeling cold, he	rode into the lists at the bottom of the garden . . .
flutes, oboes and clarinets	found an old chest glared round
the two knights . . . armed to the teeth	fetches some more coal