

Introduction:

Grammar is an idea construction set.

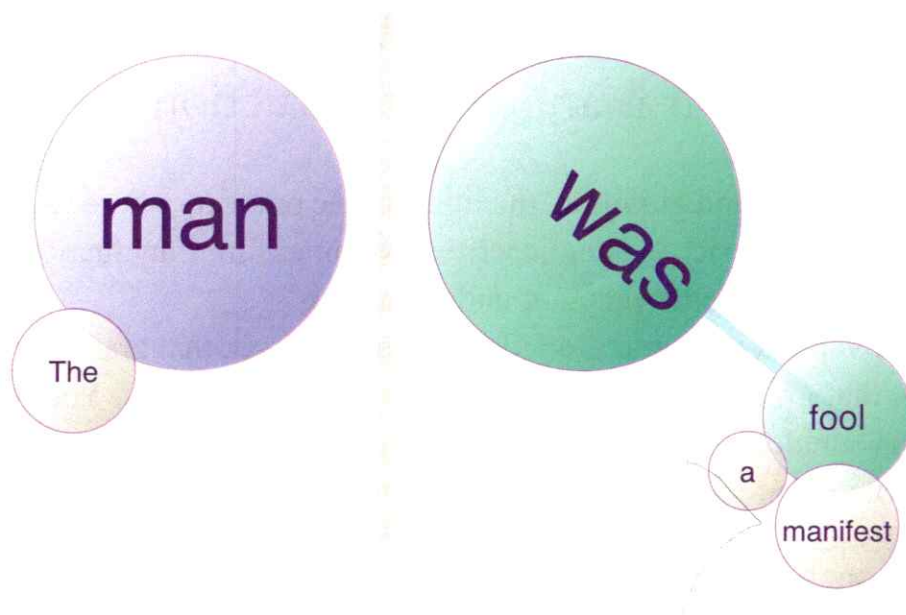
Once you understand grammar, the lights come on everywhere. All kinds of things start to make sense. Academic writing becomes fun. Punctuation becomes logical. It is so much better than not understanding.

You discover that grammar is an idea construction set, that grammar explains your mind, that grammar shows you the way you think things. You notice the grammar in your ideas, in your friends' words, in books that you read, and in papers that you write. You suddenly see grammar structures, patterns, and processes in everyone's sentences, including the sentences that great writers create. Great writers use adjectives to modify nouns, just as you do. They pair verbs with their subjects, just as you do. Despite the superficial changes that time brings to language, Charles Dickens and Jane Austen and F. Scott Fitzgerald used much the same grammar that we use today.

To find beautiful sentences—sentences that show our thinking process at its best—we need look no further than the sentences of great novelists. In their sentences we see the same parts of grammar that we use in our own sentences, but if we look closely, we also see that the parts of speech are used beautifully, efficiently, and with particular clarity. In the pages that follow, we will study sentences from great novelists, most of which will include a literary vocabulary word.

In this book I am not going to give elaborate explanations of every detail of grammar. If you would like that sort of extensive review, please consult either *Grammar Voyage* or *The Magic Lens I*. What I will do here is focus on the simplicity of grammar by providing brief overviews of the four levels of grammar—parts of speech, parts of sentence, phrases, and clauses—followed by several examples for you to analyze. I want this to be beautiful, clear, and simple, like grammar itself. Let us have a nice time looking at the grammar; we will begin with the parts of speech.

I will illustrate our sentences with my sentence model, the t-model. Note that I have done away with the misleading horizontal line in traditional diagramming to enhance the binary nature of sentences; sentences have two sides: a subject side and a predicate side that is about the subject.



From Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*:

	The	man	was	a	manifest	fool.
Parts of Speech	adj.	n.	v.	adj.	adj.	n.
Parts of Sentence	subj.		LVP			S.C.
Phrases	no phrases					
Clauses	-----independent clause----- a simple declarative sentence					

This sentence from Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* illustrates how a linking verb can create an equation: man = fool. LVP means linking verb predicate. The adjective *manifest* means obvious, and it here modifies the noun *fool*. Note how powerful it is to put the noun *fool* at the end of the sentence; it would blunt the sentence to put more syllables after that strong word, such as if we were to say, "The man was a manifest fool, clearly." The power word, *fool*, goes at the end.