

Mark Twain

What Mark Twain Did Not Say but Might Have Said If He Had Written This Book

Would you rather have a frog croaking in your pocket or a see a flock of Canada geese squawking their goosey songs high across a blue fall sky? Yep, the geese. And when you see the geese way up there, flapping south on a goose mission, they are always in a smart V formation pointed toward the Equator. The V might be for vacation or for victory. You'd have to ask the geese. They never fly in big O's or S's.¹ It's V's for them, every time. But they fly like a V; that's the principal point. They are different geese, but they fly together in a single shape.

A group acting as one. That's what phrases do. Phrases are groups of words that act like one word. They huddle together and cooperate, like little yellow peeps trailing their chicken, or like a school of fish that forms a ball, or like a long line of ants, each ant thinking the exact same thing.

Prepositional phrases begin with prepositions, and they act like adjectives or adverbs. We could say that a turtle was *beside a chicken*, *under a chicken*, *near a chicken*, or *over a chicken*. It would be a yellow-dog lie though because turtles are peculiar and have smart standards and generally want nothing to do with chickens, who cackle at everything. It gets old. And if we said that a turtle was *like a chicken*, neither the turtle nor the chicken would like it. It would discomfit them both.

Appositive phrases are interrupting definitions, and we fence 'em in with commas. Howard, *the watersogged hound*, bit the chicken. You see those two commas there, fencing that appositive in and making it stay. Those commas are watching after the subject and verb, *Howard bit*. If you're going to stick something in between those two, you better wrap it in commas, that's all I am going to say. I probably slandered the hound, if I admit the facts. Most of 'em don't bite chickens unless the chickens are insolent. Which happens.