

Level Four: Clauses

Now that we have examined the first three levels of grammar, let us discuss the fourth level, **clauses**. The word *clause* comes from the Latin *claudere*, to close, and this makes sense because a clause is similar to a closet that can be opened or closed. The idea is that in a clause the **subject** opens the idea, and the **predicate** closes it. Clauses close. A sentence is the opening and then the closing of an idea. We use this metaphor in other contexts too, saying that a discussion is now open or closed, or a meeting is open or closed. Sentences can be made of one clause, but they often have more than one if the ideas have something to do with each other.

Clause: A clause is a two-sided idea, reflecting the two-sided way that we think. The two sides of our ideas are the **subject**, what a sentence is about, and the **predicate**, the part about the subject. Clauses may be **independent**, if they make sense by themselves, or **dependent**—sometimes called **subordinate**—if they do not make complete thoughts. Every sentence has at least one independent clause. Here is a one-clause sentence from Jack London's *White Fang*: "A myriad laws governed all these things and determined conduct." *Myriad* means many. The sentence features a **compound predicate**—in other words, a subject that has two verbs.

