

If you want a real clause, you have to have a subject added to a predicate, like "That cheating Ben Rogers had strawberry jam on his chin." See? You open the clause by telling what you're telling about; then you close the clause by telling what you're telling about it. Maybe I need to try that again. Here is a clause: "The old gray hound dog scratched and nipped and itched itself against the gate." See, it's about the hound dog, and it says what the dog does. I mean did.

When you have those two sides, you have the makings of an idea.

But here's the peculiar thing: You can have a clause, and it is a clause, and it has a subject and predicate, and it opens and closes, but it is still not a complete thought. So now you think I'm a lying good-for-nothing, a no-account who'll say anything to finish a paragraph. But look here at this clause:

"When Ben Rogers broke the jam jar...."

It's a clause, see, with a subject and a predicate, but we're both still waiting, you and I, for whoever said that to finish what he was saying. Some clauses, you see, make sense and are finished, and you can move along to find some turtles and frogs and lizards. Look at these two clauses:

"As Aunt Polly stared around the back yard...."

"Aunt Polly stared around the back yard."

There. After that first clause, we don't know what was going to happen. Probably that scarecrow across the road fell down, or worse. The second clause is finished. She stared, and that was that, and if we don't like it, we'd better not say anything.

All of our sentences are made of clauses, which are dependent if they don't make sense yet, and independent if they do make sense. We talk in clauses, and our minds open and close, open and close, like rusty gates swinging in the night wind. And now we're edified, and this discussion is closed.