

Notice how happily simple this is. In every sentence we see some of the same eight parts of speech. In every sentence the core is a verb about a noun. Surrounding the noun/verb core, other parts of speech come into play. An adjective might modify a noun. A conjunction might join two things into a compound. It is beautifully simple. Does this mean that you will always be able to identify the part of speech of a word without thinking? No, some words will prove difficult to identify, and you may want to look a word up in a dictionary to see what the options are.

As you continue to look at sentences, you become familiar with all of the ordinary patterns. You see adjectives with the nouns they modify. You see verbs with the nouns or pronouns that they are about. You realize that good sentences have no unnecessary words and that a well-chosen noun is better than a mediocre noun with an adjective to rescue it. You even notice that proper punctuation makes sense. You begin to enjoy the structures of ideas.

After a bit of studying, you will be ready to begin what we call one-level analysis. A one-level analysis is simply identifying the part of speech of every word in a sentence. Here is a one-level analysis of a sentence from *Jude the Obscure*, by Thomas Hardy:

She beheld a foreigner with black hair and a sallow face.
 pron. v. adj. n. prep. adj. n. conj. adj. adj. n.

Here is a one-level analysis of a sentence from Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*:

He described it to me with morose thoughtfulness.
 pron. v. pron. prep. pron. prep. adj. n.

And here is a one-level analysis of a sentence from Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*:

Both bowed to the inexorable truth.
 pron. v. prep. adj. adj. n.

One-Level Analysis: Parts of Speech

On the lines below these classic sentences, write the part of speech of each word. If you need to review the eight parts of speech, do that first.

1. From F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*:

He smiled with jovial condescension.

2. From Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*:

Loud acclamations hailed this rebuke.

3. From Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*:

His wife's retort was like a knife-cut across the sinews.

4. From Jane Austen's *Emma*:

I never met with a disposition more truly amiable.

5. From Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*:

The waves too, nodded their indolent crests.
