

Four-Level Analysis⁺

Four-Level Analysis, supplemented with vocabulary, poetics, and writing observations.

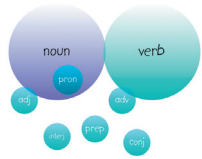
Michael Clay Thompson

mith@mac.com

Royal Fireworks Press

www.rfwp.com

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Sentence 4

The **derision** of his reply was a disturbing and unfortunate choice.

adj. n. prep. adj. n. v. adj. adj. conj. adj. n.

subj.

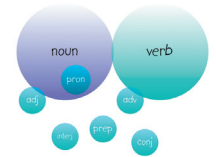
LVP

S.C.

-----prep. phrase-----

-----one independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

Comment: The noun *derision* means ridicule. The word *his* in this sentence looks like a pronoun, but it is a possessive adjective because it is used to modify a noun. If we said, *His was green*, then *his* would be a possessive pronoun.



Sentence 5

From the distant hills we heard the long, low howl of a **locomotive**.

prep. adj. adj. n. pron. v. adj. adj. adj. n. prep. adj. n.

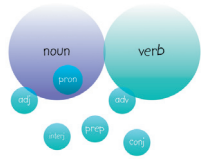
subj. AVP D.O.

-----prep. phrase-----

-----prep. phrase-----

-----one independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

Comment: Here we see a subject pronoun used as the subject of the verb. Notice the comma after the adjective *long*, used to separate a series of adjectives preceding a noun. In the noun *locomotive* the stem *loco* means place.



Sentence 6

The sailors are **prostrate** with exhaustion after the powerful storm.

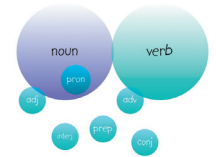
adj. n. v. adj. prep. n. prep. adj. adj. n.

subj. LVP S.C.

-----prep. phrase----- -----prep. phrase-----

-----one independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

Comment: The key here is that we have a linking verb *are* which creates an equation between the subject *sailors* and the subject complement *prostrate*. The adjective *prostrate* means lying flat.



Sentence 7

Oh, there is no **surfeit** of good will between him and me.

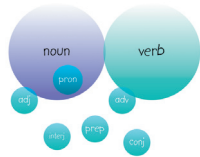
interj. adv. v. adj. n. prep. adj. n. prep. pron. conj. pron.

LVP subj.

-----prep. phrase----- -----prep. phrase-----

-----one independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

Comment: The adverb *there* indicates the existence of something and is often used in sentences like this one where the verb precedes the subject. A *surfeit* is an excess; the stem *sur* means over.



Sentence 19

From Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 1816

“I had feelings of affection, and they were **requited** by detestation and scorn.”

pron. v. n. prep. n. conj. pron. v. v. prep. n. conj. n.

subj. AVP D.O. subj. -----AVP-----

-----prep. phr.----- -----prep. phrase-----

-----independent clause----- -----independent clause-----
 an I,ccI compound declarative sentence

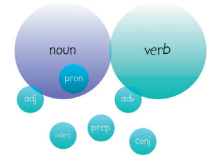
Grammar: This is a classic I,ccI compound sentence; we use a compound structure when there is a compound truth: two equally important ideas that are related to each other in a tacit way mysteriously indicated by the comma and the coordinating conjunction. The fact that we join the ideas into a compound sentence directly implies the relationship, but the relationship may never be expressed in words. The verb in the second clause is passive voice. Notice how the antecedent of *they*, the noun *feelings*, is perfectly clear.

Vocabulary: To *requite* is to repay; *re* usually means again, but in this word it means back. W67

Poetics: Notice the sweet sounds of the first clause, *FeeLiNgS oF aFFectioN*, and then notice the cruel sounds of the second clause, *reQuiTeD By DeTeStation and sCorn*. Mary Shelley knew what she was doing, and it did not hurt that her husband was one of the greatest poets in literary history.

Writing: Here we see the sentence as life; every word and sound conspires to shift this sentence off the page and into the compassion of the reader. The meaning drives the grammar and the music of the words.

Sentence 20



From Mark Twain's *The Prince and the Pauper*, 1882

“There were blind **mendicants** with patched or bandaged eyes.”

adv. v. adj. n. prep. adj. conj. adj. n.

LVP subj.

-----prep. phrase-----

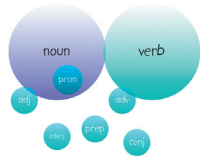
-----independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

Grammar: This sentence inverts the normal order of subject and predicate; we often use the adverb *there* to begin such a structure. Notice that the prepositional phrase has a good compound adjective modifying the object of preposition.

Vocabulary: A *mendicant* is a beggar; *mend* means flaw. W67

Poetics: Sometimes two words light each other up; it is like a hillside in the dark, covered with the lights of the neighborhood, but over here and over there are two blue lights, different from the rest, and we notice them. That is what the assonance of *blind* and *eyes* does in this sentence. Notice the enclosed assonance of *pAtched* and *bAndaged*. Notice *blIND meNDicants*.

Writing: What if we rewrite this: “*Blind mendicants with patched or bandaged eyes were there.*” How does that alter the impact of the sentence? What is the difference caused by the last word being *there* instead of *eyes*? Is the *there* in the rewrite the same *there* as in Twain’s sentence? It is not; Twain’s *there* says they exist, our *there* is the opposite of *here*. *There’s* the point.



Sentence 22

From Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, 1897

“There was no place for words in his **sublime** misery.”

adv. v. adj. n. prep. n. prep. adj. adj. n.

LVP subj.

----prep. phr.---- -----prepositional phrase-----

-----independent clause-----
a simple declarative sentence

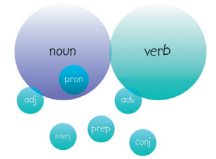
Grammar: The adverb *there* is often used at the beginning of a sentence in which the verb precedes the subject; in this situation, the adverb *there* indicates that something is a fact or that it exists.

Vocabulary: The adjective *sublime* means noble, so excellent as to inspire admiration; *sub* means under, but the word originates in the Roman custom of hanging esteemed things up high under the mantle. W68

Poetics: The sentence droops into a misery of buzzing and hissing: *waS plaCe wordS hiS Sublime miSery*. If the *s*'s appeared as alliteration at the beginnings of words, they would be easier to notice, but Stoker uses consonance instead of alliteration. Notice *HIZ MIZery*.

Writing: Notice the one place where the rhythm of the sentence stops: *no place*: the two one-syllable words are both stressed. A double stress is called a *spondee*, and authors (Abraham Lincoln is a good example) use this device to push part of an idea forward. Look what is lost if we lose the spondee: “There wasn’t any place for words in his sublime misery.” Authors learn these techniques from poetry, then they use them in their prose.

This page is from Michael Clay Thompson's *4Practice 3*.



Sentence 23

From Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, 1886

“The **ebullition** ceased, and the compound changed to a dark purple.”

adj. n. v. conj. adj. n. v. prep. adj. adj. n.

subj. AVP subj. AVP

-----prepositional phrase-----

-----independent clause----- -----independent clause-----
 an I,ccI compound declarative sentence

Grammar: This is a classic I,ccI compound sentence, made of two independent clauses joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction. What would be lost if we dropped the conjunction and wrote this as two simple sentences? Then they are described as two separate events that happened to occur in sequence.

Vocabulary: An *ebullient* person is enthusiastic, but we gain a better sense of the adjective by studying the noun form, *ebullition*, which means bubbling or boiling, either of a liquid or of a personality; *ex* (shortened to *e* here) means out. W68

Poetics: The bubbly sound effects occur in *eBULLition PurPLE*. If the liquid is pink, all is lost.

Writing: Notice how the sentence pauses on the word *ceased*. At this level of prose sentence writing, a comma is a profound event, and it is not rare to see writers putting commas after words like *ceased*, *stopped*, *silence*, *empty*, or *halt*. Note that punctuation is a problem only in writing; and the exact, correct, artistic, perfect punctuation of a sentence is as important as word choice. Punctuation means more than following rules.

This page is from Michael Clay Thompson's *4Practice 3*.