INTRODUCTORY ENGLISH COMPOSITION
FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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BY

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PREFACE

This book has not only been tested in the classroom but is the result of ten years of experimentation to determine the best methods of teaching the fundamentals of good English to students who had not acquired in their previous study an assured command of the language. The result is offered as a practical, although somewhat different, approach to an old problem.

This text, unlike most books of its kind, is based upon the *natural* processes of learning. Words are first considered according to their function in the sentence; grammatical terms for words and their relationship are withheld until the all-important matter of subjects and predicates is mastered; no part of speech is explained by another that is assumed to be understood, and all too often is not; fundamentals have been treated thoroughly and repeated often; unimportant and extraneous matters have been disregarded, as only obfuscating the primary purpose of the book—teaching the student to use acceptable English; lessons are progressively difficult and accumulative; the exercises are numerous to insure the thorough establishment of correct speech habits, yet varied sufficiently to maintain student interest; punctuation is considered an integral part of the sentence.

It is a fallacious assumption to believe that the inadequately prepared student will learn best from a text reduced to the austerity of rules. This is to say that a man who does not have a good appetite should be given unsavory food. The converse is true, both of the student and of the dyspeptic. The fare of each should be as tempting as possible. Paradoxical as it may seem—and the paradox is so often the very essence of truth—the poor or average student usually does not have his interest aroused and held because he is not learning enough. Only thorough mastery of knowledge will generate and maintain enthusiasm.

Consequently, this is a reading text, informal in manner, often conversational in tone. There is scarcely a rule in it, stated *as a rule*. It contains much grammatical material, but it is not a formal grammar; it has the essential features of a handbook, but unlike a handbook it explains the error as part of the grammatical principle under discussion. The student sees *why* a thing is right or wrong; he is not arbitrarily told that he must or must not do something.

To give the book maximum usability in the classroom, spelling has been added to many of the lessons; to increase vocabulary, words for incorporation in sentences have been suggested; reading selections for analysis are offered as an aid to writing; and quotations from great writers have been included, not only for their value as exercise material, but for their excellence in the use of language and for the philosophical content of their thought. By providing illustrations from famous authors, the all-too-prevalent triviality of much exercise material has, it is hoped, to some extent been avoided.

The ultimate purpose of any book of this kind is, of course, to teach a student how to write acceptable, if not literary, English. The theme material in this text is unique, yet extraordinarily productive of good writing. Students enjoy learning about the backgrounds of words, and this interest usually results in enthusiastic creation. The authors have been able to obtain from no other material, not even from the so-called personal interest and autobiographical theme topics, such a high degree of excellence in writing from students who were neither gifted in ability nor literary in inclination.

The material in this book may be used eclectically. At the direction of the teacher, lessons treating subjects in which the class shows proficiency may be hastily reviewed or entirely omitted. The review exercises may be assigned to the individual student for self-study. The book may be used as a semester text or for work throughout the year. It can readily be adapted to accompany a book of selections or essays.

No book can relieve the instructor of all the labor involved in teaching English; this one, however, has studiously avoided making unnecessary demands upon the teacher's time and has facilitated his work, as far as possible, by providing for the correction of all exercises in the margin. Moreover, many of the exercises can be corrected in class with no loss in accuracy.

Finally, it must be stated that knowledge alone will not guarantee creditable writing. The student must want to write well, not merely know how to do so. For the ability to write good English is as much the result of character as it is of knowledge. This book, therefore, has tried to create the desire to write good English as well as to inculcate the principles by which good English may be written. For whatever aid this text may give in accomplishing this objective, it is offered to students and teachers.

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Section I

THE SENTENCE

LESSON 1

THE SIMPLE SENTENCE

An understanding of the sentence is the basis of good speaking and good writing. The sentence is the unit of thinking. Our thoughts are almost invariably expressed in sentences. A sentence is, of course, composed of words, each with a function of its own within the sentence, but it is only when combined into sentences that words take on the scope and color of our thoughts. Words, as words, express ideas rather than thoughts.

Just as the sentence is composed of words, the paragraph, which is the unit of writing, is composed of sentences. But whether a paragraph is a good one or a bad one depends upon the quality of the sentences that compose it. The sentence, therefore, midway as it is between the word, with its limited meaning, and the paragraph, which expresses the continuity of our thought, is the logical unit with which to begin our study of English.

A Working Definition of the Sentence.—For our present purposes we may define a sentence as a group of words expressing a complete thought. *Complete* is the important word in understanding the sentence. While there are many things to be learned about sentences, this word expresses the essential fact about all sentences: every sentence, if it *is* a sentence, expresses a complete thought.

To make our discussion of the sentence concrete, let us now look at several examples of sentences. The following groups of words are sentences since each group expresses a complete thought:

The child laughed.
Mary met her cousin last week.
We had fine weather for our picnic.

Each of the preceding groups of words gives us definite information. Each statement evidently establishes the fact the writer intended. The essential characteristic of a sentence—that it have completeness of thought—has been met.

The Subject and the Predicate of a Sentence.—To express a complete thought every sentence must have a *subject* and a *predicate*. In most sentences both the subject and the predicate are expressed within the sentence; indeed, this fact is so overwhelmingly true of English sentences that we shall, for the present, disregard any other kinds of sentences. Subject and predicate are, no doubt, familiar terms to you, but we must be sure that we understand what we mean by each term before we go further.

The *subject* is that part of the sentence of which something is said, or, to express the same thing in another way, the subject is the person or thing that acts or is acted upon. The exact word expressing this person or thing is the *simple subject* of the sentence. This simple subject may have other words closely associated with it, but for the present we shall consider only the actual, that is, the simple subject of the sentence.

Taking our previous sentences, we see that, in the first sentence, something is said of *child*. Therefore, *child* is the simple subject of this sentence. Similarly, from what is said about Mary, in the second sentence, we learn that she met her cousin; *Mary* is the simple subject of the sentence. The last sentence asserts that some persons had nice weather for a picnic. *We* happen to be those persons. *We* is the simple subject of this sentence.

The *predicate* is that part of the sentence which says something about the subject. In other words, it indicates the action or the state of being of the subject. It tells what the subject does or is. The word (or words) which states exactly what the subject does is the *simple predicate*. This simple predicate may have many other words closely associated with it, but for the present we shall consider only the actual, that is, the simple predicate of the sentence.

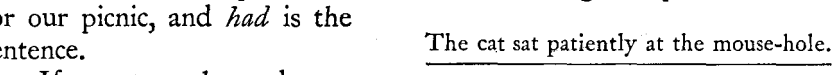
Again referring to our sentences, we note that it is said about the child that it *laughed*. That is what the child did. Therefore, *laughed* is the simple predicate of the sentence. In the next sentence it is said of Mary that she *met* some one. We are not told that Mary *invited* her cousin last week, or that she *insulted* her cousin last week, but that she *met* her cousin last week.

Since *met* expresses exactly what Mary did, it is the simple predicate of the sentence. In the last sentence it is said of us that we *had* (not that we *expected* or *enjoyed*) fine weather for our picnic, and *had* is the simple predicate of the sentence.

The Simple Sentence.—If a sentence has only *one* subject and *one* predicate, it is called a simple sentence. As its name implies, the simple sentence expresses a simple (that is, a single) completed thought. It has essential "oneness" of idea.

The three sentences we have previously considered are all simple. In the first sentence, we have one subject and one predicate, and the idea expressed in the sentence is complete. Of the second sentence we have already pointed out the simple subject and the simple predicate. The sentence has only one subject (*Mary*) and only one predicate (*met*) and must, therefore, be a simple one. Incidentally, we may observe that the words associated with the predicate tell us both *whom* Mary met and *when* she met her cousin. Similarly, in the last sentence, while we learn for what occasion we had good weather, the thought is expressed with one subject and one predicate, and we have a simple sentence.

Sometimes we are helped by visualizing what we are trying to learn. We may "picture" a simple sentence as a thought expressed on a straight line, as:



The Independent Clause.—We may add here that, grammatically speaking, a simple sentence is called an *independent clause*. We shall have need of this term; so we may as well learn it now. The newness of the term need in no way affect your understanding of the simple sentence, since it is merely a grammatical term that may be used for the simple sentence.

Restatement of Lesson.—We have learned that (1) a sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought; (2) every sentence must have a subject and a predicate; (3) the subject is the person of whom or the thing of which something is said; (4) the predicate makes an assertion of the subject; (5) a simple sentence has one subject and one predicate; (6) a simple sentence may be called an independent clause.

Name..... *Section*..... *Date*.....

EXERCISE 1

DETERMINING THE SIMPLE SUBJECT AND THE SIMPLE PREDICATE

Under Subject (abbreviated *Sub.*) in the right-hand margin, put the simple subject of each of the following sentences. Under Predicate (abbreviated *Pred.*), put the simple predicate. It is suggested that you determine first the simple predicate by finding the word that expresses action (that *does* something) or state of being (such words as *is, are, was, were*). In each of the sentences of this exercise, the predicate will be a single word. Next, to find the subject, ask *who?* or *what?* of the predicate. In the two following sentences, for example: Who built? They. What is? Knowledge.

	Sub.	*Pred.*
They built their house on top of the hill.	They	built
A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.	knowledge	is

1.	Tomahawk is an Indian word.	1.	
2.	A bad penny always comes back.	2.	
3.	The boy sold the papers on the corner.	3.	
4.	I missed him by only a few minutes.	4.	
5.	At its opening the new store gave souvenirs.	5.	
6.	The Constitution guarantees every citizen certain rights.	6.	
7.	In their migrations birds travel great distances.	7.	
8.	Icebergs are dangerous to ships.	8.	
9.	Achilles was vulnerable only in his heel.	9.	
10.	Even familiar scenes look mysterious at night.	10.	
11.	A belligerent attitude often leads one into trouble.	11.	
12.	Mark Twain was a pilot on the Mississippi River.	12.	
13.	In spite of the wood-smoke, the cabin was clean and comfortable.	13.	
14.	The most beautiful sight in Japan is the distant view of Fujiyama.	14.	
15.	The meadowlark builds its nest in the deep grass.	15.	
16.	Fred won numerals in basketball and track.	16.	
17.	In 1753 Franklin organized the postal system of the United States.	17.	
18.	Queerly enough, the same thought came to my mind.	18.	
19.	Blueberries grow profusely in our woods.	19.	
20.	The buckeye is the state tree of Ohio.	20.	
21.	Each pirate brandished a cutlass.	21.	

		Sub.	*Pred.*
22.	A good referee always enforces the rules impartially.	22.	
23.	Every year we visit Grandmother at Thanksgiving time.	23.	
24.	Nearly everyone likes some form of music.	24.	
25.	A friend in need is a friend indeed.	25.	
26.	The invention of the cotton gin was very important.	26.	
27.	Sparks flew from the anvil in all directions.	27.	
28.	They picked a bouquet of early spring flowers.	28.	
29.	Herons have long necks and long legs.	29.	
30.	Five Roman legions marched northward.	30.	
31.	That last-minute shot won the basketball game.	31.	
32.	Primitive ploughs were only crooked sticks.	32.	
33.	This family had an elaborate coat of arms.	33.	
34.	An American invented the first telegraph instrument.	34.	
35.	Pride goeth before a fall.	35.	
36.	Most works are most beautiful without ornament.—Walt Whitman.	36.	
37.	Delft is the most charming town in the world.—Hilaire Belloc.	37.	
38.	Candles on the chimney-piece always meant a party.—Thomas Hardy.	38.	
39.	Statesmanship is the noblest way to serve mankind.—William E. Gladstone.	39.	
40.	Fear is at the back of nearly all the savagery in the world.—John Galsworthy.	40.	

LESSON 2

KINDS OF SIMPLE SENTENCES

All the sentences in the first lesson made simple statements. Although the great majority of sentences in English do make statements, a considerable number do not. It is now time to consider the various kinds of simple sentences.

The Declarative Sentence.—Thought that is expressed in the form of a statement is a *declarative sentence.* A declarative sentence "declares" or "says" something; it establishes a fact. This fact may be a general truth, but it is usually a specific statement. The following are all declarative sentences:

The earth is round.
The Mississippi is a long river.
She filled the tumbler with water.
They attached a trailer behind their old car.

Punctuation is so inherently a part of a sentence that we should consider it briefly at this point. A period [.] is placed at the end of a declarative sentence. The period denotes that the thought is completed. When you are speaking, your voice naturally stops at the end of a declarative statement. In writing and printing, this stop is indicated by an arbitrary sign, accepted in English as the mark showing that a full stop is intended. We may say here that there is nothing peculiar or mysterious about punctuation. It merely involves the use of a series of symbols in writing and printing to make the sense clear. In speaking, our voice and gestures serve much the same purpose as does punctuation in writing and printing.

The Interrogative Sentence.—Sometimes a simple sentence asks a question. Such a sentence is called an *interrogative sentence. Interrogative* means "asking." Always when information is desired and sometimes when surprise is expressed or a strong negative answer is implied, the interrogative sentence is used. The following are interrogative sentences:

How many tumblers were on the tray?
Why did you tell me such a story as that?
Where is there another man like Lincoln?

Note the punctuation at the end of the preceding sentences. This symbol [?] is called a *question mark* or an *interrogation point.* When you are speaking, you naturally raise your voice at the end of an interrogative sentence. This sign in writing and printing indicates such an inflection of the voice. Just as the period indicates the close of a thought, the question mark denotes expectancy. An answer is desired and waited for. If you will accept this symbol as a mechanical device which shows that a sentence asks for information, you will have no trouble in punctuating interrogative sentences. Punctuation is not used to confuse you; indeed, it helps to clarify your thinking and to aid your reader in following your exact meaning. It is not something that you add to what you have written; it is something by which you make your writing say exactly what you mean.

The Imperative Sentence.—Although most sentences in English are either declarative or interrogative, we sometimes wish to give a command or to express an entreaty. A sentence expressing a command or an entreaty is called an *imperative sentence. Imperative* means "commanding." The following are imperative sentences:

Come in out of the rain. [Command]
You put that vase down this minute. [Command]
John, you must not make any more mistakes. [Command]
Please give us a little more time. [Mild command]
Let me wear your dress. [Entreaty]

The imperative sentence, like the declarative sentence, is closed by a period. The period is used because finality of thought is expressed in the imperative sentence.

The subject of the imperative sentence is always *you.* The *you,* however, is frequently omitted. When this is true, the subject is said to be implied or understood. In the first sentence the subject of *come* is *you* understood. We immediately realize that the person addressed is meant.

The Exclamatory Sentence.—Finally, and very

occasionally, we have a sentence expressing strong feeling or emotion. Sentences expressing strong feeling or emotion are *exclamatory;* they "exclaim." The following sentences are exclamatory:

This is a sight to behold!
How swiftly Time creeps upon us!

So that the reader may know that a sentence is intended to be exclamatory, an exclamation point [!] is placed at the close of such sentences. This exclamation point is equivalent, in speaking, to emotional intensity in the voice or a forceful gesture of the hand or arm. An exclamation point at the end of a sentence helps the reader to put the same emotional effect into the sentence when he reads it as you felt when you wrote it.

The intention of the writer will often determine whether the same sentence is declarative or exclamatory, interrogative or exclamatory, or imperative or exclamatory. Punctuation must indicate to the reader which kind of sentence was intended. Observe the following sentences:

This is fine weather. [Declarative: a statement of fact.]
This is fine weather! [Exclamatory: enthusiasm expressed for the weather or sarcasm implying bad weather.]
Is this your answer? [Interrogative: asks for reply of yes or no.]
Is this your answer! [Exclamatory: expresses surprise at such an answer.]
Quit tapping your foot. [Imperative: gives a simple command.]
Quit tapping your foot! [Exclamatory: expresses impatience or annoyance.]

Restatement of Lesson.—There are four kinds of sentences in English: (1) the declarative sentence, which makes a statement and is punctuated with a period; (2) the interrogative sentence, which asks a question and is punctuated with an interrogation point; (3) the imperative sentence, which gives a command and is punctuated with a period; (4) the exclamatory sentence, which expresses feeling or emotion and is punctuated with an exclamation point. Punctuation often gives the reader his only clue to the kind of sentence the writer intended.

Name..... *Section*..... *Date*.....

EXERCISE 2a

DETERMINING THE FOUR KINDS OF SIMPLE SENTENCES

The following simple sentences are declarative, interrogative, imperative, or exclamatory. In the spaces in the right-hand margin, put D if the sentence is declarative; I, if interrogative; Imp., if imperative; E, if exclamatory. For example:

When do you prepare your lessons? I
Lock the kitchen door. Imp.

1. How lonely you must be here! 1. ———
2. Send a police car to 412 Randolph Street immediately. 2. ———
3. The battle was really won in the first hour's fighting. 3. ———
4. Please list all the principal cities of Canada. 4. ———
5. Haven't we the right to protest a decision? 5. ———
6. Who is that funny old man over there? 6. ———
7. What a tragic fate for so fine a man! 7. ———
8. What do you mean by the word *tragic?* 8. ———
9. What time does the southbound bus arrive? 9. ———
10. Many Americans have never seen an ocean. 10. ———
11. Is there a telephone on this floor? 11. ———
12. Please give me a moment of your time. 12. ———
13. Can you arrange to come tomorrow? 13. ———
14. How easily we forget our own mistakes! 14. ———
15. The sharp-pointed shadows lengthened along the porch floor. 15. ———
16. Let him have another chance. 16. ———
17. What is the capital of Nevada? 17. ———
18. Oh, our rabbit is gone! 18. ———
19. Where have you hidden the prizes? 19. ———
20. Heavens, don't give the baby green apples! 20. ———
21. Which road shall we take now? 21. ———
22. Susan carried a Japanese parasol. 22. ———
23. Do you believe in ghosts? 23. ———
24. A few gypsies were camping near by. 24. ———
25. He threw another log on the fire. 25. ———
26. Have you seen the Palisades along the Hudson? 26. ———
27. She bought a Navajo rug in New Mexico. 27. ———

28. How much of Pennsylvania is still wooded? 28. ———
29. Perry was the hero of the Battle of Lake Erie. 29. ———
30. Tom sailed on a freighter to Australia. 30. ———
31. The sign pointed toward the east. 31. ———
32. Don't give up the ship! 32. ———
33. Do you remember the date of Columbus's discovery of America? 33. ———
34. October is usually a delightful month. 34. ———
35. Gracious, how does one eat with ants crawling everywhere! 35. ———
36. Insects are becoming a menace to man. 36. ———
37. Is your elm tree dying, too? 37. ———
38. Is Quito in Ecuador? 38. ———
39. Write your name on the back of the paper. 39. ———
40. What an enormous elephant that is! 40. ———
41. The history of liberty is the history of law.—Woodrow Wilson. 41. ———
42. What hand and brain went ever paired?—Robert Browning. 42. ———
43. The principal advantage of a democracy is a general elevation in the character of the people.—James Fenimore Cooper. 43. ———
44. Carcassonne dates from the Roman occupation of Gaul.—Henry James. 44. ———
45. Silence is the most perfect expression of scorn.—George Bernard Shaw. 45. ———