

1.2 Nouns

key words: nouns, parts of speech, morphology, plural, possessive, syntax, determiners (articles)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a: Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences. <http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/L/3/1/a>

A noun is more than a “person, place, or thing.” A noun can take certain suffixes (its morphology and appear in certain places in a sentence (its syntax).

Nouns can be pluralized - Nouns express number; that is, they can be singular or plural. So to see if you have a noun take your word in question and, if pluralizing it works, you got yourself a noun.

Nouns can be made possessive – Another morphological fact about nouns is that they can take the possessive suffix -s. Try attaching the possessive to some words that you know aren’t nouns – they’re terrible. Or it turns that word into a noun. (I follow the linguistic tradition of using * to mark an ungrammatical example.)

*the happy’s hat

*a curious’s question

Nouns can have certain other “nominal” suffixes - *-ance/ence* (performance) *-ion* (formation), *-al* (refusal), *-age* (leakage). (See Lesson 1.2b)

Nouns occur after Determiners like *a*, *the*, and *an* (also called articles); *this*, *that*, *these*, *those* (also called demonstrative determiners); and possessive determiners (*my*, *your*, *her*, etc.).

Nouns occur after Numerals, both the Cardinal ones (six, eleven, four thousand) and the Ordinal ones (second, fifteenth).

Nouns occur after Quantifiers, words that express quantity like *all*, *each*, *both*, *every*, *some*, *several*, *many*, *more*, *less*, *much*, *few*. (Quantifiers behave differently from other words, so they are a distinct part of speech category, albeit one that your students may not have heard of. I can post something more about them later. Feel free to just ask me, though. And remember that for many of you locals, I make house (classroom) calls!)

And finally, nouns can be modified by (or described by) **Adjectives**: the furry kitten, a rainy day. The term modification is one we’ll be exploring in more depth later. And we’ll take another look at adjectives too.

In a book or other text, find at least 10 nouns. Provide morphological or syntactic evidence that each is noun.

Make a chart identifying all of the ways in which you can determine if a word is a noun.

Teacher notes: When can nouns not be pluralized? When they’re mass nouns. See Lesson 1.2c. And in attempting to pluralize, some students may discover that -s can also attach to verbs, but they will also realize that that -s doesn’t have the effect of pluralizing. Instead, it marks present tense and agrees with a 3rd person singular subject: *She eats*. See the Lessons in 1.4.