

From the Sideline: Expect obedience.

Teach students to respond quickly and eagerly. We have a saying, “Obey. Right away. All the way. And with a good attitude.”

^AShow the students pictures of a platypus or a short video of one at a zoo. Be sure to also draw their attention to this chapter’s delightful illustration of a platypus.

Chapter

5

Predicate Nominatives^A

Naming things is helpful in understanding what they are. Consider a platypus at the zoo. Maybe you have never seen one before, and you wonder what exactly that strange web-footed creature is. It has a duck-like bill, a beaverlike tail, and lays lizardlike eggs. You need a good word to help you understand what you are seeing. Fortunately, the sign at the zoo provides a clear noun: “The platypus is a *mammal*.” Now you know! Because it is warm-blooded and hairy, the platypus is classified as a mammal and not a bird or a reptile. Notice in the sentence “The platypus is a mammal” that *mammal* renames *platypus*. In other words, a platypus *is* a mammal.

In your study of grammar, you have learned about subjects and predicates, so you know that *platypus* is the subject in the sentence “The platypus is a mammal,” and you know that a sentence is not complete without both a subject and a predicate. You are familiar with predicate verbs and direct objects, but the predicate in this sentence is different. It is a **predicate nominative**, which is joined to the subject with a linking verb.

A predicate nominative is a noun or pronoun that follows a linking verb in a sentence and renames the subject. The word *nominative* comes from the Latin word *nominare*, meaning “to name, call by name, give a name.” What it names is the subject. The *platypus* (subject) *is* (linking verb) a *mammal* (predicate nominative—renames the subject). Notice that in sentences in which there is a predicate nominative, the principal elements are fully completed when there is a subject, a linking verb, and a predicate nominative. A predicate nominative is also called a **subject complement**. The word *complement* comes from the verb *complete*, so a subject complement *completes* the subject.

From the

Sideline: The concept of a predicate nominative (subject complement) is a tricky one. Don't be distressed if your students don't get it right away. To help them better understand the concept, write the following sentences on the board and discuss what is happening in each one:

1. **Predicate verb** (transitive): Mary Poppins is *gluing* the stars. (Mary is *not* the stars.)
2. **Predicate verb** (intransitive): Jane is *thinking*. (Jane is *not* a thinking.)
3. **Predicate nominative** (with linking verb): Jane is a bewildered *child*. (Jane is a child).

Ideas to Understand

It is good to clarify things. In P.L. Travers's novel *Mary Poppins*, Jane asks her brother an unanswerable question after they observe their mysterious nanny, Mary Poppins, gluing stars onto the night sky:

“‘What *I* want to know,’ she said, ‘is this: Are the stars gold paper or is the gold paper stars?’”¹

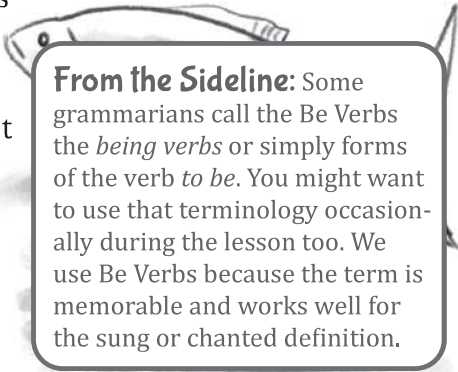
Jane is bewildered about whether the stars now shining in the sky are made from the gold paper shapes once collected in her handkerchief drawer, or whether the gold paper shapes were actually real stars all along. Perhaps no one can clarify Mary Poppins's actions, but if we turn Jane's questions into statements, we can at least untangle the grammatical structure:

Are the stars gold paper? *The stars are gold paper.*

Is the gold paper stars? *The gold paper is stars.*

In the first sentence, *stars* is the subject and *gold paper* renames the subject, so it is a predicate nominative. *Stars* and *paper* are both referring to the same sparkling heavenly bodies; *are* is the linking verb connecting them. In the second sentence, *gold paper* is the subject, and *stars* renames the subject. *Paper* and *stars* are referring to the same thing, and *is* is the linking verb. The author cleverly weaves this interconnection between subjects and predicate nominatives to echo Jane's confusion, leading the reader to also ponder what the gold paper stars really are.

Understanding how linking verbs work is crucial to understanding predicate nominatives. Linking verbs connect subjects to predicates by expressing a state of being. They are like an equal sign in a mathematical equation. To write “The gold paper is stars” is like writing “the gold paper = stars.” The subject equals the predicate nominative, which renames it. The most common linking verbs are the **Be Verbs**, which are all the forms of the verb *be*: *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *be*, *being*, *been*.



From the Sideline: Some grammarians call the Be Verbs the *being verbs* or simply forms of the verb *to be*. You might want to use that terminology occasionally during the lesson too. We use Be Verbs because the term is memorable and works well for the sung or chanted definition.

1. P.L. Travers, *Mary Poppins* (London: HarperCollins, 1934), n.p.

Depending on the sentence they're in, Be Verbs can be linking verbs or helping verbs. Look carefully at these two sentences:

- ◇ Mary Poppins *is gluing* the stars.
 - ◆ The helping verb *is* helps the action verb *gluing*.
- ◇ The gold star *is* a paper star.
 - ◆ The linking verb *is* connects the subject *star* with the predicate nominative *star*.

Helping verbs can also accompany linking verbs, as in this sentence: "The gold paper shapes *might have been* real stars." The helping verbs *might* and *have* and the linking verb *been* are considered a verb phrase. The helping verbs and the linking verb work together to "link" the subject *shapes* with the predicate nominative *stars*.

While we're studying predicate nominatives, let's think more deeply about nouns, specifically about compound nouns. A **compound noun** (also known as a compound word) is a noun made up of two or more words that are often treated as one word. Usually they are united into a single word or joined with a hyphen. There are a number of compound nouns in the longer passage from *Mary Poppins* found in the literary appendix, including *footsteps*, *handkerchiefs*, and *shoe-box* (usually spelled without the hyphen: *shoebox*). Compound nouns such as these can appear in sentences as subjects, objects, or predicate nominatives. Some compound nouns are proper nouns that are not united into single words. "Cherry Tree Lane," the name of the street where Mary Poppins nannies, is a proper compound noun. Even though it includes three words, *Cherry Tree Lane* is analyzed and diagrammed as a single word, just like *footsteps* or *handkerchiefs*. *Mr. Banks* is another example of a proper compound noun that is treated as a single word.

Some *common* compound nouns, however, stand as separate words and are treated as separate words in analysis and diagramming. The curious thing about these noun pairs is that the first noun in each compound actually functions as an adjective modifying the second noun. For example, both the word *gold* and the word *paper* are nouns, but when placed together in the sentence "The stars are *gold paper*," the word *gold* functions as an adjective, telling what kind of paper. We usually analyze and diagram the first noun (*gold*) as an adjective modifying the second noun (*paper*).

Chapter 5: Predicate Nominatives



P.L. Travers wrote eight books about Mary Poppins, so don't restrict yourself to the movie version. In the books, the mysterious nanny is strict and sometimes cross with her young charges, but they love her nonetheless, particularly for all her mysterious acquaintances and her knowledge of strange things. Life with her may be a rollicking adventure, but one simply must mind one's manners. Look for the books at your library, and check them out!

From the

Sideline: There are a few pairs of common nouns that should stay together, such as *ice cream* and *peanut butter*. In instances such as those, students may choose to analyze and diagram such two-word compound nouns as a single noun.

II Pause for Punctuation

Abbreviations of social titles often begin with a capital letter and end with a period.

◇ Abbreviations can be placed *before* a name:

- ◆ Mr. = Mister
- ◆ Mrs. = Mistress
- ◆ Dr. = Doctor
- ◆ Rev. = Reverend
- ◆ Prof. = Professor
- ◆ Gen. = General
- ◆ Capt. = Captain
- ◆ Sgt. = Sergeant

◇ Abbreviations can be placed *after* a name:

- ◆ Jr. = Junior
- ◆ Sr. = Senior
- ◆ M.D. = Medical Doctor
- ◆ Ph.D. = Doctor of Philosophy

From the Sideline: Note that the periods in MD and PhD are optional.

Terms to Remember

^BModel how to mark the sentence on the board as the students orally analyze it and mark their own books. This will be a new concept, so don't rush the learning of the new script. After you finish the analysis, diagram the sentence together.

We have said that there are three kinds of predicates. You know about predicate verbs and predicate nominatives. In the next chapter, you will learn about predicate adjectives.

- ◇ Four Classes of Verbs (1–10)
- ◇ Verb and Helping Verb (1–6)

NEW!

Be Verbs (2–2)

NEW!

Predicate Nominative and Predicate Adjective (2–3)

From the

Sideline: The Sentence Bank at the end of this chapter contains four extra practice sentences and their scripts.

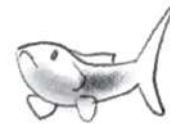
Sentences to Analyze and Diagram^B

Sentence analysis allows you to apply what you are learning and to remember it. Each step of analysis builds from the concept before. Keep in mind that only the verbs (in this case, linking verbs) receive the double line marking, *not* the predicate nominatives. Notice in this predicate nominative that even though *gold* is part of the common compound noun

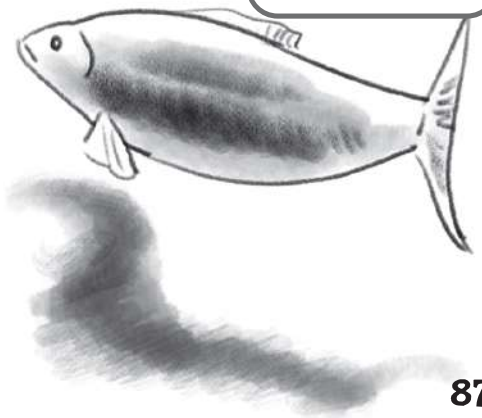
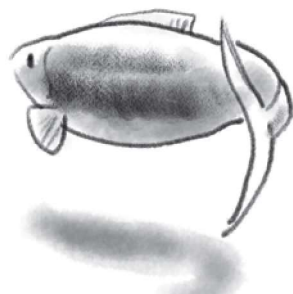
gold paper, it is analyzed and diagrammed according to its function as an adjective.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} & S & & lv & & & PN \\ \text{The} & \underline{\text{stars}} & & \underline{\text{are}} & & \text{gold} & \text{paper.} \\ | & \text{adj} \uparrow & & & & | & \text{adj} \uparrow \end{array}$$

- a. First, read the sentence aloud. “The stars are gold paper.”
- b. “This is a sentence, and it is declarative.”
- c. “This sentence is about *stars*. So, *stars* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about.” (Since *stars* is the subject, underline it and place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)
- d. “This sentence tells us that stars *are paper*.” (Double underline only the linking verb.) “So, *paper* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *stars*.” (Since *paper* tells us something about stars, place a capital letter *P* above the noun.)
- e. “It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject.” (Since *paper* is the same as or renames the subject, place a capital letter *N* to the right of the letter *P*.)
- f. “*Are* is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate.” (Since *are* joins the subject to the predicate, place the lowercase letters *lv* above the linking verb.)
- g. “*Gold* tells us *what kind* of paper.” (Since *gold* is an adjective, draw the modifying line to the word it modifies.)
- h. “So, *gold* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective.” (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)

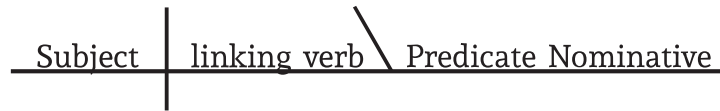


From the Sideline: By this point, students should be very familiar with how to mark adjectives and adverbs as they analyze sentences, so the instructions have been abbreviated.

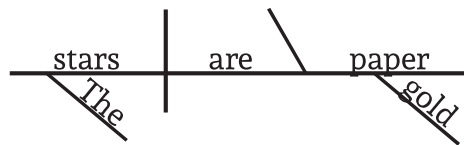




When you diagram a predicate nominative, the linking verb rests on the baseline between the subject and the predicate. Note that the predicate line is a diagonal line slanting back toward the subject, and it rests on the baseline. The diagonal line does not cross through the baseline.



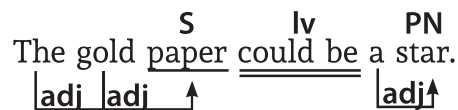
In the following diagram, notice that *stars* is the subject and is written on left side of the dividing line. The linking verb *are* is written in the middle, while *paper* is written on the far right side of the baseline with a diagonal line separating *are* and *paper*. The adjective *gold* modifies *paper*, so it is written underneath it.



When you encounter in the lessons sentences with both helping verbs and linking verbs, the helping verbs become part of the “link” between the subject and the predicate nominative. Therefore, you do not need to mark *hv*. Instead, you can place *lv* above the whole double-underlined verb phrase.

From the

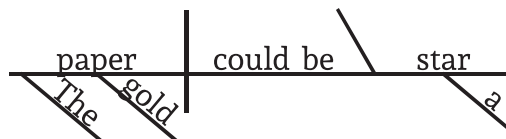
Sideline: Mark the verb phrase as *lv*. If your students need the extra reinforcement, have the students identify both the helping verb and linking verb.



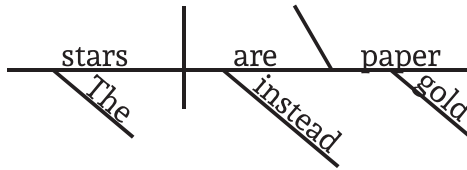
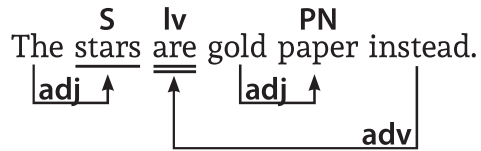
- First, read the sentence aloud. “The gold paper could be a star.”
- “This is a sentence, and it is declarative.”
- “This sentence is about *paper*. So, *paper* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about.” (Since *paper* is the subject, underline it and place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)

- d. "This sentence tells us that paper *could be* star." (Double underline only the helping verb and the linking verb.) "So, *star* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *paper*." (Since *star* tells something about *paper*, place a capital letter *P* above the noun.)
- e. "It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject." (Since *star* is the same or renames the subject, place a capital letter *N* to the right of the letter *P*.)
- f. "*Could be* is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate." (Since *could be* joins the subject to the predicate, place the lowercase letters *lv* above both the helping verb and the linking verb.)
- g. "*A* tells us *how many* stars." (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) "So, *a* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- h. "*Gold* tells us *what kind* of paper." (Since *gold* is an adjective, draw the modifying line to the word it modifies.) "So, *gold* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- i. "*The* tells us *which* paper." (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) "So, *the* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)

When you diagram a sentence with a verb phrase and a predicate nominative, the helping verbs and linking verbs are placed together. For example, the words *could be* are placed on the baseline between the vertical line and the diagonal line.

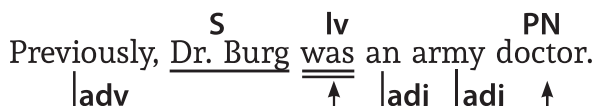


When a sentence has a predicate nominative and an adverb, the adverb modifies the linking verb. The modifying line is drawn from the adverb to the linking verb. Keep in mind that the linking verb represents a state of being, so *instead* tells *how* the stars are gold paper.

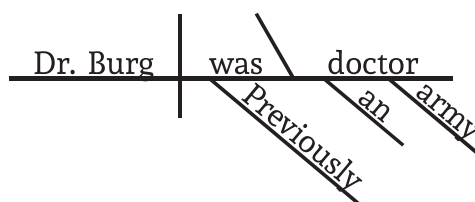


Sentence Bank

Model the sentence analysis on the board while students recite aloud from memory the lines in quotation marks. Then diagram the sentence on the board together.



- (First, read the sentence aloud.) "Previously, Dr. Burg was an army doctor."
- "This is a sentence, and it is declarative."
- "This sentence is about *Dr. Burg*." (Underline the subject.) "So, *Dr. Burg* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about." (Place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)
- "This sentence tells us that Dr. Burg *was* doctor." (Double underline only the linking verb.) "So, *doctor* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *Dr. Burg*." (Place a capital letter *P* above the noun.) "It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject." (Place a capital letter *N* to the right of the *P*.) "*Was* is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate." (Place the lowercase letters *lv* above the linking verb.)
- "*Army* tells us *what kind* of doctor." (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) "So, *army* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*An* tells us *how many* doctors." (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) "So, *an* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*Previously* tells us *how* Dr. Burg was." (Draw the modifying line from the adverb to the word it modifies.) "So, *previously* is an adverbial element because it modifies a verb. It is an adverb." (Write *adv* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)



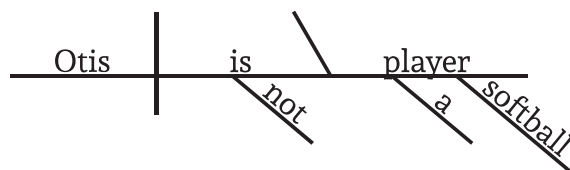
S Iv PN
Calvin might be the class president.
|adj| adj ↑

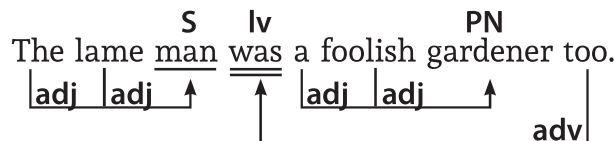
- (First, read the sentence aloud.) “Calvin might be the class president.”
- “This is a sentence, and it is declarative.”
- “This sentence is about *Calvin*.” (Underline the subject.) “So, *Calvin* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about.” (Place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)
- “This sentence tells us that Calvin *might be president*.” (Double underline only the linking verb phrase.) “So, *president* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *Calvin*.” (Place a capital letter *P* above the noun.) “It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject.” (Place a capital letter *N* to the right of the *P*.) “*Might be* is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate.” (Place the lowercase letters *lv* above the linking verb.)
- “*Class* tells us *what kind* of president.” (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) “So, *class* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective.” (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- “*The* tells us *which* president.” (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) “So, *the* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article).” (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)

Calvin | might be | president |
the class

^S ^{lv} ^{PN}
Otis is not a softball player.
^{↑adv} ^{|adj|} ^{|adj|} [↑]

- a. (First, read the sentence aloud.) "Otis is not a softball player."
- b. "This is a sentence, and it is declarative."
- c. "This sentence is about *Otis*." (Underline the subject.) "So, *Otis* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about." (Place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)
- d. "This sentence tells us that *Otis is player*." (Double underline only the linking verb.) "So, *player* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *Otis*." (Place a capital letter *P* above the noun.) "It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject." (Place a capital letter *N* to the right of the *P*.) "*Is* is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate." (Place the lowercase letters *lv* above the linking verb.)
- e. "*Softball* tells us *what kind* of player." (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) "So, *softball* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- f. "*A* tells us *how many* players." (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) "So, *a* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- g. "*Not* tells us *how* Otis is being a player." (Draw the modifying line from the adverb to the word it modifies.) "So, *not* is an adverbial element because it modifies a verb. It is an adverb." (Write *adv* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)





- (First, read the sentence aloud.) "The lame man was a foolish gardener too."
- "This is a sentence, and it is declarative."
- "This sentence is about *man*." (Underline the subject.) "So, *man* is the subject because it is what the sentence is about." (Place a capital letter *S* above the subject.)
- "This sentence tells us that *man was gardener*." (Double underline only the linking verb.) "So, *gardener* is the predicate because it is what the sentence tells us about *man*." (Place a capital letter *P* above the noun.) "It is a predicate nominative because it renames the subject." (Place a capital letter *N* to the right of the *P*.) "Was is the linking verb because it joins the subject to the predicate." (Place the lowercase letters *lv* above the linking verb.)
- "*Too* tells us *how* the man was being a gardener." (Draw the modifying line from the adverb to the word it modifies.) "So, *too* is an adverbial element because it modifies a verb. It is an adverb." (Write *adv* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*Foolish* tells us *what kind* of gardener." (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) "So, *foolish* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*A* tells us *how many* gardeners." (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) "So, *a* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*Lame* tells us *what kind* of man." (Draw the modifying line from the adjective to the word it modifies.) "So *lame* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)
- "*The* tells us *which* man." (Draw the modifying line and connect it to the other adjectival modifying line.) "So, *the* is an adjectival element because it modifies a noun. It is an adjective (or article)." (Write *adj* in lowercase letters in the elbow opposite the line with the arrow.)

