

# Four-Level Analysis<sup>+</sup>

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

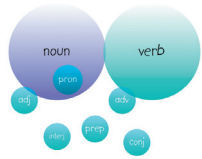
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Royal Fireworks Press

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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.

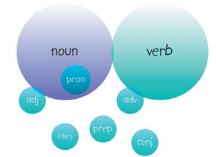
LVP

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.

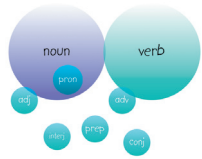
subj. AVP D.O.

-----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-----

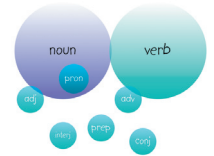
-----one independent clause-----  
a simple declarative sentence

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 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.

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LVP subj.

---

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

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

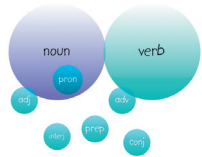
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**Grammar:** This sentence inverts the normal order of subject and predicate; we often use the adverb *there* to begin such a structure. Notice that the prepositional phrase has a good compound adjective modifying the object of preposition.

**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*.

