Answers to exercises: Chapter 3

1. Spot the word class

They gulched [verb *quaffed*] and guttled [verb *guzzled*]. Mephitically [adverb *offensively*] alliaceous [adjective *smelly*] ventripotent [adjective *big-bellied*] fopdoodles [noun *fools*] and gotchy [adjective *bloated*] slubberdegullions [noun *raibags*], she mussitated [verb *muttered*]. She fribulated [verb *hesitated*], piddling [verb *nibbling*] moliminously [adverb *laboriously*] at the jejune [adjective *meagre*] and unsaporous [adjective *unsatisfying*] grots [noun *scraps*] tofore [preposition *in front of*] her. Fackins [interjection *Damn!*] Fabulous [noun *delicious*] comessations [noun *banquets*] were an ephialtes [noun *nightmare*] for the deipnetic [noun *diner*]. It was a niminy [adjective *weak*] gulosity [noun *gluttony*], she wiste [verb *knew*] it, but they begat [verb *caused*] swilk [demonstrative *such*] an increment [noun *increase*] in her reccrement [noun *saliva*], a cupidity [noun *desire*] that was ineluctable [adjective *inescapable*] – it was the flurch [noun *abundance*] of post-jentacular [adjective *palate-tickling*] flampoints [noun *tarts*] and licious [adjective *luscious*] lozens [noun *pastry*]. Thilke [demonstrative *those*] trogalions [noun *sweets*] she yissed [verb *desired*] avidulously [adverb *greedily*]. She could but gorm [verb *stare*] esuriently [adverb *hungrily*] at the ashet [noun *dish*]. She fimbled [verb *touched*] her falbala [noun *petticoat*] aganacticiously [adverb *anxiously*].

*We’ve also included a number of functional (or grammatical) words: *tfores*, which is an obsolete preposition (also conjunction) meaning something like ‘before’; *swilk*, a demonstrative (and also pronoun), and an earlier and alternative form of *such*; *thilke*, a demonstrative (and also pronoun), meaning ‘those, these’.

We will summarize how we assigned the word classes here: we classified all the items on the basis of their grammatical behaviour; that is, their shape (i.e. their morphology) and their position in the sentence (i.e. their syntax). All the verbs show typical inflectional morphology: *gulch* and *guttle* take the typical past tense marker *-ed*; nouns like *fopdoodles* and *slubberdegullion* take the plural ending *-s*. Adverbs here show the common derivational *-ly* ending used to derive adverbs from adjectives: *aganacticiously* and *moliminously* (but remember this ending can also be found on adjectives, and there are many adverbs that don’t have it). Some adjectives here show the classic *-y* derivation ending: *gotchy* and *niminy*, but with these we also had to go on position. As we discussed in the chapter, words of the same class will fill the same basic slots in the recurrent patterns of a language. These adjectives occur just before the noun in the noun phrase.

2. Word classes in non-normal speech


Verbs are used more frequently here; also nouns and pronouns. There is not much in the way of modification (most of the adverbs here are discourse markers, providing comment on the sentence).

3. Classes and form of nouns and verbs

You may argue that you immediately come across a difficulty: the very first looks like a noun phrase in that it starts with the and is the complement of a preposition, from. So you may have started to look for a noun in there and decided that first was the best contender. However, you might then also have spotted that there are problems with first as a noun: the major one is that it is modified by very and that is a modifier of adjectives, not of nouns. If this is how you thought about it, you were absolutely right. The very first is a noun phrase, but it has no noun; the noun – probably something like time – has been left understood. We call this a case of Ellipsis.

was is a verb. It is a form of the verb BE; in particular, it is the past tense singular first or third person form. BE is unusual for an English verb in that it has different forms in the past tense: I/she was vs. you/we/they were. Was is not just any old verb, it is an auxiliary verb: it can invert with the subject to form an interrogative – was this an artist who …? – and it can carry the negation – this wasn’t an artist who …

artist is a noun; it can combine with the to form a noun phrase on its own and it can also combine with the possessive ’s; the artist’s. It is a count noun since it can also combine with an and occur in plural: an artist, artists.

made is a verb in its past tense. It could have been changed to the present: who makes us look…

look (or look at) is a verb, but it occurs here in a non-finite form. You can tell because in this use, it cannot be changed from present to past tense, they way we were able to do with made: *made us looked at… Of all the non-finite forms, this form – the BASE FORM – is the most difficult to spot since it is the same as the plural present tense form (for all verbs apart from BE). The best way to spot the difference is to try to turn it into past tense and see whether it works.

familiar The same arguments we used for the very first can be used for the familiar; we could have said the very familiar.

eyes and ears are both plural count nouns: they can combine with the and they do have a singular form – the eyes, the ears, an eye and an ear. You can also use these words with the possessive ‘s, but it sounds a little unusual, since ‘s would tend to be used mainly with animate nouns.

critics is a plural count noun; the critics, a critic, the critic’s.
tie is a verb; it is the finite third person plural form. It is not the non-finite form, because it could have occurred in the past tense here: some critics tied themselves in knots.
knots is a plural count noun; the knot, a knot.
analysing is the -ing form of the verb analyse.
Dylan is a noun; it already combines with the possessive ‘s. Since it does not normally combine with the, it cannot be a common noun. The capital letter also gives it away as a proper noun. You can combine it with the under some circumstances – the Dylan I listened to as a student – but we have considered this to be a case of using a proper noun as a common noun.
motives is a plural count noun; the motive, a motive.
has is a verb in its third person singular present tense form; if the subject had been plural, like they, the verb would have occurred in its plural form have, and if it had been a past tense context, it would have been had.
turn or turn out is an interesting one. Above, we said that you could either consider look the verb or look at. At that point, you may have wanted more discussion of which one was best, but we don’t really mind which one you choose. With turned out it is different. Though this is something that we will return to in Chapter 6, we’ll just talk a little bit about the difference here. Look means roughly the same whether you have the preposition or not, but if you want to add information about what is being looked at, you need at: he looked vs. he looked at the book. With turn out it is different; it means something quite different from turn. For this reason, I will call the verb turned out. So, turned out is a verb and it occurs here in a non-finite form, the past participle form. Since this is a verb where the past tense and the participle forms look the same in that they both end in -ed, we had better check that it is the non-finite form. We do this by trying to change it to the present tense: *it has usually turns out. Since this is ungrammatical, we know we are dealing with the non-finite form.
Means and says are both finite verbs; they occur in the third person singular present tense form.

The text contains a number of pronouns; who, us, themselves, it and he. These can be considered to be nouns too, even though they are unusual nouns.

4. Noun phrases and verb phrases

In this exercise, we need to distinguish the different kinds of things that can combine with a head to form phrases. There are complements, which are determined by the head and often obligatory. A head can require no complements or one or two, but the speaker cannot add them at will. Then there are modifiers, which are optional and add extra information about things like when, where or why. The speaker can choose how many of these she wants to use. Finally, there are specifiers, which resemble complements in that they cannot be added at will, but they are not selected by the head in the same way as complements. They are added at the top of a phrase, so to speak, and complete the phrase. The typical example is a determiner in a noun phrase. We said under exercise 3 that the very first is a noun phrase, but one in which the head noun has been left out, similarly to the familiar. The phrases which are actually headed by the nouns and verbs identified in exercise 3 are:
was heads an artist who made us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears

It is a complement because it is required by was, it is not an optional extra; * It was is not a good sentence on its own.

artist heads an artist who made us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears

made heads made us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears

Here you could argue the issue of whether there are two complements: us and look at the familiar with new eyes and ears; or just one, us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears. If we say that there are two, then us must be an object of made, much like a cup of coffee is in made a cup of coffee. This does not seem quite right, since when someone says about Bob Dylan that he made us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears, they are not really saying that Bob Dylan made us. Us look at the familiar with new eyes and ears, then, seems to be one complement. It is a clause, but one which has a rather unusual subject, us rather than we, but this is not surprising since look at is a non-finite form here.

look (at) heads look at the familiar with new eyes and ears

We can either argue that look is a verb that takes a PP complement, or that look at is a complex verb that takes an NP complement; there are arguments both ways and we leave it at that here. (At) the familiar is a complement rather than a modifier since it is required by look (at). The with phrase, on the other hand, is optional; it adds information about how.

eyes and ears each head a one-word noun phrase, hence each lacks specifiers, modifiers and complements. These two noun phrases are co-ordinated into one bigger noun phrase: eyes and ears.

critics heads some critics

tied head tied themselves in knots

This is a little tricky. It seems obvious to argue that themselves is a complement of the verb, since you need to tie something. However, it is more difficult to determine where in knots should be. It does seem to be obligatory in this context, since * they tied themselves does not work. You could possibly argue that themselves in knots is a constituent in itself, but it seems to us that constituency tests do not work well for it: * It was themselves in knots that they tied. Hence we will assume that there are two complements, but if you can think of arguments for a different analysis, then discuss those with your lecturer or tutor. When you have worked your way through Chapter 4, you will understand what we mean when we say we think themselves is an object and in knots is an object complement.

knots head the noun phrase knots, not a very exciting noun phrase
analysing heads analysing Dylan’s motives
  complement   Dylan’s motives

motives heads Dylan’s motives
  specifier     Dylan’s
We skip over the fact that Dylan is a noun phrase all on its own.

has heads has usually turned out that he means exactly what he says
  complement   turned out that he means exactly what he says
  modifier     usually

turn out heads turned out that he means exactly what he says
  complement   that he means exactly what he says

means heads means exactly what he says
  complement   exactly what he says

says does not seem to have any complements or modifiers, which is a bit surprising since you would think of say as a verb that needed a complement; you have to say something. However, this is not a basic structure and words do not appear in the place we expect them to; in a sense what he says is the same as he says what, but with what appearing at the front instead. So, we could say that what is a complement of say. There will be plenty more about this in Chapter 5.