

This article originally appeared in the April 2014 issue of *Book Links* magazine.



Budding copy editors may relish noun and verb agreement, the difference between *your* and *you're*, or the graceful placement of prepositions, but in an ever-increasing “LOL” world, grammar seems tedious to many students. In this annotated bibliography, a combination of informational and fictional books encourages children to see that grammar helps readers and writers communicate more clearly. After practicing with adjectives, conjunctions, exclamation marks, and other parts of speech and punctuation, students will see just how rich—and fun—language can be.

Nouns

A Dignity of Dragons: Collective Nouns for Magical Beasts. By Jacqueline K. Ogburn. Illus. by Nicoletta Ceccolt. 2010. 32p. Houghton, \$17 (9780618862542). 398.24. Gr. 1–3.

Rather than featuring a school of fish or a pride of lions, this picture book rounds up collective nouns of fantastical creatures, from a blaze of fire-breathers and a flurry of yetis to a pandemonium of fauns and a tangle of gorgons. Illustrated with luminous mixed-media artwork, it groups similar creatures together and provides inspiration for readers to invent their own collections.

A Lime, a Mime, a Pool of Slime: More about Nouns. By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2006. 32p. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$16.95 (9781575059372); paper, \$6.95 (9781580139342); e-book, \$34.60 (9780822571841). 428.1. Gr. 2–4.

Using equally funny rhymes and cartoonish cat illustrations, this book in the Words Are CATegorical series provides plenty of examples of people, places, and things. It also explains how nouns can be abstract (e.g., *love*, *hate*, or *peace*) or proper (“Like Uncle Lou or Timbuktu”). Each noun stands out with colored text.

Nouns. By Kate Riggs. 2013. 24p. illus. Creative Education, \$17.95 (9781608182381); paper, \$9.99 (9780898128017). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

Ample white space and eye-catching photos attract readers to this Grammar Basics title, which outlines nouns and their usage. In addition to describing them as people, places, and

things, it discusses nouns as the subjects of sentences, the difference between common and proper nouns, and the various ways to make nouns plural. A grammar game and related back matter round out the informational book.

Nouns and Verbs Have a Field Day. By Robin Pulver. Illus. by Lynn Rowe Reed. 2006. 32p. Holiday, \$17.95 (9780823419821); paper, \$7.99 (9780823420971). K–Gr. 3.

After learning about nouns and verbs in Mr. Wright’s class, his students enjoy a field day outdoors. The nouns and verbs decide to have their own friendly competition, but they soon realize that they can’t make things happen unless they work together. Their lighthearted word combinations are enhanced by Reed’s childlike acrylic paintings. A concluding page of noun and verb activities add more fun.

Orange Pear Apple Bear. By Emily Gravett. Illus. by the author. 2007. 32p. Simon & Schuster, \$12.99 (9781416939993). PreS–K.

Illustrated with charming watercolors, this deceptively simple picture book begins with four nouns: *orange*, *pear*, *apple*, and *bear*. Gravett then plays with word order and punctuation to create interesting combinations. For instance, “Apple, pear / Orange bear” shows the apple and pear stacked together and the brown bear has turned orange. The book will inspire readers to think of their own word choices.

Verbs

The Bouncing, Dancing, Galloping ABC. By Charlotte Doyle. Illus. by Julia Gorton. 2006. 32p. Putnam, o.p. PreS–K.

Three brothers play their way through the alphabet in this rhyming picture book, illustrated with energetic digital artwork. “K is for kicking up my feet” and “L is for licking something sweet,” while “U is for unwrapping what Grandma sends” and “V is for visiting very good friends,” as each letter of the alphabet uses a verb to relate the boys’ activities.

Scoot! By Cathryn Falwell. Illus. by the author. 2008. 32p. Greenwillow, \$16.99 (9780061288821). PreS–Gr. 2.

In this picture book, beautifully illustrated with paper collage artwork, six turtles sit silently on a log while the wildlife around them bustles with activity. The rhyming text relies on vivid verbs, highlighted in a bigger and bolder font, as it describes the animals’ movements: “Spiders swing, Dragonflies zing. Red squirrels hurry. Chipmunks scurry.” The book concludes with interesting facts about some of the pond life.

Ten on the Sled. By Kim Norman. Illus. by Liza Woodruff. 2010. 24p. Sterling, \$14.95 (9781402770760). PreS–Gr. 2.

Set to the “Ten in the Bed” nursery rhyme and

accompanied by pleasant illustrations, this rhythmic picture book features 10 Arctic animals racing down a hill on a giant sled. Each time the caribou makes suggestions to move ahead, one of the animals faces an alliterative exit (e.g., “Wolf wiped out” and “Moose muddled out”). Highlighted text emphasizes both the number countdown and the action verbs.

Verbs. By Kate Riggs. 2013. 24p. illus. Creative Education, \$17.95 (9781608182398); paper, \$9.99 (9780898128024). 482.2. Gr. 2–4.

This informational book, part of the Grammar Basics series, begins by defining verbs and their function in sentences. Accompanied by high-quality color photos and a grammar game, it continues by relating the difference between action and linking verbs, verb tenses (and clues to determine them), and how to match singular and plural nouns and verbs with each other.

Adjectives

Adjectives. By Kate Riggs. 2013. 24p. illus. Creative Education, \$17.95 (9781608182367); paper, \$9.99 (9780898127997). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

Part of the Grammar Basics series, this informational book explains the purpose of adjectives and their usual placement in a sentence. Enhanced with numerous color photos of animals and a concluding grammar game, it also describes the difference between common and proper adjectives, articles as adjectives, how adjectives can be formed from verbs, and superlative adjectives. See also Michael Dahl’s *If You Were an Adjective* (2006).

Little Mouse. By Alison Murray. Illus. by the author. 2013. 32p. Disney/Hyperion, \$16.99 (9781423143307). PreS–K.

To her mother, she’s a little mouse, but the little girl in this adjective-filled picture book knows she’s not timid at all. The digitally enhanced geometric artwork shows her acting alongside animals and being tall as a giraffe, strong as a bull, and more. The text uses plenty of action verbs, too, as the girl stomps, waddles, and splashes. But at bedtime, maybe she is as quiet and cozy as a mouse.

Quirky, Jerky, Extra Perky: More about Adjectives. By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2007. 32p. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$16.95 (9780822567097); paper, \$6.95 (9781580139366); e-book, \$34.60 (9781580136952). 428.2. Gr. 1–3.

“Adjectives make phrases sing and keep our language interesting!” Replete with examples, all highlighted in colored font, this Words Are CAtegorical volume uses more bouncy rhymes to explain how adjectives modify nouns. Accompanied by Gable’s trademark cat illustrations, the book also suggests how adjectives “paint a picture using words.”

Snow Dog, Go Dog. By Deborah Heiligman. Illus. by Tim Bowers. 2013. 32p. Amazon/Two Lions, \$15.99 (9781477817247). PreS–Gr. 2.

“Tinka is a play dog, a yay dog, a loves-to-romp-all-day dog.” Bouncy rhymes feature adjectives that describe this fun-loving dog as he pounces in the snow, loses his boy owner, and then reunites with him as they both snuggle by the fire. Textured acrylics accentuate the pooch’s elongated snout, offering both humor and coziness. For more Tinka merriment and adjectives, see also *Fun Dog, Sun Dog* (2005).

Spiky, Slimy, Smooth: What Is Texture? By Jane Brocket. Illus. by the author. 2011. 32p. Millbrook, \$26.60 (9780761346142); e-book, \$39.93 (9780761374589). 612.8. PreS–Gr. 1.

Although the purpose of this book in the Jane Brocket’s Clever Concepts series is to introduce texture, it also serves as an opportunity to learn about adjectives. As children look at high-quality color photos of brushes, egg yolks, and squash, they see colored font point out such adjectives as *bristly* and *scratchy*, *wobbly* and *slimy*, and *curvy* and *lumpy*. The final, uncaptioned pages ask readers to suggest their own adjectives.

Things That Are Most in the World. By Judi Barrett. Illus. by John Nickle. 1998. 32p. Atheneum, \$17.99 (9780689813337); paper, \$7.99 (9780689844492). PreS–Gr. 1.

“The quietest thing in the world is a worm chewing peanut butter.” Equally outlandish descriptions and acrylic paintings offer amusing answers to the world’s hottest, smelliest, stickiest, and other conundrums. These superlative adjectives stand out more with highlighted text. A final fill-in-the-blank page allows children to write and draw their own things that are most in the world.

Adverbs

Adverbs. By Kate Riggs. 2013. 24p. illus. Creative Education, \$17.95 (9781608182374); paper, \$9.99 (9780898128000). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

High-quality color photos, many of animals, add interest to this entry from the Grammar Basics series. The informational book first gives the definition and purpose of adverbs, explaining how they are only used with verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. It continues by describing where adverbs are used in a sentence (anywhere!), how adverbs can compare, and irregular forms of adverbs.

Lazily, Crazyly, Just a Bit Nasally: More about Adverbs. By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2008. 32p. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$16.95 (9780822578482); paper, \$6.95 (9781580139373); e-book, \$34.60 (9780761340508). 428.2. Gr. 2–5.

Complemented by cartoon cat illustrations, this Words Are CATegorical title uses humorous rhymes (“Lazily sleeping, nasally weeping, a dude eating food while he’s rudely beep-beep-ing”) to describe the function of adverbs, including modifying verbs and giving adjectives a boost, and how they sometimes come in phrases. A color-coded system relates which adverbs tell when, how, where, how often, and how much.

The Maestro Plays. By Bill Martin. Illus. by Vladimir Radunsky. 1994. 38p. Holt, \$17.95 (9780805017465). PreS–Gr. 1.

As a musician plays several different instruments, Martin takes young readers and listeners through the varying moods and tempos—all with simple sentences and robust, rhyming adverbs. Whether the maestro plays busily and dizzily or glowingly, knowingly, and showingly, Radunsky’s vibrant, hand-colored cut-paper images evenly match the fervor.

Prepositions

Pig Pig Meets the Lion. By David McPhail. Illus. by the author. 2012. 32p. Charlesbridge, \$15.95 (9781580893589). PreS–Gr. 1.

In this simple picture book, illustrated with fun-filled watercolors touched with pen and ink, a lion has escaped from the zoo and makes his way into Pig Pig’s bedroom. As the pig jumps out of bed and runs down the stairs, the lion follows him around the house, and it gradually becomes clear that the two are playing, all unbeknownst to Pig Pig’s mother in the kitchen. Large, highlighted text shows off the prepositions.

Piggies in the Pumpkin Patch. By Mary Peterson. Illus. by Jennifer Rofé. 2010. 28p. Charlesbridge, \$16.95 (9781570914607); paper, \$7.95 (9781570914614). PreS–Gr. 1.

Beginning in the pumpkin patch, two pigs peek and sneak their way under clean sheets, over growing green beans, behind sleepy sheep, and into a clover field. From there, they make a circuitous route into a bull’s pen and finally arrive back at the pumpkin patch. Adorable, digitally enhanced artwork illustrates the assonance-filled text, which uses a bold and differently spaced font to emphasize the prepositions.

Under, Over, By the Clover: What Is a Preposition? By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2002. 32p. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$16.95 (9781575055244); paper, \$6.95 (9781575052014); e-book, \$34.60 (9781575055701). 428.2. Gr. 2–5.

Part of the Words Are CATegorical series, this informational book explains how prepositions connect nouns and pronouns to other words and phrases and show when, where, and how events occur. Illustrated with cartoon cats, the book’s silly rhymes provide plenty of examples of prepositional phrases. The author also addresses the once ungrammatical practice of never ending a sentence with a preposition.

Conjunctions

But and For, Yet and Nor: What Is a Conjunction? By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2002. 32p. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$16.95 (9780822591535); paper, \$6.95 (9780761385035); e-book, \$34.60 (9780761359845). 428.2. Gr. 2–5.

Cleary’s playful, rhyming text and Gable’s jokey cat illustrations combine to introduce how conjunctions join together words, phrases, or sentences. This entry in the Words Are CATegorical series notes how some conjunctions work in pairs and addresses whether conjunctions can start off sentences. Colored text draws attention to the conjunctions used throughout.

Conjunctions. By Katie Marsico. Illus. by Kathleen Petelinsek. 2013. 24p. Cherry Lake, \$17.95 (9781624311819); paper, \$8.95 (9781624313134); e-book, \$17.95 (9781624312472). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

In this entry in the Language Arts Explorer Junior series, several reading passages about a young artist named Nancy introduce students to the use of conjunctions, which are highlighted throughout the text. Following each passage are explanations, such as how conjunctions join independent clauses and what kinds of punctuation to use with conjunctions, as well as an activity.

Super Grammar. By Tony Preciado. Illus. by Rhode Montijo. 2012. 176p. Scholastic, paper, \$8.99 (9780545425155). 428. Gr. 4–7.

“The Conjunction” has the power to create connections between words, phrases, and clauses. He is just one of many superheroes in this comic-book-style informational book. “The Completion Team” powers up to complete sentences, “The Amazing Eight” comprise the parts of speech, and “The Super Symbols” include punctuation marks. Of course, there are such villains as “Double Negative” in “The Sabotage Squad.”

Interjections

Cool! Whoa! Ah and Oh! What Is an Interjection? By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Brian Gable. 2011. 32p. Millbrook, \$16.95 (9781580135948); paper, \$6.95 (9781467709002); e-book, \$34.60 (9780761372646). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

Watch out! Lively, rhyming text and comical illustrations featuring cats teach children how interjections are words or phrases used to draw attention and convey emotions. Part of the Words Are CATegorical series, the book also notes that interjections may be nouns, verbs, or any other part of speech.

Exclamation Mark. By Amy Krouse Rosenthal. Illus. by Tom Lichtenheld. 2013. 56p. Scholastic, \$17.99 (9780545436793); e-book, \$17.99 (9780545693028). K–Gr. 3.

A lonely exclamation mark feels like he never fits in with the periods. He almost runs away until he meets a question mark, who is so curious that he can't stop asking questions. Fed up, the exclamation point yells, "Stop!" and discovers his voice and meaning. Then, wow! He soon finds reasons everywhere to be excited. Thick, expressive black line drawings add to this book's appeal.

Interjections. By Ann Heinrichs. Illus. by Dan McGeehan and David Moore. 2010. 24p. Child's World, \$18.95 (9781602534285); e-book, \$18.95 (9781609730116). 428.2. Gr. 2–4.

In this volume of the Language Rules! series, Heinrichs explains how some interjections are happy ("Golly!" "Yum!"); some are unhappy (nothing harsher here than "Nuts!"); and some just take up space ("Well," "Um"); and—take note!—some are actually verbs ("Help!" "Look!"). A gallery of multi-eyed and fabulously colored monsters illustrates each principle.

General Punctuation

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! By Mo Willems. Illus. by the author. 2003. 40p. Disney/Hyperion, \$15.99 (9780786819881). PreS–Gr. 1.

In this Caldecott Honor Book, a mischievous pigeon constantly appeals to the reader to let him drive an unattended bus. Such hilarious, unrelenting attempts as "Hey, I've got an idea. Let's play 'Drive the Bus'! I'll go first!" offer young children numerous opportunities to see punctuation in action. Willems' retro, cartoonish illustrations add to this wildly popular picture book's exuberance.

Penny and the Punctuation Bee. By Moira Rose Donohue. Illus. by Jenny Law. 2008. 32p. Albert Whitman, \$16.99 (9780807564776); paper, \$6.99 (9780807564783). Gr. 1–3.

Penny, a period, is determined to win the school punctuation bee this year and end the exclamation points' three-year reign. Her practice sentences with Quentin, a question mark, help readers see the differences among these punctuation marks. Illustrated with brightly colored, childlike paintings, this picture book serves as a good model for classroom punctuation bees.

Punctuation: The Write Stuff! By Mary Budzik. Illus. by Simon Basher. 2010. 64p. Kingfisher, paper, \$7.99 (9780753464205). 428.2. Gr. 3–6.

Part of the Basher Basics series, this informational book gives a thorough explanation of punctuation marks. It divides the punctuation into groups of similar usage, such as "The Basic Bunch" (period, exclamation point, and question mark) and "Divide and Conquer" (hyphen, colon, etc.). It also breaks up punctuation that serves multiple roles, such as "Joining Comma" and "Introducing Comma."

Punctuation Celebration. By Elsa Knight Bruno. Illus. by Jenny Whitehead. 2009. 32p. Holt, \$17.99 (9780805079739); paper, \$6.99 (9781250003355); e-book, \$4.98 (9781466821880). 428.2. K–Gr. 3.

Using a field-day theme and enthusiastic gouache paintings, this picture book introduces the period, hyphen, semicolon, quotation marks, ellipses, and other punctuation marks through bouncy, rhyming poems. In double-page spreads, one side of the poem gives an explanation, and the other side shows the punctuation in action. A red font also highlights the punctuation usage.

Punctuation Station. By Brian P. Cleary. Illus. by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff. 2010. 32p. Millbrook, \$16.95 (9780822578529); e-book, \$25.26 (9780761359760). 428.2. K–Gr. 3.

As a giraffe family takes a train to Punctuation Station, Cleary's signature bouncy rhymes describe the purpose of such basic punctuation marks as periods, commas, and quotation marks. The giraffe family's voyage echoes the descriptions as train cars with apostrophes connect and a hippo conductor yells, "All aboard!" for the explanation point. Concluding pages provide a recap with examples.

Punctuation Takes a Vacation. By Robin Pulver. Illus. by Lynn Rowe Reed. 2003. 32p. Holiday, \$17.95 (9780823416875); paper, \$7.99 (9780823418206). Gr. 1–3.

On the hottest day of the school year, in the middle of a lesson on commas, teacher Mr. Wright decides to give punctuation a vacation. Soon nothing in class makes sense without punctuation marks. Childlike acrylic paintings help set the humorous tone as the students receive postcards and guess which punctuation mark sent them. A concluding rules list recaps the purpose of each punctuation mark.

Twenty-Odd Ducks: Why, Every Punctuation Mark Counts! By Lynne Truss. Illus. by Bonnie Timmons. 2008. 32p. Putnam, \$16.99 (9780399250583). 428.2. Gr. 3–5.

In this companion to Truss' adult best-seller of the same name, illustrated double-page spreads reveal pairings of similar sentences in which punctuation makes all the difference. For example: "The queen: without her, dinner is noisy" and "The queen, without her dinner, is noisy." Concluding thumbnails explain how punctuation altered the situation. See also Truss' *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: Why, Commas Really Do Make a Difference* (2006).

Apostrophes

The Girl's like Spaghetti: Why, You Can't Manage without Apostrophes! By Lynne Truss. Illus. by Bonnie Timmons. 2007. 32p. Putnam, \$16.99 (9780399247064). 428.2. Gr. 3–5.

Illustrated with clever cartoons, double-page spreads show witty pairings (and even a triplet) of apostrophe usage (e.g., "Look, it's behind" and "Look, its behind"); the importance of this punctuation mark in contractions and possessives; and the differences it can create. A concluding page of thumbnails provides explanations of the apostrophe (or its absence) in each caption.

Greedy Apostrophe: A Cautionary Tale. By Jan Carr. Illus. by Ethan Long. 2007. 32p. Holiday, \$17.95 (9780823420063); paper, \$7.95 (9780823422050). Gr. 1–3.

As commas, question marks, and other punctuation take an oath to help readers and await their assignments, only Greedy Apostrophe refuses to be a team player. When given his job, he turns plurals into possessives that confuse customers at stores and children at school. Luckily, this humorous picture book, illustrated with digital artwork, gives correct usage throughout as well as in concluding notes.

Super Apostrophe Saves the Day! By Nadia Higgins. Illus. by Mernie Gallagher-Cole. 2012. 24p. Child's World, \$18.95 (9781614732655); e-book, \$18.95 (9781614733126). 428.23. Gr. 1–3.

Just as she's about to settle down to an orderly,

understandable day, Super A is called on to correct words at Pencil Elementary when the apostrophes float away and commas try to fill in. Following an explanation of the apostrophe's roles in possessives and contractions, Super A's skills are also called on to fix apostrophes in town and outer space. Concluding exercises and fun facts extend the learning. See also Moira Rose Donohue's *Alfie the Apostrophe* (2006).

Angela Leeper is the Director of the Curriculum Materials Center at the University of Richmond (Virginia).

Common Core Connections

Below are suggestions for implementing the Common Core State Standards with titles about the parts of speech and punctuation. You can find more information about the standards at corestandards.org.

In the Classroom: After reading about nouns in *A Lime, a Mime, a Pool of Slime*, by Brian P. Cleary, students can go on a scavenger hunt, looking for people (principal, custodian, etc.); places (cafeteria, library, etc.); and things (chalkboard, desks, etc.) around their school.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1b.** Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1b.** Use common, proper, and possessive nouns.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a.** Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

In the Classroom: Remember the good old-fashioned game Simon Says? Whether Simon says to touch your toes or pat your head, the game is all about action verbs. Students can begin with a reading of Kate Riggs' *Verbs*. Then, after students play Simon Says, generate a class list of verbs used during the game.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1b.** Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1c.** Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., He hops; We hop).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a.** Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1d.** Form and use regular and irregular verbs.

In the Classroom: Mo Willems' *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* can also be used to teach adjectives. As students read or listen to the story, they can identify descriptive emotions the pigeon feels or looks like he's feeling (e.g., mad, disappointed, or bossy).

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1f.** Use frequently occurring adjectives.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.1e.** Use adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a.** Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

In the Classroom: Following a reading of Kate Riggs' *Adverbs*, teachers can begin a sentence with "He jogs" or "She eats." Students can then select an adverb (e.g., *slowly* or *noisily*) from a pile of word cards and act out the rest of the sentence for the class.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.2.1e.** Use adjectives and adverbs, and choose between them depending on what is to be modified.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.3.1a.** Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences.

In the Classroom: After studying prepositions in David McPhail's *Pig Pig Meets the Lion*, students can play a game in which one classmate waits outside of the room while an object is hidden. The rest of the class can offer clues using prepositions (e.g., under a desk or behind a book).

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.1e.** Use the most frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *to, from, in, out, on, off, for, of, by, with*).
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.1i.** Use frequently occurring prepositions (e.g., *during, beyond, toward*).

In the Classroom: Using Moira Rose Donohue's *Penny and the Punctuation Bee* as a model, present students with a word or phrase. Students must then use the word or phrase in a sentence, question, or exclamation and identify all of the punctuation used. Individuals or teams can score points for each correct punctuation mark.

Common Core Connections

- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.K.2b.** Recognize and name end punctuation.
- **CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.1.2b.** Use end punctuation for sentences.