

# Those Colorful Parts

Poems about syntax with built-in examples  
for word recognition & developing fluency

Poetry Written for Children

English

Entry to the 2014 Palanca Awards

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English

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## **Adjectives Are Rainbow Stripes**

If adjectives were a color  
They would be rainbow stripes  
Or whatever you call

That shimmering pixie dust effect –  
The gleaming, shimmering iridescence  
On the gossamer wings of dragonflies

Because when adjectives  
Like a doting fairy godmother  
Begin their awesome magic to describe

A noun becomes adorned  
Bedecked, embellished, enhanced  
As if by sorcery, so that a girl becomes

A beautiful, brand-new princess –  
Delightful, elegant, and witty.  
In addition, a well-chosen adjective

Is like a suitable consort, a handsome  
Ideal, dashing Prince Charming  
Hooked on the arm of a noun.

## **Nouns Are Black**

If nouns were a color  
They would be dead-on black  
Specific, no nonsense, clear-cut

A-spade-is-a-spade kind of black –  
Fixed, final, and formal  
Like a tux

Because nouns name things  
And people and places  
Without mistaking.

A book is a book, however common  
A noun it is. Yet, sometimes  
Nouns can be

So particular, unique, specific  
That they should properly be  
Capitalized

Because, frankly, a boy is not a toy.  
But other than that, a cat is a cat  
Jack is Jack, and that is that.

## **Pronouns Are Gray**

If pronouns were a color  
They would be pretty  
Mysterious

Like misty gray –  
Not quite black, not quite white, but  
Pale shadows of nouns.

You see, pronouns are proxies  
Helpful substitutes  
Eager replacements

Reliable representatives  
Perhaps mere placeholders  
But who cares?

When sentences  
Party in paragraphs  
Proxy pronouns stay around

Standing in  
For nouns that do not want to be  
Repetitive.

## Verbs Are Green

If verbs were a color  
They would be vivaciously green—  
Vibrant with life, oozing with energy

Jumpy like a grasshopper  
Or silly and frivolous  
Like long-legged leaping frogs.

Verbs with verve can also be slow  
Like crawling caterpillars;  
Or chatty and verbose, like parrots.

Just know: that not all verbs  
Convey action, although  
Most of them do.

Some verbs simply tell us  
A state of being  
Just like standing, or existing—

Think of green grass, or a mantis  
That is no longer praying  
But just is, or was.

## **Adverbs Are Yellow**

If adverbs were a color  
They would be yellow, no question!  
Because they brighten, or maybe

More than that, they totally illuminate  
Verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs  
In which they come in very close contact.

It is as if adverbs bring the golden  
Moonshine, or the light  
Of a pretty steady candle flame

Nearer, just so we can see the puppy  
Sleeping quite peacefully  
On an absolutely gorgeous rug.

Like yellow-tinted sunglasses  
Adverbs tweak the meaning of clauses  
So that plain "I love adverbs" can be

Adjusted, with immediacy and  
Intensity as in, "Suddenly, I now love  
Adverbs truly, madly, and deeply."

## Prepositions Are Red

If prepositions were a color  
They would be red on the alert  
Warning, signaling, pointing out

Clearly marking the position  
Indicating the location  
Of the puppy in time, and space.

Is the puppy on the floor  
In the trashcan, or beside the phone?  
It doesn't matter that the puppy

Is lying or standing or barking  
Just give me a red dot, a crimson glare  
Or, a scarlet arrow sign, if you will.

I just want to be with my puppy again  
After all this frantic search, looking  
Around the house, and under the bed.

I want my puppy before evening comes  
Perhaps by noon, maybe during lunch?  
Please! I want my puppy beside me!

## Conjunctions Are Indigo

If conjunctions were a color  
They would be indigo –  
That color in the rainbow

That bridges violet and blue.  
Because conjunctions connect words,  
Sentences, phrases, and clauses.

Of coordinating conjunctions  
There are seven you should know  
I call them FANBOYS, here's my show:

F is for "for," A is for "and"  
N for "nor," and B for "but"  
O for "or," Y for "yet," and S for "so."

Gooooo, Fanboys! Go Fanboys in a list, go  
Fanboys with coequal words, and with  
Parallel phrases, as in: black and white

Dead or alive, naughty but nice,  
Tired yet happy. Oh! Speaking of which  
I'm tired now, so this poem ends!

## Interjections Are Fuchsia

If interjections were a color  
They would be fancy fuchsia –  
That color known also as magenta

Because however exciting  
Interjections cannot be primary  
Colors; they are not even necessary.

Some of them, like “tsk! tsk!”  
Are not even words in the dictionary!  
But, boy, are they fun, and colorful.

Meaning something “thrown  
Between or among” other things  
An interjection is a cry of fuchsia

A magenta cluck, a sudden outburst  
A hey!, a wow!, or a Hiya! of a friendly  
Recognition. What’s a “hiya,” you ask?

Just an interjection: fragments  
Of a broken voice choked with joy  
Asking “How are you?” rather excitedly.

## Articles Are Tricolored

If the articles – a, an, and the – were a color  
They would be a perfect tricolor of red, white  
And blue. And if they appear like stripes

Of colorful adjectives, rightly it is so.  
Because articles are a kind of adjective  
Which specify the definitiveness of nouns

Whose approach they announce: Red “an” to signal  
One indefinite thing coming up that starts with a vowel  
Thus blinking alarms for the likes of anonas, atis,

Easter, egg, ice cream, omelet, orange  
Umbrella, urchin, and IOU. While plain white “a” peacefully  
Calmly, introduces nouns that begin with consonants

From B to Z. Then, for definite, particular nouns  
There is dark blue “the” for the sound of “thuh” before  
Nouns commencing in consonants, and there is

Light blue “the” for the sound of “thee” just before nouns  
That are vowel-initiated. To wit, The egg is in the basket;  
The poem, in the bag. A lesson is learned, The End.

## Idioms Are Orange

If idioms were a color  
They would be orange traversing, and  
Wandering through territories

Of red, and yellow, in the spectrum  
As they crisscross boundaries of  
Literal and figurative meanings

In a “special phrasing”  
(According to the Greeks) combining  
Words for a special sense

An interpretation whose sum is greater  
Than their added parts: Pulling a leg  
To trick us, dropping a line

To send a note, keeping an eye  
To be aware, spilling the beans  
To reveal the idiomatic secret.

The ugly duckling is not necessarily  
The black sheep, but both are odd ones!  
Oops! I let another orange cat out of the bag!

## Syntax in Cinquians

*[A word on these cinquians: There are many variations to the cinquain, a class of poetic form that employs a five-line pattern. These here are based on the modern form invented by American poet Adelaide Crapsey, whose basic criteria is a five-line stanza in a syllabic pattern of two, four, six, eight, two.]*

1.

When words

Begin to jump

Or talk, or sulk, or act

Like teenage drama queens, we call

Them verbs.

2.

Nouns name

Common things like

Toys, cars, drums; and also

Proper boys like Peter, Joseph

And Mark.

3.

They are

Proxies, stand-ins

Substitutes like "he" for

John, "she" for Ann, and "them" for both—

Pronouns!

4.

Like doors

And hallways that

Connect rooms in a house

Conjunctions join words, sentences,

Phrases.

5.

Tell me

How something is

Nice, or big, or yellow

Because that's what adjectives do—

Describe.

6.

Playboys

Flirting indis-

Criminately with verbs

Adjectives, and some of their kind—

Adverbs.

7.

Standing

Before objects

And nouns, prepositions

Reveal relationships in time

And space.

8.

Oh my!

Interjections

Are those sudden outbursts

Of joy, of hope, of doubt, uttered

Somewhere.

9.

They're three:

"A," "an," and "the."

Articles we call them

To describe definitiveness

Of nouns.

10.

Idioms—

Parts of language

That play double meanings

Like saying, "Wrap it up!" to mean:

End it.

*Nothing follows.*