

Gertrude Stein

From *Poetry and Grammar* (1935)

As I say a noun is a name of a thing, and therefore slowly if you feel what is inside that thing you do not call it by the name by which it is known. Everybody knows that by the way they do when they are in love and a writer should always have that intensity of emotion about whatever is the object about which he writes. And therefore I as say it again more and more one does not use nouns. [...]

When you are at school and learn grammar grammar is very exciting. I really do not know that anything has ever been more exciting than diagramming sentences. I suppose other things may be more exciting to others when they are at school but to me undoubtedly when I was at school the really completely exciting thing was diagramming sentences. [,,]

Adjectives are not really and truly interesting. In a way anybody can know always has known that because after all adjectives effect nouns and as nouns are nor really interesting the thing that effects a not too interesting thing is of necessity not interesting, [...]

Beside the nouns and the adjectives there are verbs and adverbs, Verbs and adverbs are more interesting,. In the first place they have one very nice quality and that is that they can be so mistaken. It is wonderful the number of mistakes a verb can make and that is equally true of its adverbs, Nouns and adjectives never can make mistakes can never be mistaken but verbs can be so endlessly, both as to what they do and how they agree or disagree with whatever they do. The same is true of adverbs, In that way one can see that verbs and adverbs are more interesting than nouns and adjectives. [...]

Then comes the thing that can of all things be most mistaken and they are prepositions. Prepositions can live one long life being really being nothing but absolutely nothing but mistaken and that makes them irritating if you feel that way about mistakes but certainly something that you can be continuously using and everlastingly enjoying. I like prepositions the best of all [...]

Then there are articles. Articles are interesting just as nouns and adjectives are not. And why are interesting just as nouns and adjectives are not.. They are interesting because they do what a noun might do if a noun was not so unfortunately so completely unfortunately the noun of something, Articles please, a and an and the please as the name that follows cannot please [...] But an article an article remains as a delicate and a varied something and any one who wants to write with articles and knows how to use them will always have the pleasure that using something that is varied and alive can give.