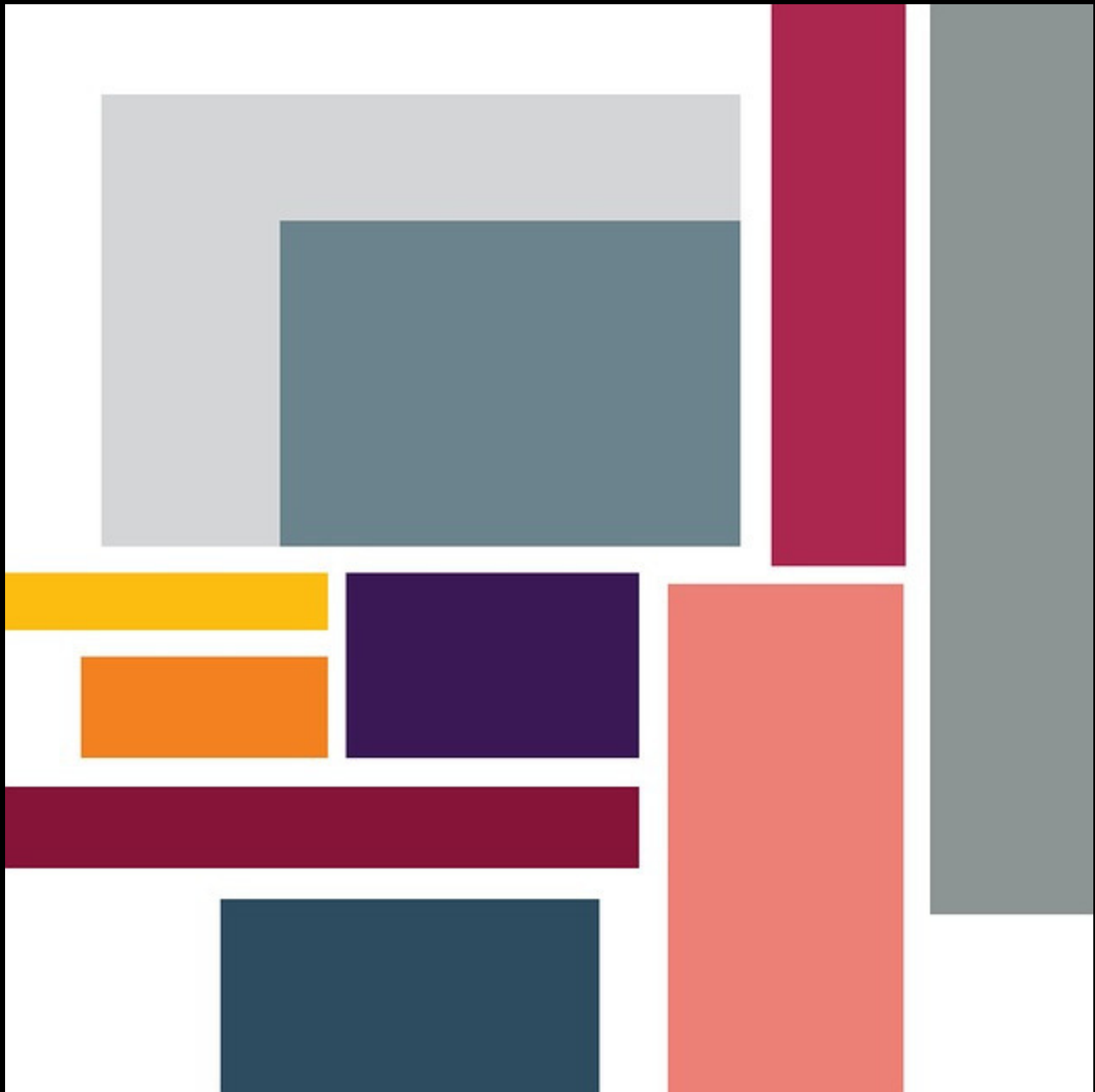# Parts of Speech

■ THE CRITICAL READER

1. Noun

Nouns indicate people, places, objects, and ideas.

Common nouns refer to **general categories**, e.g., *girl*, *city*, *house*, *father*, *doctor*, *author*, *school*, and are **not capitalized**.

Proper nouns refer to **specific** people, places, and things. These nouns **are capitalized**. They include:

- Names of individuals and organizations, e.g., *Jane Austen*, *Microsoft*, *The University of Michigan*.

- Titles, e.g., *Pride and Prejudice*, *National Geographic*, *The Last Supper*, *The New York Times*.

- States, cities, provinces, countries, and languages, e.g., *Los Angeles*, *Nebraska*, *Ontario*, *Thailand, Spanish*.

- Time periods, e.g., *The Renaissance*, *The Great Depression*, *The Cold War*.

Collective nouns refer to groups and organizations, e.g., *family*, *team*, *country*, *school*, *society*, *company*. (Note that in American English, these nouns are considered singular, whereas in British English, they are considered plural.)

Concrete nouns refer to objects that can be touched and felt, e.g., *book*, *table*, *dog*. These nouns are often derived from Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) words, and they tend to be associated with everyday language.

Abstract nouns refer to ideas and things that cannot be touched. These nouns are typically derived from Greek, Latin, or French words, and they tend to be associated with more formal academic language. They often have the following endings:

- –MENT, e.g., *movement*

- –TION, e.g., *notion*

- –SION, e.g., *exclusion*

- –ISM, e.g., *realism*

- –ITY, e.g., *unity*

- –NESS, e.g., *happiness*

- –TUDE, e.g., *solitude*

- –LOGY, e.g., *ideology*

With the exception of some proper nouns, most nouns can be preceded by **articles**. The **definite article** *the* is used to refer to specific nouns, and the **indefinite articles** *a* and *an* are used to refer to nouns in general.

- Nouns beginning with consonants should be preceded by *a*.

- Nouns beginning with vowels or vowel sounds should be preceded by *an*.

Consonant	Vowel
A pencil	An object
A leader	An idea
A reaction	An hour

As a general rule, if you are not sure whether a word can be a noun, try placing *a(n)* or *the* before it. For example, *report* can be a noun because you can say *a report* or *the report*, but *relate* cannot be a noun because it is incorrect to say *a relate* or *the relate*.

2. Pronoun

Pronouns replace nouns.

Examples: *it*, *they*, *them*, *which*, *s/he*, *this*, *that*

- Samantha loves basketball. **She** plays **it** every day after school.

- Marco walks to school with Sherri and Ann. **He** meets **them** at the corner.

Personal pronouns refer to people. They are often referred to in the following way:

	Singular	Plural
1st Person	I	We
2nd Person	You	You (pl.)
3rd Person	S/he, It, One	They

Indefinite pronouns refer to unspecified quantities.

(N)either	One	Some
No one	Each	Something
None	Everybody	Several
Any	Everyone	Many
Anybody	Few	Others
Anyone	Both	All