

# Real-World Grammar

Sentences for Symbolizing and Writing Activities  
with Cross-Curricular Content

## American Indian Naturalists

A photograph of a field of yellow wildflowers, likely goldenrods, with green foliage. Overlaid on the bottom half of the image are several geometric symbols: two red circles, two blue triangles, two black triangles, and two green crescent moons. The text is arranged around these symbols.

Meadows are important sources of

medicinal plants used by traditional healers.

*from placards at The National Museum of the American Indian*

# Real-World Grammar: American Indian Naturalists

## **Rationale: What's this going to do for my children and my class?**

The challenge that every Montessori guide faces is how to optimize the depth and breadth of the vast curriculum that we place before the children. There are not enough hours in the day or weeks in the year to give children everything that we wish we could!

One maximization technique is “double dipping” – using cross-curricular activities to practice a skill *while* inserting content. For example, rather than providing story problems about how many cookies each child gets, use numbers that are relevant to science, history, or other areas of children's interest.

Real-World Grammar does exactly this, providing sentences for symbolizing parts of speech with real-world content from topics that are popular with elementary students and teachers.

In Real World Grammar: American Indians, content comes directly from informational placards at The National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC. Sentences have been tailored for children at two working levels:

Level One sentences use only words that are among the 9 basic parts of speech. *Note: children need not have achieved mastery of all of these parts of speech to use these informational paragraphs as a grammar follow-up!* If a child is working on verbs, he can find only the verbs in the paragraph, being reminded that every sentence has at least one verb. The child who is working at a higher level might be challenged to symbolize the entire paragraph. For children who need to work with a friend, three children can each symbolize one sentence in a paragraph and then each can present his work to the others as a preliminary control-of-error. When all three are content that the symbols are correct, they can each record the results.

Level Two includes more advanced parts of speech including verbals (infinitives, participles, and gerunds) as well as “stacked” parts of speech like conjunctive pronouns, and verb types (transitive, intransitive, linking or auxiliary). Once again, the materials are flexible: if children have not been presented the symbols for the different types of verbs, a plain red verb symbol will suffice! If they have had no experience with “stacked” parts of speech, as long as they have identified a conjunctive pronoun as either a conjunction or a pronoun, their answer is completely satisfactory! (Children who have not been presented lessons on verbals should use Level One paragraphs).

## **Geeky Brain-Based Learning: Why “double dipping” is more than just an efficiency**

How do we build knowledge? How does learning move from working memory to long-term memory? Certainly that is a topic worthy of its own monograph, but in short, one way that long-term memory is built is by encountering information in multiple diverse episodes. If you were to recall when you first learned that a quart is smaller than a gallon, you might replay a specific memory, an episode, of shopping for milk or of cooking with a significant adult in your life. If that was followed by other experiences, like studying equivalencies in school, or changing the oil in the car you may now know that 4 quarts are equivalent to a gallon.

How is this relevant to Real-World Grammar? As children apply grammar to real-world content, they are experiencing an episode of both the analysis of language AND specific content to reinforce or inspire cultural studies – an example of “double dipping” that will benefit the child in two areas through a single activity.

**Implementation: How do I use this material?** There is great flexibility in this material. Of course, one can give a grammar lesson to a group of children and then choose a paragraph for the group, making enough copies of the mute paragraph for each child to have one.

*Here is but one other idea of how to use this material:*

- 1) Print and laminate pages 1 – 62.
- 2) Create a booklet of laminated pages for each topic. Each booklet will have 3 pages:
  - Cover: pages with photographs
  - Level One mute paragraph
  - Level Two mute paragraph
- 3) Create a booklet containing all of the controls of error.
- 4) Give lessons on parts of speech to all children (but you were doing that anyway, right?)
- 5) As a follow-up, invite each child to choose an aspect of American Indians' relationship with the natural world that most interests him. Give specific instructions as to what the child is to symbolize, depending upon his level of knowledge of parts of speech. For example:
  - Use Level One. Copy the sentence(s) into your notebook leaving room for the symbols above each word. Symbolize only words in the noun and verb families (noun, adjective, article, verb, and adverb). When you are done, compare with a friend and discuss any words that you have symbolized differently before checking with the Control of Error card.
  - Use Level Two. Copy the sentence(s) into your notebook leaving room for the symbols above each word. Symbolize all of the sentences in the paragraph. Watch for verbals (infinitives, participles, and gerunds)! If there are words that you aren't certain of how to symbolize, outline the symbol for your best guess without coloring it in. See if you can convince a friend or teacher that you have the right symbol before checking the control of error.

*Looking for an extension into writing instruction?*

- 1) Copy pages 62 to 72. Cut apart individual sentence strips. Laminate each sentence.
- 2) Sort sentences by paragraph and put each set of sentences into individual envelopes or folders.
- 3) Invite children to experiment with sentence order within a paragraph.
- 4) When children have assembled the sentences into a sequence that they find logical and pleasing children may do one or more of the following.
  - write a title for the paragraph on cash-register paper and add it to the top of the paragraph
  - write a topic sentence for the paragraph
  - write a concluding sentence for the paragraph
- 5) Children copy the paragraph into their notebooks.

*Do you have older children who are learning about multi-paragraph essays?*

- 1) Choose 3 paragraphs from the provided set.
- 2) Divide the children into 3 teams. Each team assembles sentences to make a logical paragraph, as above and writes a topic sentence for the paragraph.
- 3) Ask the group to put the three paragraphs in a logical sequence, writing transition sentences for the end of each paragraph.
- 4) Children individually write a thesis paragraph and a concluding paragraph to complete a 5-paragraph essay.

# American Indian Naturalists Topics

## Paragraphs for Symbolizing

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Agriculture: Traditional Croplands	11
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Plant Medicine: Black-Eyed Susan	21
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Permission is granted for the purchaser to make copies of pages from this document as needed for children's use in a single classroom; one copy of this document must be copied for each classroom.

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**First Edition**

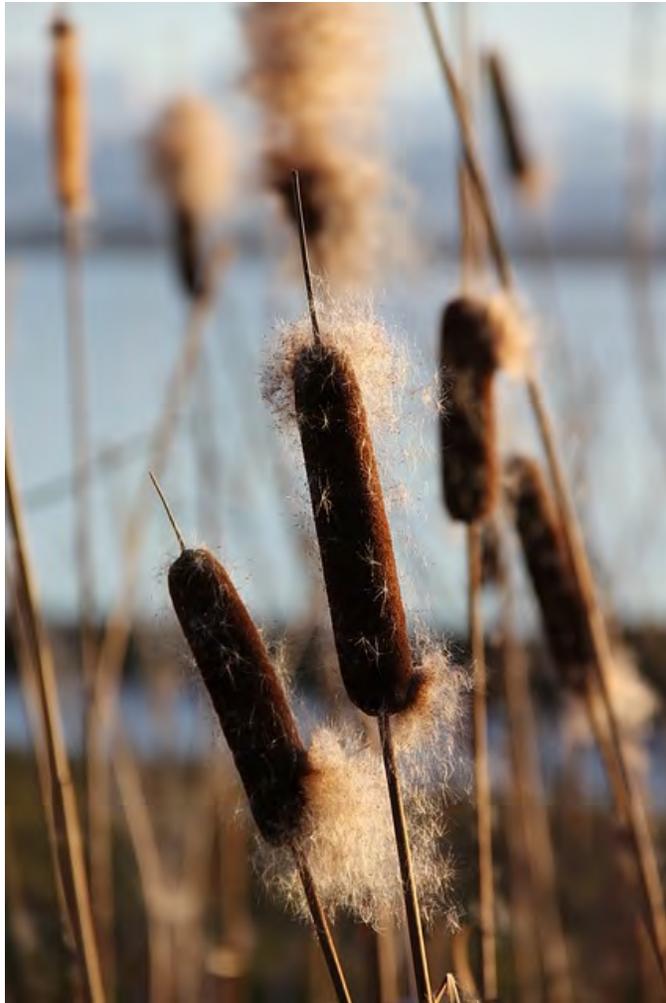
# American Indian Plant Medicine: Broadleaf Cattail and Cattail Fun Facts

## Broadleaf Cattail

Nearly every Native community in North America has used the cattail as food, medicine, or raw materials for baskets and mats. Many tribes made cordage for thick ropes from twisted strands of cattail leaves. The cordage was used to make strong, weatherproof mats for house or floor coverings, as well as toys, dolls, and duck decoys.

## Cattail Fun Facts

The cattail contains ten times the amount of starch as potatoes – an important source of energy. The “fluff” on a cattail is really its seeds. The soft fluff was often used by Native peoples to pad moccasins, bedding, and baby cradleboards.

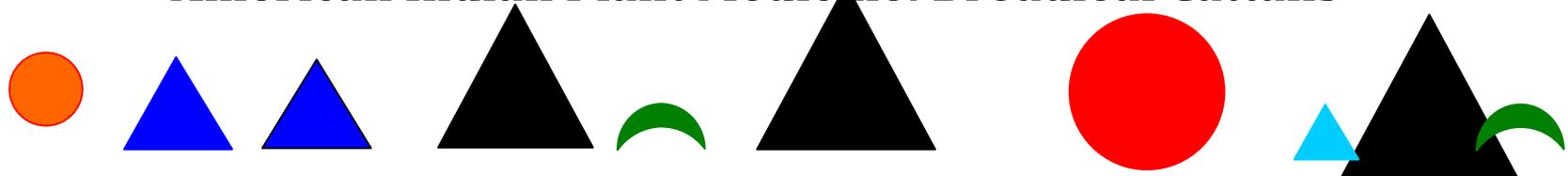


## **American Indian Plant Medicine: Broadleaf Cattails**

Nearly every Native community in (North America) (has used) the cattail as food, medicine, or raw materials for baskets and mats. Many tribes made cordage for thick ropes from twisted strands of cattail leaves. Natives made strong, weatherproof mats for house or floor coverings, (as well as) toys, dolls, and duck decoys from this cordage.

– *adapted from placards at The National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC*  
<http://nmai.si.edu>

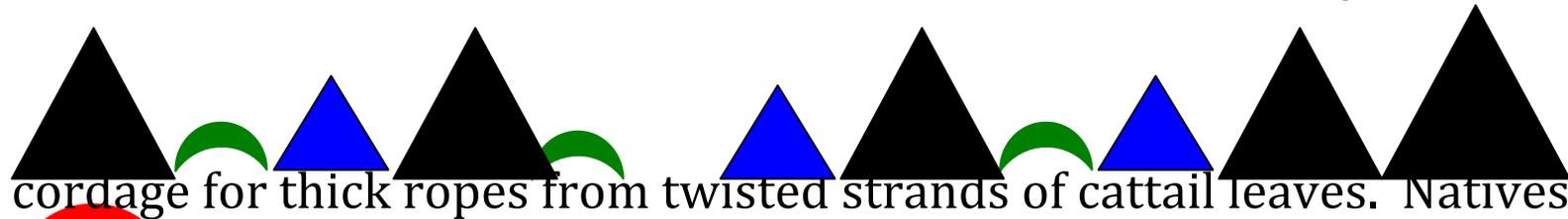
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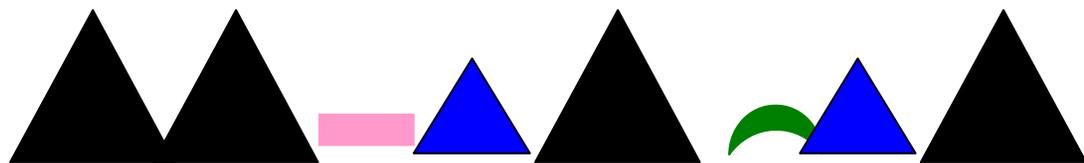
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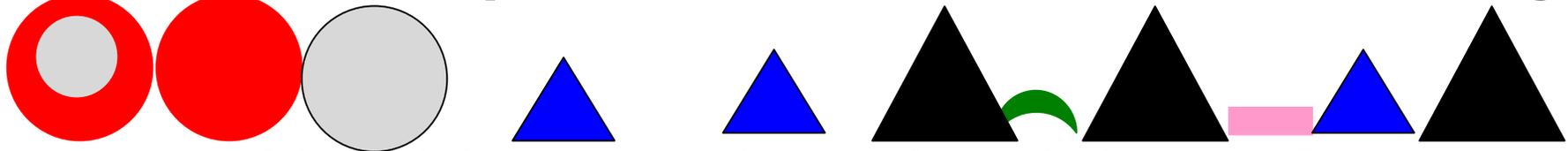


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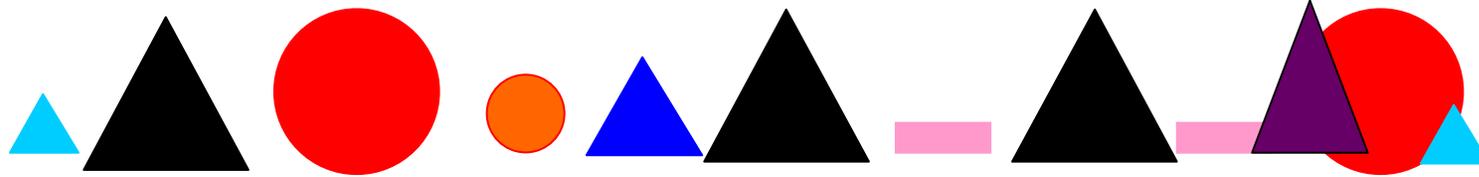
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## **American Indian Plant Medicine: Cattail Fun Facts**

The cattail contains much more starch than potatoes, so it is an important source of energy. The “fluff” on a cattail is really its seeds. The soft fluff provided padding for moccasins, bedding, and baby cradleboards.

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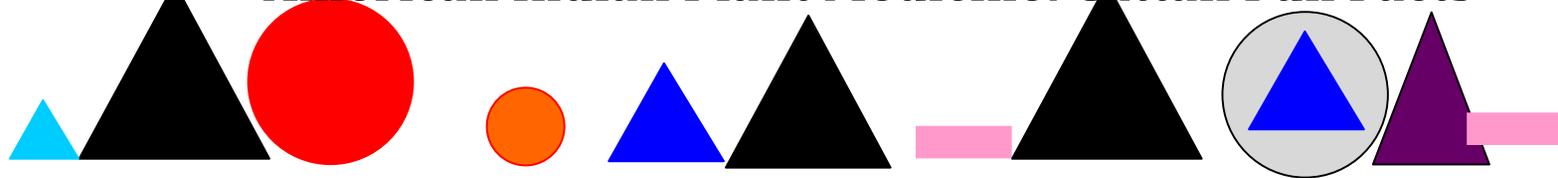
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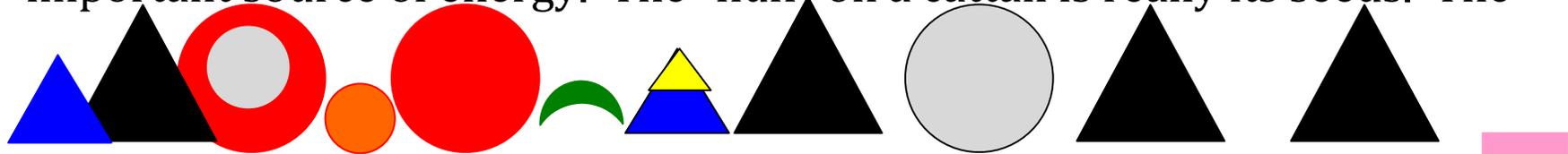
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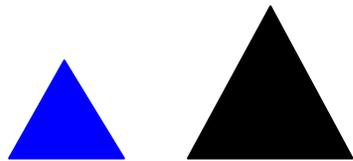
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# **American Indian Plant Medicine: Broadleaf Cattail**

(2 paragraphs)

Nearly every Native community in North America has used the cattail as food, medicine, or raw materials for baskets and mats.

Many tribes made cordage for thick ropes from twisted strands of cattail leaves.

The cordage was used to make strong, weatherproof mats for house or floor coverings, as well as toys, dolls, and duck decoys.

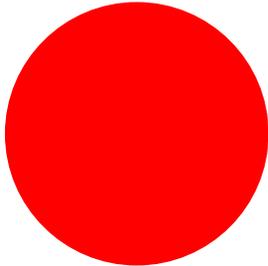
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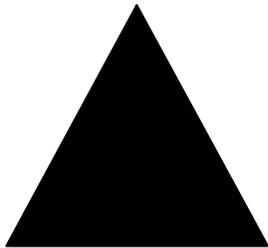
Appendix  
Grammar Symbols for Level One



Verb



Adverb



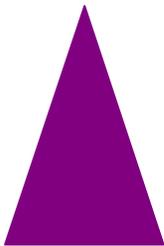
Noun



Article



Adjective



Pronoun



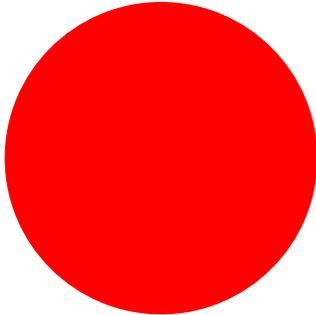
Preposition



Conjunction

# Grammar Symbols for Level One or Two

*These symbols that are shown on Level Two Controls of Error can be applied to Level One Sentences*



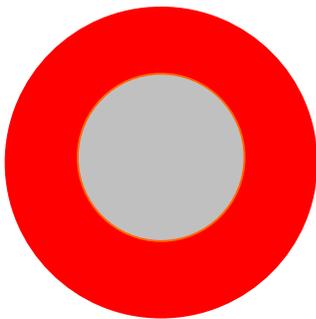
**Transitive verb:** an action verb that has a noun phrase to receive the action.

*The quarterback threw the football.*



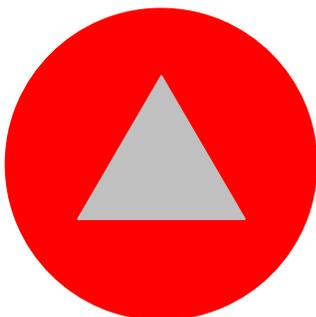
**intransitive verb:** an verb that is complete without a receiver of the action, often an assertion, an expression, a command, or a question.

*The bell rang.*



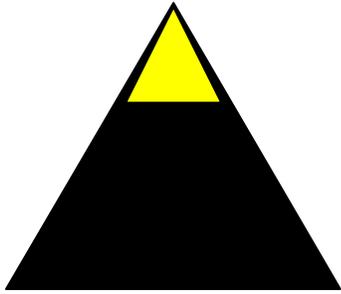
**auxiliary verb:** a verb that accompanies the main verb to help define tense, mood, or voice. (be, have, can, will)

*I will be singing a concert tomorrow.*



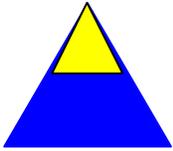
**linking verb:** a verb that equates the subject with its complement (be, become, seem)

*Basketball players are tall.*



**proper noun:** names a specific person, place or thing and is always capitalized.

(George Washington, Chicago, Eiffel Tower)

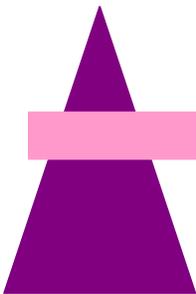


**proper adjective:** an adjective formed from a proper noun, and is always capitalized. (Spanish flag, Native peoples)



**Conjunctive adverb:** a modifier that connects independent clauses.

Also, besides, however, still, then, consequently, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, still, therefore, yet  
*Kathleen does not like to weed; she did the chore, nevertheless.*



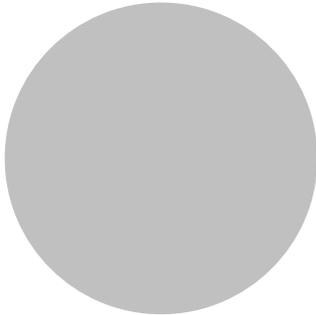
**Conjunctive pronoun:** does the work of a Conjunction and a pronoun.

that, which, who, whom, whoever, whomever, whichever  
*I like the experiments that have lots of steps.  
The girls who ran fastest won the race.*

# Grammar Symbols for Level Two:

## Verbals

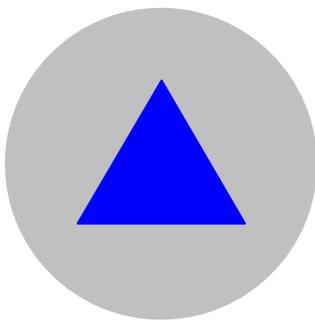
Verbals are found only in Level Two sentences: they have been replaced in Level One sentences.



**infinitive:** takes the form “to + verb” but functions as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

*Cortney loves to polish the silver.*

*To be or not to be; that is the question.*



**participle:** takes the form “verb + ing” (present) or “verb + ed” (past) but functions as an adjective.

*Rocky, the flying squirrel, is Bullwinkle’s friend.*

*The locked door wouldn’t open.*



**gerund:** takes the form “verb + ing” but functions as a noun.

*Running is good exercise*