Noun Phrase: The Final Frontier
(…well for us, for now at least!!)

We are beginning to develop a fairly sophisticated understanding of the noun phrase. We have done so, over the past few classes, mostly by looking at what linguists (people who examine how language works) have found after examining a lot of sentences that use Standard English. It might be interesting to actually examine a construction that appears in English, and then attempt to account for this structure the way that linguists and grammarians do this stuff. This way we'll get a sense of how this work is done. Here are a few sentences. We'll work with these to see what we can come up with:

1. The boy on the bus looked out the window.
2. A bird in the hand can be very messy.
3. The book on the shelf down the hall should be on my desk.
4. A rather significant break in the order of events occurred.
5. A break in the very structured order of the extremely important events happened.
6. A broken window on the car could be seen.
7. The book on the girl's desk was about basketball.

How do these sentences work?

In your groups prepare to describe the following to the rest of class:

1. The subject noun phrases for each sentence shown above (remember to use the "replacement test" that we talked about in class: where does the noun phrase begin and end? What is the largest unit that can be replaced with a pronoun?
2. Any "new" noun phrases that seem to be "inside" the subject noun phrase. Again see if you can replace them with pronouns. Now: see if you can diagram the structure of these noun phrases.
3. Any new types of words that we have not seen or discussed thus far in class.

Once we have examined these sentences as a class we will try to develop and show a "rule" that accounts for:

a) These new words and the noun phrases that seem to be connected to them
b) The noun phrase' relationship to these new words.

Prepositional Phrases

Noun phrases **<u>can</u>** include one more element—a prepositional phrase. The prepositional phrase takes the following form:

PP➔P NP

Which is to say that prepositional phrases include an obligatory (it must have a) preposition and an equally obligatory noun phrase.

The noun phrase now looks like this:

$$NP \rightarrow (\frac{Det}{NP})(Quant)(AdjP)N(PP)$$

Once again, because a prepositional phrases can appear in noun phrases, and because that prepositional phrase can contain a noun phrase, we have the possibility of recursion. This is so because the noun phrase inside the prepositional phrase can contain….a prepositional phrase, and that prepositional phrase can contain a noun phrase and so on.

Confusing just yet? Lets try a few out and see if we can establish how this works.

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A rather significant break in the order of events occurred.

A broken window on the car could be seen.

The book on the girl’s desk was about basketball.

Homework:

1. The dog wants out.
2. The school’s large, barren roof is covered with snow.
3. The little kids in the yard were playing football.
4. The screams from the playground at Keys could be heard in our classroom.
5. The large, very grungy desk’s rather old, scratched surface was covered in paper.
6. A monitor on the grungy desk was glowing in the dark.
7. The hair on the wart on the frog on the bump on the log in the hole at the bottom of the sea was brown.