

## Understanding English Grammar: A Linguistic Introduction

### *Additional Exercises for Chapter 6: Actions, States and Processes*

#### 1. Semantic roles

Identify the semantic role or roles of each of the underlined participants in the following excerpt (passage from Paige, 1998:17).<sup>1</sup>

Charles Sheridan remained at the lip of the impromptu grave for the next hour, soberly capturing with his camera the progress of the excavation. As the last of the covering dirt was shifted by the student archeologist, down to shirtsleeves now, and sweating in the bright sun that had burned off the cloud. Charles moved his tripod to get a different perspective on the work. While the sergeant and the constable hoisted the stiffened corpse out of the pit, he composed another exposure under the black cloth which covered the back of the camera, and made several others, from different angles, with the body lying faceup to the sun. A knot of curious onlookers was kept well to the street by a second police constable, summoned to control the crowd.

---

<sup>1</sup> Paige, Robin. 1998. *Death at Bishops Keep: A Victorian mystery*. New York: Berkley Publishing Group.

## 2. Argument Structures

- A. Use each of the following verbs in at least two distinct argument structures.
- B. How does the meaning of the verb vary when it appears in different argument structures?  
speak, ask, pay, drink, take, go, push, make, claim, finish,
- C. Now think of three more verbs that occur in multiple argument structures. Give examples of each verb in each of its possible argument structures.

### 3. The Verb Forms of English

Underline all of the verbs (used as verbs) in the following passage, and indicate which of the five verb forms is represented (bare form, -s form, past tense, present participle, past participle):

Mrs. Home spoke of her as her granddaughter and there is no reason to suppose that not to be true, but there was never any sign of a connecting generation. I don't know if Mrs. Home went away and came back with her, or if she was delivered by the friend with the V-8. She appeared in the summer before I was to start school. I can't remember her telling me her name -- she was not communicative in the ordinary way and I don't believe I would have asked her. From the very beginning I had an aversion to her unlike anything I had felt up to that time for any other person. (Excerpt from "Child's Play" by Alice Munro, in Rushdie, 2008:201-29).<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Rushdie, Salman (ed.). 2008. *The best American short stories 2008*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

## 4. Phrasal Verbs

For each of the following phrasal verbs (not mentioned in Chapter six):

A. Determine whether it is intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive and whether it can occur in more than one frame.

B. Determine whether it is separable or inseparable.

C. Give two examples of the verb that illustrate your answers to A and B.

D. Give a paraphrase using a non-phrasal verb.

The first example is done for you.

a. hush up      A. Intransitive or transitive.

B. Separable (transitive frame only, of course)

C. The committee hushed them up (transitive, separable).

Waldo hushed up (intransitive)

D. To become quiet (intransitive), or to make something quiet (transitive).

b. grow up

c. ramp up

d. follow on

e. max out

f. measure off

g. mess with

h. lash out at

i. latch onto

j. nail down

k. nose about

l. bring down.

## 5. Semantic subclasses of verbs

For each of the following sentences (based on the passage in exercise 1, above, from a novel), identify the semantic subclass of the italicized verb.

- a. Charles Sheridan *remained* at the lip of the impromptu grave.
- b. Charles *captured* the progress of the excavation with his camera.
- c. The excavation *progressed* slowly.
- d. The student archeologist *was sweating* in the bright sun.
- e. Dirt *covered* the corpse.
- f. "This is a nasty business" *said* the constable.
- g. The sergeant and the constable *hoisted* the stiffened corpse out of the pit.
- h. The stiffened corpse *came out* of the pit with difficulty.
- i. Charles *composed* another exposure.
- j. The body *was lying* faceup to the sun.
- k. A knot of curious onlookers *was kept* well to the street by a second police constable.
- l. The sergeant *summoned* a constable to control the crowd.