

The Syntax Detective Agency

Operation: Structural Integrity



Phase 1: Blueprint Analysis

Agent, grab your pencil. It's time to draw some trees.

Mission Brief #1: Structure Decoding

Your Orders:

We've intercepted two encrypted phrases. Your mission is to draw the appropriate tree diagrams for them.

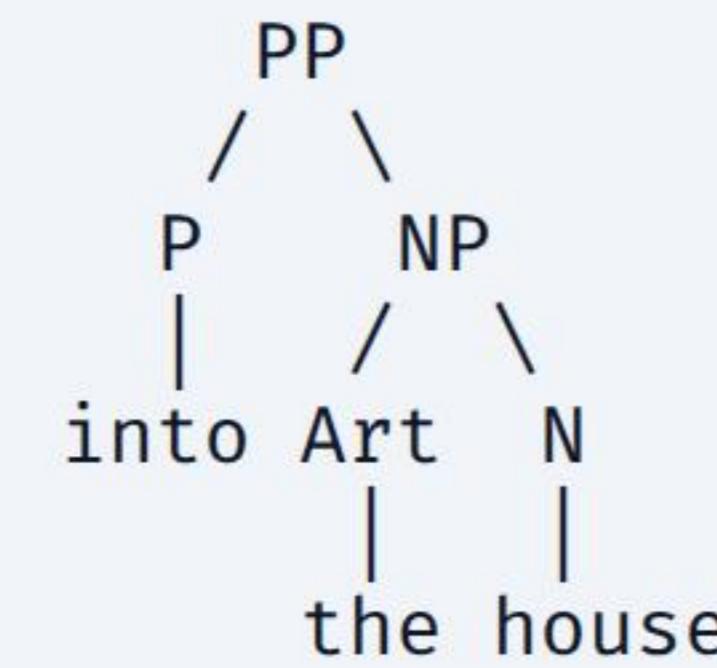
Target A: "into the house"

Target B: "sent the flowers to Carla"

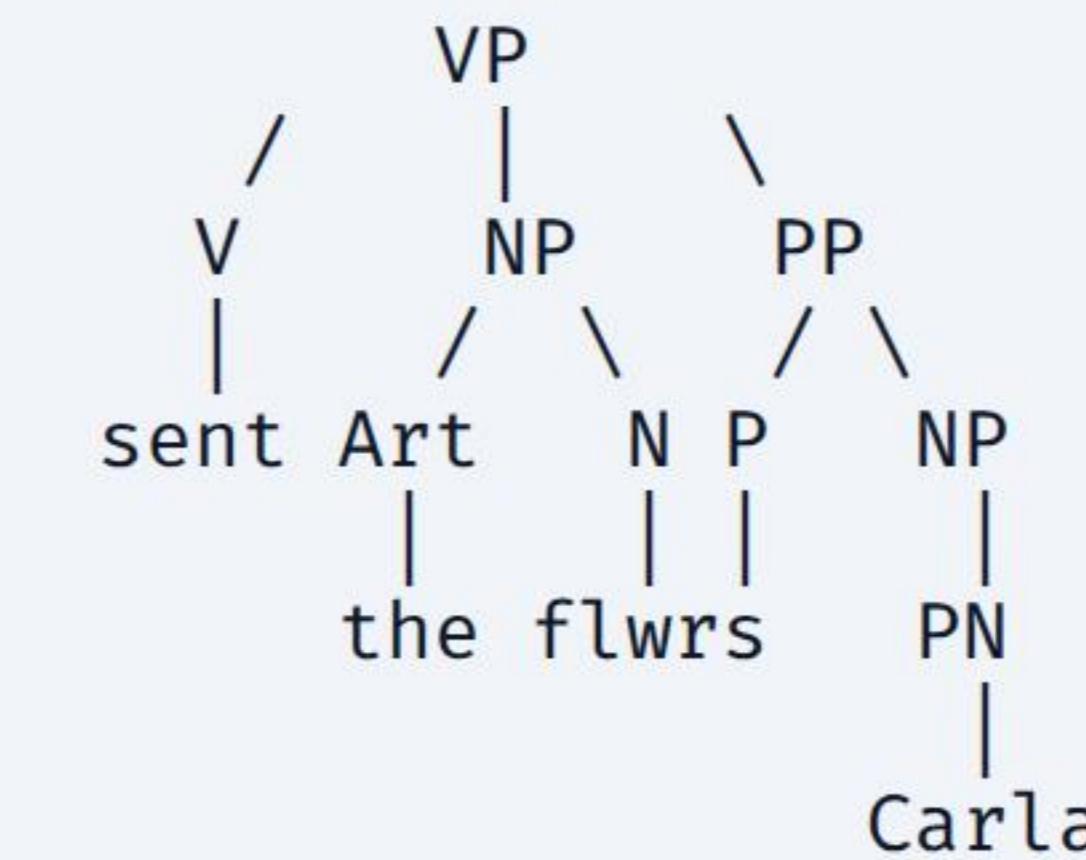
600 × 400

Mission Report: Targets A & B

Target A: PP Structure



Target B: VP Structure



Mission Brief #2: Advanced Intel



Target C

"a film about pollution"

Warning: Noun Phrase containing a Prepositional Phrase.



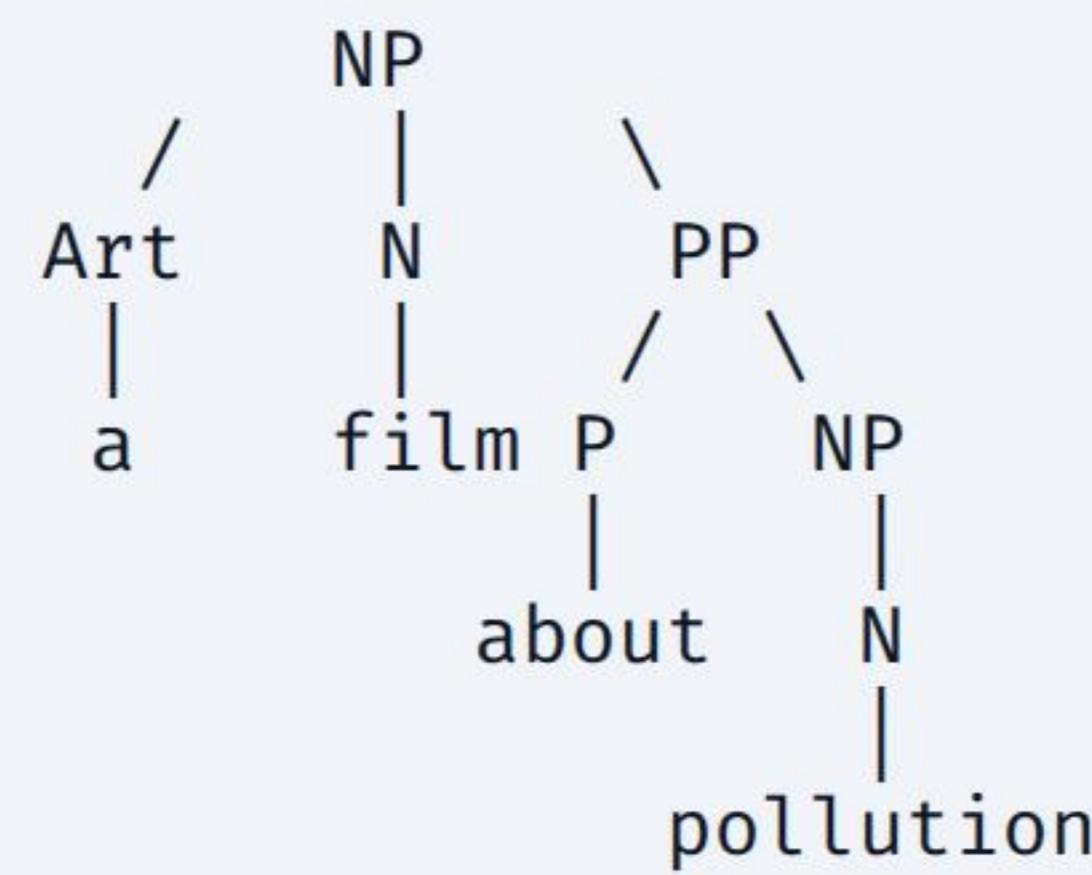
Target D

"went to the cinema yesterday"

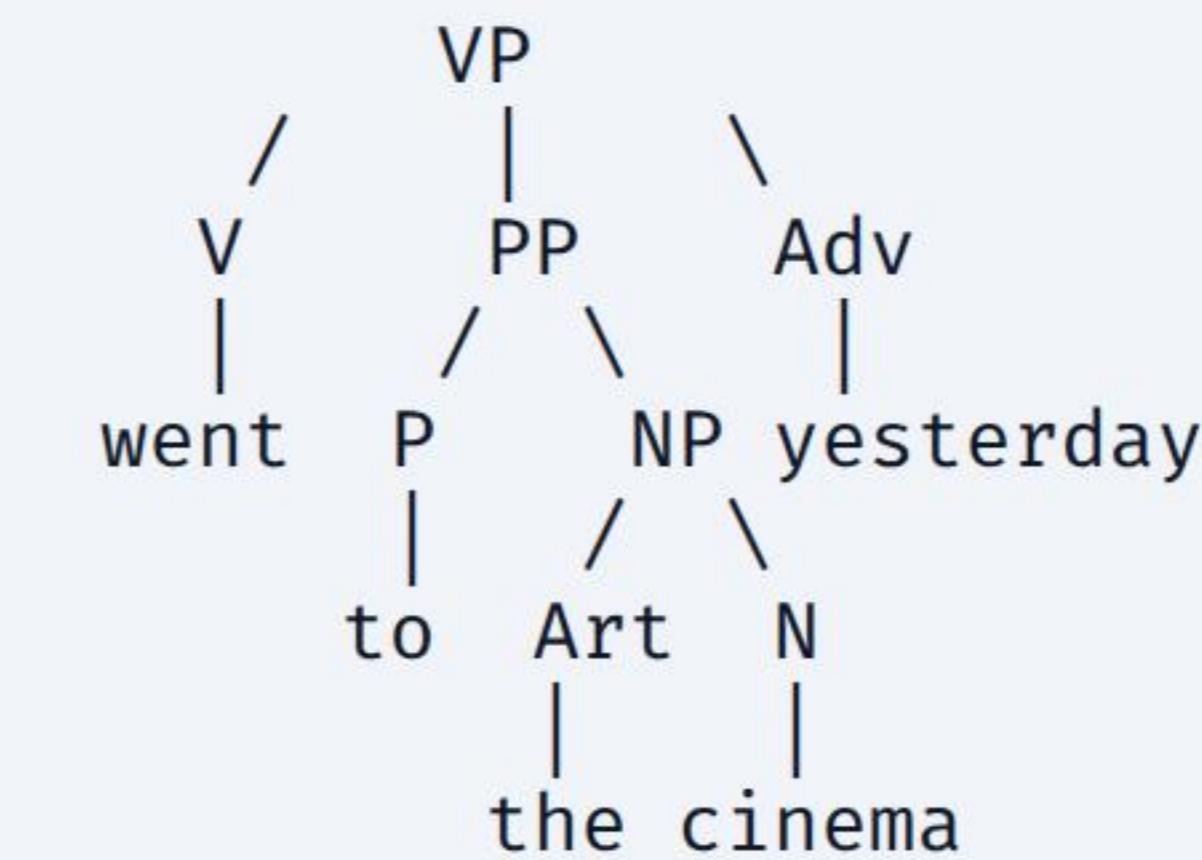
Warning: Verb Phrase modified by an Adverb.

Mission Report: Targets C & D

Target C: NP Structure



Target D: VP Structure



Phase 2: The Ambiguity Files

Things aren't always what they seem. Decode the double meanings.

File #1: The Identity Crisis



"an American history teacher"

Is the teacher a patriot from the USA? Or do they teach the history of America?



"Egyptian cotton shirts"

Are the shirts made of Egyptian cotton? Or are the shirts from Egypt made of cotton?

Decoded: File #1

The Teacher

- **Meaning 1:** A teacher of American history. (The subject is American History).
- **Meaning 2:** A teacher who is American and teaches history. (The teacher is American).

The Shirts

- **Meaning 1:** Shirts made specifically from "Egyptian cotton".
- **Meaning 2:** Cotton shirts that originate from Egypt.

File #2: The Wedding Mixer

The Statement:

"The parents of the bride and the groom were waiting."

Who exactly was waiting in the lobby? Can you spot the two different groups?

600 × 400

Decoded: File #2

Option A:

[Parents of the bride] + [Parents of the groom]

(Two sets of parents are waiting)

Option B:

[Parents of the bride] + [The Groom]

(The bride's parents and the groom himself are waiting)

File #3: The Incident

"The dog bit the man in the car."

We need to establish the crime scene.

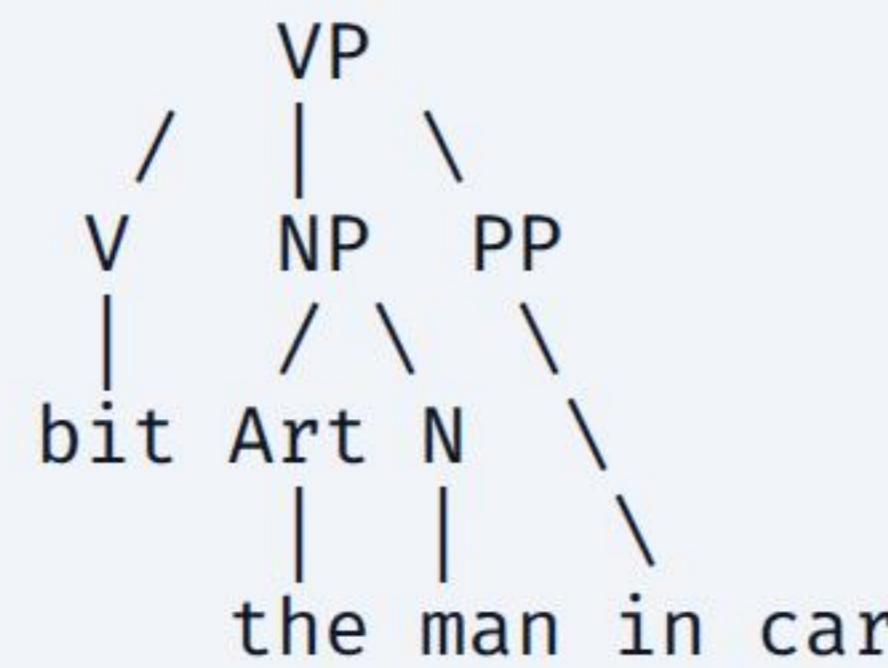
- Was the man sitting inside a car when he was bitten?
- Or did the dog bite the specific man who is known to be in the car?

600 × 400

Evidence Board: File #3

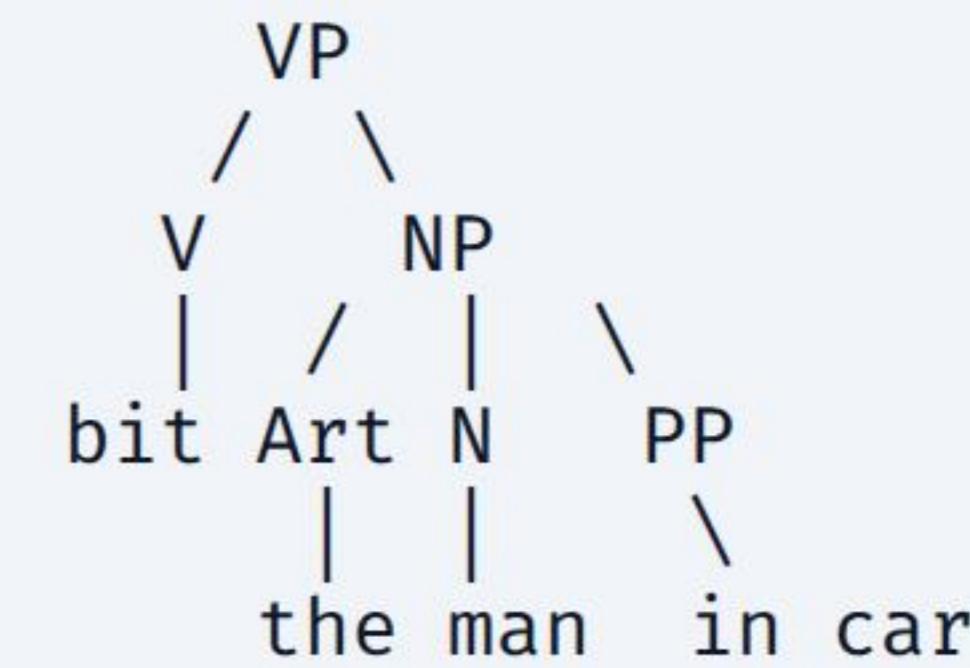
Theory 1: Location

Action happened in the car.



Theory 2: Identity

The "man-in-the-car" was bitten.



File #4: The Magic Trick

"The magician touched the child with the wand."

A classic case of instrumental ambiguity.

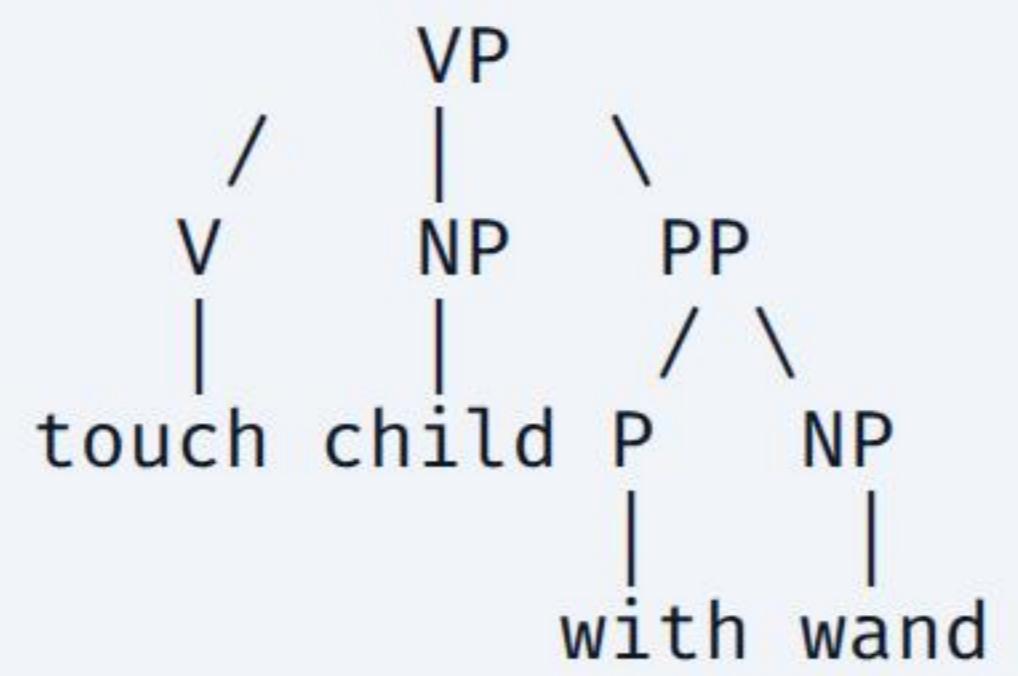
- Did the magician use the wand as a tool to touch the child?
- Or did the magician touch a child who was holding a wand?

600 × 400

Evidence Board: File #4

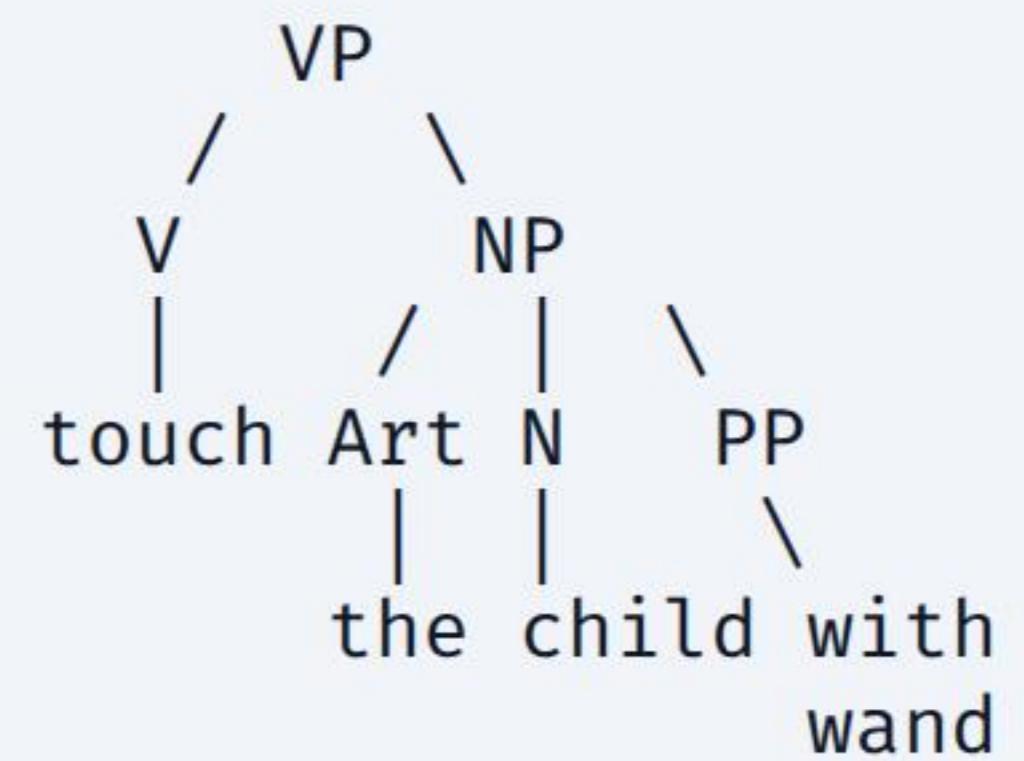
Theory 1: Instrument

Using wand to touch.



Theory 2: Possession

Child holding wand.



Case Closed?

Any questions, detectives?

