Object-oriented design: GRASP patterns

J.Serrat, L.Gomez, E.Valveny

Advanced Programming, Data Engineering

Index

What's software design ?

Design is

- Turning a specification for computer software into operational software.
- Links requirements to coding.
- One further step from the problem space to the computer-based solution

Object design

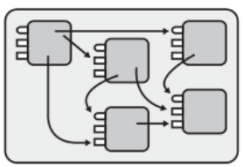
After identifying your requirements and creating a domain model, add methods to the software classes, and define the messaging between the objects to fulfill the requirements.

What's software design ?

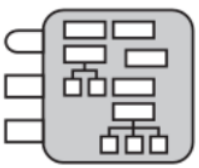
Design is needed at several different levels of detail in a system:

system

subsystems or packages: user interface, data storage, application-level classes, graphics ...



classes within packages, class relationships, interface of each class: public methods



attributes, private methods, inner classes ...

source code implementing methods

How to design object-oriented ?

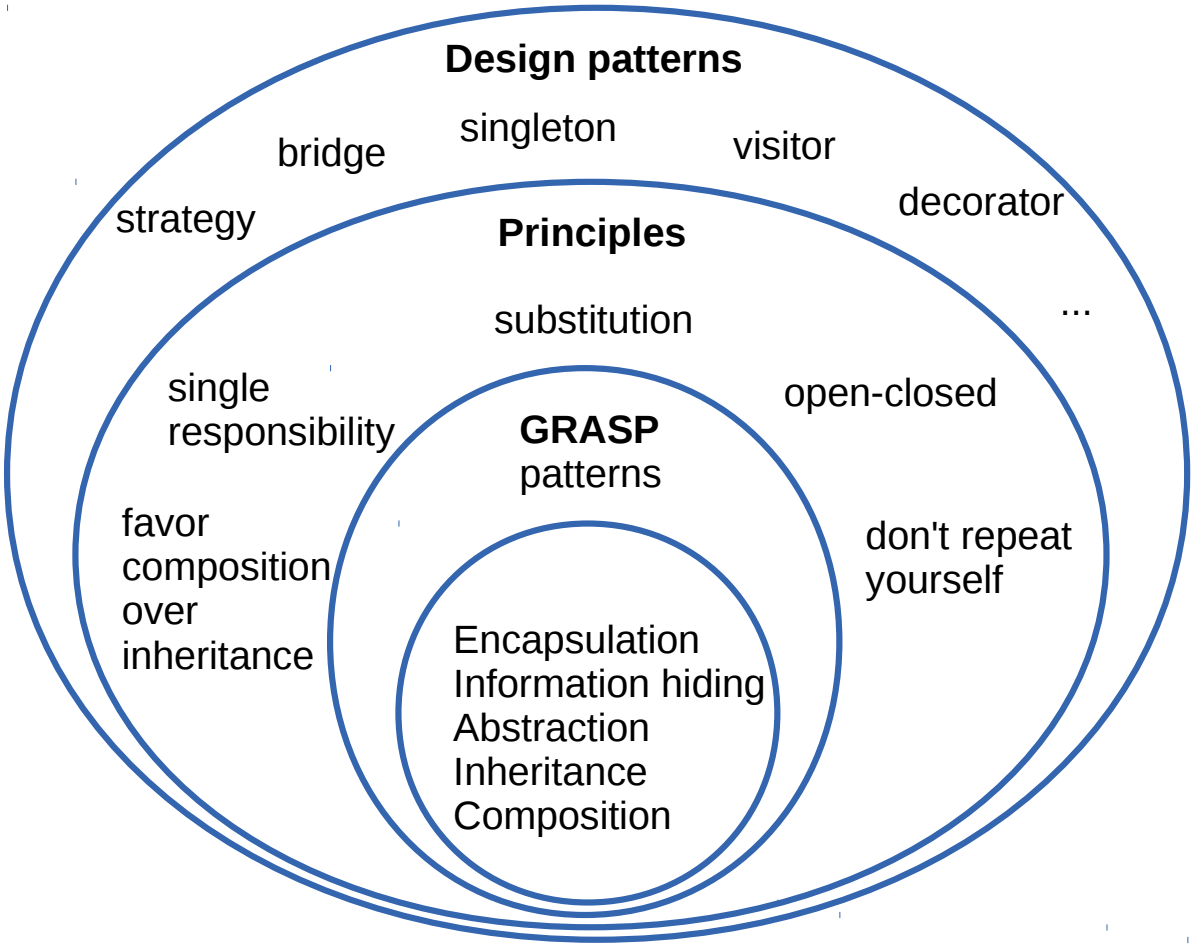
- Start from OO analysis, problem domain classes
- Add methods and define the messaging between them to fulfill the requirements
- New classes will appear, belonging to the software domain

Deciding what methods belong where, and how the objects should interact, is terribly important and anything but trivial.

Craig Larman

How to design object-oriented ?

There's no single methodology to get the best object-oriented design, but there are principles, patterns, heuristics.



How to design object-oriented ?

There's no single methodology to get the best object-oriented design, but there are principles, patterns, heuristics.

The differences between them is their abstraction level. Top Level is the main principles and other levels are details that help to reach these main principles.

Top Level: Object Oriented Main Principles

- Encapsulation (Information Hiding)
- Abstraction
- Inheritance
- Composition
- Polymorphism

How to design object-oriented ?

In a second abstraction level there are patterns and principles trying to support and improve Main Principles of Object Orientation.

- GRASP: General Responsibility Assignment Software Patterns.
- Open-close principle.
- Substitution principle.
- Single responsibility principle.
- etc.

Third Level: Design Patterns (GoF) more detailed and (somehow) dependant to programming language.

More concrete levels: Heuristics and Guidelines. E.g. Object Oriented Design Heuristics (72 Heuristics) , Book by Arthur J. Riel, 1996.

Why follow principles and patterns ?

They are best practices found after decades of experience by many developers.

To build (more) change resistant designs.

Learn [to design objects] from the successes of others, not from your failures

Read *Symptoms of rotting design: rigidity, fragility, immobility, viscosity* in the article Design Principles and Design Patterns by Robert C. Martin, 2000 at `http://objectmentor.com/resources/articles/Principles_and_Patterns.pdf`.

Why follow principles and patterns ?

The design of many software applications begins as a vital image in the minds of its designers. At this stage it is clean, elegant, and compelling.

But then something begins to happen. The software starts to rot. At first it isnt so bad. An ugly wart here, a clumsy hack there. Yet, over time as the rotting continues, the ugly festering sores and boils accumulate until they dominate the design of the application. The program becomes a festering mass of code that the developers find increasingly hard to maintain.

Eventually, the sheer effort required to make even the simplest of changes to the application becomes so high that the engineers and front line managers cry for a redesign project.

Why follow principles and patterns ?

What kind of changes cause designs to rot? Changes that introduce new and unplanned for dependencies. Each of the four symptoms is caused by improper dependencies between the software modules. It is the dependency architecture that is degrading, and with it the ability of the software to be maintained.

(...) the dependencies between modules in an application must be managed. This management consists of the creation of dependency firewalls. Across such firewalls, dependencies do not propagate.

Object Oriented Design principles build such firewalls and manage module dependencies.

—R.C. Martin, 2000

What's ahead

GRASP patterns :

- Expert
- Creator
- High Cohesion
- Low Coupling
- Controller
- Polymorphism
- Pure Fabrication

Principles :

- "Don't repeat yourself"
- Liskov substitution
- Single Responsibility
- Information hiding
- Open/Close principle
- "Program to an interface, not to an implementation"
- "Favor composition over inheritance"

Plus 23 design patterns (GoF).

GRASP patterns

Pattern

A named pair (problem, solution) plus advice on when/how to apply it and discussion of its trade-offs. In our case, solves an object–oriented generic design problem.

GRASP: General Responsibility Assignment Software Patterns

Principles of responsibility assignment, expressed as patterns.
Responsibility of an object/class is doing or knowing

- creating an object or doing a calculation
- initiating an action or controlling activities in other objects
- knowing about private, encapsulated data
- reference or contain other objects
- know how to get or calculate something

GRASP: General Responsibility Assignment Software Patterns

"the critical design tool for software development is a mind well educated in design principles. It is not UML or any other technology."

– Craig Larman.

Thus, GRASP are really a mental toolset, a learning aid to help in the design of object-oriented software.

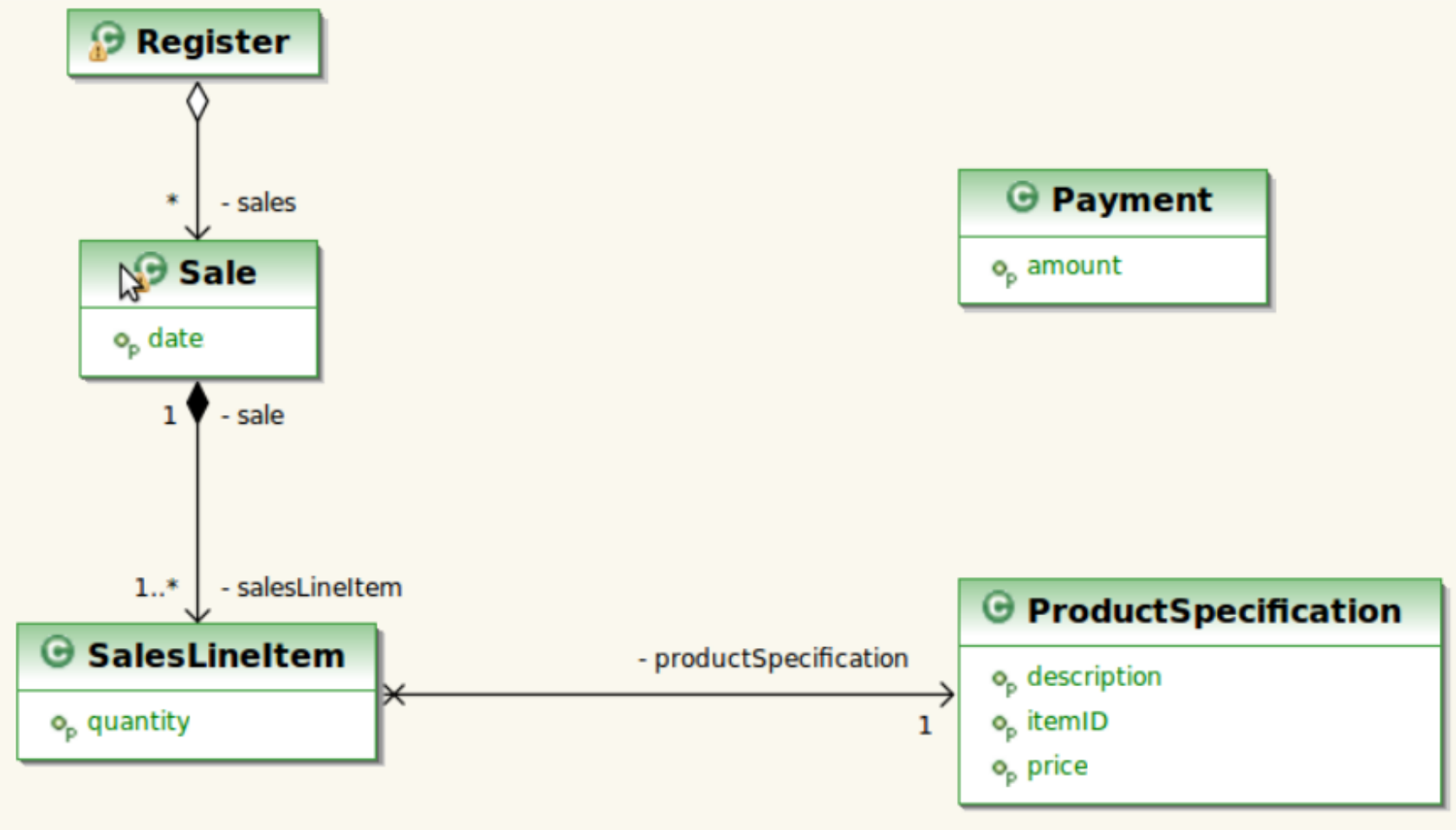
GRASP patterns: conducting example

Point of Sale :

- Application for a shop, restaurant, etc. that registers sales.
- Each sale is of one or more items of one or more product types, and happens at a certain date.
- A product has a specification including a description, unitary price and identifier.
- The application also registers payments (say, in cash) associated to sales.
- A payment is for a certain amount, equal or greater that the total of the sale.

GRASP patterns

Make a class design



Not really a design, because there are no methods! Designs must represent *how to do something*: register sales and payments.

GRASP patterns

Responsibilities are implemented through one or more methods, that may collaborate (send messages to = call methods of) other objects.

Recall : "*deciding what methods belong where, and how the objects should interact, is terribly important and anything but trivial*" .

GRASP patterns : Expert

Expert

Problem

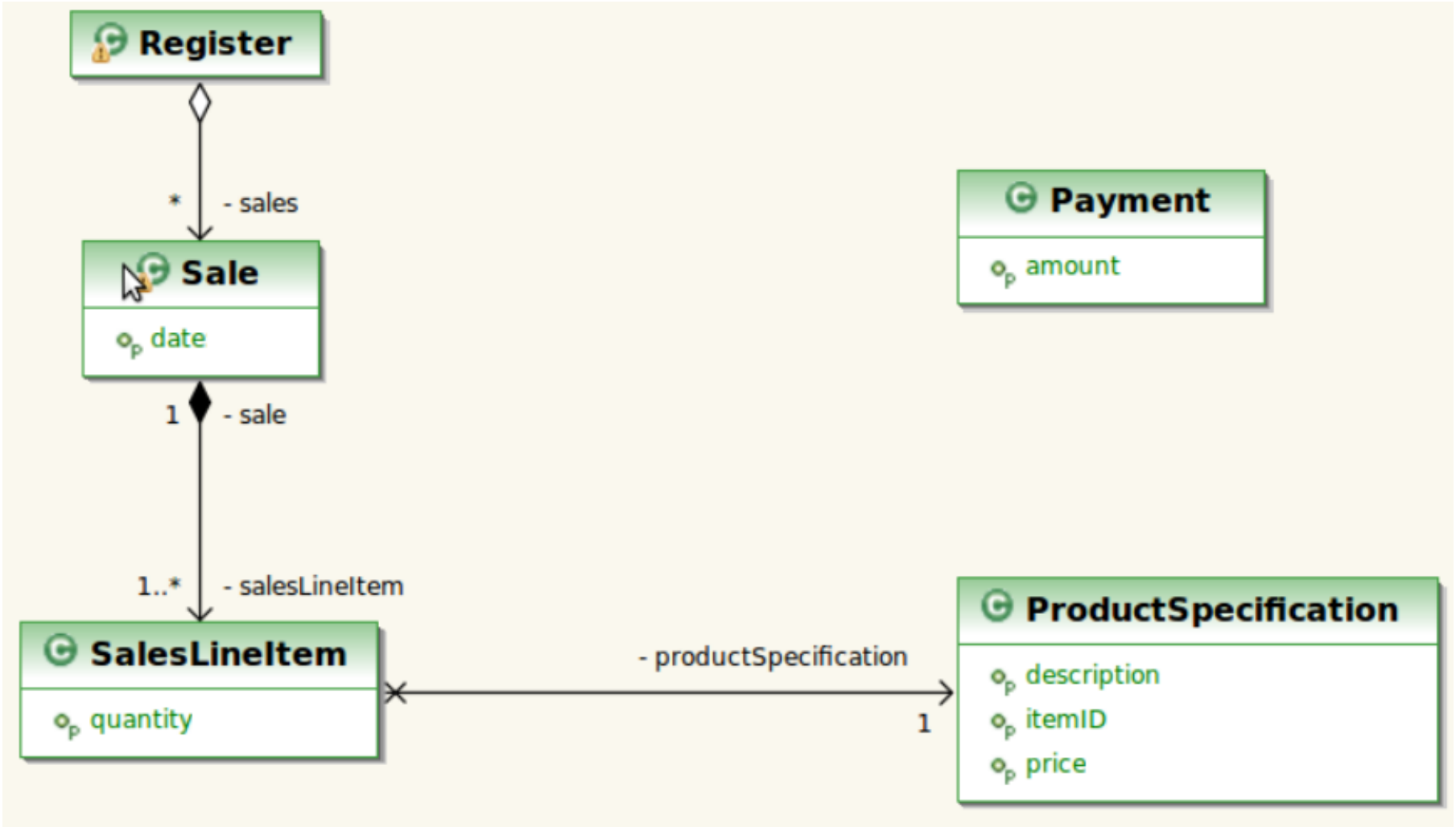
What is a general principle of assigning responsibilities to classes ?

Solution

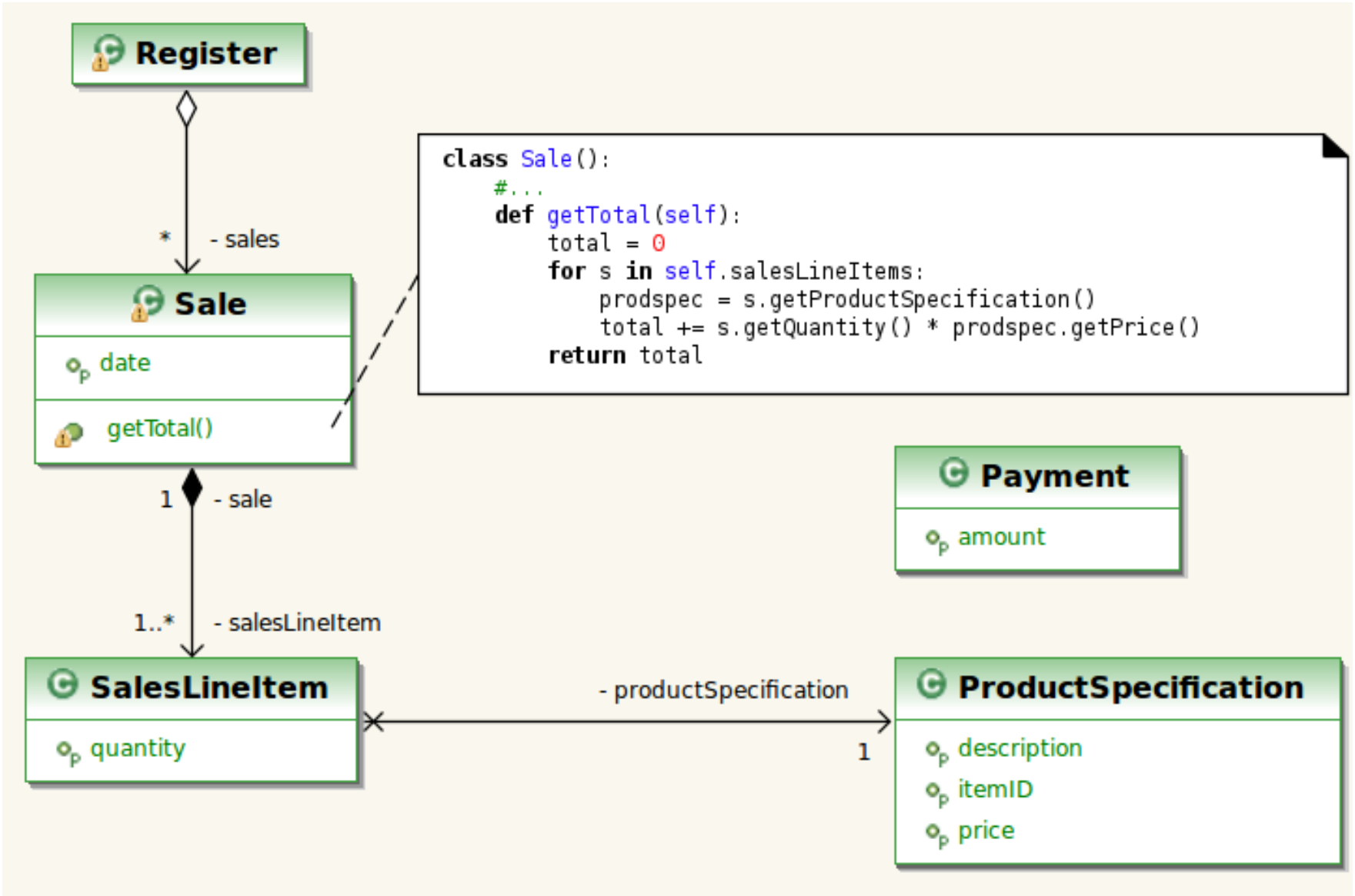
Assign responsibility to the information expert, the class that has the information necessary to fulfil the responsibility.

GRASP patterns : Expert

Who's responsible for knowing the grand total of a `Sale` ?



GRASP patterns : Expert



GRASP patterns : Expert

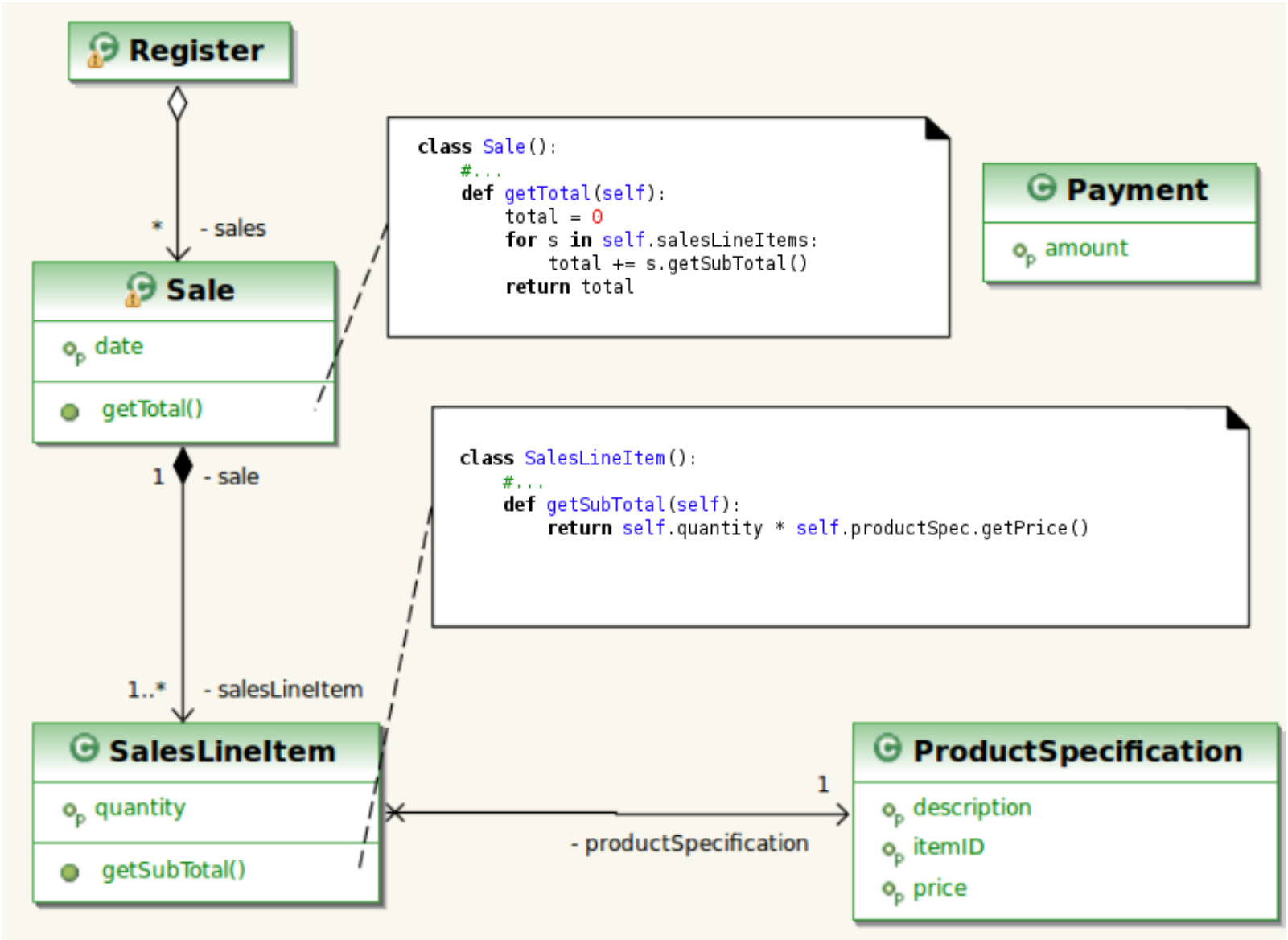
```
1  class Sale():
2      #...
3      def getTotal(self):
4          total = 0
5          for s in self.salesLineItems:
6              prodspec = s.getProductSpecification()
7              total += s.getQuantity() * prodspec.getPrice()
8          return total
```

Is this right ?

GRASP patterns : Expert

```
1  class Sale():
2      #...
3      def getTotal(self):
4          total = 0
5          for s in self.salesLineItems:
6              total +=  s.getSubTotal();
7          return total
8
9  class SalesLineItem():
10     #...
11     def getSubTotal(self):
12         return self.quantity * self.productSpec.getPrice()
```

GRASP patterns : Expert



GRASP patterns : Expert

Fulfilment of a responsibility may require information spread across different classes, each expert on its own data.

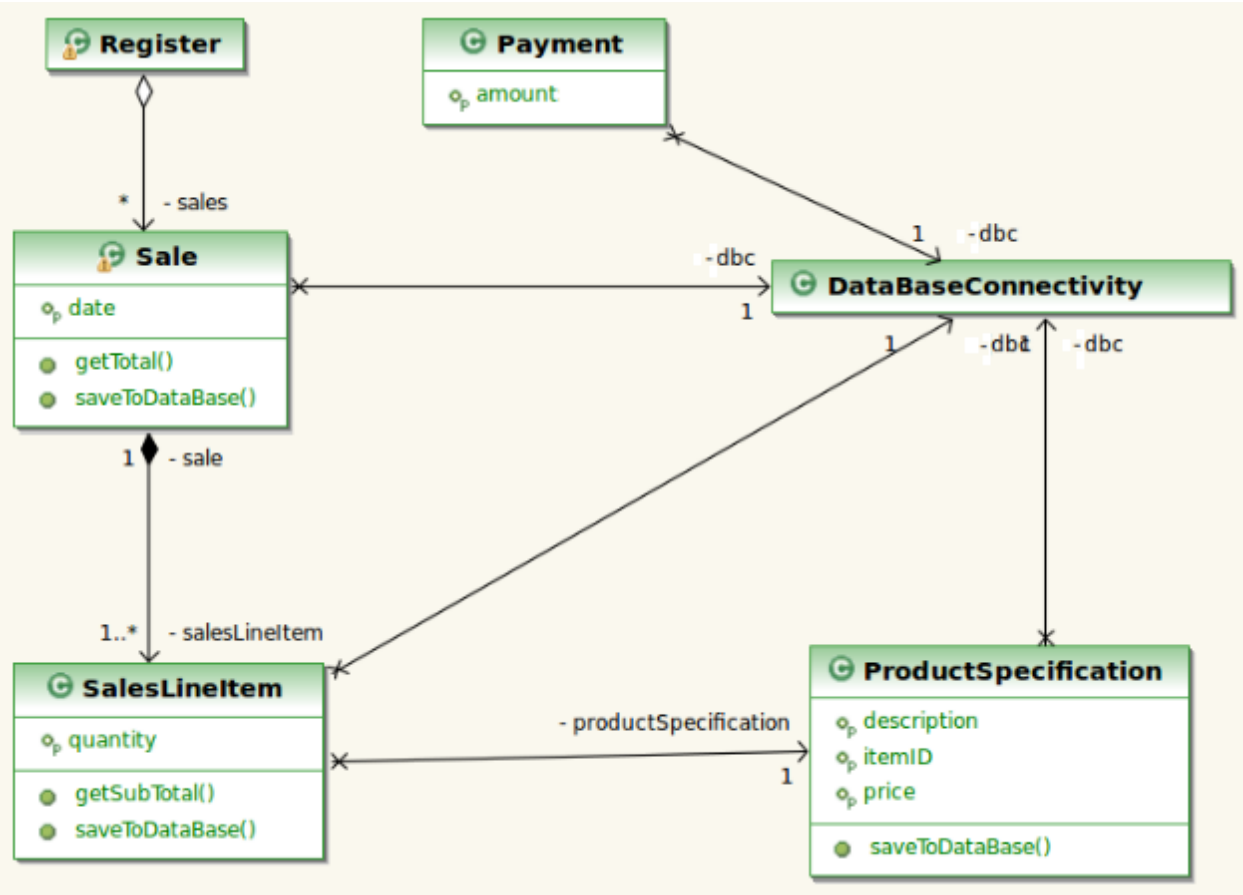
Real world analogy: workers in a business, bureaucracy, military. "Don't do anything you can push off to someone else".

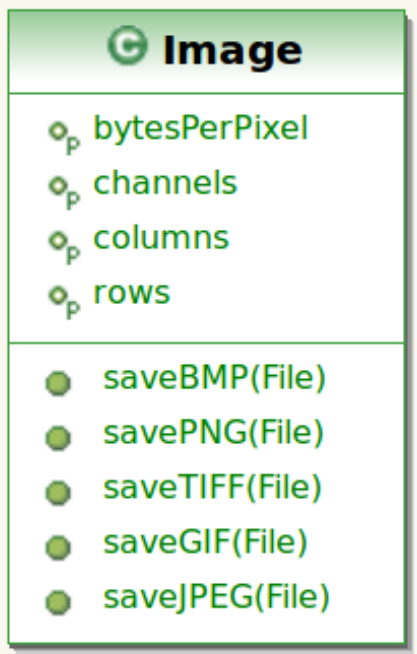
Benefits:

- Low coupling: `Sale` doesn't depend on `ProductSpecification`
- More cohesive classes
- Code easier to understand just by reading it

GRASP patterns : Expert

Not always convenient: problems of coupling and cohesion, separation of concerns.





GRASP patterns : Creator

Creator

Problem

Who should be responsible for creating an instance of some class ?

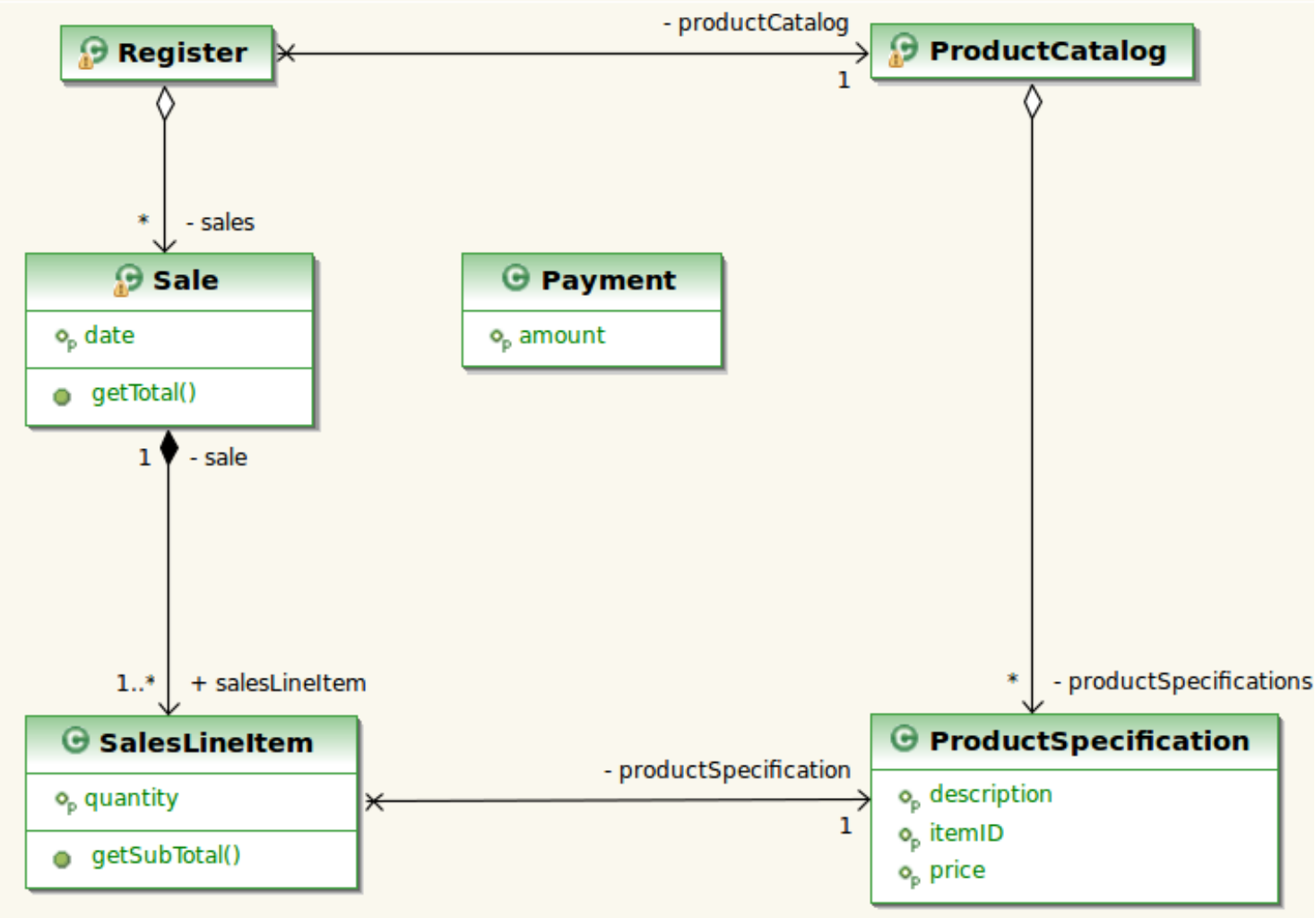
Solution

Assign B the responsibility of create instances of A if

- B aggregates or contains A objects
- B closely uses A objects
- B has the initializing data to be passed to the A constructor

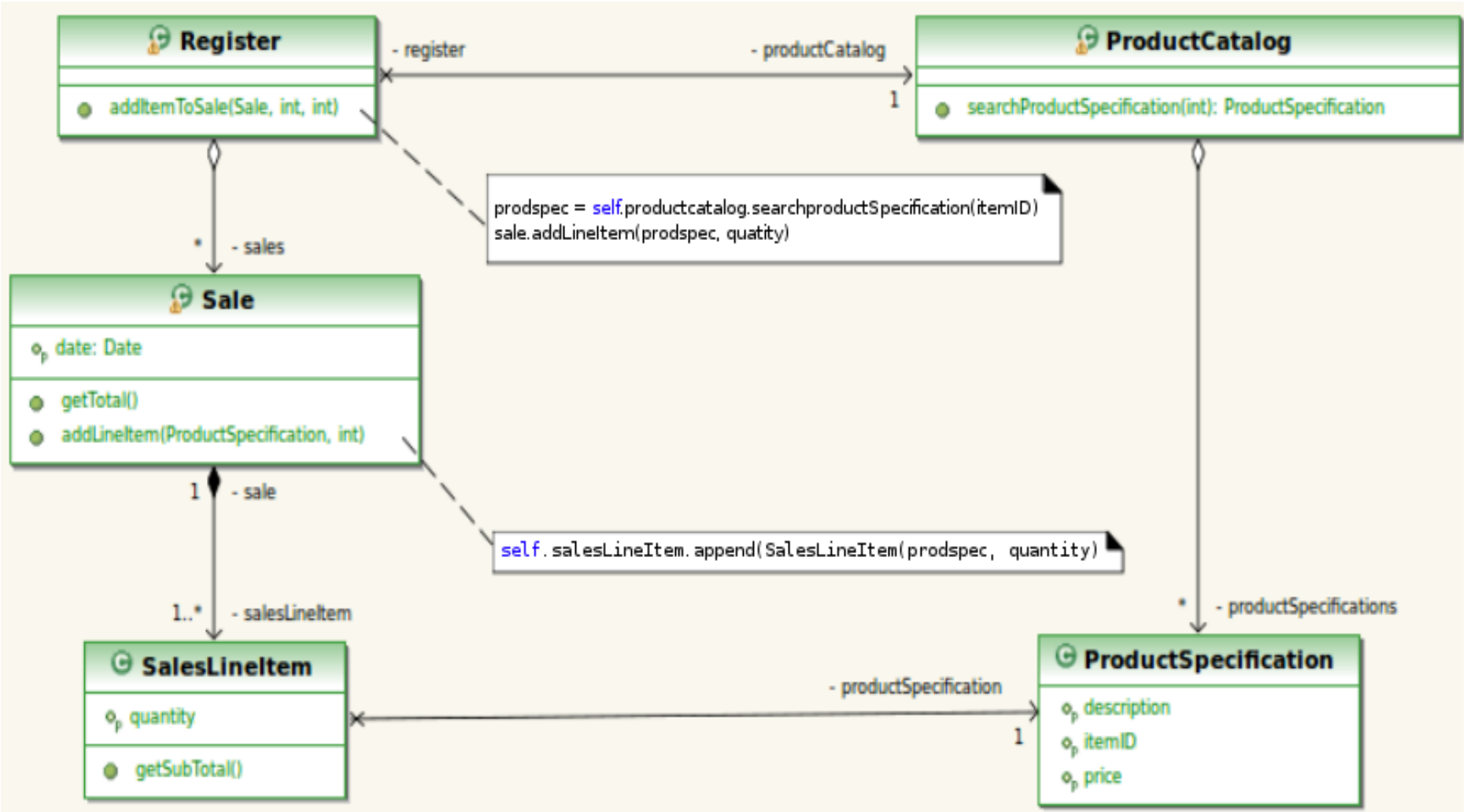
GRASP patterns : Creator

Who should be responsible for creating a `SalesLineItem` from an `itemID` and a `quantity` ?



GRASP patterns : Creator

Who should be responsible for creating a `SalesLineItem` from an `itemID` and a `quantity` ?



GRASP patterns : Creator

```
1  class Register():
2      sales = []
3      #...
4      def addItemToSale(self, sale, itemID, quantity):
5          prodspec =
       self.productcatalog.searchproductSpecification(itemID)
6          sale.addLineItem(prodspec, quatity)
7
8  class Sale():
9      salesLineItem = []
10     #...
11     def addLineItem(self, prodspec, quantity):
12         self.salesLineItem.append(SalesLineItem(prodspec,
       quantity)
```

GRASP patterns : Creator

Benefits

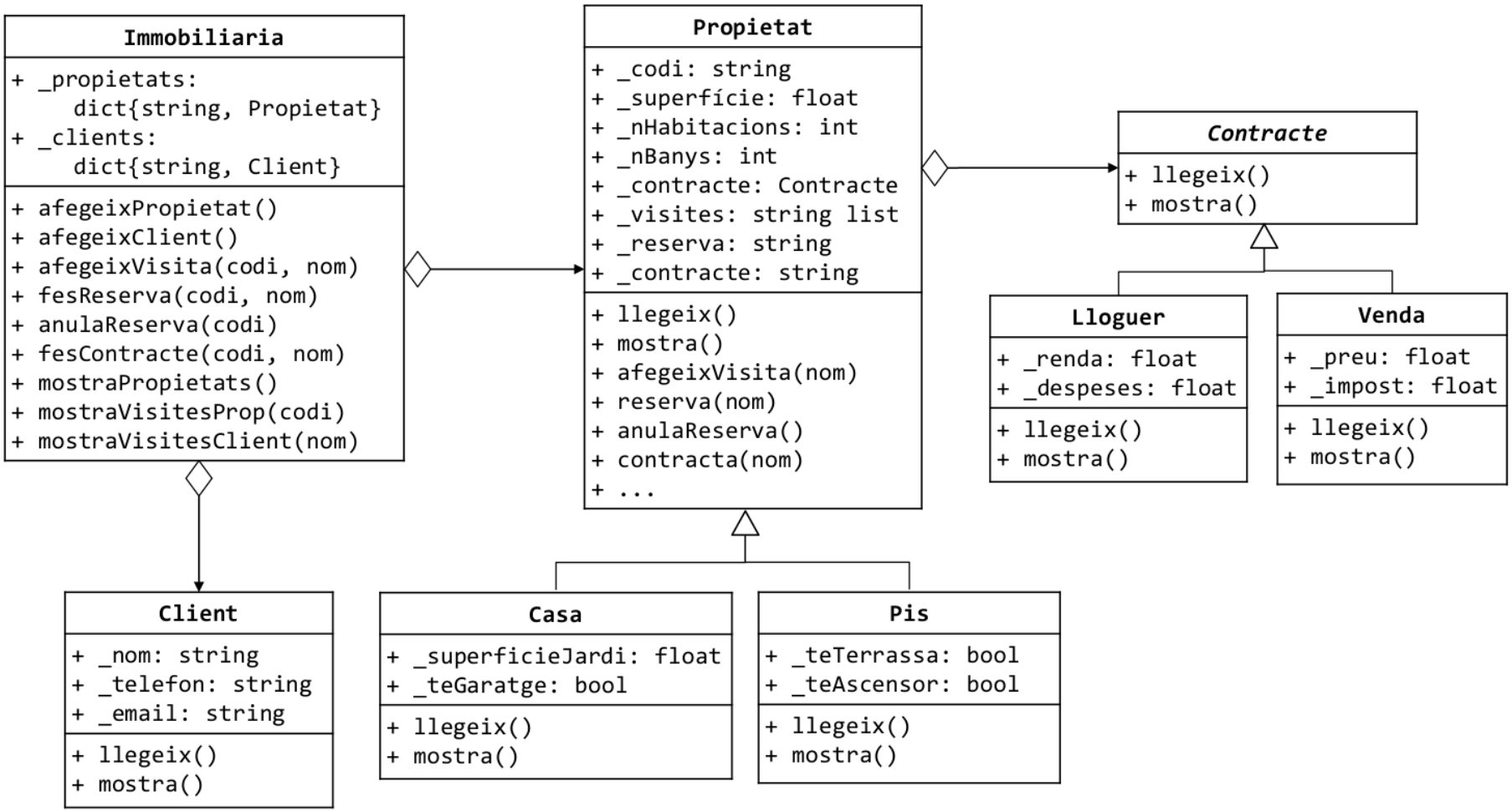
- Low coupling: anyway, the created class A has to know (depend on) to the creator B

Exceptions

- When creation is more complex, like instantiating objects of different subclasses, or clone another object.

GRASP patterns : Creator

Who should be responsible of creating new "Contracte" objects?



GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Coupling measures of how strongly an class is connected, depends, relies on or has knowledge of objects of other classes.

Classes with strong coupling

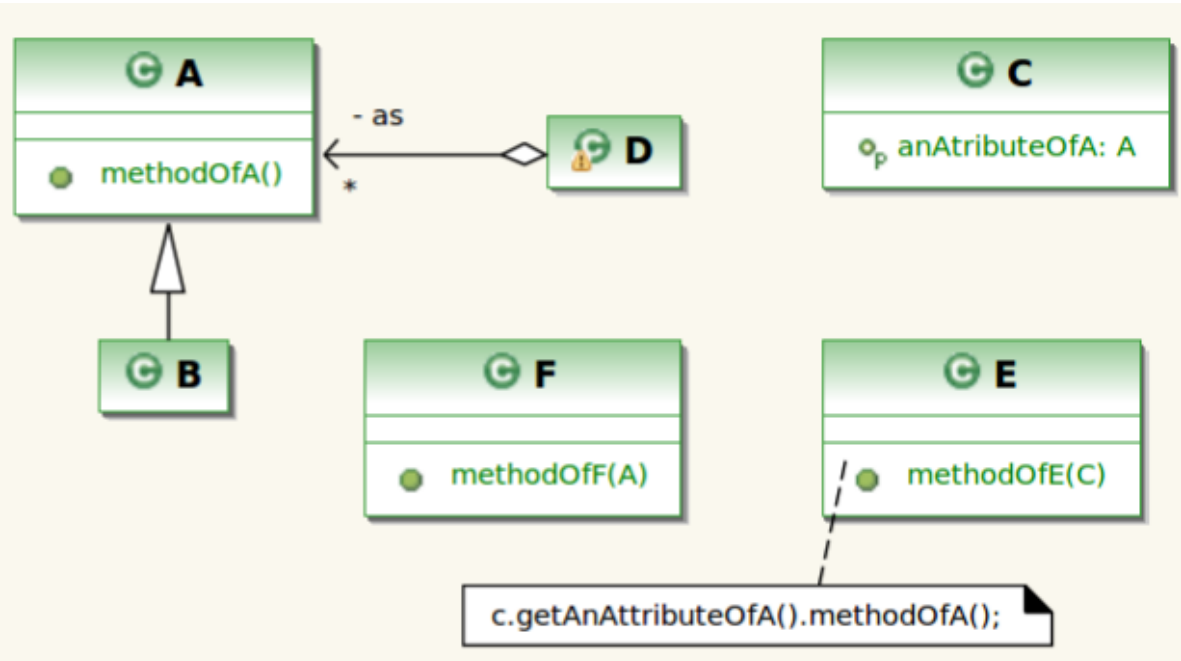
- suffer from changes in related classes
- are harder to understand and maintain
- are more difficult to reuse

But coupling is necessary if we want classes to exchange messages!

The problem is too much of it and/or too unstable classes.

GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Types of coupling



GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Problem

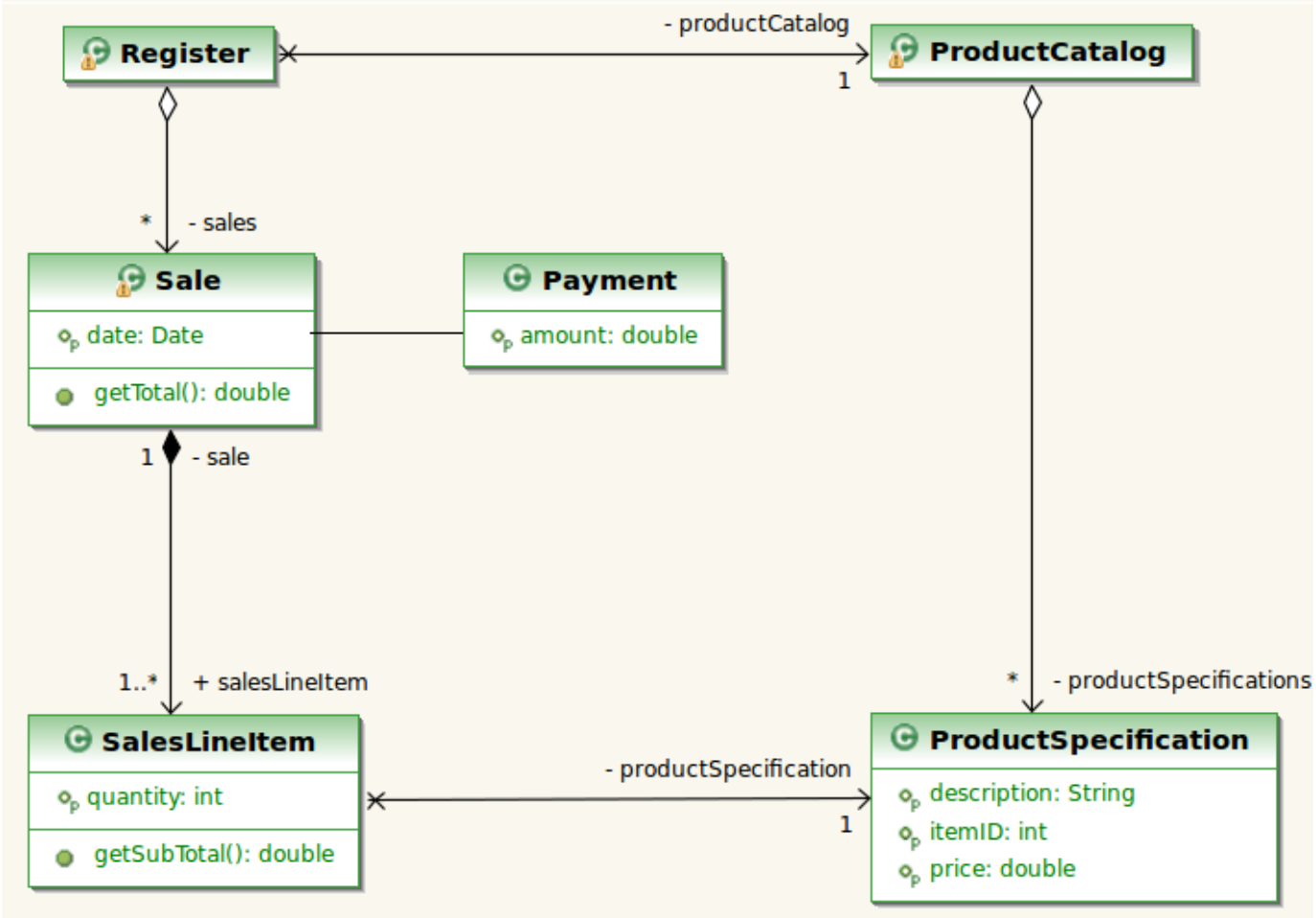
How to support low dependency, low change impact and increase reuse ?

Solution

Assign responsibilities so that coupling remains low. Try to avoid one class to have to know about many others.

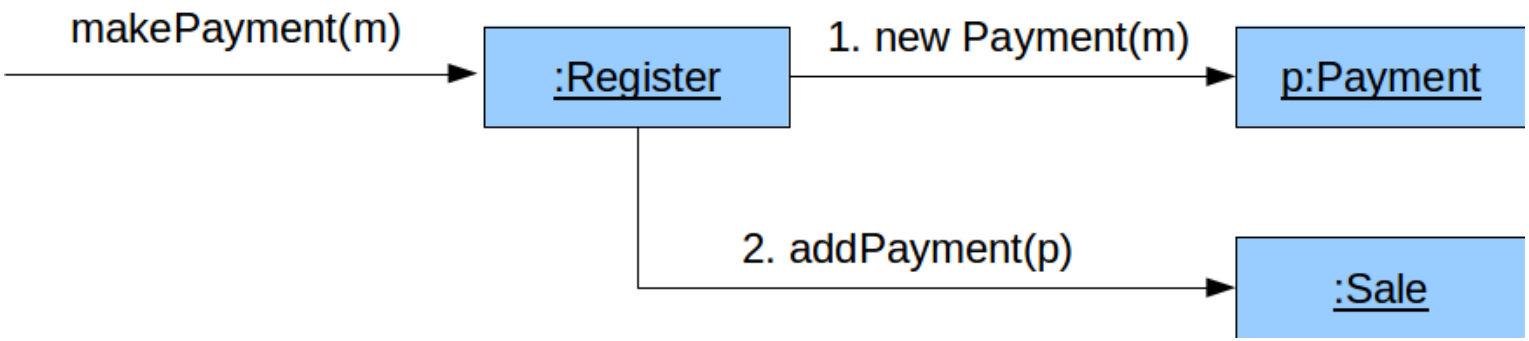
GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Who should be responsible for creating a Payment for a Sale from a handed amount ?



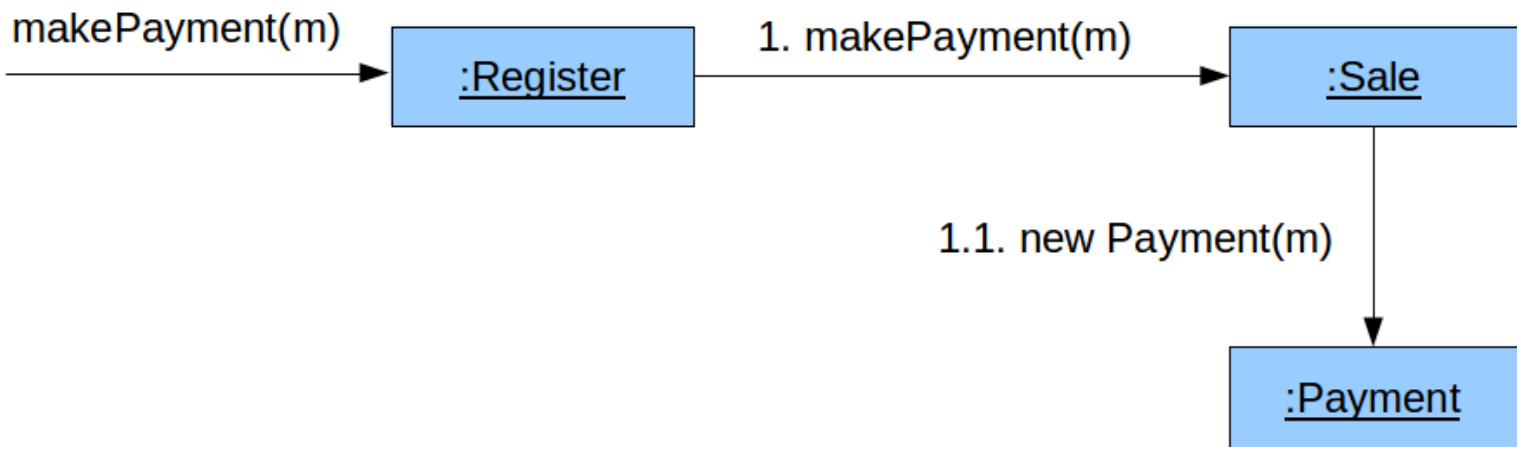
GRASP patterns : Low coupling

In the problem domain, `Register` knows about the handed amount `m`. According to Creator,



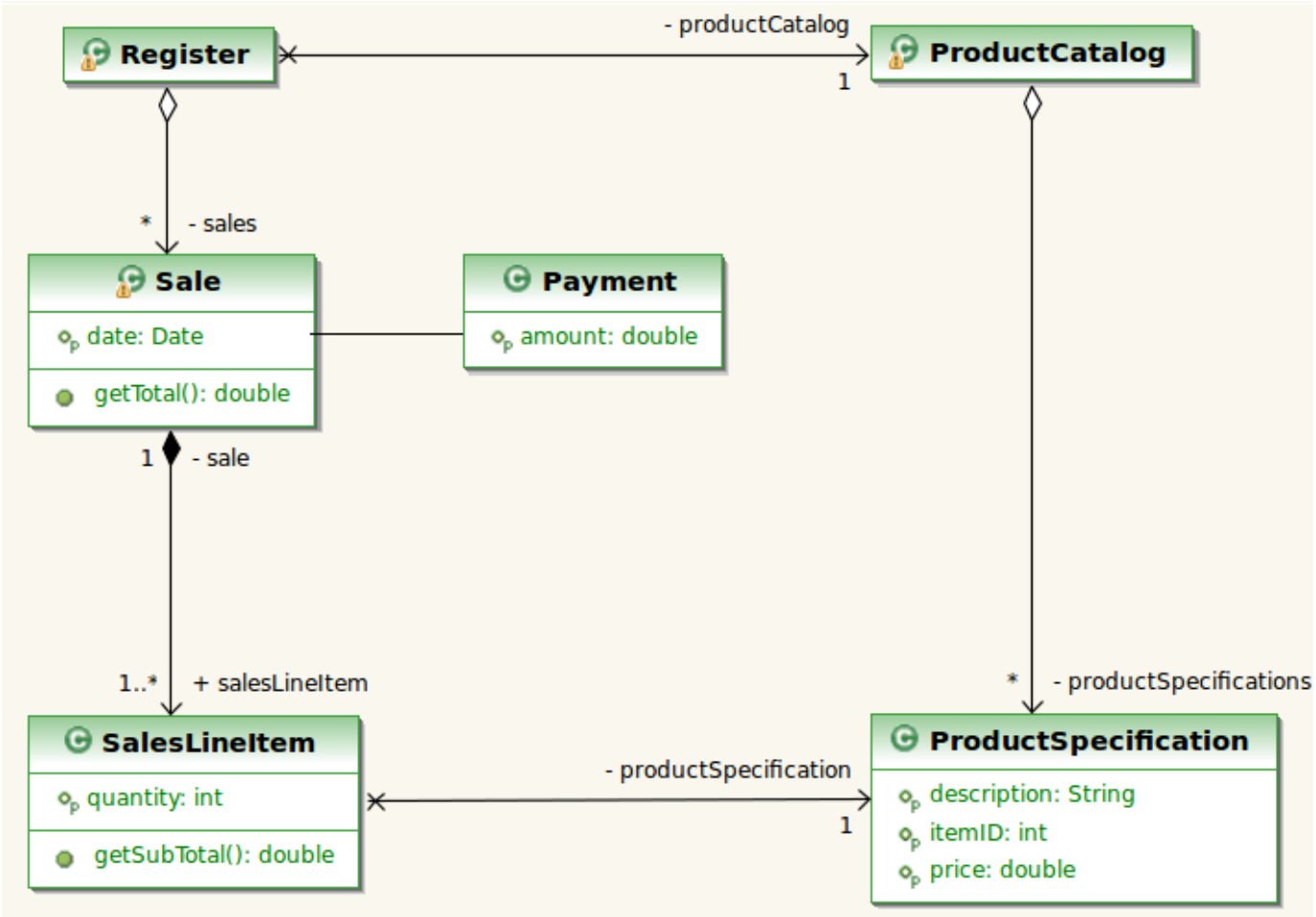
GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Delegate to `Sale` : `Register` is not coupled anymore to `Payment`. `Sales` is anyway in both cases (must be), because a `Sale` must know its payment.



GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Who should own the method `getBalance()` that computes payment amount - total of sale ?



GRASP patterns : Low coupling

Discussion

- extreme low coupling: few big, complex, non-cohesive classes that do everything, plus many objects acting as data holders
- it is not coupling per se the problem but coupling to unstable classes

GRASP patterns : High cohesion

Cohesion is a measure of how strongly related the responsibilities of a class are. A class with low cohesion does many unrelated things or too much work.

Problems: hard to

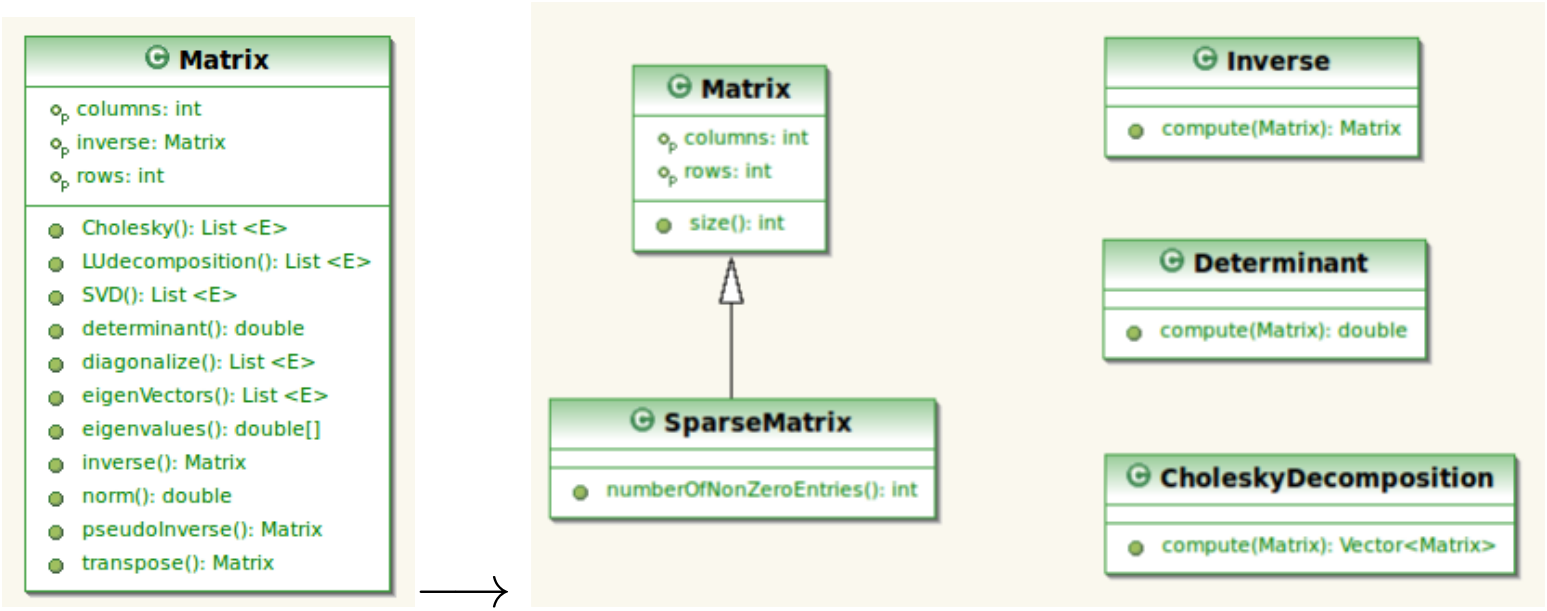
- understand
- maintain
- reuse

GRASP patterns : High cohesion

Problem
How to keep classes focused, understandable and manageable ?

Solution Assign responsibilities so that cohesion remains high. Try to avoid classes to do too much or too different things.

GRASP patterns : High cohesion



Classes do not need to represent just problem domain *entities*, but also *processes*.

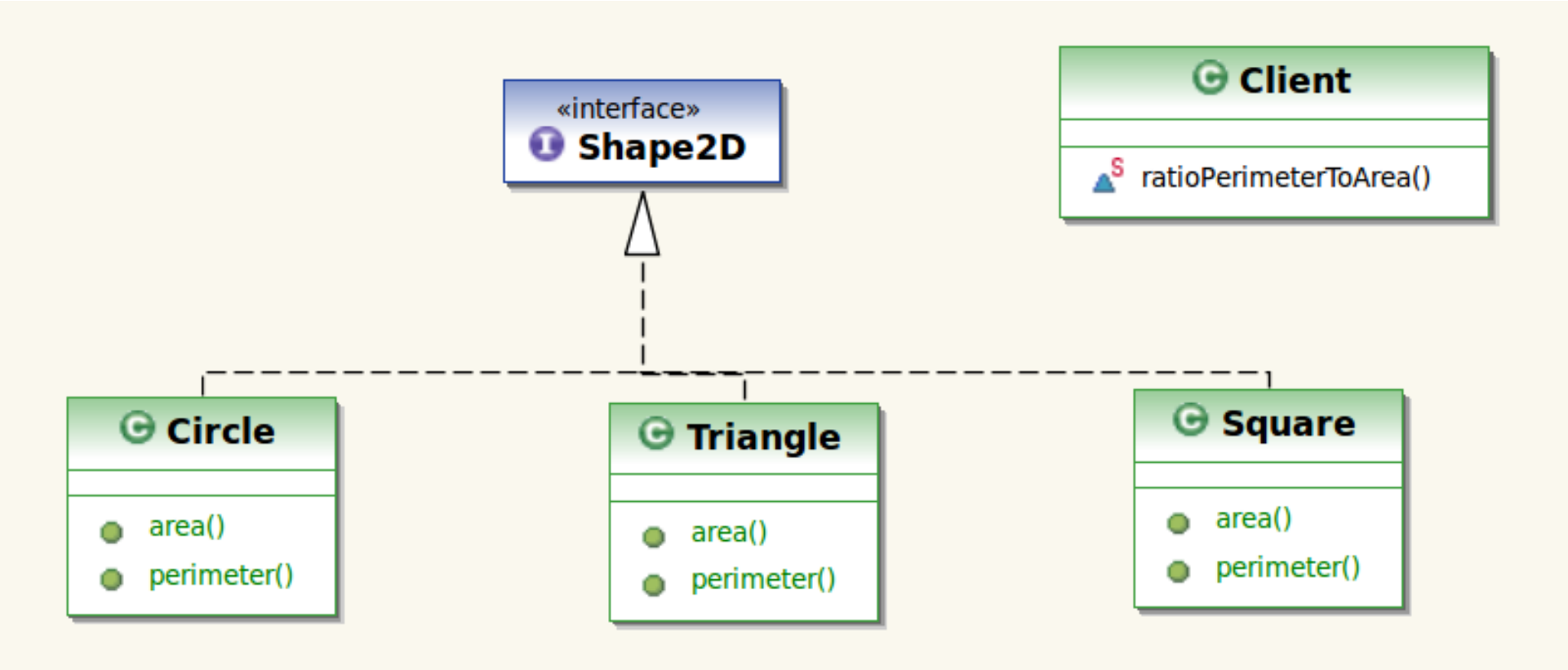
GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

Polymorphic methods: giving the same name to (different) services in different classes. Services are implemented by methods.

Problem

How to handle behavior based on type (i.e. class) but not with an if-then-else or switch statement involving the class name or a tag attribute ?

GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

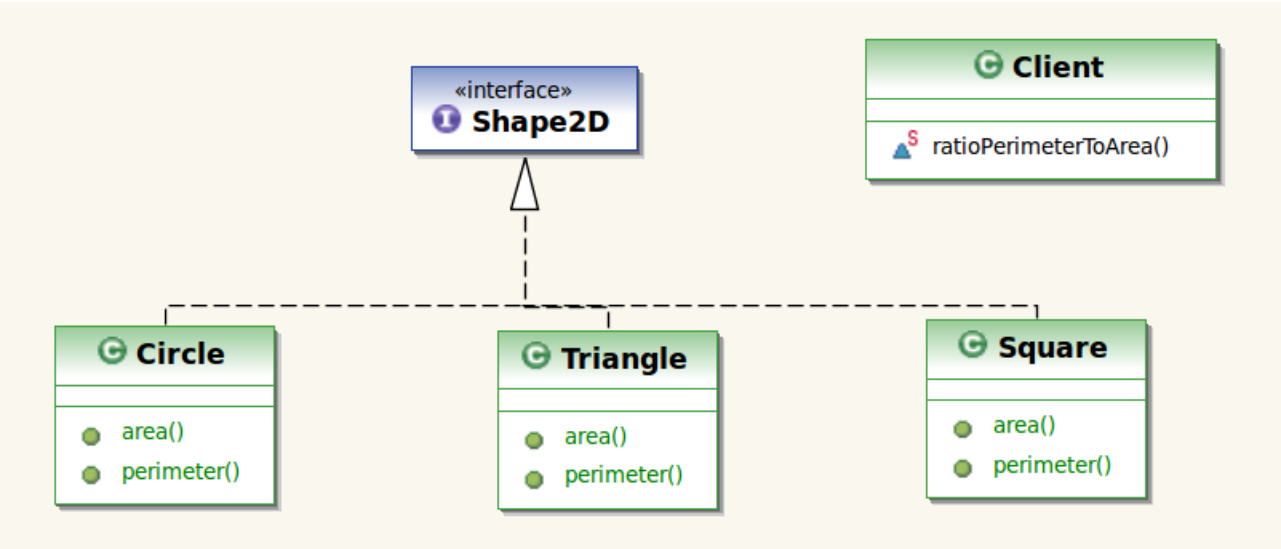


GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

Problems:

- new shapes and class name changes require the modification of this kind of code
- normally it appears at several places
- avoidable coupling between `Client` and shape subclasses

GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

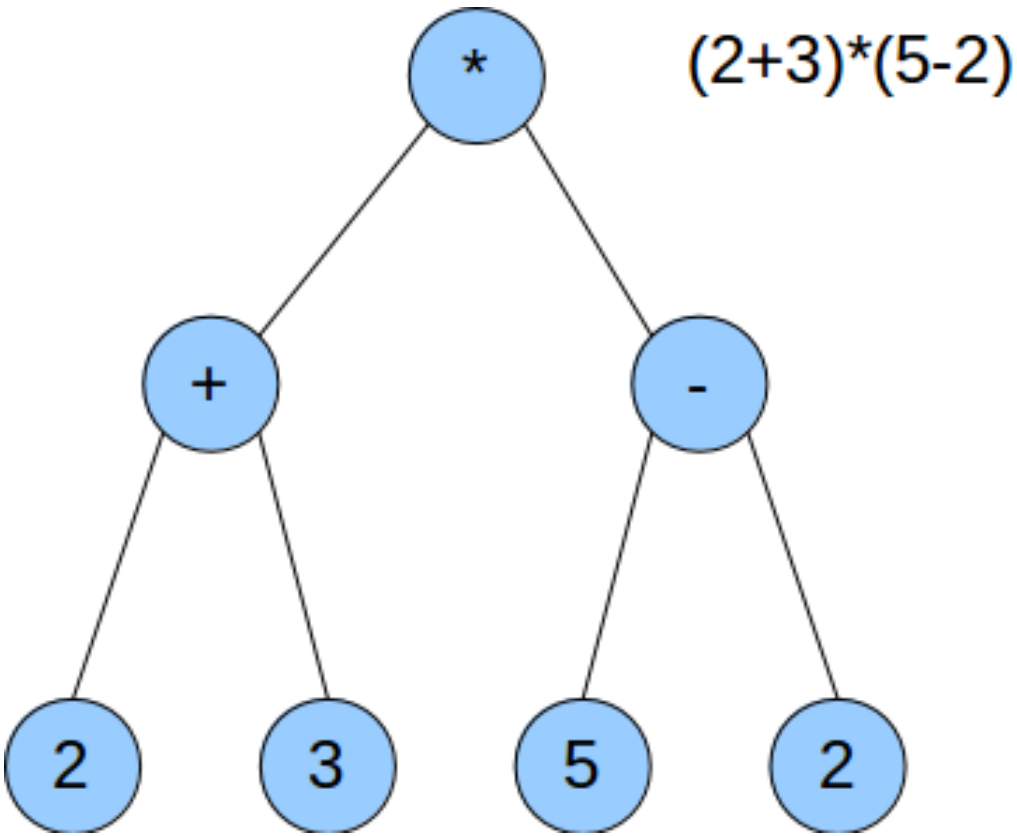


Straightforward in Python, because it is a dynamically typed language. (Not in other languages)

```
1  def ratioPerimeterToArea(s):
2      return s.perimeter()/s.area()
```

GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

Write a class `Expr` to support the evaluation of arithmetic expressions represented as trees:



GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

```
1  class NonPolyExpr:
2      CONST_EXPR = 1
3      PLUS_EXPR  = 2
4      TIMES_EXPR = 3
5
6      def __init__(self, type, left, right=None):
7          self.type = type
8          self.left = left
9          self.right = right
10
11     def evaluate(self):
12         if self.type == NonPolyExpr.CONST_EXPR:
13             return self.left
14         elif self.type == NonPolyExpr.PLUS_EXPR:
15             return self.left.evaluate() + self.right.evaluate()
16         elif self.type == NonPolyExpr.TIMES_EXPR:
17             return self.left.evaluate() * self.right.evaluate()
18         else: return None
```

GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

```
1
2       def evaluate(self):
3           if self.type == NonPolyExpr.CONST_EXPR:
4               return self.left
5           elif self.type == NonPolyExpr.PLUS_EXPR:
6               return self.left.evaluate() + self.right.evaluate()
7           elif self.type == NonPolyExpr.TIMES_EXPR:
8               return self.left.evaluate() * self.right.evaluate()
9           else: return None
10
11
12  a = NonPolyExpr(NonPolyExpr.CONST_EXPR, 3.0)
13  b = NonPolyExpr(NonPolyExpr.CONST_EXPR, 4.0)
14  c = NonPolyExpr(NonPolyExpr.PLUS_EXPR,a,b)
15  print( c.evaluate() )
```

GRASP patterns : Polymorphism

Problems:

- `evaluate()` is not cohesive as its polymorphic version
- `NonPolyExpr` cannot be easily extended: unary (`-`) and ternary operators (`x ? y : z`)
- coupling: clients must know about expression types `CONST_EXPR`, `PLUS_EXPR`, `TIMES_EXPR`
- it is legal to write non-sense code like

```
1 # a, b are NonPolyExpr objects
2 e = NonPolyExpr(NonPolyExpr.CONST_EXPR,a,b);
3 print( e.evaluate() )
```

Exercise: write the polymorphic version.

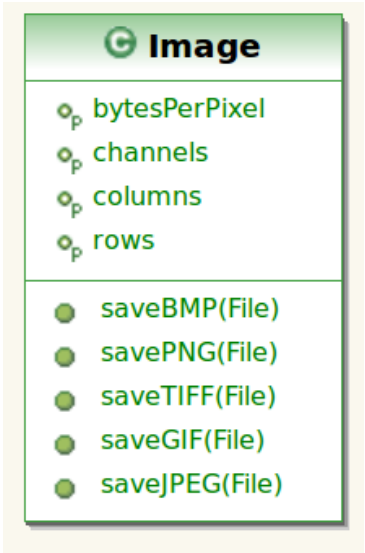
GRASP patterns : Pure fabrication

Problem

What object should have a responsibility when no class of the problem domain may take it without violating high cohesion, low coupling ?

Not all responsibilities fit into domain classes, like persistence, network communications, user interaction etc.

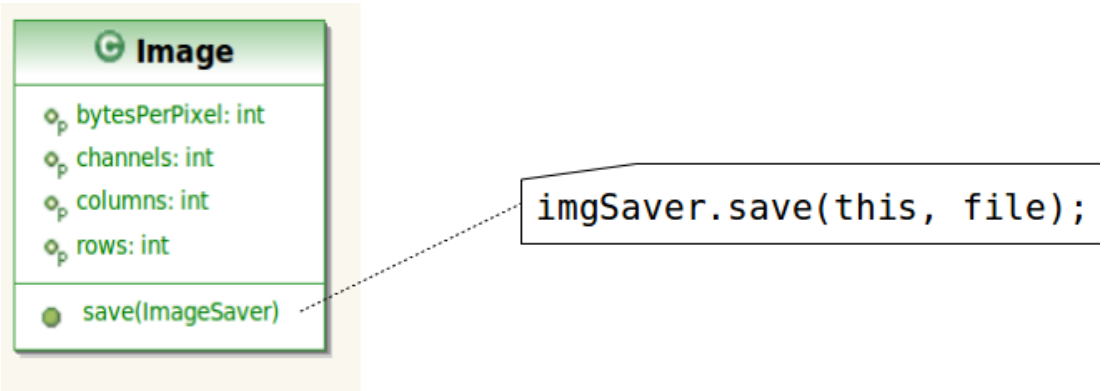
Remember what was the problem here

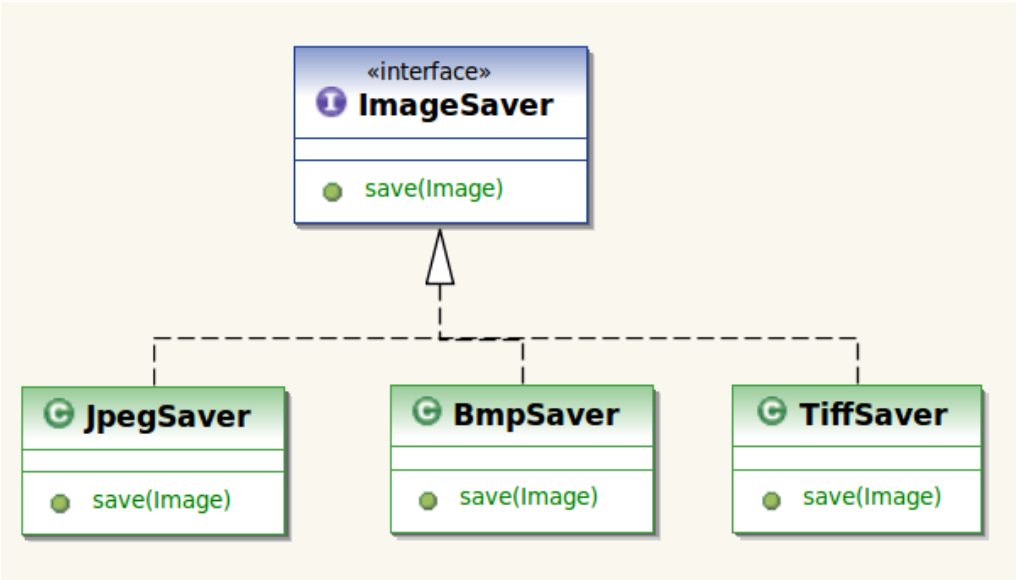


GRASP patterns : Pure fabrication

Solution

Assign a cohesive set of responsibilities to an artificial/convenience class not representing a concept of the problem domain.





GRASP patterns : Summary

What should you know

- What's design, object design and how to do it
- What are responsibilities
- Problem + solution of Expert, Creator GRASP patterns
- What's cohesion and coupling
- Why `instanceof` is evil and how to avoid it
- What's a pure fabrication class and when to create them

Next: object-oriented design general principles