

# Collective Noun

## Definition of Collective Noun

The term *collective noun* denotes a group of objects, people, animals, or ideas as a single concept, or a single thing. Though a collective noun is not a single person or thing in a group, it is considered as a single idea, entity, or thing. It is also known as a “group noun.”

Depending upon the meanings within in the given context, a collective noun can be substituted with a singular or a plural [pronoun](#). Common examples of collective noun include: army, band, cast, committee, crowd, family, faculty, group, jury, society, school, staff, team, and troop. In the [sentence](#), “The penalty for laughing in a courtroom is six months in jail; if it were not for this penalty, the jury would never hear the evidence,” (*A Little Book in C Major*, by H.L. Mencken) “jury” is a collective noun representing a group of judges.

## Common Examples of Collective Noun

Napoleon’s army finally faced defeat at Waterloo.

She comes from a decent family; she is the youngest of six kids.

The pop group will go on world tour next month.

Our cricket team has star players who can win the world cup.

The committee has enjoyed donuts with the tea.

The audience was happy with the stage performance.

## Examples of Collective Nouns in Literature

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### Example #1: *Animal Farm* (by George Orwell)

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“The two horses had just lain down when a brood of ducklings, which had lost their mother, filed into the barn, cheeping feebly

and wandering from side to side to find someplace where they would not be trodden on ... He formed the Egg Production Committee for the hens, the Clean Tails League for the cows, the Wild Comrades' Re-education Committee (the [object](#) of this was to tame the rats and rabbits), the Whiter Wool Movement for the sheep, and various others, besides instituting classes in reading and writing.”

In this paragraph, the underlined words “a brood of ducklings” and a “committee” are collective nouns, but each seems a singular noun.

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**Example #2: *The Canterbury Tales* (by Geoffrey Chaucer)**

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“As I was all prepared for setting out  
To Canterbury with a heart devout,  
That there had come into that hostelry  
At night some twenty-nine, a company  
Of sundry folk whom chance had brought to fall...  
I'd spoken with each one about the trip  
And was a member of the fellowship.

This passage has used two collective nouns “a company of Sunday folk” and “a member of the fellowship.” Both words are singular but have been used in a sense to denote a group of individuals.

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**Example #3: *A Modest Proposal* (by Jonathan Swift)**

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“Therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation...”

Swift has used “common-wealth” for an organization, and “public” for a large number of people, while “nation” also stands for a mass of people.

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#### Example #4: *Catch-22* (by Joseph Heller)

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“Soon he was proscribing parts of salutations and signatures and leaving the text untouched. One time he blacked out all but the salutation ‘Dear Mary’ from a letter, and at the bottom he wrote, ‘I yearn for you tragically. R. O. Shipman, Chaplain, U.S. Army.’ R.O. Shipman was the group chaplain’s name.”

The word “Army” in this paragraph is a collective noun. It is a defense organization having a number of troops working under a banner. However, it seems singular.

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#### Example #5: *The Catcher in the Rye* (by J.D. Salinger)

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“I was the goddam manager of the fencing team. Very big deal. We’d gone in to New York that morning for this fencing meet with McBurney School.”

In these lines, “school” is a collective noun, which is an institute having faculty members, students, and other working staff.

### Function

A collective noun indicates a number of things, ideas, or people as a single thing. Collective nouns are made up of individuals, such a team is nothing without individuals on it. They are commonly used in writing and everyday speech to make any of these concise, brief, and meaningful. Collective nouns are also used as a [subject](#) of the sentence. Hence, they play an important role in the sentence just like any other noun in bringing clarity and making text relevant.