Clause

Definition of Clause

The word "clause" has been derived from the Medieval Latin word "clausa," meaning the close of a period, a termination, or a conclusion. In grammar, a clause is a combination of words within a [sentence](#) that is comprised of a [subject](#) and a predicate.

A clause can be an independent clause, or it can be a dependent clause within another sentence. For instance, Virginia Woolf combines one independent and two dependent clauses in the following sentence: "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." (*A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf)

Types of Clause

There are four types of clause:

Independent Clause

An independent clause is also known as the "main clause," because it contains enough information to stand alone. An independent clause could, in effect, be considered a grammatically complete sentence. An independent clause contains a subject that lets the readers know what the sentence is about, as well as a verb that informs the readers what the subject is doing or will do.

Writers can connect two or more independent clauses by using coordinating conjunctions, to make a compound sentence. For instance, in the sentence, "This cat likes bread crumbs," the subject is the "cat," and the verb is "likes" making this clause a complete thought.

Dependent Clause

A dependent clause is also known as a "subordinate clause." A dependent clause, as its name would suggest, cannot stand alone because it does not have all the information necessary to make it a complete sentence; therefore, an independent clause needs to be connected to it. A dependent clause uses words like "because," "before," "after," "since," "although," "though," and "in order to."

Example: "Because my cat likes when the deliveryman feeds her bread crumbs, she does not irritate the deliveryman."

Relative Clause

A relative clause begins with a relative pronoun, such as "whom," "who," "whose," "which," "why," "where," or "when." A relative clause describes a noun and connects that noun to the main clause in order to express a complete idea. For instance, in the sentence, "My cat who likes bread crumbs is a black cat," the clause "who likes bread crumbs," contains the relative pronoun "who."

For another example, in the sentence, "My cousin is employed by Walmart, where he works with enthusiasm," "where" is the relative adverb in the clause "where he works with enthusiasm."

Noun Clause

A noun clause is also called a "nominal clause." A noun clause functions as a noun but can also be used as a subject, an object, or a complement within the sentence. A noun clause is almost similar to a relative clause; however, a noun clause functions as the noun of the sentence, whereas the relative clause derives its meaning from the noun.

Example: "The difference between *how you remember* and *what you remember* is your own personal matter."

Examples of Clauses in Literature

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

"All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

In this line, Orwell has used two independent clauses. Both clauses have a subject and a predicate. He has combined two clauses with the [conjunction](#) "but," thereby making this a compound sentence.

Example #2: *Oh What a Paradise It Seems* (by John Cheever)

> "The thought of stars contributed to the power of his feeling. What moved him was a sense of those worlds around us, our knowledge, however, imperfect of their nature, our sense of their possessing some grain of our past and of our lives to come."

Here, Cheever has used the noun clause "what moved him." This nominal clause is functioning as a noun to describe another noun: "a sense of those worlds."

Example #3: *The Rainbow* (by D.H. Lawrence)

> "She had plenty of acquaintances, but no friends. Very few people whom she met were significant to her. They seemed part of a herd, undistinguished."

In this example, a relative clause ("whom she met") is used, while a relative pronoun ("whom") further describes another pronoun ("she"). However, this clause is dependent on the noun "people."

Example #4: *God in Search of Man* (by Abraham Joshua Heschel)

> "*When I was young*, I used to admire intelligent people; *as I grow older*, I admire kind people."

In this sentence, the author has used two dependent clauses (underlined), which he combines with independent clauses to complete his thought.

Function

A clause is section of a sentence that has its own importance and value. Clauses add cohesion to a sentence by joining different parts of a sentence together.