



SENTENCE DIAGRAMMING 101

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LESSON #7

The X-Factor

We've covered the basics of diagramming from simple sentences to those that contain multiple clauses and phrases. Now it's time to look at sentences that leave out words. The first type of sentence you may think of is an imperative sentence, one that contains the understood subject: *you*.

Consider this sentence: Stop watching TV and help me in the kitchen. The subject of the sentence is understood: *You* stop watching TV and *you* help me in the kitchen.

Sometimes the relative pronoun in an adjective or noun clause is omitted: Suzie told Jack she wanted to get married. The complete thought would be worded this way: Suzie told Jack *that* she wanted to get married.

Other types of sentences omit words, such as comparisons: John is a better worker than Sam. The complete thought would be worded like this: John is a better worker than Sam *is a worker*.

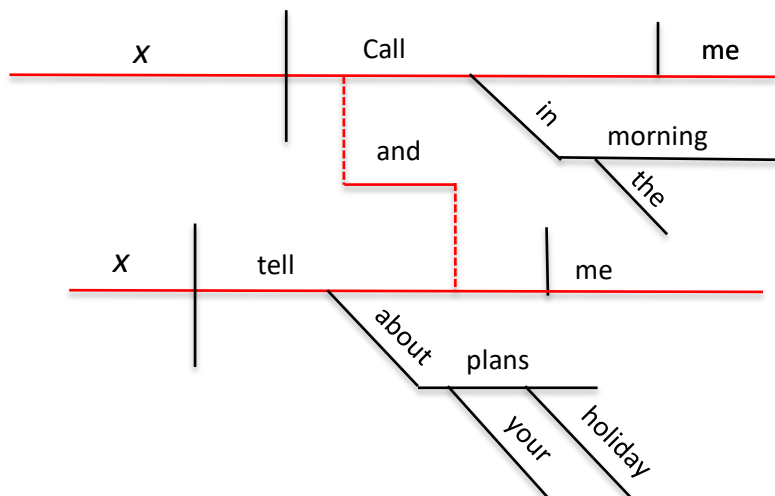
Diagrammers use an *X* to represent each omitted word in a sentence. In this lesson, we'll look at several ways to diagram these kinds of sentences.

Commands

First, let's talk about commands, or imperative sentences, that contain the understood subject *you*.

Call me in the morning, and tell me about your holiday plans.

(You) call me in the morning, and (you) tell me about your holiday plans.

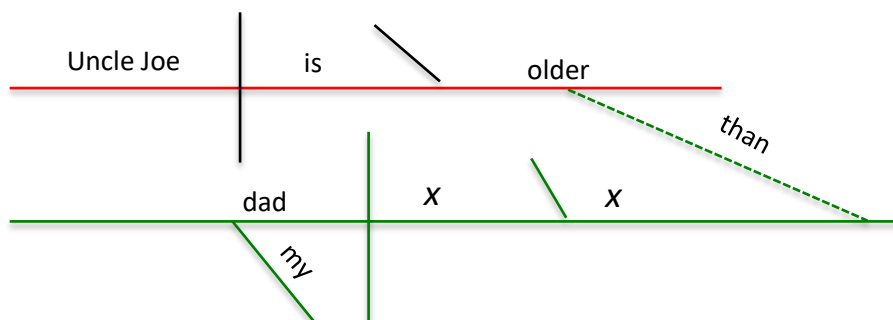


Comparisons

The technique used for comparisons is a little more complex because more than one word is missing. The comparison in the sentence below is sometimes called an unequal comparison.

Uncle Joe is older than my dad.

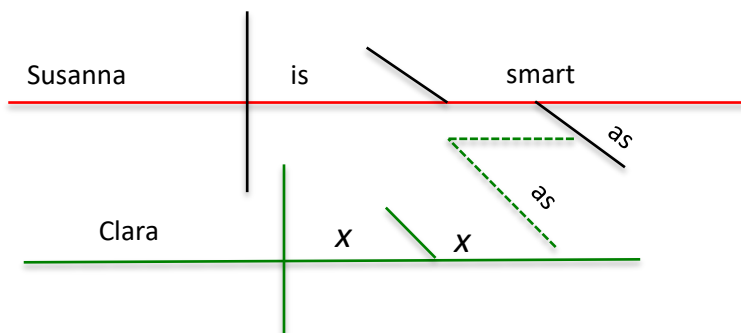
Uncle Joe is older than my dad (is old).



Here are some other comparative structures you may encounter:

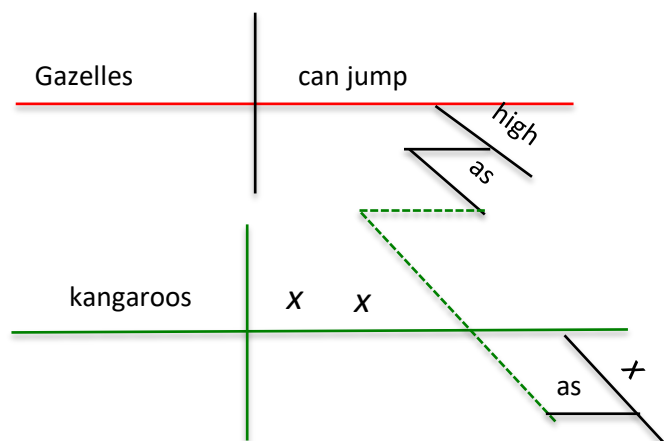
Susanna is as smart as Clara.

Susanna is as smart as Clara (is smart).



Gazelles can jump as high as kangaroos.

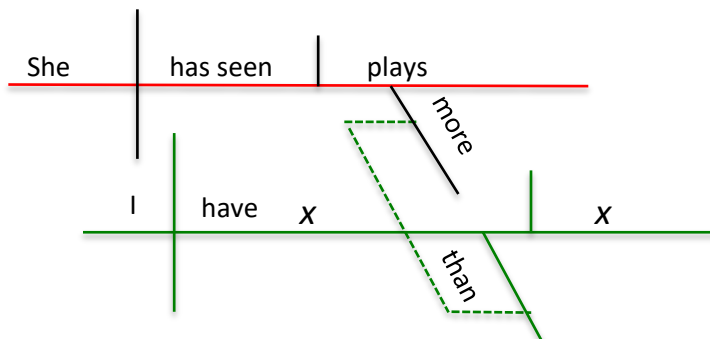
Gazelles can jump as high as kangaroos (can jump high).



Note that the diagram structure of a comparison is different for an adverb, such as *high*, which is modifying an action verb, than the diagram structure of a predicate adjective, such as *smart*, which follows a *be* (linking) verb. Also note the slight difference below when the sentence contains a direct object.

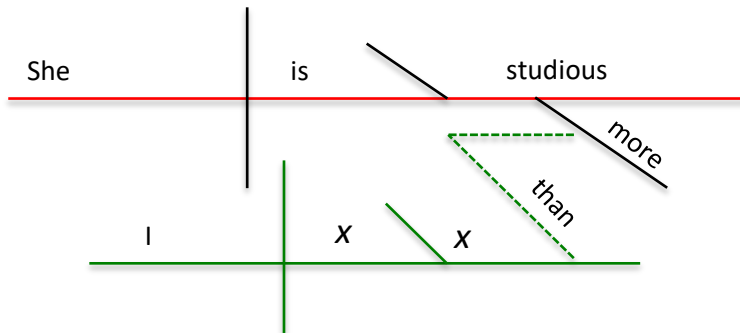
She has seen more plays than I have.

She has seen more plays than I have (seen plays).



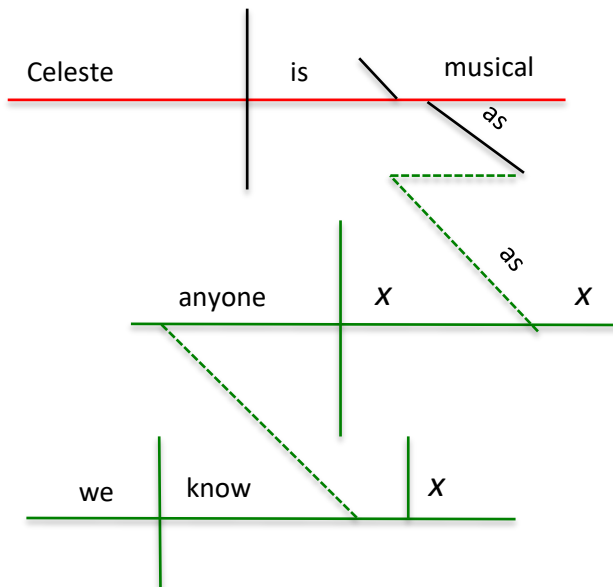
She is more studious than I.

She is more studious than I (am studious).



Celeste is as musical as anyone we know.

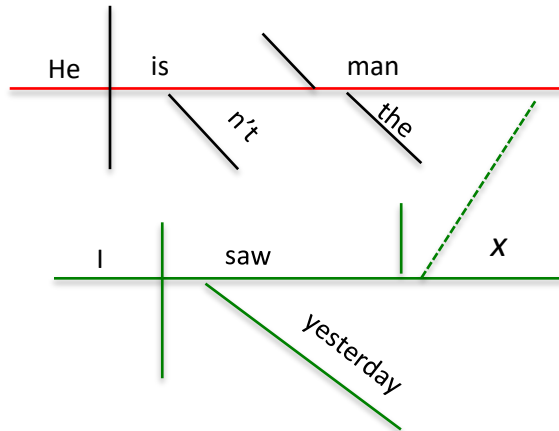
Celeste is as musical as anyone (that) we know (is musical).



The above sentence contains both a comparison (*as musical as*) and an adjective clause (*that we know*) in which the relative pronoun *that* is unexpressed.

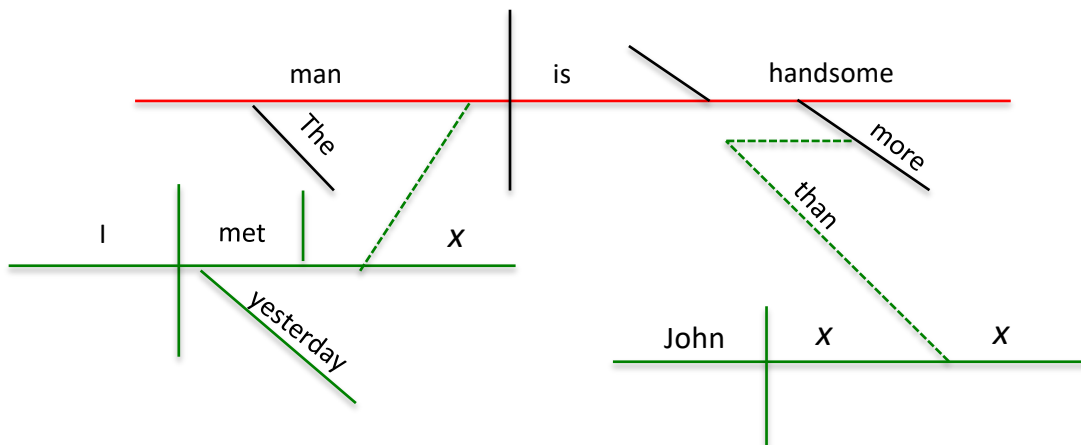
Sometimes the relative pronoun *whom* is omitted in a sentence. In this case the missing *whom* is the direct object of the adjective clause, which is modifying the predicate nominative.

He isn't the man I saw yesterday.
 He isn't the man (whom) I saw yesterday.



The omitted pronoun may also be part of an adjective clause that modifies the subject:

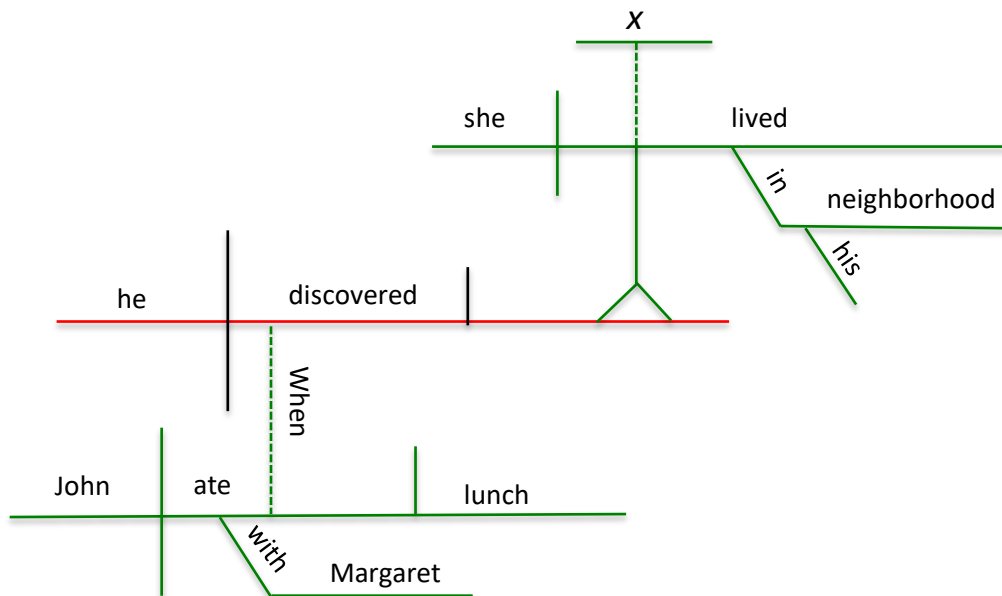
The man I met yesterday is more handsome than John.
 The man (whom) I met yesterday is more handsome than John (is handsome).



As mentioned in Lesson 5, sometimes the *that* in a noun clause is an expletive—it doesn't have a function in the clause. Editors usually eliminate these words in manuscripts, but it should still be represented in the diagram.

When John ate lunch with Margaret, he discovered she lived in his neighborhood.

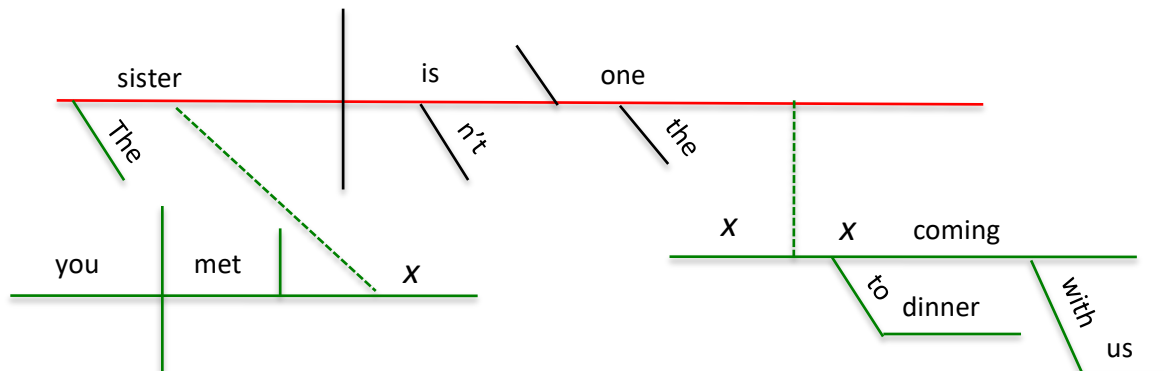
When John ate lunch with Margaret, he discovered (that) she lived in his neighborhood.



To reduce wordiness in sentences, adjective clauses are often condensed.

The sister you met isn't the one coming to dinner with us.

The sister (whom) you met isn't the one (who is) coming to dinner with us.

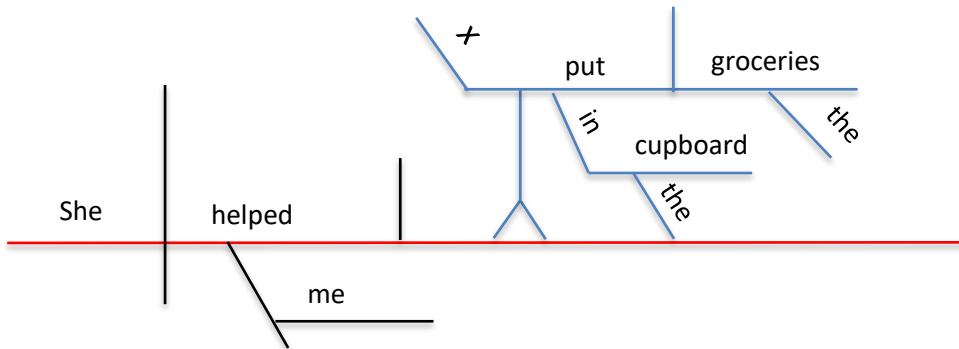


Question: Why are *to dinner* and *with us* placed separately under *coming*?

Another word that is often unexpressed is the *to* in an infinitive phrase.

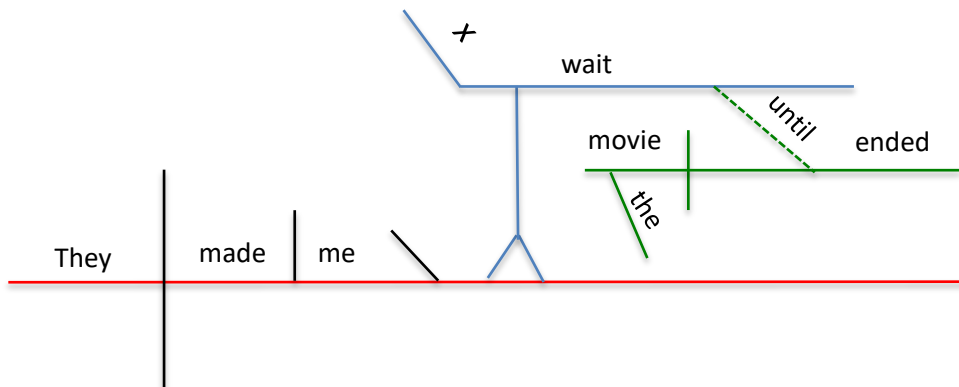
She helped me put the groceries in the cupboard.

She helped me (to) put the groceries in the cupboard.



They made me wait until the movie ended.

They made me (to) wait until the movie ended.



Note: As the above sentence demonstrates, an adverbial clause can modify a verbal.

Did you notice that I didn't diagram the *me* in the above sentences the same way? In these situations, some grammarians consider the *me* an indirect object and the infinitive phrase a direct object (as diagrammed in the first sentence). Others consider the *me* a direct object and the infinitive phrase an objective complement (as diagrammed in the second sentence). What do you think?

Recognizing unexpressed words in clauses and comparisons will solve some pronoun issues that arise. Consider the sentence below:

Nora has worked longer at the company than (he/him).

If you complete the comparison, the correct pronoun becomes obvious:

Nora has worked longer at the company than he has worked at the company.

Here are two other examples:

Have you lived in the city as long as (they/them)?

Have you lived in the city as long as they have lived in the city?

Can Joann play the piano as well as (he/him)?

Can Joann play the piano as well as he can play the piano?

Make a habit of completing comparisons and inserting unexpressed words in your mind as you edit.

Lesson Review

- In imperative sentences (commands), an *x* is used to mark the place of the understood *you* in a diagram.
- Sentences that contain comparisons also have unexpressed words, which are marked with an *x* in a diagram.
- The *to* in an infinitive phrase is often unexpressed, especially when the phrase functions as a direct object.
- Many kinds of words can be unexpressed in a sentence. We've looked at several in this lesson, including relative pronouns, verbs, and adjectives. As you examine sentences in the manuscripts you edit, you'll probably come across other kinds of unexpressed words.
- Contractions contain condensed words, not unexpressed words (i.e. *that*). Follow the pattern we established with contracted verbs, such as *don't* and *isn't*, when you encounter other contractions.

Lesson #7 Assignments

To receive a Certificate of Completion you must successfully complete all assignments.

Assignment #1

Diagram these sentences.

- A. Clean your bedroom before you go to the gym.
- B. I don't think Margaret is as friendly as John.
- C. The man you saw at the restaurant is Joan's brother.
- D. Are you more afraid of spiders than I am?
- E. After John insulted the teacher, she made him go to the principal's office.

Assignment #2

If you want more practice, diagram these sentences. They're a little more challenging.

- A. My younger brother is more adventurous than anyone else I know.
- B. Matthew likes broccoli and cauliflower more than I do.
- C. Freedom in Christ does not mean people can do whatever pleases them.
- D. If attendance is poor, the party may end earlier than you think.
- E. In most cases and for most people, I try to be as patient as I can be.

Assignment #3

Look for some sentences that contain unexpressed words in a manuscript you're editing. Try to diagram one or two of them.

Reminder: The diagrams of the sentences in each lesson's assignments are provided in the Answer Key. Resist the urge to look at the answers before you attempt to diagram the sentences.