

Sapiens

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An Animal of No Significance

ABOUT 13.5 BILLION YEARS AGO, MATTER, energy, time and space came into being in what is known as the Big Bang. The story of these fundamental features of our universe is called physics.

About 300,000 years after their appearance, matter and energy started to coalesce into complex structures, called atoms, which then combined into molecules. The story of atoms, molecules and their interactions is called chemistry.

About 3.8 billion years ago, on a planet called Earth, certain molecules combined to form particularly large and intricate structures called organisms. The story of organisms is called biology.

About 70,000 years ago, organisms belonging to the species *Homo sapiens* started to form even more elaborate structures called cultures. The subsequent development of these human cultures is called history.

Three important revolutions shaped the course of history: the Cognitive Revolution kick-started history about 70,000 years ago. The Agricultural Revolution sped it up about 12,000 years ago. The Scientific Revolution, which got under way only 500 years ago, may well end history and start something completely different. This book tells the story of how these three revolutions have affected humans and their fellow organisms.

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El Chapo

LA FUGA

GUADALAJARA (MÉXICO)

24 de mayo de 1993

EL REPENTINO ESTALLIDO DE disparos de AK-47 atravesó la calma de una perfecta tarde primaveral, desatando el pánico en el estacionamiento del Aeropuerto de Guadalajara. Sentado en el asiento del pasajero de su Grand Marquis blanco, el cardenal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, arzobispo de Guadalajara, recibió catorce disparos cuando llegó para recibir el vuelo del nuncio papal. El cardenal de sesenta y seis años de edad se desplomó hacia el centro del vehículo, con sangre bajando por su frente. Había muerto al instante. El Grand Marquis quedó agujereado con más de treinta balazos y su conductor estaba entre los otros seis muertos.

¿Quién tendría como blanco al arzobispo, uno de los líderes católicos más queridos de México, para un golpe vergonzoso a la luz del día? Parece que la verdad fue mucho más prosaica: se dijo

Brief Breakdown - Sapiens

There are usually multiple ways we can look at things--multiple ways to group words. But that's all just nomenclature. The only important thing is--the only reason we do this is, to understand what's happening in real life.

I'm still getting the hang of this myself. So don't beat yourself up if it's not easy for you at first. In time, as you get a better feel for what each part of speech really does, and as you practice identifying the subject, verb and direct object in each clause, it'll get easier and easier.

I find the verbs first--only the verbs acting as verbs. Then the conjunctions (box around them or underline). Then subjects. Then all objects.

subject verb object

* = direct object (if subject, default reflexive)

About 13.5 billion years ago, matter, energy, time and space* came into being in what is known as the Big Bang. The story of these fundamental features of our universe is called physics.

About 300,000 years after their appearance, matter and energy* started to coalesce into complex structures, called atoms, which* then combined into molecules. The story of atoms, molecules and their interactions is called chemistry.

About 3.8 billion years ago, on a planet called Earth, certain molecules* combined to form particularly large and intricate structures called organisms. The story of organisms is called biology.

About 70,000 years ago, organisms belonging to the species Homo sapiens started to form even more elaborate structures called cultures*. The subsequent development of these human cultures is called history.

Three important revolutions shaped the course of history*: the Cognitive Revolution kick-started history* about 700,000 years ago. The Agricultural Revolution sped it* up about 12,000 years ago. The Scientific Revolution, which got under way only 500 years ago, may well end history* and start something completely different*. This book tells the story of how these three revolutions have affected humans and their fellow organisms*.

Paragraph #1

The first clause is missing its direct object. That's because the subject is the direct object, "came" is default reflexive: "matter, energy, time and space came ITSELF into being".

The second and third clauses are both in the passive construction, so things are just different. In the passive construction, the subject does the verb in the sentence, but not the action in reality. The action in reality is done by the "agent" -- frequently not mentioned in the sentence.

In this example, "in what is known as the Big Bang" -- the agent is missing. When the agent is missing, we can assume it's "people" or "the people" or whatever the context tells us: "...in what is known BY PEOPLE as the

Big Bang.” Same with this one: “The story of these fundamental features of our universe is called physics BY PEOPLE.”

They don't use the passive construction in Spanish nearly as much as we do in English, which is a common cause of an English/Spanish mismatch. Don't get me started on that =) I'll make a video soon on this topic and its ramifications--this is one of the topics where The Spanish Authority is at its cruelest. Jerks.

Paragraph #2

The first and second clauses are both missing their direct objects, because again, both verbs (“started to coalesce” and “combined”) are default reflexive: “...matter and energy started to coalesce THEMSELVES into complex structures...” and “...which then combined WITH THEMSELVES into molecules.”

The third clause (the second sentence) is in the passive construction, with the agent missing: “The story of atoms, molecules and their interactions is called chemistry BY PEOPLE.”

Paragraph #3

More of the same. The first clause is missing its direct object, because it's default reflexive: “combined THEMSELVES to form particularly large and intricate structures called organisms.” To gain clarity, I replaced “to form” with “into” -- “combined THEMSELVES into particularly large and intricate structures called organisms.”

The second sentence is in the passive construction with the agent missing, “The story of organisms is called biology BY THE PEOPLE.”

Paragraph #4

In the first clause, we finally have a direct object in the sentence: “even more elaborate structures called cultures” -- or just, “cultures”. The second clause is passive again, with the agent missing: “The subsequent development of these human cultures is called history BY PEOPLE.”

Paragraph #5

This is the most normal paragraph. All the clauses are in the active construction, with no missing direct objects.

I included “may well end” all as the verb. I think that's called a “verb phrase”. Because “may” and “well” are serving as adverbs--they're most closely associated with the verb, “end”.

Brief Breakdown - El Chapo

There are usually multiple ways we can look at things--multiple ways to group words. But that's all just nomenclature. The only important thing is--the only reason we do this is, to understand what's happening in real life.

I personally find this much easier to do in Spanish than in English. But I think that's only because I know the verb conjugations and grammar already. I have to look up words constantly. As you get to know the grammar better, this will become easier and easier for you.

I find the verbs first--only the verbs acting as verbs. Then the conjunctions (box around them or underline). Then subjects. Then all objects.

subject verb object

* = direct object (if subject/verb, default reflexive)

El repentino estallido de disparos de AK-47 atravesó la calma* de una perfecta tarde primaveral, desatando el pánico en el estacionamiento del Aeropuerto de Guadalajara.

Sentado en el asiento del pasajero de su Grand Marquis blanco, el cardenal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo, arzobispo de Guadalajara, recibió catorce disparos* cuando llegó* para recibir el vuelo del nuncio papal.

El cardenal de sesenta y seis años de edad se* desplomó hacia el centro del vehículo, con sangre bajando por su fuente.

Había muerto* al instante.

El Grand Marquis* quedó agujereado con más de treinta balazos y su conductor* estaba entre los otros seis muertos.

¿Quién tendría como blanco al arzobispo*, uno de los líderes católicos más queridos de México, para un golpe vergonzoso a la luz del día?

Sentence #1

A simple, one-clause sentence with the direct object present in the sentence (followed by a prepositional object and a phrase).

Sentence #2

The first clause is simple, the direct object is present. In the second clause, both the subject and direct object are missing--and they're the same, "el cardenal". "Llegar" or "to arrive" is a default reflexive verb. Literally, that's saying: "...when the cardinal HIMSELF arrived to receive the pope's representative's flight." -- "...cuando el cardenal SE llegó para recibir el vuelo del nuncio papal."

Sentence #3

The direct object is present here, it's "se" -- a specialized direct object pronoun in this case: "the cardinal flew HIMSELF toward the center of the vehicle." -- or whatever we'd say for "desplumar" there (literally, "pluck" -- defeather -- desplumar").

Sentence #4

Dying is default reflexive--it's just not stated in the sentence. Literally, that'd be: "He himself died instantly" -- "SE había muerto al instante."

Sentence #5

Both verbs are default reflexive here. "Quedó" means "stayed" but is being used as "to be" here. Either way, "The car stayed ITSELF pierced with more than thirty bullet holes" or "the car was ITSELF pierced with more than thirty bullet holes" -- "El Grand Marquis SE quedó agujereado con más de treinta balazos."

It's the same with "to be" -- one of the most default reflexive verbs there is: "... and its driver was himself among the other six deaths." -- "y su conductor SE estaba entre los otros seis muertos."

Sentence #6:

When the sentence starts like this (with "quién") -- it confuses me, so I replace it with a subject pronoun--then make it a statement instead of a question. To get some perspective. While I'm rewriting, I'm also going to switch the orders of things.

Quién tendría como blanco al arzobispo
= Él tendría al arzobispo como blanco

The direct object is "el arzobispo". The subject, "él," would have "el arzobispo" as a target. And "el arzobispo" would be had, as a target. It's "al" not "el" because the "personal a" is needed here.