

4. A **common noun** is the name of a person, place, or thing, considered **not** merely as an individual, but as **one of a class**. *Horse, town, boy, table*, are **common nouns**.

The word *common* comes from the Lat. *communis*, "shared by several"; and we find it also in *community, commonalty*, etc.

(i) A common noun is so called because it belongs *in common* to all the persons, places, or things in the same class.

(ii) The name *rabbit* marks off, or distinguishes, that animal from all other animals; but it does **not** distinguish one rabbit from another—it is **common** to all animals of the class. Hence we may say: a common noun **distinguishes from without**; but it does **not** distinguish **within** its own bounds.

(iii) Common nouns have a meaning; proper nouns have not. The latter *may* have a meaning; but the meaning is generally not appropriate. Thus persons called **Whitehead** and **Longshanks** may be dark and short. Hence such names are merely signs, and not significant marks.

5. Common nouns are generally subdivided into—

(i) Class-names.

(ii) Collective nouns.

(iii) Abstract nouns.

(i) Under class-names are included not only ordinary names, but also the names of materials—as *tea, sugar, wheat, water*. The names of materials can be used in the plural when **different kinds of the material** are meant. Thus we say "fine teas," "coarse sugars," when we mean *fine kinds of tea*, etc.

(ii) A **collective noun** is the name of a **collection of persons or things**, looked upon by the mind as **one**. Thus we say *committee, parliament, crowd*; and think of these collections of persons as each **one** body.

(iii) An **abstract noun** is the name of a quality, action, or state, considered **in itself**, and as **abstracted** from the thing or person in which it really exists. Thus, we see a number of lazy persons, and think of *laziness* as a quality in itself, abstracted from the persons. (From Lat. *abs*, from; *tractus*, drawn.)

(a) The names of arts and sciences are abstract nouns, because they are the names of processes of thought, considered apart and **abstracted** from the persons who practise them. Thus, *music, painting, grammar, chemistry, astronomy*, are abstract nouns.

(iv) Abstract nouns are (a) derived from adjectives, as *hardness, dulness, sloth*, from *hard, dull*, and *slow*; or (b) from verbs, as *growth, thought*, from *grow* and *think*.