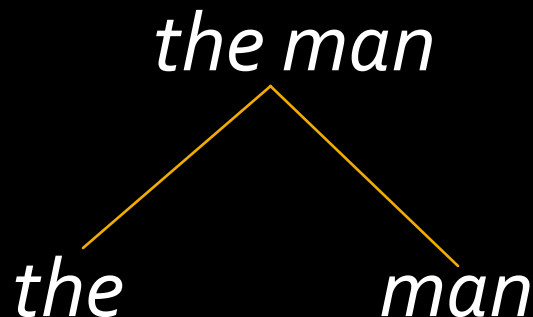


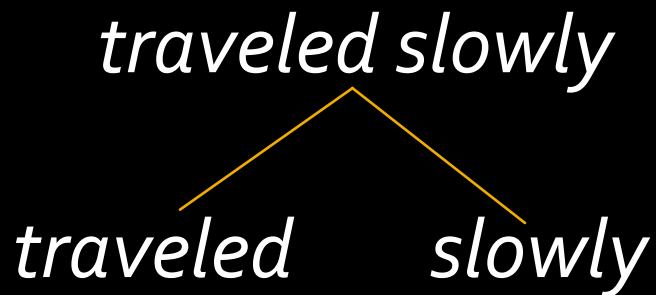
# Constituents and Phrases

# CONSTITUENCY

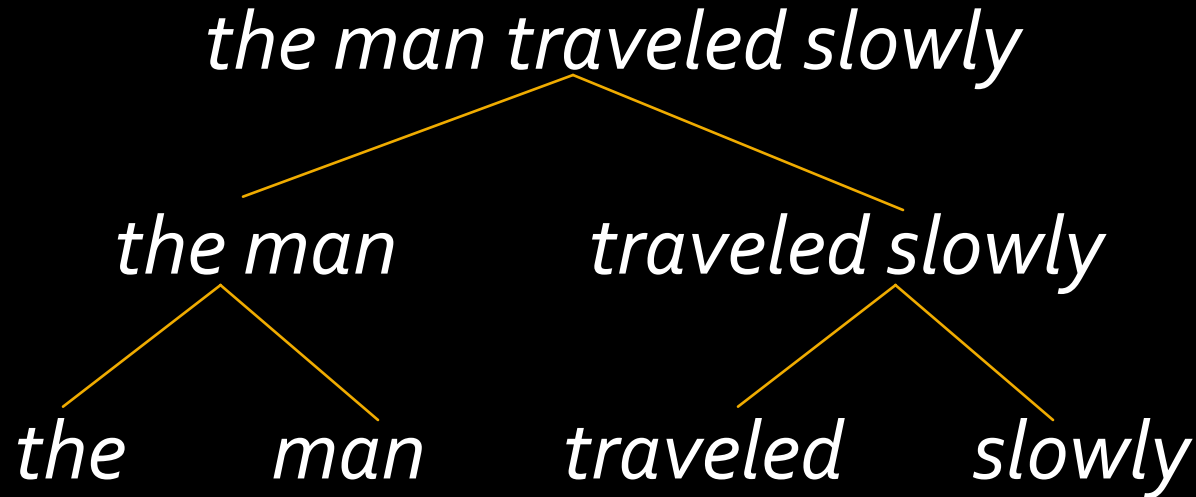
- A phrase is a construction of some kind.
- **Constituents** - by construction we mean a syntactic arrangement that consists of parts – usually two.
- Example: the phrase *the man* consists of two constituents *the* and *man*:



- *Traveled slowly* is also a construction with its constituents *traveled* and *slowly*.

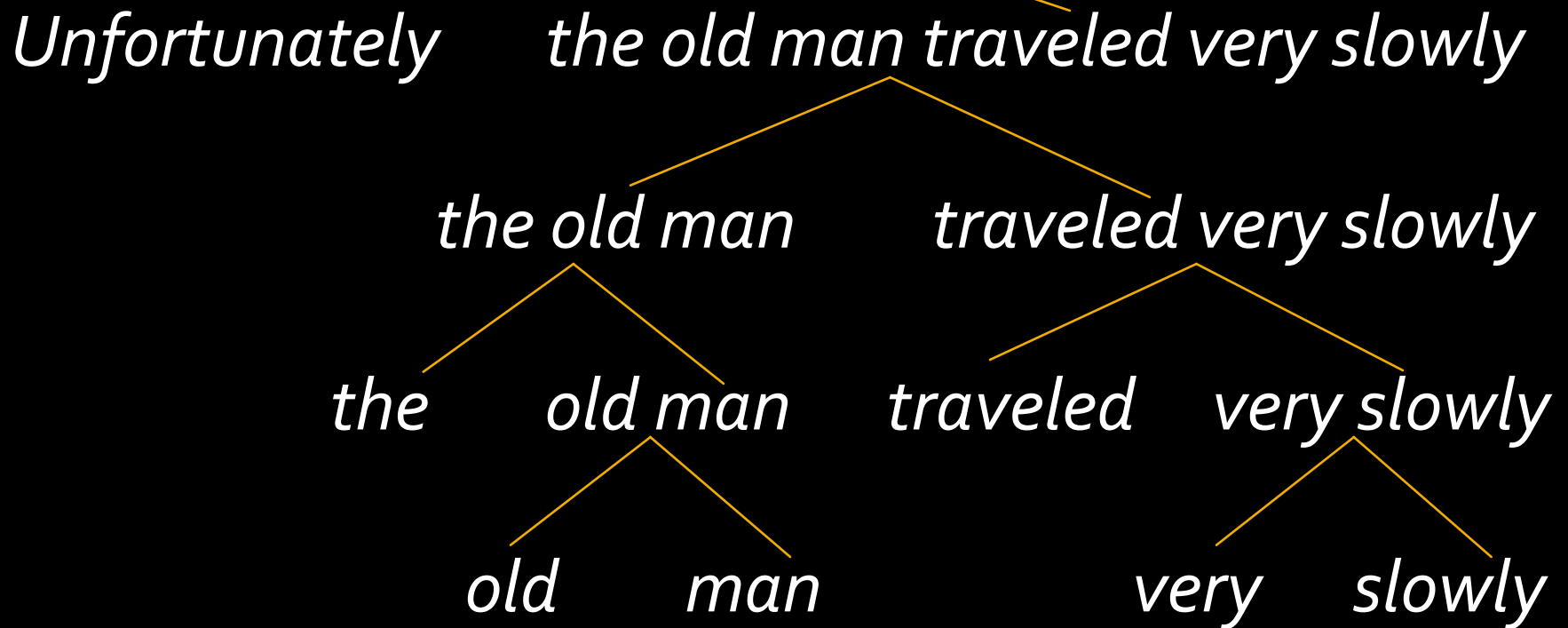


- The sentence *the man traveled slowly* can be as a construction with two constituents *the man* and *traveled slowly* with each of these constituents also being a construction.
- There are therefore construction within construction:



- We can further increase the number of constructions in, and therefore the constructional “depth” of, the previous sentence.
- For example, if we add *old* between *the* and *man*, *very* before *slowly*, and *unfortunately* at the very beginning of the sentence, we produce the following arrangement of construction and constituents:

*Unfortunately, the old man traveled very slowly.*



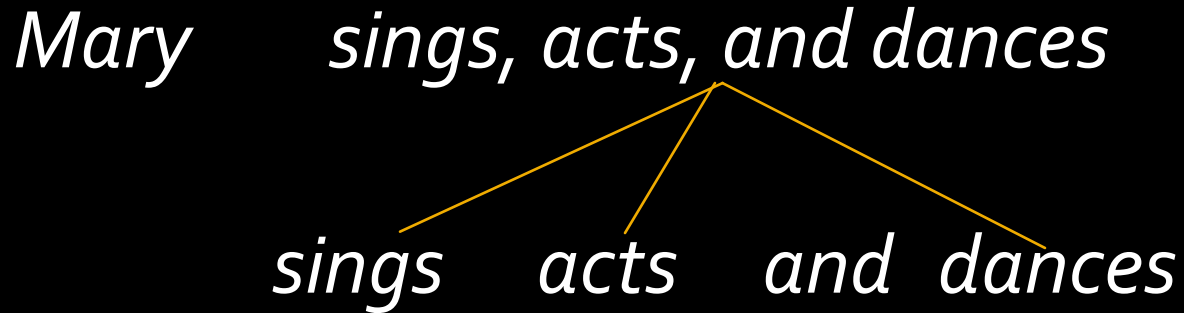
- The previous example illustrates how it is possible to show constructional relationships among the various parts of phrases, clauses, and sentences. We will shortly try to provide a little more evidence for justifying what we have not done here, i.e., claim that certain words, etc. are constituents of certain constructions. Such a claim denies other possible claims about constituency.

- Example, it denies the claim that in the final sentence given above there is many immediate constructional relationship between *man* and *traveled* or between *traveled* and *very*.

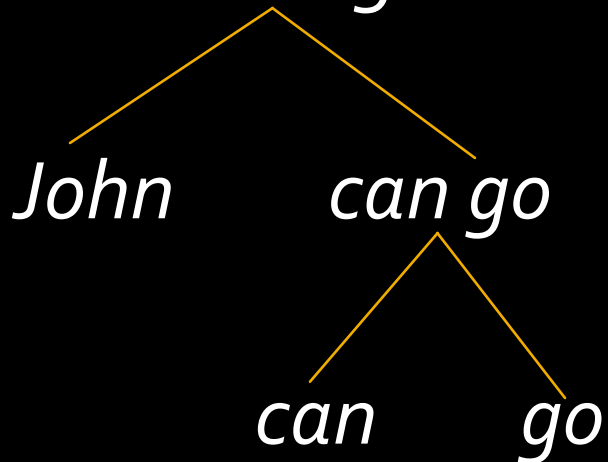


- The constituents of a constructions are likely to number just two and to be adjacent to each other. Analysis into constructions is not without problems.
- Example, in the first of the following sentences there appear to be three constituents *sings, acts, and dances* plus the problem *and*, and in the second sentence there is a definite discontinuity between *can* and *go* in the *can go* constituents.

*Mary sings, acts, and dances*



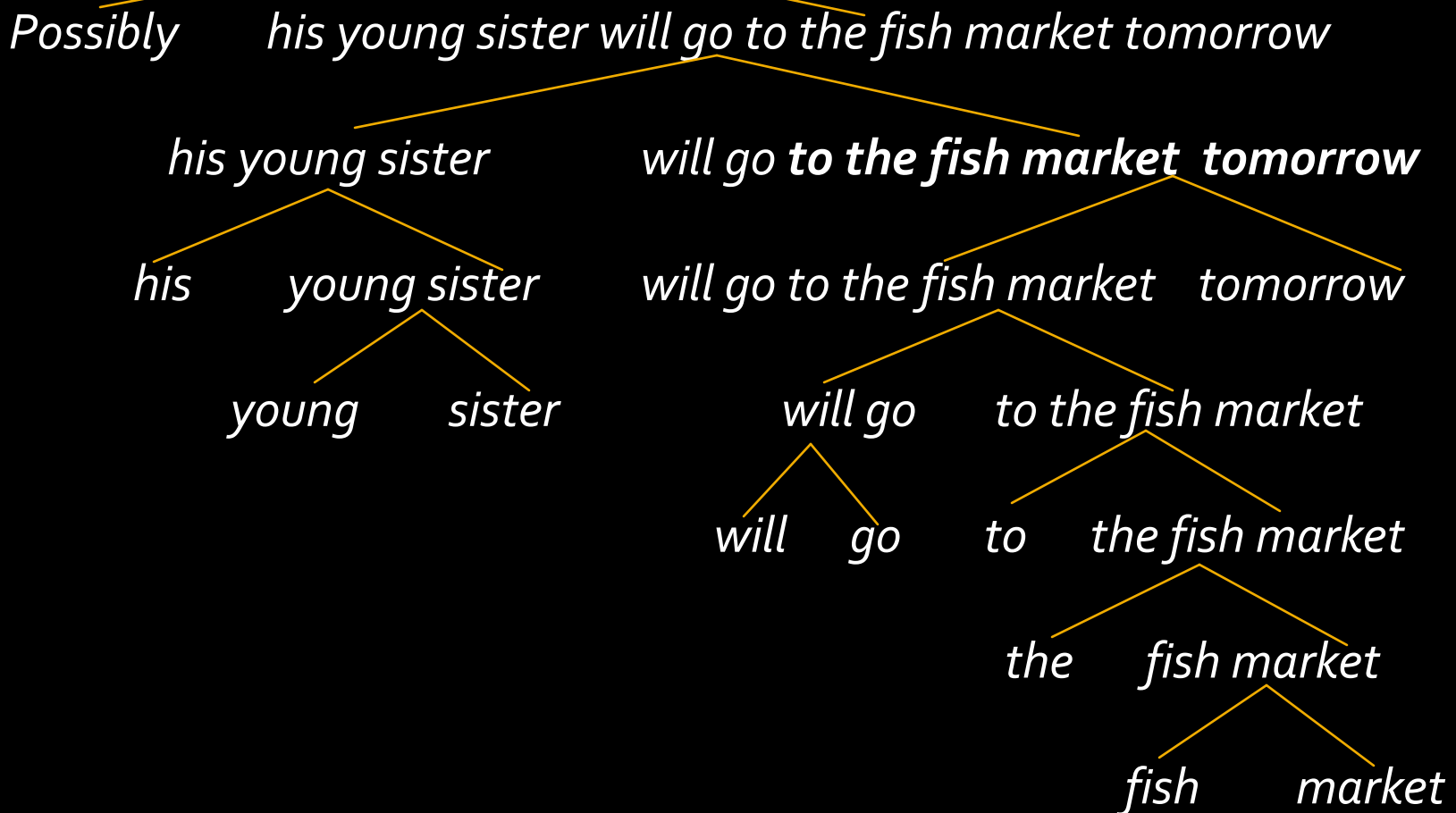
*Can John go?*



- In the first case what has happened here is that *and* is one of those words (conjunctions) which can unite any number of constituents.
- In the second case it is very characteristic of discontinuity which operates to signal and particular type of structure in English, in this case a question requiring either *yes* or *no* for an answer.

Here is still another example of how the constituents structure of a sentence is built up hierarchically:

*Possibly, his young sister will go to the fish market tomorrow.*



- Phrases, clauses, and sentences are built up out of construction even though the actual constructions involved may not always be easy to diagram. The immediate problem we should address though is just what kinds of constructions we have and how we should describe them.

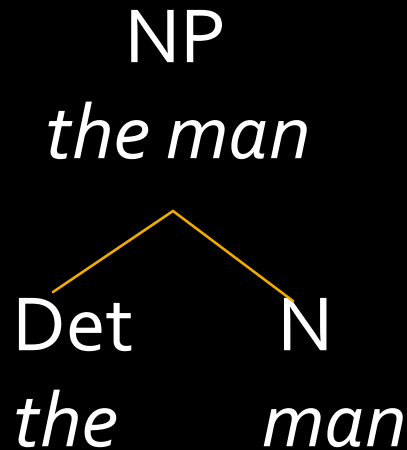
# Noun Phrase (NP)

- Noun phrase (NP) – is a construction that typically has either a noun (N) or a pronoun (Pro) as its central constituents, i.e., that noun or pronoun must be regarded as the “head” or most important element in the phrase.
- Any other constituents or constituents present in the noun phrase are usually said to be involved as modifiers of this constituents, i.e., they tell us something about it.

Each of the following is a noun phrase with its head noun or pronoun given in boldface:

- *people*
- *he*
- *the man*
- *this French cheese*
- *all those other cheeses*
- *someone else*
- *a person your age*
- *a book that long*
- *the man to see*
- *the people at the back of the room*
- *the person who told me*
- *the place to be this year*

- *The man* has the following constituents, a noun (N) and a determiner (Det):



- We should observe too that the single word *people* can be labeled in this way because it is also a noun phrase:





- As indicated in the sentence:

*I knew he could do it*

*To travel hopefully is better than to arrive.*

*Marrying him was a mistake.*

- The reason for such an assignment is a distributional one. Such construction occur in positions in sentences that the kinds of noun phrases given is usually fill:

*I knew the man.*

*This French cheese is better than all those other cheese.*

*That reply was a mistake.*

- Whatever else such constructions may be they are also noun phrases. That yet another instance of how we must take both form and distribution account in describing the structure of English.
- Our concern here is with noun phrases containing noun or pronoun especially the former. Certain nouns can occur by themselves as constituent noun phrases, e.g.,
- **proper noun** (*London, John, Canada*)
- **plural count nouns** (*cats, books, pencils*)
- **mass nouns** (*cheese, air, courage, love*)

*London is an historic city.*

*I like cats.*

*Love makes the world go round.*

- A very frequent initial constituent of noun phrase is a determiner (Det) as the, a, my, this, some, etc. Here are some noun phrase beginning with determiners:

*the boy, a girl, my friends, their car, this apple, some money, each day, much effort, every moment, no time*

- There are also certain predeterminers (predet) which sometimes combined determiners but, if they do, precede them, e.g., *all, both, half, double, twice, one-half, such, etc.*

*all the books, once a week, such effort, half the day*

- Certain quantifying expressions, which themselves are noun phrases precede nouns, e.g., *a few, three dozen, ten million*, etc.

*Ten million dollars*

- A group of post determiners (Postdet) can follow the determiners, e.g., *one, two, three*, (the cardinal numbers), *next, last, other, few, little, many, several, more, less*, etc.

*the other day, my last dollar, every second week, some more wine, the only reason*

- Note that the determiners and postdeterminers may be regarded as subclasses of determiners and some may occur alone with nouns, e.g., *such efforts*, *little hope*, etc.
- We can look at some of the various combinations that can occur:
  - He spent such a lot of money.*
  - It rained all the first week.*
  - He paid twice the last month.*

- The presence or absence of determiners in noun phrases can either have certain semantic implications or be a matter of common usage:

*Dogs are animals.* (all dogs, types of animal)

*A dog is a nice animal.* (all dogs, a nice type of animal)

*The mammoth is extinct.* (all mammoths)

*I was looking for a book.* (either any book or a specific book;  
therefore, *Did you find one?* Or *Did you find it?*)

*Love God and shun the devil* (\* the God, \*Devil)

*The poor are always with us.* (a class of poor people)

*Never let a friend down.* (any friend)

*Can you play chess?* (\*the chess: many games have no *the*)

*Do you eat pork?* (\*the pork: many foods have no *the*)

*She takes the pill every day.* (a specific pill for birth control)

*I visited the Louvre.* (part of a proper noun)

*Is she train on time?* (a specific known train)

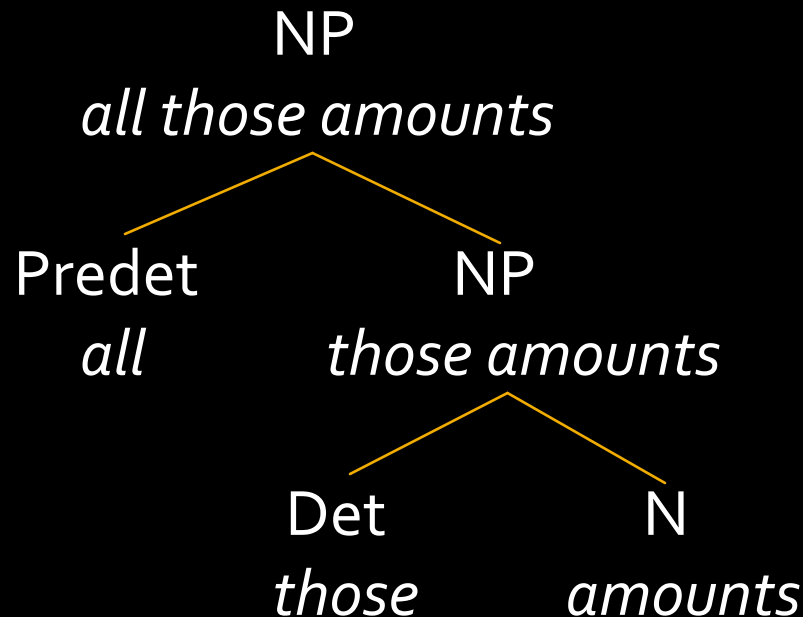
*Please put the kettle on.* (\*kettle: some common implements or furnishings require *the*)

*We went by taxi.* (\*the taxi: some forms of transportation have no *the*)

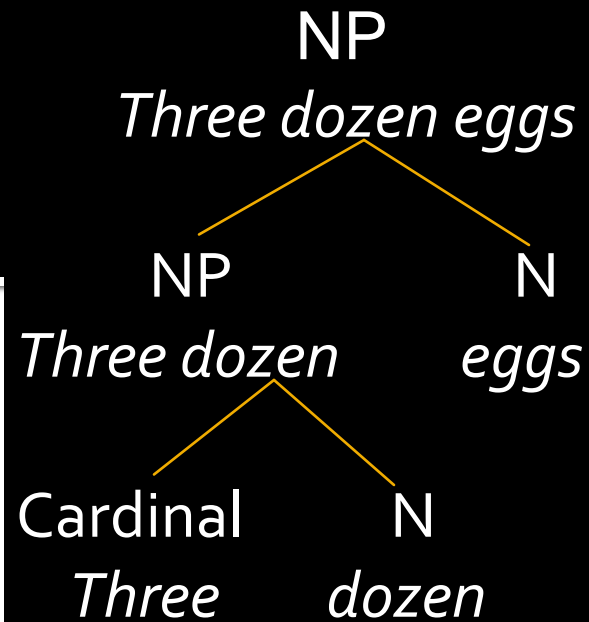
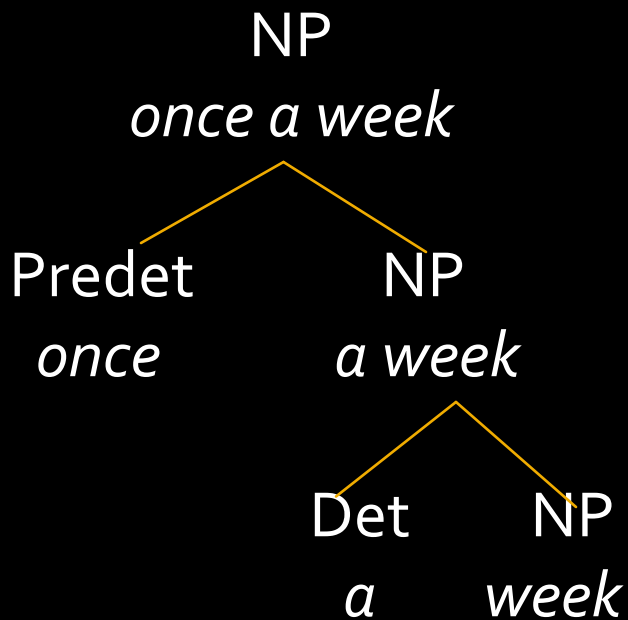
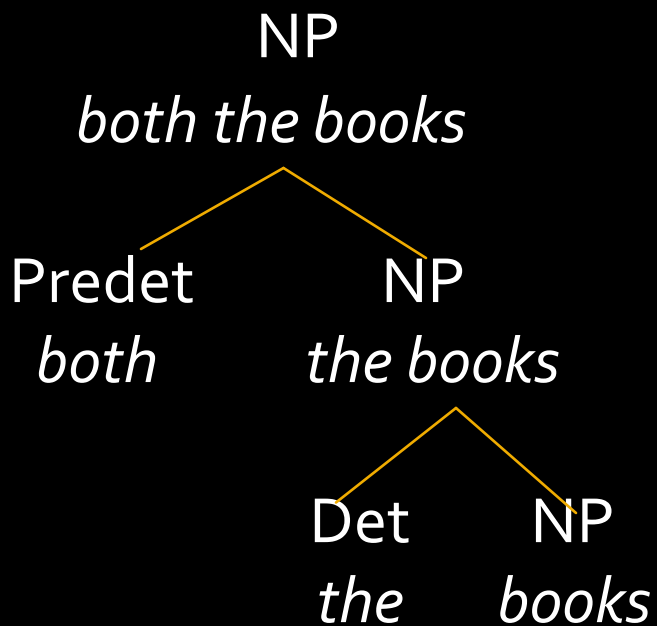
*Have you had lunch?* (\*the lunch: no *the* with meals)

*Did you eat the lunch left?* (a specific lunch)

*He's at home in bed.* (\*the home, \*the bed: fixed expression)



Those amounts is shown here as an NP within an NP; it is obviously a phrase and can only be a noun phrase.





- Adjacent phrase (AdjP) – often consisting of just adjectives (Adj) alone can be introduced the ordering of the adjectives.
- One possible statement about ordering is as follows:  
general + size + shape + age + substance + nationality + NOUN
- We can see how this ordering applies in the following phrase:

*a good, new coat*

*the small, red card*

*an old, Dutch innkeeper*

*a lovely, big, square, wooden table*

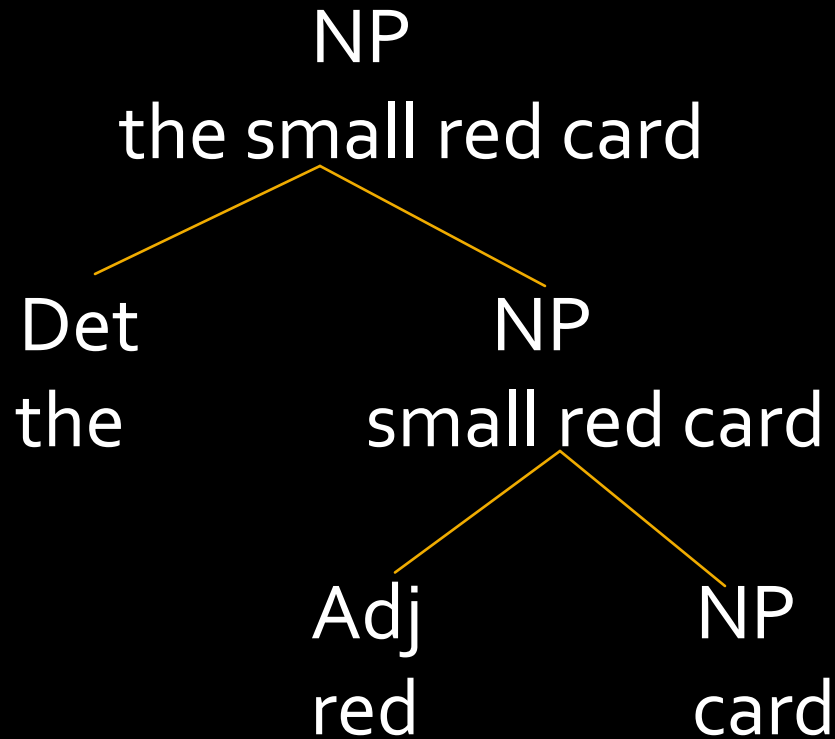
*an expensive, old, white, French tablecloth*

*a big, old cat*

*a black, plastic spoon*

*the red, woolen dress*

- We can show the internal structure of the *small, red card* follows:



- A close inspection of the above diagram shows that the *red card* is described as a NP, as is *small red card*, and *the small red card*. *Card* itself is an N (an NP too if completely labeled). One test that reaches for these constructions itself a constituent is a substitution test using the word *one*, which substitutes an NP constituent in English:

the small red card

the small red *one*

the small *one*

the *one*

*one*

- When adjectives modify nouns they do not all do so in the same way. Note *that black insect* merely describes an insect that is black in color; however, *large insect* describes an insect that is large as insects go; there is an implied comparison with a norm.
- We can see the same kind of norm in the use of the adjectives in the following phrases:  
*a tall man, a sharp needle, a little elephant, a big meal*
- We can compare the above with the following phrases in which no such norm seems to be implied:  
*a young man, a sharp ear, a little noise, a big tent*

- Other adjectives do not so much describe the **agent nouns** with which they occur but appear to indicate how the reference of those nouns perform a certain activity:

*a good writer* (writes well)

*a beautiful dancer* (dances gracefully)

*a heavy drinker* (drinks heavily)

*a light sleeper* (sleeps lightly)

- Notice that *beautiful dancer* is actually ambiguous: “she is a dancer and she is beautiful,” or “she dances beautifully” but we do not know what she looks like.
- Consequently, we can have *She’s a beautiful dancer but she’s really quite ugly.*

- A few adjectives follow the noun in a noun phrase:  
*inspector general, heir apparent, China proper, the amount due, the information available, the people concerned*
- Indefinite pronouns may also sometimes be modified in this way:  
*nothing good, something interesting, anything worthwhile*
- Other kinds of components may be inserted into noun phrases before the noun. Nouns and noun phrases may be used as modifiers:  
*stone wall, business news report, language acquisition device, knife and fork meal, bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich*

- In the first member of each pair we have noun modification of a noun and in the second member we have adjective modification of a noun:

a stone wall

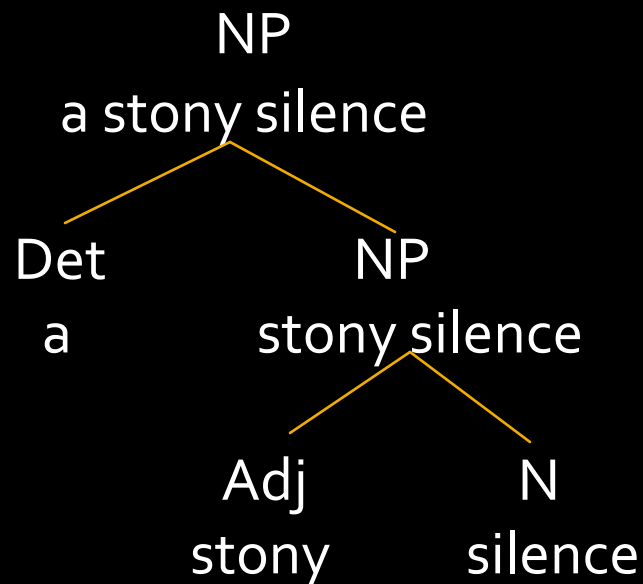
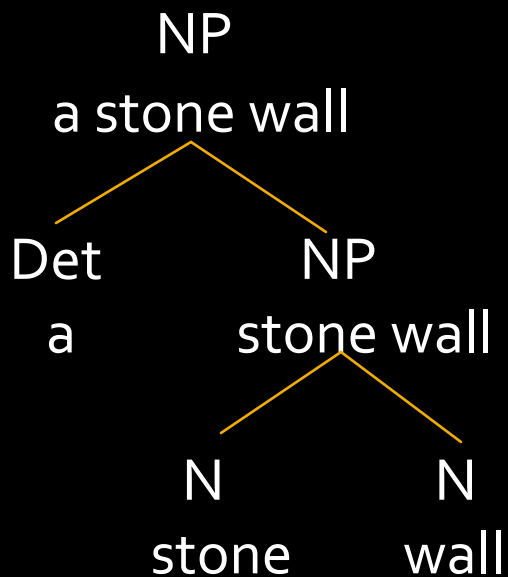
a gold watch

a blood sample

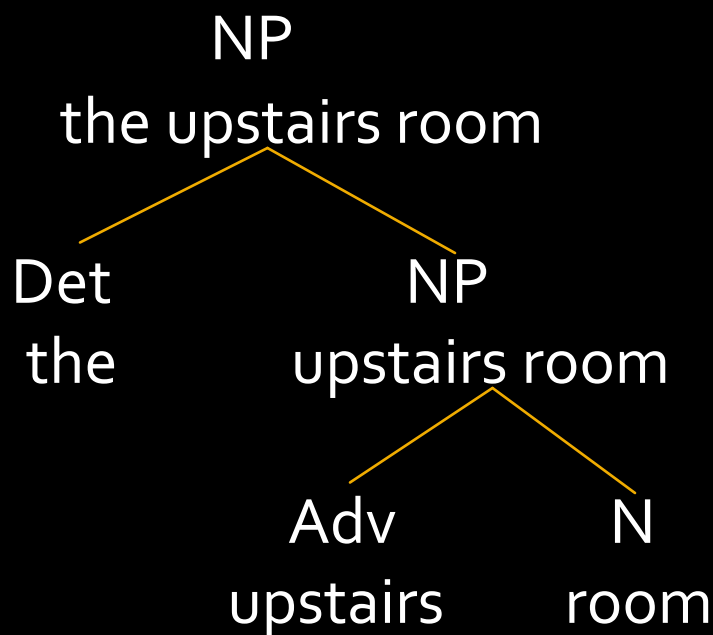
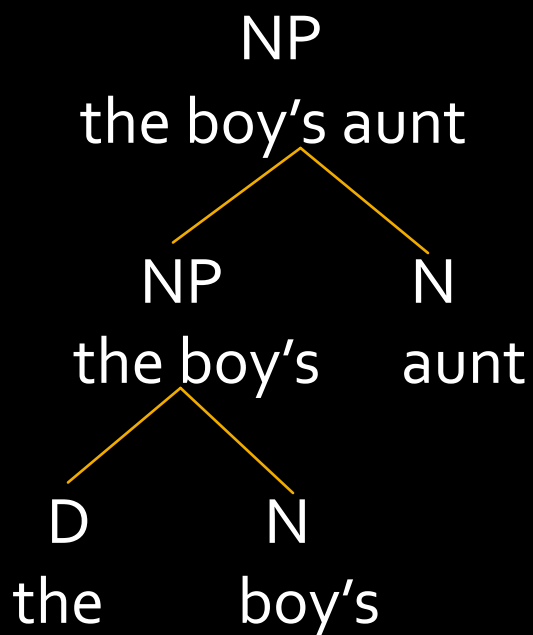
a stony silence

a golden sunset

a bloody scene



- It is also possible to use the genitive form of a noun or a genitive noun phrase as a modifier of a noun: *John's hat, the boy's aunt*. Verbs (V) may also be used as modifiers of a nouns: *a failed attempt, a running sore*. Adverbs (Adv) too can modify nouns: *the upstairs room*.





- There is a fix ordering in the various combinations of the above:

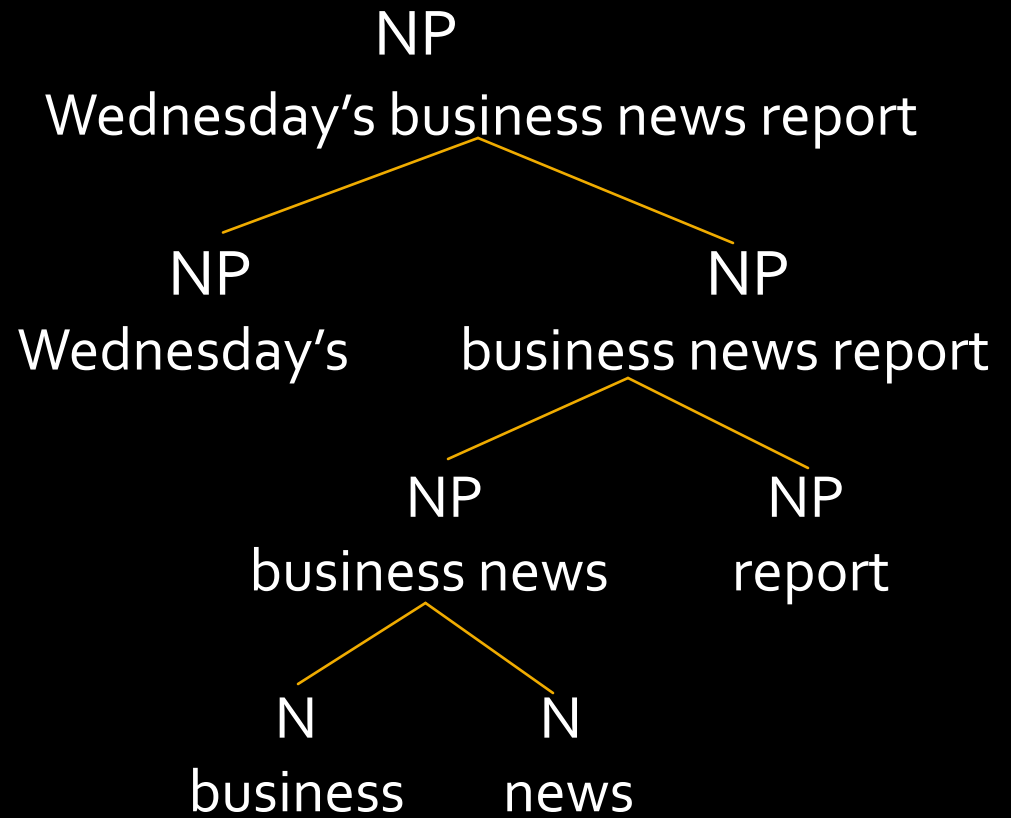
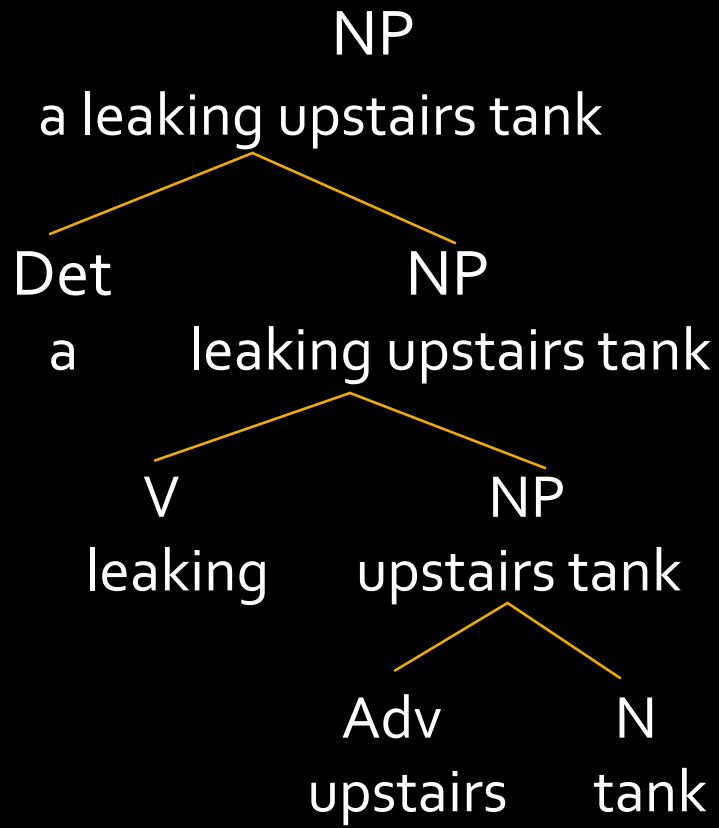
*have new running sores*

*a big old stone house*

*Wednesday's business news report*

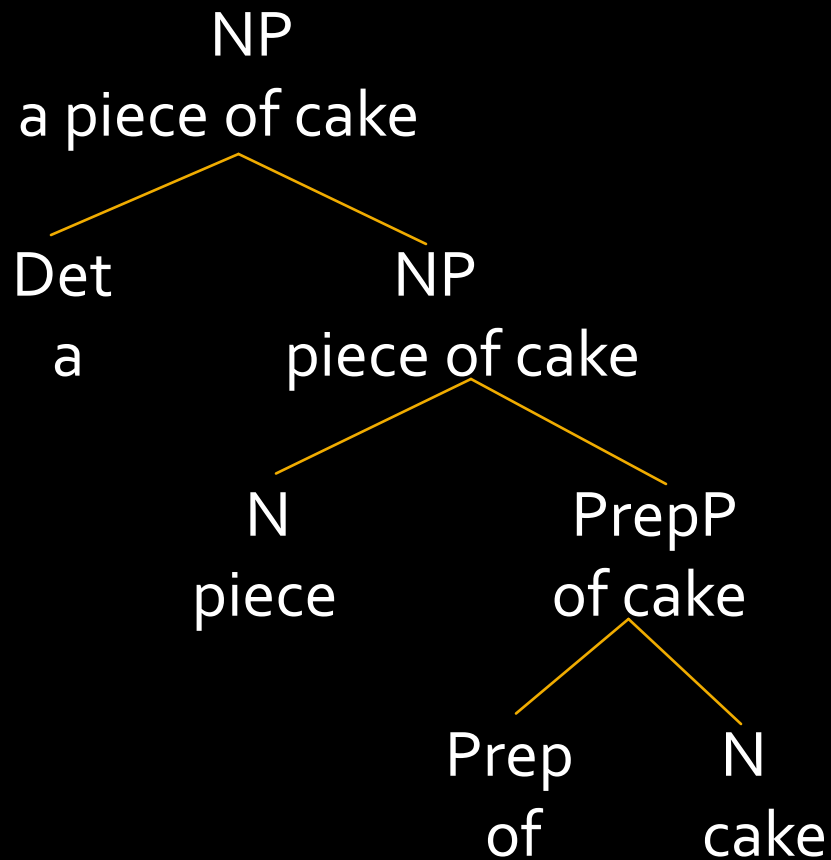
*a leaking upstairs tank*

- Each of the above also has a constituency structure. Example, the constituency structure of *a leaking upstairs tanks* and *Wednesday's business new report* are as follows:



# Noun Phrases

- May also contain modifiers after the noun heads other than the adjectives noted,  
*i.e., nothing good, inspector general.*
- Adverbs may be used as modifiers:  
*the way in, the weather outside*
- Prepositional phrases:  
*a piece of cake, the boy at the back,  
the girl behind Peter*



- **Clauses** (S) beginning with words like *who, that, where, when*, etc. may be used as modifiers: *He who hesitates is lost, the person you are seeking*. These are called **relative clauses**. Certain verb-headed constructions may also be used: *the amount owing to you, a house rented to him, the place to be*; as may appositives: *the fact that you said it, my husband Fred*.
- **Appositive** – is a restatement of a certain kind and it may be restrictive or non-restrictive.

- In the examples *that you said it* is restrictive in *the fact that you said it*, whereas *Fred* is non-restrictive in *my husband Fred*.
- In the first case it is this important fact – that you said something – not any other that it at issue;
- In the second case name Fred is merely an additional piece of information provided about husband – he happens to be called Fred

- In the following examples the appositives in the first set are restrictive and the appositives in the second set are non-restrictive:

*I am looking for the novel War and Peace.*

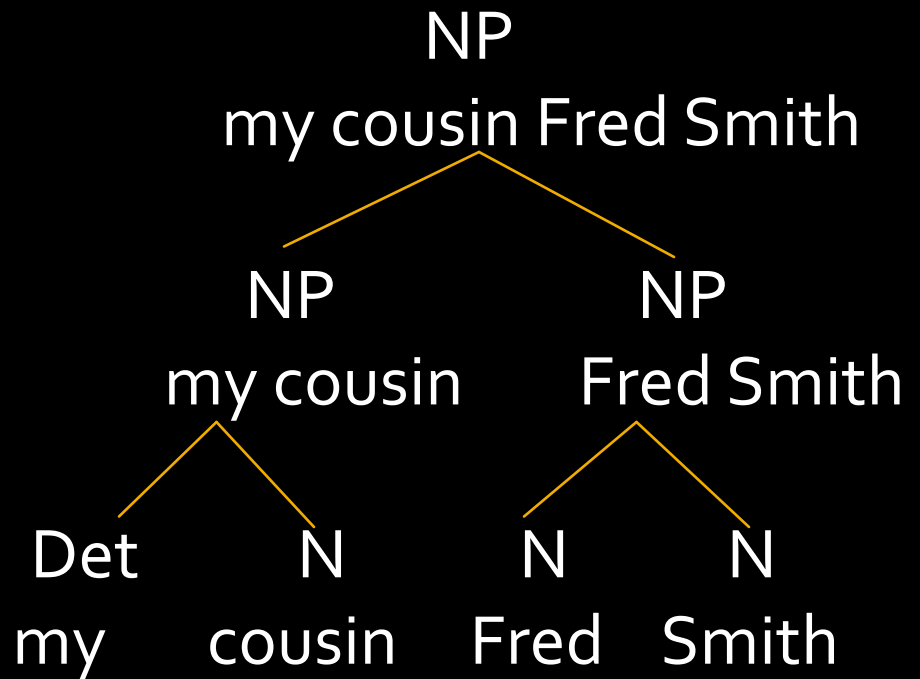
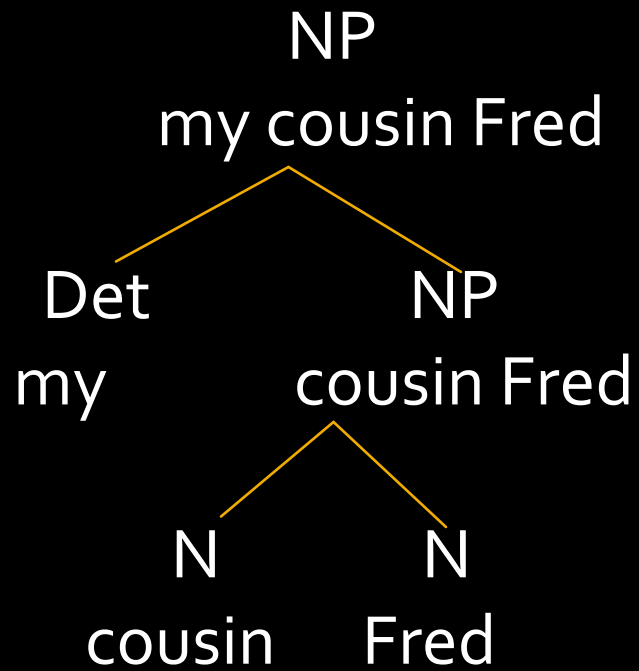
*My cousin Fred sent it.*

*The word the is a determiner.*

*They are from Mali, a country in Africa.*

*He borrowed a book, a collection of short stories.*

*My cousin, Fred Smith, sent it.*





- A fairly useful test of non – restrictiveness versus restrictiveness is to try to recast the phrase: if you can omit the appositive and supply the information it contains as “by the way” information, then it is non-restrictive, e.g., :they are from Mali and by the way Mali is a country in Africa.”
- If you cannot do this, you have a restrictive appositive, e.g., it makes no sense to say. “I am looking for a novel and by the way it is War and Peace.”

- We can also find phrases in clauses that are filling noun-phrase positions but which are headed by a part of speech other than a noun or pronoun:
- **Adjectives** in *The poor are always with us; Green is my favorite color;*
- **Verb forms** in *Seeing him restored her confidence, To do is to be;*
- **Adverb** in *Now is the hour;*
- **Prepositional phrase** in *from under the bed.*

