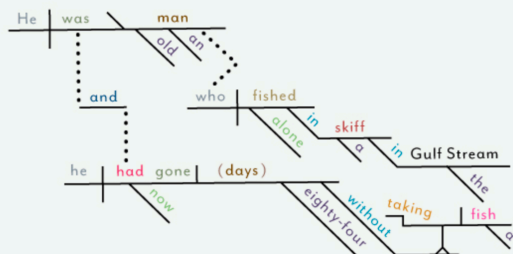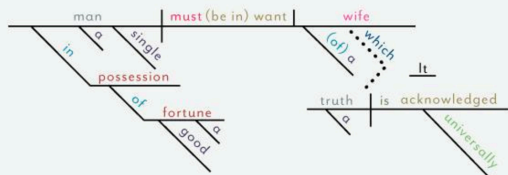He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.

Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

So many lovely sentences to read and write and draw!

GreatHearts
VERUM BONUM PULCHRUM
NORTH PHOENIX
PREPARATORY

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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SENTENCE DIAGRAMMING

NORTH PHOENIX PREP

TREEBRANCHES

Deep in a forest once there dwelt an English gnome; he was full of lore, and reputed by his people to be most wise. For his children the gnome invented wonderful stories, lovely not only for the substance of their themes, but for the beauty, craftwork, & variety of the sentences, which kept the children spellbound. Late in life, he confessed that of his own he knew nothing, but that he got all his stories from the trees, who had much to tell, having lived longer than gnomes or men, & who had revealed them through the patterns in their branches. All the gnome had done, he said, was to read the stories of the trees, and English them again in his own gnomish way. So, we have called him Treebranch.

Somewhere in la Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing.

Cervantes, Don Quixote

THE DIAGRAMME SHOWS THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE SENTENCE

It is fun to build a classroom chart with the diagrammes of the opening sentences of all the great books we read, like *Don Quixote* above, and to consider them together: *In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit; Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy; Call me Ishmael!*

Treebranch's 1st Lesson: *why* learn Diagramming?

A GUIDE FOR THE CURIOUS & PERPLEXED

Our mother tongue, English, has challenges & pitfalls for us, of which the foreigner is more aware than we. English words regularly cross the boundaries that distinguish the parts of speech. Consider the word *'tree'* in the following three sentences:

> The squirrel runs up the <u>tree</u>.
> It is a <u>tree</u> squirrel.
> My dog will <u>tree</u> the squirrel.

'Tree' is a noun in the first sentence, an adjective in the second, and a verb in the third.

Sentence diagramming (henceforth: SD) forces us to consider the fabric & structure of our very thought, and reduces it to an abstract representation, a drawing, to which it is analogous, and which immediately reveals the function of its parts. Furthermore, some complex, rich, and artful literary sentences can be challenging. A sentence diagram discovers the structural elements of that sentence and unlocks the meaning, placing it directly before the student's eyes. It takes no account of the artfulness of word order, reducing the sentence to a representation of its semantic structure.

As a discipline SD helps to order language in the human brain, especially for those with any sort of writing challenges, or language disorder. The practice of SD compels the eye, the mind, & the hand to order the elements of language so as to arrive at clear understandings.

The production of a SD is an enjoyable solution to a puzzle, and allows us to compare different sentences by looking at the drawings. How does a sentence of Hemingway compare to one of Jane Austen? The pictures show. What is Shakespeare saying? The diagramme reveals his secrets. Can I make the picture beautiful?

The continual activity by which students compare sentences & their semantic structures reinforces a sense that there is a hidden mathematics underlying everything in our world, and which is capable of describing even the words of a story. Students develop analytical skills & discover the use of analogy in the solution of problems. This discipline will strengthen every single writing skill that you will need to become an excellent reader and writer, basic foundational skills. Readers who do not understand a sentence (challenging ones are chosen) must consider the who, what, when, where, why, and how at all times, and must discover the true relationship between sentence elements, i.e. SD is an activity that perfects the understanding of the English language code upon which the operating system of the brain is based.

LITERARY CRAFT ~ THE SENTENCE AS ART

If placed upon their sides end to end, the sentences of Hemingway's *Old Man and the Sea,* and of Jane Austen's *Persuasion* will reveal a different landscape. And what's more, SD allows us to imitate the artfulness of great writers, by breaking down their thoughts, and creating new original sentences of our own that are modelled on those patterns. Once we have all the parts we need, we lay them out again according to the word order of the original—wherein resides a great part of the artistry of sentences. After such an exercise, one student exclaimed, *"I never realized I could write a sentence this beautiful."* Indeed, many students do not realize that words are a medium through which we can create beautiful things, artful sentences; they seldom realize that the use of language is an art form, until they practice the artful use of language. And as in the apprenticeship to any art, we become great, by imitation of the great.

What will make one a great writer? Two essential ingredients are (1) the reading of great writers, and (2) careful consideration of how they say what they say. Sentence diagramming trains us in all these things.
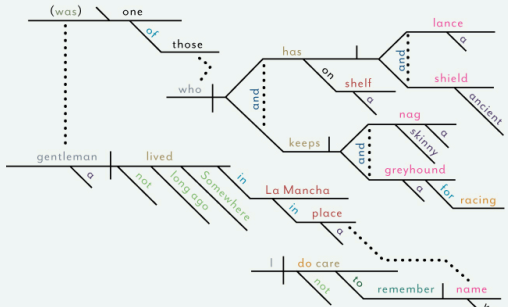
I am not a master sentence-diagrammer, but a master Latinist. I did not need SD to understand Latin sentences, because the parts of speech reveal themselves by their endings, but I was able to learn a little bit of SD when my daughter was in Middle School; I was able to see the power and beauty of SD as a tool of the intellect, and it was extremely fun work (in the way that Sudoku puzzles can be relaxing & fun). I have wanted more of it ever since. Thus I recommend to parents that they take up this study, together with their children, following along and completing all the exercises in the workbook. They'll be glad they did!

THE PARTS OF SPEECH

P O S	NOUN	PRON	ADJ	VERB
	ADV	CONJ	PREP	INTERJ