

**“The Washwoman” by Isaac Bashevis Singer**  
**“New Directions” by Maya Angelou**  
**Grammar: Common and Proper Nouns**

A **noun** is a word that names a person, place, or thing. Nouns name things that can be seen and touched as well as those that cannot be seen and touched. Notice in the following chart that among the things nouns can name are ideas, actions, conditions, and qualities.

<b>People:</b> Aunt Cele, Esteban, musicians, doctor
<b>Places:</b> Sacramento, Lincoln Park Zoo, mountain, desert, park, lake
<b>See and touch:</b> grass, dish, table, truck
<b>Ideas and actions:</b> freedom, confusion, election, censorship
<b>Conditions and qualities:</b> optimism, courage, shyness, bewilderment

A **common noun** names any one of a class of people, places, or things—for example, *day*, *river*, or *woman*. A **proper noun** names a specific person, place, or thing and always begins with a capital letter—for example, *Tuesday*, *Cuyahoga River*, or *Harriet Tubman*. In the following example, the common nouns are underlined and the proper nouns are in boldface.

**Example from “New Directions”**

He did not tell her that he knew a minister in Enid with whom he could study and who had a friendly, unmarried daughter. They parted amicably, Annie keeping the one-room house and William taking most of the cash to carry him to Oklahoma.

**A. DIRECTIONS:** *In each numbered item, underline the common nouns and draw a circle around the proper nouns.*

1. The only Gentile in the building was the janitor. Fridays he would come for a tip, his “Friday money.”
2. She lived on Krochmalna Street too, but at the other end, near the Wola section.
3. My mother spoke a little Polish, and the old woman would talk with her about many things.
4. The son had not invited the old mother to his wedding, but she went to the church and waited at the steps to see her son lead the “young lady” to the altar.

**B. DIRECTIONS:** *Write a six-sentence paragraph in which you describe the town where you live. Use at least **four** common nouns and **four** proper nouns in your paragraph. Remember that proper nouns are always capitalized.*

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