Chapter 11: COUNT/NONCOUNT NOUNS AND ARTICLES

ORDER OF CHAPTER	CHARTS	EXERCISES	WORKBOOK
A vs. an	11-1	Ex. 1 → 3	Pr. 1
Preview			Pr. 2
Count and noncount nouns	11-2 → 11-4	Ex. 4 → 10	Pr. 3 → 6
Several, a lot of, many/much, a few, a little	11-5	Ex. 11 → 14	Pr. 7 → 11
Nouns that can be count or noncount	11-6	Ex. 15	Pr. 12
Units of measure with noncount nouns	11-7	Ex. 16 → 17	Pr. 13 → 15
Article usage	11-8	Ex. 18 → 23	Pr. 16 → 22
Summary review: articles		Ex. 24	Pr. 22
Using the or Ø with nouns	11-9	Ex. 25 → 26	Pr. 23 → 24
Capitalization	11-10	Ex. 27 → 28	Pr. 25 → 26
Cumulative review		Ex. 29	Pr. 27

General Notes on Chapter 11

- The concept of count vs. noncount nouns is often quite difficult for students to understand. Some students find it illogical. Many find it a confusing nuisance. Nevertheless, just as students need to gain understanding and usage ability of verb forms, they need to understand and be able to use noun forms if they want to communicate competently and correctly in English.
- In addition, article usage in English cannot make sense unless the students understand the distinction between count and noncount nouns. In many ways, the first half of the chapter seeks to lay the groundwork for the presentation of the bare-bones basics of article use in Chart 11-8.
- TERMINOLOGY: "Count" and "noncount" may also appear in some texts as "countable" and "uncountable." A noncount noun is sometimes called a "mass" noun.

☐ EXERCISE 1, p. 311. Preview: using A and AN. (Charts 11-1 and 11-2)

This previews not only a and an but count and noncount nouns.

ANSWERS: 4. Jack has a wallet in his back pocket. 5. (no change) 6. There was an earthquake in Turkey last week. 7. A ball is a round object. 8. (no change) 9. Anna is wearing a ring on her fourth finger. 10. (no change) 11. Simon Bolivar is a hero to many people. 12. . . . It was an honest mistake. 13. I had an unusual experience yesterday. 14. Ann had a unique experience yesterday. 15. (no change)

CHART 11-1: A vs. AN

• Discuss the pronunciation of a and an. When unstressed, they are pronounced as weak vowel sounds: $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$. Only when they are emphasized are they pronounced $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$.

□ EXERCISE 2, p. 312. A vs. AN. (Chart 11-1)

ANSWERS:

2. an **8.** a **14.** a **15.** a **3.** a **9.** an **16.** a **4.** an **10.** an 5. an **11.** a 17. an **6.** a 12. an 18. an 7. a **13.** an

□ EXERCISE 3, p. 312. A vs. AN. (Chart 11-1)

Students needn't produce dictionary-quality definitions. Students find their own creative ways of giving meanings. Keep the emphasis on article usage.

POSSIBLE DEFINITIONS:

- 1. An astronaut is a person who travels in outer space.
- 2. A microscope is an instrument that magnifies very small things.
- 3. An enemy is a person you fight against.
- **4. A ferry** is a boat that carries people between short distances.
- **5. An absent-minded person** is someone who is very forgetful.
- **6.** A camel is a large animal that lives in desert regions and carries people and things.
- 7. An umbrella is something that people carry to protect themselves from rain.
- **8. A unicorn** is a mythical animal with one horn.
- **9. An onion** is a root vegetable.
- 10. A honeymoon trip is a trip newly married couples take.
- 11. An hourly wage is the amount of money a worker earns per hour.
- 12. A horn is something that grows on the heads of goats or cows.
 - **A horn** is also a musical instrument.
- 13. An unlit hallway is a passageway without lights.
- 14. A utensil is a tool you use in the kitchen or the house.
- 15. An orchard is a field where fruit trees grow.

CHART 11-2: COUNT AND NONCOUNT NOUNS

- To make the initial distinction between count and noncount, concentrate on the examples in Chart 11-2 (chair vs. furniture) and in Exercise 5 (banana vs. fruit; letter vs. mail; and question vs. information). Point out which ones can take a final -s and which "count or amount" words (i.e., quantifiers or expressions of quantity) can be used. Try to get across the concept that noncount nouns represent "masses" or "whole categories." (See Chart 11-3.)
- Typical mistakes involve using final -s at the end of noncount nouns and using improper expressions of quantity (e.g., too many homeworks).
- Most nouns are used as count nouns. Some nouns are used only as noncount nouns. Many nouns have both count and noncount uses (see Chart 11-6). Fruit is an example of a noun that can be used as either, but for pedagogical purposes it is presented as a noncount noun throughout this chapter. (When some nouns that are used predominantly or typically as noncount are used as count nouns, they may refer to "different kinds of." For example: Apples, bananas, and pears are fruits, not vegetables. Other examples would be different kinds of breads, foods, teas, soups, world Englishes.) It is the text's view that students at this level of language study would find these subtleties confusing and disruptive rather than beneficial.
- A good ESL/EFL dictionary will indicate a noun's count and/or noncount status and usages.

☐ EXERCISE 4, p. 313. Count and noncount nouns. (Chart 11-2)

The purpose of Exercises 4 and 5 is to clarify Chart 11-2 by comparing "individual parts" to "wholes." At the same time, the students are focusing on the troublesome final -s/-es.

Usual problems in the usage of nouns are that the learners don't use final -s/-es with count nouns when they should and do use it with noncount nouns when they

-s/-es with count nouns when they should and do use it with noncount nouns when they shouldn't. Tell your students you sympathize with them. It's not easy.

ANSWERS:

- **3.** (no change)
- 4. four chairs / some furniture
- 5. (no change)
- **6.** some furniture / a chair
- 7. a chair / some chairs / some furniture
- **8.** some furniture

\square EXERCISE 5, p. 314. Preview: count and noncount nouns. (Charts 11-2 and 11-3)

First the students learn which nouns are count and which are noncount. Once this information is known, they then (in the following exercises) decide which expressions of quantity they can use with these nouns. The purpose of these exercises is to clarify the use of indefinite articles, final -s/-es, and expressions of quantity used with two different kinds of nouns.

ANSWERS:

3. a (*count*)

7. some (noncount)

4. some (noncount)

8. an (*count*)

5. a (count)

9. some (noncount)

6. some (noncount)

10. a (count)

CHART 11-3: NONCOUNT NOUNS

- It is important for students to understand the <u>concept</u> of a noncount noun. That is the purpose of this chart. Discuss the concept in relation to some of the words listed at the bottom of this page, all of which are "wholes."
- In addition to understanding the concept of a noncount noun, it helps if students simply become aware of some of the common nouns that are usually noncount. That is the purpose of the lists at the bottom of this chart and in the subsequent chart (11-4).
- It is strongly suggested that you wait until Chart 11-5 to discuss possible count usages of any of the words in this chart (e.g., works of art, the literatures of France and England, green peppers, the sands of time). Chart 11-5 deals briefly with that type of usage in a way appropriate to the students' level.

☐ EXERCISE 6, p. 315. Count and noncount nouns. (Charts 11-2 and 11-3)

The troublesome final -s/-es is revisited. You might want to use this practice in class discussion to review pronunciation of final -s/-es. (See Chapter 6, Chart 6-1, p. 157, for information about pronunciation.) Omission of final -s/-es in speech and writing, even when the students understand the grammar thoroughly, may often be due to the fact that the learners don't hear it clearly. Extra work on production of -s/-es can help reinforce habits of correct usage.

ANSWFRS:

3. traffic I 11. songs 4. automobiles **12.** music *I* 5. scenery / 13. suggestions 6. mountains **14.** advice *I* 7. information I 15. literature I 8. facts 16. novels 9. words 17. sand / **10.** vocabulary *I* 18. beaches

CHART 11-4: MORE NONCOUNT NOUNS

• This chart provides information for the students to use if and as they can; this information will have varying degrees of usefulness. The students do not need to memorize these noncount nouns, but the information can be quite useful for learners who already know and use many of these words. Students to whom much of the vocabulary is new may not benefit a great deal immediately in terms of appropriate use of noncount nouns in their own speech and writing. For them, it can serve principally as a reference when they attempt these exercises and the *Workbook* practices.

\square EXERCISE 7, p. 316. Count and noncount nouns. (Charts 11-2 \rightarrow 11-4)

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ANSWERS: 3. weather / 4. storms 5. is ... chalk / 6. wishes 7. luck / 8. Thunder / ... lightning / 9. Gold / ... is ... Diamonds ... are 10. knowledge / 11. ideas ... opinions 12. patience / 13. patients 14. progress / 15. pollution / 16. bridges ... rivers ... bodies ... water /
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☐ EXERCISE 8, p. 316. Noncount abstractions. (Chart 11-4)

This practice presents a few common sayings in English that the students might find interesting. These sayings illustrate the use of abstractions as noncount nouns. There is no reason to expect the students to know the proper completions; they may not have encountered these expressions before. Tell your students just to guess if they have never heard them. Use the practice as a springboard for a discussion of the students' interpretations of and reactions to these sayings. Do they have similar sayings in their languages?

ANSWERS: 2. G 3. F 4. B 5. E 6. C 7. A

\square EXERCISE 9, p. 317. Noncount abstractions. (Chart 11-4)

The purpose here is for the students to reach for nouns that are abstractions. Most of the noncount nouns given in the answers below can be found in the list in Chart 11-4. Suggest that the students consult this chart.

SAMPLE ANSWERS:

- **a.** 1. patience
 - 2. honesty
 - 3. courage
 - 4. reliability
 - 5. compassion
 - 6. gentleness
- **b.** 1. greed
 - 2. ignorance
 - 3. jealousy
 - 4. dishonesty
 - 5. laziness
 - 6. cowardice

- c. 1. good health
 - 2. peace
 - 3. prosperity
 - 4. literacy
 - 5. justice
 - 6. freedom
 - 7. progress
- d. 1. hunger
 - 2. poverty
 - 3. disease
 - 4. homelessness
 - 5. violence

\square EXERCISE 10, p. 317. Count and noncount nouns. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-4)

This exercise is intended to elicit nouns and quantifiers. Tell the students to complete the sentence "I see" when making their lists.

CHART 11-5: USING SEVERAL, A LOT OF, MANY/MUCH, AND A FEW/A LITTLE

- Using the classroom as your context, ask the students how many desks is "several desks." How many desks is "a lot of desks"?
- You might mention that *a lot of* occurs principally in informal English. You might also mention that *lots of* is the even more informal equivalent of *a lot of*.

\square EXERCISE 11, p. 318. SEVERAL, A LOT OF, and MANY/MUCH. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-5)

The sentence with the spelling error is number 11. Spelling "a lot" as one word is a common error.

ANSWERS: 3.-5. (no change) 6. too many chairs 7. a little furniture 8. (no change) 9. some new furniture \$10. (no change) 11. are a lot (spelled as two words) of desks 12. is a lot of furniture \$

\square EXERCISE 12, p. 319. HOW MANY and HOW MUCH. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-5)

ANSWERS: 3. many players are there 4. much homework do you have 5. many apples are there 6. much fruit is there 7. many provinces are there 8. much Japanese did you know 9. many kinds of fish are there 10. much cheese should I buy 11. much coffee / many cups of coffee do you drink 12. much chalk is there / many pieces of chalk are there

\square EXERCISE 13, p. 320. MANY vs. MUCH. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-5)

EXPECTED QUESTIONS: 1. How much tea do you usually drink every day? 2. How many words are there ...? 3. How much (money) does a pencil cost? 4. How many bones are there ...? 5. How many teeth does the average person have? 6. How much mail did you get yesterday? 7. How much sugar do you put in your tea? 8. How many languages can you speak? 9. How much English had you studied ...? 10. How many people were there ...? 11. How many human beings are there?

12. How many butterflies can you see . . . ?

\square EXERCISE 14, p. 320. A FEW vs. A LITTLE. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-5)

NOTE: This text does not deal with the difference between a few vs. few or a little vs. little. See Chart 7-10 in Understanding and Using English Grammar, Third Edition.

ANSWERS:

a little help
 a little advice
 a little French
 a little pepper
 a little more money
 a few more hours
 a few things
 a few coins
 a little toothpaste
 a little more chicken
 a little fruit
 a little rain
 a few chickens

CHART 11-6: NOUNS THAT CAN BE COUNT OR NONCOUNT

• The nouns presented here are but a drop in the bucket of those that have dual count-noncount usages. The intention is simply to introduce the students to the idea that such a possibility exists in English. Point out that they may find count vs. noncount information in their dictionaries. Again, the purpose in this text is to get across the concept of a noncount noun, for it is this concept that will serve the students well as they gain experience with English and expand their usage ability. The ultimate goal is for learners to use nouns as count or noncount as unthinkingly as a native speaker does. In the meantime, it helps them to pay a little special attention to this phenomenon in English. In this chart, discuss how the noncount usages deal with "wholes" and the count usages with individual items.

\square EXERCISE 15, p. 322. Nouns that can be count or noncount. (Chart 11-6)

ANSWERS:

3. time 9. work 15. glasses 4. times **10.** light . . . gets . . . it 16. glass 5. papers **11.** are . . . lights **17.** Iron is 6. paper 12. hair . . . hair 18. Irons are 7. a famous paper 13. hairs 19. experiences 8. works 14. glasses 20. experience

CHART 11-7: USING UNITS OF MEASURE WITH NONCOUNT NOUNS

- These units of measure are also called "partitives."
- Some other units of measure not introduced in the text are *carton*, *dozen*, *head* (of lettuce or cabbage), *pack*, *package*, *roll* (of film or paper towels), *tablespoon*, *teaspoon*, *tub* (of butter or margarine). Additional nonmetric terms not in the text are *ounce*, *pint*, *inch*, *foot*, *yard*.
- The United States is the only major country that does not use the metric system. Nonmetric terms have little meaning to most students and little use unless the students are living in the United States and have to do their own food or gas shopping.
- Nonmetric terms originated in English in the 1200s and are called "English" or "British units." The metric system was created by French scientists late in the eighteenth century. At that time, each country had its own system of measurements that had developed from local traditions. By late in the nineteenth century, most major countries had recognized the need for an international system of measurements and had adopted the metric system. Great Britain, Canada, and Australia began converting to it in the 1960s. The United States government is still wrestling with the problem of if and how to convert to metric.
- The spellings "metre" and "litre" are chiefly British. The spellings "meter" and "liter" are used in American English.

☐ EXERCISE 16, p. 324. Units of measure with noncount nouns. (Chart 11-7)

There may easily be more than one possible completion. Often only one is idiomatic (i.e., the expression a native speaker would typically use) or culturally appropriate in most English-speaking countries. For example, in item 1 it would be grammatically correct to say "a bag of olives" or "a box of olives," but "can" and "jar" are the words idiomatically and culturally appropriate for quantifying olives.

USUAL COMPLETIONS (others are possible):

PAR	et I.	PAR	T II.
3.	bottle	17.	piece
4.	jar	18.	slice/piece
5.	can	19.	slice/piece
6.	can	20.	glass/cup
7.	bag/box	21.	bowl/cup
8.	bottle	22.	slice/piece
9.	can	23.	glass
10.	can	24.	bowl/cup
11.	bag	25.	glass
12.	bottle/can	26.	bowl
13.	can	27.	slice/piece
14.	box	28.	bowl/cup
		29.	bowl

\square EXERCISE 17, p. 325. Writing activity: count and noncount nouns. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-7)

The intention here is directed writing practice. Writing about food requires both count and noncount nouns.

CHART 11-8: GUIDELINES FOR ARTICLE USAGE

- This chart presents the basics of article usage. It by no means covers the myriad uses of articles in English. Almost all students find article usage difficult to learn, and many teachers and textbook authors find articles difficult to teach. There are many idiomatic uses, complex patterns, intricate variations, and subtleties. Proficient use of articles can only come with experience over time. Tell your students not to get frustrated. Articles are just one small part of English.
- Most students need help with this chart; it contains too much information to be grasped independently. It is suggested that you combine an explanation of this chart with a discussion of the illustrations in Exercise 18, or even do Exercise 18 first, before looking at the chart.
- For more information about articles, see Charts 7-7 and 7-8 in the third edition of *Understanding and Using English Grammar*.

☐ EXERCISE 18, p. 328. Count and noncount nouns. (Chart 11-8)

The key point the students need to understand from this exercise is that article usage often depends upon what the speaker assumes the listener is familiar with and is thinking about. If they have shared knowledge and are thinking about the same object or person, the speaker uses *the*.

□ EXERCISE 19, p. 330. THE vs. A/AN. (Chart 11-8)

Again the key point is what the speaker assumes the listener is familiar with and thinking about.

ANSWFRS:

 3. a ... a
 8. the
 13. the ... the ... the ... the ... the ... the

 4. the ... the
 9. the
 14. the

 5. a
 10. a
 15. a

 6. the ... the
 11. the

 7. a ... a
 12. a ... a

\square EXERCISE 20, p. 331. Using A or Ø for generalizations. (Chart 11-8)

ANSWERS:

Ø Milk . . . Ø (none possible)
 A . . . Flowers are beautiful.
 Ø Water . . . Ø (none possible)
 A . . . Horses are strong.
 Ø Jewelry . . Ø (none possible)
 Ø Soap . . Ø (none possible)
 A . . Shirts have sleeves.
 Ø Honey . . Ø (none possible)

☐ EXERCISE 21, p. 332. Using THE for specific statements. (Chart 11-8)

Students can discuss this exercise in groups or pairs prior to class discussion.

ANSWERS:

2. a. Mountains 5. a. Health **8.** a. **the** happiness b. The mountains b. **the** health b. happiness 3. a. Water **6.** a. **M**en . . . women 9. a. Vegetables b. **The** water b. **The** vegetables b. **the** men . . . **the** women 7. a. problems 4. a. **The** information **10.** a. **G**old b. information b. **the** problems b. The gold

□ EXERCISE 22, p. 333. Using THE for specific statements. (Chart 11-8) ANSWERS: 3. Ø Air 4. The air **5. The** windows 6. Ø Windows . . . Ø glass 7. Ø children **8. the** children **9.** Ø **P**aper . . . Ø trees 10. The paper 12. the nurses 11. Ø Nurses 13. Ø English . . . Ø grammar 14. The grammar 15. Ø plants ... Ø fruit ... Ø vegetables ... Ø plants ... Ø meat ... Ø plants 16. The plants ☐ EXERCISE 23, p. 333. Using THE for second mention. (Chart 11-8) ANSWERS: 3. a desk . . . a bed . . . The desk . . . The bed 4. a pen . . . some paper . . . the pen . . . the paper 5. a picnic . . . a movie . . . The picnic . . . the movie 6. a dog ... a cat ... The dog ... the cat ... The cat was chasing a mouse. The mouse ... a hole ... but the hole ... The cat ... the hole ... a tree. The dog ... the tree 7. a bag . . . some sugar . . . some cookies . . . The sugar . . . the flour . . . the flour . . . **some** little bugs . . . **the** little bugs . . . **a** new bag . . . **The** new bag 8. a princess ... a prince ... The princess ... the prince ... a distant land ... a messenger . . . some things . . . the prince . . . The messenger . . . some jewels . . . a robe ... the prince ... the princes ... the messenger's ... the prince ... **some** tokens . . . **the** messenger . . . **the** jewels . . . **the** beautiful silk robe . . . the princess . . . the messenger . . . the prince . . . a wife

\square EXERCISE 24, p. 335. Summary: A/AN vs. Ø vs. THE. (Charts 11-1 \rightarrow 11-8)

ANSWERS:

- 2. a radio . . . Ø music (also possible: some music)
- 3. the radio . . . The music
- 4. A good book . . . a friend . . . Ø life
- **5. a** book . . . **the** life
- **6. the** lake . . . **a** good idea
- 7. A lake ... \emptyset water ... a sea ... a pond ... An ocean ... a sea
- **8. the** beach . . . **the** ocean
- 9. Ø Water . . . the water . . . The pollution
- 10. Ø fresh water ... Ø seawater ... Ø salt
- 11. the salt . . . the pepper
- 12. Ø different countries ... Ø different geography ... a peninsula ... an island nation
- **13. a** taxi
- 14. Ø fresh fish
- 15. Ø Good food . . . Ø pleasure
- **16.** The food . . . the fish . . . the service . . . the waitress . . . a good tip
- 17. **the** car . . . **the** kids . . . **the** car
- 18. Ø coins ... Ø shells ... Ø beads ... Ø salt ... Ø paper ... Ø plastic cards
- **19.** Ø **M**oney . . . Ø trees
- **20.** Ø sick people . . . **A** farmer . . . Ø crops . . . **An** architect . . . Ø buildings . . . **An** artist . . . Ø new ways . . . **the** world . . . Ø life
- 21. Ø Earthquakes are Ø rare events
- 22. an earthquake . . . the earthquake . . . The ground
- 23. a good program . . . a documentary . . . an old movie . . . the documentary
- **24.** Ø Modern people . . . the universe . . . the moon . . . Ø life . . . a star . . . the universe the sun

☐ EXERCISE 25, p. 337. Preview: using THE or Ø with names. (Chart 11-9)

Suggestion: Bring a world map to class.

ANSWERS:

3. Ø 6. Ø 9. Ø 7. the 10. Ø **4.** the

8. the **5.** the

CHART 11-9: USING THE OR Ø WITH NAMES

- Using a world map, point to places and ask the students to identify them: That is the Nile River. That is Ø Brazil. That is Ø Beijing. Those are the Alps. Etc.
- American English uses a period at the end of abbreviated titles:

Mr. Wang, Mrs. Doe, Ms. Jackson, Dr. Singh.

British English does not use a period:

Mr Wang, Mrs Doe, Ms Jackson, Dr Singh

\square EXERCISE 26, p. 338. Using THE or \emptyset with names. (Chart 11-9)

Refer students to the Workbook for practice with a wider variety of place names.

ANSWERS:

3. Ø . . . Ø **6.** The $\dots \emptyset \dots$ the

4. The 7. Ø **5.** The . . . the 8. Ø . . . Ø

CHART 11-10: CAPITALIZATION

- One of the principal ideas for the students to understand from this chart is that nouns are capitalized when they are part of a name (i.e., a proper noun). The text does not use the term "proper noun." You may decide to use it if it helps your class.
- This is a reference chart. You might want to proceed directly to the exercises, then refer to the chart as questions arise.
- Correct capitalization can be a problem in student writing. Some language groups, such as Spanish speakers, have different rules for capitalizing words; for example, words related to nationality are not capitalized in Spanish, but are in English. Some students from other language groups don't consider capitalization important. It may be necessary to emphasize that proper capitalization is a value in English rhetoric, for it signals a writer's competent, educated use of the language.

☐ EXERCISE 27, p. 340. Capitalization. (Chart 11-10)

ANSWERS: 2. Do you know Richard Smith? He is a professor at this university. 3. I know that **Professor Smith** teaches at the **University** of **Arizona**. flows into the Mediterranean Sea. 5. John is a Catholic. Ali is a Moslem. 6. Anna speaks French. She studied in France for two years. 7. (no change) 8. I'm taking Modern European History 101 this semester. 9. We went to Vancouver, British Columbia, for our vacation last summer. 10. Venezuela is a Spanish-speaking country. 12. Canada is north of the United States. 11. Canada is in North America. 14. The Mississippi River flows south. 13. (no change) 15. The Amazon is a river 16. We went to Brookfield Zoo in Chicago. in **S**outh **A**merica. 17. The title of this book is Fundamentals of English Grammar. 18. I enjoy studying English grammar. 19. On Valentine's Day (February 14), sweethearts give each other presents. a book entitled The Cat and the Mouse in My Aunt's House.

☐ EXERCISE 28, p. 341. Capitalization. (Chart 11-10)

ANSWERS: (1) Jane Goodall is . . . in Tanzania. (2) . . . heart of London, England, as . . . books were *The Jungle Book*, by Rudyard Kipling, and books about Tarzan, a fictional (3) . . . go to Africa . . . and English literature . . . poets was T. S. Eliot . . . passage to Africa. (4) . . . the Red Sea and southward down the African coast to Mombasa in Kenya . . . in Nairobi with a British company . . . she met Louis Leakey, a famous . . . shore of Lake Tanganyika. (5) Jane Goodall lived (6) . . . Jane couldn't afford . . . a Ph.D. from Cambridge University and became a professor at Stanford University . . . of them is *My Friends, the Wild Chimpanzees*.

□ EXERCISE 29, p. 342. Error analysis. (Chapter 11)

ANSWERS: 2. There is a lot of information in that book. 3. The Oil is a natural resource. 4. ... there was too much traffic. 5. I drank two glasses of water.

- **6.** Our teacher gives us too **much homework**. **7.** Nadia knows a lot of **vocabulary**.
- **8.** I had **an** egg for breakfast. **9.** There **are** many **kinds** of trees in the world.
- 10. I'm studying the English. 11. My cousin is living/lives in the United States.
- **12.** Only twelve **students** were in class yesterday. **13.** I need some **advice**.
- 14. We all have a few problems in the life.
 15. There were no jobs, and ... much money.
 16. ... animals except for chickens.
 17. When I was a child, ... with the horses.
 18. I live with two friends. One is from the Chile ... from the Saudi Arabia.
 19. I think the English is a difficult language.
 20. When people use a lot of slang, I can't understand them.