

## What are Collective Nouns?

A **collective noun** refers to “groups” of people, places, things, or ideas. A collective noun is singular if its members are referenced as a “whole” group, but plural if the group’s individual members are referenced.

Improper use of collective nouns often leads to errors in subject-verb agreement. We will be studying this concept later. Here, you are learning to recognize collective nouns.

Here are some examples of collective nouns categorized under each definition element.

People	Places	Things	Ideas
band	company	bunch	majority
team	range	pride (of lions)	society
troop	department	library	government

In the excerpt below, the collective nouns have been marked. Can you identify the underlined nouns as common or proper?

### The Trail of Tears



*End of the Trail* sculpted by James E. Fraser 1915—wikimedia.org

In 1838, 16,000 Cherokee were forced from their homes in the Old South. Under armed guard, the **mass** of Native Americans was pushed west across the Mississippi River to Oklahoma’s Indian Territory. Other cultures, including the creek, Choctaw, and Chickasaw nations, were included in the removal program. Many historians refer to this journey west as the Trail of Tears. They estimate that as many as a quarter of the **group** may have died during the long and arduous migration.

Some Native Americans rebelled against the removal program, while others fled to Canada or Mexico. The Cherokee led the most organized resistance. They had their own written language; their own newspaper, the *Cherokee Phoenix*; tax-supported schools; and a written constitution. The Cherokee **nation** also had the sympathy of some members of **Congress** and of other government officials. Although the Cherokee took legal action, they never were able to regain their homelands.

Notice that not all the nouns in these two paragraphs have been marked. There are many more that have been left unmarked. Can you find them all? Remember, proper nouns specifically name something (and are capitalized) and common nouns are very general (and are not capitalized).

**Answers:** Cherokee, proper; Old South, proper; mass, common; cultures, common; group, common; Native Americans, proper; resistance, common; nation, common; Congress, proper; officials, common; homelands, common.