Image:	Lezione 3

Nouns

Gender and number of nouns

In the German language, nouns have three genders: masculine (M), feminine (F), and neuter (N).

The following list contains all the nouns from the first part of our excerpt. The definite article before a singular noun indicates its gender:

der (M), *die* (F), *das* (N)

In the plural (PL), all nouns take the same article (*die*), regardless of gender. This means that in the plural the gender distinction disappears.

This is why the article is not placed before plural nouns in the following list.

girl	Mädchen	Mädchen (girl)
dolls	Puppen	Puppen (dolls)
dream	Träume	Träume (dreams)
mountain village	Bergdorf	Bergdorf(mountain village)
beach	Meeresstrand	Meeresstrand (beach)
sea	Meer	Meer (sea)
country	Land	Land (country)
people	Leute	Leute (people)
language	Sprache	Sprache (language)
dreams	Träume	Träume(dreams)
years	Jahre	Jahre (years)
big ugly man	Riesenkerl	Riesenkerl (big ugly man)
six-foot man	Zweimetermann	Zweimetermann (six-foot man)
arms	Arme	Arme (arms)

doll	Puppe	Puppe (doll)
tiny creature	Würmchen	Würmchen (tiny creature)
angel face	Engelsgesicht	Engelsgesicht (angel face)
spasms	Krämpfe	Krämpfe (spasms)
little body	Körperchen	Körperchen (little body)
disease	Morbus	Morbus (disease)
name	Name	Name (name)
doctor	Arzt	Arzt(doctor)
glory	Ruhm	Ruhm(glory)
forms	Formen	Formen (forms)
child	Kind	Kind(child)

Making the plural

The second list contains plural nouns from the entire 600-word extract by Pirandello.

The nominative plural article for all genders is *die*.

The first six nouns in the list are from the first part (see the first list). The words *Fenster* (windows) and *Finger* (fingers) are in the second part, while the last six nouns are in the last part of the text.

Read and listen. Copy the words as you read them.

dolls	Puppen	Puppen(dolls)
people	Leute	Leute(people)
dreams	Träume	Träume(dreams)
years	Jahre	Jahre(years)
arms	Arme	Arme(arms)
spasms	Krämpfe	Krämpfe(spasms)
forms	Formen	Formen(forms)
windows	Fenster	Fenster(windows)
fingers	Finger	Finger(fingers)
lips	Lippen	Lippen(lips)
ghosts	Geister	Geister(ghosts)
mountains	Berge	Berge(mountains)

Our excerpt gives examples of the first four endings, which are the most common. The plural form often involves adding an *umlaut* to the word.

Zero ending (-ø):

Fenster, Finger(windows, fingers)

- (e)n ending:

Puppen, Formen, Lippen(dolls, forms, lips)

-e ending:

Träume, Jahre, Berge(dreams, years, mountains)

-er ending:

Geister(ghosts)

-s ending:

None of the plural nouns in the text use this ending.

There is an exercise on plural nouns in the appendix.

Cases and their functions: The Nominative Case (NOM)

The nominative case is used for the subject and the predicate noun.

The person, animal or object in the nominative case does the action described by the verb.

It answers the questions introduced by the interrogative pronouns *wer*? or *was*? ('who' or 'what').

Example:

Was ist das Leben? Ein Hauch.

> Was ist das Leben? Ein Hauch. (How flimsy life is! A breath.)

Here is a list of the nouns used as subjects in the second part of the text, arranged according to the action of the story. The article helps to identify the gender, number and case of the noun.

the room	das Zimmer	das Zimmer(the room)
the two windows	die zwei Fenster	die zwei Fenster(the two windows)
the mother	die Mutter	die Mutter(the mother)
the child	das Kind	das Kind(the child)
a breath	ein Hauch	ein Hauch(a breath)
your husband	dein Mann	dein Mann(your husband)
a giant	ein Riese	ein Riese(a giant)
the certainty	die Gewissheit	die Gewissheit(the certainty)

Good to know!

There are two exercises after this lesson.