Your main commentary should be focused on *noun phrase determination*. Other topics may also be addressed.

The river lies in a valley of hills and fields. The north end of the valley is narrow, and the river runs down from the mountains through a canyon. The sun strikes the canyon floor only a few hours each day, and in winter the snow remains for a long time in the crevices of the walls. There is a town in the valley, and there are ruins of other towns in the canyon. In three directions from the town there are cultivated fields. Most of them lie to the west, across the river, on the slope of the plain. Now and then in winter, great angles of geese fly through the valley, and then the sky and the geese are the same color and the air is hard and damp and smoke rises from the houses of the town. The seasons lie hard upon the land. In summer the valley is hot, and birds come to the tamarack on the river. The feathers of blue and yellow birds are prized by the townsmen.

The fields are small and irregular, and from the west mesa they seem an intricate patchwork of arbors and gardens, too numerous for the town. The townsmen work all summer in the fields. When the moon is full, they work at night with ancient, handmade plows and hoes, and if the weather is good and the water plentiful they take a good harvest from the fields. They grow the things that can be preserved easily: corn and chillies and alfalfa. On the town side of the river there are a few orchards and patches of melons and grapes and squash. Every six or seven years there is a great harvest of piñones far to the east of the town. That harvest, like the deer in the mountains, is the gift of God.

It is hot in the end of July. The old man Francisco drove a team of roan mares near the place where the river bends around a cottonwood. The sun shone on the sand and the river and the leaves of the trees, and waves of heat shimmered from the stones. The colored stones on the bank of the river were small and smooth, and they rubbed together and cracked under the wagon wheels. Once in a while one of the roan mares tossed its head, and the commotion of its dark mane sent a swarm of flies into the air. Downstream the brush grew thick on a bar in the river, and there the old man saw the reed. He turned the mares into the water and stepped down on the sand. A sparrow hung from the reed. It was upside down and its wings were partly open and the feathers at the back of its head lay spread in a tiny ruff. The eyes were neither open nor closed. Francisco was disappointed, for he had wished for a male mountain bluebird, breast feathers the pale color of April skies or of turquoise, lake water. Or the summer tanager: a prayer plume ought to be beautiful. He drew the reed from the sand and cut loose the horsehair from the sparrow's feet. The bird fell into the water and was carried away in the current. He turned the reed in his hands; it was smooth and nearly translucent, like the spine of an eagle feather, and it was not yet burned and made brittle by the sun and wind. He had cut the hair too short, and he pulled another from the tail of the near roan and set the snare again. When the reed was curved and strung like a bow, he replaced it carefully in the sand. He laid his forefinger lightly on top of the reed and the reed sprang and the looped end of the hair snapped across his finger and made a white line above the nail. "Sí, bien hecho," he said aloud, and without removing the reed from the sand he cocked it again.

667 words