Inheritance

- Once we learn Inheritance we will understand:

- deriving new classes from existing classes
- creating class hierarchies
- the `protected` modifier
- polymorphism via inheritance
- inheritance hierarchies for interfaces
- inheritance used in graphical user interfaces

Inheritance

- A fundamental object-oriented technique, used to organize and create reusable classes
- *Inheritance* allows a software developer to derive a new class from an existing one
- The existing class is called the *parent class,* or *superclass*, or *base class*
- The derived class is called the *child class* or *subclass*.
- As the name implies, the child inherits characteristics of the parent
- That is, the child class inherits the methods and data defined for the parent class

Inheritance

- To tailor a derived class, the programmer can add new variables or methods, or can modify the inherited ones
- *Software reuse* is at the heart of inheritance
- By using existing software components to create new ones, we capitalize on all the effort that went into the design, implementation, and testing of the existing software

Inheritance

- Forming new classes based on existing ones.

  - **superclass**: Parent class being extended.
  - **subclass**: Child class that inherits behavior from superclass.
    - gets a copy of every field and method from superclass

  - **is-a relationship**: Each object of the subclass also "is a(n)" object of the superclass and can be treated as one.

Inheritance

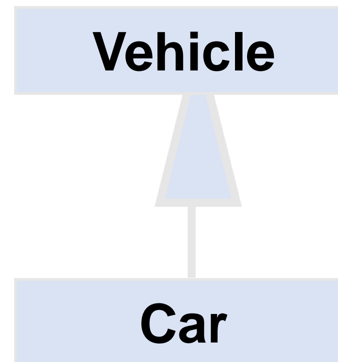
- Forming new classes based on existing ones.

  - create a special version of the code without re-writing any of the existing code.
  - End result is a more *specific* object type, called the sub-class / derived class / child class.

  - The original code is called the superclass / parent class / base class.

Inheritance

- Inheritance relationships often are shown graphically in a UML class diagram, with an arrow with an open arrowhead pointing to the parent class



Inheritance should create an *is-a relationship*, meaning the child *is a* more specific version of the parent

Deriving Subclasses

- In Java, we use the reserved word `extends` to establish an inheritance relationship

```
class Car extends Vehicle
{
   // class contents
}
```

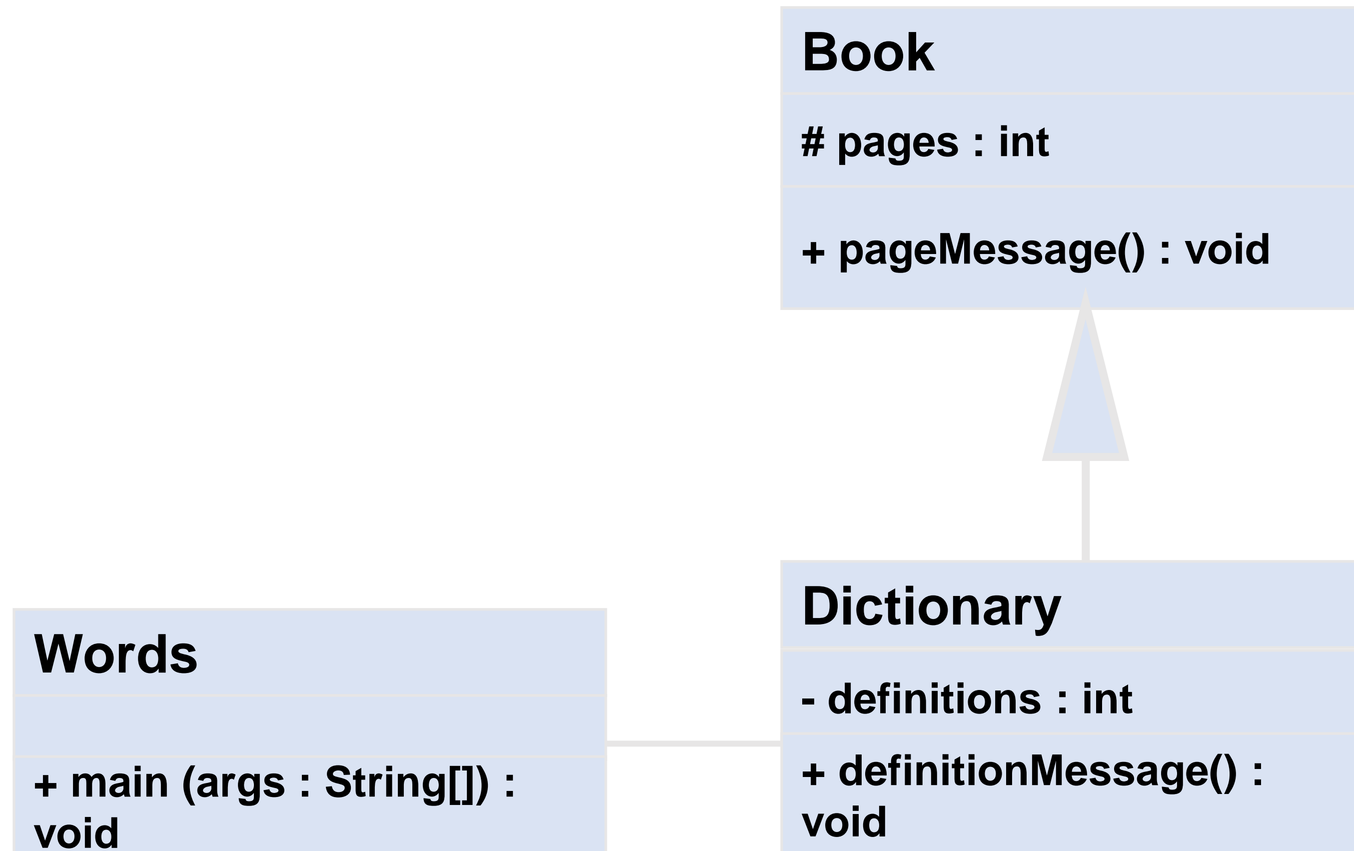
The protected Modifier

- Visibility modifiers determine which class members are inherited and which are not
- Variables and methods declared with `public` visibility are inherited; those with `private` visibility are not
- But `public` variables violate the principle of encapsulation
- There is a third visibility modifier that helps in inheritance situations: `protected`

The protected Modifier

- The `protected` modifier allows a member of a base class to be inherited into a child
- Protected visibility provides more encapsulation than public visibility does
- However, protected visibility is not as tightly encapsulated as private visibility
- The details of each modifier are given in Appendix F
- Protected variables and methods can be shown with a # symbol preceding them in UML diagrams

UML Diagram for Words



The super Reference

- Constructors are not inherited, even though they have public visibility
- Yet we often want to use the parent's constructor to set up the "parent's part" of the object
- The `super` reference can be used to refer to the parent class, and often is used to invoke the parent's constructor

The super Reference

- A child's constructor is responsible for calling the parent's constructor
- The first line of a child's constructor should use the `super` reference to call the parent's constructor
- The `super` reference can also be used to reference other variables and methods defined in the parent's class

Multiple Inheritance

- Java supports *single inheritance*, meaning that a derived class can have only one parent class
- *Multiple inheritance* allows a class to be derived from two or more classes, inheriting the members of all parents
- Collisions, such as the same variable name in two parents, have to be resolved
- Java does not support multiple inheritance
- In most cases, the use of interfaces gives us aspects of multiple inheritance without the overhead

Overriding Methods

- A child class can *override* the definition of an inherited method in favor of its own
- The new method must have the same signature as the parent's method, but can have a different body
- The type of the object executing the method determines which version of the method is invoked

Overriding

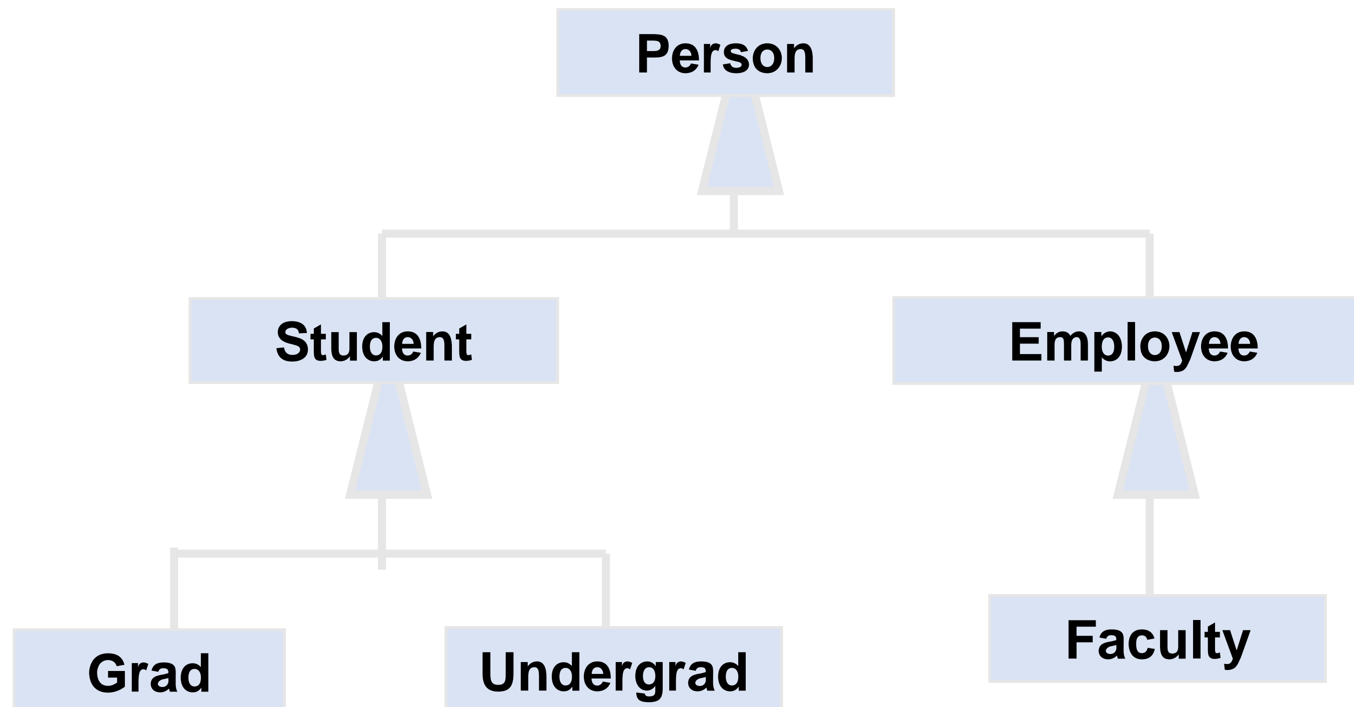
- A parent method can be invoked explicitly using the `super` reference
- If a method is declared with the `final` modifier, it cannot be overridden
- The concept of overriding can be applied to data and is called *shadowing variables*
- Shadowing variables should be avoided because it tends to cause unnecessarily confusing code

Overloading vs. Overriding

- Don't confuse the concepts of overloading and overriding
- Overloading deals with multiple methods with the same name in the same class, but with different signatures
- Overriding deals with two methods, one in a parent class and one in a child class, that have the same signature
- Overloading lets you define a similar operation in different ways for different data
- Overriding lets you define a similar operation in different ways for different object types

Class Hierarchies

- A child class of one parent can be the parent of another child, forming a *class hierarchy*



Class Hierarchies

- Two children of the same parent are called *siblings*
- Common features should be put as high in the hierarchy as is reasonable
- An inherited member is passed continually down the line
- Therefore, a child class inherits from all its ancestor classes
- There is no single class hierarchy that is appropriate for all situations

The Object Class

- A class called `Object` is defined in the `java.lang` package of the Java standard class library

- All classes are derived from the `Object` class

- If a class is not explicitly defined to be the child of an existing class, it is assumed to be the child of the `Object` class

- Therefore, the `Object` class is the ultimate root of all class hierarchies

The Object Class

- The `Object` class contains a few useful methods, which are inherited by all classes
- For example, the `toString` method is defined in the `Object` class
- Every time we have defined `toString`, we have actually been overriding an existing definition
- The `toString` method in the `Object` class is defined to return a string that contains the name of the object's class together along with some other information

The Object Class

- All objects are guaranteed to have a `toString` method via inheritance
- Thus the `println` method can call `toString` for any object that is passed to it

Summary

- We learned and focused on:
  - deriving new classes from existing classes
  - creating class hierarchies
  - the `protected` modifier
  - The object class
  - Overriding and overloading