

Function and `class` templates

P. Ronchese

Dipartimento di Fisica e Astronomia “G.Galilei”

Università di Padova

“Object oriented programming and C++” course

Similar operations

Similar operations can be defined for different types

All the following can be defined for all kind of numbers, `int` , `float` and so on:

- basic operations `+` , `-` , `*` , `/`
- absolute value
- power
- ...

More complex objects could share more complex operations

Generic types

C++ allows writing code with “generic” object types, performing the same operations with objects having different types

A lot of code replication can be avoided

- Work economy in code writing
- Ease of maintenance
- Error reduction

Function templates declaration and definition

A function can take arguments of generic type by declaring it a “function template”

```
template<class T>
void perm(T& x, T& y, T& z) {
    // make a cyclic permutation of x, y, z
    T t = x;
    x = y;
    y = z;
    z = t;
    return;
}
```

The compiler takes care of calling the proper instance

- any number of template arguments with any name can be used
- `template<typename T>` can be used as well

Template functions usage

The full definition must come before the usage:
a simple declaration is not sufficient

```
template<class T>
void perm(T& x, T& y, T& z) {
    ...
}
int main() {
    int i;
    int j;
    int k;
    ...
    perm(i, j, k);
    ...
}
```

Class templates declaration and definition

Most flexibility is achieved by the use of `class` templates

A previously seen example (“FloatArray”) can be easily used for other types than `float` by making it a `class` template.

```
template<class T> // T replaces "float"
class Array {    // everywhere
public:         // in the class definition
    Array(int n);
    Array(const Array<T>& a);
    ~Array();
    ...
private:
    int eltn;
    T* cont;
    void copy(const Array<T>& a);
};
```

Class templates implementation

The specification `template<class T>` must be included in the implementation of constructor(s), destructor, functions and operators

```
template<class T>
Array<T>::Array(int n) :
    eltn(n),
    cont(new T[eltn]) {
}
template<class T>
Array<T>::~~Array() {
    delete[] cont;
}
...
```

The implementation must come before the `class` is used:
it's usually coded in "implementation files" (`.hpp`)
included at the end of the header

Template class usage

In the declaration of objects with template type, the template parameter(s) must be specified

The usage is then exactly the same

```
#include "Array.h"
int main() {
    int i;
    int n=5;
    Array<float> a(n);
    for(i=0;i<n;++i)a[i]=i*3.2;
    for(i=0;i<n;++i)cout << i << " "
                        << a[i] << endl;
    return 0;
}
```

Type consistency

The consistency of a code template with the actually used types is performed only when an instance of the template is created

```
template<class T>
void perm(T& x,T& y,T& z) {
    cout << x.size() << " "
         << y.size() << " "
         << z.size() << endl;
    // make a cyclic permutation of x,y,z
    T t = x;
    x = y;
    y = z;
    z = t;
    return;
}
```

Works only if T has a function `size()` .

Nested class templates

A class template could contain a nested class, being referred from outside the enclosing class .

The compiler could be unable to know if a member of a class template is a type or an object: it assumes it's an object, unless a `typename` is specified.

```
template <class T> class A {
public:
    class C {
    };
};
template <class T> class B {
public:
    void f(A<T>* p) {
        typename A<T>::C* c; // pointer to "A<T>::C"
    };
};
```

typename specification

```
template <class T> class A;
template <class T> class B {
public:
    void f(A<T>* p) {
        // by default A<T>::C is an object
        // and A<T>::C * c is a multiplication
        typename A<T>::C * c;
        // adding a "typename"
        // A<T>::C is declared being a type
    };
};
```

A **typename** specification is required in a declaration if:

- there's a template parameter
- there's a scope resolution operator `::`

"**typename**" can be used in place of "class" in template declarations: `template <typename T> class A`

Non-type template arguments declaration

Template arguments can be not only types, but also integers, or anything similar to an `int` (`char`, `enum` ...)

Example: a fixed-size array

```
template<class T, unsigned int N>
class FixedSizeArray {
public:
    FixedSizeArray();
    FixedSizeArray(
        const FixedSizeArray<T,N>& a);
    ~FixedSizeArray();
    ...
private:
    T* cont;
    void copy(const FixedSizeArray<T,N>& a);
};
```

Non-type template arguments implementation

```
template<class T, unsigned int N>
FixedSizeArray<T,N>::FixedSizeArray():
    cont(new T[N]) {
};

template<class T, unsigned int N>
FixedSizeArray<T,N>::copy(
    const FixedSizeArray<T,N>& a) {
    if(cont==a.cont) return;
    delete[] cont;
    cont=new T[N];
    T* pr=a.cont+N;
    T* pl= cont+N;
    while(pl>cont) *--pl=*--pr;
    return;
};
```

Template specialization

Function and `class` templates allow the automatic replication of the same code with different types (or integer quantities), but some special situation could require a special handling

Template specialization: the implementation of a template `class` (or one of its functions) for a specific type is provided in addition to the generic one

```
template<>
Array<int>::Array(int n):
    eltn(n),
    cont(new int[eltn]) {
    cout << "create an Array of int" << endl;
}
```

A (possibly empty) `template` specification is needed all the same