



**Figure 3-1:**  
GOODBYE.C  
and its  
pieces'  
parts.

In all C programs, the starting point is the `main()` function. Every C program has one; GOODBYE.C, ERROR.C, and all the other C programs you ever create. The `main()` function is the engine that makes the program work. The `main()` function is also the skeleton upon which the rest of the program is built.

- ✓ `main()` is the name given to the first (or primary) function in every C program. C programs can have other functions, but `main()` is the first one.
- ✓ In C, functions are followed by parentheses. The parentheses can be empty, or they can contain information — it all depends on the individual function.
- ✓ When I write about C language functions in this book, I include the parentheses, as in `main()`.
- ✓ A *function* is a machine — it's a set of instructions that does something. C programs can have many functions in them, though the `main()` function is the first function in a C program. It's required.

*Function.* Get used to that word.

## C Language Pieces' Parts

Here are some interesting pieces of the C program shown in Figure 3-1:

1. `#include` is known as a *preprocessor directive*, which sounds impressive, and it may not be the correct term, but you're not required to memorize it anyhow. What it does is tell the compiler to "include" text from another file, stuffing it right into your source code. Doing this avoids lots of little, annoying errors that would otherwise occur.