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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

# **The Grammar Dog Guide to Civil Disobedience**

**by Henry David Thoreau**

**All exercises use sentences from the book.  
Includes over 250 multiple choice questions.**

## About Grammartdog

Grammartdog was founded in 2001 by Mary Jane McKinney, a high school English teacher and dedicated grammarian. She and other experienced English teachers in both high school and college regard grammar and style as the key to unlocking the essence of an author.

Their philosophy, that grammar and literature are best understood when learned together, led to the formation of Grammartdog.com, a means of sharing knowledge about the structure and patterns of language unique to specific authors. These patterns are what make a great book *a great book*. The arduous task of analyzing works for grammar and style has yielded a unique product, guaranteed to enlighten the reader of literary classics.

Grammartdog's strategy is to put the author's words under the microscope. The result yields an increased appreciation of the art of writing and awareness of the importance and power of language.



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**CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE** by Henry David Thoreau – Grammar and Style  
*All exercises use sentences from the book.*

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**SAMPLE EXERCISES - CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE** by Henry David Thoreau

**EXERCISE 5            COMPLEMENTS**

Identify the complements in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*d.o. = direct object*                      *p.n. = predicate nominative*  
*o.p. = object of preposition*        *p.a. = predicate adjective*

- \_\_\_1.            “That government is best which governs least.”
- \_\_\_2.            Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are usually, and all governments are sometimes, inexpedient.
- \_\_\_3.            In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense.

**EXERCISE 6            PHRASES**

Identify the phrases in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*par = participial*      *ger = gerund*      *inf = infinitive*      *appos = appositive*      *prep = prepositional*

- \_\_\_1.            The government itself, which is only the mode which the people have chosen to execute their will, is equally liable to be abused and perverted before the people can act through it.
- \_\_\_2.            Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool; for, in the outset, the people would not have consented to this measure.
- \_\_\_3.            For government is an expedient by which men would fain succeed in letting one another alone.

**EXERCISE 9            STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

Identify the figurative language in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*p = personification*      *s = simile*      *m = metaphor*      *h = hyperbole*

- \_\_\_1.            This American government . . . It is a sort of wooden gun to the people themselves.
- \_\_\_2.            Trade and commerce, if they were not made of India rubber, would never manage to bounce over the obstacles which legislators are continually putting in their way.
- \_\_\_3.            Such command no more respect than men of straw, or a lump of dirt.

**SAMPLE EXERCISES - CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE** by Henry David Thoreau

**EXERCISE 12      STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS**

Identify the type of allusion in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*a. history      b. mythology      c. religion      d. military/war      e. crime/punishment*

- \_\_\_\_ 1.      Witness the present Mexican war, the work of comparatively a few individuals using the standing government as their tool.
  
- \_\_\_\_ 2.      A common and natural result of an undue respect for law is, that you may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their will, aye, against their common sense and consciences, which makes it very steep marching indeed, and produces a palpitation of the heart.
  
- \_\_\_\_ 3.      Visit the Navy Yard, and behold a marine, such a man as an American government can make, or such as it can make a man with its black arts, a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity . . .

**EXERCISE 13      STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1**

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a government as this, think that they ought to wait until they have persuaded the majority to alter them. They think that, if they should resist, the remedy would be worse than the evil. But it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy *is* worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse. Why is it not more apt to anticipate and provide for reform? Why does it not cherish its wise minority? Why does it cry and resist before it is hurt? Why does it not encourage its citizens to be on the alert to point out its faults, and *do* better than it would have them? Why does it always crucify Christ, and excommunicate Copernicus and Luther, and pronounce Washington and Franklin rebels?

One would think, that a deliberate and practical denial of its authority was the only offence never contemplated by government; else, why has it not assigned its definite, its suitable and proportionate penalty? If a man who has no property refuses but once to earn nine shillings for the State, he is put in prison for a period unlimited by any law that I know, and determined only by the discretion of those who placed him there; but if he should steal ninety nine shillings from the State, he is soon permitted to go at large again.

If the injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government, let it go, let it go: perchance it will wear smooth, -- certainly the machine will wear out. If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine. What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

Read the passage a second time, marking figurative language, sensory imagery, poetic devices, and any other patterns of diction and rhetoric, then answer the questions below.

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1 Unjust laws exist: shall we be content to obey them, or shall we endeavor to amend them, and obey  
2 them until we have succeeded, or shall we transgress them at once? Men generally, under such a  
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20 of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine.  
21 What I have to do is to see, at any rate, that I do not lend myself to the wrong which I condemn.

- \_\_\_ 1. The underlined words in Line 10 are examples of . . .  
a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration d. rhyme
- \_\_\_ 2. The use of the word *Why* in Lines 5-8 is an example of . . .  
a. antimetabole b. asyndeton c. anaphora d. antiphrasis
- \_\_\_ 3. Line 8-9 contain examples of . . .  
a. allegory b. allusion c. anecdote d. antimetabole