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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

**The Grammar Dog Guide to
Life on the
Mississippi
by Mark Twain**

**All exercises use sentences from the novel.
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.



Grammartdog.com L.L.C.
P.O. Box 299
Christoval, Texas 76935
Phone: 325-896-2479
Fax: 325-896-2676
fifi@grammartdog.com

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E-mail us at fifi@grammartdog.com

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LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI by Mark Twain – Grammar and Style
All exercises use sentences from the novel.

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SAMPLE EXERCISES - LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI by Mark Twain

EXERCISE 5 COMPLEMENTS

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

d.o. = direct object

i.o. = indirect object

p.n. = predicate nominative

o.p. = object of preposition

p.a. = predicate adjective

- ___1. Nearly the whole of that one thousand three hundred miles of old Mississippi River which LaSalle floated down in his canoes, two hundred years ago, is good solid dry ground now.

- ___2. In 1673 Joliet the merchant, and Marquette the priest, crossed country and reached the banks of the Mississippi.

- ___3. The river was an awful solitude, then.

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. Now and then we had a hope that if we lived and were good, God would permit us to be pirates.

- ___2. Ten minutes later the steamer is under way again, with no flag on the jack-staff and no black smoke issuing from the chimneys.

- ___3. I went to work now to learn the shape of the river.

EXERCISE 9 STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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

p = personification

s = simile

m = metaphor

o = onomatopoeia

h = hyperbole

- ___1. He would boil a while to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

- ___2. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink.

- ___3. “Well, the finding of that plantation was the luckiest accident that ever happened; but it couldn’t happen again in a hundred years.”

SAMPLE EXERCISES - LIFE ON THE MISSISSIPPI by Mark Twain

EXERCISE 12 STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS

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

a. *history* b. *religion* c. *literature* d. *geography/ landmarks*

- ___1. But at the close of the fortnight they one day came upon the footprints of men in the mud of the western bank – a Robinson Crusoe experience which carries an electric shiver with it yet, when one stumbles on it in print.
- ___2. Here is a proud devil, thought I; here is a limb of Satan that would rather send us all to destruction than put himself under obligations to me . . .
- ___3. While we lay at landings, I listened to George Ealer’s flute; or to his readings from his two bibles, that is to say, Goldsmith and Shakespeare.

EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

Oh, but his wrath was up! He was a nervous man, and he shuffled from one side of his wheel to the other as if the floor was hot. He would boil a while to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

“Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?”

I tremblingly considered a moment, and then the devil of temptation provoked me to say:

“Well –to—to—be entertaining, I thought.”

This was a red rag to the bull. He raged and stormed so (he was crossing the river at the time) that I judge it made him blind, because he ran over the steering oar of a trading scow. Of course the traders sent up a volley of red-hot profanity. Never was a man so grateful as Mr. Bixby was: because he was brim full, and here were subjects who would talk back. He threw open a window, thrust his head out, and such an eruption followed as I never had heard before. The fainter and farther away the scowmen’s curses drifted, the higher Mr. Bixby lifted his voice and the weightier his adjectives grew. When he closed the window he was empty. You could have drawn a seine through his system and not caught curses to disturb your mother with. Presently he said to me in the gentlest way:

“My boy, you must get a little memorandum book, and every time I tell you a thing, put it down right away. There’s only one way to be a pilot and that is to get this entire river by heart. You have to know it just like A B C.”

That was a dismal revelation to me; for my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges. However, I did not feel discouraged long. I judged that it was best to make some allowances, for doubtless Mr. Bixby was “stretching.” Presently he pulled a rope and struck a few strokes on the big bell. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink. I could hear the wheels churn along the bank, but I was not entirely certain that I could see the shore. (From Chapter VI)

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.

- 1 Oh, but his wrath was up! He was a nervous man, and he shuffled from one side of his wheel to the
- 2 other as if the floor was hot. He would boil a while to himself, and then overflow and scald me again.

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3 “Look here! What do you suppose I told you the names of those points for?”

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16 right away. There’s only one way to be a pilot and that is to get this entire river by heart. You

17 have to know it just like A B C.”

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19 cartridges. However, I did not feel discouraged long. I judged that it was best to make some

20 allowances, for doubtless Mr. Bixby was “stretching.” Presently he pulled a rope and struck a few

21 strokes on the big bell. The stars were all gone now, and the night was as black as ink. I could hear

22 the wheels churn along the bank, but I was not entirely certain that I could see the shore.

- ___1. ALL of the following descriptions are metaphors EXCEPT . . .
- a. *Oh, but his wrath was up!* (Line 1)
 - b. *He would boil a while to himself, and then overflow and scald me* (Line 2)
 - c. *traders sent up a volley of red-hot profanity* (Line 8)
 - d. *my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges* (Line 18-19)
- ___2. ALL of the following devices are used to create tone EXCEPT . . .
- a. dialogue b. figurative language c. sarcasm d. sensory imagery
- ___3. The underlined words in Line 9 are examples of . . .
- a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration d. rhyme