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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

**The Grammar dog Guide to
Little Women
by Louisa May Alcott**

**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.



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SAMPLE EXERCISES - *LITTLE WOMEN* by Louisa May Alcott

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. Round shoulders had Jo, big hands and feet, a fly-away look to her clothes, and the uncomfortable appearance of a girl who was rapidly shooting up into a woman, and didn't like it.
- ___ 2. The first sound in the morning was her voice, as she went about the house singing like a lark.
- ___ 3. Mrs. March gave the mother tea and gruel, and comforted her with promises of help, while she dressed the little baby as tenderly as if it had been her own.

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. Margaret, the eldest of the four, was sixteen, and very pretty, being plump and fair, with large eyes, plenty of soft brown hair, a sweet mouth, and white hands, of which she was rather vain.
- ___ 2. "I like his manners, and he looks like a little gentleman, so I've no objection to your knowing him if a proper opportunity comes."
- ___ 3. Sitting on the floor, with one boot on, Amy began to cry, and Meg to reason with her, when Laurie from below, and the two girls hurried down, leaving their sister wailing.

EXERCISE 9 STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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

p = personification

s = simile

m = metaphor

o = onomatopoeia

h = hyperbole

- ___ 1. Another bang of the street door sent the basket under the sofa, and the girls to the table eager for breakfast.
- ___ 2. The cozy chairs, the globes, and, best of all, the wilderness of books, in which she could wander where she liked, made the library a region of bliss to her.
- ___ 3. "They sat as still as mice, and Susie cried quarts, I know she did."

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EXERCISE 12 STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS

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

a. *mythology* b. *religion* c. *literature* d. *folklore/superstition*

- ___1. “Do you remember how you used to play Pilgrim’s Progress when you were little things?”

- ___2. It seemed quite fairy-like to Jo, as she went up and down the walks, enjoying the blooming walls on either side, -- the soft light, the damp, sweet air, and the wonderful vines and trees that hung above her.

- ___3. “He can’t get into mischief in that little nunnery over there, and Mrs. March is doing more for him than we can.”

EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

Though possessed of half a dozen hats, it took him some time to find one; then there was a hunt for the key, which was at last discovered in his pocket, so that the girls were quite out of sight when he leaped the fence and ran after them. Taking the shortest way to the boathouse, he waited for them to appear; but no one came, and he went up the hill to take an observation. A grove of pines covered one part of it, and from the heart of this green spot came a clearer sound than the soft sigh of the pines, or the drowsy chirp of the crickets.

“Here’s a landscape!” thought Laurie, peeping through the bushes, and looking wide awake and good-natured already.

It was rather a pretty little picture; for the sisters sat together in the shady nook, with sun and shadow flickering over them, -- the aromatic wind lifting their hair and cooling their hot cheeks, -- and all the little wood people going on with their affairs as if these were no strangers, but old friends. Meg sat upon her cushion, sewing daintily with her white hands, and looking as fresh and sweet as a rose, in her pink dress, among the green. Beth was sorting the cones that lay thick under the hemlock nearby, for she made pretty things of them. Amy was sketching a group of ferns, and Jo was knitting as she read aloud. A shadow passed over the boy’s face as he watched them, feeling that he ought to go, because uninvited; yet lingering, because home seemed very lonely, and this quiet party in the woods most attractive to his restless spirit. He stood so still, that a squirrel, busy with its harvesting, ran down a pine close beside him, saw him suddenly, and skipped back, scolding so shrilly that Beth looked up, espied the wistful face behind the birches, and beckoned with a reassuring smile. (From Chapter 13)

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 Though possessed of half a dozen hats, it took him some time to find one; then there was a hunt for the
- 2 key, which was at last discovered in his pocket, so that the girls were quite out of sight when he leaped
- 3 the fence and ran after them. Taking the shortest way to the boathouse, he waited for them to appear;
- 4 but no one came, and he went up the hill to take an observation. A grove of pines covered one part of it,
- 5 and from the heart of this green spot came a clearer sound than the soft sigh of the pines, or the drowsy
- 6 chirp of the crickets.
- 7 “Here’s a landscape!” thought Laurie, peeping through the bushes, and looking wide awake and

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8 good-natured already.

9 It was rather a pretty little picture; for the sisters sat together in the shady nook, with sun and shadow
10 flickering over them, -- the aromatic wind lifting their hair and cooling their hot cheeks, -- and all the
11 little wood people going on with their affairs as if these were no strangers, but old friends. Meg sat
12 upon her cushion, sewing daintily with her white hands, and looking as fresh and sweet as a rose, in
13 her pink dress, among the green. Beth was sorting the cones that lay thick under the hemlock nearby,
14 for she made pretty things of them. Amy was sketching a group of ferns, and Jo was knitting as she
15 read aloud. A shadow passed over the boy's face as he watched them, feeling that he ought to go,
16 because uninvited; yet lingering, because home seemed very lonely, and this quiet party in the woods
17 most attractive to his restless spirit. He stood so still, that a squirrel, busy with its harvesting, ran
18 down a pine close beside him, saw him suddenly, and skipped back, scolding so shrilly that Beth looked
19 up, espied the wistful face behind the birches, and beckoned with a reassuring smile.

- ___ 1. The underlined words in Line 2 are an example of . . .
 a. assonance b. consonance c. rhyme
- ___ 2. The underlined words in Line 5 are an example of . . .
 a. personification b. simile c. metaphor
- ___ 3. Line 6 contains an example of . . .
 a. metaphor b. onomatopoeia c. hyperbole