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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

The Grammar Dog Guide to Short Stories

by O. Henry

The Gift of the Magi

The Skylight Room

The Cop and the Anthem

The Ransom of Red Chief

Hearts and Hands

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

About Gramwardog

Gramwardog 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 Gramwardog.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.

Gramwardog'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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SHORT STORIES by O. Henry

All exercises use sentences from the stories.

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SAMPLE EXERCISES - SHORT STORIES by O. Henry

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

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

- ___ 1. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present.
- ___ 2. Many a happy hour she had spent planning for something nice for him.
- ___ 3. They were expensive combs, she knew, and her heart had simply craved and yearned over them without the least hope of possession.

EXERCISE 6 PHRASES

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

par = participial

ger = gerund

inf = infinitive

appos = appositive

prep = prepositional

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

- ___ 1. There was a pier-glass between the windows of the room.
- ___ 2. A very thin and very agile person may, by observing his reflection in a rapid sequence of longitudinal strips, obtain a fairly accurate conception of his looks.
- ___ 3. Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

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

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

- ___ 1. So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters.
- ___ 2. Oh, and the next two hours tripped by on rosy wings.
- ___ 3. Jim stopped inside the door, as immovable as a setter at the scent of quail.

SAMPLE EXERCISES - SHORT STORIES by O. Henry

EXERCISE 12 STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS

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

a. history b. mythology c. religion d. literature e. law enforcement

THE GIFT OF THE MAGI

- ___ 1. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present.

- ___ 2. Had the Queen of Sheba lived in the flat across the airshaft, Della would have let her hair hang out the window some day to dry just to depreciate Her Majesty's jewels and gifts.

- ___ 3. Had King Solomon been the janitor, with all his treasures piled up in the basement, Jim would have pulled out his watch every time he passed just to see him pluck at his beard from envy.

EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit. "Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it." Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled. "Dell," said he, "Let's put our Christmas presents away and keep 'em a while. They're too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on." The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi. (From *The Gift of the Magi*)

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 Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The
- 2 dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.
- 3 "Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times
- 4 a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

SAMPLE EXERCISES - SHORT STORIES by O. Henry

5 Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head
6 and smiled.

7 “Dell,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ‘em a while. They’re too nice to
8 use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you
9 put the chops on.”

10 The magi, as you know, were wise men – wonderfully wise men – who brought gifts to the Babe in
11 the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no
12 doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have
13 lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely
14 sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these
15 days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive
16 gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi.

- ___ 1. The underlined words in Line 2 are examples of . . .
a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration d. rhyme
- ___ 2. The underlined words in Lines 3 and 4 are an example of . . .
a. metaphor b. simile c. personification d. hyperbole
- ___ 3. A shift occurs in Line . . .
a. 2 b. 4 c. 10 d. 13