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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

The Grammar dog Guide to Self-Reliance

by Ralph Waldo Emerson

**All exercises use sentences from the essay.
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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SELF-RELIANCE by Ralph Waldo Emerson – Grammar and Style
All exercises use sentences from the essay.

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SAMPLE EXERCISES - SELF-RELIANCE by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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. I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional.

- ___ 2. The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried.

- ___ 3. And we are now men, and must accept in the highest mind the same transcendent destiny.

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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. I read the other day some verses written by an eminent painter which were original and not conventional.

- ___ 2. Do not think the youth has no force, because he cannot speak to you and me.

- ___ 3. The nonchalance of boys who are sure of a dinner, and would disdain as much as a lord to do or say aught to conciliate one, is the healthy attitude of human nature.

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. Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string.

- ___ 2. He would utter opinions on all passing affairs, which being seen to be not private, but necessary, would sink like darts into the ear of men, and put them in fear.

- ___ 3. If malice and vanity wear the coat of philanthropy, shall that pass?

SAMPLE EXERCISES - SELF-RELIANCE by Ralph Waldo Emerson

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. literature e. folklore/superstition

- ___1. For the inmost in due time becomes the outmost, -- and our first thought is rendered back to us by the trumpets of the Last Judgment.

- ___2. Familiar as the voice of the mind is to each, the highest merit we ascribe to Moses, Plato, and Milton is, that they set at naught books and traditions, and spoke not what men but what they thought.

- ___3. In the attempt his genius deserts him; no muse befriends; no invention, no hope.

EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said today. – “Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.” – Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood. I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; -- read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not, and see it not. My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass for who we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

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 A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers
- 2 and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do. He may as well concern
- 3 himself with his shadow on the wall. Speak what you think now in hard words, and tomorrow
- 4 speak what tomorrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said
- 5 today. – “Ah, so you shall be sure to be misunderstood.” – Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood?

***SAMPLE EXERCISES - SELF-RELIANCE* by Ralph Waldo Emerson**

6 Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Jesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo,
7 and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.
8 I suppose no man can violate his nature. All the sallies of his will are rounded in by the law of his
9 being, as the inequalities of Andes and Himmaleh are insignificant in the curve of the sphere. Nor
10 does it matter how you gauge and try him. A character is like an acrostic or Alexandrian stanza; --
11 read it forward, backward, or across, it still spells the same thing. In this pleasing, contrite
12 wood-life which God allows me, let me record day by day my honest thought without prospect or
13 retrospect, and, I cannot doubt, it will be found symmetrical, though I mean it not, and see it not.
14 My book should smell of pines and resound with the hum of insects. The swallow over my
15 window should interweave that thread or straw he carries in his bill into my web also. We pass
16 for who we are. Character teaches above our wills. Men imagine that they communicate their
17 virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue or vice emit a breath every moment.

- ___1. Line 1 contains examples of . . .
a. metaphor and allusion
b. allusion and personification
c. hyperbole and simile
d. metaphor and personification
- ___2. ALL of the following words are part of the pattern of repetition EXCEPT . . .
a. character b. window c. virtue d. misunderstood
- ___3. The author uses ALL of the following devices to develop tone EXCEPT . . .
a. sensory imagery
b. rhetorical question
c. figurative language
d. anecdote