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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

**The Grammar Dog Guide to
The Outcasts of
Poker Flats
by Bret Harte**

**All exercises use sentences from the story.
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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THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT by Bret Harte – Grammar and Style
All exercises use sentences from the story.

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SAMPLE EXERCISES - THE OUTCASTS OF POKER FLAT by Bret Harte

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 p.a. = predicate adjective
o.p. = object of preposition

- ___1. He returned to his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been whipping away the red dust of Poker Flat from his neat boots, and quietly discharged his mind of any further conjecture.

- ___2. The philosophic Oakhurst alone remained silent.

- ___3. But even this act did not draw the party into any closer sympathy.

EXERCISE 6 PHRASES

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

par = participle ger = gerund inf = infinitive appos = appositive prep = preposition

- ___1. Two or three men, conversing earnestly together, ceased as he approached, and exchanged significant glances.

- ___2. It had lately suffered the loss of several thousand dollars, two valuable horses, and a prominent citizen.

- ___3. A secret committee had determined to rid the town of all improper persons.

EXERCISE 9 STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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

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

- ___1. With him life was at best an uncertain game, and he recognized the usual percentage in favor of the dealer.

- ___2. As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles.

- ___3. The third day came, and the sun, looking through the white-curtained valley, saw the outcasts divide their slowly decreasing store of provision for the morning meal.

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EXERCISE 12

STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS

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

- a. literature b. religion c. card games/gambling d. chance/fate

- ___1. There was a Sabbath lull in the air, which in a settlement unused to Sabbath influences, looked ominous.
- ___2. In point of fact, Poker Flat was “after somebody.”
- ___3. He was too much of a gambler not to accept Fate.

EXERCISE 13

STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine trees, and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with pine boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss, so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.

Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused the blood to leave, -- snow!

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 As the shadows crept slowly up the mountain, a slight breeze rocked the tops of the pine trees,
- 2 and moaned through their long and gloomy aisles. The ruined cabin, patched and covered with
- 3 pine boughs, was set apart for the ladies. As the lovers parted, they unaffectedly exchanged a kiss,
- 4 so honest and sincere that it might have been heard above the swaying pines. The frail Duchess
- 5 and the malevolent Mother Shipton were probably too stunned to remark upon this last evidence
- 6 of simplicity, and so turned without a word to the hut. The fire was replenished, the men lay
- 7 down before the door, and in a few minutes were asleep.
- 8 Mr. Oakhurst was a light sleeper. Toward morning he awoke benumbed and cold. As he stirred
- 9 the dying fire, the wind, which was now blowing strongly, brought to his cheek that which caused
- 10 the blood to leave, -- snow!

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EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

- ___1. **The underlined words in Line 1 are examples of . . .**
a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration d. rhyme
- ___2. **Lines 1 and 2 contain examples of . . .**
a. hyperbole and personification
b. metaphor and onomatopoeia
c. personification and metaphor
d. metaphor and simile
- ___3. **The underlined words in Line 7 are an example of . . .**
a. assonance b. consonance c. alliteration d. rhyme