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grammar, style, and proofreading exercises

**The Grammar Dog Guide to
Billy Budd
by Herman Melville**

**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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ISBN 978-1-60857-015-7

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BILLY BUDD by Herman Melville – Grammar and Style
All exercises use sentences from the novel.

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SAMPLE EXERCISES - BILLY BUDD by Herman Melville

EXERCISE 5 COMPLEMENTS

Identify the complements in each of 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. To the surprise of the ship's company, though much to the Lieutenant's satisfaction Billy made no demur.
- _____ 2. "Before I shipped that young fellow, my fore-castle was a rat-pit of quarrels.
- _____ 3. He took to heart those serious responsibilities not so heavily borne by some shipmasters.

EXERCISE 6 PHRASES

Identify the phrases in each of the following sentences. Label the underlined words:
par = participle ger = gerund inf = infinitive appos = appositive prep = preposition

- _____ 1. For the cabin's proprietor there was nothing left but to play the part of the enforced host with whatever grace and alacrity were practicable.
- _____ 2. Not that he preached to them or said or did anything in particular; but a virtue went out of him, sugaring the sour ones.
- _____ 3. "Lieutenant, you are going to take my best man from me, the jewel of 'em."

EXERCISE 9 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Identify the figurative language in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:
p = personification s = simile m = metaphor o = onomatopoeia

- _____ 1. But, indeed, any demur would have been as idle as the protest of a goldfinch popped into a cage.
- _____ 2. They took to him like hornets to treacle; all but the buffer of the gang, the big shaggy chap with the fire-red whiskers.
- _____ 3. A meek shy light appeared in the East, where stretched a diaphanous fleece of white furrowed vapor.

SAMPLE EXERCISES - BILLY BUDD by Herman Melville

EXERCISE 12 STYLE: ALLUSIONS

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

- a. historical b. mythological c. religious d. literary

- ____ 1. Close-reefing topsails in a gale, there he was, astride the weather yard-arm-end . . . both hands tugging at the “earring” as at a bridle, in very much the attitude of young Alexander curbing the fiery Bucephalus.
- ____ 2. . . . the character of this unfortunate man signally refutes . . . that peevish saying attributed to the late Dr. Johnson, that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.
- ____ 3. “. . . forms, measured forms are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spell-binding the wild denizens of the wood.”

EXERCISE 13 STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning. (From Chapter 2)

Though our Handsome Sailor had as much masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see; nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne’s minor tales, there was just one thing amiss in him. No visible blemish indeed, as with the lady; no, but an occasional liability to a vocal defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be, yet under sudden provocation of strong, heart-feeling his voice otherwise singularly musical, as if expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer, the envious marplot of Eden still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this planet of earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as to remind us – I too have a hand here.

The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not along that he is not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance.

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 our Handsome Sailor had as much masculine beauty as one can expect anywhere to see;
- 2 nevertheless, like the beautiful woman in one of Hawthorne’s minor tales, there was just one thing
- 3 amiss in him. No visible blemish indeed, as with the lady; no, but an occasional liability to a vocal
- 4 defect. Though in the hour of elemental uproar or peril, he was everything that a sailor should be,
- 5 yet under sudden provocation of strong, heart-feeling his voice otherwise singularly musical, as if

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6 expressive of the harmony within, was apt to develop an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of
7 a stutter or even worse. In this particular Billy was a striking instance that the arch interferer,
8 the envious marplot of Eden still has more or less to do with every human consignment to this
9 planet of earth. In every case, one way or another he is sure to slip in his little card, as much as
10 to remind us – I too have a hand here.

11 The avowal of such an imperfection in the Handsome Sailor should be evidence not along that
12 he is not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is
13 no romance.

- ___1. All of the following details contribute to the tone EXCEPT . . .
- a. *there was just one thing amiss* (Lines 2 and 3)
 - b. *under sudden provocation* (Line 5)
 - c. *expressive of the harmony within* (Line 6)
 - d. *he is sure to slip in his little card* (Line 9)
- ___2. All of the following descriptions are parallel in meaning EXCEPT . . .
- a. *hour of elemental uproar or peril* (Line 4)
 - b. *occasional liability* (Line 3)
 - c. *more or less a stutter* (Line 7)
 - d. *an imperfection* (Line 11)
- ___3. Line 2 contains an example of . . .
- a. euphemism
 - b. metaphor
 - c. allusion