Homework for Grown-Ups

E. Foley & B. Coates

HOMEWORK FOR GROWN-UPS

HOMEWORK FOR GROWN-UPS

Everything You Learned at School . . .
and Promptly Forgot

E. Foley & B. Coates

SQUARE PEG

This eBook is copyright material and must not be copied, reproduced, transferred, distributed, leased, licensed or publicly performed or used in any way except as specifically permitted in writing by the publishers, as allowed under the terms and conditions under which it was purchased or as strictly permitted by applicable copyright law. Any unauthorised distribution or use of this text may be a direct infringement of the author's and publisher's rights and those responsible may be liable in law accordingly.

ISBN: 9781407020266

Version 1.0

www.randomhouse.co.uk

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

ENGLISH
MATHEMATICS
HOME ECONOMICS
HISTORY
SCIENCE

BREAK TIME

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
GEOGRAPHY
CLASSICS
PHYSICAL EDUCATION
ART

ANSWERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CREDITS

INTRODUCTION

Where did it all go? Everything we learned at school now seems a distant memory. We sit slack-jawed when our children ask us which planet comes after Jupiter, or what the capital of Bulgaria is, or what quid pro quo actually means. Have you ever found yourself making up your own version of Pythagoras' theorem in order to avoid the humiliating scorn of your offspring? Have you ever started blithely on a list of Henry VIII's wives, while your little one looks up at you full of admiration, only to find yourself with too many Catherines? Have you ever succumbed to the temptation to use the embarrassing get-out clause 'Ask your father/mother'?

Even simple queries like 'Why is the sky blue?' have many parents scratching their heads. All we can remember is that we used to know the answer. A recent study revealed that even though most pupils learn French for five years, by the time they are adults the sum total of their knowledge stretches to – at best – four words. In these days of highspeed Internet connections and calculators on mobile phones, we rarely have to use the information that was drummed into us in our schooldays. The good news is that it's still all there. And even better, it's surprisingly easy to revive those dormant grey cells and hold your head up with pride when you're next asked to help with homework.

Homework for Grown-ups is a revision guide for adults that will put you back on track. We aim to entertain you as well

as exercise your brain and equip you with the basics, so you can impress your friends or handle homework without humiliation.

Homework for Grown-ups is organised in ten chapters, each covering a school subject: English, Maths, Home Economics, History, Science, Religious Education, Geography, Classics, Physical Education and Art. After reading it we hope you'll be as sharp as a tack, as bright as a button and as clever as when you were a fresh-faced youngster in grey socks and a blazer.

Wouldn't it be great to slip a couple of Latin phrases into a conversation with your boss, or pontificate on the qualities of a tetrahedron at a cocktail party or list the kings of England in your head while the dentist is giving you a filling? *Homework for Grown-ups* is the way to get back your self-respect and also show the kids a thing or two.

I

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

'**English** *n.* the language of England, now used in many varieties throughout the world'
Oxford Concise English Dictionary

'For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within'
ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809–92), *In Memoriam A. H. H.*

Our mother tongue is a rich and flexible beast. It contains such beauteous and varied words as 'tatterdemalion',[1] 'punch', 'vulpine',[2] 'mendacious',[3] 'croak', 'badger', 'Saturday' and 'snow'. It has the power to communicate a huge spectrum of emotions in a compact, vague phrase ('I love you', 'I'm not sure about that') and also to express accurately very specific notions ('He's a little ochlophobic',[4] 'Pass me the potassium permanganate'). The shapes and sounds of our words are hugely varied, often depending on whence our magpie language has picked up specific terms: the vowel-heavy, melodic 'anaesthesia', 'echo' and 'chaos' from the ancient Greek; the concise, muscular 'belch', 'night' and 'cow' from our Anglo-Saxon forefathers; and the sleek 'cuisine', 'blonde' and 'rendezvous' from the French, for example.

In fact, the history of the British Isles is written in our words, from Viking borrowings (‘bark’, ‘cake’, ‘akimbo’) to the souvenirs of empire (‘pukka’, ‘bungalow’, ‘trek’). Today English is an official language of more than fifty countries including Madagascar, Belize, Fiji and Singapore and is spoken by more people on Earth than any other. The *Oxford English Dictionary* contains definitions for over 500,000 words in current use (some studies record over 900,000 English words), and the average person probably uses about 1/60 of these in their lifetime. More impressively, Shakespeare’s vocabulary is reckoned to have run to over 24,000 words. In order to appreciate properly the wonderful works of literary giants like Shakespeare, or indeed to create your own, it is vital to have a basic grasp of how the language works. Grammar provides the building blocks from which the castles of great literature are built.

We are extremely lucky to have such a rich heritage of literature in our language to turn to – whether John Milton, Jane Austen or James Joyce is your thing. Literature can educate, console, amuse, enrage, challenge, move and even morally guide (as long as one reads ‘improving books’). Your reading could be made up of the instructions for the windscreen wipers on your car or it could be the poetry of T. S. Eliot, but either way you need to understand your language and its literary heritage to get the best out of the world.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

WAYS WITH WORDS: THE BASIC RULES OF GRAMMAR

As we have seen, there are thousands of words to choose from in our generous language, but it may surprise you to learn that there are only nine *kinds* of word (although in some circumstances a word can belong to more than one class).

1. **Nouns** are ‘naming’ words. They name people, places or things. There are three kinds of noun. **Proper nouns** are specific names of people and places and are written with capital letters at the start of them: ‘America’, ‘Danny’. **Abstract nouns** are things or concepts that you can’t touch: ‘shyness’, ‘romance’, ‘happiness’. **Common nouns** are the words for everything else: ‘car’, ‘jacket’, ‘cinema’.

2. **Verbs** are words indicating action or change: ‘to sing’, ‘to kiss’, ‘to be’, ‘to eat’. Many verbs have a basic root form and usually different endings are added to this root depending on the subject of the verb and the tense: ‘I dance’, ‘he dances’, ‘they dance’, ‘I danced’, ‘he danced’, ‘they danced’.

The **subject** of a verb is the person or thing who is carrying out the action of the verb and the **object** of a verb is the person or thing that the verb is being carried out upon. In

the sentence ‘Danny kissed Sandy.’ ‘Danny’ is the subject, ‘kissed’ is the verb and ‘Sandy’ is the lucky object.

In order to express some of the different tenses (present, future, past, etc.), a verb can become a **verb phrase**, incorporating auxiliary verbs to indicate timing. For example, in the sentence ‘Danny had been kissing Sandy’, ‘had been kissing’ is a verb phrase.

There is a particular subgroup of auxiliary verbs called **modal verbs**, such as ‘may’, ‘must’ and ‘can’. These express how likely or possible an event is. In the sentence ‘Danny can kiss Sandy’, ‘can’ is the modal verb.

3. **Adjectives** are words that modify and describe nouns. In ‘the shiny car’, ‘shiny’ is the adjective. Adjectives can themselves be modified, in which case they become **adjectival phrases**: ‘the impressively shiny car’.

4. **Adverbs** tell us how, where or when something is done. In other words, they describe the manner, place or time of a verb. Many adverbs are created by adding ‘ly’ to the end of an adjective: so ‘slow’ becomes ‘slowly’.

5. **Pronouns** are the words that replace nouns in a sentence. Pronouns like ‘he’, ‘which’, ‘none’ and ‘you’ are used to make sentences less cumbersome and less repetitive. Without pronouns we would end up with childish sentences like: ‘Danny took liberties with Sandy at the drive-in so Sandy slapped Danny and left Danny.’

6. **Conjunctions** are used to link words, phrases and clauses, as in: ‘I want the burger **and** the milkshake’,

or ‘Tell me **when** you are ready’.

7. **Articles** are very easy to remember as they only consist of ‘a’, ‘an’ and ‘the’. ‘A/an’ is the **indefinite article** – it can refer to any member of a group: ‘**A** boy kissed her’. The **definite article** is used when the specific subject is known: ‘**The** boy kissed her’.

8. **Prepositions** link nouns, pronouns and phrases to other words in a sentence. Prepositions usually indicate relationships in space or time. Examples are: ‘under’, ‘above’, ‘behind’, ‘from’, ‘with’, ‘at’ and ‘for’.

9. An **interjection** is a word added to a sentence to convey emotion. It is not grammatically related to any other part of the sentence. Interjections are often followed with an exclamation mark. Examples are: ‘**Ouch**, that hurt!’, ‘**Hey**! Leave me alone!’

SATISFYING SENTENCES

When speaking we are often regrettably casual in our manner and fail to communicate in complete units of sense – also known as sentences. It is natural for oral communication to sometimes consist of fragments, or even of hand gestures and grunts, but for clarity on the page we should attempt to write in full sentences. (Unless of course one is composing an experimental surrealist haiku or some other advanced form.)

Sentences are made up of one or more **clauses**. A clause is a group of words that includes a verb and usually also a subject. There are two types of clause: **main clauses** and **subordinate clauses**. Main clauses are complete units of sense and must contain a verb and a subject – every

sentence must include a main clause. Subordinate clauses are dependent on the main clause and do not have to be complete units of sense. For example, in the sentence ‘The acrid stench of exhaust fumes filled the air, reminding Sandy of Danny and encouraging her to change her dress sense’, the main clause is ‘The acrid stench of exhaust fumes filled the air.’ The clauses ‘reminding Sandy of Danny’ and ‘encouraging her to change her dress sense’ are both subordinate.

THE HUMBLE GERUND

A gerund might sound like a shy woodland creature, who whiles away his days in a burrow and munches on water lilies, but the true meaning of the word is far more grammatically intriguing. The gerund in English is identical in form to the present participle (‘running’, ‘spitting’, ‘drinking’, ‘fighting’) but it is a verb that functions in sentences as a noun either by itself or as part of a clause.

For example, in the sentence ‘Fighting is fun’, ‘fighting’ is a gerund and acts as a noun, and in the sentence ‘Fighting the system is fun’, ‘fighting the system’ is a whole clause that acts as a noun.

COMMON GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES

‘THAT’ OR ‘WHICH’?: RELATIVE PRONOUNS AND CLAUSES

In grammar, as in life, people are often confused and frustrated by relatives. Happily, the world of grammar is more logical and serene than the world of grandmas.

Relative pronouns join clauses together in a sentence and begin subordinate clauses that give more information about the main clause – this kind of clause is called a **relative clause**. Who, whom, which, that, whose, when, where and why are all relative pronouns.

There are two types of relative clause: **restrictive** (also called **defining**) and **non-restrictive** (also called, you guessed it, **non-defining**).

A restrictive relative clause identifies what is being referred to by the previous noun or pronoun. For example, in the sentence 'The jumper that I wore yesterday was pink,' the relative clause is 'that I wore yesterday' and it is a restrictive relative clause because it identifies 'the jumper'. Restrictive relative clauses cannot be removed from the sentence without affecting its meaning and they are never preceded by a comma.

A non-restrictive relative clause gives us more information about the preceding noun or pronoun but is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Non-restrictive clauses are displayed inside commas to separate them from the rest of the sentence. For example, in the sentence 'The jumper, which was bright pink, was knitted by my aunt' the non-restrictive relative clause is 'which was bright pink,'. You could remove this from the sentence without losing the sentence's central meaning.

- **'That' or 'which' can be used in restrictive relative clauses**, although 'that' should be the preferred choice unless the clause begins with a preposition, or you need to add emphasis or avoid the repetition of the word 'that'.
- **Only 'which' can be used in non-restrictive relative clauses**. 'The jumper, that was bright pink,

was knitted by my aunt' is incorrect.

DARLING, YOUR PARTICIPLE IS DANGLING: THE DANGERS OF DANGLING PARTICIPLES

Dangling participles may sound like a bizarre threat but you should keep a sharp eye out for them and always give them a wide berth. A dangling participle is a clause containing a present participle with no subject, followed by a main clause with a different subject to the subject of the participle. This inelegant and nonsensical construction should be avoided at all costs.

For example: 'Having read the book, a bottle of wine was opened' is incorrect. The bottle of wine did not read the book. This should be reworded along the lines of 'Having read the book, she opened a bottle of wine'.

DIVIDE AND OVERRULE: SPLIT INFINITIVES

Split infinitives should be avoided if possible although sometimes they are necessary and you should boldly face down any irate grammarians who object. A split infinitive is where the infinitive form of a verb – for example 'to cook', 'to go', 'to kill' – is interrupted by an adverb. The opening lines of *Star Trek* contain the most famous split infinitive of all time: 'to boldly go'. This should strictly be 'to go boldly'.

KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU: 'ME', 'MYSELF' AND 'I'

Surprisingly, considering how central we all are to our own universes, many people make mistakes when referring to themselves in sentences. 'I' is used when you are the

subject of the sentence and ‘me’ should be used only when you are the object. ‘Tristan and me smoked a hundred fags today’ is incorrect – the sentence should be ‘Tristan and I smoked a hundred fags today’. The way to work this out is to remove Tristan from the sentence: you wouldn’t say ‘Me smoked a hundred cigarettes today’, you would naturally say ‘I smoked a hundred cigarettes today’. The same rule applies if you are confused about when to use ‘she’ or ‘her’ and ‘he’ or ‘him’. ‘Tristan and she smoked a hundred cigarettes today’ is correct, rather than ‘Tristan and her smoked a hundred cigarettes today’.

‘Myself is a **reflexive pronoun**. Reflexive pronouns are pronouns that refer back to the subject of a sentence: e.g.‘oneself, ‘himself, ‘yourself, ‘themselves’. They are used when the subject and object of a sentence are the same, such as in the sentence ‘I love myself a bit too much’. ‘Myself should never be used as a substitute for ‘me’ or ‘I’. ‘He gave myself the tax return’ is incorrect. It should be ‘He gave me the tax return’.

!??..:;,?!!: PUNCTUATION

Except for in the work of very clever novelists, sentences in prose are broken up into logical parts using punctuation marks. In speech, these represent pauses but in written language there are certain rules that should be followed.

Full stops divide sentences from other sentences. They are the strongest form of punctuation. ‘Gwendoline is rather nasty. She is holding Mary-Lou under the water.’

Question marks are used in the place of full stops when the sentence is a question. ‘Is Mary-Lou all right?’

Exclamation marks are used after words, phrases or sentences that are exclamatory, hortatory (i.e. giving

encouragement or advice), particularly enthusiastic or full of wonder or contempt. ‘What a horrible cow!’

Colons are used to introduce lists or to separate main clauses in a sentence where the following clause explains, paraphrases or gives an example of the preceding clause.‘Darrell had a short temper: she lost control and smacked Gwendoline in the face.’

Semicolons are used between two main clauses when they are connected together more strongly than warrants a full stop. They are also used to divide sentences that complement or parallel each other in some way or to divide up lists if commas aren’t clear enough to mark the divisions. ‘Miss Grayling, the headmistress; Miss Potts, the first-form teacher; Mr Young, the music teacher; Mam’zelle Dupont, the French teacher’.

Dashes are used to indicate a pause or to introduce a list or explanation. Pairs of dashes are often used in the place of parentheses or commas. ‘Mary-Lou is timid – some would say positively wet – and rather small of stature.’

Parentheses (also called brackets) are used to separate off extra information or explanations from the rest of the sentence. Square brackets are used to indicate material that has been inserted by an editor, or someone other than the author of the rest of the text. ‘Gwendoline broke Mary-Lou’s most treasured possession [an expensive fountain pen] and tried to frame Darrell for the crime.’

Commas are used as light divisions to make the structure and meaning of sentences clear, for example in lists. They are also used to mark non-restrictive relative clauses. They are useful tools to avoid ambiguity The famous sentence ‘He eats shoots and leaves’, means something entirely different when a comma is added: ‘He eats, shoots and leaves.’ Some people use commas more than others so the rules are slightly more flexible than for other forms of punctuation. However, you should *never* separate a subject from its verb with a comma or a verb

from its object. In the sentence above separating the verb 'eats' from its object 'shoots and leaves' utterly changes the meaning of the sentence. You also cannot link two main clauses using a comma, you must use a conjunction instead. For example, 'Gwendoline is a spoilt brat, she also has blonde hair' is wrong. This should read 'Gwendoline is a spoilt brat and she also has blonde hair'.

Apostrophes are used to indicate possession ('Mary-Lou's pen', 'Darrell's temper'). The apostrophe comes before the 's' for singular nouns and after the 's' for plural nouns: 'Mary-Lou's pen'; 'the girls' swimming lesson'. However, for nouns that don't add an 's' in the plural, you need to add ''s', e.g. 'the women's conversation'. Apostrophes are also used to indicate missing letters ('she'll' is a contraction of 'she will'). Please be sure to remember that 'its' means 'belonging to it' and 'it's' means 'it is'.

Quotation marks are used to indicate quotations and direct speech.'"It wasn't me," she answered.'

Hyphens are used in some compound words such as 'musk-rose' and 'non-infectious'. They are also used to connect words that would look awkward or unclear if they were put together to make one word, e.g. re-enact, drip-proof, part-time. Hyphens are also used to link words used to describe an attribute of the noun, such as 'well-known villain', 'in-depth investigation', and to avoid ambiguity – the 'deep-blue sea' is different to the 'deep blue sea'.

BELLS AND WHISTLES: FIGURES OF SPEECH I

The very best authors use linguistic effects to add variety and imaginative emphasis to their writing. Figures of speech involve uses of words that go beyond the words'

literal meaning and have been popular since the glory days of rhetoric in the Roman Empire, when they were used to bolster the persuasiveness of political arguments in debates as well as in literary works. You will find that you naturally use different stylistic effects in everyday speech without realising it: ‘I’m boiling hot,’ ‘He’s a bastard,’ ‘It scared the hell out of me.’ It can become tiresome to listen to someone pontificating in continual metaphor, but it is a useful exercise to try to pepper your literary endeavours with a few of the following:

Metaphor: The use of a term for an object or action that feels imaginatively true but is not literally relevant. For example, referring to an intimate friend as an ‘old flame’, does not literally mean that he or she is aged and on fire but that metaphorical language is being used to describe desire in terms of fire conjuring up a sense of its uncontrollable and overwhelming quality.

Simile: Similar to metaphor but involving comparisons, for example ‘He is as mad as a badger’. You can spot the difference between similes and metaphors because similes use the words ‘like’ or ‘as’.

Pathetic fallacy: The term used when inanimate things are invested with human feelings or actions. Here is an example from Shelley’s poem ‘To Jane’: ‘The stars will awaken / Though the moon sleep a full hour later’. If you pay proper attention to the Geography chapter you will know that the moon and stars never go to bed or get up.

Euphemism: The substitution of a milder or more genteel phrase to describe something that might be seen as offensive or unpleasant. Some examples are ‘We’re going to have to let you go’ = ‘You’re sacked’, ‘She passed away’ = ‘She died’, ‘I’d like us to be friends’ = ‘You’re dumped’, ‘Follically challenged’ = ‘Bald’.

Hyperbole: Extreme exaggeration. For example: ‘I’m so hungry I could eat a horse’; ‘You are the worst driver in

the world'; 'He weighs about fifty stone'.

Synecdoche: This is where the part is used to represent the whole or vice versa. The phrases 'hired hands' and 'mouths to feed' are synecdoches.

Litotes: Ironic understatement, particularly where a negative construction is used: 'No small problem';'I was not entirely happy'.

Prosopopoeia: The personification of an inanimate thing or the representation of the speech of an absent or imaginary person.'The cake was calling to me' is an example of prosopopoeia.

Oxymoron: A figure of speech where opposite or contradicting words are combined.'Thunderous silence' is an example of an oxymoron.

A GOOD MOOD: THE SUBJUNCTIVE

It is quite possible to wander carelessly through life in blissful ignorance of what actually constitutes the subjunctive, but most native English speakers use it intuitively all the time so it is worth closer inspection.

The subjunctive is what is known as a **grammatical mood**. Grammatical moods describe the relationship a verb has to reality and intent. There are both **realis moods** and **irrealis moods**.

Realis moods indicate that something is, or is not, actually the case. The easy way to remember this is that realis moods are based on reality. The everyday indicative mood that all of us use all the time for making factual statements is a realis mood. For example, 'Zammo is a heroin addict'.

Irrealis moods indicate that the situation described is not known to have definitely happened. The subjunctive is an

irrealis mood. The subjunctive is used for statements that discuss hypothetical or unlikely events, express opinions or emotions, or make polite requests: ‘If I were you, I’d sell your mother’s silver’; ‘I suggested that he seek professional help’.

The subjunctive looks exactly like the indicative except for: – in the verb ‘to be’ where ‘be’ is used for all persons* of the present subjunctive and ‘were’ for all persons in the past subjunctive (as in ‘If I were you . . .’) – in all other verbs in the third-person present singular where the verb drops its normal ‘s’ ending (as in ‘I suggested that he seek . . .’ rather than ‘he seeks’).

* A REMINDER OF THE PERSONS OF A VERB

first person = I	first-person plural = we
second person = you	second-person plural = you
third person = he, she or it	third-person plural = they

NIMBLE – NYMS: SOME DISTINCTIVE WORD TYPES

Homonym: A word with the same sound and spelling as another word but a different meaning: ‘mouse’ meaning small, furry rodent and ‘mouse’ meaning a device to move the cursor on a computer are homonyms.

Synonym: A word that means the same, or nearly the same, as another word: ‘scared’ and ‘frightened’ are synonyms.

Metonym: A word that means one thing but is used to refer to a related thing: ‘the Crown’ can mean ‘the monarchy’, ‘plastic’ can be used to mean ‘credit card’.

Hapax legomenon: A word that occurs only once in a language's recorded texts or in an author's body of work. 'Honorificabili-tudinitatibus' appears only once in all Shakespeare's plays (in *Love's Labour's Lost*) and is therefore a hapax legomenon of these works. (By the way, 'honorificabilitudinitatibus'means deserving of respect).

Neologism: A word that has just been invented.

Nonce word: A word that is made up for a particular occasion and not expected to be used again.

Portmanteau word: *'Portmanteau'* is a French word for suitcase and a portmanteau word is a word that blends two separate words together to make a new word. The term comes from Lewis Carroll's book *Through the Looking-Glass* where it is used to describe the nonce word 'slithy' which is a mixture of 'lithe' and 'slimy'.

Palindrome: A word, phrase or sentence which reads the same forwards or backwards. 'Deed', 'madam', and 'I prefer pi' are all palindromes.

SP: SOME COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS

Very few people have a 100 per cent hit rate with their spelling. Even the most learned lexical geniuses can occasionally be stumped by particularly difficult terms, or make the odd careless error with familiar words. It's true that it's more of a wrestling match for some people than others but with a little practice we can all master our own blind spots, be they 'they're' for 'their', 'you're' for 'your' or more complicated constructions like 'psittacine' (meaning 'of the parrot family', in case you're wondering), 'sciatica', or 'Mississippi'.

Here are a couple of rules to help you with some common spelling difficulties, although naturally there are exceptions to every rule:

- In words that feature the combination of letters ‘i’ and ‘e’, the ‘i’ usually comes before the ‘e’ except when the letters follow the letter ‘c’. The rhyme to help you remember this is ‘“i” before “e” except after “c”’.
- It is also useful to remember that in British English ‘-ce’ endings usually indicate nouns and ‘-se’ endings indicate verbs; e.g. ‘practice’ and ‘practise’, and ‘licence’ and ‘license’. American English uses ‘-se’ for both nouns and verbs.

We’ve compiled a list of frequently misspelled words here for you to learn by heart to avoid future humiliating errors:

accommodate	drunkenness	manoeuvre	rhythm
cemetery	harass	millennium	sacrilegious
daiquiri	inoculate	minuscule	satellite
diarrhoea	leisure	occurrence	supersede
discreet*	liaison	parallel	weird

(*this means ‘circumspect’, the other spelling – ‘discrete’ – means ‘separate’)

TINSEL AND BAUBLES: RHETORICAL EFFECTS

There are so many wonderful words to describe the inventive use of words that we couldn’t resist adding a few more here for your delectation. Be sure to look out for these clever constructions in the next book you read, and then talk about them loudly on the bus in order to draw impressed looks of admiration from your fellow passengers.

Onomatopoeia: The use of words that sound like what they are referring to: ‘cuckoo’, ‘snap’ and ‘mellifluous’ are examples of onomatopoeic words.

Anacoluthon: A sentence that lacks correct grammatical structure sometimes used in literature for rhetorical

purposes or to indicate realistic thought processes: ‘If only I had been there – nothing could’ve saved him.’

Anaphora: The repetition of a word or words at the start of successive phrases or sentences. ‘Never take unnecessary risks. Never agree to carry out dangerous dares. Never climb on to the roofs of multistorey car parks.’

Chiasmus: Two parallel phrases where the order of words in the first is reversed in the second. This term comes from the ancient Greek word *‘chiasma*’ meaning ‘cross’. ‘He plunged from on high and from below we looked on’ is a chiastic sentence.

Alliteration: The repetition of sounds or letters at the start of successive or closely positioned words: ‘He was a sad, silly show-off.’

Assonance: Repetition of the same sounds, particularly the repetition of the same vowel sounds in successive or closely positioned words or phrases: ‘Why lie? He died.’

Consonance: The repetition of similar-sounding consonants in successive or closely positioned words or phrases: ‘It seems like such a shocking shame.’

Zeugma: A verbal construction where one word is applied to two others with differences in meaning for each. This comes from the ancient Greek word *‘zuegnunai’,* meaning ‘to yoke together’. For example: ‘He lost his footing and his life.’

Allegory: A work of literature where the meaning or message is represented symbolically rather than realistically *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan is a famous allegorical story. At first look it appears to be a story about a difficult trip undertaken by a man called Christian. In fact, his journey is a symbolic representation of the Christian soul’s journey to heaven.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

SPEED-READING: A VERY SHORT GUIDE TO SOME KEY WORKS OF LITERATURE

Pride and Prejudice (1813) by Jane Austen – Sassy woman with nightmare family meets snobby rich boy After various intrigues everyone ends up married.

Oliver Twist (1837–8) by Charles Dickens – Orphan asks for more gruel and ends up on the streets, is cruelly treated by adults, makes friends with criminal gang, gets implicated in robbery, and is rescued by kind-hearted honest folk who turn out to be relatives. Prostitute pal doesn't fare so well.

Wuthering Heights (1847) by Emily Brontë – Love triangle on the Yorkshire moors between dark, moody ruffian, spoilt, vivacious blonde and weedy nice-guy ends with all of them dead but their children getting on like a house on fire.

War and Peace (1865–9) by Leo Tolstoy – Napoleon is winning the war against Russia. No he isn't! Yes he is! No he isn't! Sparky Natasha loves ambitious Andrei but nearly runs off with sleazy Anatole before eventually ending up with thoughtful but bumbling, ex-Freemason, ex-aspiring political assassin and ex-prisoner-of-war, Pierre.

Ulysses (1918–20) by James Joyce – One day Leopold Bloom, having trouble with his missus, wanders around Dublin and bumps into Stephen Dedalus. After 933 pages Bloom ends up in bed with Mrs Bloom.

To the Lighthouse (1927) by Virginia Woolf – Holidaying family attempt to visit the local lighthouse and finally get round to it ten years later.

Of Mice and Men (1937) by John Steinbeck – Little clever guy and big stupid guy get jobs on California farm, but clumsy big guy accidentally kills the boss's wife. Little guy shoots big guy to save him from lynching, while promising him a rabbit farm.

An Inspector Calls (1947) by J. B. Priestley – Inspector questions nouveau riche family about a girl's suicide. Turns out they all did it. Then it turns out the inspector wasn't an inspector.

Lord of the Flies (1954) by William Golding – Schoolboys survive plane crash but quickly start killing each other and end up crying on the beach.

DYNAMIC DICKENS'S DAZZLING DRAMATIS PERSONAE

One of our best-loved novelists, and probably the first ever international literary celebrity Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on 7 February 1812 in Landport, Portsmouth. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office who wasn't very good at taking care of his pennies and, when Charles was twelve years old, Dickens pater was imprisoned in the Marshalsea jail in Southwark for debt (please read our Household Management section in the Home Economics chapter to avoid a similar fate).

As a result of this Charles was forced to go to work in a shoe-polish factory, which he apparently described to his biographer John Foster as 'a crazy, tumbledown old house .

. . literally overrun with rats'. Thankfully an inheritance saved the day and young Charles was able to leave his dreary work pasting labels onto jars and go to school.

The only way was up from this point on: having worked as a law clerk and a journalist, at the age of twenty-one Dickens began to publish short stories and essays in newspapers and magazines. *The Pickwick Papers,* his first commercial success, was published in 1836, the same year that he married Catherine Hogarth, with whom he went on to have ten children.

Many other novels followed and Dickens became incredibly popular in America as well as Britain. He was celebrated for the animated readings of his work and his author tours were spectacular successes. However, on his final tour in 1870, the strain of reading his brutal description of Bill Sikes's murder of Nancy from *Oliver Twist* has been attributed by some biographers to worsening his already frail health. Charles Dickens died on 9 June of that year leaving his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood,* unfinished. He is buried in Westminster Abbey.

Dickens is widely admired for the exceptionally colourful characters that gambol, skip and creep through his work, some of whom were based on figures from his own life. The famous ones like Ebeneezer Scrooge, Mr Micawber, Miss Havisham, Uriah Heep, Mr Pickwick, Fagin, Mr Gradgrind and Little Nell are familiar to us all and many of them have the dubious honour of having public houses named after them all over the world. However, Dickens invested even his bit players with engaging and surprising traits. Below you will find a list of five of the most memorable of the great Charles's minor creations:

The Fat Boy (*The Pickwick Papers,* 1836–7) – Actually called Joe, the Fat Boy is an obese child who falls asleep all the time, often standing up, and after whom the medical condition Pickwickian syndrome, where obesity negatively affects a patient's sleep, is named.

Bull's-eye (*Oliver Twist,* 1837–8) – A 'white shaggy dog, with his face scratched and torn in twenty different places', belonging to the villain Bill Sikes with 'faults of temper in common with his owner'. Bull's-eye terrorises poor Oliver and later witnesses Bill's murder of Nancy (and gets his paws covered in her blood), thereafter becoming a liability to Bill who attempts to drown him. Evidently forgiving this insult, at Bill's death, Bull's-eye throws himself off a building with 'a dismal howl'.

The Marchioness (*The Old Curiosity Shop,* 1841) – A mysterious tiny-framed child, the Marchioness works for the 'amazon at common law' Sally Brass, and is locked in her downstairs kitchen every night. She never has 'a clean face . . . or . . . any rest or enjoyment whatever'. She is known simply as the 'small servant' until Richard Swiveller christens her 'the Marchioness' during an illicit card game. She proves crucial to the plot, thanks to her eavesdropping skills, and, after being rescued and sent off to school by Swiveller, balances out Little Nell's sad ending by eventually becoming his happily married wife, 'And they played many hundred thousand games of cribbage together.'

Mr Krook (*Bleak House,* 1852–3) – The 'short, cadaverous, and withered' owner of a Rag and Bottle and Marine Stores Shop (he even seems to sell cat skins and sacks of ladies' hair) and a vicious grey cat called Lady Jane. Krook is partial to a drop of the hard stuff but mainly noteworthy for

his unusual demise – in Chapter 32 he spontaneously combusts.

Aged Parent (*Great Expectations,* 1860–1) – Aged P. is more an example of warm-hearted comic colour than central to the plot of *Great Expectations.* He is Pip's friend Wemmick's ancient father: 'a very old man in a flannel coat: clean, cheerful, comfortable, and well cared for, but intensely deaf. He lives with his son in Walworth in 'a crazy little box of a cottage' decked out to look like a castle, where every night they set off a gun and every Sunday the deaf old man reads out the newspapers. He is very fond of buttered toast and sausages.

THAT FORBIDDEN TREE: MILTON'S *PARADISE LOST*

John Milton (1608–74) is arguably our nation's greatest epic poet. A Renaissance man, he excelled at school and was passionate about languages – in later life he could speak French, Spanish, Italian, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, Hebrew and Anglo-Saxon. He was fervently political and religious and wrote campaigning pamphlets on various subjects – including a surprisingly modern tract on divorce after his wife deserted him.

His eyesight deteriorated when he was in his thirties and by the age of forty-six he was blind. He conceived of the idea of an epic poem, the first to be written in English, as a teenager, but it wasn't until he was forced by the Restoration to go into hiding that he was afforded the time to write it. He chose the Book of Genesis as his subject and dictated the poem in blank verse over several years to his two long-suffering daughters. *Paradise Lost* was finally

published in 1667, with a revised version appearing in 1671.

Drawing inspiration from classic epics such as Homer's *Odyssey* and Virgil's *Aeneid,* Milton set out to write a poem that would 'justify the ways of God to man'. Arranged in twelve books, *Paradise Lost* tells the story of Satan's exile from heaven and his efforts to compete with God by meddling with His best creation: humankind.

In order to attack God, Satan travels to Paradise and the Garden of Eden, where the first people, Adam and Eve, live in bliss. He disguises himself as a toad to try to persuade Eve to disobey God's prohibition against eating fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. However, the Archangel Gabriel, who guards Eden, finds Satan and kicks him out, and the Archangel Raphael is dispatched to talk to Adam and Eve about the threat from their sly enemy.

After sharing a meal together, Eve leaves the table and Raphael tells Adam of the war fought between the angels and Satan, of Satan's jealousy of the Son of God, and of the tricksy ways that Satan might try to corrupt Adam and Eve. He also tells the story of how the world was made and how Adam was created. Adam confesses how attracted to Eve he is but Raphael urges him to calm down and try to love her in a spiritual rather than physical way.

Eight days after leaving the garden, the incorrigible Satan returns disguised as a serpent and this time he successfully seduces Eve into eating from the forbidden tree. When he discovers what has happened, Adam decides he would rather be punished with his beloved than lose her and so eats the fruit as well. For this crime, the pair, and all their future progeny, are sentenced by the Son to endure the afflictions of death and sin. Eve is also cursed with the pain