

FIX-IT!

Grammar and Editing Made Easy with Classics

Pamela White

SAMPLE

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Acknowledgments

Fix-It! began as a collaboration with my dear friend and fellow teacher Vicki Graham, to whom I am particularly indebted for her inspiration, aid, and many humorous contributions to “The King and the Discommodious Pea.” Without Vicki’s assistance in writing that first tale, this book would not have materialized. I am also most grateful to my IEW students and their parents, whose lively discussions and penetrating grammatical questions have fine-tuned these stories.

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Contents

Introduction

The Stories and Recommended Levels	1
Recommended Materials	1
Teaching Procedure	2
CD-ROM Version	2
Should I Also Teach a Formal Grammar Program?	2
Reinforcing Grammar through Writing: Grammar Corrections	2
Sample Grammar Corrections from High School Papers	3
Apology	3
About the Author	3

Tom Sawyer

Introduction	5
Chapter 1: Subjects, Verbs, Indentation, and Sentence Opener #1	6
Chapter 2: Quality Adjectives, “ly” Adverbs, and Sentence Opener #3	9
Chapter 3: Prepositional Sentence Opener and Strong Verbs	12
Chapter 4: Capitalization and Adverb Clauses	14
Chapter 5: Quotation Marks and End Marks	17
Chapter 6: Who/Which Clauses	20
Chapter 7: Commas	24
Chapter 8: Apostrophes	27
Chapter 9: V.S.S. and Commonly Misused Words	30
Chapter 10: Agreement	34

Frog Prince, or Just Desserts

Introduction	37
Frog Prince Fix-Its	39

The Little Mermaid

Introduction	67
Mermaid Fix-Its	68

The King and the Discommodious Pea

Introduction	97
King and Pea Fix-Its	98

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

Introduction	125
Gawain Fix-Its	126

Appendix

Excellence in Writing Style Techniques	A-1
Dress-ups	A-1
“-ly” Adverb	A-1
Strong Verb	A-1
Quality Adjective	A-2
Who/Which Clause	A-2
Adverb Clause	A-3
Sentence Openers	A-3
#1 Subject	A-3
#2 Prepositional Opener	A-3
#3 “-ly” Adverb Opener	A-4
#4 “-ing” Opener	A-4
#5 Adverb Clause	A-5
#6 V.S.S., or Very Short Sentence	A-5
#7 (Advanced) “-ed” Opener	A-5
“T,” or Transitional Opener	A-6
Advanced Style	A-6
Alliteration	A-6
Similes and Metaphors	A-6
Duals	A-6
“That” As Noun Clause	A-7
Grammar and Mechanics	A-8
Definitions (phrase, clause)	A-8
Indentation	A-8
Capitalization	A-8
Quotations	A-9
Commas	A-10
Semicolons	A-12
Colons	A-13
Apostrophes	A-13
Ellipsis Points	A-13
Em-Dashes and Parentheses	A-14
Writing Numbers	A-14
Sentence Fragments	A-14
Past Perfect Tense	A-15
Subjunctive Mood	A-15
Active and Passive Voice	A-15
Split Infinitive	A-15
Abbreviations	A-16
Proofreading Symbols	A-17

Introduction

Fix-It! offers a delightful and effective way to teach grammar and vocabulary and to reinforce understanding of Excellence in Writing style. Students hunt for and correct errors in Fix-It sentences that cumulatively tell a story. Practice in editing trains students to locate errors in their own writing and can help with achievement tests, which ask them to identify errors in sentences. Targeting different age groups through high school, the five stories incorporate multiple levels of difficulty. Easily adapted to the home or to the classroom, *Fix-It!* reinforces what you teach your students through their writing.

The Stories and Recommended Levels

The recommended levels are suggestions only. You could teach a later level to more advanced students, while students whose grammar understanding is weak might need to start with an easier story. The first three include optional, built-in advanced concepts, indicated by an exclamation (!), which can offer challenge and instruction to more advanced students.

Tom Sawyer: Adapted from Mark Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, this abridged and paraphrased version covers the major events of the original story and is divided into chapters with specific objectives. Includes advanced (!) concepts. Recommended for grades 3 – 6.

Frog Prince, or Just Desserts: A humorous remake of the classic fairy tale about a princess who is forced to keep her promise to a frog who befriended her. Includes advanced (!) concepts. Recommended for grades 4 – 8.

The Little Mermaid: Hans Christian Andersen's beloved tale, abridged and edited for modern grammar but faithful to the original. Readers may be surprised to find little similarity to the Disney movie. Includes advanced (!) concepts. Recommended for grades 6 – 9.

The King and the Discommodious Pea: A humorous remake of "The Princess and the Pea," about a king's search for a suitable wife. Recommended for grades 7 – 10.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: An abridged translation of the medieval adventure tale about a knight of the Round Table whose courage and honor are put to the test in unexpected ways. Recommended for grades 9 – 12.

Recommended Materials

* Dictionary

* The Institute for Excellence in Writing's *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* or *Student Writing Intensive*,

by Andrew Pudewa. You do not have to use IEW's writing system to teach these stories, but *Fix-It!* complements IEW's approach.

Teaching Procedure

Each story consists of 132 Fix-It passages with embedded errors and challenging vocabulary. Designed to teach for thirty-three weeks with four each week, the Fix-Its can be presented to students on a blackboard or an overhead in a classroom situation or worked on paper with individual students.

Four days each week, have students copy and correct one Fix-It passage from the story into a notebook. Students should do the following with each Fix-It:

- Find the bolded vocabulary word. Look it up in a dictionary, then write the word plus the definition that *best* fits that context on the back of the preceding page. (It is easiest if students start the story on the second page in their notebook to provide a place for the first few vocabulary words and definitions.)
- Copy the passage into a notebook, correcting all errors. Write on every other line to allow room for additional, teacher-directed corrections.
- Copy the story as a continuous story, indenting when appropriate to begin a new paragraph. (See Appendix for rules about starting paragraphs.)
- Underline all Dress-ups. Optional. (See Appendix for an explanation of IEW's Dress-ups.)
- Mark Sentence Openers with numbers in brackets. Optional. (See Appendix for an explanation of IEW's Sentence Openers. I do not mark all #1 sentences, but continue if your students need the added practice.)

To the right of each Fix-It, you will find brief explanations of most errors in that passage, with the exception of obvious or frequent errors, such as periods at the end of sentences. The Appendix contains additional information about grammar and punctuation rules covered in the stories.

In class or at home, discuss the Fix-Its after students have rewritten them. **Cover as many or as few skills as you deem appropriate.** These following steps work well:

- Begin by reading the selection aloud, which can help students untangle the punctuation. Check that they understand the storyline.
- Ask for a definition of the bolded vocabulary word in the context of that passage. Note that the definitions provided to the right of each Fix-It fit that context only.
- When applicable, discuss the reasons for starting new paragraphs.
- Elicit from students their suggestions for grammar corrections, using the Fix-Its as a springboard to introduce or review punctuation and grammar skills you wish your students to learn.
- You can also ask students to locate Dress-ups and identify Sentence Openers (see Appendix).

Also included in the first three stories are optional advanced concepts, indicated by an exclamation [!], which make the story adaptable to stronger students when teaching to a mixed group.

Few students will find all errors. Encourage them to know this is expected. The sentences are designed to be challenging, which allows you to teach new concepts on the spot and reinforce them in later Fix-Its. Weaker students may benefit by knowing the number of errors to look for in each selection.

If you are teaching “Tom Sawyer,” note that each chapter has unique instructions, generally following these introductory guidelines but with variations.

CD-ROM Version

Included with the book is a helpful CD-ROM with Fix-Its for all five stories. You may want to give printed copies of the Fix-Its to students to work at home. In-class teachers may wish to print them on overhead transparencies to go over together in class, rather than writing them out on a dry erase board or blackboard. You might also find it useful to modify the errors in order to focus on specific grammatical problems your students are having.

We request that fellow teachers purchase their own copy of this book and CD-ROM, but you may make multiple printed copies of the Fix-Its for your own students.

Should I Also Teach a Formal Grammar Program?

In the elementary years I recommend using some formal grammar instruction in conjunction with *Fix-It!*, although I do not recommend overwhelming students with a time-consuming program. They will learn more grammar from these stories and from grappling with it in their writing than they will from traditional exercises, largely because this method is more enjoyable and because repetition instills the concepts.

Elementary students should learn parts of speech and basic mechanics of writing, such as capitalization, agreement, apostrophes, punctuation at the end of sentences, quotation marks, and indentation for new paragraphs. By the time they are in seventh or eighth grade, they should ideally be able to isolate dependent clauses, independent clauses, and phrases in their sentences. It helps to introduce elementary-age students to punctuation rules, especially the easier rules, such as commas with dates, but do not expect them to master punctuation. The frequent repetition of rules that students hear with the Fix-It stories gradually and painlessly trains them to be grammar savvy!

For seventh through twelfth graders, if you wish to reinforce concepts with a formal program that teaches punctuation rules, it can be helpful, but conventional exercises in punctuation may be counterproductive. In my experience, they rarely translate to student writing and often render students grammar-phobic. Instead, teach concepts *through* student writing, reinforced by teaching the rules in the Fix-Its. Students enjoy the stories and find it challenging to see how many errors they can locate, which makes them more receptive to instruction about grammar than with traditional approaches.

Reinforcing Punctuation through Writing: Grammar Corrections

Using the Institute for Excellence in Writing’s system of teaching style is a painless and effective method of teaching many grammar concepts for all ages (see Appendix under Dress-ups and Sentence Openers for details).

By the time students are in high school, I find traditional grammar exercises ineffective. Instead, I teach rules through Fix-Its and reinforce them by holding my students accountable for their own mistakes in writing. Generally, high school students make the same punctuation errors in their writing over and over again. One student may struggle with comma splices and run-ons, while another student omits the comma before coordinating conjunctions that connect main clauses. Focus on teaching students mastery over the problems they have individually, and you will help them conquer the majority of their errors.

To hold students accountable for their own errors, I require them to write **Grammar Corrections**. On every paper turned in, I mark two sentences for correction by putting brackets around them and writing “GC” in the margin, choosing sentences with serious punctuation errors or with errors that the student needs to overcome. Students must do three things with each sentence:

- Cut and paste or copy the incorrect sentence onto a new sheet of paper
- Rewrite the sentence, correcting all errors
- Write out the rules that explain the punctuation errors

The bulk of their grade for Grammar Corrections comes from accurately explaining to me the rule that applies to *their* sentence. They must use a grammar handbook, such as *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation*, by Jane Straus, to find the rules or deduce why a comma they had used should *not* be in the sentence. In-class teachers may find it helpful to require all students to use the same handbook.

Sample Grammar Corrections from High School Papers

Original: The carps come from an habitat were it is very hot in the summer and frightfully cold in the winter, they also have spread more than any other fish. For these fish have traveled the rivers of Central Asia to the streams of Europe.

Correction: The carps come from a habitat where it is very hot in the summer and frightfully cold in the winter. They also have spread more than any other fish, for they have traveled the rivers of Central Asia to the streams of Europe.

Rule: Comma splice because the sentence joins 2 main clauses with only a comma and it needs more.

Note: I require rules for punctuation errors only. Errors like fragments, spelling, and agreement must be corrected but no need for an explanation.

Original: Because they have such amazing adaptability they could be called super adaptors.

Correction: Because they have such amazing adaptability, they could be called super adaptors.

Rule: Comma after #5 Sentence Opener, or introductory adverb clause.

Apology

As a former copy editor, I realize that “error-free” almost never describes a published book. If you locate an error, please contact the author at pamelayw@yahoo.com or IEW at info@writing-edu.com.

The Frog Prince, or Just Desserts

Introduction

Recommended for grades four through eight, the Frog Prince Fix-Its are divided into thirty-three weeks, with four passages to rewrite and correct each week. See the general Introduction under Teaching Procedure for instructions for students and teachers.

In the notes beside the Fix-Its, exclamations in brackets [!] will alert you to advanced concepts you may wish to explain to your students, depending on their ability. These often have corresponding errors for students to locate, but do not necessarily expect students to find them. In the Appendix you will find a fuller discussion of the Dress-ups and Sentence Openers as well as most grammar issues. Starting with Week 7, I stop marking #1 Subject Openers. If your students are having trouble recognizing them, however, you may wish to continue marking these.

Because the Fix-It stories are usually taught over the course of a school year, students may sometimes have trouble following the storyline. As you discuss the sentences each week, I recommend you check students' reading comprehension first, discussing the events leading up to and including that week's reading.

Background

You may wish to read the original tale to your students by way of introduction to my version. While mine follows the overall plot, it is a radical departure from the basic story, stemming from my distaste for the ending. Why should the princess get to marry the prince when she is decent to him only after discovering his true identity? Fairy tales ought to end with characters receiving their just deserts.

The story originates as a tale by the Brothers Grimm about a princess's refusal to honor her promise to a frog. The version printed below is a popular variation of the story.

The Frog Prince

One fine evening a young princess put on her bonnet and clogs and went out to take a walk by herself in a wood. When she came to a cool spring of water that rose in the midst of it, she sat herself down to rest a while. Now, she had a golden ball in her hand, which was her favorite plaything, and she was always tossing it up into the air and catching it again as it fell. After a time she threw it up so high that she missed catching it as it fell, and the ball bounded away and rolled along upon the ground, till at last it fell down into the spring. The princess looked into the spring after her ball, but it was very deep, so deep that she could not see the bottom of it.

Then she began to bewail her loss and said, "Alas! if only I could get my ball again, I would give all my fine clothes and jewels and everything that I have in the world."

Whilst she was speaking, a frog put its head out of the water and said, "Princess, why do you weep so bitterly?"

"Alas!" said she, "what can you do for me, you nasty frog? My golden ball has fallen into the spring."

The frog said, "I want not your pearls and jewels and fine clothes, but if you will love me and let me live with you, eat from off your golden plate, and sleep upon your bed, I will bring you your ball again."

"What nonsense," thought the princess, "this silly frog is talking! He can never even get out of the spring to visit me, though he may be able to get my ball for me, and therefore I will tell him he shall have what he asks." So she said to the frog, "Well, if you will bring me my ball, I will do all you ask."

Then the frog put his head down and dived deep under the water. After a little while he came up again, with the ball in his mouth, and threw it on the edge of the spring. As soon as the young princess saw her ball, she ran to pick it up, and she was so overjoyed to have it in her hand again that she never

thought of the frog but ran home with it as fast as she could. The frog called after her, "Stay, Princess, and take me with you as you said," but she did not stop to hear a word.

The next day, just as the princess had sat down to dinner, she heard a strange noise—tap, tap—plash, plash—as if something was coming up the marble staircase. Soon afterward there was a gentle knock at the door and a little voice cried out and said:

Open the door, my princess dear.
Open the door to thy true love here!
And mind the words that thou and I said,
By the fountain cool, in the greenwood shade.

Then the princess ran to the door and opened it, and there she saw the frog, whom she had quite forgotten. At this sight she was sadly frightened, and shutting the door as fast as she could, she came back to her seat. The king, her father, seeing that something had frightened her, asked her what was the matter. "There is a nasty frog at the door," said she, "who lifted my ball for me out of the spring this morning. I told him that he should live with me here, thinking that he could never get out of the spring, but there he is at the door, and he wants to come in."

While she was speaking the frog knocked again at the door and said:

Open the door, my princess dear.
Open the door to thy true love here!
And mind the words that thou and I said,
By the fountain cool, in the greenwood shade.

Then the king said to the young princess, "As you have given your word, you must keep it, so go let him in." She did so, and the frog hopped into the room and then straight on—tap, tap—plash, plash—from the bottom of the room to the top, till he came up close to the table where the princess sat.

"Pray lift me upon the chair," said he to the princess, "and let me sit next to you." As soon as she had done this, the frog said, "Put your plate nearer to me, that I may eat out of it." This she did, and when he had eaten as much as he could, he said, "Now I am tired. Carry me upstairs and put me into your bed." And the princess, though very unwilling, took him up in her hand and put him upon the pillow of her own bed, where he slept all night long. As soon as it was light, he jumped up, hopped downstairs, and went out of the house.

"Now, then," thought the princess, "at last he is gone, and I shall be troubled with him no more."

But she was mistaken, for when night came again she heard the same tapping at the door. The frog came once more and said:

Open the door, my princess dear.
Open the door to thy true love here!
And mind the words that thou and I said,
By the fountain cool, in the greenwood shade.

When the princess opened the door, the frog came in and slept upon her pillow as before, till the morning broke. The third night he did the same. When the princess awoke on the following morning, however, she was astonished to see, instead of the frog, a handsome prince, gazing on her with the most beautiful eyes she had ever seen and standing at the head of her bed.

He told her that he had been enchanted by a spiteful fairy, who had changed him into a frog, and that he had been fated so to abide till some princess should take him out of the spring, let him eat from her plate, and let him sleep upon her bed for three nights. "You," said the prince, "have broken his cruel charm, and now I have nothing to wish for but that you should go with me into my father's kingdom, where I will marry you and love you as long as you live."

The young princess, you may be sure, was not long in saying "Yes" to all this. As they spoke, a gay coach drove up, with eight beautiful horses decked with plumes of feathers and a golden harness. Behind the coach rode the prince's servant, faithful Heinrich, who had bewailed the misfortunes of his dear master during his enchantment so long and so bitterly that his heart had well-nigh burst.

They then took leave of the king, got into the coach with eight horses, and all set out, full of joy and merriment, for the prince's kingdom, which they reached safely. There they lived happily a great many years.

Background to the Brothers Grimm

Born near Frankfurt, Germany, the Hessian brothers Jacob (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Grimm (1786–1859) are best known today for their collection and adaptation of German and other European folktales. “The Frog Prince” has sparked numerous modern adaptations, often with a kiss from the princess the catalyst for the frog's transformation back into a prince. In the version from the Brothers Grimm, the spell is broken by the princess's throwing the frog against a wall in revulsion.

The Frog Prince, or Just Desserts

Fix-Its and Corrections

Grammar, Skills, and Vocabulary

Week 1

Several hundred years ago, in an obscure kingdom, tucked away among the alps, rained a **decorous** and dignified King. Ruling Monarch in a line of Monarchs that stretched back to the middle ages.

[2] Several hundred years ago, in an obscure kingdom tucked away among the Alps, reigned a decorous and dignified king, ruling monarch in a line of monarchs that stretched back to the Middle Ages.

King Morton esteemed values, and he would have none of this recent **drivel** of dropping “Sir” and Madam when addressing ones elders. Nor could he tolerate modern jargon “sweet” should refer to pastry's; cool ought too refer too the temperature; good night should be a nighttime parting.

[1] King Morton esteemed values. [1] He would have none of this recent drivel of dropping “Sir” and “Madam” when addressing one's elders. [1] Nor could he tolerate modern jargon. [1] “Sweet” should refer to pastries; “cool” ought to refer to the temperature; “good night” should be a nighttime parting.

He became livid on the subject of modern gadgets. Just so much **folderol** in his opinion. Because downloading movies on iPods would guarantee eye problem's when children reached *his* distinguished age.

[1] He became livid on the subject of modern gadgets—just so much folderol, in his opinion. [1] Downloading movies on iPods would guarantee eye problems when children reached *his* distinguished age.

Decorous: with proper dignity in conduct & manners
Indent ¶ (new topic)

[!] Disguised #2 (*During, In, or At* that time period)

[!] With several intro. phrases, comma after last only

Capitalize proper nouns (Alps, Middle Ages)

Homophone: rained/reigned

Use lc for common nouns and titles without a name

Correct fragment by joining phrase to main clause

Dress-ups: quality adjectives; strong verb

Drivel: nonsense; meaningless talk or thinking

Indent ¶ (new topic)

[!] Avoid stringing together sentences with *and*

[!] Use quotation marks around words used as words

(adv., but students may see the pattern provided)

Use apostrophes to show possession

Fused: use a period to separate 2 main clauses

Pastries should be plural, not possessive

Homophone: too/to

[!] Note use of semicolons to separate main clauses

Dress-ups: strong verbs

Folderol: foolish talk or ideas; nonsense

Indent ¶ (new topic)

Correct 1st fragment by joining phrase to main clause

Use commas to set off transitional phrases

Correct 2nd fragment by dropping *Because*

Problems is plural, not possessive

[!] Tricky -ing opener: a #1 (imposter #4)

[!] Note use of italics for emphasis (use sparingly)

Dress-ups: quality adjectives; adverb clause

Moreover didn't they realize cell phones were intended for emergencies only. Only yesterday the palace accountant had vehemently, complained to him that the youngest of his 2 daughters had racked up 1000 text messages on her cell phone—in a single month!

[T] Moreover, didn't they realize cell phones were intended for emergencies only? [3] Only yesterday the palace accountant had vehemently complained to him that the younger of his two daughters had racked up one thousand text messages on her cell phone—in a single month!

Vehemently: forcefully; with strong emotion

[!] Transitional Opener (mark as "T")

Use commas after introductory transitional words

Use apostrophes in contractions

Use a question mark after question

No comma between an adverb and verb it describes

Homophone: two/to

Spell out numbers written as one or two words

[!] Note use of dash and exclamation for emphasis

Dress-ups: -ly adverb; strong verb

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