# Homework for Grown-ups: Everything You Learned at School and Promptly Forgot

*E. Foley, B. Coates*
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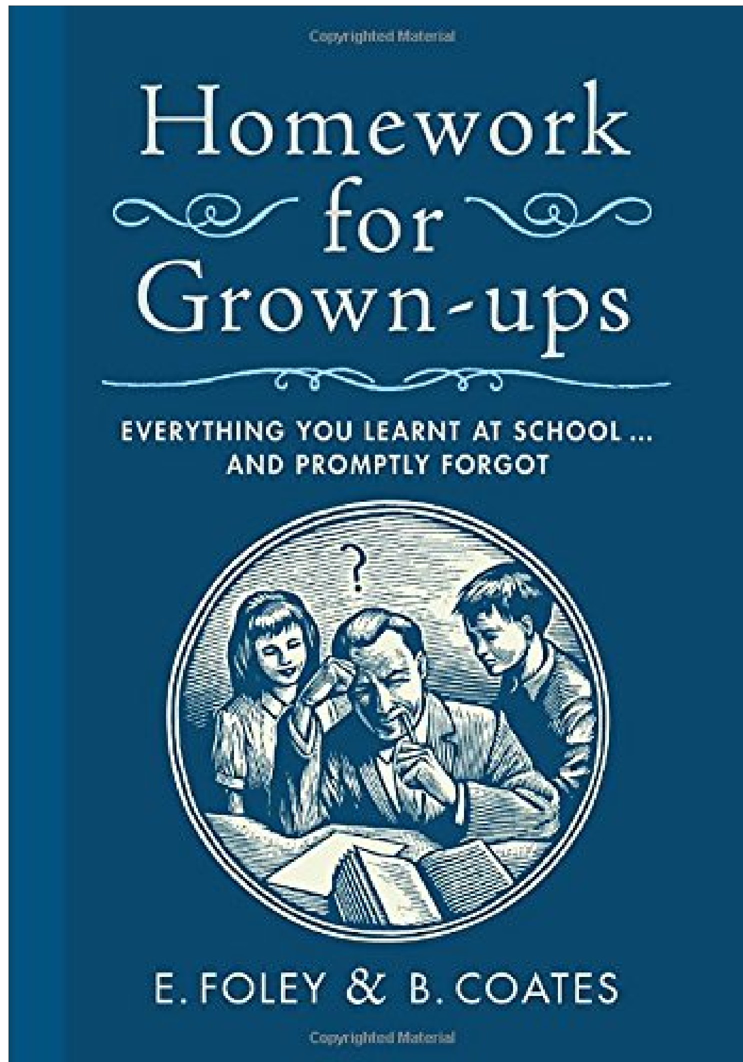


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**E. Foley, B. Coates : Homework for Grown-ups: Everything You Learned at School and Promptly Forgot** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Homework for Grown-ups: Everything You Learned at School and Promptly Forgot:

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A nostalgic compendium of essential knowledge that can help you show the world that youre smarter than a ten-year-old after all!Have you ever stared blankly at your kids when theyve asked why the sky is blue? Or clumsily changed the subject when theyve wanted to know why the wind blows? If youre done with school, its likely youre also done knowing the difference between an isosceles and equilateral triangle, and you probably leave participles dangling all over the place. Well, not anymore! Thanks to professional know-it-alls Foley and Coates, you can now gain back your self-respect and actually show those kids a thing or two as you tell it to them straight (and not make it up from fragments of facts you kind of remember).Packed with all the basic facts that have managed to free-fall from our heads over the years, Homework for Grown-ups is the ultimate grammar school refresher course in book form. In fact, theres even a quiz at the end of each chapter to ensure youve been paying attention! Written in the light, engaging style of a favorite teacher and featuring lessons in English, math, history, science, geography, art, and even home economics and recess, this fun and handy guide will help you stop hemming and hawing and start speaking with a lot more authorityand a little less shame.E. FOLEY and B. COATES are editors at Vintage who both live in London.

"An obvious candidate to take to a desert island, along with Shakespeare and the Bible" * Daily Telegraph * "This lovely cloth-bound book is packed full of facts" * Oldie * "Feel like you've forgotten everything you learned at school? Then this subject-by-subject guide, with tests, is for you" * Observer * "A decent reference book" -- Alastair Mabbott * Herald * "Irresistable" * The Lady *About the AuthorE. FOLEY and B. COATES are editors at Vintage who both live in London.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.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 the Pythagorean theorem in order to avoid the humiliating scorn of your offspring? Have you ever started blithely on a list of the thirteen original colonies only to find yourself stuck at eight? Have you ever succumbed to the temptation to use the embarrassing cop-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 toat bestfour words. In these days of highspeed Internet connections and calculators on cell phones, we rarely have to use the information that was drummed into us in our school days. The good news is that its still all there. And even better, its surprisingly easy to revive those dormant gray cells and hold your head up with pride when youre 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 home work without humiliation.Homework for Grown-ups is organized into nine chapters, each covering a school subject: English, Mathematics, Home Economics, History, Science, Religious Education, Geography, Classics, and Art. After reading it, we hope youll be as sharp as a tack, as bright as a button, and as clever as when you were a fresh-faced youngster in gray socks and a blazer.Wouldnt 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 name all the presidents in your head while thedentist 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.Chapter 1:ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATUREEnglish n. the language of England, now used inmany varieties throughout the worldOxford Concise English DictionaryFor words, like Nature, half revealAnd half conceal the Soul withinAlfred, Lord Tennyson (180992), In Memoriam A. H. H.Our mother tongue is a rich and flexible beast. It contains such beauteous and varied words as tatterdemalion,* punch, vulpine, mendacious, croak, badger, Saturday, and snow. It has the power to communicate a huge spectrum of emotions in a compact, vague phrase (I love you, Im not sure about that) and also to express accurately very specific notions (Hes a little ochlophobic, Pass me the potassium permanganate). The shapes and sounds of our words arehugely 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.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 more than 500,000 words in current use (some studies record more than 900,000 English words), and the average person probably uses about 1/60 of these in their lifetime. More impressively, Shakespeares 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 towhether 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 windshield 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.*A ragamuffin Like a fox Untruthful Afraid of crowdsENGLISH LANGUAGEWAYS WITH WORDS:THE BASIC RULES OF GRAMMARAs 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 words (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 cant 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 kissedSandy, 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: soslow 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 consist only of a, an, and the. A/an is the indefinite articleit 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! and Hey! Leave me alone!SATISFYING SENTENCESWhen speaking we are often regrettably casual in our manner and fail to communicate in complete units of sensealso 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 clauses: main clauses and subordinate clauses. Main clauses are complete units of sense and must contain a verb and a subjectevery 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 theair, reminding Sandy of Danny and encouraging her to change her outfit, 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 outfit are both subordinate.THE HUMBLE GERUNDA 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 MISTAKESTHAT OR WHICH?: RELATIVE PRONOUNS AND CLAUSESIn 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 clausethis 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 clauses: restrictive (also called defining) and nonrestrictive (also called, you guessed it, nondefining).A restrictive relative clause identifies what is being referred to by the previous noun or pronoun. For example, in the sentence The sweater 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 sweater. A restrictive relative clause cannot be removed from the sentence without affecting its meaning and it is never preceded by a comma.A nonrestrictive relative clause gives us more information about the preceding noun or pronoun but is not essential to the meaning of the sentence. Nonrestrictive clauses are displayed inside commas to separate them from the rest of the sentence. For example, in the sentence The sweater, which was bright pink, was knitted by my aunt, the

nonrestrictive relative clause is which was bright pink. You could remove this from the sentence without losing the sentences 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 therepetition of the word that. Only which can be used in nonrestrictive relative clauses. The sweater, that was bright pink, was knitted by my aunt is incorrect.DARLING, YOUR PARTICIPLE IS DANGLING: THE DANGERS OF DANGLING PARTICIPLESDangling 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 subject different from 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 INFINITIVESA split infinitive is where the infinitive form of a verbfor example to cook, to go, to killis interrupted by an adverb. Split infinitives should be avoided if possible although sometimes they are necessary, and you should boldly face down any irate grammarians who object. 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 ISurprisingly, 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 cigarettes today is incorrectthe sentence should be Tristan and I smoked a hundred cigarettes today. The way to work this out is to remove Tristan from the sentence: you wouldnt 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 sheor 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.!??..:;,?!!: PUNCTUATIONExcept 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.Periods 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 place of periods 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 ahorrible 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: shelost control and smacked Gwendoline in the face.Semicolons are used between two main clauses when they are connected together more strongly than warrants a period. They are also used to divide sentences that complement or parallel each other in some way or to divide up lists if commas arent clear enough to mark the divisions: Miss Grayling, the principal; Miss Potts, the first-grade teacher; Mr. Young, the music teacher; Mamzelle 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: for example, Mary-Lou is timidsome would say positivelyspinelessand rather small of stature.Parentheses are used to separate 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-Lous 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 nonrestrictive 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 spoiled brat and she also has blonde hair.Apostrophes are used to indicate possession (Mary-Lous pen, Darrells temper). The apostrophe comes before the s for singular nouns and after the s for plural nouns: Mary-Lous pen; thegirls swimming lesson. However, for nouns that dont add an s in the plural, you need to add s, e.g., the womens con ver sation. Apostrophes are also used to indicate missing letters (shell is acontraction of she will). Please be sure to remember that its means belonging to it and its means it is.Quotation marks are used to indicate quotations and direct speech. It wasnt me, she answered.Hyphens are used in some compound words, such as mind-blowing and re-cover. 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 ambiguitythe deep-blue sea is different from the deep blue sea.