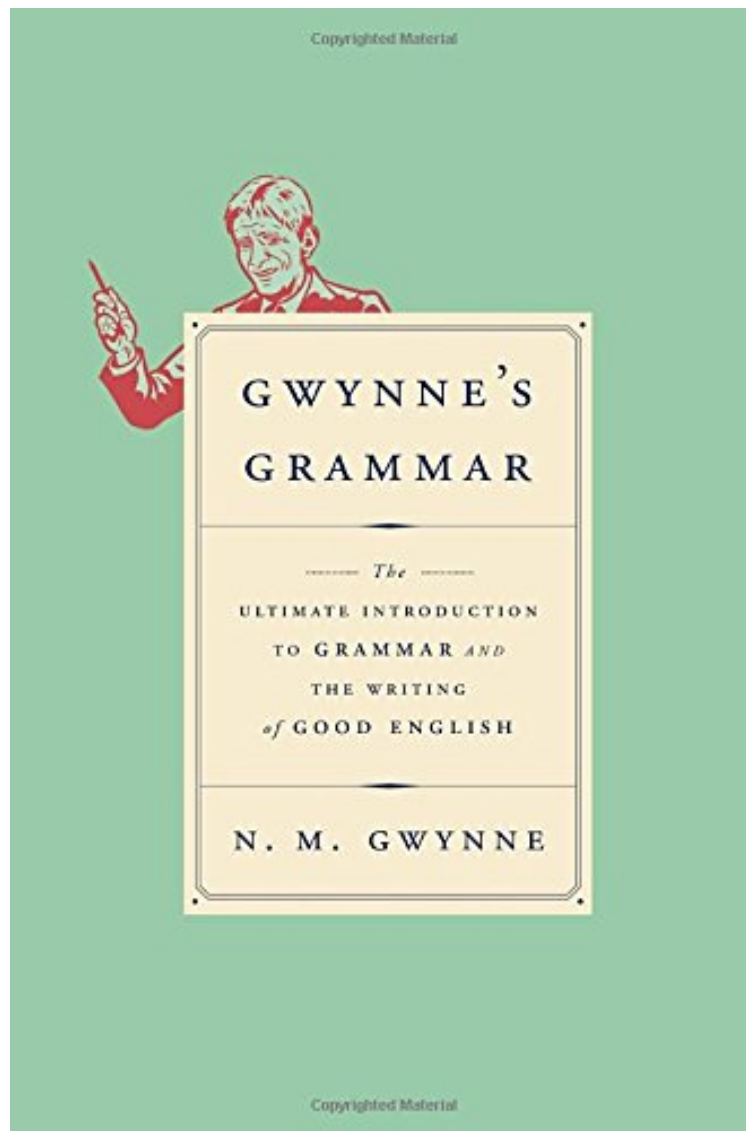


[Free] Gwynne's Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English

# Gwynne's Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English

*N.M. Gwynne*

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**N.M. Gwynne : Gwynne's Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Gwynne's Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Don't dangle your participles in publicBy John HesterIt was the nearly universal disinterest in grammar that made me buy this book. Some of my otherwise intelligent acquaintances

routinely dangle their participles in public places. Occasionally, I too fail to remember the useful guidance in English grammar my teacher in high school gave us. In fact, it was the two years of Latin I took that convinced me how truly important grammar is, or should be, to all. But I can't give Mr. Gwynne that fifth star simply because of the format he chose for the book; I would have so much preferred a shorter, more tabular version.<sup>5</sup> of 7 people found the following review helpful. Poor grammar and poverty go hand-in-hand

By Rick Skwiot

When an idiosyncratic book on English grammar becomes a bestseller in the United Kingdom, it makes one wonder who is buying it. English-as-a-second language immigrants? Schoolteachers? Students who feel their current instruction deficient? Adults who got short shrift in grammar when back in school? If so, then perhaps "Gwynnes Grammar: The Ultimate Introduction to Grammar and the Writing of Good English" will become a bestseller here in the colonies as well. It should. Heaven knows we need it.

Recently released here, the opinionated and delightful dip into the wonderfully complex and logical world of English grammar was an eye-opener for me. Not because I learned much I didn't already know I did not. But it alerted me to how good an education in the rules of grammar I got in public school in the 50s and 60s. And these were not well-funded schools in toney neighborhoods but, first, a rural southern Illinois grade school where farm kids came to class barefoot in September and, secondly, a working-class suburban St. Louis school district that has now lost accreditation.

My grammar education differed sharply from that received by the 18 African American students in a remedial grammar class I taught in the mid 90s at St. Louis Forest Park Community College. I was stunned when I looked at the results of the first diagnostic writing assignment I had given them. All had gone through 12 years in St. Louis Public Schools, all had graduated from high school, and none through no fault of their own could write a grammatically correct sentence except by accident.

On the second day of class I gave them the bad news first: You have been screwed by repeated educational malpractice perpetrated by teachers and administrators who abdicated their main responsibility: to teach you the rudiments of the language you need to succeed in life. Then the good news: You have me as teacher, and I'll correct that.

That promise was overly optimistic. After some stumbling about I obtained grade school workbooks for everyone and together we all went back to where the problem started first grade. We worked on the parts of speech (diagramming sentences, helped, something they had never been exposed to), spelling rules and structure, verb-noun agreement, etc. By semester's end most of them got it, and a few had turned into pretty competent writers. Three or four failed their poor reading skills, which I couldn't myself address, held them down. (The experience was the seed that led to my writing my new novel, "Fail", a St. Louis-based mystery that dramatizes the city's educational ills and its violent results.)

As Gwynnes Grammar author N.M. Gwynne argues, [G]rammar is the science of using words rightly, leading to thinking rightly, leading to deciding rightly, without which happiness is impossible. I am unsure if I agree with that syllogism, although there is ample evidence everywhere you look that suggests poor grammar and unhappiness often go hand-in-hand. If you can't use the language correctly these days, expect some hard times.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. The perfect home remedy for an inadequate public-school education

By will563

The perfect home remedy for an inadequate public-school education. After attending public school all the way through college, I still don't know grammar. My lower level classes neglected it and the higher level classes took it for granted. As I enter the real world, this book is a real lifesaver. I've been getting by mainly on instinct honed by a lot of independent reading, but I think it's time I actually learned how this stuff works. I doubt the professional world is as indulgent as most public schoolteachers.

Anxious about apostrophes? In a pickle over your pronouns and prepositions? Fear not

Mr. Gwynne is here with his wonderfully concise and highly enjoyable book of grammar. Within these pages, adults and children alike will find all they need to rediscover this lost science and sharpen up their skills. Mr. Gwynne believes that happiness depends at least partly on good grammar and Mr. Gwynne is never wrong.

[A] sprightly handbook . . . The examples are lively, the advice direct and confident. Some of it, once heard, won't be forgotten . . . Gwynnes certainty is infectious. When it comes to matters of language, people want order, clarity, and wit, not mushiness . . . The coercions of political correctness sway him not at all, and the sentimentality that urges us to respect the will and creativity of individuals, especially children, is altogether ousted . . . Therein lies the pleasure of the text. Not only does it reject the liberalization of usage, it counterattacks.

Mark Bauerlein, *First Things*

Mr. Gwynne is unflinchingly, unapologetically rear-guard . . . The personality of its author is not the least attraction of Gwynnes Grammar . . . [a book] with not the least wisp of dumbing-down in his composition . . . [He] does not deny that grammar can be hellishly complicated . . . [and] his definitions terse, logical, precise are among the best things in the book . . . I feel a certain elegance in what I have been taught and still take to be correct English.

Joseph Epstein, *The Wall Street Journal*

[Gwynne] is more in the mold of an 18th- or 19th-century grammarian than a modern-day prescriptivist . . . [His appeal] has been less about the rules themselves and more about his ability to invoke pre-1960s, cold-shower rigor . . . For hundreds of years, English-speakers have reveled in scolding each other and being scolded about language . . . In another century someone may be quoting Gwynne with equal fondness, while our great-grandchildren take pleasure in getting scolded all over again

Gwynnes Grammar has its undeniable pleasures.

Britt Peterson, *The Boston Globe*

Warm and utterly self-assured . . . Refreshingly opinionated . . . [Gwynne] is an

unashamed prescriptivist . . . [and his] judgment is unambiguous . . . It doesn't matter how many academic linguists tell us that language changes over time . . . Educated people still want to know whether they should write amuck or amok, between or among.

Barton Swaim, *The Weekly Standard* Dynamite to modern, child-centered education: a guide to the forgotten rudiments of the English Language. Elizabeth Grice, *Daily Telegraph* Curious and brilliant . . . it is wonderful that his crisp, lucid book has at last been embraced by the many. Charles Moore, *The Spectator* Witty, engaging and highly educational stuff. *Times Educational Supplement* A very useful, pertinent summary and it deserves both to be used and enjoyed. Tony Little, head master, Eton College Invaluable. *Writing Magazine* About the Author

In the 1980s, on retirement from a successful career as a businessman in London and Australia N.M. Gwynne gradually took up teaching, at first privately. He soon found that he had a clear vocation and he discovered a real demand for his traditional methods, universal up to the 1960s but since displaced by new-fangled theories of learning. And so Mr Gwynne began to ply his trade in classrooms and lecture halls teaching a diverse range of subjects: English, Latin, Greek, French, German, mathematics, history, classical philosophy, natural medicine, the elements of music, even "How to start and run your own business." Now with an international word-of-mouth reputation, Mr Gwynne has been flown around the world in order to teach his pupils privately. And thanks to the Internet and Skype, he has sometimes found himself, within a single day's time, teaching children and adults in India, in Europe and the western United States.

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Chapter 3 Further Encouragement

Against the background of the last chapter, I find myself provoked into raising a question of some moment. Have I your attention, dear reader? Here is the question. Is this book that you have in your hands, in a way that really does matter, the single most important book in print in the English language today? At most, I am only partly joking. What I am trying to do is to make a serious point as arrestingly and vividly as I can. I certainly deny that what I have just said is completely absurd. Let us now see if it is at least defensible. As has just been shown, and as was stressed by Libby Purves in the previous chapter, all thinking and communicating of any kind depend on grammar grammar being simply the correct use of words, and words being the indispensable tools of thought. Indeed to dismiss the need for the accuracy in grammar that only reasonably diligent study and training can give is almost self-contradictory. You need correct grammar even to be able to argue as convincingly as you can against the need to learn grammar. To proceed. If every human activity depends ultimately on language, all that is left, in order to assess my claim, is to weigh up whether or not this book does the particular job it sets out to do better than any other book on grammar in print today. There is one significant difference between this book and any of its predecessors and contemporaries, and indeed between this book and any other book setting out to teach any academic subject. This book does not only teach what must be taught. It also tries to teach how best to teach what must be taught, for the purpose of making sure that the learner will absorb, understand and remember what he or she is trying to learn. I have listed those aims absorb, understand and remember in that order, because it is their order of importance. The order of teaching those three elements should be the opposite. Contrary to education theory most widely propagated today, memorising should come first, preferably starting before understanding is even possible that is, before what is commonly called the age of reason, about seven. The period before the age of reason happens to be the age when memorising is easiest. It is also the age when the vital task of memory training is most effectively done. This very much applies to some of the material in this book, which, as stated in Chapter 1, needs to be learnt by heart for it to be most useful, or indeed in some cases for it to be of any use at all. I know this from the many pupils of all ages that I have been teaching in recent years. Merely to understand a rule is almost never sufficient. Unless it is memorised, and in such a way as to keep it in the memory, all too soon, typically, children are as incapable of applying the rule as if they had never come across it. I can hear protests. It is not treating children with the dignity they deserve to stuff their memories with what they cannot understand. Do not believe it. First, no such objection is made to children's learning the genuinely incomprehensible Eeny, meeny, miny, mo. Secondly, I repeat that the period before they reach the age of reason, at about seven years old, is when children find learning by heart easiest of all; and we are hardly being cruel by spending part of that time giving them a bank of knowledge which is ready and waiting to be used as soon as they become capable of using it and giving their memories valuable training at the same time. Thirdly, contrary to what is often supposed, children typically relish doing it. If you doubt me, you might like to visit the Gwynne Teaching Web site. There you will see some of my youngest pupils reciting sometimes for considerable periods of time things they do not yet understand, such as multiplication tables and Latin nouns and verbs, often beaming enthusiastically as they do so. If I have made something of a case in answer to the question at the beginning of this chapter, my main purpose has been less to boast, you my readers may be comforted to learn, than to stress yet further the supreme importance of what you and I are engaged in together as you go through this book. My aim in doing so is to persuade you to be prepared to take on the genuinely hard work of tackling the science of your language, whether you be pupil or teacher. Just reading this book will achieve relatively little, however enlightening and helpful you may find what you read. What is in this book must be mastered. How best to set about doing this will be discussed in Chapter 9.