

### As seen in the San Francisco Book Review by Hubert O'Hearn

There are certain questions which never receive a surprising answer. Name the greatest dramatist in the history of the English Language: Shakespeare. Who was the worst person to have lived in the twentieth century: Hitler. And, the indispensable guides to correct and fluid writing are: The Elements of Style along with Fowler's Modern English Usage. I don't think I've ever heard anyone argue that either of that pair of books is better than the other, as they just seem a natural pairing like a pair of elderly college professors who met as undergraduates, married, and are still seen hobbling across the common holding hands.

No one has seriously argued for a third grammar text to replace or add to the works of either William Strunk and E.B. White or Henry Watson Fowler, except the occasional brave soul who writes one of his or her own. Such *arrivistes* are given some attention when they arrive, they may even receive the occasional brief thunder of acclaim as in, 'By George! Our modern age finally has our own grammar guide!' (There actually are people like that. It's best to avoid them at cocktail parties if one is intent on having a swell time.) Then they pass and are forgotten as quickly as, well as a short thunderstorm.

So to be strictly honest with you, The Great Grammar Book is not going to replace either of the two classic works mentioned above. I will however argue that it deserves its place next to them, as though our metaphoric old professors had a child.

Author Marsha Sramek has clearly studied both books and I'm quite sure many of the impostors. Therefore, she has recognized that the strength of Fowler and of Strunk and White is that they keep their lessons simple and bite-sized. Anyone who ever wanted to read three or more tightly-packed pages on the correct usage of the subordinate clause will clearly never write one worth reading.

I like Sramek's lessons, for they are neither snooty or condescendingly jolly. Rather she is like that teacher who we admire more in retrospect than at the time we were students. She may not

show movies every second day or arrive for class in period costume bearing trays of baking; rather she gets on with the job, is clear in her instruction and is thorough and calm in her response to questions.

The Great Grammar Book is also filled with exercises and as such the format of the book is over-sized allowing for easy scribbling on the pages. This is Sramek's advantage over *The Elements of Style* and Fowler. Good language darling is a lot like good sex- you need to try it out repeatedly and accept where you've missed the mark.

And now I shall re-read this review and hope like hell I haven't made any wowsers myself. Be seeing you.

<http://bythebookreviews.blogspot.com>

### **C Carter Martina, CC Chronicles**

"Unless you are an editor, proof reader or teacher, the thought of reading a book on grammar will make you say, "ugh." *The Great Grammar Book* by Marsha Sramek will surprise you. It's a fresh breath of grammar air. . . *The Great Grammar Book*

is a great reference to keep on hand for any student, blogger, writer or anyone who wants to improve their written words. Five of five stars."

### **Chris Phillips, Bestsellersworld.com**

"Marsha Sramek has written the suitably titled *The Great Grammar Book*. Using a workbook

style, she covers all the regular topics, but very well. . . . Students preparing for the SAT or ACT will benefit greatly. However, this reviewer is recommending this book as a practical guide for anyone who writes on a regular basis. Five Stars."

### Deb Kincaid, MyShelf.com

"Grammar books typically suffer from the "ugh" factor; they're a necessary tool for writing, but no one actually enjoys reading them. Well, Marsha Sramek's *The Great Grammar Book: Mastering Grammar Usage and the Essentials of Composition* is not typical. She uses fun facts, news article excerpts, and goofy trivia to demonstrate the principles of grammar. Plus, she vaporizes all that stuffy hot air espoused by the grammar police.

Sramek leaves out the quirky, rare and esoteric grammar usage and focuses on the commonly encountered bulk of real-world writing. If proper use of capitalization, quotation marks, and apostrophes has you pulling your hair out; if you need some little trick to help you remember whether to use "lie" or "lay;" or if you mistakenly think a lengthy sentence is the same thing as a run-on sentence, you will benefit from *The Great Grammar Book*. Sramek makes grammar and writing less intimidating.

The book opens with a 100-question, diagnostic grammar test (with answer key) to help readers discern their grammar weaknesses. Of the book's twelve chapters, only three deal with parts of speech. The remaining chapters focus on common errors, usage, and double negatives, in addition to the areas mentioned above. Near the end of the book, a practical guide to better writing called "Successful Writing Strategies" addresses wordiness, unclear pronoun references, and meaningless phrases. Especially important to students is the advice on writing essays, research papers, and works of literary criticism. Sramek even includes a how-to on business letter writing. . .

The book targets high school and college students, but any writer would be smart to keep it handy. No, you may not borrow mine; you'll have to get your own. Highly recommended."