

SCHOOL LAUNCH • COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING

GRADE 11 COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING: THE PERSUASIVE AND RESEARCH ESSAY

The ninth year of classical writing: take apart a great speech with the canons of rhetoric, ask a real question and answer it in a research paper with honest citations, write a ten-minute play after Shakespeare, revise poems the way the masters did, argue at the level of the international essay prizes, and tell a true story for your college application.

First edition

*But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:
1 Peter 3:15 (KJV)*

COURSE GUIDE

Grade 11 puts the progymnasmata to work. The “first exercises” of Theon, Hermogenes and Aphthonius trained students to praise, blame, confirm, refute and argue a thesis; now you will use those tools on the two large forms of the upper school, the persuasive essay and the research paper. Unit 1 teaches rhetorical analysis with the five canons and the three appeals, beginning with President Reagan’s address at Pointe du Hoc on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day (1984), then an editorial and an advertisement, and ends with a written analysis. Units 2 and 3 build a research paper step by step: choosing a question, searching the library and its databases, weighing sources, an annotated bibliography, an outline, a draft, citations in MLA and Chicago style, and a finished paper that may be sent to The Concord Review or entered in National History Day. Unit 6 raises argument to its highest level with steelmanning (stating the other side at its strongest) and essays for the John Locke Institute (Theology or History) and the Institute for Faith and Culture.

The creative track writes a ten-minute play after scenes from Shakespeare, holds a poetry workshop that studies how Yeats and Frost revised their drafts and ends with three revised poems for submission, and turns the personal narrative toward the college essay: a true story of 650 words about events, people, work and God’s providence. The year closes with a portfolio, a timed essay, a résumé and a cover letter. Each lesson has a model passage, a picture study of fine art (David’s *The Death of Socrates*, Rembrandt’s *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer* and Thomas Cole’s *The Course of Empire: The Consummation*), a writing project, worked examples, practice, a Style Clinic and a verse from the King James Bible.

WHO IT IS FOR

Written for high school students in grade 11 (about ages 16–17) who can write a full essay on their own. A parent reads along, listens to the table read and the speeches, and helps with revision. There is no separate Grammar course at this level: a short Style Clinic in each lesson reviews one skill from Grammar Level 3 and applies it to your own sentences. Grade 10 Composition is helpful but not required; Lesson 1.1 reviews the canons of rhetoric and the three appeals.

HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

1. **The weekly rhythm.** One lesson a week in two or three sessions of 45–60 minutes. Session 1: warm-up, video, teaching, model passage and picture study. Session 2: worked examples, practice and the Style Clinic. Session 3 (or homework): the writing project. The research paper in Units 2 and 3 needs extra time for reading, so plan library visits during those eight weeks.
2. **Copy, imitate, invent.** Each unit opens with a model to copy by hand, then an imitation that borrows its shape, then a piece of your own. The models come from the classics: the King James Bible, Cicero, Plutarch, Shakespeare, Milton, Lincoln, Washington and others, along with Reagan’s Pointe du Hoc address in Unit 1.

3. **The quarter path.** Short on time? The eight ★ lessons (1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1 and the résumé and cover letter in 8.3), together with the final research paper in 3.4 and the John Locke essay in 6.3, make a ten-lesson, one-quarter course that still covers analysis, research and argument.
4. **The Style Clinic.** Every lesson names the Grammar Level 3 skill it reviews (🔗), such as parallel structure, the appositive or the semicolon, and asks you to find it in the model and use it in your project. The revision checklist asks only for skills the Style Clinic has covered.
5. **Speaking.** Rhetoric is meant to be heard. You will read Reagan’s address and every other model aloud, cast and lead a table read of your own play in Lesson 4.4, read your poems aloud in the Unit 5 workshop, and present your research question to your family before you begin to draft.
6. **Contests.** These dated summaries were checked in October 2026; rules change, so get the official form and rules from each sponsor before you enter. *The Concord Review* (Lesson 3.4): a quarterly journal that publishes history research papers by high school students; papers are long (published papers often run several thousand words), must be one student’s own work, and are sent with a fee; read its current guidelines before you submit. *National History Day* (Lesson 3.4): the 2027 theme is “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change”; a Senior Division paper (grades 9–12) is an individual entry of 1,500–2,500 words, and you begin at a regional or state contest, usually in late winter or spring. *Princeton Ten-Minute Play Contest* (Lesson 4.4): eleventh graders only, one play of no more than 10 pages; the online form opens in January 2027 and closes at noon (Eastern) on March 31, 2027, or sooner if 250 entries arrive first. *Foyle Young Poets of the Year* (Lesson 5.4): ages 11–17; the 2026 contest closed July 31, 2026, so watch for the 2027 call. *Bennington Young Writers Awards* (Lesson 5.4): grades 9–12, free, poetry entries of one to three poems, deadline November 1, 2026. *Scholastic Art & Writing Awards* (Lesson 5.4): grades 7–12, age 13 or older; each region sets its own deadline, from December 2026 to early January 2027. *John Locke Institute Essay Competition* (Lesson 6.3): open to students under 19, one essay of no more than 2,000 words on a question from a subject category such as Theology or History; the 2027 questions and dates were not yet posted, and recent rounds opened in late winter and closed in early summer. *Institute for Faith and Culture National Essay Contest* (Lesson 6.4): open to students and young adults under 26, an essay of 500–800 words defending the biblical worldview on the year’s theme; the 2027 theme and deadline were not yet posted, and recent contests closed in early spring. Several deadlines fall in the fall, before the lessons that prepare for them, so a student may do those lessons early or enter next year. Do your own work: sponsors disqualify writing done by someone else or by AI tools.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Unit 1: Rhetorical Analysis (1–4)

For years you have built arguments; now you learn to take them apart. Following Aristotle, who defined rhetoric as seeing “the available means of persuasion,” you will analyze a

ceremonial speech (Reagan at Pointe du Hoc, 1984), a newspaper argument (Hamilton's Federalist No. 1), and an advertisement (with P. T. Barnum as a witness), naming the situation, the appeals, the arrangement and the style of each. The unit ends with a full written analysis of the Gettysburg Address under timed conditions. Throughout, the year's faith verse sets the tone: be ready to give a reason, "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

Unit 2: The Research Paper I (5-8)

The first half of the research paper: the canon of invention carried out in the library. You will choose and narrow a research question with Socrates' courage to inquire, search reference works, catalogs and databases the way Darius's scribes searched the house of the rolls, weigh your sources as witnesses by Thucydides' tests, and finish with an annotated bibliography in the spirit of Luke's preface. The bibliography and revised hypothesis carry straight into Unit 3, where you outline, draft, cite and complete the paper.

Unit 3: The Research Paper II (9-12)

In Unit 2 you chose a research question, searched for sources, weighed them and wrote an annotated bibliography. Now you build the paper. You will arrange your notes into a sentence outline on the frame of the classical oration, following Franklin's method of "jumbled hints"; draft the paper section by section, with Macaulay's famous opening as a model introduction; cite every source correctly in MLA or Chicago style, as Bede named his authorities thirteen centuries ago; and revise the whole into a finished paper ready for National History Day (Senior Paper) or *The Concord Review*, held to Thucydides' standard of "an exact knowledge of the past."

Unit 4: 🎭 Drama: The Ten-Minute Play (13-16)

From essays for a silent reader you turn to writing for voices. You will take apart the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar* beat by beat, learn standard play format and the craft of stage directions from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, study how Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News* builds a whole comedy from a rumor, and write an original ten-minute play. The unit ends with a table read guided by Hamlet's advice to the players and a final script of ten pages or fewer, ready for the Princeton University Ten-Minute Play Contest, which is open only to eleventh graders.

Unit 5: Poetry Workshop (17-20)

A poem is made, and most of the making is revision. In this creative-writing unit you will watch the masters revise: Yeats rewriting "The Sorrow of Love" across thirty years, Frost turning "a dented spider" into "a dimpled" one, and Keats sharpening his sonnet on Chapman's Homer the morning after an all-night reading. You will learn the manners of a workshop from Alexander Pope and from Scripture's rule of truth seasoned with grace, give and receive honest critique, bring three poems to finished form through five passes of revision, and send them, with a parent, to the Bennington Young Writers Awards, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards or the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award.

Unit 6: Argument at the Highest Level (21–24)

This unit takes the year’s argument work before real judges. You will learn how essay prizes are judged by reading Socrates’ address to his judges in Plato’s *Apology*, learn to state the other side at its strongest from the objections in Aquinas’s *Summa Theologica*, define and limit a hard question with John Locke before writing a 2,000-word John Locke Institute essay in Theology or History, and open a short Institute for Faith & Culture essay the way Augustine opens *The City of God*. Picture studies: David’s *The Death of Socrates*, Rembrandt’s *Two Old Men Disputing*, Kneller’s portrait of Locke, and Botticelli’s *Saint Augustine in His Study*.

Unit 7: 🐞 Personal Narrative: The College Essay (25–28)

This unit turns the second exercise of the progymnasmata, the narrative, toward a very practical end: the college application essay. You will sit in the admissions reader’s chair, search the places of your own life for a true story, draft it in 650 words, and revise it with honest help. Your models are four classic American and English memoirs: Booker T. Washington sweeping his way into Hampton, Frederick Douglass trading bread for reading lessons, Benjamin Franklin walking up Market Street with a roll under each arm, and John Bunyan stopped mid-game by a voice from heaven. Each one proves character by deed rather than by adjective. Guided by 1 Peter 3:15, you will learn to give a reason for yourself “with meekness and fear”: truthfully, humbly and in your own voice. By the end you will have a finished personal statement ready for the Common App and your Grade 11 portfolio.

Unit 8: Review: Portfolio, Timed Essay, Résumé and Cover Letter (29–32)

The year ends with gathering and giving an account. You will take an honest inventory of everything you wrote in Units 1–7 and test your growth with Franklin’s *Spectator* method (8.1); write two essays against the clock in the current ACT and CLT formats, with Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as the model of compression (8.2); turn your year into a truthful one-page résumé and a cover letter for a real opening (8.3, the quarter-path lesson); and revise, bind and defend a portfolio of your best work before a small panel, following Paul, who answered Festus and Agrippa with “the words of truth and soberness” (8.4).

MATERIALS

- **A writing notebook (composition book)** One for the whole year, for copywork, imitations, research notes and drafts.
- **A KJV Bible** For every lesson’s verse and the faith thread, 1 Peter 3:15.
- **A library card, with access to the library’s online databases** For the research paper in Units 2 and 3. Ask a reference librarian to show you the databases in Lesson 2.2.
- **A citation guide: the *MLA Handbook* (9th edition) or *The Chicago Manual of Style* (18th edition), or a library copy of either** For Lesson 3.3 and the final paper. The lesson prints the forms you need most.

- **One play by Shakespeare (any complete edition, or a printout from Project Gutenberg)**For the scenes in Lesson 4.1 and as a pattern for format in 4.2.
- **A timer**For the ten-minute play (4.4) and the timed essay in Unit 8.
- **A folder for the portfolio**For each unit's portfolio piece and the Unit 8 portfolio, résumé and cover letter.

GRADING

Grades come mostly from the writing projects, judged with each lesson's checklist (invention, arrangement, style and mechanics), and from the research paper, which is graded in stages so that a weak source or outline is caught early. Praise first, then fix one thing at a time.

- Writing projects: 35%
- Research paper (bibliography, outline, draft and final paper): 20%
- Writing notebook and Style Clinic: 15%
- Timed essay and unit reviews: 15%
- Table read, workshop and portfolio: 15%

A 90–100, B 80–89, C 70–79. Below 70: revise with help and resubmit.

- Mechanics are graded only on Grammar Level 3 skills the Style Clinic has reviewed.
- Citations in the research paper are graded for honesty and consistency: every borrowed fact or phrase must be credited. A paper with copied, uncredited work is rewritten, not graded.
- For a transcript, this course may be listed as one credit of English 11 (Composition and Research) when paired with the literature your family reads this year.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

You do not need to be a writer to teach this course. Read the model aloud with your student, sit in on the table read, and use the checklist. Praise specific things before asking for one change. During Units 2 and 3, please help your student get to the library and meet a reference librarian, and check in each week on the research notes. In Unit 7 you are the best witness to the true stories of your student's life; talk together about events, people and work before the drafting begins.

Each lesson has a *For families* note with background, sources and cautions. Public-domain model passages were copied from downloaded Project Gutenberg texts (never typed from memory), and Scripture was checked against the King James Version. Models written for this course are labeled. Modern copyrighted works, such as Frost's drafts and recent editorials, are summarized, not quoted. Arguments are practiced on historic cases and lasting questions, never on Scripture or current party quarrels, and steelmanning teaches your student to state an opponent's view fairly and answer it, as Peter says, "with meekness and fear."

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★ quarter path (10 lessons) ·  creative writing track ·  ends with a piece for a contest in the School Launch directory ·  Style Clinic in every lesson

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

For years you have built arguments; now you learn to take them apart. Following Aristotle, who defined rhetoric as seeing “the available means of persuasion,” you will analyze a ceremonial speech (Reagan at Pointe du Hoc, 1984), a newspaper argument (Hamilton’s Federalist No. 1), and an advertisement (with P. T. Barnum as a witness), naming the situation, the appeals, the arrangement and the style of each. The unit ends with a full written analysis of the Gettysburg Address under timed conditions. Throughout, the year’s faith verse sets the tone: be ready to give a reason, “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Knows the progymnasmata through the thesis (or the encomium at least) and can write a multi-paragraph essay independently.
- Recognizes ethos, pathos and logos and the five canons of rhetoric (Grade 9), or will learn the three appeals in 1.1.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can describe a text’s rhetorical situation: speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject.
- ☐ I can identify ethos, pathos and logos, the kind of oratory, and the classical parts of a speech.
- ☐ I can find the stasis, claim and concessions of an editorial and write a four-sentence rhetorical précis.
- ☐ I can separate an advertisement’s stated and implied claims and name common fallacies.
- ☐ I can write a timed rhetorical analysis with a specific thesis and paragraphs of claim, evidence and commentary.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **The Federalist Papers (Project Gutenberg #1404)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1404>): Free; read No. 1 for lesson 1.2, and No. 10 or No. 51 for extra practice.
- **P. T. Barnum, The Art of Money Getting (Project Gutenberg #8581)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8581>): Free; the section “Advertise Your Business” is the model for lesson 1.3.
- **Ronald Reagan Presidential Library** (<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/>): Search “Pointe du Hoc” for the full text and video of the June 6, 1984 address (lesson 1.1).
- **Abraham Lincoln Online: The Gettysburg Address**
(<https://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>): Free text of the Bliss copy for the timed essay in lesson 1.4.

1.1 ANALYZING A SPEECH: REAGAN AT POINTE DU HOC (1984) ★

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the rhetorical situation of a speech: speaker, occasion, audience, purpose and subject.
- Identify ethos, pathos and logos, and the classical parts of an oration, in Reagan's address at Pointe du Hoc.
- Write one paragraph of rhetorical analysis that names a strategy, quotes or cites it, and explains its effect on the audience.

Warm-up. Think of the last time someone talked you into something (a coach before a game, a parent at the dinner table, a pastor on Sunday). In two or three sentences, write down not *what* they said but *how* they got you to listen. What did they do first?

Video slot. Video coming. Ronald Reagan, Address at Pointe du Hoc, June 6, 1984 (full speech, Reagan Presidential Library). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

rhetorical analysis

A close study of *how* a speech or text tries to persuade its audience, as opposed to whether you agree with it.

rhetorical situation

The speaker, occasion, audience, purpose and subject of a text (often remembered as SOAPS). Every choice a speaker makes answers to the situation.

ethos, pathos, logos

Aristotle's three "proofs": the character of the speaker (ethos), the feelings stirred in the hearers (pathos), and the reasoning of the argument itself (logos).

epideictic oratory

Ceremonial speech that praises or blames, given at funerals, dedications and anniversaries. Aristotle's other two kinds are deliberative (what should we do?) and judicial (what was done?).

kairos

The fitting moment: the right word at the right time and place. A speech given on the very ground it honors has strong kairos.

CORE IDEAS

From building to taking apart. In the progymnasmata you learned to *build* arguments: the chreia, the encomium, the thesis. This year you learn to take a finished piece apart and show how it works. That is rhetorical analysis. Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.” Notice the word *observing*. Before you can speak well, you must learn to watch skilled speakers closely. Analysis does not ask, “Do I agree?” It asks, “What is this speaker trying to do, for whom, and by what means?” You can analyze a speech you admire, and you can analyze one you think is wrong. The skill is the same.

Start with the situation. No speech floats in the air. On June 6, 1984, the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, President Ronald Reagan stood on the windy headland of Pointe du Hoc in Normandy, France. In front of him sat surviving Rangers who had climbed those cliffs under fire in 1944. Beyond them were the leaders of the Allied nations, and beyond them, by television, millions of Americans and Europeans. His purpose was double: to honor the men, and to call the free nations to keep the alliance those men had bought. Write this out first, every time: speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject. Every later observation you make will hang on it.

The three proofs at work. Ethos: Reagan speaks as commander in chief, yet he steps aside for the veterans. He lets the old soldiers be the heroes and makes himself their witness, which raises his own credibility. Pathos: he tells the story of the climb in plain, physical detail: the ropes, the grappling hooks, the men shot down, the men who climbed again. He does not tell the audience to feel moved; he shows them what happened and lets them feel it. Logos: under the praise lies an argument. What these men did for freedom, at that cost, lays an obligation on the living. The logic is simple and strong: if the cause was worth their lives, it is worth our steadiness now.

What kind of speech? Aristotle sorted speeches by time. Judicial speech looks to the past (was this done, and was it just?). Deliberative speech looks to the future (what should we do?). Epideictic speech dwells in the present and praises or blames. Pointe du Hoc is epideictic: it is a grown-up encomium, the same exercise you practiced in Grade 7. But watch the ending. Many great ceremonial speeches turn deliberative in their last minutes. Lincoln did it at Gettysburg, and Reagan does it here, moving from what the Rangers did to what the nations must now resolve.

Arrangement. The classical oration has four main parts: *exordium* (opening that wins attention), *narratio* (the story or facts), *confirmatio* (the proof), and *peroratio* (the closing appeal). Reagan opens with the place itself and the wind off the sea; narrates the assault; turns and speaks directly to the veterans in the audience; asks why they did it and answers with faith, belief in their cause, loyalty and love; widens the view to the allies and to reconciliation with former enemies; and closes with a pledge. When you analyze, trace the *moves* in order. A speech is a journey, and your job is to map the road.

Style and delivery. Look for patterns. Reagan repeats the opening of sentences (anaphora) when he points to the veterans as “the boys of Pointe du Hoc” and “the men who took the cliffs.” Repetition gives the listener a handhold, and in a spoken text that matters more than on the page. He uses short sentences for the hardest moments and longer, rolling ones for reflection. He chooses concrete nouns (cliffs, ropes, guns) over abstractions. The speech was drafted by the speechwriter Peggy Noonan and shaped by the president; most public speeches are team work delivered under one name, and we analyze the speech as the speaker’s own act.

Analysis with meekness. This year’s faith verse is 1 Peter 3:15: be ready to give an answer “with meekness and fear.” A Christian reader analyzes honestly. You do not invent tricks that are not there, and you do not deny real skill because you dislike a speaker. You describe what the speaker did, quote him fairly, and judge his means by the truth. Good analysis is a form of justice: giving each argument its due.

The model. *Ronald Reagan, Address at Pointe du Hoc, Normandy, June 6, 1984. Summarized for this course with two short quoted phrases (fair use); read or watch the full text at the Reagan Presidential Library.*

The president opens on the headland itself: the wind, the sea, the broken German gun emplacements, the place where forty years before American Rangers came ashore at dawn. He tells how they fired grappling hooks and ropes up the cliffs, how the enemy shot down and cut the ropes, and how, when one Ranger fell, another took his place, until they held the top. He notes how few were still able to fight after two days.

Then he turns from the cliffs to the gray-haired men in front of him and points to them: these are “the boys of Pointe du Hoc,” “the men who took the cliffs.” He asks them directly what made them do it, and he answers for them: faith and belief, loyalty and love. They believed their cause was right, that free nations were worth defending, and that God was with them in it. He recalls how Americans at home prayed in their churches and on their porches when news of the invasion came.

Finally he widens the view to all the Allies who fought, to the reconciliation of former enemies, and to the duty of the living to keep the peace with strength. He ends with a pledge that the free nations will be faithful to what the Rangers died for.

PICTURE STUDY



Aristotle with a Bust of Homer, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1653 · Oil on canvas · The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Rembrandt painted this canvas for a Sicilian collector, Antonio Ruffo. Aristotle, the teacher who wrote the first great book on rhetoric, stands in the dark with his hand on the head of Homer, the poet whose speeches in the *Iliad* the Greeks studied as models of persuasion. Across Aristotle's chest hangs a gold chain with a medallion of Alexander the Great, his famous pupil. The philosopher is caught between the poet he studies and the prince he served.

Look closely

- Where does the light fall most brightly? What does Rembrandt want you to see first?
- Look at Aristotle's two hands. One touches Homer; what is the other doing?
- Find the medallion on the chain. Why might a painter put Alexander's face so close to Aristotle's heart?

Talk about it

1. Write an analysis sentence about the painting the way you would about a speech:
"Rembrandt [does what] in order to [have what effect] on the viewer."
2. Aristotle observed the great speakers and poets before he wrote rules for them. What does this painting suggest about how a student of rhetoric should learn?

WRITING PROJECT: MAPPING POINTE DU HOC

You will read (or watch) the whole speech, annotate it, chart its situation and proofs, and write one paragraph of analysis.

Read the full text from the Reagan Presidential Library, or watch it and read along. Copy only short phrases into your notes; the speech is under copyright.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A printed or on-screen copy of the speech (Reagan Presidential Library)
- Three colored pencils or highlighters (one each for ethos, pathos, logos)

Steps

1. Write out the rhetorical situation: speaker, occasion, audience (name at least three layers), purpose, subject.
2. Read the speech once straight through, aloud if you can. Then read it again with pencils, marking ethos, pathos and logos in the margin.
3. Divide the speech into its moves and label each with a classical part (exordium, narratio, confirmatio, peroratio). Give each move a one-line summary in your own words.
4. Find one stylistic pattern (repetition, a list, a direct question, a shift from “they” to “you”) and note where it falls.
5. Write one paragraph (150–200 words): a claim about one strategy, a short quotation or close paraphrase as evidence, and at least two sentences explaining its effect on that audience on that day.
6. Read your paragraph aloud to a parent. Ask: could you tell what the speaker *did* and *why it worked*?

Check your work

- My paragraph names the speaker’s strategy with a strong verb (honors, narrates, contrasts, shifts), not “uses” or “talks about.”
- I quoted no more than a short phrase, inside quotation marks, and paraphrased the rest.
- My commentary explains the effect on a specific audience, not just on “the reader.”
- Items in a series are parallel in form (all nouns, all verbs, or all clauses).
- No sentence is a fragment or a comma splice.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric: “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.”

2. Make a SOAPS chart for a speech you have heard in person (a sermon, a graduation, a toast).
3. Imitate anaphora: write three sentences of praise for someone you know that all begin with the same three words.

History note. On June 6, 1944, Rangers of the U.S. 2nd Ranger Battalion under Lt. Col. James Earl Rudder landed beneath Pointe du Hoc, a headland between Utah and Omaha Beaches, to destroy German artillery thought to command both beaches. They climbed the cliffs with ropes and ladders under fire. At the top they found the guns had been moved; patrols located them inland and disabled them that morning. The Rangers then held the point against counterattacks for two days at heavy cost.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism** (Grammar Level 3, usage and style). Items joined by *and*, *or* or set in a list must match in grammatical form. Reagan’s pointing sentences work because they are parallel. Your analysis should be parallel too. Not parallel: “Reagan honors the veterans, narrating the climb, and he gives a pledge.” Parallel: “Reagan honors the veterans, narrates the climb, and pledges the nations to peace.” Check every list of strategies in your paragraph.

For families. Reagan’s 1984 speech is under copyright, so this lesson summarizes it and quotes only two short phrases; the full text and video are free at the Reagan Presidential Library. It is studied here as a classic of ceremonial oratory, not for party purposes. Aristotle’s definition is from the W. Rhys Roberts translation of the *Rhetoric*. The grade’s faith verse, 1 Peter 3:15, frames the whole year: argument and analysis done “with meekness and fear.” Expect about 90 minutes total, including the speech itself (about 13 minutes on video).

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote: “Reagan uses a lot of pathos in his speech to make people feel sad about the soldiers.” Revise it into a real analysis sentence.

1. Replace the weak verb “uses” with what he actually does: he narrates.
2. Name the specific material: the story of the ropes and the climb.
3. Name the specific audience and the effect: veterans, families and viewers; not merely “sad” but grateful and stirred to resolve.

Answer: By narrating the climb in plain physical detail (the grappling hooks, the cut ropes, the men who took a fallen comrade’s place), Reagan lets his audience see the cost of the cliffs for themselves, so that gratitude, not mere sadness, prepares them for the pledge at the end.

Example 2. Write the rhetorical situation for the speech in one sentence.

1. Speaker and occasion: the president, the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, at the site.
2. Audience: veterans in front, Allied leaders, a television audience.
3. Purpose: to honor and to renew a commitment.

Answer: Speaking at Pointe du Hoc on the fortieth anniversary of D-Day, President Reagan addressed the surviving Rangers, the Allied leaders and a vast television audience in order to honor the men who took the cliffs and to call the free nations to keep faith with their sacrifice.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does SOAPS stand for?
2. **EASY** Define ethos, pathos and logos in one line each.
3. **EASY** Name Aristotle's three kinds of oratory and the time each looks to.
4. **EASY** Name the four main parts of a classical oration.
5. **MEDIUM** Why does speaking on the cliffs themselves strengthen the speech? Use the word *kairos*.
6. **MEDIUM** How does Reagan build ethos by stepping aside for the veterans?
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the parallelism: "The speech honors courage, is remembering the allies, and a pledge."
8. **CHALLENGE** Many ceremonial speeches turn deliberative at the end. Explain why a speaker would do this, using Pointe du Hoc or Gettysburg as your example.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Summarizing the speech instead of analyzing it. A summary says what was said; analysis says what the speaker *did* and why it worked.
- Writing "Reagan uses ethos, pathos and logos" as a thesis. Every speech uses all three; name the specific strategies.
- Arguing with the speech or about politics instead of describing its means.
- Quoting long stretches of a copyrighted speech; quote short phrases and paraphrase the rest.

Make it a game · Name That Proof. A parent reads ten short lines from famous speeches (Henry, Lincoln, Washington, Churchill). After each, the student holds up one, two or three fingers for ethos, pathos or logos, then defends the choice in one sentence. A good defense scores even if the parent chose differently.

Scripture. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13, KJV)

Ceremonial speeches for the fallen draw their deepest power from this truth, which Christ spoke and then fulfilled.

Practice: answers

1. Speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject.
2. Ethos: the speaker's character and credibility. Pathos: the feelings stirred in the audience. Logos: the reasoning of the argument.
3. Judicial (past), deliberative (future), epideictic or ceremonial (present).
4. Exordium, narratio, confirmatio, peroratio.
5. The place and the anniversary give the speech kairos: the audience can see the cliffs being described, so the story needs no proof and the emotion is fitting rather than forced.
6. By making the Rangers the heroes and himself their witness, he shows humility and gratitude; an audience trusts a speaker who honors others more than himself.
7. The speech honors courage, remembers the allies, and makes a pledge.
8. Sample: Praise alone leaves the audience admiring the past; turning to the future gives the praise a use. At Pointe du Hoc, the Rangers' sacrifice becomes the reason the living must stay faithful to the alliance, so the honor becomes an obligation.

1.2 ANALYZING AN EDITORIAL: THE FEDERALIST NO. 1

OBJECTIVES

- Define an editorial and an op-ed, and tell an argument from a report.
- Find the claim, the stasis (fact, definition, quality, policy), the evidence and the concessions in Federalist No. 1.
- Write a rhetorical précis of a newspaper argument in four sentences.

Warm-up. Look at a newspaper or news site (with a parent). Find one piece that reports and one that argues. Copy the first sentence of each. What words in the arguing piece tell you the writer wants something from you?

Video slot. Video coming. The Federalist Papers: who wrote them and why (an overview for students from a library, museum or constitutional-history channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

editorial

An unsigned argument printed by a newspaper in its own voice. An *op-ed* (“opposite the editorial page”) is a signed argument by an outside writer.

claim

The main point a writer wants the reader to accept. In an editorial it is often stated early and restated at the end.

stasis

The point on which a dispute “stands.” The classical stases are fact (did it happen?), definition (what is it?), quality (is it good or bad?) and policy (what should we do?).

concession

Granting a point to the other side, or admitting a difficulty, before answering it. A fair concession builds ethos.

pseudonym

A pen name. Hamilton, Madison and Jay all signed the Federalist essays “Publius.”

CORE IDEAS

What an editorial is. A news story tries to tell you what happened. An editorial tries to tell you what to think or do about it. Both appear in the same paper, often on the same day, and a careful reader keeps them apart. The editorial page is the modern forum: it is where a free people argues in print. Its pieces are short, written for busy readers, and aimed at a decision. That makes them perfect for analysis, because nearly every sentence has a job.

The most famous op-eds in American history. Between October 1787 and the spring of 1788, eighty-five essays appeared in New York newspapers urging the state to ratify the new Constitution. Alexander Hamilton planned the series and wrote most of them; James Madison and John Jay wrote the rest. All three signed “Publius,” after Publius Valerius, a founder of the Roman Republic. The pen name was itself a rhetorical choice: it asked readers to judge the arguments, not the men, and it borrowed the dignity of Rome. Federalist No. 1 appeared in the *Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787.

Find the stasis. The ancient teacher Hermagoras taught that every dispute rests on one of four questions. *Fact*: is it so? *Definition*: what is it, properly named? *Quality*: is it good, just, wise? *Policy*: what shall we do? Federalist No. 1 is plainly at the stasis of policy (adopt the Constitution), but it begins by settling fact (the present government has failed) and quality (the decision is momentous for all mankind). Identifying the stasis tells you what kind of evidence the writer must supply and where an opponent would push back.

Hamilton’s opening moves. Read the model closely. He begins with a fact his readers had felt in their own pockets: “an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy” of the old government. Then he raises the stakes with remarkable speed: the Union, the safety of the states, an empire, and finally “the general misfortune of mankind.” This is amplification, an old device for making a subject seem as large as it really is. Notice too that he addresses the reader as “you,” then shifts to “we” and “our choice.” He places himself beside his readers rather than above them.

Ethos through fairness. In the paragraphs that follow the model, Hamilton does something surprising. He concedes that many opponents of the Constitution are honest men, led by “upright intentions,” and he warns his own side against the bitterness of party spirit. He even admits that the plan touches many local interests and so will be judged with passion. These concessions disarm the hostile reader and make Hamilton sound like a man more interested in truth than in winning. When you analyze an editorial, look for the concessions; they are often where the writer’s character shows most clearly.

The rhetorical précis. A précis (pray-SEE) is a four-sentence summary that captures an argument’s rhetoric, not just its content. Sentence 1: the writer, the genre and title, the date, a strong verb (argues, asserts, warns), and the claim. Sentence 2: how the writer develops the claim (the main strategies, in order). Sentence 3: the purpose, introduced by “in order to.” Sentence 4: the intended audience and the tone the writer takes with them. Writing a précis forces you to read for purpose and method, and it makes an excellent first paragraph for a longer analysis.

Reading editorials as a Christian. Proverbs 18:17 warns that the first speaker in a case always seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him. An editorial is the first speaker. Read it generously enough to understand it fully, and carefully enough to see what it leaves out. Then, if you can, read the reply. The Anti-Federalists answered Publius in the same newspapers, and the debate between them is a model of a free people reasoning together.

The model. Alexander Hamilton (“Publius”), *The Federalist No. 1*, *Independent Journal*, October 27, 1787. From *The Federalist Papers*, Project Gutenberg #1404

AFTER an unequivocal experience of the inefficacy of the subsisting federal government, you are called upon to deliberate on a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire in many respects the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example, to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis at which we are arrived may with propriety be regarded as the era in which that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

PICTURE STUDY



War News from Mexico, Richard Caton Woodville, 1848 · Oil on canvas · Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Woodville painted a crowd on the porch of the “American Hotel,” which doubles as a post office, as news of the Mexican War arrives by paper. One man reads aloud; the others react, each in his own way. Newspapers in the 1840s were read aloud and argued over just like this, and so, sixty years earlier, were the Federalist essays. At the edge of the porch, an old Black man and a girl in ragged clothes, most likely enslaved, listen from the steps, present

but not part of the circle; Woodville placed them there, and the painting is honest about who did and did not have a voice in public debate in 1848.

Look closely

- Find the reader. How does Woodville show that he is the center of attention?
- Pick three listeners and describe each one's reaction in a single word.
- Look at the sign above the door and the papers posted on the wall. Where are we, and why does it matter that news arrives here?

Talk about it

1. Write a one-sentence "editorial" that the man reading might be reading aloud, then describe how two different listeners on the porch would answer it.
2. Why does Woodville place some listeners outside the circle? What does the painting say about who takes part in public argument?

WRITING PROJECT: A PRÉCIS AND A REPLY: PUBLIUS UNDER THE GLASS

Read the whole of Federalist No. 1 (it takes about fifteen minutes) and analyze it as you would a modern op-ed.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- *The Federalist Papers*, Project Gutenberg #1404 (No. 1)
- A dictionary for eighteenth-century words (inefficacy, solicitude, emolument)

Steps

1. Read Federalist No. 1 aloud. Mark the sentence that states the claim most directly.
2. Identify the stasis of the whole essay and of each major paragraph (fact, definition, quality, policy).
3. Underline every concession Hamilton makes to his opponents. Next to each, write how it affects his ethos.
4. List Hamilton's promised topics (near the end, he lays out the plan for the whole series). What does this list tell readers about his method?
5. Write a four-sentence rhetorical précis of Federalist No. 1.
6. Then write a 200-word analytical paragraph on one strategy: amplification, concession, or the shift from "you" to "we."

Check your work

- My précis has exactly four sentences in the standard order: claim, method, purpose, audience and tone.
- I used a strong verb for Hamilton's act (argues, warns, concedes, amplifies), not "says" or "talks about."

- I quoted Hamilton exactly, with his spelling and capitals, and punctuated each quotation correctly.
- My sentences are in the active voice unless I had a reason for the passive.
- I described Hamilton's methods without arguing about modern politics.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model passage by hand. Circle every word that makes the subject seem larger (amplification).
2. Imitate Hamilton's opening sentence about a decision in your own household or church: "After an unequivocal experience of ..., you are called upon to ..."
3. List the four stases with one question of your own for each about a single subject (for example, the town library).

History note. The Federalist essays ran in several New York papers, including the *Independent Journal*, the *New-York Packet* and the *Daily Advertiser*, and were collected as a book in 1788. Their authorship was kept secret for years. Hamilton is credited with about fifty-one essays, Madison with about twenty-nine, and Jay with five (he fell ill early in the series); a few remain disputed between Hamilton and Madison.

 **Style Clinic. Active and passive voice** (Grammar Level 3, voice and mood). Hamilton opens in the passive: "you are called upon to deliberate." He hides the caller (circumstance? history? Providence?) and makes the reader the subject. That is a deliberate choice. In your analysis, prefer the active voice so the writer stays the actor: not "Fear is appealed to in the second paragraph," but "Hamilton appeals to fear in the second paragraph." Use the passive only when, like Hamilton, you mean to put the receiver first.

For families. Federalist No. 1 is studied here as a model of public argument and fair-minded concession, not as a lesson in present-day politics. The stases come from Hermagoras of Temnos (second century B.C.) by way of Cicero and Quintilian. The rhetorical précis is a standard school exercise. If your student is interested, the Anti-Federalist essays (by "Brutus," "Cato" and others) make a good companion reading; they are widely available in free collections.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Write a rhetorical précis of the model paragraph.

1. Sentence 1: writer, genre, date, strong verb, claim.
2. Sentence 2: method, in order.
3. Sentence 3: purpose with “in order to.”
4. Sentence 4: audience and tone.

Answer: Alexander Hamilton, writing as “Publius” in the opening Federalist essay (1787), asserts that the people of New York face a decision on the new Constitution whose consequences reach far beyond their state. He begins with the admitted failure of the existing government and then amplifies the stakes, from the Union to the whole of mankind. He does this in order to persuade his readers that the question deserves calm and serious deliberation. Addressing the voters of New York as fellow citizens, he adopts a grave, elevated and urgent tone.

Example 2. A student wrote: “Hamilton says the decision is very important and this makes the reader think it is important.” Revise it.

1. Name the device: amplification.
2. Point to the evidence: the climbing list of stakes.
3. Explain the effect on a specific audience: New Yorkers tempted to think of the question as a local one.

Answer: Hamilton amplifies the question step by step, from “the existence of the UNION” to “the fate of an empire” and at last “the general misfortune of mankind,” so that New Yorkers inclined to weigh the Constitution by local interest are made to see themselves as deciding a question for the whole world.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** How is an editorial different from an op-ed?
2. **EASY** Who wrote the Federalist essays, and what name did they sign?
3. **EASY** Name the four stases.
4. **EASY** What is a concession?
5. **MEDIUM** Identify the stasis: “The new tax is not a fee, as the council claims; it is a tax.”
6. **MEDIUM** Why might Hamilton have chosen the name of a founder of the Roman Republic as his pen name?
7. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in the active voice: “The reader is reminded by Hamilton of the failure of the Articles.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Explain how a writer’s concessions can strengthen an argument rather than weaken it. Use Hamilton as your example.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Treating every sentence in an editorial as a fact. Sort facts, judgments and proposals before you analyze.
- Writing a précis that only summarizes content and leaves out method, purpose and audience.
- Modernizing Hamilton's spelling or capitals when quoting. Quote exactly.
- Analyzing the Constitution instead of the essay's rhetoric.

Make it a game • Stasis Sort. Write twelve one-line claims on index cards ("The bridge was built in 1902"; "A hot dog is a sandwich"; "Courage is better than caution"; "The town should repair the bridge"). Shuffle. Players race to sort them into four piles: fact, definition, quality, policy. Argue any disputed card in one sentence each.

Scripture. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." (Proverbs 18:17, KJV)

An editorial is the first speaker in its own cause; the careful reader is the neighbor who comes and searches it.

Practice: answers

1. An editorial is unsigned and speaks for the newspaper; an op-ed is signed by an outside writer.
2. Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, signing "Publius."
3. Fact, definition, quality, policy.
4. Granting a point to the other side or admitting a difficulty before answering it.
5. Definition.
6. It borrowed Rome's dignity and its republican virtue, suggested that the writer was founding a republic too, and turned attention from the authors to the arguments.
7. Hamilton reminds the reader of the failure of the Articles.
8. Sample: A concession shows the writer has heard the other side and is not afraid of it. When Hamilton grants that many opponents are honest and warns his own allies against bitterness, hostile readers lower their guard and neutral readers trust him more, so his main claim reaches them with greater force.

1.3 ANALYZING AN ADVERTISEMENT: BARNUM AND THE ART OF THE PITCH

OBJECTIVES

- Read an advertisement as a compressed argument with an audience, a claim and appeals.
- Separate an ad’s stated claims from its implied claims, and name common fallacies (bandwagon, false authority, false cause, loaded words).
- Write an analysis of one print advertisement that judges its means by the standard of truthfulness.

Warm-up. Without looking, write down three slogans or jingles you know by heart. Why do you remember them? Did you ever decide to remember them?

Video slot. Video coming. P. T. Barnum and his American Museum (a history overview from a museum, library or historical-society channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

advertisement

A paid message meant to move an audience to buy, join, give or believe. It is an argument compressed into a picture and a few words.

implied claim

A message the ad suggests without saying it outright: a picture of a happy family beside a car implies, “This car will make your family happy.”

target audience

The particular group an ad is built for, revealed by where it runs and whom it pictures.

fallacy

A flaw in reasoning that can still persuade. Ads often lean on bandwagon (“everyone is buying it”), false authority (a celebrity praising a product he knows nothing about), and false cause (“use this, and success follows”).

puffery

Vague, boastful praise (“the best coffee in the world”) that cannot be proved or disproved.

CORE IDEAS

The shortest argument. An editorial has five hundred words to make its case; an advertisement may have five words and a picture. Yet it has everything a speech has: a speaker (the company), an audience (the people it hopes will buy), a purpose (to move them to act), and appeals to ethos, pathos and logos. Because it is so short, an ad leans heavily on

what it does not say. Your task in analysis is to make the unspoken argument spoken, to write out in plain sentences what the picture and the slogan are suggesting.

Barnum, the great showman. Phineas Taylor Barnum (1810-1891) ran the American Museum in New York, toured the singer Jenny Lind across America, and late in life founded the circus that bore his name. He was perhaps the most skillful advertiser of his century. He also practiced what he cheerfully called “humbug”: in 1842 he displayed the “Feejee Mermaid,” which was the upper half of a monkey sewn to the tail of a fish. Read the model with that in mind. Barnum insists that the advertiser must have a genuine article. Is he sincere? Partly, perhaps. But a careful reader notices that the most honest-sounding sentence in an advertisement may itself be part of the pitch.

Stated and implied claims. Begin every ad analysis with two lists. First, what does the ad actually *say*? (“Twice as many vitamins.” “Since 1885.”) Second, what does it *imply*? Pictures carry most implied claims: the setting, the faces, the colors, the people the buyer is invited to become. An ad for a pocket watch shows a young man in a good suit at a railway platform; it never says, “Buy this and you will be a successful man of affairs,” but that is the argument. Implied claims are powerful because the viewer supplies them himself and so never thinks to test them.

The appeals in pictures. Ethos in an ad comes from age (“established 1847”), from experts and testimonials, and from the look of quality: heavy paper, clean type, a coat of arms. Pathos works through desire, fear, belonging, nostalgia and humor. Logos appears in numbers, comparisons and guarantees, though often in a thin form. Ask whether the evidence would satisfy you if it came from a stranger at your door. Old advertisements are excellent practice, because time has stripped away their spell and their tricks show plainly.

Fallacies to name. *Bandwagon*: “Millions of families can’t be wrong.” *False authority*: an actor in a white coat recommending a medicine. *False cause*: an athlete wins, and the cereal he eats gets the credit. *Loaded words*: “natural,” “pure,” “new and improved,” chosen for their glow rather than their meaning. *Puffery*: praise too vague to check. Naming a fallacy is not the end of analysis. You must also explain why it works on the audience in question, and what a truthful version of the same message would need to show.

Ads and the Christian reader. Commerce is not evil. Lydia sold purple cloth, Paul made tents, and the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 “perceiveth that her merchandise is good.” Telling people truthfully about a good thing is a service. But the tenth commandment forbids covetousness, and much advertising works by making us want what we did not want an hour ago. The Christian analyst asks two questions: Is this true? And what desire is this ad cultivating in me? Proverbs 20:14 shows that buyer and seller alike can bend the truth in a bargain.

Writing it up. An ad analysis follows the same shape as a speech analysis: situation (where and when it ran, and for whom), claim (stated and implied), strategies (appeals and devices, in order of importance), and judgment (does its means honor the truth?). Describe the image precisely before you interpret it. A reader who cannot see the ad must be able to picture it from your first paragraph.

The model. *P. T. Barnum, The Art of Money Getting, "Advertise Your Business" (lecture, printed 1880), Project Gutenberg #8581*

Those who deal with the public must be careful that their goods are valuable; that they are genuine, and will give satisfaction. When you get an article which you know is going to please your customers, and that when they have tried it, they will feel they have got their money's worth, then let the fact be known that you have got it. Be careful to advertise it in some shape or other because it is evident that if a man has ever so good an article for sale, and nobody knows it, it will bring him no return. In a country like this, where nearly everybody reads, and where newspapers are issued and circulated in editions of five thousand to two hundred thousand, it would be very unwise if this channel was not taken advantage of to reach the public in advertising. A newspaper goes into the family, and is read by wife and children, as well as the head of the home; hence hundreds and thousands of people may read your advertisement, while you are attending to your routine business. Many, perhaps, read it while you are asleep. The whole philosophy of life is, first "sow," then "reap." That is the way the farmer does; he plants his potatoes and corn, and sows his grain, and then goes about something else, and the time comes when he reaps. But he never reaps first and sows afterwards. This principle applies to all kinds of business, and to nothing more eminently than to advertising. If a man has a genuine article, there is no way in which he can reap more advantageously than by "sowing" to the public in this way. He must, of course, have a really good article, and one which will please his customers; anything spurious will not succeed permanently because the public is wiser than many imagine.

PICTURE STUDY



The Mountebank (Il Ciarlatano), Pietro Longhi, 1757 · Oil on canvas · Ca' Rezzonico (Museum of Eighteenth-Century Venice), Venice
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

In eighteenth-century Venice, mountebanks (the word means “one who climbs on a bench”) set up stages in the squares during Carnival and sold cures, powders and charms to the crowd with speeches, jokes and tricks. Pietro Longhi painted the everyday life of his city, and here he shows one of these salesmen at work. The stage, the costume and the patter were the advertisement; the crowd below is the target audience. Many of them wear masks, as Venetians commonly did in public at Carnival.

Look closely

- Find the seller. What is he doing with his hands, and where are his eyes?
- Look at the crowd. Who is paying attention, and who seems doubtful?
- Why does the seller stand above the crowd? What does height do for a speaker?

Talk about it

1. Write the mountebank’s pitch in three sentences, then label the appeal in each (ethos, pathos, logos).
2. Compare the mountebank to a modern advertisement. What has changed in the means of selling, and what has stayed the same?

WRITING PROJECT: TAKING APART AN OLD ADVERTISEMENT

Old ads are the best practice: time has removed their spell. You will analyze one illustrated advertisement from before 1930 in a page-long written analysis.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- An old magazine or newspaper advertisement (the Library of Congress's free online collections and digitized magazines have thousands; a parent should help choose one)
- Barnum's *Art of Money Getting*, Project Gutenberg #8581, "Advertise Your Business"

Steps

1. Describe the ad precisely: layout, image, headline, body copy, where and when it ran. Write as if to someone who cannot see it.
2. List its stated claims, word for word, and its implied claims, in your own plain sentences.
3. Identify the target audience. Point to at least two details that reveal it.
4. Mark the appeals: one example each of ethos, pathos and logos. Name any fallacy or loaded word you find.
5. Judge the ad by Barnum's own standard: is the article "genuine," and is the message true? Then judge it by the higher standard of Ephesians 4:25.
6. Write a one-page analysis (about 400 words): a description paragraph, two strategy paragraphs, and a closing judgment.

Check your work

- My first paragraph lets a reader picture the ad without seeing it.
- I separated what the ad says from what it implies.
- Every modifier sits next to the word it modifies; I have no dangling or misplaced modifiers.
- I named at least one fallacy and explained why it works on this audience.
- My judgment is fair: I credited real skill and named real untruth.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Barnum's sentence from "The whole philosophy of life is" through "sows afterwards." Then write one sentence on whether the comparison to farming is fair.
2. Write two versions of an ad for something you own and value (a bicycle, a book, a tool): one using puffery and bandwagon, one using only true, specific claims.
3. Start a fallacy page in your notebook: bandwagon, false authority, false cause, loaded words, puffery, with one example each.

History note. Barnum's American Museum on Broadway opened in 1841 and drew millions of visitors before it burned in 1865. Barnum gave his "Art of Money Getting" lecture many times in America and Britain; besides advertising, it urges industry, sobriety, avoiding debt and keeping one's word. The mermaid he exhibited in 1842 was a fabrication made by joining a monkey's upper body to a fish's tail.

 **Style Clinic. Dangling and misplaced modifiers** (Grammar Level 3, modifiers). Ad copy is full of them, and so are hurried analyses. Dangling: “Glowing in the corner of the page, the reader’s eye is drawn to the bottle.” (The eye is not glowing.) Fixed: “The bottle, glowing in the corner of the page, draws the reader’s eye.” Misplaced: “The ad shows a family eating cereal in a magazine.” Fixed: “The magazine ad shows a family eating cereal.” Read every introductory phrase in your analysis and ask: who is doing this?

For families. Please help your student choose the old advertisement; some period ads promote patent medicines, tobacco or alcohol, or contain caricatures. Those can be studied honestly with a parent, but a simple ad for a household product, a bicycle, a watch or a food is the best start. Barnum is included as a witness, not a hero: he spoke well of honest dealing while profiting from hoaxes, and that tension is part of the lesson. Scripture references: Ephesians 4:25 (truthfulness), Exodus 20:17 (covetousness), Proverbs 20:14.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. An 1890s ad shows a smiling girl in a white dress beside a bar of soap. Headline: “Pure as the Morning.” Write out its stated and implied claims.

1. Stated claim: the soap is pure.
2. The picture adds what the words leave out: white dress, a child, morning light.
3. Implied claims: the soap is gentle enough for children; using it makes a family clean and innocent; a good mother buys it.

Answer: Stated: “Pure as the Morning” (the soap is pure). Implied: the soap is gentle and safe for children, and the mother who buys it keeps a clean and wholesome home. “Pure” is a loaded word; the ad offers no evidence of what the soap contains.

Example 2. A student wrote: “Barnum says you should only sell good stuff, which is ironic because he was a fake.” Revise it into fair analysis.

1. Replace the slangy, sweeping judgment with precise terms.
2. Credit what is true in Barnum’s advice.
3. Name the tension and explain how it affects his ethos.

Answer: Barnum builds his ethos on a principle of honest trade, warning that “anything spurious will not succeed permanently”; yet the same man profited from the Feejee Mermaid. The tension does not make his advice false, but it reminds the reader that a profession of honesty can itself be a selling point.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is an implied claim?
2. **EASY** Name the fallacy: “Nine out of ten families in Ohio already use Brand X.”
3. **EASY** Name the fallacy: a famous baseball player recommends a brand of headache powder.
4. **EASY** What is puffery? Give an example.
5. **MEDIUM** In the model, what comparison does Barnum use to make advertising seem natural and wholesome?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: “Printed in bold red letters, customers could not miss the price.”
7. **MEDIUM** Barnum says a newspaper ad works “while you are asleep.” Which appeal is this, and to what desire does it speak?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a truthful two-sentence advertisement for a used bicycle that would still persuade.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Analyzing only the words and ignoring the picture, which often carries the main argument.
- Naming a fallacy without explaining why it persuades this audience.
- Sneering at every ad. Honest advertising serves buyers; judge each one by the truth.
- Describing the ad so vaguely that a reader cannot picture it.

Make it a game · The Mountebank’s Bench. Each player draws an ordinary household object from a bag (a spoon, a sock, a pencil) and has sixty seconds on a footstool to sell it to the family. Listeners score one point for every fallacy they can name aloud, and the seller scores two points for every true, specific claim.

Scripture. “It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.” (Proverbs 20:14, KJV)

Solomon saw that buyers as well as sellers bend the truth in a bargain; the analyst of ads holds both to the standard of honest speech.

Practice: answers

1. A message an ad suggests, usually through its picture, without stating it outright.
2. Bandwagon.
3. False authority.
4. Vague, boastful praise that cannot be checked. Sample: “The finest flour in the world.”
5. Farming: first sow, then reap. Advertising is sowing, and sales are the harvest.
6. Customers could not miss the price, printed in bold red letters.
7. Logos with a strong pull of pathos: it reasons about reach and efficiency, and it appeals to the merchant’s desire to profit without extra labor.

8. Sample: Sturdy 21-speed bicycle, new tires and brakes this spring, ridden to work for two years without a breakdown. \$120, and you may ride it around the block first.

1.4 THE WRITTEN ANALYSIS: A TIMED ESSAY ON THE GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

OBJECTIVES

- Write an analytical thesis that names the speaker’s purpose and main strategies.
- Build body paragraphs that follow the speech’s line of reasoning, with claim, evidence and commentary.
- Plan, draft and proofread a rhetorical analysis in 40 minutes under test conditions.

Warm-up. Set a timer for five minutes. Read the Gettysburg Address (272 words) twice, once silently and once aloud. Then, without looking, write the one sentence you remember best and say why it stuck.

Video slot. Video coming. The Gettysburg Address: history and text (Library of Congress, National Park Service or a classical-school reading). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

analytical thesis

A sentence that states what the speaker does, by what means, and to what end: “Lincoln [does X] by [strategies] in order to [purpose].”

line of reasoning

The order of the speaker’s moves, from opening to close. A strong analysis follows it instead of hopping around the text.

commentary

Your own sentences explaining *how* and *why* a piece of evidence works on the audience. It is the heart of analysis.

verbs of analysis

Precise verbs for what a writer does: asserts, concedes, contrasts, amplifies, echoes, narrates, redefines, urges. Avoid “uses” and “talks about.”

embedded quotation

A short quotation woven into your own sentence so that the grammar runs smoothly through it.

CORE IDEAS

Putting it on paper. In the last three lessons you analyzed a ceremonial speech, a newspaper argument and an advertisement. Now you write the full essay. A written rhetorical analysis has a simple shape: an introduction that sets out the situation and ends with a thesis; body paragraphs that move through the text’s strategies; and a short

conclusion that steps back to judge the whole. It is the same shape whether you have a week or forty minutes. This lesson trains you to produce it under time, which is how many tests and college courses will ask for it.

The thesis. A weak thesis lists the three appeals: “Lincoln uses ethos, pathos and logos.” That is true of every speech ever given and says nothing. A strong thesis names the speaker, the purpose and the particular strategies: “In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln turns a cemetery dedication into a call to finish the war by redefining whose act truly consecrates the ground and by binding the nation’s birth, the soldiers’ death and the people’s future into one story.” Notice the verbs: turns, redefining, binding. A thesis should be specific enough that a reader could disagree with it.

Follow the line of reasoning. Beginners often organize by appeal: one paragraph on ethos, one on pathos, one on logos. This chops the speech into pieces and hides how it moves. Better writers follow the speaker’s order. Lincoln’s address has three movements: past (“Four score and seven years ago”), present (the battlefield and the cemetery), and future (the “unfinished work”). Three body paragraphs, one for each movement, will show how each step prepares the next. That is what an examiner means by a “line of reasoning.”

Claim, evidence, commentary. Each body paragraph opens with a claim about what the speaker does in this part of the text. Then it gives evidence, usually a short embedded quotation. Then comes commentary, two or three sentences that explain how the evidence works on that audience. Commentary should outweigh evidence: if your paragraph is half quotation, you are summarizing. Ask after every quotation: so what? What does this word, image or structure do to the listeners at Gettysburg in November 1863?

Under the clock. In a 40-minute timed analysis, spend about 8 minutes reading and planning, 27 writing, and 5 proofreading. In the planning minutes, annotate the text, write the situation in the margin, divide the text into moves, and draft your thesis. Do not begin writing without a thesis. Write a short introduction (three or four sentences) so that your time goes to the body, where the points are earned. If time runs short, a two-sentence conclusion is enough. Leave room to proofread; careless errors cost credibility. These habits serve on any timed essay: the AP English Language exam asks for exactly this kind of analysis, and the ACT’s 40-minute writing test, though it asks for your own argument, rewards the same planning.

The conclusion. Do not merely repeat your thesis. Step back and answer a larger question: why did this speech succeed, and what does it teach a writer? Lincoln’s address is famous partly because of what it leaves out: no names of generals, no account of the battle, no attack on the enemy. A good conclusion notices the shape of the whole.

Giving a reason. Peter told believers to be ready to give “a reason of the hope” that is in them. Rhetorical analysis is practice in giving reasons: not “I liked it” but “this works because.” The same habit lets you explain the faith clearly, with evidence and with grace, to anyone who asks.

The model. *Written for this course: a model introduction and first body paragraph analyzing Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863). Quotations follow the Bliss copy.*

On November 19, 1863, four months after the bloodiest battle of the war, Abraham Lincoln rose at the dedication of the soldiers' cemetery at Gettysburg. The crowd had just heard Edward Everett speak for two hours; Lincoln spoke for about two minutes. In that brief space he turns a ceremony for the dead into a charge to the living, first by setting the battle inside the whole story of the nation, then by redefining who has truly consecrated the ground, and finally by handing the unfinished task to his hearers.

Lincoln opens not on the battlefield but in 1776. "Four score and seven years ago," he begins, in the measured phrasing of the King James Bible, and his audience, who knew that cadence from church, hears at once that this will be a solemn occasion and not a political speech. He calls the founders "our fathers," making every listener an heir, and he describes the nation as "conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The images of birth and dedication do quiet work: a nation that was born can die, and a thing dedicated to a purpose can betray it. By the end of the first sentence, Lincoln has made the war a test of whether the country will keep faith with its founding, and so has prepared his listeners to see the soldiers' graves not as an ending but as a promise not yet kept.

PICTURE STUDY



The Geographer, Johannes Vermeer, about 1669 · Oil on canvas · Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer shows a scholar caught in the instant between measuring and understanding. He has been working over a chart with his dividers; now he looks up toward the light, thinking. Around him are the tools of careful study: maps, a globe, books, a carpet pushed back to clear the table. Written analysis is like this: first the close measurement, then the moment of seeing what it means.

Look closely

- Find the dividers. What do they tell you about the kind of work he is doing?
- Where is the light coming from, and what does it fall on?
- Look at the papers on the floor and the table. Has he been at work a long time? How can you tell?

Talk about it

1. Write an analytical thesis about the painting: “Vermeer [does what] by [which means] in order to [what purpose].”
2. The geographer measures before he concludes. How is that a picture of good rhetorical analysis?

WRITING PROJECT: A TIMED RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Write a full rhetorical analysis of the Gettysburg Address in 40 minutes, then revise it in a second session.

You will need

- A printed copy of the Gettysburg Address (Bliss copy)
- Timer
- Lined paper and pen (write by hand, as on a test)

Steps

1. Session 1. Read the prompt: “Write an essay in which you analyze how Lincoln builds his argument that the living must finish the work of those who died at Gettysburg. Explain how he uses the resources of language and structure to persuade his audience.”
2. Minutes 0–8: read twice, annotate, divide the speech into its moves, and write your thesis at the top of your planning page.
3. Minutes 8–35: write the introduction (situation and thesis), two or three body paragraphs following Lincoln’s order, and a brief conclusion.
4. Minutes 35–40: proofread. Fix quotations, fragments and modifiers. Stop when the timer sounds.
5. Session 2. Score your own essay with the checklist below, then rewrite your weakest body paragraph with more commentary.
6. Read the model introduction in this lesson and compare it with yours. Note one thing the model does that you will do next time.

Check your work

- My thesis names Lincoln's purpose and at least two specific strategies.
- My body paragraphs follow the order of the speech, each with claim, evidence and commentary.
- Every quotation is exact, short and embedded, with correct punctuation (periods and commas inside quotation marks; brackets and ellipses used correctly).
- Commentary outweighs quotation in every body paragraph.
- I used strong verbs of analysis and avoided "uses" and "talks about."
- My conclusion steps back to judge the whole instead of repeating the thesis.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Gettysburg Address by hand from the Bliss copy, paying attention to every comma and dash.
2. Make a list of twenty verbs of analysis. Keep it in the back of your notebook for every timed essay this year.
3. Imitate Lincoln's triple: write a sentence of your own with three parallel phrases that build ("we can not ..., we can not ..., we can not ...").

History note. The Battle of Gettysburg was fought July 1-3, 1863. At the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery that November, Edward Everett gave the main oration of about two hours; Lincoln's "few appropriate remarks" followed. Five manuscript copies in Lincoln's hand survive. The Bliss copy, written in 1864 for a charity sale and the only one he signed and dated, is the text most often printed and is displayed in the White House.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuating quotations** (Grammar Level 3, punctuation mastery). American usage puts periods and commas *inside* closing quotation marks: Lincoln calls the nation "conceived in Liberty," and he looks ahead to a "new birth of freedom." Colons and semicolons go outside. Use brackets for any word you change: Lincoln asks the living "to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which [the soldiers] ... so nobly advanced." Use an ellipsis (...) for words you omit, and never let an omission change the meaning. Embed quotations so your sentence would still be grammatical if the quotation marks vanished.

For families. Give the timed essay under real conditions: quiet room, no phone, handwritten, 40 minutes. Score it with the checklist and the unit rubric. The AP English Language exam includes a rhetorical analysis essay of this kind; the SAT offered a similar analysis essay from 2016 to 2021 but has since dropped it, and the ACT's optional writing test is a 40-minute argument essay. Check each test's official site for current formats. The model analysis was written for this course; the Gettysburg text is public domain.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this weak thesis: “In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln uses a lot of rhetorical devices to make his speech persuasive.”

1. Name the purpose: to turn mourning into resolve to finish the war.
2. Name specific strategies: the past-present-future structure; the redefinition of who consecrates the ground; the repeated triples.
3. Use strong verbs.

Answer: In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln transforms a cemetery dedication into a summons to finish the war, tracing the nation from its birth to its trial to its possible “new birth of freedom” and insisting that the soldiers, not the speakers, have already hallowed the ground.

Example 2. This body paragraph is mostly quotation. Add commentary: “Lincoln says, ‘But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract.’ This is a powerful moment.”

1. Shorten the evidence and embed it.
2. Name the strategy: the triple (with rising force) and the reversal of who acts.
3. Explain the effect on the audience: the dignitaries came to dedicate; Lincoln tells them they cannot.

Answer: Lincoln then surprises his audience by denying the very purpose of their gathering: “we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground.” Each verb is holier than the last, so the triple climbs even as it denies. The dignitaries on the platform came to make the ground sacred, and Lincoln tells them that the soldiers have already done it. By humbling the speakers, himself included, he raises the dead, and he clears the way for the only dedication left to the living: to the “unfinished work.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What three things should an analytical thesis name?
2. **EASY** What are the three parts of a body paragraph in rhetorical analysis?
3. **EASY** Give five strong verbs of analysis.
4. **EASY** In a 40-minute timed analysis, about how long should you plan, write and proofread?
5. **MEDIUM** Why is organizing by the speech’s order usually better than one paragraph each on ethos, pathos and logos?

6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate correctly: Lincoln calls the war a test of whether a nation so conceived can long endure
7. **MEDIUM** Write commentary (two sentences) on “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a conclusion (three or four sentences) for an analysis of the Gettysburg Address that does not merely repeat the thesis.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A thesis that only says the speaker “uses ethos, pathos and logos.”
- Paragraphs that summarize the speech in order without explaining how each part works.
- Long block quotations in a timed essay; quote a phrase and comment on it.
- Running out of time before the body paragraphs because the introduction was too long.

Make it a game · So What?. One player reads a single quoted phrase from a famous speech. The next must give one sentence of commentary. After each sentence, everyone else says “So what?” and the player must go one level deeper. See how many levels each phrase can bear before the commentary runs dry.

Scripture. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” (1 Peter 3:15, KJV)

Analysis trains the habit Peter asks for: a ready, reasoned answer, given with meekness.

Practice: answers

1. What the speaker does (purpose), by what means (specific strategies), and to what end.
2. Claim, evidence, commentary.
3. Sample: asserts, concedes, contrasts, amplifies, redefines.
4. About 8 minutes planning, 27 writing, 5 proofreading.
5. It shows the line of reasoning, how each move prepares the next, instead of chopping the speech apart and repeating the same evidence.
6. Lincoln calls the war a test of whether a nation “so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.” (Quote exactly, with the period inside the closing quotation mark.)
7. Sample: Lincoln sets “say” against “did” and “we” against “they,” so the sentence itself performs the humility it describes. The contrast moves honor from the speakers to the soldiers and leaves the living as debtors.
8. Sample: The address has outlived Everett’s two-hour oration partly because of what Lincoln left out: no generals, no tactics, no taunt at the enemy. By refusing the details of one battle, he made the speech about every soldier and every citizen. Its brevity is not a lack of effort but a discipline, and it teaches a writer that the strongest sentences are often the ones that make room for something larger than the speaker.

UNIT 1 REVIEW

Closed book except for the texts provided. Items 1–8 are short answers. Item 9 is a précis and item 10 a timed analysis; for item 10 the student has 40 minutes and a printed copy of Washington’s Thanksgiving Proclamation of October 3, 1789 (public domain, widely available). Score writing tasks with the unit rubric.

1. (2 pts) Name the five elements of the rhetorical situation.
2. (3 pts) Define ethos, pathos and logos.
3. (3 pts) What kind of oratory (judicial, deliberative, epideictic) is Reagan’s Pointe du Hoc address, and why? How does its ending change?
4. (2 pts) Name the four classical parts of an oration in order.
5. (3 pts) Name the four stases and identify the main stasis of Federalist No. 1.
6. (2 pts) How do Hamilton’s concessions to his opponents strengthen his ethos?
7. (3 pts) An ad shows a family laughing around a new radio. Headline: “The Center of the Home.” Give its stated claim and one implied claim, and name one loaded word or fallacy.
8. (3 pts) Correct the errors: “Standing at the cliffs, the speech was given by Reagan, who called them “the boys of Pointe du Hoc”.”
9. (4 pts) Write a four-sentence rhetorical précis of the opening paragraph of Federalist No. 1.
10. (16 pts) Timed essay (40 minutes): Write an essay in which you analyze how George Washington, in his Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1789, persuades the American people to set aside a day of public thanksgiving. Explain how he uses the resources of language and structure to achieve his purpose.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Revise your timed analysis of the Gettysburg Address (lesson 1.4) into a polished essay of 700–1,000 words, typed, with a title. Keep the timed draft clipped behind it so you can see your growth. It opens your Grade 11 portfolio.

- **Thesis and situation:** The introduction sets out speaker, occasion, audience and purpose, and the thesis names the purpose and specific strategies.
- **Line of reasoning:** Body paragraphs follow the speech’s movements in order, and each shows how one move prepares the next.
- **Evidence and commentary:** Short, exact, embedded quotations; commentary outweighs quotation and explains the effect on the actual audience.
- **Style and mechanics:** Strong verbs of analysis; parallel lists; active voice; no dangling modifiers; quotations punctuated correctly.

Answer key

1. Speaker, occasion, audience, purpose, subject.

2. Ethos: the speaker's character; pathos: the feelings of the audience; logos: the reasoning of the argument.
3. Epideictic (ceremonial): it praises the Rangers on an anniversary. At the end it turns deliberative, calling the free nations to keep faith with the sacrifice.
4. Exordium, narratio, confirmatio, peroratio.
5. Fact, definition, quality, policy. Federalist No. 1 rests mainly on policy (adopt the Constitution).
6. By granting that many opponents act from upright intentions and warning against bitterness on both sides, he shows fairness, so hostile and neutral readers trust him more.
7. Stated: the radio is the center of the home. Implied (sample): buying this radio will bring the family together and make them happy. False cause (happiness credited to the radio), or the loaded phrase "the Home."
8. Standing at the cliffs, Reagan called the veterans "the boys of Pointe du Hoc." (Fixes the dangling modifier and the passive voice, clarifies the pronoun, and puts the period inside the quotation marks.)
9. Sample: Alexander Hamilton, writing as "Publius" in the first Federalist essay (1787), asserts that the decision on the new Constitution will matter far beyond New York. He begins with the admitted failure of the existing government and amplifies the stakes to the Union, an empire and all mankind. He does this in order to persuade his readers to deliberate with seriousness. Addressing New York's voters as fellow citizens, he takes a grave and urgent tone.
10. Score with the portfolio rubric (thesis and situation, line of reasoning, evidence and commentary, style and mechanics; 4 points each). A strong essay notes that Washington grounds the proclamation in duty to "Almighty God," cites Congress's request (ethos), lists the specific mercies of the war, the peace and the new Constitution in parallel clauses, and moves from thanks for the past to prayer for the future.

THE RESEARCH PAPER I

The first half of the research paper: the canon of invention carried out in the library. You will choose and narrow a research question with Socrates' courage to inquire, search reference works, catalogs and databases the way Darius's scribes searched the house of the rolls, weigh your sources as witnesses by Thucydides' tests, and finish with an annotated bibliography in the spirit of Luke's preface. The bibliography and revised hypothesis carry straight into Unit 3, where you outline, draft, cite and complete the paper.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes a clear, organized multi-paragraph essay and can state a thesis (Grades 9–10 and Unit 1).
- Has, or can get, a public-library card and supervised internet access.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can turn a broad topic into a narrow, open, answerable research question and write a proposal for it.
- ☐ I can search with subject headings, Boolean operators and citation chaining, and keep a search log.
- ☐ I can test a secondary source by author, publisher, evidence, purpose and date, and a primary source by nearness, means of knowing, motive and corroboration.
- ☐ I can take honest notes that keep quotations, paraphrases and my own comments apart.
- ☐ I can write an annotated bibliography in MLA form whose annotations summarize, evaluate and apply.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Plato's Meno, tr. Jowett (Project Gutenberg #1643)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1643>): The model for Lesson 2.1; short enough to read whole.
- **Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, tr. Crawley (Project Gutenberg #7142)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7142>): The end of Book I, chapter 1, is the classic statement of historical method and the model for Lesson 2.3.
- **Bacon's Essays (Project Gutenberg #575)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/575>): "Of Studies" is quoted in Lesson 2.4.
- **WorldCat** (<https://search.worldcat.org/>): Find which libraries hold a book; useful for interlibrary loan.
- **Founders Online (National Archives)** (<https://founders.archives.gov/>): Free, searchable papers of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Madison and Jay.

- **Chronicling America (Library of Congress)** (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>): Free historic American newspapers, searchable by date and place.
- **HathiTrust Digital Library** (<https://www.hathitrust.org/>): Full view of millions of public-domain books and documents.

2.1 CHOOSING A RESEARCH QUESTION ★

OBJECTIVES

- Tell a topic from a research question, and a research question from a thesis.
- Narrow a broad topic to a question that can be answered from real sources in eight to twelve pages.
- Write a one-page research proposal: question, why it matters, likely sources, and a working hypothesis.

Warm-up. Write down three things you have wondered about this year that no one has answered for you: a historical event, a book, an invention, a custom in your church or town. Circle the one you would most like to spend six weeks on.

Video slot. Video coming. How to choose and narrow a research question (a university library or writing-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

topic

A subject area, named by a noun phrase: “the Erie Canal,” “Puritan sermons.” A topic tells where you will look, not what you will find.

research question

A single, open question that real evidence can answer: “Why did New York, not Pennsylvania, build the first great canal to the West?”

working hypothesis

Your best guess at the answer before the research is done. You hold it loosely and change it if the evidence says otherwise.

thesis

The answer you defend in the finished paper, stated in one or two sentences. The thesis comes at the end of research, not the beginning.

stasis

The classical “standing point” of a question: whether a thing is (fact), what it is (definition), what kind it is (quality), or what should be done (policy).

CORE IDEAS

From exercise to inquiry. For years you have argued questions someone else gave you: a fable to refute, a maxim to expand, “Should a man marry?” to debate. The research paper changes one thing. Now you choose the question, and you answer it not from memory and common sense but from evidence other people have gathered, written and saved. The

classical teachers called this the canon of *invention*, the finding of material. In a research paper invention takes most of the time, and it begins with the question.

Topic, question, thesis. Most weak research papers fail on the first day, because the student chose a topic and called it a question. “The Battle of Gettysburg” is a topic; you could fill a library with it. “Why did Lee order Pickett’s Charge on July 3?” is a question; it points to particular letters, orders and memoirs, and it can be answered in twelve pages. The thesis comes last: “Lee ordered the charge because his success on the first two days had persuaded him that the Union center was weaker than it was.” Keep the three apart in your notebook. You may not know your thesis for weeks, and that is as it should be.

Five tests of a good question. (1) *Open*: it cannot be answered with yes, no, or a date. (2) *Answerable*: evidence exists that you can actually reach, in English or in a language you read. (3) *Narrow*: one person, place, decade, book or decision. (4) *Arguable*: careful people could give more than one answer, so your paper has something to prove. (5) *Worth asking*: the answer teaches something beyond itself. A question about why one town in 1832 built a church before a school tells you how those people ordered their loves.

The stases sharpen a question. Hermogenes taught that every dispute stands on one point. Ask which point yours stands on. Fact: *Did* Washington write the Farewell Address himself? Definition: *Was* the Great Awakening a revival or a social movement? Quality: *Was* Cromwell’s rule in Ireland justified by the standards of his own day? Policy: *Should* the Founders have adopted a bill of rights in 1787? A question that mixes all four will sprawl. Pick one stasis and the paper will have a spine.

Narrowing by steps. Start wide and cut. A good method is the funnel: subject (American history), topic (the Erie Canal), angle (its financing), question (“How did DeWitt Clinton persuade a skeptical legislature to pay for the canal in 1817?”). At each step ask, “Which part of this could I actually find out?” If your question still needs a whole book to answer, take one more step down the funnel.

Meekness in inquiry. This year’s verse asks you to be ready to give an answer “with meekness and fear.” Research teaches that meekness before it teaches anything else. You form a working hypothesis, and then you let the evidence correct it. A student who has decided the answer before reading has not asked a question at all; he has hired witnesses. In the model below, Socrates admits he is not sure of everything he has argued, yet he will fight for one thing: that seeking is better than the lazy idea that nothing can be known.

The proposal. Before you go to the library, write a one-page proposal. Most graduate schools and grant committees ask for exactly this. It gives the question, says in a paragraph why the answer matters, names the kinds of sources you expect (letters, newspapers, scholarly books), and states your working hypothesis in one sentence. The proposal is a promise to yourself. In Lesson 2.2 it becomes your search plan.

The model. *Plato, Meno, translated by Benjamin Jowett, Project Gutenberg #1643*

MENO: I feel, somehow, that I like what you are saying.

SOCRATES: And I, Meno, like what I am saying. Some things I have said of which I am not altogether confident. But that we shall be better and braver and less helpless if we think that we ought to enquire, than we should have been if we indulged in the idle fancy that there was no knowing and no use in seeking to know what we do not know;--that is a theme upon which I am ready to fight, in word and deed, to the utmost of my power.

MENO: There again, Socrates, your words seem to me excellent.

PICTURE STUDY



Aristotle with a Bust of Homer, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1653 · Oil on canvas · The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

A Sicilian nobleman, Don Antonio Ruffo, ordered this painting from Rembrandt. It shows the philosopher Aristotle, the greatest researcher of the ancient world, with his hand on a bust of the poet Homer. Across his chest hangs a gold chain with a medallion of Alexander the Great, the pupil Aristotle once taught. Aristotle stands between the past he studies and the power that rewards him, and his face shows him lost in thought.

Look closely

- Where does Aristotle's hand rest, and where does his gaze go? Do they point at the same thing?
- Find the gold chain and the medallion. How does the light fall on it compared with the bust?
- Notice how much of the canvas is dark. What has Rembrandt chosen to light?

Talk about it

1. Write the research question you think Aristotle is turning over as he touches Homer's head. Make it pass the five tests from this lesson.
2. The chain is a reward from a king; the bust is a source from the past. In a paragraph, argue which one a researcher should keep his hand on, and why.

WRITING PROJECT: A ONE-PAGE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This unit and the next build one research paper of eight to twelve pages. Today you choose the question that will carry it.

If you plan to submit the finished paper to The Concord Review or National History Day in Unit 3, choose a history question now; both reward narrow, well-sourced history.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A general encyclopedia (print, or the 1911 Britannica on Wikisource) for background only
- This lesson's five tests

Steps

1. List five topics that interest you. Spend ten minutes reading a general article on each of the top two.
2. Run your favorite down the funnel: subject, topic, angle, question. Write each step.
3. Name the stasis of your question (fact, definition, quality or policy) and rewrite it so it stands on only one.
4. Test the question against the five tests. Revise until it passes all five.
5. Write the proposal: the question; a paragraph on why it matters; a list of three kinds of sources you expect to use; and your working hypothesis in one sentence.
6. Read it aloud to a parent and answer one question they ask about it.

Check your work

- My question is one sentence, ends with a question mark, and cannot be answered with yes, no or a date.
- My question stands on one stasis.
- My working hypothesis is labeled as a hypothesis, not a thesis.
- I named kinds of sources I can actually reach.
- Indirect questions inside my sentences end with a period, not a question mark.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model from Plato's *Meno* by hand, then underline the one thing Socrates says he will fight for.

2. Make a two-column list: ten topics on the left, a research question for each on the right.
3. Copy 1 Peter 3:15 and write under it one way a researcher can show “meekness and fear.”

History note. Rembrandt painted *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer* in 1653 for Antonio Ruffo of Messina. The Metropolitan Museum of Art bought it at auction in 1961 for \$2.3 million, then the highest price ever paid for a painting at auction. In the *Meno*, Plato’s dialogue on whether virtue can be taught, Meno first poses the famous puzzle: how can you search for what you do not know, since you would not recognize it if you found it? Socrates’ answer is the model above.

 **Style Clinic. Direct and indirect questions (noun clauses).** A direct question is a sentence: *Why did Lee order the charge?* When you put that question inside your own sentence, it becomes a noun clause, the word order returns to subject before verb, and the question mark goes away: *This paper asks why Lee ordered the charge.* Wrong: *This paper asks why did Lee order the charge?* In your proposal, write the research question once as a direct question, set on its own line, and everywhere else as an indirect one.

For families. Units 2 and 3 together produce one research paper, so give the question time; a good question saves weeks later. Encourage history, literature, science history, theology or local history; steer away from live partisan controversies, which tempt a student to gather allies rather than evidence. The stases (fact, definition, quality, policy) come from Hermogenes’ *On Issues* (2nd century A.D.). Plato’s account of the soul’s recollection, which comes just before the model passage, is a pagan doctrine; the passage is chosen for Socrates’ courage in inquiry, which agrees with Proverbs 25:2.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student writes: “My topic is the Puritans and my question is: Were the Puritans good?” Repair it.

1. “The Puritans” is a topic covering a century and two continents. Narrow it: Massachusetts Bay, 1630–1660; then one practice, such as the founding of schools.
2. “Were they good?” is a yes/no question on the stasis of quality, with no standard named. Make it open and pick one stasis.
3. Fact or cause works well: why did they do a particular thing? That points to laws, sermons and town records the student can find.

Answer: Revised question: “Why did the Massachusetts General Court require towns of fifty households to provide a teacher in 1647?” Working hypothesis: “The law aimed above all to make every child able to read the Scriptures.”

Example 2. Run “Shakespeare” down the funnel to a question that passes all five tests.

1. Subject: English literature. Topic: Shakespeare’s Roman plays.
2. Angle: how he used his sources, here Plutarch’s *Lives* in Sir Thomas North’s translation.
3. Question: pick one change to one source and ask why.

Answer: “Why did Shakespeare, in *Julius Caesar*, compress into a few days events that Plutarch spreads over months?” It is open, answerable (both texts are free), narrow, arguable, and it teaches something about how Shakespeare shaped history into drama.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Label each: (a) “The Lewis and Clark expedition.” (b) “Why did Jefferson ask Lewis to record Indian languages?” (c) “Jefferson asked for the vocabularies because he hoped to trace the origins of the American nations.”
2. **EASY** Name the five tests of a good research question.
3. **EASY** Name the four stases.
4. **MEDIUM** Which test does this question fail? “When was the Gutenberg Bible printed?”
5. **MEDIUM** Name the stasis: “Was the Mayflower Compact a constitution?”
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the punctuation and word order: “I want to find out how did the monks of Iona copy the Gospels?”
7. **CHALLENGE** Narrow “World War II” to a question a high-school student can answer from sources in English.
8. **CHALLENGE** In two sentences, explain why a researcher should hold a working hypothesis loosely, using the model from the *Meno*.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Choosing a topic (“The Civil War”) and calling it a question.
- Asking a question whose answer the student has already decided, then reading only to collect support.
- Choosing a question that needs sources in a language or archive the student cannot reach.
- Writing indirect questions with question marks and inverted word order.

Make it a game • Funnel Race. A parent calls out a broad subject (“ships,” “hymns,” “bridges”). Each player has three minutes to take it down the funnel to a research question that passes the five tests. Players read their questions; others may challenge any test. A question that survives every challenge scores a point.

Scripture. “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.” (Proverbs 25:2, KJV)

God has filled His world with things worth finding out, and the research question is how you begin to search out a matter with honor.

Practice: answers

1. (a) Topic. (b) Research question. (c) Thesis (or working hypothesis, if written before the research).
2. Open, answerable, narrow, arguable, worth asking.
3. Fact (whether it is), definition (what it is), quality (what kind or how good it is), policy (what should be done).
4. It is not open (a date answers it) and not arguable.
5. Definition.
6. I want to find out how the monks of Iona copied the Gospels.
7. Sample: "Why did the British government evacuate children from London in September 1939 before any bombs had fallen?"
8. Sample: Socrates admits he is not confident of everything he has said, but he is sure that seeking is better than giving up. A researcher likewise commits to the search, not to his first guess, and lets the evidence correct him.

2.2 LIBRARY AND DATABASE SEARCH

OBJECTIVES

- Move from reference works to catalogs to databases, and know what each one is for.
- Build searches with keywords, subject headings, phrase marks, Boolean operators and truncation.
- Keep a search log and gather at least twelve candidate sources, primary and secondary, for your research question.

Warm-up. Without looking anything up, write down every place you could go to answer your research question from Lesson 2.1. Then star the places you have actually used before. Keep the list; you will add to it today.

Video slot. Video coming. How to use a library catalog and subject headings, and how to search an article database (a university or public library tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

primary source

A document or object from the time and people you are studying: a letter, diary, sermon, law, newspaper report, ship's log, or the literary work itself.

secondary source

A later writer's study of the primary sources: a scholarly book or journal article. Tertiary sources (encyclopedias, textbooks) summarize the secondary ones.

subject heading

A fixed label a library assigns to every book on a subject (for example, "Erie Canal (N.Y.)—History"). Searching it finds books your keywords miss.

Boolean operators

AND (both terms must appear), OR (either term), NOT (leave this term out). Named for the logician George Boole.

citation chaining

Following a good source's footnotes back to older works, and following "cited by" links forward to newer ones.

CORE IDEAS

Two kinds of knowledge. In 1775 Samuel Johnson told Boswell, "Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it." A research paper needs both, and this lesson is about the second kind. The skill is not clicking a search box; it is knowing which door to knock on, in what order, and what to ask the person who opens it.

Three doors, in order. Begin with *reference works*: a good encyclopedia or a specialized dictionary (of national biography, of the Bible, of a period). You read them for names, dates, terms and, above all, their short bibliographies; you will rarely cite them. Next, the *catalog*: your public library's, then WorldCat.org, which shows which libraries hold a book you cannot find nearby. Third, *databases* of journal articles and digitized documents. Many are free: JSTOR's early journal content, Google Scholar, HathiTrust and the Internet Archive for old books, Founders Online for the papers of Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Madison and Jay, and the Library of Congress's Chronicling America for historic newspapers. Others, like EBSCO and Gale, come free with a public-library card.

Keywords and subject headings. A keyword search looks for your words anywhere in a record. It is fast and often noisy. A subject heading is the library's own label, applied by a cataloger who read the book. When you find one good book in the catalog, open its full record, copy its subject headings, and search those. One heading can lead you to twenty books your keywords never touched. Also learn your library's shelf numbers; the books beside a good book are often good books, and browsing the shelf is still one of the best searches there is.

Building a search. Use AND to narrow (canal AND financing), OR to gather synonyms (canal OR waterway), and NOT sparingly to exclude (Panama NOT canal zone). Put quotation marks around exact phrases ("Erie Canal"). Use the asterisk to catch endings (financ* finds finance, financing, financier). Limit by date or by "peer reviewed" when the results swell. When a search returns nothing, broaden one term; when it returns ten thousand, add one.

Follow the footnotes. The best source you find will lead you to the rest. Read its bibliography and footnotes and copy every promising title into your log. That is chaining backward. In Google Scholar, the "Cited by" link chains forward to newer work that answers it. Five chained sources from one strong book are usually better than fifty hits from a search engine, because a careful scholar has already done the first sifting.

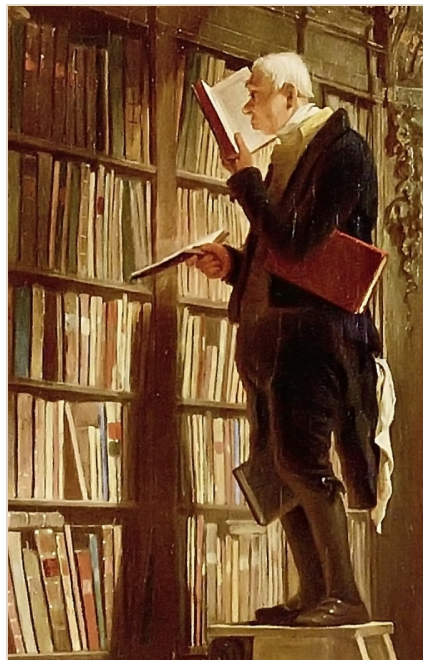
Primary sources first, when you can. A secondary source tells you what someone concluded; a primary source lets you check the conclusion. A paper on the Erie Canal that quotes Clinton's own 1816 memorial to the legislature is stronger than one that quotes only a textbook about him. Ask of every secondary source, "Where did this writer get it?" and go there yourself when the document is in reach.

The librarian and the log. Reference librarians are trained searchers, and most are glad to help a student with a real question; bring your proposal. Ask about interlibrary loan, which can bring a book from another library, usually free or at small cost. Keep a *search log*: the date, the database, the exact search, and what it yielded. The log keeps you from repeating searches, and it shows a teacher, or a contest judge, how you worked. In the model, Tattenai asks the king to settle a question by searching the royal archive, and the record is found in a city they had not expected.

The model. *Ezra 5:17-6:3 (KJV): the search of the royal archives*

Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter. Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written: In the first year of Cyrus the king the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

PICTURE STUDY



The Bookworm, Carl Spitzweg, about 1850 · Oil on canvas · Museum Georg Schäfer, Schweinfurt, Germany
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Spitzweg, a Munich pharmacist who taught himself to paint, liked gentle comedy. Here an old scholar has climbed a ladder in a baroque library and become so absorbed that he reads where he stands, with books tucked under his arm and between his knees. Light falls from above onto him and the gilded shelves. Spitzweg painted several versions of the picture.

Look closely

- Count the books the man is holding. Where is each one?
- Find the sign on the shelf above him. What does it tell you about how this library is arranged?
- Where does the light come from, and what does it fall on?

Talk about it

1. The bookworm is browsing the shelf, not searching a catalog. Write a paragraph on what browsing finds that a keyword search might miss, and what it might miss in turn.
2. Write a search-log entry for the old man's afternoon: what he was looking for, where he looked, and what he found.

WRITING PROJECT: A SEARCH LOG AND WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

Turn your proposal into a search plan and go hunting. By the end of the lesson you should have at least twelve candidate sources, more than you will use.

You will need

- Your proposal from Lesson 2.1
- A public-library card (ask about its online databases)
- A notebook or spreadsheet for the search log
- Free sites: WorldCat.org, JSTOR, Google Scholar, HathiTrust, Internet Archive, and any primary-source collection that fits your question

Steps

1. From your question, list keywords and at least three synonyms for each. Combine them with AND and OR into three search strings.
2. Read one or two reference articles on your topic. Copy every useful name, date, term and bibliography entry.
3. Search your library catalog. Open the record of the best book and copy its subject headings; search them.
4. Search two databases, at least one of which holds primary sources. Record each search in your log: date, database, exact search, number of results, useful hits.
5. Chain from your best source: copy five promising titles from its notes or bibliography.
6. Visit the library, browse the shelf around your best book, and talk with a reference librarian about your question.
7. List your twelve or more candidates, each marked P (primary) or S (secondary).

Check your work

- My log records the exact search strings I used, not just the sites.
- I searched at least one subject heading, not only keywords.
- At least three of my candidates are primary sources.
- Each candidate has author, title, date and where I found it.
- Appositives that identify authors are set off with commas.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Johnson's sentence on the two kinds of knowledge and write under it which kind you have more of on your topic today.
2. Write five Boolean searches for your question, each one narrower than the last.

3. Draw a map of your public library: reference desk, catalog computers, the shelves for your call number.

History note. In the model, the Persian governor Tattenai questioned the Jews rebuilding the temple, and they appealed to a decree of Cyrus. Darius had the archives searched, and the record turned up not in Babylon but at Achmetha (Ecbatana), the summer capital. Ezra 6 goes on to give Darius's answer: let the work go forward. Johnson's remark on knowledge is recorded by Boswell under April 18, 1775, when Johnson looked at the backs of the books in a friend's library.

 **Style Clinic. Appositive phrases to introduce a source.** The first time you name a source in a paper, tell the reader who the author is with an appositive, a noun phrase that renames the noun beside it: *Carol Sheriff, a historian at the College of William and Mary, argues ...* A nonessential appositive is set off with commas on both sides. An essential one (needed to tell which person you mean) takes no commas: *the historian Carol Sheriff*. Practice now in your log: write one appositive sentence for each of your three best sources.

For families. A library visit is part of this lesson; call ahead and ask whether a reference librarian can meet with your student for fifteen minutes. Most public-library cards include free access to article databases from home. Supervise general web searches. Wikipedia and AI chat tools may help a student find names and terms but should not be cited and can be wrong; teach your student to verify every fact in a real source, which Lesson 2.3 takes up. The scripture verse from Ecclesiastes is a good reminder to set limits: a search log helps a student know when enough has been found.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Question: "How did DeWitt Clinton persuade the New York legislature to fund the Erie Canal in 1817?" A keyword search for *Clinton canal* returns thousands of hits about Bill Clinton and the Panama Canal. Repair the search.

1. Use the full name as a phrase: "DeWitt Clinton".
2. Add the specific canal as a phrase and gather synonyms for the angle: (financ* OR fund* OR legislature).
3. Limit the dates if the database allows: publications or documents covering 1810–1825.

Answer: "DeWitt Clinton" AND "Erie Canal" AND (financ* OR fund* OR legislature), limited to 1810–1825. Then open the best book's record, copy its subject heading (for example, Erie Canal (N.Y.)—History), and search that too.

Example 2. Sort these sources for a paper on Lincoln's Second Inaugural: (a) the text of the address; (b) Ronald C. White's book *Lincoln's Greatest Speech* (2002); (c) a newspaper report of the crowd on March 4, 1865; (d) an encyclopedia entry on Lincoln.

1. Primary: made by the people and time being studied.
2. Secondary: a later scholar's study of the primary sources.
3. Tertiary: a summary of summaries.

Answer: (a) and (c) primary; (b) secondary; (d) tertiary, useful for background and bibliography but not for citing.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three doors of research in order.
2. **EASY** What does OR do in a search?
3. **EASY** Primary or secondary: a sermon preached by Jonathan Edwards in 1741.
4. **EASY** What does WorldCat show you?
5. **MEDIUM** Why search subject headings as well as keywords?
6. **MEDIUM** Write a search string for a paper on how the Pilgrims kept the Sabbath at Plymouth.
7. **MEDIUM** Add an appositive: "Thucydides says he tested every report."
8. **CHALLENGE** Explain citation chaining backward and forward, and why five chained sources may be better than fifty search hits.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Stopping at the first page of a web search engine and calling it research.
- Citing an encyclopedia or a summary site instead of using it to find real sources.
- Searching only keywords and never looking at a good book's subject headings or footnotes.
- Not logging searches, then losing a source and being unable to find it again.

Make it a game • Scavenger Search. A parent writes five questions with findable answers ("What did one New York newspaper report about the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825?", "Which libraries near you hold a copy of a given book?"). Players race using only the free sites in the project materials. A point for each answer, and a bonus point for writing down the exact search that found it.

Scripture. "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh." (Ecclesiastes 12:12, KJV)

The Preacher knew there would always be more books, so a researcher searches with a plan and a question, and knows when to stop.

Practice: answers

1. Reference works, catalogs, databases.
2. It returns records with either term, so it widens the search; use it for synonyms.
3. Primary (for a paper on Edwards or the Great Awakening).
4. Which libraries hold a particular book, so you can find it or request it by interlibrary loan.
5. A cataloger assigns the heading after reading the book, so the heading finds books on the subject even when your keywords are not in the title or record.
6. Sample: (Pilgrims OR Separatists) AND "Plymouth Colony" AND (Sabbath OR "Lord's Day" OR worship)
7. Sample: Thucydides, an Athenian general who wrote the history of the war he fought in, says he tested every report.
8. Backward: following a good source's notes and bibliography to older works. Forward: following "cited by" links to later works that respond to it. Chained sources have already been sifted and judged relevant by a careful scholar, while raw hits are unsorted.

2.3 EVALUATING SOURCES: WEIGHING THE WITNESSES

OBJECTIVES

- Judge a secondary source by its author, publisher, evidence, purpose and date.
- Judge a primary source as a witness: nearness, means of knowing, motive and corroboration.
- Sort your twelve candidate sources into keep, use with care, and set aside, with a reason for each.

Warm-up. Two neighbors describe the same fender-bender: one was driving, one watched from a porch. Write three questions you would ask before deciding whose account to trust.

Video slot. Video coming. How to evaluate sources for a research paper, primary and secondary (a university library or historical-society tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

corroboration

Agreement between independent witnesses. Two sources that copied the same report are one witness, not two.

peer review

A journal's practice of sending an article to other scholars in the field to check before it is printed.

statement against interest

Testimony that hurts the witness's own cause. It is usually trusted more, because a man has little reason to invent it.

lateral reading

Checking an unfamiliar source by leaving it and seeing what other reliable sources say about its author or publisher.

provenance

Where a document or object came from and who has held it; the history that makes it trustworthy as what it claims to be.

CORE IDEAS

Every source is a witness. In a courtroom, testimony is not believed because it is spoken under oath; it is believed after it has been tested. Your sources are witnesses you call to answer your question, and Lesson 2.2 filled the waiting room. Now you cross-examine. Proverbs puts the principle in one line: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but

his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." The first source you read always sounds right. Search it.

Testing a secondary source. Ask five questions. *Author*: who wrote it, and what training or experience gives him standing on this subject? *Publisher*: a university press or peer-reviewed journal has passed other scholars' checks; a personal website or an unsigned page has passed none. *Evidence*: does it cite its sources so you can check them, and are those primary sources? *Purpose*: was it written to inform, to persuade, to sell, or to entertain? *Date*: has later scholarship or a newly found document overtaken it? An old book is not a bad book, but you should know what has been learned since.

Testing a primary source. A primary source is closer to the event, but it is not automatically true. Ask: *Nearness*: was the writer there, and how soon afterward did he write? A diary entry that evening beats a memoir forty years later. *Means of knowing*: did he see it, or hear of it? *Motive*: what did he want the reader to believe, and why? A general's report of his own battle is written for his superiors. *Corroboration*: do independent witnesses agree? Scripture itself sets this rule for judgment: "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Bias is a fact to weigh, not a reason to discard. Every writer has a point of view, including you. A Confederate officer's account of Gettysburg is not worthless because he fought for the South; it is a witness with a known interest, and you read it alongside Union accounts. The strongest testimony is often a *statement against interest*: when a commander admits his own mistake, or a hostile witness grants a point to the other side, you have good reason to believe it. Weigh the witness; do not simply count or dismiss.

The web and the machine. A web address ending in .edu or .org guarantees nothing. When you meet an unfamiliar site, read laterally: open a new tab and find out who runs it and what reliable sources say about it. Be especially careful with AI chat tools and content farms. They can produce smooth paragraphs, invented quotations and books that do not exist. Never cite one. Every fact, quotation and title must be found in a real source you have seen.

Thucydides' method. The model below is one of the first statements of critical method in history, written about 400 B.C. by an Athenian general who lived through the war he describes. Notice three things. He refused "the first source that came to hand." He did not even trust his own impressions without testing them. And he found that eyewitnesses disagreed, "sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other." Those two causes, weak memory and partiality, are still the two great faults you test for. Notice too his honesty about the speeches: he tells the reader plainly where he has reconstructed rather than recorded.

Sorting your shelf. End the lesson by sorting every candidate into three piles. *Keep*: sources that pass the tests and answer your question. *Use with care*: sources with a strong interest or an old date, which you will cite only with a note on their limits. *Set aside*: sources you cannot verify, that cite nothing, or that do not bear on the question. A short paper built on eight strong witnesses beats a long one propped on twenty weak ones.

The model. *Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, Book I, chapter 1, translated by Richard Crawley, Project Gutenberg #7142*

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time

PICTURE STUDY



The Moneylender and His Wife, Quentin Massys (Quinten Matsys), 1514 · Oil on panel · Musée du Louvre, Paris

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

In Antwerp, a busy trading city full of foreign coins, a money-changer had to know whether a coin was what it claimed to be. Massys shows one at work, testing coins on a fine balance. His wife has turned from her prayer book, with its picture of the Virgin and Child, to watch the scales. A small convex mirror on the table reflects a figure by a window outside the scene.

Look closely

- Find the balance. What is the man about to do with the coin in his hand?
- Look at the wife's eyes and hands. Which way is her attention pulled?
- Find the mirror. What does it show that the main picture does not?

Talk about it

1. A coin and a source both claim a value. Write a paragraph comparing how the money-changer tests a coin with how you test a source.
2. Is the wife being drawn toward the scales, or is the painter warning that the scales draw people from prayer? Argue one reading from what you see.

WRITING PROJECT: WEIGHING THE WITNESSES

Cross-examine every candidate source from your search log and sort them. You will annotate the keepers in Lesson 2.4.

You will need

- Your search log and list of twelve or more candidates
- The sources themselves (or their records, introductions and tables of contents)
- A three-column sheet: Keep / Use with care / Set aside

Steps

1. For each secondary source, answer the five questions: author, publisher, evidence, purpose, date. One line each.
2. For each primary source, answer the four questions: nearness, means of knowing, motive, corroboration.
3. Read laterally on any web source or author you do not know. Note what you found and where.
4. Find one pair of sources that disagree. Write a paragraph explaining why they might disagree, using Thucydides' two causes.
5. Sort every source into the three columns with a one-sentence reason.
6. If fewer than eight sources are in Keep, return to your log and search again.

Check your work

- Every source has a written reason for its column.
- I tested primary sources as witnesses, not only secondary ones.

- I did not reject a source merely for having a point of view; I named its interest.
- No fact in my notes comes only from an AI tool or an unsigned web page.
- In my evaluations I used active voice and named who did what.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model from “far from permitting myself” to “one side or the other.”
2. List the five tests for a secondary source and the four for a primary source.
3. Imitate Thucydides: write three sentences describing honestly how you gathered and tested your sources.

History note. Thucydides commanded an Athenian squadron in 424 B.C., failed to save the city of Amphipolis, and was exiled for twenty years. He tells us this himself (Book V), and says the exile let him see both sides of the war. Massys’s panel is dated 1514. A seventeenth-century description reports that its lost original frame bore a line from Leviticus about just balances and weights (compare Leviticus 19:36).

 **Style Clinic. Active and passive voice.** The passive voice hides the actor: *It has been claimed that the canal was a failure.* Claimed by whom? In a source, an agentless passive is a warning sign. In your own writing it is a weakness. Rewrite with the actor as subject: *Clinton’s opponents in the legislature called the canal “Clinton’s Ditch.”* Keep the passive only when the actor is truly unknown or unimportant (*The letter was lost in a fire*). Go through your source evaluations and turn every agentless passive into an active sentence.

For families. Thucydides is read here for his method, not his worldview; he writes as a Greek of his time. The Crawley translation (1874) is public domain. Discuss with your student that testing sources is not cynicism: the Bereans were called noble for checking even Paul against the Scriptures (Acts 17:11). It is also worth saying plainly that Scripture is not one more source to be sorted into piles; it is the standard by which a Christian weighs all the others.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Evaluate this source for a paper on the Battle of Gettysburg: a 1906 memoir by a Confederate veteran describing Pickett's Charge.

1. Nearness: he was there, but writes over forty years later. Memory may have faded or been shaped by later reading and reunions.
2. Means of knowing: he saw his own part of the field, not Lee's headquarters.
3. Motive: veterans' memoirs often defend their units and commanders.
4. Corroboration: compare with Union reports and with letters written in July 1863.

Answer: Use with care. Cite it for what he saw and felt on the field, set it beside letters and reports from 1863, and note its date and interest in the paper.

Example 2. A web page titled "10 Shocking Facts about the Pilgrims" gives no author and no sources. It says the Pilgrims banned Christmas at Plymouth. Evaluate it and decide what to do with the claim.

1. Author and publisher: unknown. Evidence: none cited. Purpose: clicks.
2. Read laterally: the claim sounds like a mixed-up version of real history, so look for a primary source.
3. William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation* describes Christmas Day 1621, when Bradford called the newcomers out to work and stopped some who were playing in the street instead.

Answer: Set the page aside. Cite Bradford's own account, which is both primary and more precise than the page's claim; Massachusetts Bay's 1659 law against keeping Christmas is a separate matter and needs its own source.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five tests for a secondary source.
2. **EASY** Name the four tests for a primary source.
3. **EASY** According to Thucydides, what two causes made eyewitnesses disagree?
4. **MEDIUM** Two articles report the same quotation from Washington, word for word, and both cite the same 1950s magazine. How many witnesses do you have?
5. **MEDIUM** Why is a statement against interest usually more credible?
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in active voice: "Mistakes were made in the planning of the expedition."
7. **CHALLENGE** Where does Thucydides admit he is not giving exact words, and why does that admission make him more trustworthy, not less?
8. **CHALLENGE** Explain how Proverbs 18:17 applies to the first source you read on your topic.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Trusting a source because it is primary, or distrusting it because it has a point of view, instead of weighing it.
- Counting two sources that copy the same report as two witnesses.
- Citing facts from an AI tool, a quotation site or an unsigned page without finding them in a real source.
- Judging a web page by its address ending instead of reading laterally.

Make it a game • Cross-Examination. One player reads a short claim and names its source (“A ship’s cook, writing his memoirs in old age, says the captain wept”). The other players take turns asking one testing question each (nearness, means of knowing, motive, corroboration). After four questions everyone votes Keep, Use with care, or Set aside, and defends the vote in one sentence.

Scripture. “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” (Proverbs 18:17, KJV)

The first account always seems right until it is tested; a researcher plays the neighbor and searches every witness.

Practice: answers

1. Author, publisher, evidence, purpose, date.
2. Nearness, means of knowing, motive, corroboration.
3. Imperfect memory and undue partiality for one side or the other.
4. One. Both depend on the magazine; find the quotation in Washington’s own papers (Founders Online) or set it aside.
5. The witness gains nothing by inventing it and loses something by admitting it, so he probably says it because it is true.
6. Sample: The expedition’s leaders made mistakes in planning it. (Name the leaders if the source does.)
7. He says the speeches give what each occasion demanded, “adhering as closely as possible to the general sense.” By telling the reader where he reconstructs, he lets the reader weigh those parts differently, and it shows he is not hiding his method.
8. Sample: The first source I read seems right because I have heard no other side. Like a neighbor who comes and searches, a second, independent source tests it, and only then can I judge.

2.4 THE ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

OBJECTIVES

- Take honest notes: exact quotations with page numbers, true paraphrases, and your own comments kept apart.
- Write annotations of 100–150 words that summarize, evaluate, and state how each source serves your question.
- Assemble an annotated bibliography of at least eight sources in MLA form, and revise your working hypothesis in light of them.

Warm-up. Bacon wrote, “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested.” Sort your Keep sources from Lesson 2.3 into those three groups. Which ones will you chew?

Video slot. Video coming. How to write an annotated bibliography and take research notes (a university writing-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

annotated bibliography

A list of sources in citation form, each followed by a short paragraph (the annotation) that summarizes, evaluates and explains the source’s use.

annotation

From Latin *annotare*, “to note down.” A note on a source: what it says, how good it is, and what it does for your question.

paraphrase

A passage restated fully in your own words and sentence structure, about as long as the original, and still cited.

summary

The main point of a whole work or section in a few sentences of your own, also cited.

hanging indent

The format in which the first line of each entry starts at the margin and the following lines are indented half an inch.

CORE IDEAS

Why annotate. An annotated bibliography is a researcher’s map at the halfway point. It shows what you have read, what each source is worth, and where the evidence is pointing. Graduate students, lawyers preparing a brief and historians beginning a book all keep one. For you it does three jobs at once: it forces you to read each source closely enough to

summarize it; it records your judgment from Lesson 2.3 while it is fresh; and in Unit 3 it becomes the raw material for your outline and your list of works cited.

Notes first. Annotations grow out of notes, and notes must be honest. Keep three things visibly separate on the page. *Quotations* go in quotation marks, copied exactly, with the page number. *Paraphrases* and *summaries* are in your own words and sentence structure, still with the page number. *Your own comments* are marked off, with brackets or your initials. Most accidental plagiarism begins in a notebook where a copied sentence lost its quotation marks. Ephesians 4:25 bids us put away lying; giving credit where it is due is part of speaking truth.

The entry. Each entry begins with the full citation. In MLA (9th edition) a book looks like this: Sheriff, Carol. *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862*. Hill and Wang, 1996. A journal article adds the article title in quotation marks, the journal in italics, and volume, issue, year and pages. Entries are alphabetized by the author's last name, double-spaced, with a hanging indent. You will learn MLA and Chicago fully in Lesson 3.3; for now, get the author, title, publisher or journal, date and pages right.

The annotation in three moves. Below the citation write one paragraph of about 100 to 150 words. *Summarize*: in two or three sentences, state the source's main claim and the kind of evidence it uses. *Evaluate*: one or two sentences on its authority, its interest, and its limits, drawn from your tests in Lesson 2.3. *Apply*: one or two sentences on how it serves your question. Does it supply the key primary document, give the standard view you will build on, or offer the opposing view you must answer? Begin the summary with the author as subject and a strong present-tense verb: *Sheriff argues, Bradford records, White traces*.

Chew the few. Bacon's sentence describes three kinds of reading, and you need all three. Taste a book by its introduction, table of contents, index and conclusion to see whether it belongs in your paper. Swallow a useful one by reading the chapters that bear on your question. Chew and digest the two or three sources at the center of your paper, reading them whole and taking full notes. Your annotations will show which kind of reading you gave: a tasted book gets a briefer note, a chewed one a fuller one.

Luke's method. The model is the opening of the Gospel of Luke. Luke knew that "many have taken in hand" to set the events in order; he names his sources, the eyewitnesses and "ministers of the word"; he claims "perfect understanding of all things from the very first"; and he states his purpose, that Theophilus "mightest know the certainty" of what he had been taught. That is a bibliographic essay in four verses: earlier accounts, their sources, the writer's own diligence, and the use of the whole.

Revise the hypothesis. End the bibliography with a short paragraph headed "Where the Evidence Points." Restate your research question, then say how the sources have confirmed, changed or overturned your working hypothesis. If they overturned it, good: you have learned something, and you are ready for Unit 3 with a truer thesis than the one you brought in.

The model. *Luke 1:1-4 (KJV): Luke's preface to Theophilus*

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

PICTURE STUDY



Saint Jerome in His Study, Antonello da Messina, about 1475 · Oil on lime panel · The National Gallery, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Saint Jerome (about 347–420) spent decades translating the Scriptures into Latin, comparing Hebrew and Greek manuscripts and consulting Jewish scholars in Bethlehem. His translation became the Vulgate, the Bible of the Western church for a thousand years. Antonello shows him in a wooden study built inside a vast stone hall, absorbed in a book, with his other books shelved and opened around him. The lion in the shadows recalls the old legend that Jerome drew a thorn from a lion's paw.

Look closely

- Count the books you can see. How are they arranged on the shelves and desk?
- Find the lion. Where is he, and why might the painter keep him in shadow?
- Look through the windows at the back. What lies outside the scholar's study?

Talk about it

1. Write a 100-word annotation for the book Jerome is reading, imagining it is one of his Hebrew sources: summarize, evaluate, apply.

2. The painter built a small room inside a great hall. In a paragraph, compare that to an annotated bibliography inside the wide world of books.

WRITING PROJECT: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Turn your Keep and Use-with-care sources into a finished annotated bibliography of at least eight entries, with at least three primary sources. It is the first graded product of your research paper.

You will need

- Your sorted sources from Lesson 2.3
- Note cards or a notes document, one page per source
- The MLA examples in this lesson (Lesson 3.3 gives the full guide)

Steps

1. Decide which sources you will taste, swallow, and chew. Read accordingly.
2. Take notes on each source, keeping quotations (in quotation marks, with pages), paraphrases (with pages) and your comments visibly apart.
3. Write the MLA citation for each source. Check author, title, publisher or journal, date and pages against the source itself.
4. Write each annotation in three moves: summarize, evaluate, apply. Aim for 100 to 150 words.
5. Alphabetize the entries by author, double-space, and use a hanging indent.
6. Add a final paragraph, "Where the Evidence Points," restating your question and revising your working hypothesis.
7. Read three annotations aloud to a parent; ask whether each one makes clear why the source is in the paper.

Check your work

- At least eight entries, including at least three primary sources.
- Every annotation summarizes, evaluates and applies, in that order.
- Every quotation in my notes is exact, in quotation marks, with a page number.
- Entries are alphabetized, double-spaced, with hanging indents.
- The three moves of each annotation are parallel in form, and signal verbs are in the present tense.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Luke 1:1-4 and label the four parts: earlier accounts, their sources, the writer's diligence, the purpose.
2. Copy Bacon's sentence on tasting, swallowing and chewing, and list one source from your research under each verb.
3. Write a 50-word annotation of a book you read for pleasure this year.

History note. Antonello da Messina's panel is usually dated about 1475; the National Gallery bought it in 1894. Francis Bacon's "Of Studies" opened the first edition of his *Essays* in 1597 and was enlarged in the 1625 edition, which gives the sentence quoted in this lesson; the essays are free on Project Gutenberg (#575).

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism.** Items joined in a series or by coordinating conjunctions should share the same grammatical form. Not parallel: *Sheriff uses diaries, letters, and she also read the canal commissioners' reports.* Parallel: *Sheriff draws on diaries, letters, and the canal commissioners' reports.* Make your three moves parallel as well, each beginning with the author and a present-tense verb: *Sheriff argues ... Sheriff relies ... Sheriff supplies ...* Bacon's sentence is a model of parallelism: *to be tasted, ... to be swallowed, ... to be chewed and digested.*

For families. Grade the annotated bibliography as the first half of the research paper; the portfolio rubric in this unit can serve. Check a few quotations against the sources yourself; the habit of exact quotation is the best guard against plagiarism. If your student's working hypothesis changed during research, praise that openly: it is the meekness of 1 Peter 3:15 at work. The bibliography carries straight into Unit 3, where the student outlines, drafts and cites the paper, and where those aiming at The Concord Review or National History Day will check the current rules.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Improve this weak annotation: "This book is about the Erie Canal. It is very interesting and has a lot of good information. I will use it in my paper."

1. Summarize: what is the book's main claim, and what evidence does it use? "About the Erie Canal" names a topic, not a claim.
2. Evaluate: "interesting" is not a judgment of reliability. Who is the author, who published it, what are its limits?
3. Apply: "I will use it" does not say how. Tie it to the research question.

Answer: Sheriff, Carol. *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862*. Hill and Wang, 1996.

Sheriff, a historian at the College of William and Mary, argues that the canal brought prosperity to upstate New York while unsettling the people who lived along it. She draws on diaries, letters, petitions and the reports of the canal commissioners. Her book is published by a respected trade press with full notes, though its focus is the canal's effects on society more than the politics of the decision to build. It will give my paper background on the canal's promoters and, through its notes, lead me to primary sources such as the canal commissioners' reports.

Example 2. Write an annotation for a primary source: William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, edited by Samuel Eliot Morison (Knopf, 1952), for the question “How did the Plymouth colonists provide for themselves after the first harvest?”

1. Citation: Bradford, William. *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*. Edited by Samuel Eliot Morison, Knopf, 1952.
2. Summarize what Bradford records; evaluate him as a witness (nearness, means, motive); apply to the question.

Answer: Bradford, who served as governor of Plymouth for most of its first decades, records the colony’s history from the Separatists’ years in Holland through 1646. He describes the common storehouse of the early years and the decision in 1623 to assign each family its own land. As governor he was a direct witness to these decisions, though he writes partly to justify the colony’s choices and his own. Morison’s edition modernizes the spelling and adds notes. Bradford’s account of 1623 will be the central primary source for my paper, and I will test it against Edward Winslow’s *Good Newes from New England* (1624) and the records of the Plymouth court.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three moves of an annotation in order.
2. **EASY** How are entries in an annotated bibliography ordered?
3. **EASY** What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary?
4. **MEDIUM** Put this into MLA form: book by Ronald C. White, *Lincoln’s Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*, Simon and Schuster, 2002.
5. **MEDIUM** In your notes, how should you mark (a) an exact quotation, (b) a paraphrase, (c) your own idea?
6. **MEDIUM** Make parallel: “The author summarizes earlier studies, adding new letters, and his conclusion is that the plan failed.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Name the four parts of Luke 1:1–4 that resemble a bibliographic essay.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the “Where the Evidence Points” paragraph for a student whose hypothesis was that the 1647 Massachusetts school law aimed only at Bible reading, but whose sources show it also aimed at training ministers and magistrates.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing an annotation that only summarizes, with no evaluation or application.
- Copying a sentence into notes without quotation marks, then later using it as your own.
- Getting the citation from a database’s automatic generator and never checking it against the source.
- Keeping the old working hypothesis after the sources have plainly overturned it.

Make it a game • Annotation Relay. Pick a short book everyone in the family knows. One player gives its citation, the next summarizes it in two sentences, the next evaluates it in one, and the last says how it would serve a stated research question. Switch roles and repeat with another book. A round scores a point if all four moves are clear and in order.

Scripture. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11, KJV)

The Bereans received eagerly and checked carefully, which is exactly the spirit of a good annotation.

Practice: answers

1. Summarize, evaluate, apply.
2. Alphabetically by the author’s last name (or by title if there is no author).
3. A paraphrase restates one passage fully in your own words, at about the same length; a summary gives only the main point of a larger work or section, briefly. Both are cited.
4. White, Ronald C. *Lincoln’s Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*. Simon and Schuster, 2002.
5. (a) Quotation marks and a page number. (b) Your own words with a page number. (c) Brackets, initials, or another mark that shows it is yours.
6. The author summarizes earlier studies, adds new letters, and concludes that the plan failed.
7. Earlier accounts (“many have taken in hand”); their sources (eyewitnesses and ministers of the word); the writer’s own diligence (“perfect understanding of all things from the very first”); the purpose (“that thou mightest know the certainty”).
8. Sample: My question was why the General Court required towns to provide teachers in 1647. I expected to find that the law aimed only at making children able to read the Scriptures, and the law’s own preamble supports that aim. But the requirement that larger towns keep a grammar school to prepare boys for the university, together with the founding of Harvard a decade earlier, shows the Court also meant to supply learned ministers and magistrates. My thesis will hold both aims together.

UNIT 2 REVIEW

The student answers in writing, with the KJV and notes closed except for items 11 and 12, which use the student's own research materials. Score open answers by the unit checklists; samples show the expected level, not the only right answer.

1. (3 pts) Label each as topic, research question or thesis: (a) "Monasteries in Anglo-Saxon England." (b) "Why did Bede write his history in Latin rather than English?" (c) "Bede wrote in Latin because he wrote for the learned church across Europe."
2. (5 pts) Name the five tests of a good research question.
3. (4 pts) Narrow "the American Revolution" to a research question that passes the five tests, and name its stasis.
4. (4 pts) Write a search string for a paper on how monks copied manuscripts, using a phrase, OR, AND, and truncation.
5. (3 pts) What is citation chaining? Give both directions.
6. (9 pts) Name the five tests for a secondary source and the four for a primary source.
7. (3 pts) Thucydides names two causes for disagreement between eyewitnesses. What are they, and what did he refuse to do with his sources?
8. (2 pts) Rewrite in active voice and name an actor: "It was decided that the colony's land would be divided."
9. (2 pts) Fix the indirect question: "The paper asks why did the Pilgrims leave Holland?"
10. (4 pts) Name the three moves of an annotation, and explain why an annotation that only summarizes is incomplete.
11. (5 pts) From your own bibliography, copy one entry and its annotation, and underline the evaluate sentence.
12. (4 pts) In three or four sentences, explain how your sources changed or confirmed your working hypothesis.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: PROPOSAL AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Place your one-page research proposal (2.1), your search log (2.2) and your finished annotated bibliography with its "Where the Evidence Points" paragraph (2.4) in your Grade 11 portfolio. Together they are the foundation of the research paper you complete in Unit 3.

- **Question:** The research question is open, answerable, narrow, arguable and worth asking, and stands on one stasis.
- **Sources:** At least eight sources, at least three primary, found through catalogs, databases and chaining, as the search log shows.
- **Annotations:** Each annotation summarizes, evaluates by the tests of Lesson 2.3, and applies the source to the question, in 100–150 words.
- **Accuracy and form:** Citations in MLA form, alphabetized with hanging indents; quotations exact; parallel structure and present-tense signal verbs.

1. (a) Topic. (b) Research question. (c) Thesis.
2. Open, answerable, narrow, arguable, worth asking.
3. Sample: "Why did Washington order the army inoculated against smallpox in 1777?" Stasis: fact (cause).
4. Sample: (monk* OR monastic) AND ("manuscript copying" OR scriptorium) AND medieval
5. Following a good source's notes to older works (backward) and following "cited by" links to newer works that respond to it (forward).
6. Secondary: author, publisher, evidence, purpose, date. Primary: nearness, means of knowing, motive, corroboration.
7. Imperfect memory and undue partiality. He refused to take his account from the first source that came to hand, and did not even trust his own impressions without testing them.
8. Sample: In 1623 Governor Bradford and the colony's leaders decided to divide the land among the families.
9. The paper asks why the Pilgrims left Holland.
10. Summarize, evaluate, apply. A summary alone does not tell the reader how reliable the source is or why it belongs in this paper.
11. Scored by the portfolio rubric: correct citation, three clear moves, an evaluation based on the tests.
12. Sample: I expected ..., but the letters of ... show ...; my thesis will therefore ... Full credit for an honest account tied to named sources.

THE RESEARCH PAPER II

In Unit 2 you chose a research question, searched for sources, weighed them and wrote an annotated bibliography. Now you build the paper. You will arrange your notes into a sentence outline on the frame of the classical oration, following Franklin’s method of “jumbled hints”; draft the paper section by section, with Macaulay’s famous opening as a model introduction; cite every source correctly in MLA or Chicago style, as Bede named his authorities thirteen centuries ago; and revise the whole into a finished paper ready for National History Day (Senior Paper) or *The Concord Review*, held to Thucydides’ standard of “an exact knowledge of the past.”

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- A research question, notes and an annotated bibliography of at least eight sources, including primary sources (Unit 2).
- Writes clear, unified paragraphs and a multi-page argumentative essay with a thesis.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can turn a research question into a specific, arguable working thesis and a full sentence outline.
- ☐ I can draft body paragraphs that join claim, evidence and analysis, introducing every source with a signal phrase.
- ☐ I can cite sources correctly in both MLA and Chicago notes-bibliography style, and I know what needs citing.
- ☐ I can revise in three passes, from argument to sentences to proofreading.
- ☐ I can prepare a finished research paper that meets a contest’s rules.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Franklin’s Autobiography (Project Gutenberg #20203)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): The “jumbled hints” passage for Lesson 3.1.
- **Macaulay, The History of England, vol. 1 (Project Gutenberg #1468)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1468>): The model introduction for Lesson 3.2.
- **Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of England, trans. A. M. Sellar (Project Gutenberg #38326)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38326>): Bede’s Preface, where he names his sources (Lesson 3.3).
- **Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, trans. Richard Crawley (Project Gutenberg #7142)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7142>): Book 1, chapter 22, on method (Lesson 3.4).
- **National History Day: contest rules and annual theme** (<https://www.nhd.org>): Download the current Rule Book and find your state affiliate.

- **The Concord Review: submission information** (<https://www.tcr.org>): Current fee, deadlines and requirements; Chicago (Turabian) endnotes required.

3.1 OUTLINING: THE CANON OF ARRANGEMENT ★

OBJECTIVES

- Turn the research question and annotated bibliography from Unit 2 into a one-sentence working thesis.
- Use the parts of the classical oration to build a full sentence outline for a research paper.
- Order main points chronologically, logically or by strength, and key each piece of evidence to a source and page.

Warm-up. Lay out ten of your research notes or note cards from Unit 2 face up. Without reading any of them closely, sort them into three or four piles that seem to belong together. Give each pile a one-word name. What did you learn about your paper just from the sorting?

Video slot. Video coming. How to outline a research paper (sentence outline, thesis and supporting points) from a university writing center or library; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

arrangement (dispositio)

The second canon of rhetoric: putting what you have found into the order that will best convince and teach the reader. The Greeks called it *taxis*.

working thesis

A one-sentence answer to your research question that you intend to prove. It is “working” because the evidence may still change it.

sentence outline

An outline in which every heading is a complete sentence that makes a claim, not a topic word or phrase.

partition (partitio)

The part of a classical speech that tells the hearer what points will follow and in what order. In a paper it is the roadmap at the end of the introduction.

subordination

Placing lesser points under greater ones, so that each subpoint supports the heading above it.

CORE IDEAS

From a pile to a plan. In Unit 2 you chose a question, searched the library and databases, weighed your sources and wrote an annotated bibliography. You now own a stack of notes. A stack of notes is not a paper, any more than a pile of lumber is a house. The classical

teachers named five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. Your research was *invention*, the finding of material. This lesson is *arrangement*, which Cicero and Quintilian called *dispositio*: deciding what goes first, what goes last and what belongs under what.

Franklin's jumbled hints. Read the model. As a teenager Benjamin Franklin taught himself to write by reducing essays from the *Spectator* to "short hints," then rebuilding them. Notice the second exercise: he "jumbled" his hints "into confusion" and after some weeks tried "to reduce them into the best order" before writing a single full sentence. He says it was "to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts." That is exactly your task this week. Your notes are already jumbled; your work is to find the best order before you draft.

Thesis first. An outline needs something to serve. Write your research question at the top of a page, then answer it in one sentence. A strong working thesis is specific (it names people, places and a time), arguable (a careful reader could disagree), and provable with the sources you have. "Alfred the Great was an important king" is a topic. "Alfred's kingdom survived the Danes because he paired military reform, a network of fortified towns and a revival of learning" is a thesis, and it already hands you three main points. If your sources will not support the thesis, change the thesis, not the sources.

The old skeleton still stands. The classical oration had six parts, and they map neatly onto a modern research paper. The *exordium* (introduction) wins attention and states the question. The *narratio* (background) tells the reader what he must know to follow you. The *partitio* (roadmap) names your points. The *confirmatio* (body) proves each point with evidence. The *refutatio* answers the strongest objection or rival interpretation. The *peroratio* (conclusion) gathers the argument and shows why it matters. You do not need Latin headings in your paper, but if any of these parts is missing from your outline, your reader will feel the gap.

Sentence outlines, not topic lists. Use Roman numerals for the main sections, capital letters for points under them, and Arabic numerals for evidence. Write every Roman-numeral and capital-letter heading as a full sentence that makes a claim. "Burhs" tells you nothing; "Alfred's fortified towns gave every village a refuge within a day's march" tells you what the paragraph must prove. Under each claim, list the evidence with its source and page, so that when you draft you never wonder where a fact came from. Two rules: never write an A without a B (if you divide, divide into at least two), and keep headings at the same level in parallel form.

Choosing the order. There are three common orders. *Chronological* order follows time and suits narratives of events. *Logical* order moves from cause to effect, or from the general claim to the particulars. *Order of strength* places your arguments for effect; the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a Roman handbook long credited to Cicero, advises putting the strongest arguments at the beginning and the end, with the weaker ones in the middle. Most history papers blend the first two: a short chronological background, then a logical argument.

Testing the frame. When the outline is done, read only the thesis and the Roman numerals aloud. Do they prove the thesis by themselves? Then read each capital letter under its

numeral: does each one support that heading and no other? Finally check that every heading has evidence beneath it. A heading with no evidence is either a gap in your research or a point to cut. Peter tells Christians to be ready to give “a reason” for their hope; a reason that comes in order is far easier to receive than one that comes in a heap.

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (written 1771–1790), Project Gutenberg #20203*

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try'd to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and compleat the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts

PICTURE STUDY



The Geographer, Johannes Vermeer, 1669 · Oil on canvas · Städel Museum, Frankfurt
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer shows a geographer in the middle of his work. A chart lies unrolled on the table, more maps lie rolled on the floor, and a globe waits on the cabinet. He holds a pair of dividers, the tool for measuring distance on a map, but he has paused to look out of the window, as if he is working out in his head how the pieces fit. A map is to land what an outline is to a paper: a plan drawn to scale before the journey.

Look closely

- Find the dividers. What is the geographer about to measure?
- Count the maps and charts in the room, rolled and unrolled. Which one is he using now?
- Follow the light from the window. What does it fall on most brightly?

Talk about it

1. The geographer has stopped working to think. Describe a moment in your own research when you had to stop gathering and start ordering. What did you see?
2. Write a paragraph comparing an outline to a map. Where does the comparison hold, and where does it break down?

WRITING PROJECT: THE SENTENCE OUTLINE

Build a full sentence outline for your research paper from the question and annotated bibliography you finished in Unit 2.

Plan a paper of about 2,500–4,000 words. If you plan to enter National History Day in Lesson 3.4, aim for 1,500–2,500; if you aim at *The Concord Review*, plan for 4,000 words or more.

You will need

- Your research question, notes and annotated bibliography from Unit 2
- Note cards or a document with one note per line
- Writing notebook

Steps

1. Write your research question at the top of the page. Answer it in one sentence: this is your working thesis.
2. Do Franklin's exercise: shuffle your notes, then sort them into three to five groups. Name each group with a full sentence that makes a claim.
3. Decide on the order of those claims (chronological, logical or by strength) and write a sentence explaining why you chose it.
4. Lay out the outline on the classical skeleton: I. Introduction (hook, question, thesis, roadmap); II. Background; III–V. Main points; VI. The strongest objection and your answer; VII. Conclusion.
5. Under each main point, write two or three capital-letter subpoints as sentences, and under each subpoint list the evidence with author and page (for example, "Asser, ch. 91").
6. Read only the thesis and Roman numerals aloud to a parent. Ask: "Do these prove the thesis?" Revise until the answer is yes.

Check your work

- My thesis is one specific, arguable sentence that answers my research question.
- Every Roman-numeral and capital-letter heading is a complete sentence with a subject and a verb.
- Headings at the same level are parallel in grammatical form.
- No heading stands alone: every A has a B, every 1 has a 2.
- Every main point has evidence listed with author and page.
- The outline includes background, an objection with an answer, and a conclusion.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Franklin's sentence beginning "I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints" in your best hand.
2. Franklin's exercise in miniature: take any short essay you admire (an *Spectator* paper, a Lamb essay or a newspaper editorial from Unit 1), write one short hint per paragraph, shuffle the hints, wait two days, then put them back in order and compare with the original.
3. List the six parts of the classical oration with the modern name for each beside it.

History note. The *Spectator* was a daily paper written mostly by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in 1711–1712, with a later run in 1714. Its essays were collected in volumes and read for a century as models of clear English prose. Franklin read the third volume as a printer’s apprentice in Boston and went on to write some of the clearest prose of the American founding.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism in headings.** Headings at the same level should share the same grammatical form (Grammar Level 3, usage and style). Not parallel: “A. Alfred rebuilt the army. B. Fortified towns. C. Reviving learning was important to him.” Parallel: “A. Alfred divided the army into shifts. B. Alfred built a network of fortified towns. C. Alfred revived learning by translating key books into English.” Parallel headings are easier to read, and they will become the parallel topic sentences of your draft.

For families. This unit carries the research question from Unit 2 all the way to a finished paper in 3.4, so keep the student’s Unit 2 notes and bibliography handy. The outline is the most important checkpoint in the unit: sit down for ten minutes and have the student read you the thesis and main points. If you cannot follow the argument from the outline, the paper will not be clear either. The model is from Franklin’s *Autobiography*; the same passage underlies the imitation method used throughout this Composition series. This year’s faith verse is 1 Peter 3:15, “Be ready always to give an answer ... with meekness and fear.”

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's question is "Why did Alfred's kingdom of Wessex survive the Viking invasions when the other English kingdoms fell?" Her notes, jumbled, read: Battle of Edington 878; burhs (fortified towns) within reach of every village; Mercia and Northumbria overrun; army divided so half was always in the field; Alfred translated books into English; Guthrum baptized; treaty with Guthrum; the Danes split their forces. Arrange them into an outline.

1. Find the answer hidden in the notes and write it as a thesis: Wessex survived because Alfred reformed the army, fortified the land and rebuilt learning, while the Danes were divided.
2. Separate background from argument: "Mercia and Northumbria overrun" and "Battle of Edington, treaty, Guthrum baptized" set the scene (narratio).
3. Group the rest into claims: army reform; burhs; learning. "The Danes split their forces" becomes the objection: perhaps Wessex survived by luck, not by Alfred.
4. Order by strength: military reform first (strong), learning in the middle (weaker as an explanation of survival), burhs last (strongest).

Answer: I. Introduction: question and thesis. II. Background: the fall of the other kingdoms and the turn at Edington (878). III. Alfred reorganized the army so that part was always in the field. IV. Alfred revived learning, which bound his people to a common cause. V. Alfred's burhs put a refuge within reach of every village. VI. Objection: the Danes were divided; answer: division gave Alfred time, but his reforms kept what he won. VII. Conclusion.

Example 2. Revise this weak outline section into sentence form: "III. Burhs. A. Locations. B. Garrisons."

1. Turn the topic into a claim that answers "so what?": what did the burhs do?
2. Turn each subpoint into a sentence that supports the claim, in parallel form.
3. Add evidence lines under each subpoint, keyed to a source.

Answer: III. Alfred's fortified towns made Wessex hard to conquer. A. The burhs were placed so that most villages lay within a day's march of one. 1. Evidence: the list of burhs known as the Burghal Hidage (from my secondary source, with page). B. The burhs were manned by garrisons tied to the land around them. 1. Evidence: the Hidage's rule linking land to defenders (secondary source, with page).

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five canons of rhetoric. Which one does this lesson teach?
2. **EASY** In the model, what did Franklin do with his "collections of hints," and why?

3. **EASY** Give the modern name for each: exordium, narratio, confirmatio, peroratio.
4. **EASY** What is wrong with an outline that has a I.A but no I.B?
5. **MEDIUM** Topic or thesis? (a) "The Erie Canal." (b) "The Erie Canal made New York City the leading port of the United States by joining it to the Great Lakes."
6. **MEDIUM** Make these headings parallel: "A. Washington kept the army together. B. The French alliance. C. British mistakes were made."
7. **MEDIUM** Which order (chronological, logical or by strength) would you use for a paper arguing three causes of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and why?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a working thesis and three Roman-numeral main points (as sentences) for the question "Why did Gutenberg's printing press spread so quickly across Europe?"

COMMON MISTAKES

- Outlining by source ("I. What Asser says. II. What Keynes says.") instead of by claim. Organize by what you are proving; let sources serve the claims.
- Writing topic words instead of sentences, so that the outline hides whether you actually have an argument.
- Leaving out the objection. A paper that never faces the best rival view looks unaware of it.
- Falling in love with the first thesis and bending the evidence to fit it.

Make it a game · Franklin's Shuffle. A parent cuts a short, well-ordered essay (five to eight paragraphs) into separate paragraphs and shuffles them. The student races the clock to put them back in order, then names the clue in each paragraph (a transition word, a date, a pronoun) that gave its place away. Switch roles with the student's own outline cut into headings.

Scripture. "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40, KJV)

Paul's rule for worship is also a rule for teaching: order serves the hearer, and an orderly paper is a kindness to the reader.

Practice: answers

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. This lesson teaches arrangement (dispositio).
2. He jumbled them into confusion and after some weeks tried to put them back into the best order before writing full sentences, "to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts."
3. Introduction, background (statement of facts), body or proof, conclusion.
4. A point divided must have at least two parts. Either add a B or fold the A into heading I.
5. (a) is a topic. (b) is a thesis: specific, arguable and provable.
6. Sample: A. Washington kept the army together. B. France sent money, ships and troops. C. British generals divided their forces.

7. Sample: Order by strength, ending with the strongest cause (the Ottoman cannon and siege), because the paper argues which causes mattered, not merely what happened in sequence.
8. Sample thesis: Printing spread within fifty years because it was cheap to copy, profitable to sell and wanted by churches and universities. I. Movable metal type let a small shop produce many copies of a book. II. Printers found ready buyers in schools, universities and churches. III. Trade routes and trained apprentices carried the craft from Mainz to other cities.

3.2 DRAFTING: FROM OUTLINE TO PAGES

OBJECTIVES

- Write an introduction that moves from a concrete opening to the research question, thesis and roadmap, using Macaulay’s opening as a model.
- Draft body paragraphs that join claim, evidence and analysis, introducing every source with a signal phrase.
- Quote, paraphrase and summarize honestly, marking the source of every borrowed idea in the draft itself.

Warm-up. Take one Roman-numeral point from your outline and say it aloud to a parent in sixty seconds, as if explaining it at the dinner table. Then write down the three sentences you remember saying. You have just drafted the core of a paragraph.

Video slot. Video coming. Integrating quotations and evidence in a research paper (signal phrases, paraphrase, analysis) from a university writing center; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

draft

A complete working version of the paper, written to be revised. Its job is to get the argument onto the page, not to be perfect.

signal phrase

Words that introduce a source and tell the reader who is speaking: “According to Bede,” “Thucydides admits that,” “As the historian Asser records.”

paraphrase

Restating a passage in your own words and sentence structure, at about the same length. It still requires a citation.

summary

A much shorter restatement of the main point of a passage, chapter or book, in your own words, with a citation.

analysis

Your explanation of what the evidence means and how it proves your claim. It is the part of the paper no source can write for you.

CORE IDEAS

A draft is meant to be revised. Many students stall at drafting because they try to write the final paper on the first pass. Don’t. The outline has already done the hard thinking about order; the draft’s job is to turn each heading into prose while the argument is fresh. Write

steadily, a section at a time, and set a daily goal (for example, 500 words or one Roman-numeral section). If the introduction will not come, skip it and begin with the first body section. Many writers draft the introduction last, when they finally know what they are introducing.

Macaulay's promise. Read the model. Thomas Babington Macaulay opened his *History of England* (1848) with a sentence that names his subject and his limits: England from the accession of James II “down to a time which is within the memory of men still living.” Then come his promises, each beginning “I shall” or “how.” This is the *partitio* you planned in 3.1, written out in full. You need not imitate his length; your roadmap may be one sentence. But notice his confidence: the reader knows exactly what the book will prove before the story begins.

Building the introduction. A research paper's introduction usually runs in this order. Open with something concrete from your sources: a scene, a striking fact, a short quotation, a puzzle. (Never open with “Since the dawn of time” or a dictionary definition.) Give just enough context to make the question matter. State the question, or let it be plainly implied. Then state your thesis and, in a sentence or two, your roadmap. In a 3,000-word paper this takes one or two paragraphs.

The body paragraph. Each body paragraph follows a pattern you already know from the progymnasmata: a *claim* (the topic sentence, usually your outline heading), *evidence* (a quotation, paraphrase, fact or figure from a source), *analysis* (what the evidence shows and why it proves the claim), and a *link* back to the thesis or forward to the next point. Writing teachers call the middle of this pattern a “quotation sandwich”: introduce the source, give the evidence, then explain it. A good rule of thumb: at least as many of your own words of analysis as words of quotation. A paper that is a chain of quotations has no author.

Introducing sources. Never drop a quotation into a paragraph without introduction. Use a signal phrase that names the source and, the first time, says who he is: “Asser, the Welsh monk who served at Alfred's court, records that ...” Choose the signal verb with care, because it is a judgment: *states* and *records* are neutral; *argues* and *claims* mark an opinion; *admits* and *concedes* mean the source gives ground; *insists* suggests stubbornness. Quote only when the exact words matter (a primary source, a vivid phrase, a disputed claim). Otherwise paraphrase or summarize, which shows you understood the source.

Honesty at the drafting stage. Plagiarism usually happens not out of malice but from careless drafting: a student copies a sentence into his notes, forgets it was copied, and later types it as his own. Guard against it now. Put every quotation in quotation marks the moment you type it, and put a quick citation, such as (Asser ch. 91) or (Keynes 24), after every borrowed fact, quotation and paraphrase in the draft. You will format citations properly in 3.3; for now, simply never let a borrowed idea go untagged. Paul's rule is plain: “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). Giving credit is part of telling the truth.

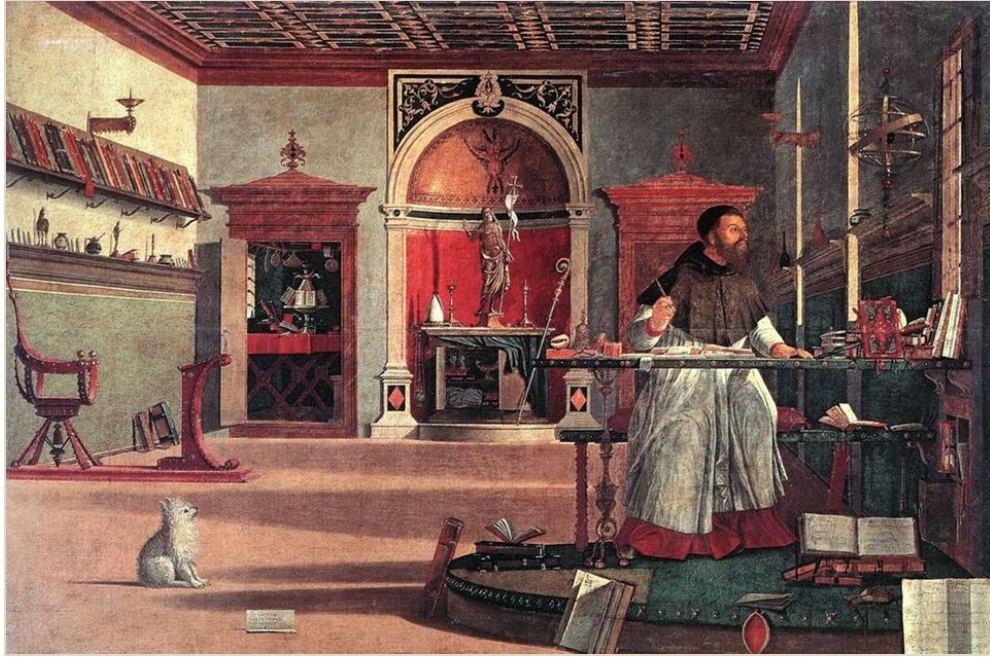
The objection and the conclusion. Draft the objection section in good faith: state the rival view at its strongest, with its best evidence, before you answer it. (Unit 6 will call this

steelmanning.) Then draft a conclusion that does more than repeat the thesis. Gather your main points in a sentence or two, then answer the question “So what?” What does your answer teach about the period, about human nature, or about how we should read the sources? Macaulay promises not only a story but a lesson; your conclusion should leave one too.

The model. *Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England from the Accession of James II, vol. 1 (1848), chapter 1, Project Gutenberg #1468*

I PURPOSE to write the history of England from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living. I shall recount the errors which, in a few months, alienated a loyal gentry and priesthood from the House of Stuart. I shall trace the course of that revolution which terminated the long struggle between our sovereigns and their parliaments, and bound up together the rights of the people and the title of the reigning dynasty. I shall relate how the new settlement was, during many troubled years, successfully defended against foreign and domestic enemies; how, under that settlement, the authority of law and the security of property were found to be compatible with a liberty of discussion and of individual action never before known; how, from the auspicious union of order and freedom, sprang a prosperity of which the annals of human affairs had furnished no example; how our country, from a state of ignominious vassalage, rapidly rose to the place of umpire among European powers; how her opulence and her martial glory grew together; how, by wise and resolute good faith, was gradually established a public credit fruitful of marvels which to the statesmen of any former age would have seemed incredible; how a gigantic commerce gave birth to a maritime power, compared with which every other maritime power, ancient or modern, sinks into insignificance; how Scotland, after ages of enmity, was at length united to England, not merely by legal bonds, but by indissoluble ties of interest and affection; how, in America, the British colonies rapidly became far mightier and wealthier than the realms which Cortes and Pizarro had added to the dominions of Charles the Fifth; how in Asia, British adventurers founded an empire not less splendid and more durable than that of Alexander.

PICTURE STUDY



Saint Augustine in His Study (The Vision of Saint Augustine), Vittore Carpaccio, about 1502 · Tempera and oil on canvas · Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Carpaccio painted Augustine, the great bishop of Hippo, at work in a Venetian scholar's study. According to an old legend, Augustine had begun a letter to Jerome when a light filled the room and he heard Jerome's voice telling him that Jerome had died. The pen is lifted, the page is begun, and the writer has stopped to listen. Everything around him is ready for work: books on the shelves, music lying open on the floor, papers within reach.

Look closely

- Find the pen. Is the page in front of Augustine finished or just begun?
- Find the small white dog. Where is it looking?
- Look along the shelves and floor. How many different kinds of books and objects can you find?

Talk about it

1. Augustine's study is ready for work, but the writer must still begin. Describe the first fifteen minutes of a good drafting session: where you sit, what is on the desk, what you write first.
2. Write a one-paragraph description of the painting using the claim-evidence-analysis pattern: make a claim about Augustine's state of mind, give two details as evidence, and explain them.

WRITING PROJECT: THE COMPLETE FIRST DRAFT

Turn your sentence outline from 3.1 into a complete first draft. Every section of the outline should become prose, with every borrowed idea tagged to its source.

You will need

- Your sentence outline from 3.1
- Your notes and annotated bibliography from Unit 2
- A computer or writing notebook; a calendar for your daily goal

Steps

1. Set a daily drafting goal (for example, 500 words or one section) and mark the days on a calendar so the draft is done within a week.
2. Draft the body first, one Roman-numeral section at a time. Make each outline heading the topic sentence of a paragraph or group of paragraphs.
3. In every body paragraph, follow claim, evidence, analysis, link. Highlight your own analysis in one color and the source material in another; the analysis should be at least as long.
4. Introduce every source with a signal phrase, and put a quick citation (author and page or chapter) after every quotation, paraphrase and borrowed fact.
5. Draft the objection section, stating the rival view fairly before you answer it.
6. Draft the introduction (concrete opening, context, question, thesis, roadmap) and the conclusion (gather, then answer “So what?”).
7. Read the whole draft aloud once without stopping to fix anything. Mark with a pencil every place you stumbled. You will revise in 3.4.

Check your work

- Every paragraph begins with a topic sentence that makes a claim.
- Every quotation is introduced with a signal phrase and followed by my own explanation.
- Every quotation, paraphrase and borrowed fact has a quick citation.
- Nonessential appositive phrases that identify sources are set off with commas.
- The introduction ends with a clear thesis and roadmap.
- The draft includes the objection and the answer, and the conclusion says why the argument matters.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the first three sentences of the Macaulay model. Then imitate them for your own paper: one sentence naming your subject and limits, and two “I shall” sentences naming what you will show. (You will likely revise the “I shall” out of the final paper, but the exercise will clarify your roadmap.)

2. Make a list of twelve signal verbs and sort them into three columns: neutral (states, records), argumentative (argues, contends) and conceding (admits, grants).
3. Choose one sentence from a source in your bibliography. Write it out exactly, then paraphrase it, then summarize it in eight words or fewer.

History note. Macaulay published the first two volumes of his *History of England* in 1848, and they sold in numbers unheard of for a work of history. He had planned to carry the story far beyond the Revolution of 1688, but he died in 1859 with the narrative reaching only to the death of William III in 1702. His great promise in the opening paragraph was never fully kept: a reminder to plan a paper you can finish.

 **Style Clinic. Appositive phrases for introducing sources.** An appositive is a noun phrase placed beside another noun to rename it (Grammar Level 3, phrases). It is the quickest way to tell the reader who a source is: “Asser, *a Welsh monk who knew Alfred personally*, records ...” When the appositive adds extra information about a noun already identified, set it off with commas (nonessential). When it identifies which one you mean, use no commas (essential): “The historian Asser” (no commas), but “Asser, the king’s biographer,” (commas). Check every source introduction in your draft for this comma pattern.

For families. Drafting takes longer than one lesson’s two sessions. Plan for a week of steady daily writing after the lessons, and resist the urge to correct grammar at this stage; that comes in 3.4. The best help you can give now is a short daily check that the word count is moving and that every borrowed idea is tagged. Macaulay’s opening is a famous example of the Whig view of English history, which treats the past as steady progress toward liberty; it is used here for its structure, and you may wish to discuss with your student that historians since have questioned that view. The model is copied from Project Gutenberg #1468.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this weak introduction: “Since the beginning of time, people have needed protection. Alfred the Great was a king of England. In this paper I will talk about Alfred and the Vikings.”

1. Cut the empty opening (“Since the beginning of time”) and replace it with something concrete from the sources.
2. Give brief context: who, where, when, and what was at stake.
3. State the question and a specific thesis, then a roadmap.

Answer: In the spring of 878 the king of the West Saxons was hiding in the marshes of Athelney with a small band of men, while a Danish army held his royal estate at Chippenham. Mercia, Northumbria and East Anglia had already fallen. Yet within months Alfred had defeated the Danes at Edington, and his kingdom became the seed of England. Why did Wessex survive when its neighbors did not? Wessex survived because Alfred turned a single victory into lasting security: he reorganized his army, revived learning among his people, and, most of all, fortified his kingdom with a network of defended towns.

Example 2. This body paragraph is mostly quotation. Revise it so the student’s analysis carries the paragraph: “Alfred cared about learning. Alfred wrote that books ‘most needful for all men to know’ should be put ‘into the language which we can all understand.’ That is what Alfred said.”

1. Sharpen the topic sentence into a claim that serves the thesis.
2. Introduce the quotation with a signal phrase that says where it comes from, and shorten the quotation to the words that matter.
3. Replace “That is what Alfred said” with analysis: what does this show, and how does it prove the claim?

Answer: Alfred saw learning as a defense of the kingdom, not a luxury. In the preface to his English translation of Gregory’s *Pastoral Care*, he proposes that certain books “most needful for all men to know” be put into the language “which we can all understand” (Alfred, Preface). The phrase “all men” matters: Alfred wanted not only priests but the free young men of the kingdom to read. A people who could read the same books in their own tongue shared a faith and a memory that the Danes could not easily break.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the four parts of a body paragraph taught in this lesson.
2. **EASY** In the model, what are the opening and closing limits of Macaulay’s history?
3. **EASY** Does a paraphrase need a citation?

4. **EASY** Give two openings to avoid in an introduction.
5. **MEDIUM** Choose the best signal verb for each: (a) a source that gives ground to the other side; (b) a chronicle that simply reports a date; (c) a historian making a disputed interpretation.
6. **MEDIUM** Paraphrase Macaulay's sentence: "I shall recount the errors which, in a few months, alienated a loyal gentry and priesthood from the House of Stuart."
7. **MEDIUM** Add a signal phrase with a correctly punctuated appositive to introduce this source: Thucydides wrote the history of the war between Athens and Sparta; he had been an Athenian general.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a two-sentence roadmap for a paper with this thesis: "The Erie Canal made New York City the nation's leading port by joining it to the Great Lakes."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Trying to make each sentence perfect before writing the next, so the draft never gets finished.
- "Dropped" quotations that appear without a signal phrase and are never explained.
- Paraphrasing too closely: changing a few words but keeping the source's sentence structure. This is still plagiarism.
- A conclusion that only repeats the introduction word for word.

Make it a game · Signal Verb Charades. Write signal verbs on slips (states, argues, concedes, insists, records, suggests, denies, laments). One player draws a slip and reads the same sentence ("The war was lost at sea") in the manner of that verb, with voice and face only. Others guess the verb, then explain how it would change a reader's view of the source.

Scripture. "And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." (Habakkuk 2:2, KJV)

The prophet is told to write plainly so that the reader can take the message and run; a draft aims at the same plainness.

Practice: answers

1. Claim, evidence, analysis, link.
2. From the accession of King James II down to a time "within the memory of men still living."
3. Yes. The words are yours, but the idea or information belongs to the source.
4. Sample: "Since the dawn of time" and a dictionary definition ("Webster's defines war as ...").
5. (a) concedes or admits; (b) records or states; (c) argues or contends.
6. Sample: Macaulay will show how, within a short time, the Stuart king's mistakes drove away the landowners and clergy who had been his firmest supporters.
7. Sample: Thucydides, an Athenian general who lived through the war, insists that he did not trust even his own impressions without testing them.

8. Sample: This paper first describes the problem of moving western goods to the coast before 1825. It then shows how the canal cut shipping costs, how trade shifted from New Orleans and Philadelphia to New York, and why rival canals came too late to catch up.

3.3 CITATIONS: MLA AND CHICAGO

OBJECTIVES

- Explain why scholars cite sources and decide what in a paper must be cited.
- Format in-text citations and a Works Cited page in MLA style, and notes and a bibliography in Chicago notes-bibliography style.
- Choose the right style for a contest and convert every quick citation in your draft into correct final form.

Warm-up. Open any book of history on your shelf to its notes or bibliography. Pick one note and answer: Who is the source? Where could you find it? What would you have to take on trust if the note were not there?

Video slot. Video coming. MLA 9th edition and Chicago notes-bibliography citation basics from a university library or writing center; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

citation

A brief reference in the text, a note, or a list entry that tells the reader exactly where a quotation, fact or idea came from.

MLA style

The Modern Language Association's system, used mostly in literature and the humanities: short parenthetical citations (author and page) keyed to an alphabetical Works Cited list.

Chicago notes-bibliography

The system in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, standard in history: numbered footnotes or endnotes plus a bibliography. Turabian is the student version of the same style.

common knowledge

Facts widely known and found in many general sources without dispute (Washington was the first president). They need no citation; interpretations and specific details do.

primary source

A document or object from the time you are studying (a letter, chronicle, law, diary or photograph). A secondary source is a later work that interprets the past.

CORE IDEAS

Why we cite. A citation does three things. It gives honest credit to the person whose work you used. It lets your reader check you, so that your argument rests on evidence and not on your say-so. And it joins your paper to a long conversation of scholars who have studied the same question. Luke opens his Gospel by telling Theophilus that he had “perfect understanding of all things from the very first” from those who “were eyewitnesses,” so that

Theophilus “mightest know the certainty” of what he had been taught. Citing is that same care for certainty.

Bede names his authorities. Read the model. Writing in 731, the Venerable Bede opened his *Ecclesiastical History* by telling King Ceolwulf where his information came from: the abbot Albinus of Canterbury, the London priest Nothelm who carried Albinus’s reports to him, and letters of Pope Gregory that Nothelm copied from the archives in Rome. He even says how each piece reached him: “either in writing, or by word of mouth.” Thirteen centuries before MLA and Chicago, Bede understood that a reader deserves to know the road from the event to the page.

What to cite. Cite every direct quotation, every paraphrase and summary, every statistic or specific fact that is not common knowledge, and every idea or interpretation you learned from someone else, even if you put it entirely into your own words. You do not cite common knowledge (the Battle of Hastings was fought in 1066) or your own analysis. When in doubt, cite. Remember the quick citations you placed in your draft in 3.2; now you will turn each one into a proper citation.

MLA in brief. MLA (now in its ninth edition, 2021) uses a short parenthetical citation in the sentence, usually the author’s last name and the page: (Keynes 24). If you name the author in a signal phrase, give only the page: Keynes argues that ... (24). For classic works divided into books and chapters, cite the division instead of a page: (Thucydides 1.22). The period goes after the parentheses. At the end comes a Works Cited page in alphabetical order, double-spaced, with a half-inch hanging indent. MLA builds each entry from “core elements” in a set order: author, title of source, title of container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, location. You include the elements that apply and skip those that don’t.

Chicago in brief. Historians use Chicago’s notes-bibliography system (the *Chicago Manual* is in its eighteenth edition, 2024). Place a superscript number at the end of the clause or sentence, after the punctuation, and give the source in a footnote or endnote. The first note for a source is full; later notes are shortened to author, short title and page. Chicago now prefers a short note to the old “Ibid.” At the end comes a bibliography, alphabetical by author, which reverses the first author’s name and uses periods where the note used commas. Notes let you add a short comment (“For a different view, see ...”) without cluttering your sentences, which is one reason historians love them.

Which style when? Use the style your teacher, journal or contest requires, and use it consistently. *The Concord Review* requires Turabian (Chicago) endnotes and says plainly: not MLA. National History Day accepts either MLA or Chicago, as long as you are consistent. If you plan to send your paper to both, write it in Chicago and you will be ready for either. Whichever you use, keep a running list of full source information as you go, including page numbers and the date you accessed any web source.

Quoting carefully. Quotation rules are part of honest citation. Copy quoted words exactly. Use an ellipsis (...) to show words left out, and square brackets to show a word you changed or added for clarity: “[Alfred] built the fortresses.” Never use an ellipsis to make a source

seem to say the opposite of what it says. Set long quotations as block quotations, indented with no quotation marks: in MLA, prose quotations of more than four lines; in Chicago, roughly a hundred words or more. Use block quotations sparingly; most of the time a well-chosen phrase does more work.

The model. *Bede, Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England (finished 731), Preface, translated by A. M. Sellar (1907), Project Gutenberg #38326*

My principal authority and aid in this work was the most learned and reverend Abbot Albinus;(7) who, educated in the Church of Canterbury by those venerable and learned men, Archbishop Theodore(8) of blessed memory, and the Abbot Hadrian,(9) transmitted to me by Nothelm,(10) the pious priest of the Church of London, either in writing, or by word of mouth of the same Nothelm, all that he thought worthy of memory that had been done in the province of Kent, or the adjacent parts, by the disciples of the blessed Pope Gregory,(11) as he had learned the same either from written records, or the traditions of his predecessors. The same Nothelm, afterwards went to Rome, and having, with leave of the present Pope Gregory,(12) searched into the archives of the Holy Roman Church, found there some epistles of the blessed Pope Gregory, and other popes; and, returning home, by the advice of the aforesaid most reverend father Albinus, brought them to me, to be inserted in my history

PICTURE STUDY



Saint Jerome in His Study, Antonello da Messina, about 1475 · Oil on lime panel · National Gallery, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Antonello frames Saint Jerome inside a stone archway, as if we are looking into a church. Jerome sits at a wooden study built into the great hall, reading, with his books on the shelves around him. Jerome spent years learning Hebrew so that he could translate the Old

Testament from the original language rather than from other translations. He is the patron of scholars who go back to the sources. Every object on his shelves is within reach: a researcher who can find what he has read.

Look closely

- Count the books you can see. How are they arranged on the shelves?
- Find the lion in the shadows. (An old legend says Jerome drew a thorn from a lion's paw, and the lion stayed with him.)
- Find the animals on the front step and the view through the windows. What lies beyond the study?

Talk about it

1. Jerome went back to the original Hebrew instead of trusting a translation of a translation. Write a paragraph explaining why a researcher should quote a primary source directly whenever possible.
2. Antonello lets us look into the study through an archway. A citation is a kind of window too. Write a short reflection on what a citation lets a reader see.

WRITING PROJECT: NOTES, WORKS CITED AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Convert every quick citation in your draft into correct final form, and prepare the list of sources at the end.

If you plan to enter *The Concord Review*, use Chicago (Turabian) endnotes. If you plan to enter National History Day, either style is accepted; choose one and be consistent.

You will need

- Your complete draft from 3.2
- Your annotated bibliography from Unit 2
- A current MLA or Chicago guide (a university library's free online guide is fine)

Steps

1. Decide on your style (MLA or Chicago) and write it at the top of your draft.
2. Go through the draft paragraph by paragraph. Highlight every quotation, paraphrase, statistic and borrowed idea. Make sure each has a quick citation; add any that are missing.
3. Convert each quick citation into final form: an MLA parenthetical citation, or a Chicago superscript number and note (full the first time, short after that).
4. Check every quotation against the source, word for word, and check every page number.
5. Build the Works Cited page or bibliography in alphabetical order, with hanging indents, using your annotated bibliography as a starting point. List only sources you actually cited (unless your contest asks for all sources consulted).

6. Trade a page with a parent: they pick any three citations, and you show them the exact place in the source.

Check your work

- Every quotation, paraphrase and borrowed fact has a citation.
- Every quotation matches the source exactly; ellipses and brackets are used honestly.
- Periods and commas are placed correctly with quotation marks, parentheses and note numbers.
- Notes or parenthetical citations match an entry in the Works Cited or bibliography.
- The list of sources is alphabetical, double-spaced, with hanging indents.
- I used one style consistently from start to finish.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Bede's first sentence (to "the traditions of his predecessors") and underline every source he names and every way the information traveled to him.
2. Write the MLA Works Cited entry and the Chicago bibliography entry for the same book side by side, and circle every difference.
3. Make a three-column list from your draft: things that are common knowledge, things that need a citation, and things that are your own analysis.

History note. Bede (about 673–735) spent nearly his whole life in the twin monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria. He finished the *Ecclesiastical History* in 731 and dedicated it to Ceolwulf, king of Northumbria. He is also the writer who made dating years *Anno Domini* (A.D.) common in English history: every date you cite in your paper owes something to him.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuation with quotations and citations** (Grammar Level 3, punctuation mastery). In American usage, commas and periods go *inside* closing quotation marks: Thucydides calls his book "a possession for all time." But in MLA, when a parenthetical citation follows, the period moves after the parentheses: Thucydides calls his book "a possession for all time" (1.22). Colons and semicolons always go outside quotation marks. Question marks go inside only if they belong to the quotation. In Chicago, the note number follows all punctuation except a dash: ... "a possession for all time."⁴

For families. Citation rules change with each new edition, so check details against a current guide from a university library rather than an old handbook. The examples here follow MLA 9 and the Chicago notes-bibliography style. Plagiarism is the most common serious problem in high school research papers, and contests disqualify for it; the habit of tagging every borrowed idea in the draft prevents nearly all of it. The model is from A. M. Sellar's 1907 translation of Bede (Project Gutenberg #38326). The Scripture is Luke 1:3–4, Luke's own statement of method.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Cite Thucydides' statement that he wrote "a possession for all time" (Book 1, chapter 22), from Richard Crawley's translation on Project Gutenberg, in both MLA and Chicago.

1. MLA in-text: a classic is cited by book and chapter, not page: (Thucydides 1.22).
2. MLA Works Cited: author, title in italics, translator as "other contributor," original date, then the container (Project Gutenberg) and its location.
3. Chicago first note: full information with commas, the location (1.22), and the URL. Later notes: short form.
4. Chicago bibliography: periods between parts, no locator.

Answer: MLA in-text: Thucydides calls his work "a possession for all time" (1.22).
MLA Works Cited: Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Richard Crawley, 1874. *Project Gutenberg*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7142.
Chicago first note: 1. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (1874; Project Gutenberg), 1.22, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7142>.
Chicago short note: 2. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 1.22.
Chicago bibliography: Thucydides. *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Translated by Richard Crawley. 1874. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7142>.

Example 2. A student writes: "Bede got his information about Kent from Albinus, who sent it by a London priest named Nothelm. Nothelm even searched the papal archives in Rome." There is no citation. What needs citing, and how would you fix it in MLA?

1. These are specific facts learned from Bede's Preface, not common knowledge, so they need a citation even though they are paraphrased.
2. The Preface has no chapter number; MLA allows a section name for an unpaginated online text.
3. Name Bede once in a signal phrase so the citation can be short.

Answer: In his preface, Bede explains that his information about Kent came from the abbot Albinus, who sent it by a London priest named Nothelm, and that Nothelm even searched the papal archives in Rome for letters of Pope Gregory (Bede, Preface). Works Cited: Bede. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of England*. Translated by A. M. Sellar, 1907. *Project Gutenberg*, www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38326.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Give three reasons to cite sources.
2. **EASY** In the model, name two of Bede's sources.
3. **EASY** Which citation style does *The Concord Review* require?

4. **EASY** Cite or not? (a) The Declaration of Independence was adopted in 1776. (b) A historian's estimate that a battle cost 4,000 lives. (c) Your own conclusion that a general was overcautious.
5. **MEDIUM** Correct this MLA citation: Keynes argues that the burhs were planned as one system. (Keynes, p. 24)
6. **MEDIUM** Where does the Chicago note number go in this sentence? Thucydides refused to trust even his own impressions
7. **MEDIUM** Shorten this quotation honestly with an ellipsis: "The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past ... I shall be content." Keep the idea that he wants to be useful.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a Chicago bibliography entry and first note for Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* read on Project Gutenberg (ebook #20203). No page numbers are available.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Citing only quotations and forgetting paraphrases and borrowed ideas.
- Mixing styles: MLA parentheses on one page and Chicago notes on the next.
- Listing sources in the Works Cited or bibliography that were never used in the paper, or citing sources that are missing from the list.
- Using an ellipsis to cut a source so that it seems to say something it does not.

Make it a game · Citation Detective. A parent reads five sentences aloud from the student's draft or a history book. For each, the student calls out "Cite!" or "Common knowledge!" or "Mine!" (own analysis) and defends the call. Score a point for each correct call and a bonus point for naming the right source from the bibliography.

Scripture. "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed." (Luke 1:3-4, KJV)

Luke researched carefully and wrote in order so that his reader could know the certainty of what he had been taught; citations serve the same purpose.

Practice: answers

1. To give honest credit, to let the reader check the evidence, and to join the scholarly conversation.
2. Any two of: Abbot Albinus; Nothelm, priest of London; letters of Pope Gregory and other popes from the Roman archives.
3. Turabian (Chicago) endnotes, not MLA.
4. (a) No, common knowledge. (b) Yes. (c) No, it is your analysis (but cite the evidence you used to reach it).

5. Keynes argues that the burhs were planned as one system (24). (The author is already named, there is no comma or “p.,” and the period goes after the parentheses.)
6. At the end, after the period: Thucydides refused to trust even his own impressions.³
7. Sample: Thucydides hopes his work will be “judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past” (1.22).
8. Sample bibliography: Franklin, Benjamin. *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. Project Gutenberg. <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>.
Sample note: 1. Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Project Gutenberg), <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>. (If the edition has chapter numbers, add the chapter, e.g., “chap. 1.”)

3.4 THE FINAL PAPER: REVISION, FORMAT AND SUBMISSION



OBJECTIVES

- Revise the research paper in three passes: argument and structure, paragraphs and sentences, then proofreading and format.
- Prepare a clean final copy in MLA or Chicago format with a title, notes or citations, and a list of sources.
- Shape the paper for National History Day (Senior Paper) or *The Concord Review* and assemble everything the contest requires.

Warm-up. Read the model aloud. Thucydides says he wrote “not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment.” Before you revise, write one sentence: what do you want a careful reader to know, years from now, after reading your paper?

Video slot. Video coming. National History Day paper category overview, or revising a history research paper, from NHD, a state historical society or a university writing center; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

revision

“Seeing again”: rethinking and rebuilding the argument, order and paragraphs of a draft, not only fixing errors.

proofreading

The last pass, a slow line-by-line search for errors in spelling, punctuation, citations and format.

process paper

A short statement (up to 500 words for National History Day) explaining how you chose your topic, researched it, built your argument and connected it to the annual theme.

endnotes

Chicago-style notes gathered at the end of the paper rather than at the foot of each page. *The Concord Review* requires them.

annotated bibliography

A list of sources with a short note on each telling what it is and how you used it. NHD requires one, divided into primary and secondary sources.

CORE IDEAS

Revision is seeing again. The word means “to look at again,” and the best revisers look at the whole before the parts. Put the draft away for at least two days so that you can read it as a stranger would. Then revise in three passes, from large to small. If you fix commas first, you will polish sentences that may be cut when you rebuild the argument.

First pass: argument and structure. Read the thesis, then only the topic sentences, in order. Do they still prove the thesis? Often the draft has taught you something: the evidence leans a little differently than you expected, or your strongest point turned out to be a different one. Revise the thesis to match what you actually proved, and reorder sections if needed. Check that the objection is stated fairly and answered, and that the conclusion answers “So what?” Cut any paragraph that does not serve the thesis, however much work it cost you.

Second pass: paragraphs and sentences. Now go paragraph by paragraph. Does each open with a claim and close with analysis rather than a quotation? Are the transitions doing real work (*therefore, yet, by contrast, as a result*) rather than marching (*also, another thing*)? Then sentence by sentence: prefer active voice and strong verbs, cut empty phrases (“It is interesting to note that”), and vary sentence length. Read every paragraph aloud. Your ear will find tangles your eye skips over.

Third pass: proofreading and format. Print the paper and read it slowly, one line at a time, with a ruler or blank card under the line. Check spelling of every name and place, every date, every quotation against its source, and every citation against your list of sources. Then format: MLA uses a heading at the top left (name, teacher, course, date), a centered title, double spacing and a Works Cited page. Chicago papers usually have a title page, numbered pages, notes and a bibliography. Give your paper a real title, often in two parts: a phrase that catches the eye and a subtitle that states the subject, such as “Fortress and Book: How Alfred Saved Wessex, 871–899.”

National History Day, Senior Paper. *Summary as of October 2026; get the current NHD Rule Book and your state affiliate’s dates before you begin.* NHD is open to students in grades 6–12; grades 9–12 compete in the Senior division. The paper category is for individuals only. The 2027 theme is “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change,” and your topic must connect clearly to it. The paper must be 1,500–2,500 words; notes, the annotated bibliography and the process paper do not count toward the limit. You also submit a process paper of up to 500 words and an annotated bibliography divided into primary and secondary sources. Either MLA or Chicago is accepted if used consistently. Students advance from regional or affiliate contests (usually in late winter) to state contests (spring) to the national contest in June, held at the University of Maryland in College Park. Homeschool students enter through their state affiliate.

The Concord Review. *Summary as of October 2026; read the submission page at tcr.org before you send anything.* Founded in 1987, the *Review* is a quarterly journal that publishes history research papers by secondary students. You may submit a paper completed before

you finished secondary school, if you have not yet enrolled in college; you must be the sole author, and the paper must be in English and not previously published (except in a publication of your own school). Papers should use Turabian (Chicago) endnotes, not MLA. Papers under 4,000 words are accepted but compete at a disadvantage with longer ones; most published papers run 5,000 words or more. Each submission requires a \$70 fee. The deadlines are February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1, and a paper is considered for the next three issues. An NHD paper can grow into a Concord paper: keep the argument, deepen the research, and expand.

A possession for all time. Read the model one more time. Thucydides tested every report “by the most severe and detailed tests possible” and admitted that his history lacked “romance,” but he wrote for those who want “an exact knowledge of the past.” That is the standard for your paper. Peter tells believers to give a reason for their hope “with meekness and fear”: a well-researched paper argues firmly, cites honestly, treats opponents fairly and does not claim more than the evidence proves. That is the mark of a writer who can be trusted.

The model. *Thucydides, History of the Peloponnesian War, Book 1, chapter 22, translated by Richard Crawley (1874), Project Gutenberg #7142*

With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative of events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eye-witnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time

PICTURE STUDY



Erasmus of Rotterdam Writing, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1523 · Oil on panel · Musée du Louvre, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Holbein painted the scholar Desiderius Erasmus in profile, bent over his writing. Erasmus published the first printed Greek New Testament in 1516 and spent years correcting it in later editions as he compared more manuscripts. Holbein shows nothing but the man, the pen and the page: no clutter, no distraction, only the patient work of getting the words right. It is a picture of the last stage of any serious piece of writing.

Look closely

- Look at Erasmus's eyes and mouth. What do they tell you about his attention?
- Look at his hands. Is he writing quickly or slowly? How can you tell?
- Notice what Holbein left out of the picture. Why might he have kept the background so plain?

Talk about it

1. Erasmus kept correcting his New Testament through several editions. Write a paragraph on why a careful scholar is willing to revise even published work.
2. Describe your own final revision session in the style of a picture study: what a painter would see if he painted you finishing your paper.

WRITING PROJECT: THE FINISHED RESEARCH PAPER

Revise your draft into a finished research paper and prepare it for National History Day (Senior Paper) or *The Concord Review*.

Contest rules here are a dated summary (October 2026). The family should download the current NHD Rule Book and the state affiliate's registration and deadlines, or read the official submission page at tcr.org, before entering.

You will need

- Your draft with final citations from 3.3
- A printed copy, a pencil and a ruler or blank card for proofreading
- The current NHD Rule Book or *Concord Review* submission page

Steps

1. Choose your target: NHD Senior Paper (1,500–2,500 words, MLA or Chicago, process paper and annotated bibliography, topic tied to the 2027 theme) or *The Concord Review* (Chicago endnotes, 4,000 words or more recommended).
2. First pass: read the thesis and topic sentences alone. Revise the thesis to match what you proved, reorder or cut sections, and strengthen the objection and the conclusion.
3. Second pass: revise each paragraph (claim, evidence, analysis, link) and each sentence (active voice, strong verbs, no empty phrases, clear modifiers). Read every paragraph aloud.
4. Third pass: proofread a printed copy line by line. Check names, dates, quotations, page numbers and citations against your sources.
5. Format the paper: title (with a subtitle), heading or title page, page numbers, notes or parenthetical citations, and the Works Cited or bibliography. Check the word count against the contest limit.
6. For NHD: write the process paper (up to 500 words) and turn your Unit 2 annotated bibliography into the final one, divided into primary and secondary sources. For Concord: convert all notes to endnotes and check the current fee and deadline.
7. Read the final paper aloud to your family in one sitting. Then, with a parent, register and submit by the official deadline.

Check your work

- The thesis matches what the paper actually proves, and every section serves it.
- Each paragraph opens with a claim and ends with my analysis, not a quotation.
- No dangling or misplaced modifiers: every introductory phrase names the right doer.
- Verbs are active where possible, and verb tenses are consistent when narrating the past.
- Every citation is correct and consistent, and every quotation matches the source exactly.
- The paper meets the contest's word limit, citation style and required parts.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the last sentence of the model: "In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time."

2. Write five possible two-part titles for your paper. Circle the one that best states the subject in the subtitle.
3. List the three passes of revision and, beside each, the one change from that pass that most improved your paper.

History note. Thucydides was an Athenian who served as a general in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) and was exiled after he failed to save the city of Amphipolis in 424 B.C. Exile let him gather reports from both sides. His careful method, testing eyewitness accounts against one another, set a standard for historians ever since. Richard Crawley’s English translation appeared in 1874.

 **Style Clinic. Misplaced and dangling modifiers** (Grammar Level 3, modifiers). A modifier must sit next to the word it describes, and an introductory phrase must describe the subject that follows it. Dangling: “Exiled from Athens, the war was studied from both sides.” (The war was not exiled.) Fixed: “Exiled from Athens, Thucydides studied the war from both sides.” Misplaced: “Bede only wrote about Kent from Albinus’s reports.” Fixed: “Bede wrote about Kent only from Albinus’s reports.” Research papers are full of introductory phrases; check every one in your final pass. This is also one of the most common sentence errors tested on the SAT, ACT and CLT.

For families. Contest summaries are current as of October 2026 and may change; download the official NHD Rule Book and your state affiliate’s calendar, or read tcr.org, before entering, and complete any registration and fees yourself. NHD contests start at the regional or affiliate level, often with paper submission deadlines in January or February, so a student finishing this unit in the fall is well placed. *The Concord Review* is demanding, and most published essays are much longer than a first research paper; it is a fine goal for a student who wants to expand this paper over the winter. Neither contest needs to be entered for the paper to count: the finished paper is the unit’s portfolio piece. The faith verse for the year is 1 Peter 3:15.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. First-pass revision. A student's thesis says, "Alfred saved Wessex mainly through military reform." But in drafting, her longest and best-supported section turned out to be on the burhs, and the military-reform section relies on one source. What should she do?

1. Let the evidence revise the thesis: the burhs are now the center of the argument.
2. Reorder so the strongest point comes last, where it will be remembered.
3. Shrink the weak section into a supporting point and note the limit of the evidence honestly.

Answer: Revised thesis: "Alfred saved Wessex above all by fortifying it: his network of burhs, supported by a reorganized army, made the kingdom too costly to conquer." The burh section moves to the end; the army section becomes a shorter point that admits it rests mainly on one source.

Example 2. Second-pass revision. Improve this sentence: "It is interesting to note that a network of fortified towns was built by Alfred, and they were built so that there were not many villages that were very far from one of them."

1. Cut the empty opener ("It is interesting to note that").
2. Change passive to active: Alfred built.
3. Replace the wordy clause with a concrete, compact phrase.

Answer: Alfred built a network of fortified towns that put nearly every village within a day's march of safety.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three passes of revision in order.
2. **EASY** What is the word range for an NHD Senior Paper, and what is not counted?
3. **EASY** What citation style does *The Concord Review* require, and what are its four deadlines?
4. **EASY** In the model, what does Thucydides say he did not even trust?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: "After searching the papal archives, the letters were brought to Bede."
6. **MEDIUM** Write a two-part title for a paper arguing that the Erie Canal made New York the nation's leading port.
7. **MEDIUM** Revise for active voice and concision: "The decision to attack at dawn was made by the general because it was thought by him that the enemy would be surprised."
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (ACT-style, 40 minutes): "Should students be required to write a research paper before graduating from high school?" Take a position, address one

counterargument, and use examples from your own research this unit. Write the opening paragraph here.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Proofreading only (fixing commas) and never revising the argument.
- Keeping a thesis that the evidence no longer supports.
- Missing contest requirements: the wrong citation style, a word count over the limit, a missing process paper or bibliography.
- Waiting until the deadline week to read the official rules.

Make it a game · The Judge's Chair. Each family member takes a role: an NHD judge, a *Concord Review* editor, and a skeptical historian. The student reads the introduction and one body section aloud. Each "judge" must give one specific praise and one specific question in the voice of the role. The student answers each question in one sentence and notes any revision it suggests.

Scripture. "The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth." (Ecclesiastes 12:10, KJV)

The Preacher labored to find fitting words and wrote what was true; a finished paper should be both well said and upright.

Practice: answers

1. Argument and structure; paragraphs and sentences; proofreading and format.
2. 1,500–2,500 words; notes, the annotated bibliography and the process paper are not counted (check the current Rule Book).
3. Turabian (Chicago) endnotes; February 1, May 1, August 1 and November 1.
4. His own impressions; he tested every report by "the most severe and detailed tests possible."
5. After searching the papal archives, Nothelm brought the letters to Bede.
6. Sample: "Clinton's Ditch: How the Erie Canal Made New York the Nation's Port, 1817–1850."
7. The general attacked at dawn because he expected to surprise the enemy.
8. Sample: Before I wrote my paper on Alfred the Great, I thought research meant collecting quotations. I learned instead that it means testing them: comparing a monk's praise with a chronicle's dates, and changing my thesis when the evidence pointed elsewhere. Every high school student should be required to write a research paper, because no other assignment teaches so directly how to weigh evidence, order an argument and give honest credit. Some argue that the time would be better spent on shorter essays, but only a long paper forces a writer to sustain an argument over many pages, which is exactly what college and most careers demand.

UNIT 3 REVIEW

Answer in writing. Short answers may be a phrase or sentence; writing tasks are scored for accuracy, clarity and correct form. Open-book for citation formats is not allowed on items 6–8; the student should know the basic patterns.

1. (6 pts) Name the six parts of the classical oration and give the part of a research paper that matches each.
2. (3 pts) Turn this topic into a working thesis: “The printing press.”
3. (3 pts) Revise these outline headings into parallel sentences: “A. Alfred’s army. B. He built burhs. C. Learning.”
4. (4 pts) Name the four parts of a body paragraph and explain what the analysis part does.
5. (3 pts) What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary? Does each need a citation?
6. (2 pts) Write an MLA in-text citation for a quotation from page 24 of a book by Simon Keynes, when Keynes is not named in the sentence.
7. (4 pts) Write a Chicago first note and a short note for Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, translated by Richard Crawley, Book 1, chapter 22.
8. (2 pts) Which citation style does *The Concord Review* require? Which styles does National History Day accept?
9. (2 pts) Fix the dangling modifier: “Having compared the eyewitness accounts, the report was judged accurate.”
10. (2 pts) Punctuate correctly in MLA: Thucydides calls his work a possession for all time (1.22)
11. (6 pts) In one sentence each, explain what Franklin, Bede and Thucydides teach a researcher, using the models from this unit.
12. (3 pts) Name the three passes of revision and give one thing you check in each.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE RESEARCH PAPER

Place the finished research paper from Lesson 3.4 in your Grade 11 portfolio, with its Works Cited or bibliography (and, for NHD, the process paper and annotated bibliography). Include the sentence outline from 3.1 and one marked-up draft page to show your revision.

- **Thesis and argument:** A specific, arguable thesis that answers the research question; every section serves it; the strongest objection is stated fairly and answered.
- **Evidence and analysis:** Primary and secondary sources used well; quotations introduced with signal phrases and followed by the writer’s own analysis.
- **Citation and honesty:** Every quotation, paraphrase and borrowed idea cited in one consistent style (MLA or Chicago); quotations exact; list of sources complete and correctly formatted.
- **Style and mechanics:** Clear, parallel topic sentences; active voice; no dangling or misplaced modifiers; correct punctuation with quotations; meets the contest’s length and format.

Answer key

1. Exordium (introduction), narratio (background), partitio (roadmap), confirmatio (body or proof), refutatio (objection and answer), peroratio (conclusion).
2. Sample: Gutenberg's press spread across Europe within fifty years because movable type made books cheap and universities and churches were eager buyers.
3. Sample: A. Alfred reorganized his army. B. Alfred built fortified towns. C. Alfred revived learning.
4. Claim, evidence, analysis, link. Analysis explains what the evidence means and how it proves the claim.
5. A paraphrase restates a passage in your own words at about the same length; a summary gives only the main point, much shorter. Both need citations.
6. (Keynes 24), with the period after the parentheses.
7. 1. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Richard Crawley (1874; Project Gutenberg), 1.22. Short note: 2. Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 1.22. (URL optional for print; required for an online copy.)
8. Concord: Turabian (Chicago) endnotes, not MLA. NHD: MLA or Chicago, used consistently.
9. Having compared the eyewitness accounts, Thucydides judged the report accurate.
10. Thucydides calls his work "a possession for all time" (1.22).
11. Sample: Franklin teaches us to put our notes in the best order before drafting; Bede teaches us to name our sources and how the information reached us; Thucydides teaches us to test every report and not even trust our own impressions without checking.
12. Sample: Argument and structure (does every section prove the thesis?); paragraphs and sentences (does each paragraph end with analysis? active voice?); proofreading and format (are quotations, dates and citations exact?).

DRAMA: THE TEN-MINUTE PLAY

From essays for a silent reader you turn to writing for voices. You will take apart the quarrel of Brutus and Cassius in *Julius Caesar* beat by beat, learn standard play format and the craft of stage directions from Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, study how Lady Gregory's *Spreading the News* builds a whole comedy from a rumor, and write an original ten-minute play. The unit ends with a table read guided by Hamlet's advice to the players and a final script of ten pages or fewer, ready for the Princeton University Ten-Minute Play Contest, which is open only to eleventh graders.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes clear, varied sentences and can tell simple, compound, complex and compound-complex structures apart (Grammar Level 3).
- Has read at least one Shakespeare play or is willing to read Act 4 of *Julius Caesar* aloud with a partner.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can map the beats of a scene and name the tactic in each.
- ☐ I can format a script with a title page, cast list, setting and present-tense stage directions that show only what can be seen or heard.
- ☐ I can plan a ten-minute play with a premise, an inciting incident by page 2 and a turn near the end.
- ☐ I can run a table read, take notes with meekness and revise from what I hear.
- ☐ I can prepare a final script of ten pages or fewer that follows a contest's current official rules.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Project Gutenberg #1522)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1522>): Free text; Act 4, Scene 3 is the quarrel in Brutus's tent.
- **Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (Project Gutenberg #1524)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1524>): Act 3, Scene 2 holds Hamlet's advice to the players and the play scene.
- **Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Project Gutenberg #844)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/844>): A model of economical stage directions and quick character introduction.
- **Lady Gregory, *Seven Short Plays* (Project Gutenberg #41653)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41653>): Includes *Spreading the News*, a one-act comedy that reads aloud in about half an hour.
- **Princeton University Ten-Minute Play Contest (Lewis Center for the Arts)**
(<https://arts.princeton.edu/about/opportunities/high-school-contests/ten-minute-play>)

contest/): Official rules, dates and entry form. Check each year; the contest is for eleventh graders only.

4.1 SCENES FROM SHAKESPEARE: THE QUARREL IN BRUTUS'S TENT 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define a scene, a beat and subtext, and explain why a ten-minute play is usually one scene.
- Read the opening of the quarrel in *Julius Caesar* (4.3) aloud and map its beats by the tactic each speaker uses.
- Write a one-page imitation scene in which two allies quarrel and one of them holds back the real reason.

Warm-up. Think of the last real argument you overheard (in a store, at a game, at a family dinner). Without naming anyone, write down what each person *wanted*. Did either of them ever say it out loud?

Video slot. Video coming. Julius Caesar Act 4 Scene 3 Brutus and Cassius quarrel performance (a stage production from a Shakespeare theater or university); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

scene

A unit of a play in one place and continuous time, usually ending when the characters leave or the place changes. A ten-minute play is almost always one scene.

beat

The smallest unit of change in a scene: the moment a character tries a new tactic (accuse, defend, threaten, plead) to get what he wants.

subtext

What a character means or feels under what he says. Brutus's harshness in 4.3 has a hidden cause the audience learns only later.

ethopoeia

The progymnasmata exercise of writing the words a particular person would say in a particular situation ("What would Achilles say over the body of Patroclus?"). It is the schoolroom root of dramatic dialogue.

conflict

Two wants that cannot both be satisfied. Without it, dialogue is only conversation.

CORE IDEAS

Writing for voices. For three units you have written prose for a silent reader who can stop, reread and check your footnotes. A play is written for voices and bodies in a room, heard once, at the speed of speech. The word *playwright* is spelled like *wheelwright* and *shipwright*: a playwright is a maker, a craftsman who builds something other people will use. A ten-minute play is a whole play in about ten pages. It usually has one place, continuous time, two to four characters and one conflict that turns. In other words, it is a single scene, and the best teacher of the scene in English is Shakespeare.

The grammar-school boy. Shakespeare learned to write at the King's New School in Stratford, where boys worked through Aphthonius in Latin. One of those exercises was *ethopoeia*: write the speech a certain person would give in a certain moment. A boy who has spent years asking "What would Niobe say over her children?" has been trained to put words in the mouths of Brutus and Cassius. When you write a play, you are doing the old exercise with more than one speaker, and the speakers want different things.

The tent at Sardis. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus and Cassius have killed Caesar for the sake of Rome's liberty and now lead armies against Antony and Octavius. In Act 4 they meet in Brutus's tent near Sardis, and the two allies quarrel. Cassius wants respect: Brutus has publicly condemned Lucius Pella for bribery and ignored Cassius's letters asking for mercy. Brutus wants the cause kept clean: if the men who struck Caesar "for justice' sake" now take bribes, the murder was only a crime. Both wants are reasonable, and they cannot both be satisfied. That is conflict.

Beats. Read the model aloud and notice that nobody repeats a tactic. Cassius *complains* ("That you have wrong'd me"). Brutus *turns the charge back* ("You wrong'd yourself"). Cassius *minimizes* ("every nice offence"). Brutus *accuses* ("an itching palm"). Cassius *threatens*. Brutus *shames* him with the memory of the Ides of March. Each new tactic is a beat, and each beat raises the temperature. A scene in which characters say the same thing louder is not building; a scene in which they keep trying new ways to win is.

Short lines, long lines. Watch the length of the speeches. As tempers rise, lines shrink: "I an itching palm!" and then the single word "Chastisement!" When Brutus seizes the high ground, he gets the long speech, full of questions an opponent cannot answer. Length tracks power. Shakespeare also builds the actors' movement into the words: "grasped thus" tells the actor to close his fist. Notice, too, what the scene withholds. Later in the same scene, after the two men make peace, Brutus reveals that his wife Portia is dead. His sharpness had a cause he never named. That is subtext, and it is why the scene feels true.

Character is choice. Aristotle taught in the *Poetics* that we know characters by what they choose under pressure. Brutus's speech is noble, and it is also proud: he would rather "bay the moon" than be such a Roman, and he says so to a friend. The audience is free to admire him and to judge him. This year's verse asks us to give an answer "with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15). Drama is one of the clearest places to watch what happens when people

answer without meekness. Your plays may show sin plainly; they should never pretend it is something else.

Your work this week. Read the model aloud with a partner, twice: once for sense, once at full volume. Then map the beats with one verb each and imitate the scene in modern prose: two people on the same side, one wrong between them, one reason held back. The ten-minute play you write in Lesson 4.3 will grow from what you learn here.

The model. *William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Julius Caesar (about 1599), Act 4, Scene 3, Project Gutenberg #1522*

SCENE III. Within the tent of Brutus.

Enter Brutus and Cassius.

CASSIUS.

That you have wrong'd me doth appear in this:
You have condemn'd and noted Lucius Pella
For taking bribes here of the Sardians;
Wherein my letters, praying on his side
Because I knew the man, were slighted off.

BRUTUS.

You wrong'd yourself to write in such a case.

CASSIUS.

In such a time as this it is not meet
That every nice offence should bear his comment.

BRUTUS.

Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself
Are much condemn'd to have an itching palm,
To sell and mart your offices for gold
To undeservers.

CASSIUS.

I an itching palm!
You know that you are Brutus that speak this,
Or, by the gods, this speech were else your last.

BRUTUS.

The name of Cassius honours this corruption,
And chastisement doth therefore hide his head.

CASSIUS.

Chastisement!

BRUTUS.

Remember March, the Ides of March remember:
Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?
What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,
And not for justice? What! Shall one of us,
That struck the foremost man of all this world
But for supporting robbers, shall we now
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,
And sell the mighty space of our large honours
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,
Than such a Roman

PICTURE STUDY



David Garrick as Richard III, William Hogarth, about 1745 · Oil on canvas · Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

David Garrick was the most famous English actor of the eighteenth century, and Richard III was the part that made his name. Hogarth paints the moment in the last act when Richard, in his tent the night before the battle of Bosworth, wakes from a dream in which the ghosts of the people he murdered have cursed him. Like Brutus, Richard is in a tent before a battle; unlike Brutus, he has no friend to quarrel with, only his conscience. Hogarth catches a single beat: the instant fear replaces pride.

Look closely

- Look at Garrick's outstretched hand and his eyes. What is he pushing away?
- Find the armor on the ground. What does it tell you about tomorrow?

- Look past the opening of the tent. What can you see in the distance?

Talk about it

1. Write the two lines of dialogue Richard might speak in this instant, one before he is fully awake and one after.
2. A painting can show only one beat. Write the beat that came just before this one and the beat that comes just after.

WRITING PROJECT: BEAT MAP AND IMITATION SCENE

Take Shakespeare's quarrel apart, then build one of your own on the same frame. You will format this scene properly in Lesson 4.2, and it may become the seed of your ten-minute play.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- *Julius Caesar* (Project Gutenberg #1522 or any good edition), Act 4, Scene 3
- A partner to read with (a parent, sibling or friend)

Steps

1. Read Act 4, Scene 3 aloud with your partner from the opening through the moment Brutus tells Cassius that Portia is dead. Switch parts and read the model passage again.
2. Make a beat map of the model: number each beat and name its tactic with one active verb (complains, accuses, threatens, shames).
3. Mark every place where the speeches get shorter and every place one speaker gets a long speech. Write one sentence on why the length changes.
4. Plan your imitation: two people on the same side (teammates, brothers, business partners, soldiers), one wrong done by one of them, and one hidden reason for the other's anger that is not revealed until the end.
5. Write the scene in modern prose dialogue, about one page, with at least five beats. Neither character may say "I feel" or name his own emotion.
6. Read your scene aloud with your partner and mark any line that sounds like an essay instead of a person.

Check your work

- Each speech tries a new tactic; no beat repeats the one before it.
- The characters never announce their feelings; we learn them from what they say and do.
- The hidden reason is withheld until the end, and when it comes, the earlier lines make sense in a new way.
- I used a mix of simple sentences for heat and complex sentences for argument (Style Clinic).

- Any fragment in my dialogue is deliberate; my notes and beat map are in complete sentences.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Brutus's speech from "Remember March" to "Than such a Roman" by hand, keeping Shakespeare's line breaks and spelling.
2. List ten pairs of people who are on the same side but could quarrel (a captain and a lieutenant, a father and a grown son who farm together). Star the three with the most at stake.
3. Write one line of ethopoeia: what would Cassius say to himself as he walks out of the tent?

History note. Garrick (1717–1779) first played Richard III in London in 1741 and later managed the Drury Lane theater for nearly thirty years. Like most actors of his century he played Colley Cibber's adaptation of *Richard III*, which held the stage from 1700 well into the nineteenth century. Hogarth's painting, about 1745, hangs in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.

 **Style Clinic. Sentence structures as temperature.** Grammar Level 3 named four structures: simple, compound, complex and compound-complex. In an essay you vary them for rhythm; in a scene they tell the actor how hot the room is. Cassius explodes in a simple exclamation and finally a one-word fragment ("Chastisement!"). Brutus answers with complex questions built on relative and adverb clauses ("What villain touch'd his body, *that did stab*, / And not for justice?"). In your scene, let the angriest character speak in short simple sentences and let the one who thinks he has the high ground build longer, clause-heavy sentences. A fragment in dialogue is a choice. A fragment in your beat map or analysis is still an error.

For families. Act 4, Scene 3 of *Julius Caesar* is clean and very good to read aloud at the table; the full scene also includes Portia's death (reported, not shown) and the appearance of Caesar's ghost. Ethopoeia (also called prosopopoeia) is one of Aphthonius's fourteen exercises, and historians of Shakespeare's schooling, such as T. W. Baldwin in *William Shakspeare's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944), trace his habits of speech-in-character to it. This year's faith verse is 1 Peter 3:15; the quarrel is a vivid picture of answering without meekness.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Map the first six beats of the model passage. Name each with one verb.

1. Cassius: “That you have wrong’d me...” He *complains*.
2. Brutus: “You wrong’d yourself...” He *turns the charge back*. Cassius: “it is not meet / That every nice offence...” He *minimizes*.
3. Brutus: “an itching palm.” He *accuses*. Cassius: “this speech were else your last.” He *threatens*.
4. Brutus: “Remember March...” He *shames*, using the deed they share as a weapon.

Answer: Complain, deflect, minimize, accuse, threaten, shame. Each tactic is new, and each one raises the stakes from a quarrel about a letter to a question about whether Caesar’s death was murder.

Example 2. Revise this student opening, which states everything and hides nothing:

TOM: I am angry because you told Dad I wrecked the truck.

BEN: I am sorry. I felt I had to be honest.

TOM: That makes me feel betrayed.

1. Ask what each brother wants. Tom wants Ben to admit he chose Dad over him; Ben wants Tom to admit he wrecked the truck.
2. Cut every named feeling (“angry,” “felt,” “betrayed”). Replace each with a tactic.
3. Hold back one fact. Perhaps Ben did not tell Dad at all; their sister did, and Ben is covering for her.

Answer: TOM: Dad says you had a nice long talk.

BEN: He asked me where the truck was.

TOM: And you told him the ditch on Miller Road. With directions.

BEN: It was the truth.

TOM: Funny how you only like the truth when it’s about me.

(The scene now has a tactic in every line, and the audience does not yet know who really talked.)

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Define a beat.
2. **EASY** What does Cassius want in the opening of 4.3? What does Brutus want?
3. **EASY** What is ethopoeia, and how does it relate to playwriting?
4. **MEDIUM** Find the stage direction hidden inside Brutus’s speech.
5. **MEDIUM** Why is “Chastisement!” a stronger line than “I cannot believe you would speak of chastising me”?

6. **MEDIUM** What is the subtext of Brutus's harshness in this scene, and when does the audience learn it?
7. **CHALLENGE** Write three lines of dialogue in which a character's real reason is hidden but can be guessed on a second reading.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT/SAT-essay style): In a short essay of four or five paragraphs, argue whether Brutus or Cassius has the stronger case in the opening of 4.3. Use at least two short quotations.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Letting characters announce their feelings ("I am so angry") instead of using tactics.
- Repeating the same beat louder instead of trying a new tactic.
- Revealing the hidden reason in the first lines, so nothing is left to discover.
- Reading Shakespeare silently. The beats only become clear aloud.

Make it a game · Tactic Cards. Write ten verbs on cards (accuse, flatter, plead, threaten, joke, shame, bargain, retreat, confess, ignore). Two players improvise a quarrel over a simple want (who gets the last slice of pie). Every thirty seconds the parent hands each player a new card, and the next line must use that tactic. Afterward, name the beat that worked best.

Scripture. "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." (Proverbs 18:17, KJV)

Cassius sounds right until Brutus answers, and Brutus sounds right until we learn what he has not said; a good scene, like a good judge, hears both sides.

Practice: answers

1. The smallest unit of change in a scene: the moment a character tries a new tactic to get what he wants.
2. Cassius wants respect and his friend Lucius Pella spared (or at least his letters honored); Brutus wants their cause kept free of bribery so that Caesar's death remains an act of justice.
3. The progymnasmata exercise of writing what a particular person would say in a particular situation. Dialogue is ethopoeia for two or more speakers with opposing wants.
4. "For so much trash as may be grasped thus": "thus" tells the actor to make a grasping fist or gesture.
5. The single word shows Cassius too angry to build a sentence; the long version explains the anger instead of showing it and slows the beat.
6. His wife Portia has died, and he is grieving; he tells Cassius only after the two men make peace, later in the same scene.
7. Sample: GRANDFATHER: Sell the north field if you want. It floods.
SON: You said last year it was the best ground we had.
GRANDFATHER: Last year I could still walk it. (He hides that he is failing; the last line gives it away on second reading.)

8. Sample thesis: "Brutus has the stronger principle but the weaker manner: he is right that men who killed Caesar 'for justice' sake' cannot 'contaminate' their fingers with bribes, but he wins the point by shaming a friend, and his pride nearly breaks the alliance he is trying to purify." Body paragraphs would treat Cassius's claim, Brutus's principle and Brutus's manner; the conclusion would note that the reconciliation proves both men loved the cause more than the quarrel.

4.2 FORMAT AND STAGE DIRECTIONS 🍷

OBJECTIVES

- Lay out a title page, cast of characters, setting and dialogue in standard play format.
- Write stage directions that show only what an audience can see and hear, in present tense and active voice.
- Study how Wilde’s opening direction and first lines set a place, a mood and two characters in under a minute.

Warm-up. Stand in the doorway of the room you are in. In exactly three sentences, describe it so that a set builder could make it. Then cross out anything a set builder could not build (a smell, a memory, a feeling).

Video slot. Video coming. How to format a stage play script (playwriting basics from a university theater department or public library); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

script

The written text of a play, read by directors, actors, designers and judges before anyone sees it performed. It is a blueprint, not a finished building.

stage direction

Any text in a script that is not spoken: setting, entrances and exits, actions, sounds. Written in present tense, usually in italics and parentheses.

cast of characters

The list at the front of a script giving each character’s name, age and a few words of description.

parenthetical

A brief direction set inside a speech, telling how a line is delivered or what the speaker does (“Hands them on a salver”). Use sparingly.

embedded direction

A direction built into the spoken words themselves, as when Brutus says “grasped thus.” Shakespeare relies on these.

CORE IDEAS

A blueprint, not a book. A novel is finished when the reader holds it. A script is finished only when actors stand on a stage, so its first readers are workers: a director, actors, a set and lighting crew, and, for this unit, a contest judge who reads hundreds of plays a year. Format is a courtesy to those readers. A judge who opens a cleanly formatted script trusts

the writer at once; one who opens a cramped, confusing page is already tired. Paul's rule for the church at Corinth fits the page as well: "Let all things be done decently and in order."

The parts of a script. A ten-minute play has four parts. (1) A title page with the title and the author's name and contact information (but follow each contest's rules; some ask that the author's name appear only on the entry form). (2) A cast of characters: name, age and a short description, such as "MARTHA HALE, 60s, a farmer's widow." (3) The setting and time: one or two lines, such as "A hay barn in Ohio. A September evening, 1932." (4) The play itself. Number your pages. Many playwrights use a 12-point serif or Courier font with generous margins; whatever you choose, keep it consistent and follow the contest's instructions if they name a format.

The page. Each speech begins with the character's name in capitals, either centered or at the left margin, with the dialogue beneath it. Stage directions are indented further, set in italics and usually in parentheses. Leave white space between speeches. This layout is the reason for the old rule that one page equals about one minute on stage. The rule only works when the layout is standard. If you shrink the font or squeeze the margins to fit fourteen pages into ten, you have not written a ten-minute play; you have written a fourteen-minute play in disguise, and an experienced judge will see it.

Only what can be seen and heard. A stage direction tells the theater what to put in front of the audience: a place, an object, a sound, a movement. It cannot convey a memory, a thought or a backstory, because the audience has no way to receive them. "She remembers the summer her father left" is a novelist's sentence; on stage it becomes "She picks up the cap on the hook, then puts it back." Write directions in the present tense and the active voice ("Lane enters"), and keep them short. Shakespeare's printed directions are almost nothing but *Enter* and *Exit*; he put the rest in the lines ("grasped thus"). You need not be that spare, but you should lean his way.

Wilde's opening. Look at how much Oscar Wilde does in the model. The setting is one place ("Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street"), with one judgment that a designer can build ("luxuriously and artistically furnished") and one sound ("a piano is heard in the adjoining room"). The action is already underway when the lights come up: Lane is setting out tea. Algernon enters only "after the music has ceased," so the audience has met him by ear before it sees him. Then two characters and a relationship arrive in four lines. Lane's "I didn't think it polite to listen, sir" is perfectly respectful and gently insulting. Algernon's boast that he plays "with wonderful expression" but not accurately tells us exactly who he is.

Directions that get in the way. Three habits mark a beginner's script. The first is the novel paragraph: half a page of description before anyone speaks. The second is the adverb parenthetical on every line, such as (*angrily*) or (*sarcastically*), which actors call "wrylies" and generally ignore. If the line is written well, the actor will find the anger. The third is the impossible effect: a storm, a car crash, twelve extras. A ten-minute play is often staged in a festival with a few chairs and a table, so write a play that a church hall could put on next week.

Your work this week. Put your 4.1 imitation scene into standard format with a title page, cast list and setting. Then go through every direction and ask two questions: could the audience see or hear this, and does the scene need it? Cut anything that fails either test.

The model. *Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest (1895), opening of the First Act, Project Gutenberg #844*

Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.

[Lane is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased, Algernon enters.]

ALGERNON. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

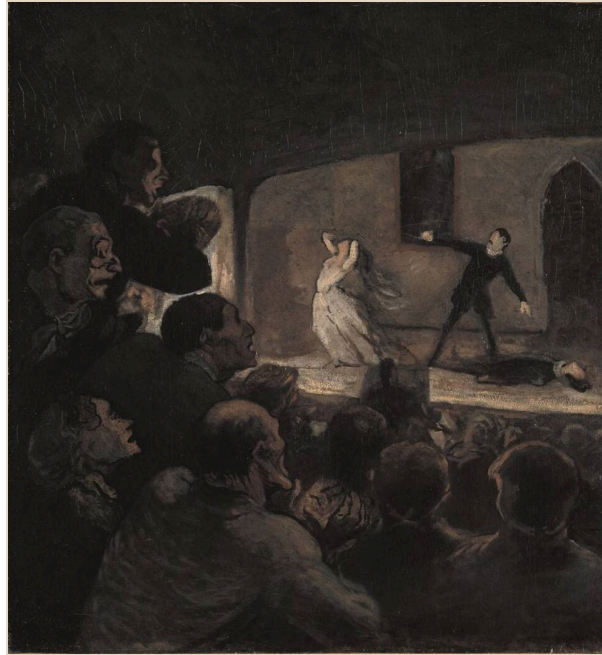
ALGERNON. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—any one can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGERNON. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE. Yes, sir. [Hands them on a salver

PICTURE STUDY



The Drama, Honoré Daumier, about 1860 · Oil on canvas · Neue Pinakothek, Munich
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Daumier (1808–1879) was a French painter and newspaper caricaturist who loved the Paris theaters. Here he turns his back on the stage and paints the audience. In the cheap seats the crowd is dark and packed, leaning toward the light; on the bright stage, actors in a popular melodrama throw themselves into a moment of crisis. The painting shows what a script is for: everything on that stage was once a stage direction, and everything in the crowd is the result.

Look closely

- Compare the light on the stage with the light in the audience. Where does Daumier want your eye to go?
- Find the actor with the most dramatic gesture. What would his stage direction say?
- Find two faces in the crowd. Are they reacting the same way?

Talk about it

1. Write the stage direction for the moment on Daumier's stage in no more than three sentences, present tense, active voice, using only what can be seen.
2. Daumier painted big, melodramatic acting. Using Hamlet's word for it, which you will read in 4.4, is this acting "o'erdone"? How would you direct it differently?

WRITING PROJECT: THE SCENE IN STANDARD FORMAT

Turn your 4.1 imitation scene (or a new one-page scene) into a properly formatted script. You will use this format for your ten-minute play.

You will need

- Your 4.1 imitation scene
- A word processor, or a clean notebook if typing is not possible
- A stopwatch or phone timer

Steps

1. Make a title page: title, your name, and the words “A Ten-Minute Play.”
2. Write a cast of characters with name, age and a description of no more than eight words for each.
3. Write the setting and time in one or two lines. Name one place, one object and, if you like, one sound.
4. Format the scene: names in capitals, dialogue beneath, stage directions indented, in italics and in parentheses, page numbers at the top.
5. Test every direction: Can the audience see or hear it? Does the scene need it? Cut or rewrite anything that fails.
6. Change every direction to present tense and active voice (Style Clinic).
7. Read the scene aloud with a partner and time it. Note how close the page count is to the minutes.

Check your work

- The script has a title page, a cast list and a setting line.
- Every direction describes something the audience can see or hear.
- No more than one parenthetical in five speeches, and none is a bare adverb like (angrily).
- All directions are in present tense and active voice.
- Formatting is consistent from the first page to the last, with page numbers.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Wilde’s opening stage direction exactly, from “Morning-room” to “Algernon enters.”
2. Imitate it: write a three-sentence setting for a place you know well (one place, one judgment a designer could build, one sound), then a one-sentence action that is already underway when the lights come up.
3. List five novelistic directions (thoughts, memories, backstory) and rewrite each as something an actor can do.

History note. *The Importance of Being Earnest* opened at the St James’s Theatre in London on February 14, 1895. Shakespeare’s first printings, by contrast, have very few directions; many of those in modern editions (“Within the tent of Brutus”) were added by later editors. Long, descriptive directions became common in the nineteenth century, when plays were printed to be read as well as acted.

 **Style Clinic. Voice and mood in stage directions.** Grammar Level 3 taught active and passive voice and the indicative, imperative and subjunctive moods. Stage directions use the *present indicative, active voice*: “Algernon enters,” “Lane is arranging afternoon tea” (present progressive, still active). Avoid the future (“Algernon will enter”), the past (“Lane arranged the tea”) and the passive (“The sandwiches are handed to him by Lane”). Avoid the imperative too (“Have Lane cross left”): a direction describes the play; it does not give orders to the director. Wilde’s two passives are deliberate exceptions: “is luxuriously and artistically furnished” describes a room no one is furnishing, and “The sound of a piano is heard” hides the player, because Algernon has not yet entered.

For families. Wilde’s private life ended in scandal and prison in 1895, the same year this comedy opened; the play itself is a clean comedy of manners, and the passage here is harmless. Standard play format varies a little from publisher to publisher; the essentials (names in capitals, directions set apart and in present tense, one page about one minute) are common to all. When a contest gives formatting rules, those rules win.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this direction: (*Sarah walked into the kitchen, remembering how her grandmother used to bake bread here every Saturday, and she felt sad and angry at her brother for wanting to sell the house.*)

1. Change tense: “walked” becomes “walks.”
2. Remove what cannot be staged: “remembering,” “felt sad and angry.”
3. Replace the memory with an object the audience can see, and leave the anger for the dialogue.

Answer: (*SARAH enters the kitchen. She stops at the bread board on the counter, runs a hand over it, then sets her car keys on it, hard.*)

Example 2. Format these lines correctly:

“Is the truck fixed?” asked Dad angrily. Ben said, “Almost,” and kept working under the hood.

1. Remove quotation marks and speech tags; the character name does the work.
2. Cut the adverb “angrily”; let the line carry it.
3. Turn “kept working under the hood” into a present-tense direction.

Answer: DAD. Is the truck fixed?

BEN. (*Under the hood, not looking up.*) Almost.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the four parts of a ten-minute play script.
2. **EASY** In what tense and voice are stage directions written?
3. **EASY** About how long is one page of a correctly formatted script on stage?
4. **MEDIUM** Which of these can go in a stage direction? (a) A dog barks offstage. (b) He thinks of his father. (c) She lights a lamp. (d) It is the worst day of his life.
5. **MEDIUM** Why does Wilde have Algernon enter only after the music stops?
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in present tense, active voice: "The letter is torn up by Cassius, and then the tent was left."
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a cast list and setting for a two-character play set in a place you know.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, ACT-style): Some say a script should give actors as many directions as possible; others say it should give as few as possible. Write a short essay taking a position and answering the other side, using Wilde and Shakespeare as evidence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing directions in the past tense, as if the play were a story.
- Putting thoughts, memories or backstory in directions.
- Adding (angrily) or (sadly) to lines that should carry their own feeling.
- Shrinking the font or margins to meet a page limit.

Make it a game • Direction Charades. Each player writes three one-sentence stage directions on slips ("He polishes one boot, then the other, then the first again"). Slips go in a bowl. A player draws one and acts it silently; the others must write the direction they saw. The closest match scores a point, and any direction no one could guess is rewritten until it can be acted.

Scripture. "Let all things be done decently and in order." (1 Corinthians 14:40, KJV)

Paul wrote this about worship, but the principle serves every reader of your script: clear order is a form of courtesy.

Practice: answers

1. Title page, cast of characters, setting and time, the play itself.
2. Present tense, active voice.
3. About one minute.
4. (a) and (c). The others cannot be seen or heard.
5. So the audience meets him first by his playing, and his first line ("Did you hear what I was playing?") follows naturally; it also gives Lane a moment alone to establish the room.
6. Cassius tears up the letter and leaves the tent.
7. Sample: CHARACTERS: WALT PRUITT, 70, a retired lineman. DANNY PRUITT, 17, his grandson. SETTING: The front porch of a farmhouse in eastern Kentucky. A summer night. A

porch light, two chairs, a radio playing a ball game.

8. Sample thesis: "A script should give exactly the directions the audience must receive and no more: Wilde names one place, one sound and one action, Shakespeare hides his directions in the lines, and both trust actors to supply the rest." A strong essay concedes that unclear scripts confuse a cast and answers that clarity comes from good dialogue, not from adverbs.

4.3 WRITING THE TEN-MINUTE PLAY

OBJECTIVES

- Plan a ten-minute play with a premise, two to four characters, one place and a turn near the end.
- Study how Lady Gregory’s opening sets the engine of a whole play in a dozen short speeches.
- Draft a complete ten-minute play of eight to ten pages in standard format.

Warm-up. Tell a parent or sibling a one-sentence story that is completely true but easy to misunderstand (“I saw Mr. Hale running out of the bank with a bag”). Then ask: what would the town say about it by suppertime?

Video slot. Video coming. Lady Gregory Abbey Theatre history (a documentary or lecture from a library, university or national library of Ireland); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

premise

The play in one sentence: who wants what, what stands in the way, and where. “A widow wants to keep the farm her son has already sold.”

inciting incident

The event that starts the trouble. In a ten-minute play it belongs on the first or second page.

reversal (peripeteia)

Aristotle’s term for the turn in which an action produces the opposite of what was intended.

recognition (anagnorisis)

Aristotle’s term for the moment a character learns the truth he did not know. The best plays join it to the reversal.

exposition

The background facts an audience needs. Good plays slip it in through conflict instead of having characters explain what both already know.

CORE IDEAS

One action in ten pages. Aristotle said a plot should have a beginning, a middle and an end, and should be one whole action. A ten-minute play is the purest test of that rule. In about ten pages you will set up a situation, complicate it and turn it. A useful map: by the end of page 2, the trouble has begun (the inciting incident); on pages 3 through 7, each beat makes it worse or more urgent; around page 7 or 8 comes the turn, a reversal joined if

possible to a recognition; and the last page shows the world changed. There is no time for a subplot, a second location or a flashback. Choose one place and let the clock run in real time.

Lady Gregory's engine. *Spreading the News* (1904) is a one-act comedy about a rumor. At a country fair, Bartley Fallon picks up a hayfork that Jack Smith has left behind and goes after him to return it. Through a half-heard remark at an apple stall and a chain of eager gossips, this kind act becomes, by the end of the play, a murder. Look at how the model plants that whole engine before the plot begins. The new Magistrate asks the Policeman leading questions, and each question is worse than the last: "Common assault?" "Agrarian crime?" "Homicide, then!" The Policeman agrees with all of it. Before Bartley ever appears, the audience has watched a man build a crime out of nothing but his own expectations. That is the play in miniature.

Want, obstacle, tactic, stakes. Every character on your stage should want something now, in this scene, from someone else in the room. Something must stand in the way, usually another character's want. Each beat is a new tactic (Lesson 4.1). And something must be at stake: a farm, a name, a friendship, a soul. If a character has no want, cut him or give him one. The Policeman in the model wants very little except to keep his new superior happy, and that small want drives the comedy: he agrees with everything.

Exposition through conflict. Beginners open with two people telling each other what both already know: "As you know, Mother, we have lived on this farm for twenty years since Father died." Real people never talk this way. Lady Gregory gives us the setting through a complaint ("Cattle and sheep and mud. No system.") and the Magistrate's past through a boast ("When I was in the Andaman Islands, my system never failed"). Let the facts come out because someone is using them as a weapon or a shield.

Choosing a subject. The strongest ten-minute plays are concrete and small: two people, one object, one decision. Scripture is full of such scenes, and you may borrow their shape without retelling them. Nathan tells David a story about a poor man's lamb, and the king condemns himself (2 Samuel 12). The elder brother stands outside the feast and will not go in (Luke 15). Joseph's brothers bow before a governor they do not recognize (Genesis 42). Each has a want, a hidden truth and a turn. Write honestly about sin and its cost, and leave room for grace, but do not preach. A character who delivers the moral to the audience stops the play. Let the choices speak, as the prophet's parable did.

Endings. The last page should show something that could not have happened on the first. The turn may be large (a confession) or small (a hand offered and refused), but it must be earned by the beats before it. Avoid three endings that judges see constantly: the dream ("it was all a dream"), the sudden death that solves the writer's problem, and the speech in which a character explains what he learned. End on an action or an image if you can. The last line is the one the audience carries out of the room.

Draft fast, then cut. Write your first draft quickly, in two or three sittings, without stopping to polish. Aim for eleven or twelve pages so that you have something to cut. In 4.4 you will hear the play read aloud and revise it to ten pages or fewer, which is the limit for the contest. Remember the warning of Proverbs 26:20: talebearing feeds strife the way wood

feeds fire. Lady Gregory made a comedy of it, and you may write comedy or seriousness, but keep the play itself truthful.

The model. *Lady Gregory, Spreading the News (1904), opening, in Seven Short Plays (1909), Project Gutenberg #41653*

Scene: The outskirts of a Fair. An Apple Stall, Mrs. Tarpey sitting at it. Magistrate and Policeman enter.

Magistrate: *So that is the Fair Green. Cattle and sheep and mud. No system. What a repulsive sight!*

Policeman: *That is so, indeed.*

Magistrate: *I suppose there is a good deal of disorder in this place?*

Policeman: *There is.*

Magistrate: *Common assault?*

Policeman: *It's common enough.*

Magistrate: *Agrarian crime, no doubt?*

Policeman: *That is so.*

Magistrate: *Boycotting? Maiming of cattle? Firing into houses?*

Policeman: *There was one time, and there might be again.*

Magistrate: *That is bad. Does it go any farther than that?*

Policeman: *Far enough, indeed.*

Magistrate: *Homicide, then! This district has been shamefully neglected! I will change all that. When I was in the Andaman Islands, my system never failed. Yes, yes, I will change all that. What has that woman on her stall?*

Policeman: *Apples mostly--and sweets.*

Magistrate: *Just see if there are any unlicensed goods underneath--spirits or the like. We had evasions of the salt tax in the Andaman Islands.*

Policeman: *(Sniffing cautiously and upsetting a heap of apples.) I see no spirits here--or salt.*

Magistrate: (To Mrs. Tarpey.) *Do you know this town well, my good woman?*

Mrs. Tarpey: (Holding out some apples. _) A penny the half-dozen, your honour

PICTURE STUDY



David Garrick and Mary Bradshaw in Garrick's The Farmer's Return, Johann Zoffany, about 1762 · Oil on canvas · Yale Center for British Art, New Haven
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

In 1762 Garrick wrote and acted a short comic piece, *The Farmer's Return from London*, in which a countryman comes home and tells his family about the wonders of the city, including a famous ghost story that all London was talking about that year. Zoffany, a German-born painter newly arrived in England, painted Garrick as the farmer and the actress Mary Bradshaw as his wife. It is a ten-minute play in a single picture: one room, a small cast, one man with a story and an audience that half believes it.

Look closely

- Find the speaker. How does Zoffany show who has the floor?
- Look at the wife's face and posture. Does she believe him?
- Find the children. What does each one want in this moment?

Talk about it

1. Write the premise of *The Farmer's Return* as you imagine it from the painting, in one sentence: who wants what, what stands in the way, and where.
2. The farmer, like the gossips in *Spreading the News*, has a story to tell. Write the first five speeches of a scene in which his wife begins to doubt it.

WRITING PROJECT: DRAFT THE TEN-MINUTE PLAY

Write the complete first draft of an original ten-minute play. You may grow it from your 4.1 scene or start fresh. In 4.4 you will hear it read, revise it and prepare it for the Princeton Ten-Minute Play Contest.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your formatted 4.2 scene, as a format guide
- A word processor

Steps

1. Write your premise in one sentence: “[Character] wants [goal] but [obstacle], in [place].” Have a parent read it and tell you what they expect to happen.
2. Make a cast list of two to four characters. Give each one a want that pulls against at least one other character’s want.
3. Outline eight to twelve beats on index cards or in a list, one tactic per card. Mark the inciting incident (by page 2) and the turn (around page 7 or 8).
4. Write the first page so that conflict begins in the first five speeches. Slip exposition in through complaints, boasts, accusations and excuses.
5. Draft straight through to the end in two or three sittings, aiming for eleven or twelve pages in standard format.
6. Read the whole draft aloud alone, once, without stopping to fix. Mark with a pencil any line you stumbled over or skipped because it bored you.
7. Give the play a title that does work: a phrase from the dialogue, an object on stage or a hint of the turn.

Check your work

- One place, continuous time, two to four characters.
- The trouble begins by page 2, and a reversal or recognition comes near the end.
- No character explains what the other already knows, and no character delivers the moral.
- Dialogue punctuation is clean: no quotation marks, dashes for interruptions, ellipses for trailing off (Style Clinic).
- Directions are in present tense and active voice, and show only what can be seen or heard.
- The last page shows something that could not have happened on the first.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Magistrate’s questions from “Common assault?” to “Homicide, then!” and note how each raises the stakes.

2. Write five premises in one sentence each. At least one should borrow the shape (not the story) of a scene from Scripture.
3. Write a first line for your play that a judge could not stop reading after.

History note. Lady Gregory (1852–1932) helped W. B. Yeats found the Abbey Theatre in Dublin. *Spreading the News* was on the bill of the Abbey’s opening night, December 27, 1904, and became one of its most popular plays. Her “Removable Magistrate” was a government-appointed official in rural Ireland, often an outsider; the Magistrate’s boast about the Andaman Islands marks him as a man who once served in a distant colonial post and expects to find trouble everywhere.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuating dialogue for the stage.** Grammar Level 3’s punctuation mastery applies with three changes. (1) No quotation marks: the character name does their work. (2) The dash marks an interruption or a sharp change of thought; Lady Gregory’s Policeman, interrupted by his own caution, says “Apples mostly--and sweets.” Type an em dash (—) in your own script. Use it when a speaker is cut off by another or catches himself: “I never said she—” (3) The ellipsis (...) marks trailing off, not interruption: “If Father were here...” Keep the comma with direct address (“my good woman”) and the question mark that turns every one of the Magistrate’s guesses into pressure. Do not use exclamation points for volume; save them, as Lady Gregory does, for the moment a man leaps to “Homicide, then!”

For families. Lady Gregory’s Irish speech (“your honour,” “it’s common enough”) is gentle and clean. *Spreading the News* is a good family read-aloud of about thirty minutes; the gossip at its center grows to include a rumor that Bartley has run off with another man’s wife, which the play treats as plain foolishness. Students should write their own original play; most contests, including Princeton’s, require original, unpublished work. Encourage your student to draft quickly and resist revising until the table read in 4.4.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student premise: “A play about forgiveness.” Make it playable.

1. A theme is not a premise. Ask who, wants what, from whom, where.
2. Find an object that can carry the theme on stage: a letter, a debt, a broken tool.
3. Put the obstacle in another character in the same room.

Answer: “In the back room of the hardware store he is about to inherit, a young man wants his father’s old partner to sign away his share, but the partner will sign only if the son reads aloud the letter his father left him.” The theme of forgiveness is still there, but now it can be acted.

Example 2. Revise this opening exposition:

MOTHER. As you know, Jim, your father has been gone for six months, and we have to sell the farm because the bank is calling the loan.

1. Find a conflict that forces the facts out. Who in the room does not want to sell?
2. Let one fact come out as a weapon and another as a shield.
3. Use an object on stage.

Answer: (*MOTHER sets a letter on the table. JIM does not pick it up.*)

MOTHER. It's from the bank.

JIM. I can read an envelope.

MOTHER. Then read what's in it.

JIM. Dad never once let them tell him what to do with this ground.

MOTHER. Your dad isn't here, Jim. Six months now. You keep setting his place.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a premise? Give the one-sentence pattern.
2. **EASY** By what page should the inciting incident come in a ten-minute play?
3. **EASY** Define reversal and recognition.
4. **MEDIUM** How do the Magistrate's questions in the model foreshadow the plot of *Spreading the News*?
5. **MEDIUM** What does the Policeman want, and how does that want help the comedy?
6. **MEDIUM** Name three endings that contest judges see too often.
7. **CHALLENGE** Borrow the shape of Nathan and David (2 Samuel 12) for a modern premise without retelling the story.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT-style): Is gossip ever harmless? Write a short argumentative essay using *Spreading the News*, Proverbs 26:20 and one example from history or experience.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting with a theme or a message instead of a character who wants something.
- Spending the first three pages on exposition before the trouble starts.
- Adding a second location or a flashback that a ten-minute play cannot afford.
- Letting a character preach the moral in the last speech.

Make it a game · Telephone Fair. Players sit in a circle. The first whispers one true, ordinary sentence ("Mr. Fallon picked up Jack's hayfork and went down the road after him"). Each player passes it on but may add one "likely" detail. The last player announces the final version. Then trace back together where the story changed, and name the beat in a play that each change would make.

Scripture. “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.” (Proverbs 26:20, KJV)

Lady Gregory’s whole play is a fire built from talebearers’ sticks; your play, too, should know what feeds its strife.

Practice: answers

1. The play in one sentence: “[Character] wants [goal] but [obstacle], in [place].”
2. By the end of page 2.
3. Reversal (peripeteia): an action produces the opposite of what was intended. Recognition (anagnorisis): a character learns a truth he did not know.
4. Each question imagines a worse crime (assault, agrarian crime, homicide) out of nothing; the play shows the town turning a kind act into a murder in the same way.
5. He wants to keep his new superior satisfied, so he agrees with every guess; his agreement feeds the Magistrate’s imagination.
6. It was all a dream; a sudden death that solves the writer’s problem; a speech in which a character explains what he learned.
7. Sample: “A foreman wants to fire a young worker for stealing tools, but the old mechanic he trusts tells him a story about a man who took another man’s truck, and the foreman condemns that man before he realizes the story is about the time he took his own brother’s.”
8. Sample thesis: “Gossip is never harmless, because it hands a man’s name to people who have no duty to protect it; Lady Gregory’s comedy makes us laugh at a town that turns a returned hayfork into a murder, but the laughter depends on our knowing that a real town could do the same.” Body paragraphs would treat the play, Solomon’s image of fire without wood, and an example; the strongest essays would answer the objection that some talk is only harmless news.

4.4 THE TABLE READ AND THE FINAL SCRIPT

OBJECTIVES

- Organize and run a table read of your own play, listening and marking instead of defending.
- Use Hamlet’s advice to the players as a standard for both the lines you write and the way they are spoken.
- Revise the play to ten pages or fewer and prepare it for the Princeton Ten-Minute Play Contest.

Warm-up. Read this sentence aloud three times, stressing a different word each time: “I never said he took the money.” Write down the three different meanings. What does this tell you about lines on a page?

Video slot. Video coming. Hamlet’s advice to the players, “Speak the speech, I pray you” (a performance or lesson from a Shakespeare theater or university); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

table read

A reading of a new script by actors seated around a table, scripts in hand, without staging, so the playwright can hear the play.

cold read

A reading by actors who have not seen the script before. It reveals which lines are clear on first sight.

dead spot

A stretch of a play where attention drops because nothing changes: no new tactic, no new information.

running time

How long the play takes in performance. A table read gives a close estimate.

o’erdone

Hamlet’s word for overacting (and, by extension, overwriting): “anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing.”

CORE IDEAS

Hearing the play. No playwright knows what he has written until he hears it. Professional theaters begin almost every new play the same way: actors sit around a table and read the script aloud, and the writer listens. Lines that looked witty on the page fall flat; a silence the writer never noticed becomes the best moment in the play; a speech that seemed necessary turns out to be the place where everyone’s eyes drift to the window. You have read your draft

to yourself. Now you will hear it in other voices, and you will learn more in thirty minutes than in a week of silent revision.

Setting up the read. Gather one reader for each character, plus one more to read the stage directions (only the essential ones: entrances, exits and actions the dialogue depends on). Family members, a co-op class or friends all work; they need not be actors. Give each reader a clean, numbered copy, and assign parts in advance so they can glance over them, though a cold read is useful too. Start a stopwatch. Do not play a part yourself. Your job is to sit with a pencil and a copy of your own, marking every stumble (X), every laugh (☺), every moment of confusion (?) and every dead spot (—). At the end, write down the running time.

Hamlet's standard. In the model, Hamlet coaches a company of traveling actors before they perform for the court. His advice is a rule for writers as much as for actors. Lines should come “trippingly on the tongue”: if your readers trip, rewrite the line. Do not “saw the air” or “tear a passion to tatters”: if your characters shout in every speech, the one shout that matters will be lost. But “be not too tame neither.” Most of all, “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.” Every line should be something a person would actually do with words: accuse, confess, bargain, refuse. And the end of playing, Hamlet says, is “to hold as ’twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image.” A good play shows virtue as lovely and vice as ugly, because they are.

Taking notes with meekness. After the read, thank your readers and ask questions instead of giving explanations. Three questions are enough: What happened in the play? Where were you confused? What did you want to happen that didn't? If a reader misunderstood your turn, do not explain what you meant; that explanation will not be in the room when the judge reads the script. Write the answer down and fix the page. This is where the year's verse becomes practical: “be ready always to give an answer... with meekness and fear.” A writer who argues with every note learns nothing. “Iron sharpeneth iron” (Proverbs 27:17), but only if the iron holds still.

Revising to ten pages. Revise in this order. First, cut: any line that repeats what the audience already knows, any beat that repeats a tactic, any direction the actors did not need. Most first drafts lose a page or two this way and get better. Second, sharpen the turn: if readers missed it, it is too quiet or too early; if they saw it coming from page 1, plant fewer clues. Third, fix every line marked X so it is easy to say aloud. Fourth, rewrite the last line until it is the best line in the play. Finally, check the format from 4.2 and count: the play must be ten pages or fewer in standard format.

The contest. *Summary as of October 2026; confirm everything on the official contest page and use the official online form.* The Princeton University Ten-Minute Play Contest, run by the Lewis Center for the Arts, is open only to students in the eleventh grade in the United States (or the international equivalent). Each student may submit one play of no more than ten pages (one page is about one minute). The contest page says the online submission form for the 2026–27 contest will open in January 2027; the contest closes when it reaches 250 entries or on March 31, 2027, at 12:00 p.m. Eastern time, whichever comes first. Because the entry cap can close the contest early, plan to have your final script ready by the end of

December and submit as soon as the form opens. A guest playwright judges. Prizes have been \$500, \$250 and \$100, and winners are notified by email in early summer.

The finished piece. When you submit, keep a copy of the final script and the table-read notes in your portfolio. Whether or not the play wins, you will have done what every playwright does: written a scene, heard it fail in places, and made it better in front of witnesses.

The model. *William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (about 1600), Act 3, Scene 2, Project Gutenberg #1524*

SCENE II. A hall in the Castle.

Enter Hamlet and certain Players.

HAMLET.

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who, for the most part, are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.

FIRST PLAYER.

I warrant your honour.

HAMLET.

Be not too tame neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure

PICTURE STUDY



The Play Scene in Hamlet, Daniel Maclise, 1842 · Oil on canvas · Tate Britain, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Hamlet has asked the traveling players to perform a play about a king murdered by poison poured in his ear, the same crime he suspects his uncle Claudius of committing. “The play’s the thing,” he says, “wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.” Maclise paints the instant the stage murder happens. Nobody is watching the stage, though: everyone who matters is watching someone in the audience. A table read works the same way. The playwright watches the listeners.

Look closely

- Find Hamlet. Where is he, and whom is he watching?
- Find the player pouring the poison on the little stage at the back. Look at the shadow it throws on the wall behind.
- Find King Claudius and the Queen. How does Maclise show that the king’s conscience has been caught?

Talk about it

1. Hamlet uses a play to show a man the truth about himself, as Nathan did with David. Write a paragraph on whether a play can do this for its audience, and how.
2. List five different reactions you can see in the faces of the court. Which would you most want to see at your table read, and why?

WRITING PROJECT: TABLE READ, REVISION AND SUBMISSION

Hear your play read aloud, revise it to a final script of ten pages or fewer, and prepare it for the Princeton Ten-Minute Play Contest.

You will need

- Your 4.3 draft, with one clean, page-numbered copy for each reader and one for you
- Readers (one per character, plus one for stage directions)
- A pencil, a stopwatch and a notebook
- The official contest page and form (arts.princeton.edu, High School Contests)

Steps

1. Assign parts and give out scripts. Explain that readers should read clearly and simply, without acting it up.
2. Run the read with a stopwatch. Mark stumbles (X), laughs (☺), confusion (?) and dead spots (—). Do not stop the read or explain anything.
3. Afterward, ask your three questions (What happened? Where were you confused? What did you want that didn't happen?) and write the answers down without arguing.
4. Revise in order: cut, sharpen the turn, fix every X line, rewrite the last line.
5. Check the format from 4.2 and count the pages. The play must be ten pages or fewer in standard format.
6. Read the revised play aloud once more, ideally with one new reader, and time it.
7. With a parent, read the official contest rules for this year, complete the form and submit when it opens. Save the final script and table-read notes in your portfolio.

Check your work

- The play is ten pages or fewer in standard format, with a title page and cast list.
- Every line marked X at the table read has been rewritten or cut.
- The turn is clear to a first-time reader, and the last line is strong.
- Parallel structures in dialogue and directions are truly parallel (Style Clinic).
- Directions are in present tense and active voice; dialogue punctuation is clean.
- I have read the current official rules and followed every formatting and entry requirement.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Hamlet's second speech, from "Be not too tame neither" to "form and pressure," by hand.
2. Write a one-paragraph account of your table read: what surprised you, what you cut, and what you kept against advice and why.
3. Copy the best line of your play on its own page. Under it, write the line it replaced.

History note. Daniel Maclise (1806–1870), born in Cork, Ireland, exhibited *The Play Scene in Hamlet* at the Royal Academy in 1842; it now belongs to Tate. Shakespeare’s company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, would have heard Hamlet’s advice as a joke about their own trade: “out-Herods Herod” refers to the ranting King Herod of the old medieval mystery plays, and Termagant was a stage villain in the same tradition.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism.** Grammar Level 3 taught that items joined in a series or pair should share the same grammatical form. Hamlet is a master of it: “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action”; “to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image.” Parallel lines are easy to say and easy to remember, which is why actors love them. Check your stage directions for faulty parallelism: “She picks up the fork, looking at it, and then to throw it down” mixes a verb, a participle and an infinitive. Fix: “She picks up the fork, looks at it and throws it down.” Use parallel structure on purpose in one key speech of your play, perhaps at the turn, and nowhere it sounds like a speech.

For families. A table read needs no stage and no skill, only willing readers; grandparents and younger siblings make fine casts, and the play should be clean enough for them to read. The contest summary is based on the Princeton Lewis Center for the Arts contest page as of October 2026. Rules, dates and prize amounts can change each year, so read the official page and form yourself before your student submits. Eligibility is limited to eleventh graders, so a Grade 11 student should enter this year; the contest cannot be entered in Grade 12.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. At a table read, three readers stumbled on this line: “MOTHER. Notwithstanding the fact that your father, who never once in thirty years asked anyone for help, would have been ashamed, I still think we should call your uncle.” Revise it.

1. Find the core: she wants to call the uncle, and she knows it would shame the father.
2. Break the long, clause-heavy sentence into short ones a person would actually say.
3. Put the hardest truth last.

Answer: MOTHER. I’m calling your uncle. (*Beat.*) Your father would hate it. Thirty years, he never asked anybody for anything. (*She picks up the phone.*)

Example 2. The table read ran 12 minutes 40 seconds on 12 pages. Readers said the middle dragged. Where do you cut?

1. Look at the dead spots (—) marked on pages 4–7.
2. Check whether any beat repeats a tactic. Here, the son pleads three times in a row.
3. Keep the strongest plea, cut the other two, and cut the explanation of the backstory on page 5 that readers already understood from page 2.

Answer: Cutting two repeated beats and a half-page of backstory brings the play to 9½ pages and about 9½ minutes, and the turn on page 7 now arrives while attention is still high.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a table read?
2. **EASY** What should the playwright do during the table read?
3. **EASY** Who may enter the Princeton Ten-Minute Play Contest, and how many plays may each enter?
4. **MEDIUM** Explain “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action” as advice for a writer.
5. **MEDIUM** Why should a playwright not explain his meaning to readers who misunderstood it?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the faulty parallelism: “He opens the door, steps inside, and is looking for his coat.”
7. **CHALLENGE** According to Hamlet, what is the purpose of playing? Why might a Christian writer agree?
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, SAT/CLT-style): Hamlet says the actor must “acquire and beget a temperance” even in a “whirlwind of passion.” Argue whether self-control makes a performance (or a piece of writing) more powerful or less.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Acting a part in your own table read instead of listening.
- Arguing with readers’ notes instead of writing them down.
- Cramming a long play into ten pages by shrinking the font or margins.
- Waiting until March to submit, when the 250-entry cap may already have closed the contest.

Make it a game • Saw the Air. Each player takes one line from the student’s play (or from the model) and performs it three ways: “o’erdone” (tearing a passion to tatters), “too tame” and “suited to the word.” The others vote on which version was which and which best served the line.

Scripture. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."
(Proverbs 27:17, KJV)

The friends around your table are the iron that sharpens the play, if you receive their notes with meekness.

Practice: answers

1. A reading of a new script by actors seated around a table, scripts in hand, without staging, so the playwright can hear it.
2. Listen and mark the script (stumbles, laughs, confusion, dead spots), time it, and not act, stop the read or explain.
3. Only eleventh graders in the U.S. (or the international equivalent); one play each, no more than ten pages. Confirm on the official page.
4. Every line should be something a character actually does with words (accuse, confess, refuse), and every action on stage should match what is said; words and actions should fit each other.
5. Because the explanation will not be on the page when a judge or audience meets the play; the page itself must be fixed.
6. He opens the door, steps inside and looks for his coat.
7. "To hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image." A Christian writer agrees because truthfulness requires showing virtue as lovely and vice as ugly, as they really are (Ephesians 4:25).
8. Sample thesis: "Self-control makes passion more powerful, not less, because an audience feels the force being held back; the actor who tears a passion to tatters spends it all at once, while the one who masters it makes every listener wait for the moment it breaks through." Evidence might include Hamlet, Brutus's controlled fury in 4.3 and a speech or sermon remembered for its restraint.

UNIT 4 REVIEW

The student answers in writing. Short answers are scored for accuracy; writing tasks are scored with the unit's revision checklists. Allow 50 minutes.

1. (4 pts) Define a beat and a scene.
2. (6 pts) Name three tactics Brutus and Cassius use in the opening of *Julius Caesar* 4.3, with a short quotation for each.
3. (3 pts) What is subtext? Give the example from 4.3.
4. (2 pts) What progymnasmata exercise lies behind dramatic dialogue? Define it.
5. (4 pts) Name the four parts of a ten-minute play script.
6. (4 pts) Rewrite as a proper stage direction: "Mary was feeling nervous and remembered her brother as the clock was being looked at by her."
7. (4 pts) Define reversal and recognition, and say where the turn usually falls in a ten-minute play.
8. (3 pts) How does Lady Gregory slip exposition into the opening of *Spreading the News*?
9. (2 pts) Punctuate for a script: (a) a line in which Jack is cut off after "I never said she"; (b) a line in which Mother trails off after "If your father were here".
10. (4 pts) Quote Hamlet's statement of the purpose of playing, and explain it in one sentence.
11. (2 pts) Fix the faulty parallelism: "He sets down the bag, opening it, and to take out the letter."
12. (6 pts) Write a one-sentence premise for a ten-minute play, and name its inciting incident and its turn.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: MY TEN-MINUTE PLAY

Place the final script of your ten-minute play (ten pages or fewer, with title page and cast list) in your Grade 11 portfolio, followed by your table-read notes and a one-paragraph reflection on what you changed after hearing it read and why.

- **Action and structure:** One place, continuous time, two to four characters; the trouble begins by page 2, and a clear, earned turn comes near the end.
- **Dialogue:** Every speech is a tactic; characters do not announce feelings or explain what both know; lines are easy to say aloud.
- **Format and directions:** Standard format throughout; directions are brief, in present tense and active voice, and show only what can be seen or heard; ten pages or fewer.
- **Revision and truthfulness:** Table-read notes show real changes; the play shows virtue and vice truthfully without preaching, and mechanics (dialogue punctuation, parallelism) are clean.

Answer key

1. A beat is the smallest unit of change in a scene, when a character tries a new tactic. A scene is a unit of a play in one place and continuous time.
2. Three of: complain ("That you have wrong'd me"), deflect ("You wrong'd yourself"), minimize ("every nice offence"), accuse ("an itching palm"), threaten ("this speech were else your last"), shame ("Remember March").
3. What a character means or feels under what he says. Brutus is harsh partly because Portia has died, which he reveals only later in the scene.
4. Ethopoeia: writing the words a particular person would say in a particular situation.
5. Title page, cast of characters, setting and time, the play.
6. Sample: (MARY looks at the clock, then at the empty chair by the door.)
7. Reversal: an action produces the opposite of what was intended. Recognition: a character learns a truth he did not know. The turn usually comes around page 7 or 8.
8. Through conflict and character: the Magistrate's complaint ("Cattle and sheep and mud") sets the scene, and his boast about the Andaman Islands gives his past.
9. (a) JACK. I never said she— (b) MOTHER. If your father were here...
10. "To hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image." Drama should show virtue and vice truthfully, as they really are.
11. He sets down the bag, opens it and takes out the letter.
12. Sample: "A boy wants his grandfather to sign the papers selling the family store, but the grandfather will sign only after the boy finds the ledger his father hid." Inciting incident: the boy arrives with the papers. Turn: the ledger shows the father kept the store alive with his own savings.

POETRY WORKSHOP

A poem is made, and most of the making is revision. In this creative-writing unit you will watch the masters revise: Yeats rewriting “The Sorrow of Love” across thirty years, Frost turning “a dented spider” into “a dimpled” one, and Keats sharpening his sonnet on Chapman’s Homer the morning after an all-night reading. You will learn the manners of a workshop from Alexander Pope and from Scripture’s rule of truth seasoned with grace, give and receive honest critique, bring three poems to finished form through five passes of revision, and send them, with a parent, to the Bennington Young Writers Awards, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards or the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has written several poems in earlier grades (rhymed and unrhymed) and knows basic terms: line, stanza, rhyme, meter, image.
- Can write a clear analytical paragraph that quotes a text exactly.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can compare two versions of a poem and name what changed in words, images, sound and structure.
- ☐ I can give a workshop critique that describes, praises exactly, questions and suggests, and I can receive critique without defending my poem.
- ☐ I can revise a poem in five passes (sense, sight, sound, shape, sum) and keep a dated draft log.
- ☐ I can choose and order three poems as a set with range and unity.
- ☐ I can read a contest’s official rules, match my poems to them, and submit a clean manuscript with a parent.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **W. B. Yeats, Poems (Project Gutenberg #38877)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/38877>): The early text of “The Sorrow of Love” and Yeats’s prefaces on revising.
- **Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism (Project Gutenberg #7409)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/7409>): Part III gives the “morals” of a good critic.
- **John Keats, Poems 1817 (Project Gutenberg #8209)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8209>): Includes “On first looking into Chapman’s Homer” and other early sonnets for imitation.
- **William Michael Rossetti, Life of John Keats (Project Gutenberg #31682)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31682>): The 1887 biography; tells the story of the all-night reading of Chapman.
- **Official contest pages: Bennington, Scholastic, Foyle**
(<https://www.bennington.edu/ywa>): Free. Also see artandwriting.org (Scholastic) and

foyleyoungpoets.org (Foyle). Always use the current official rules.

5.1 REVISION BY THE MASTERS: YEATS AND FROST ✍️ ★

OBJECTIVES

- Compare two versions of a poem by Yeats and name exactly what changed: word, image, sound and structure.
- Explain from summary how Frost revised “In White” into “Design,” and what one changed word did to the poem.
- Revise one of your own earlier poems in four passes and write a short revision note comparing the versions.

Warm-up. Ben Jonson wrote that the actors praised Shakespeare because he “never blotted out line,” and that he answered, “Would he had blotted a thousand.” In two minutes, write whether Jonson was paying Shakespeare a compliment or an insult, and why.

Video slot. Video coming. W. B. Yeats manuscripts and revisions (an exhibition talk, for example the National Library of Ireland Yeats exhibition), or Robert Frost reading his poems; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

revision

Literally “seeing again”: changing a draft so that it says more truly and more exactly what it means. Not the same as proofreading.

variant

A different reading of the same line or word in another version of a poem. Scholars print variants side by side to study a poet’s choices.

concrete image

A picture made of things the senses can take hold of (a sparrow, a moon, a ship), as opposed to an abstraction (sorrow, trouble, beauty).

diction

Word choice. Revising diction means asking whether each word is the most exact, fitting and alive word for its place.

canon of style

The third of the five canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery): choosing and ordering words with clarity, propriety and fitting ornament.

CORE IDEAS

Poems are made. The Greek word behind “poet,” *poiētēs*, means “maker,” and makers work in drafts. The old idea that a true poet writes in one burst of inspiration is mostly a legend.

Ben Jonson, who loved Shakespeare, still wished he had “blotted a thousand” lines. In this unit you will do what the masters did: write, set the draft aside, come back with fresh eyes, and change it. That is the canon of style at work, and in poetry it is most of the labor.

Yeats at twenty-seven and at sixty. W. B. Yeats first printed “The Sorrow of Love” in 1892, in *The Countess Kathleen and Various Legends and Lyrics*. The version in the model below comes from his *Poems* (1895), which he kept reprinting. Notice its plan: in stanza one the noise of the world (sparrows, moon, leaves) hides humanity’s “old and weary cry”; in stanza two a woman appears and brings “the whole of the world’s tears”; in stanza three the very same sparrows, moon and leaves now seem shaken by that cry. The poem turns on one change in the speaker. Thirty years later, for *Early Poems and Stories* (1925), Yeats rewrote nearly every line. The quarreling sparrows became “The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,” and the woman was compared to figures from Homer: Odysseus and his “labouring ships,” and King Priam of Troy.

What the old master changed. Set the two versions side by side and four kinds of change appear. *Words*: “quarrel” became “brawling,” a rougher, louder word. *Images*: vague phrases like “all the trouble of her myriad years” gave way to definite people from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. *Sound*: the soft repetitions (“And all the trouble ... And all the trouble”) were replaced with harder consonants. *Structure*: the early poem is three stanzas of the same pattern; the late one runs its last two stanzas together in a single long sentence that ends on “man’s image and his cry.” Scholars still argue about which version is better. That argument is itself the lesson: you cannot judge a revision until you can name what changed.

“It is myself that I remake.” In his 1912 preface to *Poems*, Yeats wrote that he had “not again retouched the lyric poems of my youth, fearing some stupidity in my middle years.” He went back and retouched them anyway. Years before, he had answered friends who complained about his rewriting with a quatrain that ends, “It is myself that I remake.” He meant that a poet revises because he has grown, and he wants the poem to be as true as he now is. For a Christian writer that is a good motive. We revise not to look clever but to tell the truth more exactly (Ephesians 4:25), and to give the reader our best work rather than our first.

Frost’s spider (summary). Frost’s drafts are still under copyright, so we summarize them. In 1912 he sent a friend a sonnet called “In White,” about a white spider on a white flower holding a dead white moth. It opened with “a dented spider.” Years later he published the finished poem as “Design,” and it opens with “a dimpled spider, fat and white.” One word changed the creature from something broken and pitiful into something plump and almost babyish, and that makes the scene of death more chilling, not less. Frost also changed the title from a color to an idea, and he sharpened the ending into a hard question about whether any design rules things so small. The surviving manuscript of “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” shows the same habit: lines struck through and rewritten in a poem readers often imagine came all at once.

The four passes. From these masters we take a method. Revise in four separate passes, each with one question. *Words*: Is every word exact? Could a plain verb or noun replace an

adjective? *Images*: Where am I telling (sorrow, beauty) instead of showing (a sparrow, a ship)? *Sound*: Read the poem aloud; where does the tongue stumble, and is the stumble on purpose? *Structure*: Does the poem turn at the right place, and does the title do work? Doing one pass at a time keeps you from fiddling with commas while the real problem goes unseen.

Your task. Choose a poem you wrote in an earlier grade, or a draft from this year. Copy it out untouched, then revise it in the four passes, keeping every draft. Finally write a revision note, the way a scholar writes about Yeats: quote your old line, quote your new one, and say in plain sentences why the new one is better. Keep these drafts. In 5.3 you will choose your three best poems, and in 5.4 you will send them out.

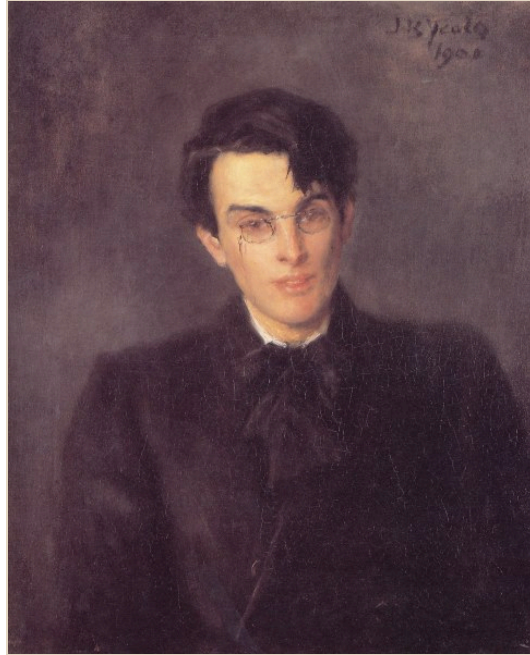
The model. *W. B. Yeats, "The Sorrow of Love," from Poems (T. Fisher Unwin, 1895; later printings), Project Gutenberg #38877*

The quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves,
The full round moon and the star-laden sky,
And the loud song of the ever-singing leaves,
Had hid away earth's old and weary cry.

And then you came with those red mournful lips,
And with you came the whole of the world's tears
And all the trouble of her labouring ships,
And all the trouble of her myriad years.

And now the sparrows warring in the eaves,
The curd-pale moon, the white stars in the sky,
And the loud chaunting of the unquiet leaves,
Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry.

PICTURE STUDY



William Butler Yeats, Poet, John Butler Yeats, 1900 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The poet's father, John Butler Yeats, was a portrait painter who talked as brilliantly as he painted. He made this portrait of his son, then about thirty-four, in only three sittings, and wrote to Lady Gregory that it caught the young man "as if in full tide of talk." The father was famous for never finishing anything: he scraped out and repainted portraits again and again. The son, as you have seen, did the same with his poems.

Look closely

- Find the places where the brushstrokes are loose and quick. Where are they most careful?
- Look at the angle of the head and shoulders. Is the sitter at rest or about to speak?
- Notice what the painter left out of the background. What does the plainness do for the face?

Talk about it

1. John Butler Yeats painted this in three sittings; his son rewrote "The Sorrow of Love" over thirty years. Write a paragraph on when a work of art should be left quick and when it should be labored over.
2. Write a short poem (8-12 lines) in the voice of the man in the portrait, beginning in the middle of a sentence, "as if in full tide of talk."

WRITING PROJECT: RE-SEEING AN OLD POEM

Revise one of your earlier poems in four passes, the way Yeats and Frost revised theirs, and write a revision note of 250–350 words that compares the versions.

Keep every draft, dated. You will need them in 5.3 and 5.4.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- One poem you wrote earlier (any grade), or a new draft of 10–30 lines
- Two colors of pen
- The model poem in this lesson

Steps

1. Copy your old poem by hand, unchanged, and date it “Draft 1.” Then copy the model poem by hand, slowly, as copywork.
2. Pass one, words: circle every adjective and every weak verb (is, was, got, went). Replace at least four with more exact words, or cut them.
3. Pass two, images: underline every abstract noun (sorrow, beauty, love). Turn at least two into concrete things a reader could see, hear or touch.
4. Pass three, sound: read the poem aloud twice. Mark with a slash every place you stumble. Fix the stumbles you did not intend.
5. Pass four, structure: find the turn of the poem. Move it, sharpen it, or add one if there is none. Rethink the title: does it name a thing, or an idea that the poem earns?
6. Write out a clean copy as “Draft 2.” Then write your revision note: quote at least three old lines and their new forms, and explain each change in one or two sentences.
7. Read both drafts aloud to a parent without saying which is which. Ask which one is stronger and why.

Check your work

- I revised in four separate passes: words, images, sound, structure.
- I quoted my old and new lines exactly in the revision note, with quotation marks.
- Each modifier in my poem sits next to the word it modifies; no dangling or misplaced modifiers.
- My revision note uses complete sentences and keeps one tense when describing what I did.
- Both drafts are dated and kept.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model poem by hand. Under it, list every word that appears in both stanza one and stanza three, and every word that changed.

2. Make a two-column page headed “Telling” and “Showing.” Fill the first column with five abstract words (sorrow, joy, time, faith, home) and the second with a concrete image for each.
3. Copy Yeats’s line from his 1912 preface: “fearing some stupidity in my middle years.” Write two sentences on whether a writer should ever revise old work.

History note. Yeats (1865–1939) revised throughout his life and won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1923. Many of his early poems exist in three or more printed versions; scholars compare them in “variorum” editions that print every variant. Frost (1874–1963) published his first book, *A Boy’s Will*, in England in 1913, when he was nearly forty.

 **Style Clinic. Modifiers.** Frost’s change from “dented” to “dimpled” is a lesson in modifiers: one adjective can change the whole moral color of a noun. Review the Level 3 rules. (1) Place a modifier next to what it modifies: not “Shaken by the wind, the poet watched the leaves,” unless the poet is shaking, but “The poet watched the leaves, shaken by the wind.” (2) A participial phrase that opens a sentence must modify the subject: “Revising the poem, the title seemed weak” dangles; write “Revising the poem, I saw that the title was weak.” (3) In poems, prefer one exact modifier to two vague ones: “fat and white” works because both words are physical and plain.

For families. Yeats’s early text is printed from Project Gutenberg #38877. The two later lines quoted from his 1925 version and the short phrases from Frost’s “In White” and “Design” are quoted briefly under fair use; Frost’s drafts and later poems are summarized, not reproduced. The model poem is a love poem in a melancholy key; it is mild, but you may want to read it first. This year’s faith verse, 1 Peter 3:15, asks for answers given “with meekness and fear”; revision is a small daily practice of that meekness: admitting the first draft was not yet right.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Compare the first lines of Yeats’s two versions: 1895, “The quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves”; 1925, “The brawling of a sparrow in the eaves.” Name what changed and say what the change does.

1. Words: “quarrel” (a noun of argument, almost polite) became “brawling” (a street fight, noisy and physical).
2. Number: many sparrows became one sparrow. One small bird making that much noise is sharper and a little comic.
3. Sound: “brawling” opens with a hard double consonant, br-, where “quarrel” glides.

Answer: Yeats made the line louder and more exact. One sparrow “brawling” is a definite, noisy picture; the world’s racket becomes physical, which sets up the cry that it later hides.

Example 2. A student's draft line: "The old barn was very sad and lonely in the cold." Revise it in the four passes.

1. Words: cut "very"; "sad and lonely" tells a feeling instead of showing one.
2. Images: what makes a barn look lonely? A door off its hinge, swallows gone, snow drifting in.
3. Sound and structure: shorten to fit a line of about ten syllables; end on the strongest word.

Answer: Revised: "The barn door swings on one hinge in the snow." The reader now sees the loneliness and feels the cold without being told.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does "revision" mean literally, and how is it different from proofreading?
2. **EASY** In the model, what three things of nature appear in both the first and the last stanza?
3. **EASY** What word did Frost change at the start of his spider sonnet, and to what?
4. **MEDIUM** In stanza one of the model, the world's noise "Had hid away earth's old and weary cry." In stanza three the same things "Are shaken with" it. What has happened between, and what does it do to the poem?
5. **MEDIUM** Why might Yeats have replaced "all the trouble of her myriad years" with figures from Homer?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: "Reading the two versions aloud, the second one sounded harsher."
7. **CHALLENGE** Yeats wrote that he feared "some stupidity in my middle years" if he retouched his early poems. Give one argument for revising old work and one against.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, SAT/CLT style analysis): In one well-organized paragraph of 200–250 words, explain how the repetition of the sparrows, moon and leaves in the first and last stanzas of the model builds the poem's meaning.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Treating revision as proofreading: fixing commas and calling the poem revised.
- Revising everything at once, so that no single pass gets real attention.
- Throwing away old drafts. Without them you cannot write a revision note or prove the work is your own.
- Adding adjectives to make a line "more poetic" when the cure is usually a stronger noun or verb.

Make it a game • Spot the Variant. A parent copies four lines of a poem the student has not memorized, changing one word in each line. The student reads both versions

aloud, guesses which word is the poet's, and defends the guess in one sentence. Score a point for each right guess and a bonus point for the best defense of a wrong one.

Scripture. "And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." (Jeremiah 18:4, KJV)

The potter does not throw the clay away; he makes it again, which is what a poet does with a marred draft.

Practice: answers

1. "Seeing again." Revision changes words, images, sound and structure to make the poem truer; proofreading only fixes spelling and punctuation.
2. The sparrows in the eaves, the moon (and stars or sky), and the leaves.
3. "Dented" became "dimpled."
4. The beloved has come and brought the world's tears with her. Now the speaker cannot stop hearing human sorrow in everything; the poem turns on that change in him.
5. To trade a vague abstraction for concrete, famous people (Odysseus, Priam) whose stories carry the weight of sorrow by themselves.
6. "Reading the two versions aloud, I heard that the second one was harsher."
7. Sample: For: a poet sees more as he matures, and the poem should be as good as he can make it. Against: the young poem had a freshness the older man may smooth away, and readers may already love it as it was.
8. Sample opening: "Yeats frames 'The Sorrow of Love' with the same three sights so that the reader can measure the change in the speaker. In the first stanza the sparrows 'quarrel,' the moon is 'full round,' and the leaves sing; this busy beauty hides the 'old and weary cry' of the earth. In the last stanza the sparrows are 'warring,' the moon is 'curd-pale'..." A strong answer quotes exactly, names the turn in stanza two, and ends on what the repetition shows: love has opened the speaker's ears to sorrow.

5.2 WORKSHOP ETIQUETTE: TRUTH AND CANDOR

OBJECTIVES

- Follow the order of a poetry workshop: read twice, describe, praise exactly, question, suggest.
- Explain Pope’s “morals” for critics and match them to Scripture’s rules for speech.
- Give written and spoken critique of a classmate’s or sibling’s poem, and receive critique of your own without defending it.

Warm-up. Think of the most helpful correction anyone ever gave you, in sport, music, work or school. In three sentences, write what the person said and why it helped instead of stinging.

Video slot. Video coming. How a writing workshop works, or poets discussing a draft (a university or library writing-center channel); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

workshop

A meeting where writers read each other’s drafts and give careful critique so that each writer can revise.

critique

A reasoned judgment of a piece of writing that names strengths and weaknesses with evidence from the text. Not the same as complaint or flattery.

candor

Frank, honest, open speech, free from malice. Pope asks critics to let “truth and candor shine.”

diffidence

Modesty about one’s own judgment; holding an opinion humbly. Pope: “speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence.”

the writer’s silence

The common workshop rule that the author listens without explaining or defending while the group discusses the poem, then may ask questions at the end.

CORE IDEAS

Why a workshop. No writer can read his own poem as a stranger reads it. You know what you meant, so you see it on the page even when it is not there. A workshop gives you strangers, or friends willing to read like strangers. The habit is old. In the 1930s and 1940s a group of Oxford friends called the Inklings met in C. S. Lewis’s college rooms on Thursday evenings to read their work aloud and hear it criticized; J. R. R. Tolkien read chapters of

what became *The Lord of the Rings* there, and he later credited Lewis's steady encouragement with keeping him at it. (The Inklings' books are summarized here, not quoted.) Good company made good books.

The order of a workshop. A well-run workshop moves in five steps. *Read twice*: the writer reads the poem aloud, and then someone else reads it, so everyone hears it in a voice other than the author's. *Describe*: what does the poem say and do? Summarize it in a sentence or two before judging. If the readers cannot describe it, that is the first and most useful critique. *Praise exactly*: name a line, image or sound that works and say why. *Question*: ask about places that confused you. *Suggest*: offer one or two changes, phrased as possibilities, not orders. Through all of this the writer stays silent and takes notes.

Pope's morals for critics. In 1711 the young Alexander Pope, then about twenty-three, published *An Essay on Criticism* in rhyming couplets. Its third part, the model for this lesson, turns from knowledge to character: "'tis but half a judge's task to know." A critic must also be honest ("let truth and candor shine"), modest ("speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence"), willing to admit his own past mistakes, and tactful, because "Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do." Pope does not mean that a kind lie is better than the truth. He means that truth flung carelessly hurts and does not help, so a wise critic teaches "as if you taught them not."

Scripture's rule for speech. Pope was restating, in polished verse, what the Bible already teaches. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend" (Proverbs 27:6): honest critique is an act of friendship, and flattery is not. Paul tells us to put away lying and "speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25), and to let our speech "be alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). Grace without salt is flattery; salt without grace is cruelty. A Christian critic needs both. This year's verse, 1 Peter 3:15, adds that even a defense of the faith must be made "with meekness and fear." How much more a remark about someone's line break.

Critique the poem, not the poet. Speak about the words on the page: "The second stanza loses me," not "You don't make sense." Point to evidence: quote the line. Separate what the poem is trying to do from whether you like that kind of poem; judge it by its own aim first. Do not rewrite another writer's poem into your own. And keep the proportions: in most workshops, praise should come first and should be specific, because a writer needs to know what to keep as much as what to cut.

Receiving critique. When your own poem is on the table, your job is to listen. Do not explain what you meant; if the poem needs an explanation, the poem needs revision. Write down every comment, even the ones you think are wrong. Thank the readers. Then wait a day before deciding. "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15). Harkening does not mean obeying every suggestion. It means weighing each one honestly. If three readers stumble on the same line, the line is the problem, whatever they suggest as a fix.

A workshop at home. You do not need a classroom. A parent, an older sibling, a co-op class, or two friends who write will do. Meet with printed copies, pencils and a timer: about

ten minutes per poem. For this lesson you will run one workshop on a poem by someone else and one on the poem you revised in 5.1. Choose your readers carefully, and do not post drafts in public online groups. Some contests count a public post as publication, and you will want your best poems unpublished for 5.4.

The model. *Alexander Pope, An Essay on Criticism (1711), Part III, Project Gutenberg #7409*

Learn, then, what morals critics ought to show,
For 'tis but half a judge's task to know.
'Tis not enough, taste, judgment, learning, join;
In all you speak, let truth and candor shine:
That not alone what to your sense is due
All may allow, but seek your friendship too.

Be silent always, when you doubt your sense;
And speak, though sure, with seeming diffidence:
Some positive persisting fops we know,
Who, if once wrong will needs be always so;
But you, with pleasure, own your errors past,
And make each day a critique on the last.

'Tis not enough your counsel still be true;
Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do;
Men must be taught as if you taught them not,
And things unknown proposed as things forgot.
Without good breeding truth is disapproved;
That only makes superior sense beloved.

PICTURE STUDY



The Reading from Molière, Jean-François de Troy, about 1728 · Oil on canvas · Private collection
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Jean-François de Troy painted a small company of Parisians gathered in a richly paneled room on an autumn or winter afternoon. One man reads aloud from a little book, traditionally said to be a comedy by Molière, while the others listen. It is a picture of a literary evening in Pope's own century, when reading aloud and talking about what was read was a social art with its own manners.

Look closely

- Find the reader. How do the others show that they are listening?
- Look at the faces and hands. Who looks pleased, who doubtful, who distracted?
- Notice how close together the chairs are. What does the arrangement say about this kind of reading?

Talk about it

1. Imagine the reading is over. Write the first comment each of two listeners makes, one that follows Pope's advice and one that breaks it.
2. Write a paragraph comparing this gathering with a modern workshop. What manners should carry over?

WRITING PROJECT: TWO WORKSHOPS

Run two workshops: one on another writer's poem, where you are the critic, and one on your revised poem from 5.1, where you are the silent writer.

Write a one-page critique letter for the first, and a one-page response log for the second.

You will need

- Printed copies of two poems (one by a sibling, friend or parent; one your own Draft 2 from 5.1)
- Pencils, a timer
- Writing notebook

Steps

1. Before the first workshop, copy the model passage by hand and underline the four “morals” Pope names: truth, modesty, owning errors, tact.
2. Workshop one: read the other writer’s poem twice aloud. On your copy, write a one-sentence description at the top, mark two lines that work with a check, and mark one confusing place with a question mark.
3. Write a critique letter of 250–350 words: open with your description, praise two lines exactly with reasons, ask one or two questions, and offer at most two suggestions as possibilities.
4. Workshop two: hand out copies of your own poem. Read it once, have someone else read it again, then stay silent and write down every comment for ten minutes.
5. Thank your readers. Ask one question only at the end, such as “Where did you lose interest?”
6. A day later, write a response log: list each comment, mark it “accept,” “reject” or “consider,” and give a reason for each mark.

Check your work

- My critique letter quotes the poem exactly and points to specific lines.
- I praised before I suggested, and my suggestions are possibilities, not orders.
- I used the indicative mood for what I observed and the subjunctive or conditional for suggestions (“If the line were shorter ...”).
- Every pronoun in my letter has a clear antecedent (no vague “it” or “this”).
- My response log gives a reason for every comment I accepted or rejected.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Pope’s couplet “Men must be taught as if you taught them not, / And things unknown proposed as things forgot.” Under it, write it in plain prose.
2. List five phrases you can use to begin a workshop comment (for example, “I noticed ...,” “I wondered whether ...,” “What if ...”).
3. Copy Proverbs 27:6 and Colossians 4:6. Write one sentence on how “salt” and “grace” balance each other.

History note. Pope (1688–1744) published *An Essay on Criticism* anonymously in 1711. It gave English several proverbs still in use, such as “A little learning is a dang’rous

thing” and “To err is human, to forgive divine.” Jean-François de Troy (1679-1752) was a French painter known for such “conversation pieces,” scenes of polite society at leisure.

 **Style Clinic. Voice and mood.** Mood shows the writer’s attitude toward a statement. Use the *indicative* for what you observed: “The third line has eleven syllables and slows the stanza.” Use the *subjunctive* or a conditional for suggestions: “If the third line were shorter, the stanza would move faster,” or “I suggest that the title be cut to one word.” Save the *imperative* (“Cut the title”) for your own drafts. Notice that Pope addresses critics in the imperative (“Learn,” “Be silent,” “speak”) because he is giving rules to critics, not to poets. Prefer the active voice in critique, too: “I lost the thread in stanza two,” not “The thread was lost.”

For families. The model is printed from Project Gutenberg #7409, which uses modernized spelling (“proposed,” “disapproved”). Note the old sense of “nice” in “nice falsehoods,” meaning delicate or subtle, and “fops,” meaning vain fools. A home workshop works best with clear time limits and a parent who models praise first. If your student joins an online writing group, choose a private, moderated one: many contests, including the Foyle Young Poets award, accept only poems that have not appeared anywhere, including on social media. The Inklings material is summarized from well-known biography; no copyrighted text is quoted.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student writes this comment on a classmate’s poem: “This is confusing and the ending is bad. You should rewrite it.” Revise the comment by Pope’s morals.

1. Truth: is anything in the comment specific? No line is quoted; “bad” is a verdict, not a reason.
2. Diffidence: “You should rewrite it” is an order aimed at the poet, not the poem.
3. Tact and order: begin with what works; then name the confusing place; then suggest a possibility.

Answer: Revised: “The image of the frozen pump in stanza one is sharp; I could hear the handle squeak. In the last stanza I lost track of who ‘he’ is: the grandfather or the speaker’s father? If the name were repeated in the final line, I think the ending would land harder.”

Example 2. In a workshop, three readers say the middle stanza of your poem drags. You love the middle stanza. Write your response log entry.

1. Count the agreement: three readers, one problem. The stanza is the problem, even if their fixes differ.
2. Do not argue with the readers. Ask what the stanza is for, and whether that purpose could be served in fewer lines.
3. Decide after a day.

Answer: Log: “Comment: middle stanza drags (three readers). Mark: accept. Reason: three readers agree, and when I read it aloud I rushed through it myself. Plan: keep the two lines about the lantern, cut the four lines of explanation, and test the shorter version on one reader.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five steps of a workshop in order.
2. **EASY** Why does the writer stay silent during the discussion?
3. **EASY** According to Pope, what is “but half a judge’s task”?
4. **MEDIUM** Explain in plain words: “Blunt truths more mischief than nice falsehoods do.” Is Pope approving of lies?
5. **MEDIUM** Change this order into a suggestion in the subjunctive: “Cut the last two lines.”
6. **MEDIUM** Match each verse to a workshop habit: Proverbs 27:6; Proverbs 12:15; Colossians 4:6.
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a three-sentence workshop comment on the model passage itself, as if Pope had brought it to your group.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, ACT/CLT style argument): “Honest criticism is the highest form of friendship.” Write a short essay of 300–400 words taking a position. Use one example from history or literature and one from your own experience.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Flattering instead of critiquing (“I loved it!”), which gives the writer nothing to work with.
- Rewriting someone else’s poem into the poem you would have written.
- Defending or explaining your poem while it is being discussed.
- Giving ten suggestions at once. One or two that matter are worth more.

Make it a game • Salt and Grace. Each player draws a card with a line from a poem (classic or student). In thirty seconds the player must give one “grace” comment (exact praise with a reason) and one “salt” comment (an honest question or suggestion with evidence). Other players vote on whether each comment was specific. Vague comments (“nice,” “weird”) lose the point.

Scripture. “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”
(Proverbs 27:17, KJV)

A workshop is iron on iron: friends who read honestly make each other’s work sharper.

Practice: answers

1. Read twice, describe, praise exactly, question, suggest.
2. So that the readers respond to the poem on the page, not to the author’s explanations; if a poem needs explaining, it needs revising.
3. To know (to have taste, judgment and learning). The other half is moral: truth, candor, modesty and tact.
4. Truth spoken bluntly can do more harm than a subtle untruth. Pope is not approving of lies; he is warning that truth must be delivered with tact so that it helps, as his next line shows (“Men must be taught as if you taught them not”).
5. “If the poem ended two lines earlier, the image of the empty chair would be the last thing we see.” or “I suggest that the last two lines be cut.”
6. Proverbs 27:6: honest critique is friendship. Proverbs 12:15: the writer listens to counsel. Colossians 4:6: critique is spoken with grace and salt.
7. Sample: “The couplet ‘Men must be taught as if you taught them not, / And things unknown proposed as things forgot’ is the strongest in the passage; the balance makes the advice easy to remember. In ‘Who, if once wrong will needs be always so,’ I tripped and wanted a comma after ‘wrong.’ If the passage ended on the ‘taught them not’ couplet, the close might be even sharper.”
8. Sample thesis: “Honest criticism is a gift only when it is given for the other person’s good, so it is a high form of friendship only when truth and goodwill travel together.” A strong essay states a clear claim, uses evidence such as Lewis and Tolkien’s friendship or Proverbs 27:6, answers the objection that criticism can wound, and ends by drawing the distinction between candor and cruelty.

5.3 THREE REVISED POEMS

OBJECTIVES

- Explain how Keats revised two lines of “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” and what the changes gained.
- Revise three poems through five passes (sense, sight, sound, shape, sum) and keep a dated draft log.
- Choose and order three poems as a set with range and unity, ready to send out in 5.4.

Warm-up. Name a book that opened a new world to you the first time you read it. In four lines (any form), say what it felt like, using one comparison to something seen.

Video slot. Video coming. Keats “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer” read aloud and explained (a university, library or literary-house channel such as Keats House); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

Petrarchan sonnet

A fourteen-line poem in two parts: an octave (eight lines, rhymed abbaabba) and a sestet (six lines), with a turn, or volta, between them.

volta

The turn in a poem where the thought shifts. In Keats’s sonnet it comes at line 9, “Then felt I.”

line break

Where a line ends. A break can pause the voice, stress the last word, or hold a surprise for the next line.

enjambment

Running a sentence over the end of a line without punctuation, so the sense pulls the reader into the next line.

draft log

A dated record of every version of a poem and what changed. It guides revision and proves the work is your own.

CORE IDEAS

A set, not a pile. Most young-writer contests ask for a small group of poems. Bennington’s Young Writers Awards take a group of up to three; Scholastic takes one to five poems; Foyle takes up to three from entrants living in the UK and one from everyone else. Judges read hundreds of entries, and a set that shows range (different forms, moods and subjects) and unity (one voice, one sensibility) stands out from three poems that sound the same. In this

lesson you will bring three poems to finished form and decide their order. You will start, again, by watching a master.

Keats overnight. In October 1816 the twenty-year-old John Keats and his friend Charles Cowden Clarke sat up reading George Chapman's Elizabethan translation of Homer. Keats's biographer William Michael Rossetti tells it plainly: they "sat up till daylight reading it," and by ten the next morning Keats sent Clarke the finished sonnet, the model for this lesson. It seems a perfect case of inspiration. Yet the manuscript Clarke received differs from the poem Keats printed in 1817. Line 7 first read "Yet could I never judge what men could mean"; Keats changed it to "Yet did I never breathe its pure serene." Line 11 first described Cortez "with wond'ring eyes"; he changed it to "eagle eyes."

What Keats gained. Look at the two changes closely. "Judge what men could mean" is the language of a debating club: abstract, intellectual and limp in sound. "Breathe its pure serene" turns reading into a bodily act, filling the lungs with clear air, and it gives the octave its rhyme on *serene*. "Wond'ring eyes" tells us the explorer was amazed; "eagle eyes" shows us a fierce, far-seeing gaze and keeps the amazement for the men who look at each other "with a wild surmise." Both revisions move from telling to showing, and both put the right weight on the right word. Keats left one thing unrevised: it was Balboa, not Cortez, who first saw the Pacific from a peak in Darien in 1513. Readers have forgiven him for two centuries, but you should check your facts; a poem's truth does not excuse carelessness.

Five passes. In 5.1 you revised in four passes. For finished poems add a fifth, and use the five S's. *Sense*: does every line mean exactly what you intend, and could a stranger follow it? *Sight*: where can an abstraction become a thing (Keats's "breathe," his "eagle")? *Sound*: read aloud; listen for rhythm, for rhyme that forces a bad word, for a run of the same vowel you did not intend. *Shape*: check every line break and stanza break; does each one earn its pause? *Sum*: read the whole poem as a stranger; does the title fit, does the first line pull you in, and does the last line close? Often the best revision is a cut: the first two lines (throat-clearing) or the last two (explaining what the poem has already shown).

Line breaks and form. In a sonnet the form makes many choices for you. In free verse every break is your choice, and it should do work. End a line on a strong word, usually a noun or verb, not "the" or "of." Use enjambment when you want the reader to lean forward; end-stop a line when you want a pause. Keats's sestet runs line into line in one long breath, from the astronomer through Cortez to the silent men, and the dash before the last line holds us on the peak. Try your poem in a fixed form and in free verse, and keep whichever is truer.

Choosing and ordering three. Lay out every poem you have drafted this year. Choose three that are finished, different from one another, and your own best. A strong set might be one fixed-form poem (a sonnet or a set of quatrains), one in free verse or blank verse, and one short lyric. Put your strongest poem first, because a judge decides quickly; put the one with the most resonant ending last. Read the three aloud in order and listen for a thread: a place, a season, a family, a question about providence. Respect the limits: Foyle allows no

more than forty lines a poem, and Scholastic counts twenty to two hundred lines for the whole entry.

Honest work. Keep every dated draft in your draft log. It shows your growth, and it is your proof that the poems are yours. The Foyle rules strictly forbid poems written with AI tools; Bennington forbids AI even for brainstorming or revising; and every contest requires your own original work. A Christian writer has a higher reason than the rules: “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). A poem signed with your name is a claim that you made it. Let it be true.

The model. *John Keats, “On first looking into Chapman’s Homer,” Sonnet XI in Poems (1817), Project Gutenberg #8209*

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific--and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise--
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

PICTURE STUDY



Full-scale study for "The Hay Wain", John Constable, about 1821 · Oil on canvas · Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Before Constable painted *The Hay Wain*, shown at the Royal Academy in 1821 and now in the National Gallery, London, he painted this study at the same full size, about six feet wide. It is a draft in paint: he used broad, rough strokes to settle the balance of the composition and its colors near Flatford Mill in Suffolk before making the finished picture. Set the study beside the finished painting and you can see a master revising: moving, adding and removing figures, sharpening some places and leaving others soft.

Look closely

- Find the cart in the river. How much detail did Constable give it here?
- Look at the sky. Where are the strokes broadest and fastest?
- If you can, compare this study with the finished *Hay Wain* in the National Gallery. Name one thing that changed.

Talk about it

1. Why would a painter make a full-size draft instead of a small sketch? What is the poet's equivalent?
2. Write a short free-verse poem (10–16 lines) about a scene you know well: draft it fast and rough like this study, then revise it once as Constable did.

WRITING PROJECT: THREE POEMS, FINISHED

Bring three poems to finished form, keep a draft log for each, and arrange them as a set of no more than about 100 lines in all.

Aim for range: at least one poem in a fixed form and one in free or blank verse.

You will need

- All your drafts from this year, including Draft 2 from 5.1 and your workshop notes from 5.2
- Writing notebook and a separate draft log page for each poem
- A computer for the final clean copies

Steps

1. Lay out every poem you have drafted this year. Choose four or five candidates; then choose three, using range, unity and your workshop notes.
2. For each poem, run the five passes (sense, sight, sound, shape, sum), one pass per sitting if you can. Date each new draft in the log and note what changed.
3. Write one new poem if your set lacks range: for example, a Petrarchan sonnet with a clear volta, modeled on Keats.
4. Test every poem against the contest limits you plan to use: no more than 40 lines a poem for Foyle; a total of 20–200 lines for Scholastic; one to three poems, 1,500 words combined, for Bennington.
5. Order the set: strongest first, most resonant ending last. Read all three aloud in order to a parent.
6. Hold one last short workshop on the whole set. Make final revisions, then type clean copies with titles.

Check your work

- Each poem has a draft log with at least three dated versions.
- Each line ends on a word that earns its place; I can explain every line break.
- Parallel structures are truly parallel (same grammatical form in each part).
- Titles of poems are in quotation marks when I write about them in my log; punctuation inside the poems is deliberate.
- The set has range and unity, and every poem is entirely my own work.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Keats's sonnet by hand. Mark the rhyme scheme of the octave (abbaabba) and the sestet, and put a bracket at the volta.
2. Write Keats's draft line and his revision one above the other: "Yet could I never judge what men could mean" / "Yet did I never breathe its pure serene." Under them, list three differences.

3. List ten strong line-ending words from poems you admire. Circle the ones that are nouns or verbs.

History note. Keats (1795–1821) published *Poems* in 1817 and died of tuberculosis in Rome at twenty-five. George Chapman (about 1559–1634) published his translations of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in the early 1600s. Vasco Núñez de Balboa, not Hernán Cortés, led the Spaniards who first saw the Pacific from Darien, in Panama, in 1513.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism.** Parallel structure puts equal ideas in equal grammatical form, and in poetry it creates rhythm. Keats builds his octave on parallel clauses: “Much have I travelled ... many goodly states and kingdoms seen ... Round many western islands have I been.” His sestet balances two similes, “like some watcher of the skies” and “like stout Cortez,” each followed by a *when* clause. Yeats in 5.1 repeats “And all the trouble of ...” twice. Check your poems: if you list, list in one form (“the plow, the harrow, the seed,” not “the plow, harrowing, and to plant seed”); if you repeat a structure, make the variation on purpose, usually in the last item.

For families. The sonnet is printed from Project Gutenberg #8209; the account of the all-night reading is from William Michael Rossetti’s *Life of John Keats* (1887), Project Gutenberg #31682. Keats’s first-draft readings come from the manuscript he sent Clarke, as reported by later editors. Contest limits given here are summarized from the 2026–27 rules; check each official page before entering (see 5.4). Some contests, Foyle among them, accept only poems never published or entered before, so help your student decide which poems will go where before sending any.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Explain what Keats gained by changing “with wond’ring eyes” to “with eagle eyes.”

1. “Wond’ring” tells the feeling; “eagle” shows a picture: sharp, fierce, far-seeing.
2. The wonder is not lost; it moves to the men, who look at each other “with a wild surmise.”
3. Sound: “eagle eyes” repeats the long *e* and the vowel of “eyes,” a tight, ringing pair.

Answer: Keats traded a told emotion for a shown image and kept the emotion for the next line, so the poem now shows the explorer’s gaze and then his men’s astonishment, one after another, instead of saying “wonder” twice.

Example 2. A student's free-verse opening: "I want to tell you about the morning / when my grandfather and I went / out to the frozen pond / and he showed me how to test the ice." Revise with the five passes.

1. Sense and sum: the first line and a half are throat-clearing; the poem begins at the pond.
2. Sight: "showed me how to test the ice" tells; what did he actually do?
3. Shape: end lines on strong words ("pond," "ice"), not on "went."

Answer: Revised: "My grandfather knelt on the frozen pond / and knocked twice with his knuckles, / listening, / the way he knocked at our door on Sundays." The poem starts in the scene, shows the action, uses one isolated word for a pause, and ends the stanza on an image that will carry the rest.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a Petrarchan sonnet?
2. **EASY** Where is the volta in Keats's sonnet, and what changes there?
3. **EASY** Name the five passes of revision.
4. **MEDIUM** Why is "Yet did I never breathe its pure serene" stronger than "Yet could I never judge what men could mean"?
5. **MEDIUM** Find the factual error in Keats's sonnet and say whether a poet should correct such errors.
6. **MEDIUM** Make this line parallel: "I love the barn, walking in the fields, and to hear the creek."
7. **CHALLENGE** You have five finished poems: two sonnets about winter, a free-verse poem about your grandfather, a short lyric on a psalm, and a long ballad of 64 lines. Choose three for the Foyle award and for Bennington, and explain.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, SAT-style analysis): In 250–350 words, explain how Keats uses two comparisons in the sestet to convey the experience of reading Chapman's Homer.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Sending three poems that sound alike, so the set shows no range.
- Keeping a weak first or last line because it was the first one you wrote.
- Ending lines on "the," "of" or "and" without a reason.
- Losing earlier drafts, so you cannot show your own work or remember what you cut.

Make it a game · Line-Break Lottery. A parent writes out a short poem the student has not read (Keats, Herbert, Christina Rossetti, Longfellow) as a single prose paragraph. The student breaks it into lines in pencil. Then compare with the poet's lines. Score a point for

every line ending that matches the poet's, and two points for any different break the student can defend aloud.

Scripture. "My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer." (Psalm 45:1, KJV)

The psalmist calls his song "the things which I have made": a poem is a made thing, worth making well.

Practice: answers

1. A fourteen-line poem with an octave rhymed abbaabba and a sestet, with a turn (volta) between them.
2. At line 9, "Then felt I." The octave describes his reading life before Chapman; the sestet describes the feeling of discovery after.
3. Sense, sight, sound, shape, sum.
4. It turns reading into a physical act (breathing clear air), drops the abstract and limp "judge what men could mean," and gives a richer rhyme word, "serene."
5. It was Balboa, not Cortez, who first saw the Pacific from Darien (1513). Sample answer on correction: Yes; a poet should check facts, because careless errors distract readers and truthfulness matters, even if this famous slip is forgiven.
6. "I love the barn, the fields, and the creek," or "I love sweeping the barn, walking the fields, and hearing the creek."
7. Sample: For Bennington (one to three poems, no more than 1,500 words combined), one winter sonnet, the grandfather poem and the psalm lyric give range of form with a unity of home and faith. For Foyle, the ballad is too long (over 40 lines); an international entrant may send only one poem, so send the strongest that has not been entered elsewhere, perhaps the second winter sonnet, so no poem is entered twice.
8. Sample thesis: "Keats compares his discovery of Homer to an astronomer's first sight of a new planet and to an explorer's first sight of an ocean, moving from a quiet private wonder to a vast public one." A strong answer quotes "swims into his ken" and "wild surmise," notes the shift from one watcher to a whole silent crew, and comments on the dashes and the final word, "Darien," which leaves the reader on the peak.

5.4 SUBMISSION: FOYLE, BENNINGTON AND SCHOLASTIC

OBJECTIVES

- Read the official 2026–27 rules for the Bennington Young Writers Awards, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the Foyle Young Poets of the Year Award, and match each of your poems to one contest.
- Prepare a clean, correctly formatted submission with a parent, and keep a submission log.
- Explain from Scripture and from the lives of poets how to work heartily and receive the results, praise or rejection, with humility.

Warm-up. Write down the date today and the date of the next contest deadline you plan to meet. Count the days. List three things that must happen before then.

Video slot. Video coming. Scholastic Art & Writing Awards: how to enter (the official Alliance for Young Artists & Writers channel), or a Poetry Society reading of Foyle Young Poets winners; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

submission

Sending finished work to an editor, magazine or contest according to its rules.

unpublished

Not yet printed, posted or broadcast anywhere. Each contest defines this; Foyle counts social media and previous competitions as publication.

blind judging

Judging in which the readers do not see the writer's name, so the poems are weighed only on their merit.

sponsor (educator)

The teacher or mentor who approves or is listed with a student's entry. For home-schooled students, a parent or outside mentor may serve where the rules allow.

submission log

A record of which poem went to which contest, on what date, with what result.

CORE IDEAS

Why send it out. Poems are made to be read. The Preacher of Ecclesiastes, the model for this lesson, did not only write wisely; he “sought out, and set in order” his proverbs and “sought to find out acceptable words,” so that what he wrote would be both pleasing and “upright, even words of truth.” Sending a poem to a contest is the last stage of that work. A deadline forces you to finish. A judge who does not know you reads your poem as a stranger

would. And a young writer who has sent work out, and had it come back, has learned something no lesson can teach.

Bennington Young Writers Awards (dated summary, October 2026). Bennington College runs this contest for students in grades 9–12 anywhere in the world. Poetry entries are a group of one to three poems, no more than 1,500 words combined. The 2026–27 window opened September 1, 2026, and closes November 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern; that is only a few weeks away. There is no fee. Prizes are \$2,000, \$1,000 and \$500, with \$250 for distinguished entries, and winners who later enroll at Bennington may receive scholarships. Every entry must be reviewed and approved by a sponsor teacher; home-schooled students may enter with a mentor sponsor. No AI tools may be used at any stage, even to brainstorm or revise. Grades 9–11 submit through the online portal at bennington.edu/YWA.

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards (dated summary, October 2026). The Alliance for Young Artists & Writers runs the Scholastic Awards for students age 13 and up in grades 7–12, including home-schooled students, in the United States, Canada and American schools abroad. The Poetry category takes one to five poems with twenty to two hundred lines in all. The entry portal for the 2027 Awards opened October 1, 2026. Deadlines are set by region and run from December 1, 2026, to January 6, 2027, so look up yours. The fee is \$10 for a single entry, and a fee waiver is available on the entry form for any family who needs it. Regional winners go on to national judging. Enter at artandwriting.org.

Foyle Young Poets of the Year (dated summary, October 2026). The Poetry Society in London runs this free award for poets aged 11–17. The 2026 contest closed July 31, 2026, and its winners have been announced. Check foyleyoungpoets.org for the 2027 rules, which are usually posted in the spring, with a deadline at the end of July. Under the 2026 rules, entrants living in the UK could send up to three poems and international entrants only one; each poem could be no longer than forty lines; poems written with AI tools were strictly forbidden; and every poem had to be appearing for the first time anywhere, which excluded poems posted on social media or entered in earlier competitions. You must still be 17 or younger on the closing date. For every contest, get the official form and rules before entering. These summaries are only a guide.

One poem, one place. Because Foyle wants poems that have never been published or entered elsewhere, plan your poems like a farmer plans fields. Choose your best set of three for Bennington now. Choose a set for Scholastic in December, or the same poems if Scholastic's rules allow it; read its rules on prior publication. Hold back at least one strong, unpublished poem, never posted or entered, for Foyle in 2027. Write all of this in your submission log before you send anything.

A clean manuscript. Judges forgive much, but not carelessness. Follow each portal's format exactly. Unless the rules say otherwise, use a plain 12-point font, put a title at the top of each poem, start each poem on a new page, and keep your stanza breaks clear. Leave your name off the poems themselves when the judging is blind, but fill in every field of the form.

Proofread aloud, word by word, against your final draft. Save a copy of exactly what you sent. Ask a parent to read the rules and your entry with you before you press “submit.”

Heartily, as to the Lord. Most entries win nothing. Keats’s long poem *Endymion* was savagely reviewed in 1818. Frost wrote for some twenty years and placed only a handful of poems in American magazines before *A Boy’s Will* was published in London in 1913, when he was thirty-nine. Neither stopped writing. Paul tells us, “whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Do your best work, send it, thank the judges whatever they decide, and begin the next poem. The results are in God’s providence; the work is yours to do faithfully.

The model. *Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 (KJV)*

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.

PICTURE STUDY



The Poor Poet, Carl Spitzweg, 1839 · Oil on canvas · Neue Pinakothek, Munich
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Carl Spitzweg’s most famous painting shows a poet in a garret so poor that he stays in bed to keep warm. An umbrella hangs from the rafters to catch the drips from the leaking roof. Beside the cold stove lie his manuscripts, perhaps waiting to become fuel. Yet he is working: quill in his teeth, fingers raised as if counting out the beats of a line. Spitzweg painted with gentle humor, and the poor poet has lasted longer than many prosperous ones.

Look closely

- Find the umbrella. What does it tell you about the room?
- Look at the poet's hand. Is he counting syllables, or doing something else? Make a case.
- Find the papers near the stove. What might happen to them?

Talk about it

1. Write a short poem (12–16 lines) in the voice of the poor poet, written the night before a contest deadline.
2. Write a paragraph on what the painting says about the difference between a poet's success and a poet's faithfulness.

WRITING PROJECT: THE SUBMISSION PACKET

Prepare and, with a parent, send your three revised poems from 5.3 to the contest that fits them best, and plan the others.

If a deadline has passed or is too near, prepare the packet anyway and calendar the next one.

You will need

- Your three finished poems and their draft logs (5.3)
- The official rules pages: bennington.edu/YWA, artandwriting.org, foyleyoungpoets.org
- A computer, a parent, and a submission log page in your notebook

Steps

1. With a parent, read the current official rules for all three contests. Copy into your log: eligibility, number of poems, length limits, deadline, fee, sponsor rules, AI rules and publication rules.
2. Assign each poem to one contest, holding back at least one never-entered poem for Foyle. Write the plan in your log.
3. Format each poem by the rules: title, font, page breaks, stanza breaks. Remove your name from the poem pages if judging is blind.
4. Proofread aloud against your final draft, word by word. Have a parent proofread a second time.
5. Arrange the sponsor or educator the contest requires (for Bennington, a sponsor teacher or mentor; for Scholastic, an educator listed on the entry).
6. Submit with a parent present. Save a copy of exactly what you sent and a screenshot of the confirmation. Log the date.
7. Write a two-sentence note to yourself to read on results day, whatever they are.

Check your work

- Poem titles appear in quotation marks and collection titles in italics in any note, form or log I write.

- Every comma, dash and capital in each poem is the one I chose; I proofread aloud twice.
- Each entry meets its contest's limits for number of poems and lines or words.
- No poem is entered in a way that breaks another contest's publication rule.
- My submission log lists poem, contest, date sent, and result.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Ecclesiastes 12:9-10. Circle the verbs that describe the Preacher's work (taught, gave heed, sought out, set in order, sought).
2. Make a three-column submission log in your notebook: Poem / Contest and date / Result. Fill in your plan.
3. Copy Colossians 3:23 and write a two-sentence prayer for results day.

History note. Carl Spitzweg (1808-1885) was a pharmacist before he became a painter, and he taught himself largely by copying the masters. *The Poor Poet* (1839) is in the Neue Pinakothek in Munich; he painted more than one version. The Foyle award has been run by the Poetry Society since 1998 and has launched the careers of several leading British poets. The Scholastic Awards began in 1923.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuation of titles and forms.** Put the titles of short works (poems, short stories, essays) in quotation marks: "Design," "The Sorrow of Love." Italicize long works and collections: *Poems, A Boy's Will, An Essay on Criticism* (a book-length poem). In American usage, commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks: I am submitting "Winter Pump," "Psalm at Dusk," and "The Barn Door." Inside a quotation, use single marks for a title: "I sent 'Winter Pump' today," she said. Use a comma in dates and after the year in a sentence ("On November 1, 2026, the window closes."). In a short bio or cover note, keep sentences complete and in the third person if the form asks for it: "Anna Clark is a home-schooled eleventh grader in Ohio."

For families. Contest details are a dated summary from the official sites as of October 2026: Bennington (bennington.edu/YWA), Scholastic (artandwriting.org) and Foyle (foyleyoungpoets.org, run by the Poetry Society). Rules change every year; please get the official rules and forms before your student enters, and supervise all online submissions. Bennington's deadline is November 1, 2026, so act quickly if your student wishes to enter this year. Bennington and Foyle forbid AI tools; keeping the draft logs from 5.3 is a good safeguard. Scholastic charges \$10 per entry with a fee waiver available. All three contests may publish winning work, which can affect eligibility for others.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student in Texas, age 16, in eleventh grade, has four finished poems: a 14-line sonnet, a 32-line free-verse poem, a 22-line lyric, and a 48-line ballad. Today is October 13, 2026. Make a submission plan.

1. Bennington: grades 9–12, one to three poems, 1,500 words combined, deadline November 1, 2026. The sonnet, free-verse poem and lyric fit easily.
2. Scholastic: one to five poems, 20–200 lines in all; regional deadline in December or January. Check whether poems entered at Bennington may also be entered here; if not, enter the ballad with a new poem.
3. Foyle 2027: an international entrant may send one poem of no more than 40 lines, never published or entered before. The ballad is too long; the student should hold back one new poem, or revise the ballad under 40 lines and enter it nowhere else.

Answer: Plan: send the sonnet, free verse and lyric to Bennington by November 1; enter Scholastic in December with the ballad and a new poem, after checking its rules; keep one fresh poem under 40 lines, unposted, for Foyle in summer 2027. Log every step.

Example 2. Proofread this sentence from a short bio: “My poem, Winter Pump, was written in a Petrarchan sonnet form after reading Keats Poems.”

1. Titles: a poem in quotation marks (“Winter Pump”), a collection in italics (*Poems*).
2. Possessive: Keats’s.
3. Voice: the passive “was written” is weaker; and “after reading” dangles, since the poem did not read Keats.

Answer: Revised: I wrote my poem “Winter Pump” as a Petrarchan sonnet after reading Keats’s *Poems*.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Which contest in this lesson takes a group of one to three poems from students in grades 9–12, and when does its 2026–27 window close?
2. **EASY** How many lines may a Scholastic poetry entry contain in all?
3. **EASY** Under the 2026 Foyle rules, how many poems could an entrant outside the UK send, and how long could each be?
4. **MEDIUM** Why should you hold back a poem for Foyle instead of sending it everywhere?
5. **MEDIUM** Punctuate correctly: I am sending Design and Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, both from Frost’s Collected Poems, as models.
6. **MEDIUM** Name four verbs in the model (Ecclesiastes 12:9–10) that describe the Preacher’s work, and say which one is most like revision.

7. **CHALLENGE** Your poem is rejected by every contest this year. Write the first entry of your submission log for results day.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT/ACT style argument): “Contests are bad for young writers because they teach them to write for judges instead of for truth.” Agree or disagree in 300–400 words.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading a summary instead of the official rules, and missing a limit, a sponsor requirement or a deadline.
- Posting a poem online before a contest that requires unpublished work.
- Sending a draft with typos because the deadline was tonight.
- Treating a rejection as a verdict on yourself instead of one reader’s decision about one poem.

Make it a game • Rules Detective. A parent writes six imaginary entries on cards (for example: “A 45-line poem to Foyle,” “A twelfth grader’s three poems through the Bennington portal,” “A 15-line single poem to Scholastic”). The student sorts each card into “accepted” or “rejected” and names the rule that decides it, checking against the official pages. One point for each correct call, two for catching a trick.

Scripture. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;” (Colossians 3:23, KJV)

Send your poems out as work done for the Lord, and the judges’ verdict will not be the last word on them.

Practice: answers

1. The Bennington Young Writers Awards; November 1, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern.
2. Twenty to two hundred lines, in one to five poems.
3. One poem, no longer than forty lines.
4. Foyle accepts only poems appearing for the first time anywhere, including social media and earlier competitions; a poem already entered or posted may not qualify.
5. I am sending “Design” and “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” both from Frost’s *Collected Poems*, as models.
6. Taught, gave (good heed), sought out, set in order, sought (to find out). “Set in order” is most like revision: arranging and shaping.
7. Sample: “March 2027. ‘Winter Pump’: no award at Scholastic. I did my best work and sent it on time, and that was my part. Next: read the winning poems, find one thing they do that mine does not, and revise. Keats was mocked for *Endymion* and kept writing.”
8. Sample thesis: “Contests can tempt a writer to chase a judge’s taste, but used rightly they teach the discipline of finishing, the humility of being read by strangers, and the habit of working ‘heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.’” A strong essay concedes the danger,

gives an example (Keats or Frost's rejections), and draws a clear line between writing for praise and writing well.

UNIT 5 REVIEW

The student answers in writing; allow an open Bible and the unit's model passages for items 7–10, but not for items 1–6. Score short answers for accuracy and writing items with the revision checklists from the unit. About 60 minutes.

1. (2 pts) What does “revision” mean literally, and how does it differ from proofreading?
2. (3 pts) Name two changes Yeats made when he rewrote “The Sorrow of Love,” and one change Frost made when “In White” became “Design.”
3. (3 pts) Name the five steps of a workshop in order.
4. (3 pts) Give two of Pope’s “morals” for critics, and one Bible verse that teaches the same.
5. (3 pts) Name the five passes of revision.
6. (3 pts) Give one rule for each contest: Bennington, Scholastic, Foyle.
7. (4 pts) Explain what Keats gained by changing “Yet could I never judge what men could mean” to “Yet did I never breathe its pure serene.”
8. (3 pts) Fix the dangling modifier and the title punctuation: “After revising it five times, The Barn Door was ready for Bennington.”
9. (4 pts) Rewrite this workshop comment so it follows Pope and Colossians 4:6: “Your ending is boring. Change it.”
10. (12 pts) Timed writing (25 minutes): In 250–350 words, compare the first and last stanzas of Yeats’s “The Sorrow of Love” (model, 5.1) and explain how the change between them carries the poem’s meaning.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THREE REVISED POEMS

Place your three finished poems from 5.3 in your Grade 11 portfolio, in the order you chose, each followed by its draft log and a revision note of about 150 words quoting at least two old lines beside their new forms. Add a copy of your submission log from 5.4.

- **Craft:** Each poem uses exact words and concrete images, line breaks that earn their place, and a clear turn or close.
- **Revision:** Draft logs show at least three dated versions per poem, and revision notes quote old and new lines exactly and explain each change.
- **The set:** The three poems show range of form and subject and a unity of voice, ordered with the strongest first and the most resonant ending last.
- **Mechanics and honesty:** Titles, modifiers and parallel structures are correct; every poem is the student’s own work, and the submission meets the chosen contest’s rules.

Answer key

1. “Seeing again.” Revision changes words, images, sound and structure; proofreading only fixes spelling and punctuation.
2. Yeats: two of “quarrel of the sparrows” to “brawling of a sparrow”; vague phrases replaced with Homeric figures (Odysseus, Priam); stanzas run together; harder sounds. Frost: “dented”

to “dimpled,” or the title changed from a color to an idea, or the ending sharpened into a question.

3. Read twice, describe, praise exactly, question, suggest.
4. Two of: let truth and candor shine; speak, though sure, with diffidence; own your past errors; teach as if you taught them not (tact). Verse: Proverbs 27:6, Ephesians 4:25 or Colossians 4:6.
5. Sense, sight, sound, shape, sum.
6. Sample: Bennington: grades 9–12, one to three poems, 1,500 words combined, sponsor approval, no AI. Scholastic: grades 7–12, age 13+, one to five poems, 20–200 lines, \$10 fee or waiver. Foyle: ages 11–17, one poem for international entrants, 40 lines maximum, unpublished, free, no AI.
7. He replaced an abstract, limp phrase with a physical act (breathing clear air) and a richer rhyme word, so reading Homer becomes something felt, not merely judged.
8. After revising it five times, I knew “The Barn Door” was ready for Bennington.
9. Sample: “The image of the lantern in stanza two is vivid. In the last two lines the poem explains what the lantern means, and I felt the energy drop. If the poem ended on the lantern itself, I think the ending would be stronger.”
10. Scored 0–12: clear thesis (3), exact quotations from both stanzas (3), explanation of the turn in stanza two (3), correct mechanics including titles and modifiers (3). Sample thesis: “Yeats repeats the sparrows, moon and leaves so that the reader can hear how love has taught the speaker to hear sorrow in everything.”

ARGUMENT AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

This unit takes the year's argument work before real judges. You will learn how essay prizes are judged by reading Socrates' address to his judges in Plato's *Apology*, learn to state the other side at its strongest from the objections in Aquinas's *Summa Theologica*, define and limit a hard question with John Locke before writing a 2,000-word John Locke Institute essay in Theology or History, and open a short Institute for Faith & Culture essay the way Augustine opens *The City of God*. Picture studies: David's *The Death of Socrates*, Rembrandt's *Two Old Men Disputing*, Kneller's portrait of Locke, and Botticelli's *Saint Augustine in His Study*.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has written a researched, cited argumentative essay (Units 2–3 of this year).
- Knows the refutation and thesis exercises and the canons of rhetoric from earlier grades.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can read a contest's rules and criteria and judge an essay by them.
- ☐ I can state an opposing view so fairly that its defender would accept it, and then answer it.
- ☐ I can define and limit a hard question before arguing it.
- ☐ I can write a 2,000-word argument with endnotes, ready for blind judging.
- ☐ I can argue a Christian position in 800 words with exact Scripture, history and meekness.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Plato, *Apology*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Project Gutenberg #1656)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1656>): Socrates' defense before his judges; short enough to read in one sitting.
- **Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part I (Project Gutenberg #17611)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/17611>): Question 2 holds the objections, the five ways and the replies.
- **John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*, Vol. 1 (Project Gutenberg #10615)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10615>): Read "The Epistle to the Reader."
- **Augustine, *The City of God*, Vol. I, trans. Marcus Dods (Project Gutenberg #45304)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/45304>): Book I answers the pagans who blamed Christians for the sack of Rome.
- **John Locke Institute Global Essay Prize (official rules and questions)**
(<https://www.johnlockeinstitute.com/essay-competition>): Check each year for new questions, dates and the referee form.

- **Institute for Faith & Culture National Essay Contest (official rules)**
(<https://instituteffc.org/national-essay-contest>): Check for the current theme, word limit and deadline.

6.1 ESSAY PRIZES AND THEIR JUDGES ★

OBJECTIVES

- Explain how a blind-judged essay prize works and what its judges reward.
- Read Socrates' opening words to his judges and name what he asks of them and of himself.
- Score a sample essay against a published set of criteria and write a one-page judge's report.

Warm-up. You are one of three judges. Two essays lie in front of you. One is polished and clever but never answers the question it was given. The other is plain, a little stiff, and answers the question squarely with good evidence. Which wins, and why? Write three sentences, then compare with a parent.

Video slot. Video coming. The trial of Socrates explained (Plato's *Apology* overview); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

blind judging

Judging without knowing who wrote the piece. Many prizes require that your name appear nowhere in the essay itself.

criteria

The published standards a judge uses (singular: criterion). The John Locke Institute, for example, lists knowledge, use of evidence, argument, originality, structure, style and persuasive force.

prompt

The question or theme set by the contest. A winning essay answers this prompt, not a nearby one the writer would rather discuss.

apologia

Greek for "a speech in defense." Plato's *Apology* is Socrates' defense before his judges; Peter uses the same word in 1 Peter 3:15 ("an answer").

ethos

The speaker's character as it comes through the words. In a blind contest you have no name or reputation, so ethos must be built entirely on the page.

CORE IDEAS

The highest level of argument. In Grades 9 and 10 you wrote theses and persuasive essays for a teacher who knew you. This unit asks you to write for strangers: professors and editors who will read your essay among hundreds of others, with no idea who you are, how

old you look, or how hard you worked. That is the essay prize. It is the closest a high-school writer comes to the real world of argument, where an editor, a judge or a hiring manager has ten minutes and a stack of papers. You will write for two such prizes in this unit: the John Locke Institute Global Essay Prize (6.3) and the Institute for Faith & Culture National Essay Contest (6.4).

Who the judges are. Every serious prize tells you who judges and by what standards. The John Locke Institute draws its judges from university faculties and says it looks for “knowledge and understanding of the relevant material, the competent use of evidence, quality of argumentation, originality, structure, writing style and persuasive force.” The Institute for Faith & Culture says simply that essays are judged on content, writing style and overall impression. Read these lists as a contract. The judges have told you, in advance and in writing, what they will reward. A wise writer copies the criteria into the margin of the draft and checks each one before sending.

What judges actually do. A judge with two hundred essays reads the first paragraph of each with one question in mind: *Does this writer answer the question that was asked?* Essays that drift, that restate the prompt for a page, or that answer an easier question are set aside early. The essays that survive are read slowly, and here the finer criteria matter: Is the evidence accurate? Does the writer meet the strongest objection (the subject of 6.2)? Is there one idea here I have not seen in the other essays? Is the prose clear enough that I never have to read a sentence twice? Notice that “style” in this sense means clarity first and ornament last.

Socrates before his judges. The oldest model we have of a man arguing before a panel is Plato’s *Apology*, the defense Socrates gave at Athens in 399 B.C. His accusers had warned the jury against his “eloquence.” Socrates turns the charge around: if eloquence means the force of truth, then he admits to it, but he will not give them “a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases.” Later in the same opening he asks the judges to “think only of the truth of my words,” and he states the duty on both sides: “let the speaker speak truly and the judge decide justly.” Socrates lost his case, but his plea has outlasted every speech made against him. It is still the best advice for a prize essay: be plain, be true, and trust a fair judge to weigh the argument rather than the decoration.

The blind page. Because most prizes judge blind, nothing outside the essay helps you. Your title, first sentence and thesis are your introduction, your handshake and your reputation all at once. This is a good discipline for a Christian writer. Scripture tells judges not to “respect persons” (Deuteronomy 1:17), and a blind contest forces the same fairness on the reader. It also forces humility on the writer: you cannot lean on a famous school, a title or a teacher’s goodwill. The argument must stand on its own legs.

Rules are part of the argument. Judges disqualify essays that break the rules before they ever weigh the ideas. Word limits are hard limits. A name inside a blind-judged file can sink the entry. A missing referee form, a late upload, or a file in the wrong format are the most common ways good essays never reach the final round. Treat the official rules as the first

source you read for every contest, and get them from the contest's own website each year, since dates, questions and limits change.

Your work this week. You will read Socrates' opening as a model of how to address judges, study David's painting of his death, and then become a judge yourself. Scoring someone else's essay against published criteria is the fastest way to learn what those criteria mean, and it will make your own essays in 6.3 and 6.4 much sharper.

The model. *Plato, Apology, translated by Benjamin Jowett, Project Gutenberg #1656*

How you, O Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me most shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; for if such is their meaning, I admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases.

PICTURE STUDY



The Death of Socrates, Jacques-Louis David, 1787 · Oil on canvas · The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

After the Athenian court condemned him, Socrates spent his last day in prison talking with his friends about the soul, then drank the hemlock as the law required. Plato tells the scene in the *Phaedo*. David painted it in 1787: Socrates is still arguing, his finger raised, even as he reaches for the cup. The old man at the foot of the bed, turned away from the scene, is usually taken to be Plato, though Plato was a young man at the time and, by his own account, was not there.

Look closely

- Find Socrates' two hands. What is each one doing, and what does the pairing say about him?
- Find the young man holding the cup. How does David show that he does not want to give it?
- Compare the light on Socrates with the light on the friends around him. Where is your eye pulled first?

Talk about it

1. David shows Socrates arguing to the very end. Write a paragraph on what it means to care more about the truth of an argument than about winning the case.
2. The jury that condemned Socrates was large and, by Plato's account, swayed by prejudice. What does a fair judge owe a speaker? Answer in five or six sentences, using Deuteronomy 1:17.

WRITING PROJECT: A JUDGE'S REPORT

You will judge before you are judged. Using one contest's published criteria, score an essay and write the kind of short report a judge might send to a committee.

Use a past essay of your own from Grade 10 or Units 2–3 of this year, or, if you prefer, a published prize essay a parent has found on a contest website.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- One finished argumentative essay (yours or a published winner)
- The John Locke Institute criteria (copied from the key terms above)
- A red pen and a timer

Steps

1. Copy the seven John Locke criteria down the left margin of a page: knowledge, evidence, argument, originality, structure, style, persuasive force.
2. Read only the first paragraph. In one sentence, write the question you think the essay is answering. If you cannot, note that first.
3. Read the whole essay once without marking. Then reread it and score each criterion from 1 to 5, with one sentence of reason for each score.

4. Find the single strongest sentence and the single weakest sentence. Copy both and say why.
5. Write a judge's report of 250–300 words: a one-sentence verdict, two strengths, two weaknesses, and one concrete suggestion for revision.
6. If the essay is your own, keep the report; you will use it when you plan your contest essay in 6.3.

Check your work

- My report gives a clear verdict in its first sentence.
- Every score has a reason tied to a line in the essay.
- My criticism is aimed at the writing, never at the writer (Colossians 4:6).
- I kept parallel structure in my list of strengths and weaknesses (see the Style Clinic).
- My report is 250–300 words.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Socrates passage by hand. Underline every place where he contrasts his way of speaking with his accusers' way.
2. Imitate it: write a five-sentence opening addressed to the judges of an essay prize, in which you promise plain truth instead of decoration. Keep his structure (a charge, a correction, a promise).
3. Begin a "judges' page": copy the criteria of both contests in this unit side by side.

History note. Socrates was tried in 399 B.C. on charges of impiety and of corrupting the young, before a jury of several hundred citizens. Plato, his student, wrote the *Apology* as Socrates' defense speech. David's painting was shown at the Paris Salon of 1787 and has hung in the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1931.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism** (Grammar Level 3, usage and style). Items in a list should share the same grammatical form. Socrates does this when he contrasts "a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases" with "the words and arguments which occur to me." In your judge's report, check your lists. *Weak*: "The essay is clear, has good evidence, and the writer argues originally." *Parallel*: "The essay is clear, well supported and original." Judges notice parallel lists because they are easy to read; criteria lists themselves are written this way.

For families. This unit is the summit of the year's argument work and leads to two real contests. The quoted judging criteria are from the John Locke Institute's Global Essay Prize page and the Institute for Faith & Culture's contest page as checked in October 2026; always read the current official rules yourself. The Jowett translation of Plato is in the public domain. David's painting shows Socrates bare-shouldered in a classical robe; it contains no nudity or gore. This year's faith verse, 1 Peter 3:15, uses the same Greek word, *apologia*, as the title of Plato's book.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's opening for the John Locke question "What might the world look like if the Library of Alexandria hadn't burned down?": "Throughout history, libraries have been very important. The Library of Alexandria was one of the most famous libraries ever. In this essay I will discuss the Library of Alexandria and what might have happened." Judge it.

1. Does it answer the question? No. It announces a topic but makes no claim about what the world would look like.
2. Is there anything a judge has not read a hundred times? "Throughout history" and "In this essay I will discuss" are the two most common openings in any stack.
3. Is the history accurate? It assumes a single burning; historians think the Library declined over centuries, which a strong essay would use.

Answer: Verdict: set aside after the first paragraph. Revision: "The Library of Alexandria did not burn down in a single night; it withered over several centuries. That fact changes the question, and the honest answer is less dramatic than the legend: the world would look much as it does, with a few dozen more classical books on our shelves."

Example 2. Turn this vague judge's comment into a useful one: "Good essay but could be better. Some parts were confusing."

1. Name the criterion: which of the seven is weak?
2. Point to a place in the essay.
3. Suggest a concrete fix.

Answer: "Structure: the third paragraph introduces a new argument (the cost of copying books) before the second argument is finished. Move it after paragraph four and add a sentence that links the two."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is blind judging, and what does it require of you as an entrant?
2. **EASY** List the seven John Locke Institute judging criteria.
3. **EASY** In the model, what does Socrates say his accusers meant by "eloquence," and how does he redefine it?
4. **MEDIUM** Why do judges often decide after the first paragraph whether an essay will advance?
5. **MEDIUM** Name three rule violations that can disqualify an essay before its ideas are read.
6. **MEDIUM** Make this list parallel: "Judges want accuracy, to be persuaded, and writing that is clear."

7. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT/SAT-essay style): “Is it better to be judged by people who know you or by strangers?” Write a thesis, two reasons and one concession.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a two-sentence imitation of Socrates’ contrast (“not ... but ...”) about your own essay style.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading the contest’s criteria after drafting instead of before.
- Treating “style” as decoration. Judges mean clarity first.
- Writing a judge’s report that praises or blames the writer instead of pointing to lines in the essay.
- Assuming last year’s rules still apply.

Make it a game · First-Paragraph Tribunal. A parent reads aloud the first paragraphs of five essays (old family essays, newspaper columns or your own drafts). After each, the student has ten seconds to say “Advance” or “Set aside” and give one reason using a criterion. Then switch: the student reads, and the parent judges.

Scripture. “Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God’s: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.” (Deuteronomy 1:17, KJV)

Moses’ charge to Israel’s judges is the ideal of blind judging: weigh the cause, not the person, and remember that every judgment is finally answerable to God.

Practice: answers

1. Judging without knowing the author’s identity. You must keep your name and identifying details out of the essay file itself.
2. Knowledge and understanding of the material, competent use of evidence, quality of argumentation, originality, structure, writing style, persuasive force.
3. They meant clever, deceptive speech; he says that if they mean the force of truth, then he admits he is eloquent.
4. Because the first paragraph shows whether the writer answers the question actually asked; essays that drift or restate the prompt rarely recover.
5. Any three: going over the word limit, putting your name in a blind-judged file, missing the deadline, wrong file format, missing referee or registration form, answering a question not on the list.
6. Judges want accuracy, persuasive force and clarity.
7. Sample thesis: Strangers judge our work more fairly than friends do, because they see only what is on the page. Reasons: friends forgive weak work out of affection; strangers cannot reward reputation. Concession: friends know our circumstances and can judge effort and growth, which a stranger cannot see.
8. Sample: You will not find here a speech dressed in borrowed phrases and quotations piled for show. You will find a plain question, a plain answer, and the evidence that made me give it.

6.2 STEELMANNING: STATING THE OTHER SIDE AT ITS STRONGEST

OBJECTIVES

- Define steeldmanning and tell it apart from the straw man fallacy.
- Study how Thomas Aquinas states objections to his own view more strongly than his opponents might.
- Write a steelman of a view you reject, good enough that someone who holds it would sign it, and then answer it.

Warm-up. Think of a friendly argument you have had (country or city, cats or dogs, paper books or screens). Write the other person’s view in two sentences, as well as you can. Now ask: would that person say, “Yes, that’s exactly what I think”? If not, try again.

Video slot. Video coming. Straw man fallacy versus steeldmanning (logic and debate lesson); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

straw man

A fallacy: attacking a weak, distorted version of an opponent’s view instead of the view he actually holds, as a soldier might stab a dummy stuffed with straw.

steelman

The opposite of a straw man: the strongest, fairest version of a view you disagree with, stated so well that its defenders would accept it.

objection

A reason against your thesis. In a medieval disputation the objections came first, before the master gave his own answer.

refutation

The answer to an objection. You first met it as the fifth progymnasma (refuting a story); here it answers an argument.

concession

Granting that part of an opposing argument is true, while showing that it does not overturn your thesis.

CORE IDEAS

The cheapest victory. The easiest way to win an argument is to argue against someone who is not there. You describe the other side as foolish, rebut the foolishness, and declare victory. This is the *straw man*, and it is the most common weakness in student essays. It persuades

no one who holds the other view, because they do not recognize themselves in it, and it convinces careful judges that the writer has not done the reading.

The steelman. The cure is to state the other side at its strongest before you answer it. Ask: What is the best reason anyone has given for this view? What evidence would its smartest defender bring? What would that person say I am missing? The test is simple and demanding: a person who holds the view should read your summary and say, “Yes, that is what I believe, and you have put it better than I could.” Only then have you earned the right to disagree.

An old Christian habit. The word “steelman” is new, but the practice is old. Proverbs 18:17 warns that the first speaker always seems right until his neighbor “cometh and searcheth him.” The medieval universities built their teaching on the *disputation*, in which every question began with the arguments against the master’s answer. Thomas Aquinas (about 1225–1274) wrote his *Summa Theologica* in this form. In the model below he asks whether God exists, and before he gives a single argument of his own he lets the unbeliever speak, twice, and speak well.

Look at what Aquinas does. His first objection is the problem of evil, and he states it in its sharpest form: if God is infinite goodness, evil could not exist at all; evil exists; therefore God does not. His second objection is that nature and human will explain everything we see, so God is an unnecessary hypothesis. Notice that he does not mock either one, does not hedge, and does not pick weak versions. Many modern unbelievers still make these same two arguments. Only after giving them full voice does Aquinas give his own answer (the famous “five ways”), and then he returns to each objection and replies to it. To the first he answers with Augustine: God, being the highest good, would not allow evil “unless His omnipotence and goodness were such as to bring good even out of evil.”

Why it persuades. Steelmanning is not weakness. It is the strongest move in argument, for three reasons. First, it builds *ethos*: a judge trusts a writer who has plainly understood the other side. Second, it builds *logos*: an answer to the strongest objection also answers all the weaker ones. Third, it is a matter of justice. The ninth commandment forbids false witness against a neighbor, and misrepresenting a neighbor’s argument is a small false witness. Ephesians 4:25 tells us to “speak every man truth with his neighbour,” and that includes the truth about what he thinks. John Stuart Mill made the same point in *On Liberty* (1859): “He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that.”

How to build one. (1) Find the best defender of the view, not the loudest. Read him in his own words. (2) State his thesis and his two strongest reasons in a paragraph he would sign. (3) Concede what is true in it; there is almost always something. (4) Answer the heart of it, not a side issue. (5) Place it well: in a 2,000-word prize essay, the steelman and reply usually take one or two paragraphs after your main case and before your conclusion, or, as Aquinas does, right at the start.

Where to practice. Steelman ideas, not people, and choose perennial questions rather than today’s quarrels: Should a man live in the country or the city? Did the printing press do more good than harm to the Church? Was the Roman Republic doomed before Caesar crossed the

Rubicon? The John Locke questions you will choose from in 6.3 are written to provoke disagreement, so this skill is exactly what those judges are testing.

The model. *Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, Part I, Question 2, Article 3 ("Whether God exists?"), translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Project Gutenberg #17611*

Objection 1: It seems that God does not exist; because if one of two contraries be infinite, the other would be altogether destroyed. But the word "God" means that He is infinite goodness. If, therefore, God existed, there would be no evil discoverable; but there is evil in the world. Therefore God does not exist.

Obj. 2: Further, it is superfluous to suppose that what can be accounted for by a few principles has been produced by many. But it seems that everything we see in the world can be accounted for by other principles, supposing God did not exist. For all natural things can be reduced to one principle which is nature; and all voluntary things can be reduced to one principle which is human reason, or will. Therefore there is no need to suppose God's existence.

On the contrary, It is said in the person of God: "I am Who am." (Ex. 3:14)

PICTURE STUDY



Two Old Men Disputing, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1628 · Oil on oak panel · National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The young Rembrandt, about twenty-two years old, painted two old scholars in close debate over an open book. The painting is often identified as the apostles Peter and Paul, who disagreed sharply at Antioch (Galatians 2:11) and yet remained brothers in Christ (2 Peter

3:15–16). One man points to a passage on the page; the other listens, his face lit and attentive. Books lie piled and tumbled around them: these men argue from texts, not from feelings.

Look closely

- Find the man pointing at the book. Where is his finger, and what does that say about how he argues?
- Look at the face of the listening man. Is he angry, dismissive, or thinking hard? What tells you?
- Find the light source. Which man and which object does Rembrandt light most brightly?

Talk about it

1. Write the dialogue: in four lines each, let the two men disagree about a verse, with each stating the other's view fairly before answering it.
2. Paul rebuked Peter "to the face," yet later Peter called him "our beloved brother Paul." What does that teach about disagreeing well? Answer in a paragraph.

WRITING PROJECT: THE STEELMAN AND THE REPLY

Choose a question with two serious sides. You will write the side you reject so well that its defender would sign it, then answer it, in the order Aquinas uses.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- One or two sources from the side you reject (a library book, an essay, a classic text)
- A parent or friend who holds, or can argue, the other side

Steps

1. Choose a question. Suggestions: Is it better to live in the country or the city? Did the Roman Republic fall because of its generals or because of its citizens? Is the problem of evil the strongest argument against belief in God? Or choose one of the John Locke Theology or History questions you will see in 6.3.
2. Read the best defender of the view you reject. Note his thesis and his two strongest reasons, in his words, with page numbers.
3. Write the objections Aquinas-style: "Objection 1: It seems that ..." and "Objection 2: Further, ..." Each is 60–100 words and contains no mockery.
4. Give the steelman to someone who holds or can argue that view. Ask: "Would you sign this?" Revise until the answer is yes.
5. Write your "On the contrary" (one sentence of authority or evidence) and your answer (150–250 words).
6. Write a reply to each objection, beginning with a concession: "It is true that ...; but ..."

Check your work

- A defender of the other view agreed that my objections state his case fairly.
- I conceded at least one true point before replying.
- My replies answer the heart of each objection, not a side issue.
- I used concessive clauses correctly (see the Style Clinic).
- No word in my objections mocks or belittles the other side.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Aquinas's two objections by hand. Circle the word "Therefore" each time it appears and underline the premises that lead to it.
2. Imitate the form: write two objections to a view you hold yourself (for example, "It seems that homeschooling is not the best education; because ...").
3. List three straw men you have heard in conversations or advertisements and rewrite one as a steelman.

History note. Aquinas left the *Summa Theologica* unfinished when he died in 1274. Each of its articles follows the same plan: objections, "On the contrary," "I answer that," and replies to the objections. The English Dominican translation used here was published in the early twentieth century. Rembrandt's *Two Old Men Disputing* carries his early monogram and hangs in the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne.

 **Style Clinic. Concessive clauses** (Grammar Level 3, adverb clauses and complex sentences). A concession is best carried by a subordinate clause, so the main clause holds your answer: "*Although* evil is real, it does not prove that God is absent." Put the concession in the dependent clause and your claim in the independent clause, never the reverse. Weak: "Evil is real, although it does not disprove God," which buries your point. Other concessive openers: *while, even though, granted that, though*. A comma follows the clause when it comes first.

For families. Students sometimes fear that stating an unbelieving argument strongly is dangerous. Aquinas shows the opposite: the Church's greatest teacher put the problem of evil at the head of his proof and answered it. If your student meets a hard objection that has no ready answer, treat it as an invitation to read further (Augustine's *Enchiridion*, Lewis's *The Problem of Pain*), not as a threat. The Mill quotation comes from *On Liberty*, chapter 2. Keep steelmanning practice on perennial and historical questions; the habit transfers to current debates later without the heat.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student writes: “Some people think city life is better because they like noise and shopping. But obviously the country is better because it is peaceful.” Find the straw man and rebuild it as a steelman.

1. Who actually argues for the city, and why? Not because of “noise and shopping,” but because of work, learning, churches, hospitals and neighbors close at hand.
2. State it at its strongest: Samuel Johnson said that when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, because London held all that life can afford.
3. Concede before replying.

Answer: Steelman: “The city gathers in one place the best of human work: universities, hospitals, great churches, libraries, and the variety of neighbors who sharpen one another. A young person who wants to learn a trade or serve many people will find more of both there.” Reply begins: “It is true that the city gathers talent; but a gathering of people is not the same as a community ...”

Example 2. Revise this reply to Aquinas’s second objection so it answers the heart of the objection: “The objection is wrong because Aquinas was a very smart man and the Bible says God exists.”

1. The objection claims nature and will explain everything. The reply must deal with explanation.
2. Aquinas’s own reply: nature and human reason are themselves changeable and dependent, so they must be traced back to something unchangeable and necessary.
3. Remove the appeal to Aquinas’s intelligence; it answers nothing.

Answer: “It is true that nature explains how a seed grows and reason explains why a man builds a house. But nature and reason are themselves things that change and could have been otherwise. An explanation that needs explaining is not the last explanation, and the question of God is the question of the last one.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Define a straw man and a steelman.
2. **EASY** What is the test of a good steelman?
3. **EASY** Name the four parts of an article in Aquinas’s *Summa*.
4. **MEDIUM** State Aquinas’s first objection as a three-step syllogism.
5. **MEDIUM** Give three reasons steelmanning makes an essay more persuasive.
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite with the concession in a subordinate clause: “The printing press spread error. It spread Scripture far more.”

7. **CHALLENGE** Write a 60–80 word steelman of the view “Rome fell because Christianity made its citizens unwilling to fight,” a charge pagan Romans made after the sack of Rome in 410, which Augustine answered in *The City of God* and Edward Gibbon later revived in part.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (20 minutes, ACT-style): “Should students be required to argue the side they disagree with in debate?” Open with a steelman of the side you reject, then give your thesis.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Quoting the weakest or rudest defender of a view and calling it “the other side.”
- Hedging the steelman with sneer words such as “supposedly” or “so-called.”
- Replying to a side issue and leaving the heart of the objection untouched.
- Putting the concession in the main clause, so it sounds like your thesis.

Make it a game · Switch Chairs. Two players take a perennial question and opposite sides. Each argues for one minute. Then they switch chairs, and each must state the other’s case in thirty seconds. The original holder scores it 1–5 for fairness. Highest fairness score wins, not the best argument.

Scripture. “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.” (Proverbs 18:17, KJV)

Every case looks strong until the other side is heard; the steelman lets your neighbor search your argument before the judges do.

Practice: answers

1. A straw man attacks a weak, distorted version of an opposing view; a steelman states the opposing view at its strongest, in a form its defenders would accept.
2. Someone who holds the view would read it and agree that it states the case fairly, even better than he could.
3. Objections; “On the contrary”; “I answer that” (the body); replies to the objections.
4. If God (infinite goodness) existed, there would be no evil. There is evil. Therefore God does not exist.
5. It builds the writer’s credibility (ethos); answering the strongest objection answers the weaker ones (logos); and fair representation is just and truthful toward the opponent.
6. Although the printing press spread error, it spread Scripture far more.
7. Sample: Rome rose by civic virtue: courage in war, devotion to the city, and the old gods who bound citizens to the state. Christianity taught that a man’s first loyalty was to a heavenly city, praised meekness and patience, and drew able men into monasteries and church offices. A people taught to look beyond Rome would not die for it as their ancestors had.
8. Sample opening: “Requiring students to argue what they disbelieve seems to train them in insincerity: they learn to say what they do not mean, and to treat truth as a game. That is a serious charge. Yet the practice does the opposite when it is done well, because no one can hold a belief honestly who has never heard the best case against it.”

6.3 THE JOHN LOCKE INSTITUTE ESSAY (THEOLOGY OR HISTORY) 🏆

OBJECTIVES

- Read the John Locke Institute Global Essay Prize rules and choose one Theology or History question.
- Define the question's terms and limits before arguing, as Locke and his friends learned to do.
- Draft, steelman, revise and format an essay of no more than 2,000 words, ready for blind judging.

Warm-up. Read this John Locke History question from the 2026 round: “What might the world look like if the Library of Alexandria hadn’t burned down?” Before answering, write three questions you would have to settle first (for example: Did it actually “burn down”? When? What was in it?). That list is the first step of a prize essay.

Video slot. Video coming. The Library of Alexandria: history and legend, or John Locke’s life and Essay Concerning Human Understanding; preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

John Locke Institute

An educational organization in Oxford, named for the philosopher John Locke (1632–1704), that runs the Global Essay Prize for students under 19.

endnote

A numbered note gathered at the end of the essay. The Locke prize allows endnotes but not footnotes, and endnotes and bibliography do not count toward the word limit.

academic referee

A teacher or other responsible adult, not a relative, who confirms that the essay is the student’s own work.

counterfactual

A “what if” question about history (what if the Library had survived?). Good counterfactuals change one thing and reason carefully from known causes.

scope

The limits you set on a question: which terms you define, which period you treat, and what you will not try to prove.

CORE IDEAS

A prize for hard questions. The John Locke Institute sets three questions in each of ten subjects every year. They are written to be difficult and a little provocative, and the judges, drawn from universities such as Oxford, Cambridge and Princeton, are looking for students who can think, not students who can summarize. This lesson takes you through one essay in the Theology or History category from first question to finished PDF. The prize's namesake, John Locke, gives you your first lesson in method.

Locke's discovery. In the model, Locke tells how his great *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) began. Five or six friends were arguing in his rooms about a question "very remote" from this one (a friend who was there later recorded that it concerned morality and revealed religion) and got nowhere. Locke saw why: they had jumped into the question without first asking what their minds were able to settle. Your essay faces the same danger. Before you argue, examine the question. What do its terms mean? What can be known about it? What would count as an answer? The first paragraph of most winning essays does exactly this, briefly, and then commits to a thesis.

Choosing your question. As of October 2026, the questions for the 2026 round are on the Institute's website, and new questions are normally posted early in the new year. Choose by three tests. (1) *Can I answer it in 2,000 words?* (2) *Can I find real evidence:* primary sources, good scholarship, Scripture where it applies? (3) *Do I have something to say that others will not?* The 2026 Theology questions included "Is religious experience better explained by neuroscience or by theology?", and the History questions included the Library of Alexandria question in the warm-up. Both suit a student in a classical Christian school: the first because you know theology from the inside, the second because you have read the ancients. Avoid questions you cannot discuss without turning the essay into a partisan quarrel; judges reward light, not heat.

Defining and limiting. Take the neuroscience question. A weak essay picks a side in the first line. A strong one first notices the hidden assumption: that the two explanations compete. Does a full account of what happens in the brain when a man prays rule out that he is praying to Someone? A full account of the eye does not rule out that there is something to see. That one distinction, made clearly in the first paragraph, sets the essay apart. In history, define your terms against the evidence: the Library of Alexandria probably declined over centuries (Julius Caesar's fire in 48 B.C. damaged part of the collection; later wars and lost funding did the rest). Setting the scope honestly is part of what the judges call "knowledge and understanding."

Arrangement for 2,000 words. A useful plan: introduction with defined terms and thesis (200–250 words); two or three main arguments, each with evidence (300–400 words apiece); the strongest objection, steelmanned and answered as in 6.2 (300–400 words); conclusion that states what follows from your answer (150–200 words). Use endnotes, not footnotes, and cite sources in one consistent style (MLA or Chicago from Unit 3). Quote sparingly; judges want your reasoning, not a chain of quotations.

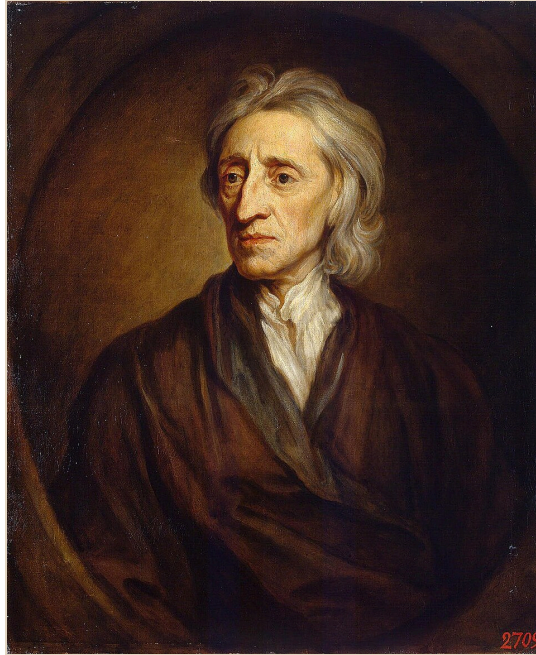
Theology before scholars. If you write in Theology, remember that your judges may not share your faith. That is no reason to hide it; it is a reason to argue well. Define terms, cite Scripture accurately and explain why it counts as evidence, and treat other views with the fairness of 6.2. Paul at Athens (Acts 17) quoted the Greeks' own poets to a skeptical audience; Peter told believers to answer "with meekness and fear." A respectful, rigorous Christian essay is exactly what such a panel rarely sees and remembers.

Honest work. The Institute permits but discourages the use of AI tools and says overreliance will count against an entry. For this course, do your own research and writing. Every quotation must be exact and every source real. Your referee will sign that the essay is yours; let it be true in every sentence (Ephesians 4:25).

The model. *John Locke, An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding (1690), "The Epistle to the Reader," Project Gutenberg #10615*

Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this Essay, I should tell thee, that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry.

PICTURE STUDY



Portrait of John Locke, Sir Godfrey Kneller, 1697 · Oil on canvas · State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Kneller was the leading portrait painter in London, and he painted Locke when the philosopher was about sixty-five and famous. Kneller left out the wig, lace and props that fill most portraits of the time. We see only the face: lean, tired, intelligent, looking straight out. The painting hung in Sir Robert Walpole's house at Houghton Hall before Catherine the Great bought it for Russia in 1779.

Look closely

- What has Kneller left out that you might expect in a portrait of a famous man? Why might he have done so?
- Look at the eyes and mouth. What qualities of mind does Kneller suggest?
- Compare the plain background with the richly lit face. Where does the painter want your attention?

Talk about it

1. A prize essay, like this portrait, succeeds by leaving things out. Write a paragraph on what you will leave out of your essay and why.
2. Write a 150-word character sketch of Locke as Kneller shows him, using only what you can see.

WRITING PROJECT: A JOHN LOCKE PRIZE ESSAY

Contest summary (checked October 2026; get the official rules and forms from johnlockeinstitute.com before you begin, since dates and questions change every year). In the 2026 round: open to students under 19 in any country; Senior category ages 15–18; ten subjects including Theology and History, three questions each; essays of no more than 2,000 words (endnotes, bibliography, diagrams and tables not counted); endnotes allowed, footnotes not; no name anywhere in the document; submit as a PDF named FirstName-LastName-Category-QuestionNumber.pdf; registration by March 31 and submission by May 31, 2026 (23:59 GMT), with paid late extensions; entry free; an academic referee (not a relative) required. Prizes in each subject were scholarships toward Institute programs, with a Grand Prize for the best essay overall.

If the next round's questions are not yet posted, draft on a 2026 Theology or History question now. Most of your research and nearly all of your skill will carry over when the new questions appear.

You will need

- The official rules and question list, printed
- Library and database access (Unit 2 skills)
- Your judge's report from 6.1 and your steelman from 6.2
- Writing notebook and a word processor that can export PDF

Steps

1. Choose one Theology or History question by the three tests. Write it at the top of every page of notes, word for word.
2. Locke's first inquiry: in one page, define the key terms, state what can and cannot be known, and set your scope.
3. Research: gather at least six sources, including at least two primary sources (ancient authors, Scripture, documents). Keep exact quotations with page numbers.
4. Write a one-sentence thesis that answers the question directly, and an outline on the 2,000-word plan in the core ideas.
5. Draft the whole essay in two or three sittings. Include one steelmanned objection and your reply.
6. Revise in three passes: (a) argument: does every paragraph serve the thesis? (b) evidence: is every fact and quotation checked? (c) style: cut every word that does no work; convert weak passives (see the Style Clinic). Then have a parent score it with the seven criteria from 6.1.
7. Format: add endnotes and bibliography, remove your name from the file, check the word count, export to PDF with the required file name, and ask your referee. Register and submit by the official deadlines.

Check your work

- My first paragraph defines the terms and states a thesis that answers the exact question.
- Each body paragraph makes one argument with evidence, and all facts and quotations are checked against sources.
- I steelmanned the strongest objection and answered its heart.
- I changed weak passive constructions to active voice, and kept passives only where the doer is unknown or unimportant.
- The essay is 2,000 words or fewer, uses endnotes (no footnotes), and has no name in the file.
- I followed every current official rule, including registration and referee.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Locke's paragraph. Then write your own "history of this essay" in four sentences: what question puzzled you, where you got stuck, and what first inquiry you made.
2. Make a two-column page for your question: "What can be known" and "What cannot be known."
3. Write three different one-sentence theses for your question, then choose the boldest one you can fully defend.

History note. Locke published the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* in 1690, the same year as his *Two Treatises of Government*. His friend James Tyrrell later wrote that the conversation described in the Epistle was about the principles of morality and revealed religion. Locke also wrote *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) and paraphrases of Paul's epistles. Kneller's portrait of him dates from 1697.

 **Style Clinic. Active and passive voice** (Grammar Level 3, voice and mood). Judges reward essays that say who did what. Passive: "The Library was destroyed and many books were lost." By whom? Active: "Caesar's fire damaged the Library in 48 B.C., and centuries of neglect finished the work." The passive is correct when the doer is unknown or beside the point ("The Library was founded under the early Ptolemies"). Search your draft for *was*, *were*, *been*, *is*, *are* followed by a past participle, and ask of each: would the active be clearer? Locke's own sentence is active: "five or six friends ... found themselves quickly at a stand."

For families. The contest summary was checked against the John Locke Institute's site in October 2026 and describes the 2026 round; read the current rules and register through the official site yourself, since dates, fees and questions change. Some of the Institute's questions in any year touch current politics or other religions; help your student choose a question that can be answered thoughtfully without partisanship. The referee must not be a relative; a co-op teacher, tutor or pastor usually serves. The essay is a strong portfolio piece even if it does not place.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart a student's first paragraph for "Is religious experience better explained by neuroscience or by theology?": "Religious experience is a fascinating topic. Many scientists have studied the brain. However, theology is better because God is real. This essay will show that theology wins."

1. Locke's first inquiry is missing: "religious experience," "explained" and "better" are not defined.
2. The thesis asserts the conclusion ("God is real") instead of arguing toward it; a judge who doubts it has no reason to read on.
3. It misses the hidden assumption that the two explanations compete.

Answer: Revision: "The question assumes that neuroscience and theology are rivals, as if an account of what the brain does in prayer settled whether anyone hears it. They answer different questions. Neuroscience can explain how a religious experience happens; only theology can ask whether it is true. This essay argues that neuroscience explains the mechanism of religious experience well, but that the question of its object, and so of its meaning, belongs to theology."

Example 2. Cut this sentence from 34 words to under 20 without losing meaning: "It is a fact that is widely agreed upon by historians who have studied the matter that the Library of Alexandria was not destroyed all at once in a single event."

1. Remove empty openers ("It is a fact that").
2. Remove phrases that repeat ("who have studied the matter," "all at once in a single event").
3. Make it active.

Answer: "Most historians agree that the Library of Alexandria declined over centuries rather than burning in a night." (17 words)

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the maximum length of a John Locke Institute essay, and what does not count toward it?
2. **EASY** Who may serve as your academic referee?
3. **EASY** In the model, what did Locke propose to his friends?
4. **MEDIUM** Name the three tests for choosing a question.
5. **MEDIUM** Change to active voice: "It was argued by Augustine that Rome's fall was not caused by the Christians."
6. **MEDIUM** What is a counterfactual, and what makes one good?

7. **CHALLENGE** Write a thesis for the Library of Alexandria question that sets its scope honestly.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (40 minutes, CLT-style essay): “Does knowing how something works tell us what it is for?” Plan and write four paragraphs using one example from history or science.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Answering a nearby, easier question instead of the exact one set.
- Spending half the essay on background before stating a thesis.
- Leaving your name in the document or using footnotes instead of endnotes.
- Relying on popular legends (the Library “burning down in a night”) without checking scholarship.

Make it a game · Define Before You Fight. A parent reads a provocative question (“Is it ever right to break a promise?”). Before anyone may argue, each player must define one key term in one sentence and say what would count as an answer. Players earn a point for each definition the others accept, then debate for two minutes.

Scripture. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11, KJV)

The Bereans were eager and careful at once; a prize essay needs both an open mind and a searched source behind every claim.

Practice: answers

1. 2,000 words; endnotes, bibliography, diagrams and tables are not counted.
2. A teacher or other responsible adult who is not a relative.
3. That before inquiring into their question, they should examine their own abilities and see what their understandings were or were not fitted to deal with.
4. Can I answer it in 2,000 words? Can I find real evidence? Do I have something to say that others will not?
5. Augustine argued that the Christians did not cause Rome’s fall.
6. A “what if” question about history; a good one changes one thing and reasons carefully from known causes rather than inventing freely.
7. Sample: “Had the Library of Alexandria survived intact, we would possess more of the Greek poets and historians, but the world would not look very different, because the knowledge that mattered most was already copied, carried and preserved in other cities and, later, in Christian monasteries.”
8. Sample plan: Thesis: knowing how something works does not by itself tell us what it is for. Example: a full chemical account of ink and paper does not tell us the meaning of the Declaration of Independence. Steelman: in biology, how an organ works often reveals its function. Reply: that works only because we already assume organs have purposes. Conclusion: mechanism and purpose are two kinds of explanation, and both are needed.

6.4 THE INSTITUTE FOR FAITH & CULTURE ESSAY: CITIZENS OF TWO CITIES 🏆

OBJECTIVES

- Read the Institute for Faith & Culture contest rules and the most recent theme, “Biblical Citizenship.”
- Study how Augustine opens *The City of God* by naming his theme, his opponents, his difficulty and his help.
- Write and polish a 500–800-word essay that argues a Christian position with Scripture, history and a fair answer to the other side.

Warm-up. Read Matthew 22:21 and Acts 5:29. The first says to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s; the second says, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” In four sentences, explain how both can be true at once.

Video slot. Video coming. Augustine and *The City of God* (introduction to the two cities); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

Institute for Faith & Culture

A nonpartisan Christian educational organization that holds an annual national student essay contest on a theme of faith and public life.

the two cities

Augustine’s picture of history: the city of God, which lives by faith and sojourns on earth, and the earthly city, built on love of self. Christians live in both at once.

conscience

The moral judgment by which a person applies God’s law to his own actions (Romans 2:15). It must be informed by Scripture, not merely by feeling.

worldview essay

An essay that reasons from a stated set of first principles (here, a biblical one) to a conclusion about a public question.

compression

Saying much in few words. An 800-word limit leaves room for one thesis, two or three arguments and one objection.

CORE IDEAS

A second kind of prize. The John Locke essay in 6.3 was long, blind-judged and written for scholars who may not share your faith. The Institute for Faith & Culture contest is short and

written for Christian judges who want to see how the faith answers a public question. Its recent themes have been “The Mind of Christ in Our Secular Age” (2025) and “Biblical Citizenship” (2026), which asked what it means to live faithfully as citizens of both heaven and earth, especially when earthly laws or customs conflict with God’s commands. Writing for an audience that agrees with you sounds easier. It is harder in one way: such judges have heard every pious phrase, and only a clear, well-supported argument will stand out.

Augustine’s opening. In A.D. 410 the Goths sacked Rome, and many pagans blamed the Christians for abandoning the old gods. Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa, answered in *The City of God*, a work he labored over for some thirteen years. Read his first paragraph (the model) as an introduction to a contest essay. In one long sentence he names his *theme* (the glorious city of God), his *reader* (Marcellinus, who asked for the work), his *opponents* (“those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city”), and the *tension* at the heart of the subject: the city lives by faith in this fleeting time and “sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly,” yet waits for its eternal seat. Then, in a short sentence, he names the difficulty and his help: “A great work this, and an arduous; but God is my helper.” Your 800-word essay needs the same parts in its first paragraph, in fewer words.

Biblical citizenship. Scripture gives the Christian two loyalties and orders them. We are told to “seek the peace of the city” (Jeremiah 29:7), to submit to rulers “for the Lord’s sake” (1 Peter 2:13), to pray for those in authority, to pay taxes and give honor (Romans 13:7). We are also told that our citizenship (“conversation”) is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and that when a ruler commands what God forbids, we must obey God (Acts 5:29). Scripture shows what faithful dissent looks like: the Hebrew midwives in Egypt, Daniel at his open window, the apostles before the council. Each disobeyed one command, openly and peacefully, accepted the cost, and went on serving the king or the people in every lawful way. That pattern of conscience, courage and continued good citizenship is rich ground for an essay.

Arguing to friends. Even before Christian judges, an essay must argue, not preach. State a thesis someone could dispute. Support it with Scripture rightly read in context, and with history: the early Christians who prayed for the emperors but would not sacrifice to them; Polycarp of Smyrna, who would not curse Christ; William Wilberforce, who used lawful means for decades to end the British slave trade. Then steelman the other side (6.2). A thoughtful secular neighbor might say religion should stay private for the sake of peace; a thoughtful Christian might argue that believers should withdraw from public life altogether. Answer the stronger of these fairly.

Nonpartisan by rule. The Institute is a nonpartisan charity and asks entrants not to write partisan messaging. Take this seriously. Write about principles and historical examples, not about current candidates, parties or campaigns. An essay that sounds like a campaign flyer will lose with these judges, and it would break this course’s rules as well. The best essays on biblical citizenship read as if they could have been written in any century.

Compression. Eight hundred words is about three typed pages double-spaced. Plan for an opening of about 100 words, two or three arguments of 150–200 words each, a steelman and reply of about 150 words, and a closing of 75–100 words. Cut every sentence that only

restates. Augustine needed twenty-two books; you have eight paragraphs at most. Choose one sharp question inside the theme (for example, “When must a Christian disobey a law?”) rather than the whole theme.

With meekness and fear. This year’s faith verse governs this essay most of all: be ready to give an answer “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Write as someone who loves country and neighbor, not as someone who scorns them. Augustine did not hate Rome; he wanted Romans to see a better city.

The model. *Augustine, The City of God, Book I, Preface, translated by Marcus Dods, Volume I, Project Gutenberg #45304*

The glorious city of God is my theme in this work, which you, my dearest son Marcellinus, suggested, and which is due to you by my promise. I have undertaken its defence against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city,—a city surpassingly glorious, whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it shall dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now with patience waits for, expecting until “righteousness shall return unto judgment,” and it obtain, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace. A great work this, and an arduous; but God is my helper

PICTURE STUDY



Saint Augustine in His Study, Sandro Botticelli, about 1490–1494 · Tempera on panel · Uffizi Gallery, Florence

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Botticelli painted this small panel, only about sixteen inches high, late in his career. Augustine sits in a tiny vaulted room, a curtain pulled back as if we have stepped in on him

unannounced. He is not preaching or looking toward heaven; he is working, pen in hand, bent over the page. Look at the floor: the papers there are the litter of hard writing. Even a saint drafts and discards.

Look closely

- Find the curtain. What does it suggest about the viewer's place in the scene?
- Look at Augustine's posture and hands. How does Botticelli show concentration?
- Look at the floor and the shelves. What do these details say about the work of writing?

Talk about it

1. Augustine wrote *The City of God* in a city under threat and an empire in decline. Write a paragraph on why such a time might call for careful writing rather than quick speeches.
2. Count the drafts you threw away this unit. Write five sentences on what revision has taught you, in Augustine's plain, direct style.

WRITING PROJECT: A FAITH & CULTURE CONTEST ESSAY

Contest summary (checked October 2026; get the current theme, rules and online form from institute.fc.org, since they change every year). In recent rounds: open to United States citizens under 26 at the time of submission, one entry per person; the 2025 essays were 500–800 words; the 2026 theme was “Biblical Citizenship,” due February 17, 2026 (the 2025 deadline was March 8), so expect the next deadline in late winter 2027; essays submitted as .docx or PDF through the online form, in Times New Roman or Arial at 11 or 12 points, with your name and essay title included (this contest is not judged blind); judged on content, writing style and overall impression. The winner received \$500, publication on the Institute's websites, and an all-expenses-paid trip to the Kingdom Come Conference to join a live panel discussion. Entrants are asked to avoid partisan messaging.

If the new theme is posted, write to it. If not, write on “Biblical Citizenship” now; the skills, and much of the research, will transfer.

You will need

- The current official rules, printed
- A KJV Bible and a concordance
- One historical source (for example, a short life of Polycarp, Daniel, or Wilberforce)
- Your steelman notes from 6.2

Steps

1. Narrow the theme to one sharp question (for example: “When must a Christian disobey a law?” “What does a Christian owe a country that does not share his faith?” “Is patriotism a Christian virtue?”).

2. Gather evidence: three to five Scripture passages read in context, and one or two historical examples. Copy every verse exactly from the KJV.
3. Write an Augustine-style opening of about 100 words: theme, question, the opposing view, the tension, and your thesis.
4. Draft the body: two or three arguments, a steelman of the strongest objection, and your reply. Close by showing what your answer asks of the reader.
5. Cut to 800 words or fewer. Check every quotation and fact, remove anything partisan, and read the essay aloud.
6. Format to the rules, add your name and title, and have a parent judge it on content, style and overall impression. Submit through the official form before the deadline.

Check your work

- My thesis answers one clear question inside the theme, and someone could reasonably disagree with it.
- Every Scripture quotation is exact and read in its context.
- I steelmanned an opposing view and answered it with meekness.
- The essay contains no partisan messaging and names no current candidates or parties.
- I used semicolons and colons correctly (see the Style Clinic).
- The essay is within the word limit and formatted to the current rules.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Augustine's paragraph. Label the theme, the reader, the opponents, the tension and the difficulty.
2. Imitate his closing sentence: write a short sentence of your own that names the difficulty of your essay and your help ("A hard question this, and an old one; but ...").
3. List five people from Scripture or church history who obeyed God rather than men. Beside each, note what they still did as faithful citizens.

History note. Alaric's Goths sacked Rome in August 410. Augustine began *The City of God* about 413 and finished its twenty-two books about 426; he died in 430 while the Vandals besieged Hippo. Marcellinus, to whom the work is addressed, was an imperial official and friend of Augustine who was executed in 413. Botticelli painted two pictures of Augustine: a large fresco in the church of Ognissanti in Florence (1480) and this small panel in the Uffizi.

 **Style Clinic. Semicolons and colons** (Grammar Level 3, punctuation mastery). A semicolon joins two closely related independent clauses: "A great work this, and an arduous; but God is my helper." (Augustine's older style puts a semicolon before *but* where we would usually use a comma; either is acceptable when the clauses are long.) A colon introduces what the first clause promises: a list, an explanation or a quotation. "Scripture gives the Christian two loyalties: one to the earthly city and one to the heavenly." Check that a complete sentence stands before every colon and on both sides of

every semicolon. In a short contest essay, one or two well-placed semicolons show control; ten show strain.

For families. The contest summary was checked against the Institute for Faith & Culture website in October 2026; the 2025 page and 2026 announcement are summarized here, and the next round's theme, length and deadline should be confirmed on the official site. Past themes have included topics on which families hold strong views; this lesson steers students to principles, Scripture and historical examples, in keeping with the Institute's own nonpartisan rule. The Dods translation of Augustine is in the public domain. Botticelli's panel shows Augustine fully robed at his desk.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this opening to do Augustine's work: "Christians are citizens of heaven. The Bible talks about this a lot. In today's world, being a Christian citizen is very important. In this essay I will talk about biblical citizenship."

1. Theme and question: narrow "biblical citizenship" to one question.
2. Opponents and tension: name the view you will answer and the pull between two loyalties.
3. Thesis: say something a reader could dispute.

Answer: "When King Darius forbade prayer to any god or man but himself, Daniel went home, opened his window toward Jerusalem, and prayed as he always had. He did not riot, and he did not hide. Some say a Christian's faith should stay private for the sake of peace; others, that a Christian owes no loyalty to an unbelieving state at all. Scripture refuses both. A Christian obeys every lawful command as a service to God, and disobeys an unlawful one openly, peacefully and at his own cost, because his first citizenship is in heaven." (98 words)

Example 2. Find and fix the partisan drift in this body sentence: "Today, some politicians want to take away our freedoms, and Christians must vote them out."

1. It points at unnamed current politicians and gives a voting instruction: that is campaign messaging, against the contest rule.
2. It makes an accusation without evidence.
3. Restate the principle it hides, with Scripture or history.

Answer: "Every age has rulers who overreach. Scripture tells Christians to pray for them, to honor them, and to use every lawful means to restrain injustice, as Wilberforce did for twenty years in Parliament until the British slave trade was abolished in 1807, while never giving them the obedience that belongs to God alone."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Who may enter the Institute for Faith & Culture contest (recent rounds)?
2. **EASY** On what three things are the essays judged?
3. **EASY** Why did Augustine write *The City of God*?
4. **MEDIUM** Name the five things Augustine's opening does.
5. **MEDIUM** Give two passages that command submission to rulers and one that limits it.
6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate correctly: "Daniel did three things he prayed openly he refused to hide and he accepted the penalty"
7. **CHALLENGE** Steelman, in 60–80 words, the view that Christians should withdraw from public life, then give a one-sentence reply.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, SAT/CLT-style): "Is loyalty to one's country a virtue?" Write an opening paragraph and an outline.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Preaching to the judges instead of arguing a thesis someone could dispute.
- Quoting verses out of context or from memory instead of copying them exactly.
- Drifting into current partisan politics, which the contest rules and this course forbid.
- Trying to cover the whole theme in 800 words instead of one sharp question.

Make it a game · Two Cities Sort. A parent writes duties on index cards (pay taxes, pray for rulers, worship God alone, honor the king, tell the truth under oath, refuse to bow to an idol, serve in an office, help a neighbor in need). The student sorts each into "the earthly city," "the city of God," or "both," and gives a Scripture reference for each. Score one point per card with a correct verse.

Scripture. "And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." (Jeremiah 29:7, KJV)

God told His exiled people to serve the good of a pagan city; biblical citizenship is love for the earthly city ordered beneath loyalty to the heavenly one.

Practice: answers

1. United States citizens under 26 at the time of submission, one entry each.
2. Content, writing style and overall impression.
3. To answer pagans who blamed Christianity for the sack of Rome in 410 and to describe the city of God in contrast with the earthly city.
4. Names the theme, the reader (Marcellinus), the opponents, the tension (sojourning now, eternal seat later), and the difficulty with his help ("God is my helper").
5. Submission: Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17 (or Jeremiah 29:7, Matthew 22:21). Limit: Acts 5:29 (or Daniel 6, Exodus 1:15–21).
6. Daniel did three things: he prayed openly, he refused to hide, and he accepted the penalty.

7. Sample steelman: "Public life corrupts. To win office or influence, a man must flatter, compromise and court the powerful, and the Church that seeks power becomes worldly. The early Christians changed Rome not by holding office but by living as a holy people apart. Better to keep our hands clean, build faithful families and churches, and let our light shine from outside the arena." Reply: "Jeremiah told exiles to seek the peace of Babylon itself, and Joseph and Daniel served pagan kings without bowing to their gods; faithfulness means serving in the city, not fleeing it."
8. Sample thesis: "Loyalty to one's country is a virtue when it is ordered beneath loyalty to God, as the love of a son for his father is good so long as it does not command him to sin." Outline: (1) Scripture commands honor and seeking the city's peace; (2) gratitude for what we have received is just; (3) objection: patriotism has led to great wrongs; reply: disordered loves, not ordered ones, lead there; (4) close with Augustine's two cities.

UNIT 6 REVIEW

Closed book except for a KJV Bible. Short answers may be written or oral. Items 9 and 10 are timed writing; score them with the checklists from 6.2 and 6.3.

1. (2 pts) What is blind judging, and what must an entrant do because of it?
2. (5 pts) Name five of the seven John Locke Institute judging criteria.
3. (2 pts) In the *Apology*, how does Socrates redefine “eloquence”?
4. (4 pts) Define straw man and steelman.
5. (4 pts) State Aquinas’s first objection to the existence of God and the gist of his reply.
6. (4 pts) What “first inquiry” did Locke propose to his friends, and how does it apply to a prize essay?
7. (5 pts) Name five things Augustine’s opening to *The City of God* accomplishes.
8. (6 pts) Revise: (a) “It was decided by the judges that the essay was too long.” (active voice) (b) “Although the essay is short, it is excellent” → make the concession serve the main point “the essay is short.” (c) Punctuate: “He kept one rule obey God first”
9. (6 pts) Timed (15 minutes): Write a 100-word steelman of the view that country life is better than city life, as one who prefers the city, then a one-sentence reply that begins with a concession.
10. (6 pts) Timed (15 minutes): Write the first paragraph of an essay on “Should a historian judge the past?” that defines terms, sets scope and states a thesis.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: TWO CONTEST ESSAYS

Place the final versions of your John Locke Institute essay (6.3) and your Institute for Faith & Culture essay (6.4) in your Grade 11 portfolio, each with its judge’s report from a parent or teacher and a note of where and when it was submitted.

- **Question and thesis:** Each essay answers the exact question or theme set, with terms defined and a thesis a reader could dispute.
- **Evidence and accuracy:** Sources are real and cited consistently; Scripture and all quotations are exact; historical facts are checked.
- **Fairness to the other side:** Each essay steelmans the strongest objection and answers its heart with meekness.
- **Style and rules:** Clear, active, parallel prose with correct semicolons and colons; within word limits and formatted to the current official rules.

Answer key

1. Judging without knowing the author; the entrant must keep his or her name and identifying details out of the essay file.
2. Any five of: knowledge and understanding, use of evidence, quality of argumentation, originality, structure, writing style, persuasive force.
3. If eloquence means the force of truth, he admits he is eloquent; he will not use ornamented speech.

4. A straw man attacks a weak, distorted version of an opposing view; a steelman states it at its strongest, in a form its defenders would accept.
5. If God is infinite goodness there would be no evil, but evil exists. Reply (from Augustine): God allows evil because His power and goodness can bring good even out of evil.
6. To examine what their understandings were and were not fitted to deal with before arguing; in an essay, define terms, set the scope and decide what counts as an answer before taking a side.
7. Theme, reader (Marcellinus), opponents, the tension of sojourning now and dwelling eternally later, and the difficulty with his help.
8. (a) The judges decided that the essay was too long. (b) Although the essay is excellent, it is short. (c) He kept one rule: obey God first.
9. Scored with the 6.2 checklist: fair, unmocking, strongest reasons, concession in a subordinate clause.
10. Sample: "To judge is not to condemn; it is to weigh. A historian who refuses to weigh the deeds of the dead cannot tell a martyr from a murderer. Yet he must weigh them by standards they could have known, and by the evidence, not by the slogans of his own day. This essay argues that a historian must judge the past, but must judge it as a careful judge does: with the facts first, with fixed moral law, and with mercy for those who lacked his light."

PERSONAL NARRATIVE: THE COLLEGE ESSAY

This unit turns the second exercise of the progymnasmata, the narrative, toward a very practical end: the college application essay. You will sit in the admissions reader's chair, search the places of your own life for a true story, draft it in 650 words, and revise it with honest help. Your models are four classic American and English memoirs: Booker T. Washington sweeping his way into Hampton, Frederick Douglass trading bread for reading lessons, Benjamin Franklin walking up Market Street with a roll under each arm, and John Bunyan stopped mid-game by a voice from heaven. Each one proves character by deed rather than by adjective. Guided by 1 Peter 3:15, you will learn to give a reason for yourself "with meekness and fear": truthfully, humbly and in your own voice. By the end you will have a finished personal statement ready for the Common App and your Grade 11 portfolio.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can write a clear multi-paragraph essay and has practiced narrative in earlier grades.
- Has completed the year's work on argument and ethos (Units 1 and 6) or can explain Aristotle's three appeals.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can explain what admissions readers look for and why the personal essay is an argument from ethos.
- ☐ I can search my own life with an inventory and test a story for truth, ownership, a turn, a scene and something new.
- ☐ I can arrange a personal essay in five movements and budget 650 words among them.
- ☐ I can revise in passes (whole, paragraph, sentence), use a cold reader and proofread.
- ☐ I can write a true, 600–650-word personal essay entirely in my own words.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery (Project Gutenberg #2376)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2376>): Chapter III, "The Struggle for an Education," holds the sweeping test. Free.
- **Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass (Project Gutenberg #23)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23>): Chapter VII and the Appendix. Free; short enough to read in a week.
- **The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #148)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/148>): The arrival in Philadelphia and the Spectator method. Free.
- **John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (Project Gutenberg #654)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/654>): Bunyan's own account of his conversion. Free.

- **Common App: essay prompts and application guide**

(<https://www.commonapp.org>): Check the official prompts and word limit for the current year before submitting. As of the 2026-27 cycle the prompts are unchanged from 2025-26, with a 650-word limit.

7.1 WHAT ADMISSIONS READERS WANT ✎ ★

OBJECTIVES

- Explain what the personal essay does in a college application that grades, scores and activity lists cannot do.
- Show how Booker T. Washington reveals character through one small deed instead of naming his virtues.
- Read three short sample openings as an admissions reader would and judge which one earns a second paragraph.

Warm-up. You have three minutes to tell a stranger who you are, but you may not use a single adjective about yourself (no “hardworking,” “kind,” “curious”). Tell one thing you did last week instead. What did your listener learn about you?

Video slot. Video coming. How college admissions officers read the personal essay (an admissions dean or college counselor talk). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

personal statement

The main essay of a college application; on the Common App, one essay of 250–650 words on one of seven prompts.

ethos

Aristotle’s word for the persuasive force of the speaker’s character. In the college essay, ethos is nearly the whole argument: the reader must come to trust the writer.

narrative (diēgēma)

The second exercise of the progymnasmata: a true or likely account of an event, told with Theon’s six elements: person, action, place, time, manner and cause.

showing

Letting a deed, a detail or a spoken line prove a quality, instead of announcing the quality (“telling”).

reflection

The part of a personal essay where the older writer looks back and says plainly what the event meant, without preaching.

CORE IDEAS

One voice in a stack of numbers. By the time admissions readers reach your essay, they already know your grades, your test scores, your courses and your activities. What they do not know is how you think, what you notice and how you behave when no one is grading you. The personal statement is the only place in the file where you speak in your own voice for a

full page. Readers at selective colleges often move through a file in a matter of minutes, and they read many essays a day. They are not hunting for a famous adventure. They are hunting for a person they would like to have in a seminar, a dormitory and a lab.

The essay is an argument from ethos. You have spent this year learning to argue: rhetorical analysis, the research paper, steelmanning. The college essay is an argument too, but its proof is almost entirely ethos. Aristotle said that an audience trusts a speaker who shows good sense, good character and goodwill. Your essay makes the case, “Admit me,” without ever saying it. The reader should close the page thinking, “This student is honest, attentive and teachable, and I believe it because I watched it happen.”

Deeds, not adjectives. Booker T. Washington traveled about five hundred miles to Hampton Institute in 1872, much of it on foot, arrived dirty and nearly penniless, and was not admitted at once. The head teacher told him to sweep a room. Read the model below. Washington never writes “I was diligent” or “I was determined.” He writes that he swept the room three times and dusted it four times, and that the teacher wiped the woodwork with her handkerchief and found nothing. The deed proves the virtue. This is the old progymnasmata rule for narrative, put to new use: give the reader the person, the action, the place, the time, the manner and the cause, and let the reader draw the conclusion.

What readers want. Admissions officers who speak and write publicly about the essay tend to say the same few things. They want (1) *a real voice*, the way you would explain something to a teacher you respect, not the way you imagine a college sounds; (2) *one story, told closely*, rather than a summary of your whole life; (3) *specific detail* that only you could supply; (4) *honest reflection*: what you learned, saw or changed, said plainly; and (5) *new information*, something the rest of the application does not already show. An essay that lists your activities in paragraph form wastes the one page that belongs to you.

What tires them. Readers grow weary of essays that open with a dictionary definition or a famous quotation, that turn a short trip into a lecture about how “eye-opening” it was, that make the writer the hero of every scene, or that end with a sermon the story did not earn. They also notice when an essay has been polished by an adult until the student’s voice is gone. A slightly rough essay that sounds like a seventeen-year-old is stronger than a smooth one that sounds like a marketing department.

Truth is the first requirement. “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). Do not invent events, inflate your role, or borrow someone else’s story. Do not let a parent, a tutor or a computer program write sentences for you; most applications ask you to certify that the work is your own, and you should be able to sign that line with a clear conscience. This year’s verse also guides your tone: be ready to give an answer “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). If your faith is part of your story, as it may well be, show it at work in a scene, humbly, rather than arguing doctrine at a reader who did not ask.

The prompts, briefly. For the 2026–27 cycle the Common App kept the same seven prompts as the year before, with a limit of 650 words. In brief, they invite a story about a background or talent central to who you are, an obstacle or failure, a time you questioned a belief, an

unexpected act of kindness that made you grateful, an event that led to growth, a subject that absorbs you, or a topic of your own choice. Almost any good true story fits at least one. Choose the story first; the prompt will follow.

The model. *Booker T. Washington, Up from Slavery (1901), Chapter III, "The Struggle for an Education," Project Gutenberg #2376*

After some hours had passed, the head teacher said to me: "The adjoining recitation-room needs sweeping. Take the broom and sweep it."

It occurred to me at once that here was my chance. Never did I receive an order with more delight. I knew that I could sweep, for Mrs. Ruffner had thoroughly taught me how to do that when I lived with her.

I swept the recitation-room three times. Then I got a dusting-cloth and dusted it four times. All the woodwork around the walls, every bench, table, and desk, I went over four times with my dusting-cloth. Besides, every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned. I had the feeling that in a large measure my future depended upon the impression I made upon the teacher in the cleaning of that room. When I was through, I reported to the head teacher. She was a "Yankee" woman who knew just where to look for dirt. She went into the room and inspected the floor and closets; then she took her handkerchief and rubbed it on the woodwork about the walls, and over the table and benches. When she was unable to find one bit of dirt on the floor, or a particle of dust on any of the furniture, she quietly remarked, "I guess you will do to enter this institution."

I was one of the happiest souls on Earth. The sweeping of that room was my college examination, and never did any youth pass an examination for entrance into Harvard or Yale that gave him more genuine satisfaction

PICTURE STUDY



The Country School, Winslow Homer, 1871 · Oil on canvas · Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Homer painted this one-room school a year before Washington walked to Hampton. Nothing dramatic is happening: a teacher stands at the front, children sit on plain benches, the morning light comes in. Yet Homer chose every object and every face with care, so that a viewer comes away knowing what that school, and that morning, felt like. That is exactly what a good college essay does with an ordinary room.

Look closely

- Find the teacher. Where is she standing, and what is in her hands?
- Look at the children one at a time. Which one is not paying attention, and how can you tell?
- Find the small objects on the desk and floor. What does each tell you about the school?

Talk about it

1. Write one paragraph from the point of view of one child in the painting, using only details you can see. Do not name a single feeling; let the details do it.
2. Homer and Washington both make a plain schoolroom memorable. What do they each choose to show instead of explain?

WRITING PROJECT: READING LIKE AN ADMISSIONS OFFICER

Before you write your own essay, sit in the reader's chair. You will read three course-written openings (in Worked Examples and Practice), score them, and then write a one-page letter to yourself: "What I must do so a tired reader keeps going."

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A timer
- The Common App prompts for the current year (from commonapp.org)

Steps

1. Copy the Washington passage by hand. Underline every concrete number and object (three times, four times, handkerchief).
2. Set a timer for 90 seconds per opening. Read each of the three sample openings in this lesson and mark the exact sentence where your attention rose or fell.
3. Score each opening 1–5 on voice, specific detail and promise (does it make you want the next paragraph?).
4. List five qualities you hope a reader will see in you. Beside each, write one deed from the past two years that shows it. Cross out any quality you cannot match with a deed.
5. Read the seven current prompts. For your two strongest deeds, write the number of the prompt each could answer.
6. Write your one-page letter: three things you will do and three things you will avoid.

Check your work

- My copywork of Washington matches the model exactly.
- Every quality on my list is paired with a real, specific deed.
- My letter uses active voice in at least four of every five sentences.
- I named at least one cliché I am tempted to use and said why I will drop it.
- My sentences are complete; no fragments except one deliberate one I can defend.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Washington's sentence "I swept the recitation-room three times." Then write three sentences in the same pattern about work you have done: subject, strong verb, object, number.
2. List ten rooms you have spent long hours in (a kitchen, a barn, a shop, a sanctuary, a practice field). Star the three you could describe with your eyes closed.

History note. Booker T. Washington (about 1856–1915) was born enslaved in Virginia. After emancipation he worked in salt furnaces and coal mines in West Virginia and as a houseboy for Mrs. Viola Ruffner, whose strict standards of cleanliness he credits in this very passage. He entered Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in 1872 and later founded Tuskegee Institute in Alabama (1881). *Up from Slavery* appeared in 1901.

 **Style Clinic. Active voice (Grammar Level 3, voice and mood).** Washington's paragraph runs on active verbs: "I swept," "I got," "she took her handkerchief." Notice his one passive stretch: "every piece of furniture had been moved and every closet and corner in the room had been thoroughly cleaned." It is fine there, because the point is the

finished state of the room. In your essay, keep yourself and the people around you as subjects of active verbs. Revise “A decision was made to rebuild the fence” to “My brother and I decided to rebuild the fence.” Then check: does every passive verb you keep have a reason?

For families. This unit produces the student’s Common App personal statement (or a strong draft of it) during the junior year, so that the summer before senior year is for polishing, not panic. The Common App prompts for 2026–27 are unchanged from 2025–26 (seven prompts, 650-word limit); confirm on commonapp.org before the student submits, since colleges and the Common App may update requirements. Your role in this unit is reader and questioner, not co-author: ask “What did you see?” and “What happened next?” but let every sentence be the student’s. The guardrail for the series holds here: the essay is about events, people, work and God’s providence, not self-labeling.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Score this opening as an admissions reader would: “Webster’s Dictionary defines perseverance as ‘continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties.’ Throughout my life, I have shown perseverance in many areas, including academics, sports and community service.”

1. Voice: none. The first sentence belongs to Webster, the second to a résumé.
2. Detail: zero concrete nouns. “Many areas” and “community service” could describe forty thousand applicants.
3. Promise: the reader already knows what the essay will say and has no reason to read on.
4. Repair: find one moment that shows perseverance and begin inside it.

Answer: Score 1 of 5. A revision might begin: “The third time the bread failed to rise, I stopped blaming the yeast.”

Example 2. Find the ethos in Washington’s passage. List three things a reader trusts about him by the end, and the detail that proves each.

1. Diligence: “three times,” “four times,” every closet and corner.
2. Gratitude and humility: he credits Mrs. Ruffner for teaching him to sweep.
3. Good sense: he sees the order as a test (“here was my chance”) without complaining that it is beneath him.

Answer: Diligence, humility and practical wisdom, each proven by a deed or a detail rather than an adjective.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the word limit for the Common App personal statement in the 2026–27 cycle?
2. **EASY** Name Theon’s six elements of a narrative.
3. **EASY** Which of Aristotle’s three appeals carries most of the weight in a college essay, and why?
4. **MEDIUM** Rewrite as showing: “I am a very responsible person.”
5. **MEDIUM** Score this opening 1–5 and explain: “The mission trip to Guatemala was truly an eye-opening experience that changed my life forever.”
6. **MEDIUM** Score this opening 1–5 and explain: “My grandfather kept every receipt since 1974 in shoeboxes labeled by year, and the summer I turned sixteen he asked me to find one from 1983.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Washington says the sweeping was his “college examination.” In two or three sentences, explain why that claim persuades instead of sounding like a boast.
8. **CHALLENGE** Your faith matters to you and you want it in your essay. Write one sentence that shows it at work in a scene, following 1 Peter 3:15 (“with meekness and fear”).

COMMON MISTAKES

- Turning the essay into a list of achievements the activities section already shows.
- Opening with a definition, a famous quotation or a sweeping claim about “society” or “life.”
- Naming virtues (“I am determined”) instead of showing a deed that proves them.
- Letting an adult or a program smooth the essay until it no longer sounds like the student.

Make it a game • Adjective Ban. Each player tells a two-minute true story about a job well done. Any adjective describing the speaker (“patient,” “hardworking,” “nice”) costs a point, and listeners clap once when they hear one. The winner has the fewest points and the most listeners able to name the quality the story showed.

Scripture. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” (1 Peter 3:15, KJV)

An admissions office is, in a small way, asking for “a reason” for you; answer truthfully and humbly, not with a boast.

Practice: answers

1. 650 words (with a 250-word minimum).
2. Person, action, place, time, manner and cause.
3. Ethos, because the essay’s real argument is that the writer is a person worth admitting, and the reader must come to trust his or her character.

4. Sample: "Every morning at 5:40 I unlocked the feed room, because Mr. Dorsey had given me the only other key."
5. About 1-2. It names a big event but gives no scene, uses worn phrases ("eye-opening," "changed my life forever"), and puts the conclusion first. A reader learns nothing that a hundred others have not said.
6. About 4-5. A specific person, a strange concrete detail, a clear time, and a small mystery that makes the reader want the next sentence.
7. Sample: He earns the claim by first showing the work in exact numbers and letting the teacher's handkerchief be the judge. The verdict comes from someone else ("I guess you will do"), and his own conclusion is about joy, not pride.
8. Sample: "Before the last shift at the nursing home, Mrs. Hale asked me to read her the Twenty-third Psalm, and I read it slowly, because I could see she was saying it with me."

7.2 FINDING A TRUE STORY

OBJECTIVES

- Use the classical canon of invention to gather at least twenty possible true stories from places, people, work, objects and turning points.
- Test each candidate with five questions and choose one story small enough to tell in a single scene.
- Learn from Frederick Douglass how a small exchange (bread for lessons) can carry a large meaning, and how prudence protects the people in your story.

Warm-up. Empty your pockets, backpack or desk drawer onto the table. Pick one ordinary object and tell the true story of how it got there. Was the story more interesting than the object?

Video slot. Video coming. Frederick Douglass learning to read in Baltimore (a museum or historic-site program on the Narrative). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

invention (inventio)

The first canon of rhetoric: discovering what there is to say before deciding how to say it.

topics (topoi)

Literally “places”: the standard headings a speaker searches for material. Here, the places of your own life: rooms, people, work, objects, turning points.

small story

A single event, often a single hour, that can be told as one scene and still reveal character.

turn

The moment in a narrative when something changes: a decision, a discovery, a reversal. Aristotle called the reversal *peripeteia*.

prudence

Practical wisdom; in a personal essay, care not to expose or embarrass the real people in your story.

CORE IDEAS

Invention comes first. Cicero and Quintilian taught that a speaker first searches for material, and only then arranges and styles it. Most weak college essays fail at invention: the student grabs the first big event that comes to mind (the championship, the trip, the injury) and starts polishing. This lesson slows you down. You will gather many stories before you choose one, the way a farmer walks the whole field before deciding where to plant.

Search the places of your life. The old rhetoricians searched the *topoi*, the “places” where arguments live. Your life has places too. Walk through them on paper: (1) *rooms* where you have spent long hours; (2) *people* who taught you something, by word or by example; (3) *work*, paid or unpaid, especially work that was dull, hard or dirty; (4) *objects* you have kept, built, broken or fixed; (5) *turning points*, the days after which something was different; and (6) *providences*, times you can now see God’s hand in what looked like chance or loss. Write fast. Aim for twenty entries. Quantity is the goal at this stage.

Small beats big. Douglass’s model is a single habit: carrying bread on errands and trading it to hungry boys for reading lessons. He could have written “I overcame great obstacles to gain an education.” Instead he gives a street name, a shipyard, a book carried on errands and a loaf of bread, and then one line that turns the whole scene: they gave him “that more valuable bread of knowledge.” The small, concrete exchange carries the large meaning. Your best story is likely to be small too: one conversation, one shift, one repair, one mistake.

Five tests for a candidate. Hold each story up to these questions. *Is it true?* (Every detail, not just the outline.) *Is it mine?* (Am I an actor in it, not just a witness to someone else’s drama?) *Does something turn?* (Do I think, act or see differently at the end?) *Can I tell it as a scene?* (Is there a place, a time and dialogue I can recall?) *Does it add something new?* (Would a reader learn something the rest of my application does not show?) A story that passes all five is worth a draft.

Stories to handle with care. Some subjects are not forbidden but are hard to do well. A grandparent’s death can become an essay about the grandparent rather than about you with the grandparent. A sports injury often becomes the same comeback story every reader has seen. A short service trip easily turns into tourism with a moral attached. A painful family matter may not be yours alone to tell. If you choose one of these, find the small, odd, specific moment inside it that no one else could write. And remember the series guardrail: your essay is about what you did, saw and learned, not a label you attach to yourself.

Prudence protects others. Notice Douglass’s restraint. He is “strongly tempted” to name the boys who taught him, “but prudence forbids,” because naming them might embarrass them. He gives only a street. Follow his example. Change or omit names when a story could hurt someone. Do not use the essay to settle scores with a coach, a teacher or a sibling. Charity toward the people in your story is part of the ethos the reader is weighing. “Let your speech be alway with grace” (Colossians 4:6).

Choose, then commit. By the end of this lesson, pick one story and two backups. Write a one-sentence summary in this form: “When ___ happened, I ___, and since then I ___.” If you cannot fill all three blanks, the story may not yet have a turn. Keep searching or look deeper into what happened next.

The model. *Frederick Douglass, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave (1845), Chapter VII, Project Gutenberg #23*

The plan which I adopted, and the one by which I was most successful, was that of making friends of all the little white boys whom I met in the street. As many of

these as I could, I converted into teachers. With their kindly aid, obtained at different times and in different places, I finally succeeded in learning to read. When I was sent of errands, I always took my book with me, and by going one part of my errand quickly, I found time to get a lesson before my return. I used also to carry bread with me, enough of which was always in the house, and to which I was always welcome; for I was much better off in this regard than many of the poor white children in our neighborhood. This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me that more valuable bread of knowledge. I am strongly tempted to give the names of two or three of those little boys, as a testimonial of the gratitude and affection I bear them; but prudence forbids;—not that it would injure me, but it might embarrass them; for it is almost an unpardonable offence to teach slaves to read in this Christian country. It is enough to say of the dear little fellows, that they lived on Philpot Street, very near Durgin and Bailey's ship-yard

PICTURE STUDY



The Banjo Lesson, Henry Ossawa Tanner, 1893 · Oil on canvas · Hampton University Museum, Hampton, Virginia

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Tanner, the son of a minister in Philadelphia, painted an old man teaching a boy to play the banjo in a small, bare room. Nothing grand happens. Yet the painting is about patience, inheritance and love, all carried by two bent heads and four hands on one instrument. It hangs today at Hampton University, the school Booker T. Washington swept his way into. It is a fine picture of the kind of small story this lesson asks you to find.

Look closely

- Find the two sources of light. Where does each fall, and what does each make you notice?
- Look at the old man's hands and then the boy's. What is each doing?
- Find the plain objects on the floor and table. Why might Tanner have kept the room so bare?

Talk about it

1. Who taught you a skill with their hands near yours? Write the first three sentences of that scene.
2. The painting has no words. What one line of dialogue do you think the old man might say? Why would it fit?

WRITING PROJECT: THE STORY INVENTORY

You will fill two notebook pages with possible stories, test the best ones and choose the story you will draft in 7.3.

Work quickly in the first session and slowly in the second.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A timer
- Old photographs, a calendar or a journal to jog memory (optional)

Steps

1. Session 1: Write six headings: Rooms, People, Work, Objects, Turning Points, Providences. Set a timer for five minutes per heading and list everything that comes to mind, without judging.
2. Circle the eight entries that bring back a specific picture: a smell, a sound, a sentence someone said.
3. For each circled entry, write one line naming the moment inside it ("the night the well pump froze," not "farm life").
4. Session 2: Put your top five through the five tests (true, mine, a turn, a scene, something new). Mark each test pass or fail.
5. Choose one story and two backups. For the chosen story, fill in: "When ___ happened, I ___, and since then I ___."
6. Tell the story aloud to a family member in under three minutes. Afterward, ask them which moment they remember best. That moment may be your opening.

Check your work

- My inventory has at least twenty entries under six headings.
- My chosen story passes all five tests.
- My one-sentence summary has a clear turn.

- I have thought about who appears in the story and changed or omitted any name that could embarrass someone.
- Every pronoun in my summary and notes has one clear antecedent.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Douglass's sentence beginning "This bread I used to bestow." Then imitate it: write one sentence in which a plain object you gave or received stands for something larger.
2. Write your six inventory headings at the top of a fresh page and add one entry to each before the first session ends.

History note. Frederick Douglass (about 1818–1895) was sent as a boy to Baltimore to serve in the household of Hugh and Sophia Auld. Mrs. Auld began to teach him the alphabet until her husband forbade it, and Douglass then taught himself with the help of the street boys described here. He escaped to freedom in 1838 and published his *Narrative* in 1845. With his own hand he names the wrong plainly: teaching a slave to read was treated as "almost an unpardonable offence."

 **Style Clinic. Pronoun reference (Grammar Level 3, pronouns).** A personal narrative is crowded with *he*, *she* and *they*. Douglass keeps every pronoun clear: "This bread I used to bestow upon the hungry little urchins, who, in return, would give me..." The relative pronoun *who* sits right after *urchins*. Test your notes: "My uncle and my cousin fixed the tractor, and he said it was my fault" leaves the reader asking which man spoke. Name the person again or recast: "My uncle said it was my fault." Watch also for a vague *this* or *it* that points at a whole idea rather than a noun.

For families. Douglass's phrase "this Christian country" is sharp irony aimed at slaveholding hypocrisy. In the Appendix to the *Narrative* he explains that he opposes "the slaveholding religion of this land" and loves "the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ." It is worth reading that Appendix with your student. During the inventory, you are the best memory aid in the house: offer dates, photographs and "Do you remember when..." but let the student choose. If the student settles on a painful family matter, talk together about what is theirs to tell.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student lists “My church mission trip to Honduras” as a topic. Use the tests to shrink it to a usable story.

1. Is something new? Many applicants write about service trips; as a whole trip, it fails.
2. Look for the moment inside: the student remembers mixing concrete by hand with a man named Óscar who spoke no English and corrected the mix by taste of grit on his fingers.
3. Turn: the student, who had come to “help,” spent three days being taught.
4. Summary: “When Óscar dumped out my first batch of concrete, I learned to measure by his hands, and since then I ask before I fix.”

Answer: The story is now one man, one task and one reversal. It passes all five tests.

Example 2. A student wants to write about a coach who cut him from the team unfairly. Apply prudence.

1. Is it mine? Partly; but the essay could easily become a complaint about the coach.
2. Find the part that is about the student’s own deeds: he spent that spring running the scoreboard for the team that cut him.
3. Omit the coach’s name; describe him fairly or not at all.

Answer: Focus the story on the scoreboard season. Charity toward the coach strengthens the writer’s ethos; a grievance weakens it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Which canon of rhetoric is this lesson about, and what does it mean?
2. **EASY** Name the six “places” of your life used in the inventory.
3. **EASY** What did Douglass trade, and for what?
4. **EASY** Why does Douglass not name the boys?
5. **MEDIUM** Shrink “working at my family’s restaurant” to a single moment.
6. **MEDIUM** Which test does this story fail? “My older sister’s struggle with illness and how she overcame it.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Fill in the summary form for a story of your own: “When ___ happened, I ___, and since then I ___.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Fix the pronoun reference: “When Grandpa and Mr. Ellis taught me to sharpen a chisel, he said I was pushing too hard, which surprised me.”

COMMON MISTAKES

- Choosing the biggest event instead of the truest small moment.
- Picking a story in which the writer only watched someone else act.
- Using the essay to air a grievance against a real, living person.
- Stopping the inventory after five entries; the best story is often the fifteenth.

Make it a game · Twenty Questions, Reversed. The student names one entry from the inventory. Family members get twenty questions to pull out details (What did it smell like? What did he say? What time was it?). Each question the student can answer with a concrete detail scores a point. A story that scores fifteen or more is ready to draft.

Scripture. “I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.” (Psalm 77:11, KJV)

Finding a true story begins with remembering, and the Psalmist teaches us to look back for God’s works among our own days.

Practice: answers

1. Invention: discovering what there is to say before arranging or styling it.
2. Rooms, people, work, objects, turning points and providences.
3. Bread, for reading lessons, which he calls “that more valuable bread of knowledge.”
4. Prudence: naming them might embarrass them, since teaching a slave to read was treated as almost unpardonable.
5. Sample: “The Saturday the dishwasher broke during a funeral luncheon and I washed 140 plates by hand while my father kept bringing out pie.”
6. “Is it mine?” The writer is a witness, not the actor, and it may not be the writer’s story to tell. Look for the writer’s own deeds within it, and ask the sister’s permission.
7. Sample: “When our neighbor’s barn burned, I spent two weekends pulling nails from the charred boards, and since then I cannot see a pile of scrap lumber without seeing the barn it could be.”
8. Sample: “When Grandpa and Mr. Ellis taught me to sharpen a chisel, Mr. Ellis said I was pushing too hard. His correction surprised me.”

7.3 DRAFTING 650 WORDS 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Arrange a personal essay in five movements (scene, context, complication, turn, reflection) and budget 650 words among them.
- Imitate Franklin’s double vision: the young actor in the scene and the older narrator who judges him with humor and honesty.
- Write a complete first draft of the college essay in one sitting, then count and mark it.

Warm-up. In exactly fifty words, tell how you arrived somewhere new (a new job, a camp, a church, a city) and what you looked like when you got there. Count. Then cut one word and add one better one.

Video slot. Video coming. Benjamin Franklin arrives in Philadelphia, 1723 (a museum or historic-site program on the Autobiography). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

arrangement (dispositio)

The second canon of rhetoric: putting what you have found in the order that will move the reader.

in medias res

Latin, “into the middle of things”: Horace’s praise of Homer for beginning a story in the midst of the action, not at the very beginning.

double vision

In memoir, the two selves on the page: the younger self who acts and the older narrator who looks back and judges.

word budget

A plan that assigns a rough number of words to each part of an essay before drafting.

zero draft

A fast, complete, unpolished first version written straight through, to be revised later.

CORE IDEAS

Arrangement serves the story. In 7.2 you found your story. Now you arrange it. The classical oration had set parts (introduction, statement of facts, proof, conclusion), and a personal essay keeps the same logic in a lighter dress. Use five movements: (1) *Scene*: open inside a moment; (2) *Context*: just enough background for the reader to follow; (3) *Complication*: what made the moment hard, strange or important; (4) *Turn*: the decision, discovery or reversal; (5) *Reflection*: what the older you now understands, and a closing image that returns to the scene.

Begin in the middle. Horace praised Homer for rushing the reader *in medias res*, into the middle of things, instead of starting with the egg from which Helen was hatched. Your opening sentence should put the reader in a place at a time with something happening. Do not begin with your birth, your town's history, a definition or a question to the reader. If your first paragraph is a running start, you will likely cut it in 7.4; that is normal.

A budget for 650 words. Six hundred fifty words is about a page and a third, single-spaced. Before drafting, give each movement a share: scene about 150 words, context about 75, complication about 150, turn about 125, reflection and close about 150. These are guides, not laws, but they guard against the two most common failures: an essay that is all story with one line of meaning tacked on, and an essay that is all reflection with no story to stand on. Roughly, the reader should *watch* for the first half and *think with you* in the second.

Franklin's double vision. Read the model. Franklin, writing in his sixties, describes himself at seventeen landing in Philadelphia: dirty, tired, pockets stuffed with shirts, eating one roll and holding two others under his arms as he walks past the door of the girl he would later marry. Then comes the older man's verdict: she thought he made "a most awkward, ridiculous appearance," and Franklin adds, "as I certainly did." He tells this, he says just before the passage, so that the reader may compare "such unlikely beginnings" with what came after. That is the whole art of the college essay in one paragraph: a vivid younger self, an honest older narrator, and humility that wins the reader.

Concrete detail does the work. Count Franklin's nouns: working dress, cloaths, shirts, stockings, Dutch dollar, shilling in copper, boat, bread, basket, three-penny loaf, three great puffy rolls, Market-street, Fourth-street, a door. He does not tell you he was poor and green; the shilling and the rolls tell you. As you draft, prefer the name of the thing ("a Dutch dollar") to the category ("some money"), and a number ("three") to a vague amount ("several").

Write it in one sitting. Draft fast and straight through, without stopping to fix sentences. The same discipline that carries you through a timed essay on a test serves you here: outline in five minutes, write for forty, leave five to read it once. A complete rough draft of 700 words is far more useful than a perfect first paragraph. You may run over 650 now; you will cut in revision, and cutting almost always improves a personal essay.

End with an image, not a sermon. The weakest endings announce a lesson in borrowed words: "This experience taught me that hard work pays off." The strongest return to a concrete thing from the opening, now seen differently: the rolls, the broom, the bread. Let your last sentence point outward, to who you are becoming or what you will do next, with the same plainness you used in the scene. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6).

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (written 1771-1790), on his arrival in Philadelphia in 1723, Project Gutenberg #148*

I was in my working dress, my best cloaths being to come round by sea. I was dirty from my journey; my pockets were stuff'd out with shirts and stockings, and

I knew no soul nor where to look for lodging. I was fatigued with travelling, rowing, and want of rest, I was very hungry; and my whole stock of cash consisted of a Dutch dollar, and about a shilling in copper. The latter I gave the people of the boat for my passage, who at first refus'd it, on account of my rowing; but I insisted on their taking it. A man being sometimes more generous when he has but a little money than when he has plenty, perhaps thro' fear of being thought to have but little.

Then I walked up the street, gazing about till near the market-house I met a boy with bread. I had made many a meal on bread, and, inquiring where he got it, I went immediately to the baker's he directed me to, in Second-street, and ask'd for bisket, intending such as we had in Boston; but they, it seems, were not made in Philadelphia. Then I asked for a three-penny loaf, and was told they had none such. So not considering or knowing the difference of money, and the greater cheapness nor the names of his bread, I made him give me three-penny worth of any sort. He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls. I was surpriz'd at the quantity, but took it, and, having no room in my pockets, walk'd off with a roll under each arm, and eating the other. Thus I went up Market-street as far as Fourth-street, passing by the door of Mr. Read, my future wife's father; when she, standing at the door, saw me, and thought I made, as I certainly did, a most awkward, ridiculous appearance.

PICTURE STUDY



The Milkmaid, Johannes Vermeer, about 1660 · Oil on canvas · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer painted one woman doing one small task: pouring milk. Yet the picture holds the attention of crowds in Amsterdam, because every object is exact. The crust of the bread

glitters, the milk falls in a thin steady stream, a nail and its shadow mark the white wall. Vermeer shows that ordinary work, closely seen, is worth looking at. The same is true of the scene that opens your essay.

Look closely

- Find the bread on the table. How has Vermeer made the crust look rough and real?
- Follow the stream of milk from the jug to the bowl. What does its thinness tell you about how carefully she pours?
- Look at the wall and floor near her feet. Find two small objects most painters would have left out.

Talk about it

1. Franklin has his puffy rolls; Vermeer has his loaf. Name one food or tool from your story and describe it in a single exact sentence.
2. Write the first 50 words of a scene in which you are doing one small task carefully. Use no adjective that names a feeling.

WRITING PROJECT: THE ZERO DRAFT

In this lesson you will write the full first draft of your college essay, about 650–750 words, in one sitting.

Session 1 is planning; Session 2 is drafting. Do not revise during Session 2.

You will need

- Writing notebook or computer (spell-check off for now)
- Your story inventory and one-sentence summary from 7.2
- A timer

Steps

1. Session 1: Choose the Common App prompt your story best answers (or prompt 7, topic of your choice). Write its number at the top.
2. List the five movements down the page and write two or three notes beside each. Mark your word budget: 150 / 75 / 150 / 125 / 150.
3. Write three possible first sentences, each beginning inside the action. Choose the best one.
4. Collect ten concrete nouns and two lines of real dialogue from the story. You must use at least six nouns and one line.
5. Session 2: Set the timer for 45 minutes and write the whole draft straight through. If you get stuck, write “[TK]” and keep going.
6. Count the words. Draw a line between movements and write the word count of each in the margin. Compare to your budget.

7. Underline every sentence of reflection. If fewer than four, or more than twelve, note it for 7.4.

Check your work

- The draft opens inside a scene, not with background, a definition or a quotation.
- All five movements are present, and the turn is clear.
- I used at least six concrete nouns and one line of dialogue from my list.
- Every introductory participial phrase is attached to the right subject (no dangling modifiers).
- The draft is complete from first sentence to last, even if it runs long.
- Every event in the draft really happened as I tell it.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Franklin's sentence beginning "He gave me, accordingly, three great puffy rolls" through "eating the other." Then imitate it with a moment when you were handed more than you expected.
2. Write two versions of one moment from your story: first as the younger self saw it, then adding one clause of the older narrator's judgment (as Franklin does with "as I certainly did").

History note. Franklin ran away from his apprenticeship to his brother James in Boston and reached Philadelphia in October 1723, at seventeen. The girl at the door was Deborah Read, whom he married in 1730. He began the *Autobiography* in 1771 as a letter to his son and kept adding to it until near his death in 1790. Its spelling ("cloaths," "surpriz'd") is his own eighteenth-century usage, kept exactly here.

Style Clinic. Dangling and misplaced modifiers (Grammar Level 3, modifiers).

Narrative writers love the opening participial phrase, and it is the most common place to slip. Franklin's "having no room in my pockets, walk'd off with a roll under each arm" works because the phrase modifies *I*, the subject of "took" and "walk'd." Compare a student draft: "Walking into the shop for the first time, the smell of cut cedar hit me." The smell was not walking. Fix it by making the walker the subject: "Walking into the shop for the first time, I smelled cut cedar." After drafting, circle every *-ing* or *-ed* phrase that opens a sentence and draw an arrow to the noun it modifies.

For families. Resist the urge to read over the student's shoulder during Session 2. The zero draft is supposed to be rough, and early correction teaches a student to write timidly. Afterward, read it once and say only three things: the moment you saw most clearly, the place you got lost, and the sentence that sounded most like your son or daughter. This lesson is on the quarter path because a completed draft is the key product of the unit.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's draft opens: "I have always been interested in how things work. Ever since I was little, I have loved taking things apart. One summer, I got a job at a small-engine repair shop." Rearrange it to begin in *medias res*.

1. Find the first moment of action: the job at the shop.
2. Find a specific moment inside the job: the student remembers a lawn mower that would not start for the owner's customer, an elderly widow.
3. Open there, and move the background ("since I was little") into one sentence of context, or cut it.

Answer: "Mrs. Pruitt's mower had been in the shop for nine days, and on the tenth she came in person, holding her late husband's receipt." The background becomes context in the second paragraph: "I had been taking engines apart since I was eleven, but I had never had to explain one to a customer."

Example 2. Check a draft against the budget. Counts: scene 320, context 210, complication 140, turn 40, reflection 35 (total 745).

1. Scene and context together (530) use over two-thirds of the essay; the reader waits too long for anything to happen.
2. The turn (40) and reflection (35) are starved: the reader sees what happened but not what it meant.
3. Plan: cut the scene to about 170 and context to about 80; expand the turn to about 120 and reflection to about 150.

Answer: The student cuts 280 words from the front and adds about 195 to the back, landing near 660, ready for line-by-line cutting in 7.4.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five movements of the personal essay in order.
2. **EASY** What does *in medias res* mean, and who praised Homer for it?
3. **EASY** Which canon of rhetoric is this lesson about?
4. **MEDIUM** Find the phrase in which the older Franklin judges his younger self.
5. **MEDIUM** Replace the categories with specific nouns: "I grabbed some food and some tools and headed to the job."
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: "Exhausted after the double shift, the walk home seemed endless."
7. **CHALLENGE** Rewrite this ending as a closing image: "This experience taught me that patience is important and that I should never give up."

8. **CHALLENGE** Write a word budget for a 650-word essay whose turn happens in a single line of dialogue. Explain one adjustment from the standard budget.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting with a running start (background, birth, a definition) before anything happens.
- Stopping to polish the first paragraph and never finishing the draft.
- Telling all story and adding one line of moral at the end.
- Dangling an opening participial phrase so that the wrong noun seems to act.

Make it a game • Fifty-Word Arrival. Each player writes the moment of arriving somewhere new in exactly fifty words, with at least three concrete nouns and one number. Read them aloud. Listeners vote for the arrival they could see most clearly; then each writer adds one Franklin-style clause of honest self-judgment and reads again.

Scripture. “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the LORD directeth his steps.” (Proverbs 16:9, KJV)

Franklin’s unlikely walk up Market Street, rolls under his arms, is a picture of how our plans and God’s providence meet; your story may hold the same pattern.

Practice: answers

1. Scene, context, complication, turn, reflection (with a closing image).
2. “Into the middle of things”; Horace, in the *Art of Poetry*.
3. Arrangement (dispositio).
4. “as I certainly did,” agreeing that he made “a most awkward, ridiculous appearance.”
5. Sample: “I grabbed two cold biscuits, a tape measure and my father’s framing hammer and headed to the Wilsons’ porch.”
6. “Exhausted after the double shift, I found the walk home endless.”
7. Sample: “The mower started on the second pull. Mrs. Pruitt didn’t say anything; she just folded the receipt and put it back in her purse, the way you put away something you won’t need again.”
8. Sample: scene 170, context 70, complication 180, turn 60, reflection 170. The turn is short because one spoken line carries it, so the saved words go to the complication (building toward the line) and the reflection (explaining why it mattered).

7.4 REVISION: FROM DRAFT TO 650

OBJECTIVES

- Revise a personal essay in three passes (whole, paragraph, sentence), then proofread, and land between 600 and 650 words.
- Learn from Bunyan’s scene of the game of cat how a strong opening drops the reader straight into the turn.
- Use a “cold reader” test and honest outside help without giving up your own voice.

Warm-up. Read your zero draft from 7.3 aloud, start to finish, without stopping to fix anything. Put a check in the margin where you were bored and a star where you were proud. Which mark appears more in the first paragraph?

Video slot. Video coming. John Bunyan of Bedford and Grace Abounding (a museum, church-history or library program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

revision

Literally “seeing again”: rethinking an essay’s story, order and meaning, not only fixing its commas.

throat-clearing

Opening sentences that warm up the writer but tell the reader nothing; usually the first paragraph of a draft.

cold reader

A reader who does not know the story or the writer well, used to test whether the essay works on its own.

parallelism

Putting matched ideas in matched grammatical form: “leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell.”

proofreading

The last pass, for spelling, punctuation and typing errors, done slowly and preferably on paper.

CORE IDEAS

Revision means seeing again. Franklin taught himself to write by rewriting essays from the *Spectator* and comparing them with the originals, finding his faults and correcting them. You will do the same with your own draft, in three passes from large to small, because there is no point polishing a sentence you will later cut. *Pass one, the whole:* Is this the right story, and is the turn clear? *Pass two, the paragraph:* Is each movement the right size and in the

right order? *Pass three, the sentence:* Is every sentence clear, active, concrete and necessary? Then proofread.

Cut the running start. Read Bunyan's model. He does not begin with his upbringing or his theology. He begins with a stick in his hand, "in the midst of a game of Cat," having struck it once and about to strike again, and a voice "did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul." In one sentence we have a place, an action, a pause and a crisis. Most drafts take a paragraph to arrive at a moment like that. Try deleting your first paragraph and reading what is left. Often the essay now begins where it should, and you have saved 80 to 120 words.

Strengthen the turn and the reflection. In pass two, check the word counts you wrote in 7.3. If the turn is buried, move it into its own short paragraph. If the reflection is thin, ask yourself three questions and answer each in a sentence: What did I do differently afterward? What do I understand now that I did not then? What is still unfinished? Bunyan's reflection is honest even about confusion: he is "put to an exceeding maze." Admissions readers trust a writer who admits what he or she has not yet figured out more than one who wraps everything in a bow.

Sentence by sentence. In pass three, work through the essay line by line with these questions. Can a weak verb (is, was, got, made) become a strong one? Can a passive verb become active? Can a category become a thing ("equipment" → "a socket wrench")? Can two sentences that say the same thing become one? Is every *very*, *really* and *truly* necessary? Cutting 100 words this way usually costs nothing and sharpens everything. Keep your own voice: if you would never say *utilize* or *plethora* aloud, do not write them.

The cold reader test. When the draft is under 650 words, give it to someone who does not know the story well: a grandparent, a pastor, a family friend, a teacher. Ask them to read it once and then answer, without looking: What happened? What kind of person wrote this? Which moment do you remember? If their answer to the second question matches what you hoped, the essay works. If not, revise the scenes that should have shown it. Ask readers for questions, not rewrites. Their job is to tell you where they were confused or bored; your job is to fix it in your own words.

Honesty in help. It is right to ask for feedback; Proverbs says that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." It is wrong to submit sentences someone else wrote, whether a parent, a paid consultant or a computer program, while signing that the work is yours. Admissions readers also compare the essay with your other writing and with what teachers say about you; a voice that does not match raises doubts. The goal of this unit is an essay that is true in its events and true in its authorship.

Proofread slowly, then stop. Print the essay. Read it backward one sentence at a time to catch typos, then forward aloud to catch rhythm. Check that names, dates and numbers are right. Paste it into the application box early and look at it there, since formatting such as italics may not carry over. Then stop. An essay revised fifteen times often loses its life; three or four honest revisions are enough. Save the final copy in your portfolio for Unit 8.

The model. John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), paragraph 22, Project Gutenberg #654

But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game of Cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, *Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?* At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was, as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus looking down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if He did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for these and other ungodly practices

PICTURE STUDY



The Return of the Prodigal Son, Rembrandt van Rijn, about 1668 · Oil on canvas · State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Near the end of his life Rembrandt painted the moment from Luke 15 when the lost son comes home and the father embraces him. Rembrandt had made an etching of the same return as a young man, in 1636, and came back to it three decades later with a quieter, deeper picture. Everything that does not serve the meeting of father and son sinks into shadow. Revision works the same way: light the turn, and let what does not matter go dark.

Look closely

- Look at the father's two hands. Are they the same? What might the difference mean?
- Find the son's feet. What do his shoes tell you about his journey?
- Find the tall figure standing at the right. How is his posture different from the father's?

Talk about it

1. Rembrandt leaves most of the canvas in darkness. Which part of your essay deserves the light, and which part could fall into shadow (be cut)?
2. The parable, like Bunyan's scene, is a story of a turn. In two sentences, state the turn of your own essay as plainly as "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17).

WRITING PROJECT: THREE PASSES AND A COLD READER

Revise your 7.3 draft into a final college essay of 600–650 words.

Save each version with a date (Draft 1, Draft 2, Final) so you can see what changed.

You will need

- Your 7.3 draft, printed
- Two colors of pen
- One cold reader (an adult outside the immediate family if possible)

Steps

1. Pass one (whole): In one sentence, write what the reader should know about you at the end. Read the draft and mark every paragraph that does not serve that sentence.
2. Delete the first paragraph and read the essay again. Keep the cut unless the essay truly needs something from it; if so, move only that one sentence.
3. Pass two (paragraph): Recount each movement. Expand the turn or reflection if starved; trim the scene or context if bloated.
4. Pass three (sentence): Go line by line. Replace weak verbs, fix passives, name things exactly, cut doubled sentences and filler words. Check that paired ideas are parallel.
5. Give the essay to a cold reader. Ask the three questions (What happened? What kind of person wrote this? Which moment do you remember?) and write down the answers.
6. Revise once more in light of the answers. Count: 600–650 words.
7. Proofread on paper, backward then forward aloud. Paste it into a plain text box to check formatting. File it in your portfolio.

Check your work

- The essay opens inside a moment and has a clear turn.
- The reflection is honest and specific, and the ending returns to a concrete image.
- Matched ideas are in parallel form; no series mixes nouns, verbs and clauses.
- No dangling modifiers, unclear pronouns or needless passives remain.
- Commas, semicolons and quotation marks in dialogue are correct.
- The essay is 600–650 words, every event is true, and every sentence is mine.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Bunyan's first sentence through "go to hell?" Then imitate its shape: "But the same day, as I was in the midst of ___, and having ___, just as I was about to ___, ___."
2. Keep a revision log: for each pass, list three specific changes you made and why.

History note. John Bunyan (1628–1688), a tinker from Elstow near Bedford, was jailed from 1660 to 1672 for preaching without a license under the Church of England. In prison he wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666), the story of his own conversion, and later *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Part I, 1678). "Cat," or tip-cat, was a village game in which a player strikes a small tapered piece of wood so that it springs up, then hits it as far as he can.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism (Grammar Level 3, usage and style).** Bunyan's question is perfectly parallel: "*leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell.*" Verb + object + *and go* + place, twice. The matching form makes the choice unforgettable. Check your essay for broken series: "That summer I learned to weld, patience, and that I should listen" mixes a verb phrase, a noun and a clause. Fix: "That summer I learned to weld, to wait and to listen." Parallel form is especially strong in a closing sentence, but use it once or twice, not in every paragraph.

For families. Bunyan's account is intense, and the next paragraphs of *Grace Abounding* describe a period of despair before he finds peace; it is worth reading on together. If your student writes about faith, the best essays show belief at work in an ordinary scene, as Bunyan does in a village game. Your part now is to be one honest reader among several and to protect the student's authorship. Most applications require the applicant to affirm that the work is their own. When the essay is finished, celebrate it; many students reach senior year with no draft at all.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this paragraph with pass three (sentence): "There were a lot of boxes that needed to be moved by me and my brother. It was very hot and we were really tired. We got the job done eventually, which was a relief to both of us." (38 words)

1. Turn the passive and the empty "there were" into active verbs with real subjects.
2. Replace "a lot of" and "very hot" with numbers and things.
3. Cut "really," "eventually" and the vague relief; show it instead.

Answer: "My brother and I carried sixty-two boxes up three flights in July. At the top, he sat on the last one and laughed until he coughed." (25 words)

Example 2. A cold reader answers “What kind of person wrote this?” with “Someone who likes horses.” The writer hoped for “someone who stays when a job gets hard.” Diagnose and revise.

1. The essay spends its words on the horses (description) rather than on the hard night the writer stayed with a sick mare.
2. Cut description of the barn and breeds by about 100 words.
3. Expand the night: the hours, the cold, the choice not to go home when the vet left, and one line of dialogue.

Answer: The reader’s second answer becomes “Someone you could count on at two in the morning,” close enough to the writer’s aim.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three revision passes in order, and the step that comes after them.
2. **EASY** What is “throat-clearing” in a draft?
3. **EASY** What three questions do you ask a cold reader?
4. **MEDIUM** List the four things Bunyan puts in his first sentence before the voice speaks.
5. **MEDIUM** Make parallel: “At the shelter I learned cooking for eighty, how to listen, and patience.”
6. **MEDIUM** Cut this to half its length without losing meaning: “Due to the fact that it was raining very heavily outside, we made the decision to postpone the work until the following day.”
7. **CHALLENGE** A parent rewrites the student’s last paragraph “to make it flow better.” What should the student do, and why?
8. **CHALLENGE** Revise this ending into a closing image: “Looking back, I realize that this experience made me a stronger and more compassionate person.”

COMMON MISTAKES

- Proofreading commas before deciding whether the paragraph should exist.
- Cutting the reflection to make the word limit instead of trimming the scene.
- Letting helpers rewrite sentences until the voice is no longer the student’s.
- Revising so many times that the essay loses its life.

Make it a game • The Fifty-Word Cut. Each player brings one paragraph of about 100 words (from any draft). Swap papers. Each player has five minutes to cut the other’s paragraph to fifty words without changing its meaning or adding new words. Owners judge: which cuts would you keep?

Scripture. “The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth.” (Ecclesiastes 12:10, KJV)

Revision is the search for “acceptable words” that remain “words of truth”: pleasing to the reader and honest before God.

Practice: answers

1. Whole, paragraph, sentence; then proofreading.
2. Opening sentences that warm up the writer but tell the reader nothing, usually the first paragraph.
3. What happened? What kind of person wrote this? Which moment do you remember?
4. A time (the same day), a place and action (a game of cat), a completed act (one blow struck) and a suspended act (about to strike again).
5. “At the shelter I learned to cook for eighty, to listen and to wait.”
6. “Because of the downpour, we put the work off until morning.”
7. Sample: Thank the parent, ask what felt rough, and then rewrite the paragraph in the student’s own words. The essay must be the student’s own work, both for honesty (Ephesians 4:25) and because readers notice a voice that does not match the rest of the file.
8. Sample: “I still have the sixty-third box. It holds his tools now, and when he calls to ask where I put the level, I know exactly which corner to tell him.”

UNIT 7 REVIEW

Answer in writing. Short items are scored for accuracy; writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit. Items 10–11 may be done as a 40-minute timed sitting.

1. (2 pts) What is the word limit of the Common App personal statement, and how many prompts does it offer?
2. (3 pts) Why is the college essay chiefly an argument from ethos?
3. (3 pts) Name Theon's six elements of a narrative.
4. (2 pts) How does Booker T. Washington show diligence without naming it? Give two details.
5. (5 pts) Name the five tests for a candidate story.
6. (3 pts) Why does Douglass refuse to name the boys who taught him, and what does that teach a college essayist?
7. (5 pts) List the five movements of the personal essay with a sample word budget for 650 words.
8. (2 pts) Fix the dangling modifier: "Climbing the ladder with the shingles, the wind nearly knocked the bundle loose."
9. (2 pts) Make parallel: "The job taught me to show up early, honesty, and that I should finish what I start."
10. (4 pts) Rewrite as an opening in medias res: "Ever since I was young, I have enjoyed helping people. Last fall I volunteered at a food pantry."
11. (4 pts) Revise this ending into a closing image that returns to a concrete detail: "In the end, this experience taught me the value of hard work."
12. (3 pts) A tutor offers to "punch up" your essay by rewriting two paragraphs. Explain what you will do, with reference to Scripture.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE PERSONAL STATEMENT

Place your final college essay (600–650 words) in your Grade 11 portfolio, together with your story inventory, your zero draft, your revision log and your cold reader's answers. In Unit 8 you will use the same story skills for your résumé and cover letter.

- **Story and truth:** One true, specific story, small enough to tell as a scene, in which the writer acts and something turns.
- **Arrangement:** Opens in medias res; all five movements present and in proportion; ends with a concrete closing image rather than a sermon.
- **Ethos and reflection:** Character shown by deed and detail; reflection honest, humble and specific; other people treated with charity and prudence.
- **Style and mechanics:** The student's own voice throughout; active verbs, concrete nouns, clear pronouns, no dangling modifiers, parallel series; 600–650 words, carefully proofread.

1. 650 words (250 minimum); seven prompts, the last being a topic of the student's choice.
2. Its real claim is that the writer is worth admitting; the reader must come to trust the writer's good sense, character and goodwill, and the essay proves these through the story.
3. Person, action, place, time, manner, cause.
4. Two of: he swept the room three times; dusted four times; moved every piece of furniture; cleaned every closet and corner; the teacher's handkerchief found no dust.
5. Is it true? Is it mine? Does something turn? Can I tell it as a scene? Does it add something new?
6. Prudence: naming them might embarrass them. An essayist should protect the real people in a story, changing or omitting names and avoiding grievances.
7. Scene (~150), context (~75), complication (~150), turn (~125), reflection and close (~150).
8. "Climbing the ladder with the shingles, I nearly lost the bundle to the wind."
9. "The job taught me to show up early, to tell the truth and to finish what I start."
10. Sample: "At 6:15 on a Saturday in November, a man in a welder's jacket asked me whether we had any coffee, and we did not."
11. Sample: "The calluses are gone now, but the hammer still hangs on the third nail in the shed, where Mr. Reyes told me it belonged."
12. Sample: Ask the tutor for questions and comments, not sentences, and revise in my own words. Ephesians 4:25 calls us to speak truth; signing an essay as my own work when someone else wrote it would be a lie.

REVIEW: PORTFOLIO, TIMED ESSAY, RÉSUMÉ AND COVER LETTER

The year ends with gathering and giving an account. You will take an honest inventory of everything you wrote in Units 1–7 and test your growth with Franklin’s *Spectator* method (8.1); write two essays against the clock in the current ACT and CLT formats, with Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address as the model of compression (8.2); turn your year into a truthful one-page résumé and a cover letter for a real opening (8.3, the quarter-path lesson); and revise, bind and defend a portfolio of your best work before a small panel, following Paul, who answered Festus and Agrippa with “the words of truth and soberness” (8.4).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has finished pieces from most of Units 1–7 (rhetorical analysis, research paper, play, poems, prize essay, college essay), in any state of revision.
- Can plan and write a thesis essay with a concession (Unit 6).

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can judge my own writing against a checklist and name the one change that would most improve it.
- ☐ I can plan a timed essay in five minutes and finish it within 30 or 40 minutes.
- ☐ I can write a truthful one-page résumé with parallel action-verb entries.
- ☐ I can write a four-paragraph cover letter in block format that answers an employer’s real need.
- ☐ I can present and defend a portfolio of my work aloud with truth, soberness and courtesy.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Free. The first part tells how Franklin taught himself to write; the source of the 8.1 model.
- **Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (Project Gutenberg #4)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4>): Free and one page; the 8.2 model. Good for copywork and memorization.
- **ACT Writing test information and sample prompt (ACT)** (<https://www.act.org>): Official site; search “ACT writing sample prompt” for a free practice prompt and the scoring rubric. Check the current format before registering.
- **Classic Learning Test (CLT)** (<https://www.cltexam.com>): Official site; check the current format of the optional essay and sample questions.

8.1 THE YEAR IN REVIEW: GATHERING THE SHEAVES

OBJECTIVES

- Gather every finished piece from Units 1–7 and name the classical skill each one practiced.
- Judge each piece honestly against its own unit checklist and choose candidates for the year’s portfolio.
- Use Franklin’s *Spectator* method on one model from the year to measure how far your style has come.

Warm-up. Without looking at your notebook, write down every piece you finished this year, from the rhetorical analysis in September to the college essay in Unit 7. Then star the one you would most like a stranger to read, and put a small x by the one you would least like a stranger to read. Keep the list; you will test your memory against your files.

Video slot. Video coming. How to assemble a writing portfolio and reflect on revision (a university writing-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

portfolio

A small, chosen collection of your best finished work, arranged with care and introduced by a short preface. It is a selection, not a scrapbook of everything.

inventory

A complete list of what you have made, with dates and drafts, taken before you choose. You cannot choose well from what you have forgotten.

self-assessment

Judging your own work against a fixed standard (a rubric or checklist) rather than against your feelings about it on a given day.

imitation

The classical practice of learning style by copying, outlining and rewriting a model, then comparing your version with the original (Latin *imitatio*).

canons of rhetoric

The five parts of the art: invention (finding material), arrangement (ordering it), style (wording it), memory (holding it) and delivery (presenting it).

CORE IDEAS

Why a review unit. A farmer does not walk off the field when the last row is cut. He gathers the sheaves, threshes them, and finds out what the year actually yielded. This unit does the same with your writing. In seven units you have analyzed a speech, built and defended a

research paper, written a play, revised three poems, argued for an essay prize, and told a true story for an admissions reader. Some of that work is ripe; some is still green; some, frankly, is chaff. The next four lessons gather it (8.1), test it under the clock (8.2), turn it into a record a stranger can use (8.3), and present the best of it aloud (8.4).

The year by the canons. Look at the year through the five canons and you will see that each unit leaned on one of them. Rhetorical analysis (Unit 1) trained your eye for *style* and *delivery* in other men's work. The research paper (Units 2–3) was mostly *invention*: finding, testing and recording evidence. The ten-minute play (Unit 4) was an exercise in *arrangement*, since a scene that runs a minute long dies. The poetry workshop (Unit 5) was *style* at the level of the single word. Steelmanning and the essay prizes (Unit 6) joined invention to arrangement in the hardest form, the thesis. The college essay (Unit 7) asked you to arrange a true story so that a stranger would know you by it. When you review a piece, ask first which canon it was meant to train.

Inventory before judgment. Begin by gathering, not by choosing. Pull every finished piece and every surviving draft into one place: notebook pages, printed papers, digital files. Date each one. Note its unit, its length, and whether it went to a contest. Students who skip the inventory choose from memory, and memory flatters. The paper you were proud of in November may not hold up; the poem you nearly threw away may be the best thing you wrote. An honest list protects you from both pride and despair.

Judge by the checklist, not the mood. Every unit gave you a revision checklist. Use it now as a judge would. Reread each piece once straight through, as a reader, and then a second time with its checklist beside you, marking each item met, partly met or missed. Then write two sentences at the top of each piece: what it does best, and what one change would most improve it. This is self-assessment, and it is a skill colleges and employers prize, because a person who can see his own faults can be trusted to fix them without being told.

Franklin's test of growth. The model below is the method this whole series has used, in Benjamin Franklin's own words. As a teenage printer's apprentice he outlined essays from the *Spectator* as short hints, set them aside, rewrote them from the hints, and compared his version with the original. He also jumbled his hints and put them back in order to learn "method in the arrangement of thoughts." You will do one round of it this week with a model from your year, perhaps a paragraph of Reagan's speech or a page from your research sources. Compare your rewrite with the original, then with the notebook copy you made in the fall. The distance between the two is your year's growth, and you will be able to see it.

Choosing the portfolio. From the inventory, choose six to eight candidates that together show range: at least one analytical piece, the research paper (or its strongest section), one creative piece, one argument, and the college essay. Range matters more than polish in a single genre, because the portfolio answers the question "What can this writer do?" Mark the one or two pieces that most need revision; Lesson 8.4 gives you time to revise before the portfolio is bound and defended.

Gratitude and stewardship. A review is also a time to give thanks. The words you found this year, the sources that taught you, the readers who corrected you were gifts. Paul could

look back and say he had “finished my course.” You have finished a course too, a smaller one. Review it as a steward reviews what he was given: not to boast, not to despair, but to return it with increase.

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (written 1771-1790), Project Gutenberg #20203*

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try'd to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them. But I found I wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them, which I thought I should have acquired before that time if I had gone on making verses; since the continual occasion for words of the same import, but of different length, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would have laid me under a constant necessity of searching for variety, and also have tended to fix that variety in my mind, and make me master of it. Therefore I took some of the tales and turned them into verse; and, after a time, when I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again. I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion, and after some weeks endeavored to reduce them into the best order, before I began to form the full sentences and compleat the paper. This was to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts

PICTURE STUDY



The Gleaners, Jean-François Millet, 1857 · Oil on canvas · Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Millet painted three women gleaning: gathering the stray ears of grain left after the harvest, as the law of Moses allowed the poor to do and as Ruth did in the field of Boaz (Ruth 2). In the distance the main harvest is stacked high in the sun, and a man on horseback oversees it. In the foreground, in shadow, the gleaners work slowly, one stalk at a time. Nothing in the field is wasted.

Look closely

- Count the figures in the far field and compare them with the three in front. Where is the light, and where is the labor?
- Follow the curve of the women's backs. How does Millet show that this work is repeated all day?
- Find the small bundle each woman holds. What has she saved that the harvesters left behind?

Talk about it

1. Your inventory is a gleaning. Write a paragraph about one piece from your year that you nearly left in the field, and what is worth saving in it.
2. The great haystacks and the small bundles are both harvest. In a short paragraph, compare a finished contest entry with a rough notebook page from this year: what does each one store up?

WRITING PROJECT: THE YEAR'S INVENTORY AND A FRANKLIN ROUND

This week you gather the year's work, judge it by its own checklists, and test your growth with Franklin's method. The result is a written inventory and a short list of portfolio candidates, which you will use in Lessons 8.3 and 8.4.

You will need

- Every finished piece and surviving draft from Units 1–7
- The revision checklists from each unit
- Writing notebook and a folder or binder
- One model passage from earlier this year (your choice)

Steps

1. Gather every piece into one folder. Make an inventory table: title, unit, date, length, canon it trained, contest (if any).
2. Reread each piece twice: once as a reader, once with its unit checklist, marking each item met, partly met or missed.
3. At the top of each piece write two sentences: what it does best, and the one change that would most improve it.
4. Choose six to eight portfolio candidates that show range (analysis, research, creative, argument, personal narrative). Mark the one or two that need revision before Lesson 8.4.
5. Franklin round: outline one paragraph of a model from your year as short hints; wait two days; rewrite it from the hints; compare with the original and list three differences.
6. Write a one-page reflection, "What the Year Yielded," naming your strongest canon, your weakest canon, and one habit you will carry into Grade 12.

Check your work

- My inventory lists every finished piece with its unit, date and canon.
- Every piece has a two-sentence judgment at the top, tied to its checklist.
- My candidates show at least four different kinds of writing.
- My reflection uses all four sentence structures (simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) at least once.
- Items in every list and series in my reflection are parallel in form.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model from Franklin by hand. Underline every step of his method and number the steps in the margin.
2. Make a two-column page: on the left, the five canons; on the right, the piece from this year that best shows each one.
3. Copy 2 Timothy 4:7 and under it list three things you have "finished" this year.

History note. Franklin was about sixteen when he found the odd third volume of the *Spectator*, the daily paper Joseph Addison and Richard Steele published in London in 1711–1712. He began the *Autobiography* in 1771 as a letter to his son and never finished it. The spellings “try’d” and “compleat” are his and are kept in the model. Millet’s *Gleaners* was shown at the Paris Salon of 1857; some critics of the day disliked its plain subject, but it is now among the best-loved pictures in the Musée d’Orsay.

 **Style Clinic. The four sentence structures.** A *simple* sentence has one independent clause: “It was the third.” A *compound* sentence joins two independent clauses: “I thought the writing excellent, and I wished to imitate it.” (Careful: Franklin’s “I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it” is still simple, with one subject and a compound predicate.) A *complex* sentence adds a dependent clause: “I compared my *Spectator* with the original, which I had laid by.” A *compound-complex* sentence has at least two independent clauses and one dependent clause. Franklin moves from three short simple sentences to one long, many-claused sentence, and the change of pace matches the change from discovery to method. In your reflection, label one sentence of each kind in the margin.

For families. This unit has no contest; its goal is consolidation. Give the inventory real time, and resist the urge to praise every piece. Students trust honest, specific praise more than general approval, and they learn more from a parent who says, “This paragraph is the best thing you wrote in the fall, and here is why.” Keep the folder: the portfolio assembled in 8.4 is useful for transcripts, college interviews and Grade 12. Franklin’s passage continues with a remark about skipping Sunday worship to study; it is left out of the model, but you may wish to read it and discuss his later regret over the habits of his youth.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student writes this judgment at the top of his Unit 1 rhetorical analysis: “This is pretty good. I worked hard on it.” Rewrite it as a real self-assessment.

1. “Pretty good” names no standard. Check the Unit 1 checklist: thesis about the speaker’s strategy, evidence quoted exactly, analysis of effect, not just summary.
2. Find what the essay actually does best: perhaps the paragraph on Reagan’s naming of the Rangers.
3. Find the one change that would most improve it: perhaps the middle section summarizes the speech instead of analyzing it.

Answer: “Best: the third paragraph shows how Reagan’s roll call of the Rangers turns a battle into a set of named men, and it quotes him exactly. Change: paragraphs four and five retell the speech; I should cut them to two sentences each and explain what the repetition of ‘these are the boys’ does to the listener.”

Example 2. A student does a Franklin round on a paragraph of his own research sources and compares versions. Original: “The canal, opened in 1825, cut the cost of moving a ton of freight from Buffalo to New York by nearly nine-tenths.” His rewrite from hints: “When the canal was finally opened in 1825 it was able to make freight costs go down a lot, about ninety percent.” What does the comparison teach?

1. Compare verbs: the original has one strong verb (“cut”); the rewrite has “was able to make ... go down.”
2. Compare precision: “a ton of freight from Buffalo to New York” is concrete; “freight costs” is vague. “Nearly nine-tenths” is exact; “a lot, about ninety percent” says the same thing twice.
3. Compare placement: the original tucks the date into a nonessential phrase; the rewrite spends a clause on it.

Answer: Three faults to correct in all his prose: weak verb chains, vague nouns, and doubled qualifiers. That is exactly what Franklin meant by “discovered some of my faults, and corrected them.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five canons of rhetoric in order.
2. **EASY** What is the difference between an inventory and a portfolio?
3. **EASY** In the model, what did Franklin do after he rewrote a *Spectator* paper from his hints?
4. **MEDIUM** Why did Franklin turn the tales into verse and back into prose?
5. **MEDIUM** Which canon did Franklin train by jumbling his hints and restoring their order?
6. **MEDIUM** Label the structure: “When I had pretty well forgotten the prose, I turned the tales back again, and I compared them with the original.”
7. **CHALLENGE** A student’s candidates are three poems, the play and the college essay. What is missing, and why does it matter?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write two sentences of self-assessment for a piece of your own, following the pattern in the first worked example.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Choosing portfolio pieces from memory instead of rereading them; memory flatters old work and forgets good drafts.
- Writing vague judgments (“pretty good,” “needs work”) instead of naming the best feature and one specific change.
- Choosing only one kind of writing, so the portfolio shows polish but not range.
- Doing the Franklin round by looking at the original while rewriting; the method only works if you write from your hints alone.

Make it a game • Canon Match. A parent reads aloud a paragraph or line from any piece the student wrote this year, without naming it. The student must name the piece, its unit, and the canon it most trained. Then the student reads a line, and the parent guesses. One point for each correct answer; a bonus point for quoting the checklist item the line meets.

Scripture. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:” (2 Timothy 4:7, KJV)

Paul looked back over his work honestly before he looked ahead, and a year’s review should do the same.

Practice: answers

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
2. An inventory lists everything you made; a portfolio is a small selection of the best, arranged and introduced.
3. He compared it with the original, discovered some of his faults, and corrected them.
4. To build a stock of words and the readiness to recall them, since verse forces a writer to search for words of different length and sound.
5. Arrangement; he says it taught him “method in the arrangement of thoughts.”
6. Compound-complex: two independent clauses joined by “and,” plus a dependent clause beginning with “When.”
7. Analytical and argumentative work: the rhetorical analysis, the research paper and the essay-prize argument. A portfolio should show range; this one shows only creative and personal writing, so a reader cannot see whether the student can research or argue.
8. Sample: Best: the opening scene of my ten-minute play starts in the middle of an argument, so the audience learns the stakes from action, not explanation. Change: the second scene repeats the conflict without raising it; I should cut half of it and have Martha make the decision a page earlier.

8.2 THE TIMED ESSAY: ARGUING AGAINST THE CLOCK

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the current timed-essay formats of the ACT and CLT and explain why the SAT no longer has one.
- Plan a timed essay in five minutes: thesis, three points, one concession, and an ending.
- Write and score two full timed essays, one in 40 minutes (ACT style) and one in 30 minutes (CLT style).

Warm-up. Set a timer for five minutes. Answer in writing: “Is it better to be feared or to be trusted?” When the timer rings, stop mid-word. Count your sentences and circle your thesis. If you cannot find one, that is today’s lesson.

Video slot. Video coming. How to plan and write the ACT Writing essay (official ACT or a university test-prep tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

timed essay

An argument written in one sitting to a prompt you have not seen before, with a fixed time and no outside sources.

prompt

The question or issue given to the writer. On the ACT it is an issue followed by three perspectives; on the CLT it is a philosophical question.

perspective

On the ACT, one of three short, stated positions on the issue. You must place your own position in relation to at least one of them.

concession

Granting what is true in the other side before answering it. The steelman of Unit 6 in miniature.

budget

The planned division of your minutes: planning, drafting and proofreading. A timed essay is lost more often by poor budgeting than by poor ideas.

CORE IDEAS

Why write against the clock. Most writing in this course has been slow: research over weeks, revision over drafts. But much writing in life is fast. A supervisor wants a summary by noon; an exam asks for an essay in forty minutes; a letter must go out today. The ancient schools trained for this too. Quintilian valued the speaker who could answer on his feet, and the students of the progymnasmata practiced the thesis until its heads came without

searching. A timed essay is a thesis exercise from Unit 6, compressed: the same invention and arrangement, done in minutes because the patterns are already in your head.

The tests as of fall 2026. Formats change, so always check the official site before you register. As of this writing: the *SAT* has had no essay since 2021, and the digital SAT tests writing through short multiple-choice items. The *ACT* offers an optional 40-minute Writing test. You read a short issue and three perspectives on it, then write an essay that states your own perspective and analyzes its relation to at least one other. Two readers score it, and the Writing score (2–12) reflects four domains: Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, and Language Use and Conventions. The *CLT* offers an optional 30-minute essay on a philosophical prompt, available only to in-person test-takers and reported apart from the main score. Few colleges require an essay now, but a good one still helps, and the skill matters far beyond the test.

The five-minute plan. Do not begin writing until you have a plan, and do not spend more than five minutes on it. On scrap paper write: (1) your thesis in one sentence, a real claim with a reason (“Trust is stronger than fear, because fear lasts only while the threat is watching”); (2) three points, each a reason or a distinction; (3) one concession, the strongest thing the other side can say; (4) an example for each point, drawn from history, literature or Scripture, which you know better than you think; and (5) a closing sentence that widens the claim. That is the eight-head pattern of your younger years cut to its bones.

The shape on the page. Five paragraphs is a crutch, but under a clock a crutch is useful. Introduction: two or three sentences that frame the issue and state the thesis. Three body paragraphs, each opening with a topic sentence that advances the argument, not merely announces a subject. Place the concession either as its own paragraph before the last point or inside the strongest body paragraph (“Granted, fear can restrain a criminal for a time; but ...”). Conclusion: two or three sentences that do more than repeat; show what follows if the thesis is true. For the ACT, name the perspectives you engage (“Perspective Two is right that ...”). For the CLT, define your key term early, since philosophical prompts turn on definitions.

The budget. For 40 minutes: plan 5, write 30, proofread 5. For 30 minutes: plan 4, write 22, proofread 4. Write the times in the margin before you start and glance at the clock at each paragraph. If you are running late, shorten the third body paragraph, never the conclusion; an essay without an ending reads as unfinished, and readers score what they see. Handwriting must be legible, so practice by hand if your test is on paper.

Lincoln’s lesson in compression. The model is the Gettysburg Address, about 270 words. Lincoln did not write it in minutes, as legend says; he drafted it with care. But it is the finest model of compression in American prose, and that is what a timed essay demands. Notice the arrangement: the past (“Four score and seven years ago”), the present (“Now we are engaged”), the future (“the great task remaining”). Notice the concession and its turn: “we cannot dedicate,” because the brave men have already done so, and then the claim, “It is for us the living, rather.” Notice that every sentence moves the argument forward. A timed essay of 500 words cannot afford a single sentence that only fills space.

Answering with meekness. This year's verse, 1 Peter 3:15, asks you to be "ready always to give an answer." Readiness is the timed essay's whole virtue. You cannot look things up; you must draw on what you have already stored. That is why reading widely and memorizing well (the canon of memory) pay off under the clock. And meekness still applies: a calm, fair answer that grants what is true in the other side persuades a reader more than a heated one.

The model. *Abraham Lincoln, Address at Gettysburg (November 19, 1863), Project Gutenberg #4*

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation: conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war. . .testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated. . . can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate. . .we cannot consecrate. . . we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. . .that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. . . that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. . . and that government of the people. . .by the people. . .for the people. . . shall not perish from this earth.

PICTURE STUDY



The Apostle Paul in Prison, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1627 · Oil on panel · Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Rembrandt was about twenty-one when he painted Paul in a Roman prison, pausing in the middle of a letter. Several of Paul's epistles were written in chains, with no library, no secretary he could count on, and no certainty of tomorrow, yet they are among the most closely argued writings ever made. The sword beside him is his traditional sign, the instrument of his martyrdom; the light through the bars falls on his face and his pages.

Look closely

- Find the pen. Is Paul writing at this moment, or thinking? What tells you?
- Follow the light from the window. What three things does it pick out?
- Look at the cell itself: what is here, and what is missing, for a writer?

Talk about it

1. Paul wrote with almost nothing at hand but what he had stored in memory. Write a paragraph on what a student must "store up" before a timed essay, and how.
2. Imagine Paul has thirty minutes to answer a question from his jailer. Plan, in five minutes, a short essay on the question "Can a prisoner be free?" using the five-step plan from this lesson.

WRITING PROJECT: TWO TIMED ESSAYS

You will write two essays under real conditions: one ACT-style in 40 minutes, one CLT-style in 30 minutes. A parent times you and then scores each with the four ACT domains.

Use the course prompts below, or download a free official sample prompt from ACT or the CLT site. Do not look at the prompt until the timer starts.

You will need

- A timer, lined paper and two pencils (or a plain word processor with spell-check turned off)
- Prompt A (ACT style): “Many communities now hold their meetings, worship and classes online as well as in person. Perspective One: Gathering in person builds trust that no screen can replace. Perspective Two: Online meetings let more people take part, so they are better for a community. Perspective Three: The form matters less than whether people keep their promises to each other.” Write an essay that states your own perspective and analyzes its relation to at least one other.
- Prompt B (CLT style): “Is it better to be feared or to be trusted? Defend your answer.”

Steps

1. Session one: write Prompt A in 40 minutes (plan 5, write 30, proofread 5). Write your time marks in the margin before you begin.
2. Stop when the timer rings. Do not add anything afterward.
3. With a parent, score the essay from 2 to 12 in each ACT domain: Ideas and Analysis, Development and Support, Organization, Language Use and Conventions. Average them.
4. Write one sentence on each domain: what cost you points, and what you will do differently.
5. Session two: write Prompt B in 30 minutes (plan 4, write 22, proofread 4), defining your key term in the first paragraph.
6. Score it the same way, and compare the two scores. File both essays, with scores, in your Unit 8 folder.

Check your work

- My thesis is one sentence with a claim and a reason, and it appears in the first paragraph.
- Each body paragraph begins with a topic sentence that advances the argument.
- I granted the strongest opposing point and answered it.
- My essay has a real conclusion that does more than repeat the thesis.
- I used subordinate clauses (because, although, since, unless) to show how my ideas relate, and I punctuated them correctly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Gettysburg Address by hand. In the margin mark the past, the present and the future, and box the word “rather” each time it appears.
2. Write ten thesis sentences in ten minutes on ten perennial questions (for example: Is it better to live in the country or the city? Should a man be judged by his intentions or his

results?).

3. Make a “ready stock” page: five examples from history, five from literature and five from Scripture that you could use in almost any timed essay, each with a one-line note on what it proves.

History note. Lincoln spoke at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863. Edward Everett, the main orator, spoke for about two hours; Lincoln spoke for about two minutes. The next day Everett wrote to him that he wished he had come “as near to the central idea of the occasion” in two hours as Lincoln had in two minutes. Five copies of the address in Lincoln’s hand survive, and they differ slightly. The story that he wrote it on the back of an envelope on the train is a legend.

 **Style Clinic. Subordinate clauses show logic fast.** Under time, students string ideas with *and*: “Fear works for a while and it fails and people stop obeying.” Subordinating conjunctions say how ideas relate: “Although fear works for a while, it fails *when* the watcher turns away, *because* it governs only the hands, not the heart.” Remember the comma rule from Grammar Level 3: an introductory adverb clause takes a comma (“Although fear works, ...”); a clause that follows the main clause usually does not (“It fails because ...”). Lincoln does the same thing with a relative clause: “those who here gave their lives that this nation might live.” In your proofread, find two *and* chains and turn each into a complex sentence.

For families. Test formats here are summarized as of October 2026; confirm them at act.org and cltexam.com before registering, since both organizations have changed their tests in recent years. Few colleges now require the ACT Writing test, so whether to take it is a family decision; the timed-essay skill is worth practicing either way, because it carries into AP exams, college blue-book exams and work. When you score, be fair but strict, and score what is on the page, not what the student meant. The Project Gutenberg text of the Gettysburg Address (#4) marks Lincoln’s pauses with spaced dots, which do not appear in his own handwritten copies; the model keeps the e-text exactly. The ACT-style prompt above was written for this course.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Plan Prompt B (“Is it better to be feared or to be trusted?”) in the five-step method, in under five minutes.

1. Thesis: It is better to be trusted, because fear governs only while it watches, but trust governs even when no one is looking.
2. Three points: (1) fear needs constant watching and so is costly; (2) trust multiplies, since trusted men are given more to do; (3) fear breeds hidden resentment, which waits for the master’s weakness.
3. Concession: Fear can restrain the wicked when trust is impossible (Romans 13:3–4: rulers are a terror to evil works). Answer: that is a remedy for evil, not a pattern for a household, a business or a friendship.
4. Examples and ending: Joseph trusted by Potiphar with “all that he had” (Genesis 39); the Roman legions that turned on cruel emperors; ending: a leader who must be feared has already failed to be trusted.

Answer: A plan of about seventy words that gives a full five-paragraph essay a spine: introduction with thesis; points one and two; concession and answer; point three; conclusion.

Example 2. Revise this timed-essay conclusion: “In conclusion, as I have shown in this essay, it is better to be trusted than to be feared, for the reasons I have stated above.”

1. It announces itself (“In conclusion,” “as I have shown”) and repeats the thesis with no new thought.
2. A strong conclusion shows what follows if the thesis is true: a consequence or a wider application.
3. Borrow Lincoln’s turn: move from what has been argued to what must now be done.

Answer: “Fear can make a man obey for a day; only trust can make him faithful for a lifetime. A father, a captain or an employer who wants to be feared has chosen the weaker power, and he will discover it on the day he turns his back.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** As of fall 2026, which of the three tests (SAT, ACT, CLT) has no essay at all?
2. **EASY** How long is the ACT Writing test, and how long is the CLT essay?
3. **EASY** Name the four domains used to score the ACT essay.
4. **MEDIUM** Give a minute budget for a 40-minute essay.
5. **MEDIUM** Find the concession and the turn in the fourth paragraph of the Gettysburg Address.

6. **MEDIUM** Combine into one complex sentence: "Online classes reach more students. They cannot teach the habits of a room full of people."
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a thesis for Prompt A that takes a clear position and names one of the three perspectives.
8. **CHALLENGE** You have six minutes left and have written only two body paragraphs. What should you do, and why?

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting to write before planning, then discovering the thesis in the last paragraph.
- Spending so long on the introduction that the conclusion is never written.
- Ignoring the given perspectives on the ACT; the essay must engage at least one of them.
- Using filler ("In today's society," "Since the dawn of time," "In conclusion, as I have shown") instead of argument.

Make it a game · Sixty-Second Thesis. A parent draws a perennial question from a hat ("Is ambition a virtue?" "Should children be paid for chores?" "Is it better to read many books or a few?"). The student has sixty seconds to say aloud a thesis with a reason, one concession, and one example. The parent scores one point for each part. Switch roles after five rounds.

Scripture. "The heart of the righteous studieth to answer: but the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things." (Proverbs 15:28, KJV)

A ready answer is a studied answer: the timed essay rewards the writer who has thought before the clock starts.

Practice: answers

1. The SAT.
2. ACT: 40 minutes. CLT: 30 minutes.
3. Ideas and Analysis; Development and Support; Organization; Language Use and Conventions.
4. Plan 5, write 30, proofread 5.
5. Concession: "we cannot dedicate ... we cannot consecrate ... we cannot hallow this ground," because the brave men have already consecrated it. The turn comes in the next paragraph: "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work."
6. Although online classes reach more students, they cannot teach the habits of a room full of people.
7. Sample: Perspective Three comes nearest the truth, because a community is held together by kept promises, and meeting in person matters chiefly because it makes those promises harder to break.
8. Write a one- or two-sentence concession folded into a short third point, then a real two-sentence conclusion, and spend the last minute proofreading. Readers score what is on the page, and a finished, shorter essay scores higher than a longer one that stops mid-argument.

8.3 THE RÉSUMÉ AND THE COVER LETTER ★

OBJECTIVES

- Build a truthful one-page résumé with sections, action verbs and specific results.
- Write a cover letter in block business format that answers one employer’s real need in four paragraphs.
- Apply the year’s rhetoric (audience, ethos, arrangement, plain style) to the most practical writing a young person does.

Warm-up. Imagine you own a small business, a bakery, a farm stand or a print shop, and you must hire one teenager for the summer. Write down the three things you most want to know about an applicant. Then write down the one thing that would make you set an application aside at once.

Video slot. Video coming. How to write a first résumé and cover letter for high-school students (a public library or university career-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

résumé

A one-page summary of your education, work, service, skills and honors, arranged so a busy reader can find what matters in seconds. (French, “summed up.”)

cover letter

A short business letter sent with a résumé that names the position, shows how you meet the employer’s need, and asks for an interview.

action verb

A strong past- or present-tense verb that opens a résumé entry and names what you did: *organized, repaired, taught, catalogued*.

block format

The standard business-letter layout: every line begins at the left margin, with a blank line between parts and between paragraphs.

ethos

The speaker’s character as it appears in his words. In a résumé, ethos is built by specific, verifiable facts, not by adjectives about yourself.

CORE IDEAS

Rhetoric at work. This year you analyzed presidents, argued before essay judges and wrote for admissions readers. The résumé and cover letter use the same art for the audience you will meet most often: someone deciding whether to give you work. Aristotle said that a speaker persuades by character, reason and feeling, and that character is perhaps the

strongest of the three. A résumé is almost pure ethos. It persuades not by eloquence but by facts arranged so that an employer can trust you before he has met you.

The reader has thirty seconds. A manager hiring for a summer job may receive forty applications. He will glance at each résumé for well under a minute before deciding whether to read further. That fact governs everything: one page; your name large at the top with phone, email and town; clear section headings; short lines; no paragraphs; no photograph; plain, readable type. The canon of arrangement matters more here than in any essay you wrote this year, because a reader who cannot find your work experience will assume you have none.

The sections. A high-school résumé usually has five parts, in this order or close to it. *Education:* your school (a homeschool is listed by its name, or as “Home education, [town], [state]”), expected graduation year, and any dual-enrollment or notable courses. *Experience:* paid and unpaid work, most recent first, each with your role, the employer, the town and the dates, and two or three entries beginning with action verbs. *Service:* church, community and volunteer work. *Skills:* concrete abilities (“Typing, 60 words per minute”; “Conversational Spanish”; “Basic carpentry”). *Honors:* awards and contests, such as an essay prize entry from Unit 6 or a National History Day result from Unit 3. Leave out hobbies unless they show a skill the employer needs.

Write entries with verbs and numbers. Weak: “Responsible for helping at the church nursery.” Strong: “Cared for 8–12 children ages 2–4 each Sunday; trained two new volunteers.” Begin each entry with an action verb, use past tense for finished work and present tense for current work, and put a number in wherever a number is true: hours, people, dollars, items, years. Numbers persuade because they can be checked. And every word must be true. Proverbs warns that a false witness “shall not be unpunished,” and Paul commands us to put away lying and “speak every man truth with his neighbour.” Inflating a title or a duty is lying, and it is also foolish, because references are called and one discovered exaggeration ruins everything else on the page.

The cover letter. The model below, written for this course, shows the shape. It follows block format: your address and the date, the employer’s name and address, a salutation to a real person if you can find the name, four short paragraphs, a courteous close, and your signature. Paragraph one names the position and how you learned of it. Paragraph two shows, with one or two specific facts, that you can do the work. Paragraph three shows that you understand *this* employer and what he needs; it is the paragraph most students skip, and the one that most often wins the interview. Paragraph four asks plainly for an interview and gives thanks. The whole letter fits on one page, usually under 300 words.

Plain style, not modesty or boasting. Cicero distinguished the plain, middle and grand styles. The cover letter belongs to the plain style: clear words, short sentences, no flourishes. Avoid both extremes. Do not grovel (“I know I don’t have much experience, but ...”), and do not praise yourself with empty adjectives (“I am a hardworking, passionate, highly motivated self-starter”). Let the facts do the praising. Leonardo da Vinci, offering his services to the

Duke of Milan, did not call himself brilliant; he listed, item by item, the bridges, engines and works he could make.

Diligence and providence. Proverbs promises that a man “diligent in his business” shall “stand before kings.” Your first job may be stocking shelves, not standing before kings, but the habits are the same: faithfulness in small things, truthful words, work done as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23). Write the letter carefully, send it, and then trust God with the result. A rejection is not a verdict on your worth; it is one door among many, and the letter you learned to write will open others.

The model. *A model cover letter, written for this course (names and addresses are invented)*

214 Mill Creek Road
Fairview, Ohio 43700
March 3, 2027

Mrs. Eleanor Haskins, Director
Harlan County Historical Society
12 Courthouse Square
Fairview, Ohio 43700

Dear Mrs. Haskins:

Pastor Reed told me that the Historical Society is looking for a summer assistant to help catalog its newspaper collection. I would like to apply for that position.

This year I wrote a twelve-page research paper on the building of the Fairview canal lock in 1832, using the Society’s own bound volumes of the *Fairview Courier*. I learned to read the old type, to record each source with a full citation, and to keep a research log of every volume I checked. For two years I have also worked Saturdays at Miller’s Hardware, where I keep the parts inventory for the plumbing aisle, about 900 items, and have not missed a shift.

I understand that the Society hopes to finish indexing the *Courier* before the town’s bicentennial next year, and that many of the volumes are too fragile for visitors to handle. I would be glad to do careful, steady work so that those papers can be read by more people without being worn out.

I have enclosed my résumé and a copy of my research paper. I am available from June 1 to August 20 and could begin on any weekday. May I come by the Society to talk with you? Thank you for considering my application.

Sincerely,

Samuel Whitfield

PICTURE STUDY



The Merchant Georg Gisze, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1532 · Oil on oak panel · Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Georg Gisze was a young merchant from Danzig working in London at the Steelyard, the headquarters of the German Hanseatic traders. Holbein painted him surrounded by the tools of honest business: letters tucked behind wall slats, a set of scales, a signet ring, a seal, a pen, a small clock. The note on the wall gives his name and age in Latin, and his motto, roughly “No pleasure without regret.” He is opening a letter addressed to him in London. Every object tells a careful reader something true about the man.

Look closely

- Find the letter in his hands and the letters on the wall. What do they tell you about his work?
- Find the scales and the clock. What virtues of a businessman might they stand for?
- Look at the glass vase of carnations. Why might Holbein put something so fragile on a merchant’s table?

Talk about it

1. Holbein’s painting is a kind of résumé: objects chosen to show what the man does. Write a résumé for Georg Gisze from what you can see in the painting, with at least four entries beginning with action verbs.
2. Write the first paragraph of the letter Gisze is opening, from a merchant in Danzig who wants him as a partner. Use block format and the plain style.

WRITING PROJECT: A RÉSUMÉ AND A COVER LETTER FOR A REAL OPENING

Find a real opening (a summer job, an internship, a volunteer post, an apprenticeship) that you might actually apply for. Write a one-page résumé and a cover letter shaped to it.

If you cannot find a real opening, write to a business or ministry in your town you admire and ask whether they need summer help; that is called a letter of inquiry, and it often works.

You will need

- Your Unit 8 inventory from Lesson 8.1
- A word processor (for the final copy) and your writing notebook (for drafts)
- The description of the position, printed or copied out

Steps

1. Read the job description and underline every skill or quality the employer asks for. List them in your notebook.
2. Brainstorm everything you have done in four years: work, chores with real responsibility, service, contests, skills. Next to each, write a number if one is true.
3. Draft the résumé: name and contact at the top; then Education, Experience, Service, Skills, Honors. Begin every entry with an action verb.
4. Cut to one page. Remove anything the employer would not care about.
5. Draft the cover letter in four paragraphs, as in the model. Paragraph three must name a specific need of this employer.
6. Read both aloud to a parent. Have the parent find every adjective you used to praise yourself; replace each with a fact, or cut it.
7. Print a clean copy of each. If the opening is real, ask your parents whether to send it.

Check your work

- Every résumé entry begins with an action verb, and the entries in each section are parallel in form and tense.
- Every fact on both pages is true and could be confirmed by a reference.
- The cover letter names the position, shows two specific qualifications, answers one need of this employer, and asks for an interview.
- The letter is in block format with a colon after the salutation and a comma after the close.
- There are no sentence fragments in the letter (fragments are allowed only in résumé entries).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model cover letter by hand in block format, then label each part: heading, inside address, salutation, body (four paragraphs), close, signature.

2. List thirty action verbs, ten for work with things (repaired, built), ten for work with people (taught, led), ten for work with words and numbers (catalogued, calculated).
3. Copy Proverbs 22:29 and Ephesians 4:25. Under them, write one sentence on how each verse governs a résumé.

History note. About 1482 Leonardo da Vinci, then about thirty, drafted a letter to Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan, offering his services. It survives in his notebooks (the Codex Atlanticus). In about ten numbered points he describes the military bridges, siege engines and other works he says he can make for the duke, and only near the end mentions that in peace he can also design buildings, carve and paint, and offers to make a great bronze horse in honor of Ludovico's father. He fitted his list to the reader's need: Milan was often at war. He got the post, and in Milan he later painted *The Last Supper*. Holbein painted Georg Gisze in 1532, during his second stay in England.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism in lists.** Items in a series should share a grammatical form. Not parallel: "Stocked shelves; responsible for the register; I also trained new workers." (verb phrase, adjective phrase, full clause). Parallel: "Stocked shelves; ran the register; trained two new workers." (three past-tense verb phrases). Keep tense parallel too: past for finished jobs, present for current ones, never mixed within one job. Résumé entries are the one place a fragment is correct, because each is a verb phrase with an understood subject ("I"). In the cover letter, write full sentences.

For families. This is the quarter-path lesson for the unit. If the student has a real opening, help them find it and decide together whether to send the letter; if not, the letter of inquiry to a local business, church office, library or farm is excellent practice and often leads to work. Check every fact on the résumé with the student: the habit of exact truth in self-description matters more than the job. Teach basic privacy too: a résumé sent to strangers or posted online should give a town and state, not a full home address, and should never include a birth date or Social Security number. The model letter's names, places and phone number are invented; 555-01xx numbers are reserved for fiction.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this résumé section: “Work: I have worked at my uncle’s farm for a long time. I was responsible for lots of things like animals and equipment. I am a very hard worker.”

1. Give the entry a heading line: role, employer, town, dates.
2. Break duties into separate entries, each beginning with an action verb, with numbers where true.
3. Delete “I am a very hard worker”; replace it with facts that show it.

Answer: Farm Hand, Whitfield Family Farm, Fairview, Ohio, Summers 2023–2026

- Fed and watered 40 head of cattle twice daily
- Repaired fencing and maintained two tractors under supervision
- Worked 30 hours a week through hay harvest each June

Example 2. A student’s cover letter opens: “My name is Hannah Cole and I am a very passionate and driven person who has always loved books and I think I would be perfect for your library.” Revise the opening paragraph.

1. The reader can see the name at the bottom; do not open with it.
2. Name the position and how she learned of it.
3. Replace self-praise (“passionate,” “driven,” “perfect”) with one fact that will be developed in paragraph two.

Answer: “I am writing to apply for the summer page position posted at the Fairview Public Library. For the past three years I have volunteered at our church library, where I shelve and repair books every Wednesday.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five usual sections of a high-school résumé.
2. **EASY** How long should a high-school résumé be?
3. **EASY** What does each of the four paragraphs of the model cover letter do?
4. **MEDIUM** Make parallel: “Mowing lawns for six neighbors; I edged the walks; responsible for collecting payment.”
5. **MEDIUM** Rewrite with an action verb and a number: “Helped out at Vacation Bible School.”
6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate the salutation and close of a business letter to Mr. Grant.
7. **CHALLENGE** A student helped her mother keep the family’s business books for one month and wants to list herself as “Bookkeeper.” What should she write instead, and why?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write paragraph three of a cover letter for a job at a family-owned bakery that is opening a second shop.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Describing yourself with adjectives (“hardworking,” “passionate,” “responsible”) instead of showing it with facts and numbers.
- Exaggerating a title or duty; it is untrue, and a single call to a reference can expose it.
- Sending the same cover letter to every employer, with no paragraph about this employer’s real need.
- Mixing forms in résumé lists (verb phrases, full sentences and “responsible for”) or mixing tenses within one job.

Make it a game · Thirty-Second Hire. A parent makes three short mock résumés (one strong, one padded with adjectives, one disorganized) and hands them to the student with a single job description. The student has thirty seconds per résumé to decide whom to interview and must explain the choice in one sentence. Then switch: the student writes three mock résumés and the parent judges.

Scripture. “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.” (Proverbs 22:29, KJV)

A résumé is a record of diligence; write it truthfully, and let faithful work speak for you.

Practice: answers

1. Education, Experience, Service, Skills, Honors.
2. One page.
3. (1) Names the position and how he heard of it; (2) shows his qualifications with specific facts; (3) shows he understands this employer’s need; (4) asks for an interview and thanks the reader.
4. Mowed lawns for six neighbors; edged the walks; collected payment.
5. Sample: Taught a daily Bible lesson to 15 children ages 6–8 for one week of Vacation Bible School.
6. “Dear Mr. Grant:” and “Sincerely,”
7. Sample: “Assisted with bookkeeping for a family landscaping business (one month, 2026); entered receipts and reconciled monthly totals.” The title “Bookkeeper” claims more than she did; Ephesians 4:25 and plain prudence both require that every claim be exactly true, since a reference may be called.
8. Sample: “I understand that Brennan’s Bakery is opening its new shop on Main Street this June and will need help on early weekend mornings while the staff is divided between two stores. I am used to rising at five for farm chores, and I would be glad to take those Saturday shifts.”

8.4 THE PORTFOLIO AND THE ORAL DEFENSE

OBJECTIVES

- Revise one or two portfolio pieces and assemble a finished portfolio of six to eight works with a preface letter.
- Prepare to explain and defend your choices, your methods and your arguments before a small panel.
- Give a 20–30 minute oral defense that answers questions with truth, soberness and courtesy.

Warm-up. Write down the three questions about your year’s writing that you would least like to be asked. Then write a one-sentence answer to each. You have just begun to prepare for your defense.

Video slot. Video coming. How to prepare for an oral examination or thesis defense (a university or classical-school senior thesis tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

preface letter

A one- to two-page letter at the front of the portfolio that introduces the writer, names each piece and why it was chosen, and says what the year taught.

oral defense

A spoken examination in which a writer presents his work and answers questions about it from a panel.

panel

The examiners: usually two or three adults, such as a parent, a pastor, a tutor or a family friend who reads well.

soberness

Calm, clear-minded seriousness. Paul answered a hostile interruption with “the words of truth and soberness” (Acts 26:25).

revision memo

A short note attached to a revised piece explaining what changed between drafts and why.

CORE IDEAS

The last canons. All year you have practiced invention, arrangement and style on the page. This lesson ends the year with memory and delivery, the two canons that belong to the speaker. A portfolio is your best work arranged; the defense is you, standing behind it and answering for it. Medieval universities ended a student’s course in the same way: he did not

only hand in papers, he disputed before his masters. Classical schools today keep the custom in the senior thesis defense. This year's is a rehearsal for that.

Revise before you bind. In Lesson 8.1 you marked one or two candidates that most needed work. Revise them now, using the methods from Units 5 and 7: reread aloud, cut what does not serve, sharpen the verbs, and test each paragraph against its unit checklist. Attach a short revision memo to each revised piece: three or four sentences naming what changed and why ("I cut the second scene to half its length because it repeated the conflict without raising it"). Panels often ask about revision, because how a writer changes a draft shows his judgment better than the draft itself.

Arranging the portfolio. Six to eight pieces, in a clean binder or bound file. Begin with a title page and a table of contents. Then the preface letter. Then the pieces, arranged on purpose: by the order of the year, which shows growth, or by kind (analysis, research, argument, creative, personal), which shows range. Include the timed essay from 8.2 with its score, and the résumé from 8.3 at the back. Use clean final copies; keep drafts in a separate folder in case the panel asks to see them.

The preface letter. Address it to the panel. In the first paragraph, introduce yourself and the year in two or three sentences. In the middle, give a short paragraph to each piece, or group them, saying what it is, what it was meant to train, and why you chose it. Near the end, name your strongest canon and your weakest honestly, and one habit you will carry into Grade 12. Close with thanks. Keep it to about 600 to 900 words. The letter is itself a piece of writing to be judged, so give it the same care as the rest.

Preparing to answer. Panels ask three kinds of questions. *Explain:* "Why did you choose this research question?" *Defend:* "Your thesis says Washington wrote most of the Farewell Address himself; what about Hamilton's drafts?" *Reflect:* "Which piece would you write differently now?" Prepare by rereading every piece and writing, on an index card for each, the strongest objection someone could make and your answer to it. That is the steelman of Unit 6 turned on your own work. Memorize nothing word for word except your opening two minutes; for the rest, know your material well enough to speak plainly.

Truth and soberness under questioning. The model is Paul's defense before Festus and King Agrippa. Festus interrupts with an insult ("much learning doth make thee mad"). Paul does not return it. He answers that he speaks "the words of truth and soberness," appeals to what his hearer already knows, and ends not with a demand but a prayer for those who hear him. That is the posture of 1 Peter 3:15, this year's verse: ready to answer, with meekness and fear. In your defense, when you do not know, say so ("I did not find evidence on that; it would be my next question"). When the panel shows you a fault, thank them. A defense is not a debate to win but an account to give.

Delivery. Stand or sit upright. Look at each examiner in turn. Speak more slowly than feels natural. Take a breath before each answer, and keep answers to about a minute unless asked for more. Hold the portfolio open to the piece being discussed, so you can point to the page and quote yourself exactly. End by thanking the panel. These are small things, but the canon

of delivery is made of small things, and they are the same habits that serve in a job interview, a college interview or a meeting with a client.

The model. *Acts 26:24-29 (KJV): Paul's defense before Festus and King Agrippa*

And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

PICTURE STUDY



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple, William Holman Hunt, 1854-1860 · Oil on canvas · Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham, England
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Luke tells how Mary and Joseph lost the twelve-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem and found him after three days in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions,” while all who heard him “were astonished at his understanding and answers” (Luke 2:46-47). Holman Hunt traveled to Jerusalem to paint the scene, studying the faces, dress and buildings of the city for years. He shows the moment Mary reaches her son: the learned elders on their bench still holding their scrolls, the boy turning from the examination toward home.

Look closely

- Find the elders. How does each one react to the boy? Is any of them still thinking about what he said?
- Look at Jesus' face and hands. Is he finished with the conversation, or only interrupted?
- Find the scrolls. What does their presence tell you about the kind of questions that were asked?

Talk about it

1. Luke says Jesus was both hearing and asking questions. Write a paragraph on why listening and asking belong in an oral defense as much as answering.
2. Choose one elder and write the question you think he asked. Then write the kind of answer that would "astonish" a learned examiner: short, true and exact.

WRITING PROJECT: THE GRADE 11 PORTFOLIO AND DEFENSE

This is the capstone of the year. You will revise, assemble and present your portfolio, then defend it before a panel of two or three adults for 20–30 minutes.

Invite the panel at least a week ahead and give them the portfolio three days before the defense so they can read it.

You will need

- Your inventory and candidate list from Lesson 8.1
- The timed essays from 8.2 and the résumé and cover letter from 8.3
- A binder or bound file, clean printed copies, index cards
- A panel of two or three adults

Steps

1. Revise the one or two pieces marked in 8.1. Attach a short revision memo to each.
2. Assemble the portfolio: title page, table of contents, preface letter, six to eight pieces in a deliberate order, résumé at the back.
3. Write the preface letter (600–900 words) addressed to the panel.
4. Make an index card for each piece with the strongest objection to it and your answer.
5. Write and practice a two-minute opening statement: who you are, what the portfolio contains, and what the year taught you.
6. Hold the defense: your opening statement, then questions from the panel, then a one-minute closing and thanks.
7. Afterward, write a half-page reflection on the defense: the best question you were asked and what you would answer now.

Check your work

- My portfolio has a title page, table of contents, preface letter and six to eight pieces in a deliberate order.
- Each revised piece has a revision memo naming what changed and why.

- My preface letter names each piece, why I chose it, my strongest and weakest canon, and one habit for next year.
- My preface letter uses active voice for my own actions (“I revised,” not “revisions were made”).
- I used the subjunctive correctly in wishes and conditions contrary to fact (“If I were to write it again ...”).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Acts 26:24–29 by hand. Underline the insult and box Paul’s answer.
2. Write five questions a panel might ask about your research paper, and a one-sentence answer to each.
3. Copy 1 Peter 3:15, this year’s verse, as the last entry in your Grade 11 notebook, and write under it one sentence on what “meekness and fear” looked like in your best piece this year.

History note. Paul made this defense at Caesarea, probably about A.D. 59 or 60, before the Roman governor Porcius Festus and King Herod Agrippa II, after he had appealed to Caesar (Acts 25–26). Medieval universities examined students by disputation: a candidate defended a thesis aloud against objections from his masters. Holman Hunt, one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, first went to the Holy Land in 1854 and worked on *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple* for about six years; it was a great success when exhibited in London in 1860.

 **Style Clinic. Voice and mood.** In a preface letter, use the *active voice* for your own decisions: “I cut the second scene,” not “The second scene was cut.” The passive hides the doer, and a panel wants to know what *you* did. Keep the *subjunctive mood* for wishes and conditions contrary to fact: “If I were to rewrite the play, I would begin later.” Paul uses it in the model: “I would to God, that ... all that hear me this day, *were* both almost, and altogether such as I am.” Not “was”: he is wishing, not reporting. Find every *if* clause in your preface letter and check its verb.

For families. The defense is meant to be serious but kind. Choose a panel of two or three adults who will read the portfolio beforehand: a parent, plus a pastor, tutor, grandparent or family friend who reads well. Give them a simple sheet with the rubric from the unit portfolio and three sample questions of each kind (explain, defend, reflect). Allow 20–30 minutes; end with specific praise from each examiner and one suggestion for Grade 12. Keep the finished portfolio; it is a fine record for transcripts and college interviews. The picture study and the model both come from Scripture; the model’s text is printed from the King James Version.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A panel member asks about a student's research paper: "You argue that the 1647 school law aimed above all at Bible reading. But didn't the colony also need clerks and magistrates who could read?" The student's first answer is: "Well, I mean, I guess, but I still think I'm right." Rebuild the answer.

1. Grant what is true in the objection (concession).
2. Return to the evidence: what does the text of the law itself say?
3. Restate the claim, narrowed if needed, and name what further evidence would settle it.

Answer: "That is a fair point; the colony certainly needed readers for civil work. But the law itself opens by naming 'that old deluder, Satan,' who would keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, and gives that as its reason. So I would say Bible reading was the stated purpose, and civil needs were a real but secondary benefit. If I continued the research, I would look at the town records to see what the schools actually taught."

Example 2. Revise this preface-letter paragraph: "The college essay was written in Unit 7. A lot of changes were made to it. It was chosen because it was thought to be good."

1. All three sentences are passive; the writer has vanished. Put "I" back as the doer.
2. Replace "a lot of changes" with the specific change.
3. Replace "thought to be good" with the real reason for the choice.

Answer: "I wrote my college essay in Unit 7 about the winter I helped my grandfather rebuild his barn. Between the first and fourth drafts I cut a page of background and began on the morning the roof beam slipped. I chose it because it is the piece in which my sentences are plainest and my story most true."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Which two canons of rhetoric does the oral defense practice most?
2. **EASY** Name the parts of the portfolio in order.
3. **EASY** Name the three kinds of panel questions.
4. **MEDIUM** How did Paul answer Festus' insult?
5. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in the active voice: "The poems were revised three times and the weakest stanza was removed."
6. **MEDIUM** Correct the mood: "If I was writing the play again, I would start in the second scene."
7. **CHALLENGE** A panel member asks a question you cannot answer. Write a truthful, courteous reply.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the two-minute opening statement's first three sentences.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Treating the defense as a debate to win and answering objections defensively instead of granting what is true.
- Bluffing an answer instead of saying “I don’t know.”
- Writing the preface letter in the passive voice, so the panel cannot tell what the student actually did.
- Putting every piece from the year into the portfolio instead of choosing six to eight.

Make it a game • Hot Seat. A parent picks a piece from the portfolio at random and asks one question of each kind: explain, defend, reflect. The student has one minute per answer. Score one point for an answer that is true, one for an answer that quotes the piece exactly, and one for courtesy under pressure. Then the student asks the parent three questions about a book the parent has read this year.

Scripture. “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:” (1 Peter 3:15, KJV)

This year’s verse ends the year: the defense is practice in giving a ready, reasoned answer with meekness and fear.

Practice: answers

1. Memory and delivery.
2. Title page, table of contents, preface letter, six to eight pieces in a deliberate order, résumé at the back.
3. Explain, defend, reflect.
4. Calmly, without returning it: “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” He then appealed to what King Agrippa already knew.
5. I revised the poems three times and removed the weakest stanza.
6. If I were writing the play again, I would start in the second scene.
7. Sample: “I don’t know. I did not look into that in my research, and I would not want to guess. It is a good question, and I’ll write it down as the next thing to find out.”
8. Sample: “Thank you for reading my portfolio. This year I learned to write for readers who did not know me: essay judges, an admissions office and, last week, a hardware-store manager. The seven pieces in front of you are arranged in the order I wrote them, so that you can see where I began and how far I came.”

UNIT 8 REVIEW

This test reviews the unit and the year. Answers may be written or, for items 9 and 10, given aloud to a parent. Item 11 is a timed essay: give the student 30 minutes and score it with the four ACT domains (2–12 each), then convert: 41–48 = 12 points, 33–40 = 10, 25–32 = 8, 17–24 = 6, 8–16 = 4.

1. (4 pts) Name the five canons of rhetoric and, for three of them, the unit this year that trained it most.
2. (4 pts) Describe Franklin's method of improving his writing in four steps.
3. (3 pts) As of fall 2026, describe the essay (if any) on the SAT, the ACT and the CLT.
4. (2 pts) Give the minute budget for a 40-minute timed essay, and say what to cut if you run short of time.
5. (2 pts) Combine into one complex sentence: "The army was larger. It lost the battle. Its general would not listen to his scouts."
6. (3 pts) Make these résumé entries parallel: "Organizing the church food drive; I collected 400 cans; responsible for delivery."
7. (4 pts) Name the four paragraphs of a cover letter and the job of each.
8. (2 pts) Why must every fact on a résumé be exactly true? Give one reason from Scripture and one practical reason.
9. (3 pts) Rewrite in the active voice and correct the mood: "The essay was revised by me twice. If I was given more time, the conclusion would be rewritten."
10. (3 pts) In Acts 26:24–29, how does Paul answer Festus' interruption, and what can a student take from it into an oral defense?
11. (12 pts) Timed essay (30 minutes): "Is it better to read many books or a few books well? Defend your answer."

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE GRADE 11 PORTFOLIO

A bound portfolio of six to eight of the year's best pieces, with a title page, a table of contents, a preface letter of 600–900 words addressed to the panel, revision memos on revised pieces, the timed essay with its score, and the résumé at the back, presented and defended aloud in a 20–30 minute oral defense (Lesson 8.4).

- **Range and selection:** Six to eight pieces showing at least four kinds of writing (analysis, research, argument, creative, personal narrative), chosen and arranged on purpose.
- **Revision:** At least one piece visibly improved since its first submission, with a revision memo that names specific changes and reasons.
- **Preface letter:** Clear, honest and well arranged: names each piece and why it was chosen, the strongest and weakest canon, and one habit for next year; active voice for the writer's own actions.
- **Oral defense:** A prepared opening statement; answers that explain, defend and reflect truthfully, quoting the work exactly; courtesy and calm under questioning (1 Peter

3:15).

Answer key

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery. Sample pairings: invention, the research paper (Units 2-3); arrangement, the ten-minute play (Unit 4); style, the poetry workshop (Unit 5); delivery, the oral defense (8.4).
2. He made short hints of each sentence of a *Spectator* paper; laid them aside a few days; rewrote the paper from the hints without looking; compared his version with the original and corrected his faults. (He also turned tales into verse and back, and jumbled his hints to practice arrangement.)
3. SAT: no essay. ACT: optional 40-minute essay on an issue with three perspectives, scored 2-12. CLT: optional 30-minute essay on a philosophical prompt, in-person only, reported apart from the main score.
4. Plan 5, write 30, proofread 5. Shorten the last body paragraph; never leave out the conclusion.
5. Sample: Although the army was larger, it lost the battle because its general would not listen to his scouts.
6. Organized the church food drive; collected 400 cans; delivered donations to the county pantry.
7. (1) Name the position and how you learned of it; (2) show qualifications with specific facts; (3) show you understand this employer's need; (4) ask for an interview and give thanks.
8. Scripture commands truthfulness: "speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25). Practically, references are called, and one discovered exaggeration discredits everything else on the page.
9. I revised the essay twice. If I were given more time, I would rewrite the conclusion.
10. He answers calmly, without insult: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness," and appeals to what Agrippa knows. A student should answer objections with courtesy and truth, grant what is fair, and point to evidence rather than return heat.
11. Sample plan: Thesis: It is better to read a few great books well and many others lightly, because the great books form judgment by which the rest are read. Points: (1) depth builds memory and the ready stock a writer draws on; (2) a few books read well teach a reader how to read any book; (3) the man of one well-read Book, the Bible, is never poorly furnished. Concession: wide reading guards against narrowness. Answer: wide reading is a good second, not a substitute. Scored with the four ACT domains and converted as in the instructions.