

SCHOOL LAUNCH • COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING

GRADE 8 COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING: COMPARISON, CHARACTERIZATION AND DESCRIPTION

The sixth year of classical writing: weigh two lives side by side as Plutarch did, give words to a person at a turning point, paint a scene in prose like Homer's shield, write a short story with a twist, try blank verse and the ode, learn to research and cite honestly, reflect on true events in the manner of Lamb and Addison, and finish the progymnasmata ready for the Rhetoric years.

First edition

*Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.
Proverbs 27:17 (KJV)*

COURSE GUIDE

Grade 8 finishes the core of the progymnasmata, the “first exercises” of the Greek and Roman schools taught by Theon, Hermogenes and Aphthonius, with three new ones. Comparison (synchrisis) sets two people or things side by side to judge them well: Plutarch’s parallel Lives, comparisons of equals, lesser and greater, and George Washington beside the Roman farmer Cincinnatus, who each laid down power and went home. Characterization (ethopoeia) writes the words a real person might speak at a certain moment: what Noah might say as the rain began, a speech looking at past, present and future, and a monologue for a historical figure. Description (ecphrasis) makes the reader see: Homer’s shield of Achilles from *Iliad* 18, a place, a battle and a season, and a word-painting of a picture study.

The creative track teaches the short story with O. Henry’s “The Gift of the Magi” and G. K. Chesterton’s Father Brown mysteries, then blank verse and the ode with the opening of Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Keats’s “To Autumn” and Wordsworth’s odes, and the reflective essay with Charles Lamb and Joseph Addison. A practical unit teaches primary and secondary sources, note cards, MLA citations and honest use of sources, and drafts a National History Day junior paper. Unit 8 reviews the whole progymnasmata, gathers a “fourteen exercises” portfolio and ends with an oral exam. Picture studies include Houdon’s *George Washington*, Rembrandt’s *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul*, the van Eyck *Ghent Altarpiece* and Constable’s *The Hay Wain*. Each lesson has a model passage, worked examples, practice, a game, a writing project and a verse from the King James Bible.

WHO IT IS FOR

Written for students in grade 8 (about ages 13–14) who write a full essay on their own. A parent reads along, listens and helps with revision. Pairs with Grammar Level 3, Units 21–24. Grade 7 Composition is helpful but not required; Lesson 1.2 reviews the heads used for comparison, and Unit 8 reviews every exercise.

HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

1. **The weekly rhythm.** One lesson a week in two sessions of 40–50 minutes. Session 1: warm-up, video, teaching, model passage and picture study. Session 2: worked examples, practice and the writing project.
2. **Copy, imitate, invent.** Each unit opens with a model to copy by hand, then an imitation that follows the model’s pattern, then a piece of your own. This is how the classical schools taught, and it is how Franklin taught himself to write from *The Spectator*.
3. **The quarter path.** Short on time? The eight ★ lessons (the first lesson of Units 1–7, and 8.4 with the oral exam), plus two weeks to revise and finish the portfolio, make a ten-week, one-quarter course.
4. **With Grammar.** Every lesson names the Grammar Level 3 lesson it uses (🔗). The revision checklist asks only for skills Grammar has taught.

5. **Speaking.** Every unit includes reading aloud. In Unit 2 you deliver your monologue as a speech, and Unit 8 ends with an oral exam on the progymnasmata.
6. **Contests.** Lesson 6.4 and the optional Contest Lab prepare entries for two contests. National History Day (Junior Division, grades 6–8): the 2026–27 theme is “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change”; a junior paper runs 1,500–2,500 words, with an annotated bibliography and a process paper of 500 words or fewer counted separately. Contests begin at the school or regional level in winter and spring. The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards (grades 7–12) take Short Story and Poetry entries, with deadlines set by region, often in December or January. (Lesson 4.4 also looks ahead to the Bennington Young Writers Awards in high school.) These notes summarize the rules as of October 2026; rules change, so download the current official rulebook and entry forms from nhd.org and artandwriting.org, and check your local deadlines before you begin.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Unit 1: Comparison (Synchrisis) (1–4)

The tenth classical exercise: synchrisis, the comparison of two persons or things. You will read Plutarch's opening to his *Parallel Lives*, learn to compare equals, good with bad, and lesser with greater (including the “how much more” argument), set George Washington beside the Roman Cincinnatus head against head, and write a full comparison essay with a fair verdict. Houdon's statue of Washington, with its sword set aside and its plow behind, shows that a comparison can be made in marble as well as in words. The year's verse runs through it all: “Iron sharpeneth iron” (Proverbs 27:17).

Unit 2: Characterization (Ethopoeia) (5–8)

The eleventh classical exercise is ethopoeia, “character-making”: you write the words a person would say at a particular moment. You will give a voice to Noah as the rain began, learn Aphthonius' plan of present, past and future from Cardinal Wolsey's farewell in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, study how William Wirt rebuilt Patrick Henry's “liberty or death” speech from the memories of those who heard it, and finish with a monologue of your own, written, memorized and delivered. Rembrandt, who painted himself as the apostle Paul, shows the same art in paint. As iron sharpeneth iron (Proverbs 27:17), every lesson asks you to test your invented words against the truth: Scripture, history and the real character of the speaker.

Unit 3: Description (Ecphrasis) (9–12)

The twelfth classical exercise: ecphrasis, the description that brings its subject vividly before the eyes. You will read Homer's shield of Achilles in Butler's translation, follow Dickens's fog through London, describe a place, a battle and a season, write an ecphrasis of Jan van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* from the Ghent Altarpiece (1432), and finish with a full description essay modeled on Irving's opening of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” Throughout, you will practice clarity and vividness, a clear path through the scene, one dominant impression, and the honesty to say what is really there.

Unit 4: 🦋 Story: The Short Story (13–16)

The creative track's story unit for Grade 8 puts this year's exercises to work: comparison, characterization and description all serve a short story. You will study the planted twist in O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," the fair-play mystery in Chesterton's "The Blue Cross," and the structure of the parable of the prodigal son. Then you will plan, draft, revise with a partner and finish a complete short story, prepared for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

Unit 5: 🦋 Poetry: Blank Verse and the Ode (17–20)

In this creative-writing unit you leave the short rhymed poem behind and climb to two of the noblest forms in English verse. You will read the opening of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and learn to write blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter; study Keats's "To Autumn" as a model of the ode, a poem that addresses and praises its subject; compare Wordsworth's regular "Ode to Duty" with his irregular "Intimations" ode; and finish by writing an ode of your own to something good, tested by Philippians 4:8. John Constable's *The Hay Wain* and his other English landscapes show the same patient praise of common things in paint.

Unit 6: Research Basics (21–24)

Comparison, characterization and description all need matter, and when the matter is history it must be found, not invented. In this unit you learn the researcher's craft the way Luke practiced it: go back to the witnesses, check everything, and write it in order. You will tell primary sources from secondary ones and compare versions of the Gettysburg Address; take notes on cards by Franklin's method of "short hints" and cite them in MLA style; learn to borrow honestly by paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence; and finally write a complete Junior Division paper for National History Day on the 2026–27 theme, "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change."

Unit 7: 🦋 Personal Narrative: The Reflective Essay (25–28)

The creative track turns to true writing about your own life: the reflective essay. You will read the two masters of the English familiar essay, Joseph Addison (*The Spectator*, 1711) and Charles Lamb (*Essays of Elia*, 1823); learn from Franklin's "The Whistle" how a small event becomes a lasting meaning; find a true, gracious voice by imitating Mr. Spectator; and write a full reflective essay of 600–900 words about one real event, person or piece of work, with an occasion, a scene, a clear turn, an honest reflection and a return.

Unit 8: Review and Promotion to Rhetoric (29–32)

The last unit of the progymnasmata. You will look back down the whole ladder of fourteen exercises, from fable to law, and see how one story can climb every rung. You will take one of your best pieces off the page and deliver it from memory, revise early work with Franklin's method, and then gather a portfolio with one finished piece for each exercise. The year ends with an oral examination and your promotion to rhetoric, where you will learn to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason" (1 Peter 3:15).

Unit 9: Bonus: Contest Lab (Bonus)

This optional unit takes two pieces you have already written and sends them out into the world. In 9.1 you turn your 6.4 research draft into a National History Day Junior Paper on the 2027 theme, “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change,” with its annotated bibliography and process paper. In 9.2 you choose between your 4.4 short story and a Unit 5 poem, fit it to a Scholastic Art & Writing Awards category, and revise its opening and ending. In 9.3 you proofread in passes, format to the official rules, submit with a parent before the deadline, and learn to receive the results with grace. Contest rules change from year to year; the summaries here were checked in October 2026, and the official rules always decide.

MATERIALS

- **A writing notebook (composition book)** One for the whole year.
- **A KJV Bible** For every lesson’s verse and Lesson 2.1 (Noah, Genesis 6–8).
- **A pack of 3×5 index cards** For note cards and sources in Unit 6.
- **A library card** For primary and secondary sources in Unit 6 and the National History Day paper.
- **A library copy of G. K. Chesterton, *The Innocence of Father Brown* (optional)** For Lesson 4.2. The lesson prints the passage it needs.
- **A timer** For the monologue (2.4), timed writing and the oral exam (8.4).
- **A folder for the portfolio** Unit 8’s “fourteen exercises” portfolio.

GRADING

Grades come mostly from the writing projects, judged with each lesson’s checklist (content, arrangement, style, mechanics). Praise first, then fix one thing at a time.

- Writing projects: 50%
- Writing notebook: 10%
- Unit reviews: 15%
- Unit portfolio pieces, oral work and the oral exam: 25%

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

- Mechanics are graded only on skills Grammar Level 3 has taught.
- In Unit 6, every borrowed fact or quotation must have a citation. Copying without credit is redone, not graded.
- A timed writing sample at mid-year and in 8.4 shows growth.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

You do not need to be a writer to teach this course. Read the model aloud, listen to your child, and use the checklist. Praise specific things before suggesting one change. This year your student will write longer pieces and a research paper, so give time for drafts, and let the student do the finding and the writing while you ask good questions.

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. Copyrighted modern works are summarized, not quoted. Characterization lessons give words to people at a moment in Scripture or history; they imagine what a person might say, and never add to or change what the Bible says. Contest rules in this book are a dated summary, so please confirm them on the official sites.

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9.3 Polish and Send 🏆

★ quarter path (10 lessons) · 📖 creative writing track · 🏆 ends with a piece for a contest in the School Launch directory · 🔗 Grammar Level 3 link in every lesson

COMPARISON (SYNCRISIS)

The tenth classical exercise: syncrisis, the comparison of two persons or things. You will read Plutarch's opening to his *Parallel Lives*, learn to compare equals, good with bad, and lesser with greater (including the “how much more” argument), set George Washington beside the Roman Cincinnatus head against head, and write a full comparison essay with a fair verdict. Houdon's statue of Washington, with its sword set aside and its plow behind, shows that a comparison can be made in marble as well as in words. The year's verse runs through it all: “Iron sharpeneth iron” (Proverbs 27:17).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Knows the encomium heads (origin, upbringing, deeds, comparison, epilogue) from Grade 7, or will review them in 1.1.
- Writes a clear multi-paragraph piece with topic sentences.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define syncrisis and explain why Plutarch wrote parallel lives.
- ☐ I can name and write the three kinds of comparison, including a “how much more” argument.
- ☐ I can compare two persons head against head instead of whole with whole.
- ☐ I can write complete, logical comparisons with pronouns in the right case.
- ☐ I can write a full comparison essay with a thesis, point-by-point body and fair verdict.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Plutarch's Lives, Vol. 1, tr. Stewart and Long (Project Gutenberg #14033)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14033>): Theseus and Romulus, Pericles and Fabius, with Plutarch's comparisons.
- **Plutarch's Lives, Vol. 2 (Project Gutenberg #14114)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14114>): Includes the Comparison of Aristeides and Cato, a good extra model.
- **The Boys' and Girls' Plutarch (Project Gutenberg #2484)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2484>): Selected lives adapted for young readers; preview first.
- **United States Presidents' Inaugural Speeches (Project Gutenberg #925)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/925>): Washington's First Inaugural, the model for 1.3.
- **George Washington's Mount Vernon** (<https://www.mountvernon.org>): Free articles on Washington's resignation, Houdon's visit and the Cincinnatus comparison.

1.1 COMPARING TWO LIVES: PLUTARCH'S PARALLEL LIVES ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define syncrisis (comparison) and place it among the progymnasmata.
- Read Plutarch's opening to the *Life of Theseus* and explain why he pairs a Greek with a Roman.
- Build a parallel table for two lives and write a paragraph that names both likenesses and a difference.

Warm-up. Think of two people you know well who are alike in some ways (two grandparents, two coaches, two brothers). Name three ways they are alike and one way they differ. Which did you learn more from: the likenesses or the difference?

Video slot. Video coming. Plutarch and his Parallel Lives (an introduction to the Greek biographer). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

syncrisis

The progymnasmata exercise of comparison: setting two persons or things side by side to show which is better, or that they are equal. From the Greek *synkrisis*, “a judging together.”

parallel lives

Plutarch's plan of writing biographies in pairs, a famous Greek beside a famous Roman whose life was like his.

point of comparison

One heading (birth, education, deeds, character, death) under which both persons are measured.

likeness and difference

The two halves of every comparison. Likeness makes the pair fair; difference makes the comparison worth reading.

Sossius Senecio

A Roman friend of Plutarch, a consul under the emperor Trajan, to whom Plutarch dedicated the *Lives*.

CORE IDEAS

The tenth exercise. You have climbed a long ladder: fable, narrative, chreia, maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium and invective. In Aphthonius's order the next rung is *syncrisis*, comparison. Aphthonius called it a double encomium (or an encomium joined to an invective), because you praise two people at once, or praise one and blame the

other. Everything you learned about praise in Grade 7 still works; now you set the heads side by side.

Why compare at all? We see a thing better beside something else. A single tree on a hill looks tall until an oak stands next to it. Two men who faced the same kind of trial show us more about courage, justice and pride than either one shows alone. Comparison also trains judgment. You cannot weigh two lives fairly unless you know both lives well, and that sends you back to the facts.

Plutarch's plan. Plutarch was a Greek, born about A.D. 46 in Chaeronea, a small town in Boeotia. He lived under Roman rule, served as a priest at Delphi, and spent his later years writing. His great work, the *Parallel Lives*, sets a famous Greek beside a famous Roman: Theseus with Romulus, Pericles with Fabius, Demosthenes with Cicero. Twenty-three pairs survive, and most end with a short formal comparison in which Plutarch weighs the two men point by point. He said he wrote lives, not histories, because a small thing, a word or a jest, often shows a man's character better than a battle.

Likeness first, then difference. Plutarch chooses men who are alike in their station or their work: two founders of cities, two lawgivers, two orators. The likeness makes the pair fair. Then he looks for the difference, and that is where the lesson lives. Theseus and Romulus both founded famous cities; but which of them ruled better, and which brought trouble on himself? A comparison with no likeness is unfair; a comparison with no difference is dull.

Truth in the margins. In the model, Plutarch admits that the oldest stories are uncertain, "inhabited by poets and mythologers." He asks the reader's patience where the tale defies probability. That is honest writing. When you compare, keep facts and legends apart, and say which is which (Ephesians 4:25).

The parallel table. Before you write a comparison, build a table with two columns, one for each person, and rows for the points: family and homeland, upbringing, the great task, deeds, character, and the end of life. Fill in facts. Then mark each row with = (alike), > or < (one surpasses the other). The table becomes your outline.

The model. *Plutarch, Life of Theseus, opening, from Plutarch's Lives, Vol. 1, translated by Aubrey Stewart and George Long (1880), Project Gutenberg #14033*

As in books on geography, Sossius Senecio, the writers crowd the countries of which they know nothing into the furthest margins of their maps, and write upon them legends such as, "In this direction lie waterless deserts full of wild beasts;" or, "Unexplored morasses;" or, "Here it is as cold as Scythia;" or, "A frozen sea;" so I, in my writings on *Parallel Lives*, go through that period of time where history rests on the firm basis of facts, and may truly say, "All beyond this is portentous and fabulous, inhabited by poets and mythologers, and there is nothing true or certain."

When I had written the lives of Lykurgus the lawgiver and Numa the king, it

appeared to me natural to go back to Romulus also, as I was engaged on the history of times so close to his. So when I was reflecting, in the words of Aeschylus,

"Against this chieftain, who can best contend?
Whom shall I match in fight, what trusty friend?"

it occurred to me to compare the founder of the fair and famous city of Athens with him, and to contrast Theseus with the father of unconquered glorious Rome. Putting aside, then, the mythological element, let us examine his story, and wherever it obstinately defies probability, and cannot be explained by natural agency, let us beg the indulgence of our readers, who will kindly make allowance for tales of antiquity.

PICTURE STUDY



George Washington, Jean-Antoine Houdon, 1785–1791 · Marble · Virginia State Capitol, Richmond
Photo: Ser Amantio di Nicolao · [CC BY 3.0](#) · [Wikimedia Commons](#)

The Virginia legislature wanted a statue of Washington made from life, so Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, then in France, chose the great French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. In October 1785 Houdon crossed the ocean and stayed at Mount Vernon, where he measured Washington and took a plaster mask of his face. Back in Paris he carved the statue in marble. Washington asked to be shown in the clothes of his own day, not a Roman toga. Yet Houdon filled the statue with Roman meaning: Washington has hung up his sword and turned toward the plow, as the Roman Cincinnatus did. The prophet's words come to mind: "they shall beat their swords into plowshares" (Micah 4:3).

Look closely

- Find the bundle of rods under Washington's left hand. Count them if you can. (There are thirteen: one for each state.) What hangs on the bundle?
- Find the plow behind him. Why would a sculptor put a farm tool beside a general?
- Look at what is in his right hand. Is it a weapon?

Talk about it

1. The statue compares Washington to a Roman farmer without a single word. List three objects in the statue and tell what each one says about him.
2. Houdon chose to show Washington after the war, not in battle. Why might that moment show his character better than a battle scene would?

WRITING PROJECT: A PARALLEL TABLE AND A PARAGRAPH

You will do what Plutarch did before he wrote: gather the facts of two lives side by side.

Choose one pair: Theseus and Romulus (from the model), Joseph and Daniel (Genesis 37–50; Daniel 1–6), or two people from history you have studied.

You will need

- Writing notebook and a ruler
- A KJV Bible (for Joseph and Daniel) or a history book or encyclopedia for your pair

Steps

1. Rule a page into three columns: Points, Person A, Person B.
2. Write six points down the left: homeland and family; upbringing; the great task or trial; chief deeds; character; the end of life.
3. Fill each box with a fact in a short phrase. Mark any legend or uncertain report with a question mark, as Plutarch would.
4. Beside each row write =, > or < to show whether the two are alike or one surpasses the other.
5. Write one paragraph (six to eight sentences): open by naming the pair and why they belong together, give two likenesses, then one important difference.
6. Read your paragraph aloud and ask a listener which person seemed greater, and why.

Check your work

- My table has six points and a fact in every box.
- My paragraph names at least two likenesses and one difference.
- I kept legend and fact apart.
- My paired sentences are parallel: “Joseph served Pharaoh; Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar.”
- Every sentence is complete, and I used semicolons only between two independent clauses.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy the model's first paragraph ("As in books on geography ...") exactly, with every comma and quotation mark.
2. Imitation: write your own sentence in Plutarch's shape: "As ... so I, in my writings on ..., ..." (for example, as sailors mark the edge of known waters).
3. List ten pairs of people who would make good comparisons (two kings, two prophets, two inventors, two explorers).

History note. Plutarch's *Lives* traveled far. Sir Thomas North's English version (1579) gave Shakespeare the stories for *Julius Caesar*, *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. A translation "by several hands" with a life of Plutarch by John Dryden appeared in 1683, and many American Founders read Plutarch as young men.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.3 "Parallel Structure." A comparison is easiest to follow when its two halves are built alike: same pattern, same kind of words.

For families. Aphthonius (about A.D. 400) placed comparison tenth in his fourteen exercises, after encomium and invective; this year's faith verse, "Iron sharpeneth iron" (Proverbs 27:17), fits an exercise in which two lives sharpen our view of each. The model uses the Stewart and Long translation (1880), which is in the public domain. Section II of the *Life of Theseus* mentions that both heroes carried off women by violence; it is not used here, and you may wish to preview the full *Lives* before handing them to a student.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote: "Theseus and Romulus were both founders. Theseus was Greek. Romulus was a Roman and he founded Rome and it became very famous." Revise it into a balanced comparison.

1. Find the likeness: both founded great cities.
2. Find the matching facts: Athens and Rome, Greek and Roman.
3. Put the two halves in the same pattern, joined by a semicolon or a conjunction.

Answer: Theseus and Romulus were both founders of cities: Theseus united the villages of Attica into Athens; Romulus built the walls of Rome.

Example 2. Take apart this student paragraph: “Joseph and Daniel belong together. Both were carried as young men into a foreign land; both served a pagan king; both told the meaning of dreams that no wise man of the court could read. Yet they differ. Joseph was sold by his own brothers, while Daniel was taken captive by an enemy army. Joseph's trial came from his family; Daniel's came from his nation's sin.”

1. Sentence 1 names the pair.
2. Sentence 2 gives three likenesses in parallel clauses (“both ... both ... both ...”).
3. “Yet they differ” turns from likeness to difference.
4. The last two sentences give the difference in matching halves.

Answer: A sound comparison paragraph: pair, likenesses, turn, difference. To finish it, the student should add a closing sentence that tells what the difference teaches.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does *syncrisis* mean?
2. **EASY** Which exercise comes just before syncrisis in Aphthonius's order?
3. **EASY** Where was Plutarch born, and was he Greek or Roman?
4. **EASY** Whom does Plutarch pair with Theseus, and why?
5. **MEDIUM** In the model, what does Plutarch compare to the blank margins of old maps?
6. **MEDIUM** Why does a comparison need both likeness and difference?
7. **MEDIUM** Make this pair parallel: “Washington led an army, and Congress was given back his commission by him.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write two sentences comparing the founders of two cities or nations you know, one sentence of likeness and one of difference.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing two separate biographies one after the other with no comparing at all.
- Choosing a pair with nothing in common, so the comparison is unfair.
- Treating legends as facts. Say “the story says” when the record is uncertain.

Make it a game · Plutarch's Pairs. One player names a famous person; the other must name a partner for a parallel life and give one likeness in a single sentence (“Moses and Washington: both led a people through long years of hardship toward a free life under law”). If the pair is fair, the first player must name one difference. Switch roles.

Scripture. “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” (Proverbs 27:17, KJV)

Set side by side, two lives sharpen each other, and they sharpen our judgment too; this is the faith thread for the whole year.

Practice: answers

1. Comparison; literally “a judging together.”
2. Invective (after encomium).
3. Chaeronea in Boeotia; he was a Greek living under Roman rule.
4. Romulus, because both were founders of famous cities (Athens and Rome).
5. The very old times before sure history, which belong to poets and mythologers and contain nothing certain.
6. Likeness makes the pair fair; difference gives the comparison its lesson.
7. Washington led an army, and he returned his commission to Congress.
8. Sample: William Penn and John Winthrop both founded colonies as havens for their faith. Penn welcomed settlers of many churches, while Winthrop sought a colony of one mind.

1.2 COMPARING EQUALS, LESSER AND GREATER

OBJECTIVES

- Name the three kinds of comparison the ancient teachers used: equals, lesser with greater, and good with bad.
- Read 1 Samuel 18:6–9 and explain how a careless comparison stirred Saul's envy.
- Write three short comparisons, one of each kind, using the “how much more” argument at least once.

Warm-up. Finish each sentence: “If a sparrow is worth something to God, how much more ...” and “If a candle helps in the dark, how much more ...”. What kind of reasoning are you using?

Video slot. Video coming. David and Saul in 1 Samuel (a Bible overview from a trusted ministry or church). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

comparison of equals

A comparison of two persons or things of the same rank, to show that they are alike in worth or that one slightly surpasses the other.

lesser with greater

A comparison that sets something smaller beside something great, either to raise the lesser (“he was a second Cincinnatus”) or to show how far the greater exceeds it.

a fortiori

Latin, “from the stronger.” The “how much more” argument: if something is true of the lesser case, it is even more true of the greater.

amplify

To make a person or deed appear greater by setting it beside something already admired.

envy

Sorrow at another's good. It is the sin that makes comparison dangerous when we use it to rank ourselves.

CORE IDEAS

Three kinds. Aphthonius taught that you may set good beside good, bad beside bad, or good beside bad. Hermogenes added that you may compare equals, or set the lesser beside the greater. These are tools, and each does a different job. Equals sharpen judgment: which of two good men was better? Good beside bad makes virtue shine by contrast. Lesser beside greater either lifts the lesser up or shows how high the greater stands.

Comparing equals. When two persons are near in rank, the writer must work hardest, because the reader will not accept an easy verdict. Plutarch often ends by saying that each man surpassed the other in something. That is an honest result. Do not force a winner where the facts give a tie; say where each excels and let the reader see the balance.

Lesser with greater. Sometimes you set a smaller thing beside a greater to raise it: a captain who held a bridge is “a new Horatius.” Sometimes you set a great thing beside a still greater to show the distance. The book of Hebrews does this with Moses and Christ. Moses was faithful “as a servant” in God's house; Christ is the Son over the house, and the builder has more honor than the house. Moses is not belittled. He is great, and that is exactly why the comparison honors Christ.

How much more. The strongest form of lesser-to-greater is the *a fortiori* argument. Our Lord used it often: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matthew 7:11). If the lesser case is true, the greater case is surely true. When you use it, make sure your lesser case is one your reader already accepts.

The danger in comparison. In the model, the women of Israel praise both Saul and David, yet they set David above the king. Saul hears only the ranking, and from that day he eyes David with envy. Comparison is a sharp tool. When it is used to judge deeds, it teaches; when it is used to puff ourselves up or tear another down, it wounds. Paul warns that those who measure themselves by themselves “are not wise” (2 Corinthians 10:12). Compare to learn, not to boast.

Fair measure. In every kind of comparison, measure both persons by the same points. If you praise one man's courage, ask about the other's courage too. Skipping a point where your favorite falls short is a quiet kind of lie.

The model. *1 Samuel 18:6-9 (KJV)*

And it came to pass as they came, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? And Saul eyed David from that day and forward.

PICTURE STUDY



Saul and David, Rembrandt van Rijn, about 1651–1658 · Oil on canvas · Mauritshuis, The Hague
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Soon after the song of “thousands” and “ten thousands,” an evil spirit troubled Saul, and David played the harp before him (1 Samuel 18:10). Rembrandt shows the king in gold and a jeweled turban, half hidden in shadow, pressing a dark curtain to his eye. His hand holds the spear he will soon throw. David, small and plainly dressed, bends over his harp in the light. The painting itself is a comparison: the great king and the young harper, rank against grace.

Look closely

- Find Saul's spear. How tightly does he hold it?
- Compare the light on Saul with the light on David. Who is brighter?
- Look at Saul's face. Is he weeping, angry, or both?

Talk about it

1. Write two sentences comparing Saul and David in this picture: one about what Saul has that David lacks, and one about what David has that Saul lacks.
2. How does Rembrandt make the lesser man in rank look like the greater man in heart?

WRITING PROJECT: THREE COMPARISONS

You will write three short comparisons (one paragraph each), one of each kind.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible

- Your parallel table from Lesson 1.1

Steps

1. Equals: compare two persons of the same rank (two judges, two kings, two explorers). Measure them on the same three points and give an honest verdict, even a tie.
2. Good with bad: compare a faithful and a faithless person in the same situation (Jonathan and Saul toward David; the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7). Let the good one shine by contrast.
3. Lesser with greater: set a smaller thing beside a greater, and use one “how much more” sentence.
4. Underline every comparing word (*more, most, than, as ... as, -er, -est*).
5. Check each comparison for completeness: compared with what?
6. Read all three aloud and ask which one persuaded best.

Check your work

- Each paragraph is one kind of comparison, and I can name the kind.
- I measured both persons by the same points.
- Every comparison is complete and logical: “braver than any *other* king,” not “braver than any king.”
- I used one “how much more” sentence correctly.
- Pronouns after *than* and *as* are in the right case: “David was braver than he [was].”

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy 1 Samuel 18:7 and Matthew 7:11 exactly.
2. Imitation: write a “how much more” sentence in the shape of Matthew 7:11 about something in nature (“If the farmer cares for his ox ...”).
3. List three pairs for each kind of comparison: equals, good with bad, lesser with greater.

History note. For years some scholars doubted that *Saul and David* was by Rembrandt himself. After a long study, the Mauritshuis announced in 2015 that it is his work, painted in two stages in the 1650s; at some point the canvas had been cut into pieces and joined again.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 22.3 “Complete and Logical Comparisons.” Every comparison must say *than what*, and must not compare a thing with itself (“any *other*”).

For families. Aphthonius and Hermogenes both discuss which persons may be compared; Hermogenes notes that a lesser may be set beside a greater to show it is equal. The “how much more” (Hebrew *qal wahomer*, Latin *a fortiori*) argument appears throughout Scripture: Matthew 6:30, 7:11, 12:12; Romans 5:9–10; Hebrews 9:13–14.

Lesson 1.2 also introduces the moral danger of comparison, which Lesson 1.4 returns to with 2 Corinthians 10:12.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote: “Daniel was more faithful than any man in Babylon.” Is the comparison logical?

1. Daniel lived in Babylon, so he is one of “any man in Babylon.”
2. The sentence compares Daniel with himself.
3. Add *other*.

Answer: Daniel was more faithful than any other man in Babylon.

Example 2. Take apart this student's lesser-with-greater paragraph: “A shepherd will leave his flock to search the hills for one lost lamb, though it is only a lamb and he has ninety-nine more. How much more will the Good Shepherd seek one lost soul, for whom He laid down His life? The shepherd risks a cold night; the Lord bore a cross.”

1. Lesser case first: a shepherd and one lamb (the reader already accepts it).
2. The “how much more” sentence moves to the greater case.
3. The last sentence balances the two in parallel halves joined by a semicolon.

Answer: A strong *a fortiori* comparison, drawn from Luke 15:4–7 and John 10:11. It honors the lesser case and then rises above it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three kinds of comparison in this lesson.
2. **EASY** What does *a fortiori* mean?
3. **EASY** What did the women sing about Saul and David?
4. **EASY** How did Saul respond to the song?
5. **MEDIUM** In Hebrews 3, why does Christ have more honor than Moses?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix: “Jonathan loved David more than Saul.” (The writer means that Jonathan loved David more than Saul did.)
7. **MEDIUM** Choose the right pronoun: “Goliath was taller than (he, him).”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a good-with-bad comparison of the wise and foolish builders (Matthew 7:24–27) in three sentences.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Leaving a comparison incomplete: “Washington was more modest.” (More modest than whom?)

- Using a lesser case the reader does not accept, which makes the “how much more” fall flat.
- Belittling the lesser person to make the greater look good. In Hebrews, Moses stays great.

Make it a game · How Much More?. One player gives a lesser case (“A gardener waters a single rose”). The next must finish with a greater case beginning “How much more ...” in one sentence. Score a point for each pair that is true and clear; lose a point for any incomplete comparison.

Scripture. “For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.” (Hebrews 3:3, KJV)

A lesser-with-greater comparison that honors Moses and still shows Christ far above him.

Practice: answers

1. Equals; lesser with greater; good with bad.
2. “From the stronger”: the “how much more” argument.
3. “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.”
4. He was very angry, and he eyed David with suspicion from that day on.
5. Because the builder of a house has more honor than the house; Moses was a faithful servant in God's house, but Christ is the Son over it.
6. Jonathan loved David more than Saul did.
7. he (Goliath was taller than he was).
8. Sample: Both men built houses, and the same rain and wind beat on both. The wise man built upon a rock; the foolish man built upon the sand. One house stood, and the other fell, and great was the fall of it.

1.3 WASHINGTON AND CINCINNATUS

OBJECTIVES

- Tell the story of Cincinnatus and explain why Americans called Washington “the Cincinnatus of the West.”
- Read the opening of Washington's First Inaugural Address and find the Cincinnatus pattern in his own words.
- Compare Washington and Cincinnatus point by point, head against head, in four paragraphs.

Warm-up. Imagine a man who could make himself king tomorrow, and everyone would cheer. Instead he goes home to his farm. Would you call him foolish or great? Give one reason.

Video slot. Video coming. George Washington resigns his commission at Annapolis, 1783 (a historic site or museum program, such as Mount Vernon or the Maryland State House). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

Cincinnatus

Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, a Roman of the early Republic who, the story says, was called from his plow in 458 B.C. to save Rome, won the war, and gave up his power to go home.

dictator (Roman)

In the early Roman Republic, a lawful office of supreme command given to one man in an emergency, for no more than six months.

commission

The official paper that gives an officer his rank and command. Washington returned his to Congress on December 23, 1783.

head against head

Aphthonius's rule for comparison: weigh the two persons point by point, not one whole life and then the other.

Society of the Cincinnati

A society of officers of the Continental Army founded in 1783, named for Cincinnatus, with Washington as its first president general. The city of Cincinnati is named after it.

CORE IDEAS

The Roman story. Livy tells that in 458 B.C. a Roman army was trapped by the Aequians. The Senate sent envoys to Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, who was working his small farm

across the Tiber. He put on his toga, heard that he had been named dictator, raised a new army, rescued the trapped legions, and won the war. Then, though he had been given power for six months, he laid it down within sixteen days and went back to his plow. Historians debate the details, but Romans told the story for centuries as the picture of a citizen who served and did not grasp.

The American story. In 1775 the Continental Congress chose George Washington, a Virginia planter, to command the Continental Army. After eight years of war, some officers grumbled against Congress, and a few would gladly have seen him seize power. Washington refused. On December 23, 1783, at the State House in Annapolis, he handed his commission back to Congress and rode home to be a farmer again. When the nation called him a second time, to be the first President, he came, served two terms, and again went home.

The name that stuck. Americans and Europeans saw the likeness at once. The officers of the army named their society for Cincinnatus and made Washington its head. Houdon's statue put a plow behind him. Lord Byron, writing in 1814, called him "the Cincinnatus of the West." A comparison can become a title of honor when the likeness is true.

Head against head. Aphthonius warned that you should not compare whole with whole, telling all of one life and then all of the other. That is flat. Instead, set head against head: homeland and family, upbringing, the call to serve, deeds, the laying down of power, and the end of life. Under each head, put both men side by side. Your reader then sees each likeness and difference as it comes.

Likeness and difference here. Both men were farmers by choice; both were called in danger; both won and went home. But they differ too. Cincinnatus held power for days; Washington held his command for eight years and the presidency for eight more. Cincinnatus lived in a city ruled by a few great families; Washington helped found a republic under a written Constitution. The story of Cincinnatus comes to us partly as legend; Washington's deeds are written in his own letters and in the records of Congress. A fair comparison names all of this.

The model. *George Washington, First Inaugural Address (April 30, 1789), from United States Presidents' Inaugural Speeches, Project Gutenberg #925*

Among the vicissitudes incident to life no event could have filled me with greater anxieties than that of which the notification was transmitted by your order, and received on the 14th day of the present month. On the one hand, I was summoned by my Country, whose voice I can never hear but with veneration and love, from a retreat which I had chosen with the fondest predilection, and, in my flattering hopes, with an immutable decision, as the asylum of my declining years--a retreat which was rendered every day more necessary as well as more dear to me by the addition of habit to inclination, and of frequent interruptions in my health to the gradual waste committed on it by time. On the other hand, the magnitude and difficulty of the trust to which the voice of my country called me, being sufficient to awaken in the wisest and most experienced of her citizens a distrustful scrutiny into his qualifications, could not but overwhelm with despondence one

who (inheriting inferior endowments from nature and unpracticed in the duties of civil administration) ought to be peculiarly conscious of his own deficiencies. In this conflict of emotions all I dare aver is that it has been my faithful study to collect my duty from a just appreciation of every circumstance by which it might be affected.

PICTURE STUDY



General George Washington Resigning His Commission, John Trumbull, 1824 · Oil on canvas · Rotunda, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

John Trumbull served as an aide to Washington early in the war and later became the painter of the Revolution. Congress hired him to paint four great scenes for the Capitol Rotunda; this is the last, finished in 1824. Washington stands to read his short address before handing back his commission. Trumbull called it one of the highest moral lessons ever given to the world. He took some liberties: a few people shown were not actually present that day, Martha Washington among them, but he placed them there to honor the moment.

Look closely

- Find Washington. Is he standing or sitting? Who is seated, and what does that say about who holds power?
- Look at the light in the room. Where does it fall most brightly?
- Find the people watching from the balcony. Why might Trumbull include ordinary spectators?

Talk about it

1. Compare this painting with Houdon's statue from Lesson 1.1. Both show Washington laying down military power. Which tells the story more clearly, and how?
2. Write a short speech, three sentences, that Cincinnatus might have given to the Roman Senate as he laid down his power.

WRITING PROJECT: THE CININNATUS OF THE WEST: A POINT-BY-POINT DRAFT

You will write the body of a comparison of Washington and Cincinnatus, head against head. Lesson 1.4 will add the introduction and conclusion.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A parallel table like the one from Lesson 1.1
- A trusted history of George Washington (the Mount Vernon website is a good start)

Steps

1. Fill a parallel table with four heads: life before the call; the call in danger; deeds in office; laying down power.
2. Mark each row =, > or <. Note where the record for Cincinnatus is legend or uncertain.
3. Write one paragraph for each head. In each, speak of both men, not one.
4. Use at least one quotation from Washington's First Inaugural (the model), copied exactly.
5. End the fourth paragraph with a sentence that tells which man's example is greater, and why.
6. Read the draft aloud and mark any place where you told one whole life and then the other.

Check your work

- Every paragraph compares both men under one head.
- Washington's words are quoted exactly, in quotation marks.
- Pronouns are clear: when two men are named, "he" never leaves the reader guessing which.
- Pronouns after *than* and *as* are in the right case: "No one served more faithfully than he."
- My comparisons are complete: more modest than whom? longer than what?

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy the sentence from the model that begins "On the one hand, I was summoned by my Country."
2. Imitation: rewrite that sentence as Cincinnatus might have spoken it, keeping Washington's pattern ("I was summoned by Rome ... from a field which ...").

3. List five other people in history or Scripture who gave up power or position when they could have kept it.

History note. Livy tells the story of Cincinnatus in Book 3 of his *History of Rome* (chapters 26–29). Benjamin West, the American painter in London, later reported that King George III, told that Washington meant to give up his army and go home, said that if he did so, he would be the greatest man in the world.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.2 “Pronouns in Comparisons and Compounds.” Finish the clause in your head to choose the case: “No Roman was more modest than he [was].” Lesson 21.4 “Clear Pronoun Reference” matters too, since every paragraph names two men.

For families. The model is the opening of Washington's First Inaugural Address, from Project Gutenberg #925 (the “--” is the e-text's dash). Byron's phrase “the Cincinnatus of the West” comes from his *Ode to Napoleon Buonaparte* (1814), which contrasts Napoleon's ambition with Washington's restraint. Mount Vernon's website and the Maryland State House (where the resignation took place) both have free materials on December 23, 1783.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote “whole with whole”: “Cincinnatus was a Roman farmer. He was called to be dictator. He won and went home. Washington was a Virginia planter. He led the army. He resigned.” Revise it to compare head against head.

1. Find the matching heads: life before the call; the call; the return home.
2. Put both men under each head in one sentence or two.
3. Add a turn to show the difference.

Answer: Both men were farmers before they were soldiers: Cincinnatus plowed his small farm across the Tiber; Washington managed the fields of Mount Vernon. Both were called in danger, and both answered. Yet Cincinnatus served sixteen days, while Washington served eight years, and the longer a man holds power, the harder it is to give back.

Example 2. Fix the unclear pronouns: “Washington admired Cincinnatus, and he gave up his power to go home to his farm.”

1. Ask: who is “he”? whose power? whose farm?
2. Replace the unclear pronoun with a name, or recast the sentence.

Answer: Washington admired Cincinnatus, who gave up his power to go home to his farm. (Or: Like Cincinnatus, whom he admired, Washington gave up his power and went home to his farm.)

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** In what year, according to the story, was Cincinnatus called from his plow?
2. **EASY** Where and when did Washington resign his commission?
3. **EASY** What society was named for Cincinnatus, and who was its first president general?
4. **EASY** In the model, what does Washington call Mount Vernon?
5. **MEDIUM** What did Aphthonius mean by comparing “head against head”?
6. **MEDIUM** Name one important difference between Washington and Cincinnatus.
7. **MEDIUM** Choose the right pronoun: “Few men were as willing to give up power as (he, him).”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write one sentence that compares Washington and Cincinnatus head against head on “the call to serve,” using a semicolon.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Telling Cincinnatus's whole story and then Washington's, with the comparing left for one sentence at the end.
- Using “he” when both men have just been named.
- Treating the Cincinnatus story as if it were as well recorded as Washington's life.

Make it a game • Plow or Sword?. A parent reads short facts aloud (“He was called while plowing,” “He served two terms as President,” “He defeated the Aequians”). The student calls out “Cincinnatus,” “Washington,” or “Both!” For each “Both,” the student must say the likeness in one parallel sentence.

Scripture. “But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.” (Mark 10:43-44, KJV)

Both men were honored for serving and then stepping aside; our Lord teaches that true greatness is service.

1. 458 B.C.
2. At the Maryland State House in Annapolis, where Congress was meeting, on December 23, 1783.
3. The Society of the Cincinnati; George Washington.
4. A "retreat" he had chosen as "the asylum of my declining years."
5. Weighing the two persons point by point under the same headings, instead of telling one whole life and then the other.
6. Sample: Cincinnatus held power for about sixteen days, while Washington commanded for eight years and then served two terms as President; or Washington's deeds are well documented, while Cincinnatus's story is partly legend.
7. he (as he was).
8. Sample: Envoys from the Senate found Cincinnatus at his plow; in 1789 a messenger from Congress found Washington at Mount Vernon.

1.4 THE COMPARISON ESSAY

OBJECTIVES

- Arrange a full comparison essay: introduction, three or four heads compared point by point, and a conclusion with a verdict.
- Take apart a model comparison of Alfred the Great and Charlemagne.
- Write, revise and copy a five- to seven-paragraph comparison essay of your own.

Warm-up. Look back at your three comparisons from Lesson 1.2 and your draft from Lesson 1.3. Which sentence is the strongest? Read it aloud and tell what makes it work.

Video slot. Video coming. Alfred the Great and Charlemagne: two Christian kings of the early Middle Ages. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

thesis of a comparison

The one sentence in your introduction that names the pair and states your judgment: alike in this, different in that, and which is greater (or that they are equal).

point-by-point arrangement

Arranging the body by heads, each paragraph comparing both persons on one point. This is Aphthonius's "head against head."

transition of comparison

A word or phrase that shows likeness or difference: *likewise*, *in the same way*, *both*, *yet*, *but*, *whereas*, *on the other hand*, *by contrast*.

verdict

The judgment in the conclusion: which person surpassed the other, and in what, or why the two are equal.

epilogue

The closing of a classical exercise, which sums up and urges the reader toward the virtue the comparison has shown.

CORE IDEAS

Putting it together. You have built a parallel table, written the three kinds of comparison, and drafted the heads for Washington and Cincinnatus. Now you will write the whole exercise as an essay. The ancient order is simple: a short introduction, the heads compared one by one, and an epilogue with a verdict.

The introduction. Open with something that makes the pair worth reading about: a scene, a striking likeness, or a title like "the Cincinnatus of the West." Then give your thesis: name

the two persons, say what joins them, and state your judgment. “Alfred and Charlemagne were both warrior kings who loved learning; yet Alfred, the smaller king, did the greater work with his own hands.” A reader should know where you are going.

The heads. Choose three or four heads from the encomium you learned in Grade 7: origin and upbringing; deeds of war; deeds of peace (laws, learning, building); character; the end of life. Give each head its own paragraph, and in every paragraph speak of both persons. Begin with a topic sentence that names the head and the likeness or difference you found. End the paragraph with a sentence that weighs the two.

Balance and variety. Parallel sentences make a comparison clear: “Charlemagne gathered scholars; Alfred became one.” But a whole essay of semicolon pairs grows stiff. Mix them with complex sentences (“While Charlemagne ruled from the Pyrenees to the Elbe, Alfred held only Wessex”) and simple ones. Use transitions of comparison so the reader always knows whether you are joining or dividing.

The verdict. Plutarch never left the reader without a judgment, but his judgments are fair: one man surpassed in this, the other in that. Your epilogue should do the same. Say which person you judge greater and in what way, or show that they are equals. Then urge the reader toward the virtue the comparison has shown. Remember Paul's warning: those who compare themselves among themselves “are not wise.” We compare great lives to learn from them, not to rank ourselves.

The model. *“Two Kings Who Loved Learning” (excerpt). Written for this course.*

Within a century of each other, two Christian kings stood against the darkness of their age. Charlemagne ruled an empire; Alfred ruled a small and battered kingdom. Both were warriors, and both loved learning; yet Alfred, the smaller king, did the greater work with his own hands.

Both men fought for the survival of Christian lands. Charlemagne led campaigns nearly every year of his long reign and was crowned emperor at Rome on Christmas Day, 800. Alfred fought for his life: driven into the marshes of Somerset by the Danes, he gathered his men again and won the battle of Edington in 878. Charlemagne fought to enlarge a kingdom; Alfred fought to keep one alive.

In peace, both kings turned to books. Charlemagne called Alcuin of York and other scholars to his court, and they taught and copied books across his lands. Yet his biographer Einhard tells us that the emperor tried late in life to learn to write and never mastered it. Alfred, by contrast, learned Latin as a grown man and turned books into English himself, so that his people could read them. Charlemagne gathered scholars; Alfred became one.

Each king, then, deserves his title of “Great.” Charlemagne's work was wider, but

Alfred's was deeper, for he not only commanded learning but practiced it. A king who studies is a lesson to every student who thinks his lessons are beneath him.

PICTURE STUDY



George Washington (the Lansdowne Portrait), Gilbert Stuart, 1796 · Oil on canvas · National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Gilbert Stuart painted this portrait near the end of Washington's second term as President. Here he is not a general but a citizen: a black velvet suit, a plain dress sword at his side, books and papers on the table beside him. His arm is held out as if he is speaking to the people. Set this painting beside Houdon's statue from Lesson 1.1, and you have a comparison ready made: the same man, the same restraint, shown in two different moments and two different arts.

Look closely

- Find the books under the table and on it. What might they tell us about the kind of rule Washington stood for?
- Find the sword. Compare it with the sword in Houdon's statue. Where is each one, and what is Washington doing with it?
- Find the rainbow in the sky. What might a rainbow mean after a storm?

Talk about it

1. Write a comparison paragraph, head against head, on Houdon's statue and Stuart's portrait: dress, objects, pose, and what each says about Washington.
2. Which work shows the Cincinnatus idea more strongly? Give your verdict and one reason.

WRITING PROJECT: A FULL COMPARISON ESSAY

Write a comparison essay of five to seven paragraphs. You may finish your Washington and Cincinnatus draft from Lesson 1.3 by adding an introduction and an epilogue, or choose a new pair.

Good pairs: Joseph and Daniel; Saul and David; Elijah and John the Baptist; Alfred the Great and Charlemagne; Washington and Lincoln; two explorers, inventors or missionaries you have studied.

You will need

- Writing notebook and clean paper
- Your parallel table
- A KJV Bible or a trusted history source for your pair

Steps

1. Build or finish a parallel table with at least four heads, marking each row =, > or <.
2. Choose your three or four strongest heads and put them in order, saving the most important for last.
3. Write a thesis sentence: the pair, what joins them, and your judgment.
4. Write the introduction, the body paragraphs (one head each, both persons in every paragraph), and the epilogue with a fair verdict.
5. Revise with the checklist below. Read the essay aloud to a parent and ask whether each paragraph treated both persons fairly.
6. Copy the final draft neatly, with a title, for your portfolio.

Check your work

- My introduction has a thesis that names the pair and my judgment.
- Each body paragraph compares both persons under one head, with a topic sentence.
- My epilogue gives a fair verdict and urges a virtue.
- Every comparison is complete and logical, and pronouns after *than* and *as* are in the right case.
- Every pronoun clearly refers to one person.
- I used parallel structure in at least two sentences, and semicolons only between independent clauses.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy the model's third paragraph ("In peace, both kings turned to books ...").
2. Imitation: write a four-word balanced sentence like "Charlemagne gathered scholars; Alfred became one" for your own pair.
3. List ten transitions of comparison: five that join and five that divide.

History note. Einhard, who knew Charlemagne well, wrote in his *Life of Charlemagne* that the emperor kept tablets under his pillow to practice his letters but began too late in life. Asser, Alfred's Welsh friend and biographer, describes Alfred's love of learning; Alfred's own preface to his English version of Pope Gregory's *Pastoral Care* laments how few in England could read Latin when he became king.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.2 “Semicolons and Colons.” The balanced semicolon sentence (“Charlemagne gathered scholars; Alfred became one”) is the comparison writer's best tool, as long as both sides are independent clauses.

For families. Grade the essay with the unit rubric: arrangement head against head, fairness, accuracy, and mechanics from Grammar Level 3. Students should keep legend and fact apart (for example, the tale of Alfred and the burned cakes is a later legend). Aphthonius's own sample comparison set Achilles beside Hector; the encomium heads from Grade 7 supply the points.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart the model's second paragraph.

1. Topic sentence names the head (war) and the likeness: “Both men fought for the survival of Christian lands.”
2. Two sentences give one fact-filled picture of each king.
3. The last sentence weighs them in balanced halves joined by a semicolon.

Answer: Head, likeness, evidence for each, weighing sentence: a complete point-by-point paragraph.

Example 2. Revise this weak thesis: “This essay is about Joseph and Daniel, who were both in the Bible and were very interesting.”

1. Cut the announcement (“This essay is about”).
2. Name what joins them (young captives who served foreign kings).
3. State a judgment (alike in faithfulness; different in the trial they faced).

Answer: Joseph and Daniel were both carried young into foreign lands and rose to serve pagan kings; yet Joseph was tested by his brothers' betrayal and Daniel by a king's decree, and each kept faith in the trial that God sent him.

PRACTICE

1.  Name the three main parts of a comparison essay.
2.  What three things belong in the thesis of a comparison?

3. **EASY** Give three transitions that show difference.
4. **EASY** In the model, which king turned Latin books into English himself?
5. **MEDIUM** Why should the most important head come last?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the illogical comparison: "Alfred's love of learning was greater than Charlemagne."
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the unclear pronoun: "Alcuin taught at Charlemagne's court, and he became famous for his schools."
8. **CHALLENGE** Write an epilogue (three sentences) for a comparison of Saul and David.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A thesis that announces the topic ("This essay will compare ...") but gives no judgment.
- A body that drifts into "whole with whole": two paragraphs on one person, then two on the other.
- A verdict that is unfair because a head where the favorite falls short was left out.
- Every sentence a semicolon pair, so the essay sounds stiff.

Make it a game · Verdict!. One player reads a single head from a parallel table ("Deeds of peace: Charlemagne gathered scholars; Alfred translated books himself"). The judge must give a one-sentence verdict with a reason in ten seconds. Then switch. The best verdicts go into your epilogue.

Scripture. "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." (2 Corinthians 10:12, KJV)

We compare great lives to learn wisdom and virtue from them, not to measure ourselves by ourselves.

Practice: answers

1. Introduction (with thesis), the heads compared point by point, and the epilogue with a verdict.
2. The pair, what joins them, and your judgment.
3. Sample: yet, whereas, on the other hand (also but, by contrast).
4. Alfred.
5. So the essay builds to its strongest point, which leads straight into the verdict.
6. Alfred's love of learning was greater than Charlemagne's.
7. Alcuin taught at Charlemagne's court and became famous for his schools. (Or name the person meant.)
8. Sample: Saul stood taller than all the people; David was chosen for his heart. Both sinned, but Saul excused his sin and David confessed his. Let us be measured, then, not by how tall we stand among men, but by how humbly we return to God.

UNIT 1 REVIEW

The student answers in writing. Short answers may be given aloud. Writing tasks are scored with the unit checklist: arrangement, fairness, accuracy and mechanics.

1. (2 pts) Define syncrisis.
2. (2 pts) Why did Plutarch pair Theseus with Romulus?
3. (2 pts) Why does a good comparison need both likeness and difference?
4. (3 pts) Name the three kinds of comparison studied in this unit.
5. (3 pts) Write one “how much more” (a fortiori) sentence.
6. (3 pts) Tell the story of Cincinnatus in three sentences.
7. (3 pts) Give two likenesses and one difference between Washington and Cincinnatus.
8. (2 pts) What does it mean to compare “head against head” rather than “whole with whole”?
9. (2 pts) Fix: “Washington was more modest than any general in the army.”
10. (2 pts) Choose the right pronoun: “No one loved Mount Vernon more than (he, him).”
11. (4 pts) Name two objects in Houdon's statue of Washington and tell what each means.
12. (10 pts) Write a comparison paragraph, head against head, on one point (for example, the call to serve) for any pair you studied this unit. End with a weighing sentence.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A COMPARISON ESSAY

Copy your revised comparison essay from Lesson 1.4 neatly, with a title and, if you like, a small sketch of the pair or of a work of art that compares them. It begins your Grade 8 portfolio.

- **Arrangement:** Introduction with a thesis; three or four heads, each comparing both persons; an epilogue with a verdict.
- **Fairness:** Both persons measured by the same points; likeness and difference both shown; legend kept apart from fact.
- **Accuracy:** Facts, dates and quotations correct; Scripture and sources quoted exactly.
- **Mechanics and style:** Complete, logical comparisons; pronouns in the right case and with clear reference; parallel structure and correct semicolons.

Answer key

1. The progymnasmata exercise of comparison: setting two persons or things side by side to show which is better or that they are equal.
2. Both were founders of famous cities: Theseus of Athens, Romulus of Rome.
3. Likeness makes the pair fair; difference gives the comparison its lesson.
4. Equals; lesser with greater; good with bad.
5. Sample: If a father will not give his son a stone when he asks for bread, how much more will our Father in heaven give good things to them that ask him?
6. Sample: In 458 B.C. Roman envoys found Cincinnatus plowing his small farm and told him he had been named dictator. He raised an army and rescued the trapped Roman legions from the

Aequians. Then he gave up his power within about sixteen days and went home to his plow.

7. Sample: Both were farmers called to lead in danger; both laid down power and went home. Cincinnatus held power for days, while Washington commanded for eight years and then served two terms as President.
8. Compare both persons point by point under the same headings, rather than telling one whole life and then the other.
9. Washington was more modest than any other general in the army.
10. he (more than he did).
11. Two of: the sword hung on the fasces (he set aside military power); the plow (he returned to farming, like Cincinnatus); the thirteen rods (the thirteen states, united); the cane (a civilian, not a weapon).
12. Sample: Both Joseph and Daniel were called to serve a king because they could read dreams that baffled the wise men. Pharaoh brought Joseph from a dungeon; Nebuchadnezzar summoned Daniel when his own magicians had failed. Each gave the glory to God, not to himself. Joseph's service saved his whole family from famine; Daniel's outlasted several kings and two empires.

CHARACTERIZATION (ETHOPOEIA)

The eleventh classical exercise is ethopoeia, “character-making”: you write the words a person would say at a particular moment. You will give a voice to Noah as the rain began, learn Aphthonius’ plan of present, past and future from Cardinal Wolsey’s farewell in Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*, study how William Wirt rebuilt Patrick Henry’s “liberty or death” speech from the memories of those who heard it, and finish with a monologue of your own, written, memorized and delivered. Rembrandt, who painted himself as the apostle Paul, shows the same art in paint. As iron sharpeneth iron (Proverbs 27:17), every lesson asks you to test your invented words against the truth: Scripture, history and the real character of the speaker.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can write a clear, organized paragraph and a multi-paragraph piece on one subject (Unit 1).
- Knows the difference between narrative, encomium and comparison, and can use quotation marks correctly.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define ethopoeia and tell it from eidolopoeia and prosopopoeia.
- ☐ I can fit a speech to its speaker and its occasion, showing character, feeling or both.
- ☐ I can arrange a speech in the three times (present, past, future) with a single thread and deliberate tense shifts.
- ☐ I can research a historical figure and write a speech for him that is honest, accurate and free of anachronisms.
- ☐ I can write, memorize and deliver a monologue with a silent listener and a revelation of character.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **The King James Bible (Project Gutenberg #10)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10>): For Genesis 6–7, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Acts 27 and 1 Kings 2.
- **Shakespeare, King Henry VIII (Project Gutenberg #1541)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1541>): Wolsey’s farewell is in Act III, Scene II. Lesson 2.2.
- **Patrick Henry, Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death (Project Gutenberg #6)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6>): The whole speech as Wirt reconstructed it; short. Lesson 2.3.
- **Shakespeare, Hamlet (Project Gutenberg #1524)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1524>): Only Act I, Scene III is needed (Polonius’ advice). Lesson 2.4.

- **Tennyson, The Early Poems, including “Ulysses” (Project Gutenberg #8601)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8601>): A famous dramatic monologue to read alongside Lesson 2.4.

2.1 WORDS FOR A PERSON AT A MOMENT: NOAH AS THE RAIN BEGAN ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define ethopoeia, name its three kinds, and tell it apart from narrative and encomium.
- Gather from Genesis 6–7 and the New Testament what Scripture tells us about Noah at the moment the rain began.
- Write a speech of 150–250 words giving the words Noah might have said as the LORD shut him in, fitted to his character and that moment.

Warm-up. Your grandfather hands you the keys to his old truck for the first time. Say out loud one sentence he might say. Now say one sentence a nervous mother might say at the same moment, and one a little brother might say. The moment stayed the same. What changed the words?

Video slot. Video coming. Rembrandt’s Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul (Rijksmuseum, 1661), a short art talk. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

ethopoeia

Greek for “character-making”: a speech written for a real person at a particular moment, giving the words he or she would fittingly say. Example: “What words Noah might say as the rain began.”

eidolopoeia

A speech given to someone who has died, as if he could speak to the living (“What would Lincoln say to a boy at Gettysburg today?”).

prosopopoeia

A speech given to a thing or a made-up speaker: a city, a river, a virtue, or an invented character.

character and feeling

The two things an ethopoeia shows. A speech of *character* (Greek *ethos*) shows what kind of person the speaker is; a speech of *feeling* (*pathos*) shows what he feels at the moment. Most good speeches are *mixed*.

occasion

The exact moment and setting of a speech: who is speaking, to whom, where, and just after or before what.

CORE IDEAS

The eleventh exercise. In Unit 1 you compared two lives side by side. Now you step inside one life. Ethopoeia, the eleventh of the fourteen exercises, asks a single question: *What words would this person say at this moment?* You do not tell a story about the person (that is narrative), and you do not praise him (that is encomium). You let him speak, in the first person, as if we could stand beside him and hear.

Three kinds. The old teachers named three kinds of speech-making. In *ethopoeia* the speaker is a real, known person and only the words are invented: Noah, Paul, Patrick Henry. In *eidolopoeia* a person who has died speaks to the living. In *prosopopoeia* everything is invented, or a thing is given a voice: a city mourning its ruin, a river, an old oak. This unit works mostly with the first kind, because it trains you to understand real people.

Two questions before a word is written. Theon, a teacher of the first century, said the words must fit the speaker and the occasion. Ask first, *Who is speaking?* His age, his station, his faith, his habits of speech. An old man does not talk like a boy, nor a king like a shepherd. Ask second, *When is he speaking?* Just before a battle, a man's words are different from the words he says after it. Then decide whether your speech will show mostly character, mostly feeling, or (best of all) both.

What Scripture tells us about Noah. Genesis calls Noah "a just man and perfect in his generations," one who "walked with God" (6:9). "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (6:22). Peter calls him "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), and Hebrews says he was "moved with fear" and built the ark "by faith" (11:7). He was six hundred years old when the rain came. And here is a surprise: before the flood, Genesis never records Noah saying a single word. God speaks; Noah obeys. That silence is the room in which you will write.

Faithful imagination. An ethopoeia about a man in the Bible must never contradict the Bible. Proverbs 30:6 warns, "Add thou not unto his words." Your speech is an exercise in understanding Noah, not a new chapter of Genesis, so title it plainly as what Noah *might* say. Do not give him new prophecies or doctrines; keep to what the text tells you, and let his words grow out of those facts: his obedience, his fear of God, his years of preaching, his family around him, the door shut by the LORD's own hand.

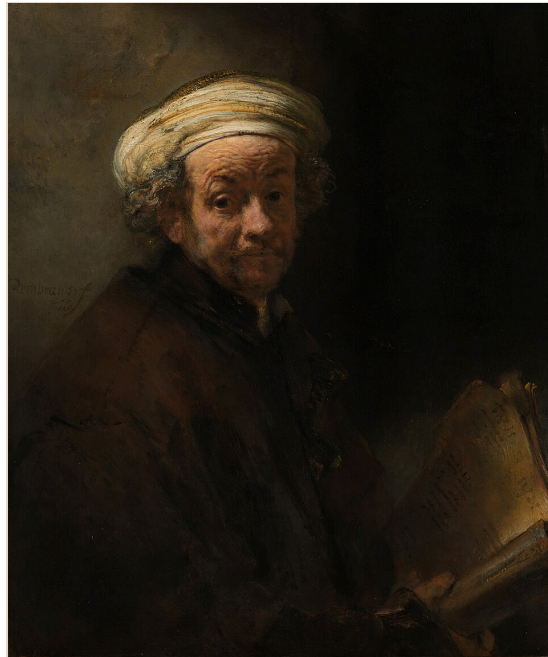
A plain style. The ancient teachers asked for a style that is clear and short and fits the speaker, without long detours. Write in the first person. Let Noah speak *to* someone: his wife, his sons, himself, or the LORD. Open at the moment ("Listen. Do you hear it on the roof?"), not with his life story. Choose either the old forms (*thou, thee, hath*) or plain modern English, and keep to your choice.

The model. *Genesis 7:11-16 (KJV)*

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty

days and forty nights. In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark; They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort. And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life. And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in.

PICTURE STUDY



Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1661 · Oil on canvas · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

When he was about fifty-five, Rembrandt painted his own tired face and dressed himself as the apostle Paul. He holds the pages of a letter, and the hilt of a sword, Paul's old sign, pokes out of his cloak. The painter has not stopped being Rembrandt; he has put on Paul's character the way you will put on Noah's. This is ethopoeia in paint: one man speaking, for a moment, as another.

Look closely

- Find the sword hilt. Paul was remembered with a sword because of his death in Rome and because he called the word of God "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17).
- Look at the pages in his hands. What might be written on them?
- Study the eyebrows and the mouth. Is this man about to speak, or has he just been asked a hard question?

Talk about it

1. Write two or three sentences this Paul might say to the person looking at him. Keep them true to what Paul says in his letters.
2. Rembrandt is both himself and Paul in this picture. How is writing a speech for Noah like painting yourself as someone else? How is it different?

WRITING PROJECT: WHAT NOAH MIGHT SAY AS THE RAIN BEGAN

Write a speech of 150–250 words: the words Noah might have said on the day the fountains of the deep broke open and the LORD shut him in the ark.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Colored pencil for marking

Steps

1. Read Genesis 6:9–7:16 aloud with a parent, then read Hebrews 11:7 and 2 Peter 2:5. List every fact Scripture gives about Noah’s character and his situation.
2. Fix the occasion: the first rain is falling and the door has just been shut. Decide to whom Noah speaks (his wife, a son, himself or the LORD).
3. Decide the kind: a speech of character, of feeling, or mixed. Under it list two traits Noah shows and three things he might feel.
4. Draft the speech in the first person. Open at the moment, with something Noah hears, sees or does, not with his life story.
5. Check the draft against Genesis. Underline in color any line that adds to or contradicts the text, and cut or change it.
6. Give the speech a plain title (“What Noah Might Say as the Rain Began”) and read it aloud in the voice you imagine for him.

Check your work

- The speech is in the first person, spoken to someone, and stays in the moment of the rain and the shut door.
- Nothing in it contradicts Genesis 6–7, Hebrews 11:7 or 2 Peter 2:5, and it gives Noah no new prophecy.
- Every pronoun points clearly to one person (he, him, they), so the listener never wonders who is meant.
- I kept to one kind of English: either thou and thee throughout, or plain modern English throughout.
- I used at least one complex sentence with an adverb clause (when, because, although) to join two thoughts.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Genesis 7:16 by hand, then copy it again from memory and check it.
2. List ten things Noah might hear, see, smell or feel in the first hour of the rain.
3. Write one sentence that Shem might say at the same moment, and one that a scoffing neighbor outside might have said the day before. Notice how the speaker changes the words.

History note. Aphthonius of Antioch, writing around A.D. 400, gave as his model ethopoeia “What words Niobe might say as her children lay dead,” from the Greek myths. Hermogenes before him suggested “What words Andromache might say over the dead Hector.” English grammar-school boys in Shakespeare’s day wrote the same exercises in Latin, which is one reason his characters speak so well in their own voices.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.4 “Clear Pronoun Reference.” A speech full of *he* and *they* (Noah, his sons, the scoffers, God) quickly becomes confusing, so check that every pronoun has one clear antecedent.

For families. Ethopoeia is an imaginative exercise, and with a Bible figure it needs a guardrail: make sure your student understands that the words are invented and are not Scripture, and that they must agree with what Scripture says (Proverbs 30:6). A good test is to ask, “Where in Genesis does that come from?” for any line that sounds doubtful. Rembrandt’s *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul* (1661) is in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Background on the exercise comes from the handbooks of Theon (first century), Hermogenes and Aphthonius, available in English in George A. Kennedy’s *Progymnasmata* (2003).

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote: “Noah said, ‘Wow, it’s finally raining! Those people who laughed at me are going to be so sorry. I told them so.’” What is wrong, and how could it be revised?

1. Form: it begins “Noah said,” which is narrative. An ethopoeia is the speech itself, in the first person.
2. Speaker: Noah was a just man and “a preacher of righteousness.” Gloating over the lost does not fit his character.
3. Style: “Wow” and “so sorry” are modern and light; they do not fit a six-hundred-year-old man at the most solemn hour of his life.
4. Moment: the student never mentions the shut door, the most striking fact in the text.

Answer: Revision: “Hear it, Shem? Rain on the roof. For years I called to them, and they would not come. Now the door is shut, and not by my hand. The LORD has closed what I could never close. I do not rejoice that they are outside; I tremble that I am within, for I found grace, and grace is not wages.”

Example 2. Sort these lines from a student’s Noah speech into character or feeling: (A) “My hands are shaking on the rail.” (B) “We built it as He said, cubit by cubit, though the whole valley laughed.” (C) “Lord, I am afraid of the water, but I am more afraid of Thee.”

1. (A) shows what Noah feels this minute: feeling.
2. (B) shows his steady obedience over many years: character.
3. (C) shows both his fear and his reverence for God, which grows out of Hebrews 11:7, “moved with fear.”

Answer: A is feeling, B is character, C is mixed. A speech built from all three is a mixed ethopoeia, the strongest kind.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does the word ethopoeia mean, and what does the exercise ask?
2. **EASY** Name the kind: “What words the city of Jerusalem might say as the Babylonians drew near.”
3. **EASY** Name the kind: “What words Daniel might say as he was lowered into the den of lions.”
4. **EASY** What two questions must you answer before you write an ethopoeia?
5. **MEDIUM** Give three facts from Scripture about Noah’s character, with references.
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the unclear pronoun: “Noah told Ham that he must close the window before he went below.”

7. **CHALLENGE** Write the first two sentences of what Noah's wife might say to him as the rain began.
8. **CHALLENGE** Why must an ethopoeia of a Bible figure never contradict Scripture, even though the words are invented?

COMMON MISTAKES

- Narrating ("Noah said that ...") instead of letting the speaker talk in the first person.
- Using modern slang or jokes that do not fit the speaker's age, station or the seriousness of the moment.
- Wandering away from the moment into a whole life story.
- Giving a Bible figure new prophecies, doctrines or actions that Scripture does not support.

Make it a game · Who Said It, and When?. One player reads aloud a sentence written in someone's voice (a soldier on the night before a battle, a grandmother at a wedding, Peter after the rooster crowed). The others guess the speaker and the moment. Then the guesser writes the next line in the same voice, and play passes on.

Scripture. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7, KJV)

Faith and holy fear are the two keys to Noah's character, so let your speech for him grow out of both.

Practice: answers

1. "Character-making." It asks what words a particular person would say at a particular moment.
2. Prosopopoeia, because a city (a thing) is given a voice.
3. Ethopoeia: a real, known person speaks invented words at a real moment.
4. Who is speaking? When (at what moment and occasion) is he speaking?
5. Three of: he was a just man and perfect in his generations (Genesis 6:9); he walked with God (6:9); he did all that God commanded (6:22); he was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5); he built the ark by faith, moved with fear (Hebrews 11:7).
6. Sample: Noah said to Ham, "Close the window before you go below." (Or: Noah told Ham to close the window before Ham went below.)
7. Sample: "You were right to keep hammering, husband, all those years they mocked you. Now hold my hand, for the floor is beginning to move."
8. Sample: Because God's word is true and we must not add to it (Proverbs 30:6); an invented speech that contradicts the text would teach a falsehood about a real man and about God. The exercise is meant to help us understand the text, not change it.

2.2 PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE: THE THREE TIMES OF A SPEECH

OBJECTIVES

- Explain Aphthonius' plan for an ethopoeia: present, past and future.
- Trace the three times in Cardinal Wolsey's farewell from Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*, and in Jeremiah's lament as Rembrandt painted it.
- Write a three-part ethopoeia of 250–350 words for a person at a turning point, moving through the times with clear, deliberate tense shifts.

Warm-up. Say three sentences about your own last birthday: one that begins “Right now I ...”, one that begins “A year ago I ...”, and one that begins “By next year I ...”. Which sentence was easiest? Which was the most interesting to hear?

Video slot. Video coming. Cardinal Wolsey and the court of Henry VIII, a short history for students. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

the three times

Aphthonius' plan for an ethopoeia: begin with the *present* (what is happening now), go back to the *past* (what was before), and end with the *future* (what will come, or what the speaker resolves).

turning point

A moment when a life changes direction: a fall, a farewell, a rescue, a loss. The best occasions for an ethopoeia are turning points.

thread

The one subject that runs through all three times and ties them together (Wolsey's greatness; Niobe's children).

soliloquy

A speech in a play spoken by a character alone, or as if alone, so that we hear his thoughts aloud.

deliberate tense shift

A change of verb tense made on purpose to move from one time to another (is → was → will be), as opposed to a careless shift inside one time.

CORE IDEAS

A plan for the speech. In 2.1 you learned who speaks and when. Now you learn how to arrange the speech. Aphthonius gave a simple plan: divide it by the three times. Begin with the *present*, because the moment is what presses on the speaker. Then turn to the *past*,

because every present is measured against what came before. End with the *future*, because a person at a turning point always wonders, fears, hopes or resolves what comes next.

Niobe's three times. Aphthonius' own example was Niobe, the proud queen of the Greek myths who lost all her children in one day. In the present she cries out at what she now suffers. In the past she remembers how she boasted of them and was envied. In the future she sees only a long, empty grief. The myth is pagan, but the plan is sound, and it fits any speaker: a soldier, a king, a prophet, a farmer at the end of a dry summer.

Wolsey's fall. Thomas Wolsey was the most powerful man in England after King Henry VIII: Lord Chancellor, a cardinal, and richer than many nobles. In 1529 he lost the king's favor in a day. In Shakespeare's play (written about 1613, probably with John Fletcher), Wolsey speaks the farewell in the model alone, just after the lords have come to strip him of the great seal of his office. Listen to the times. He begins with a general truth about the *present* state of man, the plant that blossoms and then meets "a killing frost," and he says plainly, "he falls, as I do." He turns to the *past*: "I have ventured ... This many summers in a sea of glory." He sees the *future*: a "rude stream that must for ever hide me." Then he ends with a warning for every proud man to come.

One thread. Notice that each time in Wolsey's speech is about the same thing: greatness, and how fast it goes. That is the thread. Without a thread, the three times fall apart into three small speeches. Before you draft, write your thread in a few words at the top of the page ("my children," "my city," "the ship"), and test every paragraph against it.

Verbs carry the time. The reader feels the move from one time to another mostly through the verbs: *is* and *falls*, then *have ventured* and *broke*, then *must hide*. Help him with a signal word at each turn: *now*, *once*, *tomorrow*, *hereafter*. Shifts between the three parts are deliberate and good. Shifts inside one part ("Now I stand here and I was afraid") are careless and confuse the listener.

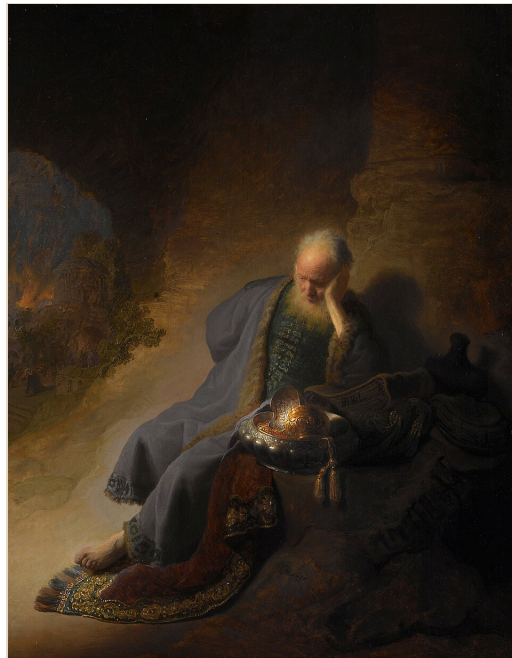
A plan, not a cage. Aphthonius' order is a guide. Wolsey mixes his times; Jeremiah weeps for the past before he speaks of the present. For this lesson, though, keep the three parts clear and in order, so you learn the plan before you bend it. For a Christian speaker, the future part is often the strongest, because it can end in hope, as Paul does in Philippians 3: "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."

The model. *William Shakespeare, King Henry VIII (about 1613), Act III, Scene II, Project Gutenberg #1541*

Farewell? A long farewell to all my greatness!
This is the state of man: today he puts forth
The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,

And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,
This many summers in a sea of glory,
But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride
At length broke under me and now has left me,
Weary and old with service, to the mercy
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!
I feel my heart new opened. O, how wretched
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!
There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,
More pangs and fears than wars or women have;
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,
Never to hope again

PICTURE STUDY



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1630 · Oil on panel · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Rembrandt was only about twenty-four when he painted the prophet Jeremiah sitting in the dark after Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians. Jeremiah had warned the city for forty years. Now he leans on his hand beside a heavy book and a few gold vessels, while far away, in the shadow at the left, the city burns. The whole picture holds the three times at once: the past he warned of, the present ruin, and a future he must still face.

Look closely

- Find the burning city. How small has Rembrandt made it, and why might he have made it so small?
- Look at the gold vessels and the rich cloth beside Jeremiah. What do they remind him of from the past?
- Study his face and hand. Is this a man who is angry, tired, or praying?

Talk about it

1. Write three sentences Jeremiah might say here: one about the present, one about the past, one about the future. (Read Lamentations 3:21–23 first for the future.)
2. What is the thread that would tie Jeremiah's three times together?

WRITING PROJECT: A SPEECH IN THREE TIMES

Write an ethopoeia of 250–350 words, in three clear parts (present, past, future), for a person at a turning point.

Choose one: Joseph as his brothers bow before him in Egypt, not knowing him (Genesis 42); Jeremiah over the ruins of Jerusalem (Lamentations 1 and 3); Paul aboard the storm-tossed ship before dawn (Acts 27:20–25); or an old shepherd on the first morning he can no longer climb the hill to his flock (an invented speaker).

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Three colored pencils

Steps

1. Read the Scripture behind your choice (or, for the shepherd, list ten facts about his life). Write the speaker, the listener and the exact moment at the top of the page.
2. Write the thread in a few words ("my brothers," "the city," "the ship and the angel's promise").
3. Make three columns headed Present, Past, Future, and jot at least four ideas in each.
4. Draft the present part first, opening right in the moment. Then write the past and the future, each with a signal word at the turn (once, now, tomorrow).
5. Shade each part in a different color. Check that the verbs in each part stay in that part's time.
6. Read the speech aloud. Does the future part feel like an ending: a resolve, a fear, a hope?

Check your work

- The speech has three parts in order, present, past, future, each in its own paragraph.
- One thread runs through all three parts.
- Tense shifts happen only at the turns between parts, never carelessly inside a part.

- Pronouns are clear, and I used who and whom correctly where they appear.
- Nothing contradicts Scripture; the words are labeled as what the person might say.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the first eight lines of Wolsey's farewell by hand, keeping every capital at the start of each line.
2. Imitate Wolsey's plant image: write four lines of your own that compare a person's rise and fall to something else that grows and fails (a wave, a fire, a candle, a harvest).
3. List five turning points in history or Scripture that would make good occasions for an ethopoeia.

History note. Thomas Wolsey (about 1473–1530) rose from a butcher's son in Ipswich to cardinal and Lord Chancellor. When he failed to get the Pope to annul Henry VIII's marriage, the king turned on him in 1529. He died at Leicester Abbey in November 1530, on his way to London to face a charge of treason. His servant George Cavendish recorded his dying words: had he served God as diligently as he served the king, God would not have given him over in his gray hairs. Shakespeare puts the same thought into his mouth a few lines after the model.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.4 "Shifts in Tense, Voice and Mood." A three-times speech is built on deliberate tense shifts, so this lesson shows you how to make them on purpose and avoid careless ones.

For families. Aphthonius' order (present, past, future) is from his *Progymnasmata*, about A.D. 400. *Henry VIII* is generally thought to be a collaboration between Shakespeare and John Fletcher; the text here is from Project Gutenberg #1541. Wolsey's phrase "wars or women" refers to the griefs men suffer in war and in love; it is the play's only touch of that kind in the passage. Rembrandt's *Jeremiah* (1630) is in the Rijksmuseum; the burning city is small and distant, with no violence shown up close.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Mark the three times in Wolsey's speech and name the thread.

1. Present: "This is the state of man ..." through "And then he falls, as I do." (present tense: is, puts forth, falls)
2. Past: "I have ventured ... This many summers in a sea of glory ... My high-blown pride At length broke under me." (present perfect and past: have ventured, broke)
3. Future: "a rude stream that must for ever hide me," and the warning that the man who falls from princes' favor falls "Never to hope again."
4. Every part is about greatness and its quick loss.

Answer: Present, past, future, all tied by the thread of worldly greatness. (Wolsey also returns to the present in the middle, "I feel my heart new opened," which shows the plan bending without breaking.)

Example 2. Revise this student's Joseph speech so the tense shifts happen only at the turns: "Now my brothers bow before me, and they didn't know me. Once I was seventeen and I wear the coat my father gave me. Someday they will know and they wept."

1. Present part: keep present tense; change "didn't know" to "do not know."
2. Past part: change "wear" to "wore."
3. Future part: change "wept" to "will weep," and give each part its own sentence or paragraph with a signal word.

Answer: "Now my brothers bow before me, and they do not know me. Once I was seventeen, and I wore the coat my father gave me, and they hated me for it. Someday they will know me, and they will weep, and I think I will weep with them."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name Aphthonius' three times in order.
2. **EASY** Why does the speech begin with the present?
3. **EASY** Who was Thomas Wolsey?
4. **EASY** What is a soliloquy?
5. **MEDIUM** In Wolsey's speech, what is the "killing frost," and what is the root it nips?
6. **MEDIUM** Find and fix the careless tense shift: "Now I stand in the empty barn, and I remembered every bale."
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a three-sentence speech for Paul on the ship (Acts 27), one sentence for each time.
8. **CHALLENGE** Wolsey's future ends in despair ("Never to hope again"). How might a Christian speaker's future part end differently? Give a verse.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Telling the past first and never getting to the moment, so the speech sounds like a biography.
- Shifting tense carelessly inside one part instead of only at the turns.
- Losing the thread, so that the three parts read like three separate speeches.
- Ending the future part with a flat summary instead of a resolve, a fear or a hope.

Make it a game · Three Times Relay. The parent names a speaker and a turning point (“a captain whose ship has just run aground”). The first player gives one sentence in the present, the second one in the past, the third one in the future. Anyone who uses the wrong tense for his turn starts the next round.

Scripture. “Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14, KJV)

Paul moves through the three times himself, from what is behind, through what he does now, to the prize ahead.

Practice: answers

1. Present, past, future.
2. Because the present moment is what presses on the speaker; it is why he speaks at all.
3. A cardinal and Lord Chancellor of England under Henry VIII, who fell from the king’s favor in 1529.
4. A speech in a play spoken by a character alone, or as if alone, revealing his thoughts.
5. The frost is the sudden loss of the king’s favor; the root is the man’s greatness, which he thought was still ripening.
6. “Now I stand in the empty barn, and I remember every bale.” (Or move “I remembered” into a separate past part with a signal word: “Once I filled it to the rafters.”)
7. Sample: “Now the sea is black and the sailors have thrown the tackling overboard. Weeks ago I told the centurion we should winter in Fair Havens, and he would not hear me. Yet tonight the angel of God stood by me, and I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me: not one of us will be lost.”
8. Sample: It can end in hope, because God’s mercies do not fail even after loss: “It is of the LORD’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning” (Lamentations 3:22-23).

2.3 SPEECH OF A HISTORICAL FIGURE

OBJECTIVES

- Explain how historians from Thucydides to William Wirt wrote speeches for real people, and the rules of honesty that govern it.
- Study the close of Patrick Henry’s speech of March 23, 1775, as Wirt reconstructed it, and name what makes it sound like Henry.
- Research a historical figure and write a 250–400-word speech for a real moment in his or her life, weaving in at least one of the person’s own recorded words.

Warm-up. Think of one sentence a grandparent or older friend always says. Write it down exactly. Now write a new sentence that he or she has never said but would say. How did you know what would sound right?

Video slot. Video coming. Patrick Henry’s “Liberty or Death” speech at St. John’s Church, Richmond (a historic-site or museum program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

reconstruction

A speech rebuilt after the fact from the memories and notes of those who heard it, when no full record was made at the time.

verisimilitude

The quality of seeming true: words that fit what we know of the speaker, his time and his situation.

primary source

Evidence from the time itself: a person’s own letters, journals, speeches, or the report of someone who was there.

anachronism

Something placed in the wrong time, such as a colonist who says “okay” or mentions a railroad in 1775.

diction

A speaker’s choice of words: plain or grand, old or new, learned or homespun.

CORE IDEAS

Historians did this first. The Greek historian Thucydides, writing of the Peloponnesian War, admitted that he could not remember every speech word for word. So he wrote what each speaker would most likely have said on the occasion, keeping as close as he could to the general sense of what was really said. Livy did the same for Rome. Their speeches are

ethopoeia in the service of history, and they are honest because the historian told the reader what he was doing.

The most famous American example. On March 23, 1775, at St. John's Church in Richmond, Patrick Henry urged the Virginia Convention to arm the colony. No one wrote the speech down. Forty-two years later, William Wirt, a lawyer and later Attorney General, published it in his *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (1817), rebuilt from the memories of men who had heard it, especially Judge St. George Tucker. Historians still argue over how many of the words are Henry's and how many are Wirt's. But Wirt worked from witnesses, and the speech fits everything known about Henry: his Bible-soaked style, his questions fired one after another, his fearlessness.

What makes it sound like Henry. Look at the model. It is short sentences and exclamations. It asks question after question ("Why stand we here idle?"). It echoes the King James Bible: "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" is from Jeremiah 6:14. It names God directly. And it ends on a personal choice, not a general one: "as for me." That last phrase also echoes Joshua 24:15. When you write for a real person, find his habits like these and use them.

Research before invention. A speech for a historical figure begins in the library, not the imagination. Find (1) the facts of the moment: date, place, listeners, what had just happened; (2) the person's own words in letters, journals or recorded speeches; (3) what others who knew him said about how he spoke. Invent only where the record is silent, and never put words in his mouth that contradict what he believed or did.

Rules of honesty. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25). An invented speech is not a lie if it is labeled as invented, so title it "What William Bradford Might Have Said" and not "Bradford's Speech at Cape Cod." Keep his real words in quotation marks inside the speech, so a reader can tell which are his and which are yours. Avoid anachronisms in words and ideas: a man of 1620 does not think like a man of today, and you should not make him.

Fit the diction to the age. You need not write in old English, but avoid words that break the spell. A Pilgrim may say *providence*, *wilderness* and *brethren*; he does not say *stressed* or *awesome*. Borrow a few words from your primary source and let them set the tone for the rest.

The model. *Patrick Henry, speech to the Virginia Convention, March 23, 1775, as reconstructed by William Wirt (1817), Project Gutenberg #6*

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace-- but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death

PICTURE STUDY



Patrick Henry Before the Virginia House of Burgesses, Peter F. Rothermel, 1851 · Oil on canvas · Patrick Henry National Memorial (Red Hill), Brookneal, Virginia
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Rothermel painted an earlier speech of Henry's: May 1765, in the House of Burgesses at Williamsburg, when the young lawyer spoke against the Stamp Act and some members cried "Treason!" The painter, like Wirt, was not there. He worked eighty-six years later from reports and his own imagination, and he made every face in the room answer Henry's words. A painting of a speech is itself a kind of ethopoeia: it shows us what the moment must have been like.

Look closely

- Find Henry. How does Rothermel make him stand out from the crowd?
- Find two listeners who react differently. What might each be saying under his breath?
- Find a man who seems to be calling out. Is he alarmed, angry or delighted?

Talk about it

1. Choose one listener in the painting and write two sentences he might say to the man beside him.
2. Rothermel, like Wirt, was not present. Is his painting still useful to a student of history? Why or why not?

WRITING PROJECT: WHAT THEY MIGHT HAVE SAID

Write a speech of 250–400 words for a real historical figure at a real moment. Use the three times from 2.2, and include at least one sentence of the person's own recorded words, set in

quotation marks.

Choose one: William Bradford as the *Mayflower* passengers reach Cape Cod (November 1620; see *Of Plymouth Plantation*, chapter 9); King Alfred hiding in the marshes of Athelney before the battle of Edington (878); Christopher Columbus on deck the night of October 11, 1492, before land was sighted; or Abigail Adams on Penn's Hill with her son John Quincy, watching the smoke of Bunker Hill (June 17, 1775; see her letters to John Adams).

You will need

- Writing notebook and note cards
- One primary source for your figure (Bradford's history, Columbus's journal, Abigail Adams's letters, Asser's *Life of King Alfred*), free on Project Gutenberg or from the library
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. Read your primary source and write down the facts of the moment: date, place, listeners, what had just happened and what came next.
2. Copy two or three sentences of the person's own words onto a card, exactly, with the page or chapter.
3. List five habits of speech or thought you notice (words he uses, his faith, his tone).
4. Plan the speech in the three times and decide where your real quotation will fit.
5. Draft the speech in the first person. Set the real quotation inside it with correct quotation marks, and inside that quotation use single marks for anything he is quoting.
6. Hunt for anachronisms: circle any word or idea that could not belong to that year, and change it.
7. Title it honestly ("What Abigail Adams Might Have Said on Penn's Hill") and add a one-line source note at the bottom.

Check your work

- Every fact (date, place, people, events) matches my source.
- The person's real words are quoted exactly, in quotation marks, with single marks for a quotation inside a quotation.
- I found and removed every anachronism in words and ideas.
- The speech follows present, past, future, with deliberate tense shifts.
- The title and source note make clear which words are invented.
- Pronouns in comparisons and compounds are correct ("braver than I," "for my brother and me").

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model from "It is in vain" to "Why stand we here idle?" exactly, including Henry's exclamation points.

2. Imitate Henry's string of questions: write four short questions in a row that a general might ask his officers before a battle.
3. List ten words a person of your chosen year might use that we rarely use now.

History note. The Second Virginia Convention met at St. John's Church, Richmond, because the royal governor, Lord Dunmore, had made meeting in Williamsburg unsafe. Henry's resolution to put the colony in a posture of defense passed narrowly. Less than a month later, on April 19, 1775, the war began at Lexington and Concord. Wirt's *Sketches* appeared in 1817, after Henry had died (1799) and while some hearers still lived.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.4 "Quotations Within Quotations; Long Quotations." When your figure quotes Scripture or another person inside his own quoted words, use single quotation marks inside the double ones.

For families. Thucydides states his method in *History of the Peloponnesian War* 1.22. Scholars debate how much of the 1775 speech is Wirt's own; your student can learn from that debate without being troubled by it, because Wirt was open about his sources. Henry spoke of "chains and slavery" while himself holding slaves, a contradiction he admitted in a letter of January 18, 1773, to the Quaker Robert Pleasants, calling the practice something he could not justify. It is worth discussing plainly. Rothermel's 1851 painting shows the Stamp Act speech of 1765, not the 1775 speech in the model.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's Bradford speech begins: "Okay, everybody, we finally made it to America! This trip was super stressful, but we are going to build an awesome new country." Find the problems and revise.

1. Anachronisms: "okay," "super," "stressful" and "awesome" are modern words.
2. Ideas out of time: Bradford did not think he was founding a country; he hoped to plant a godly colony under the king.
3. Missing source: Bradford's own words are not used, though his history records the moment.

Answer: Revision: "Brethren, we are come at last to this harbor, and the sea is behind us. Before us is nothing but a hideous and desolate wilderness, and no friends to meet us. Let it be written of us that, being thus arrived, 'they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven, who had brought them over the vast and furious ocean.' Kneel, then, and afterward we will go ashore." (Bradford's own words, in modernized spelling, sit inside single marks within the speech.)

Example 2. What makes the model sound like Patrick Henry and not like any other speaker? Name four marks.

1. Look at sentence length and type.
2. Look for borrowed language.
3. Look at how it ends.

Answer: (1) Short sentences and exclamations; (2) a rapid string of questions; (3) King James echoes: “Peace, peace ... there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14) and “as for me” (Joshua 24:15); (4) a direct appeal to God and a personal resolve at the end.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Who wrote down Patrick Henry’s 1775 speech, and when?
2. **EASY** What did Thucydides say he did when he could not recall a speech exactly?
3. **EASY** What is an anachronism? Give an example.
4. **EASY** Name two kinds of primary source you could use for a speech by Abigail Adams.
5. **MEDIUM** Which verse does “Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace--but there is no peace” echo?
6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate: The old captain said The Psalmist says They that go down to the sea in ships see the works of the LORD
7. **CHALLENGE** Why is an invented speech for a real person not a lie? What would make it one?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write two sentences King Alfred might say to his few men in the marshes of Athelney.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing from imagination alone, with no research, so facts and dates are wrong.
- Using modern words or modern ideas that the person could not have had.
- Quoting the person’s real words inexactly, or without quotation marks, so the reader cannot tell his words from yours.
- Calling the piece “Bradford’s Speech” instead of “What Bradford Might Have Said.”

Make it a game · Spot the Anachronism. The parent reads a short speech for a historical figure with three hidden anachronisms (“Washington checked his phone,” “Alfred said the plan was cool”). The student raises a hand at each one and gives a word from the right time to replace it. Then switch roles.

Scripture. “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” (Ephesians 4:25, KJV)

Writing words for a real person demands truthfulness: honest labels, exact quotations, and nothing he would never have said.

Practice: answers

1. William Wirt, in *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (1817), from the memories of men who heard it.
2. He wrote what the speaker would most likely have said on the occasion, keeping as close as possible to the general sense of what was really said.
3. Something put in the wrong time. Sample: a Roman general who checks his watch.
4. Her own letters; letters written to her or about her by people who knew her (such as John Adams or John Quincy Adams).
5. Jeremiah 6:14 (also 8:11): "Peace, peace; when there is no peace."
6. The old captain said, "The Psalmist says, 'They that go down to the sea in ships ... see the works of the LORD.'" (The ellipsis marks words left out of Psalm 107:23-24.)
7. Sample: It is honest when it is labeled as what the person might have said and agrees with what he really believed and did. It becomes a lie if it is passed off as his real words or makes him say what he never would have.
8. Sample: "We are few, and the Danes hold the land from the Thames to the sea; yet God has kept us alive in these reeds for a reason. Send word to the men of Somerset and Wiltshire: when the spring comes, the king will ride out, and they must ride with him."

2.4 MONOLOGUE WRITING

OBJECTIVES

- Tell a monologue from a soliloquy and a dramatic monologue, and name the parts of a monologue: speaker, silent listener, moment, and revelation.
- Study Polonius' advice to Laertes in *Hamlet* and show how the speech reveals more of Polonius than he means to reveal.
- Write, revise and deliver from memory a finished monologue of 350–500 words that uses everything in this unit.

Warm-up. Think of someone who gives advice at great length: a coach, a great-uncle, a character in a book. Say aloud, in his voice, three pieces of advice he would give you before a long trip. What did you show about him without saying it?

Video slot. Video coming. Polonius' advice to Laertes, *Hamlet* Act 1 Scene 3, performed or explained for students. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

monologue

A long speech by one person to one or more listeners who do not answer, or not yet.

dramatic monologue

A poem or prose piece that is a single speech by one character to a silent listener at a key moment, such as Tennyson's "Ulysses" or Browning's monologues.

silent listener

The person spoken to in a monologue. We know him only from what the speaker says to him ("Yet here, Laertes?").

revelation

What a monologue shows about the speaker that he does not say outright, sometimes more than he knows he is showing.

dramatic irony

When the audience understands something about a speaker or a situation that the speaker himself does not.

CORE IDEAS

From ethopoeia to monologue. Everything you have written in this unit has been a speech for one person at one moment. A monologue is the same thing grown up and set on a stage or a page. It is longer, it has a listener, and it is meant to be performed. Playwrights and poets learned it in the grammar school through ethopoeia; Shakespeare wrote hundreds.

Three cousins. A *soliloquy* is spoken alone, like Wolsey's farewell in 2.2; it lets us overhear thoughts. A *monologue* is spoken to someone who listens without answering. A *dramatic monologue* is a poem or piece that is nothing but such a speech, so the whole story must come through one voice. Tennyson's "Ulysses," in which the old king speaks to his sailors before one last voyage, is a famous example to look up and read.

The four parts. A good monologue has (1) a *speaker* with a distinct voice; (2) a *silent listener* whose presence we feel ("Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame"); (3) a *moment* that makes the speech necessary, often the three times of 2.2; and (4) a *revelation*: by the end we know the speaker better than when he began, and perhaps better than he knows himself.

Polonius reveals himself. In the model, Polonius, the king's chief counselor, sends his son Laertes off to France. Look at what he does. He scolds the boy for being late ("Aboard, aboard, for shame") and then keeps him standing on the dock through a long string of precepts. Some are wise: "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice." Some are merely shrewd: buy good clothes, "For the apparel oft proclaims the man." The audience smiles, because a man who says "few thy voice" is not taking his own advice. Shakespeare never tells us Polonius is long-winded and worldly; he lets him show it. That is revelation, and it is often a gentle kind of dramatic irony.

Measure the advice. Polonius' most famous line, "to thine own self be true," is often quoted as if it were Scripture. It is not. In the play it comes from a clever, worldly man who later spies on his own son. Read it in its place: it means keeping faith with your own honor so that you will not cheat others. That is decent advice as far as it goes, but a Christian measures every maxim by God's word, which asks first that we be true to God and to our neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). A good monologue writer can let a character say something half right, and trust the reader to notice.

Memory and delivery. The last two canons of rhetoric are memory and delivery. A monologue is not finished until it is spoken. Learn yours by heart, a few lines a day, and speak it to a listener. Use pauses where the dashes are, look at the place where your silent listener would stand, and let your voice change with the three times.

The model. *William Shakespeare, Hamlet (about 1600), Act I, Scene III, Project Gutenberg #1524*

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame.
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stay'd for. There, my blessing with you.

[*Laying his hand on Laertes's head.*]

And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man;
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be:
For loan oft loses both itself and friend;
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee

PICTURE STUDY



The Apostle Paul in Prison, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1627 · Oil on panel · Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Thirty-four years before his self-portrait as Paul (2.1), the young Rembrandt painted the apostle in prison, pen in hand, stopping to think before he writes. Paul's letters are a kind of

monologue: one voice speaking to listeners who are far away and cannot answer yet. Look at how the painter shows a man in the middle of composing his words.

Look closely

- Find the light. Where does it come from, and what does it fall on?
- Find the sword and the books. What do they tell us about who this is?
- Look at his face and the pen. Has he just written something, or is he about to?

Talk about it

1. Read 2 Timothy 4:6–8. Write the next sentence you think Paul is about to write in this picture, and keep it true to his letters.
2. A letter has a silent listener, like a monologue. Who is Paul's listener in 2 Timothy, and how do we feel his presence in the words?

WRITING PROJECT: A MONOLOGUE FOR THE STAGE

Write and deliver a finished monologue of 350–500 words. This is the unit's capstone piece and goes in your portfolio.

Choose one: an old blacksmith handing his forge to his apprentice on his last day of work; a sea captain speaking to a new cabin boy on his first night watch; a father or mother on the dock as a son or daughter leaves home (a better speech than Polonius'!); or King David giving his last charge to Solomon (expand 1 Kings 2:1–4 without contradicting it).

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your drafts from 2.1–2.3
- A KJV Bible
- A listener for the delivery

Steps

1. Plan the four parts: write the speaker, the silent listener, the moment, and the one thing the speech will reveal about the speaker without saying it.
2. Write one line of stage direction in italics at the top (*A forge at dusk. The fire is low. Old Tom hangs up his hammer.*). This is the only narration allowed.
3. Arrange the speech in the three times, with a thread that ties them.
4. Draft it. Let the listener's presence show at least three times (a name, a question, a gesture you answer: "No, keep your seat").
5. Revise: read it aloud, cut every line that does not sound like the speaker, and check the revelation is shown, not announced.
6. Learn it by heart over several days, then deliver it to a family listener, with pauses at the dashes and a change of voice at each of the three times.

Check your work

- The monologue has a speaker, a silent listener, a moment, and a revelation the speaker never states outright.
- It moves through present, past and future, with deliberate tense shifts only at the turns.
- I used dashes for broken-off or interrupted thoughts, no more than three times, and parentheses only for true asides.
- Pronoun references are clear, and who and whom are correct.
- Lists and paired precepts are parallel in form (“Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice”).
- I delivered it from memory to a listener.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Polonius’ advice from “Give every man thine ear” to “dulls the edge of husbandry” exactly.
2. Imitate it: write six balanced precepts in Polonius’ pattern (“Give ... but ...”) that a Christian father might give his son, each grounded in a proverb. Note the reference.
3. Write three stage-direction lines in italics, each setting a different scene for a monologue in one sentence.

History note. Shakespeare almost certainly attended the King’s New School in Stratford, where boys translated and imitated Latin authors and practiced exercises from the progymnasmata, most likely including ethopoeia. *Hamlet* was written about 1600. Polonius’ precepts imitate a long tradition of fathers’ advice to sons, of which the book of Proverbs (“My son, hear the instruction of thy father,” Proverbs 1:8) is the oldest and best.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.3 “Dashes, Parentheses and Hyphens.” In a monologue, a dash marks a thought broken off or turned sharply, so use it on purpose and sparingly.

For families. The model is only Polonius’ farewell speech; nothing else from *Hamlet* is needed for this lesson, and the play as a whole contains violence and mature matters best left for high school. The delivery step matters: memorizing and speaking a piece of one’s own is the old way of finishing the canons of memory and delivery, and it builds poise. Rembrandt’s *Apostle Paul in Prison* (1627) is in the Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. What does Polonius' speech reveal about him that he never says outright? Give three things, with lines.

1. Look at what he does, not just what he says: he tells Laertes to hurry, then keeps him with twenty-odd lines of advice.
2. Look at what he values: clothes, money, reputation, caution.
3. Compare his advice with his own speech: "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."

Answer: (1) He is long-winded: "Aboard, aboard, for shame" is followed by a long sermon. (2) He is worldly and careful about appearances: "the apparel oft proclaims the man"; "Neither a borrower nor a lender be." (3) He loves his son in his own way: he begins and ends with a blessing ("There, my blessing with you"; "my blessing season this in thee").

Example 2. Revise this opening so the listener is present and the revelation is shown, not told: "I am a proud old blacksmith and I am sad to leave my forge. I am giving it to my apprentice, whose name is Will."

1. Cut the announcing ("I am proud," "I am sad"); let actions and words show it.
2. Speak to Will by name and answer something he does.
3. Open in the moment, with something seen or handled.

Answer: "No, Will, leave the bellows. I'll work them once more. There, see how she answers? Forty years that fire has known my hand. Mind you bank it every night (my father never once let it die) and don't go buying cheap iron from the Harlow man. I can tell bad iron by the ring. You'll learn to—you will. In time."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the difference between a soliloquy and a monologue?
2. **EASY** Name the four parts of a good monologue.
3. **EASY** To whom does Polonius speak, and where is the listener going?
4. **EASY** Which two canons of rhetoric does the delivery step practice?
5. **MEDIUM** Paraphrase: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be: For loan oft loses both itself and friend."
6. **MEDIUM** Make the precepts parallel: "Be slow to speak, listening to everyone, and you should not trust flatterers."
7. **CHALLENGE** Explain the dramatic irony in Polonius telling his son, "Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice."
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the first four lines of King David's charge to Solomon, consistent with 1 Kings 2:1–4.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Announcing the speaker's character ("I am a proud man") instead of letting the speech reveal it.
- Forgetting the listener, so the monologue reads like an essay with no one in the room.
- Filling the piece with stage directions; one short line at the top is enough.
- Overusing dashes until every sentence is broken.

Make it a game • The Silent Listener. One player delivers a one-minute monologue to an imaginary listener without ever saying who the listener is ("No, don't get up; you've walked far enough today"). The others guess who is being spoken to and where they are. Score a point for each clue the audience can name.

Scripture. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." (Luke 6:45, KJV)

A monologue rests on this truth: a speaker's words reveal his heart, whether he means them to or not.

Practice: answers

1. A soliloquy is spoken alone (or as if alone); a monologue is spoken to listeners who do not answer.
2. Speaker, silent listener, moment, revelation.
3. To his son Laertes, who is sailing to France.
4. Memory and delivery.
5. Don't borrow or lend money, because a loan often loses both the money and the friendship.
6. Be slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to trust flatterers. (Compare James 1:19.)
7. Sample: Polonius advises speaking little, yet he is giving a long speech while his son waits for a ship. The audience sees what Polonius does not: he does not follow his own advice.
8. Sample: "Come close, my son; my eyes are dim, and I would see your face. I go the way of all the earth. Be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD thy God, and walk in His ways, as I did not always walk, and you will prosper in all that you do."

UNIT 2 REVIEW

Read each question aloud if needed. The student may answer in writing or out loud, but items 9 and 10 should be written. Writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit, not for spelling alone.

1. (2 pts) Define ethopoeia.
2. (3 pts) Name the kind: (a) What words a river might say in a drought. (b) What words Joseph might say when his brothers bowed. (c) What words Washington might say if he could speak to Americans today.
3. (2 pts) What two questions must you answer before writing an ethopoeia?
4. (4 pts) Name Aphthonius' three times in order, and say what a thread is.
5. (3 pts) In Wolsey's farewell, what image does he use for a man's rise and fall, and what is the thread of his speech?
6. (3 pts) Who reconstructed Patrick Henry's 1775 speech, and how? Why is the result not a forgery?
7. (2 pts) Find the anachronism and fix it: "King Alfred told his men, 'Guys, we need a better game plan.'"
8. (2 pts) Fix the careless tense shift: "Now I stand on the deck, and the wind howled all night."
9. (3 pts) Punctuate: Henry said The prophet cried Peace peace when there is no peace
10. (5 pts) Name the four parts of a monologue, and tell one thing Polonius reveals about himself without saying it.
11. (10 pts) Write a short ethopoeia (100-150 words): What words Peter might say on the morning after the rooster crowed (Luke 22:54-62). Use the three times and keep to Scripture.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THREE VOICES

Copy your three best speeches from this unit on clean paper, each with an honest title: your Noah speech (2.1), your speech for a historical figure with its source note (2.3), and your finished monologue (2.4), with a note of the date you delivered it from memory.

- **Fit:** Each speech fits its speaker's character, age, station and moment; nothing sounds modern or out of place.
- **Arrangement:** The speeches move through present, past and future, held together by one thread; the monologue has a silent listener and a revelation.
- **Truthfulness:** Nothing contradicts Scripture or the historical record; real words are quoted exactly; invented words are labeled as such.
- **Mechanics:** Clear pronoun reference, deliberate tense shifts, correct quotations within quotations, and dashes used sparingly and well.

1. "Character-making": a speech written for a real person at a particular moment, giving the words he would fittingly say.
2. (a) Prosopopoeia; (b) ethopoeia; (c) eidolopoeia.
3. Who is speaking? At what moment (on what occasion)?
4. Present, past, future. The thread is the one subject that runs through all three parts and ties them together.
5. A plant that puts forth leaves and blossoms and is nipped at the root by a killing frost. The thread is worldly greatness and how quickly it is lost.
6. William Wirt (1817), from the memories of men who heard it, such as St. George Tucker. It is not a forgery because Wirt was open about his method and worked from witnesses.
7. "Guys" and "game plan" are modern. Sample: "Men, we must make a better plan."
8. "Now I stand on the deck, and the wind howls." (Or, as a deliberate move to the past: "Now I stand on the deck. All night the wind howled.")
9. Henry said, "The prophet cried, 'Peace, peace; when there is no peace.'"
10. Speaker, silent listener, moment, revelation. Sample: he is long-winded; he tells Laertes to hurry, then keeps him with a long speech (or: he cares much for appearances; or: he loves his son).
11. Sample: "The fire is out in the high priest's courtyard, and still I smell the smoke on my coat. Three times I said I knew Him not. And only days ago I told Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.' He knew; He said the cock would crow. And when it crowed He turned and looked at me. What will I do now? I do not know. But He prayed for me that my faith fail not. I will hold to that, and wait." (Score: present, past, future, 2 each; faithful to Luke 22, 2; clear pronouns and mechanics, 2.)

DESCRIPTION (ECPHRASIS)

The twelfth classical exercise: ecphrasis, the description that brings its subject vividly before the eyes. You will read Homer's shield of Achilles in Butler's translation, follow Dickens's fog through London, describe a place, a battle and a season, write an ecphrasis of Jan van Eyck's *Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* from the Ghent Altarpiece (1432), and finish with a full description essay modeled on Irving's opening of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."

Throughout, you will practice clarity and vividness, a clear path through the scene, one dominant impression, and the honesty to say what is really there.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes a well-organized multi-paragraph essay with topic sentences (Units 1-2 of this grade).
- Knows participial phrases and the semicolon (Grammar Level 3, Units 17 and 23), or reviews them alongside this unit.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define ecphrasis and name its two virtues, clarity and vividness.
- ☐ I can describe a place, an event and a season, each with a clear order and one dominant impression.
- ☐ I can describe a painting in three layers: what I see, how it is made, and what it means.
- ☐ I can keep "I see" separate from "I think," and I quote Scripture exactly.
- ☐ I can write and revise a five-paragraph description essay with parallel series and clear pronouns.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Homer, *The Iliad*, translated by Samuel Butler (Project Gutenberg #2199)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2199>): Free. The shield of Achilles is in Book XVIII; preview the war scenes.
- **Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Project Gutenberg #1023)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1023>): Free. Chapter I holds the fog passage.
- **Washington Irving, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (Project Gutenberg #41)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/41>): Free and short; a good family read-aloud.
- **Closer to Van Eyck (KIK-IRPA, Brussels)** (<http://clostertovaneyck.kikirpa.be/>): Free, very high-resolution images of the Ghent Altarpiece. Supervise browsing: the full altarpiece includes the unclothed Adam and Eve panels.
- **Wikimedia Commons: *The Ghent Altarpiece, Adoration of the Lamb***
(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jan_van_Eyck_The_Ghent_Altarpiece_-_Adoration_of_the_Lamb.jpg): Free public-domain image of the central lower panel only.

3.1 HOMER'S SHIELD OF ACHILLES ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define ecphrasis and name its two virtues, clarity and vividness.
- Read Homer's description of the harvest and the vineyard on the shield of Achilles and explain how he makes a still picture move.
- Copy the model, then imitate it in a paragraph describing a scene of work.

Warm-up. Close your eyes while a parent describes the kitchen in three sentences. Then switch: you describe a room in your house without naming it. Could your listener guess which room it was? Which words did the most work?

Video slot. Video coming. The Shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*, Book 18 (a museum or classics lecture on ancient Greek shields and Homer). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

ecphrasis

The twelfth of the fourteen progymnasmata: a description that brings its subject vividly before the eyes of the listener. The word is Greek and means “speaking out” or “telling in full.”

vividness (enargeia)

The quality that makes readers feel they are seeing the thing themselves. With clarity, it is one of the two virtues of a description.

clarity

Plain, exact words in a clear order, so the reader is never lost in the picture.

Vulcan (Hephaestus)

The smith of the gods in Greek myth. Butler's translation uses the Roman name Vulcan for the Greek Hephaestus.

Samuel Butler

An English writer (1835–1902) whose plain prose translation of the *Iliad* appeared in 1898.

CORE IDEAS

The twelfth exercise. You have retold fables, expanded sayings, praised and blamed, compared two lives and spoken in another man's voice. Now comes ecphrasis, the description. Theon of Alexandria defined it as speech that brings the thing being shown vividly before the eyes. Hermogenes added that its two virtues are clarity and vividness. A narrative tells what happened; a description makes the reader see. You will use this skill in every story, essay and report you ever write.

The story behind the shield. In Book 18 of the *Iliad*, Achilles has lost his armor, for his friend Patroclus wore it into battle and was killed. Achilles' mother, Thetis, goes to the forge of Vulcan and begs him to make new armor for her son. Homer then spends more than a hundred lines on one object: the shield. On it Vulcan works the earth, the sky and the sea, the sun, moon and stars, a city at peace and a city at war, a ploughed field, a harvest, a vineyard, cattle and sheep, a dancing floor, and the great river Oceanus running around the rim. It is the most famous description in all of ancient literature.

Homer describes the making. Notice that Homer never says, "On the shield there was a field." He says, "He wrought also a field of harvest corn." The German critic Gotthold Lessing pointed out in 1766 that Homer turns a still object into a story by showing it being made. The figures on the shield do not stand frozen, either. Reapers reap, swathes fall, boys run with armfuls, women cook, a boy sings. Strong verbs keep a description alive. When you describe a picture or a place, ask, "What is moving here? What is happening?"

An order the reader can follow. Homer moves from the largest things (earth, heaven and sea) to cities, then to the fields, the herds and the dance, and he ends with the ocean at the edge. Inside each scene he moves in a line: the reapers, then the binders behind them, then the boys behind the binders, then the owner watching them all. A good description always has a path. You may go from near to far, from left to right, from top to bottom, from the whole to the parts, or from first to last in time, but choose one and keep to it.

All the senses, and one marvel. Homer's shield is metal, yet the reader hears the lyre and the Linus-song, tastes the barley porridge and sees black grapes on silver poles. Elsewhere in the passage the ploughed field, though made of gold, looks dark behind the ploughmen "as if it were being ploughed." That is the marvel of the scene: art so true it seems alive. Every strong description needs a few exact details for each sense and one detail that makes the reader stop and wonder.

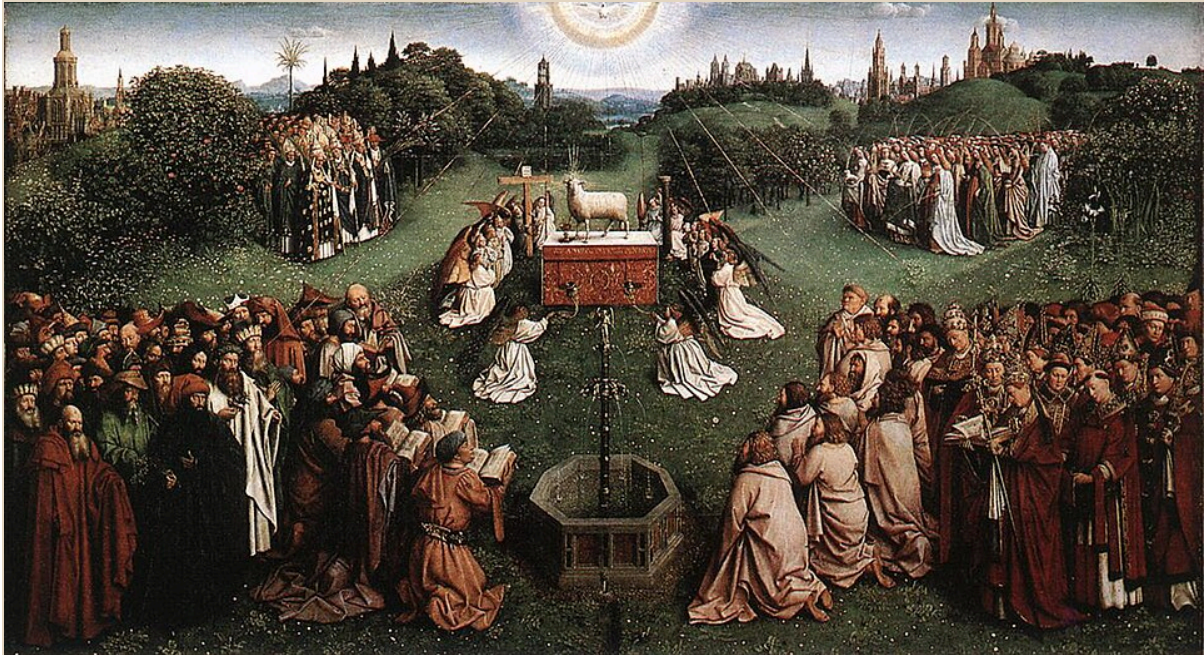
Why describe well? God filled Bezaleel "with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" to build the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3). Good work is a gift, and so is the eye that notices it. To describe something truly, you must first look at it carefully and patiently. Ecphrasis trains the attention, and attention is the beginning of gratitude.

The model. *Homer, The Iliad, Book XVIII, translated by Samuel Butler (1898), Project Gutenberg #2199*

He wrought also a field of harvest corn, and the reapers were reaping with sharp sickles in their hands. Swathe after swathe fell to the ground in a straight line behind them, and the binders bound them in bands of twisted straw. There were three binders, and behind them there were boys who gathered the cut corn in armfuls and kept on bringing them to be bound: among them all the owner of the land stood by in silence and was glad. The servants were getting a meal ready under an oak, for they had sacrificed a great ox, and were busy cutting him up, while the women were making a porridge of much white barley for the labourers' dinner.

He wrought also a vineyard, golden and fair to see, and the vines were loaded with grapes. The bunches overhead were black, but the vines were trained on poles of silver. He ran a ditch of dark metal all round it, and fenced it with a fence of tin; there was only one path to it, and by this the vintagers went when they would gather the vintage. Youths and maidens all blithe and full of glee, carried the luscious fruit in plaited baskets; and with them there went a boy who made sweet music with his lyre, and sang the Linos-song with his clear boyish voice

PICTURE STUDY



The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb (central panel of the Ghent Altarpiece), Jan van Eyck (and Hubert van Eyck), Completed 1432 · Oil on oak panel · St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The Ghent Altarpiece is a great folding altarpiece of many hinged panels, and this unit returns to it again and again. A Latin verse on its frame says that Hubert van Eyck began it and his brother Jan finished it, and that it was set up on May 6, 1432. The central lower panel shows the scene of Revelation 7: a multitude from every nation gathered before the Lamb of God. Like Homer's shield, it holds a whole world on one surface: a meadow, a fountain, a city, hundreds of people and plants so exact that botanists have named the kinds.

Look closely

- Find the Lamb. What is he standing on, and who kneels around him?
- Find the fountain in the front. Follow the water. Where does it go?
- Look at the far edge of the picture. What do you see on the horizon?

Talk about it

1. Homer describes his shield scene by scene. If you described this panel, where would you begin, and in what order would you go?
2. Choose one small group of people in the panel. Write three sentences about them using strong verbs, as Homer does with the reapers.

WRITING PROJECT: COPY, THEN IMITATE: A SCENE OF WORK

Benjamin Franklin taught himself to write by copying good prose, setting it aside and rewriting it from notes. You will do the same with Homer's harvest, then write a scene of your own.

Your scene should be a place where people are working: a garden, a kitchen before a holiday dinner, a hayfield, a workshop, a church being set up for Sunday.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage
- Colored pencils (optional, for a sketch)

Steps

1. Session 1: Copy the model by hand, slowly and exactly, keeping Butler's spelling ("labourers'," "swathe") and punctuation.
2. Underline every verb that shows motion. Circle every detail of color, metal or sound.
3. Write a five-line outline of the passage (reapers, binders, boys, owner, meal; then vineyard, path, youths, boy with lyre). Close the book and rewrite the passage from your outline. Compare and note what you changed.
4. Session 2: Choose your own scene of work. List at least four groups or people in it and what each one is doing.
5. Choose an order (near to far, first to last, or one group leading to the next) and write a paragraph of 150–200 words in the present or past tense.
6. Give your scene one "marvel," a detail that makes the reader stop, like the gold field that looks freshly ploughed.
7. Read it aloud to a parent with eyes closed. Then ask, "What did you see?"

Check your work

- My paragraph keeps one order the reader can follow.
- Every person or group in my scene is doing something, shown with a strong verb.
- I used at least three senses.
- I joined two closely related independent clauses with a semicolon at least once, as Butler does.
- My verb tense stays the same from start to finish.
- My copy of the model matches the original exactly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Theon's definition: ecphrasis is speech that brings the thing being shown vividly before the eyes.
2. List the scenes on the shield in order: the heavens, two cities, the ploughed field, the harvest, the vineyard, the herds, the sheep, the dance, Oceanus.
3. Write five strong verbs from the model and, beside each, a weaker verb a lazy writer might have used (reaping / working).

History note. Homer's shield began a tradition. Virgil gave Aeneas a shield showing the future history of Rome (*Aeneid* 8), and poets and painters have imitated Homer's shield ever since. Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766) used it to argue that poetry is best at showing actions in time, while painting is best at showing bodies side by side in space.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.2 "Semicolons and Colons." Butler joins "fenced it with a fence of tin; there was only one path to it" with a semicolon and introduces the owner with a colon, and you will use a semicolon the same way in your scene.

For families. Butler's translation (Project Gutenberg #2199) is public domain and uses Roman names (Vulcan, Jove) for the Greek gods. The model passage was copied from Butler's text; the excerpt skips the war scenes on the shield and a short passage in which two lions attack a bull. The *Iliad* is a war poem, so preview any longer reading. The picture study shows only the central lower panel of the Ghent Altarpiece; the outer upper panels of the open altarpiece show Adam and Eve unclothed, and they are not used in this unit.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote: "There was a garden. There were people in it. There were vegetables. It was nice." Revise it using Homer's methods.

1. Replace "there was" with a maker or a doer: who is acting, and what is that person doing?
2. Put the people in an order: who is in front, who behind, who watching?
3. Replace "nice" with exact details of sight, sound and smell.
4. Add one marvel.

Answer: Grandfather knelt at the end of the bean rows and pulled weeds with both hands. Behind him my sister carried a basket on her hip and dropped in tomatoes as red as fire engines. The hose ticked back and forth over the squash; the air smelled of wet dirt and mint. At the far fence the sunflowers had grown so tall that they seemed to be looking over it at the road, as if waiting for company.

Example 2. What order does Homer follow in the harvest scene, and why does it help the reader?

1. List the figures in the order they appear: reapers, the falling swathes, binders, boys, the owner, servants and women at the meal.
2. Notice the words of place: “behind them,” “among them all,” “under an oak.”

Answer: Homer follows the work itself, from the cutting to the binding to the gathering, then steps back to the owner watching and finally to the meal waiting under the oak. The reader’s eye moves along the field the way the grain does, so nothing is confusing.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is ecphrasis?
2. **EASY** Name the two virtues of a description.
3. **EASY** Why does Achilles need a new shield?
4. **EASY** In the vineyard, what color are the grapes, and what are the poles made of?
5. **MEDIUM** Find two sounds in the model passage.
6. **MEDIUM** Lessing praised Homer for describing the shield in a particular way. What was it?
7. **MEDIUM** Rewrite this sentence with a strong verb and a detail: “There was a man in the field.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write two sentences describing a kitchen at work, joined by a semicolon, in Homer’s manner.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing a list of things (“There was a table, a chair, a lamp”) with nothing happening. Show people and things in action.
- Jumping around the scene without an order, so the reader cannot picture where anything is.
- Using only sight. Add sound, smell, touch or taste where they belong.

Make it a game · Vulcan’s Forge. One player is Vulcan and secretly chooses a scene (a farmers’ market, a ballgame, a harbor). Vulcan “forges” it one sentence at a time, each starting “I wrought also ...” The other players draw what they hear. After six sentences, compare the drawings. The clearest forger wins the next turn.

Scripture. “And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,” (Exodus 31:3-4, KJV)

Homer imagined a god at the forge; Scripture tells us that real craftsmanship, like Bezaleel's, is a gift of the true God, and describing it well honors the gift.

Practice: answers

1. A description that brings its subject vividly before the eyes of the listener or reader.
2. Clarity and vividness.
3. His friend Patroclus wore his armor into battle and was killed, and the armor was lost.
4. The grapes are black, and the poles are silver.
5. The boy's lyre music and his singing of the Linus-song (the clear boyish voice).
6. Homer shows the shield being made, scene by scene, so the description becomes a story of action rather than a frozen list.
7. Sample: A man in a straw hat swung his scythe through the oats, and the stalks lay down behind him in long gold rows.
8. Sample: Mother rolled the dough flat with quick strokes and cut it into stars; behind her the kettle rattled its lid and blew a white plume against the window.

3.2 DESCRIBING A PLACE, A BATTLE, A SEASON

OBJECTIVES

- Name the subjects of description in the ancient lists: persons, events, places and times.
- Study how Dickens describes a place and a season through one repeated image in the opening of *Bleak House*.
- Write three short descriptions: a place, a battle (before, during, after) and a season.

Warm-up. Name one thing you can hear, smell and feel right now that tells you what season it is. Then name one thing that would tell a stranger which town you live in.

Video slot. Video coming. Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Hunters in the Snow* (a museum talk from the Kunsthistorisches Museum or another art museum). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

subjects of description

The ancient teachers said we describe persons, events (such as a battle, a storm or a feast), places and times (seasons, festivals). Aphthonius also named animals and plants.

standpoint

The place from which the describer looks. A clear standpoint keeps the reader from getting lost.

dominant impression

The one main effect a description leaves: gloom, peace, bustle, cold. Every detail should serve it.

before, during, after

Theon's order for describing an event: what came first, what happened, and what followed.

fitting style

Sentences shaped to suit the subject: slow, long sentences for a calm scene; short, quick ones for a busy or violent one.

CORE IDEAS

What can be described? The ancient teachers made lists. Theon named persons, events, places and times; Aphthonius added animals and plants. In Lesson 3.1, Homer described a made thing, the shield. This lesson takes three subjects that every writer meets sooner or later: a place, a battle and a season. Each has its own order, but all of them need the same two virtues, clarity and vividness.

A place: one standpoint and one thread. The opening of *Bleak House* (1853) is one of the most famous descriptions of a place in English. Dickens does not describe all of London. He follows one thing, the fog, and lets it carry the reader up the river, down the river, out to the Essex marshes and the Kentish heights, onto the ships, into an old sailor's throat and a cabin boy's toes, and up onto the bridges. The repeated word "fog" is the thread on which every detail hangs. When you describe a place, choose a standpoint and a thread: the light, the wind, a road, a sound.

A season: changes you can see. A season is a time, and time is hard to see, so we show it through what it changes. Dickens's fog belongs to a raw November day, and he shows it by its touch (pinching toes) and its smell and sting (in "the eyes and throats" of old men). Bruegel's *Hunters in the Snow* shows winter through tired dogs, bare trees, frozen ponds and skaters. Describe a season through light, weather, work, food and feasts. God Himself promised that "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter" would not cease (Genesis 8:22), so the seasons are a fit subject for grateful writing.

A battle: before, during, after. Theon taught that an event should be described in order: what came before, what happened, what followed. For a battle, that means the ground, the weather and the two sides; then the clash and the turning point; then the result. Washington's attack on Trenton is a good example: the crossing of the icy Delaware on Christmas night, 1776, in sleet and snow; the march through the dark; the surprise at dawn; nearly nine hundred Hessian soldiers taken prisoner. A battle can be vivid without being gory. Show the cold, the sounds, the movement of the lines and the moment the day turned.

Style that fits the subject. The old teachers said the style of a description should imitate its subject. Notice Dickens's sentences. Many have no main verb at all: "Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights." They pile up like the fog itself. A master may break the rule on purpose; in your own schoolwork, write complete sentences, but let their length and rhythm fit the scene. Use long, calm sentences for a sleeping valley and short, sharp ones for a charge.

One main impression. Every detail in Dickens's paragraph serves one effect: gloom and confusion. Later the reader learns why. At the center of the fog sits the Court of Chancery, where a lawsuit has dragged on for years. Before you write, decide what main impression you want to leave, and cut any detail that works against it.

The model. *Charles Dickens, Bleak House (1853), Chapter I, Project Gutenberg #1023*

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on

deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon and hanging in the misty clouds

PICTURE STUDY



The Hunters in the Snow (Winter), Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565 · Oil on oak panel · Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Bruegel painted a series of pictures of the seasons and the work of the year in 1565, and this winter scene is the most famous. Three hunters come home with their dogs, but they carry only one small fox. Next to them, a family keeps a fire burning outside an inn whose sign hangs from one hinge. Below, the whole village is out on the ice. Like Dickens, Bruegel leads the eye on a path: down the hill with the hunters, across the frozen ponds, out to the mountains.

Look closely

- Follow the hunters' path with your finger. Where does it lead your eye?
- Find three things that show it is cold, without using the snow.
- Find the skaters. What are three of them doing?

Talk about it

1. What is the dominant impression of this picture: weariness, peace, cold, or something else? Name three details that create it.
2. Write the first sentence of a description of this scene, from the hunters' standpoint on the hill.

WRITING PROJECT: THREE DESCRIPTIONS

Write three short descriptions, each about 120–180 words. Each one should have a clear order and one dominant impression.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage and the picture study
- A history book or encyclopedia for the battle

Steps

1. Session 1: Copy the model by hand. Then imitate it: write a paragraph on a place you know, repeating one thread word the way Dickens repeats “fog” (dust, rain, light, snow, noise). Write in complete sentences.
2. Choose a battle you have studied (Trenton, Marathon, Hastings, Yorktown). Make three columns in your notebook: Before (ground, weather, armies), During (the clash and the turning point), After (the result).
3. Write your battle description from the three columns, in that order. Show the cold, the sounds and the movement of the lines; leave out wounds and blood.
4. Session 2: Choose a season. List ten details under five headings: light, weather, work, food, feasts.
5. Write your season description, using Bruegel’s winter or your own town. Pick one standpoint (a window, a hill, a porch) and keep to it.
6. Read all three aloud. Over each one, write its dominant impression in one word. Cross out any detail that fights that word.

Check your work

- Each description has one clear order and one dominant impression.
- My battle follows before, during and after, and my facts are true.
- My participial phrases are placed next to the words they describe; none dangle.
- I used complete sentences, even where I imitated Dickens’s repetition.
- I used at least three senses in each description.
- My verb tense stays the same within each description.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the first four sentences of the model.
2. Make a list of ten “thread” words for describing places: fog, dust, bells, wind, smoke, lamplight, mud, frost, waves, traffic.
3. Write one sentence for each season that shows the season without naming it.

History note. *The Hunters in the Snow* belongs to Bruegel’s series on the times of the year, painted in 1565 for an Antwerp merchant. Five of the paintings survive; three hang

in Vienna. The winter of 1564–1565 was unusually hard in the Low Countries, and some think the painter remembered it.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 22.2 “Dangling Modifiers.” Descriptions are full of participial phrases (“creeping into the cabooses,” “wheezing by the firesides”), so check that each one sits next to the noun it describes and does not dangle (“Creeping over the marshes, the town disappeared” makes the town creep).

For families. *Bleak House* (Project Gutenberg #1023) is a long novel; the opening chapter is enough here. Dickens uses verbless sentences on purpose, and the lesson tells students to keep writing complete sentences themselves. For the battle description, students should describe without gore; good sources are David McCullough’s *1776* (for a parent) or any sound children’s history of the Revolution. “Aits” are small river islands; “cabooses” here are ships’ galleys; a “prentice” is an apprentice.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this battle sentence, which has a dangling modifier: “Crossing the river in the sleet, the boats were nearly crushed by ice.”

1. Ask who was crossing. The boats did not cross by themselves; the soldiers crossed in them.
2. Put the doer right after the participial phrase, or turn the phrase into a clause.

Answer: Crossing the river in the sleet, Washington’s men pushed their boats through cakes of ice. (Or: As Washington’s men crossed the river in the sleet, ice nearly crushed their boats.)

Example 2. A student’s season paragraph says: “Winter is cold. It snows a lot. Christmas is in winter. I like hot chocolate. Summer is better for swimming.” Revise it.

1. Find the dominant impression. Here it could be the warmth of home in the cold.
2. Cut the detail that fights it (summer swimming).
3. Choose a standpoint (the kitchen window) and give details for light, weather, work, food and feasts.

Answer: From the kitchen window I watch the snow fill the tracks of Father’s truck. By four o’clock the light has gone blue, and the porch lamp makes a small gold room in the dark. Inside, the kettle mutters and the milk pan steams; the windows are fogged from the soup. Wreaths hang on every door down the road, and the church bell sounds thin and far off in the cold.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the four subjects of description in Theon's list.
2. **EASY** What word does Dickens repeat, and why?
3. **EASY** What is Theon's order for describing an event?
4. **EASY** In the picture study, what have the hunters caught?
5. **MEDIUM** Find two places in the model where Dickens shows the fog by touch or feeling rather than sight.
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: "Skating across the pond, the mountains looked very far away."
7. **MEDIUM** Write one "before" sentence for the Battle of Trenton.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write three sentences describing a summer afternoon whose dominant impression is stillness. Use long, slow sentences.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Describing a whole city or a whole war. Narrow the subject to one street, one hour or one turning point.
- Filling a battle with gore instead of order. Show the ground, the weather and the movement of the sides.
- Letting participial phrases dangle ("Walking up the hill, the church came into view").

Make it a game • Guess the Season. Each player writes one sentence that shows a season without naming it or using its most obvious word (no "snow" for winter, no "leaves" for autumn). Read them aloud; others guess. Score a point for every player who guesses right on the first try.

Scripture. "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." (Genesis 8:22, KJV)

The seasons you describe are part of God's promise to Noah, and their faithful return is worth noticing and writing down.

Practice: answers

1. Persons, events, places and times.
2. "Fog." It is the thread that ties every detail together and fills the reader's mind the way the fog fills London.
3. Before, during and after: what came first, what happened, and what followed.
4. Only one small fox.
5. The fog is "in the eyes and throats" of the old pensioners, and it is "cruelly pinching the toes and fingers" of the apprentice boy.
6. Skating across the pond, the boys thought the mountains looked very far away.
7. Sample: On Christmas night, 1776, sleet drove across the Delaware as Washington's ragged army waited on the Pennsylvania shore for the boats.

8. Sample: The heat lay over the hayfield like a heavy quilt, and nothing moved but a hawk turning slowly high above the barn. In the shade of the maple the dog slept with his chin on his paws, too warm even to chase the flies. Far down the road a screen door creaked once and was quiet again.

3.3 DESCRIBING A PAINTING: THE GHENT ALTARPIECE ★

OBJECTIVES

- Describe a painting in three layers: what you see, how it is made, and what it means.
- Compare the words of Revelation 7:9–10 with the way van Eyck painted them.
- Write a 300–400 word ecphrasis of *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*.

Warm-up. Look at the picture study for one full minute without talking. Then cover it and list everything you remember. Uncover it. What did you miss?

Video slot. Video coming. Jan van Eyck, the Ghent Altarpiece and its restoration (a museum or art-history talk; the “Closer to Van Eyck” project from KIK-IRPA has close-up images). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

ecphrasis of a work of art

A description of a painting, statue or building that lets the reader see it without the picture in hand.

foreground, middle ground, background

The front, middle and back of a picture’s space.

composition

The way a painter arranges the parts of a picture: what is in the center, what lines lead the eye, what balances what.

symbol

A thing that stands for something more than itself. In the altarpiece, the Lamb stands for Christ (John 1:29).

altarpiece

A painting or carving made to stand above or behind the altar in a church. The Ghent Altarpiece has hinged wings that open on feast days.

CORE IDEAS

The oldest kind of ecphrasis. Homer described a shield that no one could hold; you will describe a real painting that still hangs in Ghent. Today, when scholars say “ecphrasis,” they usually mean exactly this: words that make a work of art visible. A good ecphrasis lets a reader who has never seen the picture walk through it in the mind and know where everything is.

Three layers, in order. First, *what you see*: the subject, the figures and the setting. Second, *how it is made*: the light, color, composition and the painter’s skill. Third, *what it means*: the

story, the symbols and the Scripture behind it. Beginning writers jump to meaning in the first sentence (“This painting is about salvation”). Earn the meaning. Let the reader see the meadow before you explain what the meadow stands for.

A path through the picture. The central panel of the Ghent Altarpiece is crowded, so you need a path. Van Eyck gives you one. At the exact center a white Lamb stands on a red altar, ringed by kneeling angels. Above him the dove of the Holy Spirit shines in golden rays. Below, in the foreground, a fountain pours its water into a little stream. From the four corners, crowds approach: prophets and patriarchs at the front left, the apostles and churchmen at the front right, and, farther back, holy men and holy women carrying palm branches out of the woods. Behind everything, the towers of a heavenly city rise against the sky. You may go from the center outward, from front to back, or from top to bottom, but tell the reader which way you are walking.

How it is made. Van Eyck built up oil paint in thin, clear layers so that colors glow from within. He painted jewels that seem to catch the light, and grass and flowers so exact that botanists have named the kinds of plants in the meadow. When the panel was cleaned and restored (the work was finished in 2020), the restorers found that the Lamb’s original face, hidden by later overpainting, looks straight out at the viewer. Choose one marvel of craft and describe it closely; that is your “gold field that looks ploughed.”

Picture from words, words from picture. Van Eyck did not invent this scene. He read Revelation 7, where John sees “a great multitude, which no man could number,” standing “before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.” On the front of the altar he painted words in Latin from John 1:29: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” The painter turned words into a picture; your ecphrasis turns the picture back into words. That is why your third layer should quote Scripture exactly.

Say what is there. Paul commands, “speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). In description, truthfulness means you do not invent what is not in the picture, and you keep “I see” separate from “I think.” “The angels kneel in a ring around the altar” is seeing. “The angels seem to be listening for something” is thinking. Both belong in an ecphrasis, but the reader should always know which is which. Van Eyck signed several of his paintings with the humble motto *Als ich can*, “As I can.” Write that way: carefully, honestly, as well as you can.

The model. *Revelation 7:9–10 (KJV), the passage van Eyck painted in the central panel*

After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

PICTURE STUDY



The Madonna of Chancellor Rolin, Jan van Eyck, About 1435 · Oil on panel · Musée du Louvre, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Use this smaller van Eyck for a warm-up ecphrasis before you write about the Ghent panel. Nicolas Rolin, chancellor of the Duke of Burgundy, kneels in prayer before Mary and the Christ Child. Behind them the painter opens three arches onto a garden and, beyond it, a river city so tiny and exact that you can find people on its bridge. It is a perfect painting for practicing a path from near to far.

Look closely

- Start at the front. What is Rolin wearing, and what is in front of him?
- Move to the middle. Find the garden and the two small figures looking over the wall.
- Go to the back. Follow the river. What crosses it?

Talk about it

1. Write a 100-word description of this painting from near to far, in three steps: the room, the garden, the city.
2. What does the Christ Child hold in his hand, and what might it mean? Label your answer “I see” and “I think.”

WRITING PROJECT: AN ECPHRASIS OF THE ADORATION OF THE MYSTIC LAMB

Write a description of the central panel of the Ghent Altarpiece (the picture study from Lesson 3.1) in 300–400 words, so clear that a reader who has never seen it could sketch it.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A large image of the panel (Wikimedia Commons or the free “Closer to Van Eyck” website)
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. Session 1: Warm up with the Rolin painting: write the 100-word near-to-far description from the picture-study question.
2. Look at the Ghent panel for ten minutes. In your notebook make three columns: I see / How it is made / What it means. Fill at least ten lines in the first column before you touch the others.
3. Choose your path (center outward, front to back, or top to bottom) and number your “I see” details in that order.
4. Session 2: Paragraph 1: name the painting, the painters, the date and the church, and give the whole scene in one or two sentences.
5. Paragraphs 2–3: walk the reader along your path. Use place words (“above the altar,” “in the front left,” “far behind”). Give one marvel of the painter’s craft.
6. Last paragraph: the meaning. Quote Revelation 7:9 or John 1:29 exactly, and tell how the picture shows it.
7. Read it to someone who has not looked at the panel. Have your listener sketch it from your words. Fix anything the sketch gets wrong.

Check your work

- I described what is there before what it means, and I kept “I see” separate from “I think.”
- My reader can follow one clear path through the painting.
- Every pronoun clearly points to one person or group (no confusing “he” or “they” in a crowded scene).
- I quoted Scripture exactly, with the reference.
- I placed my modifiers correctly, with no dangling phrases.
- The painting’s title is in italics (underlined if handwritten).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Revelation 7:9.
2. Draw a quick map of the Ghent panel: a circle for the altar, a square for the fountain and four arrows for the four crowds. Label each.
3. Write the three layers of an ecphrasis of art in your own words.

History note. The Ghent Altarpiece has been called the most stolen artwork in history. Panels were taken to Paris under Napoleon and later returned; some wings were sold and kept in Berlin until after the First World War; in 1934 the panel of the Just Judges was stolen and has never been found (a copy stands in its place); and in the Second World War

the Nazis seized the altarpiece, which was recovered from the salt mine at Altaussee, Austria, in 1945 by the Allied “Monuments Men.”

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.4 “Clear Pronoun Reference.” In a picture with angels, apostles, prophets and martyrs, “they” can mean anyone, so name the group again whenever a pronoun could point two ways.

For families. The project uses only the central lower panel. The open altarpiece also shows Adam and Eve unclothed on the outer upper wings; this course does not use those panels. In the central panel, a small stream of blood flows from the Lamb’s breast into a chalice, a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice (John 1:29; Revelation 5:6), painted without gore. The website “Closer to Van Eyck” (KIK-IRPA, Brussels) offers free, very high-resolution images; supervise browsing, as the full altarpiece includes the Adam and Eve panels.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise for clear pronoun reference: “The angels kneel around the altar where the Lamb stands. They hold the cross and the column. Behind them the apostles kneel, and they wear red.”

1. Ask who “they” is each time. The first “they” is the angels, but a reader might wonder.
2. In the last sentence, “they” could be the angels or the apostles. Name the group.

Answer: Angels kneel in a ring around the altar where the Lamb stands, and two of the angels hold up the cross and the column. Nearby, in the front right, the apostles kneel in plain robes, while the churchmen behind the apostles wear deep red.

Example 2. Sort these sentences from a student draft into “I see” and “I think”: (a) A fountain stands in the foreground. (b) The water is like the grace of God flowing to the whole world. (c) The water runs toward the bottom edge of the panel. (d) The towers in the distance are the heavenly Jerusalem.

1. A sentence anyone could check just by looking is “I see.”
2. A sentence that explains or interprets is “I think,” and it should be marked with words such as “seems,” “stands for,” or “recalls.”

Answer: I see: (a) and (c). I think: (b) and (d). Revised for (d): “The towers on the horizon seem to stand for the heavenly Jerusalem of Revelation 21.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three layers of an ecphrasis of a work of art.

2. **EASY** What stands at the center of the Ghent panel?
3. **EASY** Which chapter of Scripture did van Eyck paint in this panel?
4. **EASY** What do the holy men and women in the back carry, and where in Revelation 7:9 does it say so?
5. **MEDIUM** Write one “I see” sentence and one “I think” sentence about the dove.
6. **MEDIUM** Why is a path important in describing this panel?
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun: “Rolin kneels before Mary while an angel holds a crown over her. He wears a rich robe.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the opening two sentences of your ecphrasis, naming the painting and giving the whole scene at a glance.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting with the meaning before the reader can see the picture.
- Wandering through the picture without a path.
- Using “they” in a crowded scene so that the reader cannot tell which group is meant.
- Inventing details that are not in the painting.

Make it a game • Draw My Words. One player describes a painting from this unit (or any painting from a book) without showing it or naming it. The listener sketches it in three minutes. Compare the sketch with the painting. Then switch. The player whose sketch is most accurate chooses the next painting.

Scripture. “Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” (Revelation 5:12, KJV)

The angels kneeling around van Eyck’s altar are painting this song, and your ecphrasis can end with it.

Practice: answers

1. What you see, how it is made, and what it means.
2. A white Lamb on a red altar, surrounded by kneeling angels.
3. Revelation 7 (the great multitude before the Lamb).
4. Palm branches: “clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.”
5. Sample: I see: A white dove hovers above the altar with golden rays streaming down from it. I think: The dove stands for the Holy Spirit, who shines on everyone in the meadow.
6. The panel is crowded with hundreds of figures; without a clear order the reader cannot picture where anything is.
7. Sample: Rolin kneels before Mary while an angel holds a crown over her head. The chancellor wears a rich robe of brocade.
8. Sample: In the central panel of the Ghent Altarpiece, finished by Jan van Eyck in 1432, a whole world gathers in a single green meadow. At its heart a white Lamb stands on an altar, and from every side the saints of all ages come to worship Him.

3.4 THE DESCRIPTION ESSAY

OBJECTIVES

- Arrange a description essay: an opening that narrows from wide to close, body paragraphs that follow one path, and a closing that moves from seeing to meaning.
- Study how Washington Irving opens “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” by moving from a river to a valley to a single sound.
- Write and revise a 500–700 word description essay of a place you know or of the Ghent Altarpiece panel.

Warm-up. Give directions from your front door to your favorite room, in five steps, as if to a visitor who has never been inside. Which words told the visitor where to turn?

Video slot. Video coming. Washington Irving’s Sunnyside and the Sleepy Hollow country along the Hudson River (a historic-site or library video). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

description essay

A full essay of several paragraphs whose main purpose is to make the reader see one subject clearly and feel its dominant impression.

wide-to-narrow opening

An opening that begins with the large setting and closes in on the subject, like a traveler coming over a hill.

principle of arrangement

The rule that orders the body paragraphs: space (near to far), time (morning to night), or the senses.

topic sentence

The sentence, usually first, that tells which part of the path a paragraph covers.

parallel structure

Putting matching ideas in matching grammatical forms: “the hum of bees, the smell of hay, the creak of the gate.”

CORE IDEAS

From paragraph to essay. In this unit you have described a scene of work, a place, a battle, a season and a painting, each in a paragraph or two. Now you will join the skills in a full essay. The canons of rhetoric help here. *Invention* is gathering the details by looking hard. *Arrangement* is choosing their order. *Style* is finding the exact word and the fitting rhythm. A description essay needs all three.

Open wide, then close in. Washington Irving begins “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820) with the broad Hudson River and the old Dutch sailors on the Tappan Zee. Then he narrows to a market town, Tarry Town, then to a little valley two miles off, then to a brook, and at last to a single sound: the whistle of a quail or the tap of a woodpecker. By the end of the paragraph, the reader is standing in the quietest place in the world. Your opening paragraph can work the same way, ending with your subject and its dominant impression.

A path for the body. Each body paragraph should cover one part of the path, and its topic sentence should say where we are: “Inside the barn door, the air changes,” or “By noon the meadow is loud with insects.” Choose one principle of arrangement and keep to it. Space works for a room, a farm or a painting. Time works for a festival or a day at the shore. The senses work for a kitchen or a market. Three body paragraphs is a good number for this essay.

A voice that belongs to you. Irving does not write like an encyclopedia. He tells the joke about the husbands lingering at the tavern and then says, “I do not vouch for the fact.” A description essay may have a narrator with a sense of humor and an eye for people. Keep yourself in the background, though; the place is the subject, not your feelings about it. Let the details carry the feeling.

Close with meaning. The last paragraph steps back from seeing to understanding. Why is this place worth describing? What does it show about the people who made it or the God who made the hills around it? Paul tells us to think on whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Philippians 4:8). A description essay is practice in exactly that: holding a good thing in the mind long enough to see it truly. End with an image, not a summary; let the reader’s last look be at something.

Revise like Franklin. Franklin compared his rewritten *Spectator* essays with the originals and fixed his faults. Do the same with your draft and the models in this unit. Mark every “there was” and “very” and replace it with a doer and an exact word. Check your series of details for parallel structure. Read the essay aloud; if you stumble, the reader will too.

The model. Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820), Project Gutenberg #41

In the bosom of one of those spacious coves which indent the eastern shore of the Hudson, at that broad expansion of the river denominated by the ancient Dutch navigators the Tappan Zee, and where they always prudently shortened sail and implored the protection of St. Nicholas when they crossed, there lies a small market town or rural port, which by some is called Greensburgh, but which is more generally and properly known by the name of Tarry Town. This name was given, we are told, in former days, by the good housewives of the adjacent country, from the inveterate propensity of their husbands to linger about the village tavern on market days. Be that as it may, I do not vouch for the fact, but merely advert to it, for the sake of being precise and authentic. Not far from this village, perhaps about two miles, there is a little valley or rather lap of land among high hills, which is one of the quietest places in the whole world. A small

brook glides through it, with just murmur enough to lull one to repose; and the occasional whistle of a quail or tapping of a woodpecker is almost the only sound that ever breaks in upon the uniform tranquillity.

PICTURE STUDY



The Madonna in the Church, Jan van Eyck, About 1438–1440 · Oil on oak panel · Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

This little panel, only about a foot tall, holds a whole cathedral. Van Eyck makes Mary much larger than life so that she fills the nave, and he lets sunlight pour through the high windows and lie in pools on the floor. It is a description of a place in paint: the eye travels from Mary to the carved screen, through the doorway, and back into the bright choir.

Look closely

- Find the patches of light on the floor. Where is the light coming from?
- Find the crucifix on the screen behind Mary.
- Look through the doorway into the choir. Who is there, and what are they doing?

Talk about it

1. If you wrote a description essay about this church, what would your three body paragraphs cover?
2. Write an opening sentence that begins wide (the whole church) and narrows to Mary.

WRITING PROJECT: A DESCRIPTION ESSAY

Write a 500–700 word description essay in five paragraphs. Choose one subject:

- (a) a place you know well (a grandparent's farm, your church, a harbor, a workshop, a trail);
- (b) the central panel of the Ghent Altarpiece, expanding your ecphrasis from Lesson 3.3; or
- (c) one place in one season (the creek in January, the orchard at harvest).

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your work from Lessons 3.1–3.3
- The model passages from this unit

Steps

1. Session 1, invention: go to your place (or look at the painting) for fifteen minutes. List at least twenty details under the five senses. Circle the ten best.
2. Name your dominant impression in one word, and choose your principle of arrangement (space, time or senses).
3. Arrangement: outline five paragraphs. 1: wide-to-narrow opening ending with the subject and its impression. 2–4: one part of the path each, with a topic sentence. 5: meaning, ending on an image.
4. Write the draft from your outline.
5. Session 2, style: mark every “there was,” “very,” “nice” and “thing,” and replace each with a doer or an exact word.
6. Find two series of details and make them parallel. Read the whole essay aloud and smooth anything you stumble on.
7. Copy the final essay neatly with a title. It goes in your portfolio.

Check your work

- My opening narrows from wide to close and ends with my subject and its dominant impression.
- Each body paragraph has a topic sentence and follows one principle of arrangement.
- My closing moves from seeing to meaning and ends on an image.
- My series of details are parallel (all nouns, all phrases or all clauses).
- My pronouns point clearly, and my modifiers do not dangle.
- I used semicolons and commas correctly, and my verb tense stays consistent.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the last sentence of the Irving model.
2. Write a wide-to-narrow opening for your hometown in four sentences: region, town, street, one sound.
3. List three parallel series about a place: three nouns, three phrases, three clauses.

History note. Washington Irving (1783–1859) was one of the first American writers famous in Europe. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” appeared in *The Sketch Book of*

Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1819–1820). Irving later made his home at Sunnyside, near Tarrytown, New York, and is buried in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery there.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.3 “Parallel Structure.” A description essay is full of series (“the reapers, the binders, the boys”), so check that each series keeps matching forms.

For families. Irving’s story (Project Gutenberg #41) is short and good for a family read-aloud, though the headless horseman may be too spooky for younger siblings at bedtime. If your student chooses a real place, a visit with a notebook is worth the trip; looking hard is the heart of invention. Score the essay with the unit portfolio rubric.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student’s opening: “My grandparents’ farm is a very nice place. There are a lot of animals. I like going there.” Revise it with a wide-to-narrow opening and a dominant impression.

1. Start wide: where is the farm?
2. Narrow in steps: the road, the gate, the yard.
3. End on the subject and the dominant impression (here, welcome).

Answer: Twenty miles south of town, where the county road dips toward the river, the fields open out in long squares of corn and clover. A gravel lane leaves the road at a leaning mailbox and runs between two rows of maples to a white farmhouse. Before the car has stopped, the screen door bangs, the collie is barking, and Grandmother is on the porch wiping her hands on her apron. Of all the places I know, this is the one that seems most glad to see me.

Example 2. Make this series parallel: “In the kitchen I heard the kettle whistling, the smell of bread, and Mother was humming.”

1. Find the three items: a phrase (the kettle whistling), a noun phrase of smell (the smell of bread), and a clause (Mother was humming).
2. Choose one form for all three, and fix the verb, since one cannot “hear” a smell.

Answer: In the kitchen I heard the kettle whistling, the oven door creaking and Mother humming, and over everything hung the smell of bread.

PRACTICE

1.  What three canons of rhetoric does a description essay use most?
2.  Name the steps Irving takes from wide to narrow.

3. **EASY** What is the dominant impression of the Irving model?
4. **EASY** Name three principles of arrangement for body paragraphs.
5. **MEDIUM** Why does Irving say, “I do not vouch for the fact”?
6. **MEDIUM** Make parallel: “The church was quiet, full of light, and the floor had tiles.”
7. **MEDIUM** Write a topic sentence for a body paragraph about the choir in *The Madonna in the Church*.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a closing sentence for an essay about a harbor that ends on an image and suggests meaning.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Opening with “In this essay I will describe ...” Begin with the place itself.
- Mixing principles of arrangement (a paragraph on the kitchen, then one on smells, then one on the afternoon).
- Ending with a summary (“That is why I like the farm”) instead of an image.
- Making the essay about your feelings instead of the place. Let the details show the feeling.

Make it a game • Zoom. One player names a wide setting (“the state of Virginia”). Each player in turn narrows it by one step in a single sentence (“a farm in the Blue Ridge,” “the barn on the hill,” “a swallow’s nest in the rafter”). The player who reaches the smallest vivid detail that still makes sense wins the round.

Scripture. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8, KJV)

A description essay is a long look at something good and lovely, written down so that others can think on it too.

Practice: answers

1. Invention, arrangement and style.
2. The Hudson and the Tappan Zee, Tarry Town, the little valley, the brook, and finally the sound of a quail or a woodpecker.
3. Quiet, drowsy peace (“one of the quietest places in the whole world”).
4. Space, time and the senses.
5. He is honest that the story of the name is only a tale, and the joke gives the narrator a friendly, humorous voice.
6. The church was quiet, bright and cool, with light lying in pools on the tiled floor.
7. Sample: Beyond the carved screen, the choir glows with a brighter light, and small figures stand there singing.
8. Sample: As the last boat ties up at dusk, the lighthouse begins to turn, sweeping the water for anyone still out on the dark sea.

UNIT 3 REVIEW

Read each question aloud if needed. The student may answer in writing or out loud. Writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit, not for spelling alone.

1. (3 pts) Define ecphrasis and name its two virtues.
2. (2 pts) Why does Vulcan make a new shield for Achilles?
3. (2 pts) Name two ways Homer keeps the shield's scenes alive.
4. (2 pts) Name Theon's four subjects of description.
5. (2 pts) What is Theon's order for describing an event such as a battle?
6. (2 pts) What is the dominant impression of Dickens's fog passage, and what word ties it together?
7. (3 pts) Name the three layers of an ecphrasis of a painting, in order.
8. (3 pts) What Scripture passage did van Eyck paint in *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*? Quote one phrase from it.
9. (2 pts) Fix the dangling modifier: "Looking down from the hill, the frozen ponds were full of skaters."
10. (2 pts) Fix the pronoun reference: "The apostles kneel near the prophets. They hold books."
11. (2 pts) Make parallel: "The valley had a brook, quails whistling, and it was quiet."
12. (10 pts) Write a description paragraph (100–150 words) of one room in your house, with one clear order, at least three senses and one dominant impression.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A DESCRIPTION ESSAY

Copy your revised description essay from Lesson 3.4 on clean paper with a title (or type it). If you described the Ghent Altarpiece panel, include a small labeled sketch map of the painting. Add it to your Grade 8 portfolio after the comparison and characterization pieces.

- **Vividness:** Exact details for at least three senses, strong verbs, and one marvel; the reader can see the subject.
- **Arrangement:** A wide-to-narrow opening, three body paragraphs on one principle of arrangement with topic sentences, and a closing that moves from seeing to meaning and ends on an image.
- **Truthfulness:** Describes what is really there, keeps "I see" separate from "I think," and quotes any Scripture or source exactly.
- **Mechanics:** Parallel series, clear pronoun reference, no dangling modifiers, correct semicolons and consistent tense.

Answer key

1. A description that brings its subject vividly before the eyes; its virtues are clarity and vividness.

2. Achilles' armor was lost when Patroclus wore it into battle and was killed; Thetis asks Vulcan for new armor.
3. Two of: he shows the shield being made ("He wrought also ..."); the figures move with strong verbs; he adds sounds and tastes; he gives a marvel (gold that looks freshly ploughed).
4. Persons, events, places and times.
5. Before, during and after.
6. Gloom and confusion; the repeated word "fog."
7. What you see, how it is made, and what it means.
8. Revelation 7:9-10; for example, "a great multitude, which no man could number" or "clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."
9. Looking down from the hill, the hunters saw that the frozen ponds were full of skaters.
10. Sample: The apostles kneel near the prophets, and the prophets hold books.
11. Sample: The valley held a murmuring brook, a whistling quail and a deep quiet.
12. Sample: From the doorway of the workshop, the first thing you meet is the smell of pine shavings. Along the left wall, saws and chisels hang in order of size above the bench, each in its own painted outline. The vise at the end still grips half a birdhouse; sawdust lies in a pale drift beneath it. Farther in, the window throws a square of afternoon light across the floor, and dust turns slowly in it. Somewhere behind the paint cans a cricket ticks. Everything in the room seems to be waiting for Father to come back and pick up his tools. (Score: order 3, senses 3, impression 2, mechanics 2.)

STORY: THE SHORT STORY

The creative track's story unit for Grade 8 puts this year's exercises to work: comparison, characterization and description all serve a short story. You will study the planted twist in O. Henry's "The Gift of the Magi," the fair-play mystery in Chesterton's "The Blue Cross," and the structure of the parable of the prodigal son. Then you will plan, draft, revise with a partner and finish a complete short story, prepared for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes a narrative with a beginning, middle and end, with dialogue punctuated correctly.
- Has practiced ethopoeia (Unit 2) and ecphrasis (Unit 3), or can write a character's speech and a vivid description.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can map a story on Freytag's pyramid and name its turning point.
- ☐ I can plant a detail early and pay it off fairly at the end.
- ☐ I can hide clues in a mystery and play fair with the reader.
- ☐ I can revise in three passes: structure, scene, sentence.
- ☐ I can finish, title and proofread a complete short story ready for a contest.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **O. Henry, The Four Million (Project Gutenberg #2776)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2776>): Contains "The Gift of the Magi" and two dozen other New York stories. Free.
- **G. K. Chesterton, The Innocence of Father Brown (Project Gutenberg #204)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/204>): Opens with "The Blue Cross." Free; a good family read-aloud.
- **G. K. Chesterton, The Wisdom of Father Brown (Project Gutenberg #223)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/223>): The second collection, for students who want more mysteries to study.
- **The King James Bible (Project Gutenberg #10)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10>): For Luke 15, the parable of the prodigal son, used in 4.3.

4.1 O. HENRY’S TWIST: “THE GIFT OF THE MAGI” ✍️ ★

OBJECTIVES

- Name the five parts of a short story’s plot and find each one in “The Gift of the Magi.”
- Tell a fair twist (surprising, but planted and true to the characters) from a cheap trick.
- Plant a detail early and write a one-scene story whose ending turns on it.

Warm-up. Think of the best gift you ever gave or received. Was the best part the thing itself, or what it cost the giver? Tell it aloud in three sentences.

Video slot. Video coming. O. Henry and “The Gift of the Magi” (author biography or a faithful dramatized reading); Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

short story

A piece of prose fiction short enough to read at one sitting, with one main action, few characters and a single effect.

plot

The arranged chain of events in a story: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution.

reversal

Aristotle’s *peripeteia*: the moment the action turns the opposite way from what the characters (and readers) expected.

situational irony

When the outcome is the opposite of what the actions seemed to aim at: Della’s chain arrives the day Jim’s watch is gone.

plant and payoff

A detail set early in a story (the plant) that becomes important at the end (the payoff).

CORE IDEAS

From exercise to story. In Grade 8 you have compared two lives, put words in a person’s mouth and described a shield and a painting. A short story uses all three. It needs *characters* who speak as they would (ethopoeia), *places* we can see (ecphrasis), and often a contrast between two people or two choices (syncrisis). The narrative you learned in the early grades has grown up. Edgar Allan Poe, reviewing Hawthorne’s tales in 1842, said a short story should aim at a single effect, with no word that does not help it. Keep that rule in your pocket all unit.

The story in brief. On Christmas Eve, Della Young has one dollar and eighty-seven cents. She and her husband Jim own two treasures: Jim's gold watch, handed down from his father and grandfather, and Della's long brown hair. Della sells her hair for twenty dollars and buys a platinum chain for the watch. Jim comes home, stares at her short hair, and hands her a set of tortoise-shell combs she had long wanted. Then comes the line you will copy below: he sold the watch to buy the combs.

The five parts. *Exposition:* the \$1.87, the shabby flat, the two treasures. *Rising action:* Della sells her hair and hunts for the chain. *Climax:* Jim stands in the door and cannot stop staring. *Falling action:* the combs are opened; the chain is held out. *Resolution:* Jim's calm smile, and the narrator's last word about the Magi. Notice how short the falling action is. O. Henry gets out of the story quickly once the twist lands.

A fair twist. Aristotle taught that the strongest turns come unexpectedly and yet follow from what came before. A fair twist passes three tests. It *surprises* the reader. It was *planted*: O. Henry tells us early that the watch and the hair are the two possessions "in which they both took a mighty pride." And it is *true to the characters*: each one gives up the dearest thing out of love, which is exactly what we have seen them do. A cheap trick fails the last two tests. If the ending comes out of nowhere ("and then it was all a dream"), the reader feels cheated, not delighted.

The twist that teaches. On the surface, the gifts are wasted: combs with no hair to hold, a chain with no watch. That is situational irony. But O. Henry turns the irony once more. The two "foolish children" are called the wisest of all givers, because the gift was not the object but the sacrifice. The Magi brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to a Child who would one day give Himself. The best twist does not just fool you; it shows you something true you had not seen.

The narrator's voice. O. Henry talks right to you: "take a look at the home," "The magi, as you know, were wise men." He uses big words for fun ("parsimony," "instigates") and sets off his asides with dashes. You may borrow a little of this chatty voice, but it is spice, not the meal. Your scene should still be built from action and speech.

The model. O. Henry, "The Gift of the Magi," in *The Four Million* (1906), Project Gutenberg #2776

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful present. She held it out to him eagerly upon her open palm. The dull precious metal seemed to flash with a reflection of her bright and ardent spirit.

"Isn't it a dandy, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You'll have to look at the time a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how it looks on it."

Instead of obeying, Jim tumbled down on the couch and put his hands under the back of his head and smiled.

“Dell,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas presents away and keep ’em a while. They’re too nice to use just at present. I sold the watch to get the money to buy your combs. And now suppose you put the chops on.”

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the Babe in the manger. They invented the art of giving Christmas presents. Being wise, their gifts were no doubt wise ones, possibly bearing the privilege of exchange in case of duplication. And here I have lamely related to you the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house. But in a last word to the wise of these days let it be said that of all who give gifts these two were the wisest. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are wisest. Everywhere they are wisest. They are the magi

PICTURE STUDY



Adoration of the Magi (Strozzi Altarpiece), Gentile da Fabriano, 1423 · Tempera and gold leaf on panel ·
Uffizi Gallery, Florence
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The banker Palla Strozzi paid for this altarpiece for his family chapel in Florence. Gentile da Fabriano told the whole story of the Magi in one frame: in the three arches at the top, the kings see the star, travel and arrive at Bethlehem; below, the eldest king kneels and kisses the Child’s foot, the second bows, and the youngest, still crowned, waits his turn. The gold is real gold leaf, pressed into raised patterns so it glitters in candlelight.

Look closely

- Find the oldest king. What has he set on the ground before he kneels?
- Follow the journey through the three arches at the top, left to right. Where does the story begin?
- Find two animals in the procession that a Florentine of 1423 would almost never have seen.

Talk about it

1. The painting tells a journey in several scenes inside one frame, the way a story moves through its parts. Name the exposition, rising action and climax you see.
2. The kings bring costly gifts, but the eldest also lays down his crown. Write a paragraph comparing his gift to Della's and Jim's.

WRITING PROJECT: A TWIST IN ONE SCENE

Write a one-scene story (400–600 words) whose ending turns on a detail you planted in the first paragraph. Your twist must pass all three tests: surprising, planted and true to the characters.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage, copied by hand
- Colored pencil for marking plants

Steps

1. Choose two characters who care about each other or need something from each other (a grandfather and grandson, two brothers, a shopkeeper and a customer).
2. Decide the twist first. Write it in one sentence at the top of a page: "He had already ____."
3. List three details that could quietly plant the twist. Choose the best one and put it in your first paragraph, in the middle of a sentence about something else.
4. Draft the scene: exposition (who, where, what they want), rising action, a climax where the truth comes out, and no more than three sentences of falling action.
5. Give the ending one sentence of meaning, as O. Henry does, but do not preach. Let the last image or line carry it.
6. Hand the draft to a parent without telling the twist. Ask: "Were you surprised? Looking back, was it fair?" Revise the plant if the answer to either is no.

Check your work

- The twist was planted in the first paragraph and pays off at the end.
- The twist is true to what the characters want and have done.
- The falling action is short; the story ends soon after the twist.
- Dashes set off an interruption or aside, with no space problems and no more than two in the scene.
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly, with a new paragraph for each new speaker.
- Tense stays in the past unless a character is speaking.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model passage from "Dell," said he to "put the chops on." Underline the one sentence that turns the whole story.

2. Imitate O. Henry's first line: write a sentence fragment that names an amount and a lack ("Two quarters and a bus token. That was all."), then two sentences that make us feel it.
3. List five possessions a family might treasure. Beside each, write who might sacrifice it, and for whom.

History note. O. Henry was the pen name of William Sydney Porter (1862–1910), who had worked as a pharmacist, a bank teller and a newspaperman before he became famous for his New York stories. "The Gift of the Magi" first appeared in a New York newspaper in December 1905 and was collected in *The Four Million* (1906). The title of the book answers a society man who claimed there were only "four hundred" people in New York worth noticing; O. Henry thought all four million were.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.3 "Dashes, Parentheses and Hyphens." O. Henry's "wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts" shows a pair of dashes setting off an interruption; use the same pair for one aside in your scene.

For families. Read the whole story aloud together before the lesson; it takes about ten minutes and is in *The Four Million* (Project Gutenberg #2776). The passage in the model is copied exactly from that text, including O. Henry's spelling and lowercase "magi." The story is clean; the only adult note is Jim's worn coat and the couple's poverty. This unit's faith verse, Proverbs 27:17, returns in 4.3, when your student revises with a partner.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's ending: "Sam unwrapped the box. Inside was the same model ship he had just given his brother. They both laughed. It turned out they had each saved up all fall." Does the twist pass the three tests?

1. Surprising? Yes, the matching gifts are a small shock.
2. Planted? No. Nothing earlier tells us about saving or about the ship, so the reader cannot look back and see it coming.
3. True to the characters? We cannot tell, because we never saw what either brother wanted.
4. Fix: plant the ship early (Sam stares at it in a shop window while his brother pretends not to notice) and cut "It turned out," which explains instead of showing.

Answer: It surprises but is not yet fair. Plant the ship in the opening and let the gifts speak for themselves at the end.

Example 2. Find the plant and the payoff in “The Gift of the Magi.”

1. Plant: early in the story the narrator says there were two possessions in which they both took a mighty pride, Jim’s gold watch and Della’s hair.
2. Payoff: Della has sold the hair; Jim has sold the watch. Each gift fits a treasure that is gone.

Answer: The two treasures are planted in the exposition and both pay off in the climax; that double plant is what makes the ending feel fair.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five parts of plot in order.
2. **EASY** How much money does Della have at the start, and what does she sell?
3. **EASY** What does Jim sell, and what does he buy with the money?
4. **EASY** What are the three tests of a fair twist?
5. **MEDIUM** Explain the situational irony of the two gifts in one sentence.
6. **MEDIUM** Why does the narrator call the two “foolish children” the wisest of givers?
7. **MEDIUM** Rewrite with a pair of dashes to set off the aside: “The old lighthouse keeper, a man who had not left the island in forty years, packed a bag.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a first paragraph (3–4 sentences) that quietly plants a detail for a twist, and then write the twist in one sentence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A twist from nowhere: the surprise was never planted, so the reader feels tricked.
- Explaining the twist after it lands (“This meant that...”). Let the reader feel it.
- A long falling action. Once the twist lands, finish within a few sentences.
- Overdoing O. Henry’s chatty narrator until the asides crowd out the story.

Make it a game • Plant and Payoff. One player names an ordinary object (a key, a scarf, a dented pail). The next player must say how it could be planted in the first paragraph of a story and pay off at the end, in two sentences. Score a point if the others agree the payoff is both surprising and fair.

Scripture. “And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.” (Matthew 2:11, KJV)

The Magi opened their treasures for the Child; Della and Jim opened theirs for each other, which is why O. Henry gives them the Magi’s name.

Practice: answers

1. Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
2. One dollar and eighty-seven cents; she sells her hair.
3. His gold watch; he buys Della a set of combs for her hair.
4. It surprises, it was planted earlier, and it is true to the characters.
5. Each gift is meant for a treasure that the other has just sold, so both gifts are useless at the very moment they are given.
6. Because they gave up the dearest thing they had for each other; the love in the sacrifice is the real gift, as with the Magi.
7. The old lighthouse keeper—a man who had not left the island in forty years—packed a bag.
8. Sample: Grandpa Abel kept his fiddle on the top shelf, above the flour, where no one could reach it but him. He had not played since Grandma died, and he would not let anyone dust the case. On Saturdays he walked to town alone and came back without saying where he had been. Twist: The case was empty; on those Saturdays he had sold the fiddle to pay for my violin lessons.

4.2 CHESTERTON'S FATHER BROWN: THE FAIR-PLAY MYSTERY

OBJECTIVES

- Trace the parts of a detective story (question, investigation, clues, misdirection, reveal, explanation) in “The Blue Cross.”
- Explain “fair play”: every clue the detective uses is shown to the reader before the solution.
- Plan a small mystery with three clues and one red herring, and write its explanation scene.

Warm-up. A parent hides a small object in the room and leaves three clues in plain sight. You have three minutes. Afterward, say which clue gave it away and which one you walked right past.

Video slot. Video coming. G. K. Chesterton and Father Brown (author biography or a faithful audio reading of “The Blue Cross”); Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

detective story

A story built around a question (who did it, how, or why) that a detective answers by reasoning from clues.

clue

A detail in the story that points toward the truth, often hidden among ordinary details.

red herring

A false clue that leads the reader (or the detective) toward the wrong answer.

fair play

The rule that the reader sees every clue the detective uses before the solution is told.

explanation scene

The scene after the reveal in which the detective shows how the clues fit together.

CORE IDEAS

A story with a question. Every story asks “What will happen?” A mystery asks a sharper question: “What already happened, and who did it?” That changes the shape. In “The Gift of the Magi,” the twist was hidden from the reader. In a mystery the truth is hidden on purpose, and the pleasure is in finding it. The reader is not just watching; he is racing the detective.

The story in brief. In “The Blue Cross,” Valentin, the head of the Paris police, comes to London hunting Flambeau, the most famous thief in Europe. He has no idea where to look,

so he follows anything odd: salt in a sugar bowl, soup thrown on a wall, a shop window with the price cards switched, a broken pane paid for in advance. The odd things lead him across London to Hampstead Heath, where two priests sit on a bench talking about reason and the stars. One of them is Flambeau in disguise, trying to steal a silver cross set with sapphires. The other is a small, round-faced Essex priest named Father Brown, who left every one of those odd clues so the police would follow.

Fair play. Chesterton plays fair. Every strange thing Valentin follows is shown to us as it happens. We simply do not know what it means. When Father Brown explains, we think, “Of course,” not “That’s cheating.” This is the mystery’s version of the planted twist from 4.1. Your rule: if your detective uses a clue to solve the case, the reader must have seen it first. You may hide it, but you may not leave it out.

Hiding in plain sight. Good writers hide clues three ways. They put the clue in a *list* of ordinary things, so it does not stand out. They let a character *explain it away* as an accident or a prank, so the reader shrugs too. And they give a *red herring*, a louder clue that points the wrong way. Chesterton’s best red herring is Father Brown himself. He seems so simple and muddled, with his brown-paper parcels and his big umbrella, that no one in the story (and few readers) suspects he is the one setting the trail.

The detective’s character. A detective must have a reason to see what others miss. Valentin has logic. Father Brown has logic and something more: as a priest who hears confessions, he knows what real evil looks like, and he knows that the Christian faith honors reason as a gift of God. Flambeau, dressed as a priest, sneers at reason, and that is how Brown knows he is false. “You attacked reason,” he says. “It’s bad theology.” Truth and reason stand together; a lie, sooner or later, has to fight them both.

The shape of a mystery. (1) The question or crime. (2) The investigation, with clues scattered through it. (3) The misdirection, where the obvious answer seems right. (4) The reveal, one sentence that turns everything. (5) The explanation, short and clear, in which each clue clicks into place. Then stop. Chesterton ends within a few lines of the reveal, with a bow and a lost umbrella.

The model. G. K. Chesterton, “The Blue Cross,” in *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911), Project Gutenberg #204

How in blazes do you know all these horrors?” cried Flambeau.

The shadow of a smile crossed the round, simple face of his clerical opponent.

“Oh, by being a celibate simpleton, I suppose,” he said. “Has it never struck you that a man who does next to nothing but hear men’s real sins is not likely to be wholly unaware of human evil? But, as a matter of fact, another part of my trade, too, made me sure you weren’t a priest.”

“What?” asked the thief, almost gaping.

“You attacked reason,” said Father Brown. “It’s bad theology.”

And even as he turned away to collect his property, the three policemen came out from under the twilight trees. Flambeau was an artist and a sportsman. He stepped back and swept Valentin a great bow.

“Do not bow to me, mon ami,” said Valentin with silver clearness. “Let us both bow to our master.”

And they both stood an instant uncovered while the little Essex priest blinked about for his umbrella

PICTURE STUDY



The Cheat with the Ace of Diamonds, Georges de La Tour, about 1635 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre, Paris

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Georges de La Tour painted a crime in progress, and he lets the viewer see what the victim cannot. A wealthy young man in gold and silk studies his cards. Across the table, a seated woman flicks her eyes toward the servant; the servant looks back; and the man at the left, turning toward us, slips an ace of diamonds from his belt behind his back. Every clue is in plain sight. The young man simply is not looking.

Look closely

- Follow the eyes. Who is looking at whom, and who is looking at nobody?
- Find the hidden card. Where is the cheat’s hand, and which way is his face turned?
- Find the coins on the table. Whose pile is larger, and what might that tell a detective?

Talk about it

1. You are a detective arriving the next morning. List three clues in the painting you would write in your notebook, and one red herring.
2. La Tour shows the reader everything and the victim nothing. Write a paragraph explaining how this is like Chesterton's fair play.

WRITING PROJECT: THE CLUE PLAN AND THE EXPLANATION SCENE

Plan a small mystery (no murder needed: a missing object, a strange message, a broken window) and write two scenes: one where the clues appear, and the explanation scene where your detective puts them together. Together they should run 500–700 words.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Index cards (one per clue)
- The model passage, copied by hand

Steps

1. Write the solution first in two sentences: what happened, who did it, and why.
2. On index cards, write three true clues and one red herring. On the back of each card, note how the clue points to the truth (or away from it).
3. Choose your detective and give him or her one reason to notice what others miss (a trade, a habit, a kind of knowledge).
4. Write the investigation scene. Hide each clue: one in a list of ordinary things, one that a character explains away, one in plain sight. Put the red herring somewhere loud.
5. Write the explanation scene: one sentence of reveal, then each clue clicking into place, then end within three or four sentences, as Chesterton does.
6. Test fair play: have a parent read the investigation scene only and guess. Then read the explanation. Could they have solved it? If a clue was missing, add it to the first scene.

Check your work

- Every clue the detective uses appears in the first scene.
- There is at least one red herring that points the wrong way.
- Every pronoun clearly refers to one person; in a scene with two men or two women, names are used where "he" or "she" could be confusing.
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly, with a new paragraph for each speaker.
- The story ends soon after the explanation.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model from "You attacked reason" to the end. Circle the two details that keep Father Brown humble even in his moment of triumph.

2. Make a list of eight ordinary items on a kitchen counter. Hide one clue among them, and see if a parent can find it.
3. Imitate Chesterton's last sentence: end a scene with your hero doing something small and ordinary right after something great.

History note. G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was an English journalist, poet and defender of the Christian faith, author of *Orthodoxy* (1908). “The Blue Cross” opens *The Innocence of Father Brown* (1911), the first of five Father Brown collections. Years earlier, in *The Defendant* (1901), Chesterton had written “A Defence of Detective Stories,” praising them as a popular form that finds poetry in the streets of the modern city.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.4 “Clear Pronoun Reference.” In a mystery, “he took it” must point to one man only; a vague pronoun can hide the wrong clue or give away the right one by accident.

For families. Read “The Blue Cross” aloud together before the lesson (Project Gutenberg #204); it takes about forty minutes and is a fine family read. The model is copied exactly from that text. The story contains no violence beyond a threat; Flambeau is a thief, not a killer. Father Brown is a Roman Catholic priest, and the theology in the story is mere Christianity that any believing family can discuss: reason is a gift of God, and the truth does not fear it. Keep student mysteries to thefts, puzzles and missing things; no gore is needed for a good clue.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's explanation scene: “‘It was Mr. Cole,’ said Ruth. ‘I knew because he has a key to the shed.’” But the shed key was never mentioned before this line. What is wrong, and how is it fixed?

1. Fair play is broken: the detective uses a clue the reader never saw.
2. Go back to the investigation scene and plant the key. Hide it in a list: “On the hook by the door hung a dog leash, a straw hat and a ring of three keys, one of them painted green like the shed.”
3. Now the explanation can point back: “The green key, Mr. Cole. You are the only one who has a copy.”

Answer: Plant the key in the first scene, hidden in an ordinary list, so the reader can say “Of course!” at the reveal.

Example 2. Name the red herring in “The Blue Cross” and explain why it works.

1. The odd clues seem to be the work of a criminal leaving a messy trail.
2. Father Brown seems too simple and clumsy to be the one leaving them, so we look past him.
3. The truth is the reverse: the “simpleton” is the master.

Answer: Father Brown’s simple, muddled manner is the red herring. It works because it is true to his humble character, so the reader never questions it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Who is Flambeau, and who is Valentin?
2. **EASY** Define a red herring.
3. **EASY** Name two odd clues Valentin follows across London.
4. **EASY** What is fair play in a mystery?
5. **MEDIUM** How did Father Brown know Flambeau was not a real priest?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the unclear pronoun: “Tom told Mr. Hale that he had left the gate open.”
7. **MEDIUM** Hide this clue in a list of ordinary things: a muddy boot print with a star on the heel.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a five-sentence explanation scene for a mystery about a missing pie, using two clues the reader would already have seen.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Using a clue in the solution that the reader never saw.
- Making clues so loud that the mystery is solved by page one.
- A long explanation that repeats the whole story. Explain each clue once and stop.
- Unclear pronouns in scenes with two men or two women, so the reader cannot tell who did what.

Make it a game • Twenty Clues. One player secretly decides what happened (“The dog ate the birthday card”). The others ask yes-or-no questions, up to twenty, then must explain the solution aloud, Father Brown style, naming each clue they used. If they name it right, they win; if not, the hider reveals the answer and the clue they missed.

Scripture. “For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad.” (Luke 8:17, KJV)

A mystery story is a small picture of this truth: what is hidden will be brought to light, and in God’s world the truth always wins in the end.

1. Flambeau is a famous thief; Valentin is the head of the Paris police who is hunting him.
2. A false clue that leads the reader or detective toward the wrong answer.
3. Two of: salt in the sugar bowl, soup thrown on the wall, switched price cards in a shop window, a broken window paid for in advance.
4. Every clue the detective uses is shown to the reader before the solution.
5. Flambeau attacked reason; Father Brown knew the Christian faith honors reason, so the attack was "bad theology."
6. Sample: Tom admitted to Mr. Hale, "I left the gate open." (Or: Tom told Mr. Hale that Mr. Hale had left the gate open.)
7. Sample: The back porch held a broom, two flowerpots, yesterday's paper, a muddy print with a little star pressed in the heel, and the cat's empty dish.
8. Sample: "The pie did not walk away," said Aunt Lena, setting down her teacup. "But someone did, through the back door, which squeaked at half past three when everyone was supposed to be napping." She pointed to the floor. "And that someone left a trail of crumbs as far as the window seat, where a certain boy keeps his comic books." Charlie looked at his sleeve, which was dusted with sugar.

4.3 STRUCTURE AND REVISION

OBJECTIVES

- Map a story on Freytag’s pyramid and find its turning point, using the parable of the prodigal son.
- Tell scene from summary, and decide where a story should begin and end.
- Plan your contest story and revise its opening in three passes: structure, scene, sentence.

Warm-up. Tell the parable of the prodigal son aloud in exactly six sentences. Then tell it in three. Which sentences did you refuse to cut?

Video slot. Video coming. Plot structure and Freytag’s pyramid for students (a teacher-made explanation); Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

Freytag’s pyramid

A diagram of plot as a rising and falling line: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution. Named for Gustav Freytag, a German writer who described it in 1863.

turning point

The moment a character’s direction changes; often the climax, and in the best stories a change of heart, not only of fortune.

scene and summary

A scene shows one moment in full, with action and speech; a summary tells a long stretch quickly (“For three years he worked the farm”).

point of view

Who tells the story: first person (“I”), or third person (“he,” “she”) close to one character or able to see into many.

revision

Literally “seeing again”: changing the structure, scenes and sentences of a draft, not only fixing spelling.

CORE IDEAS

Arrangement. The second canon of rhetoric is arrangement: putting the right things in the right order. In a story, arrangement is called structure. You can have a fine character and a vivid place and still lose the reader if the events come in the wrong order, or if the story starts too early and ends too late. This lesson is about the bones of a story and about the hard, good work of rebuilding them.

The pyramid. In 1863 Gustav Freytag drew plot as a pyramid: the line rises through exposition and rising action to a climax, then falls to the resolution. For a short story, the pyramid is lopsided. The exposition is quick, the rising action takes most of the room, and the falling action is short. You saw this in O. Henry and Chesterton: both end within a few lines of the turn.

The perfect short story. Our Lord's parable of the prodigal son is one of the finest short stories ever told, and it fills only twenty-two verses (Luke 15:11-32). Exposition: a father, two sons, a demand for the inheritance. Rising action: the far country, the riotous living, the famine, the swine. Turning point: "when he came to himself." That is a change of heart, the deepest kind of climax. Falling action: the journey home and the speech he practices. Resolution: the father running, the robe, the ring, the feast. Notice that the son plans a speech and never gets to finish it. The father's love interrupts the script. That is structure serving meaning.

Scene and summary. The parable covers years in a few verses (summary) and then slows down for the meeting on the road (scene): the father sees, runs, falls on his neck, kisses him. Every story mixes the two. Use summary to cover time that does not matter; use scene for the moments that do. A common beginner's mistake is to write the whole story in summary, which feels like a report, or the whole thing in scene, including every breakfast.

Begin late, end early. Start as close to the trouble as you can. If your story is about a storm, do not begin with the alarm clock. Begin when the wind takes the barn door. End as soon as the turn has landed and the reader knows what it means. Check your draft: could the first paragraph be cut? Could the last one?

Three passes. Revise from the large to the small. *Pass one, structure:* is the turning point in the right place; does every scene push toward it; is anything missing or extra? *Pass two, scene:* does each scene show a person wanting something, in a place we can see, with speech that sounds like that person? *Pass three, sentence:* strong verbs, active voice, steady tense, clear pronouns, clean punctuation. Then read it aloud, and give it to a friend. As iron sharpens iron, a good reader sharpens a writer.

The model. *Luke 15:17-24, the parable of the prodigal son (King James Version)*

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

PICTURE STUDY



The Return of the Prodigal Son, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, about 1667–1670 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Murillo painted this scene for the chapel of a brotherhood of charity in Seville, to which he himself belonged; its members worked to feed the hungry and clothe the poor. He chose the moment of the parable's resolution, but he packed the whole falling action into one canvas: the son kneels in rags, the father embraces him, servants bring the robe and the ring, and a smiling boy leads in the fatted calf.

Look closely

- Find the son's feet. What do they tell you about his journey home?
- Find three things the father ordered in Luke 15:22–23. Who is bringing each one?
- Find the little dog. Why might Murillo have added it, though the parable does not mention one?

Talk about it

1. Murillo shows several verses at once. Put the actions in the painting in the order the parable tells them.
2. If you were writing this as a short story, which moment would you write as a full scene, and which would you summarize? Explain your choice.

WRITING PROJECT: MAP, DRAFT, REVISE

This is the first half of your contest story. Today you plan the whole story, draft the opening scene, and revise it in three passes. In 4.4 you will finish and polish it.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A large sheet of paper for the pyramid
- Three colored pencils (one per revision pass)

Steps

1. Choose your story idea: your twist scene from 4.1, your mystery from 4.2, or a new idea taken from a painting in this unit. Write one sentence: “[Character] wants [thing], but [trouble].”
2. Draw Freytag’s pyramid. Write one line for each part, and star the turning point. Ask: is it a change of heart, a change of fortune, or both?
3. List your scenes (four to six). Beside each, write S for scene or M for summary. Cross out any scene that does not push toward the turning point.
4. Draft the opening scene (300–500 words). Begin as close to the trouble as you can.
5. Revise in three passes, each in its own color: structure (does the opening start late enough and plant what the ending needs?), scene (want, place, speech), sentence (the checklist below).
6. Read the revised opening aloud to a parent or friend. Ask one question only: “Where did you want to stop reading?” Fix that spot.

Check your work

- The pyramid has all five parts and a starred turning point.
- The opening begins close to the trouble, not with waking up or the weather.
- Tense, voice and mood do not shift without a reason.
- Verbs are mostly active (“the wind tore the door,” not “the door was torn by the wind”).
- Every pronoun points clearly to one person.
- Commas, semicolons and quotation marks are used correctly in dialogue and long sentences.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Luke 15:20. Underline the five verbs that tell what the father did.
2. Write a two-sentence summary of a whole summer. Then write one scene of three to five sentences from a single afternoon of it.
3. Take the first paragraph of any story you have written this year and cross it out. Does the story start better at paragraph two?

History note. Gustav Freytag (1816–1895) drew his pyramid in *Technique of the Drama* (1863), describing the five-act plays of Shakespeare and the Greeks. Writers have used it for short stories ever since. Murillo’s *Return of the Prodigal Son* was one of a series he painted around 1667–1670 for the Hospital de la Caridad in Seville; it has been in the National Gallery of Art since 1948.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.4 “Shifts in Tense, Voice and Mood.” In pass three, read for any sentence that slides from past to present, or from active to passive, without a reason.

For families. The model is printed from the King James text. Revision is where most of the growth happens at this age, and it is where students most often resist. Praise specific strengths first, then give one or two changes, not ten. This unit’s faith verse, Proverbs 27:17, makes a good motto for the partner reading: the reader’s job is to sharpen, not to flatter or to crush. Save every draft; the comparison in 4.4 is part of the lesson.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student’s opening: “My alarm went off at 6:30. I got up and brushed my teeth and ate cereal. Then I got dressed and went outside. That was when I saw the smoke over the Hendersons’ barn.” Revise the structure.

1. Pass one, structure: the trouble is the smoke. Everything before it is summary of ordinary time.
2. Begin late: start at the smoke.
3. Pass two, scene: add a place we can see and a person who wants something.
4. Pass three, sentence: use strong, active verbs.

Answer: Smoke was rolling over the Hendersons’ barn, black and low, when I stepped out with the milk pail. Mrs. Henderson stood at the pasture gate in her apron, shouting for her son, and her son was nowhere.

Example 2. Map the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–24) on Freytag’s pyramid.

1. Exposition: a man had two sons; the younger asks for his portion.
2. Rising action: he wastes it in a far country, famine comes, he feeds swine and is hungry.
3. Climax/turning point: “he came to himself.”
4. Falling action: he rises and goes home; the father runs to meet him. Resolution: robe, ring, shoes, the feast: “he was lost, and is found.”

Answer: The turning point is a change of heart (verse 17), and the resolution is the father’s welcome (verses 22–24).

PRACTICE

1.  Who drew the plot pyramid, and when?
2.  What is the difference between scene and summary?
3.  Name the three passes of revision in order.

4. **EASY** What words mark the turning point of the prodigal son?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the shift in tense: "The wolf crept to the fold. He sniffs the air and waits."
6. **MEDIUM** Change to active voice: "The letter was opened by Grandmother with trembling hands."
7. **MEDIUM** The son practices a speech but does not finish it (compare verses 18–19 with verse 21). What does that show about the father?
8. **CHALLENGE** Turn this summary into a short scene (4–6 sentences): "After the fire, the neighbors helped rebuild the barn."

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting too early (waking up, the weather, the drive there) instead of at the trouble.
- Revising only spelling and commas and calling it done. Structure comes first.
- Writing the whole story in summary, so it reads like a report.
- Taking a reader's comment as an insult instead of as iron sharpening iron.

Make it a game • Cut the Ends. Each player reads aloud the first and last paragraph of a draft. The others vote: could the story begin at paragraph two? End one paragraph sooner? A player who defends a paragraph convincingly keeps it; otherwise it is struck through in pencil.

Scripture. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." (Proverbs 27:17, KJV)

This year's faith verse is the rule for revision partners: an honest, kind reader sharpens a writer the way one blade sharpens another.

Practice: answers

1. Gustav Freytag, in 1863.
2. A scene shows one moment in full with action and speech; a summary tells a long stretch of time quickly.
3. Structure, scene, sentence.
4. "And when he came to himself."
5. The wolf crept to the fold. He sniffed the air and waited.
6. Grandmother opened the letter with trembling hands.
7. The father's welcome interrupts him before he can ask to be a hired servant; his love is greater than the son dared to hope.
8. Sample: By seven the first wagon was in the yard, loaded with new pine boards that still smelled of the mill. Mr. Ortiz climbed down and handed my father a hammer without a word. Behind him came the Lindqvist brothers with a keg of nails, and behind them, walking, old Mrs. Beal with two pies in a basket. My father stood looking at the black ground where the barn had been. "Well," said Mr. Ortiz, "are you going to tell us where you want the posts?"

4.4 A COMPLETE SHORT STORY 🍷 ★ 🏆

OBJECTIVES

- Finish a complete short story with a clear plot, a planted detail and a turning point.
- Revise the full draft with a partner, then edit and proofread for a clean final copy.
- Prepare the story for the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards (Short Story or Flash Fiction category).

Warm-up. Look at Winslow Homer’s *Breezing Up* for one minute without talking. Then say in one sentence what each person in the boat wants.

Video slot. Video coming. How to write a short story: plot, character and revision (a teacher or author talk for students); Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

unity of effect

Poe’s rule that every part of a short story should work toward one main impression on the reader.

title

The first words a reader sees; a good one names a key object or idea without giving the ending away (“The Gift of the Magi,” “The Blue Cross”).

editing

Correcting sentences after the structure is settled: word choice, grammar, punctuation.

proofreading

The last slow read for typing errors, spelling and formatting, ideally aloud and on paper.

manuscript

The clean final copy of a story, formatted for a reader or a contest judge.

CORE IDEAS

Everything at once. A complete short story asks for everything you have learned this year. Ethopoeia gives your characters speech that fits them. Ecphrasis gives the reader a place to stand. Synchrisis shows up whenever two people or two choices are set side by side. From this unit you add plot, the planted detail and the turning point. Your job now is not to learn something new but to make all of it serve one story.

Read the model as a writer. The model story below was written for this course to show the parts plainly. Exposition: a storm, a boy stuck in town, cows that need milking. Rising action: the argument with Mr. Abbott, the decision, the walk post to post. Turning point: Eli sees the fence posts and remembers his grandfather’s words; the plant pays off. Falling action: the

kitchen light, the milking. Resolution: the father's hand on the last post. The theme (a promise kept, and the help of those who went before) is never stated. The ending image carries it.

Character in a choice. We learn who Eli is from one decision: he walks into a storm because he gave his word. Every strong short story turns on a choice like that. Ask of your draft: what does my main character choose at the turning point, and what does it cost? If nothing is chosen and nothing costs, the story will feel thin no matter how good the sentences are.

The last three passes. In 4.3 you revised the opening. Now revise the whole story: structure, scene, sentence. Then edit, then proofread. Read the final copy aloud, slowly, on paper. Your ear will catch what your eye skips. Ask a partner to mark the one place where the story drags and the one place it is strongest. Cut from the first; learn from the second.

Writing for a judge. A contest judge reads many stories in a sitting. What wins is rarely the most shocking plot. It is a story that begins close to the trouble, has characters who sound like real people, keeps its promise to the reader and ends cleanly. Give it a title that makes a judge curious. Follow the formatting rules exactly; a story disqualified for the wrong word count cannot win.

Work as unto the Lord. Contests are a good discipline: a deadline, a stranger reader, a high bar. But the prize is not the point. The point is a story well made and told truthfully, so that your reader sees something good more clearly. Do the work heartily, finish it, and leave the results with God.

The model. *"The Fence Line," a short story written for this course*

The snow had been falling since noon, and by six the Hollins road was gone. Eli Marsh stood at the window of the feed store and watched the plow's lights pass without stopping.

"Your father won't get through tonight," said Mr. Abbott, counting the till. "You'd best sleep on the cot in back."

Eli thought of the cows: thirty of them, and nobody to milk at five. His father had driven to the hospital in Ashby that morning, where Eli's mother had a new baby girl, and he had left the milking to Eli with one word: "Promise."

"I promised," Eli said.

Mr. Abbott looked at him over his glasses. "It's four miles."

"Three by the creek road."

"The creek road is under two feet of snow. You won't see the ditch."

Eli did not answer. He was looking at the fence posts outside, black against the white, marching away in a line toward the creek. He knew those posts. His grandfather had set every one of them, and he had told Eli once that a good fence will lead a man home when nothing else will.

He buttoned his coat, borrowed a lantern and went out. He walked with one mitten on the top wire, post to post, counting. At post two hundred the wind took his breath; at post four hundred he stopped counting and only walked.

It was after midnight when the kitchen light came up through the snow. Eli lit the stove, slept two hours in his chair, and at five went out to the barn.

When his father came home the next noon, the milk cans stood full on the platform, and the boy was asleep in the hay with the lantern beside him. His father did not wake him. He only stood a long while with his hand on the post by the barn door, the last one the old man had set.

PICTURE STUDY



Breezing Up (A Fair Wind), Winslow Homer, 1873–1876 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Winslow Homer (1836–1910) spent summers on the New England coast and painted the working life of the sea. Here a fisherman and three boys run before a fresh wind in a catboat; the name on the stern is Gloucester, the old fishing port in Massachusetts. Homer gives us no title-card story. He gives us a moment full of wanting: a boy at the tiller, a man watching the sail, two boys leaning out on the high side with their eyes on the water ahead. The story is ours to write.

Look closely

- Find the boy at the tiller. Where is he looking, and what does his job require?
- Look at how far the boat leans. Which way is the wind blowing, and how hard?
- Find the larger ship in the distance. Where might it be going, and where might the little boat be coming from?

Talk about it

1. Write the opening paragraph of a story that begins in this boat. Begin close to the trouble.
2. Choose one of the four people. What does he want this afternoon, and what might stand in the way? Plan a five-part pyramid for his story.

WRITING PROJECT: YOUR CONTEST STORY

Finish the story you began in 4.3 and bring it to a clean final copy. Aim for 1,000–2,000 words. If it runs shorter, it may fit the Flash Fiction category instead of Short Story; check the current word limits on the official category page before you choose.

You will need

- Your pyramid and revised opening from 4.3
- Writing notebook or computer
- A partner reader (parent, sibling or friend)
- The official Scholastic Awards category rules and submission form for your region

Steps

1. Draft the rest of the story from your scene list. Write straight through; do not stop to polish.
2. Pass one, structure: does the story begin close to the trouble, plant what the ending needs, and turn on a choice? Cut any scene that does not push toward the turning point.
3. Pass two, scene: in each scene, can we see the place, hear the people and tell what they want?
4. Partner reading: your reader marks the one place it drags and the one place it is strongest. Fix the first.
5. Pass three, sentence and edit: use the checklist below. Then proofread a printed copy aloud.
6. Give the story a title that names something important without giving away the ending.
7. Prepare the contest copy: typed, the title at the top, no name on the story itself if the rules require it, word count within the limit, and the parent-signed form ready.

Check your work

- The story has all five parts, a planted detail that pays off and a turning point built on a choice.
- Tense, voice and mood stay steady; verbs are strong and mostly active.
- Every pronoun points clearly to one person; no modifiers dangle or are misplaced.
- Dialogue punctuation is correct, including quotations within quotations.
- Long sentences are balanced (parallel structure), and commas, semicolons and dashes are used correctly.
- Commonly confused words (its/it's, affect/effect, lie/lay, than/then) are checked one by one.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the last paragraph of "The Fence Line." Underline the planted detail that returns.
2. List ten possible titles for your story. Circle the one that makes a stranger most curious without giving the ending away.
3. Write a two-sentence summary of your finished story for the contest form: who wants what, and what stands in the way.

History note. The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards began in 1923 and are the longest-running recognition program for creative teenagers in the United States. Past winners include writers who later became well known, but most winners simply became people who write well for the rest of their lives. Winslow Homer painted *Breezing Up* between 1873 and 1876; it is in the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.4 "Grammar and Good Writing." Your final edit draws on the whole Level 3 course, from clear pronouns (Unit 21) and modifiers (Unit 22) to punctuation (Unit 23) and parallelism (Unit 24).

For families. Contest summary (checked October 2026; confirm everything on the official site, artandwriting.org, and use your region's official form). The 2027 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are open to students in grades 7–12 who are 13 or older, including homeschoolers (the parent usually serves as the educator of record). Submissions opened October 1, 2026; deadlines are set by region and generally fall between early December 2026 and early January 2027, so look up your own region's date now. Each individual entry carries a fee (a recent report gives \$15 for 2027), and fee waivers are available for families with financial need. Writing categories include Short Story and Flash Fiction, each with its own word limit; work must be the student's own and original, and a parent or guardian signs the submission form. Regional Gold Key works go on to national judging, with national medals announced in the spring. The **Bennington Young Writers Awards** (Bennington College) are for high-school students in grades 9–12; save this story to revise for that contest later. Help your student revise by asking questions, not by rewriting; contest rules require the work to be the student's own.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart “The Fence Line” on Freytag’s pyramid and find the plant.

1. Exposition: snow, the road gone, Eli in town, thirty cows to milk, a promise to his father.
2. Rising action: Mr. Abbott argues; Eli decides; he walks post to post through the wind.
3. Turning point: he sees the fence posts and remembers his grandfather’s words, then chooses to go. Falling action: the kitchen light, the stove, the milking.
4. Resolution: the father finds the full cans and the sleeping boy and stands with his hand on the grandfather’s last post.

Answer: The plant is the fence and the grandfather’s saying (“a good fence will lead a man home”); it pays off twice, on the walk and in the last image.

Example 2. Revise this student ending: “Finally Mara got the colt back into the barn. She learned that being patient is really important and that you should never give up on animals or people. It was the best day of her life.”

1. The story stops being a story and becomes a lecture; the theme is stated outright.
2. “The best day of her life” is a summary label; show a final image instead.
3. Shift in person: “you should” breaks the third-person telling. Keep it in third person.
4. End on an image tied to a planted detail (suppose the colt would not take the halter all spring).

Answer: Sample: At dusk the colt walked into the barn on his own, the halter rope slack between them. Mara closed the stall door and did not latch it. She knew he would stay.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is unity of effect?
2. **EASY** What is the difference between editing and proofreading?
3. **EASY** Who may enter the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards?
4. **EASY** In “The Fence Line,” what choice does Eli make at the turning point?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: “Trudging through the drifts, the farmhouse finally appeared.”
6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate the quotation within a quotation: Grandpa always said a good fence will lead a man home Eli told him.
7. **MEDIUM** Make the series parallel: “He buttoned his coat, a lantern was borrowed, and then going out into the snow.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a title and a two-sentence contest summary for a story about a girl who must finish her late mother’s quilt for the county fair.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Stating the moral at the end instead of letting the last image carry it.
- Rushing the turning point after a long, slow beginning.
- Missing the contest's word limit, deadline or form, which can disqualify a fine story.
- Letting a helper rewrite the story; contest work must be the student's own.

Make it a game • Judge's Table. Each family member brings a first page (their own, or a page from a story in this unit) with the author's name hidden. Everyone reads all the pages and gives each one a score from 1 to 5 for "I want to keep reading." Then discuss: what made the high scorers hard to put down?

Scripture. "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" (Colossians 3:23, KJV)

Write your story for the best Reader first; then whatever the judges say, the work was done well.

Practice: answers

1. Poe's rule that every part of a short story works toward one main impression.
2. Editing corrects sentences, word choice and grammar; proofreading is the final slow check for typing, spelling and format errors.
3. Students in grades 7-12 who are 13 or older, including homeschoolers; check the current official rules.
4. He chooses to walk home through the storm to keep his promise to milk the cows.
5. Trudging through the drifts, Eli finally saw the farmhouse.
6. "Grandpa always said, 'A good fence will lead a man home,'" Eli told him.
7. He buttoned his coat, borrowed a lantern and went out into the snow.
8. Sample: "The Ninth Square." Ada has two weeks to finish the quilt her mother left with one square missing, and she cannot match the faded blue. When she finds the matching cloth in an unexpected place, she must decide what she is willing to give up to finish it.

UNIT 4 REVIEW

Read each question aloud if needed. The student may answer in writing or out loud. Writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit, not for spelling alone.

1. (5 pts) Name the five parts of plot on Freytag's pyramid, in order.
2. (4 pts) In "The Gift of the Magi," what does each character sell, and what does each buy?
3. (3 pts) Give the three tests of a fair twist.
4. (3 pts) Define a red herring and give the one from "The Blue Cross."
5. (2 pts) What is fair play in a mystery?
6. (3 pts) What is the turning point of the parable of the prodigal son, and what kind of change is it?
7. (4 pts) What is the difference between scene and summary? When should you use each?
8. (3 pts) Name the three passes of revision, in order.
9. (3 pts) Fix the dangling modifier and the shift in tense: "Running for the gate, the bull is gaining on him."
10. (2 pts) Fix the unclear pronoun: "Father Brown told Flambeau that he had changed the parcels."
11. (6 pts) Write the first paragraph (4–6 sentences) of a story that begins close to the trouble and plants one detail for later. Underline the plant.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A COMPLETE SHORT STORY

Place the final copy of your 4.4 story in your Grade 8 portfolio, with your pyramid from 4.3 and one marked-up earlier draft behind it, so a reader can see how the story grew. Note whether and when you entered it in the Scholastic Awards.

- **Structure:** All five parts of plot; begins close to the trouble; the turning point rests on a character's choice; the ending is brief.
- **Plant and payoff:** At least one detail planted early pays off fairly at the end; the theme is shown, not preached.
- **Character and place:** Characters speak as they would (ethopoeia); places are seen clearly (ecphrasis); scene and summary are used well.
- **Mechanics:** Steady tense and voice, clear pronouns, no dangling modifiers, correct dialogue punctuation, and parallel series.

Answer key

1. Exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution.
2. Della sells her hair and buys a chain for Jim's watch; Jim sells his watch and buys combs for Della's hair.
3. It surprises, it was planted earlier, and it is true to the characters.
4. A false clue that points the wrong way; Father Brown's simple, muddled manner hides that he is the one leaving the trail.

5. Every clue the detective uses is shown to the reader before the solution.
6. "When he came to himself" (Luke 15:17); it is a change of heart.
7. A scene shows one moment in full with action and speech; a summary tells a long stretch quickly. Use scene for moments that matter and summary for time that does not.
8. Structure, scene, sentence.
9. Running for the gate, Sam felt the bull gaining on him.
10. Father Brown told Flambeau, "I changed the parcels back." (Any version that makes clear who changed them.)
11. Sample: The ice on Miller's Pond groaned like an old door, and Ben stopped ten steps from shore. His little brother was already out by the cattails, skating in circles, the red scarf Grandma had knitted flying behind him. "Come back, Toby!" Ben called. Toby only waved. (Plant: the red scarf, which later shows Ben where Toby went through.) Score: begins at the trouble (2), clear plant (2), clean sentences (2).

POETRY: BLANK VERSE AND THE ODE

In this creative-writing unit you leave the short rhymed poem behind and climb to two of the noblest forms in English verse. You will read the opening of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and learn to write blank verse, unrhymed iambic pentameter; study Keats's "To Autumn" as a model of the ode, a poem that addresses and praises its subject; compare Wordsworth's regular "Ode to Duty" with his irregular "Intimations" ode; and finish by writing an ode of your own to something good, tested by Philippians 4:8. John Constable's *The Hay Wain* and his other English landscapes show the same patient praise of common things in paint.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can identify stressed and unstressed syllables and write rhymed lines with a steady beat (Grade 7 poetry).
- Knows the heads of the encomium for praising a person or thing (Grade 7).

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define blank verse and scan a line of iambic pentameter.
- ☐ I can name the marks of an ode and tell a regular ode from an irregular one.
- ☐ I can explain how Keats and Wordsworth personify their subjects.
- ☐ I can plan a poem with the five canons of rhetoric.
- ☐ I can write and read aloud a complete ode of four to six stanzas in a consistent form.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Milton, *Paradise Lost* (Project Gutenberg #26)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26>): Free full text; Book I, lines 1–26 are the model for 5.1.
- **Keats: *Poems Published in 1820* (Project Gutenberg #23684)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/23684>): A reprint of the 1820 volume, with "To Autumn" and the other great odes.
- **The *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, Vol. 3, ed. Knight (Project Gutenberg #12383)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12383>): Contains "Ode to Duty" with notes; the "Intimations" ode is in Volume 8.
- **The National Gallery, London: *The Hay Wain***
(<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/john-constable-the-hay-wain>): Free zoomable image of the unit's picture study.

5.1 BLANK VERSE: THE OPENING OF PARADISE LOST 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define blank verse and scan a line of iambic pentameter by marking its five stresses.
- Read the first twenty-six lines of *Paradise Lost* and name the subject Milton states and the help he asks for.
- Write an opening of twelve to twenty lines of your own blank verse that states a subject and asks God's help.

Warm-up. Say this line aloud and clap on the loud syllables: “And justify the ways of God to men.” How many claps? Now say a line of your own about breakfast with the same beat.

Video slot. Video coming. Milton's *Paradise Lost* introduction and reading of the opening lines (a university, library or classical-school lecture). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

blank verse

Unrhymed iambic pentameter: lines of ten syllables, five stresses, no rhyme at the line ends. The meter of Shakespeare's plays and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

iambic pentameter

A line of five iambs. An iamb is a soft syllable followed by a strong one (da-DUM): “and JUS-ti-FY the WAYS of GOD to MEN.”

enjambment

Running the sense of one line on into the next without a pause at the line end.

caesura

A pause inside a line, usually marked by a comma, semicolon or period.

invocation

The opening of an epic, where the poet states his subject and calls for help from above to tell it.

CORE IDEAS

Verse without rhyme. So far you have written poems that rhyme. Blank verse keeps the beat but drops the rhyme. Each line has ten syllables in five da-DUM steps (iambic pentameter), and the line ends are free. The Earl of Surrey first used it in English in the 1540s to translate Virgil; Marlowe and Shakespeare made it the voice of the English stage; and John Milton used it for the greatest long poem in our language. Blank verse sounds close to strong, dignified speech, which is why it suits plays and epics.

How to scan a line. Say the line naturally, then mark the strong syllables. “And JUS-ti-FY the WAYS of GOD to MEN”: ten syllables, five stresses, each on the even syllable. Real lines are not metronomes. Milton often reverses the first foot (“SING, Heav-en-ly MUSE”) or slides two quick syllables together (“dis-o-BED-yence”). A good line keeps the pattern underneath while the sense moves freely on top, the way a good speaker keeps time without sounding like a drum.

The verse paragraph. Without rhyme to mark the end of a unit, Milton builds long sentences that run across many lines. The first sentence of *Paradise Lost* is sixteen lines long, and its main verb, “Sing,” does not arrive until line 6. Everything before it is the object: “Of Man’s first disobedience ... Sing.” This is enjambment on a grand scale. Commas and semicolons inside the lines (caesuras) give the reader places to breathe, so the long sentence never loses its way.

Stating the subject and asking for help. Homer and Virgil began by calling on the Muse. Milton keeps the form but changes the helper. His “Heavenly Muse” is the one who inspired “that shepherd,” Moses, on Sinai to write “In the beginning.” Then he turns plainly to “thou, O Spirit,” the Holy Spirit who brooded “Dove-like” on the deep in Genesis 1:2. He asks to be taught, lit and lifted, so that he may “assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men.” His subject is the fall, but his hope is in “one greater Man” who will “restore us,” that is, Christ.

Why it matters for you. Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* after he had gone completely blind, dictating lines each morning to whoever would write them down. It was published in 1667 in ten books and again in 1674 in twelve. You will not write an epic this week, but you will do what Milton did in his first lines: state your subject clearly, ask for help humbly, and let one strong sentence carry the reader across several lines of steady verse.

Read, copy, imitate. Read the opening aloud twice. Copy lines 1–6 by hand and mark the stresses. Then find the main verb, the object, and the two things Milton asks the Spirit to do for him. Only after that, try your own lines.

The model. *John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book I, lines 1–26 (1667; 2nd ed. 1674), Project Gutenberg #26*

Of Man’s first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa’s brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence

Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men

PICTURE STUDY



The Hay Wain, John Constable, 1821 · Oil on canvas · The National Gallery, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

John Constable painted the countryside where he grew up, along the River Stour in Suffolk. Here a hay wain (a farm wagon) splashes through a ford beside the cottage of Willy Lott, a farmer who was said to have spent only a few nights of his long life away from home. In the distance, haymakers work in a bright field. Constable showed the canvas in London in 1821; three years later it won a gold medal in Paris. Like blank verse, the picture has no fancy ornament. It is plain English ground, painted with patient strength.

Look closely

- Find the dog on the bank. Which way is he looking?

- Look far right, beyond the trees. What are the small figures in the field doing?
- Study the sky. Where is the sun breaking through, and where are the clouds heavy?

Talk about it

1. Write five lines of blank verse describing the wagon in the ford. Do not rhyme; keep the beat.
2. Milton begins with the whole story of mankind; Constable paints one ordinary noon on a farm. Can a small subject be worthy of great care? Give a reason.

WRITING PROJECT: AN OPENING IN BLANK VERSE

Write the opening of a poem, twelve to twenty lines of blank verse, in Milton's pattern: state your subject, then ask for help to tell it well.

Choose a worthy subject: a story from Scripture (Joseph in Egypt, David and Goliath, the building of the ark), a true event from history, or the work of a farm like the one in *The Hay Wain*.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Pencil for marking stresses

Steps

1. Write one plain prose sentence that states your subject: "I will tell how ..."
2. List five words or pictures that belong to the subject (for Joseph: the coat, the pit, the dream, the grain, the brothers bowing).
3. Draft three to six lines that name the subject, as Milton's first five lines do. Let the sentence run over the line ends.
4. Write the request for help: address God plainly and ask for one or two things (light, truth, a steady voice). Write it as a command or request, the way Milton writes "Instruct me."
5. Scan every line: count ten syllables and mark the five stresses. Fix any line that limps.
6. Read the whole opening aloud. Mark where you naturally pause. Put a comma or semicolon there (a caesura), and remove any rhyme that crept in.

Check your work

- Every line has about ten syllables and five stresses.
- No line ends rhyme; at least three lines run on (enjambment).
- The subject is stated clearly in the first sentence.
- The request uses the imperative mood correctly ("Teach me," "Give light").
- Long sentences have commas and semicolons in the right places, and every sentence is complete.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy lines 1–6 of *Paradise Lost* by hand. Mark each stressed syllable with a slash and each soft one with an x.
2. Write five lines of iambic pentameter about something you can see from your window. No rhyme allowed.
3. List three subjects you think are worthy of a long poem, with one sentence each on why.

History note. Milton (1608–1674) lost his sight completely by about 1652. He composed *Paradise Lost* in his head and dictated it to helpers, including his daughters and friends. The first edition (1667) had ten books; the second (1674) divided it into twelve. In a short note added in 1668, Milton defended his choice of verse without rhyme, calling it the freer and more ancient way of heroic poetry.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.3 “Mood.” Milton’s invocation is built on imperatives (“Sing,” “Instruct me,” “Illumine”); use the imperative mood for your own request for help.

For families. The model is copied from Project Gutenberg’s text of the 1674 edition (#26). The opening lines are reverent and safe to read aloud; later books of the poem portray Satan and the rebel angels at length and are best read with a parent’s guidance. Note for discussion: Milton’s “Heavenly Muse” is his poetic name for the Holy Spirit who inspired Moses; he is borrowing the classical form, not praying to a pagan goddess. This year’s faith verse is Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpeneth iron”: read your lines to a parent or sibling and sharpen them together.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Scan Milton’s line 16: “Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.”

1. Count the syllables: things / un / at / tempt / ed / yet / in / prose / or / rhyme = 10.
2. Say it naturally and mark the strong syllables: un, TEMPT, YET, PROSE, RHYME.
3. Check the pattern: soft-strong five times (things UN / at TEMPT / ed YET / in PROSE / or RHYME).

Answer: A regular line of iambic pentameter: things UN-at-TEMPT-ed YET in PROSE or RHYME. Five iambs, no rhyme with the line before.

Example 2. A student wrote this opening. Revise it into blank verse: “I want to write about Joseph’s coat / And all the trouble that it got him in, / God help me please to write it well and right.”

1. Line 1 is only nine syllables and states the subject weakly (“I want to write about”). Use Milton’s order: put the subject first, the verb later.
2. Line 2 is a good pentameter but ends on a weak word (“in”). End lines on strong words.
3. Line 3 is ten syllables but sounds like a list of small words. Make the request a clear imperative and run the sense across the line end.

Answer: Of Joseph and the coat his father gave,
The pit, the chain, the long Egyptian years,
And grain stored up to feed the hungry world,
I mean to sing. O Lord, who turned their harm
To good, give light to tell it true and plain.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is blank verse?
2. **EASY** How many syllables and stresses are in a regular line of iambic pentameter?
3. **EASY** What is the main verb of Milton’s first sentence, and in which line does it appear?
4. **EASY** Who is “that shepherd” in line 8?
5. **MEDIUM** Find one example of enjambment and one of caesura in lines 1–6.
6. **MEDIUM** What two things does Milton ask the Spirit to do in lines 22–23?
7. **MEDIUM** Who is the “one greater Man” of line 4, and what will he do?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write three lines of blank verse that state a subject from Scripture, with the main verb delayed until line 3.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Letting rhyme creep in. Blank verse may have an occasional echo, but the line ends should not chime.
- Counting syllables but ignoring stress. “Beautiful mountains standing tall today” has ten syllables but no iambic beat.
- Stopping every sentence at the end of every line, which makes the verse sound choppy. Let some sentences run on.
- Padding lines with weak words (“so,” “very,” “just”) to fill out ten syllables.

Make it a game • Clap the Line. One player reads a line of blank verse from the model; the others clap only on the stressed syllables. Then the reader invents a new line about the room you are in. If it has five claps and no rhyme with the line before, the reader scores a point and the next player tries.

Scripture. “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19, KJV)

Milton's first line names “Man's first disobedience,” and his fourth line looks to the “one greater Man” whose obedience restores us, just as Paul says.

Practice: answers

1. Unrhymed iambic pentameter.
2. Ten syllables, five stresses.
3. “Sing,” in line 6.
4. Moses, who wrote “In the beginning” (Genesis) and received the law on Sinai.
5. Enjambment: “and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree” runs over the line end. Caesura: the comma in “Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.”
6. Illumine what is dark in him, and raise and support what is low.
7. Christ, who will restore mankind and regain the “blissful seat” (Paradise) that Adam lost.
8. Sample: Of David, and the stone, the sling, the brook,
The giant's boast that rang across the vale,
I tell, and of the God who gave him aim.

5.2 KEATS, “TO AUTUMN”

OBJECTIVES

- Define the ode and name the three marks of the English ode: address, elevated praise and stanza form.
- Trace how “To Autumn” moves through ripeness, harvest and evening, and how Keats personifies the season.
- Write two eleven-line stanzas addressed to another season, imitating Keats’s pattern.

Warm-up. Name five things you could touch, see, hear, smell and taste in a garden or orchard in late September. Which one would you put first in a poem?

Video slot. Video coming. John Keats “To Autumn” reading and introduction (a library, museum, university or classical-school channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

ode

A lyric poem of praise, serious in tone, that addresses its subject directly and is usually built in stanzas.

apostrophe

Speaking directly to something absent or not human as if it could hear: “Season of mists ... Who hath not seen thee?”

personification

Giving human form or action to a thing or idea. Keats’s Autumn sits on a granary floor and dozes in a half-reaped furrow.

stanza

A group of lines that forms one unit of a poem, like a paragraph in prose. Keats’s stanzas are eleven lines each.

imagery

Words that appeal to the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste and smell.

CORE IDEAS

What an ode is. The Greek poet Pindar wrote odes to be sung by a chorus in honor of athletes and gods; the Roman poet Horace wrote quieter odes on friendship, the country and the good life. English poets borrowed both. An English ode does three things: it *addresses* its subject directly (“thou”), it *praises* in a lifted, serious voice, and it moves in *stanzas* that are longer and more carefully built than a ballad’s. An ode is the encomium you wrote in Grade 7 set to music.

Keats's autumn. John Keats wrote "To Autumn" on 19 September 1819, after a Sunday walk near Winchester, where the stubble fields looked, he wrote to a friend, warm. It was published in 1820. Keats died of tuberculosis in Rome in February 1821, at twenty-five. He knew he was ill, and the poem is about ripeness and ending, yet it never complains. It simply looks closely and gives thanks for what is there.

Three stanzas, three movements. Stanza 1 is about *fullness*: verbs of loading, bending, filling, swelling and plumping, as autumn and the sun "conspire" to ripen everything. Stanza 2 turns Autumn into a *person at harvest work*: sitting on the granary floor, asleep in a half-reaped furrow, crossing a brook like a gleaner, watching the cider-press. Stanza 3 turns to *sound and evening*: gnats, lambs, crickets, the robin, and at last "gathering swallows twitter in the skies," ready to fly south. The poem moves from morning to dusk, from touch to sight to hearing.

The stanza. Each stanza has eleven lines of iambic pentameter. The first four rhyme like a sonnet's opening (ABAB); the last seven weave three more rhymes (CDEDCCE in stanza 1, CDECDDE after). You do not need to copy the exact scheme, but notice what it does: the opening quatrain sets the scene, and the longer tail lets the sentence spill and slow down, like ripe fruit that hangs heavy.

Packing a line. Keats crowds his lines with things you can touch: "To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells / With a sweet kernel." Read it slowly and feel how the long vowels and doubled consonants slow your mouth down. That is sound fitting sense. Strong odes use concrete nouns and active verbs, not vague words like "beautiful" or "nice."

Gratitude, not grief. Stanza 3 asks, "Where are the songs of Spring?" and then answers, "Think not of them, thou hast thy music too." Every season has its own gifts. That is a lesson for writers and for living: praise what God has given now, instead of mourning what has passed.

The model. John Keats, "To Autumn," stanzas 1-2, from *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (1820), Project Gutenberg #23684 (Keats: Poems Published in 1820)

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours

PICTURE STUDY



The Gleaners, Jean-François Millet, 1857 · Oil on canvas · Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Keats compares Autumn to a gleaner who keeps “steady thy laden head across a brook.” Gleaners were the poor, usually women, who were allowed to gather the stalks the reapers left behind. Jean-François Millet, a French painter who grew up on a farm in Normandy, painted three of them bent over the stubble, while far behind them the rich harvest is piled high. The law of Moses commanded this kindness (Leviticus 19:9–10), and it is how Ruth met Boaz (Ruth 2).

Look closely

- Compare the three women. How is each one's posture different?
- Look far back to the right. What is happening there, and who is in charge?

- Find the colors of the women's caps. Why might Millet have used them against the brown field?

Talk about it

1. Write an eleven-line stanza addressed to one of the gleaners, in Keats's manner.
2. Keats's Autumn is a gleaner; Millet's gleaners are poor women at hard work. Which picture of the harvest is truer, or are both true? Explain.

WRITING PROJECT: TWO STANZAS TO A SEASON

Write two stanzas of eleven lines each, addressed to winter, spring or summer, in the manner of "To Autumn."

Stanza 1: the season's fullness (what it does to the land). Stanza 2: the season as a person at work, seen in three or four places.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A copy of the model
- Colored pencils for marking rhymes

Steps

1. Pick your season and list twelve concrete things that belong to it, with a sense for each (frost on the pump handle: touch).
2. Begin stanza 1 with an address: name the season and give it a title, as Keats calls Autumn the "bosom-friend of the maturing sun."
3. Write the rest of stanza 1 as a chain of infinitives showing what the season does ("To bend ... To swell ... To set").
4. For stanza 2, ask a question ("Who hath not seen thee ...?") and then show the season as a person in three or four places.
5. Use iambic pentameter. Rhyme the first four lines ABAB; rhyme the last seven as best you can, or use blank verse for the tail if rhyme forces bad words.
6. Read both stanzas aloud. Replace every vague word ("nice," "pretty," "beautiful") with a thing you can see or touch.

Check your work

- The poem addresses the season directly ("thou" or "you") from start to finish.
- Every line has about ten syllables and five stresses.
- Each stanza has eleven lines, with at least the first four rhymed ABAB.
- Semicolons join closely related clauses correctly, and colons introduce what follows.
- Pronouns stay consistent: if you begin with "thou," you do not switch to "you."

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy stanza 1 of “To Autumn” and circle every verb.
2. Mark the rhyme scheme of stanza 2 with letters in the margin.
3. List ten sounds of an autumn evening where you live, for a third stanza of your own.

History note. Keats (1795–1821) trained as a surgeon’s apprentice before giving his life to poetry. He wrote his great odes in 1819; “To Autumn” was the last of them. The 1820 volume printed spellings such as “moss’d,” “Drows’d” and “cyder-press”; modern editions often change them, but our model keeps the 1820 forms.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.2 “Semicolons and Colons.” Keats links his long chain of clauses with semicolons and opens a new turn with a colon (“twined flowers:”); use both the same way in your stanzas.

For families. The model is the first two stanzas from Project Gutenberg #23684, a reprint of the 1820 edition; please check the start and end lines against the e-book when you print it. The whole poem is short and clean; read the third stanza aloud from the e-book too. Keats was not a Christian believer, and his letters show it; the poem itself is simple gratitude for the harvest, and Genesis 8:22 gives the Giver’s name.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart Keats’s first stanza. How is the sentence built?

1. The stanza is one long sentence with no main verb. It is an address: “Season of mists ... Close bosom-friend ... Conspiring with him ...”
2. After “how,” a chain of infinitives tells what Autumn and the sun plot to do: “to load and bless,” “To bend,” “And fill,” “To swell,” “and plump,” “to set.”
3. The last two lines change direction: the bees “think warm days will never cease,” and the reason is given with “For.”

Answer: Stanza 1 is a single long address held together by participles (“Conspiring”) and infinitives, divided by semicolons, and closed with a cause clause. The grammar itself is full to overflowing, like the season.

Example 2. Revise this student opening for an ode to winter:

“O Winter, you are very cold and white,
You make the world look really nice and bright.”

1. “Very cold,” “really nice” and “bright” are vague. Replace them with concrete things.
2. The rhyme white/bright is easy and tired. Try an ABAB start so the rhyme comes later.
3. Give Winter a title, as Keats does, and something to do.

Answer: Season of iron ground and early night,
Stern keeper of the woodpile and the hearth;
Conspiring with the north wind how to bite
The windowpane, and lock the stiffened earth;

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What three things does an English ode do?
2. **EASY** Whom does Keats address in “To Autumn”?
3. **EASY** How many lines are in each stanza of “To Autumn”?
4. **EASY** Name four places where stanza 2 shows Autumn.
5. **MEDIUM** Find two examples of personification in stanza 2.
6. **MEDIUM** What does each stanza mainly appeal to: touch, sight or hearing?
7. **MEDIUM** Give the rhyme scheme of the first four lines of stanza 1, with the rhyming words.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write four lines (ABAB, iambic pentameter) addressed to spring, giving it a title and one thing it does.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Talking *about* the season (“Autumn is a nice time”) instead of *to* it. An ode addresses its subject.
- Listing abstract words (“beauty,” “joy,” “wonder”) instead of things you can touch and see.
- Twisting word order or choosing silly words just to force a rhyme. Better an honest unrhymed line than a forced one.
- Switching between “thou” and “you” in the same poem.

Make it a game • Season Charades. Each player secretly picks a season and acts it out as a person at work, the way Keats shows Autumn at the granary and the cider-press (shoveling snow, planting seeds, wading a creek). The others guess the season and then must describe the action in one line of ten syllables.

Scripture. “While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22, KJV)

Keats praises the season; God’s promise to Noah tells us why the seasons keep returning to be praised.

Practice: answers

1. It addresses its subject directly, praises in an elevated voice, and is built in stanzas.
2. Autumn itself, personified as a person.
3. Eleven.
4. On a granary floor, asleep on a half-reaped furrow, crossing a brook like a gleaner, and by a cider-press.
5. Autumn sits “careless on a granary floor” with hair “soft-lifted by the winnowing wind”; Autumn is “sound asleep” and “Drows'd with the fume of poppies”; Autumn watches the cider-press “with patient look.” (Any two.)
6. Stanza 1: touch and taste (ripeness, swelling, plumping). Stanza 2: sight (Autumn seen in places). Stanza 3: hearing (gnats, lambs, crickets, robin, swallows).
7. ABAB: fruitfulness / bless; sun / run.
8. Sample: Season of rain and green unfolding light,
Glad nurse of every lamb and every seed;
Who calls the swallow home from southern flight,
And clothes the bare and dripping wood in need;

5.3 WORDSWORTH'S ODES: DUTY AND DELIGHT

OBJECTIVES

- Tell a regular (Horatian) ode from an irregular (Pindaric) ode, using Wordsworth's "Ode to Duty" and his "Intimations" ode as examples.
- Read the opening of "Ode to Duty," mark its stanza pattern (ABABCCDD with a long last line), and explain how Wordsworth personifies a virtue.
- Write three regular stanzas addressed to a virtue, imitating Wordsworth's pattern.

Warm-up. Finish the sentence three ways: "Duty is like ..." Is your comparison something harsh (a fence, a drill sergeant) or something kind (a lamp, a guide)? Why?

Video slot. Video coming. William Wordsworth life and the Lake District, or a reading of "Ode to Duty" (a library, museum, university or classical-school channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

regular (Horatian) ode

An ode whose stanzas all share the same length, meter and rhyme scheme, named for the Roman poet Horace. "Ode to Duty" is one.

irregular (Pindaric) ode

An ode whose stanzas vary in length and line length to follow the poet's feeling, loosely modeled on the Greek poet Pindar. Wordsworth's "Intimations" ode is one.

alexandrine

A line of twelve syllables (six iambs). Wordsworth ends each stanza of "Ode to Duty" with one, so the stanza closes slowly and firmly.

abstraction

An idea that cannot be seen or touched (duty, patience, courage). An ode to an abstraction must give it a face, a voice or a task.

epigraph

A short quotation set at the head of a poem to hint at its theme.

CORE IDEAS

Two kinds of ode. In 5.2 you met the ode as a poem of address and praise. Poets build odes in two ways. A *regular* or Horatian ode repeats one stanza pattern from start to finish, calm and orderly like a hymn. An *irregular* or Pindaric ode lets each stanza grow or shrink, with long and short lines mixed, as the poet's thought rises and falls. William Wordsworth wrote one great ode of each kind, and both were published in 1807.

The “Intimations” ode. Wordsworth’s longest ode begins, “There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream, / The earth, and every common sight, / To me did seem / Apparelled in celestial light.” Notice the line lengths: ten syllables, then eight, then four, then eight. That is the irregular ode. The poem mourns that the grown man no longer sees the world with a child’s wonder, then finds comfort in memory, in faith, and in the “philosophic mind.” It ends: “To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.” Wordsworth later explained that his lines about the soul living before birth were a poet’s image, not a doctrine he meant to teach; Scripture teaches that God forms each soul (Zechariah 12:1).

“Ode to Duty.” This ode, written in 1804, is regular: seven stanzas of eight lines, rhyming ABABCCDD, in iambic tetrameter (four beats) with a last line of six beats. Wordsworth addresses Duty as a person: “Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!” She is a light to guide, a rod to correct, a victory over fear and a rest from “the weary strife of frail humanity.” Over the poem, Wordsworth confesses that he has trusted his own moods too long and asks Duty to take him as her servant: “I myself commend / Unto thy guidance from this hour.”

Giving a virtue a face. An idea is hard to praise until it can act. Wordsworth gives Duty a family (daughter of God’s voice), tools (a light, a rod), a face (“the smile upon thy face”) and work in the heavens: “Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong.” This is personification put to work for a moral end. When you write your own ode to a virtue, ask: Whose child is it? What does it carry? What does it do for people? What does it do in nature?

The stanza as a staircase. Read the first stanza aloud. Seven short lines of four beats move quickly, ending with “From vain temptations dost set free;” then the last line, “And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!” stretches out to six beats. The long last line is a landing at the top of a stair: the reader slows down and rests. Keep that shape in your own stanzas: build in short steps, then end on a long, weighty line.

Duty and delight. Wordsworth’s epigraph, from the Roman writer Seneca, says in Latin that the good man reaches the point where he can do nothing but right. The poem’s hope is that obedience will become glad habit, so that duty and delight agree. That is a Christian hope too: “I delight to do thy will, O my God” (Psalm 40:8).

The model. *William Wordsworth, “Ode to Duty,” stanzas 1–2 (written 1804; published 1807), from The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, Volume 3, ed. William Knight, Project Gutenberg #12383*

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth,
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth:
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, and know it not:
Oh, if through confidence misplaced
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast

PICTURE STUDY



The Cornfield, John Constable, 1826 · Oil on canvas · The National Gallery, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Constable painted a lane near his boyhood home in Suffolk on a hot summer day. A shepherd boy has left his flock to the dog and flung himself down to drink from a stream. Beyond the gate, the wheat (which the English call “corn”) stands ready for harvest, and far off a church tower rises. After Constable died in 1837, a group of his friends bought this picture and gave it to the National Gallery in his memory. It is the world Wordsworth remembers in his “Intimations” ode: “every common sight ... Apparelled in celestial light.”

Look closely

- Find the boy. What has he left undone while he drinks?
- Find the dog. Is he doing his duty?
- Look past the gate. What do you see in the far distance, near the horizon?

Talk about it

1. The dog keeps the flock while the boy drinks. Write one stanza of an ode to Faithfulness, using the dog as your picture.
2. Wordsworth says a child sees common things in a heavenly light. Choose one ordinary thing in this painting and describe it as a child would see it.

WRITING PROJECT: AN ODE TO A VIRTUE

Write three stanzas of a regular ode addressed to a virtue: Diligence, Patience, Courage, Honesty, Thrift, Faithfulness or Gratitude.

Use Wordsworth's stanza: eight lines rhyming ABABCCDD, four beats a line, with a longer last line of five or six beats.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible and concordance
- A copy of the model

Steps

1. Choose your virtue and find two verses about it with a concordance (for Diligence, Proverbs 10:4 and 22:29).
2. Answer four questions in your notebook: Whose child is the virtue? What does it carry? What does it do for people? What does it do in nature or in the world?
3. Stanza 1: address the virtue by name with a title ("Plain Sister of the early sun") and tell what it is to us.
4. Stanza 2: show people who have the virtue without thinking about it, and those who lack it, as Wordsworth does with the "Glad Hearts."
5. Stanza 3: ask the virtue's help for yourself, and end with a long, slow last line.
6. Mark the rhyme letters in the margin and count beats in every line. Then read all three stanzas aloud to a parent and revise one line they found weak.

Check your work

- Three stanzas, each eight lines, rhyming ABABCCDD.
- Each stanza ends with a longer line that slows the reader.
- The virtue is personified with a title, a tool or a task, not just named.
- *Who* and *whom* are used correctly ("thou who art," "those whom thou dost guide").
- Pronoun and verb agree throughout ("thou art," "thou dost"; or "you are," "you do").

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy stanza 1 of "Ode to Duty" and write the rhyme letters ABABCCDD in the margin.
2. Copy the first four lines of the "Intimations" ode (quoted in the core ideas) and count the syllables in each line.

3. List six virtues and give each a title as Wordsworth gives Duty one (“Stern Daughter of the Voice of God”).

History note. Wordsworth (1770–1850) lived most of his life in the Lake District of northern England with his sister Dorothy, whose journals he drew on for many poems. Both “Ode to Duty” and the ode later titled “Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood” first appeared in his *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807). He became Poet Laureate in 1843.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.1 “Who and Whom.” Wordsworth writes “Thou, who art victory and law” (subject) and “Who do thy work” (subject); check every *who* and *whom* in your ode by asking whether it is a subject or an object in its own clause.

For families. The model is copied from Project Gutenberg #12383 (Knight’s edition, Volume 3); the full poem is seven stanzas and is worth reading aloud together. The “Intimations” ode is printed in Knight’s Volume 8. Its fifth stanza speaks of the soul coming “trailing clouds of glory ... From God, who is our home,” and hints that the soul lived before birth. Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick he used this old idea as a poet, not as a teaching of faith. It is a good place to talk with your student about how to admire a poem while weighing its ideas against Scripture.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Mark the meter and rhyme of stanza 1 of “Ode to Duty.”

1. Rhyme words: God / love / rod / reprove / law / overawe / free / humanity. Letters: A B A B C C D D (God/rod, love/reprove, law/overawe, free/humanity).
2. Beat: “stern DAUGH-ter OF the VOICE of GOD” = four stresses (tetrameter). The first seven lines are all about eight syllables.
3. Last line: “and CALM'ST the WEAR-y STRIFE of FRAIL hu-MAN-i-TY” = twelve syllables, six stresses (an alexandrine).

Answer: ABABCCDD; seven lines of iambic tetrameter and a closing alexandrine. The long last line makes each stanza land with weight.

Example 2. A student began an ode to Patience: “Patience, you are a good thing to have,
/ You help me when I am mad.” Revise it into Wordsworth’s manner.

1. The student talks about Patience rather than giving her a face. Give a title and a family.
2. “Good thing” and “mad” are vague. Show what Patience does.
3. Use four beats and an ABAB start.

Answer: Slow Daughter of the waiting field,
O Patience, quiet-handed friend,
Who taught the seed to break and yield,
And keep its season to the end;

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the difference between a regular and an irregular ode?
2. **EASY** What title does Wordsworth give Duty in the first line?
3. **EASY** Name two things Duty is in lines 3–4.
4. **EASY** What is an alexandrine?
5. **MEDIUM** Who are the “Glad Hearts” of stanza 2?
6. **MEDIUM** Count the syllables of the first four lines of the “Intimations” ode. What kind of ode does this show?
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun: “O Duty, thou who I have long ignored, guide me now.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the last two lines (a couplet, the second one long) for a stanza of an ode to Diligence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Naming the virtue without personifying it. “Honesty is important” is a sentence, not an ode.
- Letting stanzas drift: in a regular ode, every stanza keeps the same length and rhyme scheme.
- Making the last line long by padding it with filler words. Add a picture or a weighty idea instead.
- Using *who* where *whom* is needed after “thou” or “those.”

Make it a game • Who Is Her Father?. One player names a virtue; the next must give it a Wordsworth-style title in one line of eight syllables (“Calm Daughter of the Sabbath bell” for Rest). Others vote on the best title. The winner names the next virtue.

Scripture. “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13, KJV)

Wordsworth calls Duty the daughter of God's voice; Solomon says the whole of it plainly: fear God and keep His commandments.

Practice: answers

1. A regular ode repeats one stanza pattern; an irregular ode varies its stanza and line lengths.
2. "Stern Daughter of the Voice of God."
3. A light to guide and a rod to check the erring and reprove.
4. A line of twelve syllables (six iambs).
5. People, often the young, who do Duty's work naturally, out of love and truth, without even knowing it is duty.
6. 10, 8, 4, 8. The changing line lengths show an irregular (Pindaric) ode.
7. "O Duty, thou whom I have long ignored, guide me now." (*Whom* is the object of *have ignored*.)
8. Sample: Thou fill'st the barn, thou mend'st the fence,
And lay'st up, year by year, a store against the need.

5.4 AN ODE TO SOMETHING GOOD

OBJECTIVES

- Choose a worthy subject for an ode, using Philippians 4:8 as a test.
- Plan an ode with the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery.
- Write, revise and read aloud a complete ode of four to six stanzas, ready for the unit portfolio.

Warm-up. Name three good things you used today without thinking about them (bread, a pencil, a door, a well, a book). Choose one. What would the world be like without it?

Video slot. Video coming. John Constable’s Salisbury Cathedral paintings (a museum or gallery talk, e.g., the Victoria and Albert Museum or the Frick). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

occasion

What prompts a poem: a season, a gift, a place, a day of thanks. Every ode has a subject and a reason for praising it now.

praise by causes

Praising a thing by telling where it comes from, what it is made of, what it does and what good it brings: the old heads of the encomium, used in verse.

the turn

A point, often near the end of an ode, where the poem shifts direction: from praise to prayer, from past to present, or from the thing to its Giver.

refrain

A line or phrase repeated at the ends of stanzas or sections, like “Praise ye him” in Psalm 148.

CORE IDEAS

Something good. Paul tells us to think on whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report. That is the best test for an ode’s subject. Milton sang of Providence, Keats of the harvest, Wordsworth of duty. You may choose a thing (bread, a lamp, a barn, a book), a place (a church, a river, a kitchen), a work (plowing, building, nursing), or a virtue. Choose something you know well enough to show in detail, not something you only admire from far off.

Invention: praise by causes. In Grade 7 you praised a person with the heads of the encomium. An ode praises the same way, in verse. Ask four questions of your subject: Where

does it come from (who made it, how is it made)? What is it like (its look, sound, smell, feel)? What does it do (for whom, when, how often)? What does it point to (whose goodness does it show)? Fill a page of notes before you write a line of verse.

Arrangement: five stanzas. A good plan for a first ode: (1) the address, naming the subject with a title as Keats and Wordsworth do; (2) its origin; (3) its look and sound, in concrete images; (4) its work among people, shown in two or three small scenes; (5) the turn, where you thank the Giver or ask a blessing. Psalm 148 has the same shape at heart: it calls the heavens, the angels, the sun and moon and stars to praise, and then gives the reason: “for he commanded, and they were created.”

Style: choose your form. You have now met three ways to build a stanza. You may write blank verse in verse paragraphs (5.1), Keats’s eleven-line rhymed stanza (5.2), or Wordsworth’s eight-line stanza with a long last line (5.3). An irregular ode is allowed if each change of line length serves the sense. Whatever form you choose, keep it consistent, use the address (“thou” or “you”) throughout, and favor concrete nouns and strong verbs over abstract words.

Parallel praise. Odes and psalms love lists, and lists need parallel grammar. “Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light” repeats the same structure so the ear can follow. If one item in your list is a noun, keep them all nouns; if one is a clause, keep them all clauses. A repeated phrase at a stanza’s opening or close (a refrain) can bind the whole ode together.

Memory and delivery. An ode was first a song. When your ode is finished, learn at least one stanza by heart and read the whole aloud to your family, slowly, pausing at the commas and full stops, not at every line end. Your listeners are the iron that sharpens iron: ask them which line they remember, and which line they did not understand.

The model. *Psalm 148:1-6, King James Version (1611)*

Praise ye the LORD . Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights. . Praise: Heb. Hallelujah, etc Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the LORD : for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

PICTURE STUDY



Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds, John Constable, 1823 · Oil on canvas · Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Constable's friend John Fisher, Bishop of Salisbury, asked him to paint the cathedral from the bishop's own garden. Constable framed the great spire, the tallest in England, with an arch of trees, and set cattle drinking in the stream below. In the lower left corner the bishop and his wife stand admiring the view. The bishop is said to have wished for a less cloudy sky, and Constable later painted another version with brighter weather. The picture is an ode in paint: one good thing, a house of prayer, set in the middle and praised from every side.

Look closely

- Find the bishop and his wife. Where is he pointing?
- Follow the arch of trees from left to right. How does it frame the spire?
- Look at the sky behind the spire. Is it calm or stormy?

Talk about it

1. Write the address stanza of an ode to a church you know, giving it a title as Wordsworth gave Duty one.
2. Constable frames the spire with trees and cattle. How might you frame your ode's subject with the ordinary things around it?

WRITING PROJECT: MY ODE

Write a complete ode of four to six stanzas (about 32–66 lines) to something good, in one of the three forms from this unit.

This is your portfolio piece for Unit 5. Take two sessions: plan and draft in the first, revise and deliver in the second.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Your poems from 5.1-5.3
- A clean sheet for the final copy

Steps

1. Invention: choose your subject and test it against Philippians 4:8. Then fill a page answering the four questions: origin, appearance, work, and what it points to.
2. Arrangement: assign your notes to five stanzas (address, origin, look and sound, work among people, the turn).
3. Style: choose your form (blank verse, Keats's stanza or Wordsworth's stanza) and draft every stanza in it.
4. Revise for sense: read the draft aloud and cross out every vague word; replace it with something you can see, hear, touch, taste or smell.
5. Revise for grammar: check parallel lists, pronoun consistency (thou or you) and punctuation inside long sentences.
6. Memory: learn one stanza by heart.
7. Delivery: copy the ode neatly with a title ("To ..." or "Ode to ...") and read it aloud to your family. Ask which line they remember best.

Check your work

- The ode addresses its subject directly and praises it in a serious, warm voice.
- All stanzas follow the chosen form (same length and pattern, or a purposeful irregular pattern).
- Items in every list or series are parallel in grammar.
- Pronouns are consistent (thou/thee/thy or you/your, not both) and each has a clear antecedent.
- Commas, semicolons and colons are placed correctly in long sentences; there are no run-ons.
- The final stanza turns toward the Giver, a lesson, or a prayer.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Psalm 148:1-6 and underline every repeated phrase.
2. Make a list of ten good things in your house or on your street that no one ever writes poems about.
3. Write a single title-line for five of them, as Keats gives Autumn a title ("Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun").

History note. Constable painted *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds* for Bishop John Fisher and exhibited it at the Royal Academy in 1823; it is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. A later version (about 1825) with a brighter sky is in the Frick Collection in New York. Salisbury's spire, finished in the 1300s, is the tallest medieval church spire in Britain.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.3 "Parallel Structure." Psalm 148 repeats one pattern ("Praise ye him, ..."); make every list in your ode parallel, nouns with nouns and clauses with clauses.

For families. The model is printed from the King James text. Help your student choose a subject he or she truly knows; odes to plain things (a grandfather's workbench, the kitchen table, the church bell) often turn out better than odes to grand ones. Listen to the reading as a fellow writer: name one strong line and one line to sharpen. Proverbs 27:17 is this year's verse for exactly this kind of help.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Plan an ode "To Bread" with the four questions and five stanzas.

1. Origin: seed, rain, the reaper, the mill, the oven; God who gives seed to the sower (2 Corinthians 9:10).
2. Look and sound: the crust that cracks, the steam, the smell that fills the house.
3. Work: the farmer's lunch, the child's breakfast, the bread on the Lord's table.
4. The turn: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Answer: Stanza 1: address ("Plain loaf, first gift of field and fire"). Stanza 2: from seed to mill. Stanza 3: crust, steam and smell. Stanza 4: three tables where bread is broken. Stanza 5: thanks to the Giver, ending with the Lord's Prayer.

Example 2. Revise this stanza from a student’s ode to a lamp for parallel structure and concrete detail:

“Thou givest light, and warmth is given by thee,
And thou art helpful, nice and also bright.”

1. The first line shifts from active to passive voice (“thou givest ... warmth is given by thee”). Keep both clauses active and parallel.
2. “Helpful, nice and also bright” mixes vague words with one real quality. Replace with things the lamp does.
3. Add a small scene.

Answer: Thou givest light, thou givest gentle heat;
Thou guid'st the reader's eye along the page,
The mother's needle, and the scholar's feet
Up darkened stairs, from childhood into age.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name four of the qualities in Philippians 4:8 that make a good subject for an ode.
2. **EASY** What are the five canons of rhetoric?
3. **EASY** What is “the turn” in an ode?
4. **EASY** What reason does Psalm 148:5 give for praising the Lord?
5. **MEDIUM** Name the three stanza forms studied in this unit.
6. **MEDIUM** Make this series parallel: “The well gives water, coolness, and it is where neighbors meet.”
7. **MEDIUM** Write the four invention questions for an ode to a river.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a four-line turn (final stanza opening) for an ode to a barn, moving from the barn to its Giver.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Choosing a subject too large or vague (“Love,” “Nature”) and saying nothing particular about it.
- Praising only by adjectives. Show the subject at work in scenes.
- Changing forms halfway through: a Keats stanza, then a Wordsworth stanza, then free lines.
- Forgetting the turn, so the ode ends as a list with no landing.

Make it a game • Ode Auction. Write ten humble subjects on slips (spoon, gate, boots, candle, well, clock, saw, kettle, quilt, bell). Each player draws one and has two minutes to give it a title-line and say one thing it does for people. The family “bids” beans on the best one; the winner must write that ode’s first stanza.

Scripture. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” (Philippians 4:8, KJV)

Paul gives the test for an ode’s subject: think on whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, and then praise it.

Practice: answers

1. Any four of: true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtue, praise.
2. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
3. A shift in direction near the end, such as from praise of the thing to thanks to its Giver.
4. “For he commanded, and they were created.”
5. Blank verse in verse paragraphs (Milton), Keats’s eleven-line rhymed stanza, and Wordsworth’s eight-line ABABCCDD stanza with a long last line.
6. “The well gives water, coolness and a meeting place for neighbors.”
7. Where does the river come from? What is it like (look, sound, feel)? What does it do, and for whom? What does it point to, or whose goodness does it show?
8. Sample: Yet not the beam, nor yet the builder’s hand,
Nor any rafter laid by human skill,
First filled thy loft; the Lord who rains on land
And ripens grain has filled it, and fills still.

UNIT 5 REVIEW

Allow one session. The student answers in writing; the parent may read questions aloud. Creative items are scored for form and sense with the unit checklists, not for spelling alone. Total 40 points.

1. (2 pts) Define blank verse.
2. (3 pts) Scan this line by writing the five stressed syllables: "And justify the ways of God to men."
3. (4 pts) Define enjambment and caesura, and give one example of each from the opening of *Paradise Lost*.
4. (2 pts) What does Milton say is the purpose of his poem?
5. (3 pts) Name the three marks of an English ode.
6. (3 pts) Describe the movement of Keats's three stanzas in "To Autumn."
7. (4 pts) Explain the difference between a regular and an irregular ode, with one example of each by Wordsworth.
8. (3 pts) Give the rhyme scheme of a stanza of "Ode to Duty" and say what is special about its last line.
9. (2 pts) Fix the pronoun: "O Patience, thou who all the saints have praised."
10. (2 pts) Make the series parallel: "The lamp gives light, warmth, and it makes us feel safe."
11. (6 pts) Write four lines of blank verse that state a subject from Scripture or history.
12. (6 pts) Write the opening stanza (four to eight lines) of an ode to something good, addressing it with a title.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: AN ODE TO SOMETHING GOOD

Copy your finished ode from 5.4 neatly with its title, and add your best passage of blank verse from 5.1 on a second page. Note under the ode which form you chose and why, and record the date you read it aloud to your family.

- **Subject and address:** A worthy subject (Philippians 4:8), addressed directly and consistently, with a title or name that gives it a face.
- **Form:** A consistent stanza form (blank verse, Keats's stanza, Wordsworth's stanza, or a purposeful irregular ode), with a steady meter.
- **Imagery and arrangement:** Concrete images of origin, appearance and work, arranged in clear stanzas that end with a turn toward the Giver or a lesson.
- **Mechanics:** Parallel lists, correct who/whom, consistent pronouns, and correct commas, semicolons and colons in long sentences.

Answer key

1. Unrhymed iambic pentameter.
2. JUS, FY, WAYS, GOD, MEN (and JUS-ti-FY the WAYS of GOD to MEN).

3. Enjambment: sense running past the line end ("and the fruit / Of that forbidden tree").
Caesura: a pause inside a line ("Restore us, and regain the blissful seat").
4. To "assert Eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men."
5. It addresses its subject directly, praises in an elevated voice, and is built in stanzas.
6. Stanza 1: ripeness and fullness (touch); stanza 2: Autumn as a person at harvest work (sight); stanza 3: the sounds of evening (hearing).
7. A regular (Horatian) ode repeats one stanza pattern ("Ode to Duty"); an irregular (Pindaric) ode varies stanza and line lengths (the "Intimations" ode).
8. ABABCCDD; the last line is an alexandrine (twelve syllables, six beats), longer than the rest.
9. "O Patience, thou whom all the saints have praised."
10. Sample: "The lamp gives light, warmth and safety."
11. Sample: Of Nehemiah and the broken wall,
The gates burned down, the scoffers at the gate,
The trowel in one hand, the sword in one,
I sing, and of the God who built with him.
12. Sample: Plain loaf, first gift of field and fire,
Thou humble crown of reaper's toil,
Whom every table may desire,
Brown child of rain and patient soil;

RESEARCH BASICS

Comparison, characterization and description all need matter, and when the matter is history it must be found, not invented. In this unit you learn the researcher's craft the way Luke practiced it: go back to the witnesses, check everything, and write it in order. You will tell primary sources from secondary ones and compare versions of the Gettysburg Address; take notes on cards by Franklin's method of "short hints" and cite them in MLA style; learn to borrow honestly by paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence; and finally write a complete Junior Division paper for National History Day on the 2026-27 theme, "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change."

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes a clear multi-paragraph essay with a thesis (Units 1-3).
- Knows the rules for quotation marks and quotations within quotations (Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.4), or will review them in 6.2.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can tell a primary source from a secondary source and ask the five sourcing questions.
- ☐ I can take note cards with a heading, source number and page, and tell quotation, paraphrase and summary apart.
- ☐ I can write MLA in-text citations and a Works Cited page.
- ☐ I can paraphrase honestly and tell common knowledge from what must be cited.
- ☐ I can write a 1,500-2,500-word historical paper with a thesis, a process paper and an annotated bibliography.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Lincoln's Gettysburg Address (Project Gutenberg #4)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4>): The e-text used in 6.1; compare it with Lincoln's handwritten copies.
- **Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Free; the Spectator passage used in 6.2 is in the first part.
- **The Declaration of Independence (Project Gutenberg #1)**
(<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1>): Free; used for paraphrase practice in 6.3.
- **Library of Congress: Digital Collections** (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/>): Free primary sources: letters, photographs, maps, patents and historic newspapers (Chronicling America). Browse with a parent.
- **National History Day: Contest Rule Book and Theme** (<https://www.nhd.org/>): Download the current official rule book and theme materials; find your state affiliate here.

6.1 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define primary and secondary sources and sort a list of sources into each kind.
- Ask five sourcing questions of a primary source: who, when, where, for whom and why.
- Compare two versions of the Gettysburg Address and explain why a researcher goes back to the best original.

Warm-up. Your grandfather tells you about the day he learned to drive. Your cousin, who was not born yet, tells you the same story as he heard it at Thanksgiving. Whose account would you trust more, and why? What might each one get wrong?

Video slot. Video coming. Primary and secondary sources explained for students (a library or archive lesson, such as the Library of Congress or National Archives). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

primary source

A source made at the time, or by someone who was there: a letter, diary, speech, law, photograph, newspaper report of the day, map or tool.

secondary source

A source made later by someone who studied primary sources: a history book, biography, encyclopedia article or documentary.

eyewitness

A person who saw an event with his own eyes. Luke spoke with “eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word” (Luke 1:2).

sourcing

Asking who made a source, when, where, for whom and why, before trusting what it says.

corroborate

To check one source against another to see whether they agree.

CORE IDEAS

A new kind of work. All year you have compared, characterized and described. Each of those exercises needs *matter*, things to say, and the ancient teachers called the finding of matter *invention*, the first canon of rhetoric. When your matter is history, you cannot invent it out of your head. You must find it. That is research, and this unit teaches its basic tools so that you can write a real historical paper in 6.4.

Luke the researcher. Luke opens his Gospel like a careful historian. Many had already written accounts; Luke went back to those “which from the beginning were eyewitnesses,”

traced “all things from the very first,” and then wrote “in order,” so that Theophilus might “know the certainty” of what he had been taught. Notice his three steps: go to the witnesses, check everything, then arrange it. A good research paper follows the same path.

Primary and secondary. A *primary source* comes from the time itself: Lincoln’s own handwritten speech, a soldier’s letter from Gettysburg, a newspaper printed the next morning. A *secondary source* is written later by someone who studied the primary sources: a biography of Lincoln, a textbook chapter on the Civil War. You need both. Secondary sources give you the big picture and point you to the best documents; primary sources let you see with your own eyes and test what the books say.

It depends on the question. The same item can be either kind. A history of the Civil War written in 1890 is a secondary source about the battle, but a primary source if your question is “How did Americans of 1890 remember the war?” Always ask: *primary for what?* Then ask the sourcing questions. Who made it? When, and how long after the event? Where was he? For whom was it made, and why? A general’s report to his superiors may make himself look good; a private letter home may tell more, or less, than a public speech.

Closer to the source. The model this lesson is the Gettysburg Address, which Lincoln gave on November 19, 1863. Five copies in Lincoln’s own hand survive, named for the men who received them: the Nicolay, Hay, Everett, Bancroft and Bliss copies. They differ in small ways. The words “under God,” for example, are missing from the two earliest copies but appear in the reporters’ accounts and in the later copies. The e-text below, from Project Gutenberg, adds rows of dots that are not in any of Lincoln’s copies. That is not a reason to distrust the speech. It is a reason to do what Luke did: go back to the best original and compare.

Iron sharpens iron. This year’s verse is Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpeneth iron.” Sources sharpen each other the same way. When two independent witnesses agree, you can write with confidence. When they disagree, say so honestly and tell your reader which one you trust more and why.

The model. *Abraham Lincoln, the Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863), Project Gutenberg #4 (an e-text transcription, not one of Lincoln’s five handwritten copies)*

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



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

Jerome (died A.D. 420) spent years translating the Bible into Latin. For much of the Old Testament he did not rest on the Greek translation everyone used; he learned Hebrew and went back to the Hebrew text itself. Antonello painted him as a scholar at work in a study built like a little room inside a great hall, with his books close at hand. Look through the stone archway at the front: we are invited to step in and watch a researcher read.

Look closely

- Find the books. How many places are they kept, and how are they arranged?

- Find the lion in the shadows on the right. (Old legends said Jerome pulled a thorn from a lion's paw.)
- Look out the windows at the back. What do you see in the far distance?

Talk about it

1. Jerome went back to the Hebrew rather than trusting only a translation. Write a paragraph explaining why a researcher should go back to the original source when he can.
2. Is this painting a primary or a secondary source about Jerome's life? Is it a primary source about anything? Explain.

WRITING PROJECT: A SOURCE LOG

Begin a research notebook that you will use all unit. In 6.4 you will write a National History Day paper on the 2027 theme, "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change," so choose a starter topic now: an invention, a new method or a new idea that changed things (the printing press, the telegraph, the steam locomotive, the reaper, the Erie Canal, the polio vaccine).

You will need

- Research notebook
- A library card and the library catalog
- Internet access with a parent (the Library of Congress and National Archives websites)

Steps

1. Write your starter topic at the top of a page, and under it one question you want to answer.
2. Draw two columns: *Primary* and *Secondary*.
3. Find at least three secondary sources (a biography, a history book, an encyclopedia article) and list each with its author, title and date.
4. Use the secondary sources to find at least three primary sources (a letter, a patent, a newspaper of the day, a photograph, a diary) and list them the same way.
5. Choose one primary source and answer the five sourcing questions in full sentences: who, when, where, for whom, why.
6. Write a short paragraph: which source is most trustworthy for your question, and why?

Check your work

- Each source is placed in the right column, and I can explain why.
- Every source lists author, title and date.
- My sourcing answers are complete sentences.
- I used active voice to say who did what ("Morse sent the message," not "The message was sent").

- Every pronoun clearly points to one person (no unclear “he” when two men are named).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Luke 1:1–4 by hand. Underline the words that tell how Luke did his research.
2. Copy the last sentence of the Gettysburg Address from the Bliss copy (ask a parent to help you find it at the Library of Congress or Abraham Lincoln Online). Then list every difference you find between it and the Gutenberg e-text.
3. List ten sources in your house (a birth certificate, a family Bible, a photo album, a cookbook). Mark each P or S.

History note. Lincoln spoke at the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery at Gettysburg, after Edward Everett’s two-hour oration. Lincoln’s speech took about two minutes. The Bliss copy, the last one Lincoln wrote out, is the version most often reproduced and the one carved in the Lincoln Memorial.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.2 “Active and Passive Voice.” Historians name who acted: write “Lincoln revised the speech,” not “The speech was revised,” unless the doer is truly unknown.

For families. This unit prepares for the National History Day paper in 6.4, which takes several weeks; start the source log early and keep it. The Gutenberg e-text of the Gettysburg Address is used on purpose: its added dots show students why a researcher checks a transcription against the originals. The five handwritten copies can be viewed free online (the Nicolay and Hay copies at the Library of Congress; the Bliss copy in the Lincoln Bedroom of the White House). Help your student with internet searches; library databases and the Library of Congress are safer and better than a general search engine.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Sort these sources for the question “What was the battle of Gettysburg like for the soldiers?”: (a) a soldier’s letter home, July 1863; (b) a 1990 history of the battle; (c) a photograph of the field taken days after the battle; (d) an encyclopedia article.

1. Ask of each: was it made at the time, by someone there?
2. The letter and the photograph were made at the time by people present.
3. The history and the encyclopedia were written long after, from other sources.

Answer: Primary: (a) and (c). Secondary: (b) and (d).

Example 2. A student wrote: “The Gettysburg Address says ‘a great civil war. . .testing whether that nation’ with three dots, so Lincoln paused there.” Revise the claim.

1. Sourcing: who put the dots there? Not Lincoln; they are in the e-text, not in his handwritten copies.
2. Corroborate: check the Bliss copy, which has a plain comma after “civil war,” not a row of dots.
3. Restate the claim so that it rests on the better source.

Answer: The dots in the Project Gutenberg e-text were added by a later transcriber; they do not appear in Lincoln’s handwritten copies, so they cannot tell us where he paused.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Define a primary source.
2. **EASY** Define a secondary source.
3. **EASY** Name the three steps of Luke’s research in Luke 1:1–4.
4. **EASY** Primary or secondary: Lincoln’s handwritten Bliss copy; a biography of Lincoln written in 2008.
5. **MEDIUM** Name the five sourcing questions.
6. **MEDIUM** A newspaper from 1890 describes the Civil War. When is it a primary source?
7. **MEDIUM** Why should you use secondary sources at all, if primary sources are closer to the event?
8. **CHALLENGE** Suppose two reporters give different sizes for the crowd at Gettysburg. One stood near the platform; the other wrote from what he heard afterward. Write two sentences telling your reader how you will handle it.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Thinking “old” means “primary.” A source is primary for a question only if it comes from the time and place you are studying.
- Trusting a transcription or quotation website without checking it against the original.
- Using only secondary sources, so the paper repeats what others said instead of looking at the evidence.

Make it a game · Primary or Secondary?. A parent reads out twenty sources one at a time (a diary, a textbook, a coin, a museum label, a patent, a movie about the event). The student holds up one finger for primary and two for secondary, then gives a reason. A point for each right answer with a good reason; a bonus point for any item that could be either, if the student names the question that makes it so.

Scripture. “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." (Luke 1:1-4, KJV)

Luke went back to the eyewitnesses and checked everything before he wrote; that is the pattern for every honest researcher.

Practice: answers

1. A source made at the time, or by someone who was there.
2. A source made later by someone who studied primary sources.
3. He went to the eyewitnesses, traced everything from the first, and wrote it in order.
4. The Bliss copy is primary; the 2008 biography is secondary.
5. Who made it? When? Where? For whom? Why?
6. When the question is about the 1890s, for example how Americans of that time remembered the war.
7. They give the big picture, explain background, and point you to the best primary sources; a good paper uses both.
8. Sample: The two reporters disagree about the size of the crowd, so no exact count can be trusted. I lean toward the reporter who stood near the platform, because he saw the crowd himself, but the reader should know the sources disagree.

6.2 NOTE CARDS AND CITATIONS (MLA)

OBJECTIVES

- Make source cards and note cards with a heading, source number and page, one idea to a card.
- Tell a quotation, a paraphrase and a summary apart, and write each on a card.
- Write MLA Works Cited entries and in-text citations for a book, a website and the Bible.

Warm-up. Read a paragraph from any history book once. Close the book. Write down, in five words or fewer each, the three things you remember. Now open it again. What did you get right? What did you miss?

Video slot. Video coming. How to take research notes on note cards and cite sources in MLA style (a school library or university writing center lesson). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

source card

A card (or numbered list entry) with the full information for one source, given a number so your note cards can point to it.

note card

A card holding one idea from one source, with a short topic heading, the source number and the page.

paraphrase

Another writer's idea put fully into your own words and sentence pattern, about the same length as the original, and still cited.

summary

The main point of a longer passage, put briefly into your own words, and still cited.

MLA style

The citation rules of the Modern Language Association (9th edition, 2021): a short in-text citation, such as (Franklin 14), pointing to a full entry in the Works Cited list.

CORE IDEAS

Franklin's hints. In this lesson's model, young Benjamin Franklin teaches himself to write. He reads an essay from the *Spectator*, jots "short hints of the sentiment in each sentence," puts the book away, and later rebuilds the essay from his hints. Sometimes he shuffles the hints and puts them back in order "to teach me method in the arrangement of thoughts." That is the note-card method exactly: short notes, one idea at a time, which you can shuffle into the best order before you write.

Two kinds of cards. First make a *source card* for each book, article or document, with everything you will need for the Works Cited: author, title, publisher, date, web address. Number it. Then make *note cards*. Each note card holds one idea only. In the top left corner write a short heading ("Congress pays," "first message"); in the top right, the source number; at the bottom, the page. Because each card is one idea, you can later sort the cards into piles by heading, and the piles become your paragraphs. You may keep the same system in a notebook or a computer file, as long as each note has a heading, a source and a page.

Three kinds of notes. A *quotation* copies the words exactly, inside quotation marks; use it when the words themselves matter, as with a famous sentence or a striking eyewitness detail. A *paraphrase* puts one passage into your own words and your own sentence pattern. A *summary* gives the main point of a longer passage in a sentence or two. Most of your notes should be paraphrase and summary, written in Franklin's "short hints," so that you are forced to understand before you write. Every kind still gets a source number and page.

MLA in the text. In MLA style you give a short citation in parentheses right after the borrowed material: the author's last name and the page, with no comma between, and the period after the parenthesis: "Franklin rebuilt the essays from short notes (Franklin 14)." If you name the author in your sentence, give only the page: "Franklin says he jumbled his hints on purpose (14)." For the Bible, give the version the first time, then book, chapter and verse with a period between: (*King James Bible*, Luke 1.1-4).

MLA at the end. The full entries go on a page titled *Works Cited*, in alphabetical order by the author's last name, double-spaced, with a hanging indent (the second line moves in half an inch). The core pattern for a book is *Author. Title. Publisher, Year*. For example: Silverman, Kenneth. *Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse*. Knopf, 2003. A web source adds the site and address: Author (if any). "Title of Page." *Name of Site*, Date, web address. Copy the facts from the source itself, never from memory.

Why it matters. Citations are a kindness to your reader, who can walk back along your path and check your sources, and an honesty to the writers who did the work before you. In 6.3 you will see what happens when citations are missing.

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (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 painted a mapmaker at work in his room in Delft. He has been measuring a chart with a pair of dividers, and now he looks up toward the window, as if he has just thought of something. Rolled charts lie on the floor, a globe stands on the cabinet, and a sea chart hangs on the wall. Every tool of his research is within reach, and the light falls on his work.

Look closely

- Find the dividers in his right hand. What do you think he was measuring?
- Find the globe and the map on the wall. How many different records of the world are in the room?
- Look at his face. What moment of the work has Vermeer chosen to paint?

Talk about it

1. The geographer pauses between measuring and drawing. Write a paragraph comparing his pause to the moment a researcher stops taking notes and begins to see the shape of his paper.
2. Make three note cards about this painting from the museum or Commons description, each with a heading, source and one idea.

WRITING PROJECT: TWELVE CARDS AND A WORKS CITED

Use the topic and sources from your 6.1 source log. By the end of this lesson you should have at least four source cards, twelve note cards and a first Works Cited page.

You will need

- Index cards (3 × 5 inches) in two colors, or a notebook divided into two sections
- Your 6.1 source log and at least two of its sources
- A rubber band or small box for the cards

Steps

1. Make a source card for each of four sources (at least one primary and one secondary). Number them 1 to 4.
2. Read one source a section at a time. After each section, close it and write one note card from memory in short hints, then check it against the page.
3. Give every card a heading (top left), source number (top right) and page (bottom).
4. Make at least twelve note cards: no more than three quotations; the rest paraphrase or summary. Put quotation marks around every copied word.
5. Shuffle your cards, then sort them into piles by heading, as Franklin sorted his hints. Name each pile.
6. Type or write a Works Cited page from your source cards in MLA style: alphabetical, double-spaced, hanging indent.

Check your work

- Each note card has one idea, a heading, a source number and a page.
- Every exact phrase from a source is inside quotation marks.
- Quotations within quotations use single marks inside double marks.
- My Works Cited entries are alphabetical, with periods and italics in the right places.
- In-text citations put the period after the closing parenthesis: (Franklin 14).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Franklin passage from “With this view” to “corrected them.”
2. Write Franklin’s method as five numbered steps in your own words.
3. Imitate Franklin: write short hints for one paragraph of a history book, wait two days, rebuild it, and compare.

History note. The *Spectator* was a London daily paper of essays by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (1711–1712). Franklin, a printer’s apprentice in Boston, studied it at night and on Sundays. You will meet Addison himself in Unit 7.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.4 “Quotations Within Quotations; Long Quotations.” When a source quotes someone, use single marks inside your double marks; MLA sets a quotation of more than four typed lines as an indented block without quotation marks.

For families. MLA (9th edition, 2021) and Chicago/Turabian are the two styles National History Day accepts; this course teaches MLA because it is simpler for a first paper. The Works Cited examples in this lesson are real books; always copy citation facts from the title page or web page, not from memory or an automatic citation tool, which often makes errors. Index cards work well for this age because the shuffling is physical, but a notebook or a simple document with the same parts is fine.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Turn this sentence from Franklin into three note cards (quotation, paraphrase, summary): “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.” (Source 2, page 14 in the student’s edition.)

1. Quotation: copy the exact words, with marks, and keep his spelling “compleat.”
2. Paraphrase: close the book and rebuild the idea in a new sentence pattern.
3. Summary: shrink it to the main point.
4. Give each card the same heading, source number and page.

Answer: Heading “arranging notes,” Source 2, p. 14. Quotation: “I also sometimes jumbled my collections of hints into confusion.” Paraphrase: Every so often Franklin would mix up his notes on purpose and, weeks later, try to put them back in the best order before writing the essay out in full. Summary: Franklin practiced arrangement by shuffling his notes and reordering them.

Example 2. Fix this Works Cited entry: “Lightning Man, by Kenneth Silverman, 2003, Knopf.”

1. Author first, last name then first: Silverman, Kenneth.
2. Title in italics, then a period.
3. Publisher, comma, year, period.

Answer: Silverman, Kenneth. *Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse*. Knopf, 2003.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What three things go on every note card besides the note?
2. **EASY** How many ideas go on one note card?
3. **EASY** What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary?
4. **EASY** In Franklin’s method, what did he do after making his hints?
5. **MEDIUM** Punctuate this in-text citation correctly: Franklin studied at night. (Franklin, 14)
6. **MEDIUM** Put these Works Cited authors in order: Silverman, Franklin, Lincoln, Bradford.
7. **MEDIUM** Write the MLA in-text citation for Proverbs 27:17 in the King James Bible, the first time you cite it.
8. **CHALLENGE** A practice source by a historian named Smith says on page 40: Lincoln promised that the world would “never forget what they did here.” Quote Smith’s whole sentence in your paper, with a citation.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing several ideas on one card, so the cards cannot be sorted.
- Copying words onto a card without quotation marks, then forgetting later that they were not yours.
- Leaving off the page number and having to hunt for it the night before the paper is due.
- Putting the period inside the parenthesis or a comma between the name and page: write (Franklin 14).

Make it a game • Card Shuffle. A parent writes ten note cards from one short Bible chapter or history article, then shuffles them. The student sorts them into the best order to make a paragraph plan, as Franklin did with his hints, and explains the order. Time it; try again next week with a new set and beat your time.

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)

Clear notes and clear citations make your work plain, so that your reader can follow it quickly.

Practice: answers

1. A heading, the source number and the page.
2. One.
3. A paraphrase restates one passage fully in your own words; a summary gives only the main point, briefly.
4. He laid them by for a few days, rebuilt the essay without looking at the book, and then compared it with the original.
5. Franklin studied at night (Franklin 14).
6. Bradford, Franklin, Lincoln, Silverman.
7. (*King James Bible*, Prov. 27.17)
8. Smith writes, "Lincoln promised that the world would 'never forget what they did here'" (40). Lincoln's words take single marks inside Smith's double marks, and the page goes after the closing marks.

6.3 AVOIDING PLAGIARISM: HONEST BORROWING

OBJECTIVES

- Define plagiarism and name its common forms, including patchwriting.
- Tell common knowledge (which needs no citation) from borrowed words and ideas (which do).
- Paraphrase a passage of the Declaration of Independence honestly, with a signal phrase and a citation.

Warm-up. A classmate copies your science report word for word and gets an A. Another changes every fifth word of your report and gets an A. Are these two wrong in the same way? What did each one take from you?

Video slot. Video coming. How to paraphrase and avoid plagiarism (a school library or university writing center lesson for students). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

plagiarism

Presenting another person's words or ideas as your own, whether on purpose or by carelessness. The word comes from the Latin *plagiarius*, a kidnapper.

patchwriting

Keeping a source's sentence pattern and swapping in a few synonyms. It looks like paraphrase but is still copying.

common knowledge

Facts that are widely known and found in many general sources, such as "The Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776." It needs no citation.

signal phrase

A phrase that names your source before you use it: "As Jefferson later wrote," "According to the historian Pauline Maier."

CORE IDEAS

An old sin with a new name. The Roman poet Martial complained that another poet was reciting Martial's verses as his own, and called him a *plagiarius*, a kidnapper. The name stuck. God's word is older and plainer still: "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15), and through Jeremiah the LORD says He is against the prophets who "steal my words every one from his neighbour." Plagiarism is stealing and lying together: it takes another man's work and tells the reader it is yours. Ephesians 4:25 settles the matter: "putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour."

Its common forms. (1) Copying words without quotation marks, even with a citation. (2) Patchwriting: keeping the source's sentence and swapping a few words. (3) Paraphrasing an idea with no citation. (4) Reusing your own old project as if it were new work, which National History Day forbids. (5) Letting another person, or a computer program, write your sentences and handing them in as yours. Most plagiarism by students is not wicked planning but careless notes, which is why 6.2 taught you to mark every copied word on your cards.

What needs a citation. Cite every quotation, every paraphrase and summary, every number or statistic, and every opinion or argument that came from someone else. You need not cite common knowledge: facts found in many general sources and known to most readers, such as the date of the Declaration. When you are not sure, cite. A citation never hurts an honest paper.

The honest paraphrase. Use Franklin's method from 6.2. Read the passage until you understand it. Close the book. Write the idea from memory in your own sentence pattern. Then open the book and compare: if any phrase of three or more words matches, either change it or put it in quotation marks. Finally, add a signal phrase and a citation. A paraphrase in your own words is still the source's idea, so it still gets credit.

Jefferson and Locke. The model this lesson is the opening of the Declaration of Independence. Years later, Richard Henry Lee charged that it was copied from John Locke's treatise on government. Jefferson answered, in a letter of 1825, that he had not aimed at "originality of principle or sentiment," nor copied any particular writing; the Declaration was meant to be "an expression of the American mind." Was he guilty? No. Ideas about natural rights and the consent of the governed were the common inheritance of the age, as widely known then as common knowledge is now, and Jefferson put them into his own words. Notice, too, that the Committee of Five and then Congress revised his draft, and Congress signed it as its own act; the work of many hands was honestly presented as the work of many hands. That is the line: shared ideas in your own words are fair; someone else's particular words or particular argument must be credited.

Speech seasoned with grace. Colossians 4:6 asks that our speech be "always with grace." Honest citation is gracious: it thanks the writers who went before you, and it lets your reader see which thoughts are truly yours.

The model. *Thomas Jefferson and the Continental Congress, The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), Project Gutenberg #1*

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these

are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness

PICTURE STUDY



Declaration of Independence, John Trumbull, about 1818 · Oil on canvas · Rotunda, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Trumbull, who had served as an officer in the Revolution, shows the Committee of Five handing the draft of the Declaration to John Hancock, President of Congress. Tall Jefferson lays the paper on the table; John Adams stands beside him, and Benjamin Franklin stands at the right of the group. Trumbull began a small version in 1786 and painted many of the faces from life, so the portraits are carefully researched. Yet the scene is an artist's arrangement of the men, not a record of one exact moment: a fine picture, but a secondary source.

Look closely

- Find Jefferson. How did Trumbull make him stand out?
- Find Franklin. What is he doing with his hands?
- Count the flags and banners on the back wall. Why might Trumbull have hung them there?

Talk about it

1. Trumbull researched the faces carefully but arranged the scene himself. Write a paragraph on how a history painter, like a history writer, must be honest about what is record and what is arrangement.
2. Write a caption for this painting for a museum wall, and include a citation for one fact you looked up.

WRITING PROJECT: THREE HONEST PARAPHRASES

Practice the honest paraphrase on the model, then on your own research topic.

You will need

- Research notebook and note cards from 6.2
- A highlighter
- The Declaration of Independence (model)

Steps

1. Read the first sentence of the Declaration three times. Write one sentence saying what it means.
2. Close the text and write a paraphrase of the first sentence from memory, in your own sentence pattern.
3. Open the text and highlight any string of three or more words that matches. Revise those words or put them in quotation marks.
4. Add a signal phrase and an MLA citation. Repeat for the sentence beginning “We hold these truths.”
5. Choose one passage from a secondary source for your own topic and write a third honest paraphrase the same way.
6. Write three sentences about your topic that are common knowledge and need no citation, and three that do. Explain the difference to a parent.

Check your work

- No string of three or more words matches the source unless it is in quotation marks.
- My sentence pattern is my own, not the source’s with synonyms swapped in.
- Each paraphrase has a signal phrase and a citation.
- Every pronoun points clearly to one person: not “he said” when Jefferson and Lee are both named.
- Commas set off the nonrestrictive signal phrases (“Jefferson, who drafted it, later wrote ...”).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Jeremiah 23:30 and Ephesians 4:25.
2. Copy the second paragraph of the Declaration by hand, exactly, keeping its capital letters.

3. List five facts about your topic that are common knowledge and five that you must cite.

History note. Jefferson discussed Richard Henry Lee's charge in a letter to James Madison in 1823 and wrote of "an expression of the American mind" in a letter to Henry Lee on May 8, 1825. Congress cut and revised about a quarter of his draft before adopting it.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.4 "Clear Pronoun Reference." A paraphrase that names two writers must make every *he* and *they* point to the right one, or the reader cannot tell whose idea is whose.

For families. Plagiarism is the one rule National History Day treats as grounds for disqualification, along with reusing an old project. Talk with your student about tools that write or rewrite text: at this level, any sentence handed in should be the student's own, and help from a parent should be questions and comments, not rewritten sentences. Check the current NHD rule book for its policy on such tools. The Trumbull painting is the large version in the Capitol Rotunda, placed there in 1826; the small first version is at the Yale University Art Gallery.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Is this an honest paraphrase of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation"?

Student: "a proper respect for the views of mankind requires that they should state the reasons which drive them to the separation."

1. Compare the patterns: the sentence shape is the same, word for word.
2. Only four words were swapped (decent/proper, opinions/views, declare/state, causes/reasons).
3. Strings like "requires that they should" and "to the separation" match exactly, and there is no citation.

Answer: No. It is patchwriting. Honest version: Jefferson believed that a people breaking away owes the rest of the world an explanation, so Congress set out its reasons (*Declaration of Independence*).

Example 2. Which of these sentences need a citation? (a) The Declaration was adopted on July 4, 1776. (b) Congress cut about a quarter of Jefferson’s draft. (c) Jefferson called the Declaration “an expression of the American mind.” (d) I believe the opening sentence is the most graceful in American history.

1. (a) is in every general source: common knowledge.
2. (b) is a specific fact a reader may want to check: cite it.
3. (c) is a quotation: cite it.
4. (d) is your own opinion: no citation, but it must be truly yours.

Answer: Cite (b) and (c). (a) is common knowledge; (d) is the student’s own judgment.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Define plagiarism.
2. **EASY** What does the Latin word *plagiarius* mean?
3. **EASY** Which commandment does plagiarism break?
4. **EASY** Does a paraphrase need a citation?
5. **MEDIUM** What is patchwriting, and why is it plagiarism?
6. **MEDIUM** Common knowledge or cite? “Morse sent the first long-distance telegraph message on a line Congress paid for.”
7. **MEDIUM** Write an honest paraphrase, with a signal phrase, of “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Richard Henry Lee said the Declaration was copied from Locke. Write a short paragraph judging the charge.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Citing a source but forgetting quotation marks around words copied from it.
- Swapping synonyms into the source’s sentence and calling it a paraphrase.
- Citing nothing because “I put it in my own words.” Your words, their idea: cite it.
- Citing everything, even common knowledge, until the reader cannot see your own thinking.

Make it a game · Spot the Patch. A parent writes four versions of one sentence from the Declaration: an exact quotation, a patchwrite, an honest paraphrase and a summary. The student labels each and points to the matching words in the patchwrite. Then trade: the student writes four versions for the parent to sort.

Scripture. “Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.” (Jeremiah 23:30, KJV)

Stealing another's words is an old sin, and the LORD names it plainly; honest citation gives every word back to its owner.

Practice: answers

1. Presenting another person's words or ideas as your own.
2. A kidnapper.
3. "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15); it also breaks the command against false witness, since it tells a lie about whose work it is.
4. Yes. The words are yours, but the idea is the source's.
5. Keeping a source's sentence pattern and swapping a few synonyms; it still copies the writer's sentence.
6. Cite it. It is a specific fact a reader may want to check, not something found in every general source.
7. Sample: The Declaration teaches that men set up governments, and those governments rightly hold power only because the people agree to it (*Declaration of Independence*).
8. Sample: Lee's charge does not stand. The ideas of natural rights and government by consent were shared by many writers of the age, and Jefferson put them into his own words rather than copying Locke's sentences. He said himself that he aimed not at originality but at "an expression of the American mind." Using the common ideas of one's time, in one's own words, is not plagiarism.

6.4 NATIONAL HISTORY DAY JUNIOR PAPER

OBJECTIVES

- Narrow a topic to fit the 2026–27 National History Day theme, “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change,” and write a historical argument (thesis).
- Organize note cards into an outline and draft a 1,500–2,500-word paper with MLA citations.
- Prepare the title page, process paper and annotated bibliography that National History Day requires.

Warm-up. Before 1844, how fast could news travel from Baltimore to Washington, about forty miles? List every way a message could go. Then guess how long each would take.

Video slot. Video coming. National History Day paper category guide for junior division students (from nhd.org or a state NHD affiliate). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

National History Day (NHD)

A yearly history contest in which students research a topic tied to an annual theme and enter it as a paper, exhibit, documentary, performance or website. Grades 6–8 compete in the Junior Division.

thesis (historical argument)

One or two sentences that state what your paper claims about your topic and why it matters, not merely what happened.

process paper

A short paper (500 words or fewer) explaining how you chose your topic, how you researched, how you built the entry, your argument and your topic’s significance.

annotated bibliography

A list of every source you used, divided into primary and secondary, each with a two- or three-sentence note on how you used it.

significance

Why your topic mattered in history: what changed because of it, and what followed from it.

CORE IDEAS

The contest. National History Day asks students to research a topic tied to the year’s theme. For the 2026–27 contest year the theme is *Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change*. The paper is the one category entered only by individuals, never groups. Entries

usually advance from a school or regional contest to a state (affiliate) contest, and the best go on to the national contest in June. Homeschool students may enter in most states through the state affiliate; your parent should contact yours early in the fall to learn the dates.

The rules in brief. As summarized from the NHD rules in October 2026 (your family must get the current official *Contest Rule Book* from nhd.org and follow it, along with your affiliate's instructions): the paper is 1,500 to 2,500 words, about ten double-spaced pages. Your words and quoted words count; citations, the title page, the process paper, the annotated bibliography and primary-source appendices do not. Citations follow MLA or Turabian (Chicago) style, as footnotes, endnotes or in-text citations. Images or documents go in a short appendix, not in the text. With the paper you turn in a title page (with word counts), a process paper of 500 words or fewer, and an annotated bibliography split into primary and secondary sources. The work must be new this year and your own; plagiarism or reusing an old project can disqualify you.

Choose and narrow. "Inventions" is a subject, not a topic. "Samuel Morse and the telegraph" is a topic. "How Morse's telegraph line of 1844 changed the speed of American news" is a topic you can prove in ten pages. Choose an innovation with plenty of primary sources you can reach (letters, patents, newspapers of the day, photographs), and look past the moment of invention to its impact, influence and change. The judges weigh historical quality most heavily (about 60 percent), then relation to the theme and clarity (about 20 percent each), so a modest topic studied deeply beats a grand one skimmed.

From cards to argument. Spread out your note cards from 6.2 and sort them into piles. Usually the piles become the sections of the paper: *background* (the world before the innovation), *the innovation* (who, what, how), *impact* (what happened at once), *influence and change* (what followed over years), and *significance* (why it matters). Now write your thesis: one claim that your piles can prove. The model below is a sample introduction written for this course; notice that it opens with a scene, gives background, and ends with a thesis built in parallel parts.

Draft, cite, revise. Write each section from your cards, citing as you go so you never lose track of a source. Quote primary sources for their best words, but let your own sentences carry the argument. Then ask a parent or teacher to read it, as NHD allows: "Iron sharpeneth iron." Weigh each suggestion and make the changes yourself. Last of all, write the process paper and the annotated bibliography, count your words, and make the title page.

The model. *Written for this course: a sample introduction for a Junior Division NHD paper on Samuel F. B. Morse and the telegraph*

On May 24, 1844, Samuel F. B. Morse sat in the Supreme Court chamber of the United States Capitol and tapped a message along a wire to his partner, Alfred Vail, waiting at a railroad depot in Baltimore, about forty miles away. The words had been chosen from the Bible by Annie Ellsworth, the daughter of a friend: "What hath God wrought!" (*King James Bible*, Num. 23.23). Within moments Vail sent the words back.

Before that day, news could travel no faster than a horse, a ship or a train could carry it. Morse was not the only inventor working on an electric telegraph, but he had a simple code, a working instrument and, after years of asking, thirty thousand dollars from Congress to build a test line.

The Washington-Baltimore line of 1844 was the moment the telegraph became more than an experiment. Its impact was immediate, as messages that once took hours arrived in minutes; its influence spread to newspapers, railroads and businesses within a few years; and the change it began, that news could outrun the messenger, shaped how Americans communicated for the rest of the century.

PICTURE STUDY



A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery, Joseph Wright of Derby, about 1766 · Oil on canvas · Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, England
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

An orrery is a clockwork model of the solar system, and in Wright's day it was a new and wonderful teaching machine. Here a lamp stands in for the sun, hidden behind a boy in the center, so that every face is lit as if by the sunlight itself. Wright painted ordinary English men and children, not gods or kings, gathered around an innovation, and that choice was itself new in art.

Look closely

- Find the man at the left with a notebook. What is he doing that you have done all unit?
- Find where the light comes from. Why can you not see the lamp itself?
- Compare the children's faces with the grown men's. Who looks most amazed?

Talk about it

1. Write a paragraph describing this scene as a primary source: what does it tell us about how people of the 1760s met new scientific ideas?
2. The theme speaks of impact, influence and change. Write three sentences, one on each, about the orrery as a way to teach the heavens.

WRITING PROJECT: YOUR NATIONAL HISTORY DAY PAPER

Write a complete Junior Division paper of 1,500 to 2,500 words on an innovation in history, using your source log and note cards from 6.1–6.3. Plan four to six weeks: one to two weeks of more research, one week to outline, two weeks to draft and revise, and a few days for the written materials.

Before you begin, have your parent download the current NHD Contest Rule Book and your state affiliate's instructions, and check the deadline for your first contest.

You will need

- Source log, note cards and Works Cited from 6.1–6.3
- The current NHD Contest Rule Book (nhd.org) and your affiliate's instructions
- A word processor (12-point type, 1-inch margins, double-spaced)
- A library card and the Library of Congress website (loc.gov)

Steps

1. Narrow your topic and write a working thesis that names the innovation and its impact, influence and change. Show it to a parent.
2. Fill gaps in your research: you should have several primary sources and at least as many secondary sources, and a note card for every fact you plan to use.
3. Sort your cards into section piles (background, innovation, impact, influence and change, significance) and make an outline with a topic sentence for each paragraph.
4. Draft the paper section by section, citing in MLA as you go. Open with a scene or a striking primary-source quotation; end with significance, not a summary.
5. Revise: read it aloud, ask a reader for comments, weigh each one and make the changes yourself. Count the words and keep between 1,500 and 2,500.
6. Write the process paper (500 words or fewer) answering how you chose the topic, how you researched, how you built the paper, what your argument is and why the topic matters.
7. Make the annotated bibliography (primary and secondary sections, two or three sentences each) and the title page with your title, name, Junior Division, Paper category and both word counts.

Check your work

- My thesis makes a claim and names impact, influence and change in parallel form.

- Every quotation, paraphrase and specific fact is cited in MLA style, and no string of three or more borrowed words lacks quotation marks.
- Pronouns agree with their antecedents and point clearly to one person.
- Modifiers are placed next to what they describe (no dangling “Tapping the key, the message was sent”).
- Long quotations of more than four lines are set as indented blocks; semicolons and colons are used correctly.
- The paper, process paper and bibliography meet the word limits and format in the current rule book.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Numbers 23:23, the verse Morse’s first message came from.
2. Write three possible thesis statements for your topic, each with impact, influence and change in parallel form. Star the best.
3. Write one annotated bibliography entry for a primary source and one for a secondary source.

History note. Congress voted thirty thousand dollars for Morse’s experimental line in 1843. The paper tape on which the first message of May 24, 1844, was recorded is held by the Library of Congress with Morse’s papers.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.3 “Parallel Structure.” The theme’s three words, impact, influence and change, invite a thesis built in three parallel clauses, as in the model’s last sentence.

For families. This rules summary was prepared in October 2026 from National History Day materials for the 2026–27 contest year (theme: “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change”). Rules, deadlines and homeschool entry vary by state affiliate and can change, so download the official Contest Rule Book from nhd.org and contact your state affiliate before your student begins writing. NHD permits reasonable help (reading drafts, asking questions) but the student must be the sole author. Check the rule book for its current policy on writing tools. Good primary sources for innovation topics are free at the Library of Congress (Chronicling America newspapers, the Morse papers), the National Archives and Google Patents.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this weak thesis: “This paper is about the telegraph, which was invented by Samuel Morse and was very important.”

1. It announces a subject but makes no claim; “very important” says nothing a reader can test.
2. Narrow the topic: which telegraph, when, where?
3. Make a claim about impact, influence and change, in parallel form.

Answer: Morse’s Washington-Baltimore telegraph line of 1844 turned the telegraph from an experiment into a working system: its impact was immediate, its influence reached newspapers and railroads within a few years, and the change it began let news outrun the messenger.

Example 2. Write an annotated bibliography entry for this primary source: the two-volume *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals*, edited by his son Edward Lind Morse, published by Houghton Mifflin in 1914.

1. Author first (Morse), then the title in italics.
2. Add the editor, publisher and year; note it is in two volumes.
3. Annotate in two or three sentences: what it is and how you used it.

Answer: Morse, Samuel F. B. *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals*. Edited by Edward Lind Morse, Houghton Mifflin, 1914. 2 vols.

This collection of Morse’s own letters and journals, edited by his son, let me read Morse’s words about his years of seeking support from Congress. I used it for quotations about the first message in 1844.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the 2026–27 National History Day theme?
2. **EASY** What grades make up the Junior Division?
3. **EASY** What is the word range for an NHD paper?
4. **EASY** May two students write one NHD paper together?
5. **MEDIUM** Name three things that do not count toward the paper’s word limit.
6. **MEDIUM** What five questions does the process paper answer?
7. **MEDIUM** Narrow this subject to a topic you could prove in ten pages: “The printing press.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a thesis on the Erie Canal (opened 1825) that names impact, influence and change in parallel form.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Telling the story of an invention without an argument: a report, not a historical paper.
- Ending at the moment of invention and never showing impact, influence and change.
- Relying on websites and secondary sources only, with no primary sources.
- Leaving the process paper and bibliography for the last night; they take real time and are judged too.

Make it a game • Thesis Ladder. A parent names a subject (“trains,” “vaccines,” “the printing press”). The student climbs three rungs out loud: a narrower topic, a question, and a one-sentence thesis with impact, influence and change. Then switch: the student names a subject for the parent. Score a point for every rung climbed in under a minute.

Scripture. “Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!” (Numbers 23:23, KJV)

Morse sent these words as the telegraph’s first official message, giving God the credit for the innovation, as every good history should give credit where it is due.

Practice: answers

1. Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change.
2. Grades 6–8.
3. 1,500 to 2,500 words.
4. No. Papers are individual entries only.
5. Any three of: citations, the title page, the process paper, the annotated bibliography, primary-source materials in an appendix.
6. How you chose your topic and how it relates to the theme; how you researched; how you created the entry; what your argument is; why the topic is significant.
7. Sample: How Gutenberg’s printed Bible of the 1450s made the Scriptures cheaper and more widely available in Europe.
8. Sample: The Erie Canal, opened in 1825, joined the Great Lakes to the Atlantic: its impact was to cut the cost of moving goods across New York, its influence was a rush of canal building in other states, and the change it began made New York City the nation’s chief port.

UNIT 6 REVIEW

Read each question aloud if needed. The student may answer in writing or out loud, except items 8–10, which must be written. Writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit, not for spelling alone.

1. (4 pts) Define primary source and secondary source, and give one example of each.
2. (5 pts) Name the five sourcing questions.
3. (3 pts) Why should a researcher check a transcription of the Gettysburg Address against Lincoln's handwritten copies?
4. (3 pts) What three things belong on every note card besides the note itself?
5. (3 pts) Describe Franklin's method with the Spectator in three steps.
6. (4 pts) Write a correct MLA Works Cited entry: book by Kenneth Silverman, *Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse*, Knopf, 2003.
7. (4 pts) Define plagiarism and patchwriting.
8. (5 pts) Write an honest paraphrase, with a signal phrase and citation, of "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."
9. (3 pts) Common knowledge or cite? (a) Lincoln gave the Gettysburg Address in 1863. (b) Congress voted Morse thirty thousand dollars in 1843. (c) A historian's claim that the telegraph changed newspapers more than any other business.
10. (6 pts) Write a thesis for an NHD paper on an innovation of your choice, naming impact, influence and change in parallel form.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: NATIONAL HISTORY DAY JUNIOR PAPER

Place your finished NHD paper in your Grade 8 portfolio with its title page, process paper and annotated bibliography, plus your source log and a sample of ten note cards to show your process.

- **Historical quality:** A clear thesis proved with both primary and secondary sources; accurate facts; sources weighed and corroborated.
- **Relation to theme:** Shows the innovation's impact, influence and change, and explains its significance.
- **Honest citation:** Every quotation, paraphrase and specific fact cited in MLA style; no patchwriting; annotated bibliography split into primary and secondary.
- **Clarity and mechanics:** Organized sections, parallel thesis, clear pronoun reference, correct modifiers and punctuation; within 1,500–2,500 words.

Answer key

1. A primary source comes from the time or from someone who was there (e.g., Lincoln's Bliss copy); a secondary source is made later from primary sources (e.g., a biography of Lincoln).
2. Who made it? When? Where? For whom? Why?

3. Transcriptions can add or change things (the Gutenberg e-text adds rows of dots); the closest original is the most trustworthy.
4. A heading, the source number and the page.
5. He wrote short hints of each sentence; laid them aside and rebuilt the essay without the book; compared his version with the original and corrected his faults.
6. Silverman, Kenneth. *Lightning Man: The Accursed Life of Samuel F. B. Morse*. Knopf, 2003.
7. Plagiarism is presenting another's words or ideas as your own; patchwriting keeps a source's sentence pattern and swaps a few words.
8. Sample: As the Declaration explains, a people breaking away owes the world an account of its reasons (*Declaration of Independence*).
9. (a) common knowledge; (b) cite; (c) cite.
10. Sample: Gutenberg's press of the 1450s changed Europe: its impact was cheaper books, its influence was a spread of reading, and the change it began put the Scriptures in many more hands.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE: THE REFLECTIVE ESSAY

The creative track turns to true writing about your own life: the reflective essay. You will read the two masters of the English familiar essay, Joseph Addison (*The Spectator*, 1711) and Charles Lamb (*Essays of Elia*, 1823); learn from Franklin's "The Whistle" how a small event becomes a lasting meaning; find a true, gracious voice by imitating Mr. Spectator; and write a full reflective essay of 600–900 words about one real event, person or piece of work, with an occasion, a scene, a clear turn, an honest reflection and a return.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes multi-paragraph pieces independently and can use dialogue punctuation correctly.
- Knows past and present tense and has met dangling modifiers and pronoun reference (Grammar Level 3, Units 20–22), or will review them in this unit.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can tell how a reflective essay differs from a story and a report, and name Addison and Lamb as masters of the familiar essay.
- ☐ I can find the turn in a reflective essay and write a meaning that grows from the event instead of a tacked-on moral.
- ☐ I can name the four parts of voice and write about myself in a true, gracious voice.
- ☐ I can use past tense for an event and present tense for reflection, shifting only on purpose.
- ☐ I can write a 600–900 word reflective essay with occasion, event, turn, reflection and return.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb, Vol. 2: Elia (Project Gutenberg #10343)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10343>): All the *Essays of Elia*; try "New Year's Eve," "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" and "Grace Before Meat."
- **The Coverley Papers, From 'The Spectator' (Project Gutenberg #6482)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6482>): Mr. Spectator's own history (No. 1) and the Sir Roger de Coverley papers.
- **Benjamin Franklin, The Whistle (Project Gutenberg #78663)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/78663>): The whole short letter, to read aloud.
- **Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): See his account of teaching himself to write from the *Spectator*.

7.1 LAMB AND ADDISON: THE FAMILIAR ESSAY 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Tell how a reflective essay differs from a story and from a report.
- Read Charles Lamb’s “New Year’s Eve” and trace its moves from occasion to memory to reflection.
- Copy the model by hand and write an imitation paragraph about a sound or an occasion from your own life.

Warm-up. Think of one sound that always makes you remember something: a church bell, a screen door, a tractor starting, your grandmother’s kettle. Say the sound and the memory in two sentences. Then ask: why does that sound bring back that memory?

Video slot. Video coming. Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and The Spectator, or Charles Lamb and the Essays of Elia (a literature lecture or library talk). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

essay

From the French *essai*, “a try” or “an attempt.” Montaigne gave the name in 1580 to short prose pieces in which he tried out his thoughts.

familiar essay

A short, friendly essay in the first person about an ordinary subject (a bell, a birthday, a meal), written as if to a friend.

reflective essay

A true account of an event or experience from your own life, together with your thinking about what it meant.

occasion

The event or moment that sets an essay going: Lamb’s New Year bells, Franklin’s whistle.

pen name

A name an author writes under. Lamb wrote as “Elia”; Addison wrote as “Mr. Spectator.”

CORE IDEAS

A new kind of writing. All year you have practiced the classical exercises: you compared lives, gave words to a person at a moment, and described a shield and a painting. In this unit you write about real events from *your own* life and think about what they meant. A story invents; a report gathers facts; a reflective essay tells something true that happened to you and then turns it over in the light. The subject is never “who I am” in the abstract. It is a day, a person, a piece of work, a mistake, a mercy: something that happened, and what you learned by it.

Addison and the Spectator. On March 1, 1711, Joseph Addison and his old school friend Richard Steele began a single-sheet London paper called *The Spectator*. It came out six days a week, was read aloud in coffeehouses, and ran until the end of 1712 (with a brief revival in 1714). Each number was one short essay by an imaginary narrator, Mr. Spectator, a quiet gentleman who watched London and said little. Addison wrote that he would try “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality.” His sentences are clear and balanced, his humor gentle, his aim always to make readers wiser. Young Benjamin Franklin taught himself to write by copying and rewriting *Spectator* essays, the same method you use this year.

Lamb and Elia. A century later, Charles Lamb (1775–1834), a clerk at the East India House in London, began writing essays for the *London Magazine* in 1820 under the name “Elia.” They were collected as *Essays of Elia* in 1823. Lamb’s voice is very different from Addison’s. He loves old words (“twelvemonth,” “methinks”), stops in mid-sentence to add a thought in parentheses, quotes poets he has read, and moves easily from a joke to something sad. Behind his gentleness was a hard life: for nearly forty years he cared for his sister Mary through long illnesses, and never married.

What the two share. Addison and Lamb are the two great masters of the English familiar essay, and their essays have the same bones. (1) A real “I” speaks, honestly, about faults as well as strengths. (2) The subject is ordinary: a bell, a meal, a club, an old schoolmaster. (3) The essay moves from *the particular to the general*: from one night to what all of us feel. (4) The tone is conversational, as if the writer were talking across a table. (5) The writer brings in his reading: Scripture, poets, old sayings.

How Lamb’s paragraph moves. Read the model slowly. It has four moves. *Occasion*: the bells ring out the old year. *Memory*: the sound gathers up “all I have done or suffered, performed or neglected.” *Reflection*: “I begin to know its worth, as when a person dies.” *Turn*: his friends cheer the new year, but he is “none of those.” Along the way he borrows a line from his friend Coleridge (“I saw the skirts of the departing Year”) and one from Pope’s *Odyssey* (“Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest”). Notice the dashes and parentheses: they let you hear a man thinking aloud.

Copy, then imitate. This week you copy Lamb’s paragraph by hand, slowly, the way Franklin copied the *Spectator*. Copying makes you notice what you would skim past: the semicolons, the pairs (“done or suffered, performed or neglected”), the long sentence followed by a short one. Then you write your own paragraph on a sound or occasion from your life, using Lamb’s four moves but your own words and subject.

The model. Charles Lamb, “New Year’s Eve,” *Essays of Elia* (1823), from *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. 2, Project Gutenberg #10343

Of all sounds of all bells--(bells, the music nighest bordering upon heaven)--most solemn and touching is the peal which rings out the Old Year. I never hear it without a gathering-up of my mind to a concentration of all the images that have been diffused over the past twelvemonth; all I have done or suffered, performed or neglected--in that regretted time. I begin to know its worth, as when a person

dies. It takes a personal colour; nor was it a poetical flight in a contemporary, when he exclaimed

I saw the skirts of the departing Year.

It is no more than what in sober sadness every one of us seems to be conscious of, in that awful leave-taking. I am sure I felt it, and all felt it with me, last night; though some of my companions affected rather to manifest an exhilaration at the birth of the coming year, than any very tender regrets for the decease of its predecessor. But I am none of those who--

Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.

PICTURE STUDY



The Angelus, Jean-François Millet, 1857-1859 · Oil on canvas · Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

A man and his wife have been digging potatoes. Far off, a church bell rings the evening Angelus, and they stop, bow their heads and pray. Millet later said the picture came from memory: when he was a boy working in the fields, his grandmother never failed to stop the work when the bell rang, so that they could pray. Like Lamb's essay, the painting begins with a bell and becomes a remembering.

Look closely

- Find the church steeple. How far away is it? How would the sound reach the field?
- Look at the man's hat and the woman's hands. What do they tell you about this moment?
- Find the tools and the basket. What were they doing a minute ago?

Talk about it

1. Millet painted a memory of his grandmother. Write three sentences about a person in your family whose habit you still remember.
2. Why might a painter (or an essayist) choose the end of the day for a moment of reflection?

WRITING PROJECT: THE BELL PARAGRAPH: COPY AND IMITATE

You will copy Lamb's paragraph by hand and then write one paragraph of your own (150–200 words) that follows his four moves: occasion, memory, reflection, turn.

Choose a true sound or occasion from your own life: the last bell of a school year, the church bell on Easter morning, the whistle at the end of a ball game, the clock in your grandparents' hall.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage
- A pencil and a colored pencil for marking

Steps

1. Copy the model by hand, slowly, keeping every comma, dash and parenthesis.
2. With the colored pencil, mark Lamb's four moves in the margin: O (occasion), M (memory), R (reflection), T (turn).
3. List three sounds or occasions that bring back memories for you. Choose the one you can say the most about truthfully.
4. Write your occasion sentence: name the sound and when you hear it.
5. Write two or three memory sentences: what the sound gathers up. Use at least one pair, like Lamb's "done or suffered."
6. Write a reflection sentence that says what you understand now, and a turn sentence that shows how your view differs from someone else's or from your younger self's.
7. Read your paragraph aloud. Where you pause to add a thought, try a dash or a parenthesis.

Check your work

- My paragraph has all four moves, in order.
- Everything in it is true; I did not invent events.
- I used at least one pair of words joined by *or* or *and*.
- I used dashes or parentheses correctly, for an interrupting thought, not in place of every comma.
- Every pronoun clearly points to one noun.
- I copied Lamb's paragraph exactly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model paragraph by hand.
2. Make two columns, "Addison" and "Lamb," and list three things you learned about each.
3. List five ordinary things that could start a familiar essay (a door, a coat, a recipe, a road, a dog).

History note. Lamb and Samuel Taylor Coleridge were schoolboys together at Christ's Hospital in London and stayed friends for life. The line Lamb quotes, "I saw the skirts of the departing Year," is from Coleridge's "Ode to the Departing Year" (1796). Addison and Steele had also been schoolboys together, at the Charterhouse. Both great essay partnerships grew out of school friendships: "iron sharpeneth iron" (Proverbs 27:17).

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.3 "Dashes, Parentheses and Hyphens." Lamb's "--(bells, the music nighest bordering upon heaven)--" shows an interrupting thought; in your own paragraph, use a dash or parentheses for one aside and a hyphen in one compound like "gathering-up."

For families. Lamb's Gutenberg text prints dashes as double hyphens (--), as the model shows. In 1796 Lamb's sister Mary, in a fit of madness, killed their mother; Charles took charge of her for the rest of his life. Students need not know the details, but older students who read further will meet them. The model is from *The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb*, Vol. 2 (Gutenberg #10343). The rest of "New Year's Eve" is gentle but melancholy and mentions a youthful love; it is fine to read with a parent. The Angelus is a Catholic evening prayer recalling the angel's message to Mary (Luke 1:26-38); families may wish to explain the custom.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote this imitation paragraph. Label its four moves and suggest one improvement.

“Every year on the last day of wheat harvest, the combine stops and the field goes quiet. I never hear that silence without remembering the whole summer at once: the broken belt in June, the dust in my teeth, the day my father let me drive the truck alone. I begin to know what the summer was worth only when it is gone. My little brother runs to the house cheering, but I stand at the edge of the stubble a minute longer.”

1. Occasion: the combine stops on the last day of harvest.
2. Memory: the broken belt, the dust, driving the truck alone (a list of particular things, as Lamb has).
3. Reflection: “I begin to know what the summer was worth only when it is gone.” This echoes Lamb’s “as when a person dies.”
4. Turn: the brother cheers; the writer lingers. Improvement: add a pair, such as “all I worked at or worried over,” and one aside in a dash.

Answer: All four moves are present and true to life. Revised memory sentence: “I never hear that silence without remembering the whole summer at once--all I worked at or worried over: the broken belt in June, the dust in my teeth, the day my father let me drive the truck alone.”

Example 2. This sentence tries to imitate Lamb but uses dashes badly: “The bell—it rang—at noon—and I—remembered—my grandmother.” Revise it.

1. A dash or a pair of parentheses marks one interrupting thought, not every pause.
2. Find the real interruption: something you would say in a lower voice.
3. Keep the main sentence whole and set the aside off once.

Answer: “The noon bell (the same bell that rang for her wedding) always brings back my grandmother.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does the French word *essai* mean?
2. **EASY** Who began *The Spectator*, and in what year?
3. **EASY** What pen name did Charles Lamb use?
4. **EASY** How is a reflective essay different from a short story?
5. **MEDIUM** Name Lamb’s four moves in the model and quote a few words from each.
6. **MEDIUM** Find the two pairs of opposites in “all I have done or suffered, performed or neglected.” What do they add?

7. **MEDIUM** Name three marks that Addison's and Lamb's essays share.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a two-sentence opening for a familiar essay on an ordinary object in your house, in the manner of Lamb.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing only the story and leaving out the reflection, or only the reflection and leaving out the event.
- Inventing details to make the piece more exciting. A reflective essay must be true.
- Using dashes for every pause, so that none of them stands out.
- Making the essay a list of feelings about yourself instead of an account of a real event, person or place.

Make it a game · Addison or Lamb? The parent reads short sentences, some written in Addison's plain, balanced style and some in Lamb's style with old words, dashes and asides (the parent may make them up). The student calls out "Addison!" or "Lamb!" and names the clue. Switch roles and let the student write two sentences for each.

Scripture. "I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old." (Psalm 77:11, KJV)

The psalmist reflects on the past to find God's hand in it; the reflective essay is a disciplined way of remembering.

Practice: answers

1. A try or an attempt.
2. Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, in 1711.
3. Elia.
4. A short story is invented; a reflective essay tells something true from the writer's own life and thinks about what it meant.
5. Occasion ("the peal which rings out the Old Year"); memory ("all I have done or suffered"); reflection ("I begin to know its worth, as when a person dies"); turn ("But I am none of those who--").
6. Done/suffered (what he did and what happened to him) and performed/neglected (duties kept and duties missed). Together they cover the whole year, good and bad, briefly.
7. Three of: a real "I" speaking honestly; an ordinary subject; movement from the particular to the general; a conversational tone; quotations from the writer's reading.
8. Sample: Of all the doors in our house--(and an old farmhouse has more doors than reasons for them)--the kitchen door is the one I hear in my sleep. It slaps twice when my father comes in from chores, and I have learned to tell the season by the sound.

7.2 FROM EVENT TO MEANING: FRANKLIN’S WHISTLE

OBJECTIVES

- Find the turn in a reflective essay: the sentence where the event becomes meaning.
- Read Franklin’s “The Whistle” and explain how one childhood purchase became a rule for his life.
- Draft an event-and-meaning piece of two or three paragraphs about a small true event from your own life.

Warm-up. Tell about a time you paid too much for something, in money, time or trouble. Then finish this sentence aloud: “Ever since then, when I ..., I say to myself ...”

Video slot. Video coming. Benjamin Franklin in Paris, 1776–1785 (a museum or historical-society program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

event

What happened: the particular, concrete happening at the center of a personal narrative.

reflection

The writer’s thinking about the event: what it meant, what it taught, how it looks now.

the turn

The sentence where an essay moves from telling what happened to telling what it meant.

Franklin’s: “This, however, was afterwards of use to me.”

the two selves

The younger self who lived the event and the older self who now writes about it. A reflective essay lets the reader hear both.

tacked-on moral

A lesson stuck onto the end of a story that does not really grow out of it (“And that taught me to always be nice”).

CORE IDEAS

Two halves. Every reflective essay has two halves, though they are not always equal in length. The first tells the *event*: what happened, where, to whom, in what order. The second tells the *meaning*: what the writer understood, then or later. A piece with only the first half is a story. A piece with only the second half is a sermon without a text. Your task is to join them so that the meaning grows out of the event the way an apple grows out of a branch.

Franklin’s whistle. In November 1779, Benjamin Franklin was in France as the American minister, trying to keep the young country’s alliance alive. To amuse his friend and neighbor

Madame Brillon, he wrote her a letter that has been printed ever since as “The Whistle.” In the model, read the first paragraph. It is all event: a seven-year-old with a pocketful of coins, a whistle he hears in another boy’s hands, a bad bargain, a house full of noise, and laughing brothers and sisters. Notice how particular it is: “coppers,” “four times as much,” “cried with vexation.”

The turn. Then comes one sentence that changes everything: “This, however, was afterwards of use to me.” The little word *however* signals the turn; *afterwards* tells us the older Franklin is now speaking. The foolish purchase became a short saying he could carry, “Don’t give too much for the whistle,” and in the rest of the letter he uses it to judge grown men: the courtier who gives up his liberty for favor, the miser who gives up every comfort for money. A child’s mistake became an old man’s wisdom.

Meaning must be earned. The commonest fault in personal writing is the tacked-on moral: “And that is how I learned that honesty is the best policy.” The reader does not believe it, because nothing in the story prepared for it. Franklin’s lesson is believable because it fits the event exactly: he gave too much for something, and the saying is about giving too much. Ask yourself: does my meaning come out of *this* event, or could it be stuck onto any story at all?

Small events, large meanings. You do not need a dramatic event. Franklin’s whole essay rests on a penny whistle. A broken jar, a lost race, a long afternoon in a hospital waiting room, a job done badly and done over: these are better subjects than a summary of a whole vacation, because you can tell them in detail. Choose a single afternoon, not a whole year.

Looking back with faith. Some meanings are seen only years later. Joseph told his brothers, long after they sold him, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good” (Genesis 50:20). The older self sees what the younger self could not. A Christian writer may honestly say where he now sees God’s hand, without forcing a neat lesson onto every event, and without pretending he understood more at the time than he did.

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, “The Whistle” (letter to Madame Brillon, 1779), Boston: Brad Stephens & Company, 1921, Project Gutenberg #78663*

When I was a child of seven years old, my friends, on a holiday, filled my pocket with coppers. I went directly to a shop where they sold toys for children; and, being charmed with the sound of a *whistle*, that I met by the way in the hands of another boy, I voluntarily offered and gave all my money for one. I then came home, and went whistling all over the house, much pleased with my *whistle*, but disturbing all the family. My brothers, and sisters, and cousins, understanding the bargain I had made, told me I had given four times as much for it as it was worth; put me in mind what good things I might have bought with the rest of the money; and laughed at me so much for my folly, that I cried with vexation, and the reflection gave me more chagrin than the *whistle* gave me pleasure.

This, however, was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind; so that often, when I was tempted to buy some unnecessary thing, I said to myself, *Donâ€™t give too much for the whistle*; and I saved my money

PICTURE STUDY



Snap the Whip, Winslow Homer, 1872 · Oil on canvas · Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

School is out, and a line of country boys plays “snap the whip.” The boy at the head runs and stops short; the line swings, and the boys at the tail are flung off. Homer painted it in 1872, when one-room schoolhouses like this were already beginning to disappear. Every boy in the line is living an event; only years later will any of them know what it meant.

Look closely

- Find the two boys at the left end. What has just happened to them?
- Look at the boy anchoring the right end. How is he standing?
- Find the schoolhouse and the hills. What season is it, and how can you tell?

Talk about it

1. Pick one boy and write the event in three sentences as he would tell it that evening. Then write one sentence as he might reflect on it forty years later.
2. Homer painted a game that was ending along with the one-room school. What game or custom from your childhood might you write about someday?

WRITING PROJECT: MY WHISTLE: AN EVENT AND ITS MEANING

Write two or three paragraphs (300–450 words) about one small, true event from your life and what it came to mean. Follow Franklin’s plan: tell the event in detail, make a clear turn, and give a meaning that fits the event.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage

Steps

1. List five small events from your life that you still think about: a mistake, a surprise, a kindness, a job, a loss.
2. Choose one that happened in a single day or less. Write down five concrete details (things seen, heard, said).
3. Draft the event paragraph in past tense. Include who was there, what was said and how it ended.
4. Write a turn sentence that moves to the older self, using a word like *however*, *afterwards*, *since then* or *now*.
5. Draft the meaning paragraph. If the event gave you a short saying (as Franklin's did), include it. Show one later time the meaning helped you.
6. Test the meaning: could it be stuck onto any story? If so, make it more exact.
7. Read the piece aloud to a parent and ask, "Did you believe the ending?"

Check your work

- The event is one particular happening, told with at least five concrete details.
- There is a clear turn sentence.
- The meaning fits this event and is not a tacked-on moral.
- No dangling modifiers: every opening phrase like "Looking back" is followed by the person who looks.
- Pronouns agree with their antecedents and point clearly to one noun.
- Everything is true.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Franklin's turn sentence and underline the two words that signal it.
2. Write three short sayings like "Don't give too much for the whistle" that came from your own experience.
3. List three events from your life and, beside each, one possible meaning.

History note. Franklin lived at Passy, just outside Paris, from 1777 to 1785, while he served as America's representative to France. He wrote short pieces like "The Whistle" and "The Ephemera" for his neighbor Madame Brillon, a gifted musician, and printed some on a small press in his house. "The Whistle" is dated November 10, 1779.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 22.2 "Dangling Modifiers." Reflective writing invites openers like "Looking back, the whistle seemed foolish," which dangles because the whistle is not looking back; write "Looking back, I see that the whistle was foolish."

For families. The model is the first two paragraphs of Franklin’s letter, from Gutenberg #78663 (1921 edition, which italicizes *whistle*). The rest of the letter applies the saying to ambitious courtiers, misers and pleasure-seekers and is worth reading aloud. Help your student choose a small event they can tell honestly; a modest subject told well is better than a dramatic one told vaguely. Sad or private events are allowed but never required.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student’s ending: “I dropped my mom’s glass casserole dish in the driveway and it shattered. And that taught me that everything happens for a reason.” Find the problem and revise.

1. The meaning is tacked on; it could end any story.
2. Ask what the event actually showed. The student was carrying too much at once to save a trip.
3. Make the meaning fit the event exactly, and add a turn.

Answer: “I had tried to carry the casserole, the salad and two pitchers in one trip to save myself thirty seconds. Since then, when I am tempted to cut a corner to save a little time, I remember the glass on the gravel and make two trips.”

Example 2. Revise this dangling turn: “Thinking about it now, that summer at the farm changed everything.”

1. Who is thinking? Not the summer.
2. Put the thinker right after the phrase.
3. Make “changed everything” more exact.

Answer: “Thinking about it now, I see that the summer at my uncle’s farm taught me to finish a job before I ask whether I like it.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What are the two halves of a reflective essay?
2. **EASY** How old was Franklin when he bought the whistle?
3. **EASY** Quote Franklin’s turn sentence.
4. **EASY** To whom did Franklin write “The Whistle,” and where was he living?
5. **MEDIUM** Find three concrete details in Franklin’s event paragraph.
6. **MEDIUM** What is a tacked-on moral? Give an example and tell why it fails.
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: “Remembering that day, my grandfather’s patience still amazes me.”

8. **CHALLENGE** Write a four-sentence event-and-meaning piece in Franklin's pattern: event, consequence, turn, saying.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Summarizing a whole trip or season instead of telling one event in detail.
- Ending with a moral that does not grow out of the event.
- Forgetting the turn, so the reader cannot tell where the story stops and the reflection starts.
- Opening the reflection with a dangling phrase ("Looking back, it was ...").

Make it a game · Whistle Sayings. Each player tells a tiny true event in thirty seconds (a burnt pancake, a lost glove). The next player must invent a Franklin-style saying that fits it exactly ("Don't flip before the bubbles"). The teller judges whether the saying truly fits; if it does, the inventor scores a point.

Scripture. "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." (Genesis 50:20, KJV)

Joseph looks back on the worst event of his youth and sees its meaning in God's providence: the older self understanding what the younger could not.

Practice: answers

1. The event (what happened) and the meaning (what it came to mean).
2. Seven.
3. "This, however, was afterwards of use to me, the impression continuing on my mind."
4. To Madame Brillon, his neighbor at Passy, near Paris, France.
5. Three of: a pocket full of coppers; the whistle in another boy's hands; whistling all over the house; paying four times its worth; brothers, sisters and cousins laughing; crying with vexation.
6. A lesson stuck onto a story that does not grow from it. Sample: "I missed the bus, and that taught me to be grateful for my family." It fails because nothing about missing a bus leads to that meaning.
7. "Remembering that day, I am still amazed by my grandfather's patience."
8. Sample: When I was ten I skipped the last coat of varnish on a birdhouse because I wanted to hang it before supper. By March the roof had split and the wrens had moved out. That split roof has been useful to me since. When I want to skip a last step, I tell myself, "Don't lose the wrens."

7.3 VOICE: MR. SPECTATOR TELLS HIS OWN HISTORY

OBJECTIVES

- Define voice and name the four things that make it: diction, sentence shape, what the writer notices, and attitude.
- Read Addison’s account of himself in *Spectator* No. 1 and explain how understatement and humility create his voice.
- Rewrite a flat paragraph about yourself in a true, natural voice, and compare it with an imitation of Addison.

Warm-up. Close your eyes while a parent reads one sentence from three different books (for example, the King James Bible, a cookbook and Dr. Seuss). Can you tell which is which before you hear what it is about? What gave each one away?

Video slot. Video coming. Joseph Addison and the eighteenth-century coffeehouse (a museum, library or literature lecture). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

voice

The sound of a particular person on the page: what makes a reader feel that someone real is speaking.

diction

Word choice: plain or fancy, old or new, exact or vague.

tone

The writer’s attitude toward the subject and the reader: grave, playful, warm, dry, sorrowful.

understatement

Saying less than the truth on purpose, often for gentle humor: “I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words.”

self-deprecation

Humor aimed gently at oneself. Used well, it is a kind of humility that wins the reader’s trust.

CORE IDEAS

What voice is. If your best friend sent you an unsigned letter, you would probably know who wrote it by the second sentence. That is voice. It is not a trick or a decoration; it is the sound of a real person thinking. In a reflective essay, voice matters more than anywhere else, because the reader is spending time with *you*. A true voice makes the reader trust you; a borrowed or fake voice makes him stop believing.

Four parts of a voice. Voice is made of four things you can study. (1) *Diction*: do you say “house” or “residence,” “scared” or “apprehensive”? (2) *Sentence shape*: long and winding like Lamb’s, or balanced like Addison’s, or short and plain? (3) *What you notice*: one writer sees the price of the whistle, another the color of the sky. (4) *Attitude*: grave, amused, tender, dry. Change any one of these and the voice changes.

Mr. Spectator’s voice. In the very first *Spectator* (March 1, 1711), Addison introduces his narrator by having him tell his own history. Read the model. Mr. Spectator is a man famous for *not talking*, and he tells it with a perfectly straight face: he “distinguished myself by a most profound silence,” he scarce spoke “an hundred words” in eight years, and he does “not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life.” That is understatement and exaggeration used together for gentle comedy. Notice how calm and balanced the sentences are, and how the joke is always on himself.

Humility in the voice. The best personal essayists laugh at themselves more than at anyone else. Franklin laughed at the boy who overpaid for a whistle; Mr. Spectator laughs at the silent young man. This is not putting yourself down; it is honesty with a smile. It also keeps a personal essay from turning into boasting. A writer who tells only his victories sounds like an advertisement. A writer who admits his follies sounds like a friend.

Two voices compared. Set Addison beside Lamb. Addison is clear, even, a little formal, and dry; you can hear the smile but never the laugh. Lamb is quirky, full of old words, dashes and asides, and swings quickly from fun to sorrow. Both are good. Neither is “correct.” Your voice will not be exactly like either, but by imitating both you learn what the controls are, the way a young pianist learns by playing Bach and Mozart before he writes his own music.

Honest and gracious. Two rules guard a Christian writer’s voice. Be truthful: “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). Do not inflate events, invent drama or put on a manner that is not yours. And be gracious: let your speech be “seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Slang, sarcasm and thesaurus words all ring false. Read your sentences aloud: if you would never say it to a respected grown-up across the table, rewrite it.

The model. *Joseph Addison, The Spectator No. 1 (March 1, 1711), from The Coverley Papers, From ‘The Spectator’, ed. O. M. Myers, Project Gutenberg #6482*

As for the rest of my infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I shall pass it over in silence. I find, that, during my nonage, I had the reputation of a very sullen youth, but was always a favourite of my schoolmaster, who used to say, *that my parts were solid, and would wear well*. I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence; for during the space of eight years, excepting in the public exercises of the college, I scarce uttered the quantity of an hundred words; and indeed do not remember that I ever spoke three sentences together in my whole life. Whilst I was in this learned body, I applied myself with so much diligence to my studies, that there are very few celebrated books, either in the learned or the modern tongues, which I am not acquainted with

PICTURE STUDY



Saying Grace (Le Bénédicité), Jean-Siméon Chardin, 1740 · Oil on canvas · Musée du Louvre, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

A mother is setting out the noon meal. Before anyone eats, the littlest child folds tiny hands to say grace, while the mother pauses and the older sister watches to see whether it is said properly. Chardin painted quiet household scenes in soft, warm colors with no showy effects. Art lovers say you can recognize a Chardin across a room, the way you recognize a friend's voice: the calm, the plainness and the tenderness are always his.

Look closely

- Find the child's hands. What is the child doing?
- Look at the mother's face and hands. Is she hurrying or waiting?
- Find the plain objects: the pot, the chair, the cloth. How are they painted: sharply or softly?

Talk about it

1. Chardin's "voice" as a painter is quiet and warm. Describe a meal in your home in a voice that matches this painting: plain, calm and tender.
2. Now describe the same meal in Mr. Spectator's dry, amused voice. What changed?

WRITING PROJECT: YOUR OWN HISTORY, TWICE

Mr. Spectator begins with "my own history." You will write a short history of some part of your own childhood (150–250 words) twice: once in an imitation of Addison's voice, and once in your own natural voice.

Choose a true and ordinary part of your past: learning to ride a bicycle, your first chore, the year your family moved, the way you once refused to eat peas.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The model passage
- A parent or sibling to listen

Steps

1. Copy the model by hand and underline every understatement or gentle exaggeration.
2. List five true facts about the part of your childhood you chose.
3. Draft version A in Addison's manner: calm, balanced sentences, a straight face, the joke on yourself. Try one sentence that begins "As for ..." and one with a semicolon.
4. Draft version B in your own voice: the words you would really use telling it to your grandparents.
5. Read both aloud. Mark in the margin where each sounds most like a real person.
6. Write three sentences comparing the two versions: diction, sentence shape, attitude.

Check your work

- Both versions tell the same true facts; nothing is invented.
- Version A uses at least one understatement and one semicolon correctly.
- Version B contains no slang, sarcasm or words I would not really say.
- Every pronoun has a clear antecedent; no "it" or "they" points to two things.
- I used *who* and *whom* correctly.
- The humor is aimed at myself, not at another person.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model by hand.
2. Write one sentence about your morning in three voices: Lamb's, Addison's and your own.
3. Collect five words you use often that sound like you, and five words you would never use.

History note. Addison (1672–1719) gave Mr. Spectator a club of friends, most famously the country squire Sir Roger de Coverley, whose doings fill many later papers. Franklin wrote in his *Autobiography* that as a boy he came upon an odd volume of the *Spectator*, thought the writing excellent, and taught himself style by making notes on the essays, rewriting them from his notes and comparing his versions with the originals.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.4 "Grammar and Good Writing." Voice is built from grammar choices, such as a balanced compound sentence, a semicolon, or a short sentence after a long one, so use them on purpose as you draft both versions.

For families. The model is the third paragraph of *Spectator* No. 1, from Gutenberg #6482; old spellings such as “favourite” and “an hundred” are kept. “Nonage” means childhood or youth; “parts” means abilities. The earlier paragraphs of No. 1 include a few frank lines about the narrator’s infancy, which is why the lesson begins with the third. Help your student see that self-deprecating humor is a form of humility, not self-contempt; if a draft becomes harsh toward the self or others, steer it back to gentle honesty.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Find the voice problem in this student opening and revise it: “My existence commenced in an ordinary residence, and my early years were characterized by an exceptional enthusiasm for agricultural endeavors.”

1. The diction is inflated: “existence commenced,” “residence,” “agricultural endeavors.” No one talks like this.
2. Find the plain truth underneath: the student was born in an ordinary house and loved farm work as a small child.
3. Keep a little of Addison’s dryness, but in real words.

Answer: “I was born in an ordinary white house on a gravel road, and before I could read I had made up my mind to be a farmer. My mother says I pulled up half her carrots that first spring to see whether they were done.”

Example 2. Imitate Addison’s sentence, “I had not been long at the university, before I distinguished myself by a most profound silence,” about a different place and quality.

1. Keep the frame: “I had not been long at ___, before I distinguished myself by ___.”
2. Choose something true and slightly foolish about yourself.
3. Keep the straight face; let the reader find the joke.

Answer: “I had not been long on my uncle’s farm, before I distinguished myself by a most remarkable talent for leaving gates open.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is voice in writing?
2. **EASY** Name the four parts of a voice.
3. **EASY** What is Mr. Spectator famous for, according to the model?
4. **EASY** What did Mr. Spectator’s schoolmaster say about him?
5. **MEDIUM** Find one example of understatement or straight-faced exaggeration in the model and explain the humor.
6. **MEDIUM** Give two differences between Addison’s voice and Lamb’s.

7. **MEDIUM** Fix the unclear pronoun: "When my brother and my father finished the fence, he said it was the best work he had done."
8. **CHALLENGE** Write three sentences about your handwriting, your cooking or your singing in Mr. Spectator's voice.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Using big words from a thesaurus to sound "literary." It sounds false.
- Using slang or sarcasm and calling it voice.
- Turning humor against other people instead of against yourself.
- Inventing funny events that did not happen to make the voice livelier.

Make it a game • Voice Swap. Write a plain sentence on a card ("The dog ran away and we found him at the neighbor's"). Draw a voice card: Addison, Lamb, King James, sports announcer, grandmother. Retell the sentence in that voice in one breath. Others guess the voice and name one clue: diction, sentence shape, what was noticed, or attitude.

Scripture. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:6, KJV)

A writer's voice should be like Paul's rule for speech: gracious, with enough salt to be lively, and fitting for the listener.

Practice: answers

1. The sound of a particular person on the page, what makes a reader feel someone real is speaking.
2. Diction, sentence shape, what the writer notices, attitude (tone).
3. His silence: he scarcely spoke a hundred words in eight years at the university.
4. "That my parts were solid, and would wear well."
5. Sample: "I distinguished myself by a most profound silence." People usually distinguish themselves by doing something; he did it by doing nothing, and he says it as if it were an honor.
6. Two of: Addison is clear, balanced and dry, Lamb quirky and full of asides; Addison uses even sentences, Lamb dashes and parentheses; Addison keeps a straight face, Lamb moves quickly between fun and sadness; Lamb uses more old words.
7. Sample: "When my brother and my father finished the fence, my father said it was the best work he had ever done."
8. Sample: As for my singing, there being nothing in it to recommend it, I shall pass it over in silence, which is what my family has long desired. I am told that in my fourth year I sang through an entire Christmas service, a full beat behind the congregation. My grandmother, who was a kind woman, used to say that my voice was hearty and would carry well.

7.4 THE REFLECTIVE ESSAY

OBJECTIVES

- Plan a reflective essay with five parts: occasion, event, turn, reflection and return.
- Use past tense for the event and present tense for the reflection, and shift between them on purpose.
- Write, revise and copy a finished reflective essay of 600–900 words about a true event, person or piece of work.

Warm-up. Look back over the paragraphs you wrote in 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3. Which one could grow into a full essay? Read it aloud and tell a parent what you would add.

Video slot. Video coming. How to set a fence post, or a short documentary on an old trade such as blacksmithing or barn-raising (for the model essay’s subject). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

occasion

The present-day moment that opens the essay and calls up the memory (Lamb’s bells, a fence post seen years later).

return

An ending that comes back to the opening image or occasion, now seen with new understanding.

scene

A part of the essay told moment by moment, with details and speech, as if the reader were there.

summary

A part of the essay that covers time quickly (“For the rest of that summer ...”).

deliberate tense shift

Moving on purpose from past tense (what happened) to present tense (what I understand now), signaled clearly to the reader.

CORE IDEAS

Putting it together. In this unit you have read the two masters of the familiar essay, learned to turn an event into meaning, and practiced finding a true voice. Now you write the whole thing: a reflective essay of 600–900 words about one true event, person or piece of work from your life. This essay will go into your Grade 8 portfolio, and its skills will serve you in high school, when you write a college essay that asks the same question in grown-up clothes: “Tell us about a time that shaped you.”

Five parts. A strong reflective essay usually has five parts. (1) *Occasion*: a present moment that calls up the memory (a smell, a sound, an object, a date). (2) *Event*: the memory itself, told as a scene with concrete details and real speech. (3) *Turn*: one sentence that moves from then to now. (4) *Reflection*: what you understand now that you did not then, with one later example. (5) *Return*: a closing paragraph that comes back to the opening occasion and sees it differently. This is not a cage; Lamb and Addison move freely. But it is a sound frame for a first full essay.

Scene and summary. Do not tell every part at the same speed. Slow down for the moment that matters most: give the reader what was seen, heard and said, as Franklin does with the whistling and the laughing cousins. Speed up for the parts in between: “The rest of the afternoon went by in sweat and dirt.” A good rule: about half the essay is the event, mostly in scene, and the other half is occasion, turn, reflection and return.

Two tenses, on purpose. The event happened in the past, so tell it in past tense. The reflection is what you think *now*, so it may be in present tense: “I understand now that ...” That shift is right when it is deliberate and clearly marked by a turn. It is wrong when it happens by accident in the middle of the story: “He handed me the shovel, and I dig for an hour.” Check every paragraph: is it then or now?

Choosing a subject. The best subjects are small, true and concrete: one day of work beside a grandparent, a mistake you had to fix, a stranger’s kindness, a hard week of a family illness, the first time you were trusted with something. Avoid the “greatest day of my life” summary and the essay that only describes your own qualities. Write about something that happened and someone who was there. If you now see God’s hand in it, say so plainly, without forcing it.

Reading the model. The model essay was written for this course to show the five parts in a short space. Read it twice. The first time, simply enjoy it. The second time, mark the occasion (the post seen years later), the event (the leaning post), the turn (“I did not understand it then”), the reflection (work no one sees) and the return (the post still standing). Notice where it slows to a scene and where it summarizes, and where it shifts from past to present tense.

The model. “*The Corner Post*,” a sample reflective essay (abridged). Written for this course.

There is a cedar post at the southwest corner of my grandfather’s pasture. I passed it last week on the way to church, and it was standing as straight as a soldier, the wire still tight against it. I set that post when I was eleven. Or rather, I set it twice.

It was August, and the ground was hard as brick. Grandpa handed me the post-hole digger and said, “Thirty inches. Not twenty-eight.” I dug until my palms burned and then, when he walked to the truck, I quit at about two feet, dropped the post in, and tamped the dirt around it with my boot. When he came back he did not say anything at first. He put his hand on top of the post and pushed. It leaned like a tired man.

“Pull it,” he said.

I pulled it. I dug the last six inches while he held the level, and then he made me tamp the dirt in every four inches with the iron bar until the sound changed from a thud to a ring. It took the rest of the afternoon. I was angry the whole time, and I did not hide it well.

I did not understand it then, but I think I do now. A corner post holds the tension of the whole fence line. Nobody admires it. Nobody sees the thirty inches underground. But if it is shallow, every wire down the line goes slack. Since then, when I am tempted to do the part of a job no one will check halfway, I remember that post leaning under Grandpa’s hand.

Grandpa has been gone two years. The post is still standing. I suppose most of what he built in me is like that: underground, out of sight, and holding.

PICTURE STUDY



The Little Street, Johannes Vermeer, about 1658 · Oil on canvas · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer painted an ordinary brick house on an ordinary street in his town of Delft. A woman sews in the doorway; two children play on the pavement; down a narrow passage a maid bends over her work. Nothing dramatic happens. Yet the patched bricks, the whitewashed walls and the quiet work make the place feel remembered, as if someone loved it. A reflective essay can do the same with a kitchen, a barn or a pew.

Look closely

- Find the woman in the doorway. What is she doing with her hands?
- Find the children. Where are they and what might they be playing?
- Look at the brick wall. Where has it been mended or patched over the years?

Talk about it

1. Choose a place from your childhood and describe it in five plain sentences, the way Vermeer painted this street: ordinary things, seen with care.
2. The bricks show years of mending. What object in your home shows years of use? What event could it open?

WRITING PROJECT: A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Write a reflective essay of 600–900 words about one true event, person or piece of work from your life. Use the five parts, a true voice and a meaning that grows from the event.

Take three or four sittings: plan, draft, revise, and copy fair.

You will need

- Writing notebook and your paragraphs from 7.1–7.3
- The model essay
- Clean paper or a computer for the final copy

Steps

1. Choose your subject. Test it: did it happen in a single day or less? Can you remember at least eight concrete details? Is there someone else in it?
2. Plan the five parts in a short outline: occasion, event, turn, reflection, return.
3. Draft the event first, mostly as a scene in past tense. Include real speech in quotation marks.
4. Draft the occasion and the return together, so that the ending answers the beginning.
5. Draft the turn and the reflection in present tense. Give one later example where the meaning mattered.
6. Revise with the checklist. Read the whole essay aloud to a parent; cut any sentence that sounds unlike you.
7. Copy the final version neatly with a title.

Check your work

- The essay has all five parts, and the return answers the occasion.
- The event is true and told mostly as a scene, with at least eight concrete details.
- The meaning grows from this event and is not tacked on.
- Tense shifts only on purpose: past for the event, present for the reflection; no accidental shifts.
- Pronouns agree with their antecedents and point clearly to one noun; no dangling or misplaced modifiers.

- Quotation marks, commas with dialogue and semicolons are used correctly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the last paragraph of the model and underline the words that return to the opening.
2. List eight concrete details from the event you chose: three things seen, two heard, two said, one felt by hand.
3. Write three possible turn sentences for your essay and star the best.

History note. Montaigne, who named the essay in 1580, wrote, “I am myself the matter of my book,” yet his essays are mostly about books, friends, travel and customs. The best personal writing has always been about the world the writer has lived in, seen through one honest pair of eyes. Augustine’s *Confessions* (about A.D. 400) is the great ancient example: a man looking back over his life to trace God’s hand in it.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.4 “Shifts in Tense, Voice and Mood.” A reflective essay moves from past tense (the event) to present tense (the reflection); check that every shift is deliberate and marked by your turn, and that no tense slips in the middle of a scene.

For families. The model essay is original to this course. Help your student pick a subject that is true and modest; you may need to remind them of details they have forgotten, which is a good conversation in itself. Painful subjects (an illness, a death) are allowed if the student chooses them, but never assign one. Grade the finished essay with the unit portfolio rubric. Vermeer’s *Little Street* hangs in the Rijksmuseum; the house it shows is believed to have stood on the Vlamingstraat in Delft.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student’s draft middle: “Mrs. Hall gave me the pie to carry to the car. I was being careful. Then I trip on the step and the pie flies everywhere. She just laughed.” Find two problems and revise.

1. Accidental tense shift: “was being” and “gave” are past, “trip” and “flies” are present. The event should stay in past tense.
2. Summary where there should be a scene: the key moment needs details and speech.
3. Slow down at the fall and give Mrs. Hall’s actual words.

Answer: “Mrs. Hall handed me the cherry pie, still warm through the towel, and I carried it down the porch steps like a crown. On the last step my heel caught. The pie turned once in the air and landed face down in the gravel. I stood there waiting to be scolded. Mrs. Hall looked at the pie, then at me, and laughed until she had to sit down. ‘Well,’ she said, ‘the chickens will think it’s Thanksgiving.’”

Example 2. This ending is weak: “In conclusion, that day taught me a lot and I will never forget it.” Write a return for an essay whose occasion was finding an old baseball glove in the garage.

1. “In conclusion” and “taught me a lot” are empty; they could end any essay.
2. Go back to the opening image, the glove.
3. Let the reader see the glove with the new understanding.

Answer: “I put the glove back on its nail in the garage. The leather is cracked where Dad oiled it every spring, and the pocket is still shaped to a ball I could not catch until he stopped throwing easy ones.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five parts of a reflective essay in order.
2. **EASY** What is the difference between scene and summary?
3. **EASY** In the model, what is the occasion?
4. **EASY** Quote the turn sentence in the model.
5. **MEDIUM** How does the model’s last paragraph return to the opening?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the accidental tense shift: “Grandpa pushed the post, and it leans like a tired man.”
7. **MEDIUM** Why is “the greatest summer of my life” usually a weak subject?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a five-sentence outline (one sentence per part) for a reflective essay of your own.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Shifting tense by accident in the middle of the event.
- Ending with “In conclusion” or “I will never forget it” instead of a real return.
- Telling the whole event as summary, with no scene and no speech.
- Writing about your own qualities instead of a true event and the people in it.

Make it a game · Then or Now?. The parent reads sentences from the student’s draft (or from the model) one at a time. The student calls “Then!” for a sentence about the event or “Now!” for a sentence of reflection, and checks that its tense matches. A wrong tense earns the parent a point; a correct call earns the student one.

Scripture. “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” (Psalm 90:12, KJV)

Moses prays to count his days rightly; a reflective essay is one way of numbering a day and gaining wisdom from it.

Practice: answers

1. Occasion, event, turn, reflection, return.
2. A scene tells a moment in detail as if the reader were there; a summary covers time quickly.
3. Seeing the corner post standing straight on the way to church last week.
4. "I did not understand it then, but I think I do now."
5. It comes back to the post still standing and uses it as a picture of what the grandfather built in the writer: underground, out of sight, and holding.
6. "Grandpa pushed the post, and it leaned like a tired man."
7. It is too large to tell in detail, so it becomes a list or summary; one event from that summer, told as a scene, is stronger.
8. Sample: Occasion: Every time I smell bread baking I think of my great-aunt's kitchen. Event: When I was nine she let me make the Saturday loaves alone, and I forgot the salt. Turn: I thought she would be angry, but she ate a slice and said, "Now you will never forget it." Reflection: I understand now that she let me fail where failure was cheap, and that a good teacher does that on purpose. Return: I still say "salt" out loud every time I start a loaf.

UNIT 7 REVIEW

The student may answer short items aloud or in writing. Writing items are scored with the unit checklists: truthfulness, a clear turn, a fitting meaning, a natural voice and correct tense, not for spelling alone.

1. (2 pts) How does a reflective essay differ from a short story?
2. (2 pts) Who wrote as “Mr. Spectator,” and who wrote as “Elia”?
3. (3 pts) Name three marks shared by Addison’s and Lamb’s familiar essays.
4. (4 pts) In “The Whistle,” what is the event, what is the turn, and what saying came from it?
5. (4 pts) What is a tacked-on moral? Write a better ending for: “I forgot to water the tomatoes and they died. That taught me to always be kind.”
6. (4 pts) Name the four parts of a writer’s voice.
7. (3 pts) Explain the humor in Mr. Spectator’s “I distinguished myself by a most profound silence.”
8. (2 pts) Fix the dangling modifier: “Looking back now, the move to Kansas was the best thing for our family.”
9. (2 pts) Fix the accidental tense shift: “My father handed me the reins, and I hold them as if they are made of glass.”
10. (5 pts) Name the five parts of a reflective essay in order.
11. (9 pts) Write a one-paragraph reflective piece (100–150 words) about a sound, object or small event from your life, with a clear turn.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A REFLECTIVE ESSAY

Copy your finished reflective essay from 7.4 (600–900 words) neatly with a title. Add a short note at the bottom naming the model (Lamb, Addison or Franklin) whose voice or method helped you most.

- **Event:** One true event told mostly as a scene, with concrete details and real speech.
- **Meaning:** A clear turn and a reflection that grows from the event, with a return that answers the opening.
- **Voice:** Natural, honest and gracious; no slang, sarcasm or inflated words; humor aimed at oneself.
- **Mechanics:** Tense shifts only on purpose; clear pronoun reference; no dangling modifiers; dialogue correctly punctuated.

Answer key

1. A short story is invented; a reflective essay tells a true event from the writer’s life and reflects on what it meant.
2. Joseph Addison (with Richard Steele) wrote *The Spectator*; Charles Lamb wrote as Elia.

3. Three of: a real "I" speaking honestly; an ordinary subject; movement from the particular to the general; a conversational tone; quotations from the writer's reading.
4. Event: at seven, Franklin paid all his coppers, four times its worth, for a whistle and was laughed at. Turn: "This, however, was afterwards of use to me." Saying: "Don't give too much for the whistle."
5. A lesson that does not grow from the event. Sample: "Now when I leave for a week I write the garden on a card and tape it to the door, because plants cannot remind you."
6. Diction, sentence shape, what the writer notices, attitude (tone).
7. People usually distinguish themselves by doing something; he did it by doing nothing, and he says so with a straight face. It is gentle humor aimed at himself.
8. "Looking back now, I see that the move to Kansas was the best thing for our family."
9. "My father handed me the reins, and I held them as if they were made of glass."
10. Occasion, event, turn, reflection, return.
11. Sample: The screen door on our back porch has a spring that sings before it slams. When I was eight I let it slam on the tail of my grandmother's cat, and the cat did not speak to me for a week. My grandmother only said, "Hold the door until it's done." I thought she meant the door. Now I think she meant most things. When I am finishing a job and want to let go too soon, I hear that spring sing and I hold on a moment longer. Score: true event with details (3), clear turn (2), fitting meaning (2), mechanics (2).

REVIEW AND PROMOTION TO RHETORIC

The last unit of the progymnasmata. You will look back down the whole ladder of fourteen exercises, from fable to law, and see how one story can climb every rung. You will take one of your best pieces off the page and deliver it from memory, revise early work with Franklin's method, and then gather a portfolio with one finished piece for each exercise. The year ends with an oral examination and your promotion to rhetoric, where you will learn to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason" (1 Peter 3:15).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has written most of the progymnasmata exercises in earlier grades, or is ready to write short new pieces for any that are missing.
- Has completed (or is completing) Grammar Level 3, Units 21–24, for the revision checklist.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can name the fourteen exercises in order and tell what each one does.
- ☐ I can memorize a piece of my own writing and deliver it clearly to listeners.
- ☐ I can revise from the whole piece down to the sentence, using Franklin's method and Grammar Level 3.
- ☐ I can assemble a portfolio with a table of contents and a preface.
- ☐ I can answer questions about my work aloud with a claim, a reason and an example.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Aesop's Fables, translated by George Fyler Townsend (Project Gutenberg #21)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21>): Free. The fable of the father and his sons (8.1) and many more for climbing the ladder.
- **Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Free. Part One tells how Franklin taught himself to write from the Spectator (8.3).
- **The Spectator, Volumes 1, 2 and 3, ed. Henry Morley (Project Gutenberg #12030)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12030>): Free. The essays Franklin imitated, for anyone who wants to try his method on the original.

8.1 ONE LADDER, FOURTEEN RUNGS: THE PROGYMNASMATA REVIEWED

OBJECTIVES

- Name the fourteen exercises of the progymnasmata in order and tell in one sentence what each one does.
- Show how one fable can climb the whole ladder, from retelling to thesis and law.
- Take stock of your own writing from earlier grades and plan the pieces your portfolio still needs.

Warm-up. Without looking, write the names of as many of the classical exercises as you can remember in two minutes. Then put a star by the one you liked writing most and a check by the one you found hardest.

Video slot. Video coming. The progymnasmata and classical rhetoric in Renaissance grammar schools (how Shakespeare learned to write). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

progymnasmata

Greek for “preliminary exercises”: fourteen graded writing exercises, set down by Theon, Hermogenes and Aphthonius, that prepared students for full speeches.

Aphthonius

A Greek teacher of rhetoric (about A.D. 400) whose short handbook gave the fourteen exercises their usual order and a model for each.

thesis

The thirteenth exercise: arguing a general question that names no particular person, such as “Should a man marry?” or “Is it better to live in the country or the city?”

introduction of a law

The fourteenth exercise: speaking for or against a proposed law, asking whether it is lawful, just, useful and possible.

inventory

A complete list of what you have. Here, a list of your past pieces sorted under the fourteen exercises.

CORE IDEAS

A ladder, not a list. For six years you have climbed the progymnasmata one rung at a time. Each exercise used the skills of the one below it. You cannot tell a narrative well until you can retell a fable; you cannot refute a story until you can tell one; you cannot compare two

men until you can praise one. This week you stand near the top and look back down. Seeing the whole ladder at once is the best preparation for rhetoric, where you will use all fourteen rungs inside a single speech.

The fourteen in order. Aphthonius gives them this way:

1. *Fable*: a made-up story that teaches a lesson.
2. *Narrative*: a story told clearly, briefly and believably.
3. *Chreia*: expanding a famous person's saying or deed.
4. *Maxim*: expanding a general saying.
5. *Refutation*: arguing that a story is not believable.
6. *Confirmation*: arguing that it is.
7. *Commonplace*: amplifying against a vice or wrongdoer everyone already agrees is wrong.
8. *Encomium*: praise of a person, place or virtue.
9. *Invective*: blame of a vice or a long-dead wrongdoer.
10. *Comparison*: setting two things side by side.
11. *Characterization*: words fitting a person at a moment.
12. *Description*: bringing a thing before the eyes.
13. *Thesis*: arguing a general question.
14. *Law*: speaking for or against a proposed law.

Where you met them. Fable and narrative came in Grades 3 and 4. Chreia, maxim, refutation and confirmation came in Grades 5 and 6. Commonplace, encomium and invective came in Grade 7, and this year you learned comparison, characterization and description. Thesis and law are the doorway to rhetoric. You will argue them fully next year, but this unit gives you a first short try at each, so that your portfolio holds all fourteen.

One story up the whole ladder. Read the model fable below. Watch how far it can climb. Retell it (fable). Tell it as a true event in a real family (narrative). Expand the father's words (chreia). Expand "A house divided cannot stand" (maxim). Argue that no bundle of sticks is truly unbreakable (refutation), then that the story is true to life (confirmation). Amplify against quarreling (commonplace). Praise concord (encomium) and blame discord (invective). Compare the united sons with the divided ones (comparison). Write what the father said that night to his wife (characterization). Describe the bundle in his hands (description). Ask, "Is it better to work alone or with others?" (thesis). Finally, argue for a family rule that quarrels be settled before supper (law).

Why review at all? Iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17). A skill you used once and dropped grows dull. When you lay your old pieces side by side, you see your growth, and you also see habits that still need work: a narrative that wanders, a refutation that only says "That's silly," a description with no order. The ancients did not throw away the early exercises when students reached rhetoric. They kept practicing them, the way a pianist still plays scales.

The model. Aesop, *"The Father and His Sons,"* in *Aesop's Fables*, translated by George Fyler Townsend (1867), Project Gutenberg #21

A FATHER had a family of sons who were perpetually quarreling among themselves. When he failed to heal their disputes by his exhortations, he determined to give them a practical illustration of the evils of disunion; and for this purpose he one day told them to bring him a bundle of sticks. When they had done so, he placed the faggot into the hands of each of them in succession, and ordered them to break it in pieces. They tried with all their strength, and were not able to do it. He next opened the faggot, took the sticks separately, one by one, and again put them into his sons' hands, upon which they broke them easily. He then addressed them in these words: "My sons, if you are of one mind, and unite to assist each other, you will be as this faggot, uninjured by all the attempts of your enemies; but if you are divided among yourselves, you will be broken as easily as these sticks

PICTURE STUDY



The Village School in 1848, Albert Anker, 1896 · Oil on canvas · Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The Swiss painter Albert Anker painted this schoolroom in 1896, almost fifty years after the year in its title, when he himself was a schoolboy. The room is packed with children of every size on long benches. Some bend over their work; some look about. The clothes are plain and patched, yet the room is orderly and full of learning. It is a picture of what this unit is: a whole school of lessons gathered into one room.

Look closely

- Count the rows of benches. How are the children grouped: by size, by task, or by something else?
- Find one child hard at work and one whose mind has wandered. How does the painter show the difference?
- What tools of learning (slates, books, pens, a board) can you find?

Talk about it

1. Write a short description (ecphrasis) of the room in the order your eye travels across it.
2. Characterization: what might one of these children say to a younger brother about his first year at school?

WRITING PROJECT: THE FOURTEEN-RUNG INVENTORY

Gather everything you have written in composition, sort it under the fourteen exercises, and plan what is missing. This inventory becomes the table of contents for your portfolio in 8.4.

If you are new to this course and have no earlier pieces, that is fine: your inventory will show which short pieces to write this unit.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Folders or files of earlier composition work (Grades 3–8)
- Fourteen sheets of paper or a fourteen-row chart

Steps

1. Head fourteen sheets (or chart rows) with the names of the exercises in Aphthonius's order.
2. Sort your old pieces onto the sheets. Write the title, the grade, and one sentence on what the piece does well.
3. For each exercise, choose the best piece you have. If you have none, or only a weak one, mark the rung "to write."
4. Using the bundle of sticks, write one or two sentences for each of the fourteen rungs (as in the core ideas) to show you know what each exercise does.
5. Write a first short thesis (about 150 words) on "Is it better to work alone or with others?" Give a definition, two reasons and an answer to one objection.
6. Make a plan: list the rungs marked "to write" and the dates you will write them before 8.4.

Check your work

- All fourteen exercises are named, in order, and spelled correctly.
- Each one-sentence summary uses parallel structure (for example, every summary follows the pattern "Fable teaches a lesson").
- My thesis names no particular person; it argues a general question.

- Every pronoun in my thesis points clearly to one noun.
- My plan gives a date for each missing piece.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Townsend fable by hand, exactly, including the father's speech.
2. Write the fourteen exercises from memory as a ladder drawing, fable on the bottom rung and law on the top.
3. List three habits you notice in your old pieces: one strength to keep and two faults to mend.

History note. Aphthonius of Antioch wrote his *Progymnasmata* about A.D. 400. In the 1500s Reinhard Lorich's Latin edition, with many added models, became a standard schoolbook in English grammar schools. Boys at schools like the one at Stratford-upon-Avon worked through these same exercises, which is why scholars find traces of them all through Shakespeare.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.3 "Parallel Structure." When you write fourteen one-sentence summaries, give them the same grammatical shape so the list reads as one ladder.

For families. This unit closes the progymnasmata. Students who joined the course late will not have a piece for every exercise; let them write short new ones (150–300 words) rather than full essays. Thesis and law are only introduced here and taught fully in Grade 9. The Townsend translation of Aesop (1867) is on Project Gutenberg as ebook #21; the faggot in the fable is simply a bundle of sticks.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student sorted these pieces: (a) "Why the Story of Midas Cannot Be True," (b) "In Praise of the Honeybee," (c) "What David Said to Goliath," (d) "Washington and Cincinnatus." Name the exercise for each.

1. (a) argues that a story is not believable, so it is a refutation.
2. (b) praises a creature and its virtues, so it is an encomium.
3. (c) gives the words fitting a person at a moment, so it is a characterization.
4. (d) sets two men side by side, so it is a comparison.

Answer: (a) refutation, (b) encomium, (c) characterization, (d) comparison.

Example 2. Revise this weak thesis opening: “My brother always wants to do everything by himself, and he is wrong.”

1. A thesis names no particular person. “My brother” turns it into a family quarrel.
2. State the general question, then define your terms.
3. Keep the tone fair, so the reader trusts you.

Answer: Is it better to work alone or with others? By “work” I mean any task that takes skill and time, from raising a barn to writing a book. Some say a man works best alone, where no one slows him down. I will argue that most good work is done better together, as the father in Aesop’s fable showed with his bundle of sticks.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does *progymnasmata* mean?
2. **EASY** Name the first four exercises in order.
3. **EASY** Which two exercises are opposites about a story?
4. **EASY** Which two exercises are opposites about a person or thing?
5. **MEDIUM** How is a thesis different from a chreia?
6. **MEDIUM** Write a one-sentence chreia statement from the fable of the father and his sons.
7. **MEDIUM** Make these summaries parallel: “Fable teaches a lesson. Narrative: telling a story clearly. In the chreia you will expand a saying.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a short introduction of a law (four sentences) for “Every member of a family shall settle a quarrel before supper.” Touch on whether it is just, useful and possible.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Mixing up commonplace and invective. A commonplace amplifies against a kind of wrongdoer (any traitor, any thief); an invective blames one particular long-dead person or one vice.
- Writing a thesis about a particular person or a current political quarrel. A thesis asks a general, lasting question.
- Sorting a piece by its topic instead of its form. A piece about Washington could be a narrative, an encomium or a comparison, depending on what it does.

Make it a game • Climb the Ladder. Lay fourteen cards on the floor as a ladder. A parent names a story (a fable, a Bible narrative, a history event). The student steps onto each rung and gives one sentence in that exercise for that story. A miss sends the student back two rungs. Try to reach the top in under five minutes.

Scripture. “And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12, KJV)

The Preacher teaches the same lesson as the bundle of sticks, and your fourteen exercises are stronger bound together than kept apart.

Practice: answers

1. "Preliminary exercises": the practice pieces that come before full speeches.
2. Fable, narrative, chreia, maxim.
3. Refutation (the story is not believable) and confirmation (it is).
4. Encomium (praise) and invective (blame).
5. A chreia expands the saying or deed of a particular famous person; a thesis argues a general question that names no particular person.
6. Sample: A father, handing his quarreling sons a bundle of sticks they could not break, said that united they would stand but divided they would be broken one by one.
7. Fable teaches a lesson. Narrative tells a story clearly. Chreia expands a famous saying.
8. Sample: I propose that every quarrel in our house be settled before supper. The rule is just, because it asks the same of everyone, parent and child alike. It is useful, because a family that eats together in peace is like the father's bundle, hard to break. And it is possible, since nearly any quarrel can be ended in the hour before a meal if both sides are willing to say, "I was wrong."

8.2 A PIECE DELIVERED: MEMORY AND DELIVERY

OBJECTIVES

- Name the five canons of rhetoric and explain the last two, memory and delivery.
- Prepare one of your best pieces for the ear: mark it, shorten long sentences, and learn it by heart.
- Deliver the piece aloud (3–5 minutes) with clear voice, steady eyes and fitting gesture.

Warm-up. Read the first sentence of Proverbs 15:1 aloud three ways: in a mumble, in a shout, and as if you meant every word to a friend. Which way made the meaning clearest? Why?

Video slot. Video coming. How to memorize and recite a speech (a classical recitation or declamation). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

canons of rhetoric

The five parts of the speaker's art: invention (finding what to say), arrangement (putting it in order), style (choosing the words), memory and delivery.

memory

The fourth canon: holding a speech in the mind so you can give it without reading.

delivery

The fifth canon: the use of voice, face and gesture in giving a speech. The Greeks called it *hypokrisis*, the Romans *actio* or *pronuntiatio*.

declamation

A practice speech given aloud by a student, often one he wrote himself.

pause

A short, planned silence that lets a key word or idea land before you go on.

CORE IDEAS

Written to be heard. In the old schools a piece of writing was not finished until it was spoken. A boy who wrote an encomium of a hero stood up and delivered it to his master and classmates. You are about to be promoted to rhetoric, the art of the speaker, so this lesson takes one of your best pieces off the page and puts it into the air. Choose a piece of 300–600 words: an encomium, a characterization, a description or a comparison works well.

The five canons. Cicero and Quintilian divided the speaker's art into five parts. *Invention* finds what to say; *arrangement* orders it; *style* chooses the words. You have practiced these

three for years. *Memory* and *delivery* are the last two. A speech you must read with your nose in the paper is only half delivered; your eyes belong to your hearers.

Prepare for the ear. A reader can look back; a listener cannot. So make the piece easy to follow by ear. Break any sentence longer than about thirty words. Replace a pronoun that could point to two people with the person's name. Add short signposts ("First," "But now consider," "Last of all"). Then mark your copy: underline the words to stress, put a slash (/) for a short pause and a double slash (//) for a long one.

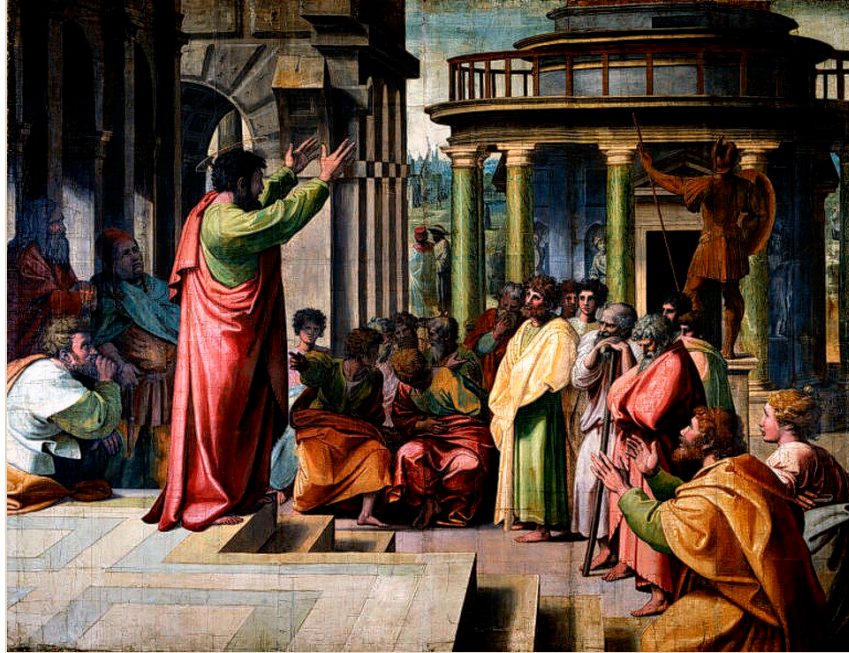
Learn it by heart. Memorize one paragraph at a time. Read it aloud three times, then say it with the page face down, then check. Next day, say all the paragraphs you know before adding a new one. Learn the first and last sentences perfectly; they matter most. Franklin's trick of making short notes helps here: write one key word for each sentence on a card. If you lose your place, the card brings it back.

Deliver it plainly. Stand still with both feet planted. Look at your hearers, one face at a time. Speak more slowly than feels natural, and loudly enough for the back of the room. Let gestures come from the meaning: an open hand for an offer, a pointing hand for "there." Do not act every word. In the model below, Ezra the scribe reads God's law to all Israel. Notice what the Levites did: they read *distinctly*, they *gave the sense*, and they *caused them to understand*. That is the goal of all delivery: not to show off the speaker, but to make the hearers understand.

The model. *Nehemiah 8:5-8 (KJV)*

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD , the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground. Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

PICTURE STUDY



St Paul Preaching at Athens, Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), 1515–1516 · Bodycolor (glue-based paint) on paper, mounted on canvas; a full-size design (cartoon) for a tapestry · Victoria and Albert Museum, London (lent by the Royal Collection)

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Pope Leo X asked Raphael to design ten tapestries for the Sistine Chapel, showing the acts of Peter and Paul. This cartoon was the full-size pattern for one of them. It shows Acts 17: Paul on the Areopagus, telling the Athenians about “the unknown God.” Raphael gives Paul no pulpit and no notes, only his upright body, his raised arms and his face. Every listener reacts differently: some think, some argue, and at the right two people (Dionysius and Damaris, Acts 17:34) step toward him in belief.

Look closely

- Look at Paul’s stance and arms. What does his whole body say before he speaks a word?
- Find three listeners who are reacting in three different ways. What is each one thinking?
- Where is Paul placed in the picture, and how does Raphael make your eye go to him?

Talk about it

1. Write the first three sentences Paul might be speaking at this moment, using Acts 17:22–23 as your guide.
2. What can a speaker learn about delivery from this picture? Give two lessons.

WRITING PROJECT: ONE PIECE, DELIVERED

Choose one of your strongest pieces from the year (or from your inventory in 8.1), prepare it for the ear, learn it by heart, and deliver it to your family or a small audience.

You will need

- A clean copy of your chosen piece (300–600 words)
- Pencil for marking stresses and pauses
- Five or six index cards
- A room with a little space and at least one listener (a phone recording is a good second listener)

Steps

1. Choose the piece and tell a parent why you chose it.
2. Prepare it for the ear: break long sentences, replace unclear pronouns with names, add signposts.
3. Mark your copy: underline stressed words; mark short (/) and long (//) pauses.
4. Make key-word cards, one card per paragraph, with one word for each sentence.
5. Memorize one paragraph a day, reviewing the earlier ones each time.
6. Give a practice run and listen to the recording. Fix one thing: speed, volume or eye contact.
7. Deliver the piece. Afterward, ask your listeners one question: “What did you understand?”

Check your work

- No spoken sentence runs longer than about thirty words.
- Every pronoun clearly points to one person or thing (no “he” that could mean two men).
- Signposts tell the listener when I move to a new part.
- I can say the first and last sentences perfectly from memory.
- I looked at my hearers and spoke slowly enough to be understood.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Nehemiah 8:8 and underline the three things the Levites did.
2. Copy the first paragraph of your chosen piece and mark stresses and pauses.
3. After delivering, write three sentences: what went well, what to fix, and what your listener understood.

History note. The Raphael Cartoons were painted in 1515–1516 as patterns for tapestries woven in Brussels. Seven of the ten survive. They were bought for the English royal collection in 1623 and have hung at the Victoria and Albert Museum since 1865, lent by the Crown.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 21.4 “Clear Pronoun Reference.” A listener cannot look back to see whom “he” means, so in a spoken piece every pronoun must point clearly to one noun.

For families. Nehemiah 8 describes the public reading of the law after the return from exile, about 444 B.C. The phrase “gave the sense” is a fine short definition of good delivery. Keep the audience friendly and small; the goal is a confident first declamation, not a contest. Praise eye contact and pace before you correct anything else. The picture shows Acts 17, Paul on the Areopagus in Athens.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Prepare this sentence for the ear: “When Washington returned his commission to Congress at Annapolis in 1783, having led the army through eight long years of war and refused every offer of greater power, he showed the world that he valued the republic more than himself, which was rare.”

1. It runs over forty words; a listener will lose the subject before the verb.
2. Break it into two or three sentences, each with one main idea.
3. Move the strongest idea to the end of its sentence, where the voice lands.

Answer: In 1783 Washington stood before Congress at Annapolis and gave back his commission. / For eight long years he had led the army, and he had refused every offer of greater power. // Few men in history have done it: he valued the republic more than himself.

Example 2. Mark stresses and pauses: “The father gave his sons a bundle of sticks, and not one of them could break it.”

1. Which words carry the meaning? *bundle, not one, break.*
2. Where should the listener wait? Before the surprise: “and not one of them ...”

Answer: The father gave his sons a bundle of sticks, / and not one of them // could break it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five canons of rhetoric in order.
2. **EASY** What three things did the Levites do in Nehemiah 8:8?
3. **EASY** Why should a spoken piece have shorter sentences than a written one?
4. **EASY** Which two sentences of a speech should you learn most perfectly?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun for a listener: “Paul spoke to the philosopher, and he was amazed.”

6. **MEDIUM** Write three signposts you could use in a comparison speech.
7. **MEDIUM** What is the difference between a gesture that fits and one that is overdone?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a five-card key-word plan for a five-paragraph encomium of honesty.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading the piece instead of learning it, so the speaker's eyes never leave the page.
- Speaking too fast because of nerves. Plan your pauses and keep them.
- Leaving written-only sentences (long, with many clauses and pronouns) that the ear cannot follow.
- Overacting: walking about, waving the arms, or using a stage voice. Plain and clear is better.

Make it a game • Pass the Paragraph. Family members each take one paragraph of a short piece (a psalm or a fable works well). Each person reads his part aloud with one rule chosen by drawing a card: "Pause before the last word," "Look up three times," "Stress one word in every sentence," or "Whisper, but clearly." Listeners vote on which rule helped the meaning most.

Scripture. "Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:6, KJV)

Delivery is not a show; it is speech offered with grace so that hearers understand and are helped.

Practice: answers

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
2. They read distinctly, gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading.
3. A listener cannot look back, so long sentences make him lose the thread.
4. The first and the last.
5. Paul spoke to the philosopher, and the philosopher was amazed. (Or: Paul was amazed, if that is the meaning.)
6. Sample: "Consider first the soldier." "Now turn to the farmer." "Set the two side by side, and the difference is plain."
7. A fitting gesture comes from the meaning and helps the listener (an open hand for an offer); an overdone gesture acts out every word and draws attention to the speaker instead of the message.
8. Sample: Card 1: virtue, Proverbs, honest weights. Card 2: Washington, Farewell Address, "best policy." Card 3: trust, money, word. Card 4: contrast, liar, believed. Card 5: Ephesians 4:25, "speak every man truth."

8.3 REVISION: FRANKLIN'S METHOD ON YOUR OWN WORK

OBJECTIVES

- Explain Franklin's method of imitation (notes, rewrite, compare, correct) and turn it on your own early writing.
- Revise at three levels: the whole piece (form), the paragraph (order) and the sentence (style and mechanics).
- Produce clean final copies of at least three portfolio pieces, keeping the first drafts beside them.

Warm-up. Pull out the oldest piece of writing you can find. Read it aloud. Name one thing you would never write that way today, and one thing your younger self did well.

Video slot. Video coming. Benjamin Franklin teaches himself to write (the Spectator method from his Autobiography). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

revision

Literally “seeing again”: changing a piece at the level of ideas, order and sentences, not only fixing spelling.

proofreading

The last, smallest step of revision: checking spelling, punctuation and capitals line by line.

hints

Franklin's word for the short notes he made of each sentence's thought before rewriting it from memory.

Spectator

A London daily paper of essays by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele (1711–1712), which Franklin used as his writing model.

fair copy

A clean final copy made after all corrections.

CORE IDEAS

Franklin's school. Benjamin Franklin left school at ten, yet he became one of the finest writers in America. In the model below he tells how. He took an essay he admired, wrote short “hints” of each sentence, waited a few days, rewrote the essay from the hints, and then compared his version with the original to find his faults. You have used this method all through the course: read, copy, imitate, compare. This week you turn it on a new original: your own earlier work.

Your old self as the model. Choose three pieces from your inventory: one weak piece from an early exercise, one middle piece, and one from this year. For the first two, do what Franklin did. Make hints of each sentence, put the old page away, and rewrite the piece from the hints with everything you know now. Then lay old and new side by side and list what changed. Most students find they now write with more order, fuller sentences and stronger verbs.

Revise from the top down. Work in three passes, from large to small. *The form:* Does the piece do what its exercise demands? Does the refutation actually test the story's clearness, probability and fitness? Does the encomium follow its heads? *The order:* Does each paragraph hold one head or one idea, and does each follow from the last? Franklin even jumbled his hints and put them back in order to learn arrangement. *The sentence:* Only now look at style and mechanics. Fixing commas in a paragraph you are about to cut wastes time.

The Level 3 sentence check. At the sentence level, use what Grammar Level 3 taught you. Vary structure with complex and compound-complex sentences. Prefer active voice unless the doer is unknown or unimportant. Make pronouns agree and point clearly. Place modifiers next to what they modify, and repair dangling ones. Use semicolons to join closely related independent clauses. Keep lists and pairs parallel. Watch the words often confused: *affect/effect, its/it's, than/then.*

Keep both copies. Do not throw away your first drafts. In your portfolio each revised piece will sit beside its original, so a reader can see how you grew. That is honest. Revision is not hiding your past work; it is building on it, the way Jerome in this lesson's picture spent years correcting and improving the Latin Bible of his day.

The model. *Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (written 1771), 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

PICTURE STUDY



St. Jerome in His Study, Albrecht Dürer, 1514 · Engraving · Impressions in many museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Jerome (about A.D. 347–420) spent much of his life translating and revising the Bible into Latin; his version, the Vulgate, was read in the Western church for a thousand years. Dürer shows him at work in a quiet, orderly room. Sunlight falls through the windows, the lion he was said to have tamed sleeps by the door, and every object is in its place. It is a picture of patient, careful work done over and over until it is right.

Look closely

- Find the hourglass and the skull on the windowsill. What do they remind a writer of?
- Follow the light. Where does it come from, and where does it fall?
- Find three signs that this room belongs to a man who works with books.

Talk about it

1. Describe the room in the order a visitor would see it on stepping through the door.
2. Jerome spent years correcting earlier translations. Write a short paragraph on why patient revision is a kind of faithfulness.

WRITING PROJECT: THREE PIECES REVISED

Use Franklin's method and the three passes (form, order, sentence) to revise three pieces for your portfolio. Keep each original.

You will need

- Your 8.1 inventory and the pieces it names
- Writing notebook and index cards for hints
- Grammar Level 3 notes (Units 21-24)

Steps

1. Choose three pieces: one early, one middle, one from this year.
2. For the early and middle pieces, write one-line hints for each sentence. Put the original away.
3. After a day or two, rewrite each piece from the hints only, using everything you have learned since.
4. Compare old and new. List at least five changes you made and why.
5. For the piece from this year, revise in three passes: form, then order, then sentences.
6. Read each revised piece aloud and proofread it line by line.
7. Make a fair copy of each, and clip the original behind it.

Check your work

- Each piece does what its exercise requires (its heads or parts are all present, in order).
- Each paragraph holds one idea and follows from the one before.
- Every pronoun agrees with its antecedent and points clearly to one noun.
- No modifier is misplaced or dangling.
- Items in a series and paired ideas are parallel.
- Semicolons, colons, dashes and quotation marks are used correctly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Franklin passage by hand, exactly as printed, including his old spellings “try'd” and “compleat.”
2. Write hints for a paragraph of Franklin’s, then rewrite it from your hints a day later and compare.
3. Keep a running list titled “My Faults Corrected,” as Franklin did, and add to it each time you revise.

History note. Franklin began his *Autobiography* in 1771 as a letter to his son and kept adding to it until near his death in 1790. The *Spectator* he imitated ran in London in 1711-1712. Dürer’s *St Jerome in His Study* (1514) is one of his three “Master Engravings,” with *Knight, Death and the Devil* and *Melencolia I*.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.4 “Grammar and Good Writing.” Your sentence pass gathers the whole of Level 3 into one checklist: clear pronouns, placed modifiers, active voice, parallel structure and correct punctuation.

For families. Franklin’s account appears early in Part One of the *Autobiography*; the Project Gutenberg text (#20203) keeps his eighteenth-century spellings, so the copywork

will show “try'd” and “compleat.” Let your student keep the old drafts. Seeing real growth across several years is one of the best rewards of a portfolio. If a piece is very weak, it may be better to write that exercise fresh than to revise.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise a Grade 4 narrative sentence with Grade 8 tools: “Joseph was sold by his brothers. They were jealous. He went to Egypt. He became a slave there.”

1. Four short sentences of the same shape: combine them into one complex sentence.
2. “Was sold by his brothers” is passive; the brothers are the doers, so make it active.
3. Use a subordinate clause for the cause (jealousy) and a participial phrase for the result.

Answer: Because they were jealous of their father’s love for him, Joseph’s brothers sold him to traders, who carried him down to Egypt as a slave.

Example 2. Find and fix the faults: “Walking into the study, the lion was asleep by the door, and Jerome was writing, reading, and he prayed.”

1. Dangling modifier: the lion is not the one walking in. Supply the real walker.
2. The series “writing, reading, and he prayed” is not parallel.
3. Choose a clear order: what the visitor sees first, then next.

Answer: Walking into the study, a visitor would find the lion asleep by the door and Jerome writing, reading and praying at his desk.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What were Franklin’s “hints”?
2. **EASY** Name the three passes of revision, in order.
3. **EASY** Why should you not proofread first?
4. **EASY** What is a fair copy?
5. **MEDIUM** Make active: “The town was saved by the boy who warned the farmers.”
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun reference: “When Washington met Cincinnatus’s admirers, they praised him.”
7. **MEDIUM** Join with a semicolon and make the pair parallel: “Franklin read the essay. Then the essay was rewritten by him from memory.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write five hints for the first five sentences of the Franklin model, then rewrite those sentences in your own modern words.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Calling spell-checking “revision.” Real revision begins with the whole piece and its order.
- Throwing away the first draft, so no one can see your growth.
- Revising an old piece into a different exercise by accident (a refutation that turns into an encomium).
- Peeking at the original while rewriting from hints, which defeats Franklin’s method.

Make it a game • Hint Relay. A parent reads a short paragraph from a classic (Aesop or Franklin) once. Each player writes one-word hints, then the paragraph is put away. Ten minutes later, players rebuild the paragraph from their hints. Compare with the original; a point for each sentence whose thought is complete and in the right order.

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)

Revision makes writing plain, so that the reader can take it in at a glance and carry it away.

Practice: answers

1. Short notes of the thought (sentiment) in each sentence of the essay.
2. Form (the whole piece), order (paragraphs), sentence (style and mechanics).
3. You may cut or rewrite the paragraphs later, so early comma-fixing wastes time.
4. A clean final copy made after all corrections.
5. The boy who warned the farmers saved the town.
6. Sample: Cincinnatus’s admirers praised Washington when they met him.
7. Franklin read the essay; then he rewrote it from memory.
8. Sample hints: found a stray Spectator; volume three; first one seen; bought, reread, loved it; wanted to imitate. Sample rewrite: Around then I came across a single volume of the *Spectator*, the third. I had never seen the paper before. I bought it and read it again and again with great pleasure. The writing seemed excellent to me, and I wanted to learn to write like it.

8.4 THE FOURTEEN-EXERCISE PORTFOLIO AND ORAL EXAM



OBJECTIVES

- Assemble a finished portfolio with one piece for each of the fourteen exercises, a table of contents and a short preface.
- Answer questions about the progymnasmata aloud, giving reasons and examples from your own work.
- Defend one portfolio piece before an examiner, explaining your choices of invention, arrangement and style.

Warm-up. Your examiner asks, “Which exercise taught you the most, and why?” Answer aloud in one minute without notes. Then answer again, this time beginning with a clear claim and giving one example.

Video slot. Video coming. What is a viva voce or oral examination? (how students defend their work aloud). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

portfolio

A gathered collection of a writer’s best finished work, arranged so a reader can see what he can do.

preface

A short opening letter that tells the reader what the collection holds and how it was made.

oral examination

A test given by speaking: the examiner asks, the student answers and explains. Latin *viva voce*, “with the living voice.”

defense

Explaining and giving reasons for the choices you made in a piece of work.

rhetoric

The art of speaking and writing well to teach, delight and move an audience; the stage of study that follows the progymnasmata.

CORE IDEAS

The last rung. In the old schools a boy did not move up to rhetoric because a calendar said so. He moved up when his master was satisfied that he had mastered the exercises. This lesson is your promotion. You will hand in a finished portfolio of fourteen pieces and sit an oral examination on them. When you have done both, you are ready for rhetoric.

Building the portfolio. Use your inventory from 8.1 and your revisions from 8.3. Put one piece under each of the fourteen exercises, in Aphthonius's order. Where you revised a piece, place the fair copy first and the original behind it. Add a title page, a table of contents (exercise, title, grade written, grade revised), and a preface of 250–400 words. The preface is a short letter to the reader: what the collection is, which pieces you are proudest of, what you learned about writing, and what you still mean to improve. Quote at least one line from your models (Aesop, Franklin, Scripture) and punctuate the quotation correctly.

The oral exam. A parent, or better yet a grandparent, pastor or family friend, serves as examiner. The exam has three parts. *First, the ladder:* name and define the fourteen exercises, and tell how each prepares for the next. *Second, the questions:* the examiner chooses five or six questions, such as “How is a refutation built?” or “What makes a description vivid?” *Third, the defense:* the examiner chooses one portfolio piece; you read or recite part of it and explain why you arranged it as you did, and what you would change now.

How to answer well. Give a claim, a reason and an example: “The comparison is harder than the encomium, because you must praise or weigh two subjects fairly; in my Washington and Cincinnatus I first gave each man too few lines.” Speak to the examiner, not the floor. If you do not know, say so plainly and tell what you do know. Truthfulness counts more than a show of knowledge (Ephesians 4:25).

Ready to give a reason. The model for this lesson is Peter's charge to the early Christians: be ready always to give an answer to every man who asks a reason. That is the heart of rhetoric. You learn to speak and write well not to win applause, but to give a clear, true, gracious reason for what you hold, and to do it “with meekness and fear.” The examiner may push back on your answers. Iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17); a good question makes a better answer.

The model. *1 Peter 3:15 (KJV)*

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:

PICTURE STUDY



The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild (The Sampling Officials), Rembrandt van Rijn, 1662 · Oil on canvas · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

These five men were the sampling officials of the Amsterdam cloth makers' guild. Each year they examined cloth to see whether it met the guild's standard. Rembrandt shows them at their table with the sample book open, and they look up as if someone has just come in, perhaps you, with your work to be judged. A servant stands bareheaded behind them. Their faces are not cruel; they are attentive, fair and a little curious. That is how a good examiner looks.

Look closely

- Find the man who is half rising from his chair. What might have made him stand?
- Where are the men looking? What does that do to you, the viewer?
- Find the open book on the table. What do you think is written in it?

Talk about it

1. Characterization: write the first question one of these officials might ask a young weaver presenting his cloth.
2. Compare these examiners with the ones you will face in your oral exam. What do they share?

WRITING PROJECT: THE FOURTEEN-EXERCISE PORTFOLIO AND ORAL EXAM

Session 1: assemble and finish the portfolio. Session 2: sit the oral exam and receive your promotion to rhetoric.

The examiner should have the portfolio a day or two before the exam to choose questions and a piece for the defense.

You will need

- All fourteen pieces (fair copies and originals) from 8.1–8.3
- A binder or folder with dividers
- The question list below for the examiner
- A quiet room, a table, and (if possible) a guest examiner

Steps

1. Arrange the fourteen pieces in order behind labeled dividers, revised copies before originals.
2. Make a title page and a table of contents (exercise, title, grade written, grade revised).
3. Write and revise a 250–400 word preface, quoting at least one model correctly.
4. Give the portfolio to your examiner. Examiner's question bank: (1) Name the fourteen exercises in order. (2) How is a fable different from a narrative? (3) What are the parts of a refutation? (4) How is a commonplace different from an invective? (5) What are the heads of an encomium? (6) Why compare equals, lesser or greater? (7) What are the three times in a characterization? (8) How do you order a description? (9) What is a thesis, and how is it different from a law? (10) Which piece shows your greatest growth, and how?
5. Sit the exam: the ladder (name and define all fourteen), five or six questions, and the defense of one piece (read or recite part, then explain your choices).
6. Close by answering: "What do you hope to do with rhetoric?" The examiner then declares you promoted.

Check your work

- All fourteen exercises are present, labeled and in Aphthonius's order.
- The table of contents matches the pages.
- Quotations in the preface are exact, with quotation marks inside quotation marks where needed.
- Every pronoun in the preface points clearly to one noun, and every comparison is complete.
- In the exam I answered with a claim, a reason and an example.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy 1 Peter 3:15 and write it from memory on exam day.
2. Write a one-sentence definition of each of the fourteen exercises as exam notes, then put the notes away before the exam.
3. After the exam, write three sentences: the hardest question, your best answer, and one goal for rhetoric.

History note. Rembrandt painted *The Syndics* in 1662 for the drapers' guild hall in Amsterdam; it is now in the Rijksmuseum. In English grammar schools of the 1500s and 1600s, boys passed from the lower forms to rhetoric after showing their masters they could handle the exercises. Oral examinations, in which a student answers and defends his work aloud, are still used for advanced degrees today.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.4 “Quotations Within Quotations; Long Quotations.” In your preface, quote your models exactly, using single quotation marks for a quotation inside a quotation and setting off any long quotation as a block.

For families. Make the exam warm but real. A guest examiner (grandparent, pastor, family friend) makes it feel like an occasion; give that person the question bank and the portfolio ahead of time. Score the oral part with the unit test and portfolio rubric if you wish, but the main question is simple: can your student explain and defend the work? If a few answers are weak, review and re-examine those parts a week later before promotion. A small ceremony (a certificate, a family meal, a good book of speeches as a gift) marks the step into rhetoric.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Examiner: “How is a refutation built?” Weak answer: “You say the story is wrong.” Improve it.

1. Give the claim: what a refutation does.
2. Give the parts (heads): unclear, impossible or improbable, unfitting, and so on.
3. Give an example from your own portfolio.

Answer: A refutation argues that a story is not believable. After stating the story fairly, you test it under heads: Is it unclear? Is it impossible or improbable? Is it unfitting? In my refutation of the tale that Arion was carried to shore by a dolphin, I argued it was improbable and unclear about who saw it, and I ended by saying what the story teaches even though it is not history.

Example 2. Revise this preface sentence: “This portfolio has my writing in it, and it shows what I learned, and I hope you like it and I worked hard on it.”

1. One long string of *and* clauses: break it or subordinate.
2. “It” is used three ways; replace with clear nouns.
3. Make it specific: name what the collection holds.

Answer: This portfolio holds fourteen pieces, one for each of the classical exercises, written between Grade 3 and Grade 8. Several appear twice, as a first draft and a revision, so that you can see what the years of practice taught me.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does *viva voce* mean?
2. **EASY** What three things belong in the front of your portfolio?
3. **EASY** What are the three parts of the oral exam?
4. **EASY** What pattern should a good exam answer follow?
5. **MEDIUM** Punctuate, quoting Nehemiah 8:8 inside the teacher's words: My teacher said remember that the Levites gave the sense
6. **MEDIUM** Complete the comparison: "My comparison essay is longer than any piece in the portfolio."
7. **MEDIUM** Answer with claim, reason and example: "Why does a description need an order?"
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the opening paragraph (about 100 words) of your portfolio preface.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Putting pieces in the order they were found instead of Aphthonius's order.
- Answering exam questions with one word or a guess. Give a claim, a reason and an example, or say honestly that you do not know.
- Writing a preface that only says "I worked hard." Name the pieces and what you learned.
- Defending a piece by saying it is perfect. A good defense also names what you would change.

Make it a game · Examiner's Chair. Swap roles: the student sits in the examiner's chair and asks a parent five questions from the question bank. The student judges each answer by the claim-reason-example rule and explains the score. Then switch back for the real exam.

Scripture. "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend."
(Proverbs 27:17, KJV)

This year's verse ends the year: your examiner's questions sharpen your answers, as you will sharpen others in rhetoric.

Practice: answers

1. "With the living voice": an examination given by speaking.
2. A title page, a table of contents and a preface.
3. The ladder (name and define the fourteen), the questions, and the defense of one piece.
4. Claim, reason, example.
5. My teacher said, "Remember that the Levites 'gave the sense.'"
6. My comparison essay is longer than any other piece in the portfolio.
7. Sample: A description needs an order because the reader can see only one thing at a time. If I jump about, the picture breaks apart. In my description of the Ghent Altarpiece I moved from

the Lamb at the center outward to the groups coming to worship, so the reader's eye traveled the way the painter meant.

8. Sample: Dear Reader, this folder holds six years of practice in the old exercises that taught Shakespeare and Franklin to write. It begins with a fable I wrote when I was nine and ends with a thesis I wrote this fall. Between them stand narratives, a chreia on a saying of Lincoln, a refutation, an encomium of my grandfather's trade, a comparison of Washington and Cincinnatus, and a description of the Ghent Altarpiece. Where I could, I have placed my first draft behind the revision, so that you may judge, as Franklin did, what was faulty and what was mended.

UNIT 8 REVIEW

Give the test orally or in writing; the oral form may serve as part of the 8.4 exam. Short answers may be in the student's own words. Score writing tasks with the unit checklists, not for spelling alone.

1. (7 pts) Name the fourteen exercises of the progymnasmata in Aphthonius's order.
2. (2 pts) How is a maxim different from a chreia?
3. (3 pts) How is a thesis different from the introduction of a law?
4. (5 pts) Name the five canons of rhetoric.
5. (3 pts) What three things did the Levites do when they read the law (Nehemiah 8:8)?
6. (4 pts) Describe Franklin's method of teaching himself to write.
7. (3 pts) Name the three passes of revision, in order, and say why the order matters.
8. (2 pts) Fix the dangling modifier: "Having finished the portfolio, the exam began."
9. (2 pts) Fix the pronoun reference for a listener: "Ezra read to the Levites, and they explained it to them."
10. (2 pts) Make parallel: "In rhetoric I will learn to argue, the writing of speeches, and how to persuade."
11. (6 pts) Using the fable of the father and his sons, write one sentence each for a maxim, a comparison and a characterization.
12. (4 pts) Answer with a claim, a reason and an example: "Which exercise has helped your writing most?"

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE FOURTEEN EXERCISES

Your complete progymnasmata portfolio: one finished piece for each of the fourteen exercises in Aphthonius's order, revised copies with their originals behind them, a title page, a table of contents and a 250–400 word preface. It is presented and defended in the 8.4 oral exam and closes your Grade 8 portfolio.

- **Completeness and order:** All fourteen exercises present, labeled and in order; each piece does what its exercise requires.
- **Revision:** At least three pieces revised with Franklin's method and the three passes, with originals kept for comparison.
- **Preface:** A clear, specific letter naming the pieces, what was learned and one goal for rhetoric; models quoted exactly.
- **Mechanics and style:** Clear pronoun reference, well-placed modifiers, parallel structure and correct punctuation (Grammar Level 3, Units 21–24).

Answer key

1. Fable, narrative, chreia, maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, invective, comparison, characterization, description, thesis, introduction of a law.

2. A chreia expands the saying or deed of a particular famous person; a maxim expands a general saying that needs no famous speaker.
3. A thesis argues a general question ("Should a man marry?"); a law exercise argues for or against a particular proposed law, asking whether it is lawful, just, useful and possible.
4. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
5. They read distinctly, gave the sense, and caused the people to understand the reading.
6. He made short hints of each sentence of a Spectator essay, laid them by for a few days, rewrote the essay from the hints without looking, then compared it with the original and corrected his faults.
7. Form, order, sentence. Large problems come first, since there is no use polishing sentences in a paragraph you may cut.
8. Having finished the portfolio, I began the exam. (Or: After I finished the portfolio, the exam began.)
9. Sample: Ezra read the law, and the Levites explained it to the people.
10. In rhetoric I will learn to argue, to write speeches and to persuade.
11. Sample: Maxim: A house divided against itself cannot stand. Comparison: The united sons were like the bundle, strong together; the quarreling sons were like single sticks, easily snapped. Characterization: "I have spoken to them for years," the father said to his wife that night, "but today a handful of sticks preached a better sermon than I ever did."
12. Sample: The narrative helped me most, because every other exercise needs a story told clearly and briefly. When I wrote my encomium of Washington, I could tell the story of Valley Forge in five sentences instead of a page.

BONUS: CONTEST LAB

This optional unit takes two pieces you have already written and sends them out into the world. In 9.1 you turn your 6.4 research draft into a National History Day Junior Paper on the 2027 theme, “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change,” with its annotated bibliography and process paper. In 9.2 you choose between your 4.4 short story and a Unit 5 poem, fit it to a Scholastic Art & Writing Awards category, and revise its opening and ending. In 9.3 you proofread in passes, format to the official rules, submit with a parent before the deadline, and learn to receive the results with grace. Contest rules change from year to year; the summaries here were checked in October 2026, and the official rules always decide.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- A research draft with notes and a works-cited list from 6.4, and a finished short story from 4.4 or a finished poem from Unit 5.
- Knows the Grammar Level 3 skills for quotations, pronouns, modifiers and words often confused (Units 21–24), or is studying them now.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can write a history thesis that answers the 2027 theme’s three words: impact, influence and change.
- ☐ I can write an annotated bibliography with primary and secondary sources listed separately, and a process paper of 500 words or fewer.
- ☐ I can choose the stronger of two pieces and fit it to a contest category’s word or line limits.
- ☐ I can proofread a finished piece in separate passes and format it to a contest’s rules.
- ☐ I can submit an entry on time with a parent and keep a record of what I sent.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **National History Day: Contest Rule Book and 2027 theme guide**
(<https://www.nhd.org/>): Free official rules, theme guide and affiliate contact list. Use the current rule book, not an older copy.
- **Scholastic Art & Writing Awards: How to Enter, Categories and Calendar**
(<https://www.artandwriting.org/awards/how-to-enter/>): Official 2027 categories, deadlines by region, fees and fee waivers.
- **Samuel F. B. Morse Papers (Library of Congress)**
(<https://www.loc.gov/collections/samuel-morse-papers/>): Free digitized primary sources for the telegraph example in 9.1, including the 1844 message.
- **Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers (Library of Congress)**
(<https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/>): Free searchable historic newspapers, a rich source of primary evidence for any NHD topic.

9.1 NATIONAL HISTORY DAY JUNIOR PAPER: INNOVATION IN HISTORY

OBJECTIVES

- Fit your 6.4 research draft to the 2027 National History Day theme, “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change,” with a thesis that answers all three words.
- Check the paper against the Junior Paper rules: 1,500–2,500 words, citations, an annotated bibliography divided into primary and secondary sources, and a process paper of 500 words or fewer.
- Annotate every source and write the process paper.

Warm-up. Name three inventions from before 1900 that changed daily life. For each one, finish the sentence two ways: “Before it, people had to ...” and “After it, they could”

Video slot. Video coming. Samuel Morse and the first telegraph line from Washington to Baltimore, 1844 (a history program or museum talk). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

annual theme

The idea every National History Day project must connect to in a given year. For 2027 it is “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change.”

historical argument

The thesis of an NHD project: a claim about the past that the evidence must prove, not a list of facts.

annotated bibliography

A list of every source you used, each followed by a short note on what the source is and how it helped you, split into primary and secondary sources.

process paper

A short description (500 words or fewer, no quotations) of how you chose your topic, did your research, built your project and reached your argument.

word count

For an NHD paper, every word or number in the text counts, including quotations. Notes, the annotated bibliography, captions and appendix do not.

CORE IDEAS

From 6.4 to the contest. In 6.4 you drafted a research paper the way National History Day asks: a topic, a thesis, primary and secondary sources, and notes. Now you will turn that draft into a contest entry. First test the topic against this year’s theme. If it does not touch

innovation, look for an angle that does: a battle may turn on a new weapon or a new way of moving supplies; a missionary may have brought the first printing press or alphabet to a people; a town may have been remade by a canal or a railroad. If no honest angle exists, choose a new topic now, while there is still time to research it.

The 2027 theme. The theme is “Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change.” NHD’s theme guide explains that innovation is more than new machines; it includes new ways of thinking, organizing and shaping society. The three words of the subtitle give you three questions. *Impact*: what did the innovation do right away? *Influence*: whom did it shape, and how far did it reach? *Change*: what was different afterward, for good or for ill? A thesis that answers all three is an argument. A paper that only describes the invention is a report.

Argument, not report. A report says, “Samuel Morse sent the first long-distance telegraph message in 1844.” An argument says, “Morse’s telegraph cut the time it took news to cross the country from weeks to minutes, and in doing so it changed how Americans did business, fought wars and read the news.” Notice that the argument is a comparison, a before and after. The syncrisis you learned in Unit 1 is one of the strongest tools a history paper has. Each body section should prove one part of the thesis with evidence, and the conclusion should say why the topic matters.

The example. On May 24, 1844, Morse sat in the Supreme Court’s chamber in the Capitol and tapped a message along a wire to his partner Alfred Vail in Baltimore. The words were chosen by Annie Ellsworth, the young daughter of the Commissioner of Patents. She took them from the King James Bible, Numbers 23:23 (the model below): “What hath God wrought.” The paper tape that recorded the message survives in the Library of Congress. That tape is a primary source. A modern history of the telegraph is a secondary source. A good paper uses both.

The paperwork counts. Judges read more than the paper. The *annotated bibliography* lists every source, primary and secondary in separate sections, and each entry gets one to three sentences: what the source is and how you used it. The *process paper* (500 words or fewer, with no quotations) tells how you chose the topic and how it fits the theme, how you researched, how you built the paper, what your argument is and why the topic matters. Many judges read the process paper first, so write it with care.

Honest history. Paul wrote, “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25). In a history paper that means citing every borrowed idea, quoting exactly, and never bending a source to fit the theme. Name real wrongs plainly when your topic includes them, and give credit where the evidence shows real good. Solomon says it is “the honour of kings” to search out a matter. Research done honestly is a kind of honor too.

The model. *Numbers 23:23 (KJV), the verse behind Samuel Morse’s first telegraph message from Washington to Baltimore, May 24, 1844*

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

PICTURE STUDY



A Philosopher Lecturing on the Orrery, Joseph Wright of Derby, about 1766 · Oil on canvas · Derby Museum and Art Gallery, Derby, England
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

An orrery is a clockwork model of the solar system: turn the handle and the planets and moons move around the sun. In the eighteenth century it was a new teaching machine. Joseph Wright of Derby (1734–1797) lived among the inventors and manufacturers of the English Midlands, and he painted science the way earlier painters had painted saints, with light falling on astonished faces. Here a lamp stands where the sun should be, hidden behind a child, and every face in the room is lit by it.

Look closely

- Find where the light comes from. What stands in the place of the sun?
- Look at the children's faces. How does each one show a different reaction to the lesson?
- Find the man at the left with paper. What is he doing, and why might Wright have put him in the picture?

Talk about it

1. Write three sentences about the orrery as an innovation: one on its impact on the children in the room, one on its influence on how science was taught, one on what changed afterward.
2. The note-taker is a researcher. Write a short paragraph comparing his work to yours as you prepare your NHD paper.

WRITING PROJECT: THE CONTEST PAPER

Turn your 6.4 draft into a complete National History Day Junior Paper entry: the paper, the annotated bibliography, the process paper and a title page.

Work from the official rule book and your state or regional affiliate's instructions. This lesson summarizes the rules; the official book decides.

You will need

- Your 6.4 draft, note cards and works cited
- The current NHD Contest Rule Book and the 2027 theme guide (free at nhd.org)
- Your state or regional affiliate's contest dates and registration instructions
- A computer with a word counter

Steps

1. With a parent, find your affiliate's contest date, registration deadline and paper due date. Write them at the top of your plan.
2. Theme test: write a thesis that names the innovation and answers impact, influence and change in one or two sentences. If your 6.4 topic does not fit, choose a new angle or topic today.
3. Revise the body so each section proves one part of the thesis with evidence. Add at least one more primary source if you can.
4. Check the length: 1,500–2,500 words, counting quotations. Cut padding and long quotations before you cut evidence.
5. Check every quotation and borrowed idea for a note, and use one style (Chicago or MLA) throughout.
6. Write the annotated bibliography with primary and secondary sources in separate sections, one to three sentences per entry.
7. Write the process paper (500 words or fewer, no quotations) and make the title page the rule book describes.

Check your work

- My thesis names the innovation and says what its impact, influence and change were.
- Every quotation is exact and punctuated correctly; long quotations are set off as block quotations, and quotations within quotations use single marks.
- Every pronoun points clearly to one antecedent ("it" never stands for two different inventions).
- No modifiers are misplaced or dangling, and every comparison is complete and logical ("faster than any other messenger," not "faster than any messenger").
- Nonrestrictive elements are set off with commas; restrictive ones are not.
- The paper is 1,500–2,500 words and the process paper is 500 words or fewer.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Numbers 23:23 and write one sentence on why Morse's choice of message was fitting for the day.
2. List five innovations you could write about. Beside each, write one word each for its impact, influence and change.
3. Write your thesis three ways: as a report, as a weak argument and as a strong argument. Circle the strong one.

History note. Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872) was a portrait painter before he was an inventor. Congress paid for the experimental line from Washington to Baltimore, and the message of May 24, 1844, proved it worked. The recorded tape is kept with Morse's papers at the Library of Congress. Joseph Wright's *Orrery* (about 1766) hangs in the Derby Museum and Art Gallery.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 23.4 "Quotations Within Quotations; Long Quotations." A history paper quotes sources that themselves quote others, and long quotations must be set off as block quotations.

For families. Contest summary (checked October 2026; confirm everything in the official NHD Contest Rule Book at nhd.org and with your state or regional affiliate). The 2027 theme is "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change." The Junior Division is for grades 6–8, and homeschool students can usually enter through their state affiliate. The Paper category is for individuals only. A paper must be 1,500–2,500 words; every word of the text counts, including quotations, but notes, the annotated bibliography, captions and appendix material do not. Citations (footnotes, endnotes or internal citations) are required, in Chicago or MLA style. Every entry needs an annotated bibliography with primary and secondary sources listed separately and a process paper of 500 words or fewer. Affiliates set their own dates and formatting details (many ask for typed, double-spaced, 12-point pages with numbered pages), and papers are often due before the contest day. Contests usually run from local and regional rounds in late winter to state contests in spring and the national contest in June. Help by finding sources and checking deadlines; the argument and the writing must be your student's own.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Turn this report sentence into a thesis that fits the 2027 theme: “Samuel Morse invented the telegraph and sent the first message in 1844.”

1. Name the innovation precisely: not just “the telegraph” but the electric telegraph line of 1844.
2. Impact: news could travel between cities in minutes instead of days.
3. Influence: railroads, newspapers and businesses built their work around it, and the lines spread across the country.
4. Change: Americans began to expect news the same day it happened.

Answer: When Samuel Morse’s electric telegraph carried “What hath God wrought” from Washington to Baltimore in 1844, it cut the time news needed to travel from days to minutes; within twenty years railroads, newspapers and the government depended on the wires, and Americans had come to expect the news of the day on the same day.

Example 2. Write an annotated bibliography entry for the telegraph tape in the Library of Congress.

1. Decide where it goes: it was made at the event, so it is a primary source.
2. Give the citation: who, what, when, where it is kept.
3. Annotate: what the source is, then how you used it.

Answer: Morse, Samuel F. B. “What hath God wrought.” Telegraph message tape, 24 May 1844. Samuel F. B. Morse Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. *This is the paper tape on which the first message over the Washington-Baltimore line was recorded. Seeing the dots and dashes showed me how the message was received, and I used it to open my paper.*

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the 2027 National History Day theme?
2. **EASY** What is the word range for an NHD paper, and do quotations count?
3. **EASY** Name three things that do not count toward the paper’s word limit.
4. **EASY** What two sections must the annotated bibliography have?
5. **MEDIUM** Primary or secondary? (a) Morse’s 1844 telegraph tape; (b) a 2010 book on the history of the telegraph; (c) a newspaper report of May 1844 about the message.
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the illogical comparison: “The speed of the telegraph was far greater than the railroad.”
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun reference: “Vail worked with Morse on the code, and he improved it.”

8. **CHALLENGE** Write a thesis for an NHD paper on the printing press, the cotton gin or the steamboat that answers impact, influence and change.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing a report on an invention instead of an argument about its impact, influence and change.
- Treating the process paper and annotated bibliography as afterthoughts; judges read them closely.
- Missing the affiliate's registration or paper deadline, which can come weeks before the contest.
- Letting a long quotation do the work of your own explanation (and use up the word count).

Make it a game • Impact, Influence, Change. A parent names an innovation (the plow, eyeglasses, the printing press, the lighthouse, the postage stamp). The student has thirty seconds to give one sentence each for its impact, its influence and the change it brought. Switch roles and keep score.

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)

Research is searching out a matter; do it diligently and honestly, and give God the glory for what is found.

Practice: answers

1. "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change."
2. 1,500–2,500 words; yes, quotations count.
3. Any three of: notes (citations), the annotated bibliography, illustration captions, appendix material.
4. Primary sources and secondary sources.
5. (a) Primary; (b) secondary; (c) primary.
6. The speed of the telegraph was far greater than that of the railroad (or: than the railroad's). Compare speed with speed, not speed with a railroad.
7. Vail worked with Morse on the code, and Vail improved it. (Name the person the facts support.)
8. Sample: Robert Fulton's steamboat, which carried passengers up the Hudson against the current in 1807, made river travel faster and more reliable than wind or oars allowed; within a generation steamboats carried farm goods and settlers along the Mississippi and its branches, turning river towns into busy ports of trade.

9.2 SCHOLASTIC ART & WRITING AWARDS: CHOOSING AND SHAPING YOUR ENTRY 🏆

OBJECTIVES

- Choose between your 4.4 short story and a Unit 5 poem by testing each against the 2027 category rules and the judges' three criteria.
- Fit the chosen piece to its category: Short Story (1,000–3,000 words) or Poetry (one poem, 3–100 lines).
- Revise the opening and the ending, the two places where a judge decides.

Warm-up. Read aloud the first sentence of your 4.4 story and the first line of your best Unit 5 poem. Which one makes a stranger want to keep going? Say why in one sentence.

Video slot. Video coming. How to revise the opening of a story or poem (an author or librarian talk for teen writers). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

category

The kind of writing an entry is judged as, each with its own rules: for example Short Story, Flash Fiction or Poetry.

originality

The first Scholastic criterion: work that is your own and sees its subject freshly, not a copy of someone else's idea or a borrowed formula.

technical skill

The second criterion: command of the craft, such as structure, sentences, meter, line breaks, punctuation.

voice or vision

The third criterion: the sense that a particular writer is seeing and speaking, with a way of looking at the world that is his or her own.

Gold Key

The top regional award; Gold Key works go on to national judging, where they may earn Gold or Silver Medals.

CORE IDEAS

Two roads. You have two finished pieces that could go to the Scholastic Awards: the short story from 4.4 and the ode or blank-verse poem from Unit 5. Read both aloud. Ask which one you would rather a stranger read, and which one has more life in it. Choose the stronger piece, not the longer one or the one that cost you more work. You may enter both, since each

entry is judged on its own, but one piece polished to the end is worth more than two left half-done.

Fit the category. As of October 2026, the Short Story category asks for 1,000–3,000 words. If your story came in under 1,000 words, it belongs in Flash Fiction (1,000 words at most), which must tell a full story, not an excerpt. A Poetry entry is one poem of 3–100 lines. Count before you revise and again after. A fine piece in the wrong category, or one word over the limit, gives a judge an easy reason to set it aside.

What judges look for. The Scholastic Awards name three criteria: originality, technical skill and the emergence of a personal voice or vision. Originality does not mean shock; it means seeing truly, so that the reader notices something he had passed by. Technical skill is everything you have practiced this year, from clauses to meter. Voice is the hardest to teach and the easiest to hear: a writer who sounds like himself, not like a greeting card or a television show.

First lines and last lines. A judge may read hundreds of entries. Your first lines must earn the rest of the reading, and your last lines are what stay in the judge’s mind. Study the model below. The first draft starts with weather, a name, an age and a promise that “something happened.” The contest draft starts inside the trouble: a horse that will not get up. Everything the first draft *told* (a farm, a family, a sick animal, a boy’s love for it), the contest draft *shows* in action and speech. Do the same for your ending: stop on an image, not an explanation.

Polishing a poem. If you choose a poem, read it aloud slowly and mark the stresses in each line, as you did with blank verse in 5.1. Every line break should be a choice. Every image should be one a reader can see, as in Keats’s “To Autumn.” Cut any word that is there only to fill out the meter. Alexander Pope said it in a single line: “True ease in writing comes from art, not chance.” What looks easy on the page is the result of revision.

Your own work. The rules require that every entry be original to the student and not generated by a computer program. Parents and friends may ask questions and point to weak places, but the words must be yours. The psalmist called his tongue “the pen of a ready writer” as he spoke of the King. Write to honor Him, and let the judges see what you made.

The model. *Two openings of the same story, a first draft and a contest draft. Written for this course*

First draft

It was a cold morning in November. My name is Thomas and I am thirteen years old. I live on a farm with my family and we have a lot of animals. On this particular day something happened that would change my life forever. I woke up and got dressed and went downstairs to eat breakfast, and my mom told me that our old horse, Captain, was really sick.

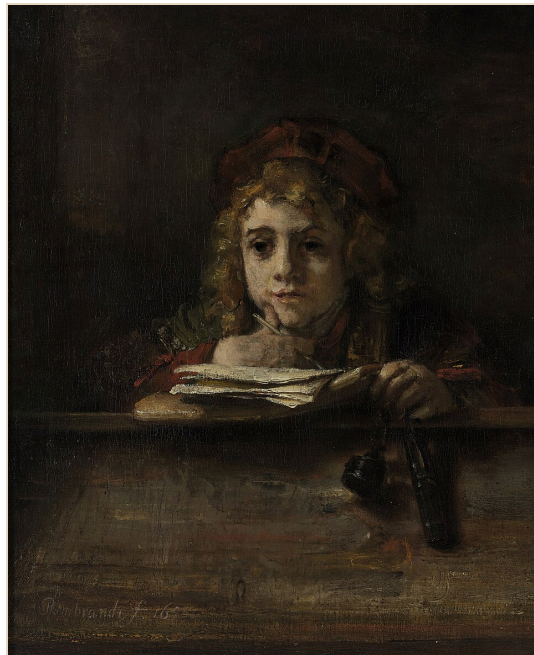
Contest draft

Captain would not get up. Thomas found him at first light, lying in the straw with his legs folded under him like a foal's, and when the boy rattled the oat bucket, the old horse only turned one ear.

"Go get your father," his mother said from the barn door. She had pulled her coat on over her apron, and her breath hung white in the cold.

Thomas did not go. He knelt in the straw and put his hand flat on the gray neck, the way his father had taught him to gentle a horse before the harness went on. Captain had pulled the hay wagon on this farm since before Thomas could walk. The hide under his palm was warm, and it was trembling.

PICTURE STUDY



Titus at His Desk, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1655 · Oil on canvas · Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Titus was Rembrandt's son, born in 1641, so he was about fourteen when his father painted him: just your age. He sits at a desk with his papers and a pen, but he is not writing. His chin rests on his thumb, and he looks past the page. Rembrandt caught the moment every writer knows, the pause in which the next sentence is being found.

Look closely

- Find Titus's hands. What is each one doing?
- Where is Titus looking? Is it at the paper?
- Look at the light. Which parts of the picture are brightest, and why might Rembrandt have chosen them?

Talk about it

1. Write the sentence you think Titus is trying to find. Then write the sentence he might write next.
2. Describe a time you paused like this over your own writing. What did you do to get started again?

WRITING PROJECT: YOUR SCHOLASTIC ENTRY

Choose your entry, fit it to its category and revise it to contest standard. In 9.3 you will proofread it and send it.

You will need

- Your 4.4 short story and your Unit 5 poems
- The official 2027 category rules and calendar (artandwriting.org)
- A printed copy of your chosen piece and a pencil
- A partner reader

Steps

1. Read both pieces aloud. Score each from 1 to 5 on originality, technical skill and voice. Choose the higher total.
2. Count the words (story) or lines (poem). Decide the category: Short Story, Flash Fiction or Poetry.
3. Revise the opening. Story: begin inside the trouble. Poem: make the first line one a reader can see or hear.
4. Revise the ending. Cut any sentence or line that explains what the reader already feels; end on an image.
5. Have a partner mark the one place the piece drags and the one place it is strongest. Fix the first.
6. Choose a title that makes a stranger curious without giving away the ending.
7. With a parent, find your region's deadline on the official calendar and write it on your calendar.

Check your work

- Tense stays steady throughout; no slips from past to present in the middle of a scene.
- Voice and mood do not shift without reason; verbs are mostly active and strong.
- No modifiers are misplaced or dangling.
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly, including quotations within quotations.
- Pronouns agree with their antecedents and point clearly to one person.
- The piece fits its category: 1,000–3,000 words, under 1,000 for Flash Fiction, or one poem of 3–100 lines.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the contest draft from the model. Underline every detail that shows something the first draft only told.
2. Write five possible first lines for your entry. Circle the one closest to the trouble.
3. Copy Pope's line "True ease in writing comes from art, not chance" and write two sentences on what it means for revision.

History note. Titus van Rijn (1641–1668) was the only one of Rembrandt's children by his wife Saskia to live past infancy. Rembrandt painted him several times as he grew up; *Titus at His Desk* (1655) is in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 20.4 "Shifts in Tense, Voice and Mood." Stories most often slip from past to present tense in the middle of a scene; check every verb in your entry.

For families. Contest summary (checked October 2026; confirm everything at artandwriting.org and in the entry portal). The 2027 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are open to students in grades 7–12 who are 13 or older at entry and who live in the United States, its territories, on military bases or in Canada (excluding Quebec). Entries opened October 1, 2026. Deadlines are set by region and run from December 1, 2026, to early January 2027. Regional results come out January 27, 2027, national results March 31, 2027, and National Awards Week in New York is June 8–11, 2027. The fee is \$15 per individual entry, and fee waivers are available without proof of need. Short Story is 1,000–3,000 words; Flash Fiction is up to 1,000 words; Poetry is one poem of 3–100 lines per entry. A parent or guardian must agree to the Participation Terms electronically. Work must be original and not AI-generated, and it may also be entered in other contests. Ask questions and point to weak places, but do not rewrite.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart the model. What did the contest draft do with each part of the first draft?

1. “It was a cold morning in November” became a picture: breath hanging white, first light, a coat pulled on.
2. “My name is Thomas and I am thirteen” was cut; the reader learns he is a boy and a farm child from what he does.
3. “Something happened that would change my life forever” was cut; the horse that will not get up is the something.
4. “My mom told me ... was really sick” became action and speech: the oat bucket, one ear turning, “Go get your father.”

Answer: The contest draft cuts the summary and the promise, starts inside the trouble, and turns every told fact into a thing the reader sees or hears.

Example 2. Revise the ending of this student ode: “O river, you are so beautiful and great, / You teach me many things I should know. / I will always love you, river, / And I think everyone should love you too.”

1. “Beautiful and great” and “many things” are labels; the reader sees nothing.
2. The last line turns to the reader and preaches; an ode should praise its subject, not lecture.
3. Find one true thing the river does and end on it as an image.

Answer: Sample: “O river, patient worker of the hills, / You carry down the snow of March in June, / And still the cattle find you in the heat.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three Scholastic judging criteria.
2. **EASY** What is the word range for the Short Story category?
3. **EASY** How many poems go in one Poetry entry, and how long may it be?
4. **EASY** Your story is 850 words. Which category fits it?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the tense shift: “Thomas knelt in the straw. He puts his hand on Captain’s neck and feels him tremble.”
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: “Rattling the oat bucket, the horse only turned one ear.”
7. **MEDIUM** Rewrite this first line to begin inside the trouble: “One day my sister and I decided to go fishing at the pond, which would turn out to be a big mistake.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the last three lines of a blank-verse poem about a grandfather’s workbench. End on an image, not an explanation.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Entering the piece you worked hardest on instead of the one that reads best aloud.
- Choosing the wrong category for the word or line count.
- Opening with background (name, age, weather, “one day”) instead of the trouble.
- Ending with a moral or an explanation instead of an image.

Make it a game • Keep Reading?. Each player writes three first lines on separate slips: one from a classic story or poem, one from their own work and one deliberately dull. Shuffle and read them aloud. Everyone votes “keep reading” or “put it down” on each, then guesses which lines came from the classics.

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 made something good and offered it to the King; make your entry ready in the same spirit.

Practice: answers

1. Originality, technical skill and the emergence of a personal voice or vision.
2. 1,000–3,000 words.
3. One poem, 3–100 lines.
4. Flash Fiction (1,000 words at most), as long as it tells a full story.
5. Thomas knelt in the straw. He put his hand on Captain’s neck and felt him tremble.
6. When Thomas rattled the oat bucket, the horse only turned one ear.
7. Sample: The ice groaned under my sister’s boots, and she was still twenty feet from shore.
8. Sample: “His plane still hangs above the cluttered bench, / The blade set fine, the handle worn to fit / A hand that left it sharp for mine to use.”

9.3 POLISH AND SEND

OBJECTIVES

- Proofread a finished entry in separate passes: aloud, backward for spelling, and by checklist for confused words and punctuation.
- Format each entry exactly to its contest's rules and submit it, with a parent, before the deadline.
- Keep a submission record and receive the results, good or disappointing, with grace.

Warm-up. Your parent reads you a short paragraph with five hidden mistakes (its/it's, than/then, a missing comma, a doubled word, a misspelled name). How many can you catch by ear alone?

Video slot. Video coming. How editors proofread: tips for checking your own writing (a library or writing-center talk for students). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

proofreading

The last slow check of a finished piece for typing, spelling, punctuation and formatting errors, done after all revision is finished.

pass

One complete read-through looking for one kind of problem only.

manuscript format

The page layout a contest requires: font, size, spacing, margins, page numbers, title page and where (or whether) your name appears.

submission record

A log of what you sent, to which contest, in which category, on what date, with the confirmation and the date results are due.

acceptable words

The Preacher's phrase in Ecclesiastes 12:10 for words that are fitting and pleasing to the hearer, and also upright and true.

CORE IDEAS

The last five percent. By now your NHD paper and your Scholastic entry are revised. What remains is small and easy to skip: the typo in the first paragraph, the page number missing from page 4, the "there" that should be "their." Small errors do not ruin good work, but they make a judge read less kindly. A carpenter sands the joint no one will see. Do the same.

The Preacher's method. The model below describes how Solomon, "the preacher," worked. He "gave good heed," "sought out" and "set in order" his proverbs; he "sought to find out acceptable words"; and what he wrote was "upright, even words of truth." That is a whole revision checklist. *Set in order*: is the arrangement right? *Acceptable words*: is each word fitting and pleasing? *Upright and true*: is every fact, quotation and citation exact? Even the wisest king worked at his words before he let them go.

Proofread in passes. You cannot catch everything in one reading, because your mind fills in what you meant to write. So read several times, each time for one thing. Print the piece and read it aloud slowly, pointing at each word. Then read it backward, last word to first, for spelling only; out of order, every word looks new. Then go through the list of words often confused (its/it's, than/then, affect/effect, lie/lay, who's/whose, their/there/they're) and check each one. Last, check every quotation mark, comma and semicolon.

Format to the rules. Each contest sets its own format, and the official rules always win over anything in this course. Your NHD paper will usually need a title page, typed double-spaced pages in a 12-point font with one-inch margins and numbered pages, followed by the process paper and annotated bibliography in the order your affiliate asks. Your Scholastic entry is uploaded through the online portal; follow its instructions for the title and file. Check the word count one last time after proofreading, since small fixes can change it.

Send it. Sending is the step most young writers never take. Sit down with a parent, open the official site and register or upload together, since both contests need a parent's part. Do it several days before the deadline, not the last night. Save a copy of exactly what you sent, and write a line in your submission record. Then write a short thank-you note to anyone who helped you, such as a librarian, an archivist or a first reader. Your speech should be "always with grace" (Colossians 4:6), and gratitude is a good place to start.

After the results. Some entries win and many do not. Judges are human, and a piece that wins nothing one year may win the next after another revision. If you win, thank God and the people who helped you, and do not boast. If you do not, read the piece again in a month: you will see things you could not see before. "As iron sharpeneth iron" (Proverbs 27:17), every contest sharpens the next piece you write.

The model. *Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 (KJV), how "the preacher" worked at his words*

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



Man Writing a Letter, Gabriël Metsu, about 1664–1666 · Oil on panel · National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Gabriël Metsu (1629–1667) was a Dutch painter of quiet scenes from everyday life. Here a young man sits by a window, bent over a letter with his pen. The light falls on the page, and nothing in the room distracts him. A letter in his day could not be unsent; once the seal was pressed and the messenger gone, the words were out of his hands. So he takes his time.

Look closely

- Find where the light comes from and where it falls brightest.
- Look at how the man sits and holds his pen. Is he hurrying or taking care?
- Look at the objects on the table and the wall. What do they tell you about the man?

Talk about it

1. Write the last paragraph of the letter you think the man is writing. Then proofread it in two passes.
2. Compare this man finishing his letter with Titus pausing at his desk (9.2). Which stage of writing does each picture show?

WRITING PROJECT: THE CONTEST PACKET

Proofread, format and send your NHD paper, your Scholastic entry, or both, and start a submission record you will keep through high school.

You will need

- Your revised entries from 9.1 and 9.2, printed

- A colored pen and a ruler (to read one line at a time)
- The official NHD rule book and affiliate instructions; the Scholastic portal
- A parent, and a notebook page for your submission record

Steps

1. Pass one: read the printed piece aloud slowly, pointing at each word. Mark anything that sounds wrong.
2. Pass two: read backward, last word to first, for spelling only. Check every name and date against your notes.
3. Pass three: go through the confused-words list one word at a time, then check every punctuation mark.
4. Format the piece to the official rules and check the word or line count one last time.
5. With a parent, register and submit several days before the deadline. Save a copy of exactly what you sent.
6. Start your submission record: contest, category, title, date sent, confirmation, date results are due.
7. Write a short thank-you note to someone who helped.

Check your work

- Words often confused are all correct (its/it's, than/then, affect/effect, lie/lay, who's/whose, their/there/they're).
- Commas, semicolons, colons and dashes are used correctly; quotation marks are paired.
- Who and whom are correct; pronouns in compounds and comparisons are in the right case ("my father and I," "taller than he").
- Lists and paired ideas are parallel.
- Names, dates and quotations match the sources exactly.
- The format, word or line count and deadline match the official rules.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Ecclesiastes 12:9-10 and underline the four things the preacher did with his words.
2. Make your own list of the ten mistakes you make most often, from your marked drafts this year. Keep it in the front of your notebook.
3. Rule a submission record page with six columns: contest, category, title, date sent, confirmation, results.

History note. Before typewriters and computers, scribes and printers proofread by having one person read the copy aloud while another followed the proof, a method still used by some publishers. Metsu's *Man Writing a Letter* is in the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin.

 **Grammar link.** Grammar Level 3, Lesson 24.1 “Words Often Confused I.” The confused-words pass in this lesson uses that list; add the pairs from 24.2 if you have finished it.

For families. Both contests need a parent’s part. For National History Day, register through your state or regional affiliate and follow its instructions for submitting the paper, which is often due before the contest day. For the Scholastic Awards, the parent or guardian agrees to the Participation Terms electronically, and in a homeschool the parent usually serves as the educator who connects to the student’s account. Check the official deadlines yourself (summaries are in 9.1 and 9.2), submit a few days early, and keep copies. You may proofread with your student, but mark errors with a question or a check in the margin and let your student make the fix. If the results disappoint, praise the work and the finishing; sending a finished piece to a stranger is itself an achievement worth honoring.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Proofread this paragraph from a student NHD paper in passes: “When Morse sent his first message in 1844, it’s effect on the nation was immediate. Newspapers, then dependant on the mail, could now print news from Baltimore the the same day. The government, too, quickly saw it’s value.”

1. Aloud: the doubled “the the” is easy to hear when you point at each word.
2. Backward for spelling: “dependant” should be “dependent” in this use.
3. Confused words: “it’s” means “it is”; both places need the possessive “its.” “Effect” (a noun, the result) is correct.

Answer: When Morse sent his first message in 1844, its effect on the nation was immediate. Newspapers, then dependent on the mail, could now print news from Baltimore the same day. The government, too, quickly saw its value.

Example 2. Check the format of a Scholastic entry before upload: the story is 3,140 words, titled “Story for Contest,” and the student plans to upload it the night of the regional deadline.

1. Word count: 3,140 is over the 3,000-word limit. Cut 140 words or more, starting with sentences that explain what the reader already knows.
2. Title: “Story for Contest” tells a judge nothing. Choose a title that names something important in the story.
3. Timing: uploading on the last night risks a missed deadline if the site is busy or a form is missing. Upload several days early.

Answer: Cut the story to under 3,000 words, give it a real title, and upload it with a parent several days before the regional deadline.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Why should you proofread in several passes instead of one?
2. **EASY** Why read a piece backward when checking spelling?
3. **EASY** Name the four things the preacher did with his words in Ecclesiastes 12:9–10.
4. **EASY** Name four columns for a submission record.
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the confused words: “The telegraph was faster then the mail, and it’s inventor became famous.”
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun case: “My mother and me checked the deadline, and she reads faster than me.”
7. **MEDIUM** Fix who/whom: “The librarian who I thanked found the 1844 newspaper.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a three-sentence thank-you note to a librarian who helped you find a primary source for your NHD paper.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Proofreading on the screen only, in one quick read.
- Making a last-minute fix that pushes the word count over the limit.
- Waiting until the deadline night to register or upload.
- Treating a contest result as the measure of the work instead of one reader’s judgment.

Make it a game • Typo Hunt. A parent copies a paragraph from one of this year’s model passages and plants ten errors: confused words, a doubled word, a missing comma, a wrong date. Set a timer for three minutes. The student scores a point for each error found and loses a point for each correct word marked wrong. Then switch: the student plants errors for the parent.

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)

Diligence in the small last steps is part of good work, and good work is noticed in time, whatever any one contest decides.

Practice: answers

1. Your mind fills in what you meant to write, so each pass looks for one kind of error and catches what a single reading misses.
2. Out of order, the words lose their meaning, so you see each word as it is spelled instead of as you meant it.
3. He gave good heed, sought out and set in order proverbs, sought acceptable words, and wrote what was upright and true.
4. Any four of: contest, category, title, date sent, confirmation, date results are due.
5. The telegraph was faster than the mail, and its inventor became famous.
6. My mother and I checked the deadline, and she reads faster than I (do).
7. The librarian whom I thanked found the 1844 newspaper.
8. Sample: Dear Mrs. Hale, Thank you for helping me find the May 1844 newspaper report of Morse's first telegraph message. Reading it showed me how astonished people were that day, and it became the opening of my National History Day paper. I am grateful for your time and your patience with all my questions.

UNIT 9 REVIEW

Answer in writing. Questions 1-7 may be answered aloud if needed. The writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit. Contest facts are those summarized in the unit (checked October 2026).

1. (2 pts) What is the 2027 National History Day theme?
2. (3 pts) Give the word range for an NHD paper and name two things that do not count toward it.
3. (3 pts) What is a process paper, and how long may it be?
4. (3 pts) How is an annotated bibliography arranged, and what goes in each annotation?
5. (3 pts) Name the three Scholastic judging criteria.
6. (2 pts) Give the limits for a Scholastic Short Story entry and a Poetry entry.
7. (3 pts) Name three separate proofreading passes.
8. (5 pts) Write a thesis for an NHD paper on an innovation of your choice that answers impact, influence and change.
9. (4 pts) Rewrite this opening to begin inside the trouble: "It was a normal day on our farm and I was doing my chores when something happened that I will never forget."
10. (4 pts) Proofread: "The inventor who's work we studied was more famous then his partner, and it's effect on the nation was great."
11. (3 pts) Fix the pronoun case: "The judges gave my sister and I a certificate, though she wrote more than me."
12. (3 pts) Name three things a submission record should include, and one reason to submit before the deadline night.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE CONTEST PACKET

Place in your portfolio a copy of exactly what you submitted: the NHD paper with its title page, process paper and annotated bibliography, and/or the Scholastic entry with its category marked. Add your submission record and the thank-you note you wrote (or a copy). When results come, add them, along with one paragraph on what you would revise next time.

- **Argument or story:** The NHD paper argues a clear thesis on impact, influence and change; or the Scholastic entry begins inside the trouble and ends on an image.
- **Rules followed:** Word or line count, category, required parts and format all match the official rules; the entry was sent before the deadline.
- **Accuracy and honesty:** Every quotation, name, date and citation is exact; the work is the student's own.
- **Mechanics:** Clean proofreading: no confused words, correct pronoun case and reference, correct punctuation of quotations, steady tense.

Answer key

1. "Innovation in History: Impact, Influence, Change."

2. 1,500–2,500 words; any two of notes, the annotated bibliography, captions, appendix material.
3. A description of how you chose your topic and connected it to the theme, researched, built the project and reached your argument; 500 words or fewer, with no quotations.
4. Primary and secondary sources in separate sections; each annotation says what the source is and how you used it.
5. Originality, technical skill and the emergence of a personal voice or vision.
6. Short Story: 1,000–3,000 words. Poetry: one poem, 3–100 lines.
7. Sample: aloud, pointing at each word; backward for spelling; a confused-words check; a punctuation check.
8. Sample: Gutenberg's printing press, which printed books with movable type in the 1450s, made books far faster and cheaper to produce than copying by hand; within a century printed Bibles and pamphlets had spread across Europe, and ordinary people could read God's Word for themselves.
9. Sample: The barn door was banging in the wind, and the calf pen was empty.
10. The inventor whose work we studied was more famous than his partner, and its effect on the nation was great.
11. The judges gave my sister and me a certificate, though she wrote more than I (did).
12. Any three of: contest, category, title, date sent, confirmation, date results are due. Reason: a busy site, a missing form or a parent's step can delay a last-minute entry.