

SCHOOL LAUNCH · COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING

GRADE 9 COMPOSITION & CREATIVE WRITING: THESIS I AND THE FULL ESSAY

The first high school year of classical writing: learn the five canons of rhetoric and the six-part oration, argue a thesis on a general question with the heads of lawful, just, expedient, possible and honorable, grow past the five-paragraph essay with counterargument and rebuttal, write a parable, scan and write meter, write for work, and give a testimony of God's providence aloud.

First edition

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

Isaiah 1:18 (KJV)

COURSE GUIDE

Grade 9 opens the high school years with the whole art of rhetoric. You will learn Aristotle's three appeals (ethos, pathos and logos) and the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. You will build a speech on the six-part oration Cicero taught, from exordium to peroration, with Raphael's cartoon of St. Paul preaching in Athens as your picture of a speaker who reasoned with his hearers. Then comes the thesis, the progymnasmata exercise that argues a general question not tied to any person, such as Aphthonius's "Should one marry?" You will test a question with the heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable), argue whether it is better to work with the hands or the head, and write a full thesis.

The full essay unit carries you beyond five paragraphs into counterargument, rebuttal, transitions and coherence, and ends with a script for the VFW Voice of Democracy audio essay. The creative track reads the parables of Christ as literature, Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" and a summarized scene from C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, with Rembrandt's *Return of the Prodigal Son* for picture study, and then you write a parable of your own. You will scan the four chief meters in Longfellow and Poe, read Hopkins's "God's Grandeur" and write in two meters. A practical unit teaches the business letter and email, the short report, instructions and a first job application.

The year closes with testimony: Augustine's account of his conversion in *Confessions*, Book 8, and John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, then a three-minute testimony or word of thanks given aloud. Each lesson has a model passage, worked examples, practice, a game, a Style Clinic and a verse from the King James Bible.

WHO IT IS FOR

Written for high school students in grade 9 (about ages 14-15) who can write a well-organized multi-paragraph essay on their own. A parent reads the drafts, listens to the speeches and helps with revision. There is no Grammar course this year: a short Style Clinic in each lesson reviews Grammar Level 3 and applies it to sentence style. Grade 8 Composition is helpful but not required; Unit 1 reviews the earlier progymnasmata as it introduces the canons of rhetoric.

HOW TO USE THIS COURSE

1. **The weekly rhythm.** One lesson a week in two sessions of 45-60 minutes. Session 1: warm-up, video, teaching, model passage and picture study. Session 2: worked examples, practice, the Style Clinic and the writing project. Longer essays may need a third short session for revision.
2. **Copy, imitate, invent.** Each unit opens with a model to copy by hand, then an imitation that follows the model's shape, then a piece of your own. The models come from Scripture and the classics, so you learn to write by keeping good company.

3. **The quarter path.** Short on time? The ten ★ lessons make a one-quarter course: 1.1, 2.1, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 7.1 and 8.4.
4. **The Style Clinic.** Every lesson has a Style Clinic (🔗) that reviews one Grammar Level 3 skill and then uses it in your own sentences: parallelism, subordination, active verbs, punctuation for clarity and so on. The revision checklist asks only for skills the Style Clinic has covered.
5. **Speaking.** Rhetoric was first a spoken art. You will deliver part of an oration in Unit 1, record an audio essay in Unit 3, read meter aloud in Unit 5 and give a three-minute testimony or thanks in Unit 7. Unit 8 practices delivery again before the portfolio.
6. **Contests.** Lesson 3.4 prepares a script for the VFW Voice of Democracy audio essay (grades 9–12). As of this writing, the 2026–27 theme is “What a Veteran Taught Me About America”; the recording must be 3–5 minutes, submitted with a typed essay and entry form through a participating local VFW Post by October 31, 2026. Families starting late may do Lesson 3.4 early or prepare for the next year’s contest. Rules change each year, so check the official VFW rules and get the current entry form before you write.

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

Unit 1: The Canons of Rhetoric (1–4)

For six years you have practiced the preliminary exercises: fable, narrative, chreia, maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, comparison and description. Now you are ready for the full art of rhetoric. In this unit you will meet Aristotle's three proofs (ethos, pathos and logos) and trace them in Paul's speech on Mars' hill; learn to find arguments with the stases, the common topics and the circumstances; arrange a case in the six parts of the classical oration; and then polish, memorize and deliver a four- to five-minute speech of your own. The year's faith verse sets the tone: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18).

Unit 2: Thesis (General Question) (5–8)

The thirteenth classical exercise: the thesis, a general question argued without reference to particular persons, places or times. You will learn to strip a particular case down to the general question inside it, read Bacon weighing marriage and single life, test every choice with the five final heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable), answer Ruskin on whether it is better to work with the hands or the head, and write a full thesis of 900–1,200 words, plus a timed thesis in forty minutes. Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,” sets the tone: honest reasoning, fair to the other side, toward the truth.

Unit 3: The Full Essay (9–12)

The five-paragraph theme comes down like scaffolding. In this unit you build one full thesis essay of 1,000–1,200 words, planned by divisions instead of a paragraph count (Bacon’s “Of Truth”), strengthened by a fair counterargument and rebuttal (Hamilton’s *Federalist* No. 1), and revised for coherence (Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address). Then you put the same skills to

the ear in a three-to-five-minute audio essay for the VFW Voice of Democracy contest on the 2026–27 theme, “What a Veteran Taught Me About America.”

Unit 4: 🦋 Story: Fable and Parable for Older Readers (13–16)

You wrote fables in the early grades; now you return to the short moral story as a mature reader and writer. You will study the parables of Christ as literature (their brevity, contrast, turn and end-stress), using the prodigal son and Rembrandt’s great painting of its homecoming; read Tolstoy’s “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” to see a parable grow into a folk tale; study the dream-vision of C. S. Lewis’s *The Great Divorce*, a chain of parables about the choices that keep souls out of Heaven; and finally write a modern parable of your own that shows one truth of Scripture in ordinary life without stating it.

Unit 5: 🦋 Poetry: Meter in Depth (17–20)

In this creative-writing unit you learn to hear and mark the beat of English verse. You will name the four chief feet (iamb, trochee, anapest, dactyl) and scan Shakespeare’s Sonnet 146; scan the long dactylic hexameter of Longfellow’s *Evangeline* against the hammering trochaic octameter of Poe’s “The Raven”; study how Gerard Manley Hopkins packs stress and sound into “God’s Grandeur”; and finally write the same subject in two meters, choosing and defending the better fit. The unit joins the canon of style (decorum: the form must fit the matter) with the canons of memory and delivery, for you will finish by reciting your best poem from memory.

Unit 6: Writing for Work I (21–24)

The art of rhetoric now goes to work. You will write a business letter and a professional email using Lincoln’s answer–reason–offer pattern, report findings honestly in a short memo report (with the spies of Numbers 13 as a warning and a model), write and test step-by-step instructions patterned on God’s exact commands to Noah, and prepare a complete first-job application, learning from Leonardo da Vinci’s famous letter to Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan. A Style Clinic in each lesson reviews active voice, parallelism, the imperative mood and dangling modifiers. By the end you will have a packet of real documents you can use to apply for a job, and the habit of writing so that a busy reader can act.

Unit 7: 🦋 Personal Narrative: Testimony (25–28)

In this creative-writing unit you become the witness. You will read the turning point of Augustine’s *Confessions* (Book 8, the garden at Milan) and the plain-style account of John Bunyan in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, learn the structure of a testimony from Paul’s defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26) and the classical parts and virtues of narrative, and finish by giving a three-minute testimony or speech of thanks to a real audience. Throughout, the aim is a true account of events, people and God’s providence, told plainly, with God rather than the teller at the center.

Unit 8: Review (29–32)

The year ends by gathering its work. You will look back over the year's exercises and revise one essay with Franklin's method and three passes (8.1); prepare and deliver one piece aloud with Hamlet's rules for speakers (8.2); assemble a portfolio with a preface and defend it in an oral exam (8.3); and practice the forty-minute timed essay that the ACT and similar tests ask for (8.4, ★). Models: Franklin's *Autobiography*, Hamlet's advice to the players, Ecclesiastes 12, and a sample timed essay written for this course.

MATERIALS

- **A writing notebook (composition book)** One for the whole year, for copywork, imitations and drafts.
- **A KJV Bible** For every lesson's verse and Units 1, 4 and 7.
- **A phone or computer that records audio** For the Voice of Democracy script (3.4) and the testimony (7.4).
- **A library copy of C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (optional)** For Lesson 4.3. The lesson summarizes the book; it does not quote it.
- **A good dictionary** For word choice in the Style Clinics and for marking stresses in Unit 5.
- **A timer** For speeches, the testimony (7.4) and timed essay practice (8.4).
- **A folder for the portfolio** Unit 8.

GRADING

Grades come mostly from the writing projects, judged with each lesson's checklist (invention, arrangement, style, mechanics) and, for spoken work, delivery. Praise first, then fix one thing at a time.

- Writing projects: 50%
- Writing notebook and Style Clinics: 15%
- Unit reviews: 15%
- Unit portfolio pieces and oral work: 20%

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

- Mechanics are graded only on Grammar Level 3 skills reviewed in the Style Clinics.
- A timed essay at mid-year and another in 8.4 show growth. Families keeping a high school transcript may record this course as one credit of English composition.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

You do not need to be a writer or a speaker to teach this course. Read the model aloud with your student, listen to the speeches, and use the checklist. Praise specific things before suggesting one change. At this age, ask good questions more than you give answers: "What would someone who disagrees say?" and "Which head is your strongest?"

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. C. S. Lewis is summarized, not quoted, because his books are in copyright. Thesis questions are general questions about life and work, never current political quarrels, and the testimony unit asks your student to tell what God has done through events, people and work, not to label himself or herself.

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

THE CANONS OF RHETORIC

For six years you have practiced the preliminary exercises: fable, narrative, chreia, maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, comparison and description. Now you are ready for the full art of rhetoric. In this unit you will meet Aristotle's three proofs (ethos, pathos and logos) and trace them in Paul's speech on Mars' hill; learn to find arguments with the stases, the common topics and the circumstances; arrange a case in the six parts of the classical oration; and then polish, memorize and deliver a four- to five-minute speech of your own. The year's faith verse sets the tone: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18).

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has completed the Grade 7-8 exercises (commonplace, encomium, comparison, description) or can write a well-organized multi-paragraph essay.
- Knows the Grammar Level 3 basics: phrases, clauses, the four sentence structures, active and passive voice, parallelism.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define rhetoric with Aristotle and identify ethos, pathos and logos in a speech.
- ☐ I can name the four stases and use the five common topics to find arguments on a question.
- ☐ I can arrange a case in the six parts of the oration, from exordium to peroration.
- ☐ I can name the four virtues of style and use figures of speech on purpose.
- ☐ I can memorize the structure of a speech and deliver it clearly to an audience.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Aristotle, Rhetoric, trans. W. Rhys Roberts (MIT Internet Classics Archive)** (<https://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/rhetoric.html>): Free. Book I, chapters 2-3 cover the three proofs and the three kinds of oratory.
- **Cicero's Brutus and Orator, trans. E. Jones (Project Gutenberg #9776)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/9776>): Source of the 1.3 model passage on Antonius; Cicero's portraits of Roman orators.
- **Shakespeare, Hamlet (Project Gutenberg #1524)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1524>): Act III, Scene 2 contains Hamlet's advice to the players (the 1.4 model).

1.1 ARISTOTLE'S RHETORIC: ETHOS, PATHOS, LOGOS ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define rhetoric with Aristotle and name the three proofs: ethos, pathos and logos.
- Trace all three proofs in Paul's speech on Mars' hill (Acts 17:22–31).
- Write a 600–800 word rhetorical analysis that judges how a speaker uses each proof.

Warm-up. Think of the last time someone changed your mind about something real: which book to read, which job to take, whether to apologize. Write three sentences: Who persuaded you? What did they say? Why did you believe them? Keep the page; by the end of this lesson you will be able to name what happened.

Video slot. Video coming. Aristotle's three appeals: ethos, pathos and logos explained (a lecture or overview from a classical school or university). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

rhetoric

The art of persuasion. Aristotle defined it as the power of seeing, in any given case, the available means of persuasion.

ethos

Proof from the speaker's character: the audience trusts the speaker because he shows good sense, good character and goodwill.

pathos

Proof from the audience's emotions: the speaker brings the hearers to feel what the truth deserves, such as pity, fear, hope or indignation.

logos

Proof from the argument itself: reasons, evidence and examples that show the claim is true or probable.

enthymeme

Aristotle's name for a rhetorical syllogism, an argument with one premise left unstated because the audience already holds it: “He is honest, for he returned the lost wallet.”

CORE IDEAS

Why study persuasion? This year's faith verse is God's own invitation: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 1:18). God does not merely command; He argues, pleads and promises. Men and women made in His image persuade one another every day, in kitchens, courtrooms, shops and pulpits. The question is not whether you will persuade, but whether you will do it well and honestly. That is why, for two thousand years, students at your age left the preliminary exercises and began the full study of *rhetoric*, the

art of persuasion. This unit names its five great parts, the canons. This lesson begins with the man who first wrote the subject down as a science.

Aristotle's definition. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) studied under Plato in Athens and later tutored the young Alexander the Great. In his *Rhetoric* he defined the art as the faculty of observing “in any given case the available means of persuasion” (W. Rhys Roberts's translation). Notice the word *observing*. The rhetorician is first a noticer: he studies his audience, his subject and himself before he says a word. Notice too that rhetoric is a tool. A hammer can build a house or break a window, and a speech can serve truth or a lie. Scripture settles which use is ours: “putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25).

The three proofs. Aristotle taught that the proofs a speech itself supplies are of three kinds. The first lies in the character of the speaker (*ethos*), the second in putting the hearers into the right frame of mind (*pathos*), and the third in the argument itself, “so far as it proves or seems to prove” (*logos*). Every persuasive essay you write this year will lean on all three, and the best writers keep them in balance. A speech that is all logic can be correct and cold; a speech that is all feeling can be warm and false; a speaker of poor character can lose a good case.

Ethos: who is speaking? Aristotle went so far as to say that character is almost the most effective means of persuasion. Later in the *Rhetoric* he names three things that make a speaker trusted: good sense, good moral character and goodwill toward the audience. On paper, your ethos is built by small, honest habits: getting facts and quotations exactly right, stating the other side fairly, admitting what you do not know, and keeping a tone that respects the reader. One careless error in a date can cost you more trust than three fine paragraphs earn.

Pathos: what should the hearer feel? Emotion is not the enemy of reason. Aristotle observed that we judge differently when we are grieved or glad, friendly or hostile. A good speaker does not stir feeling for its own sake; he helps the audience feel what the facts actually deserve. Grief at a real loss, gratitude for a real gift, indignation at a real wrong: these are fitting. The best tool of pathos is the concrete picture, a single widow, a single field, a single child, rather than a pile of adjectives. Feeling without truth is manipulation, and a Christian writer refuses it.

Logos: what is the reason? Aristotle named two main tools of rhetorical argument: the *example* (reasoning from a case) and the *enthymeme* (a syllogism with a premise the audience already supplies). “We should trust him with the keys, for he has never once been late” leaves unsaid the premise that punctual people are dependable. When you analyze a speech, find the claim, then ask: what reason is given, and what unstated belief must the audience share for the reason to work?

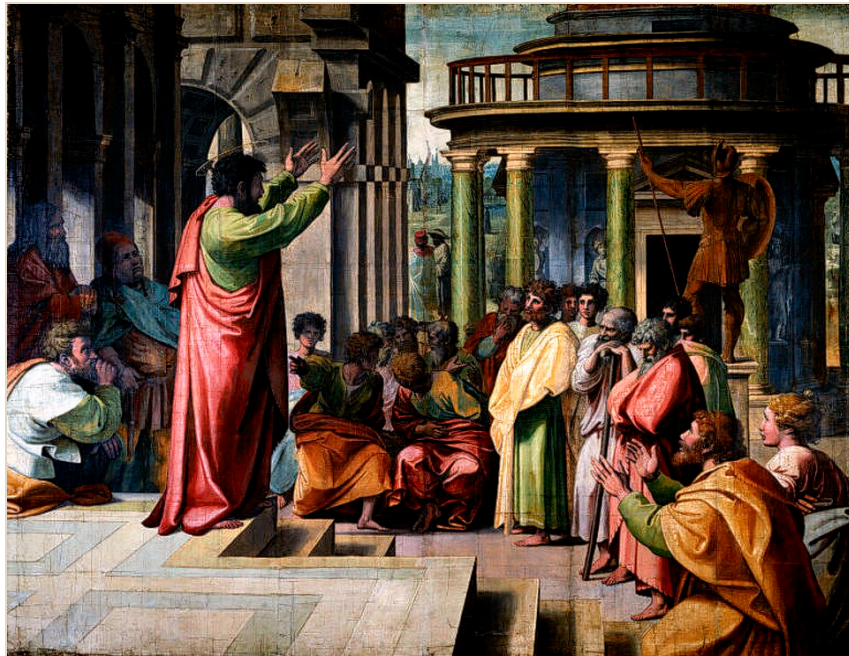
Paul on Mars' hill. The model passage is a speech heard in the city where Aristotle had taught, nearly four centuries after his death. Paul builds ethos by showing he has observed Athens carefully and by quoting their own poet (Aratus: “For we are also his offspring”). He reasons from their altar “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD” to the Creator who “dwelleth not in

temples made with hands”: if God made the world and gives life to all, He cannot be housed or fed by men. In verses 30–31 he turns to pathos and a call to action: God “commandeth all men every where to repent,” for He has appointed a day of judgment. Read on to verses 32–34: some mocked, some delayed, and some believed. Even perfect persuasion does not command results. We speak faithfully and leave the harvest to God.

The model. *Acts 17:22–28 (KJV), Paul's speech on Mars' hill in Athens*

Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

PICTURE STUDY



St. Paul Preaching in Athens (cartoon for the Sistine Chapel tapestries), Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), 1515–1516 · Bodycolour (glue-based paint) on paper, mounted on canvas · Victoria and Albert Museum, London (on loan from the Royal Collection)
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Pope Leo X asked Raphael to design ten tapestries for the walls of the Sistine Chapel, showing the acts of Peter and Paul. A cartoon is the full-size design the weavers worked from, so the finished tapestry came out reversed. Seven of the cartoons survive. Here Paul stands above the philosophers of Athens with both arms lifted. Raphael has painted the whole range of responses Luke records: thoughtful listeners, skeptics and, at the lower right, a man and a woman who seem to step toward Paul. Many take them for Dionysius the Areopagite and Damaris, who believed (Acts 17:34).

Look closely

- Paul's gesture: both arms raised, body leaning forward. What does his posture say before he says a word?
- The listeners: find one who is persuaded, one who is doubtful and one who is thinking it over.
- The round temple and statue in the background. How does Raphael remind you which city this is?

Talk about it

1. Choose one listener and write his thoughts in a paragraph as Paul reaches verse 31. Which proof (ethos, pathos or logos) has reached him, or failed to?
2. Raphael could only paint one instant of a long speech. Which sentence of Acts 17:22–31 do you think Paul is speaking here? Defend your choice from details in the picture.

WRITING PROJECT: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF PAUL ON MARS' HILL

Write a 600–800 word essay that analyzes how Paul uses ethos, pathos and logos in Acts 17:22–31 and judges which proof carries the most weight.

An analysis does not summarize the speech; it explains how the speech works. Every paragraph should answer “How does Paul persuade here, and why does it fit this audience?”

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible (read Acts 17:16–34 for the full setting)
- Three colored pencils or highlighters

Steps

1. Read Acts 17:16–34 twice: once for the story, once for the speech.
2. Mark the speech in three colors: ethos, pathos, logos. Some phrases will get two colors; note why.
3. Write a thesis that makes a claim, not a list: e.g., “Paul wins a hearing by meeting the Athenians on their own ground, but his argument rests on the Creator they did not know.”

4. Draft an introduction (setting and thesis), one body paragraph for each proof with at least one exact quotation, and a paragraph weighing which proof matters most.
5. Conclude with the audience's response (verses 32–34) and what it teaches about persuasion.
6. Read the draft aloud and cut every sentence that only retells the story.

Check your work

- My thesis makes a claim about how Paul persuades, not just that he uses three proofs.
- Each body paragraph quotes Acts 17 exactly, with the verse number.
- I explain why each move fits an Athenian audience.
- Items in a series are parallel in form (Style Clinic).
- Nonessential clauses are set off with commas; essential clauses are not.
- The essay is 600–800 words and has a title.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Acts 17:22–23 by hand, slowly, noticing every comma.
2. Make a three-column page headed Ethos, Pathos, Logos. For one week, add one example you meet in a sermon, advertisement, letter or conversation.
3. Imitation: write a three-sentence opening to a talk for your own church or co-op that begins, like Paul, from something you have observed about your hearers.

History note. Raphael's tapestries were first hung in the Sistine Chapel in 1519, and the surviving cartoons were later bought for the English royal family. They have been displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum since 1865. In 2020 the Vatican briefly hung the tapestries in the chapel again to mark five hundred years since Raphael's death.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism** (Grammar Level 3). Ideas of equal weight belong in the same grammatical form. Paul writes “life, and breath, and all things” (three nouns) and “we live, and move, and have our being” (three verbs). Faulty: “Paul builds trust, stirs feeling, and his reasoning is sound.” Parallel: “Paul builds trust, stirs feeling and reasons soundly.” In your analysis, check every list of the three proofs: noun, noun, noun or verb, verb, verb, never a mix.

For families. Aristotle's *Rhetoric* is free in W. Rhys Roberts's translation at the MIT Internet Classics Archive; Book I, chapter 2 is the source of the three proofs and is short enough to read with your student. Aristotle was a pagan philosopher, and Christians have long read him as Augustine advised in *On Christian Doctrine*, Book IV: the art of speaking is neutral and ought to serve the truth. The faith thread for this year is Isaiah 1:18. The project essay is the student's first full analysis of the year; grade it chiefly on whether the thesis makes a claim and whether the quotations are exact.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Label each sentence of this student paragraph by its main proof: (1) “As a lifeguard for three summers, I have pulled four swimmers from the lake.” (2) “Each time, the swimmer had ignored the posted warning.” (3) “Picture a mother on the beach scanning the water for a red cap that is no longer there.” (4) “Signs alone do not keep swimmers safe; trained guards do.”

1. Sentence 1 tells us who is speaking and why we should trust him: ethos.
2. Sentence 2 gives evidence from experience: logos (example).
3. Sentence 3 makes the reader see and fear a single concrete loss: pathos.
4. Sentence 4 states the claim the evidence supports: logos.

Answer: Ethos, logos, pathos, logos. The paragraph is balanced: the writer earns trust, gives facts, makes the reader care and then states the point.

Example 2. Revise this all-pathos paragraph so that it uses all three proofs: “Old libraries are beautiful and wonderful and full of memories. Tearing one down would be heartbreaking and terrible. Everyone would be devastated.”

1. Cut the stacked adjectives (beautiful, wonderful, heartbreaking, terrible); they claim feeling without showing it.
2. Add ethos: who is the writer, and why should we listen?
3. Add logos: a fact or reason.
4. Keep one concrete picture for pathos.

Answer: I have used the Carnegie library on Main Street every week since I was six, and I have read its records of its own history. The building has served the town since 1911, and its reading room still seats more students after school than any other space in town. Last winter I watched an old farmer there teach his grandson to find the county maps from 1890. A new building could hold the books; it could not easily hold that.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Give Aristotle's definition of rhetoric in your own words.
2. **EASY** Name the three proofs and say where each one is found.
3. **EASY** What three qualities, according to Aristotle, make a speaker trusted?
4. **MEDIUM** Find the unstated premise: “You should hire Daniel; he finished his apprenticeship early.”
5. **MEDIUM** In Acts 17:28 Paul quotes a Greek poet. Which proof does this serve most, and why?
6. **MEDIUM** Why is “feeling without truth” a failure of rhetoric and not only of morals?

7. **CHALLENGE** Read Acts 17:30–34. Write two sentences evaluating whether Paul's speech succeeded, using the three responses Luke records.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, as for a college-entrance essay): “Is a good argument enough to persuade, or must the speaker also be trusted?” Write a thesis, a three-point outline and the first body paragraph.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Summarizing the speech instead of analyzing how it persuades.
- Calling every emotional word “pathos” without asking whether the feeling fits the facts.
- Treating ethos as the speaker's titles only; character is shown in the speech itself through accuracy, fairness and tone.
- Writing a thesis that only lists (“Paul uses ethos, pathos and logos”) instead of claiming something about how and why.

Make it a game • Appeal Auction. A parent reads ten short persuasive lines (from ads, speeches, Proverbs or the student's own drafts). Each player has 100 points to “bid” on the proof he thinks dominates: ethos, pathos or logos. Correct bids double; wrong bids are lost. Disputes must be argued in one sentence, using the very proof you are defending.

Scripture. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18, KJV)

God Himself reasons with His people, joining argument (logos) to a tender promise (pathos), and His character makes the promise sure (ethos).

Practice: answers

1. Rhetoric is the ability to see, in any situation, every available means of persuading the audience.
2. Ethos is in the speaker's character, pathos in the audience's emotions, logos in the argument itself.
3. Good sense, good moral character and goodwill toward the audience.
4. A worker who finishes his training early will be a good employee (or: early completion shows skill and diligence).
5. Ethos (and some logos): quoting the Athenians' own poet shows Paul knows and respects their culture, and it uses an authority they already accept.
6. Sample: Once the audience discovers the emotion was not earned by the facts, the speaker loses his ethos, and every later argument is doubted.
7. Sample: Measured by applause, the speech half failed, for some mocked and others put Paul off. Measured by faithfulness, it succeeded: Paul told the truth clearly to the wisest men of Athens, and Dionysius, Damaris and others believed.

8. Sample thesis: A good argument is necessary but rarely enough, because hearers judge the speaker before they judge his reasons. Outline: (1) Aristotle ranks character among the strongest proofs; (2) example: a doctor's sound advice ignored because of his rude manner; (3) concession: in mathematics the proof stands alone, but most human questions are matters of probability where trust decides. Body paragraph begins: "Aristotle, who loved logic more than most men, still called character almost the most effective means of persuasion..."

1.2 INVENTION: FINDING ARGUMENTS WITH TOPICS AND QUESTIONS

OBJECTIVES

- Name the three kinds of oratory and the four questions of stasis.
- Use the common topics (definition, comparison, relationship, circumstance, testimony) and the seven circumstances to generate arguments.
- Build an invention dossier on a perennial question and choose the three strongest arguments.

Warm-up. Set a timer for three minutes and list every argument you can think of for or against this question: “Is it better to read old books or new books?” Count your list. At the end of the lesson you will do it again with the topics, and compare.

Video slot. Video coming. Classical rhetoric: invention, stasis theory and the common topics (a lecture from a classical school or university writing program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

invention (inventio)

The first canon of rhetoric: discovering what can be said on a question. From the Latin *invenire*, “to find.”

stasis

The point on which a dispute actually stands. The four stases ask: Did it happen? What is it? What kind is it? Who should decide?

topic (topos)

Greek for “place”: a standard line of inquiry where arguments can be found, such as definition, comparison or cause and effect.

circumstances

The seven questions for any act or event: who, what, where, when, why, how, and by what means.

deliberative, judicial, ceremonial

Aristotle's three kinds of oratory: about the future (what should we do?), the past (what was done, and was it just?) and the present (who or what deserves praise or blame?).

CORE IDEAS

Finding, not making up. The first canon is *inventio*, from the Latin “to find.” The classical writer did not believe arguments had to be conjured out of nothing. They were already there in the subject, waiting to be discovered by someone who asked the right questions. The

model passage shows Luke at this work. Before he wrote his Gospel, he gathered what eyewitnesses had handed down, gained “perfect understanding of all things from the very first,” and only then wrote “in order,” so that Theophilus might “know the certainty” of what he had been taught. Research, then order, then certainty: that is the path of every honest essay.

First, what kind of speech? Aristotle sorted all oratory into three kinds. *Deliberative* speech looks to the future and asks what we should do; its measure is whether a course is advantageous or harmful. *Judicial* (forensic) speech looks to the past and asks what happened and whether it was just. *Ceremonial* (epideictic) speech dwells in the present, praising or blaming; its measure is the honorable and the shameful. You met the last kind as the encomium in Grade 8. Before you invent, decide which kind you are writing, for each kind sends you to different arguments.

Second, where does the dispute stand? The Greek teacher Hermagoras of Temnos (second century B.C.) taught that every controversy comes to rest, or *stands*, on one of four questions. *Conjecture*: did it happen? *Definition*: what, exactly, was it? *Quality*: was it good or bad, just or unjust, wise or foolish? *Jurisdiction* (or procedure): who has the right to judge, and by what process? Take the death of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. No one disputes that Brutus and Cassius struck him (conjecture is settled). Their quarrel with Mark Antony stood on definition and quality: was it murder or the removal of a tyrant, and was it right? A writer who argues the wrong stasis wastes his effort proving what no one denies.

Third, search the places. Aristotle called the sources of argument *topoi*, “places,” as if arguments lived in the rooms of a house and the writer had only to walk through them. A modern grouping, drawn from Aristotle and Cicero, gives five rooms. *Definition*: what is the thing, what kind is it, what are its parts? *Comparison*: how is it like or unlike something else, and is it greater or less? *Relationship*: what causes it and what does it cause; what is its opposite? *Circumstance*: is it possible; has it happened before; will it happen? *Testimony*: what do authorities, witnesses, records, laws, precedents and Scripture say? Walk through every room for every question. The best argument is often in the room you would have skipped.

Fourth, ask the circumstances. When the question concerns a deed or event, the ancient teachers added seven questions, often credited to Hermagoras and later repeated by medieval schoolmen: *who, what, where, when, why, how, by what means*. You have used them since you first wrote narratives. Here they become tools of proof. A lawyer defending a client asks whether the man could have been at that place at that time, by what means, and for what motive. A historian testing a legend asks the same.

A run through the topics. Return to the warm-up: old books or new? Definition: what makes a book “old”? Surviving several generations. Comparison: an old book is like a tested road, a new book like an unmapped trail. Relationship: old books correct the blind spots of our own age, because they were written with different ones. Circumstance: the old books that reach us have already been sifted by time. Testimony: Proverbs 22:28, “Remove not the

ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” In two minutes the topics give five arguments, each in a different direction.

Gather, then choose. Invention produces more than you can use. That is the point. A harvest is not the same as a meal. Collect widely, then keep the three or four arguments that are strongest, best suited to your audience and most clearly true. And remember Solomon: “He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him” (Proverbs 18:13). Honest invention always gathers the arguments of the other side too, because you cannot answer what you have not heard.

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

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

PICTURE STUDY



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

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

A Sicilian nobleman, Don Antonio Ruffo, ordered this painting from Rembrandt. Aristotle, dressed in Rembrandt's own idea of rich clothing, rests his hand on a bust of Homer, the blind poet whose epics every Greek schoolboy learned. From his shoulder hangs a gold chain, often thought to carry a medallion of Alexander the Great, Aristotle's famous pupil.

The philosopher seems caught between two worlds: the poet who came before him, whose works he studied, and the conqueror who came after, whom he taught.

Look closely

- Aristotle's two hands: one touches the bust, one fingers the chain. What might each stand for?
- Where does the light fall brightest? What does Rembrandt leave in shadow?
- Aristotle's eyes: is he looking at the bust, or past it? What does his face suggest he is doing?

Talk about it

1. Use the topic of comparison: in one paragraph, compare what Aristotle might owe to Homer with what he might owe to Alexander. Which debt is greater?
2. Invention begins with a question. Write five questions Aristotle might be asking himself in this moment, one from each of the five common topics.

WRITING PROJECT: AN INVENTION DOSSIER

Choose one question below and do the full work of invention before writing a single paragraph of the essay. You will draw on this dossier in 1.3.

Questions: (a) Is it better to read old books or new books? (b) Should every student learn to play a musical instrument? (c) Is it wiser to memorize poetry or to read widely? (d) Is a handwritten letter worth the trouble? (e) Should a town preserve its oldest buildings?

You will need

- Writing notebook (four facing pages)
- A KJV Bible and at least two other sources (an encyclopedia article, a book chapter, an interview with an adult who knows the subject)

Steps

1. Name the kind of oratory your question calls for and the stasis on which it stands. Write one sentence for each.
2. Walk through the five topics. Write at least two possible arguments in each room, on both sides of the question.
3. If your question involves an event or practice, ask the seven circumstances of one real example.
4. Gather testimony: one verse of Scripture, one quotation from a book (copied exactly, with author and title) and one piece of evidence from an interview or record.
5. Star the three strongest arguments for your side and the single strongest argument against it.
6. Write a working thesis in one sentence and a 250–300 word paragraph that develops your best argument.

Check your work

- Every one of the five topics has at least two entries.
- I named the stasis and the kind of oratory.
- Quotations are copied exactly, with their sources.
- I recorded the strongest argument against my position.
- Indirect questions end with a period, not a question mark (Style Clinic).
- My working thesis is one clear sentence.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Luke 1:1–4 by hand. Underline the words that describe research and the words that describe order.
2. Draw the five topics as five rooms of a house, with two sample questions written in each room. Keep it in the front of your notebook all year.
3. Choose a well-known event from Plutarch or the Bible and write one question for each of the seven circumstances.

History note. Rembrandt painted *Aristotle with a Bust of Homer* in 1653. In 1961 the Metropolitan Museum bought it at auction for \$2.3 million, then the highest price ever paid for a painting, and crowds lined up to see it. Ruffo later ordered companion paintings of Alexander and of Homer from Rembrandt.

 **Style Clinic. Noun clauses and indirect questions** (Grammar Level 3). Invention is full of questions, and in an essay you often state them indirectly as noun clauses: “The question is *whether old books are better than new.*” “We must ask *what a library is for.*” An indirect question is a statement, so it ends with a period and keeps statement word order. Faulty: “I wonder what is a library for?” Correct: “I wonder what a library is for.” Use *whether* rather than *if* when the clause presents two alternatives.

For families. Aristotle discusses the three kinds of oratory in *Rhetoric* I.3 and the topics in Book II; Cicero's short *Topica* and his youthful *On Invention* carried these ideas to Rome and the medieval schools. The fivefold grouping of common topics used here is a modern teaching arrangement of the ancient lists. Help your student choose a question with real substance but no partisan heat; the guardrail for this course is perennial questions, the kind Hermogenes himself set (“Should one marry?”). The dossier is a working document: grade it for completeness and honesty, not polish.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Identify the stasis of each dispute: (a) Did the night watchman actually lock the gate? (b) Was taking the bread from the bakery theft or a borrowed loan? (c) Granting he took it, was he right to feed his starving family that way? (d) Should the town council or the county court hear the case?

1. (a) asks whether a fact happened.
2. (b) agrees on the fact and asks what to call it.
3. (c) agrees on the fact and the name and asks whether it was right.
4. (d) asks who has the authority to judge.

Answer: (a) conjecture, (b) definition, (c) quality, (d) jurisdiction.

Example 2. Use the five topics to generate arguments on “Should every student learn to play a musical instrument?”

1. Definition: what counts as “learning to play”? Reading music and playing simple hymns, not concert mastery.
2. Comparison: learning an instrument is like learning a language; both are easiest when young and both open a world.
3. Relationship: daily practice causes discipline, because no one can cram for a scale; its opposite, giving up at the first difficulty, becomes a habit too.
4. Circumstance and testimony: David played the harp for Saul (1 Samuel 16:23); Psalm 150 calls for trumpet, psalter, harp, strings and organs; ask a church musician how he began.

Answer: Strongest three for the affirmative: practice builds daily discipline (relationship); Scripture calls God's people to praise Him with instruments (testimony); a student who can read music can serve in worship and family singing for life (circumstance). Strongest objection: not every family can spare the time or money for lessons; this must be answered in the essay.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does the Latin *invenire* mean, and why does that matter for the first canon?
2. **EASY** Name Aristotle's three kinds of oratory and the time each looks to.
3. **EASY** List the four stases.
4. **EASY** List the seven circumstances.
5. **MEDIUM** Which topic does each argument use? (a) “A town without a library is like a body without a memory.” (b) “Benjamin Franklin helped found one of America's first subscription libraries.” (c) “Closing the library would cause more students to study in places with no quiet.”

6. **MEDIUM** Read Proverbs 18:17: "He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him." What does it teach about invention?
7. **CHALLENGE** Redo the warm-up: in three minutes, use the five topics to list arguments on "Is it better to read old books or new books?" How many did you find this time? Give one per topic.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (5 minutes of invention, then 20 of drafting): "Is it better to be a specialist who knows one thing deeply or a generalist who knows many things?" Show your invention notes by topic, then a thesis.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Beginning to draft before inventing, so the essay runs out of arguments in the second paragraph.
- Arguing the wrong stasis: proving a fact that no one disputes while ignoring the real question of quality.
- Skipping the topic of testimony, or quoting authorities from memory instead of checking them.
- Collecting only arguments for one's own side.

Make it a game • Five Rooms. Mark five corners or chairs as the rooms of definition, comparison, relationship, circumstance and testimony. A parent names a question. Each player runs to a room and must give an argument from that room within ten seconds. No room may be used twice in a row. Score a point for each fresh argument; lose one for repeating.

Scripture. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Proverbs 18:13, KJV)

Invention is the discipline of hearing a matter fully, both sides of it, before you answer.

Practice: answers

1. "To find." Arguments are discovered in the subject by asking good questions, not invented out of nothing.
2. Deliberative (future), judicial or forensic (past), ceremonial or epideictic (present).
3. Conjecture (did it happen?), definition (what is it?), quality (what kind is it?), jurisdiction (who should judge?).
4. Who, what, where, when, why, how, by what means.
5. (a) comparison, (b) testimony, (c) relationship (cause and effect).
6. Sample: An argument heard alone always sounds right, so a careful writer must gather the other side's case during invention and test his own against it.
7. Sample: Definition: an old book is one that has lasted. Comparison: an old book is a tested road. Relationship: old books correct our age's blind spots. Circumstance: time has already sifted out weak old books, but not weak new ones. Testimony: Proverbs 22:28; Jeremiah 6:16, "ask for the old paths."

8. Sample notes: Definition: specialist vs. generalist. Comparison: a surgeon vs. a country doctor. Relationship: specialists advance knowledge; generalists connect it. Circumstance: small towns need generalists. Testimony: Paul, "I am made all things to all men" (1 Corinthians 9:22). Thesis: A young person should first become a generalist, because breadth teaches him which single thing deserves a lifetime of depth.

1.3 ARRANGEMENT: THE SIX-PART ORATION

OBJECTIVES

- Name and explain the six parts of the classical oration, from exordium to peroration.
- Map the six parts onto Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26) and onto a modern essay.
- Outline and draft a four- to five-minute speech in six parts, ready to be polished and delivered in 1.4.

Warm-up. Shuffle these five sentences into the most persuasive order and explain your choice: (a) “So let us keep the library open.” (b) “Some say the building costs too much to heat.” (c) “I have studied in that reading room since I was six.” (d) “It is used by more students than any other public space in town.” (e) “The heating cost is less than the town spends on its parking lot.”

Video slot. Video coming. The parts of a classical oration: exordium, narration, partition, confirmation, refutation, peroration (a lecture from a classical school or university). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

arrangement (*dispositio*)

The second canon of rhetoric: putting the arguments you have found into the most effective order.

exordium

The opening, which makes the audience well-disposed, attentive and ready to learn.

narration and partition

The narration states the facts of the case briefly and clearly; the partition shows what is agreed, what is disputed and which points the speaker will prove.

confirmation and refutation

The confirmation proves the speaker's case; the refutation answers the opposing arguments.

peroration

The closing, which sums up the case, magnifies its importance and moves the audience to act or to feel rightly.

CORE IDEAS

Order is persuasion. In 1.2 you gathered a harvest of arguments. The second canon, *dispositio*, decides where each one goes. The model passage praises the Roman orator Marcus Antonius (143–87 B.C.) for exactly this: he found everything useful to his cause “and

that in the very order in which it would be most so,” posting his arguments as a skilful general posts cavalry, infantry and light troops. The same facts in a different order can make a different speech. Scripture prizes order too: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The six parts. Cicero's youthful handbook *On Invention* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (both from the early first century B.C.) teach that a full oration has six parts: *exordium* (introduction), *narratio* (statement of facts), *partitio* (division of the case), *confirmatio* (proof), *refutatio* (answer to objections) and *peroratio* (conclusion). Some teachers combined or renamed parts, but this six-part shape governed speeches, sermons and essays for two thousand years, and it still lies under the best modern writing.

Exordium: win a hearing. The ancient handbooks give the opening three jobs: make the hearers well-disposed, attentive and teachable. Paul's defense before King Agrippa is a textbook case: “I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews” (Acts 26:2). He honors his judge, notes Agrippa's expert knowledge of Jewish customs, and asks for a patient hearing (verse 3). In an essay, the exordium is your opening hook and the reason the reader should care, built honestly on ethos, never on a trick.

Narration and partition: set the table. The narration tells the facts the audience needs, and the handbooks ask that it be brief, clear and plausible. Paul tells his life from his strict youth to the road to Damascus (verses 4–18). The partition then marks out the ground: here is what we agree on, here is what is in dispute, and here are the points I will prove. In a modern essay the partition is usually your thesis sentence with a preview of its reasons. A reader who knows the plan follows more easily and trusts the speaker more.

Confirmation and refutation: fight the battle. The confirmation brings your proofs in order. Quintilian described a “Homeric” arrangement, named for old Nestor in the *Iliad*, who placed his strongest troops in front and behind with the weaker in the middle: begin with a strong argument, end with your strongest, and tuck lesser ones between. The refutation then answers the other side. Choose the strongest objection, state it fairly in words its holders would accept, and answer it with reasons. Refuting a weak version of the opposing case may win applause, but it costs you ethos with every thoughtful reader.

Peroration: send them home changed. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* gives the conclusion three tools: summing up the main points, amplifying the importance of the case and appealing to the hearers' feelings. Paul's peroration is personal and urgent: “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest” (Acts 26:27), and finally, “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (verse 29). A good peroration does not merely repeat; it lifts the argument to its highest point and asks for a response.

From oration to essay. The familiar essay is the six-part oration in modern clothes. Your introduction joins exordium, narration and partition; your body is confirmation and refutation; your conclusion is the peroration. Two warnings. First, not every piece needs all six parts at equal length: a short essay may give the narration one sentence, and a speech to

friends may need little exordium. Second, a fixed count of five paragraphs is a training device, not a law. The six parts flex to fit the question; Unit 3 will build on this. Arrange for the audience in front of you, as Antonius did, so that the order itself becomes an argument.

The model. *Cicero, Brutus*, trans. E. Jones, in *Cicero's Brutus or History of Famous Orators; also His Orator, or Accomplished Speaker*, Project Gutenberg #9776

Antonius discovered every thing which could be of service to his cause, and that in the very order in which it would be most so: and as a skilful General posts the cavalry, the infantry, and the light troops, where each of them can act to most advantage; so Antonius drew up his arguments in those parts of his discourse, where they were likely to have the best effect. He had a quick and retentive memory, and a frankness of manner which precluded any suspicion of artifice. All his speeches were, in appearance, the unpremeditated effusions of an honest heart; and yet, in reality, they were preconcerted with so much skill, that the judges were, sometimes, not so well prepared, as they should have been, to withstand the force of them.

PICTURE STUDY



Cicero Denounces Catiline, Cesare Maccari, 1882–1888 · Fresco · Palazzo Madama (seat of the Italian Senate), Rome

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

On November 8, 63 B.C., the consul Cicero rose in the Senate, meeting that day in the Temple of Jupiter Stator, to expose Catiline's plot to seize Rome. Catiline had dared to attend. Cicero reports that the senators near him left their seats, and Maccari paints him sitting alone on an empty bench while Cicero speaks. Cicero's opening, "How long, Catiline, will you abuse our patience?", is the most famous exordium in Latin, and it breaks the rules on purpose: instead of a calm, winning introduction, Cicero leaps straight at the accused.

Look closely

- The space around Catiline. How does Maccari use empty space to make an argument?
- Cicero's gesture and stance. Where are the senators looking?
- The light: where does it fall, and whom does it leave in shadow?

Talk about it

1. Cicero's attack-first exordium worked because the danger was real and present. Write a paragraph on when a sudden, direct opening is right and when it would backfire.
2. Write the exordium (three to five sentences) that one of the silent senators might have given if he rose next to support Cicero, following the rule: well-disposed, attentive, teachable.

WRITING PROJECT: A SIX-PART SPEECH

Using the dossier from 1.2 (or a new perennial question approved by a parent), outline and draft a speech of 600–750 words, about four to five minutes aloud. In 1.4 you will polish its style, commit it to memory and deliver it.

Your audience is your family, co-op or a small group of adults. Write for the ear: shorter sentences, clear signposts, one idea at a time.

You will need

- Your invention dossier from 1.2
- Writing notebook and six index cards

Steps

1. Write the name of one part on each of six index cards. On each card, note in a phrase what that part will do in your speech.
2. Choose the order of your proofs using Nestor's plan: strong, lesser, strongest.
3. On the refutation card, write the strongest objection in words its holders would accept, then your answer.
4. Draft the exordium last but one: you will know what you are introducing once the confirmation is written.
5. Draft the peroration with all three tools: sum up, amplify, appeal.
6. Read the whole speech aloud and time it. Cut or add to fit four to five minutes.
7. Label each part in the margin of your draft.

Check your work

- All six parts are present and labeled in the margin.
- The partition (thesis and preview) is a single clear sentence or two.
- The refutation states the strongest objection fairly before answering it.

- The peroration sums up, amplifies and appeals; it does not simply repeat the introduction.
- I used at least one periodic sentence and one compound-complex sentence (Style Clinic).
- The speech runs four to five minutes aloud.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model passage from Cicero by hand. Circle the comparison to the general and box the sentence about memory.
2. Imitation: write a sentence of your own on the pattern “as a skilful ___ ... ; so ___ ...,” comparing a writer's arrangement to some craft you know (a cook, a builder, a coach).
3. List the six parts in Latin and English from memory, with one word describing each part's job.

History note. Marcus Antonius the orator was the grandfather of the better-known Mark Antony. He was killed in 87 B.C. during the civil strife under Marius, and Cicero, who had heard him as a young man, made him a main speaker in his dialogue *On the Orator*. Maccari's frescoes in the Palazzo Madama, painted in the 1880s, include several scenes of the Roman Senate; the Catiline scene is by far the most reproduced.

 **Style Clinic. Sentence structures: loose, periodic and compound-complex** (Grammar Level 3). A *loose* sentence states its main clause first and adds details: “Antonius won his cases, for he placed his arguments well and spoke from memory.” A *periodic* sentence holds the main clause until the end: “Placing every argument where it would strike hardest, and speaking as if from an honest heart, Antonius won.” The model's long middle sentence is compound-complex, built on the correlative pattern *as ... so*. Use a periodic sentence where you want suspense, especially in the exordium or peroration, and loose sentences where you want ease, as in the narration.

For families. The six parts follow Cicero's *On Invention* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, long attributed to Cicero but now usually treated as anonymous; Quintilian's “Homeric” order is in his *Institutes of Oratory*, Book V. The model is from E. Jones's old English translation of Cicero's *Brutus* (Project Gutenberg #9776). Read Acts 26 aloud with your student before the project; it is the clearest six-part speech in Scripture. The speech drafted here is delivered in 1.4, so keep the draft and the index cards.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Map Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26:1–29) onto the six parts.

1. Verses 2–3: Paul honors Agrippa and asks for patience: exordium.
2. Verses 4–18: his strict youth, persecution of Christians and the vision on the Damascus road: narration.
3. Verses 19–23: his obedience and the claim that he says only what Moses and the prophets foretold: partition joined to confirmation.
4. Verses 24–26: Festus cries that Paul is mad, and Paul answers that he speaks “the words of truth and soberness” and that these things were not done in a corner: refutation. Verses 27–29: the personal appeal to Agrippa: peroration.

Answer: Exordium 2–3; narration 4–18; partition and confirmation 19–23; refutation 24–26; peroration 27–29. Paul's refutation is unplanned, answering an interruption, which shows that arrangement must flex to the occasion.

Example 2. A student's conclusion reads: “In conclusion, the library should stay open because it is historic, it is used by students, and it costs less than people think. That is why the library should stay open.” Revise it into a true peroration.

1. Sum up, but in fresh words rather than a repeated list.
2. Amplify: show what is really at stake beyond the building.
3. Appeal: end with a picture and a call to act.

Answer: We have seen that the old library is sound, well used and worth its modest cost. But more than a building is at stake. A town that keeps its library tells its children that knowledge is worth a share of the common purse. Next Tuesday the council will vote. Come, and bring the youngest reader you know, so that the council can see whom it serves.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** List the six parts of the oration in order.
2. **EASY** What three things should the exordium make the audience?
3. **EASY** Name the three qualities of a good narration.
4. **EASY** What are the three tools of the peroration in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*?
5. **MEDIUM** In the model passage, what does Cicero compare Antonius's arrangement to? What does the comparison teach?
6. **MEDIUM** Return to the warm-up. Assign each sentence (a)–(e) to one of the six parts.
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a partition for an essay on “Should a town preserve its oldest buildings?”
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (30 minutes): “Is it better to be praised or to be respected?” Write a full outline labeled with the six parts, then draft only the exordium and

peroration.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing a conclusion that only repeats the introduction instead of summing up, amplifying and appealing.
- Leaving out the refutation, or answering only the weakest objection.
- Burying the thesis (the partition) so deep that the reader does not know the plan.
- Treating the six parts as six equal paragraphs; each part takes the length the case needs.

Make it a game · Cut-Up Oration. A parent cuts a short speech (Paul in Acts 26, or a student's old essay) into its sentences and shuffles them. Race to rebuild it in the six parts, then read the result aloud. The fastest correct order wins; any player may challenge an order by arguing it is more persuasive.

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

Paul gave this rule for worship, and it is also a fit rule for every speech: order serves the hearer.

Practice: answers

1. Exordium, narration, partition, confirmation, refutation, peroration.
2. Well-disposed (friendly), attentive and teachable.
3. Brief, clear and plausible.
4. Summing up, amplification, and appeal to the hearers' feelings.
5. A skilful general posting cavalry, infantry and light troops where each works best. Each argument has a place where it is most effective, and the writer must place it there.
6. (c) exordium (ethos); (d) confirmation; (b) the objection in the refutation; (e) the answer in the refutation; (a) peroration. A one-sentence narration and partition could follow (c).
7. Sample: All agree that a town must spend its money wisely; the question is whether old buildings are worth what they cost. I will show that they are, because they cost less to restore than to replace, because they draw visitors and trade, and because they teach each generation where it came from.
8. Sample outline: Exordium: a story of a coach who was rarely praised but always obeyed. Narration: define praise and respect. Partition: respect is better because it lasts, it is earned and it gives authority to serve. Confirmation: three proofs in Nestor's order. Refutation: “Praise encourages the young”; answer: praise is good food but poor foundation. Peroration: “Seek the respect of the wise, and let praise come as it will; for ‘a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches’ (Proverbs 22:1).”

1.4 STYLE, MEMORY, DELIVERY

OBJECTIVES

- Name the four virtues of style and the three levels of style, and use two figures of speech on purpose.
- Use the classical memory palace to commit the structure of a speech to memory.
- Deliver the six-part speech from 1.3 using Hamlet's rules for voice and gesture, and evaluate the delivery.

Warm-up. Read this sentence aloud three ways: as a news announcer, as a tired student and as a father calling his son home for dinner: “The road is long, but the lamp is lit.” What changed? The words stayed the same. Write one sentence about what else carries meaning when we speak.

Video slot. Video coming. Hamlet's advice to the players, Act 3 Scene 2 (a stage performance or Shakespeare company recitation); also the memory palace technique explained. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

style (elocutio)

The third canon: choosing and arranging the words and sentences that fit the subject, the audience and the occasion.

figures of speech

Artful departures from plain expression. *Schemes* change the pattern of words (parallelism, antithesis, anaphora); *tropes* change their meaning (metaphor, simile, irony).

memory (memoria)

The fourth canon: holding the speech in mind, traditionally by placing images of each part in an imagined building (the method of loci, or memory palace).

delivery (pronuntiatio or actio)

The fifth canon: the management of voice, pace, pause, face and gesture when the speech is spoken.

decorum

Fitness: the virtue of saying the right thing in the right way for this subject, this audience and this occasion.

CORE IDEAS

The last three canons. Invention finds what to say and arrangement decides where to say it. The remaining canons concern how it is said: *style* (the words), *memory* (holding them) and *delivery* (speaking them). Students sometimes think these are decoration added once the

real work is done. The ancients disagreed. A true argument badly worded, half-remembered and mumbled may persuade no one, and the truth deserves better servants than that.

Style: four virtues. Cicero, following Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus, named four virtues of style. *Correctness*: grammar, usage and spelling that do not distract. *Clarity*: the reader understands at once. *Decorum*: the words fit the subject, audience and occasion; you do not speak at a funeral as at a ball game. *Ornament*: figures and rhythm that make the truth memorable. Notice the order. Ornament comes last, and it never excuses a failure in the first three.

Style: three levels and the figures. Cicero also taught three levels of style, plain, middle and grand, and tied them to the speaker's three duties: to teach, to delight and to move. Augustine took up the same three in *On Christian Doctrine*, Book IV, and urged preachers to use all of them in the service of truth. Most of an essay is plain; the grand style is saved for a few high moments, usually in the peroration. Learn a few figures well. *Antithesis* sets opposites side by side: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). *Anaphora* repeats an opening: "Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessed are they that mourn." *Metaphor* says one thing is another: "The LORD is my shepherd."

Memory: the palace. Cicero tells the story of the poet Simonides, who stepped out of a banquet hall moments before the roof fell. He could name the crushed guests because he remembered where each had sat, and so, the story goes, he discovered that order and place are the keys to memory. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* teaches the method: imagine a building you know well, walk a fixed route through it, and set a vivid image for each part of your speech in each room. For your speech, memorize the structure and the key phrases rather than every word. Know your first and last sentences cold; the middle can be spoken from a mind that knows where it is going.

Delivery: the first, second and third thing. Asked what was most important in oratory, Demosthenes is said to have answered, delivery; and second? delivery; and third? delivery. Plutarch tells how he trained a weak voice and unclear speech by practicing with pebbles in his mouth and reciting while running uphill. Good delivery is mostly simple: speak slowly enough to be followed, loudly enough to be heard, look at your hearers, pause before and after important sentences, and let gestures arise from meaning rather than nerves.

Hamlet's rules. The model passage is Prince Hamlet coaching a company of actors, and it remains the best short lesson on delivery in English. Speak "trippingly on the tongue," not mouthed. Do not "saw the air" with your hand. Even in a whirlwind of passion, keep a "temperance" that gives it smoothness. Do not "tear a passion to tatters," yet do not be "too tame neither." Above all, "suit the action to the word, the word to the action," and take care "that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature." Every rule is about decorum: the outward manner must fit the inward meaning.

The Christian speaker. Paul, a trained and forceful speaker, wrote to the Corinthians that his preaching "was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). He was not rejecting skill; he was refusing to trust it. We work hard at style, memory and delivery because our hearers deserve clarity and the

truth deserves honor, and then we rest the outcome in God. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). For written work, delivery means a clean, titled, carefully proofread page, read aloud once before it is handed in.

The model. *William Shakespeare, Hamlet, Act III, Scene 2, Project Gutenberg #1524*

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

FIRST PLAYER. I warrant your honour.

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

PICTURE STUDY



The Mennonite Preacher Cornelis Claesz. Anslo and His Wife, Aeltje, Rembrandt van Rijn, 1641 · Oil on canvas · Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Cornelis Claesz. Anslo was a cloth merchant and a lay preacher among the Mennonites of Amsterdam. Rembrandt shows him in the middle of speaking: he turns from the open books toward his wife, Aeltje, and opens his hand as if to press a point home. She listens. The same year Rembrandt made an etching of Anslo, and the poet Joost van den Vondel wrote a short verse daring the artist to paint the preacher's voice, since a man like Anslo must be heard to be known. This painting may be Rembrandt's answer: a picture of delivery itself.

Look closely

- Anslo's open hand. What does the gesture add to the words we cannot hear?
- The open books on the table. What is the source of what he is saying?
- Aeltje's face and posture. How does Rembrandt show that she is listening, not merely sitting?

Talk about it

1. Rembrandt was dared to "paint a voice." In a paragraph, explain how he tries to do it, using at least three details from the painting.
2. Write the three sentences Anslo might be speaking at this moment, in the plain, middle or grand style. Name which style you chose and why it fits the scene.

WRITING PROJECT: POLISH, MEMORIZE AND DELIVER

Take the six-part speech you drafted in 1.3 through the last three canons and deliver it to a live audience of at least two adults.

Record the speech if you can; you will watch it once and evaluate yourself with the checklist.

You will need

- Your draft and index cards from 1.3
- A quiet room to rehearse in; a phone or camera to record (optional)
- A one-page delivery evaluation sheet (copy the checklist below)

Steps

1. Style pass: cut ten percent of the words. Replace weak verbs and passive constructions with strong active verbs (Style Clinic).
2. Add two figures on purpose: an antithesis or parallel series in the confirmation, and one metaphor or anaphora in the peroration. Mark them in the margin.
3. Memory: choose a building you know well. Place one vivid image for each of the six parts in six rooms along a fixed path. Memorize the first and last sentences word for word.
4. Reduce the speech to one index card of key words. Rehearse from the card three times, once in front of a mirror.
5. Apply Hamlet's rules: mark three places to pause, one place to slow down and one gesture that suits a word.

6. Deliver the speech to your audience. Afterward, ask each listener to name your thesis and one thing they remember.

Check your work

- I spoke from one card of key words, not from a full script.
- My listeners could state my thesis afterward.
- I used at least two figures of speech on purpose, and they fit the subject (decorum).
- Verbs are active unless the doer is unknown or unimportant (Style Clinic).
- I paused before and after my most important sentences and kept eye contact with my listeners.
- The speech ran four to five minutes.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model passage from “Be not too tame neither” to the end. Underline every command.
2. Draw a floor plan of your memory palace with six rooms, and sketch the image you placed in each.
3. Collect three figures of speech from the KJV (one antithesis, one anaphora, one metaphor), with references.

History note. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (early first century B.C.) contains the oldest surviving full description of the memory palace, and the Simonides story appears in Cicero's *On the Orator*, Book II. Plutarch's *Life of Demosthenes* records the pebbles, the uphill recitations and an underground study where Demosthenes practiced for months at a time. Shakespeare's original audiences would have known Termagant and Herod as ranting roles in the old religious plays; Hamlet's point is that bellowing is not the same as power.

 **Style Clinic. Voice and mood** (Grammar Level 3). Hamlet's advice is almost all in the *imperative mood*: “Speak the speech,” “Suit the action to the word.” Commands are direct and strong; use them in a peroration that calls for action. In the body of an essay or speech, prefer the *active voice*: “The council closed the library” rather than “The library was closed by the council.” The active voice names the doer, uses fewer words and is easier to follow by ear. Use the passive only when the doer is unknown or unimportant: “The library was built in 1911.” In your style pass, circle every *was* or *were* followed by a past participle and decide whether it earns its place.

For families. The *Hamlet* text is from Project Gutenberg #1524; the passage contains no objectionable content, though Hamlet's “whipped” is said in comic exaggeration. Please be the student's audience for the final speech and give one specific word of praise and one specific suggestion. If your student is very nervous, let the first delivery be to family only and the second, a week later, to a slightly larger group; the goal this year is steady growth. This speech is a good candidate for the Unit 1 portfolio piece.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this passage for style using the four virtues: “It is a fact that there are many reasons why it can be said that memorizing poetry is something that is good and helpful for students to do, and these reasons were given by many teachers in the past.”

1. Correctness and clarity: cut the empty openings (“It is a fact that,” “there are many reasons why it can be said that”).
2. Use the active voice: “many teachers in the past gave these reasons” becomes a strong verb with a named doer.
3. Decorum and ornament: add one fitting figure, such as an antithesis, to make the point memorable.

Answer: Teachers have long urged students to memorize poetry, and for good reason: a poem read is borrowed, but a poem learned is owned.

Example 2. Build a memory palace for the six parts of a speech on “Is a handwritten letter worth the trouble?” using the rooms of a house.

1. Front door (exordium): Grandmother standing in the doorway holding a yellowed envelope.
2. Hall (narration): a mailbox on the wall stuffed with ads and one handwritten card. Living room (partition): three candles on the mantel, one for each point.
3. Kitchen (confirmation): a pen, a stamp and a slow-cooking stew: care, permanence, patience. Back porch (refutation): a ringing phone shouting “Faster!” and a letter quietly answering. Garden gate (peroration): you, dropping a letter in the box.

Answer: Walking the same path through the house recalls the parts in order; each image triggers the key phrase of its part, so the speaker can talk naturally without a script.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five canons of rhetoric in order, in English and Latin.
2. **EASY** Name the four virtues of style.
3. **EASY** What are the three levels of style, and which duty does each serve?
4. **EASY** According to the story, what did Demosthenes name as the first, second and third most important thing in oratory?
5. **MEDIUM** Name the figure: (a) “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (b) “The LORD is my shepherd.” (c) “Blessed are the meek ... Blessed are the merciful ... Blessed are the pure in heart.”
6. **MEDIUM** Put two of Hamlet's rules into plain modern English.
7. **CHALLENGE** Rewrite in the active voice and add one figure: “A decision was made by the committee that the old bridge would be torn down, and protests were made by the

townspeople.”

8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes): “Does how something is said matter as much as what is said?” Write a thesis and a body paragraph that uses one example from this lesson and one from history or literature.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Piling on ornament before the sentence is correct and clear.
- Memorizing a speech word for word, then freezing when one word is lost; memorize the structure and the key phrases.
- Speaking too fast and never pausing, so the audience cannot keep up.
- Gestures that come from nerves (swaying, pocket-jingling) rather than from meaning.

Make it a game · One Line, Five Ways. Write a single line on a card (“The road is long, but the lamp is lit,” or a line from the model). Each player draws a slip naming a manner (a herald, a tired traveler, a grieving friend, a coach at halftime, a mother at bedtime) and delivers the line that way. The others guess the manner. Then everyone delivers it the way Hamlet would approve, and the family votes on who best suited the action to the word.

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)

Style, memory and delivery are ways of seasoning speech so that the truth is served with grace.

Practice: answers

1. Invention (inventio), arrangement (dispositio), style (elocutio), memory (memoria), delivery (pronuntiatio or actio).
2. Correctness, clarity, decorum (propriety) and ornament.
3. Plain (to teach), middle (to delight), grand (to move).
4. Delivery, each time.
5. (a) antithesis, (b) metaphor, (c) anaphora.
6. Sample: “Speak smoothly and clearly; don't overpronounce.” “Don't wave your arms around; let your gestures match your words and stay natural.”
7. Sample: The committee voted to tear down the old bridge, and the townspeople protested: the bridge had carried their grandfathers, and now it would carry no one.
8. Sample thesis: What is said matters most, but how it is said decides whether it is heard. Body paragraph: Demosthenes had the arguments to warn Athens against Philip of Macedon, yet he spent years training a weak voice, because he knew a true warning that could not be heard would save no one. Hamlet makes the same point from the stage: an actor who “saws the air” buries the playwright's meaning under noise.

UNIT 1 REVIEW

Closed book except for a KJV Bible. Allow 60 minutes. Short answers are scored for accuracy; the writing tasks (items 9 and 10) are scored with the unit checklists, for thought, arrangement and clarity first and mechanics second.

1. (2 pts) Give Aristotle's definition of rhetoric.
2. (3 pts) Name the three proofs and say where each lies.
3. (3 pts) In Acts 17, Paul quotes a Greek poet: "For we are also his offspring." Which proof does this serve, and why does it fit the audience?
4. (4 pts) Name the four stases with the question each asks.
5. (5 pts) Name the five common topics.
6. (6 pts) List the six parts of the oration in order and give the job of the first and last.
7. (4 pts) Name the four virtues of style and the three levels of style.
8. (3 pts) Rewrite in the active voice with parallel structure: "The speech was written by Anna, she memorized it, and delivering it was done on Friday."
9. (5 pts) Use the five topics to list one argument each on "Should every student memorize poetry?" Star the strongest.
10. (5 pts) Write a peroration (5–7 sentences) for a speech arguing that a town should keep its old library. Use all three tools of the peroration and one figure of speech.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A SIX-PART SPEECH

Place the final, polished text of the speech you delivered in 1.4 in your Grade 9 portfolio, with the six parts labeled in the margin, your one-card outline clipped to it and a short note (three to five sentences) evaluating your delivery. If you recorded the speech, keep the recording with it.

- **Invention:** The arguments are true, varied (drawn from more than one topic) and suited to the audience; the strongest objection is included.
- **Arrangement:** All six parts are present and labeled; the proofs follow a deliberate order; the peroration sums up, amplifies and appeals.
- **Style:** Clear, correct and fitting; active voice and parallel structure; at least two figures of speech used on purpose.
- **Memory and delivery:** Spoken from one card of key words, at a steady pace with pauses and eye contact; listeners could state the thesis afterward.

Answer key

1. The faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion.
2. Ethos (the speaker's character), pathos (the audience's emotions), logos (the argument itself).
3. Chiefly ethos (with logos from authority): it shows Paul knows and respects Athenian culture and uses a source they already accept.
4. Conjecture (did it happen?), definition (what is it?), quality (what kind is it?), jurisdiction (who should judge?).

5. Definition, comparison, relationship, circumstance, testimony.
6. Exordium, narration, partition, confirmation, refutation, peroration. The exordium makes the audience well-disposed, attentive and teachable; the peroration sums up, amplifies and appeals.
7. Correctness, clarity, decorum, ornament; plain, middle, grand.
8. Anna wrote the speech, memorized it and delivered it on Friday.
9. Sample: Definition: memorizing means owning a poem by heart. Comparison: a memorized poem is like a lamp carried in the pocket. Relationship: memorizing trains attention and enlarges vocabulary.* Circumstance: generations of schoolchildren did it routinely. Testimony: Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart."
10. Sample: We have seen that the old library is sound, well used and worth its cost. Yet the question is larger than a building. A town spends its money on what it loves, and a town that loves learning will keep a door open to it. A parking lot is paved for today; a library is built for the grandchildren. Next Tuesday the council will vote. Come, and bring the youngest reader you know.

THESIS (GENERAL QUESTION)

The thirteenth classical exercise: the thesis, a general question argued without reference to particular persons, places or times. You will learn to strip a particular case down to the general question inside it, read Bacon weighing marriage and single life, test every choice with the five final heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable), answer Ruskin on whether it is better to work with the hands or the head, and write a full thesis of 900–1,200 words, plus a timed thesis in forty minutes. Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together,” sets the tone: honest reasoning, fair to the other side, toward the truth.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Knows the five canons and the six-part oration from Unit 1.
- Can write a multi-paragraph essay with a clear claim and supporting examples (refutation, confirmation and comparison from earlier grades are a help but not required).

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define a thesis and tell it from a hypothesis, and I can strip a particular case down to its general question.
- ☐ I can name and define the five final heads and run them on both sides of a question.
- ☐ I can state an objection fairly, grant what is true in it and answer it.
- ☐ I can write a full thesis in five parts with a clear, qualified thesis statement.
- ☐ I can write a thesis in forty minutes and keep my pronouns and modal verbs consistent.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Francis Bacon, The Essays (Project Gutenberg #575)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/575>): Free. “Of Marriage and Single Life,” “Of Travel,” “Of Studies” and “Of Riches” are short theses to read and imitate.
- **John Ruskin, The Crown of Wild Olive (Project Gutenberg #26716)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/26716>): Free. Lecture I, “Work,” is the source of the Lesson 2.3 model.
- **Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Book 3 (H. E. Butler translation, LacusCurtius)** (https://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/3A*.html): Free. Chapter 5 gives the “Should a man marry? / Should Cato marry?” distinction. For the teacher.
- **Aesop’s Fables, Townsend translation (Project Gutenberg #21)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21>): Free. “The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse” opens the Lesson 2.4 model.

2.1 WHAT IS A THESIS? THE GENERAL QUESTION ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define a thesis as the ancients did: a general question argued without reference to particular persons, places or times.
- Tell a thesis from a hypothesis (a particular case) and turn particular cases into general questions.
- Read Bacon’s “Of Marriage and Single Life” and trace how he weighs a general question on both sides.

Warm-up. Look at two questions: “Should one marry?” and “Should my cousin Daniel marry Sarah next June?” Write three facts you would need to answer the second that you do not need for the first. Then say which question a stranger in another century could argue with you.

Video slot. Video coming. The progymnasmata and the thesis exercise in classical rhetoric (a lecture on Aphthonius or Quintilian). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

thesis

In classical rhetoric, a general question argued without names, dates or places: “Should one marry?” “Should one go to sea?” (Not the same as the modern “thesis statement,” though the two are related.)

hypothesis

A particular case, tied to persons and circumstances: “Should Cato marry?” Quintilian set the two side by side to show the difference.

practical (political) thesis

A general question about what one should do: marry, farm, travel, build walls. This is the kind we argue in this unit.

theoretical thesis

A general question about what is true in nature or philosophy, such as whether the heavens are a sphere. It is studied more than argued in a speech.

circumstances

The who, what, when, where, why and how of a case. Strip them away and a hypothesis becomes a thesis.

CORE IDEAS

The thirteenth exercise. You have climbed a long ladder to get here. Aphthonius’s handbook (about A.D. 400) sets out fourteen exercises in order: fable, narrative, chreia,

maxim, refutation, confirmation, commonplace, encomium, invective, comparison, characterization, description, thesis and the proposal of a law. The thesis is the thirteenth rung. It gathers everything below it. You will narrate examples, quote maxims, refute objections, confirm your side and compare goods, all in one essay. That is why Quintilian and the schoolmasters after him treated the thesis as the doorway from the classroom to real public speaking.

General, not particular. A thesis is a question that does not depend on any one person. “Should one marry?” can be argued in Athens, in Rome or in your kitchen, and the answer will not change with the names. Quintilian put it plainly: a question like “Should a man marry?” is general, but “Should Cato marry?” is particular, because now we must ask about Cato’s age, money, health and duties. The particular case is called a *hypothesis*. Every hypothesis has a thesis hidden inside it. If you want to know whether Cato should marry, you first need to know whether marriage is good at all.

Strip off the circumstances. To find the thesis inside a case, remove the circumstances: who, what, when, where, why and how. “Should Ellen, who is sixteen, take a job at the hardware store this summer?” becomes “Should the young work for wages?” “Should our town build a wall against the river?” becomes “Should a city fortify itself?” (Aphthonius’s own list of practical theses includes building walls.) Practice this until you can do it quickly. Much clear thinking in law, business and church life begins by asking, “What is the general principle here?”

Practical and theoretical. The ancients sorted theses into two kinds. Practical, or political, theses ask what one should do: whether one should marry, sail, farm or study. Theoretical theses ask what is true: whether the heavens are a sphere, whether there are many worlds. Practical theses belong to the speaker, because they lead to choices. Theoretical ones belong more to the philosopher and the scientist. In this unit you will argue practical theses, though you will notice that every good practical argument leans on some theoretical truth, such as what man is and what he is for.

Why argue a general question? It may seem odd to argue about marriage in general when you are fourteen. But the general question trains you to reason before your feelings are tangled in a particular case. When the day comes to decide about *your* job, *your* church or *your* marriage, you will already have weighed the goods and dangers coolly. Scripture does the same. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul weighs marriage and single life with care, granting real goods on each side, before he gives counsel to particular people.

Two sides, honestly weighed. A thesis is not a rant. The old method alternates objection and answer: you state what an opponent would say, then you resolve it. The best writers grant what is true on the other side. In the model, Francis Bacon (1561–1626) weighs the single and the married life by looking at different callings: friends, servants, churchmen, judges, soldiers. He gives each side its due, then lands on a sentence that tips the scale: wife and children are “a kind of discipline of humanity.” Notice that Bacon names no one. He speaks of *unmarried men* and *single men*, never of a particular neighbor. That is the mark of a thesis.

The thesis and the modern essay. Your English teachers will one day ask for a “thesis statement,” one sentence that states your claim. The two ideas are cousins. The classical thesis is the general question; your thesis statement is your answer to it. “Should one marry?” is the thesis. “Marriage is, for most people, the better path, because it trains the heart in patience and ties a man to the future” is a thesis statement. In Lesson 2.4 you will write both.

The model. *Francis Bacon, “Of Marriage and Single Life,” Essays (1625 edition), Project Gutenberg #575*

Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away; and almost all fugitives, are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen; for charity will hardly water the ground, where it must first fill a pool. It is indifferent for judges and magistrates; for if they be facile and corrupt, you shall have a servant, five times worse than a wife. For soldiers, I find the generals commonly in their hortatives, put men in mind of their wives and children; and I think the despising of marriage amongst the Turks, maketh the vulgar soldier more base. Certainly wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other side, they are more cruel and hardhearted (good to make severe inquisitors), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon.

PICTURE STUDY



Two Old Men Disputing (probably St. Peter and St. Paul), Rembrandt van Rijn, 1628 · Oil on panel · National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The young Rembrandt, only about twenty-two, painted two old men in close argument over a book. Many scholars think they are the apostles Peter and Paul, who once disagreed openly at Antioch (Galatians 2:11) and yet remained brothers. Rembrandt lets the light fall on the page, not on the faces: the argument turns on what is written, not on who is speaking. That is the spirit of the thesis.

Look closely

- Find the source of light. What does it touch most brightly?
- Look at the pointing hand. What is the speaker doing with it?
- Study the listener's face and posture. Is he angry, doubtful or thinking?

Talk about it

1. Write the general question the two men might be arguing. Make sure it names no person.
2. How does the painting show that a good argument appeals to a shared authority rather than to the speaker's own importance?

WRITING PROJECT: A THESIS BANK

Begin a section in your writing notebook called "Thesis Bank." You will draw on it for the rest of the year, including your timed essays.

Your goal is twelve good general questions and one short opening paragraph on the question you like best.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Bacon's *Essays* (Project Gutenberg #575), optional

Steps

1. List six particular cases from real life, history or books (for example, "Should Crusoe have left his father's house?").
2. Strip off the circumstances and write the general question inside each case.
3. Add six more perennial questions of your own or from Bacon's essay titles (Of Travel, Of Riches, Of Studies, Of Friendship).
4. Mark each question P (practical) or T (theoretical). Cross out any that name a living person or a current political quarrel.
5. Choose one practical thesis. Write a paragraph of 150–200 words that states the question, tells why it matters to everyone, and names one good on each side.
6. Read the paragraph aloud. Underline any word that ties it to a particular person, place or time, and generalize it.

Check your work

- My question names no particular person, place or date.
- My paragraph grants at least one real good to the other side.
- My balanced phrases are parallel in form (noun with noun, clause with clause).
- Every sentence is complete; no fragments or run-ons.
- Quotations from Scripture or Bacon are copied exactly and credited.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy Bacon's passage by hand, keeping every semicolon. Circle each place where he turns from one side to the other.
2. Imitation: write three sentences in Bacon's pattern on a different thesis ("Those who live in the city are best ... , best ... , best ... ; but not always ...").
3. List: turn five newspaper-style questions about one person into general questions.

History note. Quintilian (about A.D. 35–100), Rome's great teacher of rhetoric, distinguished the general question from the particular case in Book 3 of his *Institutes of Oratory*, using marriage and Cato as his example. Aphthonius of Antioch (about A.D. 400) made the thesis the thirteenth of his fourteen exercises, and his model thesis argues that one should marry. His handbook was printed and taught in English grammar schools in Shakespeare's day.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism** (Grammar Level 3, usage and style). Bacon writes "best friends, best masters, best servants," three items in the same form. A thesis weighs things side by side, so it lives on parallel structure. Keep matched items matched: not "Marriage teaches patience, generosity and how to plan ahead," but "Marriage teaches patience, generosity and foresight." When you balance two sides with *not only ... but also* or *either ... or*, put the same part of speech after each half.

For families. Bacon's essay is printed from Project Gutenberg #575. His remarks about churchmen, the Turks and "inquisitors" reflect his own age; let your student notice them and discuss rather than skip them. Marriage is chosen as the first thesis because it is the ancients' own example and because Scripture itself weighs it (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7). Keep the discussion general; the point is to reason, not to plan anyone's life. This year's faith verse, Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, and let us reason together," fits the whole unit.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Turn this case into a thesis: “Should Thomas, who loves engines, leave high school at sixteen to apprentice in his uncle’s garage in Dayton?”

1. Find the circumstances: who (Thomas), what (leave school, apprentice), when (at sixteen), where (Dayton, the uncle’s garage), why (he loves engines).
2. Remove the persons and places; keep the action in general terms.
3. Check: could someone in 1825 or 2125 argue this question? Yes.

Answer: Thesis: “Should the young learn a trade by apprenticeship rather than by long schooling?” (A narrower thesis also works: “Should one leave school early to learn a trade?”)

Example 2. A student wrote: “Marriage is great and anyone who doesn’t get married is selfish, like my neighbor who just wants to travel.” Revise it into a sentence fit for a thesis.

1. Remove the particular person (the neighbor). A thesis names no one.
2. Replace the insult with an honest grant to the other side, as Bacon does.
3. Replace the vague word “great” with a specific good.

Answer: “The single life frees a person for travel and service, yet marriage, by daily calling on our patience and care, is for most people the surer school of kindness.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Define a thesis in the classical sense.
2. **EASY** What is a hypothesis in rhetoric? Give Quintilian’s example.
3. **EASY** Where does the thesis stand in Aphthonius’s order of exercises, and what comes after it?
4. **EASY** Label each P (practical) or T (theoretical): (a) Should one go to sea? (b) Is the earth round? (c) Should one keep a diary?
5. **MEDIUM** Turn into a thesis: “Should the Smiths move from Chicago to a farm in Iowa next spring?”
6. **MEDIUM** In Bacon’s passage, which callings does he think suit single life, and which suit marriage?
7. **MEDIUM** Fix the parallelism: “A single man is free to travel, to study and for serving others.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a 4–5 sentence opening for the thesis “Should one keep a few close friends or many acquaintances?” Name no person and grant one good to each side.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Smuggling a particular person back in (“like my uncle”) instead of arguing the general question.
- Treating the thesis as a rant: stating one side only and calling the other side foolish.
- Choosing a live political quarrel instead of a perennial question that people in any century could argue.
- Confusing the classical thesis (the question) with the thesis statement (your answer).

Make it a game · Strip the Case. One player reads a particular case aloud from a news story, a novel or family history (“Should Jo March sell her hair?”). The other has ten seconds to state the general thesis inside it (“Should one sacrifice beauty for family need?”). Score a point for each thesis that names no one; switch roles after five rounds.

Scripture. “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.” (Genesis 2:18, KJV)

Before any human debate about marriage, God Himself made a general judgment about man’s nature, the kind of truth on which a good thesis rests.

Practice: answers

1. A general question argued without reference to particular persons, places or times, such as “Should one marry?”
2. A particular case tied to persons and circumstances: “Should Cato marry?”
3. Thirteenth of fourteen; the proposal of a law comes after it.
4. (a) P, (b) T, (c) P.
5. “Is it better to live in the country or the city?”
6. Single life suits churchmen (charity need not first fill a pool at home) and is indifferent for judges; marriage helps soldiers and makes men tender rather than hardhearted; unmarried men make good friends, masters and servants but not always good subjects.
7. “A single man is free to travel, to study and to serve others.”
8. Sample: Every person must decide how widely to spread his affection. Many acquaintances open doors, bring news and make a town feel like home. A few close friends, by contrast, know us well enough to rebuke us and stay when trouble comes. The question is not which is pleasant, for both are, but which better serves a whole life. I will argue that a few true friends are worth more than a crowd of acquaintances.

2.2 THE HEADS: LAWFUL, JUST, EXPEDIENT, POSSIBLE, HONORABLE

OBJECTIVES

- Name and define the five “final heads” used to argue a practical thesis.
- Tell the heads apart, especially lawful from just and expedient from honorable.
- Build a two-sided chart of arguments under each head for “Should one marry?”

Warm-up. Your friend says, “It’s not against the rules, so it’s fine.” Write two sentences: one that agrees, and one that shows why “not against the rules” is not the end of the question.

Video slot. Video coming. Aristotle’s three kinds of rhetoric: deliberative, judicial and ceremonial (a lecture or classical-school lesson). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

final heads (*telika kephalaia*)

The standard tests for any proposed action: is it lawful, just, expedient, possible and honorable? The ancient teachers used them in the thesis and the proposal of a law.

lawful

In agreement with law: the law of God first, then the laws of the land and long-settled custom.

just

Right in itself; giving to God and to each person what is due. A thing may be legal and still unjust, or just where no law yet speaks.

expedient

Advantageous; leading to good results, safety or profit. The old word for “useful” or “beneficial.”

honorable

Fitting, noble and worthy of good report; what a good person would be glad to have known of him.

CORE IDEAS

Five questions for every choice. When the ancient teachers argued whether a thing should be done, they did not wander. They asked five questions in turn, called the final heads. Is it *lawful*? Is it *just*? Is it *expedient*? Is it *possible*? Is it *honorable*? Aphthonius and Hermogenes list these heads (the handbooks vary a little in number and name) for the thesis and for the proposal of a law. They work as a checklist for invention, the first canon of

rhetoric you met in Unit 1. If you can answer all five, you will never sit before a blank page wondering what to say.

Lawful. The first head asks whether the action agrees with law. For a Christian, the highest law is God's, written in Scripture and on the conscience (Romans 2:15). Beneath it stand the laws of the land and customs long kept by good people. In a thesis on marriage, you might argue that God commanded the first man and woman to "be fruitful, and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), and that every civilized nation has honored marriage in its laws. The lawful head is strong, but it rarely settles a question alone, because many things the law allows are still unwise.

Just. The second head asks whether the action is right in itself, giving each his due. Lawful and just are not the same. A law can be unjust, as Daniel's friends found when Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to bow to an image; and some duties are just where no human law speaks, such as caring for aged parents. In the marriage thesis, the just head might ask what we owe our parents (who gave us life), the next generation and society itself.

Expedient. The third head asks whether the action is advantageous: does it bring safety, health, wealth, happiness or other good results? This is the head of practical calculation. Paul draws the line between lawful and expedient in our model: "all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." A thing may be permitted and still be unprofitable or harmful. In the marriage thesis, expedience covers the help a spouse gives, the care of children in old age, and also the costs on the other side: expense, worry and less freedom.

Possible. The fourth head asks whether the thing can be done. No good law or plan is worth urging if it cannot be carried out. Opponents of marriage might argue that a lifelong promise is too hard to keep; you would answer that countless ordinary people keep it, and that God gives grace for what He commands. Use this head to answer the objection "It sounds good, but it won't work."

Honorable. The fifth head asks whether the action is noble and fitting, whether it brings good report. Aristotle taught that deliberative speeches aim chiefly at the expedient, judicial speeches at the just, and ceremonial speeches at the honorable. The thesis uses all three ends. Here you ask what a wise and good person would do, and what will be praised when a life is remembered. Paul names this kind of thinking in Philippians 4:8: "whatsoever things are honest ... whatsoever things are of good report ... think on these things."

Using the heads on both sides. The heads are not only for your side. An honest writer runs every head twice: once for, once against. Make a chart with five rows and two columns. Some boxes will be strong and some weak. Your job is to lead with your strongest heads, answer the other side's strongest heads, and not pad your essay with weak ones. Often the most powerful argument comes when two heads collide, as when something is expedient but dishonorable. Then you must show which should win, and why.

The model. *Paul, First Epistle to the Corinthians (KJV)*

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth .

PICTURE STUDY



Allegory of Good Government, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1338–1339 · Fresco · Sala dei Nove, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The nine men who governed Siena met in a room whose walls Lorenzetti painted with the effects of good and bad government. On this wall, Justice sits enthroned at the left with Wisdom above her. Below, Concord holds a carpenter's plane across her lap, and a cord runs from her hand through the hands of a line of citizens to the great figure of the Common Good, surrounded by virtues. Every council that met in this room deliberated under these pictures: is it lawful, is it just, is it for the common good?

Look closely

- Find Justice on the left. What does she hold or balance?
- Follow the cord from Concord through the citizens. Where does it lead?
- Find the reclining figure of Peace dressed in white. How does her posture differ from the others?

Talk about it

1. Match three figures in the fresco to three of the five heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable). Explain each match in a sentence.
2. Why might a city council want to see these pictures while it argued? Write a paragraph.

WRITING PROJECT: THE FIVE-HEAD CHART

Build the chart that will become the body of your thesis. Use “Should one marry?” or another practical thesis from your Thesis Bank.

You will need

- Writing notebook or a large sheet of paper
- A KJV Bible
- Your Thesis Bank from Lesson 2.1

Steps

1. Draw a chart with five rows (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable) and two columns (for, against).
2. Fill every box with at least one argument in a full sentence. Where a box is weak, say so honestly.
3. Find one Scripture and one example from history or literature to support any two boxes.
4. Star your two strongest heads on your own side and the one strongest head on the other side.
5. Write two paragraphs of 120–150 words each: one arguing your strongest head, one answering the other side’s strongest head.
6. Read both aloud. Check that each paragraph argues only one head.

Check your work

- All ten boxes are filled, and weak boxes are marked honestly.
- Each paragraph keeps to a single head and names it in its topic sentence.
- I use “should,” “must,” “may” and “can” precisely (see the Style Clinic).
- Pronouns agree with their antecedents (“one ... his,” “people ... their”).
- Scripture is quoted exactly from the KJV with its reference.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy 1 Corinthians 10:23-24 and 6:12. Underline the word that marks each turn.
2. Imitation: write a sentence in Paul’s pattern on a new subject: “All ... are ..., but all ... are not”
3. List: for each of the five heads, write one question you would ask about “Should one keep a garden?”

History note. Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* (Book 1, chapter 3) divides speeches into three kinds by their ends: deliberative speeches urge or dissuade and aim at the expedient; judicial speeches accuse or defend and aim at the just; ceremonial speeches praise or blame and aim at the honorable. The later handbooks folded these ends into the list of final heads.

Lorenzetti's frescoes in Siena are among the first large paintings in Europe about civic government rather than sacred history.

 **Style Clinic. Mood and modal verbs** (Grammar Level 3, voice and mood). The five heads each have their own helping verb. *May* asks the lawful ("One may marry"). *Ought* or *should* asks the just ("One ought to honor parents"). *Should* also weighs the expedient ("One should save before marrying"). *Can* asks the possible ("Ordinary people can keep vows"). *Must* marks duty and necessity. Do not blur them: "You can't marry at fifteen" (impossible?) is not the same as "You may not marry at fifteen" (unlawful) or "You should not marry at fifteen" (inexpedient). Choosing the right modal tells your reader which head you are arguing.

For families. The number and names of the final heads vary among the handbooks (Hermogenes and Aphthonius differ slightly, and some lists add "necessary" or "easy"). The five in this lesson follow the course outline. Paul's "lawful ... expedient" is the clearest scriptural example of two heads set against each other; read 1 Corinthians 6:12 alongside the model. Keep the practice on perennial questions rather than current political quarrels.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Which head does each sentence argue? (a) "No law of God or man forbids it." (b) "It will cost more than it returns." (c) "Our grandparents would be ashamed of us." (d) "No one has ever managed it."

1. Look for the key idea: law, rightness, advantage, ability or good name.
2. (a) speaks of law; (b) of profit and loss; (c) of shame and good report; (d) of what can be done.

Answer: (a) lawful, (b) expedient, (c) honorable, (d) possible.

Example 2. A student wrote under "expedient": "Marriage is good because God made it and it is a noble thing and it saves money." Revise.

1. Sort the reasons: "God made it" is lawful; "noble" is honorable; "saves money" is expedient.
2. Keep only the expedient reason in this paragraph and develop it.
3. Add a specific example and grant the cost on the other side.

Answer: "Marriage is also expedient. Two people who share one household pay one rent and cook one dinner, and in sickness each has a nurse close at hand. It is true that a family brings expenses a single person never meets, but the help given and received over a lifetime outweighs them."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five final heads in order.
2. **EASY** What does “expedient” mean?
3. **EASY** Which two heads does Paul set against each other in 1 Corinthians 10:23?
4. **EASY** Which kind of speech aims chiefly at the honorable, according to Aristotle?
5. **MEDIUM** Give an example from Scripture of something lawful under a human king but unjust.
6. **MEDIUM** Choose the right modal: “Anyone with a library card ___ borrow ten books” (rule) and “A student ___ read before bed” (advice).
7. **MEDIUM** Write one sentence for and one against “Should one go to sea?” under the possible head.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a paragraph (5–7 sentences) where two heads collide on the thesis “Should one always tell the truth?” Show which head wins.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Mixing several heads in one paragraph so that none is argued fully.
- Treating “lawful” as the end of the argument: “It’s allowed, so it’s good.”
- Running the heads for your own side only and ignoring the other side’s strongest head.
- Using modal verbs loosely, so the reader cannot tell whether you mean permitted, wise or possible.

Make it a game • Head Hunt. The parent reads short arguments from a list (“It would ruin his good name,” “There isn’t enough money,” “The Bible forbids it,” “It wouldn’t be fair to his brother”). The student slaps the table and names the head. Then switch: the student invents arguments and the parent names the heads. Five points for a correct head, a bonus point for an argument that fits two heads at once.

Scripture. “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8, KJV)

The prophet names the just as something God requires, reminding us that the heads are not merely clever tools but questions asked before God.

Practice: answers

1. Lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable.
2. Advantageous; leading to good results such as safety, health or profit.
3. Lawful and expedient.
4. The ceremonial (epideictic) speech of praise or blame.
5. Sample: Nebuchadnezzar’s command to bow to the golden image (Daniel 3), or Darius’s decree forbidding prayer (Daniel 6).
6. “may” (lawful, permitted); “should” (expedient, advised).

7. Sample: For: a strong young person can learn seamanship in a single season. Against: a man with weak lungs or a family to keep at home cannot easily go.
8. Sample: A lie may sometimes seem expedient. It can spare a friend's feelings or keep us out of trouble for a day. But expedience is a poor master when honor and justice speak against it. Scripture commands, "Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour" (Ephesians 4:25), and our neighbor is owed the truth. A man known for small lies is not trusted in great matters, so even the advantage is lost in the end. When the expedient and the just collide, the just must win, and in time it proves the more expedient too.

2.3 “IS IT BETTER TO WORK WITH THE HANDS OR THE HEAD?”

OBJECTIVES

- Read Ruskin’s argument on hand work and head work and trace how he grants, qualifies and decides.
- Run the five heads on both sides of the thesis “Is it better to work with the hands or the head?”
- Draft the body of a thesis on this question, with at least two objections answered.

Warm-up. List six kinds of work you have watched someone do well (a mechanic, a nurse, a farmer, a bookkeeper, a pastor, a carpenter ...). Sort them: mostly hands, mostly head, or both. Which list was hardest to fill, and why?

Video slot. Video coming. A skilled tradesman at work: blacksmith, cabinetmaker or stonemason (a craft demonstration from a museum or trade school). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

comparative thesis

A general question that asks which of two goods is better: country or city, hands or head, reading or travel. It joins the thesis to the comparison exercise you learned in earlier grades.

concession

Granting a true point to the other side before answering it: “It is true that ..., but”

qualification

A limit placed on your claim to make it accurate: “when both are done equally well,” “for most people,” “in ordinary times.”

vocation

From Latin *vocare*, “to call”: the work God calls a person to, whether of the hand or of the mind.

the curse on labor

God’s word to Adam after the fall: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). Work came before the fall (Genesis 2:15); toil and thorns came after.

CORE IDEAS

A comparative thesis. Some theses ask whether to do a thing (“Should one marry?”). Others ask which of two good things is better (“Is it better to live in the country or the city?”). The second kind is a comparative thesis. It joins two exercises you know: the thesis

and the comparison. The rule of the comparison still holds. Compare two goods, not a good and an evil, or the contest is over before it starts. Hand work and head work are both good. Your task is to show which deserves the higher place, or under what conditions each does.

Ruskin's lecture. In 1865 the art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900) gave a lecture called “Work” to an audience of working men. He did not flatter them. He granted that rough work is “real, honest, and, generally, though not always, useful,” while much fine work is “foolish and false.” Then he added his qualification: “when both kinds are equally well and worthily done,” head work is the nobler. Finally he reached for Scripture, reading hand work through the curse of Genesis 3. Study the model for its moves, not only its conclusion: grant, qualify, decide, support.

Testing Ruskin with the heads. Run the five heads and see where Ruskin is strong and weak. *Lawful*: Scripture commands both kinds of work. Paul tells believers “to work with your own hands” (1 Thessalonians 4:11), and he also commends those who “labour in the word and doctrine” (1 Timothy 5:17). *Just*: the hand worker feeds everyone, so justice owes him honor and fair wages (James 5:4). *Expedient*: a society needs both bread and books; yet the trades often pay well and are hard to replace. *Possible*: not everyone can do every kind of work, and this is part of God’s design (1 Corinthians 12). *Honorable*: here Ruskin places his weight, and here you may answer him.

Answering an authority. You may disagree with a great writer, if you do it fairly. Ruskin is right that the ground was cursed and that toil wears the body. But Scripture also shows hand work lifted up. God filled Bezaleel “with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3), so that the tabernacle was built by skilled hands. Our Lord was called “the carpenter” (Mark 6:3), and Paul made tents (Acts 18:3). A student might therefore argue that the best work joins hand and head, and that the distinction Ruskin calls “inevitable” is softer than he thought. That is a refutation built on the same authorities he used.

Every craft has a head. A good thesis looks for hidden assumptions. Ruskin assumes the hand worker does not think. Watch a master electrician trace a fault, a farmer judge the weather, or a surgeon cut, and you see the head at work through the hands. The reverse is true as well: a scholar’s head work depends on hands that build his desk, print his books and grow his food. You might frame your answer as a qualification: “Head work ranks higher in what it aims at, but hand work ranks higher in what it guarantees.” Or you might argue the union of both as the true ideal.

Careers and calling. This thesis is not idle. In a few years you will choose training, a trade or a college. Employers in nearly every field ask for the same rare combination: people who can do real work and also write clearly about it. The electrician writes estimates; the engineer writes reports; the nurse writes charts that save lives. Whatever side you argue, remember Paul’s word: “whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Colossians 3:23). The highest work is the work God has called you to, done well.

The model. John Ruskin, “Work,” a lecture of 1865, in *The Crown of Wild Olive* (1866), Project Gutenberg #26716

Rough work, honourable or not, takes the life out of us; and the man who has been heaving clay out of a ditch all day, or driving an express train against the north wind all night, or holding a collier's helm in a gale on a lee-shore, or whirling white hot iron at a furnace mouth, that man is not the same at the end of his day, or night, as one who has been sitting in a quiet room, with everything comfortable about him, reading books, or classing butterflies, or painting pictures.

If it is any comfort to you to be told that the rough work is the more honourable of the two, I should be sorry to take that much of consolation from you; and in some sense I need not. The rough work is at all events real, honest, and, generally, though not always, useful; while the fine work is, a great deal of it, foolish and false as well as fine, and therefore dishonourable; but when both kinds are equally well and worthily done, the head's is the noble work, and the hand's the ignoble; and of all hand work whatsoever, necessary for the maintenance of life, those old words, 'In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread,' indicate that the inherent nature of it is one of calamity; and that the ground, cursed for our sake, casts also some shadow of degradation into our contest with its thorn and its thistle; so that all nations have held their days honourable, or 'holy,' and constituted them 'holydays' or 'holidays,' by making them days of rest; and the promise, which, among all our distant hopes, seems to cast the chief brightness over death, is that blessing of the dead who die in the Lord, that 'they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.'

PICTURE STUDY



Work, Ford Madox Brown, 1852-1865 · Oil on canvas · Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Ford Madox Brown spent more than ten years on this painting of navvies (laborers) digging a trench in Heath Street, Hampstead, near London. Around them pass every kind of person: a rich couple on horseback, a ragged flower seller, a group of children with no parents, men carrying advertising boards. At the right lean two “brainworkers,” as Brown called them: the writer Thomas Carlyle and the clergyman F. D. Maurice, who founded a college for working men. Hand and head stand in the same street, in the same sunlight.

Look closely

- Find the strongest laborer in the center. What is he doing, and how has Brown made him the hero?
- Find the two gentlemen at the right. What are they doing with their hands?
- Find one person in the crowd who is not working at all. What does Brown seem to think of him?

Talk about it

1. Does the painting argue that hand work or head work is better, or that both belong together? Write a paragraph using details as evidence.
2. Choose one figure and write the objection he might raise against Ruskin’s lecture.

WRITING PROJECT: HANDS OR HEAD: THE BODY OF THE THESIS

Write the main body of a thesis on “Is it better to work with the hands or the head?” You will add the opening and closing in Lesson 2.4.

Choose your answer: hands, head, or a qualified answer (for example, “the work that joins both”).

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Your Five-Head Chart from Lesson 2.2 (as a pattern)
- Ruskin’s lecture (Project Gutenberg #26716), optional

Steps

1. Fill a new five-head chart for this thesis, for and against your answer.
2. Write a thesis statement of one sentence that answers the question and includes a qualification.
3. Write three body paragraphs (150–200 words each), each built on one head, with an example from history, Scripture or your own observation of real work.
4. Write two objection-and-answer paragraphs. Begin each by stating the objection fairly (“Some will say ...”) and then resolve it.
5. Quote Ruskin once, exactly, either to agree or to answer him.

6. Read the draft aloud and mark every long sentence. Check its punctuation against the Style Clinic.

Check your work

- My thesis statement answers the question and includes a qualification.
- Each body paragraph argues one head and names it.
- Each objection is stated fairly before I answer it.
- Semicolons join only complete clauses or separate items that already contain commas.
- My quotation from Ruskin is exact and introduced with his name.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy Ruskin's second paragraph through "the head's is the noble work, and the hand's the ignoble." Mark each semicolon and say what it joins.
2. Imitation: write one long sentence in Ruskin's pattern listing four kinds of hard work ("the man who has been ... , or ... , or ... , or ... , that man is not ...").
3. List: write down three skilled trades and the "head work" hidden in each.

History note. F. D. Maurice founded the Working Men's College in London in 1854 to give laborers evening classes in literature, history and art. Ruskin taught drawing there in its early years, and Brown painted Maurice into *Work* for that reason. Thomas Carlyle, also in the painting, had written that work itself is a kind of worship. Brown wrote a long catalogue explaining each figure when he exhibited the picture in 1865.

 **Style Clinic. Semicolons in the long sentence** (Grammar Level 3, punctuation mastery). Ruskin's second paragraph is one enormous sentence held together by semicolons. A semicolon may (1) join two independent clauses closely related in thought ("The rough work is at all events real ...; while the fine work is ..."), or (2) separate items in a series when the items already contain commas. It may not join a clause to a fragment. Test: could each side of the semicolon stand as a sentence? Use one or two semicolons in your draft to balance hands against head, but do not imitate Ruskin's length in a timed essay.

For families. Ruskin's passage is printed exactly from Project Gutenberg #26716 (British spelling and his single quotation marks kept). His sharp division between "rough men" and "gentlemen" reflects Victorian class assumptions; this lesson invites the student to test it against Scripture rather than accept it. This is a good lesson to invite a tradesman or professional you know to describe the thinking and writing their work requires.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Trace Ruskin's four moves in his second paragraph: grant, qualify, decide, support.

1. Grant: rough work is "real, honest, and, generally, though not always, useful"; much fine work is "foolish and false."
2. Qualify: "when both kinds are equally well and worthily done."
3. Decide: "the head's is the noble work, and the hand's the ignoble."
4. Support: Genesis 3:19 and the curse on the ground; the human custom of holy days of rest; Revelation 14:13, "they rest from their labours."

Answer: Ruskin concedes the moral advantage of honest hand work, limits his claim to work done equally well, ranks head work higher, and supports the ranking from Scripture and the custom of nations.

Example 2. Revise this objection paragraph: "People who think hand work is lower are just snobs. My dad is a welder and he's smarter than most lawyers."

1. Remove the name-calling and the particular person; keep the idea.
2. State the other side fairly first, then answer it.
3. Support the answer with a general example and Scripture.

Answer: "Some will say, with Ruskin, that head work is nobler because it aims at higher things. Yet the line between hand and head is not so sharp as it looks. A good welder must read drawings, judge metals and calculate heat, and his mistakes can cost lives. Scripture honors such skill as wisdom itself: Bezaleel was filled 'with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding.' The craftsman's hand is a thinking hand."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a comparative thesis?
2. **EASY** Name the four examples of rough work in Ruskin's first paragraph.
3. **EASY** What qualification does Ruskin attach to his claim that head work is nobler?
4. **EASY** Name two people in Scripture who worked with their hands.
5. **MEDIUM** Was work itself part of the curse? Answer from Genesis.
6. **MEDIUM** Punctuate correctly: "Hand work feeds the body head work feeds the mind both are needed."
7. **MEDIUM** Write a thesis statement for this question that includes a qualification.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed practice (25 minutes): Write a five-paragraph response to "Is it better to work with the hands or the head?" State a position, use at least two heads, and answer one objection.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Comparing a good with an evil (“honest hand work versus lazy desk work”) instead of two goods at their best.
- Dismissing Ruskin as a snob instead of answering his actual argument.
- Writing one long list of reasons with no heads to organize them.
- Joining a clause to a fragment with a semicolon.

Make it a game • Hidden Head. One player names a job that looks like pure hand work (roofer, baker, gardener). The other must name, within twenty seconds, two kinds of thinking the job requires. Then reverse: name a job that looks like pure head work (accountant, judge, poet) and find the hand work hidden in it. One point per good answer.

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,” (Exodus 31:3, KJV)

God gave Bezaleel wisdom and workmanship together, a strong answer to anyone who would separate the head from the hand.

Practice: answers

1. A general question asking which of two goods is better, such as “Is it better to work with the hands or the head?”
2. Heaving clay out of a ditch, driving an express train against the north wind, holding a collier’s helm in a gale, whirling white hot iron at a furnace mouth.
3. “When both kinds are equally well and worthily done.”
4. Two of: Jesus the carpenter (Mark 6:3), Paul the tentmaker (Acts 18:3), Bezaleel the craftsman (Exodus 31), Lydia the seller of purple (Acts 16:14), Aquila and Priscilla, tentmakers.
5. No. God put Adam in the garden “to dress it and to keep it” before the fall (Genesis 2:15). After the fall, toil, sweat and thorns were added (Genesis 3:17-19).
6. “Hand work feeds the body; head work feeds the mind; both are needed.”
7. Sample: Although head work aims at higher ends, the best work in most lives joins skilled hands to a thinking mind, and such work is more honorable than either alone.
8. Sample outline: (1) Introduction with the question and thesis statement: work that joins hand and head is best. (2) Expedient: trades are needed and well paid, and thinking makes them safer. (3) Honorable: Scripture honors Bezaleel’s skill and Christ’s carpentry. (4) Objection and answer: Ruskin says head work is nobler; answer that the line is not so sharp. (5) Conclusion: Colossians 3:23, do all heartily as to the Lord.

2.4 WRITING A THESIS

OBJECTIVES

- Arrange a full thesis essay in five parts: introduction, statement, confirmation by the heads, objections and answers, conclusion.
- Write a complete thesis of 900–1,200 words on a perennial question, using at least three heads and answering two objections.
- Write a timed thesis in 40 minutes, the length of the ACT’s optional writing test.

Warm-up. From memory, list the six parts of the classical oration from Unit 1 (exordium to peroration). Beside each, write what it might become in an essay on “Should one marry?”

Video slot. Video coming. How to outline and write an argumentative essay with counterarguments (a writing lesson from a classical school or university writing center). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

introduction (proem)

The opening that wins attention and goodwill and shows why the general question matters to everyone. It matches the exordium of the oration.

thesis statement

One sentence that answers the general question, often with a qualification, and may preview the heads you will use.

objection and solution

Aphthonius’s method for the thesis: state what an opponent would say, then resolve it. Unit 3 will develop this as counterargument and rebuttal.

epilogue

The closing that gathers the argument, rises to its highest point and urges the reader. It matches the peroration.

impersonal pronoun

A pronoun such as *one* that refers to no particular person: “One should count the cost.” Fitting for a thesis, which names no one.

CORE IDEAS

From parts to the whole. You have stripped cases down to general questions (2.1), learned the five heads (2.2) and drafted a body on hands and head (2.3). Now you will write the whole thesis. Aphthonius’s model thesis on marriage opens with an introduction, then moves through a series of objections and answers, arguing from the final heads, and ends with an

epilogue. If you lay this over the six-part oration from Unit 1, you get a plan that fits nearly any argumentative essay you will ever write.

The five-part plan. (1) *Introduction*: catch attention and show why the question belongs to everyone. (2) *Statement*: pose the question plainly, give your answer in a thesis statement, and if you wish name the heads you will use. (3) *Confirmation*: argue your side head by head, one head to a paragraph, each with a reason and an example. (4) *Objections and answers*: state the strongest arguments on the other side fairly, and resolve each. (5) *Epilogue*: gather the main points and close with weight, often with a maxim, a Scripture or a picture. In a long essay you may weave objections into the confirmation, but beginners do well to keep them separate.

The introduction. Begin with something every reader shares. For “Is it better to live in the country or the city?” you might begin with the old story of the town mouse and the country mouse, or with the fact that the first city in Scripture was built by Cain while God planted the first garden. Avoid empty openings (“Since the dawn of time ...”) and dictionary definitions. In two to four sentences, make the reader feel that the question matters, then turn to your statement.

Choosing and ordering the heads. You will rarely use all five heads at full strength. Choose the three that serve your answer best. A common order is to begin with a strong head, put a weaker one in the middle, and end with your strongest, often the honorable or the just, because those heads reach the conscience. The lawful head often goes first because it sets the boundaries: if God or the law forbids a thing, the argument is short. Give each head its own paragraph with a clear topic sentence (“Country life is also expedient”).

Objections, answered with grace. The thesis is a contest of reasons, not of insults. State each objection as its best defender would (“The city, some will say, is where the arts and the churches flourish”), grant what is true, then answer. You may answer by denying the premise, by showing the objection proves less than it claims, or by showing that a higher head outweighs it. Colossians 4:6 sets the tone: “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt.” An opponent treated fairly is more easily persuaded.

The voice of a thesis. Because a thesis is general, its voice is general. Speak of “one,” “a person,” “people” or “the farmer,” not of yourself and your friends. The first person is not forbidden, but use it sparingly (“I will argue ...”). Above all, do not shift pronouns in the middle of a sentence (“If one moves to the city, you will find ...”). Keep a measured tone: the thesis persuades by clarity and fairness more than by heat.

Timed writing. Many tests ask for exactly this kind of essay. The ACT’s optional writing test, for example, gives forty minutes to weigh several perspectives on a general question and argue your own. Spend about five minutes on a quick five-head chart and an outline, twenty-five minutes writing, and five to ten minutes rereading. A clear thesis statement, two or three well-developed heads and one objection fairly answered will beat a long, wandering essay every time.

The model. *Written for this course: a model student thesis (shortened), "Is It Better to Live in the Country or the City?"*

Aesop tells of a town mouse who visited his country cousin and scorned his plain supper of barley, yet fled home from the town's rich table when the dogs burst in. Every generation retells the story because every generation must choose where to make its home. Is it better to live in the country or the city? I will argue that, for raising a family and forming character, the country is the better place, though the city has real goods of its own.

Country life is first of all expedient for the body. Fresh air, open ground and food grown close at hand make for health, and work outdoors gives children chores that matter: a calf fed, a garden weeded, a fence mended.

It is also honorable, for it keeps a person near the work on which all others depend. The farmer stands where Adam stood, set in a garden "to dress it and to keep it." A child who sees bread grow learns gratitude before he learns to read.

Some will say that the city is where learning, music and great churches flourish, and that the country is narrow. This is partly true. Paul carried the gospel from city to city, and libraries and hospitals gather where people gather. Yet the country does not forbid learning; it only asks that one bring books home. And many great minds were formed in the quiet of the fields before they served in the city.

The town mouse was right that the country is plain. But plainness is not poverty, and quiet is not emptiness. Where a family can live near the land, it will find there a school of health, work and thanksgiving that no city can easily offer.

PICTURE STUDY



The Harvesters, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1565 · Oil on wood · The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Bruegel painted a series of pictures of the seasons for a merchant in Antwerp; this is the late summer harvest. In the foreground, workers eat bread, porridge and pears in the shade while one man sleeps under the tree. Behind them others keep cutting the wheat, and far off lie a village, a church and a harbor with ships, the world of trade and towns. Country and town lie in the same landscape, joined by the road the reapers' grain will travel.

Look closely

- Find the sleeping man under the tree. How did Bruegel show that he is tired?
- Find the path cut through the wheat. Where does it lead?
- Look into the far distance. What signs of town life and trade can you find?

Talk about it

1. Use three details from the painting as evidence for one side of "Is it better to live in the country or the city?"
2. Write an objection the merchant who owned this painting might raise against country life, then answer it.

WRITING PROJECT: A FULL THESIS

Write a complete thesis essay of 900–1,200 words on a practical question from your Thesis Bank, or finish your hands-or-head thesis from Lesson 2.3. This essay goes in your portfolio.

In the third session, write a second, shorter thesis under timed conditions.

You will need

- Writing notebook or computer
- A KJV Bible
- Your Thesis Bank, Five-Head Chart and 2.3 draft
- A timer

Steps

1. Choose your question and confirm it names no particular person, place or date.
2. Fill a five-head chart for and against; choose your three strongest heads and the other side's two strongest objections.
3. Outline the five parts: introduction, statement, confirmation (three heads), objections and answers (two), epilogue.
4. Draft the essay in one or two sittings without stopping to polish.
5. Revise with the checklist below, reading aloud. Cut any sentence that does not serve a head.
6. Session three: set a timer for 40 minutes and write a thesis on a new question from your bank (five minutes planning, twenty-five writing, ten rereading).

Check your work

- My introduction shows why the question matters to everyone, without "since the dawn of time."
- My thesis statement answers the question clearly, with a qualification if needed.
- I argue at least three heads, one to a paragraph, each with a reason and an example.
- I state two objections fairly and answer each.
- My pronouns do not shift ("one ... one," not "one ... you"), and each pronoun has a clear antecedent.
- Quotations from Scripture and other authors are exact and credited.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy the objection paragraph of the model and label its three moves: objection, concession, answer.
2. Imitation: write an introduction of three or four sentences for "Should one travel while young?" that opens with a story everyone knows.
3. List: write ten openings to avoid and ten better ones (a fable, a proverb, a scene, a question, a surprising fact).

History note. The French writer Michel de Montaigne called his short prose pieces *essais*, "attempts" or "trials," in 1580. Francis Bacon borrowed the word for his own *Essays* in 1597, the first English book of the kind. Many of Bacon's essays are theses in the classical sense: "Of Marriage and Single Life," "Of Travel," "Of Riches," "Of Studies."

The schoolboy's thesis and the grown man's essay are the same exercise at different heights.

 **Style Clinic. Pronoun consistency and the impersonal “one”** (Grammar Level 3, pronouns). A thesis speaks generally, so it often uses *one*, *a person* or *people*. Pick one and keep it. Wrong: “If one lives in the country, you have more chores.” Right: “If one lives in the country, one has more chores,” or “People who live in the country have more chores.” Make sure every pronoun points back to a clear noun: in “The farmer told the merchant that he was wrong,” who was wrong? Revise to name him. Use the formal “one” sparingly; two or three times in an essay is enough before it sounds stiff.

For families. Score the full thesis with the unit portfolio rubric. The model essay was written for this course and shortened for study; your student's essay should be longer and develop each head more fully. The ACT's writing test remains optional as of 2026; check the current ACT website for format and timing before test day. The timed essay is practice in clear thinking under pressure, not a race; praise a clear structure even if the prose is rough.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart the model thesis: label each paragraph by its part and head.

1. Paragraph 1: introduction (Aesop's town and country mouse) and statement (“I will argue that, for raising a family and forming character, the country is the better place”). Note the qualification.
2. Paragraph 2: confirmation, expedient head (health, useful chores).
3. Paragraph 3: confirmation, honorable head (near the work all depend on; Genesis 2:15).
4. Paragraph 4: objection (the city has learning, music, churches), concession (“This is partly true”), answer (the country does not forbid learning).
5. Paragraph 5: epilogue, returning to the fable and closing with a balanced sentence.

Answer: Introduction and statement, two heads of confirmation, one objection answered, epilogue. A full student essay would add a third head (perhaps the just: what parents owe children) and a second objection.

Example 2. Revise this weak thesis statement: “There are many good and bad things about country and city life, and people have different opinions.”

1. It does not answer the question; it only says the question exists.
2. Choose a side and add a qualification that makes it accurate.
3. Optionally preview the heads.

Answer: “Although the city offers learning and fellowship that few villages can match, the country is the better place to raise children, because it is healthier, teaches useful work and keeps a family close to the land God gave.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five parts of the thesis plan in order.
2. **EASY** Which part of the oration from Unit 1 matches the thesis introduction? Which matches the epilogue?
3. **EASY** How does Aphthonius handle the opposing side in a thesis?
4. **EASY** Name two openings to avoid.
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronoun shift: “When one chooses a trade, you should think about where you want to live.”
6. **MEDIUM** Write a thesis statement with a qualification for “Should one travel while young?”
7. **MEDIUM** Give three ways to answer an objection.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed (40 minutes): “Is it better to read many books or to read a few books many times?” Write a full thesis with an introduction, at least two heads, one objection answered and an epilogue.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A thesis statement that restates the question or says “there are good and bad sides” without answering.
- Arguing every head thinly instead of three heads fully.
- Stating objections weakly (a “straw man”) so they are easy to knock down.
- Shifting from “one” to “you” or “we” in the middle of a sentence or paragraph.

Make it a game • Thesis Tournament. Draw a question from a hat of perennial theses. Each player has three minutes to prepare a 90-second speech: statement, one head, one objection answered. The listener must restate the speaker’s thesis statement and name the head used before giving his own speech. Award points for clarity, fairness to the other side and a strong closing sentence.

Scripture. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be

as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18, KJV)

God Himself invites reasoning, and the thesis trains us to reason honestly, humbly and toward the truth.

Practice: answers

1. Introduction, statement, confirmation, objections and answers, epilogue.
2. The exordium; the peroration.
3. By stating objections and resolving them one by one.
4. Sample: “Since the dawn of time ...” and a dictionary definition (“Webster’s defines ...”).
5. “When one chooses a trade, one should think about where one wants to live,” or “People choosing a trade should think about where they want to live.”
6. Sample: For most young people, travel is worth its cost when it is joined to work or study, because it widens judgment and teaches gratitude for home.
7. Deny its premise; show it proves less than it claims; show that a higher head (such as the just or honorable) outweighs it.
8. Sample outline: Introduction: a man with one Bible read through all his life versus a man with a library he never finishes. Statement: a few great books read often form the mind more deeply than many read once, though wide reading has its place. Expedient: deep reading fixes knowledge in memory. Honorable: the great books (Scripture first, Psalm 1:2) repay meditation. Objection: wide reading prevents narrowness; answer: a few deep books give the judgment to read widely well. Epilogue: return to the two men; better to know one well than many a little.

UNIT 2 REVIEW

Closed book except for a KJV Bible. Items 1–9 may be answered orally or in writing. Item 10 is a timed essay (40 minutes) scored with the portfolio rubric, scaled to 12 points.

1. (2 pts) Define a thesis in the classical sense and give an example.
2. (2 pts) What is a hypothesis? Give Quintilian's example.
3. (2 pts) Turn into a thesis: "Should Grace spend her savings on a trip to Rome after graduation?"
4. (5 pts) Name and briefly define the five final heads.
5. (3 pts) Which two heads does Paul contrast in 1 Corinthians 10:23? Explain the difference in one sentence.
6. (3 pts) In Bacon's passage, what does he call wife and children, and what reason does he give?
7. (4 pts) What qualification does Ruskin place on his claim that head work is nobler? Give one scriptural answer to his view.
8. (5 pts) Name the five parts of the thesis plan in order.
9. (4 pts) Fix the style errors: "If one wants a good trade, you can't forget that a electrician must read drawings, calculate loads and safety is important."
10. (12 pts) Timed essay (40 minutes): "Is it better to have a few close friends or many acquaintances?" Write a thesis with an introduction, a qualified thesis statement, at least two heads, one objection fairly answered and an epilogue.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A THESIS ON A PERENNIAL QUESTION

Revise your full thesis from Lesson 2.4 (900–1,200 words), give it a title, and add it to your Grade 9 portfolio together with your five-head chart and the timed thesis from session three, so that growth can be seen across the year.

- **General question and statement:** The question names no particular person, place or time; the thesis statement answers it clearly, with a fitting qualification.
- **Heads and evidence:** At least three heads, one to a paragraph, each with a reason and a concrete example from Scripture, history, literature or observation.
- **Objections answered:** Two objections stated fairly in their strongest form, conceded where true and answered with grace.
- **Arrangement and style:** Introduction, statement, confirmation, objections and epilogue in order; parallel structure, precise modal verbs, consistent pronouns and correct semicolons; quotations exact and credited.

Answer key

1. A general question argued without reference to particular persons, places or times, such as "Should one marry?"
2. A particular case tied to persons and circumstances: "Should Cato marry?"

3. Sample: "Should the young spend their savings on travel?"
4. Lawful (agrees with God's law and just human law), just (right in itself, giving each his due), expedient (advantageous), possible (able to be done), honorable (noble, fitting, of good report).
5. Lawful and expedient: a thing may be permitted and still not be profitable or edifying.
6. "A kind of discipline of humanity"; single men may be more charitable, but they are more cruel and hardhearted because their tenderness is not so often called upon.
7. "When both kinds are equally well and worthily done." Answer, sample: God filled Bezaleel with His Spirit in wisdom and workmanship (Exodus 31:3); Christ was a carpenter (Mark 6:3).
8. Introduction, statement, confirmation, objections and answers, epilogue.
9. "If one wants a good trade, one must remember that an electrician must read drawings, calculate loads and ensure safety." (Pronoun shift, article, parallelism; modal "must" for necessity.)
10. Scored with the portfolio rubric. A strong essay states a clear answer, develops two or three heads with examples, states the opposing case fairly before answering it, and keeps pronouns consistent.

THE FULL ESSAY

The five-paragraph theme comes down like scaffolding. In this unit you build one full thesis essay of 1,000–1,200 words, planned by divisions instead of a paragraph count (Bacon’s “Of Truth”), strengthened by a fair counterargument and rebuttal (Hamilton’s *Federalist* No. 1), and revised for coherence (Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address). Then you put the same skills to the ear in a three-to-five-minute audio essay for the VFW Voice of Democracy contest on the 2026–27 theme, “What a Veteran Taught Me About America.”

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has written a thesis on a general question and knows the heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable) from Unit 2.
- Knows the six parts of the classical oration from Unit 1.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can plan an essay by divisions and give each part the space its weight deserves.
- ☐ I can state the strongest objection to my thesis fairly and answer it by a named method.
- ☐ I can make an essay cohere with true transitions, repeated key terms, old-to-new order and clear pronouns.
- ☐ I can write a script for the ear, time it, and record it within a contest’s limits.
- ☐ I can write a conclusion that widens or urges instead of only repeating.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Francis Bacon, *Essays* (Project Gutenberg #575)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/575>): Free. “Of Truth” is the first essay; “Of Studies” and “Of Discourse” are good further reading.
- **Hamilton, Madison and Jay, *The Federalist Papers* (Project Gutenberg #1404)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1404>): Free. Read all of No. 1; it is short.
- **Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address (Project Gutenberg #4)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/4>): Free, one page, for copywork and memorizing.
- **VFW Voice of Democracy** (<https://www.vfw.org/vod>): Official theme, rules, entry form and Post finder. Check the current year’s details before entering.
- **Library of Congress Veterans History Project** (<https://www.loc.gov/programs/veterans-history-project/>): Free interview guides for talking with a veteran.

3.1 BEYOND FIVE PARAGRAPHS: PLANNING BY DIVISIONS ★

OBJECTIVES

- Explain why the five-paragraph theme is scaffolding, not the building, and plan an essay by its divisions instead of by a paragraph count.
- Trace how Francis Bacon’s “Of Truth” moves through three large divisions and marks the turn from one to the next.
- Outline and begin a 1,000–1,200-word thesis essay with an introduction, three or more divisions of one or more paragraphs each, and a conclusion that does more than repeat.

Warm-up. Take the thesis you wrote in Unit 2. Set a timer for five minutes and list every reason, example, objection and authority you could use for it. Then count them. How many would fit in a five-paragraph essay? Which ones would you have to throw away?

Video slot. Video coming. Francis Bacon’s Essays and the history of the essay form (a lecture or overview). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

five-paragraph theme

A school form with an introduction ending in a three-part thesis, three body paragraphs (one per part) and a conclusion that restates the thesis. A useful scaffold for beginners, not a rule for real essays.

division

A large section of an essay that answers one question or makes one main point. A division may run one paragraph or several. Cicero’s word for announcing the divisions is *partitio*.

proportion

Giving each part of an essay the space its weight deserves: more words for the hard or important point, fewer for the easy one.

amplification

Developing a point so that it is felt as well as understood, by example, cause, comparison, contrast or testimony. The old heads of the chreia are tools of amplification.

peroration

The closing part of an oration (Unit 1). In an essay, a conclusion that widens, applies or urges instead of only summing up.

CORE IDEAS

The scaffold. You probably learned the five-paragraph theme years ago: an introduction that ends with a thesis in three parts, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion that says it

all again. It was a good teacher. It showed you that an essay has one main claim, that each paragraph should do one job, and that the reader needs a beginning and an end. But scaffolding comes down when the building stands. Real questions seldom have exactly three reasons of exactly equal weight. One reason may need three paragraphs and a story; another deserves one sentence. An essay cut to fit five boxes either pads its weak points or chops its strong ones.

Divisions, not paragraphs. In Unit 1 you learned the six parts of the classical oration: exordium, narration, division, confirmation, refutation and peroration. A full essay grows from that plan, not from a paragraph count. So plan by *divisions*. A division is a section that answers one question: What do we mean by the terms? Why is it just? Why is it expedient? What will an opponent say? Each division takes as many paragraphs as its matter needs. A 1,200-word thesis essay may have nine, ten or twelve paragraphs, gathered into four or five divisions. The number is an outcome of your thinking, not a target.

The heads become the frame. The heads you studied in Unit 2 (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable) are a ready supply of divisions. You will not use all five. Choose the two or three where your case is strongest, and add a division for the opposing view (Lesson 3.2). Then arrange them. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, an old Roman handbook once credited to Cicero, advised putting the strongest arguments at the beginning and the end of the proof and the weaker ones in the middle, so the reader starts and finishes with your best. Whatever order you choose, have a reason for it: least to greatest, cause to effect, or private good to public good.

The paragraph inside the division. A paragraph is still a unit of thought: one claim, stated and developed. Its topic sentence tells the reader what the paragraph will prove and, often, how it connects to the one before. Its body amplifies with the tools you already own from the chreia and maxim: cause, contrast, comparison, example, testimony. As a rough check, a paragraph that runs past 250 words probably holds two thoughts and should be split; a string of two-sentence paragraphs probably has not developed anything. Proportion matters more than length. Give the most words to the point the reader is least likely to grant.

Openings and closings that work. Drop “Since the dawn of time” and “Webster’s dictionary defines.” Open the way the exordium does: win attention and good will honestly, with a concrete case, a sharp question, or a short quotation that bears on the thesis. Then state the thesis plainly and, if the essay is long, forecast its divisions in a sentence. The conclusion is your peroration. Do not simply list your points again. Show what follows from them, answer “So what?”, urge the reader to act or think, or return to the image you opened with so that it now means more.

Marking the turns. When an essay has large divisions, the reader needs to know when one ends and the next begins. Good writers mark the turn with a sentence that looks back and points ahead: “So much for the cost; now for the benefit.” You will study this craft closely in Lesson 3.3. For now, notice it in the model.

The model. Francis Bacon, “Of Truth,” *Essays* (1625), Project Gutenberg #575

To pass from theological, and philosophical truth, to the truth of civil business; it will be acknowledged, even by those that practise it not, that clear, and round dealing, is the honor of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehoods, is like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth it. For these winding, and crooked courses, are the goings of the serpent; which goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice, that doth so cover a man with shame, as to be found false and perfidious. And therefore Montaigne saith prettily, when he inquired the reason, why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace, and such an odious charge? Saith he, If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth, is as much to say, as that he is brave towards God, and a coward towards men. For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man. Surely the wickedness of falsehood, and breach of faith, cannot possibly be so highly expressed, as in that it shall be the last peal, to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men; it being foretold, that when Christ cometh, he shall not find faith upon the earth.

PICTURE STUDY



The Stonemason's Yard, Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal), about 1725 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery, London

Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Canaletto painted an ordinary morning in the Campo San Vidal in Venice, where masons were cutting stone for the rebuilding of a church. The square is cluttered with rough blocks, half-dressed pieces and chips on the ground; across the Grand Canal stand finished buildings, including the church and bell tower of Santa Maria della Carità. In one picture you see every stage of building, from raw material to the finished whole. An essay goes through the same stages: a heap of notes, shaped pieces, and at last a structure that stands.

Look closely

- Find the masons. What are they doing to the stone, and what tools can you see?
- Compare the rough blocks in the foreground with the finished buildings across the water. What has been added to the stone between the one and the other?
- Find the small domestic scenes: laundry, a woman at a window, a mother hurrying to a child who has tumbled. How do they make the square feel real?

Talk about it

1. The rough blocks are like your warm-up list. Write a paragraph explaining which “blocks” of your thesis essay are ready to set in place and which still need cutting.
2. Canaletto gives most of the canvas to the yard and a narrow band to the finished city. Write about proportion: where in your essay should most of the space go, and why?

WRITING PROJECT: A FULL THESIS ESSAY, PART 1: THE DIVISION PLAN AND FIRST DRAFT

This unit builds one essay of 1,000–1,200 words on the thesis you wrote in Unit 2 (or on “Is it better to work with the hands or the head?”). In this lesson you plan it by divisions and draft the confirmation. Lesson 3.2 adds the refutation, and Lesson 3.3 revises for coherence.

Keep every draft. Your portfolio will show the essay growing.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your thesis and notes from Unit 2
- Index cards or sticky notes
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. Write your thesis as one clear sentence at the top of a page. Under it, copy your warm-up list of reasons, examples, objections and authorities.
2. Sort the list into heads (lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable). Circle the two or three heads where your case is strongest; these become your divisions of proof.
3. Write each division’s main claim on a card. Lay the cards out and choose an order. Write one sentence explaining why that order is best.
4. Under each card, list the paragraphs that division needs (one claim per paragraph) and the amplification each will use: example, cause, comparison, contrast or testimony. Leave a blank card labeled “Objection” for Lesson 3.2.
5. Draft an introduction of one or two paragraphs that opens with a concrete case, question or quotation, states the thesis, and forecasts the divisions in a single sentence.
6. Draft the divisions of proof. Begin each division with a sentence that marks the turn from the last.
7. Draft a conclusion that answers “So what?” instead of listing your points again.

Check your work

- My thesis is one sentence about a general question, not about a particular person.
- Each division makes one main point, and each paragraph inside it makes one claim with real development.
- My order has a reason, and the strongest argument is at the beginning or the end.
- My conclusion widens, applies or urges; it does not only repeat.
- Every complex sentence has a main clause; I have no dependent clause standing alone as a fragment.
- My topic sentences use subordinate clauses to link back and main clauses to state the new claim.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Bacon's first sentence from the model by hand, punctuation and all. Then write your own "To pass from ... to ..." sentence that turns between two divisions of your essay.
2. Outline "Of Truth" in three divisions, one line each, with the main tool of amplification Bacon uses in each.
3. Make a two-column list: "What the five-paragraph theme taught me" and "What it cannot do."

History note. Bacon (1561–1626) borrowed the word *essay* ("attempt" or "trial") from the French writer Montaigne, whom he quotes in the model. His first *Essays* of 1597 were ten short pieces; the 1625 edition had fifty-eight. The five-paragraph theme, by contrast, is a modern classroom form that spread through American schools in the twentieth century. The older grammar schools taught arrangement through the parts of the oration, which is what you are returning to now.

 **Style Clinic. Clauses that carry the turn.** (Grammar Level 3: clauses and sentence structures.) A strong topic sentence is often a *complex sentence*: the dependent clause looks back, and the independent clause states the new claim. "*Although work with the hands trains the body, its deeper gift is to the character.*" The reader hears the old point in the *although* clause and the new point in the main clause, where the weight falls. Watch for the fragment that results when the main clause drops off: "*Although work with the hands trains the body.*" That is a dependent clause pretending to be a sentence. Test every topic sentence in your draft: cover the subordinate clause with your finger; what remains must stand alone.

For families. This is the first long essay of the year; expect it to take the whole unit. A reasonable pace is the division plan and confirmation in this lesson, the refutation in 3.2 and the revision in 3.3. Grade the plan before the draft: a sound plan prevents most later trouble. Bacon's Elizabethan style (*doth*, *embaseth*, long chains of commas) is worth reading aloud together. His "jesting Pilate," which opens the essay, refers to John 18:38.

Montaigne's saying, as Bacon reports it, is that a liar is "brave towards God, and a coward towards men."

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's five-paragraph plan on "Is it better to work with the hands or the head?" reads: I. Intro: hands work is better because it is healthy, useful and satisfying. II. Healthy. III. Useful. IV. Satisfying. V. Conclusion: restate. Rebuild it as a division plan.

1. Ask which reasons are weak. "Healthy" is true but minor and easy to grant; it needs a sentence, not a division. "Useful" is strong but needs defining: useful to whom?
2. Find missing divisions. The plan has no definition of terms (Is a surgeon working with hands or head?) and no answer to the obvious objection that thinking work feeds more people.
3. Map onto heads and order: definition; the just (honest exchange of labor for bread, 2 Thessalonians 3:10); the honorable (character formed by finishing real things); objection and answer; peroration. Put "health" inside the honorable division as one supporting sentence.

Answer: I. Introduction (a carpenter checking a joint; thesis; forecast). II. Definition: the false split between hand and head; the best hand-work is thoughtful work (2 paragraphs). III. The just: hand-work makes a plain, visible exchange (2 paragraphs). IV. The honorable: finished things form patience and honesty; health as a minor gain (3 paragraphs). V. Objection: head-work multiplies its effect; answer (2 paragraphs). VI. Peroration: return to the carpenter. Ten or eleven paragraphs in five divisions, with the most space where the reader is least likely to agree.

Example 2. Revise this conclusion: "In conclusion, working with the hands is better because it is just, it is honorable, and it answers the objection about head-work. These three reasons show that hand-work is better."

1. Name the fault: it only lists the divisions and says "better" twice. It never says what follows.
2. Ask "So what?" If hand-work is better, what should a fourteen-year-old do about it this year?
3. Return to the opening image so that it means more now.

Answer: Sample: The carpenter who ran his thumb along the joint was not choosing his hands over his head; he was letting his hands keep his head honest. That is an offer open to anyone. Before you choose a desk for life, spend a summer making something that can fail: a fence, a meal, an engine that will not start until you understand it. You will think better for it, and you will know what your thinking is worth.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does the five-paragraph theme teach well, and what is its chief weakness?
2. **EASY** What is a division, and how many paragraphs may it have?
3. **EASY** Name the three divisions of Bacon's "Of Truth."
4. **MEDIUM** In the model, find one example each of comparison, testimony and Scripture used for amplification.
5. **MEDIUM** Where did the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* advise placing the strongest arguments, and why?
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite this opening so that it does the work of an exordium: "Since the dawn of time, people have worked."
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a complex topic sentence that turns from a division on justice to a division on honor. Underline the dependent clause.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed practice (25 minutes, as for a timed essay on the ACT or a similar test): Plan, but do not draft, a full essay on "Should young people be required to learn a trade?" Give a thesis, four or five divisions with paragraph counts, and an opening image.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Counting paragraphs before thinking. Decide the divisions first; the paragraph count follows.
- Giving equal space to a minor point and a major one. Proportion follows weight.
- Writing a conclusion that only lists the points again.
- Forecasting divisions in the introduction and then writing them in a different order.

Make it a game · Divide the Question. A parent or sibling names a thesis question ("Is it better to live in the country or the city?"). The student has sixty seconds to name four divisions and the head each comes from. The listener may challenge one division as weak; the student must defend it or replace it in fifteen seconds. Switch roles.

Scripture. "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established: And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches." (Proverbs 24:3-4, KJV)

A house is planned before it is filled; an essay is built by wisdom in its plan and filled by knowledge in its divisions.

Practice: answers

1. It teaches unity, order and the idea of one main claim per paragraph. Its weakness is that it forces every argument into three equal parts, padding weak points and cutting strong ones.
2. A large section that answers one question or makes one main point. It may have one paragraph or several, as the matter requires.

3. Why men love lies; truth as the sovereign good of human nature (theological and philosophical truth); truth in civil business.
4. Comparison: falsehood is like alloy in gold and silver coin. Testimony: Montaigne's saying that a liar is brave towards God and a coward towards men. Scripture: the serpent going on its belly (Genesis 3:14) and Christ not finding faith on the earth (Luke 18:8).
5. At the beginning and the end of the proof, with weaker ones in the middle, so the reader starts and finishes with the best.
6. Sample: My grandfather could tell a board was warped by sighting down it once, and he never read a book on lumber. Was his knowledge lesser than a professor's, or only different?
7. Sample: If hand-work is just because it trades plain labor for plain bread, it is honorable for a deeper reason: it teaches a man to finish what he starts.
8. Sample: Thesis: Every young person should learn at least one trade skill before leaving school. Opening image: a flooded basement and a family that cannot shut off the water. Divisions: I. Definition of "trade skill" (1 paragraph); II. Expedient: self-reliance and saved money (2); III. Honorable: respect for those who build and repair (2); IV. Objection: crowded schedules and academic goals; answer: a skill takes one summer, not a career (2); V. Peroration: the valve you can find in the dark (1).

3.2 COUNTERARGUMENT AND REBUTTAL

OBJECTIVES

- State the strongest opposing argument to your thesis fairly, in a form its best defender would accept.
- Name and use four ways to answer an objection: deny the premise, deny the inference, concede and outweigh, and distinguish.
- Read Hamilton's opening to *The Federalist* and write a refutation division of two or three paragraphs in a tone that attacks arguments, not persons.

Warm-up. Argue against yourself. Take the thesis of your Unit 3 essay and, in three minutes, write the best paragraph you can for the other side, as if you believed it. Then read it aloud. Did it make you uneasy? Good: that is the argument you must answer.

Video slot. Video coming. The Federalist Papers: Hamilton, Madison and Jay and the debate over the Constitution (a history overview). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

counterargument

The strongest reasoning against your thesis, stated in your essay so that you can answer it.

rebuttal (refutation)

Your answer to a counterargument. In the classical oration this part is the *confutatio*, which follows the confirmation.

concession

Granting that part of the opposing case is true. An honest concession builds trust and often sets up the stronger answer: "Granted ..., but"

straw man

A weak, twisted version of an opponent's argument, set up only to be knocked down. It is a fallacy and a kind of untruthfulness.

ad hominem

Latin, "to the man": attacking the person or his motives instead of his reasoning.

CORE IDEAS

An old exercise, a new target. In earlier grades you practiced refutation (*anaskeue*) on stories and historical claims, testing whether they were unclear, implausible, impossible, inconsistent, improper or inexpedient. In Unit 1 you met the *confutatio*, the part of the oration where the speaker answers the other side. Now you aim those tools at real arguments against your own thesis. An essay that never mentions an opposing view feels

thin to a thoughtful reader, because the reader is already thinking of the objection. If you do not raise it, he will raise it for you, and he will not answer it in your favor.

State it fairly. “He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him” (Proverbs 18:17). Your essay must do the neighbor’s searching before the reader does. Present the counterargument as its best defender would: with its strongest reason, its best example, and in words he would recognize. A good test is to ask, “If my opponent read this paragraph, would he say, ‘Yes, that is what I mean’?” Only then have you earned the right to answer. Knocking down a straw man wins nothing, and a careful reader notices the trick and trusts you less. Fairness is not weakness; it is truthfulness applied to argument (Ephesians 4:25).

Four ways to answer. Once the objection stands in its full strength, choose your reply. (1) *Deny the premise:* show that a fact the objection depends on is false or doubtful. (2) *Deny the inference:* grant the facts but show that the conclusion does not follow from them. (3) *Concede and outweigh:* admit the point is true and show that your side weighs more, often by setting one head against another (it may be expedient, but yours is just). (4) *Distinguish:* show that the objection holds in some cases but not in the case your thesis concerns, often by defining a term more carefully. Most strong rebuttals combine two of these. The weakest reply is simply to repeat your thesis louder.

Where it goes. The classical order places refutation after confirmation: first build your case, then clear away the objections, then close. That order suits most thesis essays. Sometimes, though, the objection is so present in the reader’s mind that it must be answered early, or each division of your proof meets its own small objection. You may also make a brief concession in the introduction (“It is true that ...”) to show you know the ground. Keep proportion: the refutation is usually one division of two or three paragraphs. If it swallows half the essay, you are writing the other side’s essay for them.

The tone of a fair fight. Attack the argument, not the arguer. Do not guess at an opponent’s motives, call him names, or imply that only a fool could disagree. These are ad hominem moves, and they usually signal that the writer has no better answer. Useful phrases keep the tone steady: “It may be objected that ...,” “This objection has real force; yet ...,” “Granted, ...; but the question is ...,” “This would be decisive if ...; it is not, because ...” Paul’s rule fits a debate as well as a dinner table: “Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Salt bites, but it also preserves.

For timed writing. The optional ACT Writing test, like many timed essay prompts, gives an issue with several perspectives and asks you to develop your own while relating it to at least one other. That is counterargument and rebuttal under a clock. Practice the move until it is automatic: name the strongest other view in one sentence, concede what is true in it, and give one clear reason your position still holds.

The model. *Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist No. 1 (1787), Project Gutenberg #1404*

It is not, however, my design to dwell upon observations of this nature. I am well aware that it would be disingenuous to resolve indiscriminately the opposition of

any set of men (merely because their situations might subject them to suspicion) into interested or ambitious views. Candor will oblige us to admit that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and it cannot be doubted that much of the opposition which has made its appearance, or may hereafter make its appearance, will spring from sources, blameless at least, if not respectable--the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. So numerous indeed and so powerful are the causes which serve to give a false bias to the judgment, that we, upon many occasions, see wise and good men on the wrong as well as on the right side of questions of the first magnitude to society. This circumstance, if duly attended to, would furnish a lesson of moderation to those who are ever so much persuaded of their being in the right in any controversy. And a further reason for caution, in this respect, might be drawn from the reflection that we are not always sure that those who advocate the truth are influenced by purer principles than their antagonists. Ambition, avarice, personal animosity, party opposition, and many other motives not more laudable than these, are apt to operate as well upon those who support as those who oppose the right side of a question.

PICTURE STUDY



The Syndics of the Drapers' Guild (De Staalmeesters), Rembrandt van Rijn, 1662 · Oil on canvas ·
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

The five men in black were the sampling officials of the Amsterdam cloth-makers' guild. Their job was to test cloth against samples and judge whether it met the standard; the man without a hat behind them is the guild's servant. Rembrandt painted them at their table with an open book, looking up as if someone in the room has just spoken. One man is half-risen from his chair. They are not hostile, but they are weighing what they hear. That is exactly the

reader you write for when you raise a counterargument: a fair judge who has heard the other side and is waiting to see whether you can answer it.

Look closely

- Count the men and find the servant. How is he set apart from the officials?
- Find the man who is rising from his chair. What might have made him stand?
- Look at the faces one by one. Which seems doubtful, which patient, which ready to agree?

Talk about it

1. Imagine that you have just read your thesis to these five men. Write the objection the half-risen man is about to make, in his strongest words.
2. The syndics judged cloth by a standard sample. Write a paragraph on the standard a fair reader uses to judge a rebuttal.

WRITING PROJECT: A FULL THESIS ESSAY, PART 2: THE REFUTATION DIVISION

Return to the blank “Objection” card from Lesson 3.1. In this lesson you fill it with a refutation division of two or three paragraphs and set it into your essay.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your division plan and draft from Lesson 3.1
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. List every objection you can think of to your thesis. Ask a parent or sibling to add one more.
2. Choose the strongest objection, not the easiest. Write it as one sentence its best defender would accept.
3. Develop the objection in a paragraph: its reason, its best example, and why a sensible person might hold it. Ask someone who disagrees with you (or a parent playing that part) whether it is fair.
4. Choose your answer: deny the premise, deny the inference, concede and outweigh, or distinguish. Label your choice in the margin.
5. Draft the rebuttal in one or two paragraphs. Begin with a concession if one is honest, and end by turning back toward your thesis.
6. Place the division in your essay (usually after the confirmation) and write a transition sentence into it and out of it.

Check your work

- I chose the strongest objection and stated it in words its defender would accept.

- My rebuttal uses at least one of the four ways to answer, and I can name which.
- I attack the argument, never the person or his motives.
- The refutation takes proportionate space: one division, not half the essay.
- I used a semicolon (or a period) before conjunctive adverbs such as *however* and *nevertheless* when they join two independent clauses; I have no comma splices.
- Concessive clauses beginning with *although*, *though* or *granted that* are attached to a main clause.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Hamilton's sentence beginning "So numerous indeed and so powerful" by hand.
2. Write the four ways to answer an objection, with one example of each on the thesis "It is better to live in the country than the city."
3. Collect five fair-minded transition phrases for introducing an objection (for example, "It may be objected that").

History note. Eighty-five essays signed "Publius" appeared in 1787–1788, written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay to urge New York to ratify the Constitution. Hamilton's No. 1 first appeared in the *Independent Journal* on October 27, 1787. The essays were collected as *The Federalist* in 1788 and are still read as a model of sustained public argument. Their opponents, often called the Anti-Federalists, wrote serious essays of their own, which is one reason Hamilton's fairness in No. 1 was wise as well as right.

 **Style Clinic. Semicolons with conjunctive adverbs.** (Grammar Level 3: punctuation mastery.) Rebuttals lean on words like *however*, *nevertheless*, *therefore* and *yet*. When a conjunctive adverb joins two independent clauses, a comma is not enough. Wrong (comma splice): "*The objection has force, however, it proves too much.*" Right: "*The objection has force; however, it proves too much.*" Or use a period. Notice Hamilton: "Candor will oblige us to admit that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and it cannot be doubted" When *however* falls inside a single clause, commas are correct: "*The objection, however, proves too much.*"

For families. Play the opponent for your student. Read the counterargument paragraph and ask, "Is this what I would actually say?" If the answer is no, the paragraph is a straw man. Choose thesis topics that are perennial rather than tied to current campaigns; the guide keeps refutation on general questions so that the skill, not the controversy, stays in front. Hamilton's text is from the Project Gutenberg edition of *The Federalist*; the double hyphen stands for a dash in the old printing.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student writes: “Some people think working with the head is better, but they are just lazy and don’t want to get their hands dirty.” Revise this into a fair counterargument.

1. Name the faults: it guesses at motives (lazy) and states no reason at all. That is ad hominem and a straw man in one sentence.
2. Ask what the best defender of head-work would say. His strongest reason: one engineer’s design lets a thousand builders work safely; thinking multiplies the good of every hand.
3. Give the reason an example and say why a sensible person holds it.

Answer: Sample: The strongest case for work with the head is that thought multiplies. One engineer who designs a sound bridge serves every mason who builds it and every family that crosses it for a century. On this view, the hands carry out what the head conceives, and the head therefore does the greater good. A reasonable person, looking at the Brooklyn Bridge or a modern hospital, might well agree.

Example 2. Write a rebuttal to the counterargument above, and name the method you use.

1. Decide what is true in it. Thought does multiply; that should be conceded.
2. Find the weak link. The objection assumes head and hand are separate, but the best engineers learned by building, and a design is tested only when hands make it.
3. Choose “concede and distinguish” and end by turning back to the thesis.

Answer: Sample: Granted, a design multiplies the good of every hand that follows it. But the objection assumes a split that good work does not allow. The engineer who has never set a beam designs beams that look sound on paper and fail in the field; the mason who has set ten thousand knows at a glance what will hold. The head’s work is multiplied only when hands have first taught it. That is not a defeat for hand-work; it is its highest praise. (Method: concede, then distinguish.)

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a straw man, and why is it a kind of untruthfulness?
2. **EASY** Name the four ways to answer an objection.
3. **EASY** Where does the refutation come in the classical oration?
4. **MEDIUM** What does Hamilton concede about his opponents, and what lesson does he draw?
5. **MEDIUM** Which method is this? “It is true that city life offers more jobs. But a job is not a life, and the country offers what no paycheck can buy: room, quiet, and neighbors who

know your name.”

6. **MEDIUM** Fix the punctuation: “Country life is slower, nevertheless it is not idle.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a “deny the inference” rebuttal to: “Most great inventions came from cities; therefore city life makes people more creative.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed practice (40 minutes, in the manner of the ACT Writing test): “Some say young people learn most from structured schooling; others say they learn most from work and responsibility; a third view holds that they learn most from reading on their own.” Write an essay that states your own view and answers at least one other perspective.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Choosing the weakest objection because it is easy to answer.
- Guessing at opponents’ motives instead of answering their reasons.
- Raising an objection and never answering it, so the essay ends on the other side’s best point.
- Letting the refutation grow until it is longer than the proof.

Make it a game · Steel, Not Straw. One player states a thesis in one sentence. The other must state the strongest objection; the first player scores a point only by repeating the objection back in words the objector accepts (“Yes, that is my point”), and a second point by answering it with a named method. Switch roles after each round.

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

A one-sided case always looks just until it is examined; the writer who searches his own case first is the one the reader learns to trust.

Practice: answers

1. A weak or twisted version of the opponent’s argument set up to be knocked down. It misrepresents what the other side really says.
2. Deny the premise, deny the inference, concede and outweigh, distinguish.
3. After the confirmation and before the peroration.
4. He concedes that many may have upright intentions and honest errors, and that wise and good men stand on both sides of great questions. He draws a lesson of moderation for those too sure they are right.
5. Concede and outweigh.
6. Country life is slower; nevertheless, it is not idle. (Or: Country life is slower. Nevertheless, it is not idle.)
7. Sample: The facts may be granted without the conclusion. Cities gather people, money and workshops, so inventions are recorded there; that shows where inventors went to sell their work, not where their ideas were born. Many of them, like the Wright brothers testing gliders on the dunes at Kitty Hawk, did their crucial work far from any city.

8. Sample outline: Thesis: Young people learn most from responsibility, because it makes them use what they know. Division 1: responsibility tests knowledge (a first job, a family duty). Division 2: it forms character (diligence, honesty). Refutation: grant that schooling gives order and foundations; distinguish: schooling supplies the tools, but responsibility teaches their use. Peroration: the best schooling hands a student real work. Score yourself: Is the other view stated fairly? Is one method of rebuttal clear?

3.3 TRANSITIONS AND COHERENCE

OBJECTIVES

- Tell unity from coherence, and choose transition words by the logical relation they show, not for decoration.
- Find the hidden ties in Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: repeated key words, the movement through past, present and future, and old-to-new order.
- Revise your thesis essay for coherence within paragraphs, between paragraphs and between divisions.

Warm-up. Read these three sentences aloud: “Bees make honey. Ancient physicians spread it on wounds. Sealed in a jar, it keeps for years.” Each is true, yet they do not hang together. In two minutes, rewrite them so that a reader can follow from one to the next. What did you have to add?

Video slot. Video coming. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: history of the speech and the manuscripts (a museum or library program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

unity

Keeping every sentence of a paragraph, and every paragraph of an essay, on its one subject and purpose.

coherence

The quality by which the parts of a piece hold together, so a reader can follow from sentence to sentence and from part to part without rereading.

transition

A word, phrase or sentence that shows how one idea relates to the next: *however*, *therefore*, *for example*, *so much for ...*; *now*

old-to-new order

Beginning a sentence with something the reader already knows and ending it with the new information, so each sentence hands off to the next.

key-term repetition

Repeating the central word of an argument exactly, instead of swapping in synonyms, so the reader knows the subject has not changed.

CORE IDEAS

Unity and coherence. A paragraph has *unity* when every sentence belongs to its subject. It has *coherence* when the sentences hold hands. The warm-up sentences had unity (all about honey) but no coherence: each one started over. The reader of an incoherent essay has to do

the writer's work, guessing how each sentence connects to the last. Most readers will not. Coherence is a kindness to the reader and a proof that the writer has thought the matter through, because you cannot show a connection you have not seen.

Transitions show relations. Transition words are not ornaments. Each one names a logical relation, and you should choose it the way you choose a tool. *Addition*: also, moreover, further. *Contrast*: but, however, yet, on the other hand. *Cause and effect*: because, therefore, so, consequently. *Example*: for instance, for example, thus. *Concession*: granted, although, it is true that. *Sequence*: first, then, finally. *Conclusion*: so, in short, then. If you write *therefore*, the sentence that follows had better be a consequence. A paragraph that starts every sentence with *Furthermore* or *Additionally* is not coherent; it is only stacking.

Old to new. The strongest ties are often invisible. Put what the reader already knows at the start of a sentence and the new information at the end; the new information then becomes the old information of the next sentence. "Every craft begins with a tool. The first tool most children meet is a hammer. A hammer teaches two lessons at once: aim and patience." Each sentence picks up where the last one put down. When a paragraph feels choppy, check whether its sentences begin with something new each time.

Repetition, pronouns and parallels. Three more devices bind sentences. First, repeat key terms. In argument, do not swap "hand-work" for "manual labor," then "physical toil," then "the trades" just to avoid repetition; the reader will wonder whether you mean four different things. Second, use pronouns with clear antecedents: *this*, *it* and *which* must point to one plain noun. Third, use parallel structure for parallel ideas, so the reader hears that they belong together.

Between paragraphs and divisions. A new paragraph should begin with a sentence that links back to the old one and points forward: the complex topic sentence you practiced in 3.1. Between larger divisions, a writer often steps back to signpost the turn, as Bacon did with "To pass from theological, and philosophical truth, to the truth of civil business." Signposts like "So much for the cost; now for the benefit" are welcome at the turns of a long essay, but use them only at the turns. An essay that announces every step ("In this next paragraph I will discuss ...") sounds like a machine reading its own instructions.

Read it aloud. The best test of coherence is your ear. Read your draft aloud slowly, or have someone read it to you. Wherever you stumble, pause to work out a connection, or want to say "and so?", a link is missing. Mark the spot and supply the relation: a transition word, a repeated key term, a sentence reordered from old to new, or a sentence cut because it does not belong.

The model. *Abraham Lincoln, Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863), Project Gutenberg #4*

Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent a new nation: conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war. . .testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated. . . can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war.

We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that this nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate. . .we cannot consecrate. . . we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us. . .that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion. . . that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain. . . that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom. . . and that government of the people. . .by the people. . .for the people. . . shall not perish from this earth.

PICTURE STUDY



The Tower of Babel, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1563 · Oil on oak panel · Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Bruegel imagined the tower of Genesis 11 as a vast Roman-style building, rising in rings above a Flemish harbor. Look closely and it does not hold together. The lower levels are unfinished while the upper ones go on rising; the rings do not sit level; arches open onto nothing. In the foreground the king (traditionally Nimrod) inspects the work while stonemasons kneel. The builders had one plan and one speech, and then “the LORD did there confound the language of all the earth” (Genesis 11:9). A tower whose parts do not connect is a fair picture of an essay without coherence: impressive from far off, impossible to climb.

Look closely

- Find a place where the levels of the tower do not line up or where an arch opens onto empty air.
- Find the cranes, ramps and scaffolds. How did the builders move stone from one level to the next?
- Find the king and the kneeling masons. What does the scene suggest about the builders’ pride?

Talk about it

1. The tower’s ramps carry stone from level to level. Write a paragraph comparing them to the transitions in an essay.
2. Bruegel’s builders kept adding stories before the lower ones were finished. Write about an essay (perhaps your own draft) that does the same with its ideas.

WRITING PROJECT: A FULL THESIS ESSAY, PART 3: THE COHERENCE REVISION

Your essay now has a plan, a proof and a refutation. In this lesson you make it hold together, then write a clean second draft.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your full draft from Lessons 3.1–3.2
- Three colored pencils or highlighters

Steps

1. Read the whole draft aloud. Put a check in the margin wherever you stumble or want to ask “and so?”
2. With one color, circle every transition word. For each, ask whether it names the right relation. Replace or cut the ones that do not.
3. With a second color, underline your key term each time it appears. If you used three different words for one idea, choose one and use it throughout.
4. With a third color, box every *this*, *that*, *it* and *which*. Draw an arrow to its antecedent. If there is no single clear noun, add one (“this objection”).

5. Check every paragraph's first sentence: does it link back and point forward? Check every division's first sentence: does it mark the turn?
6. Write a clean second draft. Read it aloud once more and fix any place you still stumble.

Check your work

- Each transition word names the true relation between the ideas it joins.
- My key term is the same word throughout the essay.
- Sentences in each paragraph move from old information to new.
- Every paragraph and division opens with a sentence that links back and points forward.
- Every pronoun, especially *this*, *it* and *which*, has one clear antecedent.
- Parallel ideas are written in parallel grammatical form.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Gettysburg Address by hand. Then underline every *dedicate(d)*, circle every *nation* and box every *here*.
2. Make a chart of transition words under seven headings: addition, contrast, cause and effect, example, concession, sequence, conclusion. Give at least three words for each.
3. Write a five-sentence paragraph about your favorite tool in strict old-to-new order: each sentence begins with a word from the end of the one before.

History note. Five manuscript copies of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln's hand survive, and their wording differs slightly; the one he wrote out for Colonel Alexander Bliss in 1864 is the version most often printed today. Edward Everett, the main orator that day, spoke for about two hours. The next day he wrote to Lincoln that he wished he could flatter himself that he had come as near the central idea of the occasion in two hours as the President had in two minutes.

 **Style Clinic. Pronoun reference.** (Grammar Level 3: pronouns.) Nothing breaks coherence faster than a pronoun with no clear antecedent. "*Hand-work builds patience and honesty, and the objection ignores this.*" Ignores what: patience, honesty, or the fact that hand-work builds them? Repair it by turning the vague pronoun into a pronoun plus a noun: "*The objection ignores this formation of character.*" Watch *which* at the end of a sentence too: "*Lincoln repeated 'dedicate' six times, which ties the speech together.*" Better: "*Lincoln repeated 'dedicate' six times, a repetition that ties the speech together.*" Notice that Lincoln's own pronouns are always clear: "The brave men ... who struggled here have consecrated *it*": the ground, named one clause before.

For families. Have your student read the essay aloud to you while you listen without looking at the page. Where you lose the thread, stop and ask, "How does that connect?" The answer is usually the missing transition. The model follows the Project Gutenberg text exactly, including its spaced periods, which are not in Lincoln's manuscripts; the wording is otherwise close to the Bliss copy. Lincoln's phrase "under God" appears in the Bliss copy and in newspaper reports of the speech as delivered.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise for coherence: “Hand-work forms character. Many great men worked with their hands. Washington surveyed land as a young man. Physical labor teaches patience. A surveyor cannot rush his measurements. The trades are honorable.”

1. Find the key term: “hand-work.” The draft also says “physical labor” and “the trades.” Choose one.
2. Find the logic: the claim (character), an example (Washington), and the reason (patience). Reorder so the reason comes before the example that proves it.
3. Supply relations: “because,” “for example,” and an old-to-new chain from surveyor to measurement to patience. Cut “The trades are honorable,” which belongs to another paragraph.

Answer: Sample: Hand-work forms character because it cannot be rushed. A board cut too quickly is cut too short, and no apology will lengthen it. Washington learned this lesson as a young surveyor in the Virginia backcountry: a surveyor who hurries his measurements draws a false line, and a false line can cost a family its land. That patience, learned with chain and compass, served him later in matters far larger than a boundary.

Example 2. Write a transition sentence to turn from the confirmation of your essay to the refutation, without saying “In this next paragraph.”

1. Look back: sum up the case in a phrase.
2. Point ahead: name the objection that a fair reader is already forming.
3. Use a concessive or contrast structure to mark the turn.

Answer: Sample: So far the case for hand-work seems strong; yet a thoughtful reader will already be asking whether one engineer’s design does not do more good than a thousand masons’ walls.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the difference between unity and coherence?
2. **EASY** Name the relation shown by each: *therefore*, *however*, *for instance*, *granted*.
3. **EASY** How many times does a form of *dedicate* appear in the Gettysburg Address (Project Gutenberg text)?
4. **MEDIUM** Trace the movement in time through the Gettysburg Address. Which words mark each stage?
5. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in old-to-new order: “Patience is what a garden teaches. Weeds come back every week, and the gardener must pull them.”
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the vague pronoun: “The city offers more jobs and more noise, and this is why many families move.”

7. **CHALLENGE** Explain why repeating a key term is often better than using synonyms in an argument.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed practice (15 minutes): Take one paragraph from a past essay. Circle every transition, underline your key term, box every pronoun. Then rewrite the paragraph to fix every weak link you found.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting every sentence with *Furthermore* or *Additionally* instead of showing real relations.
- Swapping synonyms for the key term so the reader cannot tell whether the subject has changed.
- Using *this* or *which* without a clear noun to point to.
- Announcing every step (“In this paragraph I will ...”) instead of linking ideas.

Make it a game · Chain Link. Players take turns adding one sentence to a paragraph on a chosen subject. Each new sentence must begin with a word or idea from the end of the sentence before (old to new). A player who breaks the chain, or uses a transition word for the wrong relation, is out. The last player in reads the whole paragraph aloud.

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

Paul asked that worship be orderly so that all could understand and be edified; coherent writing serves the same end for the reader.

Practice: answers

1. Unity means every part belongs to the one subject; coherence means the parts are connected so the reader can follow from one to the next.
2. Cause and effect; contrast; example; concession.
3. Six.
4. Past: “Four score and seven years ago.” Present: “Now we are engaged.” Future: “shall have a new birth of freedom ... shall not perish.”
5. Sample: A garden teaches patience. Every week the weeds return, and every week the gardener pulls them again.
6. Sample: The city offers more jobs and more noise, and the jobs are why many families move.
7. Synonyms can suggest a change of subject; the reader may wonder whether “labor,” “toil” and “the trades” are different things. One repeated term keeps the argument fixed on one idea, as Lincoln’s repeated “dedicate” does.
8. Sample answer depends on the paragraph. A strong revision keeps one key term throughout, uses each transition for its true relation, gives every pronoun a clear antecedent, and reads aloud without a stumble.

3.4 VOICE OF DEMOCRACY SCRIPT: WHAT A VETERAN TAUGHT ME ★ 🏆

OBJECTIVES

- Summarize the 2026–27 VFW Voice of Democracy rules and shape an essay to fit them: theme, three-to-five-minute length, audio format and judging.
- Interview a veteran respectfully and choose one concrete story that carries a lesson about America.
- Draft, time and record a 450–650-word script written for the ear, using the divisions, refutation and coherence of this unit.

Warm-up. Think of the oldest person you know who served in the armed forces. Write down three things you already know about his or her service and three questions you have never asked. If no one comes to mind, list three places where you might meet a veteran (a church, a VFW or American Legion post, a neighbor’s porch).

Video slot. Video coming. How to interview a veteran for an oral history (Library of Congress Veterans History Project or a museum program). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

audio essay

An essay written to be heard. In the Voice of Democracy, a recorded reading of your own original script.

script

The written text of something meant to be spoken, often marked with pauses and emphasis.

anecdote

A short, true story of one incident, told to make a point. The best audio essays turn on one.

speaking rate

How many words a speaker says per minute. A clear, unhurried reading is usually about 130–150 words per minute.

oral history

A record of a person’s memories gathered by interview, with permission, and kept accurately.

CORE IDEAS

The contest. The Veterans of Foreign Wars runs the Voice of Democracy audio-essay competition for students in grades 9–12. As checked in October 2026, the 2026–27 theme is

"What a Veteran Taught Me About America." You write an original essay, record yourself reading it (three to five minutes, with about five seconds' leeway either way), and submit the recording with a typed copy and an entry form to a participating local VFW Post by midnight, October 31, 2026. Recent rules ask for an MP3 file, forbid music, singing, poetry and sound effects, and require that the student be the sole author; using AI to write the essay is not allowed. Recent judging gave 30 points for originality, 35 for content and 35 for delivery. Post winners advance to district, state and national levels, and the national first-place scholarship is \$35,000. Rules change; get the official entry form from vfw.org/vod or your local Post before you begin.

Still an essay. A spoken essay needs everything you have learned in this unit. It has a thesis: the one thing your veteran taught you about America, stated in a sentence. It has divisions: two or three ways that lesson showed itself. It may have a brief refutation: the easy, careless view your lesson corrects ("I used to think freedom was simply the way things are"). It needs coherence even more than a written essay, because a listener cannot glance back up the page. And it needs a peroration that leaves the listener with resolve, not a summary.

Writing for the ear. The ear wants shorter sentences than the eye, and fewer of them strung with commas. Put the subject and verb early, and use active verbs. Repeat your key word or a short refrain so the listener can hold on. Signpost the turns more plainly than you would in print. Read every sentence aloud as you write it; if you run out of breath, cut it in two. At about 140 words per minute, a three-minute essay runs roughly 420 words and a five-minute essay roughly 700. Aim for 450–650 words so you can read at a natural pace and stay comfortably inside the limits.

Find your veteran. The theme asks what a veteran taught *you*, so the strongest entries rest on a real person and a real conversation. Ask a grandparent, neighbor, church member or someone at a local VFW or American Legion post. Ask permission, bring a parent, and take notes or record only with consent. Good questions open doors: "Why did you join?" "What did you learn in your first month?" "Who did you serve with, and what were they like?" "What do you wish young Americans understood?" Do not press for memories of combat that he or she does not offer; let the veteran choose what to tell. Afterward, write a thank-you letter. "Ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee" (Deuteronomy 32:7).

One story, plainly told. Judges hear many essays that say freedom is not free. Originality does not mean being clever; it means telling the story only you can tell. Choose one incident from the interview: a moment, an object, a sentence the veteran said. Open on it, concretely. Then draw out the lesson and show it in two or three places: in the veteran's service, in his or her life since, and in what it asks of you. Avoid partisan claims and current political fights; the contest honors service and citizenship, which belong to every American.

Delivery. Delivery is a third of the score. Mark your script: a slash for a short pause, two for a long one, underlining for emphasis. Practice until you can look away from the page for whole sentences. Record in a quiet room with soft surfaces, a few inches from the

microphone, and time each take. Speak to one person, as if your veteran were across the table. Listen back, then record again; most strong entries take several tries.

The model. *2 Samuel 23:15-17 (KJV)*

And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate! And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men.

PICTURE STUDY



General George Washington Resigning His Commission, John Trumbull, 1824 (installed 1826) · Oil on canvas
· Rotunda, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

On December 23, 1783, at the Maryland State House in Annapolis, General Washington stood before the Continental Congress and handed back the commission that had made him commander in chief. The war was won, and the army would have followed him anywhere; he went home to Mount Vernon instead. John Trumbull, who had served as one of Washington's aides early in the war, painted the scene decades later for the Capitol Rotunda. It shows a veteran teaching his country a lesson without a single word of argument: in a republic, the soldier serves and then returns power to the people's representatives.

Look closely

- Find Washington. How does Trumbull make him stand out from everyone else in the room?
- Look at the members of Congress. Washington stands and they sit. What might that show about who holds authority in this moment?
- Find the people watching from the gallery and the doorway. Why would ordinary citizens want to see this?

Talk about it

1. Write a paragraph beginning “What Washington taught America in this room was” Use one detail from the painting.
2. Washington’s lesson was taught by an act, not a speech. Name one act of the veteran you interviewed that teaches a lesson, and write it as the opening scene of your script.

WRITING PROJECT: VOICE OF DEMOCRACY AUDIO ESSAY: “WHAT A VETERAN TAUGHT ME ABOUT AMERICA”

Write and record a three-to-five-minute audio essay on the 2026–27 theme. Even if you do not enter, the script makes a fine portfolio piece and a gift to the veteran who helped you.

Before you start, a parent should download the official entry form and rules from vfw.org/vod or the local Post, check this year’s details, and note the deadline (as checked in October 2026: midnight, October 31, 2026).

You will need

- Official VFW entry form and rules
- Writing notebook
- A phone or computer that can record and save MP3 files
- A timer
- A quiet room

Steps

1. Arrange and hold an interview with a veteran, with a parent present. Take careful notes and write a thank-you letter the same week.
2. From your notes, choose one story or moment. Write your thesis in one sentence: what this veteran taught you about America.
3. Plan by divisions: opening scene; thesis; two or three ways the lesson shows itself; a short turn against the careless view your lesson corrects; peroration of resolve.
4. Draft 450–650 words for the ear: short sentences, active verbs, a repeated key word, clear signposts.
5. Read it aloud with a timer. Cut or add until it runs between 3:15 and 4:45 at a natural pace.
6. Mark pauses and emphasis. Practice at least five times, then record several takes in a quiet room. Save the best as an MP3 and check its length.

7. Type a clean copy, complete the entry form, and deliver everything to the participating Post before the deadline.

Check your work

- My script answers the theme exactly, with one clear thesis about what a veteran taught me.
- It rests on one concrete story, told plainly and accurately, with the veteran's permission.
- The recording runs between three and five minutes and contains no music, singing, poetry or sound effects.
- Every word is my own; I did not use AI to write it.
- My sentences are mostly in the active voice and short enough to say in one breath.
- Parallel ideas are in parallel form, and every pronoun has a clear antecedent so a listener can follow.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Deuteronomy 32:7 at the top of your interview page, then write ten interview questions under it.
2. Write the opening scene of your script three different ways: starting with an object, with a sentence the veteran said, and with a place. Choose the best.
3. Copy one paragraph of your draft and mark it for delivery: slashes for pauses, underlines for emphasis.

History note. The Voice of Democracy program began in 1947 under the National Association of Broadcasters; the Veterans of Foreign Wars joined as a sponsor in the late 1950s and took sole charge of it in 1961. Trumbull, a Continental Army veteran himself, painted four large scenes of the Revolution for the Capitol Rotunda; *General George Washington Resigning His Commission* was the last, finished in 1824. The resignation is often counted among Washington's greatest acts, because he surrendered power at the moment he could have kept it.

 **Style Clinic. Active voice for the ear.** (Grammar Level 3: voice and mood.) In active voice the subject acts: *"My grandfather carried the radio."* In passive voice the subject receives the action: *"The radio was carried by my grandfather."* Listeners follow the active sentence more easily, because the doer comes first and the verb does the work. Passive voice has honest uses (when the doer is unknown, or when the receiver matters more: *"He was wounded at the Chosin Reservoir"*), but a script full of *was given, was taught, was shown* sounds like a report. Go through your draft, circle every form of *be* plus a past participle, and change each one to active unless you have a reason to keep it.

For families. Contest summary, as checked in October 2026 at vfw.org/vod and in recent official rules: grades 9–12; theme "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"; recorded essay of three to five minutes; typed copy and entry form to a participating local VFW

Post by midnight, October 31, 2026; national first prize \$35,000. Homeschool students have been eligible in past years, but confirm eligibility, file format and other details on the current official form, since rules can change. If the deadline is too close, use this lesson as practice and enter next year, when a new theme will be announced. Be present for the interview, help your student contact a Post, and remind him or her that some veterans carry hard memories; let them lead. The Library of Congress Veterans History Project (loc.gov/vets) offers interview guidance and accepts recorded oral histories if the veteran wishes to preserve the story.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Turn this written sentence into lines for the ear: “My great-uncle, who enlisted in the Navy in 1966 after graduating from a small high school in Ohio where he had worked summers on his father’s farm, taught me that duty is something one chooses rather than something imposed on one by others.”

1. Count the ideas: who he is, when and where he enlisted, his background, and the lesson. That is four ideas in one breath.
2. Give each idea its own short sentence with the subject first and an active verb.
3. Save the lesson for last, where the voice can land on it, and repeat the key word.

Answer: Sample: My great-uncle grew up on a farm in Ohio. He worked his father’s fields every summer. In 1966 he finished high school and joined the Navy. No one made him go. He chose it. And that is what he taught me: duty is not something done to you. Duty is something you choose.

Example 2. A student’s draft is 780 words. At a natural pace of 140 words per minute, will it fit the contest’s limit? How much should she cut?

1. $780 \div 140 \approx 5.6$ minutes, which is over the five-minute limit.
2. A safe target is about 4:30, or $4.5 \times 140 = 630$ words.
3. $780 - 630 = 150$ words to cut, usually from the weakest division or from long sentences.

Answer: No; it would run about 5 minutes 35 seconds. She should cut about 150 words, to roughly 630, then time a real reading to check.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the 2026–27 Voice of Democracy theme?
2. **EASY** How long must the recording be, and where is it submitted?
3. **EASY** Name three things the recent rules forbid in the recording.
4. **MEDIUM** Why did David refuse to drink the water in 2 Samuel 23?

5. **MEDIUM** Change to active voice: “A lesson about patience was taught to me by my grandfather.”
6. **MEDIUM** Write three interview questions that invite a story rather than a yes-or-no answer.
7. **CHALLENGE** Write the thesis sentence and a short refutation turn for a script about a grandmother who served as an Army nurse.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the opening 80–100 words of your own script, beginning with a concrete object or scene.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Writing about veterans or freedom in general instead of one real veteran and one real lesson.
- Opening with a slogan everyone has heard (“Freedom isn’t free”) instead of a scene.
- Writing long, comma-strung sentences that read well silently but cannot be spoken in one breath.
- Running over five minutes or under three because the script was never timed aloud.

Make it a game • One Breath. A family member reads a sentence from the student’s draft. The student must say it aloud from memory in one breath, with clear emphasis on the key word. If the student runs out of air, the sentence is “too long for the ear” and must be split before the next round. The goal is a whole paragraph of one-breath sentences.

Scripture. “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.” (Deuteronomy 32:7, KJV)

Moses charged Israel to learn from their elders; your interview with a veteran is an act of that same remembering.

Practice: answers

1. “What a Veteran Taught Me About America.”
2. Three to five minutes (with about five seconds’ leeway); to a participating local VFW Post, with a typed copy and entry form.
3. Any three of: music, singing, poetry, sound effects (and AI-written content).
4. Because his men had risked their lives to get it; drinking it would treat their sacrifice as cheap, so he poured it out to the LORD.
5. My grandfather taught me a lesson about patience.
6. Sample: What was your first day of training like? Tell me about someone you served with whom you still remember. What did you learn in the service that you still use every day?
7. Sample: Thesis: My grandmother taught me that America is kept by people who do the next necessary thing, whether or not anyone is watching. Turn: I used to think that history was made by generals and presidents. Then she told me about the night she worked eighteen hours straight because no one else was there to do it.

8. Sample: On the shelf above my grandfather's workbench sits a dented canteen. For years I thought it was junk. Last spring I asked him about it, and he set down his screwdriver and held it for a long time before he answered. He carried it across Korea in the winter of 1950. He told me that he shared it with men he had met only that week. That canteen taught me what America is: strangers who become brothers because they share what they have.

UNIT 3 REVIEW

Answer in writing. Items 1–7 are short answers. Items 8–10 are writing tasks; score them with the unit’s revision checklists, not for length alone. Allow 60–75 minutes; item 10 may be done as a separate timed sitting.

1. (3 pts) What is a division in an essay, and how does planning by divisions differ from writing a five-paragraph theme?
2. (3 pts) Name three things a strong conclusion can do besides restating the thesis.
3. (4 pts) Name the four ways to answer an objection.
4. (2 pts) What is a straw man, and what is an ad hominem argument?
5. (2 pts) What “lesson” does Hamilton draw in *Federalist* No. 1 from the fact that wise and good men stand on both sides of great questions?
6. (4 pts) Name four devices that create coherence besides transition words.
7. (2 pts) State the 2026–27 Voice of Democracy theme and the length limits of the recording.
8. (8 pts) Fix each: (a) “The objection is popular, however, it is mistaken.” (b) “Although the city has more jobs.” (c) “The country is quiet and cheap, and this is why I prefer it.” (d) “The letter was written by my grandfather in 1952.” (make it active)
9. (8 pts) Write a fair counterargument and a rebuttal (one paragraph each) for the thesis “It is better to live in the country than in the city.” Name your method of rebuttal.
10. (10 pts) Timed essay (40 minutes): “Is it better to be skilled in one thing or competent in many?” Write a full essay with an introduction, at least three divisions (one of them a refutation) and a conclusion.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE FULL THESIS ESSAY AND THE AUDIO ESSAY

Place in your portfolio the division plan, first draft and final copy of your 1,000–1,200-word thesis essay from Lessons 3.1–3.3, so the growth shows, together with the typed script (and, if you like, the recording) of your Voice of Democracy audio essay from Lesson 3.4.

- **Arrangement:** Clear thesis; divisions chosen from the heads and ordered for a reason; proportion follows weight; introduction and conclusion do real work.
- **Refutation:** The strongest objection stated fairly and answered by a named method, in a tone that attacks arguments, not persons.
- **Coherence:** Transitions show true relations; one key term throughout; old-to-new order; every paragraph and division linked to the last.
- **Style and mechanics:** Complex sentences with no fragments; semicolons with conjunctive adverbs; clear pronoun reference; active voice in the script; quotations and Scripture copied exactly.

Answer key

1. A division is a large section answering one question or making one main point; it may take several paragraphs. Planning by divisions lets the writer set the number and length of paragraphs, instead of forcing three equal body paragraphs.
2. Any three of: show what follows, answer "So what?", urge the reader to act or think, apply the thesis, return to the opening image so it means more.
3. Deny the premise, deny the inference, concede and outweigh, distinguish.
4. A straw man is a weakened or twisted version of the opponent's argument; *ad hominem* attacks the person or his motives instead of his reasoning.
5. A lesson of moderation for those who are sure they are right.
6. Old-to-new order, key-term repetition, clear pronoun reference, parallel structure (also linking topic sentences and signposts at turns).
7. "What a Veteran Taught Me About America"; three to five minutes.
8. (a) The objection is popular; however, it is mistaken. (b) Sample: Although the city has more jobs, the country has more room. (c) Sample: The country is quiet and cheap, and the quiet is why I prefer it. (d) My grandfather wrote the letter in 1952.
9. Sample: Counterargument: The city offers more work, schools, hospitals and churches within reach, and for a family with little money that nearness can mean survival. Rebuttal (concede and distinguish): Granted, the city gathers services. But the question is where a family can best live, not where it can most easily shop; in the country, neighbors become the services, and children learn to make and mend what city children buy. Scored on fairness of the objection (3), named and clear method (3), tone (2).
10. Score with the portfolio rubric. A strong answer states one thesis, plans by divisions with proportion, answers the strongest objection fairly, uses transitions that name true relations, and ends with a conclusion that widens or urges.

STORY: FABLE AND PARABLE FOR OLDER READERS

You wrote fables in the early grades; now you return to the short moral story as a mature reader and writer. You will study the parables of Christ as literature (their brevity, contrast, turn and end-stress), using the prodigal son and Rembrandt's great painting of its homecoming; read Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" to see a parable grow into a folk tale; study the dream-vision of C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, a chain of parables about the choices that keep souls out of Heaven; and finally write a modern parable of your own that shows one truth of Scripture in ordinary life without stating it.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can tell a fable and a narrative with a clear beginning, middle and end (Grades 3–6), or will review the forms in 4.1.
- Writes clear, correctly punctuated dialogue and paragraphs of plain prose.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can define a parable and tell it from a fable and an allegory.
- ☐ I can name the marks of a parable (brevity, few characters, plain setting, the turn, end-stress, an open verdict) in a parable of Christ.
- ☐ I can explain how Tolstoy and Lewis borrow and adapt the parable form.
- ☐ I can use the subjunctive mood, parallel structure, well-placed modifiers and correct dialogue punctuation in a story.
- ☐ I can write a modern parable that a hearer understands without being told the moral.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Tolstoy, What Men Live By, and Other Tales (Maude translation), Project Gutenberg #6157** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/6157>): Free. Contains "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" and three other short tales; read the whole story for 4.2.
- **The King James Bible, Project Gutenberg #10** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10>): Free text for Luke 15, Luke 12, Matthew 13 and the other parables in this unit.
- **Rembrandt, The Return of the Prodigal Son (Wikimedia Commons)** (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rembrandt_Harmensz_van_Rijn_-_Return_of_the_Prodigal_Son_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg): A high-resolution public-domain image for close looking at the hands and feet.

4.1 THE PARABLES OF CHRIST AS LITERATURE 📖 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Define a parable and tell how it differs from a fable and an allegory.
- Name the marks of a parable (an everyday setting, few characters, a turn, end-stress, a verdict left to the hearer) in the parable of the prodigal son.
- Retell a parable of Christ in your own prose, keeping its shape and its single point.

Warm-up. In 2 Samuel 12 the prophet Nathan tells King David a short story about a rich man who steals a poor man's only lamb. David is furious at the rich man. Then Nathan says four words: "Thou art the man." In three sentences, explain why a story worked on David when a plain accusation might not have.

Video slot. Video coming. The parables of Jesus as literature, or Rembrandt's Return of the Prodigal Son explained (a museum talk or a trusted Bible-teaching ministry). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

parable

From the Greek *parabolē*, "a throwing beside": a short story from ordinary life set beside a spiritual truth so that the hearer sees one in the other.

fable

A short tale, often with talking animals or plants, that teaches a lesson of practical wisdom (Aesop; Jotham's fable of the trees in Judges 9).

allegory

A story in which many or all of the details stand for something else, point by point, as in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.

end-stress

The habit of a well-made story to save its weight for the last line or the last character, so that the ending is what the hearer remembers.

the turn

The moment a story reverses the hearer's expectation: the Samaritan stops, the father runs, the last are paid first.

CORE IDEAS

Story as argument. This year you have been learning to argue a thesis, a general question, with heads and proofs. This unit turns to another way of persuading that is older than Aristotle: the story that makes the hearer judge himself. Nathan did not argue with David about adultery and murder. He told a story about a lamb, let David pass sentence on the rich

man, and then turned the sentence around. That is what a parable does. It goes in by the side door of the imagination and then shuts the door behind it.

What a parable is. The Greek word *parabolē* means “a throwing beside.” A parable lays an ordinary scene (a sower, a lost coin, a wedding feast, a man robbed on a road) beside an unseen truth about God and His kingdom, so that the hearer sees the one in the other. The Hebrew word behind it, *mashal*, is broader and covers proverbs and riddles too. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke record some thirty to forty parables of Jesus, depending on how one counts the short ones. Matthew says plainly that “without a parable spake he not unto them” (13:34).

Parable, fable, allegory. You wrote fables in the early grades, so mark the differences. A fable usually uses animals or plants and teaches prudence: look before you leap. A parable almost always uses people doing ordinary work (farming, fishing, baking, keeping accounts) and points beyond prudence to God, judgment and mercy. An allegory, like Bunyan’s, makes nearly every detail stand for something. Most of Christ’s parables have one main point, or one point for each main character, and the details serve the point rather than standing for separate things. Jesus did explain some parables point by point (the sower, the tares), so the line is not rigid; but do not hunt for a hidden meaning in every pig and sandal of the prodigal son.

The marks of the form. Read a dozen parables and you will see the same craft. (1) *Brevity*: most can be read aloud in under a minute. (2) *Few characters*, usually two or three, often in contrast: two sons, two builders, a priest and a Levite and a Samaritan. (3) *Plain setting, little description*: we are never told the color of the father’s robe. (4) *Action and speech, not explanation*: the characters reveal themselves by what they do and say. (5) *The turn*: something happens that the first hearers did not expect. A Samaritan, not the priest, is the neighbor; a father runs to meet a son who disgraced him. (6) *End-stress*: the weight falls on the last scene, and the story often stops before the hearer is ready, with the elder brother still standing outside.

The prodigal son. Luke 15 holds three parables of lost things: a sheep, a coin and a son. The third is the longest and the most carefully built. Its first half is a descent: the younger son demands his share, travels into a far country, wastes it, and ends feeding swine, the lowest work a Jewish hearer could imagine. Then comes the hinge of the whole story: “he came to himself.” The second half is an ascent: he rehearses a speech, sets out, and is met by a father who sees him “a great way off” and runs. Notice that the son never finishes his rehearsed speech. The father interrupts him with robe, ring, shoes and feast. The structure itself preaches grace.

The open ending. The parable does not end with the feast. It ends with the elder son, angry, refusing to go in, and the father pleading with him. Jesus told the story to Pharisees and scribes who murmured that He “receiveth sinners, and eateth with them” (15:2). The elder brother is their portrait. We are never told whether he went in. That silence is deliberate: the hearer must finish the story with his own life. A good parable leaves the verdict to the listener, as Nathan left it to David.

Why this matters for your writing. In this unit you will read Tolstoy and Lewis, who both learned from these parables, and then write a parable of your own set in the modern world. The model below gives you the turn of the story: five verses of the father's welcome. Copy it by hand. Notice how many verbs are packed into verse 20, and how the father's reply in verses 22-24 is built on doubled phrases. Then retell the whole parable in your own plain prose, keeping Christ's shape. If you keep the shape, you will find that the power stays.

The model. *Luke 15:20-24, King James Version (1611)*

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, Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, about 1668-1669 · Oil on canvas · State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Rembrandt painted this canvas near the end of his life, after the deaths of his wife, his son and his fortune. He does not paint the far country or the feast. He paints the moment of verse 20: the son has come home and is on his knees, his head shaved like a prisoner's, his shoes worn through, his face hidden in his father's chest. The old father, nearly blind, bends over him with both hands spread on his back. To the right, in the light but apart, stands a tall man with a staff: most viewers take him for the elder brother.

Look closely

- Look at the son's feet. What do the sandals tell you about the road he has traveled?
- Look at the father's two hands. Do they look the same? What might Rembrandt mean by that?
- Find the standing man at the right. Where is the light on him, and how far is he from the father?

Talk about it

1. Rembrandt chose one moment from a long parable. Write a paragraph explaining why he chose this moment rather than the feast or the pigsty, and what the choice shows about the story's point.
2. Write the elder brother's thoughts as he stands watching, in five or six sentences of plain prose, without stating the moral.

WRITING PROJECT: RETELL THE PRODIGAL SON

Franklin taught himself to write by outlining a good essay, putting it away, rewriting it from his notes, and comparing. Do the same with Luke 15:11–32.

Your retelling should be 400–600 words of your own prose, in the past tense, keeping Christ's setting and characters.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- The picture study above

Steps

1. Read Luke 15:11–32 aloud twice. Then outline it in eight to ten short lines, one for each movement of the story (demand, departure, waste, famine, swine, "came to himself," return, welcome, elder son, father's plea).
2. Close the Bible. Copy the model (verses 20–24) by hand from the lesson only after you have outlined; mark every verb in verse 20.
3. From your outline alone, write your retelling. Keep the two halves (descent and ascent) and the hinge between them.
4. Keep the father's actions before his words, as Luke does. Let the son begin his speech and be interrupted.
5. End where Christ ends: with the elder brother outside. Do not add what he decided, and do not add a moral.
6. Open the Bible and compare. Note in the margin one thing Luke does better than you did, and revise that part.

Check your work

- My retelling keeps the descent, the hinge, the ascent and the open ending.
- I show the characters by action and speech and do not explain the meaning.
- Paired ideas are in parallel form (dead and alive, lost and found).
- My quotations from the KJV are exact and punctuated correctly.
- Every sentence is complete; I have no comma splices or fragments that are not intended.
- My verbs are active and specific (ran, fell, kissed), not forms of “was” with an adverb.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Luke 15:20–24 by hand. Circle the verbs in verse 20 and count them.
2. List the three parables of Luke 15 and, under each, the thing lost, who seeks it, and the line about rejoicing.
3. Make a two-column chart: “fable” and “parable.” List five differences, with an example of each from Aesop and the Gospels.

History note. Rembrandt died in Amsterdam in 1669, and *The Return of the Prodigal Son* is usually dated to his last years. Catherine the Great of Russia acquired it in 1766, and it has hung in the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg ever since. Rembrandt had drawn and etched the same parable as a young man (an etching of 1636); comparing the two shows how his understanding of the story deepened.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism.** Grammar Level 3 taught that ideas of equal weight should be put in the same grammatical form. Verse 24 is a model: “this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.” Two clauses, each a pair of opposite predicates, balanced around a semicolon. Faulty parallelism breaks the pattern: “He was lost, and now we have found him” shifts from passive to active and from *he* to *we*. In your retelling, find one place where you pair or list ideas and make the items match: three verbs, three nouns, or three clauses of the same build. On the SAT and ACT, parallelism questions reward the same eye.

For families. This lesson treats the parables as literature in the way the Church has always done, by reading them closely, without treating them as mere stories or doubting that Christ spoke them. The count of “thirty to forty” parables varies because scholars differ on whether short sayings (salt, light, the lamp under a bushel) count. The fable/parable distinction follows the older handbooks; Aphthonius treated the fable as the first exercise, and the parables show how far a short story can carry. Rembrandt’s painting contains no nudity; the son’s torn garment is modest.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student retold the turn of the parable this way. What is wrong, and how should it be revised? “The son walked home feeling very guilty and sad. His father was really happy to see him because he loved him a lot and had forgiven him. This shows that God forgives us.”

1. It explains feelings instead of showing actions. Luke never says “happy”; he says the father saw, had compassion, ran, fell on his neck and kissed him.
2. It states the moral. A parable leaves the meaning to the hearer.
3. It loses the details that carry the turn: “a great way off,” the father running, the interrupted speech.

Answer: Revision: He was still far down the road when his father saw him, and the old man gathered up his robe and ran. Before the son could finish the speech he had practiced in the pigsty, his father had his arms around his neck and was calling for the best robe.

Example 2. Is the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37) a fable, a parable or an allegory? Defend your answer from its features.

1. Characters: people, not animals (a traveler, a priest, a Levite, a Samaritan). Not a fable.
2. Setting: an ordinary danger on a real road, from Jerusalem to Jericho.
3. Point: one main point, given in answer to “Who is my neighbour?” The details (oil, wine, two pence) make the mercy vivid; they are not separate symbols.
4. Turn: the despised Samaritan, not the religious men, shows mercy.

Answer: A parable: a short, realistic story with three contrasting characters, a turn, and a single point that the lawyer is made to state himself (“He that shewed mercy on him”).

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What does the Greek word *parabolē* mean?
2. **EASY** Name the three parables of lost things in Luke 15.
3. **EASY** To whom did Jesus tell the parables of Luke 15, and why?
4. **EASY** What phrase marks the hinge of the prodigal son’s story?
5. **MEDIUM** Give two differences between a fable and a parable.
6. **MEDIUM** Identify the turn in the parable of the laborers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16).
7. **CHALLENGE** Why does the parable of the prodigal son end without telling us whether the elder brother went in? Answer in a paragraph.

8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT-style): “A story persuades better than an argument.” Write a short essay that takes a position, using the parables of Christ and one other example as evidence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Explaining the characters’ feelings instead of showing what they did and said.
- Turning a parable into an allegory by assigning a meaning to every detail (the ring, the shoes, the pigs).
- Adding a moral or a happy ending that Christ left out.
- Calling any short story with a lesson a “parable,” even when it is a fable with talking animals.

Make it a game · Name That Parable. One player reads only the turn of a parable (“and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side”; “they also received every man a penny”). The others name the parable and the Gospel. Then the reader asks, “Who was the story aimed at?” A second point goes to whoever can say.

Scripture. “All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:” (Matthew 13:34, KJV)

The greatest Teacher chose the short story as His usual way of speaking to crowds, which is reason enough to study how His stories are made.

Practice: answers

1. “A throwing beside”: one thing set beside another for comparison.
2. The lost sheep, the lost coin (piece of silver) and the lost (prodigal) son.
3. To Pharisees and scribes who murmured that He received sinners and ate with them (Luke 15:1-2).
4. “He came to himself” (Luke 15:17).
5. Two of: fables often use animals or plants, parables use people in ordinary life; fables teach practical prudence, parables point to God and His kingdom; fables often end with a stated moral, parables usually leave the verdict to the hearer.
6. The men hired at the eleventh hour are paid first and receive a full day’s wage, the same as those who worked all day.
7. Sample: The elder brother stands for the Pharisees and scribes who were listening. Jesus leaves his choice open because their choice was still open: they could still go in to the feast and rejoice that sinners were coming home. By stopping at the father’s plea, the parable turns the question on the hearer, the way Nathan’s story turned on David.
8. Sample thesis and plan: A story persuades the heart that an argument has already persuaded the mind, but it cannot replace argument. (1) Nathan’s parable moved David where an accusation might have hardened him. (2) Yet Christ often joined parables to plain teaching, and explained the sower to His disciples. (3) Counterargument: stories can be misread; rebuttal: so can arguments, and the best stories leave one clear point. Conclusion: the wise speaker uses both.

4.2 TOLSTOY'S SHORT PARABLES: "HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?"

OBJECTIVES

- Read Tolstoy's "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" and trace how it grows from a single boast to a single grave.
- Explain how Tolstoy borrows the marks of Christ's parables (plain setting, few characters, a turn, end-stress) and adds the folk tale's devices (the Devil, the bargain, the dream).
- Imitate Tolstoy's plain style in a short scene that plants a desire and lets it grow.

Warm-up. Finish this sentence five different ways, as five different people might: "If I only had a little more _____, I would be content." Then underline the one you most suspect is false.

Video slot. Video coming. Leo Tolstoy's life and his short stories for the people (a library, university or literature-lecture channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

folk tale

A story in the manner of tales told aloud by ordinary people: plain words, repeated patterns, a bargain or a test, and often a supernatural visitor.

covetousness

The desire for more than one needs, especially for what belongs to another; the sin forbidden by the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17).

foreshadowing

A hint early in a story of what will happen later. Pahom's boast about the Devil and his dream before the walk both foreshadow his end.

dramatic irony

When the reader knows something a character does not. We know the Devil is listening behind the oven; Pahom does not.

plain style

Writing in short, concrete sentences with ordinary words and few ornaments, so that the events themselves carry the weight.

CORE IDEAS

The novelist who turned to parables. Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) wrote two of the longest and most admired novels in the world, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. Then, in his fifties,

he turned to something very small. In the 1880s he wrote a series of short tales for ordinary Russian readers, many of them peasants who had just learned to read: "What Men Live By," "Where Love Is, God Is," "The Three Hermits," "Three Questions," and "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" (1886). He wanted stories as plain and as lasting as the Gospels and the old folk tales. Louise and Aylmer Maude, English friends of Tolstoy, translated them, and their versions are the ones on Project Gutenberg.

The story. Pahom is a peasant who works his own small plot. His wife's sister from town boasts of city comforts; his wife answers that country life is safer. Pahom, listening from the top of the stove, says that his only trouble is too little land: "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!" The Devil, sitting behind the stove, hears him. From then on Pahom gets land, and every gain makes him restless for more. He buys a farm and quarrels with his neighbors; he moves to a richer district and finds it too crowded; at last a passing dealer tells him of the Bashkirs, a people on the steppe who sell land for almost nothing. Their chief makes him a strange offer: for one thousand roubles, Pahom may have as much land as he can walk around in a day, but if he does not return to his starting point by sunset, the money is lost.

The turn and the end. Pahom sets out at sunrise. Each time he means to turn, he sees a better piece of ground just ahead. By afternoon he is far from the starting hillock, and he must run in the heat with the sun sinking. He reaches the spot just as the sun goes down, where the chief sits laughing, and falls dead. His servant digs him a grave, and the story ends in one sentence of grave irony: "Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed." The title asks a question; the last line answers it.

What Tolstoy took from the Gospels. Hold this story beside Luke 12, where a man asks Jesus to make his brother divide an inheritance. Jesus warns, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness," and tells of a rich fool who plans bigger barns and hears God say, "this night thy soul shall be required of thee." Tolstoy's tale is a long, Russian rich fool. It has the parable's marks: a farming setting, few characters who matter, almost no inner description, a turn (the free land is the trap), and end-stress so heavy that the last sentence carries the whole meaning. Like a parable, it states no moral. The grave is the moral.

What Tolstoy took from the folk tale. Christ's parables rarely have supernatural visitors. Tolstoy's has the Devil, who keeps changing his mask: Pahom later dreams that the Bashkir chief, the dealer and an earlier traveler are all the same laughing figure, and then the Devil himself, with hoofs and horns, sitting over a dead man who is Pahom. The pattern of three moves (first farm, second district, the Bashkirs), each bigger than the last, is the folk tale's rule of three. So is the bargain with a deadline, which every child knows from stories where the spell breaks at midnight. These devices make the story easy to remember and easy to retell.

The plain style. Notice how little decoration there is. Tolstoy writes short declarative sentences, uses ordinary nouns (oven, tea-things, land), and lets dialogue do most of the work. Even the Devil speaks like a peasant: "We will have a tussle." This is the style of the King James parables too: "A certain man had two sons." You will be tempted, writing your

own parable, to describe sunsets and feelings at length. Resist it. The plainness is not a lack of skill; it is the skill, because it puts the reader's whole attention on what happens and what it means.

A caution and the model. Tolstoy's later religious opinions departed from historic Christianity, and the Russian Church excommunicated him in 1901. You can still learn from his craft, as from any writer, while testing his ideas by Scripture. The model below is the end of the first chapter, where the boast is made and the Devil hears it. Copy it, and notice how Tolstoy uses dramatic irony: the reader knows from the start what Pahom never learns until the end.

The model. *Leo Tolstoy, "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" (1886), translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude, in What Men Live By, and Other Tales, Project Gutenberg #6157*

Pahom, the master of the house, was lying on the top of the oven, and he listened to the women's chatter.

"It is perfectly true," thought he. "Busy as we are from childhood tilling Mother Earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!"

The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea-things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the oven, and had heard all that was said. He was pleased that the peasant's wife had led her husband into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land he would not fear the Devil himself.

"All right," thought the Devil. "We will have a tussle. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power."

PICTURE STUDY



Rye, Ivan Shishkin, 1878 · Oil on canvas · State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Shishkin, a Russian painter of forests and fields, worked from a sketch he made near the village of Lekarevo, in the Kama River country west of Yelabuga. The painting is almost all land and sky: a sea of ripe rye that seems to go on without end, broken only by a few enormous pines. This is the kind of black-earth farmland Pahom dreamed of. Look at it the way he would have, and then the way the last line of the story would teach you to.

Look closely

- Follow the field back to the horizon. Can you see where it ends?
- Find the tall pines. How small would a man look standing beside them?
- Look at the track or road. Where does it lead the eye?

Talk about it

1. Write Pahom's thoughts as he stands at the edge of this field at noon, in five sentences of plain style. Let the reader feel his hunger for the land without being told it is wrong.
2. Write a short paragraph contrasting the size of the field with the size of a grave, using one detail from the painting and the last line of the story.

WRITING PROJECT: THE BOAST AND THE LISTENER

Read the whole story (Project Gutenberg #6157; about 25 minutes). Then imitate Tolstoy's first chapter in a modern setting.

Write a scene of 300–450 words in which a character makes a careless boast about the one thing he lacks, and the reader learns that something (temptation, circumstance, a rival) has

heard it and will grant it. Do not use the Devil; find a modern listener.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Tolstoy, “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” (Project Gutenberg #6157)
- A KJV Bible (Luke 12:13–21)

Steps

1. Copy the model by hand. In the margin, number each move: the setting, the boast, the ordinary ending of the evening, the hidden listener, the listener’s plan.
2. Choose your modern equivalent of land: followers, a starting position, money, a title, a bigger house. Pick something ordinary people really want.
3. Write the setting and the conversation that provokes the boast. Keep it to two or three speakers.
4. Write the boast in the character’s own words, using a conditional “If I had ..., I would ...” sentence.
5. Close the evening plainly, as Tolstoy does with the tea-things, and then reveal the listener in one short paragraph.
6. Read your scene aloud. Cut every adjective that does not change the meaning.

Check your work

- My scene follows the five moves of the model in order.
- The boast uses the subjunctive correctly (“If I had,” “If I were”), not “If I would have.”
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly, with a new paragraph for each new speaker.
- I show desire through speech and action, not by naming the sin.
- Sentences are mostly plain and declarative; I have no more than two adjectives in any sentence.
- Verbs stay in the past tense throughout the narration.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model and underline the two sentences that create dramatic irony.
2. List Pahom’s three moves in order and write one sentence for what he gains and what he loses at each.
3. Write one last line for an imaginary parable in Tolstoy’s manner: one plain sentence that answers a title question.

History note. Tolstoy wrote “How Much Land Does a Man Need?” in 1886, in the years when he was writing cheap, plain tales for the Russian people, many of them issued by *Posrednik* (“The Intermediary”), a publishing house founded in 1884 to sell good books at low prices. The Bashkirs are a real Turkic people of the southern Ural region, then largely herdsmen. Shishkin’s *Rye* (1878) shows the farmland of the same broad eastern country, though not the Bashkir steppe itself.

 **Style Clinic. The subjunctive mood.** Grammar Level 3 taught the three moods: indicative (statements), imperative (commands) and subjunctive (wishes and conditions contrary to fact). Pahom's boast is a textbook subjunctive: "If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!" He does not have the land; the *if*-clause states a condition contrary to fact, so it uses the past form *had*, and the main clause uses *should* or *would*. Two errors to avoid: "If I would have had more land" (doubled conditional; write "If I had had") and "If I was rich" in formal writing (write "If I were rich"). Use one correct contrary-to-fact sentence in your boast. Standardized tests often test exactly this.

For families. The Maude translations (published 1906 and after) are in the public domain and are reliable. Tolstoy rejected many Christian doctrines in his later years (including the divinity of Christ as the Church confesses it) and was excommunicated by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901. His short tales for the people are nonetheless full of Gospel themes, and they are widely read in Christian schools. The story's death scene is quiet and contains no gore. Read it aloud together if you can; it takes about half an hour.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student opened an imitation like this. Revise it into Tolstoy's plain style. "The magnificently ambitious young entrepreneur, whose heart burned with an unquenchable fire of desire, sat restlessly in his luxurious leather chair, gazing longingly at the glittering skyline and thinking deeply about how unfair it was that he did not yet own a bigger company."

1. Cut the stacked adjectives and adverbs (magnificently, unquenchable, restlessly, longingly, deeply).
2. Replace the narrator's judgment ("unfair") with something the character says.
3. Break the one long sentence into two or three plain ones.

Answer: Revision: Daniel sat at his desk and looked out at the towers across the river. "If I had one more good year," he said to his partner, "I could buy the whole block and never worry again."

Example 2. Show how the story’s final sentence answers its title. Explain the irony in a short paragraph.

1. The title asks a question: How much land does a man need?
2. Pahom acts as though the answer is “more than I can walk around.”
3. The last line answers literally: the length of a grave.

Answer: The title sounds like a question about farming, but the last line turns it into a question about death. Pahom spends his life acting as if he needs more land than he can walk around in a day; in the end, all he needs is the six feet his servant digs. The irony is that the story’s answer was true all along, and Pahom learns it only when it is too late to matter.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Who listens to Pahom’s boast, and where is he sitting?
2. **EASY** What are the terms of the Bashkir chief’s offer?
3. **EASY** Who translated the Project Gutenberg text of this story?
4. **EASY** Name two other short tales Tolstoy wrote in the 1880s.
5. **MEDIUM** Which parable of Christ is closest to this story? Give the reference and one likeness.
6. **MEDIUM** Correct the mood: “If Pahom would have stopped at noon, he would have lived.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Name two features Tolstoy’s story shares with Christ’s parables and one feature it adds from the folk tale.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT-style): “Contentment is a greater achievement than ambition.” Agree or disagree, using Tolstoy’s story and one example from history or Scripture.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Summarizing the story’s events without explaining how the ending answers the title.
- Writing an imitation that names the moral (“his greed would destroy him”) instead of letting the events show it.
- Using the doubled conditional (“if he would have”) in a contrary-to-fact clause.
- Treating Tolstoy as a church teacher rather than as a gifted storyteller to be read with discernment.

Make it a game · Sunset Walk. Mark a starting spot in a yard or room and set a timer for three minutes. The walker must say one thing Pahom wanted at each step (“the hollow with flax,” “a bit more meadow”) and be back on the spot before the timer ends. Others call out “The sun is low!” at two minutes. Then talk about how it felt to turn back.

Scripture. “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” (Luke 12:15, KJV)

Christ's warning is the question Tolstoy's title asks and the answer his last line gives.

Practice: answers

1. The Devil, sitting behind the oven (stove).
2. For one thousand roubles, Pahom may have as much land as he can walk around in a day, but he loses his money if he is not back at the starting point by sunset.
3. Louise and Aylmer Maude.
4. Two of: “What Men Live By,” “Where Love Is, God Is,” “The Three Hermits,” “Three Questions.”
5. The rich fool, Luke 12:16–21. Both men plan for more land or barns and die before they can enjoy them; both stories show that a man's life does not consist in what he possesses.
6. If Pahom had stopped at noon, he would have lived.
7. Shared (two of): an ordinary farming setting; few important characters; little inner description; a turn (the cheap land is a trap); end-stress on the last line; no stated moral. Added: the Devil as a disguised visitor, the bargain with a sunset deadline, or the rule of three in Pahom's moves.
8. Sample plan: Thesis: Contentment is the greater achievement, because ambition without it can never be satisfied. (1) Pahom's every gain made him more restless, until the gain killed him. (2) Paul learned “in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11), yet he still labored more than all. (3) Counterargument: without ambition no one builds or discovers; rebuttal: rightly ordered ambition works for a good end and can stop, which is what contentment makes possible. Conclusion: return to the six feet.

4.3 LEWIS'S THE GREAT DIVORCE: THE PARABLE AS DREAM-VISION

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the frame, setting and pattern of C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce* (1945) and place it in the line of dream-visions from Dante to Bunyan.
- Explain how the episode of the ghost with the lizard works as a parable inside a story: a turn, an image, a single point.
- Write a short encounter scene in which a character must choose between holding something and giving it up.

Warm-up. Think of something small that people refuse to give up even when it makes them miserable: a grudge, a habit, a complaint, the last word in an argument. Write three sentences describing it as if it were a small animal living on someone's shoulder.

Video slot. Video coming. C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, introduction or overview (a classical-school, university or C. S. Lewis Foundation channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

dream-vision

A story told by a narrator who falls asleep and sees the spiritual world in a dream, as in Dante's *Divine Comedy* (a waking vision), Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Lewis's *Great Divorce*.

frame

The outer story that holds the inner stories together: in Lewis, the bus ride from the grey town to the edge of Heaven.

episode

One self-contained encounter within a larger story. Each ghost's meeting with a bright Spirit is an episode.

solidity

Lewis's central image: Heaven is more real and more solid than earth, and the ghosts are too thin to bear it.

guide

A wise figure who explains the vision to the narrator: Virgil for Dante, Evangelist and the Interpreter for Bunyan's Christian, George MacDonald for Lewis.

CORE IDEAS

A parable as long as a book. C. S. Lewis (1898–1963), the Oxford scholar who wrote *Mere Christianity* and the Narnia books, published *The Great Divorce* in 1945. It is short, about a hundred pages, and it is a chain of parables on one question: why would anyone refuse Heaven? Lewis took his title from William Blake’s poem *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake had played with the idea that good and evil might be married; Lewis answers that they must be divorced. You cannot bring any part of Hell with you into Heaven, he says, however small and however dear.

The frame. The narrator finds himself in a grey town where it is always drizzling twilight. The town is endless because its people quarrel and move farther and farther apart. He joins a queue of bickering passengers and boards a bus that flies upward, out of the gloom, and lands at the edge of a bright country of grass, rivers and distant mountains. There the passengers turn out to be ghosts: thin, smoky, almost transparent. The grass does not bend under them; it pierces their feet like spikes. A flower or a leaf is too heavy for them to pick up, and a shower of rain would go through them like bullets. Heaven, in Lewis’s picture, is not vaguer than earth but far more solid. The ghosts must become solid to live there.

The pattern. Out of the mountains come bright Spirits, men and women who once knew the ghosts on earth, to meet them and invite them to stay. Each encounter is an episode, and each turns on the same choice. A ghost who was a respectable man is met by a former employee who was a murderer and has been forgiven; the ghost insists on his rights and will not accept anything as charity. A ghost who was a clergyman prefers asking questions to finding answers and hurries back to give a paper to a theological society in the grey town. A mother wants her son back more than she wants God. In every case the ghost is offered joy and clings to something smaller. This is the parable’s rule of contrast, repeated a dozen times with variations.

The guide. Like Dante, the narrator meets a guide. Lewis chose George MacDonald (1824–1905), the Scottish minister and writer of fairy tales whose book *Phantastes* had first turned the young, unbelieving Lewis toward holiness. MacDonald explains what the narrator sees. The grey town, it turns out, is so small that it would fit into a crack in the soil of Heaven. The ghosts are not kept out; they keep themselves out. MacDonald sums up the whole book in a saying built on the Lord’s Prayer: in the end there are only two kinds of people, those who say to God, “Thy will be done,” and those to whom God at last says, “Thy will be done.”

The lizard. The episode in the model below, from chapter 11, is a complete parable in itself. Read the summary closely and then name its parts: a character, a besetting thing he carries, an offer, a struggle of excuses (“not now,” “gradually,” “tomorrow”), a moment of consent, a death, and a resurrection. The turn is the last image. What the ghost feared would leave him empty instead rises transformed and carries him up the mountain. MacDonald draws the point: nothing, not even the best and noblest thing, can go on as it is; and nothing, not even the lowest, is beyond being raised if it submits to death. That is Christ’s own teaching about losing one’s life to save it (Matthew 16:25), turned into a picture.

How Lewis builds an episode. Notice what Lewis does that you can imitate. He keeps each scene to two speakers. He gives the ghost real, ordinary excuses, so that the reader recognizes his own voice in them. He lets the Spirit be courteous and patient, never smug. He makes the sin concrete, small and talkative, so that we can see it. And he puts the decisive moment in an action, not a speech: the angel's grip, the ghost's shriek, the body thrown on the turf. Then the explanation comes afterward, briefly, from the guide. A parable may be explained, but only after the story has done its work.

Why a summary. *The Great Divorce* is still under copyright, so this lesson describes it in our own words rather than printing Lewis's text. Borrow or buy a copy if you can; chapter 11 takes about fifteen minutes to read. Then compare your memory of the summary with Lewis's own sentences and notice how much more alive the scene is in his telling. That gap is the difference between a report of a parable and a parable.

The model. *C. S. Lewis, The Great Divorce (1945), chapter 11, summarized for this course. The book is in copyright; no text is quoted.*

Among the ghosts is one who carries a small red lizard on his shoulder. It twitches its tail and whispers in his ear, and he keeps telling it to be quiet. A burning Spirit, tall as a tree and bright as fire, comes to meet him and offers to silence the creature for good. The ghost is eager at first, until he understands that the Spirit means to kill it.

Then the excuses begin. The ghost says he only meant that it should be quieted. He says it would hurt him. He suggests that a gradual cure would be better, that he will come back another day, that he is not feeling well enough today. Each time the Spirit answers gently that the moment is now, that a gradual process will not help, and that it cannot kill the lizard against the ghost's will.

At last, with a cry, the ghost gives permission. The Spirit seizes the lizard, breaks it, and flings it to the ground. The ghost, in pain, begins at once to grow solid, into a real and shining man. The broken lizard grows too, into a great stallion with a golden mane. The man leaps on its back, and the two ride away up the mountains toward the sunrise, while the whole country seems to sing.

The narrator's guide explains: what was surrendered and killed has been raised, stronger and better, to serve the man instead of ruling him.

PICTURE STUDY



The Empyrean (Paradiso, Canto 31), Gustave Doré, published 1868 · Wood engraving, illustration for Dante's *Paradiso* · Published in Doré's illustrated edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Lewis loved Dante and borrowed his plan: a narrator, a guide, and a journey from darkness to the edge of glory. Doré's engraving shows the end of Dante's journey, when he and Beatrice look up at the Empyrean, the highest heaven, pictured as a great white rose of light made of the saints and angels. The two travelers are tiny; the light is enormous. That is Lewis's idea of solidity in another form: Heaven is not small and pale but larger and more real than anything we know.

Look closely

- Find the two travelers. How large are they compared with the whole picture?
- Follow the rings of light inward. Where is the brightest point?
- Look closely at the rings. What are they made of?

Talk about it

1. Lewis said in effect that Hell is smaller than a crack in Heaven's soil. Write a paragraph comparing that idea with the scale of this engraving.
2. Describe this scene from the point of view of one of Lewis's thin ghosts seeing it for the first time, in five or six plain sentences.

WRITING PROJECT: THE THING ON THE SHOULDER

Write an encounter scene of 400–600 words in the manner of Lewis's episodes: one character carries something he will not give up, and another offers to free him from it.

You may use Lewis's setting (a ghost at the edge of a bright country) or a realistic modern one (a workshop, a hospital corridor, a kitchen at midnight). Either way, the choice must be real and the excuses believable.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The summary of chapter 11 above (or a copy of *The Great Divorce* from a library)
- A KJV Bible (Matthew 16:24-26)

Steps

1. Choose the thing carried: a grudge, a habit, a complaint, a fear, a pride. Make it concrete (an object, a creature, a sound) so the reader can see it.
2. Name your two speakers and give the one who offers help a manner that is patient and courteous, not preachy.
3. List four excuses the carrier might make. Use the most ordinary ones; they are the most convincing.
4. Write the scene: offer, excuses, answers, decision. The decision may be yes or no, as in Lewis.
5. Put the decisive moment in an action, not a speech.
6. If you include an explanation, put it after the scene in no more than three sentences, from a third character or the narrator.

Check your work

- My scene has two main speakers and one clear choice.
- The thing carried is concrete and visible.
- Every modifier sits next to the word it describes; I have no dangling participles.
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly, with a new paragraph for each speaker.
- The turn comes through an action, and any explanation is brief and comes after it.
- I did not copy Lewis's sentences; the wording is my own.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. List the guides of three dream-visions (Dante, Bunyan, Lewis) and what each guide explains.
2. Write four excuses a person gives for keeping a bad habit, in his own voice, each one sentence long.
3. Copy Matthew 16:25 and write one sentence connecting it to the lizard episode.

History note. *The Great Divorce* first appeared in installments in *The Guardian*, a Church of England weekly paper, in 1944-1945, and then as a book in 1945. Lewis wrote it in the same years as his wartime broadcast talks that became *Mere Christianity*. In his preface he warns that the book is a fantasy, an imaginative supposal, and not a guess about what the afterlife is actually like.

 **Style Clinic. Misplaced and dangling modifiers.** Grammar Level 3 taught that a modifier must sit next to the word it modifies. In scenes full of action, writers often slip: “Twitching its tail, the ghost listened to the lizard” makes the ghost twitch the tail. Fix it by naming the right subject: “Twitching its tail, the lizard whispered to the ghost.” A dangling modifier has no word to modify at all: “Walking toward the mountains, the grass hurt his feet” (the grass is not walking). Revise: “As he walked toward the mountains, the grass hurt his feet.” Reread your scene and check every opening participial phrase. The ACT English section tests this skill in nearly every form.

For families. Lewis’s book is in copyright in the United States, so this lesson summarizes it and quotes nothing of his but the Lord’s Prayer phrase his guide uses. Lewis stated in the preface that the story is not a doctrine of the afterlife; some readers have questioned whether it suggests a second chance after death, and the preface is worth reading together on that point. The lizard represents a besetting sin of the flesh; the book handles it with restraint, and this lesson describes it only as a sin the ghost has nursed. Chapter 11 is suitable for this age.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote this encounter. What makes it weak as a Lewis-style episode? “The angel said, ‘You need to give up your anger because anger is a sin and it is bad for you and God wants you to forgive.’ The man said, ‘You are right. I will.’ Then he was happy.”

1. The Spirit preaches; Lewis’s Spirits invite and answer.
2. The man has no excuses, so there is no struggle and no real choice.
3. The anger is abstract; nothing concrete is seen.
4. The resolution is stated (“he was happy”) rather than shown in an action.

Answer: Revision plan: make the anger a visible thing (a hot stone he keeps in his coat pocket and turns over with his thumb); give him three ordinary excuses (“He started it,” “I’ll let it go when he apologizes,” “It keeps me warm”); let the helper answer each one briefly; end with an action, his hand opening or closing on the stone.

Example 2. Name the parts of the lizard episode as a parable.

1. Character and burden: the ghost and the lizard.
2. Offer: the Spirit will kill it.
3. Struggle: excuses of delay and gradualness.
4. Turn: consent, death, and the lizard raised as a stallion.

Answer: Character, burden, offer, struggle, consent, death, resurrection. The single point: what we surrender to God to be put to death is not lost but raised, stronger and rightly ordered.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** When was *The Great Divorce* published as a book?
2. **EASY** Whose work gave Lewis his title, and what was it called?
3. **EASY** Who is the narrator's guide in the bright country?
4. **EASY** Why does the grass hurt the ghosts' feet?
5. **MEDIUM** How is Lewis's narrator like Dante and Bunyan's dreamer?
6. **MEDIUM** Fix the modifier: "Burning like fire, the ghost was afraid of the Spirit."
7. **CHALLENGE** Explain the two kinds of people in MacDonald's saying and how the saying uses the Lord's Prayer.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the first 100 words of an episode in which a ghost carries something he will not put down. Use one concrete image and one ordinary excuse.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Treating the book as a literal description of Heaven and Hell, which Lewis's preface warns against.
- Making the helping character preachy instead of patient and courteous.
- Giving the character no real excuses, so the choice costs nothing.
- Copying Lewis's phrases instead of imitating his method in your own words.

Make it a game • Excuse Ladder. One player names a small thing someone might cling to (the last cookie, a grudge, a phone). Going around the table, each player must give a new excuse for keeping it, in character. The first player who cannot think of a new excuse must instead give the Spirit's gentle answer to the last one. Count how many excuses the group can climb before the answers run out.

Scripture. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18, KJV)

Lewis's picture of a Heaven more solid than earth is an imaginative way of saying what Paul says plainly: the unseen things are the lasting ones.

Practice: answers

1. 1945.
2. William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.
3. George MacDonald, the Scottish writer and minister.
4. Because Heaven is more solid and real than the ghosts are; the grass does not bend under them.
5. Each travels in a vision through the spiritual world, meets souls whose choices are revealed, and has a guide who explains what he sees.
6. The ghost was afraid of the Spirit, which burned like fire. (Or: Burning like fire, the Spirit frightened the ghost.)
7. Some people say to God, "Thy will be done," and submit to Him; others insist on their own way, and God at last grants it, saying to them, "Thy will be done." The saying takes the petition of Matthew 6:10 and turns it around, so that Hell is pictured as God giving the self-willed what they chose.
8. Sample: The ghost had a ledger under his arm, thick as a brick. Every few steps he opened it and ran a finger down the columns, moving his lips. "Debts," he explained to the bright figure who had come to meet him. "Things people owe me. My brother, mostly." The Spirit held out a hand. "You can put it down here. It will be quite safe." The ghost clutched it tighter. "Not yet. I haven't added up the last page. A man has to know where he stands."

4.4 WRITE A MODERN PARABLE ✍️ ★

OBJECTIVES

- Plan a parable from a single truth of Scripture, choosing an ordinary modern setting, two or three characters and a turn.
- Draft a parable of 400–700 words in plain style that shows its point without stating it.
- Revise the parable for end-stress, concrete detail and correct dialogue punctuation, and read it aloud.

Warm-up. Christ drew His parables from the work His hearers did every day: sowing, fishing, baking, herding, keeping accounts. List ten kinds of ordinary work or places your own neighbors know (a hardware store, a lineup at a ballfield, a night shift, a group chat). Star the three that could hold a story.

Video slot. Video coming. Jean-François Millet, *The Sower*, explained (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, or another museum channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

governing truth

The single point the parable exists to show, usually taken from a verse of Scripture. Everything in the story serves it.

vehicle

The ordinary story that carries the truth: the sower and his seed, the house on the sand, a modern equivalent of your choosing.

contrast pair

Two characters (or choices) set side by side so that one shows the meaning of the other: the wise and foolish builders, the two sons.

last line

The final sentence of a parable, which carries the end-stress. It often answers the title, reverses an expectation, or turns the question on the hearer.

CORE IDEAS

From reader to maker. In this unit you have read Christ's parables as literature, watched Tolstoy stretch a parable into a folk tale, and seen Lewis build a chain of parables inside a dream. Now you will make one. This is the classical order: read, copy, imitate, invent. You are not trying to add to Scripture or to write a new Gospel. You are doing what Christian storytellers have done for centuries, from medieval preachers to Bunyan and Tolstoy and Lewis: taking a truth Scripture already teaches and setting it beside the ordinary life of your own day, so that a modern hearer sees it fresh.

Begin with the truth, not the plot. A parable is built backward. Start with one verse whose truth you want a hearer to feel: “a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15); “whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased” (Luke 14:11); “be sure your sin will find you out” (Numbers 32:23). Write it at the top of your page. Then ask: where in ordinary modern life does this truth show itself so plainly that anyone would recognize it? That place is your vehicle. Christ chose farms and fishing boats because His hearers knew them; you may choose a warehouse, a basketball tryout or a used-car lot for the same reason.

Keep the cast small. Two or three characters are enough. A contrast pair is the oldest and strongest pattern: two builders, two sons, two servants with talents, one who prepares and one who does not. A third character can be the judge or the giver of the test (the master, the father, the inspector). Give your characters plain names or none at all; “a certain man” has served for two thousand years. Do not spend a paragraph on anyone’s appearance or history. We learn who they are from what they choose.

Build toward the turn. Every good parable has a moment the hearer does not see coming, or sees coming too late to escape. Tolstoy’s turn is that the free land is a trap; Lewis’s is that the dead lizard becomes a stallion; Christ’s is that the father runs. Plan your turn before you draft. Ask what your hearer expects and how the story can overturn it. The best turns feel surprising at first and inevitable afterward, as if the story could never have ended any other way.

Show, then stop. Write in the plain style you practiced with Tolstoy: short declarative sentences, concrete nouns, strong verbs, little ornament. Let dialogue carry the important moments. Do not name the moral or explain the symbols. End-stress means your last line must carry the weight, so draft three possible last lines and choose the one that does the most with the fewest words. Then stop. If you feel you must add “And so we learn that ...,” your story has not done its work yet; revise the story instead of adding the sermon.

Test it aloud. Parables were spoken before they were written. When your draft is done, read it aloud to your family without telling them the verse. Then ask one question: “What is this story about?” If they name your truth, or something close to it, the parable works. If they are puzzled, look for the place where the vehicle wanders from the truth: a character who does not matter, a detail that points the wrong way, a turn that is clever but unrelated. If they name it instantly before the end, your turn may be too obvious. Revise and try again on someone else.

The model. *“The House on Mill Street,” a modern parable. Written for this course.*

A certain man bought an old house on Mill Street for less than it was worth, because the inspector had found a crack in the foundation. “It will cost you eight thousand dollars to set right,” the inspector told him, “and it ought to be done before the ground freezes.”

The man thanked him and went to work. He painted the shutters a deep green and hung a brass lamp by the door. Neighbors slowed their cars to admire it.

In November the crack crept up the dining-room wall. The man filled it with plaster, sanded it smooth, and hung a large painting over the place. In January the back door began to stick. He planed the bottom of the door until it swung easily again. In March a long split opened in the kitchen tile, and he laid a handsome rug across it.

“It is a beautiful house,” his friends said. “You have done wonders.”

In the spring he put the house up for sale at twice what he had paid. Many came to see it. The third buyer brought her own inspector, a quiet old man with a flashlight, who went down the basement stairs and came up again in five minutes.

He looked at the green shutters and the brass lamp and the painting in the dining room. Then he turned to the owner and said, “Sir, you have built a very fine house on nothing at all.”

PICTURE STUDY



The Sower, Jean-François Millet, 1850 · Oil on canvas · Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Millet grew up on a farm in Normandy and painted the hard, ordinary work of French peasants. Here a sower strides down a dark hillside at the end of the day, his right arm swinging wide to scatter seed from the bag at his side. Birds swoop behind him to steal what falls. Every first viewer in 1850 would have thought of Christ’s parable of the sower (Matthew 13), in which some seed falls by the wayside and the fowls devour it. Millet painted no halo and no Bible scene, only a man at work; but the parable is there for anyone who knows it. That is exactly what you are trying to do.

Look closely

- Follow the sower's right arm. Where is the seed going?
- Find the birds. What are they doing, and which verse in Matthew 13 do they recall?
- Look at the top of the hill. What other work is going on there, and at what time of day?

Talk about it

1. Millet set a Bible parable in his own time without painting anything religious. Name one scene from modern life that could do the same for a parable of Christ, and describe it in four sentences.
2. Write the first paragraph of a modern parable of the sower, set in a place you know, in plain style.

WRITING PROJECT: A MODERN PARABLE

Write an original parable of 400-700 words that sets one truth of Scripture in ordinary modern life. This is the unit's portfolio piece.

Plan in the first session; draft, test aloud and revise in the second.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Your retelling from 4.1, your Tolstoy imitation from 4.2 and your encounter scene from 4.3

Steps

1. Choose the governing truth: one verse, copied exactly at the top of your planning page with its reference.
2. Choose the vehicle: an ordinary modern place or task where that truth plainly shows itself. Write two sentences explaining why it fits.
3. Choose the cast: a contrast pair, or one main character plus a judge or tester. No more than three who speak.
4. Plan the shape on five lines: situation, test or choice, development (often in three steps), turn, last line. Draft three possible last lines and choose one.
5. Draft in plain style, past tense, mostly action and dialogue. Do not state the moral.
6. Read it aloud to someone who does not know your verse and ask, "What is this story about?" Note the answer.
7. Revise: cut any character or detail that does not serve the point, sharpen the turn, and check the mechanics list below. Write a clean copy with a title.

Check your work

- My parable has one governing truth from Scripture, and a hearer can name it without being told.
- It uses an ordinary modern setting, no more than three speaking characters, and a clear turn.
- It ends on a strong last line and does not state the moral.
- Dialogue is punctuated correctly: commas and periods inside quotation marks, a new paragraph for each speaker.
- I use semicolons only between closely related independent clauses, and colons only after a complete clause.
- My verbs are active and in a consistent tense, and every modifier is placed next to the word it modifies.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the model parable by hand. Mark the opening formula, the test, the three cover-ups, the turn and the last line.
2. Write five governing truths from Proverbs or the Gospels, each with a possible modern vehicle beside it.
3. Write three different last lines for the same parable, then choose one and explain why in a sentence.

History note. Millet painted *The Sower* in 1850 and showed it at the Paris Salon that winter. Vincent van Gogh, who admired Millet deeply, copied and reworked the sower many times in the 1880s. Medieval preachers kept collections of short moral tales called *exempla* to illustrate sermons, so the habit of making new parables to teach old truths is very old in the Church.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuating dialogue and joining clauses.** Grammar Level 3 reviewed the marks that matter most in a story. (1) Commas and periods go inside closing quotation marks: “It is a beautiful house,” his friends said. (2) When a speaker tag interrupts one sentence, use commas on both sides: “It will cost you eight thousand dollars to set right,” the inspector told him, “and it ought to be done before the ground freezes.” (3) When the tag falls between two sentences, use a period after the tag: “Debts,” he said. “Things people owe me.” (4) A semicolon joins two independent clauses that are closely related, as in Luke 15:24; never use a comma alone between them (a comma splice). Check every line of dialogue in your parable against these four rules.

For families. Students should understand that a modern parable illustrates a truth Scripture already teaches; it is not a new revelation and should not put words in Christ’s mouth or retell a Gospel scene with changes to its meaning. Encourage ordinary settings from work and family life rather than fantasy or politics. The portfolio rubric in the unit rewards a clear point, a real turn and restraint. If your student wants to share the parable more widely, reading it aloud at a family gathering or a church youth meeting is a fitting first audience.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart the model parable, “The House on Mill Street.” Name its governing truth, cast, development, turn and last line.

1. Governing truth: a life built on appearances, without dealing with the hidden fault, cannot stand (Matthew 7:24–27; 23:27).
2. Cast: the owner; the first inspector, who names the fault; the second inspector, who gives the verdict. Friends and buyers are background.
3. Development: three cover-ups that grow worse in three seasons (plaster and painting, planed door, rug over tile).
4. Turn and last line: the admired house is worthless; the stranger’s single sentence, “a very fine house on nothing at all,” gives the verdict and the story stops.

Answer: The parable works because every detail serves one point, the cover-ups escalate in a rule of three, and the last line names the truth in the terms of the story rather than in a moral.

Example 2. A student drafted this ending for a parable about pride on a basketball team: “And so Marcus learned that pride comes before a fall, and that being humble is better, just like it says in Proverbs 16:18. The end.” Revise it.

1. The ending states the moral and quotes the verse inside the story, which removes the hearer’s work.
2. Find the action that would show the fall: the moment the proud player is passed over, or the humble one is chosen.
3. Write a last line in the story’s own terms, spoken or done by a character.

Answer: Revision: Coach read the list for the final game. Marcus listened for his name until the last one was read, and it was the name of the boy who had stayed every night to sweep the gym.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** In what order is a parable best planned: plot first or truth first?
2. **EASY** What is a contrast pair? Give an example from Christ’s parables.
3. **EASY** Why did Christ draw His parables from farming and fishing?
4. **EASY** Punctuate: It is a beautiful house his friends said
5. **MEDIUM** Give a modern vehicle for Proverbs 22:7, “the borrower is servant to the lender.”
6. **MEDIUM** Correct the comma splice: “The inspector went down the stairs, he came back in five minutes.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a last line for a modern parable on Luke 14:11 (“whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased”) set at a wedding dinner.

8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT-style): “The best way to teach a moral truth is to state it plainly.” Agree or disagree, using at least two parables from this unit as evidence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Starting with a clever plot and hunting for a verse to fit it afterward.
- Crowding the story with characters, back-story and description.
- Stating the moral at the end or quoting the verse inside the story.
- Choosing a setting so fantastic or so tied to a current controversy that the hearer stops listening to the truth.

Make it a game · Parable Swap. Each player writes a verse of Scripture on a slip of paper and a modern setting on another. Shuffle the verse slips and setting slips separately and deal one of each. Each player has three minutes to tell the outline of a parable aloud from the pair he drew, ending with a last line. The others guess the verse before it is revealed.

Scripture. “And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it.” (Mark 4:33, KJV)

Christ fitted His stories to His hearers; a modern parable fits the same truth to hearers of today.

Practice: answers

1. Truth first: choose the governing truth, then the vehicle, cast, turn and last line.
2. Two characters set side by side so one explains the other, such as the wise and foolish builders, or the two sons of Luke 15.
3. Because His hearers did that work every day and would recognize the truth in a familiar setting.
4. “It is a beautiful house,” his friends said.
5. Sample: A young man finances a new truck he cannot afford, then must turn down a better job in another town because he cannot miss a single paycheck.
6. The inspector went down the stairs; he came back in five minutes. (Or: The inspector went down the stairs and came back in five minutes.)
7. Sample: The host came down the long room, passed the man who had taken the seat nearest the head table, and stopped instead at the back, where an old woman sat by the kitchen door. “Grandmother,” he said, “we kept your chair at the front.”
8. Sample plan: Thesis: Plain statement teaches the mind, but a story teaches the will, and the best teachers use both. (1) Nathan’s parable convicted David before the plain charge, “Thou art the man.” (2) Tolstoy’s last line teaches contentment more memorably than a rule. (3) Counterargument: stories can be misunderstood, and Christ explained the sower; rebuttal: He explained it to disciples who already wanted to understand, and the story prepared them to receive it. Conclusion: plain truth is the foundation; the parable is the door.

UNIT 4 REVIEW

Allow about 60 minutes. Items 1–8 may be answered in a sentence or two. Item 9 is a short writing task and item 10 a timed paragraph; score them with the unit checklist and rubric, not for spelling alone. The student may use a KJV Bible for item 9 only.

1. (3 pts) Define a parable and give the meaning of the Greek word it comes from.
2. (2 pts) Give two differences between a fable and a parable.
3. (4 pts) What is the hinge of the parable of the prodigal son, and why does the parable end with the elder brother outside?
4. (3 pts) How does the last sentence of Tolstoy's story answer its title?
5. (2 pts) Name one device Tolstoy takes from the folk tale that Christ's parables usually lack.
6. (3 pts) In *The Great Divorce*, why do the ghosts find the grass painful, and what does the image teach?
7. (4 pts) Summarize the lizard episode and state its single point.
8. (6 pts) Correct each sentence: (a) "If he would have turned back sooner, he would have lived." (b) "Walking toward the mountains, the grass cut his feet." (c) "It is a beautiful house his friends said."
9. (6 pts) Choose a verse (for example Proverbs 16:18 or Luke 14:11). Write the five-line plan of a modern parable on it: governing truth, vehicle, cast, turn, last line.
10. (7 pts) Timed paragraph (15 minutes): Explain how a parable can persuade someone who would resist a plain argument. Use one example from this unit.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A MODERN PARABLE

Make a clean, titled copy of your modern parable from 4.4 (400–700 words). On a separate card, write the governing verse with its reference, but keep the card out of sight when you read the parable aloud. Add it to your Grade 9 portfolio, with your prodigal son retelling from 4.1 as a supporting piece.

- **Governing truth:** One clear truth from Scripture that a hearer can name without being told; every character and detail serves it.
- **Form:** Ordinary modern setting, no more than three speaking characters, a real turn, and a last line that carries the end-stress without stating the moral.
- **Style:** Plain, concrete prose in a consistent tense; action and dialogue rather than explanation; parallel structure where ideas are paired.
- **Mechanics:** Dialogue correctly punctuated; no comma splices; subjunctive mood and modifiers used correctly; Scripture quoted exactly.

Answer key

1. A short story from ordinary life set beside a spiritual truth so that the hearer sees one in the other; *parabolē* means "a throwing beside."

2. Two of: fables often use animals or plants, parables use people in ordinary life; fables teach prudence, parables point to God and His kingdom; fables often state a moral, parables usually leave the verdict to the hearer.
3. The hinge is "he came to himself" (Luke 15:17). It ends with the elder brother because he stands for the murmuring Pharisees and scribes, whose choice was still open; the hearer must finish the story.
4. The title asks how much land a man needs; the last line says that six feet, the length of his grave, was all Pahom needed.
5. One of: the Devil as a disguised visitor; the bargain with a sunset deadline; the dream; the rule of three in Pahom's moves.
6. Heaven is more solid and real than the ghosts, so the grass does not bend under them. The image teaches that Heaven is not vaguer than earth but more real, and souls must become solid to live there.
7. A ghost carries a whispering lizard; a Spirit offers to kill it; the ghost makes excuses but finally consents; the lizard is killed and raised as a stallion, and the ghost becomes a solid man who rides into the mountains. Point: what we surrender to God to be put to death is raised and rightly ordered, not lost.
8. (a) If he had turned back sooner, he would have lived. (b) As he walked toward the mountains, the grass cut his feet. (c) "It is a beautiful house," his friends said.
9. Sample on Proverbs 16:18: Truth: pride goes before a fall. Vehicle: a county spelling bee. Cast: a champion who stops studying, a quiet younger speller, the pronouncer. Turn: the champion misses an easy word he had laughed at in practice. Last line: It was the word he had laughed at all spring, and the younger girl spelled it without looking up.
10. Sample: A parable persuades by letting the hearer judge a case before he knows it is his own. When Nathan told David of the rich man who took the poor man's lamb, David condemned the rich man at once; only then did Nathan say, "Thou art the man," and David could not escape his own verdict. A plain charge might have made the king defensive, but the story went past his guard and let his conscience speak first. Christ's parable of the prodigal son does the same for the elder brother and the Pharisees who listened.

POETRY: METER IN DEPTH

In this creative-writing unit you learn to hear and mark the beat of English verse. You will name the four chief feet (iamb, trochee, anapest, dactyl) and scan Shakespeare's Sonnet 146; scan the long dactylic hexameter of Longfellow's *Evangeline* against the hammering trochaic octameter of Poe's "The Raven"; study how Gerard Manley Hopkins packs stress and sound into "God's Grandeur"; and finally write the same subject in two meters, choosing and defending the better fit. The unit joins the canon of style (decorum: the form must fit the matter) with the canons of memory and delivery, for you will finish by reciting your best poem from memory.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can identify stressed syllables in ordinary words and read a poem aloud for sense.
- Writes a clear analytical paragraph with a topic sentence and quoted evidence (Units 2-3).

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can name and mark the iamb, trochee, anapest and dactyl, and name line lengths from trimeter to octameter.
- ☐ I can scan a line, name its meter, and explain what a variation does for the meaning.
- ☐ I can compare two poets' meters in an essay using claim, scan and effect.
- ☐ I can explain how Hopkins uses stress, alliteration and the Petrarchan sonnet form in "God's Grandeur."
- ☐ I can write the same subject in a rising and a falling meter, defend the better fit, and recite it from memory.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Shakespeare's Sonnets (Project Gutenberg #1041)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1041>): All 154 sonnets; Sonnet 146 is the Lesson 5.1 model.
- **Longfellow, Evangeline (Project Gutenberg #2039)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2039>): The full poem in dactylic hexameter.
- **Poe, The Raven (Project Gutenberg #1065)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1065>): Short; read it aloud in one sitting.
- **Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins, ed. Robert Bridges, 1918 (Project Gutenberg #22403)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/22403>): Includes Hopkins's own preface on sprung rhythm.
- **Stevenson, A Child's Garden of Verses (Project Gutenberg #136)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/136>): Clear, varied meters for scansion practice.
- **Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Franklin's account of turning prose into verse and

back.

5.1 IAMB, TROCHEE, ANAPEST, DACTYL 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Name and mark the four chief feet of English verse and the line lengths from trimeter to hexameter.
- Scan Shakespeare's Sonnet 146 line by line and explain where and why he varies the iambic beat.
- Write four original lines on one subject, one in each foot, and mark every stress.

Warm-up. Say these words aloud and tap the desk on each loud syllable: *today, garden, interrupt, merrily*. Now tap the faith verse for the year: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18). Where do the beats fall? Did everyone in the room tap the same places?

Video slot. Video coming. Poetic meter and scansion explained: iamb, trochee, anapest, dactyl (a lecture or reading for high-school students). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

foot

The unit of meter: one stressed syllable with its unstressed syllables, counted as a group. A line is measured by how many feet it has.

iamb

An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one (da-DUM): *be-CAUSE, to-DAY, the SOUL*. The most common foot in English.

trochee

A stressed syllable followed by an unstressed one (DUM-da): *GAR-den, MOTH-er, PAINT-ing*.

anapest

Two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed one (da-da-DUM): *in-ter-RUPT, on the HILL*.

dactyl

A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones (DUM-da-da): *MER-ri-ly, HOL-i-ness*. From the Greek word for "finger": one long joint, two short.

CORE IDEAS

Stress is the raw material. Every English word of more than one syllable leans on one syllable harder than the others. You hear it when the same spelling changes meaning: you *reCORD* a song on a *REcord*; a soldier may *deSERT* into the *DEsert*. Small words take stress from the sense of the sentence: in "I said *the* book, not a book," even *the* is loud. *Meter* is a

pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables repeated regularly enough that the ear begins to expect it. The Greeks and Romans measured long and short syllables by how long they took to say; English poets kept the old Greek names for the feet but count stress instead.

The four feet. Four feet do almost all the work in English verse. The *iamb* (da-DUM) and the *anapest* (da-da-DUM) end on the beat, so they are called *rising* meters. The *trochee* (DUM-da) and the *dactyl* (DUM-da-da) begin on the beat, so they are *falling* meters. Two-syllable feet (iamb, trochee) march; three-syllable feet (anapest, dactyl) gallop or sway. Two more feet appear only as substitutes inside a line: the *spondee* (DUM-DUM), two heavy stresses together, and the *pyrrhic* (da-da), two light syllables together.

Counting the feet. A line is named for its foot and the number of feet: *trimeter* (three), *tetrameter* (four), *pentameter* (five), *hexameter* (six). Longfellow's *Hiawatha* runs in trochaic tetrameter: "SHOULD you | ASK me, | WHENCE these | STOR-ies?" Byron's poem on the fall of Sennacherib's army (2 Kings 19) runs in anapestic tetrameter: "The as-SYR | ian came DOWN | like the WOLF | on the FOLD" (with *Assyrian* said in three quick syllables). Tennyson opens "The Charge of the Light Brigade" with dactyls: "HALF a league, | HALF a league." But the great English line, the line of Shakespeare's plays, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Wordsworth's *Prelude*, is *iambic pentameter*: five iambs, about ten syllables, close to the natural length of an English breath.

How to scan. *Scansion* is marking a line to show its meter. (1) Read the line aloud as you would speak it, for sense. (2) Mark each syllable stressed (CAPS or ´) or unstressed (˘). (3) Divide the line into feet with a bar (|). (4) Name the foot that appears most and count the feet. (5) Note every place the line departs from the pattern. Here is the first line of today's model: "poor SOUL | the CEN | tre OF | my SIN | ful EARTH." Five iambs: iambic pentameter. Notice that *of* takes only a light stress; it is louder than the syllables beside it, not loud in itself. The golden rule: let the sense of the sentence set the stress. If you force the pattern and read in a sing-song, you are not scanning; you are drumming.

Variation is the art. A meter is a promise, not a cage. If every line ticked off five perfect iambs, the poem would drone like a clock. Good poets keep the pattern steady enough to be felt and then break it where the meaning wants weight. The most common change is the *trochaic inversion* at the start of a line: "PAINT-ing | thy OUT | ward WALLS | so COST | ly GAY." The line lunges forward on the accusing word *Painting*. Another is the spondee, where two stresses slam together: "and DEATH | ONCE DEAD." When you scan, always ask two questions: *Where does the line vary?* and *What word is being pushed forward?*

Why this sonnet. Sonnet 146 is the most openly Christian of Shakespeare's sonnets. The speaker scolds his own soul for spending everything on its "fading mansion," the body, which will soon be food for worms. The cure is a trade: sell "hours of dross" and buy "terms divine." It is Christ's counsel to lay up treasure in heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt" (Matthew 6:20), and the last couplet echoes Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:54). The meter carries the argument. The steady iambs of the questions give way to hard commands, and the final line ends on a word that closes the door: *then*.

Meter in your prose. Meter is not only for poets. Cicero and Quintilian taught that the ends of prose sentences need rhythm, and Grade 9 is the year you learned the canon of *style*. A thesis sentence that ends on a strong stressed word (“Work with the hands trains the whole man”) sticks; one that trails off in light syllables (“...is something that should be considered”) slides away. As you learn to hear feet in verse, read your own essays aloud and listen for where the stress lands.

The model. *William Shakespeare, Sonnet 146, Shakespeare’s Sonnets (1609), Project Gutenberg #1041*

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
My sinful earth these rebel powers array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body’s end?
Then soul, live thou upon thy servant’s loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shall thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there’s no more dying then

PICTURE STUDY



The Sower, Jean-François Millet, 1850 · Oil on canvas · Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Millet grew up on a farm in Normandy and spent his life painting the work of the fields. In *The Sower*, shown at the Paris Salon of 1850–51, a young man strides down a steep hillside in the last light, throwing seed in a wide arc. Sowing by hand is done in rhythm: one step, one fling; one step, one fling. The sower's stride is a meter, and the painter has caught him at the stressed beat, arm flung out, weight on the forward foot. Christ's parable of the sower (Matthew 13) is never far from this picture.

Look closely

- Find the sower's right hand. At what moment of the throw has Millet stopped him?
- Look at his legs and the slope of the ground. How does the painter make him seem to move?
- Find the birds and the team of oxen on the ridge. What are they doing?

Talk about it

1. Write four lines about the sower in iambic tetrameter. Then rewrite them in trochaic tetrameter. Which meter matches his stride better, and why?
2. In a paragraph, compare the regular beat of hand sowing with the regular beat of a meter. Where would a skilled sower, or a skilled poet, break the rhythm?

WRITING PROJECT: FOUR FEET, FOUR LINES, ONE SONNET SCANNED

You will scan the whole of Sonnet 146, then build your own lines in each of the four feet.

By the end, you should be able to hear a foot without counting on your fingers.

You will need

- Writing notebook and pencil
- A printed or hand-copied Sonnet 146 with space between lines
- A colored pencil for marking variations

Steps

1. Copy Sonnet 146 by hand, skipping a line between each line of the poem.
2. Read each line aloud for sense. Mark every syllable stressed or unstressed, then divide the feet with bars.
3. With a colored pencil, circle every foot that is not an iamb. In the margin, name it (trochee, spondee, pyrrhic) and write the word it pushes forward.
4. Choose one subject you know well (the sower, a kitchen at supper, a job you do). Write four lines of tetrameter about it: one iambic, one trochaic, one anapestic, one dactylic.
5. Read your four lines aloud to a parent, who taps the beats. Revise any line where the parent's taps and yours do not match.
6. Write one paragraph (150–200 words) with a clear topic sentence explaining one variation in Sonnet 146 and what it does for the meaning.

Check your work

- Every syllable in the sonnet is marked, and the feet are divided.
- I named every variation and the word it emphasizes.
- Each of my four lines keeps its foot from start to finish, or I marked where it varies on purpose.
- My paragraph opens with a topic sentence and quotes the line exactly, with a slash (/) where a line break falls.
- Every sentence in my paragraph is complete; I used semicolons only between independent clauses.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the last couplet of Sonnet 146 and scan it. Which syllables want to be stressed in “And Death once dead”?
2. List ten words from your own life (names, places, tools, foods) for each of the four feet: forty words in all.
3. Copy one line each from Hiawatha, Byron and Tennyson as quoted above, and scan them.

History note. Shakespeare’s Sonnets were first printed together in 1609 by Thomas Thorpe. In that printing, line 2 of Sonnet 146 repeats “My sinful earth” from line 1, and most editors think the printer repeated the words by mistake, leaving the line short. The Project Gutenberg text keeps the 1609 wording, so that is what you copy. Modern editions often print a guess such as “Feeding these rebel powers” in brackets.

 **Style Clinic. Phrases at the end of the sentence.** A prepositional phrase usually ends on its stressed object (“in the FIELD,” “of the LORD”), so it gives a sentence a rising, iambic close. Move the phrase that carries your main idea to the end. Weak: “Character is what lasts, in the end.” Strong: “In the end, what lasts is CHARACTER.” Weak: “Of all the arts, writing is the most useful one for a worker.” Strong: “For a worker, the most useful art is WRITING.” Read your project paragraph aloud and rearrange one sentence so it ends on its strongest stressed word.

For families. Coleridge wrote a short teaching poem for his son Derwent, “Metrical Feet: Lesson for a Boy” (1806), which names each foot in its own meter; it is in his collected poems and makes a good memory aid. Scansion is partly a matter of judgment: two careful readers may stress a line differently, especially small words like *of* or *thy*. Grade the student on whether the marks follow a sensible spoken reading and whether the reasons are given, not on matching one answer key exactly. Sonnet 146 mentions worms eating the body; this is the plain language of mortality, as in Job 19:26.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Scan line 9 of Sonnet 146: “Then soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,”

1. Read it for sense: it is a command. The speaker tells his soul to *live*, and *thou* is pointed (you, soul, not the body).
2. Mark stresses: then SOUL | LIVE THOU | up ON | thy SER | vant's LOSS.
3. Name the pattern and the change: four iambs and one spondee in the second foot.

Answer: Iambic pentameter with a spondee in the second foot. The two heavy stresses on “live thou” make the command land hard, as the turn of the sonnet begins.

Example 2. A student wanted one line of iambic pentameter and wrote: “The tractor rolled across the field in morning light.” Scan and revise.

1. Scan: the TRAC | tor ROLLED | a CROSS | the FIELD | in MORN | ing LIGHT.
2. Count: six iambs. That is iambic hexameter, one foot too long.
3. Cut one foot without losing the picture: “rolled across” becomes “crossed.”

Answer: “The tractor crossed the field in morning light.” the TRAC | tor CROSSED | the FIELD | in MORN | ing LIGHT: five iambs, iambic pentameter.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the foot in each word: *believe*, *happy*, *understand*, *beautiful*.
2. **EASY** Which two feet are rising meters, and which two are falling?
3. **EASY** How many feet are in a line of tetrameter? Of pentameter? Of hexameter?
4. **EASY** What is a spondee, and how is it usually used?
5. **MEDIUM** Scan line 3 of Sonnet 146: “Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,”
6. **MEDIUM** Line 4 begins “Painting thy outward walls.” What is the first foot, and why might Shakespeare put it there?
7. **MEDIUM** Write one line of anapestic tetrameter about a storm and mark its stresses.
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a four-sentence paragraph arguing that Shakespeare’s last line (“And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.”) is stronger because it is not perfectly regular.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Forcing the pattern: reading “of” or “the” as heavy beats because the meter seems to want them, instead of reading for sense first.
- Counting syllables instead of stresses. Ten syllables do not make a line iambic; the stresses must fall in the even places.

- Calling a whole poem trochaic because its first line opens with a stressed word. One inversion does not change the meter.
- Naming the foot but not the length (“iambic”), or the length but not the foot (“pentameter”). Give both.

Make it a game • Foot Tag. One player says a word or short phrase (“Massachusetts,” “over the river,” “Abraham Lincoln”). The next player must clap the stresses and name the foot or feet within five seconds, then give a new word of a different foot. Miss and you are “it.” Bonus round: name a whole line of verse someone in the family knows by heart, and scan it together.

Scripture. “Sing unto him a new song; play skilfully with a loud noise.” (Psalm 33:3, KJV)

God asks not only for praise but for skill; learning meter is learning to make your words sing skilfully.

Practice: answers

1. be-LIEVE: iamb. HAP-py: trochee. un-der-STAND: anapest. BEAU-ti-ful: dactyl.
2. Rising: iamb and anapest (they end on the stress). Falling: trochee and dactyl (they begin on the stress).
3. Four, five and six.
4. Two stressed syllables together (DUM-DUM). It appears as a substitute foot inside a line to add weight, as in “Death once dead.”
5. why DOST | thou PINE | with IN | and SUF | fer DEARTH: iambic pentameter. (Some readers stress “WHY” as well, making the first foot a spondee; either is defensible if explained.)
6. A trochee (PAINT-ing), a trochaic inversion. It throws the stress onto the accusing word: the soul is wasting itself on paint, on the outside of the house.
7. Sample: “And the THUN | der came DOWN | from the HILLS | to the SEA.” Four anapests.
8. Sample: Shakespeare ends his sonnet with a line that refuses to tick along. In “And Death once dead,” two stresses fall together, so the reader must slow down and hit both *once* and *dead*, the way one drives a nail. The slowing gives the paradox time to sink in: the thing that kills is itself killed. A perfectly smooth line would hurry past the very idea the whole poem has been building toward.

5.2 SCANSION OF LONGFELLOW AND POE

OBJECTIVES

- Scan the dactylic hexameter of Longfellow’s *Evangeline*, including its trochee and spondee substitutions and its caesuras.
- Scan the trochaic octameter of Poe’s “The Raven” and explain catalexis and internal rhyme.
- Write a comparative essay that argues how each poet’s meter fits his subject, with scanned lines as evidence.

Warm-up. Read aloud, slowly, “This is the forest primeval,” and then, quickly, “Once upon a midnight dreary.” Which line sways and which line knocks? Without counting anything yet, write one sentence describing the sound of each.

Video slot. Video coming. Longfellow’s *Evangeline* and Poe’s “The Raven” read aloud (a full, unhurried recitation by a trained reader). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

dactylic hexameter

A line of six feet, the first five usually dactyls (DUM-da-da) with trochees or spondees allowed in their place, and the last foot always two syllables. The meter of Homer and Virgil.

trochaic octameter

A line of eight trochees (DUM-da). Very rare in English; Poe’s “The Raven” is the famous example.

catalexis

Leaving off the last unstressed syllable of a line, so it ends on a stress. Such a line is *catalectic*; a complete one is *acatalectic*.

caesura

A strong pause inside a line, usually at a punctuation mark, marked ||. Long lines almost always have one.

internal rhyme

Rhyme between a word inside the line and another word in the same or next line: “dreary ... weary,” “napping ... tapping.”

CORE IDEAS

Two Americans, two falling meters. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882) taught modern languages at Harvard and became the best-loved American poet of his century. Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849), poet, critic and story writer, attacked Longfellow in print more

than once. Yet in the two poems you study today both men chose *falling* meters, lines that start on the beat. Scanning them side by side shows how the same kind of foot can make two very different sounds.

Evangeline and the hexameter. *Evangeline* (1847) tells of the Acadians, French-speaking Catholic farmers of Nova Scotia, whom the British expelled in 1755 during the war with France. Families were put on ships and scattered through the colonies; the poem follows one young woman's years-long search for the man she was to marry. Longfellow chose the line of Homer and Virgil, dactylic hexameter. Scan the opening: "THIS is the | FOR-est pri- | ME-val. || The | MUR-mur-ing | PINES and the | HEM-locks." Five dactyls and a closing trochee: six feet. The caesura after *primeval* splits the line into two breaths.

Substitution in the long line. English has fewer light syllables than Greek, so English hexameters lean on substitutes. Line 3: "STAND like | DRU-ids of | ELD, with | VOI-ces | SAD and pro- | PHET-ic." Only two dactyls here; the rest are trochees, and "Stand like" could even be heard as a spondee. Line 5 puts a heavy spondee in the fourth foot: "LOUD from its | ROCK-y | CAV-erns, the | DEEP-VOICED | NEIGH-bor-ing | O-cean." Then the sentence runs over the line end (enjambment) and lands on one hard word: "Speaks." The long, loose line rolls in and out like the surf and sighs like pines. It suits mourning and memory.

The Raven and the octameter. "The Raven" (1845) was a sensation the month it appeared. Its first line is eight trochees: "ONCE up- | ON a | MID-night | DREAR-y, || WHILE I | PON-dered, | WEAK and | WEAR-y." Line 2 is one syllable short at the end: "O-ver | MAN-y a | QUAINT and | CU-rious | VOL-ume | OF for- | GOT-ten | LORE." That is *catalexis*: the last trochee loses its light syllable, so the line slams shut on the rhyme word. Poe described his own scheme in "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846): octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic, ending each stanza with a short tetrameter catalectic, "Only this and nothing more." Inside the lines, rhymes chime at the caesura: *dreary/weary*, *napping/tapping/rapping*.

Meter fits matter. The ancient teachers called it *decorum* (Greek *to prepon*): style must fit the subject. Longfellow's dactyls give room, and the three-syllable feet let the line drift like a story told by an old man by the fire. Poe's short, strict trochees allow almost no variation, and the internal rhymes keep striking the same bell, so the reader feels the speaker's mind circling the same grief. Both poems are falling meters; one sways and one knocks.

How to scan a long line. (1) Find the caesura first and treat each half separately. (2) Mark the stresses you are sure of: the stressed syllables of nouns, verbs and adjectives. (3) Fill in the small words by sense. (4) For a hexameter, expect the last foot to have two syllables; for Poe, expect a stressed syllable at the end of every other line. (5) Count, and if the count is off, look for an elision ("MAN-y a" said quickly as two syllables) before you blame the poet.

Writing about meter. In a critical essay, a claim about meter needs the same proof as any thesis: *claim, scan, effect*. State what the meter does, quote and scan the line, and say what effect the pattern or the break in it has on the meaning. "Poe's meter is spooky" is an impression. "Poe's catalectic lines end on hard stressed rhymes, so each line shuts like a door" is an argument.

The model. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* (1847), *Prelude*, Project Gutenberg #2039

THIS is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it
Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman?
Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,--
Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands,
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?

PICTURE STUDY

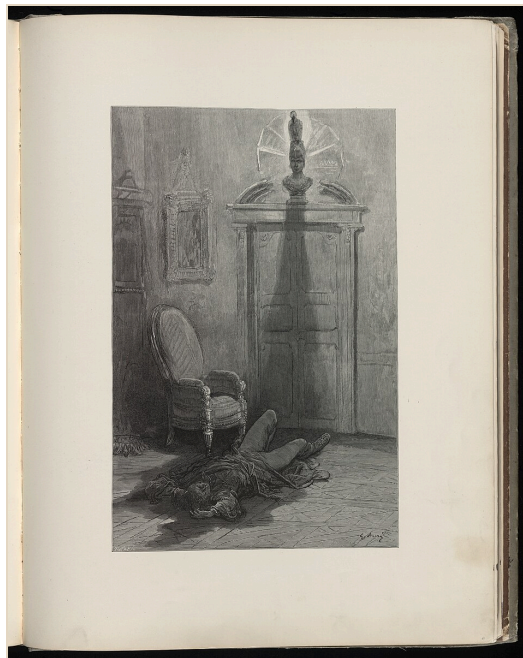


Illustration for the closing lines of "The Raven", Gustave Doré, published 1884 · Wood engraving (book illustration) · From The Raven (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884); this impression from the Library of Congress

[Wikimedia Commons · Public domain](#)

Gustave Doré (1832–1883), the French artist who illustrated the Bible, Dante, Milton and Coleridge, made a series of drawings for “The Raven” near the end of his life; they were engraved on wood and published in New York in 1884, the year after he died. This plate illustrates the poem’s last lines, in which the lamplight throws the raven’s shadow on the floor and the speaker says his soul “Shall be lifted—nevermore!” Doré works only in black and white, as Poe works almost only in trochees: a narrow means, pressed hard.

Look closely

- Find the raven. Where has Doré placed it in relation to the viewer?
- Find the source of light. What does the light make, and where does it fall?
- Look at the lines of the engraving. Where are they dense and dark, and where open and pale?

Talk about it

1. Poe's meter repeats and repeats; Doré's lines repeat as well. Write a paragraph comparing how the poet and the engraver build a single mood by repetition.
2. The poem ends without hope. In a short paragraph, set its last line beside Psalm 30:5 ("weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning") and say what the speaker of "The Raven" lacks.

WRITING PROJECT: HEXAMETER AND OCTAMETER: A COMPARATIVE ESSAY

You will scan six lines from each poem and then write a comparative essay of 600–800 words.

Your thesis must make a claim about how each meter fits its subject, not just name the meters.

You will need

- Writing notebook and pencil
- *Evangeline* (Project Gutenberg #2039) and "The Raven" (Project Gutenberg #1065)
- Colored pencils for caesuras and substitutions

Steps

1. Copy the first six lines of the model and the first stanza (six lines) of "The Raven," skipping lines.
2. Scan all twelve lines. Mark caesuras (|), substitutions in Longfellow and catalectic endings in Poe. Underline every internal rhyme in Poe.
3. Fill in a two-column chart: foot, line length, variety or strictness, rhyme, subject, mood.
4. Write a thesis sentence that claims something about both poems: what each meter does for its story.
5. Draft the essay: introduction with thesis, a body section on Longfellow, a body section on Poe, a section that compares them directly, and a conclusion. Use claim, scan, effect in every body paragraph.
6. Read the essay aloud, and read every quoted line aloud too. Revise any scansion you stumble over.

Check your work

- My thesis makes a claim about both meters and how they fit their subjects.

- Every body paragraph quotes at least one line, scans it, and states its effect.
- Poetry quoted in my sentences uses a slash with a space on each side (/) for line breaks; quotations of four or more lines are set off as block quotations.
- I used dashes, colons and semicolons correctly, and quoted both poets exactly as printed.
- My transitions show comparison and contrast (likewise, by contrast, whereas).

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the first five lines of the model by hand, marking the caesura in each.
2. Copy the first stanza of “The Raven” and underline the internal rhymes in one color, the end rhymes in another.
3. Write two lines of your own dactylic hexameter about a place you love; mark the feet.

History note. Longfellow based *Evangeline* on a story he heard about an Acadian couple separated in the expulsion of 1755. Many exiled Acadians later settled in Louisiana, where their descendants are called Cajuns. Poe published “The Raven” in January 1845 and explained his method the next year in “The Philosophy of Composition,” where he claimed to have built the poem step by step, as one works a problem. Most readers doubt it was quite so cold-blooded, but his description of the meter is exact.

 **Style Clinic. Punctuation for quoting verse.** When you run up to three lines of poetry into your sentence, show each line break with a slash with a space on each side: Poe begins “Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, / Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—” and the dash carries us on. Four lines or more go in a block quotation without quotation marks. Keep the poet’s own punctuation: the double hyphen (--) in a Gutenberg text stands for the dash of the printed book, and you may set it as a dash (—). Use brackets for any word you add and an ellipsis (...) for words you leave out in the middle.

For families. Both full texts are free on Project Gutenberg (#2039 and #1065). “The Raven” is a poem of grief and near-despair over a dead young woman; it is not gory, but it is dark, and the second picture question invites the student to answer it with the hope of Scripture. Poe’s Gutenberg text spells “visiter” in stanza 1 as in his own day; it is not a typo to correct. When grading scansion, accept any reasonable reading that the student can defend aloud.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Scan line 5 of the model and say what the substitution does: “Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean”

1. Mark the sure stresses: LOUD, ROCK-, CAV-, DEEP, VOICED, NEIGH-, O-.
2. Divide: LOUD from its | ROCK-y | CAV-erns, the | DEEP-VOICED | NEIGH-bor-ing | O-cean.
3. Name the feet: dactyl, trochee, dactyl, spondee, dactyl, trochee. Six feet.

Answer: Dactylic hexameter with a trochee in the second foot and a spondee in the fourth. The spondee “deep-voiced” makes two heavy stresses boom together, so the sound of the line imitates the deep voice of the ocean it describes.

Example 2. A student wrote: “Poe uses a lot of rhyme which makes it catchy.” Revise into a claim-scan-effect sentence or two.

1. Make the claim exact: what kind of rhyme, and where?
2. Quote and scan: “WHILE I | NOD-ded, | NEAR-ly | NAP-ping, | SUD-den- | LY there | CAME a | TAP-ping.”
3. Name the effect, tied to the poem’s subject.

Answer: Poe sets rhymes inside the line as well as at its end: “While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping.” Because *napping* and *tapping* both fall on the trochee before a caesura or line end, the ear hears the knocking before the speaker does, and the meter itself seems to rap at the chamber door.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** How many feet are in a line of hexameter? In a line of octameter?
2. **EASY** What foot does Longfellow use most in *Evangeline*? What foot does Poe use in “The Raven”?
3. **EASY** Define *catalectic*.
4. **EASY** Find two internal rhymes in the first line of “The Raven.”
5. **MEDIUM** Scan the last line of the model: “Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?”
6. **MEDIUM** Scan “Only this and nothing more.” Name its meter.
7. **MEDIUM** Where is the caesura in “This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it”? What does it divide?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a thesis sentence for an essay comparing the two meters.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Counting syllables in a hexameter instead of feet. A dactylic hexameter may have anywhere from 12 to 17 syllables.
- Calling every Raven line octameter. The even lines are catalectic heptameter in Poe's own scheme, and the last line of each stanza is a short tetrameter.
- Forgetting elision: "many a" and "curious" are often said with one syllable fewer than they are spelled.
- Describing the sound ("it is gloomy") without scanning a line to prove it.

Make it a game · Hexameter Hopscotch. Chalk six squares in a row on the driveway (or tape them on the floor). A reader says a line of *Evangeline*; the player hops one square per foot, landing hard on each stressed syllable, and must end on square six exactly. Then switch to Poe with eight squares. A miss means the reader chooses the next line.

Scripture. "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90:12, KJV)

Counting feet is a small kind of numbering; Moses asks God to teach the larger kind, which turns counting into wisdom.

Practice: answers

1. Six; eight.
2. The dactyl (with trochee and spondee substitutes); the trochee.
3. A line that leaves off its final unstressed syllable, so it ends on a stress.
4. *dreary* and *weary*.
5. DARK-en-ed by | SHAD-ows of | EARTH, but re- | FLECT-ing an | IM-age of | HEAV-en: five dactyls and a closing trochee, a perfectly regular hexameter.
6. ON-ly | THIS and | NOTH-ing | MORE: trochaic tetrameter catalectic (three full trochees and a final stressed syllable).
7. After "primeval;" at the semicolon. It divides the repeated statement of what remains (the forest) from the question about what is gone (the people).
8. Sample: Longfellow's loose dactylic hexameter lets *Evangeline* drift and swell like the sea that scattered the Acadians, while Poe's strict trochaic octameter, packed with internal rhyme, traps the reader in the same narrow room as his grieving speaker.

5.3 GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, “GOD’S GRANDEUR”

OBJECTIVES

- Map the Petrarchan sonnet form of “God’s Grandeur”: octave, turn and sestet.
- Scan Hopkins’s lines by counting stresses, and explain how his clusters of stress, alliteration and internal rhyme carry the meaning.
- Write an eight-line octave in five-beat lines that imitates Hopkins’s sound, and explain one of your choices in a short paragraph.

Warm-up. Say this line aloud three times, faster each time: “And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil.” What does your mouth have to do? Which sounds repeat? Write one sentence on what the sound itself makes you feel.

Video slot. Video coming. Gerard Manley Hopkins, “God’s Grandeur,” read aloud and explained (a careful reading by a scholar or trained reader). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

Petrarchan sonnet

A fourteen-line poem divided into an octave (eight lines, rhymed ABBAABBA) and a sestet (six lines, here CDCDCD), named for the Italian poet Petrarch.

volta

The “turn” in a sonnet, where the argument changes direction; in a Petrarchan sonnet it usually comes at line 9.

sprung rhythm

Hopkins’s name for a meter that counts only stresses: each foot has one stressed syllable and any number of unstressed ones (even none), so heavy stresses may stand side by side.

alliteration

The repetition of the same consonant sound at the start of nearby stressed syllables: “brown brink,” “warm breast ... bright wings.”

enjambment

Running a sentence over the end of a line without a pause, so the next line begins in the middle of the thought: “the bent / World.”

CORE IDEAS

The poet. Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) studied classics at Oxford, became a Roman Catholic, entered the Jesuit order and was ordained a priest. He wrote “God’s Grandeur” in 1877 in Wales, where he was finishing his theological studies. Almost none of his poems were printed in his lifetime. His friend Robert Bridges, by then Poet Laureate, kept the

manuscripts and published them in 1918, nearly thirty years after Hopkins died in Dublin. Readers who had never heard of him found a voice that sounded like no one else.

The shape of the argument. The poem is a Petrarchan sonnet, and its two parts are a problem and an answer. The *octave* (lines 1–8) states a fact and a puzzle: the world is charged with God’s glory like a battery with electricity, so why do men ignore him? Generations have walked the same road, and everything is worn, smudged and “seared with trade.” The *volta* comes at line 9: “And for all this, nature is never spent.” The *sestet* (lines 9–14) gives the reason: the Holy Ghost broods over the world as a bird over her nest, and morning comes back every day. The form is the logic: *although* in the octave, *because* in the sestet.

Counting stresses. Hopkins built this sonnet on the five-beat line of the English sonnet, but he counts beats, not syllables. Line 5 has ten syllables and five heavy beats, three of them the same word: “GEN-er-A-tions have TROD, have TROD, have TROD.” You hear the boots. Line 4 has a stressed word hanging at the front, cut off by a period: “CRUSHED. || Why do MEN then NOW not RECK his ROD?” That jolt, a stress alone with a full stop behind it, is something smooth iambs cannot do. In his preface (printed by Bridges in 1918) Hopkins called this kind of meter *sprung rhythm*: one stress to a foot, with any number of light syllables, so that stresses can crowd together where the sense needs force.

Sound as meaning. In the octave the sounds grind. “Seared ... bleared, smeared” rhymes three times inside one line; “wears man’s smudge and shares man’s smell” pairs *wears/shares* and *smudge/smell* so the line sounds as dirty as it says. Line 8 piles up monosyllables, “Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod,” so the reader must slow down, as a man in heavy boots cannot feel the ground. In the sestet the sounds open: *dearest freshness deep down, brown brink, warm breast ... bright wings*. The alliteration is no longer a grind but a lift.

The last two lines. “Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.” The line break bends the sentence over the edge just as the horizon bends; *bent* means the curved earth and also the world bent by sin. Then the last line crowds its stresses: WORLD BROODS ... WARM BREAST ... AH! BRIGHT WINGS. The “ah!” is the poet himself breaking into the poem in wonder. Behind it stands Genesis 1:2, “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The same Hebrew verb describes an eagle that “fluttereth over her young” in Deuteronomy 32:11.

Two images to unpack. “Shook foil” is gold leaf or tinsel that throws off sudden flashes when shaken; Hopkins explained this in a letter to Bridges. “The ooze of oil / Crushed” is olive oil pressed slowly out of the fruit, a glory that gathers instead of flashing. So the poem names two ways God’s grandeur appears: in sudden flashes and in slow accumulation. To “reck his rod” is to heed his rule; the rod is a king’s scepter and a father’s correction.

What to imitate. Do not try to copy Hopkins’s oddities. Imitate his habits: choose concrete, one-syllable English words; let stresses fall together where you want force; repeat consonants for sound and meaning, not decoration; and shape the argument so the form

carries it, a problem in the octave and an answer in the sestet. A writer who learns to make stress serve sense will write stronger prose as well as verse.

The model. Gerard Manley Hopkins, "God's Grandeur" (written 1877), *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed. Robert Bridges (1918), Project Gutenberg #22403

THE world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs--
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

PICTURE STUDY



Twilight in the Wilderness, Frederic Edwin Church, 1860 · Oil on canvas · Cleveland Museum of Art
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900), a painter of the Hudson River School, painted this sunset over an untouched northern wilderness in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War. There is no road, no house, no smudge of man: only forest, water and a sky on fire. Hopkins wrote of

“the last lights off the black West”; Church painted them going. Both men believed that creation itself declares the glory of its Maker (Psalm 19:1).

Look closely

- Find the brightest point in the sky. Where does the painter lead your eye from there?
- Find the water. How does it repeat the sky?
- Look at the foreground trees and land. How dark are they compared to the sky, and why?

Talk about it

1. Hopkins’s octave describes a world worn by man; Church shows a world untouched. Write a paragraph comparing them. Which is closer to the world you see every day?
2. Write four five-beat lines describing this sunset, using at least two pairs of alliterating stressed words.

WRITING PROJECT: AN OCTAVE OF GRANDEUR

You will write the octave of a sonnet in Hopkins’s manner: eight five-beat lines about a place where God’s glory shows through something worn or ordinary.

Then you will explain one of your choices of sound or stress in a paragraph, the way you explained Hopkins.

You will need

- Writing notebook and pencil
- Your copy of “God’s Grandeur” with stresses marked
- A list of one-syllable English nouns and verbs from your sketchbook

Steps

1. Choose your place: a workshop, a city street at dawn, a farm field after harvest, a church before service, a kitchen. It should be somewhere used and worn.
2. List twenty concrete one-syllable words that belong there (nouns and strong verbs). Circle pairs that begin with the same sound.
3. Write a first line that states a large truth about the place, as Hopkins does in line 1.
4. Write seven more lines with five strong beats each. Use at least one line where three stresses fall together, one internal rhyme, and one enjambment that bends the sentence over the line end.
5. Rhyme ABBAABBA if you can; if the rhymes force bad words, use slant rhyme (soil/toil/smell) and say so in your notes.
6. Mark every stress. Read the octave aloud to a parent, who taps the beats. Revise until each line has five beats in a natural reading.
7. Write one paragraph (150–200 words) explaining one sound choice in your octave and what it does, in claim-scan-effect form.

Check your work

- Each of my eight lines has five strong beats in a natural reading, and I marked them.
- I used at least one cluster of stresses, one internal rhyme, and one enjambment, each on purpose.
- My octave states a problem or puzzle that a sestet could answer.
- Compound modifiers before a noun are hyphenated (sun-cracked boards), and coordinate adjectives are separated by commas.
- My paragraph has a clear claim and no dangling modifiers.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy “God’s Grandeur” by hand. Mark the rhyme scheme in the margin and draw a line where the volta comes.
2. List every pair or group of alliterating stressed words in the poem.
3. Write one five-beat line in which three stressed one-syllable words stand side by side.

History note. Hopkins burned many of his early poems when he entered the Jesuit order in 1868, thinking poetry might distract from his vocation. He began writing again in 1875, when his superior said he wished someone would write a poem on the wreck of the *Deutschland*, a ship lost with five exiled nuns aboard. “God’s Grandeur” came two years later. Bridges’s 1918 edition, the source of the Gutenberg text, includes Hopkins’s own preface on sprung rhythm.

 **Style Clinic. Compound and stacked modifiers.** Hopkins and Longfellow both use compound adjectives: “deep-voiced ocean,” “thatch-roofed village.” Hyphenate a compound modifier when it comes *before* the noun (a well-worn road), not after it (the road was well worn). Separate coordinate adjectives with a comma when each modifies the noun alone (a warm, bright morning). In poetry Hopkins may stack sounds; in prose, one exact modifier beats three loose ones. Watch also for dangling participles in your explication: not “Reading the sestet, the mood changes” (the mood is not reading), but “Reading the sestet, we feel the mood change.”

For families. Hopkins was a Jesuit priest, and the poem is a Christian sonnet that any believer can read with profit: it praises the Creator, laments man’s neglect of him and ends with the Holy Spirit. The Gutenberg text follows Bridges’s 1918 edition. Some later editions print stress marks that Hopkins placed on certain words; this one does not, so accept any reasonable scansion that has five strong beats per line. Reading Hopkins aloud is essential; he wrote that his verse should be read with the ears.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Scan line 8 and explain the effect: “Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.”

1. Read it for sense. The important words are *bare, now, foot, feel, shod*.
2. Mark: is BARE NOW, || nor can FOOT FEEL, || BE-ing SHOD. Five strong stresses, two pairs side by side.
3. Note the sounds: *foot feel* alliterates; the commas force two pauses.

Answer: Five beats, with stresses crowded in pairs (BARE NOW, FOOT FEEL) and two caesuras. The line moves heavily, like a man in thick boots, and the pairing *foot feel* makes us notice exactly what the shod foot cannot do: feel the earth God made.

Example 2. A student wrote this line for the project: “The old and dirty and worn-out factory stands there.” Revise it in Hopkins’s manner.

1. Find the weak parts: three loose adjectives, “stands there” ends on a light word, few strong stresses.
2. Choose concrete one-syllable words and an action: the factory’s bricks, soot, a whistle.
3. Build five beats with a stress cluster and alliteration.

Answer: Revision: “The mill’s brick black with soot, the whistle’s shriek.” the MILL’S BRICK BLACK with SOOT, the WHIS-tle’s SHRIEK: five beats, a three-stress cluster, and the alliteration of *brick black*. The line now shows the wear instead of naming it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is the rhyme scheme of the octave of “God’s Grandeur”?
2. **EASY** Where is the volta, and what word signals it?
3. **EASY** In sprung rhythm, what does the poet count?
4. **EASY** Who first published Hopkins’s poems, and when?
5. **MEDIUM** Find two examples of internal rhyme in line 6 or 7.
6. **MEDIUM** Explain the two meanings of “bent” in line 13.
7. **MEDIUM** What two pictures of God’s grandeur do lines 2–4 give, and how are they different?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a claim-scan-effect paragraph of three or four sentences on line 5.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading Hopkins in a smooth iambic sing-song. Find the heavy words first and let the light ones hurry between them.

- Using alliteration for decoration (“the beautiful, bountiful, blue bay”) instead of for meaning.
- Splitting the poem at the wrong place. The octave states the problem; the sestet answers it.
- Copying Hopkins’s odd word order in your own octave. Imitate his habits, not his strangeness.

Make it a game • Stress Stack. Players take turns adding one-syllable stressed words to build a line about the room you are in, aiming for five beats with as many stresses together as possible (“Black stove, hot bread, cold milk, wet boots, bright lamp”). Each player must read the whole line aloud before adding a word. A line that cannot be read naturally is “sprung” and the last player starts a new one.

Scripture. “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Genesis 1:2, KJV)

Hopkins’s last image, the Holy Ghost brooding over the world, comes from this verse, where the Spirit hovers over creation like a bird over its nest.

Practice: answers

1. ABBAABBA (God, foil, oil, rod, trod, toil, soil, shod).
2. At line 9, “And for all this, nature is never spent.” The phrase “for all this” (in spite of all this) turns the argument.
3. Stresses only; each foot has one stress and any number of unstressed syllables.
4. Robert Bridges, in 1918.
5. Line 6: seared, bleared, smeared. Line 7: wears, shares.
6. The curved surface of the earth (the horizon), and the world bent or warped by sin.
7. Shaken foil, which flashes suddenly; crushed olives, whose oil gathers slowly. One is sudden, one gradual.
8. Sample: Hopkins makes the reader feel the weariness of human history through repetition. Line 5 scans GEN-er-A-tions have TROD, have TROD, have TROD, so three of its five stresses fall on the same dull word. Each “have trod” is a footstep on a path already beaten flat, and the semicolon at the end comes like a halt. The meter does not tell us that men have trudged; it makes us trudge.

5.4 WRITE IN TWO METERS

OBJECTIVES

- Explain how a poet matches meter to matter, using Stevenson’s “Windy Nights” and “From a Railway Carriage” as evidence.
- Write two poems of 12–16 lines on the same subject, one in a rising meter and one in a falling meter, and scan both.
- Choose the better fit, defend the choice in a short reflection, and recite one poem from memory.

Warm-up. Walk across the room, then march, then skip. Clap the rhythm of each. Which one is da-DUM, which DUM-da, which da-da-DUM? Now name one subject that would suit each motion.

Video slot. Video coming. Robert Louis Stevenson, “From a Railway Carriage” and “Windy Nights,” read aloud (a clear recitation, ideally with footage of a steam train or a horse at the gallop). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

decorum

The classical rule that style must fit the subject, the speaker and the occasion (Greek *to prepon*, “the fitting”). Choosing a meter is a choice of decorum.

rising meter

A meter whose feet end on the stress (iambic, anapestic). It leans forward toward the end of the line, like speech moving to its point.

falling meter

A meter whose feet begin on the stress (trochaic, dactylic). It strikes first, like a drum, a chant or a hammer.

recast

To rewrite the same matter in a new form, changing words, line length and order, not just moving the old words around.

CORE IDEAS

Meter is a decision. In Unit 1 you learned the five canons of rhetoric. Choosing a meter belongs to the third, *style*, and it obeys the old rule of *decorum*: the form must fit the matter. You have heard it this unit. Shakespeare argues with his soul in iambic pentameter, the meter closest to speech; Longfellow mourns a scattered people in long, swaying dactyls; Poe traps a grieving man in hammering trochees; Hopkins makes stresses crowd together under

the weight of trade and toil. Today you make the decision yourself, twice, on the same subject.

Stevenson's two journeys. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), the author of *Treasure Island*, published *A Child's Garden of Verses* in 1885. The poems are written as a child would speak, but the meters are a grown craftsman's. Both of today's poems describe fast motion, a horse and a train, and Stevenson gives each a different beat. "Windy Nights" is built on iambs with anapests mixed in: "when-EV | er the MOON | and STARS | are SET." The extra light syllables are hoofbeats. In each stanza's closing couplet the line begins to fall instead of rise ("LATE in the NIGHT," "BY at the GAL-lop"), and the rider seems to sweep past.

The train in falling feet. "From a Railway Carriage" begins on the beat and never lets go: "FAST-er than | FAIR-ies, | FAST-er than | WITCH-es." Dactyl, trochee, dactyl, trochee: the clatter of wheels over the joints in the rails. Short lines in trochees ("PAINT-ed | STA-tions | WHIS-tle | BY") are the stations flashing past. Stevenson also uses lists of paired nouns, "Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches," so the scenery comes in blurs of two. The last line, "EACH a | GLIMPSE and | GONE for- | EV-er," stops the poem as suddenly as the view out the window changes.

What the meters tend to do. These are tendencies, not laws. *Iambic*: speech, argument, reflection, narrative; the default English line. *Anapestic*: speed, comedy, the gallop, sometimes the charge of an army. *Trochaic*: chant, song, spell, march, lament; it sounds old and strong. *Dactylic*: sway, dance, the sea, the epic. Line length matters as much as foot: long lines suit meditation and story; short lines suit song and action. A sad poem can be written in anapests, but the poet will have to work against the meter, and the reader will feel the strain.

Franklin's method in verse. In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin tells how he improved his writing by taking essays from the *Spectator* and turning some of them into verse, then, after he had forgotten the original, turning them back into prose and comparing his version with the original. Writing in verse forced him to hunt for words of the right length and sound, and his vocabulary grew. Writing the same subject in two meters does the same for you. You cannot just shuffle the first poem's words; you must find new ones.

The process. (1) Choose a subject with motion or work in it: a storm, a harvest, a ship, a woodpile, a city at rush hour, a hymn of thanks. (2) Write a prose sketch of six to eight sentences full of concrete detail. (3) Choose one rising and one falling meter, and decide on a line length for each. (4) Draft the first poem; scan every line. (5) Recast the subject in the second meter. Change the line length if the matter wants it; keep the best images, drop what will not fit. (6) Read both aloud and decide which meter suits the subject better, and why.

Memory and delivery. The fourth and fifth canons, memory and delivery, were the reason meter was invented. Before books were common, verse was how a people carried its history and its prayers in its head. When you have chosen your better poem, learn it by heart and recite it. Meter will help you remember: if a word is missing, the beat will tell you that something is gone.

The model. *Robert Louis Stevenson, "Windy Nights" and "From a Railway Carriage," A Child's Garden of Verses (1885), Project Gutenberg #136*

Windy Nights

Whenever the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

From a Railway Carriage

Faster than fairies, faster than witches,
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;
And charging along like troops in a battle
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:
All of the sights of the hill and the plain
Fly as thick as driving rain;
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,
Painted stations whistle by.

Here is a child who clammers and scrambles,
All by himself and gathering brambles;
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;
And here is the green for stringing the daisies!
Here is a cart run away in the road
Lumping along with man and load;
And here is a mill, and there is a river:
Each a glimpse and gone forever!

PICTURE STUDY



Rain, Steam and Speed – The Great Western Railway, Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1844 · Oil on canvas ·
National Gallery, London
[Wikimedia Commons](#) · Public domain

J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) painted a train of the Great Western Railway crossing the Maidenhead bridge over the Thames, only a few years after the line opened. The engine's black funnel comes straight at us out of a storm of light. On the old river below, a small boat drifts; in the fields, a farmer plows with a horse; and on the track ahead of the engine, if you look closely, a hare runs for its life. Turner sets the old, slow pace of the river and field against the new speed of steam, as Stevenson set the gallop against the clatter of the train.

Look closely

- Find the locomotive's front. What color is it, and how does it stand out from everything else?
- Find the small boat on the river and the plowman in the field. How fast are they moving?
- Look for the hare on the track ahead of the train. Why might Turner have put it there?

Talk about it

1. Write four lines on this painting in a rising meter and four in a falling meter. Which suits the train, and which suits the river?
2. In a paragraph, explain how Turner shows speed in paint. Compare one of his methods with one of Stevenson's methods in meter.

WRITING PROJECT: ONE SUBJECT, TWO METERS

You will write two poems of 12–16 lines each on the same subject, one in a rising meter (iambic or anapestic) and one in a falling meter (trochaic or dactylic).

Then you will choose the better fit, defend your choice in a short reflection, and recite that poem from memory. This is your unit portfolio piece.

You will need

- Writing notebook and pencil
- Your scansion notes from Lessons 5.1–5.3
- Colored pencils for marking stresses and variations
- A quiet room and a listener for the recitation

Steps

1. Choose a subject with motion or work in it, or a subject of praise (a storm, a harvest, a ship, a woodpile, a hymn of thanks). Write a prose sketch of six to eight sentences full of concrete detail.
2. Pick your two meters and a line length for each (for example, iambic pentameter and trochaic tetrameter). Write them at the top of two pages.
3. Draft the first poem, 12–16 lines. Scan every line and mark at least two deliberate variations.
4. Recast the subject in the second meter. Do not shuffle words: find new ones, and change the line length or rhyme if the matter wants it.
5. Read both poems aloud to a parent. Ask which one sounds more like the subject.
6. Write a reflection of 250–350 words with a thesis: which meter fits your subject better, and why? Quote and scan at least two lines from each poem.
7. Learn the better poem by heart and recite it, standing, with eye contact and a steady pace.

Check your work

- Both poems keep their chosen meter, and every variation is marked and deliberate.
- Each poem uses concrete nouns and strong verbs; no line is padded with filler words just to fill the beat.
- My reflection has a thesis and quotes and scans lines from both poems.
- I used parallel structure in my reflection when comparing the two poems (in the first ..., in the second ...).
- Quotations of verse in my reflection use slashes for line breaks, and every sentence is complete.
- I recited one poem from memory without notes.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy “From a Railway Carriage” by hand and scan the first stanza.
2. List five subjects that would suit a rising meter and five that would suit a falling meter, with one reason for each.
3. Rewrite one stanza of “Windy Nights” as a prose paragraph, then compare the two aloud. What did the meter give that the prose lost?

History note. Stevenson wrote most of *A Child’s Garden of Verses* in the early 1880s, often while ill, and dedicated it to Alison Cunningham, the nurse who cared for him as a sickly boy in Edinburgh. Turner showed *Rain, Steam and Speed* at the Royal Academy in 1844; it has been in the National Gallery, London, since the Turner Bequest after his death in 1851.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism.** Stevenson’s “Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches” sets two pairs of nouns side by side in the same grammatical form, and the meter rides on the match. Prose needs the same balance. In your reflection, compare the two poems in parallel form. Faulty: “The iambic version is calm, but when I wrote the trochaic one it was more like a march.” Parallel: “The iambic version walks; the trochaic version marches.” Or: “In the first poem the lines lean forward; in the second they strike first.” Check every comparison sentence in your reflection: are the two halves built alike?

For families. Both Stevenson poems are free in *A Child’s Garden of Verses* (Project Gutenberg #136). They are children’s poems, chosen here because their meters are so clear; your student is studying the craft, not the age of the audience. Franklin’s account of turning *Spectator* essays into verse and back is near the start of his *Autobiography* (Project Gutenberg #20203). Grade the two poems for control of meter and for concrete language, the reflection for its argument, and the recitation for accuracy and steadiness. The finished pair is the unit portfolio piece.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student wrote this iambic line about splitting wood and then tried to recast it in trochees by moving one word: “I split the oak beside the shed.” → “Split I the oak beside the shed.” What went wrong, and how should it be recast?

1. Scan the first: i SPLIT | the OAK | be SIDE | the SHED. Four iambs: iambic tetrameter. Good.
2. Scan the second: SPLIT i | the OAK | be SIDE | the SHED. Only the first foot changed, and the word order is unnatural.
3. Recast with new words so every foot falls: put stressed words first and light words after.

Answer: Shuffling words gives one trochee and three iambs, plus a strained word order. A true recast: “Swing the maul and split the oak.” SWING the | MAUL and | SPLIT the | OAK: trochaic tetrameter catalectic, and the falling beat now sounds like the blow of the maul.

Example 2. A student’s reflection says: “I liked the second poem better because it sounded good.” Revise into a thesis with evidence.

1. Name the meters and the subject.
2. Say what each meter does, in parallel form.
3. Point to a scanned line as proof.

Answer: Revision: “My storm belongs in anapests rather than iambs: the iambic version describes the storm, but the anapestic version imitates it. In ‘and the RAIN | on the ROOF | was a DRUM | in the DARK,’ the two light syllables before each beat rush forward like wind before a gust.”

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the two rising meters and the two falling meters.
2. **EASY** What is decorum?
3. **EASY** Scan “Painted stations whistle by.”
4. **EASY** What did Franklin do with *Spectator* essays to improve his writing?
5. **MEDIUM** Scan “Whenever the moon and stars are set,” and name its feet.
6. **MEDIUM** Recast this trochaic line in iambs, keeping the subject: “Thunder rolling over mountains.”
7. **MEDIUM** Why might a poet choose trochees for a hymn of praise sung by a crowd?
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, in the manner of an SAT- or CLT-style analysis): In a short essay, explain how Stevenson uses meter and other devices in “From a Railway Carriage” to make the reader feel the speed of the train.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Shuffling the first poem's words into a new order instead of truly recasting the subject.
- Padding lines with filler words ("so," "did go," "oh") to make the beat come out.
- Twisting word order unnaturally to force a rhyme. Change the words instead.
- Choosing a meter at random. Defend the choice by what the meter does for the subject.

Make it a game · Meter Switch. One player speaks a line about the room in iambs. The next must say the same thing in trochees, the next in anapests, the next in dactyls, then back to iambs with a new idea. Each player claps the beat while speaking. A player who keeps the meter but loses the meaning, or keeps the meaning but loses the meter, sits out one round.

Scripture. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:" (Ecclesiastes 3:1, KJV)

As there is a time for every purpose, there is a fitting meter for every subject; the wise writer learns to choose.

Practice: answers

1. Rising: iambic, anapestic. Falling: trochaic, dactylic.
2. The classical rule that style must fit the subject, speaker and occasion.
3. PAINT-ed | STA-tions | WHIS-tle | BY: trochaic tetrameter catalectic.
4. He turned some of them into verse, then later turned the verse back into prose and compared his version with the original.
5. when-EV | er the MOON | and STARS | are SET: iamb, anapest, iamb, iamb. Iambic tetrameter with an anapest in the second foot.
6. Sample: "The thunder rolls across the hills." the THUN | der ROLLS | a CROSS | the HILLS: iambic tetrameter.
7. A falling meter begins on the beat, so many voices can start together, and its strong, regular pulse suits singing and marching.
8. Sample outline: Thesis: Stevenson builds speed out of falling feet, paired lists and short trochaic lines. (1) Falling meter: "FAST-er than | FAIR-ies" starts on the beat and repeats like wheels over rail joints. (2) Paired lists: "Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches" show the scenery as a blur of twos. (3) Short lines: "Painted stations whistle by" and "Each a glimpse and gone forever!" flash past in four beats. Conclusion: the poem does not describe speed from outside; it puts the reader in the carriage.

UNIT 5 REVIEW

Closed book except for the printed lines given in each question. Scansion may be marked with CAPS or with ´ and ˘; accept any reasonable reading the student can defend aloud. Writing items are scored with the checklists from the unit.

1. (4 pts) Name the four chief feet and give the stress pattern of each.
2. (2 pts) Which feet are rising and which are falling?
3. (3 pts) Scan and name the meter: "Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,"
4. (3 pts) Define a trochaic inversion and give the example from Sonnet 146, line 4.
5. (4 pts) Scan and name the meter: "Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?"
6. (3 pts) What is catalexis? Show it in "Only this and nothing more."
7. (2 pts) Give two internal rhymes from the first stanza of "The Raven."
8. (4 pts) Name the parts of a Petrarchan sonnet and say where the volta of "God's Grandeur" falls and what it turns from and to.
9. (3 pts) What does Hopkins mean by sprung rhythm?
10. (4 pts) Explain decorum in one sentence and apply it to Stevenson's "From a Railway Carriage."
11. (4 pts) Write two lines on the same subject, one in iambic tetrameter and one in trochaic tetrameter, and scan both.
12. (6 pts) Write a claim-scan-effect paragraph (four to six sentences) on one line from any poem in this unit.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: ONE SUBJECT, TWO METERS

Copy your two poems from Lesson 5.4 on clean paper with titles and full scansion marked in pencil, followed by your 250–350-word reflection. Note the date you recited the better poem from memory. Add your Hopkins-style octave from Lesson 5.3 as a second piece if you wish.

- **Control of meter:** Each poem keeps its chosen meter; variations are deliberate, marked and few.
- **Fit of meter to matter:** The reflection argues, with scanned lines from both poems, which meter suits the subject better, and the argument is persuasive.
- **Concrete language:** Strong verbs and concrete nouns; no filler words or twisted word order to force the beat or rhyme.
- **Mechanics and recitation:** Verse quoted correctly with slashes, parallel structure in comparisons, complete sentences; one poem recited accurately and steadily from memory.

Answer key

1. Iamb (da-DUM), trochee (DUM-da), anapest (da-da-DUM), dactyl (DUM-da-da).
2. Rising: iamb, anapest. Falling: trochee, dactyl.

3. poor SOUL | the CEN | tre OF | my SIN | ful EARTH: iambic pentameter.
4. A trochee in place of an iamb, usually at the start of a line: "PAINT-ing | thy OUT | ward WALLS."
5. DARK-ened by | SHAD-ows of | EARTH, but re- | FLECT-ing an | IM-age of | HEAV-en: dactylic hexameter (five dactyls and a closing trochee).
6. Dropping the final unstressed syllable of a line: ON-ly | THIS and | NOTH-ing | MORE ends on a stress (trochaic tetrameter catalectic).
7. Any two of: dreary/weary; napping/tapping/rapping.
8. Octave (8 lines) and sestet (6 lines). The volta is at line 9, "And for all this, nature is never spent": from man's neglect and the worn-out world to God's renewing presence.
9. A meter that counts only stresses: each foot has one stress and any number of unstressed syllables, so stresses may stand together.
10. Decorum means the style must fit the subject; Stevenson's falling dactyls and trochees ("FAST-er than | FAIR-ies") imitate the clatter of a speeding train.
11. Sample: "The river runs beneath the hill." the RIV | er RUNS | be NEATH | the HILL. "Rivers running down the valley." RIV-ers | RUN-ning | DOWN the | VAL-ley.
12. Sample: In line 8 of "God's Grandeur" Hopkins makes the reader feel the dullness of a shod foot. The line scans this way: is BARE NOW, nor can FOOT FEEL, BE-ing SHOD, with stresses crowded in pairs and two pauses. The crowded beats slow the reader to a trudge. The alliteration of "foot feel" points to the very sense that has been lost. The line does not only say that men have lost touch with creation; its weight makes us feel it.

WRITING FOR WORK I

The art of rhetoric now goes to work. You will write a business letter and a professional email using Lincoln's answer-reason-offer pattern, report findings honestly in a short memo report (with the spies of Numbers 13 as a warning and a model), write and test step-by-step instructions patterned on God's exact commands to Noah, and prepare a complete first-job application, learning from Leonardo da Vinci's famous letter to Ludovico Sforza, ruler of Milan. A Style Clinic in each lesson reviews active voice, parallelism, the imperative mood and dangling modifiers. By the end you will have a packet of real documents you can use to apply for a job, and the habit of writing so that a busy reader can act.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Writes clear, organized multi-paragraph essays (Units 2-3) and knows the canons of rhetoric (Unit 1).
- Recognizes active and passive voice, the moods of verbs, parallel structure and misplaced or dangling modifiers (Grammar Level 3).

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can write a block-format business letter and a professional email that state their purpose in the first two sentences.
- ☐ I can write a short memo report that puts the summary first and keeps findings separate from opinions and recommendations.
- ☐ I can write numbered instructions in the imperative mood and revise them after a user test.
- ☐ I can fill out a job application truthfully and write a one-page résumé and a cover letter that prove my abilities with specific facts.
- ☐ I can revise business writing for active voice, parallel lists and clear modifiers.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Lincoln Letters (Project Gutenberg #8110)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/8110>): Includes the full letter to John D. Johnston (December 24, 1848) used in 6.1, and many short business and personal letters worth imitating.
- **The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, trans. Jean Paul Richter (Project Gutenberg #5000)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5000>): Section 1340 is the letter to Ludovico Sforza used in 6.4. The file is very large; search for "Most illustrious Lord."
- **Isabella Beeton, The Book of Household Management (Project Gutenberg #10136)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/10136>): Classic Victorian instructions: each recipe lists ingredients, method, time, cost and servings. Useful for comparing with 6.3.

- **The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Franklin's account of teaching himself to write and of his early working life as a printer's apprentice.
- **YouthRules! (U.S. Department of Labor)** (<https://www.youthrules.gov>): Free official guide to the hours and jobs allowed for workers under 18; check your state's rules as well.

6.1 THE BUSINESS LETTER AND EMAIL ★

OBJECTIVES

- Name and arrange the parts of a block-format business letter and a professional email.
- Analyze Lincoln’s 1848 letter to John D. Johnston as a model of the answer-reason-offer pattern for saying no kindly and clearly.
- Write a business letter and a matching email that make one clear request in a courteous, exact tone.

Warm-up. Read these two openings aloud: (a) “hey so i was wondering if maybe u could tell me about the job thing” and (b) “Dear Mrs. Harper: I am writing to ask whether your bakery is hiring weekend help this summer.” Which writer would you hire? List three things that make the difference.

Video slot. Video coming. How to format a business letter and write a professional email (a library, community college or career-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

block format

The most common business-letter layout: every part begins at the left margin, paragraphs are not indented, and a blank line separates each part.

inside address

The name, title, company and mailing address of the person who will receive the letter, placed below the date and above the salutation.

salutation and complimentary close

The greeting (“Dear Mr. Lowe:”, with a colon in a business letter) and the courteous closing before the signature (“Sincerely,” with a comma).

subject line

The short label at the top of an email (or a memo) that tells the reader exactly what the message is about before it is opened: “Request: Saturday hours, June 7.”

tone

The attitude a piece of writing shows toward its reader. In business writing the right tone is courteous, direct and calm, neither cold nor chummy.

CORE IDEAS

From the forum to the office. This year you learned the five canons of rhetoric and argued a thesis at full length. Now we turn the same art toward work. A business letter is a small speech delivered on paper to one listener who is busy. It still needs invention (what do I want, and why should the reader grant it?), arrangement (what comes first?) and style (what

words fit this reader?). The difference is scale. A good business letter is usually under one page, and a good email is usually under one screen. Your reader did not ask to hear from you, so every sentence must earn its place.

The parts of a business letter. In block format every part starts at the left margin, with a blank line between parts: (1) your address, or a letterhead; (2) the date, written out (“October 13, 2026”); (3) the inside address, with the reader’s name, title, company and address; (4) the salutation, followed by a colon (“Dear Ms. Alvarez:”); (5) the body, in short paragraphs that are not indented; (6) the complimentary close, followed by a comma (“Sincerely,”); (7) four blank lines for your handwritten signature; (8) your typed name. If you send something with the letter, add “Enclosure” below your name. If you do not know the reader’s name, find it. A phone call to the front desk is better than “To Whom It May Concern.”

The body: purpose first. Busy readers want the point in the first two sentences. Open with what you want or what you are answering: “I am writing to ask whether ...” or “Thank you for your order of May 3; it shipped today.” The middle paragraph gives the facts the reader needs to act: dates, amounts, names, reasons. The last paragraph says exactly what happens next and makes it easy (“I will call your office on Monday morning” or “You can reach me at 555-0142 after 3 p.m.”). This is the old exordium, narration and peroration of Unit 1, trimmed to fit a single page.

Email is still a letter. Most business letters today travel as email, but the email is not a text message. Write a subject line that names the topic and, if you can, the action (“Question about your summer camp counselor opening”). Begin with a greeting (“Dear Mr. Reed,” or “Good morning, Mr. Reed,”; a comma is normal in email) and end with a closing and your full name, with a phone number below it. Keep one topic per email so it can be answered and filed. Use standard capitals and punctuation, no emoji, no abbreviations like “u” or “thx.” Before you press Send, reread for three things: the right person in the To line, the attachment really attached, and nothing you would be ashamed to see forwarded. An email can be copied to anyone and kept for years.

Lincoln’s model: answer, reason, offer. In December 1848, while he was serving in Congress, Abraham Lincoln received a letter from his stepbrother, John D. Johnston, asking for eighty dollars. Lincoln loved him and refused him in the same letter. His first sentence gives the answer: “Your request for eighty dollars, I do not think it best to comply with now.” Then he gives the reason, plainly and without insult: the trouble is a habit of wasted time, not bad luck. Then, in the passage you will copy, he makes an offer that is better than the request: for every dollar Johnston earns by his own work before May, Lincoln will add another. Notice how exact the offer is. It has a deadline (“the first of next May”), a worked example (“ten dollars a month ... twenty dollars a month”) and a limit (work “close to home, in Coles County”). A reader cannot misunderstand it.

Tone: grace seasoned with salt. Lincoln’s letter is firm, but near its close he writes, “You have always been kind to me, and I do not now mean to be unkind to you.” That is the business writer’s goal in every hard message: tell the truth (Ephesians 4:25) in words

“seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Avoid two errors. The first is coldness: one-line replies, ALL CAPITALS, sarcasm. The second is gush: piled-up apologies, exclamation points, flattery. Write as you would speak to a respected adult across a desk. If you are angry, write the draft, wait a day, and cut every sentence you would not say to the reader’s face.

Why this matters now. Your first business letters will be small: asking about a volunteer opening, thanking a team sponsor, asking for a reference. A fifteen-year-old who can write a clean, polite, exact letter is noticed. In 6.4 you will use this lesson to apply for a first job.

The model. *Abraham Lincoln, letter to John D. Johnston, December 24, 1848, in Lincoln Letters, Project Gutenberg #8110*

You are now in need of some ready money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, "tooth and nail," for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of things at home--prepare for a crop, and make the crop; and you go to work for the best money wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get. And to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of next May, get for your own labor either in money or in your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this, I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines, in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home, in Coles County. Now if you will do this, you will soon be out of debt, and what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But if I should now clear you out, next year you will be just as deep in as ever.

PICTURE STUDY



The Merchant Georg Gisze, Hans Holbein the Younger, 1532 · Oil and tempera on oak panel ·
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Georg Gisze was a young German merchant of the Hanseatic League who worked at the Steelyard, the League's trading house in London. Holbein painted him in his office, surrounded by the tools of business correspondence: letters pinned to the wall and addressed to him, an inkwell and quills, a seal for closing letters, a box of string, and a small brass scale for weighing coins. He has just opened a letter. Nearly five hundred years ago, a man's business still traveled by letter, and a merchant's fortune could depend on how well he read and wrote them.

Look closely

- Find the letter in Gisze's hands. Is it opened or sealed? How can you tell?
- Find at least four writing tools on the table and the wall.
- Find the letters tucked into the strips on the wall. Why might a merchant keep old letters where he can see them?

Talk about it

1. Imagine the letter Gisze is reading. Write its first two sentences in plain modern business style, stating its purpose at once.
2. What does this office tell you about the value of written records in business? Answer in a paragraph that names three details from the painting.

WRITING PROJECT: ONE REQUEST, TWO FORMS

Write a real business letter that makes one clear request, then send the same request as a short email. Choose a real reader and, with a parent's approval, send one of them.

Ideas: ask a library, museum, nursing home or church office about volunteer work; ask a local business owner for a fifteen-minute interview about how he or she started; thank a sponsor of your team or co-op and report how the gift was used.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A computer with a word processor and an email account (used with a parent)
- The reader's correct name, title and address (look it up or call)
- Plain white paper and an envelope, if you mail the letter

Steps

1. Invention: in one sentence, write what you want the reader to do. Then list the facts he or she needs in order to do it (dates, times, who you are, how to reach you).
2. Find the reader's full name, title and mailing address. Check the spelling of the name twice.
3. Draft the letter in block format with all eight parts. Paragraph 1: purpose. Paragraph 2: facts and reasons. Paragraph 3: the next step and how to reach you.
4. Cut it to one page. Strike every sentence that does not help the reader decide or act.
5. Turn the letter into an email: write a subject line, change the colon after the salutation to a comma, and shorten the body to about 120 words.
6. Read both aloud to a parent. Ask, "What exactly am I asking for?" If the parent cannot answer in one sentence, revise.
7. Print and sign the letter, or send the email from a family account, with a parent's approval.

Check your work

- All eight parts of the letter are present, in block format, with a colon after the salutation and a comma after the close.
- The purpose is stated in the first two sentences.
- The last paragraph says what happens next and how to reach me.
- The email has a clear subject line, one topic, a greeting, a closing and my full name.
- I used active voice for my own actions and avoided needless passive verbs (Style Clinic).
- Names, dates and numbers are checked; no slang, emoji or texting abbreviations.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Lincoln passage by hand. Underline the deadline, the worked example and the limit in his offer.
2. Imitate the answer-reason-offer pattern: write a four-sentence note declining a request (to babysit, to lend a tool, to join a team) and offering something better.
3. Collect five subject lines from real emails your family has received (business ones, not personal). Rewrite two weak ones so the reader knows the topic and the action.

History note. Lincoln's letter is dated December 24, 1848, during his single term in the U.S. House of Representatives. John D. Johnston was the son of Sarah Bush Johnston, the widow who married Lincoln's father and raised young Abraham with kindness. Holbein painted Georg Gisze in London in 1532; the letters on the wall are addressed to Gisze, and the painting is one of the best pictures we have of a merchant's office in the age of the Reformation.

 **Style Clinic. Active and passive voice (Level 3, voice and mood).** In active voice the subject does the action: "*I will deliver* the flyers Friday." In passive voice the subject receives it: "The flyers *will be delivered* Friday." Business writing prefers the active voice because it tells the reader *who* is responsible. Lincoln writes, "I now promise you," not "A promise is now made." Use the passive only when the doer is unknown or truly unimportant ("The store was built in 1921"). Never use it to hide a mistake: "Your order was lost" is weaker and less honest than "We lost your order, and I am sorry." Revise: "A decision has been made to cancel practice" → "Coach Hale has canceled practice."

For families. Students should not send email to strangers from a private account without a parent's knowledge; using a family email or copying a parent is a sensible rule. Block format follows common American office practice; some employers prefer modified block, and either is acceptable if consistent. Lincoln's full letter (Gutenberg #8110) is short and worth reading together. His answer to Johnston's remark that he would almost give his place in Heaven for the money ("Then you value your place in Heaven very cheaply") opens a good conversation about love that tells the truth.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise this email. Subject: “hi.” Body: “Hi!! I saw ur sign for help and I really really want to work there because I love animals so much!!! Let me know. Thanks, Ben”

1. Subject line: name the topic and the action. “Question about your kennel assistant opening.”
2. Greeting: find the owner’s name from the sign or website and use it: “Dear Mrs. Walsh,”.
3. Purpose first, then facts: what job, when he can work, why he is suited (evidence, not exclamation points).
4. Close with the next step, a full name and a phone number; remove slang and the repeated “really.”

Answer: Subject: Question about your kennel assistant opening

Dear Mrs. Walsh,

I saw the sign in your window for a kennel assistant and would like to apply. I am fifteen, available Saturdays and weekday afternoons after 3:30, and for two years I have cared for our three dogs and a neighbor’s dog while the family travels.

May I stop by on Saturday morning to fill out an application? You can reach me at 555-0187.

Sincerely,
Benjamin Cole

Example 2. Take apart this student’s refusal letter, written to a neighbor who asked the student to mow every week while also painting a fence: “Dear Mr. Okafor: Thank you for thinking of me for both jobs this summer. I am not able to take on the fence as well as the mowing, because my weekday mornings are already promised to the hardware store. I would be glad to keep mowing every Saturday, and my brother Sam, who helped me paint our own fence last year, is free in July. His number is 555-0133. Sincerely, Eli Grant”

1. Answer: the refusal comes in the second sentence, after one courteous line. It is clear: “I am not able to take on the fence.”
2. Reason: one honest, specific reason, with no excuses piled up.
3. Offer: two concrete offers (keep mowing on Saturdays; a named, qualified substitute with a phone number). This is Lincoln’s pattern.

Answer: A strong letter. It follows answer–reason–offer, uses active voice, and leaves the reader with a clear next step. One improvement: the date and inside address are missing above the salutation.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** List the eight parts of a block-format business letter in order.
2. **EASY** What punctuation follows the salutation in a business letter? In a business email?
3. **EASY** Name Lincoln’s three moves in his letter to Johnston.
4. **MEDIUM** Write a better subject line for “Question.” The email asks the church office whether the youth group may use the fellowship hall on Friday, March 6.
5. **MEDIUM** Find three details in Lincoln’s offer that make it impossible to misunderstand.
6. **MEDIUM** Change to active voice: “It was decided by the manager that schedules will be posted on Mondays.”
7. **CHALLENGE** Write the opening two sentences of a letter to a hardware store owner who sponsored your baseball team’s uniforms. State your purpose at once.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed (20 minutes): A customer has written to complain that you delivered her newspapers late three days in a row. Write the body of your reply in three short paragraphs: own the mistake, give the cause and the fix, and offer something to make it right.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Burying the request in the third paragraph. State your purpose in the first two sentences.
- Using a comma after the salutation in a printed business letter, or forgetting the comma after “Sincerely.”
- Writing an email like a text message: no subject line, no greeting, no capitals, emoji, or “u” and “thx.”

- Hiding responsibility in the passive voice (“mistakes were made”) instead of owning the action.

Make it a game · Letter Puzzle. A parent cuts a printed business letter into its eight parts and shuffles them. Race the clock to lay them out in block-format order. Then swap roles: the student writes a short letter, cuts it up, and times the parent.

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 business letter must often answer someone, sometimes with a refusal; Paul asks us to answer with grace and with salt, kind and yet clear, as Lincoln did.

Practice: answers

1. Your address (or letterhead), date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature, typed name.
2. A colon in a business letter (“Dear Ms. Park:”); a comma is normal in email (“Dear Ms. Park,”).
3. Answer (he will not send the money now), reason (the habit of wasting time), offer (a dollar for every dollar earned by work before May).
4. Sample: Request to use the fellowship hall, Friday, March 6.
5. The deadline (“the first of next May”), the worked example (ten dollars a month becomes twenty), and the limit (work “close to home, in Coles County,” not St. Louis or the mines).
6. The manager decided to post schedules on Mondays.
7. Sample: Thank you for sponsoring the Riverside Rangers’ uniforms this spring. I am writing on behalf of the team to tell you how your gift was used and to invite you to our final game on June 14.
8. Sample: Dear Mrs. Lin: You are right, and I am sorry. Your paper reached your porch after 7:00 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and you count on reading it before work.

My bicycle chain broke Monday, and I did not fix it quickly enough. It is repaired, and I have moved your street to the start of my route, so your paper will arrive before 6:30.

Please accept this week’s delivery without charge. If the paper is ever late again, call me at 555-0119 and I will bring it at once. Sincerely, Daniel Ruiz

6.2 THE SHORT REPORT: FINDINGS BEFORE OPINIONS

OBJECTIVES

- Name the parts of a short memo report and explain why the summary comes first.
- Use the report of the twelve spies (Numbers 13) to tell findings from conclusions and an honest report from an “evil report.”
- Gather facts on a real question and write a one- to two-page report with headings, findings and a recommendation.

Warm-up. Your parent asks, “How was the hardware store?” and you answer in two ways: (a) “Fine.” (b) “They had the hinges, \$4.29 each, but only three of the four we need; the clerk says more come Thursday.” Which answer could your parent act on? What makes the difference?

Video slot. Video coming. How to write a short report or memo with headings and a summary (a library, community college or career-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

report

An organized account of facts gathered for a reader who must understand or decide something. It informs first and may then recommend.

memo heading

The four lines at the top of a short business report or memo: To, From, Date, Subject.

summary (bottom line up front)

A short paragraph at the start of a report that gives the main finding and recommendation, so a busy reader can stop there if he must.

finding

A fact the writer discovered or verified: a count, a measurement, a price, a quotation, an observation. Findings are kept separate from opinions.

recommendation

The action the writer advises, based on the findings and clearly labeled as advice.

CORE IDEAS

Narration put to work. Theon taught that every narration answers six questions: who, what, where, when, how and why. A report is a narration of facts gathered for a purpose. Your boss, your pastor or your father wants to know what is true about something so that he can decide what to do. An essay defends a thesis; a report lays out findings first and argues only at the end, in a clearly marked recommendation. The report’s first virtue is accuracy; its second is order.

A report from the wilderness. When Moses sent twelve men to search the land of Canaan, he gave them a commission with exact questions (Numbers 13:17-20): Is the land good or bad? Are the people strong or weak, few or many? Do they live in tents or strongholds? Is the soil fat or lean? Bring back some fruit. That is how every good report begins: with a reader and clear questions. Forty days later the spies returned and gave their findings, in the passage you will copy. They brought evidence, a cluster of grapes so large that two men carried it on a staff. Every man agreed on the facts: the land is rich, the people are strong, the cities are walled.

Findings, conclusions, and the “evil report.” The spies split over what the facts meant. Caleb concluded, “we are well able to overcome it.” Ten others concluded the opposite, and then their report changed. In verses 32-33 they called it “an evil report”: the land now “eateth up the inhabitants,” all the people are “men of a great stature,” and “we were in our own sight as grasshoppers.” Notice what happened. Fear turned findings into exaggeration, and a feeling (“in our own sight”) was reported as if it were a measurement. A Christian who writes reports must keep three things apart: what I observed (“the walls are about twenty feet high”), what I infer (“a siege would take months”) and what I recommend (“attack from the north”). Label each one honestly.

The parts of a short report. A one- or two-page report sent inside a company or a family usually follows the memo form. (1) *Heading*: To, From, Date, Subject. (2) *Summary*: two to four sentences giving the main finding and the recommendation. Write it last, put it first. (3) *Purpose*: the question you were asked and who asked it. (4) *Method*: how you gathered the facts (“I called four shops and visited two”). (5) *Findings*: the facts, under headings, with numbers, dates and sources. (6) *Conclusions and recommendation*: what the facts mean and what you advise. A reader who reads only the summary should know the answer; a reader who doubts it should find the proof below.

Design for a busy reader. Reports are skimmed before they are read. Help the eye with short headings, short paragraphs, numbered or bulleted lists, and a small table when you compare three or more things on the same points. Use exact numbers (“\$212” not “around two hundred”), name your sources (“according to the county extension office”), and give dates for prices and counts, since both change. Plain words beat impressive ones: “use” not “utilize,” “now” not “at this point in time.”

Voice and honesty. A report is not a diary, but it is not written by a machine either. Use “I” for what you did (“I measured the shed”) and keep yourself out of the findings. Above all, report what you found, not what you hoped to find. If two of five sources disagree with your recommendation, say so and explain why you still recommend it. A reader who discovers that you hid a fact will never trust your next report. Joshua and Caleb’s report was unpopular, and the people wanted to stone them (Numbers 14:10), but God honored it: of all that generation of grown men, only those two entered the land.

The model. *Numbers 13:26-30 (KJV), the report of the spies*

And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back

word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and shewed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.

PICTURE STUDY



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

Vermeer painted a mapmaker at the moment of thinking. He has been measuring with his dividers, and he looks up toward the window as if checking a figure in his head. Around him are the sources of his work: a terrestrial globe, a sea chart on the wall, rolled charts on the floor, books on the cabinet. The Dutch Republic of the 1600s was a nation of merchants and sailors, and good maps and accurate reports of distant coasts were worth a fortune. A geographer's map is a kind of report: findings set down so that someone else can act on them.

Look closely

- Find the dividers in his hand. What is this tool used for?
- Find at least three sources of information in the room (maps, charts, books, globe).
- Where does the light come from, and how does Vermeer use it to direct your eye?

Talk about it

1. Write a three-sentence “finding” the geographer might be about to record. Keep it to facts he could measure.
2. How is a mapmaker like a report writer? Answer in a paragraph that uses the words finding and source.

WRITING PROJECT: A REPORT SOMEONE CAN ACT ON

Write a one- to two-page memo report on a real question for a real reader who will make a decision from it. Your parent may be the reader.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A phone, the internet (with permission) or a notepad for visits
- A word processor for headings and a small table

Steps

1. Get a commission. Write the reader’s name, the exact question and the deadline.
Examples: “Which of three used bicycles should Dad buy for my brother?” “How is our co-op’s lending library used, and should it keep its Tuesday hours?” “What would it cost to start a small lawn-care business this spring?”
2. Gather at least four findings from at least two kinds of source (calls, visits, counts, measurements, printed sources). Write each on its own line with the date and the source.
3. Sort the findings under two to four headings. If you compare three or more options on the same points, make a small table.
4. Draft the purpose, method and findings sections. Keep opinions out of the findings.
5. Write your conclusions and recommendation, labeled as such. If any finding cuts against your recommendation, mention it and answer it.
6. Last, write the two-to-four-sentence summary and place it first, under the memo heading.
7. Hand the report to your reader and ask, “Could you decide from this?” Revise what was unclear.

Check your work

- The memo heading (To, From, Date, Subject) is complete, and the subject names the question.
- The summary gives the main finding and recommendation in four sentences or fewer.
- Findings are facts with numbers, dates and sources; opinions appear only under conclusions and recommendation.
- Headings and list items are parallel in grammatical form (Style Clinic).
- Numbers, prices and names are checked twice.
- The report fits on one or two pages.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Numbers 13:27–28. Label each clause F (finding) or C (conclusion).
2. Read Numbers 13:31–33 and list every exaggeration in the “evil report.” Beside each, write what an honest finding would have said.
3. For one week, write a three-line daily report on something you do (practice, chores, a job): what was done, a number, what comes next.

History note. Vermeer signed and dated *The Geographer* in 1669; it is one of very few dated works by him. The same model and robe appear in his *Astronomer*, and the two pictures are often thought of as a pair. Theon’s six elements of narration (person, action, place, time, manner, cause) come from his *Progymnasmata* of the first century A.D., and they still sit underneath the reporter’s “who, what, when, where, why and how.”

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism in headings and lists (Level 3, usage and style).** Items in a list or a set of headings should share the same grammatical form, so the reader sees at a glance that they are equals. Not parallel: “Findings: 1. Price of the bikes. 2. Checking the brakes. 3. Which one is lighter?” Parallel: “1. Price. 2. Brakes. 3. Weight.” or “1. Comparing prices. 2. Testing brakes. 3. Weighing frames.” The spies’ report is built on parallel clauses: “the people be strong ... the cities are walled ... we saw the children of Anak.” Check every list in your report: all nouns, all *-ing* phrases, or all full sentences, never a mixture.

For families. Read Numbers 13–14 together; chapter 14 shows the cost of the faithless report and God’s mercy and judgment. The memo form taught here is standard in American offices and the military (“bottom line up front”). If your student lacks a natural commission, ask a real question you need answered (a purchase, a schedule, a repair) and act on the report; the lesson is stronger when the report actually matters.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Sort these sentences from a student's report on the co-op library into finding (F), inference (I) or opinion/recommendation (R): (a) "On four Tuesdays in October, 23 books were checked out." (b) "Most families seem to prefer Thursday." (c) "The Tuesday hours are a waste of everyone's time." (d) "On the same four Thursdays, 61 books were checked out."

1. (a) and (d) are counts with dates: findings.
2. (b) is drawn from the counts but goes beyond them (it guesses at preference): inference. Label it and support it.
3. (c) is an opinion stated with heat. A report puts it as a calm recommendation, under its own heading.

Answer: F, I, R, F. Revised recommendation: "Because Thursday checkouts were nearly three times Tuesday's in October, I recommend closing on Tuesdays and adding an hour on Thursdays."

Example 2. Revise this opening so the bottom line comes first: "As you know, our family has been talking about getting a bicycle for Sam for a while now, and last week you asked me to look into it, so on Saturday I went to three places and also looked online, and there were a lot of options, and after thinking about it I think the blue one is best."

1. Find the main finding and the recommendation buried at the end: the blue bicycle is best.
2. Say why in a phrase, with numbers.
3. Move the method to its own section and cut the throat-clearing ("As you know," "for a while now").

Answer: Summary: I recommend the blue Schwinn at Miller's Cycle (\$140). Of the three bicycles that fit Sam, it is the only one with new tires and working hand brakes, and it is \$35 below the average price of the other two. Details on all three follow.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What four lines make up a memo heading?
2. **EASY** Why does the summary come first, even though it is written last?
3. **EASY** What evidence did the spies bring back from Canaan?
4. **MEDIUM** In Numbers 13:27-30, which sentences are findings, and which is a recommendation?
5. **MEDIUM** Why is "we were in our own sight as grasshoppers" not a finding?
6. **MEDIUM** Make these headings parallel: "Cost," "How long it takes," "Is it safe?"

7. **CHALLENGE** Write a four-sentence summary for a report to your pastor on whether the church's nursery has enough supplies for the next three months.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed (25 minutes, SAT/ACT style): Some say a report should never include the writer's opinion. Write a short essay with a clear thesis on whether a report should end with a recommendation. Give one example and answer one objection.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Telling the story of how you did the research before giving the answer. Put the summary first.
- Mixing opinions into the findings ("the shocking price of \$40").
- Vague numbers and missing sources ("a lot of people," "online it said").
- Headings and list items in mixed grammatical forms.

Make it a game • Spy Report. One player leaves the room for two minutes while the other changes five things in it. The spy returns, has three minutes to search, then gives a report in under one minute: findings only, with exact details ("the blue cup moved from the shelf to the desk"). Score a point for each correct finding; lose a point for any guess reported as a fact.

Scripture. "He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him." (Proverbs 18:13, KJV)

A report gathers and hears the facts before it gives an answer; to recommend before you know is folly.

Practice: answers

1. To, From, Date, Subject.
2. Busy readers need the main finding and recommendation at once; the details below are proof for those who want them.
3. The fruit of the land, including a cluster of grapes carried on a staff between two men (Numbers 13:23, 26).
4. Findings: the land flows with milk and honey; this is its fruit; the people are strong; the cities are walled and great; the Anakim, Amalekites and others live there. Recommendation: Caleb's "Let us go up at once, and possess it."
5. It reports a feeling about themselves, not a measurement or observation of the land or people; fear has been presented as if it were fact.
6. Sample: Cost, Time, Safety.
7. Sample: The nursery has enough diapers and wipes for about five weeks, not three months. I counted supplies on September 28 and compared them with sign-in records for August and September, which average 14 children a Sunday. Snacks and cleaning supplies will last past December. I recommend buying four packs of size 4 diapers and two boxes of wipes before October 30.
8. Sample thesis: A report should end with a recommendation, provided the recommendation is clearly labeled and kept apart from the findings, because the person who gathered the facts

usually understands them best. Example: Caleb's report gave findings and then advice.

Objection answered: the ten spies show that a writer's fear can corrupt a report, but the cure is honest separation of fact from advice, not silence.

6.3 INSTRUCTIONS AND PROCEDURES

OBJECTIVES

- Name the parts of a set of instructions and explain why each step begins with a verb in the imperative mood.
- Study God’s instructions to Noah (Genesis 6:14–16) for exactness of material, measure and order.
- Write, test and revise a set of instructions for a real task, using a stranger as the tester.

Warm-up. Without pointing or using your hands, tell a parent how to tie a shoe. The parent must do exactly what you say and nothing more. Where did your words fail?

Video slot. Video coming. How to write clear step-by-step instructions (technical writing basics from a library, community college or career-center channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

instructions

Writing that tells a reader how to do a task, step by step, so that he can do it without the writer present.

procedure

A set of instructions that a workplace follows the same way every time, such as opening a store, cleaning a machine or handling cash.

imperative mood

The verb form that gives a command, with the subject “you” understood: “Loosen the nut.” “Make thee an ark.”

caution

A warning placed before the step it concerns, telling the reader what could injure him or damage the work.

user test

Watching someone who has never done the task follow your written instructions without help, and noting every place he hesitates or goes wrong.

CORE IDEAS

The most-read writing in the world. Few people will read your essays, but many may follow your instructions: the recipe card, the closing checklist at the shop, the note for the neighbor who feeds the chickens while you are away. Instructions are judged by a hard test. When they fail, something real goes wrong: a wrong turn, a fallen cake, a cut hand. Their reader is usually doing the task while reading, with dirty hands and divided attention, and you are not there to answer questions. Every word must be clear the first time.

The pattern given to Noah. The model for this lesson is the oldest set of building instructions most of us know. Notice what God tells Noah, and in what order. First the object and its material: “Make thee an ark of gopher wood.” Then the finish: “pitch it within and without with pitch.” Then the exact measure, all in one unit: three hundred cubits long, fifty broad, thirty high. Then the features, each placed: a window finished to a cubit above, a door “in the side thereof,” and “lower, second, and third stories.” There are no adjectives of praise, only nouns, numbers and commands. And the account closes with the result instructions are written for: “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (Genesis 6:22).

The parts of a set of instructions. (1) A *title* that names the result: “How to Patch a Bicycle Inner Tube.” (2) A short *introduction*: what the task does, how long it takes, and any skill needed. (3) A *list of materials and tools*, with quantities, so the reader gathers everything before starting. Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1861) made this habit famous in cookery by setting the ingredients and their amounts above every recipe. (4) *Numbered steps* in the order of doing. (5) *Cautions*, set off and placed before the step they concern, never after. (6) *Checks* that tell the reader he is on track (“The bubbles should stop”). (7) A *finish*: how to know the job is done, and what to do if it is not.

Writing the steps. Begin each step with a verb in the imperative mood: “Remove,” “Fill,” “Press.” Give one action per step, or two only if they happen together (“Hold the lever down and turn the key”). Give exact quantities and units (“two cups,” “a quarter turn clockwise,” “for 30 seconds”). Name each part the same way every time; if you call it “the valve” in step 2, do not call it “the stem” in step 6, or the reader will think there are two parts. Describe things by what the reader can see: “the red wire,” “the larger of the two bolts.” Put the reason in a short clause only when it prevents a mistake: “Let the glue dry five minutes, or the patch will slide.”

Test with a stranger. You cannot judge your own instructions, because you already know how to do the task and your mind fills every gap. Give them to someone who has never done the job, a younger brother or sister or a grandparent, and watch in silence. Do not help. Every place your tester pauses, rereads, asks a question or does the wrong thing marks a flaw in the writing, not in the reader. Revise and test again. Professional technical writers do the same thing, and call it a user test.

Procedures save lives. In 1935 a new bomber that Boeing had built for an Army competition crashed on takeoff because an experienced test pilot had forgotten to release a control lock. The fix was not a better pilot but a written checklist, and checklists have been part of flying ever since. Hospitals, kitchens, factories and fire departments all run on written procedures for the same reason: even skilled people forget steps when they are tired or rushed. When you take your first job, you will likely follow procedures written by someone else; one day you will write them for others. To do it well is a quiet form of love for your neighbor. As Paul wrote to a disorderly church, “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

The model. *Genesis 6:14-16 (KJV), God’s instructions to Noah*

Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it.

PICTURE STUDY



The Milkmaid, Johannes Vermeer, about 1660 · Oil on canvas · Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer painted a kitchen maid absorbed in one simple step of a task: pouring milk slowly into an earthenware bowl. Bread is broken on the table, and many think she is making a bread pudding. Nothing in the picture is hurried. Her eyes are on the stream of milk, and her hands hold the jug at just the angle the work needs. The painting honors ordinary work done with care, the kind of work every procedure is written to guide.

Look closely

- Follow the stream of milk from the jug to the bowl. How thick is it, and what does that tell you about her care?
- List every ingredient or tool you can find on the table.
- Find the small foot-warmer on the floor at the right and the nail holes in the wall. What do these tiny details add?

Talk about it

1. Write the next three steps of the maid's recipe as numbered instructions, each beginning with an imperative verb.

2. Vermeer gave his finest skill to a picture of a single kitchen task. What does that suggest about the worth of ordinary work? Answer in a paragraph.

WRITING PROJECT: INSTRUCTIONS THAT PASS THE STRANGER TEST

Write instructions for a real task you know well and someone else will need to do: a chore, a repair, a recipe, a procedure at your job or your church. Aim for 8 to 15 steps.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- The tools and materials for the task itself
- A willing tester who has never done the task
- A word processor for the final copy

Steps

1. Do the task once yourself slowly and jot every action as you do it, including the small ones you usually skip in your head.
2. Write the title (naming the result), a two-sentence introduction (what, how long, skill needed) and the materials list with quantities.
3. Turn your notes into numbered steps. Begin each with an imperative verb; give one action per step and exact measures.
4. Find every danger or common mistake and write a caution before the step where it applies. Add at least one check ("You should now see ...").
5. Write the finish: how the reader knows the job is done.
6. Run a user test. Hand the instructions to your tester and watch silently. Mark every pause, question and error.
7. Revise every marked step, then test once more with a second reader if you can.

Check your work

- The title names the result, and the materials list comes before the steps.
- Every step begins with an imperative verb and keeps the same mood throughout (Style Clinic).
- Each step gives one action with exact quantities, times or directions.
- Each part is called by the same name every time.
- Cautions come before the steps they concern.
- A tester completed the task from my writing alone, and I revised every place he or she hesitated.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Genesis 6:14–16. Circle every number and underline every command.
2. Imitate the pattern: in the same order (object and material, finish, measures, features), write five sentences of instructions for building a birdhouse, a bookshelf or a garden

bed.

3. List ten imperative verbs that are more exact than “do,” “put” or “get” (for example: tighten, sift, align, rinse, fold).

History note. The aircraft in the checklist story was the Boeing Model 299, prototype of the B-17, which crashed at Wright Field, Ohio, on October 30, 1935, because the gust lock that holds the controls had not been released. Isabella Beeton’s *Book of Household Management* (1861) is on Project Gutenberg (#10136); its recipes list ingredients, method, time, cost, number served and season, a pattern worth looking at. Vermeer’s *Milkmaid* is usually dated about 1658–1661 and has been in the Rijksmuseum since 1908.

 **Style Clinic. Imperative mood, kept consistent (Level 3, voice and mood).** The imperative mood gives commands, with “you” understood: “Drain the pasta.” It is the natural mood of instructions, and it is shorter and clearer than the alternatives. The common fault is a *shift in mood or voice* partway through: “1. Remove the wheel. 2. You should then take off the tire. 3. The tube is pulled out. 4. Next, it is important to find the leak.” Steps 2–4 slip into the indicative, the passive and a wordy expletive. Revised: “1. Remove the wheel. 2. Take off the tire. 3. Pull out the tube. 4. Find the leak.” Compare the steady commands to Noah: “Make ... shalt pitch ... shalt thou make ... shalt thou set.”

For families. This lesson is best done with a real task the household needs written down: the routine for feeding animals while the family travels, the steps for starting the generator, a grandmother’s recipe. Choose a tester carefully if the task involves tools, heat or blades, and supervise. The cubit was roughly the length of a forearm, about 18 inches, so the ark was about 450 feet long; avoid stating it as exact, since cubits varied.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Turn this paragraph into numbered instructions: “To make the coffee for Sunday fellowship, you want to get the big urn from the closet and fill it up with water to the 40 line, and you should make sure the basket is in first, and put about two and a half cups of coffee in it, then plug it in, it takes like 45 minutes. Don’t plug it in empty because it can burn out.”

1. Pull out the actions in the order of doing: get urn, insert basket, fill water, add coffee, plug in, wait.
2. Make the caution a separate line before the step it concerns.
3. Begin each step with an imperative verb and use exact quantities.

Answer: How to Make Coffee for Sunday Fellowship (serves about 40; 50 minutes)

Materials: 40-cup urn (hall closet), 2½ cups ground coffee, water.

1. Set the urn on the counter near the outlet.
2. Place the filter basket and stem inside the urn.
3. Fill the urn with cold water to the 40-cup line.
4. Add 2½ cups of ground coffee to the basket and put on the lid.

Caution: Never plug in an empty urn; the heating element will burn out.

5. Plug in the urn.
6. Wait about 45 minutes, until the red “Ready” light comes on.

Example 2. Find four faults in these steps for changing a furnace filter: “1. Turn off the thermostat and open the panel. 2. Pull out the old one. 3. Put the new screen in. 4. Make sure the arrow points toward the furnace or the filter won’t work right. 5. Close it.”

1. Step 1 holds two actions in different places; split it.
2. Steps 2 and 3 name the part three ways (“the old one,” “screen,” “filter”); use “filter” each time.
3. The arrow check in step 4 comes after the filter is already in; move it into the step where the filter is inserted.
4. No size is given, so the reader may buy the wrong filter; add it to a materials list.

Answer: Materials: one 16 × 25 × 1 inch furnace filter. 1. Set the thermostat to Off. 2. Open the filter door on the left side of the furnace. 3. Slide out the old filter. 4. Find the arrow on the edge of the new filter, and slide it in with the arrow pointing toward the furnace. 5. Close the filter door. 6. Set the thermostat back to Heat.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the seven parts of a set of instructions.
2. **EASY** Where does a caution belong?

3. **EASY** Give the three dimensions of the ark in Genesis 6:15.
4. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in the imperative mood: “The next thing you will want to do is to make sure the oven is set to 350 degrees.”
5. **MEDIUM** Why should a part be called by the same name in every step?
6. **MEDIUM** Why can’t a writer test his own instructions?
7. **CHALLENGE** Write a five-step closing procedure for a lemonade or bake-sale stand, with one caution and one check.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed (25 minutes, CLT/SAT style): “Good instructions require no reader’s judgment at all.” Agree or disagree in a short essay with a thesis, an example and an answer to one objection.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Skipping “obvious” steps because the writer already knows them. The stranger test will find them.
- Putting two or three actions in one step, or a warning after the step it concerns.
- Vague measures: “some,” “a while,” “tighten it a bit.”
- Shifting from commands to “you should,” passive verbs or “it is important to.”

Make it a game • Blind Builder. One player builds a small shape from ten blocks or LEGO bricks behind a book. Then, in writing only, the player writes instructions for building it. A second player follows the instructions with an identical set of pieces, without seeing the original or asking questions. Compare the two shapes; every difference marks a step to rewrite.

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

Paul gave the church at Corinth a procedure for orderly worship; clear instructions serve the same end in a kitchen, a shop or a home.

Practice: answers

1. Title, introduction, materials and tools, numbered steps, cautions, checks, finish.
2. Before the step it concerns, set off so the reader sees it.
3. Three hundred cubits long, fifty cubits broad, thirty cubits high.
4. Set the oven to 350°F.
5. A reader who sees two names will think there are two different parts and may stop or make a mistake.
6. He already knows the task, so his mind supplies every missing step; only a newcomer reveals the gaps.
7. Sample: 1. Count the cash box and write the total on the tally sheet. 2. Have a second person count it again and initial the sheet. Caution: Do not leave the cash box on the table while you clean. 3. Pour leftover lemonade into the gallon jug and refrigerate it. 4. Wipe the table with soapy water and fold it. 5. Carry the box, sheet and jug inside. Check: the total on the sheet should equal the cash minus the \$20 starting change.

8. Sample thesis: Good instructions reduce the reader's need for judgment but cannot remove it, because no writer can foresee every condition. Example: a recipe says "bake 30 minutes until golden," giving both a time and a sign because ovens differ. Objection: checklists in flying seem to remove judgment; yet they exist to free the pilot's judgment for what the list cannot cover.

6.4 WRITING A JOB APPLICATION FOR A FIRST JOB

OBJECTIVES

- Fill out a job application form completely, neatly and truthfully.
- Analyze Leonardo da Vinci’s letter to Ludovico Sforza as a model of offering specific, provable abilities to an employer.
- Write a one-page first-job résumé and a short cover letter for a real or realistic opening.

Warm-up. List every kind of work you have done in the last two years, paid or unpaid: chores, babysitting, lawn mowing, helping at church, caring for animals, a family business, a project you finished. Aim for ten items. Circle any for which an adult could vouch for you.

Video slot. Video coming. How to write a first résumé and cover letter as a teenager (a library, community college or career-center tutorial). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

application form

The employer’s own form asking for your contact information, availability, education, experience and references. Many first jobs require only this.

résumé

A one-page summary of your skills, experience and education, arranged under headings so an employer can scan it in under a minute.

cover letter

A short business letter sent with a résumé that names the job, shows why you fit it, and asks for an interview.

reference

An adult outside your family (a teacher, coach, pastor, neighbor or past employer) who has agreed to tell an employer about your work and character.

availability

The days and hours you are able to work, stated exactly and honestly.

CORE IDEAS

What a first employer wants. The owner of a hardware store, a farm stand or a summer camp does not expect a fifteen-year-old to have a long work history. He wants to know three things: Will you show up, on time, every time? Will you be honest with the cash, the tools and the truth? Will you learn and work without being watched? Your application must answer those questions with evidence. “I am a hard worker” proves nothing. “For two years I have

fed and watered our neighbor's fourteen chickens every morning before school, and I have not missed a day" proves a great deal.

Leonardo's letter. In about 1482, a thirty-year-old painter in Florence named Leonardo da Vinci wanted to work for Ludovico Sforza, the ruler of Milan. The letter he drafted is often called the most famous job application in history, and it is the model for this lesson. Notice three things. First, he knows his reader: Ludovico faced wars with neighboring states, so Leonardo leads with what Ludovico needs most, engineering for war, and saves painting for nearly the end. Second, he lists his abilities as specific, numbered claims ("I have a sort of extremely light and strong bridges"), not as adjectives about himself. Third, he offers proof: if any claim seems impossible, he is "most ready to make the experiment in your park." He is asking to be tested.

The application form. For many first jobs the form is the whole application, and how you fill it out is itself a test. Read the entire form before writing. Use black or blue ink and print neatly, or type if it is online. Answer every line; write "N/A" (not applicable) rather than leaving a blank. Give exact dates and a complete availability schedule. Carry a card with the names, phone numbers and addresses of your references and past work, so you can copy them accurately on the spot. Never stretch the truth: a false line on an application is a lie, and employers who discover one usually dismiss the worker on the spot.

The first résumé. Keep it to one page with plain headings. (1) *Name and contact:* name, town, phone, a sensible email address. (2) *Objective* (one line, optional): "To work as a summer stock clerk at Hansen's Hardware." (3) *Experience:* paid and unpaid work, most recent first, each with a title, place, dates, and two or three lines that begin with action verbs and give numbers ("Mowed and edged six lawns weekly, May-September 2026"). (4) *Skills:* real ones you could demonstrate: cash handling, a tractor, a language, typing speed, first aid certification. (5) *Education:* "Homeschool, Grade 9, expected graduation 2030," with any honors or courses that fit the job. (6) *References:* two or three names with permission, or "Available on request."

The cover letter. Use the business-letter form from 6.1, kept under 250 words. Paragraph one names the job and how you learned of it. Paragraph two, the heart, gives two or three facts that match what the employer needs, as Leonardo matched Ludovico's wars. Paragraph three states your availability and asks for an interview, and tells when you will follow up: "I will stop by on Thursday afternoon to see whether you have questions." Address it to a person by name. Write a new letter for each job; a letter that could be sent to anyone persuades no one.

Honest confidence. Leonardo did not undersell himself, and you should not either. Scripture says, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." But confidence is not inflation. Do not call babysitting "childcare management" or claim skills you cannot show. A plain, true sentence with a number in it persuades better than a puffed-up one, and it lets your "yea be yea" (James 5:12). After an interview, send a short handwritten thank-you note within a day. Few young applicants do, and employers remember the ones who do.

Ready to apply. Before you hand in anything, check the law and your family's plans. Most first jobs are seasonal or part-time, and the hours a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old may work are limited. When you are ready, put the canons to work: invent from your list of real experience, arrange it under the employer's needs, polish the style, and deliver it in person with a clean copy and a firm handshake.

The model. *Leonardo da Vinci, letter to Ludovico Sforza (about 1482), translated by Jean Paul Richter, The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, §1340, Project Gutenberg #5000 (items 3-9 omitted)*

Most illustrious Lord, Having now sufficiently considered the specimens of all those who proclaim themselves skilled contrivers of instruments of war, and that the invention and operation of the said instruments are nothing different to those in common use: I shall endeavour, without prejudice to any one else, to explain myself to your Excellency showing your Lordship my secrets, and then offering them to your best pleasure and approbation to work with effect at opportune moments as well as all those things which, in part, shall be briefly noted below.

[Footnote: The numerous corrections, the alterations in the figures (l. 18) and the absence of any signature prove that this is merely the rough draft of a letter to Lodovico il Moro. It is one of the very few manuscripts which are written from left to right--see the facsimile of the beginning as here reproduced. This is probably the final sketch of a document the clean of which copy was written in the usual manner. Leonardo no doubt very rarely wrote so, and this is probably the reason of the conspicuous dissimilarity in the handwriting, when he did. (Compare Pl. XXXVIII.) It is noteworthy too that here the orthography and abbreviations are also exceptional. But such superficial peculiarities are not enough to stamp the document as altogether spurious. It is neither a forgery nor the production of any artist but Leonardo himself. As to this point the contents leave us no doubt as to its authenticity, particularly l. 32 (see No. 719, where this passage is repeated). But whether the fragment, as we here see it, was written from Leonardo's dictation--a theory favoured by the orthography, the erasures and corrections--or whether it may be a copy made for or by Melzi or Mazenta is comparatively unimportant. There are in the Codex Atlanticus a few other documents not written by Leonardo himself, but the notes in his own hand found on the reverse pages of these leaves amply prove that they were certainly in Leonardo's possession. This mark of ownership is wanting to the text in question, but the compilers of the Codex Atlanticus, at any rate, accepted it as a genuine document.

With regard to the probable date of this projected letter see Vol. II, p. 3.]

1) I have a sort of extremely light and strong bridges, adapted to be most easily carried, and with them you may pursue, and at any time flee from the enemy; and others, secure and indestructible by fire and battle, easy and convenient to lift

and place. Also methods of burning and destroying those of the enemy.

2) I know how, when a place is besieged, to take the water out of the trenches, and make endless variety of bridges, and covered ways and ladders, and other machines pertaining to such expeditions.

3) Item. If, by reason of the height of the banks, or the strength of the place and its position, it is impossible, when besieging a place, to avail oneself of the plan of bombardment, I have methods for destroying every rock or other fortress, even if it were founded on a rock, &c.

4) Again I have kinds of mortars; most convenient and easy to carry; and with these can fling small stones almost resembling a storm; and with the smoke of these causing great terror to the enemy, to his great detriment and confusion.

9) * And when the fight should be at sea I have kinds of many machines most efficient for offence and defence; and vessels which will resist the attack of the largest guns and powder and fumes.

5) Item.* I have means by secret and tortuous mines and ways, made without noise to reach a designated [spot], even if it were needed to pass under a trench or a river.

6) Item. I will make covered chariots, safe and unattackable which, entering among the enemy with their artillery, there is no body of men so great but they would break them. And behind these, infantry could follow quite unhurt and without any hindrance.

7) Item. In case of need I will make big guns, mortars and light ordnance of fine and useful forms, out of the common type.

8) Where the operation of bombardment should fail, I would contrive catapults, mangonels, *trabocchi* and other machines of marvellous efficacy and not in common use. And in short, according to the variety of cases, I can contrive various and endless means of offence and defence.

10) In time of peace I believe I can give perfect satisfaction and to the equal of any other in architecture and the composition of buildings public and private; and in guiding water from one place to another.

Item: I can carry out sculpture in marble, bronze or clay, and also in painting whatever may be done, and as well as any other, be he whom he may.

Again, the bronze horse may be taken in hand, which is to be to the immortal glory and eternal honour of the prince your father of happy memory, and of the

illustrious house of Sforza.

And if any one of the above-named things seem to any one to be impossible or not feasible, I am most ready to make the experiment in your park, or in whatever place may please your Excellency--to whom I commend myself with the utmost humility &c

PICTURE STUDY



Work, Ford Madox Brown, 1863 (replica of the larger canvas of 1852–1865 in Manchester) · Oil on canvas · Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Ford Madox Brown spent more than ten years on this painting of a street in Hampstead, London, where navvies (laborers) are digging a trench for new drains. At the center a strong young workman lifts a shovelful of earth; around him are people of every station, from a ragged flower seller to a rider on horseback. Brown painted it to honor honest labor, and he framed the original with Bible verses, including “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19) and “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings” (Proverbs 22:29).

Look closely

- Find the central workman with the shovel. What is he doing, and how has Brown made him the center of attention?
- Find someone in the picture who is not working. What is that person doing instead?
- Find the two gentlemen at the far right. They are watching the work. Who do you think they are, and why might they be there?

Talk about it

1. Choose one worker in the painting and write the “Experience” section of his résumé in three lines that begin with action verbs.
2. Brown chose Proverbs 22:29 for his frame. Write a paragraph explaining how that verse applies to a fifteen-year-old’s first job.

WRITING PROJECT: A FIRST-JOB APPLICATION PACKET

Prepare a complete application for a real job you could hold (seasonal, part-time or volunteer) or for a realistic opening your parent describes: a one-page résumé, a cover letter, a reference list and a filled-out sample application form.

You will need

- Your warm-up list of experience
- A word processor
- A printed sample job application (many stores and libraries offer them; your parent may supply one)
- Names and phone numbers of two or three references who have agreed to speak for you

Steps

1. Choose the job and write down what the employer most needs (for example: punctuality, cash handling, lifting, friendliness with customers).
2. Ask two or three adults outside your family whether they will serve as references. Write their names, titles and phone numbers exactly.
3. Draft your résumé with the six headings. For each item under Experience, write two lines that begin with action verbs and include a number or a date.
4. Draft the cover letter in block format: job and source, two or three matching facts, availability and the request for an interview.
5. Fill out the sample application form in ink with no blanks, using N/A where needed.
6. Have a parent read all three as if hiring you. Ask: “What would make you call me?” and “What would make you doubt me?” Revise.
7. Print clean copies and place them in a folder, ready to deliver.

Check your work

- Every claim is true and could be confirmed by a reference.
- Résumé lines begin with action verbs and give numbers, dates or results.
- The cover letter is under 250 words, addressed to a person by name, and ends with a request and a follow-up plan.
- No modifier dangles: every opening phrase names the person who does the action (Style Clinic).
- The application form has no blanks, and dates, phone numbers and spellings are checked twice.
- Résumé headings and list items are parallel in form.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Leonardo's opening sentence and item 10. Then rewrite item 10 in plain modern English as a résumé line.
2. Imitate Leonardo: write your own numbered list of five things you can do, each one specific enough to be tested, and end with an offer to prove them.
3. Turn five weak résumé phrases into strong ones (example: "helped with yard work" → "Raked, bagged and hauled leaves for four households, October–November 2025").

History note. The letter survives in the Codex Atlanticus in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, in the hand of a secretary or copyist rather than Leonardo's own famous mirror-writing; it is usually dated about 1482, when Leonardo moved to Milan. The "bronze horse" was a giant equestrian statue honoring Ludovico's father, Francesco Sforza. Leonardo did enter Ludovico's service and made the clay model for the horse, but the bronze set aside for it went to make cannon, and the statue was never cast. Ford Madox Brown's first and larger version of *Work* (1852–1865) hangs in Manchester Art Gallery; the smaller version shown here, dated 1863, is in Birmingham. The two gentlemen at the right are portraits of the writers Thomas Carlyle and F. D. Maurice.

 **Style Clinic. Dangling modifiers (Level 3, modifiers).** An opening participial phrase must modify the subject that follows it. Applicants often write: "Having worked at the farm stand for two summers, the cash register is easy for me." The register did not work at the farm stand. Fix it by making the doer the subject: "Having worked at the farm stand for two summers, I can run a cash register." Another: "As a reliable worker, my neighbors trust me with their keys" → "As a reliable worker, I am trusted with my neighbors' keys," or better (active voice), "My neighbors trust me with their keys." Résumé lines avoid the problem by starting with a verb and leaving the subject "I" understood: "Ran the register for two summers."

For families. Federal law (the Fair Labor Standards Act) currently lets 14- and 15-year-olds work outside school hours in many non-hazardous jobs, with limits: no more than 3 hours on a school day, 18 hours in a school week, 8 hours on a non-school day and 40 hours in a non-school week, and only between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m. (9 p.m. from June 1 through Labor Day). Many states add their own rules or require a work permit, and family farms and businesses have different rules. Check the U.S. Department of Labor's YouthRules site and your state labor office before your student applies. Please supervise any online applications and do not let your student give out a Social Security number until a real job offer is made.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Take apart and revise this résumé entry: “Babysitting — I babysat a lot for different families and I am really good with kids and very responsible.”

1. Find the claims: frequent work, good with children, responsible. None is proved.
2. Replace adjectives with facts: how many families, how long, what duties, any training.
3. Begin each line with an action verb, drop “I,” and keep lines parallel.

Answer: Babysitter, three families in Elm Grove, June 2024-present

- Cared for up to four children, ages 2-9, about eight hours a week
- Prepared meals, supervised homework and kept to parents’ bedtime routines
- Completed American Red Cross Babysitting Basics course, 2025

Example 2. Analyze this cover letter body: “I am writing to apply for the stock clerk opening posted at the front counter. Last spring I unloaded and shelved the weekly book order for our co-op library, about 300 books a week, and kept the shelves in call-number order. I also worked eight Saturdays at my uncle’s feed store, where I learned to lift 50-pound bags safely and help customers find what they needed. I can work Monday through Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., from June 1 to August 20. May I come in for an interview? I will call on Tuesday afternoon in case you have questions.”

1. Paragraph 1 names the job and where the writer saw it.
2. The middle gives two facts that match a stock clerk’s needs (handling shipments, keeping order, lifting, helping customers), with numbers. This is Leonardo’s method: specific, provable abilities matched to the reader.
3. The close states exact availability, asks for the interview, and names a day to follow up.

Answer: A strong letter. It needs only the business-letter frame (date, inside address with the manager’s name, salutation, close and signature) and a paragraph break before the availability sentence.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the six headings of a first-job résumé.
2. **EASY** What should you write on an application line that does not apply to you?
3. **EASY** What did Leonardo offer to do if Ludovico doubted any of his claims?
4. **MEDIUM** Why did Leonardo put engineering for war first and painting near the end?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the dangling modifier: “After finishing the lifeguard course, the pool manager hired me.”
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite as a résumé line: “I helped out at the church food pantry sometimes.”

7. **CHALLENGE** Write the middle paragraph of a cover letter for a summer job as a day-camp helper, giving two specific, provable facts.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed (25 minutes, SAT/ACT style): “A young person’s first job teaches more than any classroom.” Write a short essay that takes a position, gives two reasons with examples, and answers one objection.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Using adjectives (“hard-working,” “responsible”) instead of facts with numbers and dates.
- Leaving blanks on the application form or giving vague availability (“most days”).
- Listing references without asking their permission first.
- Inflating small jobs with grand titles, which a good employer sees through at once.

Make it a game • Prove It. One player reads a vague claim (“I’m good with animals,” “I’m organized,” “I’m a fast learner”). The other has thirty seconds to turn it into a specific, provable résumé line with a number or date. A parent judges: one point if Leonardo could have “made the experiment” to test it.

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)

Leonardo, a diligent craftsman, stood before the ruler of Milan; your application is the first page of a working life that Scripture calls you to do well.

Practice: answers

1. Name and contact, objective (optional), experience, skills, education, references.
2. “N/A” (not applicable), never a blank.
3. To “make the experiment” in Ludovico’s park or anywhere he chose: to prove it by demonstration.
4. He knew his reader: Ludovico was a ruler at war, so Leonardo led with what Ludovico needed most.
5. After finishing the lifeguard course, I was hired by the pool manager. (Or: After I finished the lifeguard course, the pool manager hired me.)
6. Sample: Sorted and shelved donations at Grace Church Food Pantry, two Saturdays a month, 2025–2026.
7. Sample: For the past two years I have helped teach the four- and five-year-old Sunday school class at First Baptist, where I lead the songs and the craft for twelve children each week. Last summer I also served as a helper at our church’s vacation Bible school, in charge of the outdoor games station for five mornings.
8. Sample thesis: A first job teaches lessons a classroom cannot easily teach, punctuality, responsibility to a customer and the worth of an earned dollar, though it should add to a sound education, not replace it. Reasons: a customer who waits teaches promptness faster than a grade; Lincoln told Johnston that his advice to go to work would be worth “more than

eight times eighty dollars.” Objection: books teach what work cannot; true, so the best course joins them, as Leonardo joined study and craft.

UNIT 6 REVIEW

Allow about 50 minutes. The student answers in writing. Short answers are scored for accuracy; writing tasks are scored with the checklists from the unit, especially purpose stated first, specific facts, correct form and the Style Clinic skills.

1. (4 pts) List the parts of a block-format business letter in order.
2. (3 pts) Name Lincoln's three moves in his letter refusing Johnston's request, and tell why the pattern works.
3. (4 pts) Write a subject line and the first two sentences of an email asking a museum's volunteer coordinator, Mr. Davis, about summer openings for students age 15.
4. (2 pts) Change to active voice: "The cash drawer was left unlocked overnight." (The night clerk, Tom, left it.)
5. (4 pts) Name the six sections of a short memo report and tell which one is written last but placed first.
6. (3 pts) Label each as finding (F), inference (I) or recommendation (R): (a) "The shed roof has three holes larger than a dime." (b) "The roof will probably leak by spring." (c) "Replace the roof before November."
7. (3 pts) What went wrong in the "evil report" of Numbers 13:32-33? Give one example.
8. (3 pts) Make these list items parallel: "Sweeping the floor," "Wipe the counters," "The trash should be taken out."
9. (6 pts) Write five numbered instructions, with one caution placed correctly, for a task such as watering houseplants, filling a bird feeder or making a sandwich.
10. (2 pts) Name two things Leonardo's letter to Ludovico Sforza does that a good job application should do.
11. (3 pts) Fix the dangling modifier and turn it into a résumé line: "Having mowed lawns for three summers, the mower is easy for me to repair."
12. (5 pts) Write the middle paragraph of a cover letter for a job at a farm stand, giving two specific, provable facts.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A WORKING PACKET

Assemble a clean folder of real work documents from this unit: the business letter (or email) from 6.1, the memo report from 6.2, the tested instructions from 6.3, and the résumé and cover letter from 6.4. Add a one-paragraph note telling which document was actually sent or used, and what happened.

- **Purpose and reader:** Each document is written to a real, named reader and states its purpose or main point at the start.
- **Form:** Each follows its form correctly: block-format letter, memo heading and summary, numbered imperative steps with materials and cautions, one-page résumé with clear headings.
- **Truth and evidence:** Claims are specific, accurate and provable, with numbers, dates and sources; findings are kept separate from opinions.

- **Style and mechanics:** Active voice, parallel lists and headings, consistent imperative mood in instructions, no dangling modifiers, and correct letter punctuation.

Answer key

1. Your address (or letterhead), date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature, typed name (and “Enclosure” if needed).
2. Answer, reason, offer. It is honest and clear about the refusal, explains it without insult, and gives the reader something better to do, so firmness and kindness go together.
3. Sample: Subject: Question about summer volunteer openings for students. Dear Mr. Davis, I am writing to ask whether the museum accepts volunteers age 15 this summer. I am available Tuesdays and Thursdays from June 9 to August 13.
4. Tom, the night clerk, left the cash drawer unlocked overnight.
5. Heading, summary, purpose, method, findings, conclusions and recommendation. The summary is written last and placed first.
6. (a) F, (b) I, (c) R.
7. Fear turned findings into exaggeration and feelings into facts: the land “eateth up the inhabitants,” all the people are giants, and “we were in our own sight as grasshoppers.”
8. Sweep the floor. Wipe the counters. Take out the trash. (Or: Sweeping the floor, wiping the counters, taking out the trash.)
9. Sample: Filling the Bird Feeder. 1. Take the feeder down from its hook. 2. Unscrew the top. Caution: Fill the feeder outdoors; spilled seed draws mice. 3. Pour sunflower seed to one inch below the rim. 4. Screw the top on tightly. 5. Hang the feeder back on its hook.
10. Two of: it leads with what the reader needs most; it lists specific, numbered abilities instead of adjectives; it offers proof by demonstration; it is addressed to a particular person.
11. Having mowed lawns for three summers, I can repair a mower. Résumé line: Mowed and edged five lawns weekly for three summers; replaced blades and spark plugs as needed.
12. Sample: Last summer I picked and sorted produce two mornings a week on my grandparents’ farm, about 40 bushels of tomatoes and sweet corn in all. I also ran the cash box at our church’s bake sale, counting and recording over \$600 with my pastor’s wife checking my totals.

PERSONAL NARRATIVE: TESTIMONY

In this creative-writing unit you become the witness. You will read the turning point of Augustine's *Confessions* (Book 8, the garden at Milan) and the plain-style account of John Bunyan in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, learn the structure of a testimony from Paul's defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26) and the classical parts and virtues of narrative, and finish by giving a three-minute testimony or speech of thanks to a real audience. Throughout, the aim is a true account of events, people and God's providence, told plainly, with God rather than the teller at the center.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Can write a classical narrative with the six parts (person, action, place, time, manner, cause) from earlier grades.
- Knows the five canons of rhetoric and the parts of an oration from Unit 1.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can explain how Augustine paces his turning point and why he addresses his book to God.
- ☐ I can describe Bunyan's plain style and why he chose it.
- ☐ I can outline a testimony as before, turn and after, with an opening and a close, and check it against the six parts and three virtues of narrative.
- ☐ I can write a true narrative about myself or another person without exaggeration, jargon or glamorized sin.
- ☐ I can deliver a three-minute testimony or speech of thanks from a key-word card.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Augustine, Confessions, translated by E. B. Pusey (Project Gutenberg #3296)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3296>): Free. Book 8 is the conversion; Book 9 tells of Monica's last days. Parents may wish to preview the earlier books.
- **The Confessions, Pusey translation, audiobook (LibriVox)** (<https://librivox.org/the-confessions-by-saint-augustine-of-hippo/>): Free public-domain recording; useful for hearing Book 8 read aloud.
- **John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (Project Gutenberg #654)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/654>): Free. Short numbered paragraphs; the model is paragraphs 37–38.
- **John Bunyan, The Pilgrim's Progress (Project Gutenberg #131)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/131>): Free. The same road told as allegory; good companion reading for this unit.

7.1 AUGUSTINE’S CONFESSIONS, BOOK 8: THE TURNING POINT 🍷 ★

OBJECTIVES

- Explain what Augustine meant by a “confession” and why the whole book is addressed to God.
- Analyze how Augustine paces the garden scene in Book 8: brief before, slow turn, brief after.
- Write a true turning-point scene of 400–600 words that slows down at the moment of change.

Warm-up. Think of a moment when you finally understood or accepted something you had resisted for a long time: a hard lesson, a piece of advice, a truth about God. In two minutes, list every concrete detail you can remember about that moment: where you were, what you heard, what was in your hands. Circle the one detail you would put in the first sentence.

Video slot. Video coming. Augustine’s conversion in the garden at Milan, Confessions Book 8 (a lecture or overview from a seminary, Christian college or classical-school channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

confession

In Augustine’s Latin, *confessio* means both admitting one’s sin and praising God. His book does both.

testimony

A true account, given by a witness, of what God has done in his life or before his eyes (Acts 1:8; Psalm 66:16).

turning point

The moment in a narrative when the main person’s direction changes; in a testimony, the moment of conversion, repentance or clear understanding.

pacing

How fast a narrative moves: summary covers years in a sentence; scene slows down to show one moment in detail.

tolle, lege

Latin for “take up, read,” the words Augustine heard a child chanting in the garden at Milan.

CORE IDEAS

You are now the subject. In earlier grades you practiced the classical narrative (Greek *diēgēma*): a fable retold, a battle from Plutarch, an event from history. In this unit you tell a story in which you are both narrator and witness. The oldest great model in the West is the *Confessions* of Augustine (354–430), bishop of Hippo in North Africa, written about A.D. 397–400, more than ten years after the events of Book 8. Notice at once that the book is not a diary and not an advertisement for Augustine. It is one long prayer addressed to God as “Thee.” The reader overhears. That is your first lesson: a Christian testimony is mainly about God, and only secondarily about the one telling it.

The story so far. Augustine grew up in Thagaste, the son of a pagan father and a praying Christian mother, Monica. He was brilliant and restless. He joined the Manichees, a sect that promised secret wisdom, and lived for years with a woman he did not marry. He became a professional teacher of rhetoric, the very art you are studying this year, and in 384 won a post in Milan. There he went to hear Bishop Ambrose preach, at first only to judge his style; slowly the content got through. By Book 8 his mind is nearly convinced, but his will is divided. He calls it two wills at war in one man, and he admits that he had prayed for purity while secretly hoping God would wait.

Stories that lead to a story. Book 8 is full of other people’s testimonies. Simplicianus tells Augustine how the famous Roman orator Victorinus confessed Christ publicly. Then a visitor named Ponticianus tells how Antony of Egypt heard a single verse of the Gospel read in church and obeyed it, and how two officials at Trier read the life of Antony and gave up their careers that afternoon. Augustine cannot bear it. He has the arguments; others have the obedience. He rushes into the garden of the house with his friend Alypius, weeping. Mark this: Augustine was turned partly by hearing testimonies, and his own testimony has turned readers for sixteen centuries. One honest account plants the next.

The art of the slow turn. Read the model closely. Augustine covers whole years of his life in a few sentences elsewhere, but at the turning point he slows almost to a stop. We get the neighboring house, the child’s voice, the fact that he cannot tell if it is a boy or a girl, his puzzled search of memory for a children’s game, the remembered story of Antony, the walk back to the bench where the book lay, the three verbs “seized, opened, and ... read,” and the exact words of Romans 13:13–14. Then, in a single sentence, the change: “all the darkness of doubt vanished away.” This is the pattern you will imitate: compress the before, slow the turn, and let the after be short and plain.

Honest limits. Augustine does not claim more than he knows. He does not say an angel spoke. He says he heard a voice “as of boy or girl, I know not,” that he could not remember any game with those words, and that he took it as a command from God. He reports the event and his interpretation, and he keeps them distinct. You must do the same. “Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour” (Ephesians 4:25) applies with special force when the story is your own and no one can check it but God.

Sin named, not savored. Augustine is frank that he was proud and impure, but he does not make his old life exciting. He spends his words on God's patience and on his own foolishness, not on the details of his sins. The verse he reads names the sins in four plain pairs and moves on to "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." A testimony that lingers lovingly on the wild years has the proportions backward.

The turn goes back to people. The chapter does not end in private. Augustine marks the place in the book, tells Alypius, and Alypius reads the next verse and joins him. Then they go straight to Monica, who had prayed for her son for years, and she rejoices. A testimony is told to someone, and it usually includes the people God used. As you write this week, ask: who was there, and who had been praying?

The model. *Augustine, Confessions, Book VIII (about A.D. 397-400), translated by E. B. Pusey (1838), Project Gutenberg #3296*

So was I speaking and weeping in the most bitter contrition of my heart, when, lo! I heard from a neighbouring house a voice, as of boy or girl, I know not, chanting, and oft repeating, "Take up and read; Take up and read." Instantly, my countenance altered, I began to think most intently whether children were wont in any kind of play to sing such words: nor could I remember ever to have heard the like. So checking the torrent of my tears, I arose; interpreting it to be no other than a command from God to open the book, and read the first chapter I should find. For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him: Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me: and by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee. Eagerly then I returned to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there had I laid the volume of the Apostle when I arose thence. I seized, opened, and in silence read that section on which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, in concupiscence. No further would I read; nor needed I: for instantly at the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of serenity infused into my heart, all the darkness of doubt vanished away.

PICTURE STUDY



Saint Augustine Reading the Epistle of Saint Paul ("Tolle, lege"), from the Life of Saint Augustine, Benozzo Gozzoli, 1464–1465 · Fresco · Church of Sant'Agostino, San Gimignano, Italy
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

In 1463 the Florentine painter Benozzo Gozzoli came to the hill town of San Gimignano and spent several years painting the life of Augustine around the choir of the Augustinian church, in seventeen scenes. This one shows the moment of Book 8: Augustine has taken up the book and reads. Gozzoli paints a still, orderly, sunlit space, as if the storm of the garden scene has already passed. Compare the calm of the painting with the tears and rushing of the text.

Look closely

- Find the book. Where is it, and how is Augustine holding it?
- Find Augustine's companion. Who in the story might he be, and what is he doing while Augustine reads?
- Look at the setting around the figures. How does the painter use straight lines and open space to make the moment feel settled?

Talk about it

1. Gozzoli shows the quiet moment of reading, not the weeping just before it. Write a paragraph arguing which moment a painter ought to choose, and why.
2. Describe in five sentences the room or place where your own turning-point scene happened, as if you were telling a painter what to put in the picture.

WRITING PROJECT: A TURNING-POINT SCENE

Write a true scene of 400–600 words in which something changed in you. It may be your coming to faith, but it does not have to be. It may be the moment you understood a hard command of God, accepted correction from a parent, forgave someone, or saw God’s providence plainly in an event.

Imitate Augustine’s pacing: a short before, a slow turn full of concrete details, and a short, plain after that returns to people.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- The model passage, copied by hand in the sketchbook task

Steps

1. Choose the moment. In one sentence, write: “Before, I ... ; then ... ; after, I” If you cannot finish the sentence truthfully, choose another moment.
2. Write the before in no more than three or four sentences of summary. Name what was wrong or unsettled without dwelling on it.
3. List eight concrete details of the turning moment: place, time of day, sounds, objects, words spoken or read. Choose the best five.
4. Write the turn as a scene, slowly, using your five details. If a verse of Scripture or a sentence someone said mattered, quote it exactly.
5. Write the after in two or three sentences, and include at least one other person: who you told, who had been praying, who was there.
6. Read the draft aloud. Cross out any sentence that claims more than you actually saw, heard or know.

Check your work

- The before is short; the turn is the longest part of the piece.
- At least five concrete details appear in the turn.
- Any Scripture or spoken words are quoted exactly and checked.
- Introductory adverb clauses are followed by a comma; a trailing “when” clause that interrupts the action is set off by a comma (Style Clinic).
- Verb tenses stay in the past for the story and shift to the present only for what is still true now.
- Nothing is exaggerated or invented; God, not I, is the main actor.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy the model passage by hand, from “So was I speaking” to “vanished away.” Underline every verb in the sentence that begins “I seized.”

2. Imitation: write one sentence about an ordinary moment from this week in Augustine's pattern: "So was I ..., when, lo! I heard"
3. List the people God used in Augustine's Book 8 (Monica, Ambrose, Simplicianus, Ponticianus, Alypius, Antony). Then list three people God has used in your life.

History note. The garden scene took place in Milan in the summer of 386, when Augustine was thirty-one. He was baptized by Ambrose at Easter 387, together with Alypius and his son Adeodatus. On the way home to Africa that year, Monica died at Ostia, near Rome; Book 9 tells of her last days. Augustine later wrote *The City of God* and served as bishop of Hippo until his death in 430.

 **Style Clinic. The interrupting "when" clause** (Grammar Level 3: clauses; punctuation). Normally an adverb clause that *begins* a sentence takes a comma ("When I reached the bench, I picked up the book") and one that *ends* it does not ("I picked up the book when I reached the bench"). But Augustine uses a special pattern: "So was I speaking and weeping ..., when, lo! I heard" Here the main clause sets the scene and the *when* clause carries the surprise. Because it means "and just then," it takes a comma. Try it once in your turning-point scene: "I was stacking the last of the firewood, when my father called my name from the porch." Use it only once; it is a spotlight, not a lamp.

For families. The model is Pusey's 1838 translation as printed in Project Gutenberg #3296. Book 8 is clean for this age, but the *Confessions* as a whole speaks frankly of Augustine's sins, including the woman he lived with and the son born to them; preview before assigning other books. Romans 13:13 uses the old words "chambering and wantonness"; explain that they mean sexual immorality. Please do not press a student to produce a dramatic conversion story he does not have. A child raised in the faith may write about a smaller turning point or about God's keeping, and 7.4 offers a speech of thanks as an equal option. The year's faith verse, Isaiah 1:18, fits Augustine well: God reasoned with a professional reasoner and won.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's first draft of a turn: "Then one day at camp everything changed and I realized God was real and my whole life was different." Revise it in Augustine's manner.

1. Find the summary words that hide the scene: "one day," "everything changed," "my whole life."
2. Ask for the five details: where exactly? what time? what was heard or read? who was there?
3. Keep only what the student actually saw and heard, and quote the verse exactly.
4. End the turn with one plain sentence of change, as Augustine does.

Answer: Sample: On the last night at camp I sat on the dock after the others had gone up to the cabins. The counselor had read John 6:68 at the fire, and I could still hear his voice reading Peter's question: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." A loon called somewhere across the water. I had been arguing with God all week, and I had no answer left to Peter's question. I said so, out loud, to the dark lake. The next morning I told my cabin leader, and he prayed with me before breakfast.

Example 2. Analyze the pacing of the model. Which sentences are scene, and which single sentence is the change?

1. The scene runs from "I heard from a neighbouring house" through the quotation of Romans 13:13-14: sound, puzzlement, decision, memory of Antony, return to the bench, reading.
2. The verbs speed up at the climax: "I seized, opened, and in silence read."
3. Then the pace stops: "No further would I read; nor needed I."

Answer: Almost the whole passage is slow scene. The change itself is one clause: "all the darkness of doubt vanished away." Augustine spends many words on the approach and very few on the result, which makes the result feel sudden and sure.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** To whom is the whole *Confessions* addressed?
2. **EASY** What two meanings does Augustine's word *confessio* carry?
3. **EASY** What words did Augustine hear from the neighboring house, and what passage did he read?
4. **EASY** Whose story of hearing the Gospel read was in Augustine's mind when he opened the book?
5. **MEDIUM** Find two places where Augustine admits the limits of what he knows. Why do they make the account more believable?

6. **MEDIUM** Name three people whose testimony or prayers helped bring Augustine to the garden.
7. **MEDIUM** Add the right punctuation: “I was sanding the last board when my grandfather set his hand on my shoulder.” (The second action interrupts the first, as in Augustine.)
8. **CHALLENGE** Augustine taught rhetoric for a living. Write a paragraph on the irony that his turning point came through a child’s chant and a single verse, not through an argument.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Summarizing the turning point (“everything changed”) instead of showing it as a scene with concrete details.
- Spending most of the words on the old life and its sins, so that the before outweighs the turn.
- Claiming more than you saw or know, or dressing up an ordinary moment as a miracle.
- Leaving out the people God used: the friend, the parent, the one who prayed.

Make it a game · Slow Motion. One player names an everyday action in one sentence (“I opened the back door”). The next player must retell it in slow motion with three concrete details. The next adds two more details without repeating any. When the scene has eight details, the group votes on the best five, just as you will for your turning point.

Scripture. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV)

Augustine’s garden is one picture of what Paul describes here: the old passing away and the new beginning, which every testimony bears witness to in its own way.

Practice: answers

1. To God (“Thee”); the reader overhears a prayer.
2. Admitting sin and praising God.
3. “Take up and read; Take up and read.” He read Romans 13:13-14.
4. Antony of Egypt, who heard “Go, sell all that thou hast ...” read in church and obeyed.
5. He hears a voice “as of boy or girl, I know not,” and he cannot remember any game with those words. He reports what he heard and separately says how he interpreted it. A witness who admits what he does not know is easier to trust.
6. Any three of: Monica, Ambrose, Simplicianus (telling of Victorinus), Ponticianus (telling of Antony and the officials at Trier), Alypius.
7. “I was sanding the last board, when my grandfather set his hand on my shoulder.”
8. Sample: Augustine had spent his life teaching young men to win arguments, and he had heard every argument for the faith from Ambrose himself. Yet arguments only brought him to the edge. What moved him across was a child’s voice he could not identify and a verse he did not choose. God, who “hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise,” humbled

the professional persuader with the simplest kind of speech. The lesson for a writer is not that reasoning is useless, but that the will must be turned as well as the mind.

7.2 BUNYAN’S GRACE ABOUNDING: THE PLAIN STYLE AND THE LONG ROAD

OBJECTIVES

- Summarize the circumstances in which Bunyan wrote *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* and explain his reason for writing plainly.
- Compare Bunyan’s plain style and long road with Augustine’s high style and single turning point.
- Interview an older Christian and write a true account of 500–700 words of how God worked in that person’s life.

Warm-up. Bunyan wrote that he would not “play in relating” his story but would “be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was.” Write the same sentence three ways about something that happened to you last week: once in the plainest words you can, once as fancy as you can, once in between. Which is the most believable?

Video slot. Video coming. John Bunyan’s life in Bedford and Elstow, the tinker who wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (a church-history overview from a seminary, museum or Christian college channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

spiritual autobiography

A true account of one’s own life told to show the work of God in it. Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* (1666) is the great English example.

plain style

Writing in common words and short, direct clauses, with homely pictures rather than learned ornament. The Puritans valued it for preaching and testimony.

decorum

In rhetoric, fitting the style to the subject, the speaker and the audience. A tinker writing to his own congregation chooses a different style from a bishop praying in Latin.

tinker

A traveling mender of pots, pans and kettles; Bunyan’s trade, which he learned from his father.

providence

God’s wise and active care over all things, including the ordinary events of one life. Bunyan begins the model with “the good providence of God called me to Bedford.”

CORE IDEAS

A tinker in prison. John Bunyan was born in 1628 in the village of Elstow, near Bedford, England, and followed his father's trade as a tinker. As a teenager he served as a soldier in Parliament's army during the English Civil War. He married a poor young woman whose only dowry was two devotional books, which they read together. In 1660, after he had become a preacher among the Bedford Christians, he was arrested for preaching without a license and spent most of the next twelve years in the county jail. There, in 1666, he published *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*. The title joins two verses: Paul calling himself the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Romans 5:20). Twelve years later he published *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which is in many ways the same story told as an allegory.

Written for his people. Bunyan wrote *Grace Abounding* for his congregation, whom he could not visit from prison. He told them his story so that they would remember their own and take heart. That gives his book its tone: not a performance before strangers, but a pastor talking to people he loves. He numbered his paragraphs, more than three hundred of them, and kept each one short. Your testimony will also have a real audience. Decide early whom you are speaking to.

"I dare not." In his preface Bunyan says he could have "stepped into a style much higher than this," and adorned everything, "but I dare not: God did not play in tempting of me." Because the events were deadly serious, he would not play in telling them, but would "be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was." This is a principle of style rooted in truthfulness. Ornament can draw attention to the writer; plainness keeps attention on the thing that happened. It is the canon of style serving the commandment not to bear false witness.

The women at the door. In the model, Bunyan has already given up some outward sins and become, as he says, "a brisk talker also myself, in the matters of religion." He is proud of his reformation. Then, working in Bedford, he overhears three or four poor women sitting in the sun, talking about God. He listens and finds he "heard but understood not." Their talk was not about their own goodness at all. It was about the new birth, about specific "words and promises" of Scripture that had comforted them, about temptations and how they were "borne up," and about the weakness of their own righteousness. It was joy, he says, that made them speak. These women never wrote a book, yet their testimony, given at a doorstep, helped turn the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

The long road. Augustine's Book 8 has one garden and one verse. Bunyan's road is long and crooked. After the women at the door come years of searching, hope, terrible doubt and relief, with verses darting into his mind, sometimes to frighten him and sometimes to rescue him. Finally a sentence, "Thy righteousness is in heaven," settles him: his righteousness is Christ, who does not change with his moods. Both shapes are true to Christian experience. Many believers, especially those raised in faithful homes, cannot name one day. Their testimony is a road, a series of moments in which God kept, corrected and assured them. You do not need a lightning bolt to have something to tell.

Scripture woven in. Bunyan's pages are thick with Bible verses, quoted as the very words God used on him. Notice, though, that he quoted from memory. In the model he cites Numbers 23:9 as "people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours," but the King James reads "among the nations." The habit to imitate is naming the exact verse God used; the habit to improve on is checking it before you write it down.

Plain is not dull. Look at how much life is in Bunyan's plain sentences: "sitting at a door, in the sun"; "as if they had found a new world." Plain style uses ordinary words and concrete pictures and lets them do the work. This week you will write in it, telling another person's story, so that you practice listening before you practice telling your own.

The model. *John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners (1666), paragraphs 37-38, Project Gutenberg #654*

But upon a day, the good providence of God called me to *Bedford*, to work on my calling; and in one of the streets of that town, I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear them discourse, I drew near to hear what they said, for I was now a brisk talker also myself, in the matters of religion; but I may say, *I heard but understood not*; for they were far above, out of my reach. Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God on their hearts, also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature; they talked how God had visited their souls with His love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they had been refreshed, comforted, and supported, against the temptations of the devil: moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular; and told to each other, by which they had been afflicted and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, and of their unbelief; and did contemn, slight and abhor their own righteousness, as filthy, and insufficient to do them any good.

[Picture: Bunyan listens to the poor women of Bedford]

38. And, methought, they spake as if joy did make them speak; they spake with such pleasantness of scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me, as if they had found a new world; as if they were *people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours*. Numb. xxiii. 9.

PICTURE STUDY



The Courtyard of a House in Delft, Pieter de Hooch, 1658 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery, London
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Pieter de Hooch painted this ordinary Dutch courtyard in 1658, in the same decade that Bunyan was walking the streets of Bedford with his tinker's tools. Nothing dramatic happens: a maid and a child, a woman at the far doorway, bricks and sunlight. Yet the painter makes the everyday glow. A stone tablet over the passage came from an old cloister in Delft and carries a verse about patience and humility. It is the visual equivalent of Bunyan's plain style: common things, carefully seen.

Look closely

- Follow the light. Where does it fall most brightly, and where is the deepest shadow?
- Find the woman standing in the passage at the back. Where is she looking? What might she be hearing in the street?
- Find the stone tablet over the arch. Why might a painter put an old inscription over such an ordinary scene?

Talk about it

1. Imagine Bunyan passing the door of this courtyard and overhearing the women of his model. Write a paragraph of 100–150 words in plain style describing what he would see and hear.
2. De Hooch and Bunyan both find meaning in ordinary places. Name an ordinary place where something important happened to you or your family, and describe it in five concrete sentences.

WRITING PROJECT: A TESTIMONY OVERHEARD: AN INTERVIEW NARRATIVE

Bunyan was turned partly by overhearing the testimony of others. This week you will do the overhearing on purpose. Interview a parent, grandparent, pastor or older friend about how God has worked in his or her life, then write it as a true narrative of 500–700 words in the plain style.

This is practice in listening, in accuracy and in telling another person’s story with honor before you tell your own.

You will need

- Writing notebook or a recording device (with permission)
- A KJV Bible
- A list of interview questions

Steps

1. Ask permission, and tell the person the account may be read aloud at home. Agree that they may read and correct your draft.
2. Prepare six questions: What was your life like before? Was there one moment, or a long road? Who did God use? What verse or words mattered? What changed afterward? What would you want a young person to know?
3. Conduct the interview for about twenty minutes. Write down at least three of the person’s sentences word for word.
4. Choose one moment to tell as a slow scene, as Augustine did; summarize the rest in plain sentences, as Bunyan does.
5. Draft in the third person (“My grandmother was nineteen when ...”), quoting the person at least once and naming any verse exactly from the KJV.
6. Give the draft to the person to check for accuracy. Correct every error, and thank them in writing.

Check your work

- The person approved the draft as accurate.
- Quotations of the person and of Scripture are exact and in quotation marks.
- Words in a series and paired clauses are parallel in form (Style Clinic).
- The style is plain: common words, concrete details, no straining for effect.
- One moment is told as a scene; the rest is brief summary.
- God’s providence, not the person’s heroism, is the center of the account.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy paragraph 38 of the model by hand. Then look up Numbers 23:9 in the KJV and copy it beneath. Circle the word Bunyan remembered differently.

2. Imitation: write a paragraph that begins “But upon a day, the good providence of God called me to ...” about a real errand, job or trip that turned out to matter.
3. List three “brisk talker” habits (ways a person can talk religion without understanding it) and three marks of the women’s talk.

History note. The women Bunyan overheard belonged to the small Bedford congregation led by John Gifford, a former soldier who had been converted himself. Gifford took an interest in the young tinker, and Bunyan later joined that church and became one of its preachers, and in 1672, as his imprisonment was ending, its pastor. Bunyan died in London in 1688 and is buried in Bunhill Fields.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism** (Grammar Level 3: usage and style). Bunyan builds long sentences without losing the reader because the parts match: “refreshed, comforted, and supported”; “they talked how ..., they reasoned of ..., and told to each other ...”; “contemn, slight and abhor.” Items in a series, and clauses joined by *and*, *but* or *or*, should share the same grammatical form. Faulty: “She told me about praying, her Bible, and how she had been helped by the pastor.” Parallel: “She told me how she prayed, what she read, and who helped her.” When you quote your interview subject, keep their words; when you summarize, make the parts match.

For families. The model is printed from Project Gutenberg #654. *Grace Abounding* describes long seasons in which Bunyan feared he had committed an unforgivable sin and was beyond hope. Sensitive teenagers can be shaken by these chapters; if your student reads further, read alongside and point out that Bunyan wrote from the far side of those fears, assured of God’s grace. The interview project works best with someone who knows the student well. If no believing relative is available, a pastor or a long-time church member is a good choice.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Rewrite this sentence from a student’s interview narrative in the plain style: “It was an absolutely life-altering, deeply profound experience that utterly transformed every aspect of my grandfather’s existence.”

1. Strike the intensifiers that claim importance without showing it: “absolutely,” “deeply,” “utterly,” “every aspect.”
2. Ask the question Bunyan would ask: what actually happened? (From the interview notes: he stopped drinking, came home on time, and started reading the Bible to his children at supper.)
3. Put the facts in plain words and let them carry the weight.

Answer: After that winter my grandfather stopped going to the tavern on payday. He came straight home, and at supper he read a chapter of the Bible aloud to his four children. My father says he can still hear him reading the Psalms.

Example 2. Compare the two models. Write one paragraph on how Augustine’s turning point differs from Bunyan’s experience at the door in Bedford.

1. Augustine: a single moment that settles everything; he understands at once (“all the darkness of doubt vanished away”).
2. Bunyan: a moment of discovery that he does *not* understand (“I heard but understood not”); it begins a long road rather than ending one.
3. Both: turned partly by hearing others’ testimony.

Answer: Augustine’s garden is an ending: years of struggle close in one sentence, and the darkness of doubt vanishes. Bunyan’s doorstep is a beginning: he hears women speak of a new birth and realizes he does not understand it, and the realization sets him on a road of several years. Yet in both stories God uses the testimony of others, Antony and the officials at Trier for Augustine, the poor women for Bunyan, to show a proud man what he lacks.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What was Bunyan’s trade, and where did he write *Grace Abounding*?
2. **EASY** Which two verses does the title *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* draw on?
3. **EASY** Name four things the women talked about.
4. **EASY** Why did Bunyan say he would write plainly?
5. **MEDIUM** What does Bunyan mean by calling himself “a brisk talker also myself, in the matters of religion”? Why does he include it?
6. **MEDIUM** Make this sentence parallel: “My aunt said the verse comforted her, gave her hope, and that it reminded her of her mother.”
7. **MEDIUM** Find the misquotation in the model and correct it from the KJV.
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT or SAT-style prompt): “Is it better to tell an important story in plain language or in elevated language?” Write a short essay with a clear thesis, two reasons and one counterargument, using Augustine and Bunyan as evidence.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Thinking a testimony is only worth telling if it has one dramatic moment; Bunyan’s long road is just as true.
- Writing someone else’s story without checking it with them, or putting words in their mouth.
- Mistaking plain style for flat style: plain style still needs concrete pictures (“sitting at a door, in the sun”).
- Quoting Scripture from memory without checking the exact words.

Make it a game · Plain or Puffed? One player reads a sentence aloud, either plain (“We sat on the porch until the rain stopped”) or puffed up with intensifiers and fancy words (“We remained ensconced upon the veranda in profound contemplation until the precipitation utterly ceased”). The others call “Plain!” or “Puffed!” For each puffed sentence, the first player to give a good plain version scores a point.

Scripture. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.” (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV)

Bunyan took his title from Paul’s own testimony, which puts the sinner low and Christ high in a single plain sentence.

Practice: answers

1. He was a tinker (a mender of pots and pans); he wrote it in the Bedford county jail, where he was imprisoned for preaching without a license.
2. 1 Timothy 1:15 (“of whom I am chief”) and Romans 5:20 (“where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”).
3. Any four of: the new birth; the work of God on their hearts; how they were convinced of their sinful state; how God visited them with His love in Christ; the words and promises that comforted them; Satan’s temptations and how they were borne up; their own unbelief and the worthlessness of their own righteousness.
4. Because God “did not play” with him in his trials, so he would not “play in relating” them; he would “be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was.”
5. He could talk about religion easily and was proud of his outward reformation, but he did not know God’s work in his heart. He includes it to show the contrast with the women and to be honest about his own pride.
6. “My aunt said the verse comforted her, gave her hope, and reminded her of her mother.”
7. Bunyan wrote “not to be reckoned among their neighbours”; Numbers 23:9 in the KJV reads “shall not be reckoned among the nations.”
8. Sample thesis and outline: Plain language usually serves an important true story best, because it keeps attention on the events and makes the teller easier to trust. (1) Bunyan refused high style so as to “lay down the thing as it was,” and his plain account has moved readers for over 350 years. (2) Ornament can make a witness sound like a performer. Counterargument: Augustine wrote in a high, prayerful style and is just as moving. Rebuttal: Augustine’s elevation is the elevation of prayer addressed to God, not decoration for readers, and at the turning point even he becomes simple: “I seized, opened, and in silence read.” Conclusion: elevated language must earn its place; plainness is the safer default for testimony.

7.3 THE STRUCTURE OF A TESTIMONY: PAUL BEFORE AGRIPPA

OBJECTIVES

- Outline Paul's defense before Agrippa (Acts 26) as before, turn and after, framed by an opening and an appeal.
- Apply the classical parts of a narrative (person, action, place, time, manner, cause) and its three virtues (clarity, conciseness, credibility) to a testimony.
- Draft a testimony of about 450 words with a clear before, turn and after, an opening and a close.

Warm-up. Paul told the story of his conversion three times in Acts (chapters 9, 22 and 26). Skim Acts 9:1–9 and Acts 26:12–19. In two minutes, list what is the same and what is different. Why would the same man tell the same event differently to different audiences?

Video slot. Video coming. Paul's defense before King Agrippa, Acts 26 (a Bible overview or sermon excerpt from a trusted ministry or seminary channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

before, turn, after

The three movements of a testimony: life before God's intervention, the moment or season of change, and life since.

the six parts of narrative

From Theon and Aphthonius: the person, the action, the place, the time, the manner and the cause. A full narrative answers who, what, where, when, how and why.

the three virtues of narrative

Theon's marks of a good narration: clarity (the hearer can follow it), conciseness (nothing unnecessary), and credibility (it rings true).

exordium and peroration

The opening and closing of a speech (Unit 1). In a testimony, the exordium greets the hearers and gives the reason for speaking; the peroration gathers the meaning and offers thanks or an invitation.

witness

One who tells what he has seen and heard (Acts 26:16; 1 John 1:3). A witness reports; he does not invent.

CORE IDEAS

A testimony in chains. About A.D. 59, the apostle Paul stood as a prisoner at Caesarea before the Roman governor Festus and King Herod Agrippa II. He had already appealed to Caesar, so this was not a trial that could free him. It was an opportunity, and Paul used it to tell his story. Acts 26 is the fullest of the three accounts of his conversion in Acts, and it is a polished speech. It has an exordium (verses 2–3: “I think myself happy, king Agrippa ...”), a narration, a proof from the prophets, and a direct appeal that made the king answer, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.” You studied the six-part oration in Unit 1; here it is in the mouth of an apostle.

Before, turn, after. Inside the speech is the simplest structure for any testimony. *Before* (verses 4–11): Paul was a strict Pharisee who believed it his duty to oppose Jesus, and he persecuted Christians “even unto strange cities.” *Turn* (verses 12–18, the model): a light at midday on the Damascus road, a voice in Hebrew, a question and a commission. *After* (verses 19–23): “I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,” and he has preached ever since, “witnessing both to small and great.” For a three-minute testimony, a good proportion is about one quarter before, nearly one half turn, and one quarter after, with a sentence or two of opening and close.

The six parts. The progymnasmata taught that a full narrative answers six questions. Look how Paul answers all six in the turn. *Person*: Paul and those who journeyed with him. *Action*: he saw a light, fell, heard a voice, was sent. *Place*: “in the way” to Damascus. *Time*: “at midday, O king.” *Manner*: a light “above the brightness of the sun,” a voice “in the Hebrew tongue.” *Cause*: “I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness.” When your draft feels thin, check it against the six; one is usually missing.

Clear, concise, credible. Theon added three virtues. *Clarity*: tell events in order and do not assume your hearers know church words. Paul explains himself to a king who is not a Christian, and so should you; “I got saved” or “I rededicated” means nothing to many listeners until you say what actually happened. *Conciseness*: cut every detail that does not serve the turn. *Credibility*: give names, places and times you are sure of, admit what you do not know, and never exaggerate. Paul even names his witnesses: “them which journeyed with me.”

Opening and close. Begin by greeting your hearers and saying why you are speaking, then move quickly into the before; a strong first concrete sentence beats a speech about how nervous you are. Close by gathering the meaning in one or two sentences and either giving thanks or offering a short, humble invitation. Paul’s close is famous: “I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.” He wishes his hearers his faith but not his chains, which is gracious even to the men holding him prisoner.

When there is no Damascus road. Timothy, Paul’s closest helper, had no blinding light. He had known the Scriptures “from a child” and had received faith that “dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice” (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15). If that is your story, your

before is not a life of open sin but a time of testing or of a faith not yet your own; your turn is the moment you saw God's hand plainly, perhaps in an answered prayer, a loss, a hard obedience; your after is what you do now. That is a testimony too, and often a more useful one for people raised in the church.

Three guardrails. First, do not glamorize sin; Paul names his persecution soberly, and Ephesians 5:12 warns that some things are a shame even to speak of. Second, do not make yourself the hero; in Acts 26 Paul falls to the ground and the Lord does the speaking. Third, do not borrow a better story than your own. A small true testimony honors God more than a large invented one.

The model. *Acts 26:12-19 (KJV)*

Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision:

PICTURE STUDY



The Conversion of Saint Paul (Conversion on the Way to Damascus), Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, 1601 · Oil on canvas · Cerasi Chapel, Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Caravaggio painted this canvas in 1601 for a side chapel in a Roman church, where it still hangs beside his *Crucifixion of Saint Peter*. He leaves out the crowd of soldiers and the heavenly figures other painters used. There is only a horse, an old groom who seems to notice nothing, and Saul flat on his back with his arms open, lit by a light we cannot see. The turn in the story happens in a quiet, crowded space, and only one man knows it.

Look closely

- Find where the light falls. Where does it seem to come from, since no source is painted?
- Look at Saul's arms and eyes. What do they say about his state at this moment?
- Look at the groom. What is he doing, and what does he seem to understand?

Talk about it

1. Acts 26 says those who traveled with Paul also fell to the earth, yet Caravaggio shows a calm groom. Write a paragraph arguing whether the painter's choice helps or hurts the telling of the story.
2. Caravaggio fills most of the picture with the horse and leaves the turning man small and low. Write three sentences describing your own turning point from the outside, as a bystander who noticed nothing unusual would have seen it.

WRITING PROJECT: OUTLINE AND DRAFT A TESTIMONY

Draft a testimony of about 450 words, the length of a three-minute talk. Use your turning-point scene from 7.1 if it fits, or choose a new subject. If you do not have a conversion story to tell, write a testimony of God's keeping or of a clear providence in your life or your family's.

You will revise and deliver this, or a speech of thanks, in 7.4.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- A KJV Bible
- Your 7.1 turning-point scene and 7.2 interview notes
- A watch or timer

Steps

1. Fill in the frame in one sentence each: Before, I Then Since then, I
2. Write the six parts of your turn: person, action, place, time, manner, cause.
3. Write a one- or two-sentence opening that greets your hearers and moves straight into a concrete detail.
4. Draft the before (about 100 words), the turn (about 200 words) and the after (about 100 words). Name one verse, quoted exactly.
5. Write a one- or two-sentence close: what God did, and thanks or a short invitation.
6. Read the draft aloud with a timer. If it runs over three minutes, cut from the before first.

Check your work

- Before, turn and after are clear, and the turn is the longest part.
- The turn answers who, what, where, when, how and why.
- God is the subject of the key sentences; passive voice is used only where it is honest and clear (Style Clinic).
- No church jargon is left unexplained.
- Nothing is exaggerated, invented or glamorized.
- The draft reads aloud in about three minutes.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy Acts 26:28-29 by hand. Underline the words that show Paul's graciousness to his captors.
2. Outline Acts 26:2-29 in five lines: exordium, before, turn, after, appeal, with verse numbers.
3. Write the six parts of your own turn as a six-line list.

History note. Christians have long written down the moment of their turning. On the night of November 23, 1654, the French mathematician Blaise Pascal wrote a short record of an experience of God, headed with the single word “Fire,” and sewed it into the lining of his coat; it was found there after his death in 1662. On May 24, 1738, John Wesley went unwillingly to a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London, where someone was reading Luther’s preface to Romans, and wrote in his journal that he “felt my heart strangely warmed.” Both men recorded the place, the time and the words that were read, the same parts Paul names before Agrippa.

 **Style Clinic. Active and passive voice** (Grammar Level 3: voice and mood). Use active voice for your own actions, especially your wrongs: write “I lied to my coach,” not the evasive “Things were said.” In a testimony, the strongest sentences usually make God the subject: “God stopped me,” “the Lord sent my uncle.” Passive voice is honest only when it fits the facts, as when you were acted upon and the actor is plain: “I was not disobedient” and “we were all fallen to the earth” keep the focus on what happened to Paul. Check your draft: circle every passive verb and ask, “Who did it? Am I hiding someone, or showing that I was on the receiving end?” Paul’s close also uses the subjunctive mood for a wish: “I would to God, that ... all that hear me ... were ... such as I am.”

For families. Students raised in Christian homes sometimes feel they have “no testimony.” The section on Timothy is meant for them; please encourage a testimony of God’s keeping rather than a borrowed drama. Some students will have painful material in their before (a family loss, a hard illness, a sin they regret). Help them decide what is fitting to tell a general audience, and remember Ephesians 5:12: not every true thing needs to be said in public. Theon’s three virtues of narration (clarity, conciseness, credibility) come from his *Progymnasmata*, chapter on narrative.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Outline Paul's whole speech in Acts 26 using the parts of an oration from Unit 1.

1. Exordium (26:2-3): he counts himself happy to answer before a king who knows Jewish customs, and asks for a patient hearing.
2. Narration in three movements: before (26:4-11), turn (26:12-18), after (26:19-21).
3. Proof (26:22-23): he says nothing but what the prophets and Moses said should come.
4. Interruption and appeal (26:24-29): Festus calls him mad; Paul answers with "words of truth and soberness," appeals to Agrippa's belief in the prophets, and closes with his wish.

Answer: Exordium 2-3; narration 4-21 (before 4-11, turn 12-18, after 19-21); proof 22-23; refutation of Festus and peroration 24-29.

Example 2. A student's before is too long and too vivid: "Freshman year I was out of control. Let me tell you about the worst party I went to" followed by 300 words of details. Revise it.

1. Ask: does this serve the turn, or does it make the old life exciting? (It glamorizes sin.)
2. Ask: is the audience general or private? (General: the details are not fitting.)
3. Compress to the facts that set up the turn, in active voice, owning the wrong plainly.
4. Keep it to about a quarter of the talk.

Answer: Sample: "Two years ago I stopped caring what my parents thought. I lied to them about where I was on weekends, and I chose friends who made lying easy. I knew it was wrong, and I did not want to stop. Then, one Tuesday night in March, my father asked me to drive with him to the hospital."

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the three movements of a testimony and give the verse ranges for each in Acts 26.
2. **EASY** List the six parts of a narrative from the progymnasmata.
3. **EASY** Name Theon's three virtues of a narrative.
4. **EASY** What did Agrippa say at the end of Paul's speech?
5. **MEDIUM** Identify the time, place and manner in Acts 26:13.
6. **MEDIUM** Rewrite in clear words for a listener who did not grow up in church: "At youth camp I got saved and rededicated my life."

7. **MEDIUM** Revise this evasive passive into honest active voice: "Some money was taken from my brother's drawer, and lies were told about it."
8. **CHALLENGE** Timed writing (25 minutes, CLT-style narrative-argument prompt): "Describe a time when you changed your mind about something important. Explain what changed it." Write a plan and the first paragraph.

COMMON MISTAKES

- A long before and a rushed turn; the proportions should be reversed.
- Church jargon that outsiders cannot follow.
- Making yourself the hero, or glamorizing the old life.
- Ending with a sermon instead of a short close of thanks or invitation.

Make it a game · Six Questions. One player tells a 30-second true story from this week. The others race to name which of the six parts (person, action, place, time, manner, cause) were missing. The teller must supply each missing part in one sentence. Then switch.

Scripture. "He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." (John 9:25, KJV)

The man born blind gives the shortest testimony in Scripture, before and after in one sentence, and he refuses to claim what he does not know.

Practice: answers

1. Before (4-11), turn (12-18), after (19-23; verses 22-23 also serve as Paul's proof from the prophets).
2. Person, action, place, time, manner, cause.
3. Clarity, conciseness, credibility.
4. "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).
5. Time: at midday. Place: in the way (the road to Damascus). Manner: a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about Paul and his companions.
6. Sample: "At a summer camp when I was thirteen, I admitted to God that I had been living for myself, and I asked Christ to forgive me and to be my Lord. A year later, after I had drifted, I told Him again that I meant it."
7. "I took money from my brother's drawer, and I lied about it."
8. Sample plan: Before: I thought reading old books was a waste of time. Turn: in tenth grade, my grandfather gave me his copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* with his notes in the margins from when he was my age. After: I read it, saw his questions answered, and now read one old book each term. Sample first paragraph: "For most of my life I believed old books were for people who had nothing better to do. Then, the week before my grandfather moved into assisted living, he handed me a cracked green copy of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and said, 'I was fifteen when I first read this. Read my notes.'"

7.4 GIVE A THREE-MINUTE TESTIMONY OR SPEECH OF THANKS 🍷

OBJECTIVES

- Shape a testimony or a speech of thanks to fit three minutes (about 400–450 words) for a real audience.
- Use the pattern of Psalm 107 (trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks) to arrange a speech of thanks.
- Deliver the talk from a key-word card, using the canons of memory and delivery from Unit 1, and revise after a recorded rehearsal.

Warm-up. Read your 7.3 draft aloud with a timer. Write down your time and your words per minute (words ÷ minutes). Most speakers talk at about 130–150 words per minute. How many words will you need to cut, or add, to land at three minutes?

Video slot. Video coming. How to give a short personal testimony or speech of thanks: pacing, eye contact and speaking from notes (a speech-and-debate, classical-school or church ministry channel). Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

speech of thanks

A short public talk that names a specific gift or deliverance, tells how it came, and gives thanks to God and to the people He used.

occasion

The time, place and audience of a speech: a Thanksgiving table, a youth meeting, a grandparent's birthday. The occasion decides what is fitting to say.

key-word card

A single index card with the first and last sentences written out and one or two words for each section between, used in place of a full script.

memory (*memoria*)

The fourth canon of rhetoric: holding the speech in mind, usually by its order and pictures rather than word for word.

delivery (*actio*)

The fifth canon: voice, pace, pause, posture, gesture and eye contact.

CORE IDEAS

Two roads to the same place. This lesson ends the unit with a spoken piece, and you may choose either of two forms. The first is the testimony you drafted in 7.3. The second is a

speech of thanks: a true account of one specific gift or deliverance, given to God and to the people He used. Both are testimony in the broad sense. “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so” (Psalm 107:2), and “Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul” (Psalm 66:16). Choose the one you can tell most truthfully and most fittingly for your audience.

The pattern of Psalm 107. Psalm 107 tells four short stories of rescue: wanderers in the wilderness, prisoners in darkness, the sick near death, and sailors in a storm. Each follows the same four steps. Trouble: they were lost, bound, sick, tossed. Cry: “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble.” Deliverance: “and he delivered them out of their distresses.” Thanks: “Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” This is the natural shape of a speech of thanks, and it maps neatly onto before, turn and after. Name the trouble briefly; tell the cry and the deliverance as a scene; give thanks by name.

Three minutes is about 400-450 words. Time is a discipline that improves writing. Most drafts are too long, and the cutting should come from the before and from any general reflection, never from the concrete details of the turn. One sentence of opening, about 100 words of trouble or before, 200 of turn, 100 of after, and one or two sentences of close will land you near three minutes. If you run long, cut adjectives first, then whole sentences of explanation, then a minor detail. Keep the verse.

Memory. The ancient orators did not usually memorize a speech word for word; they memorized its order and its pictures. Cicero and Quintilian describe placing each part of a speech in an imagined room or building and walking through it in the mind. A testimony is easy to remember in this way because it is already a sequence of places and moments. Write out and memorize only your first and last sentences, so that you begin and end steadily. For the rest, make a key-word card with one or two words for each movement: “kitchen, three calls, prayer, headlights, Mr. Ortiz.”

Delivery. Stand still and plant your feet. Look at your hearers, one at a time, for a full sentence each. Speak more slowly than feels natural, especially at the turn, and pause before and after the verse or the key sentence; silence is how hearers know something matters. Let your voice drop and slow at the close rather than rush to sit down. If you lose your place, look at your card, find the next picture, and go on. No one minds a pause; everyone notices a speaker who reads every word from a page without looking up.

Fitting the occasion. Peter tells us to be ready to give an answer “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15), and Paul says our speech should be “alway with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Meekness means you do not preach at your hearers or lecture them about their own lives. Grace means you speak well of the people in your story, including those who wronged you if they appear. Ask what is fitting for this audience: a family dinner allows more private detail than a church gathering; a grandparent’s birthday wants thanks for that grandparent. Get permission before you tell any story that involves another person’s private trouble.

Rehearse three times, then give it. Rehearse once alone with a timer, once recorded (audio or video), and once before one listener who can tell you where they lost the thread. Watch or listen to your recording once for content and once for delivery. Then give the talk to your real audience. Afterward, write down one thing that went well and one thing you would change; you will use these in the Unit 8 review.

The model. *“The Night the Furnace Quit,” a sample three-minute speech of thanks (about 420 words). Written for this course.*

Good evening. Grandpa asked me to say something tonight, so I want to tell you about the coldest night I can remember, and to say thank you.

Two winters ago, on a Saturday in January, the temperature dropped to eleven below zero. At about nine o’clock that night my sister Anna said her room was cold. By ten, the whole house was cold. Dad went down to the basement and came back up with a flashlight and a face I had not seen before. The furnace had quit, the repair company could not come until Monday, and Mom was nine months pregnant with my brother Thomas.

I remember standing in the kitchen in my coat while Dad called three numbers and got three recordings. Then he put the phone down on the counter and said, “Let’s pray.” We stood around the table, all five of us, and he asked God for heat and for help, in about four sentences. I did not expect anything. I was fourteen, and I had already decided we would all sleep in the car.

Twenty minutes later there were headlights in the driveway. It was Mr. Hale from church, with two space heaters in the back of his truck. He had heard from his wife, who had heard from Mom’s friend, who had called to check on her. Behind him came Mr. Ortiz, who has fixed furnaces for thirty years. He had been in bed. He came anyway. He lay on our basement floor until almost two in the morning, and at 1:47, I know because I looked, the burner caught and the house started to tick and breathe again.

Mr. Ortiz would not take any money. He said, “Your dad helped me move twice. We’re even.” Thomas was born nine days later in a warm house.

I have thought about that night a lot. I learned that God usually answers prayer through people, and that the people are often the ones who have been quietly faithful for years. I learned that my dad, when he does not know what to do, prays first and calls again second.

Psalm 107 says, “Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.” That is what happened in our kitchen. So tonight I want to thank God for His goodness, and I want to thank Mr. Hale and Mr. Ortiz, who are both here, for getting out of bed. Thank you.

PICTURE STUDY



The Angelus, Jean-François Millet, 1857-1859 · Oil on canvas · Musée d'Orsay, Paris
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Millet, a French painter from a farming family, painted two peasants stopping their work at evening when the church bell rang for prayer. The steeple is a tiny shape on the horizon; the bell cannot be seen, only answered. Millet said the picture came from remembering how his grandmother, hearing the bell in the fields, would make the family stop work and pray. It is a painting of thanks offered in the middle of ordinary work, by people who have very little.

Look closely

- Find the church steeple. How far away is it, and how does the light around it differ from the field?
- Look at the hands of the man and the woman. What is each one doing?
- Find the basket, the pitchfork and the wheelbarrow. What do they tell you about the day these two have had?

Talk about it

1. Write the four-sentence prayer of thanks you imagine one of these two people praying, using the Psalm 107 pattern: trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks.
2. Millet's grandmother taught him to stop and give thanks. Write a paragraph about a person who taught you a habit of thanks, and how.

WRITING PROJECT: DELIVER YOUR THREE MINUTES

Revise your 7.3 testimony, or write a new speech of thanks using the Psalm 107 pattern, and deliver it to a real audience: your family, a grandparent, a homeschool group or a church

gathering your parents approve.

The goal is a true, fitting, well-ordered talk of about three minutes, spoken from a key-word card.

You will need

- Your 7.3 draft or a new draft
- One index card
- A timer and a recording device
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. Choose testimony or thanks, and name your audience and occasion in one sentence.
2. Revise to 400–450 words. Cut first from the before and from general reflection; keep the concrete details of the turn and the verse.
3. If anyone else's private trouble appears in your talk, ask that person's permission.
4. Make a key-word card: first sentence and last sentence written out; one or two words for each movement between.
5. Rehearse three times: alone with a timer, recorded, and before one listener. Revise after each.
6. Deliver the talk to your audience. Afterward, write one thing that went well and one thing you would change.

Check your work

- The talk runs between 2:45 and 3:15.
- It follows before, turn, after (or trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks), with a brief opening and close.
- Pronouns are in the right case ("Dad and I went," "for Anna and me"), and no pronoun is vague (Style Clinic).
- Not every sentence begins with "I"; God and other people are subjects too.
- Scripture is quoted exactly, and people are named with permission and with grace.
- I spoke from a key-word card, looked up, and paused at the turn.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copywork: copy Psalm 107:1–8 by hand. Label the four steps: trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks.
2. Make your key-word card in your notebook first. Then cover everything but the key words and say the talk from memory.
3. List five people you have never properly thanked, and one specific thing each did.

History note. Millet painted *The Angelus* between 1857 and 1859 for an American collector who never took it. The Angelus is an old Catholic prayer said at morning, noon

and evening at the sound of a church bell; Millet's picture shows the evening bell. The painting later became one of the most famous and most reproduced in France, and it hangs today in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

 **Style Clinic. Pronouns in a spoken story** (Grammar Level 3: pronouns). Three checks for this talk. (1) *Case after "and."* Cover the other person and test: "Dad and I went" (I went), "He called Anna and me" (called me), "between you and me." (2) *Clear reference.* In a spoken story, hearers cannot glance back. "Mr. Hale called Dad, and he said he would come" is unclear; say "Mr. Hale called Dad and said he would come." (3) *The "I" problem.* A testimony can turn into a row of sentences starting with *I*. Let God, other people and things be subjects: "Twenty minutes later there were headlights in the driveway" instead of "I saw headlights twenty minutes later."

For families. Please give your student a real audience: a family dinner, grandparents on a video call, a co-op or a church group. A speech of thanks is an equal choice to a testimony and often the better one for a younger or more private student. Help with fittingness: what is right to say at your table may not be right in a church hall, and anyone named in a story of private trouble should give permission. The model speech is fictional and was written for this course; Mr. Hale and Mr. Ortiz are invented. Keep the recording and the student's two notes for the Unit 8 portfolio and review.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Map the model speech onto the four steps of Psalm 107 and count the words in each part.

1. Opening (about 30 words): greeting and reason for speaking.
2. Trouble (about 80 words): the cold, the furnace, no repair until Monday, Mom's pregnancy.
3. Cry (about 70 words): the three calls, the prayer in the kitchen, the speaker's doubt.
4. Deliverance (about 140 words): Mr. Hale, Mr. Ortiz, 1:47 a.m., no payment, Thomas born warm.
5. Thanks and close (about 100 words): what was learned, Psalm 107:6, thanks to God and by name.

Answer: The cry and deliverance together make up about half the talk, the trouble and the thanks about a quarter each, which matches the proportion recommended in 7.3. The verse is placed near the end, where it names what happened rather than opening with a sermon.

Example 2. A student's talk is 640 words (about 4½ minutes). The before has a long paragraph on his whole year in eighth grade; the turn is a vivid scene at his aunt's hospital bed; the close has three paragraphs of lessons learned. Cut it to three minutes.

1. Keep the hospital scene almost whole; it is the turn.
2. Reduce the eighth-grade paragraph to two sentences that set up the hospital visit.
3. Reduce the three paragraphs of lessons to one sentence of meaning and one of thanks.
4. Re-time aloud: aim for 400–450 words.

Answer: Before: 160 words → 40. Turn: 250 → 230. After and lessons: 230 → 90. Opening and close: 60 total. Result: about 420 words, three minutes at a steady pace, with the strongest material intact.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** About how many words fill three minutes of speaking?
2. **EASY** Name the four steps of each story in Psalm 107.
3. **EASY** Which two sentences should you memorize word for word?
4. **EASY** Name the fourth and fifth canons of rhetoric.
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronouns: "Me and my sister thanked Mr. Ortiz, and he gave her and I a ride home."
6. **MEDIUM** Revise to avoid starting with "I": "I saw that the burner had caught at 1:47. I felt the house warming up."
7. **MEDIUM** What do "meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15) and "seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6) require of a speaker giving a testimony?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write the key-word card for the model speech.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading a full script word for word without looking up.
- Running long and cutting the concrete details of the turn instead of the general reflection.
- Rushing the turn and the close; those are the places to slow down and pause.
- Telling another person's private trouble without permission.

Make it a game · Thirty-Second Thanks. Around the dinner table, each person gives a 30-second speech of thanks for one specific gift this week, using the four steps of Psalm 107 in one or two sentences each. A timekeeper rings a spoon on a glass at 30 seconds. Anyone who names a specific person and a specific detail earns a cheer.

Scripture. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul." (Psalm 66:16, KJV)

The psalmist calls an audience and promises not his own deeds but what God has done, which is the whole aim of a testimony or a speech of thanks.

Practice: answers

1. About 400–450 words (at 130–150 words per minute).
2. Trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks.
3. The first and the last.
4. Memory and delivery.
5. “My sister and I thanked Mr. Ortiz, and he gave her and me a ride home.”
6. Sample: “At 1:47 the burner caught, and the house began to warm.”
7. Meekness: not preaching at or talking down to hearers. Fear: reverence toward God and care to tell the truth. Seasoned with salt: speech that is gracious, wholesome and fitting, speaking well of others, even those who wronged you.
8. Sample: First line: “Good evening. Grandpa asked me to say something tonight, so I want to tell you about the coldest night I can remember, and to say thank you.” Key words: eleven below / furnace / Mom, nine months / three recordings / “Let’s pray” / headlights: Mr. Hale / Mr. Ortiz, 1:47 / “We’re even” / Thomas, nine days / people, Dad prays first / Psalm 107:6. Last line: “... for getting out of bed. Thank you.”

UNIT 7 REVIEW

Answer in writing. Short answers may be a sentence or two; writing tasks are scored for structure, truthfulness and the Style Clinic skills, not length. Scripture should be quoted from the KJV. Item 11 may be drafted from the student's own unit work.

1. (3 pts) What two meanings does Augustine's word *confessio* carry, and to whom is the *Confessions* addressed?
2. (3 pts) What did Augustine hear in the garden, what did he read, and what changed?
3. (4 pts) Explain how Augustine paces the garden scene.
4. (3 pts) Why did Bunyan refuse a "higher" style in *Grace Abounding*?
5. (3 pts) What did Bunyan overhear in Bedford, and how did it affect him?
6. (3 pts) Give the verse ranges of before, turn and after in Paul's defense in Acts 26.
7. (4 pts) Name the six parts of a narrative and Theon's three virtues.
8. (2 pts) Name the four steps of each rescue story in Psalm 107.
9. (4 pts) Revise: "Me and my brother were told about it by Grandpa, and mistakes were made by us." Use correct pronoun case and honest active voice.
10. (3 pts) Make parallel: "The verse comforted me, was giving me hope, and it made me call my mother."
11. (10 pts) Write the turning-point paragraph (120-180 words) of a true testimony or speech of thanks. Slow down, use at least four concrete details, and quote one verse exactly.

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: A TESTIMONY OR THANKS, WRITTEN AND SPOKEN

Include the final text of your three-minute testimony or speech of thanks (400-450 words), your key-word card, the recording of your delivery if your family made one, and your two notes on what went well and what you would change. Add your interview narrative from 7.2 as a companion piece.

- **Structure:** Clear before, turn and after (or trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks) with a brief opening and close; the turn is the longest part.
- **Truthfulness and fittingness:** Nothing invented or exaggerated; sin named soberly, not glamorized; others named with permission and grace; God at the center.
- **Style:** Plain, concrete language; the turn answers who, what, where, when, how and why; Scripture quoted exactly; parallelism, voice and pronoun case correct.
- **Delivery:** Between 2:45 and 3:15; spoken from a key-word card with eye contact, steady pace and a pause at the turn.

Answer key

1. Admitting sin and praising God; it is addressed to God.
2. A child's voice chanting "Take up and read"; Romans 13:13-14; "all the darkness of doubt vanished away."

3. He compresses the years before, slows down at the turn with many concrete details (the voice, his puzzlement, Antony, the book, the verse), and states the change briefly in one clause.
4. Because God “did not play” with him in his trials, he would not play in telling them, but would be plain and simple and “lay down the thing as it was.”
5. Three or four poor women at a door, talking of the new birth and God’s work in their hearts; he “heard but understood not” and saw that his own brisk religious talk lacked what they had.
6. Before 4-11; turn 12-18; after 19-23.
7. Person, action, place, time, manner, cause; clarity, conciseness, credibility.
8. Trouble, cry, deliverance, thanks.
9. “Grandpa told my brother and me about it, and we made mistakes.”
10. “The verse comforted me, gave me hope, and made me call my mother.”
11. Sample: scored on a scene (not a summary), four or more concrete details, an exactly quoted KJV verse, God or others as subjects of key sentences, no exaggeration, and correct mechanics.

REVIEW

The year ends by gathering its work. You will look back over the year's exercises and revise one essay with Franklin's method and three passes (8.1); prepare and deliver one piece aloud with Hamlet's rules for speakers (8.2); assemble a portfolio with a preface and defend it in an oral exam (8.3); and practice the forty-minute timed essay that the ACT and similar tests ask for (8.4, ★). Models: Franklin's *Autobiography*, Hamlet's advice to the players, Ecclesiastes 12, and a sample timed essay written for this course.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- Has completed most of the Grade 9 writing (thesis, full essay, parable, poem, business writing, testimony) and kept it in a notebook or folder.
- Knows the five canons of rhetoric and the heads of a thesis from Units 1-2.

MASTERY CHECKLIST

- ☐ I can revise an essay in three passes (argument, arrangement, sentences) and explain my changes.
- ☐ I can prepare a reading script and deliver a three-to-five-minute piece with clear voice, pace and restrained gesture.
- ☐ I can select and order a portfolio and write a preface that makes a claim about my growth.
- ☐ I can answer questions about my work with a claim, a reason and an example.
- ☐ I can plan, write and check a five-paragraph argumentative essay in forty minutes.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

- **Benjamin Franklin, Autobiography (Project Gutenberg #20203)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/20203>): Read the early pages on how he taught himself to write (8.1).
- **William Shakespeare, Hamlet (Project Gutenberg #1524)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1524>): Act III, Scene 2: the advice to the players (8.2).
- **Addison and Steele, The Spectator, Volumes 1-3 (Project Gutenberg #12030)** (<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/12030>): The essays Franklin imitated; good for practicing his method.
- **ACT (official site): Writing test description and free practice** (<https://www.act.org/>): Check the official site for current rules (8.4); preview first.

8.1 LOOKING BACK AND REVISING: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

OBJECTIVES

- Name the year’s main forms (thesis, full essay, parable, metrical poem, business writing, testimony) and the skill each one built.
- Use Franklin’s method (notes, rewrite, compare) to test and strengthen one of your own essays.
- Revise one full essay from this year in three passes: argument, arrangement, sentences.

Warm-up. Without looking at your notebook, list every kind of writing you did this year. Then circle the one you are proudest of and put a question mark next to the one you would most like to do over.

Video slot. Video coming. Benjamin Franklin’s method for teaching himself to write (imitating the Spectator); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

revision

Literally “seeing again”: going back to a finished draft to change its argument, order or sentences, not only its spelling.

proofreading

The last, narrow check for errors in spelling, punctuation and typing. It comes after revision, not in place of it.

reverse outline

An outline made from a finished draft: one line per paragraph saying what that paragraph actually does.

Franklin’s method

Benjamin Franklin’s exercise of noting the sense of a good essay in short hints, rewriting it from the hints days later, and comparing his version with the original.

the three passes

This course’s order of revision: first the argument (invention), then the arrangement, then the sentences (style).

CORE IDEAS

A year of exercises. You began this year with Aristotle’s three appeals and the five canons of rhetoric: invention, arrangement, style, memory and delivery. You then argued a thesis, a general question such as “Should one marry?”, using the heads of lawful, just, expedient, possible and honorable. You stretched the five-paragraph essay into a full essay with

counterargument, rebuttal and real transitions. Then the creative units sent you to the parables, to meter, and to testimony, and Unit 6 taught you to write for a boss or a client. Each of those was an exercise in the old sense, like a scale on the piano. The scales are not the music, but the music is impossible without them.

The canons as a checklist. The five canons make a good review because every piece you wrote used all of them. Invention asks, “Did I find the strongest things to say?” Arrangement asks, “Are they in the best order?” Style asks, “Are the sentences clear, fitting and alive?” Memory and delivery ask, “Can I carry this in my head and give it to a listener?” When you look back at a piece from October, ask the five questions in that order. Most weak essays fail at invention or arrangement long before they fail at style.

Revision is seeing again. Many students think revising means fixing commas. That is proofreading, and it comes last. Revision means looking at the whole draft with fresh eyes, as if a stranger had written it. Writers have always needed distance to do this. Horace told the young poet to keep a finished work for nine years before publishing it. You do not have nine years, but you have the essays you wrote in the fall, and you are not quite the same writer who wrote them.

Franklin’s method. In the model below, the young Benjamin Franklin teaches himself to write by imitation. He reads an essay from the *Spectator*, jots short “hints” of the sense of each sentence, waits a few days, and rewrites the essay from his hints. Then comes the step most people skip: he compares his version with the original, finds his faults and corrects them. You can turn the method on your own work. Take your best essay from this year, write a one-line hint for each paragraph (a reverse outline), put the essay away, and rewrite from the hints. Your second draft will show you what you really meant. Then compare: where is the old draft stronger, and where is the new?

Three passes. Revise in the order of the canons, from large to small. *First pass, the argument:* Is the thesis a general question with a clear answer? Did you use at least two heads? Did you answer the strongest objection, not a weak one? *Second pass, arrangement:* Does your reverse outline move in a straight line from exordium to peroration? Does each paragraph do one job? Do transitions show the logic (therefore, yet, for example) instead of merely adding (also, another)? *Third pass, sentences:* Cut empty words, wake up passive verbs, balance your lists, and read every sentence aloud.

Keep the old draft. Do not throw away the first version. Put the old and new side by side in your portfolio (Lesson 8.3). The difference between them is the clearest record of what you learned this year, and it will be the best thing to talk about in your oral exam.

Truth in revision. Revision is also a moral act. When you look again, you may find that a sentence claimed more than you could prove, or that you treated an opponent’s view unfairly. Fix those first. Paul’s rule, “speaking the truth in love,” governs the essay as much as the conversation. A revised essay should be not only better written but more honest.

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

About this time I met with an odd volume of the *Spectator*. It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers, and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, try'd to compleat the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my *Spectator* with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them

PICTURE STUDY



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

Jerome spent years in study and translation to give the Latin-speaking church the Bible in its own tongue, and he revised his own work again and again. Antonello shows him in a wooden study built inside a vast stone hall. Everything is in order: books on the shelves, shoes set aside on the step, a towel on its peg. The painting is a picture of patient, careful work done in a quiet place.

Look closely

- Find the open book on Jerome's desk. Where is the light that falls on it coming from?
- Find the shoes, the towel, the cat and the lion. Which details show order and which show life?
- Look through the windows at the back. What does the outside world look like compared with the study?

Talk about it

1. Describe the place where you do your best revising. What would you add to it or take away?
2. Jerome's study is a room inside a room. Write a paragraph on why a writer needs to shut out the world for a while before going back into it.

WRITING PROJECT: ONE ESSAY, SEEN AGAIN

Choose one full essay from this year (Unit 2 or Unit 3 is best) and revise it with Franklin's method and the three passes.

You will keep both drafts for your portfolio.

You will need

- Writing notebook
- Your essays from this year
- Two colors of pen
- A KJV Bible

Steps

1. Reread every piece in your notebook from this year and list them by unit. Mark the one you will revise.
2. Make a reverse outline: one line per paragraph saying what the paragraph does ("states thesis," "gives the expedient head," "answers objection").
3. Put the essay away for two days. Then rewrite it from the reverse outline alone, without looking.
4. Compare the two versions side by side. In one color, mark places where the old draft is better; in the other, places where the new one is better.
5. Make a final draft taking the best of both, in three passes: argument, arrangement, sentences.
6. Write a short note (100–150 words) telling what you changed and why.

Check your work

- My thesis is a general question with a clear answer in one sentence.
- I answer the strongest objection, fairly stated.
- Each paragraph does one job, and my transitions show the logic between them.
- Items in every list or series are parallel in form.
- I read the final draft aloud and fixed every sentence that made me stumble.
- Quotations and Scripture are copied exactly.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the Franklin passage by hand. Underline the four steps of his method.
2. Make a two-column list: "What I can do now" and "What I could not do last fall."

3. Write a one-line hint for each paragraph of a short essay by someone else (Addison, Lamb or Johnson), then rewrite one paragraph from the hint.

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 was the daily paper of essays written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele in London in 1711–1712; collected volumes were still read as models of plain, graceful English a century later. Antonello's *St Jerome* is small (about 46 × 36 cm), much smaller than it looks in reproductions.

 **Style Clinic. Parallelism (Level 3, usage and style).** Items joined by *and*, *or* or *not only ... but also* should share one grammatical form. Not: “Revision means rethinking the argument, the order, and to fix the sentences.” But: “Revision means rethinking the argument, reordering the paragraphs, and sharpening the sentences.” Franklin's own sentence is built this way: he “compared ..., discovered ..., and corrected.” In your third pass, find every list in your essay and make its parts match.

For families. This unit reviews the year. Lessons 8.1–8.3 gather the year's work into one revised essay, one delivered piece and a portfolio with a short oral exam; Lesson 8.4 (★) practices the timed essay. The Franklin passage is printed with the 1791-era spellings of the Gutenberg text (“try'd,” “compleat”); one editorial footnote marker has been left out. Let your student choose the essay to revise, but steer toward a thesis or full essay rather than a creative piece, since the three passes are built for argument. The year's faith verse is Isaiah 1:18, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD.”

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's paragraph from Unit 2: “Working with the hands is good. Also many people like it. Another thing is that farmers feed everyone. Also it is healthy. So hand work is better.” Revise it in three passes.

1. Argument: “good” and “people like it” prove nothing. Choose a head: expedient (farmers feed everyone) and honorable (Scripture honors labor, Ephesians 4:28).
2. Arrangement: put the claim first, then the reason, then the example. Replace “also” and “another thing” with transitions that show logic.
3. Sentences: cut “is good” and “another thing is”; use strong verbs.

Answer: Work with the hands is expedient, for every other kind of work rests on it. Before the scholar can think, the farmer must plow; before the judge can sit, the carpenter must build the bench. For this reason Paul tells the Ephesians to labor, “working with his hands the thing which is good,” so that he may have something to give.

Example 2. Make a reverse outline of a four-paragraph draft and find the problem: (1) Introduction, thesis that one should keep a journal. (2) Journals help memory. (3) My grandfather kept a journal; also some people say journals waste time. (4) Conclusion.

1. Paragraph 3 does two jobs: an example and an objection.
2. The objection is raised but never answered, and it sits in the middle of an example.
3. Split it: one paragraph for the grandfather's example, one for the objection and rebuttal, placed just before the conclusion.

Answer: Revised outline: (1) Exordium and thesis. (2) Expedient: journals help memory. (3) Example: Grandfather's farm journal settled a dispute about a property line. (4) Objection ("a waste of time") and rebuttal (ten minutes a day saves hours of confusion). (5) Peroration.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Name the five canons of rhetoric in order.
2. **EASY** What is the difference between revision and proofreading?
3. **EASY** What did Franklin do after rewriting a Spectator paper from his hints?
4. **MEDIUM** Name the five heads of a thesis from Unit 2.
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the parallelism: "A good testimony is short, true, and it gives glory to God."
6. **MEDIUM** Replace the adding transition with one that shows logic: "The ant stores food in summer. Also she survives the winter."
7. **CHALLENGE** Why does this course revise the argument before the sentences?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write a one-line reverse-outline entry for the Franklin model as a whole.

COMMON MISTAKES

- Calling a spelling check "revision" and leaving the argument untouched.
- Revising the day after drafting, before the draft has had time to become strange to you.
- Throwing away the first draft, so there is nothing to compare.
- Keeping a favorite sentence that no longer fits the argument.

Make it a game · Name That Unit. A parent reads a term or short line from the year ("exordium," "The world is charged with the grandeur of God," "Is it expedient?", "Dear Mr. Harlan:"). The student names the unit it comes from and one skill that unit taught. Two points for the unit, one for the skill.

Scripture. "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" (Ephesians 4:15, KJV)

Revision is growing up in our speech: making what we say both truer and more loving.

Practice: answers

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
2. Revision changes the argument, order and sentences of a draft; proofreading is the last check for small errors in spelling, punctuation and typing.
3. He compared his version with the original, discovered his faults and corrected them.
4. Lawful, just, expedient, possible, honorable.
5. A good testimony is short, true and God-glorifying. (Or: A good testimony is short, tells the truth and gives glory to God.)
6. The ant stores food in summer; therefore she survives the winter.
7. Because polishing sentences that will be cut or moved wastes effort, and most weak essays fail at invention or arrangement. A beautiful sentence cannot save an unproved claim.
8. Sample: Franklin tells how he learned to write by rewriting the Spectator from notes and checking his work against the original.

8.2 DELIVERY: GIVING ONE PIECE ALOUD

OBJECTIVES

- Explain Hamlet’s rules for delivery: speak “trippingly,” use gesture gently, and keep temperance in passion.
- Choose one piece from this year and prepare it for delivery with a marked reading script.
- Deliver the piece (three to five minutes) to an audience and revise it from their response.

Warm-up. Say the sentence “I never said he took the money” seven times, stressing a different word each time. How many different meanings can one sentence carry by voice alone?

Video slot. Video coming. Hamlet’s advice to the players, Act 3 Scene 2, performed (a theatre or Shakespeare library channel); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

delivery

The fifth canon of rhetoric: the management of voice, pace, face and gesture when a speech is given. The Greeks called it *hypokrisis*, the actor’s art.

memory

The fourth canon: holding a speech in the mind, whether word for word or by its outline, so the speaker can look at the audience.

reading script

A clean, large-print copy of a speech marked with pauses (/ and //), stressed words and breath points.

pace

The speed of speaking. Most nervous speakers go too fast; about 130 words a minute is a good speaking pace.

temperance

Self-control. In Hamlet’s sense, the calm that governs even a passionate speech so it does not become shouting.

CORE IDEAS

The canon we forget. When Demosthenes, the greatest orator of Athens, was asked what mattered most in speaking, he is reported to have said, “Delivery,” and when asked what came second and third, “Delivery” again. The story is told by Cicero and Quintilian, who taught that a middling speech well delivered beats a fine speech badly delivered. Most of

your writing this year was meant to be read silently, but much of it can be spoken: a Voice of Democracy script, a parable, a poem in meter, a testimony. This lesson puts one of them into the air.

Hamlet's school for speakers. In the model, Prince Hamlet coaches a company of traveling actors. His advice has three parts. First, speak "trippingly on the tongue": lightly, clearly, at a natural speed, not mouthing every word like a town crier. Second, "do not saw the air too much with your hand": gesture is allowed, but gently and seldom. Third, even in a "whirlwind of passion," keep a "temperance" that gives the speech smoothness. The bad actor tears "a passion to tatters" to please the noisiest people in the cheap standing room. The good actor holds back, so that when the strong moment comes, it is strong.

Choose the right piece. Not every essay is a good speech. Choose a piece that has one clear line of thought, short paragraphs, and a strong ending: your Voice of Democracy script (3.4), your testimony (7.4), your modern parable (4.4), or a section of your thesis essay. A speech for the ear needs more signposts than an essay for the eye ("My second reason is ..."), shorter sentences, and repetition of the key phrase. Revise for the ear before you rehearse: if a sentence has three clauses before its verb, break it in two.

Mark a reading script. Print or copy the piece in large type with wide margins. Mark a single slash (/) for a short pause and a double slash (//) for a full stop and breath. Underline the one word in each sentence that carries the meaning. Write "slow" in the margin beside the thesis and the last paragraph. Put a small box where you will look up at the audience. A marked script is to a speaker what a score is to a singer.

Memory: own it, do not recite it. The ancients memorized long speeches by placing each part in a room of an imagined house (the "method of loci"). You may use the same trick, or simpler: learn the outline cold, learn the first two sentences and the last two sentences word for word, and know the middle well enough to glance down only at the start of each paragraph. Read it aloud at least five times over two days. The goal is that your eyes are on the listeners at least half the time.

Deliver and listen. Stand straight, feet planted, hands at rest. Wait two seconds before your first word; silence gets attention. Speak to one face at a time. After the speech, ask your listeners three questions: What was my main point? Where did you lose me? What sentence do you remember? Their answers are a revision tool no checklist can match. If no one can state your main point, the problem is in the writing, not the voice.

Grace in the voice. Paul says our speech should be "alway with grace, seasoned with salt." Delivery is part of that grace. A true thing shouted at people is heard as anger; a true thing mumbled is heard as doubt. Temperance in the voice is a form of charity toward the listener.

The model. *William Shakespeare, Hamlet (about 1600), Act III, Scene 2, Project Gutenberg #1524*

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.
But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke

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

PICTURE STUDY



Cicero Denounces Catiline in the Roman Senate, Cesare Maccari, 1880s (fresco cycle completed 1888) ·
Fresco · Palazzo Madama (Italian Senate), Rome
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

In 63 B.C. the consul Cicero rose in the Senate and exposed the plot of Catiline, a nobleman who was conspiring to seize Rome. His first speech against Catiline begins with a famous question: “How long, Catiline, will you abuse our patience?” Maccari painted the moment for the Italian Senate building. Notice that Cicero holds the whole room with one controlled gesture, not with flailing arms: Hamlet’s temperance in paint.

Look closely

- Find Cicero. Where is his weight, and what is each hand doing?
- Find Catiline. How has the painter shown, without words, that the Senate has turned from him?
- Look at the senators’ faces. Are they watching the speaker or each other?

Talk about it

1. Describe Cicero's posture in a paragraph as if you were coaching a young speaker to copy it.
2. Maccari shows the speech by showing its effect on listeners. Write about a time a speaker held your attention. What did he or she do with voice, face and hands?

WRITING PROJECT: A DELIVERED PIECE

Prepare one piece from this year for delivery and give it to a live audience of at least three people (family, co-op, church group or grandparents on a video call).

Aim for three to five minutes, roughly 400-650 words.

You will need

- Your chosen piece from this year
- A large-print copy for marking
- Pencil
- A phone or recorder (optional)

Steps

1. Choose the piece and revise it for the ear: shorten long sentences, add signposts, repeat the key phrase in the opening and closing.
2. Time a read-through. Cut or add to fit three to five minutes.
3. Mark a reading script: / and // for pauses, one underlined word per sentence, "slow" at the thesis and ending, boxes for eye contact.
4. Learn the outline, the first two and last two sentences by heart. Rehearse aloud five times over two days, once in front of a mirror or recorder.
5. Deliver the piece. Ask your listeners: What was my main point? Where did you lose me? What do you remember?
6. Make one revision to the written piece based on their answers and note it in your notebook.

Check your work

- My main point can be stated by a listener in one sentence.
- My sentences are short enough to say in one breath; long ones are broken up.
- I used signposts (first, second, finally) and repeated my key phrase.
- My script is marked for pauses and stress.
- I looked up at the audience at least half the time and used gesture sparingly.
- Pronouns in my speech point clearly to one noun each, so the listener is never lost.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Hamlet's first two sentences to the players and mark them as a reading script.
2. List five things a bad speaker does and the opposite habit of a good one.

3. Write the opening and closing sentences of your delivered piece from memory.

History note. The story of Demosthenes and “Delivery” is told by Cicero (*Brutus* 142 and *On the Orator* 3.213) and by Quintilian (11.3.6). Plutarch’s *Life of Demosthenes* adds that he practiced with pebbles in his mouth to cure a weak voice. Cicero gave four speeches against Catiline in 63 B.C.; the first opens “Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?” Termagant and Herod, in Hamlet’s lines, were ranting villains in the old English mystery plays.

 **Style Clinic. Sentence structures for the ear (Level 3).** On the page, a complex or compound-complex sentence can carry a fine argument. In the air, a listener must hold every clause in memory until the verb arrives. Revise for delivery by turning one long complex sentence into two: a simple sentence and a short complex one. Not: “Although many people believe that work with the hands, which our grandfathers knew well, is less honorable than work with the head, Scripture teaches otherwise.” But: “Many people think hand work is less honorable than head work. Scripture teaches otherwise.” Keep one or two long periodic sentences for the climax, where suspense helps.

For families. Any audience counts; younger siblings make honest critics. If your student completed the VFW Voice of Democracy script in Lesson 3.4, this is a good time to record a clean final version. The model is printed as prose, as the speech is in prose in the play; the passage ends where the First Player breaks in with a short reply. Hamlet goes on in the next speech to give his famous rule, “Suit the action to the word, the word to the action.” Maccari’s fresco is a historical painting made eighteen centuries after the event; it shows the drama of the speech, not an exact record of the room.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Revise for the ear: “It is the case that the ant, which has no guide, overseer or ruler, nevertheless provides her meat in the summer, which teaches us, if we are willing to consider her ways, that diligence is wiser than sloth.”

1. Cut the empty opener “It is the case that.”
2. Break the sentence where the listener would run out of breath: after “summer.”
3. Put the lesson in its own short sentence at the end, where it will ring.

Answer: The ant has no guide, no overseer, no ruler. Yet she gathers her food in the summer. Consider her ways: diligence is wiser than sloth.

Example 2. Mark a reading script for the opening of a testimony: “I used to think I was the one who had kept our family farm alive. The drought of 2023 taught me otherwise.”

1. Stress the word that carries the contrast: “I” in the first sentence, “otherwise” in the second.
2. Pause before the turn so the listener feels it coming.
3. Box the eye contact on the last word.

Answer: I used to think / I was the one / who had kept our family farm alive. // The drought of 2023 / taught me [look up] otherwise. //

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** Which canon of rhetoric is this lesson about? Which comes just before it?
2. **EASY** What does Hamlet mean by “trippingly on the tongue”?
3. **EASY** What does Hamlet say about using the hands?
4. **MEDIUM** What is a “groundling,” and why does Hamlet mention them?
5. **MEDIUM** Name three ways to revise a written essay for the ear.
6. **MEDIUM** What do / and // mean in a reading script?
7. **CHALLENGE** Explain Hamlet’s “temperance” in passion with an example from your own delivered piece.
8. **CHALLENGE** Why might a listener be unable to state your main point even when your delivery was good?

COMMON MISTAKES

- Reading a silent-reading essay aloud without revising it for the ear.
- Racing through the speech from nerves; the cure is marked pauses and practice.
- Memorizing word for word without knowing the outline, so one slip ends the speech.
- Too much gesture: sawing the air instead of letting the words work.

Make it a game • One Sentence, Five Ways. Draw a card with a mood (grateful, urgent, calm, amazed, sorrowful). Say the line “Come now, and let us reason together” in that mood using voice only, hands still. Others guess the mood. Then try it with one gesture. Did the gesture help or hurt?

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 part of grace: the same true words can be given harshly or kindly, and Paul asks for kindness with salt.

Practice: answers

1. Delivery, the fifth canon. Memory comes just before it.
2. Lightly, clearly and naturally, without over-pronouncing each word.
3. Do not saw the air too much with your hand, but use all gently.
4. A spectator who stood on the ground in the cheapest part of the theater. Hamlet warns against ranting actors who play to the noisiest crowd instead of serving the play.
5. Shorter sentences; signposts such as “first” and “finally”; repetition of the key phrase (also: cut long clauses before the verb, put the strongest word last).
6. / is a short pause; // is a full stop with a breath.
7. Sample: At the climax of my testimony, where my father was in the hospital, I wanted to speed up and raise my voice. Instead I slowed down and spoke more quietly, and the room grew still. The feeling was stronger because I held it in.
8. Because the written piece itself has no single clear thesis or buries it; the fix is in invention and arrangement, not voice.

8.3 THE PORTFOLIO AND THE ORAL EXAM

OBJECTIVES

- Select, order and present a Grade 9 portfolio of six to eight pieces with a short preface.
- Write a reflective preface that names what each piece shows, using the canons of rhetoric.
- Answer questions about your work in a 10–15 minute oral exam, giving reasons and examples.

Warm-up. If you could keep only three pieces of writing from this whole year, which three would they be? Give one reason for each, out loud, in one sentence apiece.

Video slot. Video coming. How to prepare for an oral exam or viva (a classical school or university study-skills channel); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

portfolio

A chosen, ordered collection of finished work that shows what a writer can do. From the Italian for “carry leaves (pages).”

preface

A short opening piece in which the writer introduces a collection: what is in it, why, and how it should be read.

oral exam

An examination by questions and spoken answers. In the old universities, a student “defended” his work before his masters.

disputation

The medieval school exercise of stating a question, answering objections and giving a reasoned reply aloud.

acceptable words

Ecclesiastes’ phrase for words that are fit, pleasing and true; the standard for what goes in a portfolio.

CORE IDEAS

The Preacher’s portfolio. The model for this lesson is the closing of Ecclesiastes. The Preacher tells us how he worked: he “gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs.” He “sought to find out acceptable words,” and what he wrote was “upright, even words of truth.” That is exactly the work of a portfolio. You have written much this year. Now you give good heed (reread), seek out (select) and set in order (arrange). Then the Preacher

adds a warning every student will appreciate: “of making many books there is no end.” A portfolio is not everything you wrote. It is the best, chosen and arranged.

What goes in. A Grade 9 portfolio holds six to eight pieces, one from most units, in final, clean copies: a thesis essay (Unit 2) with its old draft from Lesson 8.1; a full essay with counterargument (Unit 3); your Voice of Democracy script or another delivered piece (Lesson 8.2), with a recording if you have one; a modern parable (Unit 4); a poem in two meters, scanned (Unit 5); one piece of business writing (Unit 6); your testimony (Unit 7); and a timed essay from Lesson 8.4. Choose by quality and variety, not by length.

Set in order. Arrangement matters in a collection as much as in an essay. You might order the pieces by the calendar, to show growth; by kind (argument, then story and poetry, then practical writing), to show range; or by a strong-to-stronger plan like an essay, saving your best for last. Whatever order you choose, number the pages, make a table of contents, and give every piece a title and a date.

The preface. Open the portfolio with a preface of 400–600 words. It is not a list of feelings about writing. It is a short essay with a thesis: “This year I learned to ...” Then walk through the pieces using the canons. Which piece shows your best invention? Where did your arrangement improve? What sentence are you proudest of, and why? What is still weak, and what will you work on in Grade 10? Quote yourself briefly. A good preface sounds like a master craftsman showing an apprentice’s work honestly, neither boasting nor running himself down.

The oral exam. For centuries, students did not simply hand in papers; they answered for them aloud. In the medieval universities the disputation trained a student to state a question, answer objections and give a reasoned reply. Your oral exam is a gentle version of it. A parent or tutor reads your portfolio and asks questions for 10–15 minutes. Some questions test knowledge (“Name the six parts of an oration”); some ask you to explain a choice (“Why did you end your parable there?”); some press on a weakness (“Your rebuttal on page 4 seems thin. How would you strengthen it?”).

How to answer. Use the shape of a short argument for each answer: a direct claim, a reason, and an example from your own pages. Do not bluff. If you do not know, say so and tell how you would find out; that is honest and it is respected. When a question presses a weakness, agree with what is true in it before you defend what is right in your work. Peter tells Christians to be “ready always to give an answer” for their hope, “with meekness and fear.” An oral exam is practice in that readiness and that meekness.

The whole matter. The Preacher ends his book by stepping back: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.” Your portfolio and exam are your conclusion of the whole matter for Grade 9. The final duty of man is not good prose but to fear God and keep His commandments. Good prose, truthfully used, is one way of keeping them.

The model. *Ecclesiastes 12:9–13 (KJV)*

And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs. The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.

PICTURE STUDY



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple, William Holman Hunt, 1854–1860 · Oil on canvas · Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, England
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Luke 2 tells how Mary and Joseph searched three days for the twelve-year-old Jesus and found Him in the temple, “sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.” Hunt traveled to Jerusalem to paint this scene and worked on it for about six years. He shows the moment the questioning ends and Mary finds her Son, while the learned elders, scrolls in hand, are still thinking about His answers.

Look closely

- Find the elders on the left. What are they holding, and how do their faces differ?
- Find the boy Jesus. Where is He looking?
- Look for light and gold. Where does Hunt put the brightest light in the picture?

Talk about it

1. Luke says all who heard Jesus “were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Write a paragraph on the difference between knowing an answer and understanding it.
2. Choose one elder and write the question you think he asked.

WRITING PROJECT: MY GRADE 9 PORTFOLIO AND ORAL EXAM

Assemble your portfolio, write its preface, and sit for an oral exam on it.

The exam is given by a parent, tutor or other trusted adult who has read the portfolio first.

You will need

- All your writing from this year
- A binder or folder with page protectors (or a single bound document)
- Your revised essay and old draft from 8.1
- Your delivered piece and recording from 8.2 (if any)
- A timer

Steps

1. Select six to eight pieces, one from most units, plus your 8.1 revision with its old draft.
2. Make clean final copies. Give each a title and a date.
3. Decide the order (calendar, kind, or strong-to-stronger) and make a table of contents.
4. Write a 400–600 word preface with a thesis about your year, using the canons as your guide.
5. Give the portfolio to your examiner two days before the exam.
6. Sit the oral exam (10–15 minutes). Answer each question with a claim, a reason and an example from your pages.
7. Afterward, write three goals for Grade 10 at the end of the preface.

Check your work

- Six to eight finished pieces, titled, dated and in a deliberate order.
- A table of contents and numbered pages.
- My preface has a clear thesis and refers to specific pieces and sentences.
- Every pronoun in my preface points clearly to one noun (no vague “this” or “it”).
- Quotations from Scripture and other authors are exact and cited.
- I proofread every piece one last time.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy Ecclesiastes 12:9–10 and underline the three things the Preacher did with his proverbs.
2. List ten possible oral-exam questions about your own portfolio, then answer the two hardest in writing.

3. Write the first paragraph of your preface twice, once in order of the calendar and once by kind. Which works better?

History note. Hunt began the painting in Jerusalem in 1854 and finished it in London in 1860; it was a great public success and is now in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The disputation was a regular exercise in the medieval universities of Paris and Oxford, and Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* is written in its pattern: question, objections, answer, replies.

 **Style Clinic. Pronouns: clear reference and case (Level 3).** In a preface, “this,” “it” and “they” pile up fast. Not: “I revised my thesis and my testimony, and it was much better.” (Which one?) But: “I revised my thesis and my testimony; the thesis improved most.” Check case after prepositions and in comparisons: “between my teacher and *me*,” “my sister writes faster than *I* (do).” Use *who* as a subject and *whom* as an object: “the examiner *whom* I asked.”

For families. Keep the oral exam warm and fair: three questions of knowledge, three asking the student to explain a choice, and two that press a weakness is a good mix. Let the student finish each answer before following up. You may score it with the unit portfolio rubric. If you need an outside record of the year, the finished portfolio is exactly the kind of work sample many state homeschool reviews and co-ops ask for. Hunt's painting is fully modest and suitable for all ages; read Luke 2:41–52 together before the picture study.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. A student's draft preface opens: “This year I wrote a lot of things and I think I got better. I liked some things more than others. My favorite was the parable.” Revise it.

1. There is no thesis. What, exactly, got better? Name a canon.
2. “A lot of things” and “some things” are vague. Name pieces.
3. Give a reason for the favorite and point to a page.

Answer: This year I learned that an argument is won or lost before the first sentence is written, in invention. My October thesis on hand and head work (page 3) has one reason; my April revision of it (page 5) has three heads and answers the strongest objection. My favorite piece, “The Two Ledgers” (page 9), is a parable, but it shows the same lesson: I cut it from two pages to one when I found its single point.

Example 2. Oral-exam question: “Your rebuttal in the full essay seems weak. Why should I accept it?” Shape an answer.

1. Agree with what is true in the question.
2. Defend what is right, with a reason.
3. Give an example and say how you would strengthen it.

Answer: You are right that the rebuttal is the thinnest paragraph; it answers the objection with only one sentence. But the claim itself holds: the objection assumes cost is the only measure, and my essay already argued the honorable head on page 6. If I rewrote it, I would bring that argument forward and add the example of the apprentices in Franklin’s print shop.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What three things did the Preacher do with his proverbs (Ecclesiastes 12:9)?
2. **EASY** How many pieces should a Grade 9 portfolio hold?
3. **EASY** Name three ways to order a portfolio.
4. **MEDIUM** What should a portfolio preface contain?
5. **MEDIUM** Fix the pronouns: “Me and my brother read each other’s essays, and he said it was too long.”
6. **MEDIUM** What is the three-part shape of a good oral-exam answer?
7. **CHALLENGE** “Of making many books there is no end.” How does this verse apply to choosing a portfolio?
8. **CHALLENGE** Write an honest answer to: “What is the weakest piece in your portfolio, and why did you include it?”

COMMON MISTAKES

- Including everything instead of selecting the best.
- A preface that tells feelings (“I enjoyed writing”) instead of making a claim about skill.
- Bluffing in the oral exam instead of saying “I don’t know, but here is how I would find out.”
- Defending every weakness instead of admitting what is true in a criticism.

Make it a game · Hot Seat. The student sits in a chair; family members take turns asking quick questions about the year (one minute each, three questions). Every answer must include “because.” A bell rings for any answer without a reason; three clean answers earn a cheer.

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

The oral exam trains the habit Peter asks of every Christian: a ready, reasoned answer given with meekness.

Practice: answers

1. He gave good heed, sought out, and set in order many proverbs.
2. Six to eight, one from most units, plus the 8.1 revision with its old draft.
3. By the calendar (to show growth), by kind (to show range), or strong-to-stronger (best last).
4. A thesis about the year, specific references to pieces and sentences (using the canons), an honest weakness, and goals for next year.
5. My brother and I read each other's essays, and he said my thesis essay was too long.
6. A direct claim, a reason, and an example from your own pages.
7. More is not better; a portfolio is a selection. Leaving out weaker pieces makes the strong ones clearer, just as a good essay cuts reasons that do not serve the thesis.
8. Sample: My business letter is the weakest; the request comes in the third paragraph instead of the first. I kept it because it is the only practical piece I wrote, and my notes in the margin show how I would fix it.

8.4 THE TIMED ESSAY: THESIS IN FORTY MINUTES ★

OBJECTIVES

- Budget forty minutes for a timed essay: about 8 to plan, 27 to write, 5 to check.
- Turn a timed prompt into a thesis and outline quickly, using the heads and the counterargument you learned this year.
- Write two full timed essays and score them with an ACT-style rubric.

Warm-up. Set a timer for two minutes. Write as many reasons as you can for and against this question: “Is it better to learn from books or from experience?” Count them. Which two are strongest?

Video slot. Video coming. How to plan and write a timed argumentative essay (ACT Writing strategy from a test-prep or classical-school channel); preview first. Search approved channels (e.g., a library, museum or classical-school channel); preview first.

KEY TERMS

timed essay

An essay written in one sitting under a time limit, usually on a prompt seen for the first time.

prompt

The question or issue given to the writer. On the ACT it comes with three perspectives to weigh.

perspective

One position on the issue. A strong timed essay states its own and weighs at least one other fairly.

time budget

A plan for dividing the minutes: plan, write, check. The writer keeps to it by watching the clock.

scratch outline

A quick plan of a few words per paragraph, written before drafting, that keeps a hurried essay on its line.

CORE IDEAS

The whole year in forty minutes. A timed essay asks you to do everything this course has taught, at speed: find arguments (invention), set them in order (arrangement), write clear sentences (style), all without a second draft. It is not a lesser kind of writing. Samuel Johnson wrote many of his *Rambler* essays against the printer’s deadline, and much of the best prose in English was written in haste by people who had practiced for years. Practice is the whole

secret: the more thesis essays you have planned slowly, the faster you can plan one under the clock.

What the tests ask (2026-27). The ACT offers an optional Writing section: one prompt on a general issue, three perspectives printed with it, and forty minutes to write an essay that states your own perspective and analyzes its relation to at least one other. It is scored on four domains: ideas and analysis, development and support, organization, and language use. The SAT no longer has an essay. The Classic Learning Test (CLT) has offered an optional, unscored essay at some sittings. Rules change, so check the official ACT and CLT websites before you register, and ask whether the colleges you are considering want the essay.

The time budget. For forty minutes, plan about eight, write about twenty-seven, and check about five. Write the times in the margin (for a 9:00 start: 9:08 begin writing, 9:35 stop and check). The commonest failure is not a weak thesis but an unfinished essay. An essay with a conclusion and a modest middle scores better than a brilliant opening that stops mid-paragraph.

Plan in eight minutes. First, restate the question as a thesis question in your own words: a general question, like Hermogenes' "Should one marry?" Second, decide your answer and write it as one sentence. Third, run the heads quickly in the margin: Is it just? Expedient? Possible? Honorable? Pick the two strongest. Fourth, name the strongest objection (on the ACT, usually one of the printed perspectives) and your reply. Fifth, choose one concrete example for each reason: history, literature, Scripture, or something you have seen. Then write a scratch outline: intro and thesis, reason one, reason two, objection and reply, conclusion. Five paragraphs is the right shape for forty minutes; this is the one place where the old form still serves you well.

Write plainly and fast. Open with one or two sentences that frame the issue, then state your thesis in the last sentence of the first paragraph. Begin each body paragraph with a topic sentence that names its reason. Develop with a specific example, not a list of vague ones: one well-explained case from Franklin or from your grandfather's farm beats five sentences of "many people." Use transitions that show logic (therefore, yet, for this reason). Do not stop to hunt for the perfect word; leave a good-enough word and go on.

Check in five minutes. Reread your thesis and conclusion: do they agree? Then scan each paragraph for a missing word, a run-on, or a pronoun with no clear antecedent. Make neat corrections with a single line through. Do not start rewriting paragraphs. The last five minutes are for proofreading, and Paul's counsel to redeem the time applies here quite literally.

The model. *Written for this course: a sample forty-minute essay (excerpt: introduction, first reason, objection and conclusion)*

Every craftsman learns from two teachers: the book that tells him how a thing is done and the bench where he finds out whether he can do it. Some say experience is the only real teacher, since no one ever learned to swim from a manual. Yet experience alone is slow, costly and narrow. It is better to learn first

from books and then to test what we have read by experience, because books give us the experience of thousands of people we could never meet.

The first reason is that books save us from paying for every lesson ourselves. A young farmer who has read about crop rotation does not need to ruin three harvests to discover that corn exhausts the soil. Benjamin Franklin taught himself to write not by trial and error alone but by studying the *Spectator*, rewriting its essays from notes and comparing his work with the original. The book gave him a standard; practice made the standard his own.

Some will object that a reader who has never practiced knows nothing. This is partly true. A surgeon who has only read about surgery should not be trusted with a knife. But the objection proves that experience is necessary, not that books are useless. Even the surgeon's first operation is guided by what he has read and been taught.

Books without experience make a person learned but clumsy; experience without books makes him skilled but small. The wise path is the one the craftsman takes: read first, then work, and let each teacher correct the other.

PICTURE STUDY



A Lady Writing, Johannes Vermeer, about 1665 · Oil on canvas · National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Wikimedia Commons · Public domain

Vermeer catches a writer in the middle of her work. Her quill is on the paper, but she has looked up for a moment, as if someone has come into the room or a thought has stopped her. On the table are her pearls, a ribbon and a small box; behind her hangs a dark painting. The

whole picture is quiet, but the moment is brief: in a second she will look down and go on writing.

Look closely

- Find the quill. Is she in the middle of writing or about to start?
- Find the objects on the table. Which ones are useful for writing and which are not?
- Look at the light. Where does it fall most brightly?

Talk about it

1. Write three sentences about what the writer might be thinking in the moment she looks up. Then write a paragraph on how a writer under a time limit should use such pauses.
2. Timed prompt practice (15 minutes): “Is a quiet place necessary for good work?” Write a thesis, two reasons and one objection from the painting.

WRITING PROJECT: TWO TIMED ESSAYS

Write two full timed essays, forty minutes each, on different days, then score them.

Choose from these prompts (or have a parent choose for you, unseen): (1) Is it better to learn from books or from experience? (2) Should young people be given responsibility early or late? (3) Is it wiser to save for the future or to give generously now? (4) Does technology make people more or less patient?

You will need

- Lined paper and two pencils (practice by hand; many tests are handwritten)
- A timer or clock you can see
- The scoring rubric below
- Your Lesson 8.3 portfolio (the better essay goes in)

Steps

1. Have a parent choose a prompt you have not seen and start the timer for forty minutes.
2. Write your time budget in the margin: plan 8, write 27, check 5.
3. Plan: restate the question, write your one-sentence thesis, run the heads, name the strongest objection, pick examples, and jot a scratch outline.
4. Write the essay in five paragraphs: introduction with thesis, two reasons with examples, objection and reply, conclusion.
5. Check: thesis and conclusion agree; fix missing words, run-ons and unclear pronouns.
6. Score the essay 1–6 in each of four domains: ideas and analysis, development and support, organization, language use. A parent scores it too; compare.
7. On another day, write the second essay. Choose one domain to improve and watch your score in it.

Check your work

- I finished, with a conclusion that returns to the thesis.
- My thesis takes a clear side and appears at the end of the first paragraph.
- Each body paragraph opens with a topic sentence and gives one specific example.
- I stated an opposing view fairly and answered it.
- My verbs are mostly active, and I avoided run-on sentences and comma splices.
- I kept to my time budget within two minutes.

WRITING NOTEBOOK

1. Copy the first paragraph of the model essay and underline the thesis.
2. Make a bank of eight examples you could use on many prompts: two from history, two from literature, two from Scripture, two from your own life.
3. Write five one-sentence theses for the four project prompts and one of your own, in five minutes total.

History note. Samuel Johnson wrote the *Rambler* twice a week from 1750 to 1752, and his friend James Boswell reports that many of the essays were written in haste, some sent to the printer without being read over. Vermeer's *A Lady Writing* was given to the National Gallery of Art in Washington in 1962.

 **Style Clinic. Voice under pressure (Level 3, voice and mood).** When we write fast, passive verbs creep in: “It can be seen that experience is valued by many.” Active voice is shorter and clearer: “Many people value experience.” Use the passive only when the doer is unknown or unimportant (“The *Rambler* was printed twice a week”). In your check, circle every form of *is*, *was*, *be*, *been* followed by a past participle and ask, “Who did it?” Also watch the subjunctive in hypotheses: “If a reader *were* never to practice ...”

For families. Test summary as of October 2026: the ACT Writing section is optional, 40 minutes, one prompt with three perspectives, scored in four domains; the SAT has had no essay for general administrations since 2021; the CLT has offered an optional, unscored essay at some sittings. Confirm current details on the official ACT and CLT sites before registering, since formats and fees change. Grade 9 is early for the real tests; these two practice essays build the habit. Scoring them together, with the student reading the essay aloud to you, is the most useful part of the lesson. The model essay was written for this course; the Franklin example draws on Lesson 8.1.

WORKED EXAMPLES

Example 1. Prompt: “Should young people be given responsibility early or late?” Plan it in eight minutes.

1. Thesis question: Is it better to give responsibility to the young early? Answer: yes, in measured steps.
2. Heads: expedient (skills grow by use), honorable (Scripture: “It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth,” Lamentations 3:27).
3. Objection: the young make costly mistakes. Reply: small early mistakes prevent large later ones.
4. Examples: Franklin apprenticed at twelve; David keeping his father’s sheep before facing Goliath.

Answer: Scratch outline: (1) Intro: every adult was once trusted for the first time; thesis: early responsibility, given in measured steps, makes capable adults. (2) Expedient: skills grow by use; Franklin’s apprenticeship. (3) Honorable: Lamentations 3:27; David and the sheep. (4) Objection: costly mistakes; reply: small mistakes made young prevent large ones later. (5) Conclusion: start small, start early.

Example 2. Score and revise this timed-essay body paragraph: “Also experience is good because you learn a lot. Many people have learned a lot from experience in many ways. It can be seen that experience is very important to many people today.”

1. Ideas: no clear claim beyond “experience is good.” Development: no specific example. Organization: “Also” adds rather than links. Language: passive voice and repetition (“a lot,” “many”). Score: about 2 of 6.
2. Revise with a topic sentence that names a reason, one specific example, and active verbs.

Answer: Experience teaches what no book can: judgment in the moment. A young carpenter may read that green lumber shrinks, but only after his first warped door does he learn to feel the wet weight of a board in his hands. The book gave him the rule; the bench taught him to see it.

PRACTICE

1. **EASY** What is a good time budget for a forty-minute essay?
2. **EASY** Where should the thesis usually go in a timed essay?
3. **EASY** Name the four ACT Writing scoring domains.
4. **MEDIUM** Turn this prompt into a one-sentence thesis: “Is it better to live in a small town or a large city?”
5. **MEDIUM** Make active: “The decision was made by the committee to delay the vote.”

6. **MEDIUM** You have six minutes left and are halfway through your third body paragraph. What should you do?
7. **CHALLENGE** Write an objection-and-reply paragraph for the thesis “It is wiser to save for the future than to give generously now.”
8. **CHALLENGE** Why does this course, which moved beyond five paragraphs in Unit 3, recommend five paragraphs for a forty-minute essay?

COMMON MISTAKES

- Skipping the plan and starting to write at once, then wandering off the thesis.
- Running out of time before the conclusion.
- Listing many vague examples (“many people,” “throughout history”) instead of explaining one specific one.
- Ignoring the opposing view, or stating it so weakly that answering it proves nothing.

Make it a game · Thesis Sprint. A parent reads a perennial question (books or experience, town or city, save or give, early or late responsibility). The student has thirty seconds to say a one-sentence thesis with “because.” Then sixty seconds for the strongest objection and a reply. Score one point for each clear thesis, one for a fair objection, one for a reply.

Scripture. “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” (Ephesians 5:15-16, KJV)

Redeeming the time means using it wisely; in a timed essay, a plan and a budget are how you do it.

Practice: answers

1. About 8 minutes planning, 27 writing, 5 checking.
2. At the end of the first paragraph.
3. Ideas and analysis, development and support, organization, language use (and conventions).
4. Sample: A small town is the better place to live, because it teaches neighbors to depend on one another and makes each person’s work visible and valued.
5. The committee decided to delay the vote.
6. Finish that paragraph in two or three sentences, write a short conclusion that returns to the thesis, and use any remaining time to proofread. A finished essay beats an unfinished one.
7. Sample: Some will say that saving is selfish when others are in need now. The objection is serious, for Scripture commands generosity. But the one who saves is able to give more, and more steadily; Joseph stored grain in the years of plenty and so fed Egypt and his own brothers in the famine. Wise saving is the root of lasting generosity.
8. Because under a time limit a simple, known shape saves planning time and makes it likely the essay will be finished and clear. The full essay suits longer work; the timed essay needs a form the writer can fill quickly without losing the counterargument.

UNIT 8 REVIEW

The student answers in writing. Item 10 is a timed essay; give it in a separate sitting of forty minutes and score it with the four-domain rubric from Lesson 8.4 (1–6 per domain, scaled to 12 points). Short-answer items may be answered aloud as part of the oral exam if you prefer.

1. (3 pts) Name the five canons of rhetoric in order.
2. (2 pts) What is the difference between revision and proofreading?
3. (4 pts) Describe Franklin’s method of learning to write in four steps.
4. (2 pts) Give two of Hamlet’s rules for delivery.
5. (3 pts) Revise for the ear: “Although it is often said by many people that hand work, which our grandparents knew well, is less honorable, this is not true.”
6. (3 pts) What three things did the Preacher do with his proverbs (Ecclesiastes 12:9), and how does each apply to a portfolio?
7. (2 pts) Fix the parallelism: “A good portfolio is selective, ordered, and it has a preface.”
8. (2 pts) Fix the pronouns: “Her and me revised the essays, and it was much better.”
9. (3 pts) Give a time budget for a forty-minute essay and name its paragraphs in order.
10. (12 pts) Timed essay (40 minutes): “Is it better to be trusted with a little or to wait until you can be trusted with much?” Plan, write and check a five-paragraph essay.
11. (2 pts) Make active: “The speech was delivered by the student and was praised by the audience.”

UNIT PORTFOLIO PIECE: THE GRADE 9 PORTFOLIO

Six to eight finished pieces from the year, titled, dated and deliberately ordered, with a table of contents and a 400–600 word preface. Include the 8.1 revised essay with its old draft, the 8.2 delivered piece (with a recording if possible), and the better of the two 8.4 timed essays. The portfolio is defended in a 10–15 minute oral exam.

- **Selection and order:** The best and most varied work, one piece from most units, arranged by a clear plan with a table of contents.
- **Preface:** A thesis about the year’s growth, supported by specific pieces and sentences, with one honest weakness and goals for Grade 10.
- **Revision and finish:** Old and new drafts show real revision of argument and arrangement; all pieces are proofread, with parallel lists, clear pronouns and exact quotations.
- **Oral defense:** Answers give a claim, a reason and an example; weaknesses are admitted honestly and answered with meekness.

Answer key

1. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery.
2. Revision changes the argument, order and sentences; proofreading is the last check for small errors.

3. He made short hints of each sentence in a Spectator paper, laid them by a few days, rewrote the paper from the hints, then compared it with the original and corrected his faults.
4. Two of: speak trippingly on the tongue; do not saw the air with your hand but use all gently; keep temperance in passion; do not tear a passion to tatters or play to the groundlings.
5. Sample: Many people say hand work is less honorable. Our grandparents knew better.
6. He gave good heed (reread your work), sought out (select the best), and set in order (arrange it deliberately).
7. A good portfolio is selective, ordered and introduced by a preface.
8. She and I revised the essays, and the thesis essay was much better.
9. Plan about 8, write about 27, check about 5. Introduction with thesis; reason one; reason two; objection and reply; conclusion.
10. Scored with the Lesson 8.4 rubric: clear thesis at end of first paragraph; two reasons with specific examples; a fair objection answered; conclusion that returns to the thesis; mostly active voice and correct sentences. (Luke 16:10 is an apt testimony.)
11. The student delivered the speech, and the audience praised it.