

THE COMPLETE WRITER

Writing With Style



A Plan for Writing Well
in High School

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Overall Plan

Elementary grades (1-4): Writing with ease

Learning basic grammar and style, basic sentence structure, and paragraph structure.

Method: grammar, copying, and dictation.

Middle grades (5-8): Writing with skill

Learning how to organize sentences into arguments that prove specific points.

Method: diagramming, outlining, outlining and rewriting, narrative compositions

High school (9-12): Writing with style

Learning how to argue original points and ideas.

Method: modelling and the progymnasmata

High school prep:

- Know how to do two and three-level outlines
- Have some experience/knowledge of basic composition forms: chronological narratives, descriptions, definitions, sequences, etc.
- Be familiar with the essentials of citation, documentation
- Understand basic “literary criticism” (answering questions about literature in writing)
- Grasp of grammatical concepts

High School Writing

Continue skills in spelling/word study

Reinforce skills in grammar

Develop skills in persuasive writing

Spelling: transition into word study

Vocabulary from Classical Roots

Vocabulary notebook

Roget's International Thesaurus

fear

alarm, apprehension, abhorrence, agitation, angst, anxiety, aversion, awe, bete noire, chickenheartedness, cold feet, cold sweat, concern, consternation, cowardice, creeps, despair, discomposure, dismay, disquietude, distress, doubt, dread, faintheartedness, foreboding, fright, funk, horror, jitters, misgiving, nightmare, panic, phobia, presentiment, qualm, recreancy, reverence, revulsion, scare, suspicion, terror, timidity, trembling, tremor, trepidation, unease, uneasiness, worry

Grammar: continue with upper-level program for reinforcement

Rod & Staff

Analytical Grammar

Stewart English Program

Warriner's English Grammar and Composition

High School Writing

1. Study of rhetoric, 2-3 hours per week
2. Two 1-page persuasive papers per week in history, science, or literature
3. Longer research papers in history, science, or literature
 - Two ninth-grade papers, 4-8 pages
 - Two tenth grade papers, 5-10 pages
 - 1 eleventh-grade paper, 12-15 pages
 - 1 twelfth-grade paper, 12-15 pages

Creative writing?

Study of Rhetoric

Progymnasmata: a set of writing exercises intended to equip the student with a “toolbox” for persuasive writing.

For example: Slanted and direct narratives

A dog was sitting at the side of the road. A man walked up, put a collar on the dog, and took the dog away.

A mutt was crouching at the side of the road. A dog-trainer approached cautiously, managed to get a collar around the dog's neck, and dragged the dog away.

A St. Bernard was sitting on the side of the road, wagging his tail. His owner rushed up, put the dog's collar on, and led him away.

Self-Study in Rhetoric

(Anthony Weston, *Rulebook for Arguments*)

Frank D'Angelo, *Composition in the Classical Tradition*

Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say:*

The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing

Thomas S. Kane, *The New Oxford Guide to Writing*

(Edward Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*)

Read a section of the text, outline its content, and then do the exercise; if not exercise is provided, write a paragraph illustrating the technique or find an example.

3-5 hours per week

From *They Say, I Say*: "The Art of Quoting"

--Finding relevant quotations

--"Since quotations do not speak for themselves, you need to build a frame around them in which you do that speaking for them.

Quotations that are inserted into a text without such a frame are sometimes called "dangling" quotations for the way they're left dangling without any explanation."

--Templates for introducing quotations (X states, "Not all steroids should be banned from sports." According to X, X agrees when she writes..."

Exercise 1

Find a published piece of writing that quotes something that "they say." What words does the author use to "frame" the quote? What sentence ties the quote to the text? Are there any changes that you would make, based on what you've read in this chapter?

From *The New Oxford Guide*, "Illustration and Restatement":

--"At its simplest, restatement involves nothing more than repeating the main idea."

--Restate at the end of your paper to emphasize the main idea.

--Restatements should be *different* in both sentence form and vocabulary.

--Negative-positive restatement: first say what is *not* the case, then say what is. ("I am not thinking of philosophy as its own subject. I am thinking of it in its own Greek sense..." --Brand Blanchard)

--Move from the general to the specific ("Bound to the production of staples--tobacco, cotton, rice, sugar--the soil suffered from erosion and neglect."--Oscar Handlin)

--For practice: To end one of your papers, restate your main theme using at least one of the strategies above.

Evaluation

1. Teacher at local private or parochial school (honorarium \$40 is a nice gesture).
2. Teacher at local community college or university.
3. Cindy Marsch's Writing Assessment Services,
www.writingassessment.com

Alternatives

Institute for Excellence in Writing, *Classical Rhetoric through Structure and Style: Writing Lessons Based on the Progymnasmata*. At least one year of *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* is a prerequisite.

Classical Writing, www.classicalwriting.com

Martin Cothran, *Classical Rhetoric with Aristotle: Traditional Principles of Speaking and Writing*, Memoria online academy

Two one-page persuasive papers per week in history, science, or literature

Learn how to formulate and support a thesis statement.

A proposition that you can defend

A statement that you can either prove or disprove

An assertion that has to be supported by evidence.

NON-THESIS STATEMENTS

Homer and William Blake both talk about nature.

The heroine of Return of the Native dies by drowning.

Hamlet had a fatal flaw.

ASK:

How are these things the same, and how are they different?

Why?

When?

THESIS STATEMENTS

How are these things the same, and how are they different?

Homer sees nature as a hostile force to be reckoned with while Blake sees nature as a friend of man

Why?

In Return of the Native, Eustacia Vye drowns in the weir because the weir symbolizes nature's hostility to humanity.

When?

Hamlet is sane throughout most of the play, but goes mad during the duel.

Finding topics in history:

Question motivations of historical actors

Argue that place and/or weather affected the outcome of an event

Argue that one event was caused by a previous event

Prove that a certain group of people was
better or worse off after a certain event

Show a connection between two events or
people in two different countries

Speculate on how history might have changed
under different circumstances

Finding topics in literature, background:

Acquaint student with essential literary terms

Simplest method: Create a “literary analysis” notebook using *Essential Literary Terms: A Brief Norton Guide With Exercises*, by Sharon Hamilton.

Begin on page 32, “Figurative Language”

Once a week, spend 30-45 minutes studying *Essential Literary Terms*. Make an ongoing list of literary terms and brief definitions, along with one example for each. Do the exercises at the end of each chapter

Keep on hand for reference.

EXAMPLE

From *Essential Literary Terms: A Brief Norton Guide With Exercises*

Simile: When one kind of thing is compared to a different object, concept, or experience, using the word “like” or “as.” The comparison is supposed to highlight some quality of the subject. Robert Burns says that his love is like a red rose because she is “fresh, vibrant, and lovely.”

Assign brief essays on literature: 1 page, once a week

(some essays can be written before the book is finished)

Finding topics in literature, part one: “response papers”

Discuss some element (scene, plot, or character) that are either interesting or annoying. Explain, using quotes from the work, why it interests or annoys.

Compare the work with something else (anything else) and draw parallels.

Point out how some metaphor or technique is used in the work, and explain

Argue that one of the characters acted in a way that is ethically right or wrong

Finding topics in literature, part two: “critical”

Topics:

“Formal”: Explain how a term from *Essential Literary terms* is used in the book and why you think the author uses it. (This type of essay should be written at least once every three or four weeks.)

“Biographical”: Draw a parallel between something that happened in the writer’s life and something that happens in the literary work.

“Historical”: Draw a parallel between something that happened in the writer’s lifetime and something that happens in the literary work.

Draw essay topics from critical sources:

Cliff Notes

Pink Monkey Notes (www.pinkmonkey.com)

The Well-Educated Mind, Susan Wise Bauer

Finding topics in science:

Focus on discovery/invention:

What was the need for the invention?

Why did the scientist look?

(What question was he trying to answer?)

Focus on theory:

How has this theory changed the way we think?

Is the change good or bad?

Longer research papers

Two ninth-grade papers, 4-8 pages

Two tenth grade papers, 5-10 pages

1 eleventh-grade paper, 12-15 pages

1 twelfth-grade paper, 12-15 pages

Informational, not persuasive

**Goal: learn how to find and use sources,
proper documentation**

Opportunity to explore a topic of interest

Techniques for research papers:

Schaum's Quick Guide to Writing Great Research Papers