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A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE CLASSICAL PROGYMNASMATA

Writing Rhetoric

BOOK 5: REFUTATION & CONFIRMATION

PAUL KORTEPETER



Writing & Rhetoric, Book 5: Refutation & Confirmation

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Refutation & Confirmation

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A Typical Teaching Week

These guidelines are intended to help bring some predictability to lesson planning. Although the elements of grammar are important aspects of this course, its primary focus is writing and rhetoric. We recommend that you teach a simple, but rich, grammar curriculum in parallel with the lessons in *Writing & Rhetoric: Refutation & Confirmation*. By simple, we mean to suggest that you avoid a grammar program with a writing component. Two different writing methods would most likely work against each other and cause an imbalance in the school day. Instead, look for a grammar program that focuses on grammatical concepts, that provides plenty of practice sentences, and that encourages diagramming.

Teachers, you may want to provide same-day grammar instruction several days a week, preferably separating Writing & Rhetoric from grammar study by several hours. Or, you may want to alternate weeks between a grammar program and Writing & Rhetoric. This requires some negotiation in your language arts program for the year. If you aim to do two Writing & Rhetoric books per school year, that would equal approximately twenty-five lessons. If you spend one week on each lesson, that leaves you with approximately ten weeks to focus on grammar. You will have to choose a grammar program based on the needs you observe in your students.

Day One

1. The teacher models fluency by reading the text aloud while students follow along silently.
2. “Tell It Back” (Narration) and “Talk About It” should immediately follow the reading of the text, while the story is still fresh in the students’ minds. “Talk About It” is designed to help students analyze the meaning of texts and to see analogous situations, both in the world and in their own lives. Narration, the process of “telling back,” can be done in pairs or by selecting individuals to narrate to the entire class. Solo students can tell back the story into a recording device or to an instructor. The process of narration is intended to improve comprehension and long-term memory.

Days Two and Three

1. Optional: The teacher can appoint a student to read the text again to the class or pair students to reread it independently.
2. Students work with the text through the “Go Deeper” and “Writing Time” exercises. “Go Deeper” is all about building vocabulary and understanding the nuances of the text better. “Writing Time” includes sentence play, copiousness, and the refutation or confirmation exercises themselves. You will probably want to take more than one day for this step.

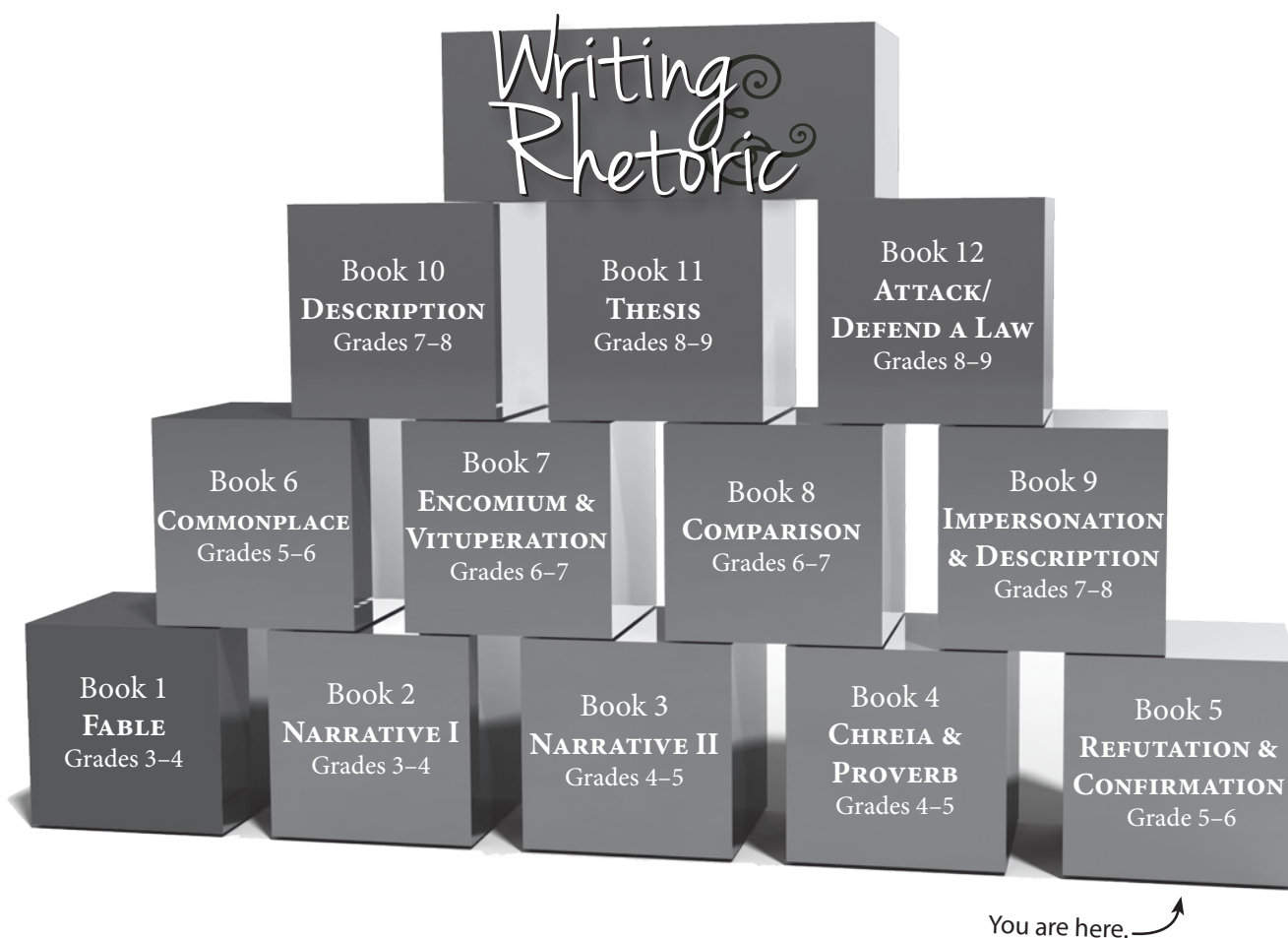
Day Four

1. Rather than going directly to revision, we recommend that students take a breather from their essays for a day while they work on their speaking skills. Keeping a day between essay completion and revision helps students to look at their work with fresh eyes.
2. The “Speak It” section creates opportunities for students to memorize, recite, play word games, and playact. Please consider using a recording device whenever it suits the situation. When using electronics, the student should listen to his recording to get an idea of what

sounds right and what needs to be improved. Have students read the elocution instructions to help them work on skill in delivery.

Day Five

At this level, students will take an important step toward revision. The first several lessons in this book provide basic exercises that introduce students to revision. Later in the book, the lessons provide a self-editing checklist that covers some of the most important aspects of improving an essay. Most students can do rudimentary self-editing at this age and provide some useful feedback to each other. However, teachers are still the best source for giving editorial feedback and requesting rewrites.



Introduction to Students

On the Road to Rhetoric

Have you ever heard the Willie Nelson tune “On the Road Again”? Don’t worry, I’m not going to sing it for you, but it goes like this:

On the road again,
Just can’t wait to get on the road again . . .
Goin’ places that I’ve never been,
Seein’ things that I may never see again.
And I just can’t wait to get on the road again.

Well, here you are, on the road again. You are on a long stretch of highway called Writing & Rhetoric, and you are most definitely going places where you’ve never been. You’ve already cruised through several fascinating places. Your first stop was Fable, which was all about short moral tales with talking animals. Your second stop was Narrative, which includes all forms of story, from history to mystery. And now you are leaving Chreia—which focused on short remembrances about useful sayings or deeds—in the rearview mirror as you motor on down the road.

Unlike the words of the song, you won’t see things and never see them again. The beauty of this program is that you never really leave behind the things you’ve learned. You will use, and reuse, each and every skill along the way. That’s because we want those skills to become powerful tools of communication for you, whether you’re writing or speaking.

Every road trip needs a destination, right? You’re not simply going for a Sunday drive and burning gas. The place you’re heading to is called Rhetoric. Do you remember the meaning of this important Greek word? Rhetoric is the art and practice of persuasive writing and speaking.

The Greek philosopher Plato called rhetoric “the art of winning souls through speech.” The Roman leader Cicero said that rhetoric was “speech aimed at persuasion.” The English philosopher John Locke saw rhetoric as a way “to make one man’s thoughts and ideas known to another.” This book is the first in the series in which you will actually try to win, to persuade, to make your ideas known to readers. You will be commenting on parts of the stories you read and trying to convince readers that your ideas are right. Do the stories contain parts that are worthy of praise? Or do they contain parts that are not so great? Perhaps your rhetoric will be so well done that your readers will agree with what you say. Hey, it’s worth a try.

So, let’s get a move on! The road sign says, “Rhetoric straight ahead!”

Introduction

If you've picked up Writing & Rhetoric books and asked, somewhat mystified, "Where's the prewriting? Where's the outlining from scratch? Is there enough expository writing in this series?" I commend you for asking these good questions! They indicate that you are serious and thoughtful about finding a curriculum for your students that optimizes their chances for success.

Before I address these questions, it might help for you to know where I am coming from and where I want to take you. If you happened to be lost in a forest and you met a guy with twigs in his beard and bird droppings on his shoulders, you might well believe that he has spent quite a few years wandering the forest. But before you let him serve as your guide, you will still want to know how well he really knows the landscape and if he is going to lead you to the nearest road or off the nearest cliff. To show you how well I know the "landscape" and where I will lead you, please allow me to share with you a brief history of rhetoric and composition as it relates to the method in the Writing & Rhetoric books.

Two thousand-plus years ago, the Greeks developed a system of persuasive speaking known as rhetoric. The Romans fell in love with rhetoric because it was both practical for the real world and served the need of training orators in their growing republic. In order to prepare their students for oration, the Romans invented a complementary system of persuasive writing known as the *progymnasmata*: *pro-* meaning preliminary and *gymnas* meaning exercises. The *progymnasmata* were the primary method in Graeco-Roman schools used to teach young people the elements of rhetoric. This happened in a grammar school (called a *grammaticus*) sometime after a student reached the age of ten.

There are several ancient "progymns" still in existence. The most influential progymns were by Hermogenes of Tarsus, who lived in the second century, and by Aphthonius of Antioch, who lived during the fourth century just as the western Roman Empire was collapsing. Even after the great cities of Rome lay in ruins, the progym continued as the primary method for teaching writing during the Middle Ages and even into early modern times.

The Writing & Rhetoric series is based on the *progymnasmata* of ancient Rome. This method assumes that students learn best by reading excellent examples of literature and by growing their skills through imitation. It is incremental, meaning that it goes from simpler exercises to more complex exercises, and it moves from the concrete to the abstract. One of the beauties of the progym is that it grows with the student through the stages of childhood development termed the "trivium"¹ by modern classical education, effectively taking a young writer from the grammar phase through the logic phase and finally to the rhetoric phase.

I believe that the progym is every bit as valuable today as it was hundreds of years ago. Before I explain why this is so, it might be helpful to take a look back on the history of composition for the last 150 years. How we were trained to write as schoolchildren creates certain expectations as we evaluate any writing program. However, these expectations may or may not square with a course in classical composition that leads to rhetoric.

Modern Composition

Depending on when you learned to write, you were most likely immersed in one of several pools of composition theory. If you learned to write before the 1970s, you learned the current-traditional com-

1. In medieval times, the trivium was originally the lower division of the seven liberal arts. For the modern idea that these studies correspond to childhood development, please refer to Dorothy Sayers, *The Lost Tools of Learning*, available as an audio CD from classicalacademicpress.com.

position theory. We call it “traditional” because it is old—over 150 years old—and it is “current” because it continues to be taught. The primary method in Writing & Rhetoric, the *progymnasmata* of ancient Rome, gave birth to the current-traditional theory. The current-traditional method makes its rounds by means of the modes of discourse—exposition, description, narration, and argumentation. It is a bit bandaged up because it has been nicked and cut with a great deal of criticism in the last sixty-odd years.

The focus of the current-traditional method is proper English grammar and compositions that take a very specific and prescribed form (e.g., five-paragraph essays with an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion). Elegance of style rules over every other consideration. Proponents of the current-traditional method generally agree that the best style has clearness of expression, with a stamp of individuality on it, and is not falsely ornamented, but properly grammatical.

Now, many educators who desire to reclaim the classical tradition for modern students would embrace various aspects of the current-traditional method. We see good grammar as the basis of clear communication. We see stylish writing as a sign of careful attention and an appreciation of the beauty of language. We like prescribed forms because they are easy to teach and master. I suspect that many courses that purport to be classical writing are nothing more than the current-traditional method dressed up in fresh clothes. And yet there’s something missing in this type of writing, something so crucial and vital that it took the next wave of writing theory to point it out: Current-traditional method relies so heavily on form and style that substance is neglected.

If you learned to write in the 1970s and beyond, you have been heavily influenced by the process approach to writing, which cropped up in the 1960s as a way to give more freedom and autonomy to writers. The educational researchers who gave us “process” criticized the idea of a finished, polished product of writing (i.e., the five-paragraph essay) divorced from any passion or any authentic effort to communicate. They contended that students rarely consider their audience when writing traditional papers. Arguments are not tailored to persuade any particular group of people. Just as problematic, students don’t often have a desire to communicate significant ideas through the traditional forms, but rather complete their papers by rote. In other words, they write a paper because they had an assignment and not because they had a conviction about a book or subject. The process approach is a reaction against the stylish yet rote compositions done by the traditionalists. Process theorists emphasized, instead, self-discovery through language.

The process approach emphasizes the process of the writer as essential to the finished product of writing. The majority of time spent in process writing is devoted to “prewriting” or, in Professor Donald Murray’s words, “in everything that takes place before the first draft. . . . It includes the awareness of the world from which the subject is born. . . . In prewriting, the writer focuses on that subject, spots an audience, chooses a form which may carry his subject to his audience. Prewriting may include research and daydreaming, note-making and outlining, title-writing and lead-writing.”² The writing and rewriting stages are also important, but the innovation is in the prewriting stage of this method.

So, you see, the process approach to writing introduces, or I should say reintroduces, something very good and necessary to composition: the intention of the author, an awareness of the audience, and the understanding that we use writing as a form of thinking. Without this, writing degenerates into empty and terribly dull formulae. Writing & Rhetoric embraces the process of the author as well as traditional style, but in both cases, as you will see, it takes a different tack.

Beyond the process approach, we now also have post-process theories, which reject any generalized explanation of the writer’s process. These ideas take the perspective that the writer is “situated” in a certain context and that within this context knowledge is created. Knowledge is not some

2. Donald M. Murray, “Teach Writing as a Process Not Product,” *The Leaflet*, November 1972.

objective reality waiting to be discovered by the writer. In essence, reality is built either individually or in a social setting. Post-process theorists would deny any sort of grand scheme to explain or teach writing, just as a postmodern theorist is wary of any generalized narratives of human existence. Though rich and abundant, even words are considered unreliable by post-process theorists, as they often carry different meanings for different people. As such, a structured writing program such as Writing & Rhetoric might be considered limited and unreasonably authoritative to a post-process teacher, who recognizes no hard-and-fast writing pedagogy.

Authentic Classical Writing—The Vitality of Rhetoric

In my estimation, all of these ideas about writing are more or less inadequate. Each has an insight that the theory took too far and failed to balance with other insights. They all miss the mark of what we once had in classical writing. This is because composition has been cut off from its roots in rhetoric. In the classic world, composition served rhetoric, the art of persuasive speech, as a means to an end. The content of the composition was expected to have a purpose, rather than existing as a purposeless exercise in expression. The practice of skillful composition was designed to enhance persuasive public speaking. At the same time, rhetoric asserted that words have precise meanings and that ideas have universal, cross-cultural relevance rooted in our common existence as human beings.

In a democracy such as Athens or a republic such as Rome, rhetoric was a powerful way to enter into public conversations. In the words of Yale rhetorician Charles Sears Baldwin, “Rhetoric is conceived by Aristotle as the art of giving effectiveness to the truth.” He adds that “the true theory of rhetoric is the energizing of knowledge, the bringing of truth to bear upon men. . . .” Rhetoric thus had an intentional public purpose, that is, to persuade people to embrace truth and its corollaries: virtue and beauty. It is designed to enjoin right behavior by holding up to public scrutiny examples of goodness and wickedness. There is an urgency and a real purpose to rhetoric. It was never meant to be empty forms of speaking and composition. It was never meant to be only eloquence and skill of delivery.³ At the same time, rhetoric was not meant to be full of purpose poorly delivered—a poor delivery would only undermine the effectiveness of the purpose.

So here we come to the heart of the matter. The reasoning of the author (process) adds strength and purpose to elegance of style and form (current-traditional) and occurs within a particular context (post-process). Rather than separate elements that fall short when used independently, the three are married together in rhetoric—form, substance, and context united. I believe that a return to rhetoric, to persuasive argument fired by a passion for virtue and in service to humanity, is progress in the best sense of the word. I believe that composition theory finds its highest expression in classical writing reinterpreted for the needs of the modern world.

3. Charles Sears Baldwin goes on to note that a “sophistic tendency” was a perpetual problem in the history of rhetoric. In essence, the sophistic was the weed that grew up alongside rhetoric and tried to choke off the more nutritious plant. The history of sophistry in the ancient world is long and illustrious, but in modern parlance it has come to mean clever and deceptive reasoning. Baldwin says, “What has intervened to deviate rhetoric and frustrate its best use has again and again been the preoccupation with giving effectiveness not to the message, but to the speaker.” In other words, the speaker and delivery became more important than the urgency and significance of the content. In writing, the compositions can be overly prescribed and technical. Not even the *progymnasmata* have escaped this criticism. Baldwin criticized the “fixed topics” of the *progymnasmata* as “arid” and “impersonal as arithmetic.” (Baldwin, *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetry [to 1400]: Interpreted from Representative Works* [New York: Macmillan, 1928], n.p.)

In Writing & Rhetoric, we seek to overcome any tendency to be overly prescribed or technical by encouraging imitative self-expression and real moral purpose. We want for young people to clearly see a model, but then to attempt, as soon as possible, to put these ideas into practice by expressing their own ideas.

In this series I've sought to do just that. I aim not to be purely backward-looking, but to bring those excellent, time-tested practices into today's classroom. I have done so by drawing on the expertise of educators who have taught writing in a variety of settings from grade school through college. For the better part of fourteen years, I have taught writing to students at elementary and middle school levels and guided the writing curriculum at my school. These students live in an urban environment and come from both privileged and less privileged backgrounds; the Writing & Rhetoric approach has been effective in both cases.

The best preparation for rhetoric is still, as practiced by the ancients, the *progymnasmata*, the preliminary exercises. In the *progym*, every aspect of rhetoric is part of the training, from the three types of audience appeal to the five canons (or laws) of rhetoric. (This terminology will be explained in greater depth to students as the series progresses.)

The *progymnasmata* as applied by Writing & Rhetoric serve the development of rhetoric admirably. Writing & Rhetoric is a creative take on the *progym* designed to meet the needs of modern children. We have understood both the method as it was used for the Romans and the demands that contemporary students must meet.

- It teaches the four modes of discourse—narration, exposition, description, and argumentation—while at the same time blending them for maximum persuasive impact.
- It is incremental, moving from easier forms to harder forms. The level of challenge is appropriate for students as they mature with the program.
- It uses “living” stories, from ancient to modern, and is not stuck in any particular time period. Rather, it follows a timeline of history so that the stories can be integrated with history lessons.
- Its stories engage the imagination and also spark a desire in young people to imitate them. In this way, Writing & Rhetoric avoids the “blank-page syndrome” that can paralyze many nascent writers by giving students a model from which to write.
- It promotes virtue by lifting up clear-cut examples of good and bad character.
- It fosters the joy of learning by providing opportunities for creative play and self-expression as well as classroom fun.
- It uses speaking to enhance the development of persuasive composition.
- It provides opportunities for students to learn from other students' work and to present their own work.

Questions about Apparent Omissions

So now, what about certain aspects of current-traditional and process approach writing? Does Writing & Rhetoric cover these? For example, what about prewriting? What about outlining? What about exposition?

Let's first examine prewriting, which is essentially another word for brainstorming and research. We can look at prewriting as a conversation that the writer has with herself. Although prewriting and graphic organizers can be useful, I believe that dialogue is the most effective means of thinking through the task at hand and of avoiding writer's block. In other words, conversations are a great way to prepare for the process of writing.

The Greek philosopher Plato is famous for a process of discussion and argumentation called dialectic. In these dialectical conversations, the teacher would ask questions about an opinion held by a student and would keep pressing in until deeper truths were revealed. Similarly, modern teachers can guide students toward thoughtful writing by asking probing questions and following up on an-

swers with other questions. The idea is not to ask leading questions, but instead to ask open-ended questions so that the student reaches her own conclusions. In *Writing & Rhetoric*, this conversation—verbal prewriting—is explicitly encouraged in our Talk About It sections, but dialectic can occur any time during the process, including during revision.

Revision is introduced for the first time in this book through the Revise It section. Why didn't we do it sooner? Quite often younger, grammar-age students are too concrete in their thinking to see the flaws in their own writing. It often takes a brain that has matured in the direction of abstract thinking, as well as in grammatical conventions, to evaluate writing and revise it appropriately. Just as writing is necessarily incremental, so is the process of revision. In this volume we introduce some specific pointers to aid in reviewing and changing writing. Please keep in mind, however, that revision takes critical thinking, and this type of higher-level thinking takes time and practice. Not every student matures at the same pace. You, the teacher, know your students and will be able to make comments and corrections that best support their needs.

Outlining from scratch, a tool associated with current-traditional and process approach writing, is also very useful in classical writing. However, it is important not to put the cart before the horse. The *progym* provides the outline for various types of compositions, from the chreia to the thesis paper, and encourages students to think resourcefully and flexibly within these prearranged forms. In this way, the *progym* encourages students in the grammar and logic phases of their development to be imitative of writing models. As with all things in education, we must be careful not to overload the cognitive function of young people. When the outline is provided, students have more freedom of expression within the form itself. As a student grows older, especially as a student enters the rhetoric phase of development, outlining from scratch becomes more tenable. In this book, we continue outlining as a subset of narration whereby stories are reconstructed in outline form. This method helps familiarize students with the structure of outlines without burdening them too soon to employ rhetorical thinking. And, even narration, orally “telling back,” is an elementary form of outlining that prepares students for the more complex process of laddering details in order of importance.

What about exposition? Expository writing is often called informational writing and is primarily used to “expose” or explain a topic. It can clarify a process, analyze an event, extend a definition, introduce a problem and propose a solution, or describe how to do something. “The Art of Building the Perfect Hamburger” and “Why the Unsinkable *Titanic* Sank” are sample titles that could be classified as expository. It's true that up to this point *Writing & Rhetoric* has emphasized narrative and descriptive writing. However, many aspects of expository writing are now in place and are being bolstered with every lesson. These include:

- introducing and concluding the main topic
- informing and explaining the basis of an opinion
- summary
- use of narrative to capture interest
- developing paragraphs
- extending description

In fact, expository papers rely on a firm grasp of narrative and description to properly explain and inform.

Onward!

As educators, I think we need to admit that teaching writing is difficult. This is because writing makes big demands on cognitive function and, for many beginning writers, can easily become overwhelming. Our brains need to simultaneously do the following:

- utilize motor skills
- process vocabulary
- sequence and organize ideas
- employ grammatical concepts
- draw upon a reservoir of good writing—hopefully the reservoir exists—as a template for new writing

That’s a tall order. Also, writing contains a subjective element. It’s not as clear-cut as math. And when you add argumentation to the mix, you have a very complex process indeed. To be properly educated, every person needs to be able to make and understand arguments.

It is from this list of complexities that a desire for a relatively easy-to-implement curriculum was born. My hope is that this introduction has clarified why this series follows the classical method of composition and how it naturally integrates helpful elements from other writing methods. While the task of teaching writing is difficult, it is my sincere belief that reconnecting the tree of modern composition to its classical roots in rhetoric will refresh the entire process. Regardless of your personal writing history, I trust that these books will provide a happy and rewarding experience for your students.



The *Progym* and the Practice of Modern Writing

Although the *progym* are an ancient method of approaching writing, they are extraordinarily relevant today. This is because modern composition developed from the *progym*. Modern writing borrows heavily from many of the *progym*’s various exercises. For example, modern stories are essentially unchanged from the ancient fable and narrative forms. Modern expository essays contain elements from the ancient chreia, the refutation/confirmation, and other *progym* exercises. Persuasive essays of today are basically the same as the ancient commonplace and thesis exercises. In this series, you can expect your students to grow in all forms of modern composition—narrative, expository, descriptive, and persuasive—while at the same time developing unique rhetorical muscle.

The *progym* cover many elements of a standard English and language arts curriculum. In *Refutation & Confirmation* these include:⁴

- experiencing both the reading of a story (sight) and listening to it (hearing)
- analyzing text that is organized in sequential or chronological order
- demonstrating an understanding of texts by creating outlines, summarizing, and paraphrasing in ways that maintain meaning and logical order within a text
- comparing and contrasting two or more characters, settings, or events in a story, drawing on specific details in the text
- determining a theme from details in the text, including how characters in a story respond to challenges

4. This list was derived from the Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II, Chapter 110: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading (<http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/index.html>), the Core Knowledge Foundation’s Core Knowledge Sequence: Content and Skill Guidelines for Grades K-8 (http://www.coreknowledge.org/mimik/mimik_uploads/documents/480/CKFSequence_Rev.pdf), the English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (<http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/elacontentstnds.pdf>), and the English Language Arts Standards of the Common Core State Standards Initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy>).

- determining the meaning of words (in some cases by using word origins) and phrases, including figurative language, as they are used in a text
- articulating an understanding of several ideas or images communicated by the literary work
- critiquing the credibility of characterization and the degree to which a plot is contrived or realistic
- drawing evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research
- participating civilly and productively in group discussions
- writing informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly
- introducing a topic or text clearly, stating an opinion, and creating an organizational structure in which ideas are logically grouped into coherent paragraphs to support the writer's purpose
- introducing claims and supporting them with clear and logically organized reasons that are supported by facts and details
- developing the topic with relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples
- providing a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented
- using precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic
- establishing and maintaining a formal style
- producing clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- with some guidance and support from peers and adults, developing and strengthening writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach
- using technology as an aid to revision and oration

While these standards are certainly worthwhile and are addressed in this curriculum, the *progym* derive their real strength from the incremental and thorough development of each form of writing. The Writing & Rhetoric series does not skip from form to form and leave the others behind, but rather builds a solid foundation of mastery by blending the forms. For example, no expository essay can truly be effective without description. No persuasive essay can be convincing without narrative. All good narrative writing requires description, and all good persuasive writing requires expository elements. Not only do the *progym* demand strong organization and implement many of the elements of modern language arts, but they also retain all of the power of classical rhetoric.

Here Is How the *Progym* Develop Each Stage of Modern Composition:

1. Fable—Narrative
2. Narrative—Narrative with descriptive elements
3. Chreia & Proverb—Expository essay with narrative, descriptive, and persuasive elements
4. Refutation & Confirmation—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
5. Commonplace—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
6. Encomium & Vituperation—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, and expository elements
7. Comparison—Comparative essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, and persuasive elements
8. Impersonation & Description—Descriptive essays with narrative, expository, persuasive, and comparative elements
9. Thesis—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, and comparative elements

10. Defend/Attack a Law—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, comparative, and technical elements

As you can see, the *progym* move quickly to establish the importance of one form to another.

Objectives for Refutation & Confirmation

The following are some of the major objectives for the exercises found in each section of this book:

1. Expose students to various forms of narrative writing as well as culturally important stories from the early American period.
2. Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
3. Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
4. Review the concepts of narrative, plot, character, fable, parable, fairy tale, history, myth, and ballad, with an additional focus on legend and the introduction of biography.
5. Introduce the concepts of argument versus quarrel and refutation versus confirmation. Refutation and confirmation correspond to persuasive (or argumentative) essays in modern writing theory. They were extracted from two parts of classic oration by the same name.
6. Give students opportunities to creatively assess and critique narratives by weighing believability/unbelievability, probability/improbability, clarity/lack of clarity, and propriety/impropriety.
7. Reinforce the ability to summarize and paraphrase for greater rhetorical flexibility.
8. Strengthen working memory through recitation, thus improving storage of information. Memory is essential to any oration delivered with rhetorical power.
9. Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
10. Continue to make use of the persuasive essay using a four-step outline. The predetermined outline helps students to organize their thinking into patterns of ideas.
11. Introduce students to the concepts of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.



Lesson 1

Believe It or Not

“**P**sssst. Hey, kid! You. Yeah, you! Listen, I have a great deal for you, but don’t tell anyone, OK? I’m the owner of the Brooklyn Bridge, and I’d like to sell it to you for only twenty bucks. Twenty bucks for this magnificent architectural wonder! I could easily sell it for fifty dollars, but because you look like a decent kid, you can have it for a measly twenty. Do we have ourselves a deal, kid?”

Believe it or not, there was a New Yorker named George C. Parker who convinced foolish people to buy the Brooklyn Bridge from him even though he didn’t own it. He also sold people other famous landmarks he didn’t own: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Grant’s Tomb, and the Statue of Liberty. If he could have convinced people to buy the sun and the moon, he probably would have sold those as well. Nowadays when people say, “If you believe that story, I have a bridge to sell you,” they are referring to George C. Parker selling the Brooklyn Bridge to **gullible** buyers.

Do you believe everything you hear? I hope you answer without hesitation, “Certainly not! Mama and Daddy didn’t raise a fool!” This world of ours is full of liars,

boasters, and stretchers of the truth, and we might as well admit that it's no use believing everyone and everything.

On the other hand, some stories are meant to be believed for the sake of enjoying a good story. Consider the well-known book *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie. In this story we have a boy who never grows up, a shadow that gets away from its owner, children who fly, a fairy who rings like a tinkling bell, and a crocodile that ticks like a clock. The following is one of my favorite scenes, when the Darling children discover they can fly:

"I say, Peter, can you really fly?" asked John.

Instead of troubling to answer him Peter flew around the room, taking the mantelpiece on the way.

"How topping!" said John and Michael.

"How sweet!" cried Wendy.

"Yes, I'm sweet, oh, I am sweet!" said Peter, forgetting his manners again.

It looked delightfully easy, and they tried it first from the floor and then from the beds, but they always went down instead of up.

"I say, how do you do it?" asked John, rubbing his knee. He was quite a practical boy.

"You just think lovely wonderful thoughts," Peter explained, "and they lift you up in the air."

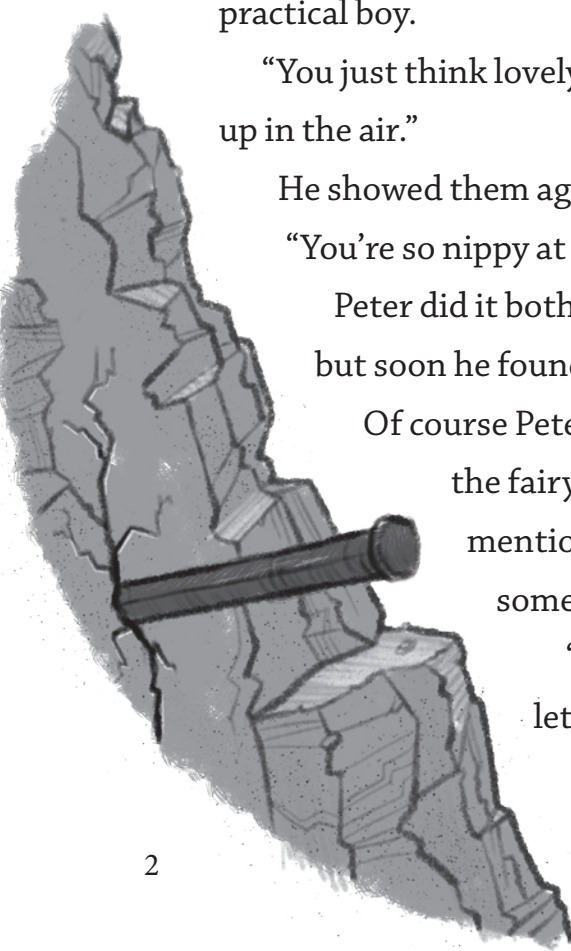
He showed them again.

"You're so nippy at it," John said, "couldn't you do it very slowly once?"

Peter did it both slowly and quickly. "I've got it now, Wendy!" cried John, but soon he found he had not. Not one of them could fly an inch. . . .

Of course Peter had been trifling with them, for no one can fly unless the fairy dust has been blown on him. Fortunately, as we have mentioned, one of his hands was messy with it, and he blew some on each of them, with the most superb results.

"Now just wiggle your shoulders this way," he said, "and let go."



They were all on their beds, and gallant Michael let go first. He did not quite mean to let go, but he did it, and immediately he was borne across the room.

“I flew!” he screamed while still in mid-air.

John let go and met Wendy near the bathroom.

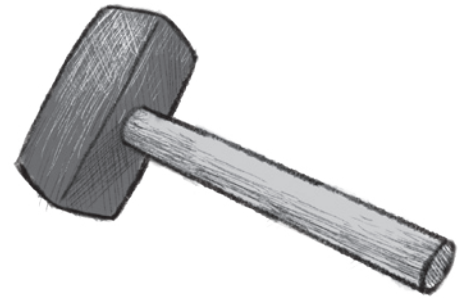
“Oh, lovely!”

“Oh, ripping!”

“Look at me!”

“Look at me!”

“Look at me!”



They were not nearly so elegant as Peter, they could not help kicking a little, but their heads were bobbing against the ceiling, and there is almost nothing so delicious as that. . . .

Up and down they went, and round and round. Heavenly was Wendy’s word.

After the story about George C. Parker and the Brooklyn Bridge, you may be thinking that all of this stuff about Peter Pan is unbelievable and nonsense. There’s no way people can fly with lovely thoughts and fairy dust alone, and, after all, you don’t want to be gullible. Yet, here’s what I have to say about that: If you think of J.M. Barrie and *Peter Pan* the same way you think of George C. Parker and the Brooklyn Bridge, that would be a great pity. That would take all the magic out of reading!

You see, there’s a big difference between the Brooklyn Bridge story and *Peter Pan*. The first intends to harm us by stealing our money, and the second is meant to fill us with delight. The first is a real-life scam, and the second is a fictional fantasy. As a matter of fact, J.M. Barrie created such a convincing magical world that I am completely captured by it. When I read *Peter Pan*, I’m flying along with Peter, Wendy, John, and Michael, and I most certainly do believe in fairy dust. While I’m reading about Neverland, I believe pretty much everything that happens because J.M. Barrie is a master storyteller. While you certainly don’t want to believe everything you hear, the whole point of reading a story such as *Peter Pan* is to get swept along to Neverland, a world of enchantment.

It is possible, however, that even when you believe and enjoy a story you're reading, you still might find that some *parts* of it are difficult to believe. If I had to argue with anything in *Peter Pan*, if I had to say that something is unbelievable in that story, it would be that Peter refused to be adopted by Mrs. Darling in the end. All of Peter's companions, all of the lost boys, happily agreed to be adopted, but not Peter. Peter flew off by himself because he refused to grow up. I find it hard to believe that Peter Pan, who wanted to have a mother in Neverland, refused to join the Darling family. I am willing to make an argument about Peter passing up the wonderful chance to have a real mother.

We find many different elements in a story, don't we? Things may happen in the story that we believe, and there may be some things we find hard to believe. Things may happen that seem probable, or likely, and sometimes things happen that don't seem probable at all. In nearly all narratives we see characters who are trustworthy and good examples of virtue, as well as other characters who are pretty repulsive. We see characters' actions that are proper and improper, and everything in-between. Sometimes part of a narrative itself can be very clear and understandable, and other times it can be unclear and hard to understand.

So what do we do when we see parts of a narrative that are unbelievable, improbable, unclear, or improper to us? We refute them. That means we criticize those parts and explain why we are doing so. (We will explain these four terms thoroughly in lesson 6.) When we see parts of a narrative that are believable, probable, clear, or proper, we confirm them. That means we explain why we think those parts are praiseworthy. In some ways you could see refutation as an attack and confirmation as a defense.

Refutation—a short essay that attacks certain parts of a narrative

Confirmation—a short essay that defends certain parts of a narrative

Refutation and confirmation—these are the two main types of written exercises you will practice in this book. Your job in this type of writing is to persuade your readers that your opinion is right.

Now, you may be tempted to ask, "Why on earth would I want to spend my time picking apart narratives? Doesn't that take some of the magic out of them?"

Let me assure you that this exercise is not about taking the magic out of stories. On the contrary, this exercise is designed to make you love truly good stories even more because you think about them more deeply. When you slow down and think carefully about what you read, you discover so much more to the story and are able to savor it, just as you would enjoy a meal better by slowing down to taste its different flavors and spices.

Refutation and confirmation are also wonderful ways for you to become a discerning, clear-thinking reader. You have all sorts of messages coming to you through the magical narratives of movies, television, plays, video games, and books, and it is wise for you to grow in your understanding of what your mind and heart are absorbing.

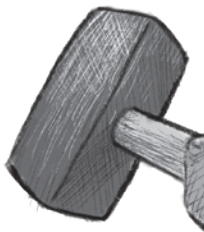
Recently I came across this popular joke:

A lady gets on a bus with her baby in her arms. The bus driver says, “Yowza! That is the ugliest baby I have ever seen!”

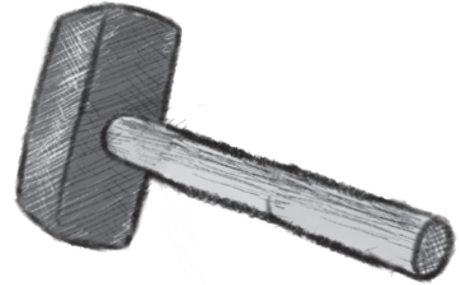
The lady goes to the rear of the bus with an angry look on her face. She sits down and says to another passenger, “The bus driver just insulted me!”

The passenger says, “How rude! You go up there and give the driver a piece of your mind. And I’ll hold your monkey for you.”

After I got over my chuckles, I thought more deeply about this joke. I wondered if it might cause some new parents to feel badly about their babies. One way to refute this joke would be to argue, “There’s no such thing as an ugly baby. All babies are beautiful.” Or, even better, I might argue that it’s improper to insult someone’s baby, a child who is dear to its parents and loved by them. On the other hand, there’s something very trustworthy about this joke, something worth confirming: The joke demonstrates that there are plenty of rude people in this world—and that’s worth knowing. As you can see, looking at the joke from different angles helped me to think more deeply about the joke itself.



Remember to keep the big picture in mind. You are marching down the road toward rhetoric. Rhetoric is the art of writing and speaking persuasively, and the more fully you understand stories, the better your own stories will be when you are called on to tell them. Stories are very persuasive—as much now as at any time in history—and that is why we dwell on them. You must also learn how to argue for what you agree with and against what you don't agree with. What better way to learn to do this than with stories?



Now that you understand the ideas of refutation and confirmation, take a look at one story in particular and start considering how you might refute or confirm parts of it. It is the story of John Henry, the amazing steel driver of the C&O Railway. (A steel driver hammers holes in rock for the placement of explosives.) Henry may have been a real person who was an ex-slave from Mississippi and worked on the expansion of railroads after the Civil War.

The legendary contest in John Henry's story takes place during the construction of the Big Bend Tunnel in West Virginia during the 1870s. As you read it through, think about how parts of the story can be either refuted or confirmed. In other words, think about what parts of this narrative are worthy of praise or criticism.

The Legend of John Henry

—adapted from *John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study* by Louis W. Chappell

John Henry was the best steel driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. He was the only man who could drive steel with two hammers, one in each hand. People came from miles around to watch him drive steel with his two twenty-pound hammers.

Two different railroad companies were working toward each other from opposite directions and planned to meet in a place called Big Bend Tunnel. One company had a steam drill, while the other used manpower to drill. When the two companies met, everyone **asserted** that the steam drill was the greatest invention ever, but John

Henry claimed, “I can sink more steel than any steam drill ever could.” A contest was arranged along with a monetary prize. John Henry could win \$100 for beating the steam drill.

John Henry had his foreman buy him two new twenty-pound hammers for the race. They were to drill for thirty-five minutes. When the contest was over, John Henry had drilled two holes seven feet deep, which was a total of fourteen feet. The steam drill had only drilled one hole nine feet deep, so the prize was given to John Henry.

When the race was over, John Henry went home and told his wife that he had a queer feeling in his head. She prepared his supper, and immediately after eating, he went to bed. The next morning, when his wife awoke and told him it was time to get up, she received no answer, and she immediately realized that he had died sometime during the night. His body was examined by two doctors from Baltimore, who discovered that his death was caused by a burst blood vessel in his head.

Tell It Back—**Narration**

- Without looking at the text, retell *The Legend of John Henry* as best as you
- remember it using your own words. Try not to leave out any important details.

• Here is the beginning of the narrative to help you get started:

- John Henry was the best steel driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway.
- He was the only man who could drive steel with two hammers, one in each hand.
- People came from miles around to watch him drive steel with his two twenty-
- pound hammers.

Talk About It—

- 1. What parts of this story could you attack or refute? There is no right or wrong
- answer, but you should be able to support your opinion.
- 2. What parts of this story could you defend or confirm?

- 3. In 1996, world chess champion Garry Kasparov played against the computer Deep Blue and beat it four games to two. In a rematch in 1997, however, the computer ultimately beat Kasparov because the chess player's nervousness caused his performance to weaken. Compare and contrast this story from real life with John Henry's legend. How is it similar or not similar?

Go Deeper—

- 1. As you already know, a legend is a story that gets exaggerated by storytellers over time. Which particular details of the John Henry story seem somewhat exaggerated?

- 2. When the companies met, everyone asserted that the steam drill was the greatest invention ever, but John Henry claimed, "I can sink more steel than any steam drill ever could." The word "assert" comes from the Latin word *assertus*, which means "claim" or "declare." In the following list, circle the word that *could not* be used in place of "assert."

- a. announce
- b. insist
- c. cry
- d. proclaim
- e. taunt

Now use the word "assert" in your own sentence. Make sure that the meaning of the word is clear by the way you use it in the sentence.

- 3. What legendary quality is John Henry best known for?
- a. quiet humility
- b. amazing intelligence
- c. superhuman strength
- d. caring thoughtfulness

Writing Time—

- 1. **SENTENCE PLAY**—What happens when glass hits a concrete pavement?

• You guessed it! It breaks into lots of tiny pieces, or fragments. Sentences are
• like glass. They can also be broken into many tiny pieces.

• In writing, a **fragment** is a sentence that is incomplete. Fragments lack at
• least one essential part of a sentence. For example, “I jumped excitedly on
• the trampoline” is a complete sentence. “I jumped excitedly on” is a fragment.
• (Using grammatical lingo, this is because the preposition “on” is missing
• a direct object.) “Jumped excitedly on the trampoline” is also a fragment
• because it lacks a subject.

• Be a fragment magician! Use your word magic to fix the following
• fragments by turning them into complete sentences.

• Example:

• Fragment: John Henry was the best steel driver. On the Chesapeake and
• Ohio Railway.

• Complete: John Henry was the best steel driver on the Chesapeake and
• Ohio Railway.

• Note that the period improperly divides the sentence. The fragment begins
• with the preposition “on.”

• Fragment: John Henry the best steel driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio
• Railway.

• Complete: John Henry was the best steel driver on the
• Chesapeake and Ohio Railway.

• Notice that the fragment in this case is missing the verb “was.”



A. Fragment: I'll hammer myself to death. Before I let this steam drill beat me.

Complete: _____

B. Fragment: John Henry had to go to bed. Because he got sick.

Complete: _____

C. Fragment: John Henry had a little.

Complete: _____

D. Fragment: John Henry up on the mountain.

Complete: _____

E. Fragment: John Henry drove his fourteen feet. And the steam drill only made nine.

Complete: _____

2. **COPIOUSNESS**—As you'll recall, an adjective is a word that describes a noun.

- A. Examine the statue of John Henry by Charles Cooper. List five adjectives that describe John Henry as depicted by the sculptor.



▲ Statue of John Henry by Charles Cooper

- B. Adjectives can be strung together and separated by commas. For example:
“The bright, sparkling, beautiful stars twinkled in the night sky.”

The following sentence would be more interesting with adjectives:

The person of John Henry is captured by this statue.

Rewrite the sentence, stringing together three adjectives to describe the person of John Henry. Keep in mind that the noun you are describing is “person.”

The _____, _____,
_____ person of John Henry is captured by
this statue.

- C. The following sentences are taken from folklore studies of John Henry. Rewrite the sentences by adding one or two adjectives to describe each of the underlined nouns.

Example: Now, John Henry was a hero, but he's long dead.

Change to: Now, John Henry was a towering, famous hero, but he's long dead.

- a. John Henry often said his strength was brought from Africa.

- b. The crowd that remained through the race at the tunnel was estimated at 2,500 people.

- c. John Henry met a black bear and didn't do nothin' but shoot him with his bow and arrow.

D. Adjectives can lose their charm when too many are used. Although sometimes appropriate, three adjectives together are more than likely too many! In addition, not every noun in a sentence should have an adjective. You should only use an adjective when you want to emphasize one or two nouns in particular.

In the following sentences, label all of the adjectives with "ADJ." Then subtract some adjectives from these sentences and rewrite them, leaving only two behind in each sentence.

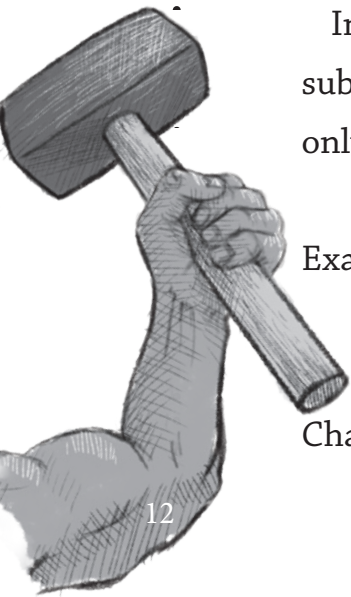
ADJ ADJ ADJ

Example: The extraordinary, fascinating tale of the brawny John Henry is

ADJ ADJ

enthraling and legendary. (5 adjectives)

Change to: The extraordinary tale of John Henry is enthralling.



- a. Just like magnificent, powerful Samson, John Henry could have killed a scary, toothy, bloodthirsty lion with his bare hands. (6 adjectives)

- b. Because of nice, generous Johnny Appleseed, children in Ohio enjoyed crunchy, juicy, tangy apples every beautiful, crisp fall. (7 adjectives)

- c. You could recognize dear old Johnny Appleseed by his holey, threadbare, beat-up shoes. (5 adjectives)

3. **AMPLIFICATION**—The story of John Henry is very short, and many details could be added to make it more interesting. Adding details to narratives or any form of writing is called **amplification**. Amplify the legend in the following ways.

A. Dialogue—As you learned in *Writing & Rhetoric: Narrative I*, dialogue is one of the best ways to extend or amplify a story because it helps the reader to know what the characters are thinking.

When you write dialogue, don't forget to use quotation marks to properly punctuate your writing. Quotation marks are like a fence, enclosing what is being said.

There are several places within a sentence that you can identify the speaker: beginning, middle, and end.

- Beginning: John Henry said, “Captain, bet yo’ last red cent on me, for I’ll beat it to the bottom or I’ll die.”
- Middle: “Captain,” John Henry said, “bet yo’ last red cent on me, for I’ll beat it to the bottom or I’ll die.”
- End: “Captain, bet yo’ last red cent on me, for I’ll beat it to the bottom or I’ll die,” John Henry said.

Create a dialogue between two people who are watching the race between man and machine. The first person thinks the steam drill will win, but the second person is rooting for John Henry.

John Henry was the best steel driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. He was the only man who could drive steel with two hammers, one in each hand. People came from miles around to watch him drive steel with his two twenty-pound hammers.

Two different railroad companies were meeting in a place called Big Bend Tunnel. One company had a steam drill, while the other used manpower to drill. When the two companies met, everyone asserted that the steam drill was the greatest invention ever, but John Henry claimed, “I can sink more steel than any steam drill ever could.” A contest was arranged along with a monetary prize. John Henry could win \$100 for beating the steam drill.

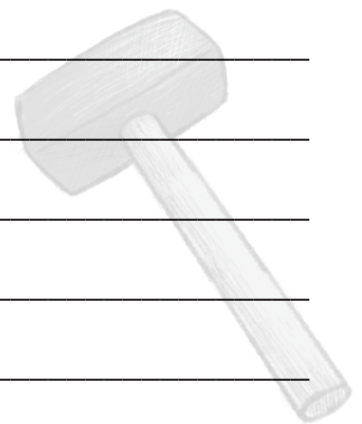
One observer said, “_____

_____.”

A second observer said, “ _____

_____.”

- B. Description of a person—As you learned in *Writing & Rhetoric: Narrative I*, description is another great way to extend or amplify a story. How would you describe John Henry if you saw him standing in your classroom? Be sure to give lots of specific details.



- C. Detailed action—They were to drill for thirty-five minutes. When the contest was over, John Henry had drilled two holes seven feet deep, which was a total of fourteen feet. I don't know about you, but I'm a little disappointed by this narrative. The contest is the most exciting part of the story, and yet the details of it are left out by the storyteller. Anton Chekov said, “Don't tell me the moon is shining, show me the glint of light on broken glass.” In other words, show the scene. Don't merely tell about it. Use your senses—sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing—where appropriate to capture the action.

Pretend you are the next storyteller to tell the tale of John Henry. What details would you add to make the contest come alive and seem even more legendary and exaggerated? Picture a man with two sledgehammers driv-

ing steel pins into hard granite. What would the noise be like? What would it do to the mountain? Would sparks fly? In exercise B, you described the central character of the legend. This time describe the central action.

Speak It—

Alone or in a group, give a dramatic reading of the following selections adapted from *The Ballad of John Henry*.

Captain says to John Henry,
“Gonna bring me a steam drill ’round,
Gonna take that steam drill out on the job,
Gonna **wop** that steel on down,
Lawd, lawd, gonna wop that steel on down.”

John Henry told his captain,
Lightning was in his eye:
“Captain, bet yo’ last red cent on me,
For I’ll beat it to the bottom or I’ll die,
Lawd, lawd, I’ll beat it to the bottom or I’ll die.”

• Sun shined hot and burnin',
• Weren't no breeze at all,
• Sweat ran down like water down a hill,
• That day John Henry let his hammer fall,
• Lawd, Lawd, that day John Henry let his hammer fall.

• John Henry started on the right hand,
• The steam drill started on the left—
• “Before I'd let this steam drill beat me down,
• I'd hammer myself to death,
• Lawd, lawd, I'd hammer myself to death.”

• Oh, the captain said to John Henry,
• “I believe this mountain's sinking in.”
• John Henry said to the captain, “Oh, my!”
• Ain't nothing but my hammer suckin' wind,
• Ain't nothing but my hammer suckin' wind.”

• Captain asked John Henry,
• “What is that storm I hear?”
• He says, “Cap'n that ain't no storm,
• 'Tain't nothing but my hammer in the air,
• Nothing but my hammer in the air.”

• John Henry was hammering on the mountain,
• And his hammer was strikin' fire,
• He drove so hard till he broke his poor heart,
• And he lied down his hammer and he died,
• And he lied down his hammer and he died.”



Revise It—

Welcome to the all-new Revise It section of Writing & Rhetoric. Did you know that the best writing is almost always rewritten? It's true. Author Ernest Hemingway said that he rewrote the ending to his novel *A Farewell to Arms* thirty-nine times before he was satisfied. Thirty-nine! Truly good writing comes from rewriting.

If you skip the revision stage of writing, you skip the most satisfying part. I'm certainly not saying that rewriting is easy. It can be hard work at times, but you will also experience the thrill of doing a better job, a more exciting, compelling job.

By the end of this book I anticipate that you will see your writing differently. I hope that you will see your first writing as only a first step rather than the final composition. As you revise your work, there are plenty of questions you can and should ask yourself. Does this make sense? Is this in the best sequence possible? Does every paragraph have a strong topic sentence? Are my nouns, verbs, and adjectives vivid? Do all of my subjects and verbs agree? Revision is not simply proofreading for spelling and punctuation errors. It is reading for all aspects of good writing.

To get started you're going to work on somebody else's writing instead of your own. You'll get to your own work in the not-so-distant future.

1. **SEQUENCE**—One of the most important aspects of good writing is sequence. Proper sequence means that the parts of a story, an essay, or a speech are all placed in an order that makes sense. This is true for the sentences within a paragraph as well as the paragraphs within a story. Before we can persuade people, we need to be clearly understood. If people don't understand our writing, they will certainly not be convinced that what we have to say has any soundness.

The following paragraphs from *The Legend of John Henry* are all jumbled up. Use numbers 1 through 4 to put the story in its proper sequence.

_____ Two different railroad companies were meeting in a place called Big Bend Tunnel. One company had a steam drill, while the other used manpower to drill. When the two companies met, everyone asserted that the steam drill was the greatest invention ever, but John Henry claimed, “I can sink more steel than any steam drill ever could.” A contest was arranged along with a monetary prize. John Henry could win \$100 for beating the steam drill.

_____ John Henry had his foreman buy him two new twenty-pound hammers for the race. They were to drill for thirty-five minutes. When the contest was over, John Henry had drilled two holes seven feet deep, which was a total of fourteen feet. The steam drill had only drilled one hole nine feet deep, so the prize was given to John Henry.

_____ John Henry was the best driver on the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. He was the only man who could drive steel with two hammers, one in each hand. People came from miles around to watch him drive steel with his two twenty-pound hammers.

_____ When the race was over, John Henry went home and told his wife that he had a queer feeling in his head. She prepared his supper, and immediately after eating, he went to bed. The next morning, when his wife awoke and told him it was time to get up, she received no answer, and she immediately realized that he had died sometime during the night. His body was examined by two doctors from Baltimore, who discovered that his death was caused by a burst blood vessel in his head.

2. **PROOFREADING**—Most people need to put their writing down, get away from it, and then see it later with “fresh eyes.” That’s always very helpful for catching mistakes, both small and large. Checking your writing for mistakes is called **proofreading**.

Please note: Looking for mistakes—proofreading—is a good final step in revising your work, but keep in mind that it is not the first step! You need to take care of bigger issues such as sequence before you take care of smaller issues such as improper punctuation.

There are many types of proofreading marks, but the four that follow are some of the most common.



This symbol means you should capitalize the letter—change it from lowercase to uppercase.



This mark is called a caret. It means “insert something here.” You might be missing a word or proper punctuation.



This mark means “please delete.” Think of it as an X through the word or words.



When you find a word circled and this symbol in the margin, the word has been misspelled.

Now practice putting these symbols to use by marking up the following paragraph, which contains eight errors.

Johnny Appleseed became his right name if men are rightly named from their works. Wherever he went he carried a store of appel seeds with him, and when he came to a good clear spot on the bank of a stream, he planted his seeds seeds. He soon had hundreds of these little nurseries throughout ohio, which he returned year after year to watch and tend. When the trees were large enough he sold them the farmirs for a trifle. He went barefoot in the warm weather, and in winter he wore cast-off shoes; when he could get none, and the ways were very rough, he protected his feet with rude sandals of his own making. He dwelt close to the heart of of nature, whose dumb children he would not wound or kill, even poisonous snakes or noxious insects. The indians knew him and loved him for the goodness of his life.



Lesson 2

Narrative Review

Before you move along to refutations and confirmations, you need to get cozy with narratives again. I wish that meant you could have a nice warm cup of narrative tea and a soft, fuzzy narrative blanket, but that's not how it works. By getting cozy with narratives, I mean that you need to be very familiar with how narratives work.

Telling your own narratives, as well as being familiar with the great narratives of civilization, is a vital part of rhetoric. Both can serve as illustrations in your writing and speeches. You've learned a lot about narratives over the time that you have studied writing and rhetoric, and in this lesson you will review what you have learned.

Do you remember what a narrative is? In *Writing & Rhetoric: Narrative II* you learned that "narrative" is a fancy word for "story." "To narrate" means "to tell" and comes from the Latin word *narrare*, which also means "to tell." So if you're telling a story, you're also narrating a narrative.

There are a lot of stories to be heard and read, but not all of them are great stories. Not so long ago, a famous teen singer was in the news after being arrested for recklessly racing his car on a city street. Of course, this drag race could have accidentally killed anyone trying to cross to the other side of the street. As if that wasn't bad enough, this young singer had apparently been drinking alcohol before climbing behind the wheel. Now, there's probably a decent fable in this story if we were to make the teen a reckless, conceited talking toad such as Mr. Toad from the *The Wind in the Willows*. However, most of the stories you read in this series aren't about the latest news headlines. They are stories that have been with us for generations and have stood the test of time. Singers and movie stars come and go, but the great stories are here to stay.

There are two major types of narratives: fiction and nonfiction. Imaginative stories, not usually based on **fact**, are generally called **fiction**. Factual stories, not usually based on the storyteller's imagination, are called **nonfiction**. For example, an imagined story about a horse, such as *Black Beauty* or *Misty of Chincoteague*, would be considered fiction. A history of a real horse, such as the story of Man o' War or Secretariat, would be nonfiction.

So what makes a story a story? Do you remember what every story has in common? Every story has a beginning, a middle, and an end. In other words, narratives contain an order of events like a timeline.

Here's a delicious way you could illustrate a story timeline: Think about baking a gooey, mouthwatering chocolate cake. The beginning of your chocolate cake story is when you make the batter. You must crack eggs, add milk, whisk in flour, melt the chocolate, and so on. The batter goes into greased pans, the pans go in the oven, and you set the timer. Now you're ready for the middle of the story, right?

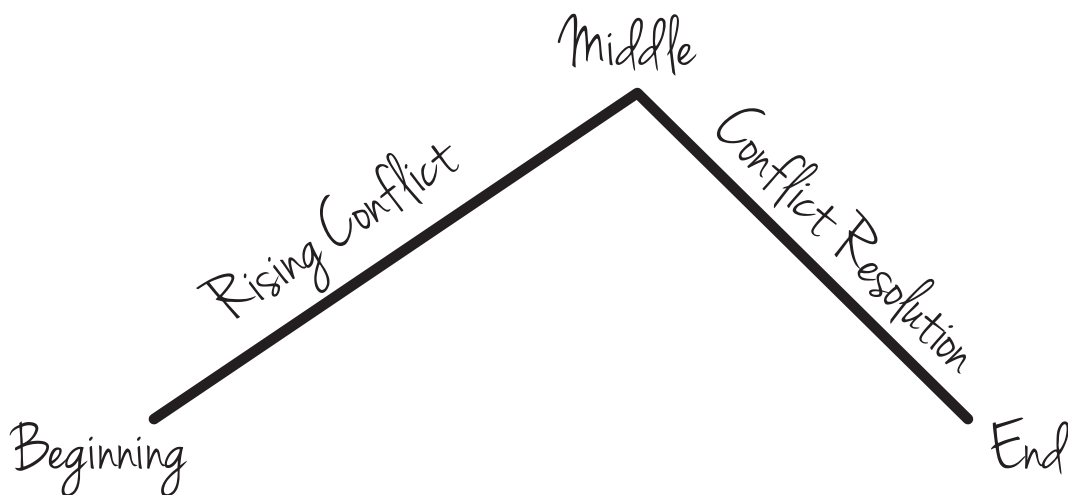
Right! You could sit by the oven and watch the cake bake for thirty minutes—that could be the middle of your story. However, story middles are most interesting with conflict. **Conflict** is a clash between people or ideas. When we don't easily get what we want, when our goals are thwarted time and time again, we call this

conflict. So say that, while you're sitting in the kitchen and watching your cake bake, a motorcycle gang comes along and demands to know the cake recipe. Of course, the recipe is an old family secret and you refuse to tell. The motorcycle gang grabs you and drives you into the desert toward their hideout, where they plan to hold you for ransom for Grandma's cake recipe. Luckily, you escape in a low-flying helicopter that happened to have a rope ladder dangling from its cockpit. Just when you think you're safe, the chopper plunges into the ocean and you're forced to swim to shore with a pack of sharks at your tail.

Now that's a story middle! Did you notice how the series of events built toward the peak of the action of the story? That's what we would call **rising conflict**—things just get worse and worse for you. Of course, you don't want to simply go from one conflict to another without an ending. You want to get back home and pull the chocolate cake out of the oven, remember? So in your story middle you must also resolve your conflicts. That is, you must settle your problems somehow. I think it would be a great resolution to the problem of the motorcycle gang if the sharks ate all of the bikers.

So now you are ready for the ending. Tired, worn-out, cut, and bruised, you slog back into your kitchen. Lo and behold, you find the cake already frosted and ready to eat! You thank your mother for finishing the cake, take one bite of it, and fall asleep on the kitchen floor.

Together these three parts of a story—beginning, middle, and end—create what we call the **plot**, or plan, of the story. The plot creates a sense of order, of starting in one place and ending at a different place.

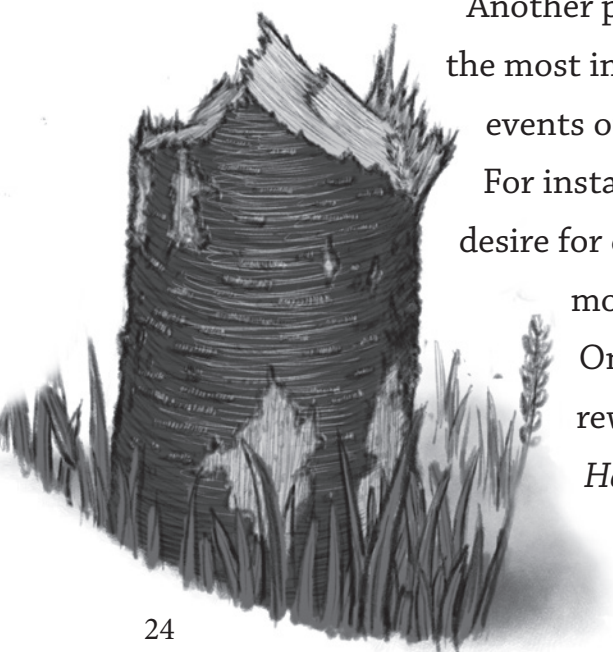


You also learned that every story has characters. You probably have some favorite characters that mean so much to you that they seem like friends—or at least you wish they were friends! The characters we love have been created so well that they seem like us, like people we know or with whom we have lived and worked. That is why characters are able to teach us about ourselves and about life—because many of them are taken from life.

Think of any story and you will immediately think of the persons in the story. King Arthur, Queen Guinevere, and Sir Lancelot are some of the main characters of the legends of Camelot. Aladdin, the princess, the African magician, and the genie are all important characters in *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp*. As you can see in the case of the genie, a character need not be a human being.

The characters of a story make the story interesting. How interesting would *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* be without Charlie? Or Willy Wonka? How interesting would *Anne of Green Gables* be without Anne Shirley? The persons of a story—the characters—make a story fun to read.

- ▶ Name some of the characters in *Treasure Island* or another story you know well.
- ▶ Name some of the characters in the story of Joseph in Egypt from the Hebrew Scriptures or another book you know well.
- ▶ Can you think of a story without characters?



Another part of a narrative is its **main idea**. The main idea is the most important thought or message in the story. All the events of the story add up to create or support a main idea. For instance, in the novel *The Hobbit*, a character who has no desire for change and adventure is forced to go on a quest across mountains and forests to defeat a fire-breathing dragon. One of the main ideas of this story is that there is a reward to taking appropriate risks. In the case of *The Hobbit*, the hero of the story wins a huge stash of gold. More importantly, he gains a broader sense of the big

world and realizes that he doesn't have to be afraid of it. All of the challenges that he faced throughout the book were leading him toward those rewards. We love the fact that stories have meaning and that everything that happens in them contributes to their meaning.

So now you've reviewed what you learned before, that all narratives must have a plot and that they must also contain persons or characters, and you've learned that stories have meaning and a main idea.

- The following stories tell two versions of the same incident. One is a narrative and the other is not. Can you tell the difference?

George Washington and His Hatchet

—from *Fifty Famous Stories Retold* by James Baldwin

Version 1

When George Washington was quite a little boy, his father gave him a hatchet. It was bright and new, and George took great delight in going about and chopping things with it. He ran into the garden, and there he saw a tree which seemed to say to him, "Come and cut me down!"

George had often seen his father's men chop down the great trees in the forest, and he thought that it would be fine sport to see this tree fall with a crash to the ground. So he set to work with his little hatchet, and, as the tree was a very small one, it did not take long to lay it low.

Soon after that, his father came home.

"Who has been cutting my fine young cherry tree?" he cried. "It was the only tree of its kind in this country, and it cost me a great deal of money."

He was very angry when he came into the house.

"If I only knew who killed that cherry tree," he cried, "I would—yes, I would—"

"Father!" cried little George. "I will tell you the truth about it. I chopped the tree down with my hatchet."

His father forgot his anger.

“George,” he said, and he took the little fellow in his arms, “George, I am glad that you told me about it. I would rather lose a dozen cherry trees than that you should tell one falsehood.”

Version 2

In the colony of Virginia, “George” was a common name. The name “George Washington” belonged to a boy in the Potomac River region near the town of Alexandria.

Cherry trees are very useful trees. They produce sweet, red fruit in season, and their wood is lovely for making furniture. In the days of colonial America, cherry trees were rare and highly prized. Sadly, sometimes cherry trees are accidentally chopped down by little boys, and it is possible that George Washington cut one down.

Tell It Back—Narration

- Without looking at the text, retell *George Washington and His Hatchet* as best as you remember it using your own words. Try not to leave out any important details.

Here is the beginning of the narrative to help you get started:

- When George Washington was quite a little boy, his father gave him a hatchet. It was bright and new, and George took great delight in going about chopping things with it.

Talk About It—

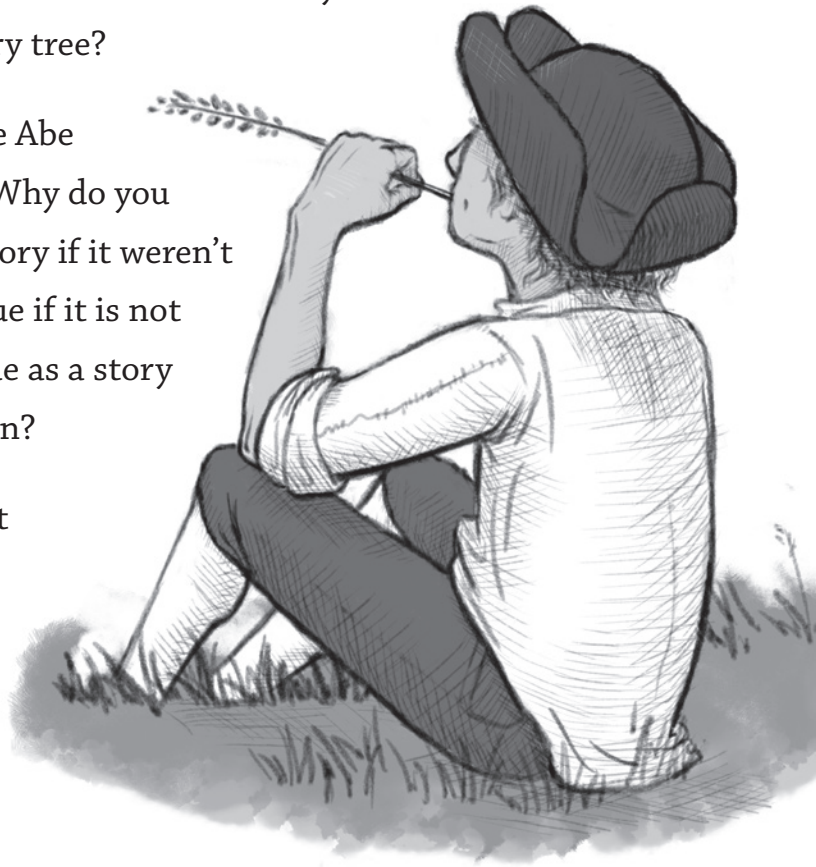
- 1. What do you think about the character of George Washington in this story? What might be considered untrustworthy about his actions? What might be trustworthy about his response to his father?

2. What is the main idea of the story? Do you agree with it? Have you ever learned from an event in your own life that taught you the same lesson?
3. Americans seem to love stories about honesty. Another cherished story, this time about Abe Lincoln, our sixteenth president, has been passed down from generation to generation. The following is the story in a nutshell:

One day a woman bought a bill of goods in Offutt's store amounting to something over two dollars. She paid Abe the money and went away satisfied. That night, on going over the sales of the day, Abe found that he had charged the woman six and one-fourth cents too much. After closing the store, though it was late, he could not go home to supper or to bed till he had restored that sixpence to its proper owner. She lived more than two miles away, but that did not matter to Abe Lincoln. When he had returned the money to the astonished woman he walked back to the village with a long step and a light heart, content with doing his duty.

How is this story similar to and different from the story about George Washington and the cherry tree?

4. We don't know whether or not the Abe Lincoln story is true or made up. Why do you think Americans would tell this story if it weren't true? Does the story have any value if it is not true? In other words, does its value as a story change if it did not actually happen?
5. Why is honesty such an important quality in a leader? Why do you suppose Americans want to have honest presidents?





▲ Engraving of George Washington and his father by John C. McRae

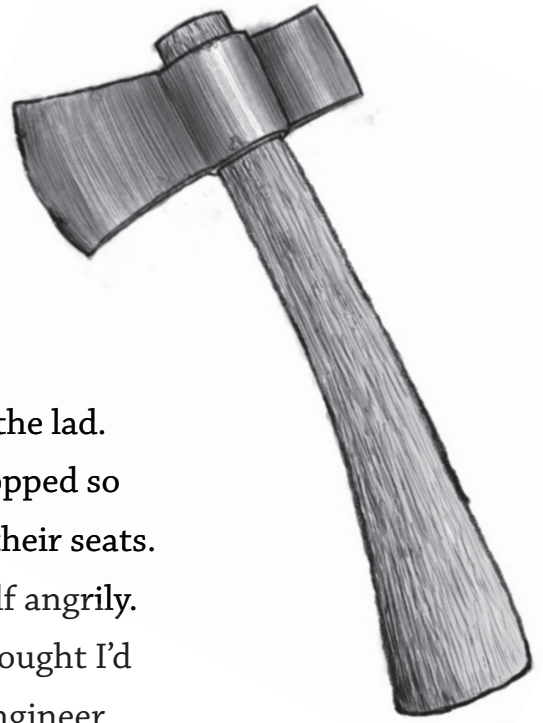
- 6. Examine the engraving of George Washington and his father by John C.
- McRae. Notice that, in the engraving, George did not cut down the whole tree
- and his father does not look angry. Why do you think McRae portrayed the
- story this way?

Go Deeper—

- Beside each of the following selections write “narrative” or “non-narrative.”
- Remember that a narrative is a story. All narratives must have a beginning, a
- middle, and an end—a plot. They must also contain characters. Non-narratives
- may give good information and may contain lovely descriptions, but the two
- essential elements of story—plot and characters—are missing.

1. _____

Without stopping to think, the boy pulled off his coat and ran swiftly along the tracks to meet the train. He swung his coat wildly above his head and shouted with all his might. But who could hear his voice above the rumble and roar of the great express? The engineer saw the lad. He threw on the emergency brakes. The train stopped so quickly that the passengers were thrown out of their seats. "What's the matter, boy?" cried the engineer, half angrily. "Wash—out—down there. Track—caved in—thought I'd tell you," gasped the boy, all out of breath. The engineer leaped from the cab, and running forward a few paces was horrified to see the danger his train had escaped.



2. _____

When Israel was in Egypt's land
Let my people go;
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go.
The Lord told Moses what to do
Let my people go;
To lead the children of Israel through,
Let my people go.
"Thus spoke the Lord" bold Moses said,
Let my people go;
If not I'll smite your firstborn dead,
Let my people go.
They journeyed on at his command,
Let my people go;
And came at length to Canaan's land,
Let my people go.

3. _____

Rock-a my soul in the bosom of Abraham.

Rock-a my soul in the bosom of Abraham.

Rock-a my soul in the bosom of Abraham.

Oh, rock-a my soul.

His love is so high you can't get over it,

So low you can't get under it,

So wide you can't get around it.

You must go in at the door.

4. _____

A wounded animal itself is less dangerous than chasing the animal on horseback. The prairie does not always present a smooth, level, and uniform surface. The most formidable obstructions are the burrows of wild animals. In the blindness of the chase the hunter rushes over it unconscious of danger; his horse, at full career, thrusts his leg deep into one of the burrows; the bone snaps, the rider is hurled forward to the ground and probably killed.

5. _____

Listen my children and you shall hear

Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,

On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;

Hardly a man is now alive

Who remembers that famous day and year.

He said to his friend, "If the British march

By land or sea from the town to-night,

Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch

Of the North Church tower as a signal light,—

One if by land, and two if by sea;

And I on the opposite shore will be,

Ready to ride and spread the alarm

Through every Middlesex village and farm,

For the country folk to be up and to arm.

6. _____

An emerald is as green as grass,
A ruby red as blood;
A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;
A flint lies in the mud.
A diamond is a brilliant stone,
To catch the world's desire;
An opal holds a fiery spark;
But a flint holds fire.

7. _____

Soon as the sun forsook the eastern main
The pealing thunder shook the heav'nly plain;
Majestic grandeur! From the zephyr's wing,
Exhales the incense of the blooming spring.
Soft purl the streams, the birds renew their notes,
And through the air their mingled music floats.
Through all the heav'ns what beauteous dies are spread!
But the west glories in the deepest red:
So may our breasts with ev'ry virtue glow,
The living temples of our God below!
Fill'd with the praise of him who gives the light,
And draws the sable curtains of the night,
Let placid slumbers sooth each weary mind,
At morn to wake more heav'nly, more refin'd;
So shall the labours of the day begin
More pure, more guarded from the snares of sin.
Night's leaden sceptre seals my drowsy eyes,
Then cease, my song, till fair Aurora rise.



8. _____

Next day Amy was rather late at school, but could not resist the temptation of displaying, with pardonable pride, a moist brown-paper parcel, before she consigned it to the inmost recesses of her desk. During the next few minutes the rumor that Amy March had got twenty-four delicious limes (she ate one on the way) and was going to treat her friends circulated through the class.

9. _____

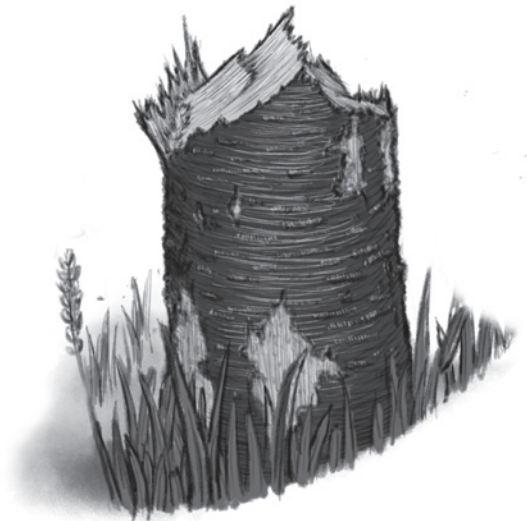
It is generally agreed by travelers, that the flesh of the Bison is little inferior to the beef of our domestic oxen. The tongue is considered a delicacy, and the hump is much esteemed. A kind of potted-beef, called *pemmican*, is made of the flesh of the Bison.

10. _____

Tom and Becky rose up and wandered along, hand in hand and hopeless. They tried to estimate how long they had been in the cave, but all they knew was that it seemed days and weeks, and yet it was plain that this could not be, for their candles were not gone yet. A long time after this—they could not tell how long—Tom said they must go softly and listen for dripping water. Both were cruelly tired, yet Becky said she thought she could go a little farther.

11. _____

There was a man, who had a goat
He loved that goat, just like a kid.
One day that goat got frisk and fine
Ate three red shirts right off the line.
The man he grabbed him by the back
And tied him to the railroad track
And when the train came into sight
That goat grew pale and green with fright.
He heaved a sigh, as if in pain,
Coughed up those red shirts and flagged the train.



12. _____

The beaver is found chiefly in North America. It is about three and a half feet long, including the flat, paddle-shaped tail, which is a foot in length. The long, shining hair on the back is chestnut-colored, while the fine, soft fur that lies next the skin is grayish brown. Beavers build themselves most curious huts to live in, and quite frequently a great number of these huts are placed close together, like the buildings in a town.

Writing Time—

1. **SENTENCE PLAY**—Can you spot the fragments? Some fragments are sentences that are missing essential parts, such as subjects or verbs. Some fragments have punctuation, such as a period, incorrectly placed in the middle of the sentence. In the following exercises, circle any fragments that you see and then correct them by rewriting the sentences in the spaces provided. If the sentence is not a fragment, leave it alone.

Examples:

Fragment: At the early age of seventeen, George Washington a surveyor.

Complete: At the early age of seventeen, George Washington became a surveyor.

In this example, the subject “George Washington” lacks a verb.

Fragment: (At the early age of seventeen.) George Washington became a surveyor.

Complete: At the early age of seventeen, George Washington became a surveyor.

In this example, the sentence is improperly divided by a period. Replace the period with a comma.

A. George Washington’s father was glad. Because his son told the truth.

B. George Washington cut down the cherry tree. Which is why he was grounded for a month.

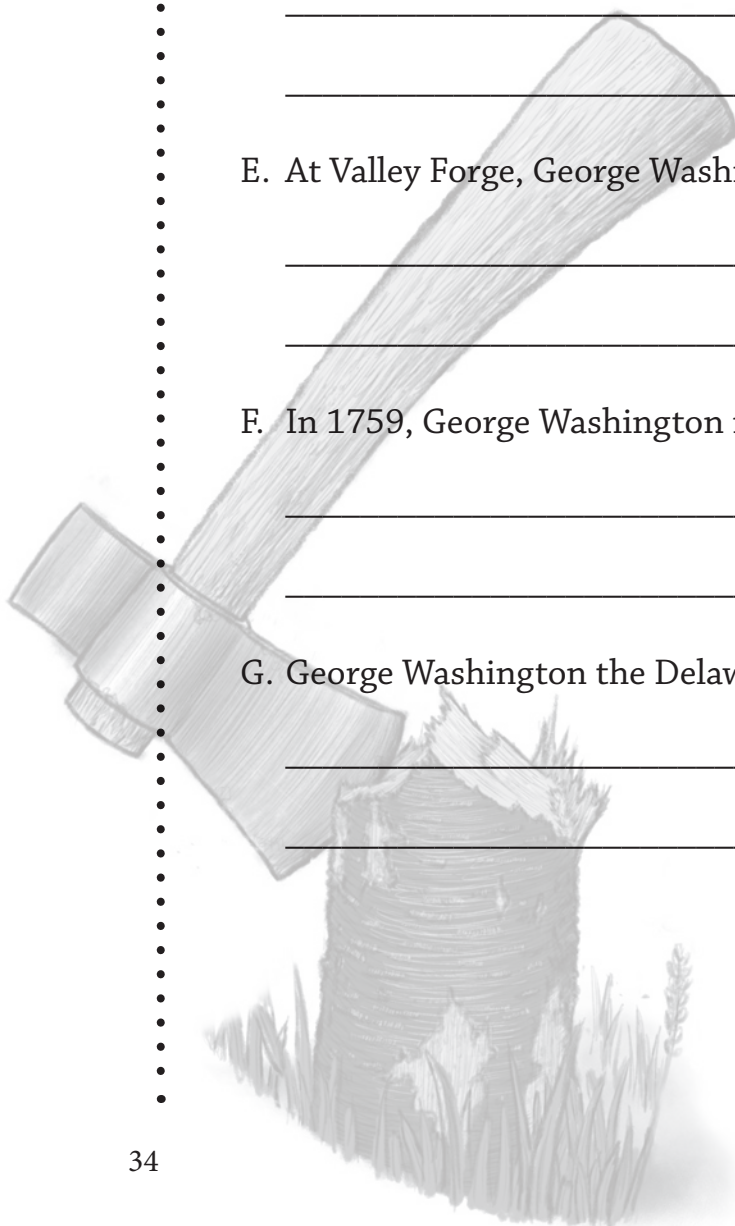
C. One of Washington's best qualities was his honesty.

D. During the French and Indian War, George Washington in the Battle of Monongahela.

E. At Valley Forge, George Washington's troops nearly froze to death.

F. In 1759, George Washington married Martha Custis.

G. George Washington the Delaware River on Christmas day in 1776.



2. **COPIOUSNESS**—Sentences become stronger, more vigorous and intense, when specific words are used. This is true whether the word is a noun, an adjective, or a verb. Always search your mind, and sometimes a thesaurus, for the very best word to use.

A. Underline the adjectives in the following sentences and then rewrite the sentences to make the adjectives more specific. The adjective does not need to be a synonym.

Example: Deceiving your father is bad.

Change to: Deceiving your father is wicked.

a. Cherry trees make a nice addition to a nature-lover's backyard.

b. Of all trees, cherry trees are the most pretty.

c. George Washington was a good boy for telling the truth.

d. A hatchet can be a fine tool but should not be used for bad purposes.

B. In the following sentences, underline the common nouns—the ordinary names of persons, places, things, and ideas—and replace them with more specific nouns. Do not change the proper nouns, which name a specific person, place, thing, or idea. (For example, a common noun is “girl”; a proper noun is “Stella.”)

Example: George Washington lived at home.

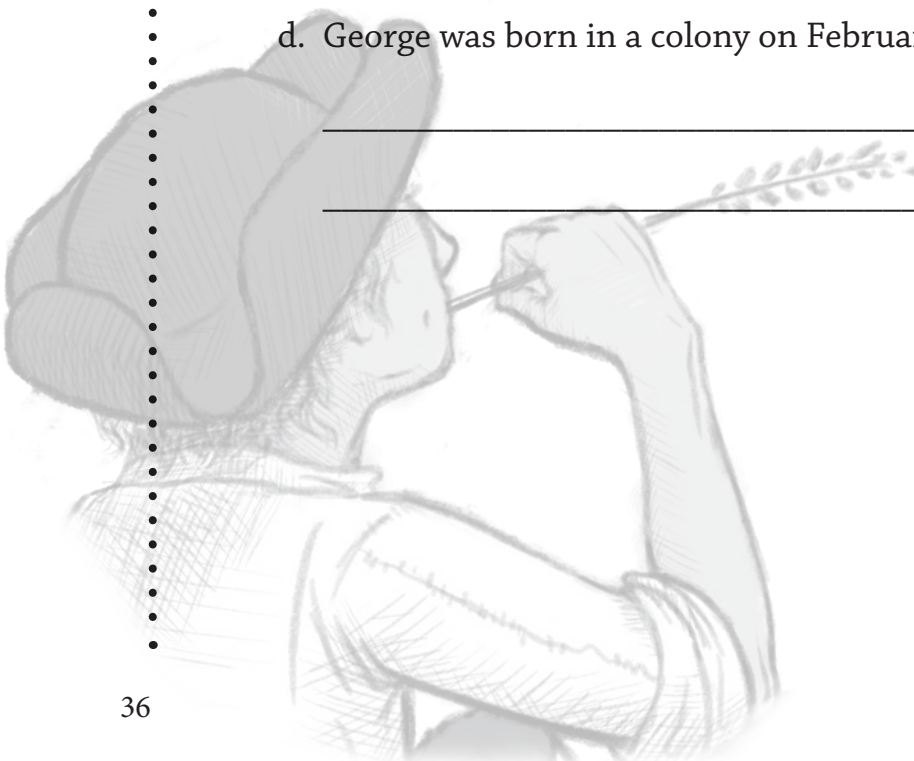
Change to: George Washington lived at Mount Vernon.

a. Cutting down his father’s plant was an issue.

b. George Washington grew up to become America’s first leader.

c. Juicy fruits can be baked into tasty food.

d. George was born in a colony on February 22, 1732.



C. Underline the **state-of-being verbs** in the following sentences and replace them with action verbs. (State-of-being verbs are forms of the verb “to be”: is, are, was, were, be, been, and so on.) Change the sentence as needed so that it makes sense.

Example: George is in his father’s orchard.

Change to: George wanders in his father’s orchard.

In this example, the verb “is” tells us nothing about what George Washington is doing in his father’s orchard. Is he walking, skipping, playing, hiding, or something else? An action verb such as “wanders” gives the reader a much more vivid picture.

a. Cherries are delicious with whipped cream.

b. George is truly remorseful as he explains his actions to his father.

c. George Washington was in Virginia for most of his life.

d. Martha Washington is afraid that epiglottitis will kill George.

D. Replace the dull nouns, adjectives, and verbs that are underlined in the following sentence to create several new and exciting sentences. The new sentences don't have to have the same meaning as the original.

The sad, sorry boy started to do nicer things after he learned stuff.

3. **SUMMARY**—After reading the story of George Washington and the cherry tree again, **summarize** the tale in two or three sentences using your own words. Do you remember how you did this in previous books? First, determine the main idea of the story and then note the important details and words that support it. Often dialogue and description can be cut from a summary. It can be helpful to cross out these extra details.

When George Washington was quite a little boy, his father gave him a hatchet. It was bright and new, and George took great delight in going about and chopping things with it. He ran into the garden, and there he saw a tree which seemed to say to him, "Come and cut me down!"

George had often seen his father's men chop down the great trees in the forest, and he thought that it would be fine sport to see this tree fall with a crash to the ground. So he set to work with his little hatchet, and, as the tree was a very small one, it did not take long to lay it low.

Soon after that, his father came home.

"Who has been cutting my fine young cherry tree?" he cried. "It was the only tree of its kind in this country, and it cost me a great deal of money."

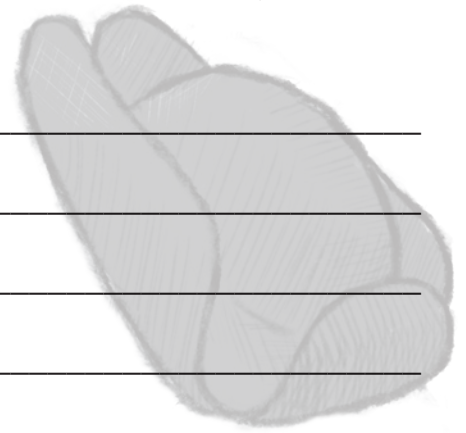
He was very angry when he came into the house.

"If I only knew who killed that cherry tree," he cried, "I would—yes, I would—"

"Father!" cried little George. "I will tell you the truth about it. I chopped the tree down with my hatchet."

His father forgot his anger.

"George," he said, and he took the little fellow in his arms, "George, I am glad that you told me about it. I would rather lose a dozen cherry trees than that you should tell one falsehood."



4. **AMPLIFICATION**—The story *George Washington and His Hatchet* is told in the **third-person** point of view, using the pronouns "he," "she," "it," and "they." Retell the story in the **first-person** point of view, first from George's father Augustine's point of view, and then from George's. Feel free to add thoughts and feelings, as well as description and dialogue. As you learned in previous Writing & Rhetoric books, these are some of the best ways to amplify narratives.

When George Washington was quite a little boy, his father gave him a hatchet. It was bright and new, and George took great delight in going about and chopping things with it. He ran into the garden, and there he saw a tree which seemed to say to him, "Come and cut me down!"

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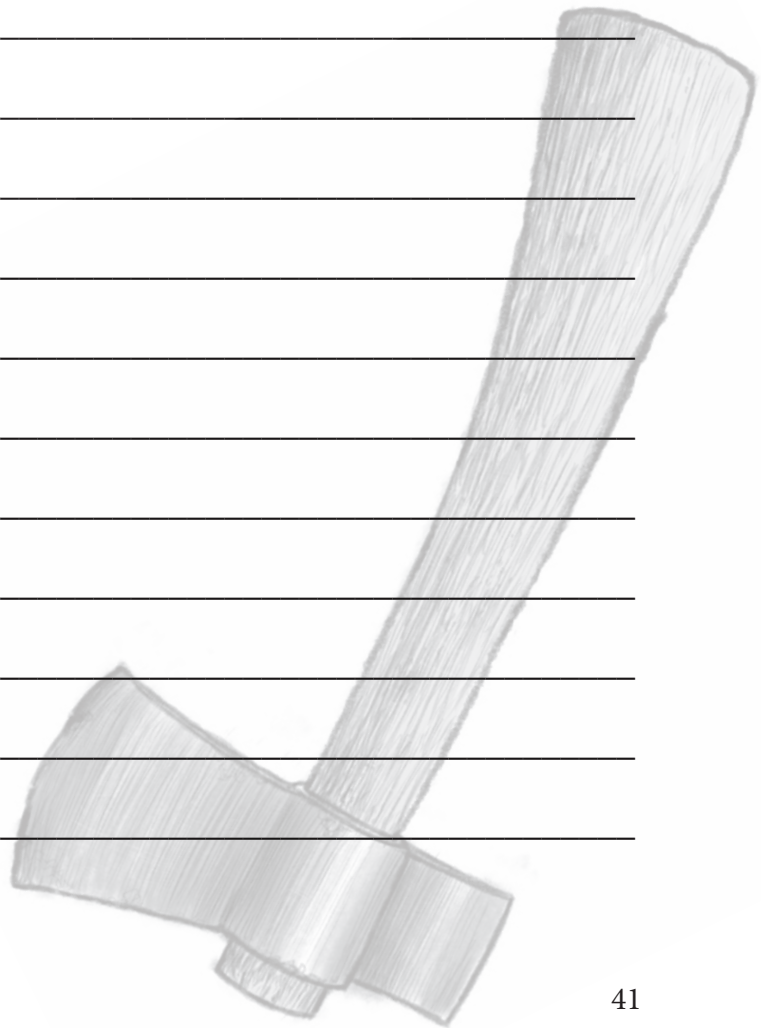
"George," he said, and he took the little fellow in his arms, "George, I am glad that you told me about it. I would rather lose a dozen cherry trees than that you should tell one falsehood."

Augustine Washington's Point of View

.....

[illegible]

.....

A large, faint, stylized letter 'L' watermark is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page. The 'L' is composed of a thick vertical stroke and a horizontal base, both rendered with a textured, wood-grain-like pattern. The watermark is light gray and semi-transparent, allowing the lined paper background to be visible through it.

How does the change in point of view affect the story?

Speak It—

An **impromptu speech** is a speech given “off the top of one’s head,” or on the spot. Impromptu speaking is good practice for thinking creatively and speaking without much preparation.

To practice impromptu speaking, reenact the story of George Washington and the cherry tree alone or with a partner. One person can be George and one can be his father. You will do this on the spot, without preparing ahead of time.

1. For the first impromptu speech, do a dramatic acting out of the actual story.
2. During the second impromptu speech, have George accept blame for chopping down the tree and apologize. Then have George make up weak excuses for chopping down the tree. His father can grow progressively more frustrated as he refutes George’s excuses. What punishment does he give George?
3. During the third impromptu speech, George can try shifting the blame for chopping down the tree. He can blame his older brother for not watching him better, he can blame his father for giving him the hatchet in the first place, he can blame the ax for being so sharp, etc. He can even blame the cherry tree for being so tempting. In each case, his father should explain why the blame-shifting is pure foolishness. In the end, George’s father should explain why telling the truth is important and dole out a punishment much worse than it would have been if George had been honest.

Revise It—

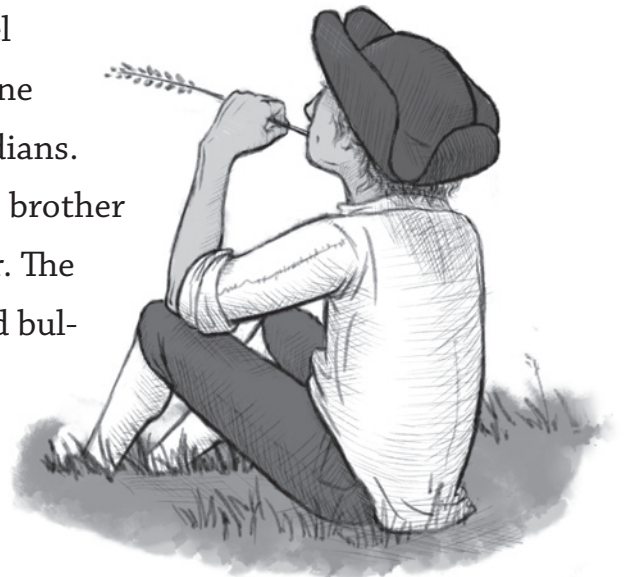
1. **SEQUENCE**—Think for a moment of a dog with its head where its tail should go, its tail where its head should go, and its hind legs and front legs turned in opposite directions. That would not be a dog. That would be a disaster! In the same way, a story that is out of order can be difficult to understand, and if your reader doesn't understand what you are saying, it's hard to make a lasting impact on her. Readers can understand a story best when it is told in chronological fashion, that is, with the beginning first, the middle next, and the end last.

The sentences in the following paragraphs are all jumbled up. Find the best order for the sentences so that they make the most sense, and then rewrite the paragraphs in that order. *Hint:* In the paragraphs in this exercise, the lead sentence names the main character so that the reader doesn't have to guess who the paragraph is about.

Example:

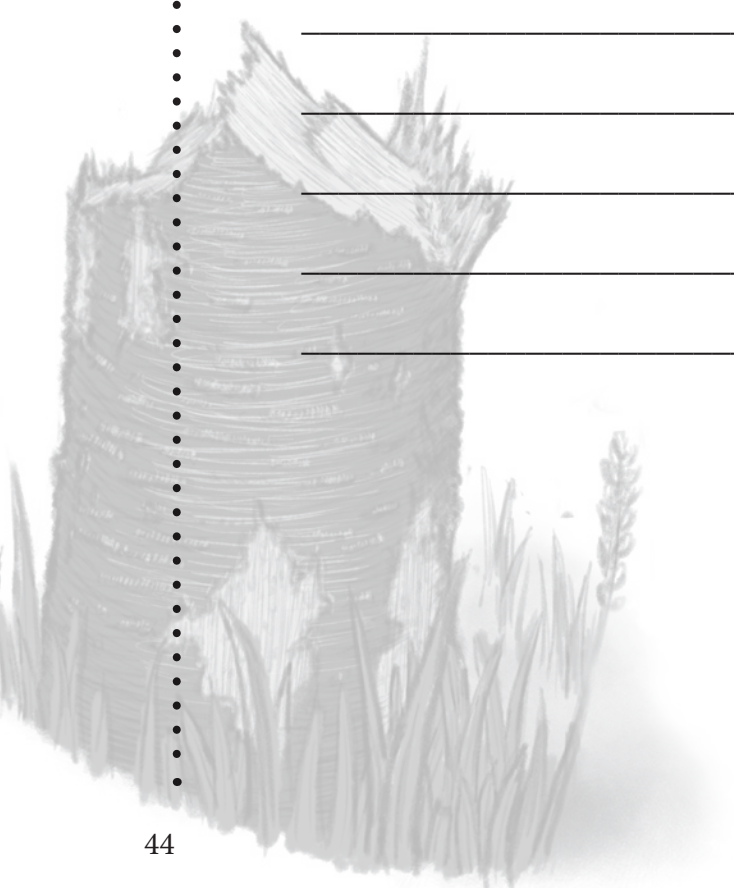
Jumbled Paragraph: He looked through the trees. The other horse was loaded with powder and bullets and clothes, and other things that Boone needed. One evening Daniel Boone sat by his cabin. He saw his brother riding on one horse and leading another. He thought that it might be Indians. He heard someone coming.

Properly Sequenced: One evening Daniel Boone sat by his cabin. He heard someone coming. He thought that it might be Indians. He looked through the trees. He saw his brother riding on one horse and leading another. The other horse was loaded with powder and bullets and clothes, and other things that Boone needed.



A. They took with them such things as were curious and valuable. Then they went home to North Carolina. These were the skins of animals they had killed, and no doubt some of the heads and tails. Daniel Boone and his brother picked out a good place in Kentucky to settle.

B. The great swing carried him far out as it swung. He now thought of a way to break his tracks. Then he took hold of it. He fell to the ground, and then he ran away in a different direction from that in which he had been going. Boone had swung on grapevines when he was a boy. Then he let go. He cut the wild grapevine off near the root. He sprang out into the air with all his might.



2. **PROOFREADING**—The following story is a tale about another honest American leader, Abraham Lincoln. Do you remember the proofreading marks from the last lesson?



This symbol means you should capitalize the letter—change it from lowercase to uppercase.



This mark is called a caret. It means “insert something here.” You might be missing a word or proper punctuation.



This mark means “please delete.” Think of it as an X through the word or words.



When you find a word circled and this symbol in the margin, the word has been misspelled.

Use the symbols to correct the following story, which has eight mistakes. Keep an eye out for capitalization, spelling, and punctuation mistakes as well as incomplete sentences.

In managing the country store, as in everything that he undertook for others, lincoln did his very best. On one okasion, when he counted over his cash, Lincoln found that he had taken a few cents from a customer more than was due. He closed the store and walked a long distance to to restore her money. at another time, dicovering on the scales in the morning a weight with which he had weighed out a package of tea for a woman the night before, he saw that he had given her too little for her money He weighed out what what was due, and carried it her, much to the surprise of the woman, who had not known that she was short in the amount of her purchase.



Lesson 3

A Review of Narrative Types, Plus a New One!

In the previous lesson you reviewed that stories, or narratives, have two elements.

► Can you remember what they are?

During your study of the Writing & Rhetoric series, you've become familiar with some of the different shapes (called **genres**) that stories can take. For example, there are fables, which teach simple moral lessons, usually with talking animals. Many of our favorite sayings come from such fables as *The Fox and the Grapes* by Aesop. There are also parables, and they too teach a moral (or spiritual) lesson, but, unlike fables, parables are true to life.

► Do you remember some of the famous parables told by Jesus?

There are also fairy tales, fanciful stories for children, usually with magical people or creatures. *Cinderella* is a beloved fairy tale in many cultures, and later in this book you will read another version of this story.

► Can you name some other fairy tales?

Another genre or shape that narratives have taken is history, which is a narrative of actual events. In *Narrative II* and *Chreia & Proverb* you studied some historical events and people. Some readers find historical stories more exciting than fairy tales because they really did happen.

► What historical events do you think are interesting and exciting?

Another type of narrative, the myth, is an ancient story not based on actual events, with gods, goddesses, and heroes, that is used to explain life and nature. Myths remind us that people haven't changed all that much over the centuries. We still share many of the same emotions, desires, and fears as people from long ago.

► What are some myths you're familiar with?

A ballad is a song that tells a story, combining both plot and characters. Some ballads you might recognize are *Oh My Darling, Clementine*, *The Ballad of John Henry*, and *Waltzing Matilda*. Some of the most well-known contemporary musicians, such as Bob Dylan, have made their names by singing ballads.

Of course, you know by now that there are many more types of stories than the ones listed here. There are genres such as mystery, romance, science fiction, and westerns. There are animal tales, folk tales, tall tales, and legends. There are bragging stories, jokes, and tattling stories. There are science stories and math stories. There are as many types of stories in the world as are necessary to satisfy the human heart, which has a bottomless thirst for tales.

The following is a remarkable true story told from the first-person point of view. While you read the story, ask yourself if it fits any of the narrative types that you have just reviewed.

Visitors in the Night

—adapted from *Indian Boyhood* by Charles A. Eastman

This story was told to Native American Charles A. Eastman by his uncle Mysterious Medicine. Eastman's Sioux name is Ohiyesa.

I had a somewhat peculiar experience, which I think I never related to you before. It was at the time of the fall hunt. One afternoon when I was alone, I discovered that I was too far away to reach the camp before dark, so I looked about for a good place to spend the night. This was on the upper Missouri, before any white people had settled there, and when we were in constant danger from wild beasts as well as from hostile Indian tribes. It was necessary to use every **caution** and the utmost **vigilance**.

I selected a spot that appeared to be well adapted to defense. I had killed two deer, and I hung up pieces of the meat at certain distances in various directions. That way, if a wolf stole one piece of meat, the others would be safe. The same if a grizzly bear came marauding, but I wasn't worried about a mountain lion or a panther. A fire would keep the big cats away. Therefore, I made a fire. There was a full moon that night, which was much in my favor.

Having cooked and eaten some of the venison, I rolled myself in my blanket and lay down by the fire, taking my rifle for a bedfellow. I hugged it very closely, for I felt that I should need it during the night. I had scarcely settled myself when I heard what seemed to be ten or twelve coyotes set up such a howling that I was quite sure of a visit from them. Immediately afterward I heard another sound, which was like the screaming of a small child. This was a porcupine, which had doubtless smelled the meat.

I watched until a coyote appeared upon a flat rock fifty yards away. He sniffed the air in every direction; then, sitting partly upon his haunches, he swung round in a circle with his hind legs sawing the air and howled and barked in many different keys. It was a great feat! I could not help wondering whether I should be able to imitate him. What had seemed to be the voices of many coyotes was in reality only one animal. His mate soon appeared and then they both seemed satisfied

and showed no signs of a wish to invite another to join them. Presently they both suddenly and quietly disappeared.

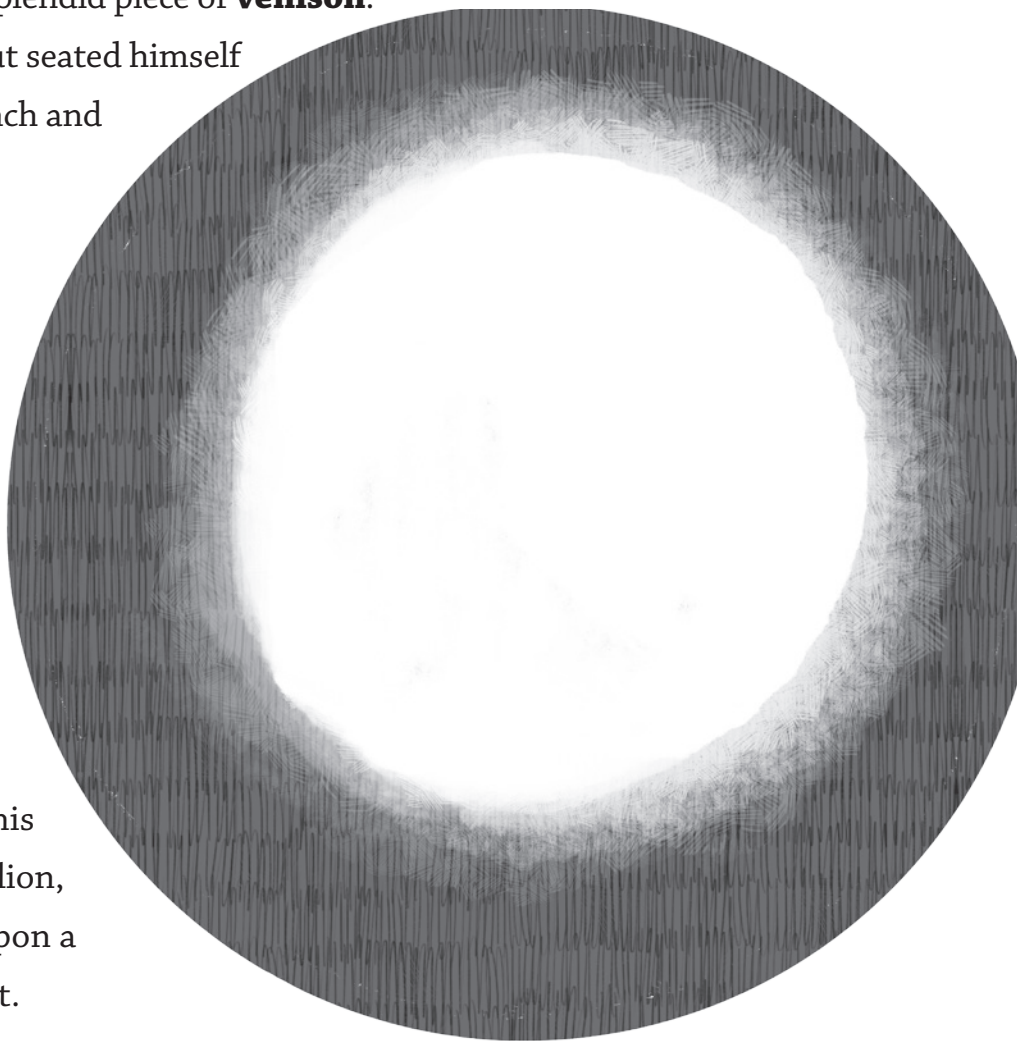
At this moment a slight noise attracted my attention, and I saw that the porcupine had arrived. He had climbed up to the piece of meat nearest me and was helping himself without any ceremony. I thought it was fortunate that he came, for he would make a good watchdog for me. Very soon, in fact, he interrupted his meal and caused all his quills to stand out in defiance. I glanced about me and saw the two coyotes slyly approaching my open camp from two different directions.

I took the part of the porcupine! I rose in a sitting posture and sent a swift arrow to each of my unwelcome visitors. They both ran away with howls of surprise and pain.

The porcupine saw the whole from his perch, but his meal was not at all disturbed, for he began eating again with apparent relish. Indeed, I was soon furnished with another of these unconscious protectors. This one came from the opposite direction to a point where I had hung a splendid piece of **venison**.

He cared to go no further, but seated himself at once on a convenient branch and began his supper.

The canyon above me was full of rocks and trees. From this direction came a startling noise, which caused me more concern than anything I had thus far heard. It sounded much like a huge animal stretching himself and giving a great yawn that ended in a scream. I knew this for the voice of a mountain lion, and it caused me to perch upon a limb for the rest of the night.



I got up and climbed into the nearest large tree, taking my weapons with me, but first I rolled a short log of wood in my blanket and laid it in my place by the fire.

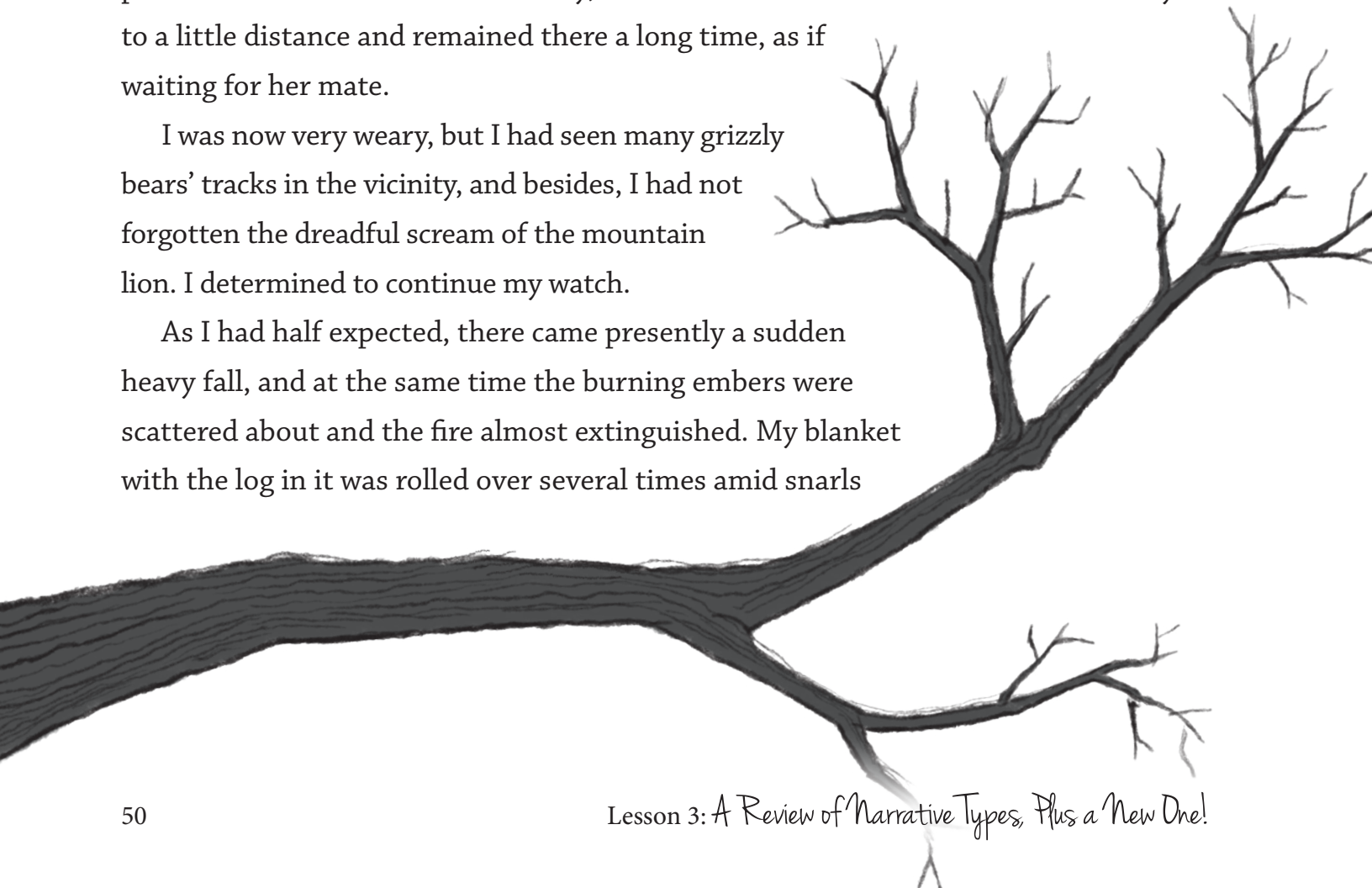
As I got up, the two porcupines began to descend, but I paid no attention to them, and they soon returned to their former positions. Very soon I heard a hissing sound from one of them and knew that an intruder was near. Two grey wolves appeared.

I had hung the hams by the hamstrings, and they were fully eight feet from the ground. At first the wolves came boldly forward, but the warning of the porcupines caused them to stop and hesitate to jump for the meat. However, they were hungry and began to leap savagely for the hams, although evidently they proved good targets for the quills of the prickly ones, for occasionally one of them would squeal and rub his nose desperately against the tree.

At last one of the wolves buried his teeth too deeply in a tough portion of the flesh and, having jumped to reach it, his own weight made it impossible for him to loosen his upper jaw. There the grey wolf dangled, kicking and yelping, until the tendon of the ham gave way and both fell heavily to the ground. From my hiding place I sent two arrows into his body, which ended his life. The other wolf ran away to a little distance and remained there a long time, as if waiting for her mate.

I was now very weary, but I had seen many grizzly bears' tracks in the vicinity, and besides, I had not forgotten the dreadful scream of the mountain lion. I determined to continue my watch.

As I had half expected, there came presently a sudden heavy fall, and at the same time the burning embers were scattered about and the fire almost extinguished. My blanket with the log in it was rolled over several times amid snarls



and growls. Then the assailant of my camp—a panther—leaped back into the thick underbrush, but not before my arrow had penetrated his side. He snarled and tried to bite off the shaft, but after a time he became exhausted and lay still.

I could now distinguish the grey dawn in the east. I was exceedingly drowsy, so I fastened myself by a rope of rawhide to the trunk of the tree against which I leaned. I was seated on a large limb and soon fell asleep.

I was rudely awakened by the report of a gun directly under me. At the same time, I thought someone was trying to shake me off the tree.

Instantly I reached for my gun. Alas! It was gone! At the first shake of the tree by my visitor, a grizzly bear, the gun had fallen, and as it was cocked, it went off.

The bear picked up the weapon and threw it violently away; then he again shook the tree with all his strength. I shouted, “I have still a bow and a quiver full of arrows; you had better let me alone.”

He replied to this with a rough growl. I sent an arrow into his side, and he groaned like a man as he tried hard to pull it out. I had to give him several more before he went a short distance away and died.

It was now daylight, so I came down from my perch. I was stiff and scarcely able to walk. I found that the bear had killed both of my little friends, the porcupines, and eaten most of the meat.

Perhaps you wonder, Ohiyesa, why I did not use my gun in the beginning; but I had learned that if I once missed my aim with it, I had no second chance. I have told of this particular adventure, because it was an unusual experience to see so many different animals in one night. I have often been in similar places and killed one or two. Once a common black bear stole a whole deer from me without waking me. But all this life is fast disappearing, and the world is becoming different.

Tell It Back—Narration

1. Oral Narration: Without looking at the text, retell *Visitors in the Night* as best as you remember it using your own words. Try not to leave out any important details.

Here's the beginning of the story to help you get started:

I had a somewhat peculiar experience, which I think I never related to you before. It was at the time of the fall hunt. One afternoon when I was alone, I discovered that I was too far away to reach the camp before dark, so I looked about for a good place to spend the night.

2. Outline: Create an outline for the story *Visitors in the Night* using Roman numerals (I, II, III) for the most important events and capital letters (A, B, C) for less important events. Use standard numbers (1, 2, 3) for minor points.

Talk About It—

1. What kind of narrative does *Visitors in the Night* seem to be? Consider some of the types you have learned about in this series: fable, parable, myth, legend, and history.
2. *Visitors in the Night* is actually a new type of narrative, a history of one person. Can you guess what this type of narrative is called?
3. If you didn't know that this story was true and told through the eyes of an experienced Native American hunter, what aspects would you find unbelievable?
4. Why do you think Mysterious Medicine said, "All this life is fast disappearing, and the world is becoming different"? What might he mean by this?

2. Which of the following is a caution used by Mysterious Medicine?

Circle your answer.

- a. taking his rifle to bed with him
- b. sleeping after the panther died
- c. dropping the rifle from the tree branch

3. Use the word “caution” in your own sentence. Make sure that the meaning of the word is clear by the way you use it in the sentence.

4. Mysterious Medicine says, “It was necessary to use every caution and the utmost vigilance.” The word “vigilance” comes from the Latin word *vigilantia*, meaning “wakefulness.” In the context of this story about wild animals, what is “vigilance” most likely to mean? Circle your answer.

- a. fearfulness
- b. deadliness
- c. watchfulness
- d. boredom

5. Of the following suggestions, the best title for this story would be:

- a. A-Hunting We Will Go
- b. My Meal in the Woods
- c. Surrounded by Wild Beasts
- d. Sleeping with Wolves

On the following line, write another title that captures the events in this story.

6. Biographies and autobiographies are the histories of a single person. An **autobiography** is a description of someone's life that is written in the first person by the subject himself. A biography is a description of someone's life that is written by someone else (usually in the third-person point of view) about another person, often someone famous. Look at the following passages and label them "biography" or "autobiography."

a. _____

I had, on the whole, abundant reason to be satisfied with my being established in Pennsylvania. There were, however, two things that I regretted, there being no provision for defense, nor for a complete education of youth; no militia, nor any college. I therefore, in 1743, drew up a proposal for establishing an academy and I let the scheme lie awhile dormant. I succeeded the next year, 1744, in proposing and establishing a Philosophical Society.

b. _____

Pocahontas, as Princess of the tribe, claimed her right, and would not yield up their victim. Then Powhatan, who ruled them all, raised his hand and stopped their clamor. For a moment he hesitated, and the fate of Captain John hung wavering in the balance. Then, to please his favorite daughter, whom he dearly loved, he decreed that she should have her will. "Let Pocahontas keep the stranger as her own, to make her toys," he said, for Captain John, during the idle days of weary captivity, had often whittled curious playthings for the little maid. And thus was Captain John Smith's life saved by the gentle Indian girl.

c. _____

Francis Scott Key was full of joy. He took an old letter from his pocket. The back of this letter had no writing on it. Here he wrote the song about the star-spangled banner. The British commander now let Key go ashore. When he got to Baltimore, he wrote out his song. He gave it to a friend. This friend took it to a printing office, but the printers had all turned soldiers. They had all gone to defend the city.

d. _____

During my captivity with the Indians, my wife, who despaired of ever seeing me again, expected that the Indians had put a period to my life. Oppressed with the distresses of the forest, and bereaved of me, she transported my family and goods, on horses, through the wilderness, amidst a multitude of dangers, to her father's house in North Carolina.

e. _____

Louisa Alcott was a wild little girl. When she was very little, she would run away from home. She liked to play with beggar children. One day she wandered so far away from her home, she could not find the way back again. It was growing dark. The little girl's feet were tired. She sat down on a doorstep. A big dog was lying on the step. He wagged his tail. That was his way of saying, "I am glad to see you." Little Louisa grew sleepy. She laid her head on the curly head of the big dog. Then she fell asleep.

7. Take some time to play story detective once more. Using the definitions of the different types of narrative, try to find clues that will help you to label the following short paragraphs. Label them as fable, parable, fairy tale, history, myth, or ballad.

Fable: a short story that teaches a simple moral lesson, usually with talking animals

Parable: a short story that teaches a moral, spiritual, or heavenly lesson and is always true to life

Fairy tale: a fanciful story for children, usually with magical people or creatures

History: a narrative of actual events

Myth: an ancient story not based on actual events, with gods, goddesses, and heroes, that is used to explain life and nature

Ballad: a song that tells a story, combining both plot and characters

a. _____

It was almost twilight. Since nine in the morning the battle had raged. To attack the English behind the firm line of shields was like making an assault upon a fortress. William ordered his archers to shoot straight up into the air. There fell upon the English a storm of the deadly steel, the most terrible event of the day. Men held their shields high up to protect their heads. This was the moment for the Norman lance and the Norman sword. But then King Harold fell, his eye pierced by an arrow.

b. _____

Sixteen prisoners in all had been sent from Nicæa to the great show at Ephesus. They were confined in cells, constructed under the seats of the amphitheatre, and indeed close to the cages of the wild beasts. That which was occupied by the two sisters, who, by special favor, were allowed to be together, was separated by nothing more than a wooden partition from the habitation of the lions. The heat, the darkness, and the stench were such as it would be impossible to describe. And if anything was wanted to aggravate the horror of the situation, the two prisoners heard day and night the restless pacing to and fro, and now and then the deep growling, of their ferocious neighbors.

c. _____

After these things came Memnon, a black warrior, who men said was the son of Morning. He slew Antilochus, son of Nestor, and was himself slain by Achilles. Not many days afterwards Achilles himself was slain near the Scæan Gates. It was by an arrow from the bow of Paris that he was killed, but the arrow was guided by the sun god Apollo.

d. _____

“Can you really love such an ugly creature as I am?” said the Beast faintly. “Ah! Beauty, you only came just in time. I was dying because I thought you had forgotten your promise. Beauty, will you marry me?” She answered softly: “Yes, dear Beast.”

As she spoke a blaze of light sprang up before the windows of the palace; fireworks crackled and guns banged, and across the avenue of orange trees, in letters all made of fire-flies, was written: "Long live the Prince and his Bride."

e. _____

A Bat blundered into the nest of a Weasel, who ran up to catch and eat him. The Bat begged for his life, but the Weasel would not listen. "You are a Mouse," he said, "and I am a sworn enemy of Mice." "But I am not a Mouse!" cried the Bat. "Look at my wings. Can Mice fly?"

f. _____

A young Hindu girl watched her mother pour buttermilk into fresh cow's milk. "This is the way to make butter," said the mother. "But where is the butter?" asked the girl. "It is in every drop of milk, but it is hidden," the mother replied. "I will show you in the morning." In the morning, the girl saw that the liquid had become solid overnight because the buttermilk had curdled the milk. The milk was changed into curd. In the same way God, who is hidden, can be found in life for those who pursue holiness.

g. _____

A Peacock, puffed up with vanity, met a Crane one day, and to impress him spread his gorgeous tail. "Look," he said. "What have you to compare with this? I am dressed in all the glory of the rainbow, while your feathers are gray as dust!"

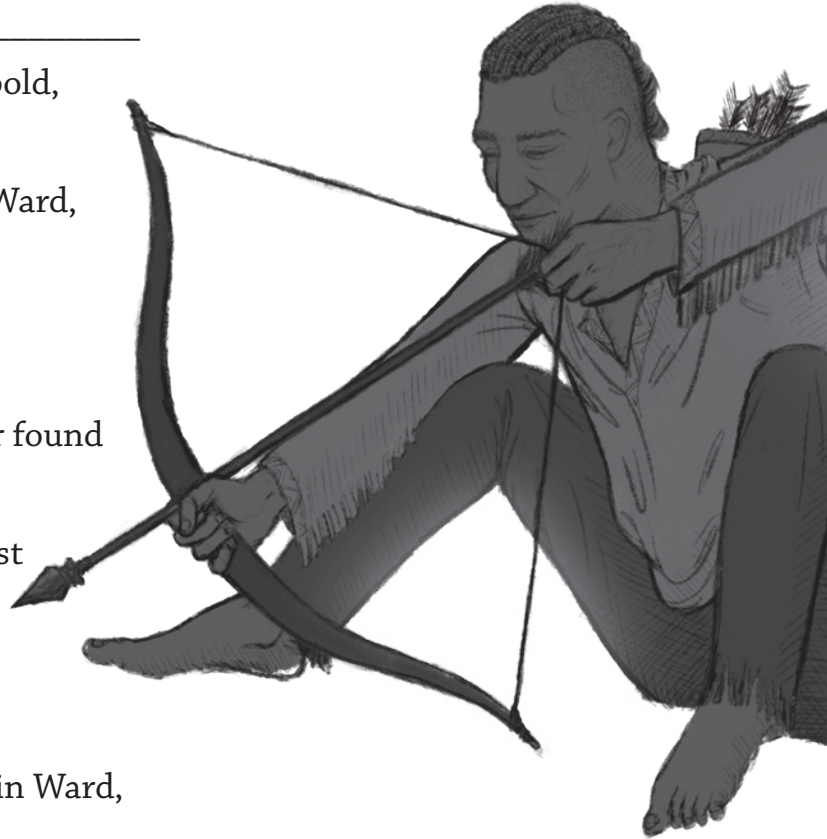
h. _____

The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, "Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?" "An enemy did this," he replied. The servants asked him, "Do you want us to go and pull them up?" "No," he answered, "because while

you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.”

i. _____

Come all you gallant seamen bold,
All you that march to drum,
Let's go and look for Captain Ward,
Far on the sea he roams.
He is the biggest robber
That ever you did hear,
There's not been such a robber found
For above this hundred year.
A ship was sailing from the east
And going to the west,
Loaded with silks and satins
And velvets of the best;
But meeting there with Captain Ward,
It was a bad meeting;
He robbed them of all their wealth,
And bid them tell their king.



j. _____

Rapunzel was the most beautiful child in the world. When she was twelve years old the witch shut her up in a tower in the midst of a wood, and it had neither steps nor door, only a small window above. When the witch wished to be let in, she would stand below and would cry, “Rapunzel, Rapunzel! Let down your golden hair!”

k. _____

I'm lonesome since I crossed the hill,
And o'er the moorland sedgy
Such heavy thoughts my heart do fill,
Since parting with my Betsey
I seek for one as fair and gay,
But find none to remind me
How sweet the hours I passed away,
With the girl I left behind me.



l. _____

The apples of youth were so precious to the gods that Idun was well guarded by night and day. Sometimes, however, even the Asas were off their guard, and that was the opportunity for Loki. Strolling one day through the trees of Asgard, Loki found the beautiful maiden all alone in a sunny corner playing ball with her golden fruit.

Writing Time—

1. **SENTENCE PLAY**—A **run-on sentence** is a sentence that lacks proper punctuation and should really be divided into separate sentences. Instead of having punctuation or a connecting word such as “and,” “but,” or “or,” the sentence keeps going on.

For example:

Mysterious Medicine was a great hunter he was also a brilliant storyteller.

This sentence can be fixed in two ways. It could divided into two sentences using punctuation:

Mysterious Medicine was a great hunter. He was also a brilliant storyteller.



Or it could have a connecting word between the sentences:
Mysterious Medicine was a great hunter, and he was also a brilliant storyteller.

These connecting words are called **conjunctions**.

Identify which of the following sentences are run-on and correct them. Not all sentences will need to be corrected.

Example: Mysterious Medicine was rudely awakened by the report of a gun directly under him at the same time, he thought someone was trying to shake him off the tree.

Change to: Mysterious Medicine was rudely awakened by the report of a gun directly under him. At the same time, he thought someone was trying to shake him off the tree.

A. The forests of early America were filled with wild animals some of them were dangerous.

B. Mysterious Medicine was smart to light a fire, because it probably scared certain animals away.

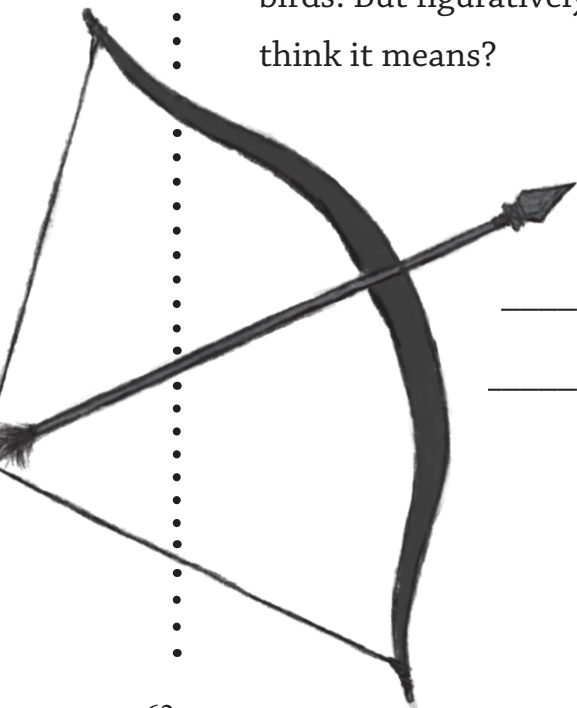
C. Another famous Native American was Pocahontas, who saved Captain John Smith from execution.

D. After Pocahontas grew up, she married a man named John Rolfe he was an English settler.

E. No one knows exactly how Pocahontas died it may have been from small-pox or pneumonia.

2. **COPIOUSNESS**—In *Writing & Rhetoric: Chreia & Proverb*, you played with the figurative language of a proverb. Figurative language is wording that suggests an imaginative meaning that goes beyond what the actual words say. Mysterious Medicine uses figurative language when he says, “All this life is fast disappearing.” Can life truly disappear, or vanish into thin air? No, not really. The hunter implies, rather, that the outdoor way of life, the ability to survive from hunting in the wilderness, is becoming more rare.

What about the sentence “Don’t let a fox guard a hen house”? As literal advice, it means don’t let a fox near a chicken shed or the fox will kill the birds. But figuratively, the sentence means something more. What do you think it means?



A sentence can usually be rephrased in many different ways. Rewrite this proverb five different ways to express the same idea. Change the animal and what that animal is guarding.

Don't let a fox guard a hen house.

Sample sentence: Don't let a lion guard a cow pasture.

A. _____

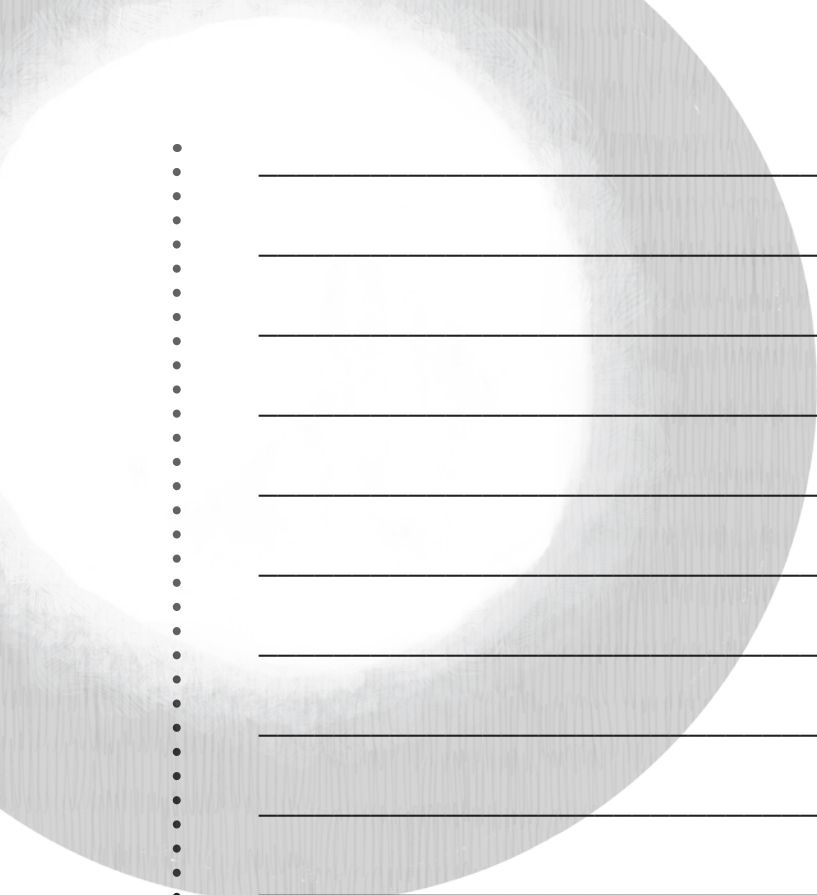
B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

3. **SUMMARY**—A summary is a shortened version of a longer story. Summarize *Visitors in the Night* in exactly five sentences. The key is to cut out any unnecessary details. Your summary might not include all of the animals in the story, but it should include the big ideas and more general details (who, what, where, when). Change the first-person point of view to third person (he, she, it, they).



Speak It—Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters are a fun and excellent way to practice **enunciation**, which is clear and articulate speech. The following tongue twisters are about some of the beasts that Mysterious Medicine would have encountered in the woods. Speak these tongue twisters slowly at first and then gradually speed up. With practice, you will mumble less and be heard more clearly.

The Bear

A big black bug bit a big black bear, but the big black bear bit the big black bug back.

The Porcupine

Prickly porcupines pick pretty prickly pears perfectly.

The Woodchuck

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck
If a woodchuck could chuck wood?

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Revise It—

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his great paw and threw him down. Somehow, he did not retain his hold, but made another leap and again concealed himself in the snow. Evidently he was preparing to make a fresh attack.

I was partially stunned and greatly confused by the blow; therefore I should have been an easy prey for him at the moment. But when he left me, I came to my senses; and I had been thrown near my gun! He arose and aimed between the tips of his ears—all that was visible of him—and fired. I saw the fresh snow fly from the spot. The panther leaped about six feet straight up into the air and fell motionless. I gave two good war whoops, because he had conquered a very formidable enemy. I sat down on the dead body to rest, and his heart beat as if it would knock out all my ribs. I had not been expecting any danger, and that was why I was so taken by surprise.

2. When it comes to revising, the old proverb “Two heads are better than one” is often true. Receiving feedback about your writing from a partner is a way to help along the process of revision, because it may help you discover areas of weakness that you hadn’t noticed on your own.

Read your summary of *Visitors in the Night* to a partner, and then have your partner read his or her summary to you. Give each other your reactions and comments (also called feedback) by answering these questions: How are your summaries similar and how are they different? Does one or both of you use words from the original story? Do these words make the summary stronger or weaker? Which summary is the most like the original story?

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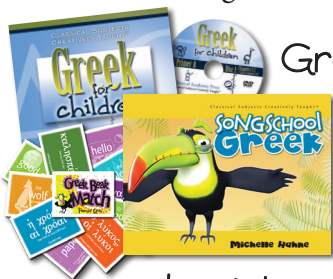
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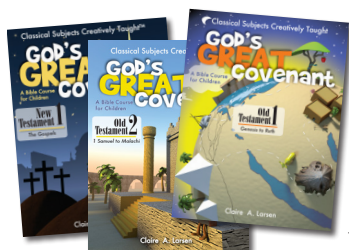
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