

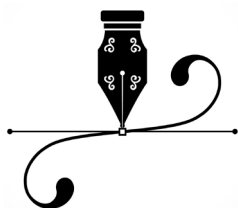
# INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;

I address my verses to the king;

my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

— Psalm 45:1, ESV



The aim of Language Arts at Cottage Press is to develop ready scribes who pen pleasing themes flowing from a heart of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Our methods are based on a classical tradition beginning with the ancient Greeks and Romans, and embraced in the educational practices of Western Civilization—Christendom—over the past two thousand years. The ancient Greek and Roman orators and rhetoricians, who developed and articulated many of the methods that we have adopted, considered training in effective communication to be inseparable from training in virtue. We agree wholeheartedly.

Our methods are inextricably linked with the Great Books, a.k.a. the classics, those that contain the best thoughts of the best minds of Western civilization. They are the very foundation upon which the culture of the West stands. Every truly educated person must have an understanding of this great body of thought. Because of this, literary selections in Cottage Press Language Arts are culled in large part from the Great Books.

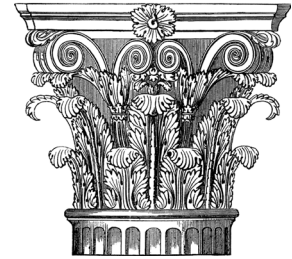
Many lists of THE Great Books have been compiled through the years. These lists vary somewhat according to the listmaker's preferences and biases, but there are probably a hundred or so books that must be on any worthwhile list. Works like Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Augustine's *Confessions*, Dante's *Inferno*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and of course, the very greatest of all great books, the Bible, must be included if the listmaker wishes to be taken seriously.

The Great Conversation naturally rises out of these Great Books, as great minds in each age respond and refer to the thoughts of the great minds of previous ages, transcending the boundaries of time and place. As we sit at the feet of these remarkable men and women, listen to them, ask questions of them, answer them back (pen in hand!), we become participants in this enduring exchange. Who knows? A *Poetics & Progym* student may even make a contribution of his or her own someday.

Cottage Press Language Arts courses are organized around the ancient Greek **Progymnasmata** (**Progym**) because it is a comprehensive pedagogy, aimed at developing rhetorical skill and love of virtue. Students trained by the Progym are prepared for ALL of life's writing requirements

including—but not limited to—academic and college-level composition. Composition lessons are based primarily on the ancient Greek **Progymnasmata (Progym)**. Literature and poetry studies, and a strong emphasis on grammar round out our Language Arts instruction.

The Greek word *progymnasmata* (pronounced proh-jim-naz-MAH-tuh) literally means *exercises before*. These fourteen successive exercises are designed to train students in elegant and effective composition. As they worked through these exercises progressively, ancient Greek and Roman scholars imitated great orators and authors of their past. With the knowledge gained from each level, they would then write their own compositions. This training was intended to produce men who were able to think and speak persuasively and virtuously on any given topic in the public forum and in the court of law. The need for persuasive articulation of truth is certainly as great today as it has ever been.



For a more detailed explanation of each level of the Progymnasmata, visit the Cottage Press website: [cottagepress.net](http://cottagepress.net).

The composition exercises in *Poetics & Progym I* first review the Fable and Narrative exercises of the Progym (covered thoroughly in *Fable & Song* and *Bards & Poets*). The rest of the lessons are based on the Anecdote and Proverb exercises of the Progym. In these exercises, the student learns to elaborate (examine and explain) an anecdote or a proverb. This leads naturally into the modern expository essay. The writing **sequence** is emphasized: Plan, Write, Revise. The aim of poetry lessons in *Poetics & Progym* is first and foremost to delight in the poems. In addition, students are taught to scan poems, to identify rhyme and stanza forms, and to recognize other literary devices.

In all lessons, students practice a variety of applied grammar and vocabulary exercises, including extensive sentence diagramming. They learn to identify figures of speech and figures of description, and to use them in their own writing. All of these exercises are designed to supply the student with copia—*an abundant and ready supply (or storehouse) of language*.<sup>1</sup> Read more about this in Lesson 1.

One word of caution: *Poetics & Progym* (and all of our Language Arts books) is intended to accompany the student's broad and generous curriculum of reading. We teach students to observe these particular stories and poems in a very detailed way, but please do not attempt to do this with every poem and story the student reads. Most of your student's reading should be unencumbered by analysis and "comprehension" exercises, which are often little more than busywork. Instead, a student should form the habit of narrating (telling back) what he has read

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1 Erasmus, *On Copia of Words and Ideas*, trans. Donald B. King, (Milwaukee: The Marquette University Press, 1963).

with very little intervention on the part of the teacher. For more details on this, consult the many excellent resources online that explain Charlotte Mason's completely classical method of narration.

*Poetics & Progym I* is designed for the needs and abilities of an advancing writer, from 8th grade and up. Adjust the pace according to the needs and abilities of the student.

**The instruction in the Student Book is written directly to students, yet the material is intended to be actively taught by a teacher.** *Poetics & Progym* works well in home-school, classroom, and co-op settings. In any case, the student should have either parental or teacher oversight for **each day's** work. For composition lessons, students are instructed to work with a **writing mentor**. This is the person who works one-on-one with the individual student. It may be the teacher, the parent, or an outside tutor employed for the purpose. There are even online services that provide writing mentorship. See the Cottage Press website for links.

## STUDENT PREPARATION

*Poetics & Progyon I* contains twenty-eight lessons. Each lesson is centered around a classic literary selection—either a poem, or a retelling of a historical or literary narrative. Each lesson has five sub-lessons and a review section. The format is flexible, so that each sub-lesson may be completed in as little as one day, or at a more leisurely pace over several days. This may also be varied from lesson to lesson.

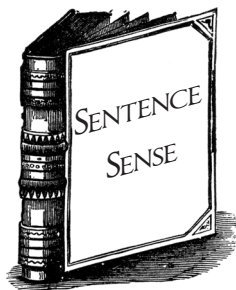
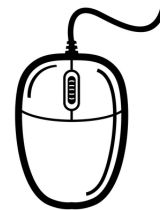
Lesson components include:

- ♦ Commonplace Book
- ♦ Prose & Poetry (literary analysis)
- ♦ Language Logic (word usage and grammar)
- ♦ Eloquent Expression (developing style)
- ♦ Classical Composition (retell a fable or parable)

You will be instructed to complete most written work in your Writing Journal. You will also enter passages from literary selections into your Commonplace Book. The Appendix has instructions for setting up and using these composition books. These images indicate that the work is to be completed in one or the other:

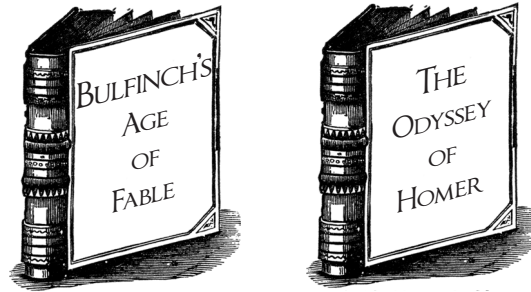


Work to be completed on the computer is indicated by this image:

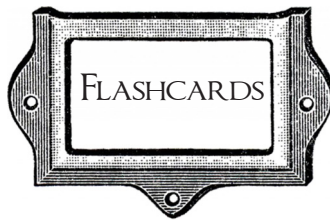


This image indicates grammar lessons to be completed in *Sentence Sense* (See Materials Needed for *Bards & Poets*).

Accompanying literature readings are indicated by these images:



Grammar terms and definitions will be added throughout the lessons, and should be reviewed regularly. There is a complete list of Grammar Terms & Definitions in the Appendix. Cottage Press also maintains a classroom at Quizlet ([quizlet.com/class/1650721/](https://quizlet.com/class/1650721/)) for *Poetics & ProgyM I*. From there, you may review, practice, quiz, and test online; you may also print flashcard sets there. This symbol indicates that new flashcards are to be reviewed and quizzed.



❧ Before you begin Lesson 1, gather and set up your materials. First, read each of these sections in the Appendix; then, follow the instructions to set up your notebooks and flashcard review system.

- ◆ Writer's Journal
- ◆ Commonplace Book
- ◆ Flashcard Review System

❧ Familiarize yourself with the layout of *Sentence Sense*:

- A. Read the Preface and Introduction
- B. Study the Table of Contents
- C. Turn to each of the five chapters and get a bird's eye view of the content of each.