

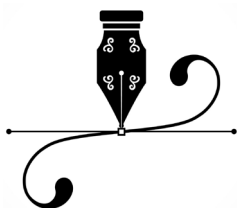
INTRODUCTION FOR STUDENTS & TEACHERS

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme;

I address my verses to the king;

my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe.

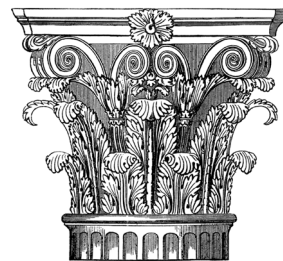
— Psalm 45:1, ESV



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.

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: cottagepresspublishing.net.

The composition exercises in *Bards & Poets I* are primarily based on the progymnasma Narrative exercise. In this exercise, students retell a narrative. *Bards & Poets I* begins with a short fable; after that, most narratives are between two and four pages long. The writing **sequence** is emphasized: Plan, Write, Revise. The aim of poetry lessons in *Bards & Poets I* is first and foremost to delight in the poems. Beyond that, 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*.¹ Read more about this in Lesson 1.

One word of caution: *Bards & Poets I* (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 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.

Bards & Poets I is designed for the needs and abilities of an intermediate writer, from 6th 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. *Bards & Poets I* 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 online services that provide writing mentorship. See the Cottage Press website for links.

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

STUDENT PREPARATION

Bards & Poets 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. 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.

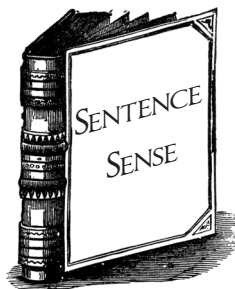
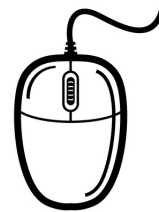
Lesson components include:

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

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:



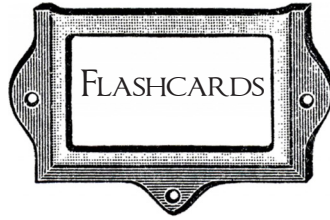
Work to be completed on the computer is indicated by this image:



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

Grammar flashcards will be added throughout the lessons, and should be reviewed regularly. The Appendix has instructions for setting up

and using a *Bards & Poets I* Grammar Flashcard review system. This image indicates that new flashcards are to be added to the review system.



❦ 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.