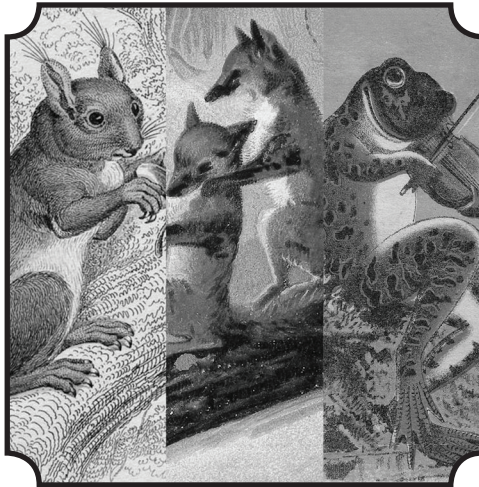




# Language Lessons for Children

by Kathy Weitz



## Primer One

Teaching Helps

*for Autumn, Winter, & Spring*



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## PREFACE

When I began educating my children at home more than two decades ago, one of the first books I read was *For the Children's Sake* by Susan Schaeffer Macaulay. Here I was formally introduced to the philosophies of Charlotte Mason, a Victorian education reformer. In my girlhood, L. M. Montgomery had given me a first glimpse of similar methods via *Anne of Avonlea*, so Charlotte Mason's ideas immediately attracted me. Later, I read her complete series on education which provided additional insight and encouragement. After all these years and after teaching many students of all ages (my own and others), I continue to consider many of her methods ideal for teaching young children and the perfect preparation for a rigorous classical education later.

All of the ideas and methods contained in the *Language Lessons for Children* series have been field tested and honed in several educational settings with students of differing ages, abilities, and learning styles. The primary testers have been my own five sons and one daughter in our homeschool classroom.

*Language Lessons for Children* is a work of "heart". It is the series I wish I had had when my children were young. It is the result of much trial and error on my part. I pray that it will provide structure, simplicity, and much delight for those tasked with the instruction of young students in our extraordinary English language.

~kpw  
*Soli Deo Gloria!*  
April, 2014

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Although my name is on the cover, the Primer series in many ways has been a collaborative effort. I owe a great debt of gratitude to many folks. The gorgeous cover designs are the craftsmanship of my friend Jayme Metzgar, with image credit to The Graphics Fairy ([www.thegraphicsfairy.com](http://www.thegraphicsfairy.com)). Many other friends have helped with both editing and content: in particular, Kimberlynn Curles, Emily Cook, Cheryl Turner, Karen Gill, Carolyn Vance, Lene Jaqua, and the exceptional teachers, moms, and students of Providence Preparatory Academy. And of course, the main source of help and encouragement in myriad ways—from design consultation to field testing to dinner duty—has come from my dear husband and my wonderful children.*

*~kpw*

# Primer One Teaching Helps

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## INTRODUCTION

*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*

All Language Lessons at Cottage Press aim to develop *ready scribes* who pen *pleasing themes* flowing from a heart of truth, goodness, and beauty. The *Primer* series is designed to provide gentle yet meaningful lessons for early elementary students in preparation for more rigorous grammar and composition instruction in late elementary, middle, and high school.

Weekly copybook and narration selections are drawn from classic children's literature and poetry. These time-proven imitation methods fill students' minds with a ready supply of elegant and beautiful words and patterns of expression, and equip their imaginations with a delightful treasury of stories. Nature and art study lessons included each week also provide "scope for the imagination", and hone the students' powers of observation, description, and attention to detail—necessary attributes for *ready scribes*.

*Primer* books are sequential in skills: *Primer One Autumn*, *Primer One Winter*, and *Primer One Spring* followed by *Primer Two Autumn*, *Primer Two Winter*, and *Primer Two Spring*. Familiarity with the concepts from the preceding book is assumed, but the lessons are so straightforward that students may begin at their current skill level.

Students beginning *Primer One* should have achieved

## INTRODUCTION

beginning spelling and phonics proficiency, be ready for beginning chapter books, and be able to copy words and sentences. Students beginning *Primer Two* should have achieved intermediate spelling and phonics proficiency, be able to read beginning chapter books with basic fluency, and be able to copy sentences and short paragraphs. *Primer One* is very generally appropriate for 2nd to 3rd grade students, and *Primer Two* for 3rd to 4th grade students, but both could be used very effectively by older students as well.

### 🌀 LESSON FORMAT

Each *Primer* book is divided into twelve weeks of study. Each week is divided into four days' work, with a poetry or prose selection at its heart. Each day's lesson includes a short copybook exercise from the copybook selection and a brief grammar or phonics review exercise connected with the copybook selection. The weekly routine also includes narration exercises on Days 1 and 3, a nature study lesson on Day 2, and a picture study lesson on Day 4. Detailed directions for each of these lesson components is provided in the Pedagogy & Practice section below.

### 🌀 LESSON PREPARATION

The lessons in this book are designed to free teachers from as much preparation work as possible. For the most part, you will just open to the week's lesson and begin. Additional preparation may be necessary if you opt to add the enrichment ideas included *Teaching Helps*, but even that preparation is minimal.



# WEEKLY ROUTINE

*“Habit is either the best of servants or the worst of masters.” ~ Nathanael Emmons*

Routine (habit) is one of the most important things to establish in students’ schoolwork, and extremely beneficial to them in every area of life. Charlotte Mason often likened habits to train tracks that allow a child’s life to run smoothly and evenly through the day. Her thoughts on this apply to both home life and school life:

*“The mother who takes pains to endow her children with good habits secures for herself smooth and easy days; While she who lets their habits take care of themselves has a weary life of endless friction with the children.”*

~ Charlotte Mason, *Home Education*, p. 136

Young children thrive when they know what to expect next; the daily routine or order of schoolwork creates an environment that optimizes learning.

An important habit for children to develop is the that of paying careful attention to what they are doing. Short lessons at this age makes this habit much easier for all children to learn. Consider moving to a different kind of activity between each section of the daily lessons. For example, just after completing copybook, have students do some kind of physical motion—even if it is just getting up and stretching or sharpening their pencils. Particularly after any part of the lesson that requires strong concentration and close eye focus, try to incorporate a short physical activity.

 SAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Here is a suggested order for completing the daily work in *Language Lessons for Children Primers*.

1. Begin each day's session with students by reading the weekly selection aloud. Make sure you read with proper pauses and with feeling and expression. On the first day of a new lesson, talk with students about the copybook selection and make sure they understand it. On subsequent days, continue to read the copybook selection aloud to students, and then have them read it to you. Set a goal to have the students read with good feeling and expression by the end of the week. Encourage students to memorize the copybook selection. Each week's selection has a drawing page opposite. Have students illustrate the copybook selection on this page at some point during the week.
2. Have students write the date in the "Today is..." section. As they are learning how to do this, write the date out for them to copy. Use this format:

*Monday, October 3, 2014*

3. Go over the day's copybook selection with students as detailed in Pedagogy and Practice above. At first, students may need you to sit with them as they complete their work. Do this as long as necessary, but work towards more independence in completing lessons over time. Copybook sessions should be short (five to ten minutes). If necessary, complete this over several copybook sessions in one day. Have students check their work at the end of each session.

4. Help students complete the spelling or grammar lesson accurately.
5. Do the reading and narration, picture study, or nature study lesson.

It is worth repeating: keep lessons short and varied! Avoid having young children complete all of this work in one long sitting. Here is an example of how I might structure Day 2 for my eight-year-old son at home.

- ♦ Read weekly selection together.
- ♦ Complete about half of the copybook selection and check it.
- ♦ Feed the cat.
- ♦ Review the spelling or grammar lesson; complete and check.
- ♦ Go over the vocabulary for the narration lesson.
- ♦ Get up and do a little bit of stretching or run around the outside of the house three times.
- ♦ Move to the sofa to do the reading and narration lesson.
- ♦ Enjoy a snack.
- ♦ Complete the rest of the copybook selection and check it.

Of course, your particulars will vary. Some students will be able to sit and focus for longer periods of time, but I have found that most students, particularly boys, do best with this kind of routine.

# A NOTE TO HOME EDUCATING PARENTS<sup>1</sup>

*“Richer than I you can never be-  
I had a Mother who read to me.”*

*~ Strickland Gillilan*

Read, read, read to your child! I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. Take it from a mom of grown children—this is a fleeting opportunity, so treasure the time reading with your child. And keep reading to your child even as he reaches the teen and young adult years. The ideas, characters, and language in the books you read together will become part of the ‘language’ of your family, and give you countless opportunities for discussion.

Do not allow busy schedules to crowd out this vital component of developing the soul of your child. Prioritize reading with your child above co-ops, enrichment classes, and even sports. It is one of the best investments you can make in your child’s education, as well as in your relationship with him. Make reading aloud a routine in your homeschool and in your daily life with your child. Guard this time with your life.

Select worthy books with lovely illustrations. Choose books both you and your child will enjoy, and do not forget to reread favorites. There are so many marvelous classic children’s books. Do not waste time reading ‘twaddle’—books that are shallow and condescending to children, as unfortunately many children’s books are. Be discerning in your choices. Just as setting healthy eating patterns early

<sup>1</sup> This note is excerpted from a talk entitled *Joy in the Homeschool Journey* which I have given to several local homeschool groups.

## A NOTE TO HOME EDUCATING PARENTS

in life can create lifelong healthy habits, so establishing a taste for worthy books in his early years can help train his appetite for great books in later years.

Horace E. Scudder, the late nineteenth century editor of *The Atlantic Monthly* and compiler of great literature for children wrote, "There is no academy on earth equal to a mother's reading to her child." I could not agree more.

## AUTUMN

The morns are meeker than they were,  
 The nuts are getting brown;  
 The berry's cheek is plumper,  
 The rose is out of town.

The maple wears a gayer scarf,  
 The field a scarlet gown.  
 Lest I should be old fashioned,  
 I'll put a trinket on.

- Emily Dickinson

### 🌀 COPYBOOK & DICTATION

Students may notice and mention, as mine frequently do, that *gown* and *on* do not exactly rhyme. Explain that this is called a **slant rhyme**—the final consonant sounds match, but not necessarily the vowel sound of the final syllable. Emily Dickinson's poetry abounds with slant rhymes.

### 🌀 SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND WORD USAGE

See Week 5 notes on adding a suffix beginning with a vowel to a one-syllable word.

#### Day 2 Adding Suffixes

Answers: skipper, zipper, gayer, shipper, bigger, boxer, sinner, stopper, rower, flipper, meeker, plumper

#### Day 4 Rhyming Words

Answers (will vary): brown, crown, clown, noun; her, blur, fir, myrrh, stir, purr; hose, blows, clothes, close, shows, throws

 NATURE STUDY

**Tree Leaf Identification** Students should learn to identify the most common trees found in your geographical location. Leaf identification is a good place to start.

Select trees near your home or school, and have students collect one or more leaves from the tree. Try to get intact leaves. If possible, collect the seed of the tree. Some common seed types include cones, acorns, or helicopters. If the tree is in an area where you are not allowed to remove leaves and seeds, make careful notes and drawings to aid you in identification. Another possibility is to take digital photos for this step.

Observe the tree. Do a quick sketch the shape of the whole tree in your nature notebook. Look at how the leaves are arranged on each stem, and make sketches. Is there only one leaf on a stem, or are there multiple leaves on the stem? If there are multiple leaves, look carefully at how the leaves are arranged on the stem. Are they directly across from each other (opposite) or do they alternate along the stem? Help students sketch and make notes as they observe.

Observe the leaf. Is it a broad leaf or a needle? What color is it? How is it shaped? Does it have a jagged, tooth-shaped edge or a smooth edge? What do the veins look like?

Bring the leaf back home and have students carefully draw it on the page provided in their *Primer* books. They should take their time and include the details you have discussed.

Using what you have collected, see if you can identify the

type of tree using the links to identification keys.

**Optional Enrichment Activities** See the *Primer Resource Webpage* for links to instructions.

- ♦ Choose a tree near your house and make a sketch of it each month to observe how it changes through the year.
- ♦ Press leaves between two sheets of wax paper to preserve them.
- ♦ Do leaf rubbings.

## WINTER, WEEK 6

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from **THE TALE OF PETER RABBIT**

“Now, my dears,” said Old Mrs. Rabbit one morning, “you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don’t go into Mr. McGregor’s garden: your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs. McGregor. Now run along, and don’t get into mischief. I am going out.”

Then old Mrs. Rabbit took a basket and her umbrella, and went through the wood to the baker’s. She bought a loaf of brown bread and five currant buns.

Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cotton-Tail, who were good little bunnies, went down the lane to gather blackberries.

But Peter, who was very naughty, ran straight away to Mr. McGregor’s garden, and squeezed under the gate!

~ Beatrix Potter

## 🌀 COPYBOOK & DICTATION

This is the first copywork selection in *Primer One Winter* with quotations. Make sure students carefully observe where the punctuation and capitalization are placed.



## 🌀 SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND WORD USAGE

**Day 1 Spelling Rule i before e** Again, analyze each word and have students tell you why they use **ei** or **ie**, according to the rule. See Week 5 notes on exceptions to the rules for using **ei**.

**Day 2 Writing a Friendly Letter: The Closing** If students have not yet learned cursive, consider teaching them how to write just their names in cursive. Provide neat cursive models for them to copy. The most common closing used for a friendly letter is *Love, \_\_\_*. There are others you might use also. Some possibilities: *Fondly, Your friend, Sincerely, With love, Affectionately*.

**Day 3 Abbreviations** All US states with their USPS postal abbreviations are listed in the Appendix of *Primer One Winter*.

Answers: Rd., Dr., St., Ave.

## 🌀 NATURE STUDY

**Orion and the Pleiades** Before you read this introduction to students, write the bolded words on the board.

Some of the brightest stars in the night sky are contained in the constellation **Orion** (also known as The Hunter). Look for Orion high in the sky in the winter months, although you can also see him in the spring and fall months as well. Look at the link to the constellations on the *Primer Resource Webpage*. You can see the shape of a man, with a sword and a belt. In fact, the three bright

stars in **Orion's Belt** will help you to find this constellation. In the winter, the **Milky Way** passes right over Orion's head.

Next to Orion is **Taurus**, The Bull. The seven bright stars in a V-shape, forming the head of the bull, are an asterism called **The Pleiades**.

## SPRING, WEEK 6

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### THE FLOWERS

All the names I know from nurse:  
 Gardener's garters, Shepherd's purse,  
 Bachelor's buttons, Lady smock,  
 And the Lady Hollyhock.  
 Fairy places, fairy things,  
 Fairy woods where the wild bee wings,  
 Tiny trees for tiny dames -  
 These must all be fairy names!  
 Tiny woods below whose boughs  
 Shady fairies weave a house;  
 Tiny tree-tops, rose or thyme,  
 Where the braver fairies climb!  
 Fair are grown-up people's trees  
 But the fairest woods are these;  
 Where, if I were not so tall,  
 I should live for good and all.

~ Robert Louis Stevenson

### 🌀 SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND WORD USAGE

**Day 3 Homonyms** Have students use both forms orally in a sentence to make sure they understand the difference in meanings.

Answers: eye or aye, no, fare, be, bows, time, four or fore

#### **Day 4 Possessive Forms**

Answers: Gardener's garters = garters of a gardener; shepherd's purse = purse of a shepherd; bachelor's buttons = buttons of a bachelor; people's trees = trees of people

#### NATURE STUDY

*By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds. And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth. ~ Job 37:10-12*

In bygone days, men and women who kept journals often noted the weather each day. When there was no air conditioning or heat, and certainly when life and livelihood depended on agriculture, the weather was a constant source of interest and concern.

For this week's lesson, learn about the different types of clouds. See links on the *Primer Resource Webpage* to excellent illustrations and explanations. Have students draw and label the four cloud types listed.

Additionally, for the next month, students should make note of the weather each day. A blank calendar for this purpose is included in the Appendix of *Primer One Spring*. Copy it onto cardstock and have students keep it out where they will see it and be reminded.

Decide together with students how to record the weather information, and any additional information to be recorded on their weather charts. Some suggestions:

- ♦ Sunny, cloudy, or rainy? Draw symbols for each.
- ♦ If you have a thermometer, record the temperature each morning, or any time of day. Try to record at the same time each day.
- ♦ Types of clouds seen in the sky.