

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE CLASSICAL PROGYMNASMATA

Writing Rhetoric

BOOK 6: COMMONPLACE

TEACHER'S EDITION

PAUL KORTEPETER



Writing & Rhetoric, Book 6: Commonplace Teacher's Edition
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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: Commonplace*. 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, provides plenty of practice sentences, and encourages diagramming.

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-two lessons. If you spend one week on each lesson, that leaves you with about thirteen weeks to focus on grammar. However, as the reading selections grow longer and the writing tasks more extensive, you may need to spend more time on each Writing & Rhetoric lesson according to the needs of your students. You will have to choose a grammar program with these considerations in mind.

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 text 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: As time allows, the teacher can ask students to reread the text silently 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 commonplace 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 sections create 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 continue to work toward a foundation in revision. In the first several lessons in this book, the “Revise It” section provides 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 one another. However, teachers are still the best source for giving editorial feedback and requesting rewrites.

Introduction to Students

Don't Skip This Stepping-Stone!

χαῖρε, ὦ μαθητα, πῶς ἔχεις; ἀρ' ἐμὲ ἐπόθησες;¹

Let me guess: You picked up this book, took one look at the title, and said to yourself, “Commonplace! Well, doesn’t that sound perfectly dull?” “Commonplace,” after all, is a synonym for “ordinary,” “mundane,” and “humdrum.” You might be more excited by a title such as “Amazing-place” or “Awesome-place” or “Wowza-Yowza-place.” But commonplace? What were those ancient Romans (in the Greek-speaking part of the empire) thinking when they came up with the title κοινὸς τόπος?²

Well, now, not so hasty! The commonplace essay is really another important stepping-stone across the swamp of fuzzy thinking and poorly crafted essays. You may think a stepping-stone is a perfectly ordinary rock until it’s gone and then . . . *splash! Glub, glub, glub!* Somebody throw that kid a lifesaver!

To be perfectly clear, the commonplace is not common at all. It is another super-fantastic way to move you toward the final goal of rhetoric. Like the refutation and confirmation essays, the commonplace essay is a persuasive piece of writing. With it you are trying to convince your reader that you know what you are talking about and that your ideas are important and correct.

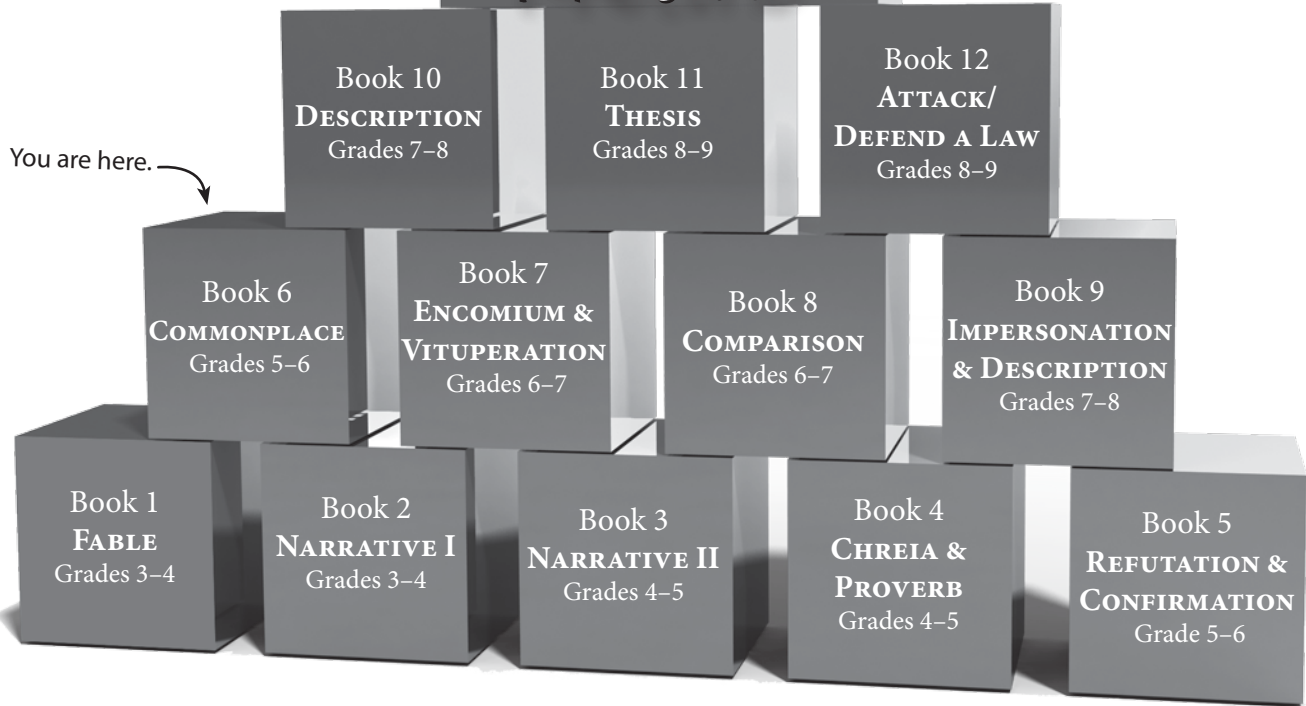
Why do you need to learn how to be convincing? People are trying to persuade you all the time, aren’t they? Shampoo makers are trying to persuade you that their shampoo is the best way to lick the ol’ greasy hair. Fast food restaurants are trying to persuade you that their burger ’n’ fries are so much more scrumptious than the burger ’n’ fries across the street. Your friends are trying to persuade you to buy the hot new sneakers, your parents are trying to persuade you to be sensible, your teachers are trying to persuade you to get your homework done on time, and your TV is trying to persuade you to waste the next two hours watching TV. Let’s face it: You can’t avoid persuasion. Some of it is helpful, and some of it is downright dreadful. If you don’t want to fall prey to every Tom, Dick, and Harry who has something to sell you, you need to study and practice the art of persuasion so that you understand it better.

Rhetoric is the art of persuasive writing and speaking. These exercises, the προγυμνάσματα, or *progymnasmata*, are the preliminary exercises, the stepping-stones, that will lead you to rhetoric. So that’s why you’re here. That’s why you’ve cracked open this book. You need rhetoric, and these books will get you there! (ἐλπίζω σοι τοῦτο τὸ προοιμιον πιθανόν φανῆναι.)³

1. Greetings, student! How are you? Did you miss me?
2. Common topic, or commonplace.
3. I hope that you found this introduction persuasive.

Writing Rhetoric

You are here. →



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?" then 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 *progym* still in existence. The most influential *progym* 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 they grow 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* are every bit as valuable today as they were 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

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*.

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 composition 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 emphasize, 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, takes a different tack.

Beyond process, we 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 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

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

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.

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. The Writing & Rhetoric series is a creative take on the *progym* designed to meet the needs of modern children. It is informed by an understanding of the method as it was used for the Romans and an understanding of 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.

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 criticizes the “fixed topics” of the *progymnasmata* as “arid” and “impersonal as arithmetic.”

In Writing & Rhetoric, marked effort has been made to overcome any tendency to be overly prescribed or technical by encouraging imitative self-expression and real moral purpose. Young people should clearly see a model, but then attempt, as soon as possible, to put these ideas into practice by expressing their own ideas.

- 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 as well as 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 most 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 answers with other questions. The idea is not to ask leading questions, but 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.

The process of revision continues to be strengthened in this book through the Revise It section. In this volume some specific pointers are offered to aid in reviewing and changing writing. Please keep in mind that grammar-age students are often too concrete in their thinking to easily 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. Revision takes critical

thinking, and this type of higher-level thinking takes time and practice. Not every student matures at the same pace. You know your students best and will be able to make comments and corrections that 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* provide 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, you will 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. In the first four books of *Writing & Rhetoric*, narrative and descriptive writing was emphasized. 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
- using 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, we need, I think, 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 do the following simultaneously:

- 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.

Best Foot Forward

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 *Commonplace* 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

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>).

- 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
- 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 a character
- 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. Rather, it 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 also they 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 essay with narrative, expository, persuasive, and comparative elements
9. Thesis—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, and comparative elements
10. Attack/Defend 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 *Commonplace*

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

Reading

1. Expose students to various forms of narrative and nonfiction writing, as well as culturally important stories from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of American history.
2. Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading multiple texts.
3. Aid student reading and recall by teaching techniques for annotation.
4. Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through discussions and exercises in evaluation and critical thinking.
5. Introduce research by giving students multiple texts to read and having them summarize, outline, lift quotes, and create a thesis from the material.

Writing

1. Enable students to write well-crafted, six-paragraph persuasive essays—with introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion—attacking general types of wrongdoing and defending general types of virtuous behavior. This includes the development of an awareness of transitions and tone.
2. Demonstrate the use of pathos to engage the emotions of readers.
3. Practice the concepts of thesis and supporting arguments. This includes practicing the anticipation of opposing arguments.

4. Encourage students to map (prewrite) their arguments before they write a paragraph.
5. Support the development of invention (inventing topics and ideas to write about) and demonstrate how to use quotations in a crafted piece of writing.
6. Continue the development of revision, proofreading, and joint critiquing.
7. Reinforce grammatical concepts such as participial and prepositional phrases and simple and compound sentences, as well as provide practice recognizing and repairing sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

Related Concepts

1. Aid in the development of vocabulary and analysis of language as well as thinking in analogies.
2. Review the concepts of argument versus quarrel and refutation versus confirmation.
3. Review the concepts of contrast and comparison (*Chreia* unit) as well as monologue and soliloquy (*Narrative II* unit).
4. Reinforce the ability to summarize and paraphrase, as well as to amplify through description, for greater rhetorical flexibility.
5. Employ a number of new rhetorical devices: the contrary, synonymia, antonymia, periphrasis, anacolutha, and repetition.
6. Strengthen working memory through recitation (*memoria*), thus improving storage of information and rhetorical power.
7. Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.

Speaking

1. Strengthen students' oratory skills by providing opportunities for public speaking and for working on delivery—volume, pacing, and inflection.
2. Encourage students to see the relationship between writing and speaking as they consider their ideas orally and to use oration as an aid to the process of revision.

Teaching Commonplace

In this sixth book of the Writing & Rhetoric series, your students will be writing well-crafted, six-paragraph persuasive essays called commonplace essays. Commonplace essays attack and defend certain aspects of human behavior. They will make use of a range of writing skills—the ability to inform, to describe, and to argue. They are also the perfect follow-up to the previous Writing & Rhetoric book, *Refutation & Confirmation*, as the commonplace argument can either refute (attack) wrongdoers or confirm (defend) virtuous people.

In writing these compositions, students take another step forward toward the goal of mastering rhetoric. The readings will continue to be a foundation of pleasure and instruction, but now students will use the content of the readings to develop a persuasive essay. They will learn to create a strong thesis with support and quotations from the readings, and they will consider contrasting material in order to establish their case. In other words, all the basics are in place for creating persuasive speech or oratory, which is the goal of rhetoric.

In addition, by looking more deeply into texts, students will extend their dialogic (conversational) relationship with reading. The kinds of questions asked in the exercises in this book will lead students to consider the readings in the context of their lives.

You will find nearly every lesson organized around the chapter readings. Narration, questions for discussion, and exercises in composition all emerge within the context of the readings. We find that contextualization helps to reinforce memory and the laddering of skills.

The Lesson Reading

Almost every lesson contains narratives or excerpts from various historical sources. Part of the beauty of the Writing & Rhetoric series is that it uses readings, many of them stories, that are culturally significant. When children care about a character (real or imagined) and what happens to him—when they get wrapped up in the language of the narrative—their delight helps them to write more enthusiastically. Well-told stories also populate students' minds with rich content. They get to practice skills without also having to invent content. All of the readings in the book are recorded in a downloadable MP3 file so that your students can experience the pleasure of being read to.

Tell It Back—Narration

Every time students hear a reading in this book, they will also practice narrating it back. Multiple intelligences—memory, sequence, main idea—are developed by this practice. In addition to exercising their executive functions, students will continue to internalize an outline of the material. They will review and extend the skill of outlining and rediscover that they are already equipped to complete the task. Some educational models have based their entire strategy on the important skill of narration.

Talk About It and Speak It

These two sections mirror our conviction that writing, speaking, and thinking are critical skills that work together. Some educators believe that difficulties with writing stem from a deeper lack of thought. These books use comprehension, reading aloud, discussion, and even oral performance as ways to help students become critical thinkers according to the way their bodies (and brains) are made. These three abilities—thinking, speaking, and writing—enlarge each other when practiced together.

Memoria

In this section students memorize a quotation related in theme to the lesson and prepare to recite it during class. Quotes, and indeed all memory work, will help students in the process of invention (or prewriting), and may be useful for reference as they write their essays. We also encourage students to keep commonplace books, or journals of thoughts and quotes, for future reference.

Go Deeper

This section seeks to develop comprehension of the lesson readings. Students will variously examine thesis statements, characterization, individual words and roots of words, formal and informal language, prefixes, and aspects of courtesy. The questions, rather than draining a reading of its delight, make the experience more vivid. They stimulate a desire to catch details that guide the student to the story's meaning and also to the pleasure of the reading. In *Commonplace*, these questions also call students' attention to elements that will help them in the writing task at hand.

You will find a few multiple-choice questions in the Go Deeper sections in this book. Although classically minded educators often eschew multiple-choice questions, they are nonetheless a universal assessment tool and are used here sparingly to give students practice in analysis.

Writing Time

This aspect of the book is the most obvious. Each lesson features various kinds of writing practice, from sentence play (in which students imitate sentences) to copiousness (*copia*). Copiousness is a stretching exercise that teaches students to reach for new words to express variations of the same idea. That way they can experience the joy of the abundance of language as well as of finding precise words.

In this book students will also learn to write well-crafted, six-paragraph persuasive essays that include an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. This practice includes instructions on transitions and tone. Each essay follows a clear pattern from paragraph to paragraph, and the principle of imitation is always at work.

The essays consist of the following parts: The first paragraph introduces the thesis and uses two supporting arguments to strengthen and give detail to the thesis. Then a contrary, which is a statement that considers two opposing ideas, rounds out the paragraph. The second paragraph introduces a contrast by comparing the subject of the essay to someone whose actions contrast with his or hers. The third paragraph is a soliloquy of the thoughts of the wrongdoer or virtuous person considered in the essay, which is meant to magnify the behavior under consideration. The fourth paragraph compares the subject of the essay to another type of person with similar traits and finds the subject to be either better (if praiseworthy) or worse (if wrongdoing) than the comparison. The fifth paragraph explains why readers should support or reject pity for the subject of the essay. The sixth paragraph is an epilogue or conclusion appealing to honor, justice, or consequences.

Revise It

In this book, students will continue to critically analyze their own writing. The Revise It section offers students the opportunity to improve their writing, and the writing of others, by identifying the main point (the main argument), supporting it from the text, strengthening phrasing, finding grammar errors, and proofreading.

Historical Note

The material covered in the Writing & Rhetoric series is loosely tied to periods in history. *Fable* and *Narrative I* borrow their stories from Greek and early Roman times. *Narrative II* picks up with the

late Roman Empire, while *Chreia & Proverb* continues into the Middle Ages. *Refutation & Confirmation* moves into the experience of colonial America. In *Commonplace*, students will read selected writings from such periods as late colonial America, the American Revolution, and the Federalist period.

The purpose of this progression is to provide rich content that helps timeline-based schools integrate history with the language arts. As one discipline reinforces the other, students will retain a powerful impression of the periods of history they study.

Important Notes

Flexibility is built into the program.

This book has been crafted to be useful to students at different levels with different needs. For instance, teachers can ask their students to complete some exercises verbally instead of in writing. If, on the other hand, teachers desire more written work, they can ask students to respond to Talk About It questions in writing. Teachers can also have students work together to tackle parts of lessons that are difficult. Education is personal, and one size does not fit all. Please use your judgment to determine what is best for your student(s) in terms of discipline and delight.



Include dramatic retelling (optional).

This icon indicates an opportunity for students to act out a scene from a featured text. (Note that although specific readings have been highlighted that seem to lend themselves best to dramatic retelling, you are free to practice this exercise with any reading you wish.) Without looking at the text, students can retell the narrative by performing it for their class. This type of spontaneous drama sometimes can take the place of oral narration.

Alternatively, teachers can divide actors into groups to prepare and rehearse their retelling for a more polished performance. Consider making a special event out of the performances, inviting other students and parents to come to the presentations. Sock puppets, paper dolls, costumes, or props can also be used. Students can add dialogue or description to create longer narratives. It is recommended that students stick to the story's plot and characters, but develop and present them in a way that brings those elements to life.

Classrooms are busy and curricular goals are widespread. Therefore, the dramatic retelling exercise can be considered optional according to the time available for such an activity. These exercises tend to be the ones kids love and remember because they engage the mind at so many points of contact.



Decide whether to do oral narration or outlining.

Teachers should decide whether oral narration or narration via outline would best serve their class. Oral narration serves the memory, while outlining improves understanding of story structure. Doing both is also a fine choice. Again, tailor this program to the needs of your students.

Review outlining instructions.



This icon guides students to a section of the book that provides a rationale and a model for outlining. Outline practice in this book is based on the lesson readings and is a way of narrating or telling the stories back. Students will not outline from scratch until later in this series. This method helps familiarize students to the structure of outlines without burdening them too soon to employ rhetorical thinking.



Review summarization instructions.

This icon points students to a section of the book with detailed instructions on how to summarize. Here, students will learn how to distill a lengthy paragraph into a three-sentence and a one-sentence summary. To be succinct is to use words wisely. It is a way to communicate important information to the audience while showing concern for its needs. We see summary as a vital rhetorical skill with a myriad of uses from the mnemonic to the descriptive.



Review memoria instructions.

This icon guides students to a section of the book that provides full instructions for engaging in the memoria exercises. Additional suggestions for teachers are included for supporting the process of memorization.



Begin prewriting.

This icon indicates that students will be doing prewriting exercises, including creating theses, supports, and contraries.



Practice a rhetorical device.

Various new rhetorical devices are introduced in this book. The formal study of rhetoric collects and draws upon these devices throughout a student's life as a writer and a speaker. We wanted to make special note of these to help you track the growing number of "tools" in your students' rhetorical "toolbox."



Include elocution instruction.

This icon indicates that elocution instruction should be included with the exercise and guides you to a section of the book that provides full elocution instructions. We believe that speaking well makes students better writers and that writing well makes for better speakers. In this book, we focus on the various aspects of speaking well, which include recitations, speeches, dramatic presentation, and the sharing of student work. Your students should practice one aspect of elocution every time they do public speaking.



Use a recording device.

This icon indicates that, depending on the size of the class and the availability of technology, you may want to have your student(s) record their work from the Speak It and sometimes the Revise It sections and play it back. This is an excellent way for them to hear the words and the qualities of their performances. They will learn elocution faster if they hear themselves as well as one another.

Best wishes as you embark upon this new and fascinating exercise with your students!

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the idea of a commonplace essay, as well as the concept of emotional appeal, or pathos.

In this lesson, students will practice:

- oral narration
- critical thinking
- reflection, memorization, and recitation
- fixing sentence fragments
- adding synonyms to build copiousness
- rhetorical analysis of a picture
- oral argumentation
- public speaking and elocution
- proofreading and revision



Lesson 1

Attacking Wrongdoers and Defending the Virtuous

Don't you wish that everyone you met in the world could be someone good? For instance, don't you wish that if you got lost, every person you'd meet would help you find your way home? And don't you wish that if money fell out of your pocket, everybody in the world would be so honest that if they found it they'd give it back to you? No more "Finders keepers, losers weepers!" Sadly, however, the reality is that people are a mixture of good and bad. As the saying goes, "The problem with people is that they are all too human!" Yes, the world is full of all types of wrongdoers, great and small: liars, thieves, bullies, boasters, crooks, criminals, tyrants, and dictators, to name a few. Thankfully, the world is also full of all types of virtuous people: loving fathers and mothers, protectors, guardians, rescuers, heroes, and honest people.

In this book, you will be writing persuasive essays, called **commonplace essays**, that attack and defend certain aspects of human nature. The commonplace essay will make use of a range of writing skills—your ability to inform, to describe, and to argue. It is also the perfect follow-up exercise to the previous Writing & Rhetoric book, *Refutation & Confirmation*. The commonplace argument can either refute (attack) wrongdoers or confirm (defend) virtuous people.

How Did the Commonplace Essay Get Its Name?

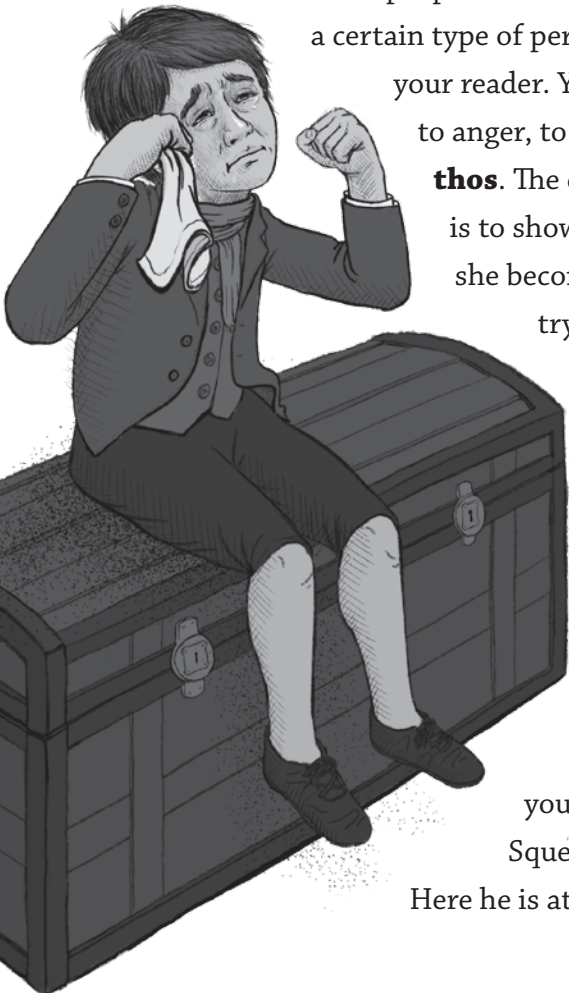
Ancient students of rhetoric noticed that people used the same types of arguments over and over. For example, people like to use comparisons when they argue: “This is better than that.” You might hear, “A Rottweiler is a better guard dog than a poodle because it is bigger and stronger.” Or someone might say, “Tacos are better than burritos because they’re crunchy.” Another common type of argument is testimony: “So-and-so expert says such and such.” For example, a television commercial might say, “All dentists agree that drinking soda pop is bad for your teeth.” Or you could hear, “Celebrities love to wear Famous Brand clothing.” Comparison and testimony are two main types of common arguments.

Because commonplace essays use common arguments such as these, it is called *koinos topos*, or “common topic,” in Greek. The commonplace essay is especially concerned with helping students to make comparisons.

The purpose of the attacking commonplace essay is to show wrongdoing by a certain type of person so that he or she becomes blameworthy in the eyes of your reader. You are trying to provoke the reader’s emotions—to disgust, to anger, to sorrow. In rhetoric, this emotional appeal is known as **pa-**
thos. The defending commonplace essay also uses pathos. Its purpose is to show virtuous behavior by a certain type of person so that he or she becomes praiseworthy in the eyes of your reader. Again, you are trying to provoke the reader’s emotions, but this time to admiration, to respect, to joy. You want to pull feelings out of your readers and “touch their hearts.” You will work with the confirming commonplace later in the book. First you will focus on the refuting commonplace.

To see one example of how writing can refute or turn our emotions against a wrongdoer, take a look at the story of Wackford Squeers as told by Charles Dickens in his book *Nicholas Nickleby*. No matter what you think of your schoolteachers, past or present, I’m quite certain you’ve never had a teacher as horrible as Wackford Squeers. Mr. Squeers is the kind of man to give any profession a bad name.

Here he is at the beginning of the book:



Wackford Squeers

—adapted from *Nicholas Nickleby* by Charles Dickens

Mr. Squeers looked at the little boy to see whether he was doing anything he could beat him for. As he happened not to be doing anything at all, he merely boxed his ears, and told him not to do it again. . . .

Here the little boy on the top of the trunk gave a violent sneeze.

“Halloa, sir!” growled the schoolmaster, turning round. “What’s that, sir?”

“Nothing, please sir,” replied the little boy.

“Nothing, sir!” exclaimed Mr. Squeers.

“Please sir, I sneezed,” rejoined the boy, trembling till the little trunk shook under him.

“Oh! sneezed, did you?” retorted Mr. Squeers. “Then what did you say ‘nothing’ for, sir?”

In default of a better answer to this question, the little boy screwed a couple of knuckles into each of his eyes and began to cry, wherefore Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk with a blow on one side of the face, and knocked him on again with a blow on the other.

“Wait till I get you down into Yorkshire, my young gentleman,” said Mr. Squeers, “and then I’ll give you the rest. Will you hold that noise, sir?”

“Ye—ye—yes,” sobbed the little boy, rubbing his face very hard. . . .

“Then do so at once, sir,” said Squeers. “Do you hear?”

As this admonition was accompanied with a threatening gesture, and uttered with a savage aspect, the little boy rubbed his face harder, as if to keep the tears back; and, beyond alternately sniffing and choking, gave no further vent to his emotions.

“Mr. Squeers,” said the waiter [in the tavern], looking in at this juncture, “here’s a gentleman asking for you at the bar.”

“Show the gentleman in, Richard,” replied Mr. Squeers, in a soft voice. “Put your handkerchief in your pocket, you little scoundrel, or I’ll murder you when the gentleman goes.”

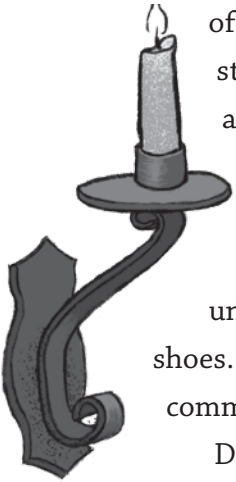
The schoolmaster had scarcely uttered these words in a fierce whisper, when the stranger entered. Affecting not to see him, Mr. Squeers pretended to be intent upon mending a pen, and offering **benevolent** advice to his youthful pupil.

“My dear child,” said Mr. Squeers, “all people have their trials. This early trial of yours that is fit to make your little heart burst, and your very eyes come out of your head with crying, what is it? Nothing; less than nothing. You are leaving your friends, but you will have a father in me, my dear, and a mother in Mrs. Squeers. At the delightful village of Dotheboys, near Greta Bridge in York-



shire, where youth are boarded, clothed, booked, washed, furnished with pocket-money, provided with all necessaries—”

How would you describe a man such as Wackford Squeers? Cruel? Random? Two-faced? Hypocritical? He is certainly all of these things. Charles Dickens does a wonderful job of making us feel a growing disgust for the schoolteacher. By contrasting his brutality with the helplessness of the little boy, Dickens fills our hearts with loathing. To add insult to injury, the instant a stranger enters the room, Squeers becomes sickeningly sweet. The more we learn about Squeers, the more our negative feelings grow.



What if Dickens had merely written, “Wackford Squeers was an unkind schoolteacher”? Would this sentence move you to disgust? Does it capture the full nastiness of the man? Not at all. This sentence, taken alone, could mean that Squeers was unkind because he forgot to feed the goldfish. Or perhaps he deliberately wore squeaky shoes. It’s the details that give us a fuller picture of the man. In the same way, an attacking commonplace essay should include details that will appeal to your reader’s emotions.

Dickens puts the wrongdoing of Wackford Squeers on display to wake us up and make us feel disgust for such an abusive man. That is the purpose of the attacking commonplace essay as

well. It is designed to awaken our emotions and show us why we should feel **repulsed** by the behavior of certain people.

The refuting commonplace does not attack a specific person (e.g., Attila the Hun), but a type of person who is ruled by bad habit of behavior (e.g., a merciless conqueror). If you were going to write a commonplace essay against men and women who are like Wackford Squeers, you would make a general attack—against cruel schoolteachers, for instance—and use Squeers as an example. Or, still using Squeers, you could write against random disciplinarians. Or against false father figures. Or against hypocrites.

One of the benefits of writing this sort of essay is that it will strengthen your personal convictions against destructive behavior and human evil. It will also get you to examine your own thoughts and

When you practiced refutation in the last book, you argued against the parts of stories that seemed unbelievable, improbable, unclear, or improper. When you practiced confirmation, you argued for the parts of stories that seemed believable, probable, clear, or proper. Writing these essays taught you the importance of making a clear argument in persuasive writing. You learned that people are not persuaded by angry, quarrelsome words. Rather, people need to hear reasons and evidence for why they should consider a new idea or why they should change their minds. In commonplace essays, you are taken a step further as you learn about the **thesis statement**. As you’ll learn, the thesis is the main argument, a debatable statement, of an essay or oration. Your refutation and confirmation essays contained a thesis even though you didn’t know it, and in this book you will practice writing thesis statements directly. You will also learn more about lining up evidence to support your thesis.

behavior. While you're writing a commonplace essay, ask yourself if you share any of the qualities of the type of person you're writing against. Maybe these qualities aren't quite so obvious in you—hopefully you haven't slid so far down the destructive slope as the individuals written about in this book—but maybe you recognize something all the same. When pointing fingers at people, it's important to remember that we need first to be humble. Perhaps if we see our own misdeeds in hard-core evildoers, we can learn from them and be spared a life of hurting people. By the same token, in this book you will write about the types of people who are generally admired. You'll take a stand for courageous people, for peacemakers, and for polite people. By thinking through why you respect certain virtues, you will better understand the kind of person you want to become.

The next several lessons will help you along the way to writing your own commonplace essay.

Tell It Back—Narration

TE 1. Explain the purpose of the commonplace essay.

TE 2. Why should we be humble when we point a condemning finger at certain types of people?

TE 3. Do you remember what rhetoric is? Why is it important?

TE 4. In the last book in this series, an argument was defined as a clear line of thinking aimed at proving a point. An argument is not a quarrel, which is a sharp or angry disagreement. What is one quotation from the passage from *Nicholas Nickleby* that supports the following argument: "Parents should never send their children to Mr. Squeers's school"?

5. Without looking at the text, retell the passage from *Nicholas Nickleby* as best you remember it using your own words. Try not to leave out any important details.

Here's the first line to help you get started:

Mr. Squeers looked at the little boy to see whether he was doing anything he could beat him for.

Talk About It—

TE 1. Wackford Squeers is a terrible teacher because he is cruel and impatient with his students. What are the qualities of a good teacher?

TE

2. Wackford Squeers uses his power as a teacher to be nasty to his poor students. Many other people in literature and history, such as the White Witch from *The Chronicles of Narnia* or Ivan the Terrible of Russia, also became cruel when they were in positions of power. Why do you think this is?

TE

3. In the news recently, a teacher lost her job for taping a student's mouth shut during class. The teacher claimed that the student was talking too much. How is this real-life story similar to and different from the story of Wackford Squeers?

Memoria—

Memory work is very important to rhetoric. *Memoria* (Latin for “memory”) is one of the five canons or laws of rhetoric. Our memory helps us as writers to come up with topics and ideas for our compositions. A well-exercised memory also helps us to remember things “off the top of our heads” when we deliver speeches. When we take things into memory, they become a part of our thinking and we are often enabled to think about them more deeply. Don't be surprised if passages you memorize become dear to you in one way or another.

And thus I clothe my naked villainy . . . And seem a saint, when most I play the devil.

This quote was written by William Shakespeare about the wicked King Richard III. Richard and Wackford Squeers are similar men. They both delight in their own wickedness, and yet they can appear kind and compassionate when they want to. In this quote, Richard is saying that he hides his devilishness, his villainy, in clothes of saintliness. Memorize this quotation and be prepared to recite it during your next class.

Memoria Instructions—

Our word “memory” comes from the Latin word *memoria*, which means “mindful” and “remembering.” The Greek poet Aeschylus said that memory is the “workmaid and mother of the Muses.” By this he meant that memory works for us and inspires us just as the nine Muses, Greek goddesses, were thought to inspire artists. In Greek times, and for many centuries afterward, people understood that to memorize beautiful and instructive words is helpful to life and work.

In this book you will begin to memorize significant quotes, which will help you in your writing and in your life. You will be surprised how often these insightful and beautiful words will surface in your mind and on your tongue at just the right moment because you have spent time thinking about them and committing them to memory.

There are many things you can do to help you with memorization:

- Go to a place where you will not be distracted. We retain information better when we have learned it in a quiet space.
- Repeat the piece multiple times out loud. Practice it in front of family or friends.

- Create hand motions that help you to remember words and phrases, and repeat the words as you perform the motions. For example, while memorizing the previous Shakespeare passage, you could pretend to pull on a cloak and then use your fingers to form a halo and then devil's horns.
- Discuss the piece with someone else, explaining what the piece means and describing your feelings about it. Thinking through a piece will help it to stick in your mind.
- Think about places (rooms in your house, for instance) and connect them in your mind with different parts of the text. For instance, because this quote involves clothing, place the scene in the bedroom where you get dressed and think of a deceitful person “clothing” bad behavior (or “villainy”) in that room.
- Write a journal entry on the quote, poem, or speech you want to memorize. Not so long ago, it was popular for people to keep “commonplace books.”

These books were essentially scrapbooks of quotes, poems, ideas, prayers, and notes of music. A person who kept a commonplace book expected that these bits of knowledge would be useful in conversation, in thought, and for writing. By jotting down the ordinary or “commonplace” stuff of life, people hoped to remember their thoughts for future reference. We have included the practice of keeping a commonplace journal in this book in order to strengthen your memory for writing and speaking.



Memoria Suggestions for Teachers—

The following process is a form of classical prewriting called invention. It is one way that rhetors invent topics for composition and for oration. This process will help students to discover material that they can then use for the writing later in these lessons. You may not have time to do this in each lesson, but it will be a benefit whenever you can.

(continued on TE pages)

Go Deeper—

1. Read the following narrative passages and answer the questions using complete sentences where appropriate.

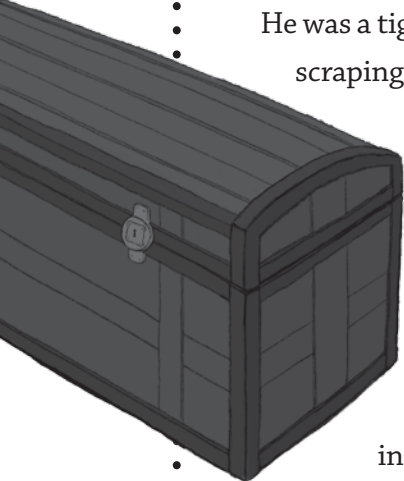
King Midas

King Midas was fonder of gold than of anything else in the world. He valued his royal crown chiefly because it was composed of that precious metal. If he loved anything better, or half so well, it was the one little maiden who played so merrily around her father's footstool. But the more Midas loved his daughter, the more did he desire and seek for wealth. He thought—foolish man!—that the best thing he could possibly do for this dear child would be to **bequeath**

her the immensest pile of yellow, glistening coin, that had ever been heaped together since the world was made. Thus, he gave all his thoughts and all his time to this one purpose. If ever he happened to gaze for an instant at the gold-tinted clouds of sunset, he wished that they were real gold, and that they could be squeezed safely into his strong box.

—from *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys* by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Ebenezer Scrooge



He was a tight-fisted hand at the **grindstone**, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, **covetous**, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. . . . Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house [counting money]. . . . The door of Scrooge’s counting-house was open that he might keep his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a sort of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, but the clerk’s fire was so very much smaller that it looked like one coal. But he couldn’t replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-box in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the shovel, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them to part. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and tried to warm himself at the candle.

—adapted from *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens

- a. What wickedness do King Midas and Ebenezer Scrooge have in common?

— Sample answer: Midas and Scrooge both love gold and money excessively, more than they love people, beauty, or the warmth of the world.

- b. Write a title for a commonplace essay about men such as Midas and Scrooge, starting with the word “against.”

Example: Against Gold Grubbers

Against Greedy People

Samson and Delilah

[Samson] loved a woman in the valley of Sorek, whose name was Delilah. The lords of the Philistines came up to her and said to her, “Entice him, and see where his great strength lies and how we may overpower him that we may bind him to afflict him. Then we will each give you eleven hundred pieces of silver.” So Delilah said to Samson, “Please tell me where your great strength is and how you may be bound. . . .”

So he told her all that was in his heart and said to her, “A razor has never come on my head, for I have been a Nazirite¹ to God from my mother’s womb. If I am shaved, then my strength will leave me and I will become weak and be like any other man.” When Delilah saw that he had told her all that was in his heart, she sent and called the lords of the Philistines, saying, “Come up once more, for he has told me all that is in his heart.” Then the lords of the Philistines came up to her and brought the money in their hands. She made him sleep on her knees, and called for a man and had him shave off the seven locks of his hair. Then she began to afflict him, and his strength left him. . . .

Then the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes; and they brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze chains. —from Judges 16:4–6, 17–19, 21, the Hebrew scriptures, NASB

Caesar and Brutus

Casca, who was to give the first blow, drew his dagger and struck Caesar on the shoulder. Either through fear or haste he did little harm by his stroke.

In a moment Caesar had sprung to his feet, and seizing hold of Casca’s weapon, he cried, “Vile Casca, what does this mean?”

But immediately daggers were drawn on every side of him, and blow after blow descended upon his body, while angry faces looked into his.

Unarmed as he was, Caesar yet struggled desperately with the assassins, until he caught sight of Decimus Brutus, whom he loved, among his murderers, ready to strike.

Then crying, “Et tu, Brute?” “Thou, too, Brutus?” he covered his face with his toga and fell to the ground, his body covered with many wounds.

Caesar was dead. And it is said that nature herself mourned for the great man stricken to death by those whom he had befriended. —from *The Story of Rome* by Mary Macgregor

- a. What wickedness do Delilah and Brutus have in common?

— Sample answer: Delilah and Brutus are both traitors. They betray and destroy the person to whom they should be loyal.

1. Nazirite: a Hebrew person dedicated to God’s service

- b. Write a title for a commonplace essay about people such as Delilah and Brutus, starting with the word “against.”

Against Betrayers/Traitors

The Princess

A great king of a land far away in the East had a daughter who was very beautiful, but so proud, and **haughty**, and conceited, that none of the princes who came to ask her hand in marriage was good enough for her, and she only made sport of them.

Once upon a time the king held a great feast, and asked thither² all her suitors; and they all sat in a row, ranged according to their rank—kings, and princes, and dukes, and earls, and counts, and barons, and knights. Then the princess came in, and as she passed by them she had something spiteful to say to every one.

—from *King Grisly-Beard* by the Brothers Grimm

Lavinia

Lavinia, in fact, was spiteful. She was inordinately jealous of Sara. Until the new pupil’s arrival, she had felt herself the leader in the school. She had led because she was capable of making herself extremely disagreeable if the others did not follow her. She **domineered** over the little children, and assumed grand airs with those big enough to be her companions. . . . As time went on it became apparent that Sara was a leader, too, and not because she could make herself disagreeable, but because she never did.

—from *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett

- a. What wickedness do the princess and Lavinia have in common?

 Sample answer: The princess and Lavinia are both haughty and spiteful to others.

- b. Write a title for a commonplace essay about people such as the princess and Lavinia, starting with the word “against.”

Against Haughty and Spiteful People

Clara Barton

At the outbreak of the Civil War, a young woman who was a clerk in the Patent Office, at Washington, gave up her position, and volunteered to nurse soldiers without pay. She knew

2. thither: there

that the sick, wounded, and dying men would need the comfort that only a woman’s hand can give.

Inspired by her example, other women undertook the same work, some going to the hospitals, and others following the armies, but all nursing the sick, comforting the dying, and keeping their last messages for the loved ones at home.

—from *America First* by Lawton B. Evans

Jo March

Jo never left her for an hour since Beth had said “I feel stronger when you are here.” She slept on a couch in the room, waking often to renew the fire, to feed, lift, or wait upon the patient [sister] who seldom asked for anything, and ‘tried not to be a trouble’. All day she haunted the room, jealous of any other nurse, and prouder of being chosen than of any honor her life ever brought her. Precious and helpful hours to Jo, for now her heart received the teaching that it needed.

—from *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

- a. What good quality do Clara and Jo have in common?

Sample answer: Clara and Jo are both compassionate and care for the sick.

- b. Write a title for a commonplace essay about people such as Clara and Jo, starting with the word “for.”

Example: For Kind People

For Caregivers/Compassionate Nurses

Joan of Arc

Joan crashed into the Burgundians at Marguy. . . . Joan rallied her men and charged again, and was again rolled back. Two assaults occupy a good deal of time—and time was precious here. Joan heartened her men with inspiring words and led them to the charge again in great style. Now all of a sudden there was a panic on our side. Some say one thing caused it, some another. Anyway our men broke, and went flying in a wild retreat for the high road. Joan tried to rally them and face them around, crying to them that victory was sure.

—adapted from *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* by Mark Twain



Chevalier Bayard

Then Bayard, like a furious lion, put his lance in rest and charged the Spanish troop. He was in deadly earnest, and soon overthrew the first four Spaniards. . . . The Spaniards were amazed at such strength and courage. The Good Knight . . . defended himself so well that the Spaniards could make no way. He hurled them into the river one after another, and, the banks of the river being high and the water muddy, neither man nor horse could scramble out again. The knight repulsed³ them all. For a whole hour he stuck to his post—one man against two hundred!

“Follow me, my friends!” he cried aloud.

The French obeyed, and the whole body, with Bayard at their head, forced back the Spaniards and pursued them for nearly a mile. —adapted from *Brave Men and Brave Deeds* by M.B. Synge

- a. What good quality do Joan of Arc and Chevalier Bayard have in common?

Sample answer: Joan of Arc and Chevalier Bayard are both brave military leaders in the face of hardship and danger.

- b. Write a title for a commonplace essay about people such as Joan of Arc and Chevalier Bayard, starting with the word “for.”

For Brave Leaders

1. Name a destructive type of person that is common to humanity (e.g., a coward or a killer or a braggart) and give a famous example of that type of person.

Examples: A famous coward in literature is Falstaff.

A famous killer in history is Al Capone.

A famous braggart from the Hebrew scriptures is Goliath.

Sample answer: A famous bandit in history is Jesse James.

2. Name a virtuous type of person that is common to humanity (e.g., a self-sacrificing person or a fearless warrior or a loyal friend) and give a famous example of that type of person.

3. repulsed: drove back

Examples: Four famous self-sacrificing people in history are the chaplains who died on the sinking troop ship *Dorchester*.

A famous fearless warrior in history is the Shawnee warrior Tecumseh.

A famous fearless warrior in mythology is the Amazon queen Hippolyta.

A famous loyal friend in literature is Samwise Gamgee from *The Lord of the Rings*.

Sample answer: A famous nurse in history is Florence Nightingale.

3. In the space provided, write a general word that describes the type of person that participates in the deeds and actions in each of the following lists.

Example: Misdeeds: piracy, stealing a necklace, pickpocketing, taking candy from a store when no one is looking

thieves/dishonest people

- a. Misdeeds: starting a race before the countdown, looking at someone else's test paper, sneaking a peek at someone's hand of playing cards

cheaters

- b. Misdeeds: putting rat poison in someone's food, pushing a person off a cliff, stabbing a person in the back

murderers

- c. Misdeeds: demanding to have their own way, crying if their parents say no to something, throwing a temper tantrum

spoiled brats

- d. Deeds: donating to charity, funding the building of a hospital, sharing food with someone hungry, giving money to the poor

generous people/philanthropists



- e. Deeds: volunteering at a homeless shelter, adopting an orphaned child, nursing the sick

kind/compassionate people

- f. Deeds: admitting to a mistake, answering a question truthfully, not cheating on a difficult test

honest people

Writing Time—

1. **SENTENCE PLAY**—When porcelain is broken, it shatters into many jagged pieces. In the same way, sentences can be broken into pieces. In composition, a fragment is a sentence that is broken and incomplete. Fragments lack at least one essential part of a sentence.
 - “Began to cry” is a fragment because it lacks a subject.
 - “The little boy to cry” is also a fragment because it lacks a proper verb.
 - “The little boy began to cry” is a complete sentence because it has a subject (“the little boy”) and a predicate (“began to cry”).

Subject—what the sentence is about; either a noun, a pronoun, or a noun phrase

Predicate—the part of speech that tells what the subject of a sentence does; always includes a verb

Fragments can be caused by misplaced punctuation. In the following examples, the underlined fragments are formed by an improperly placed period.

- The schoolmaster uttered. These words in a fierce whisper.

To fix this fragment, join the phrases together: The schoolmaster uttered these words in a fierce whisper.

- Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk. And knocked him on again.

To fix this fragment, join the phrases together: Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk and knocked him on again.

Now be a fragment magician! Use your word magic to rewrite the following fragments as complete sentences in the space provided.

Examples: Joan rallied her men. And charged again.

Change to: Joan rallied her men and charged again.

Had already faced that dreary land of ice and snow.

Change to: He had already faced that dreary land of ice and snow.

- a. Clara Barton gave up her position. And volunteered to nurse soldiers without pay.

Sample answer: Clara Barton gave up her position and volunteered to nurse soldiers without pay.

- b. Samson fell in love with. A woman named Delilah.

Sample answer: Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah.

- c. King Midas his daughter and his gold.

Sample answer: King Midas loved his daughter and his gold.

- d. As the princess passed by each suitor. She had something spiteful to say to each one.

Sample answer: As the princess passed by each suitor, she had something spiteful to say to each one.

- e. Lavinia vain and jealous of Sara.

Sample answer: Lavinia was vain and jealous of Sara.

- 2. **COPIOUSNESS**—Desiderius Erasmus was a famous teacher of rhetoric during the Renaissance. He believed that abundance in language, or copiousness, was important to excellent communication. Now, what does “abundance in language” mean exactly? It means that there are many different words and there are many different ways to express the same idea. In chapter 7 of his book *Copia*, Erasmus said that variety adds color and excitement to writing. Much like a scene in a pretty painting that captures your attention, writing filled with variety holds readers’ attention. Erasmus also demonstrated the concept of variety using clothing as an example: It is more interesting to look at a person who is well dressed in clothes that express her personality than a person who wears dull clothes. In the same way, the words you use express your personal writing style and make your writing interesting.



Amplification is an important part of copiousness. According to Erasmus, one way to amplify writing is to “put in place of an appropriate word a stronger one.” By making each word as specific as possible, you can make your arguments more powerful and your thoughts clearer.

Another way to amplify your writing is by using synonyms to emphasize your point. This is a rhetorical technique called **synonymia**. Do you see the word “synonym” lurking in this word? You should, because this technique involves using two additional synonyms to amplify or explain a subject. Repetition like this adds force, but it should be used sparingly and for special effect. Any technique that is overused can lose its effect on an audience and grow tiresome. **A** **You will find this note in the TE pages for this chapter.**

In this exercise, expand the underlined part of each sentence by adding two other words or phrases that express the same idea.

Example: “My dear child,” said Mr. Squeers, “all people have their trials.”

Amplified: “My dear child, my beloved boy, my darling youth,” said Mr. Squeers, “all people have their trials.”

- a. As she passed them by, she had something spiteful to say to everyone. (Fill in the blanks with synonyms for the adjective “spiteful.”)

As she passed by them, she had something spiteful, something

_____ rude _____, something _____ cruel _____ to say to everyone.

- b. Casca drew his dagger and he attacked his friend Caesar. (Fill in the blanks with synonyms for the verb “attacked.”)

Casca drew his dagger and he attacked, he _____ assaulted _____, he

_____ stabbed _____ his friend Caesar.

- c. Beth had said, “I feel stronger when you are here.” (Fill in the blanks with synonyms for the adjective “stronger.”)

Beth had said, “I feel stronger, I feel _____ sturdier _____, I feel

_____ tougher _____ when you are here.”

- d. Two assaults occupy a good deal of time—and time was precious here. (Fill in the blanks with synonyms for the word “precious” in the independent clause “time was precious.”)

Two assaults occupy a good deal of time—and time was precious, time was

_____ valuable _____, time was _____ priceless _____ here.

- e. Lavinia had led because she was capable of making herself extremely disagreeable if the others did not follow her. (Fill in the blanks with synonyms for the adjective “disagreeable.”)

Lavinia had led because she was capable of making herself extremely disagreeable,

extremely _____ unpleasant _____, extremely _____ nasty _____ if the others did not follow her.

3. **SHORT ARGUMENT**—Take a careful look at the illustration of Wackford Squeers with his students by Frederick Barnard. The artist is trying to say something with this drawing. Barnard uses an image to say the same thing about Wackford Squeers that Dickens does with words. What do you think he is trying to say?

- a. Your teacher may split you up into partnerships of two students. Examine the picture closely for about a minute, silently noting details in the foreground, middle ground, and background.



- b. Hide the picture and describe the scene with as many details as you can remember. Your partner may help you fill in any missing details.
- c. Discuss with your class what the illustrator is trying to say about Wackford Squeers and his school. Is it a good school? Is it a happy place? Is learning taking place? Use details such as the schoolmaster’s posture and his facial expression to make your case. **B**
- d. Now use your observation of this illustration to write a paragraph supporting the argument that Wackford Squeers is a cruel teacher. First describe the image in writing, and then support the argument with evidence from the picture.

BOne of the theses of this book is that speaking, writing, and critical thinking are three sails that move the ship of rhetoric. Whenever you can give students the chance to speak and think critically in conjunction with their writing—as a part of the process of their working out their thoughts—it will yield immense benefits in their work.

▲ Illustration of Wackford Squeers and his students by Frederick Barnard.

Based on the illustration by Frederick Barnard, Wackford Squeers is a cruel teacher.

— Sample paragraph: Based on the illustration by Frederick Barnard, Wackford Squeers is a cruel teacher. On the left, the schoolmaster stands behind a podium and hovers gleefully over his students with a switch in his hand. On the right slouch several boys all dressed in rags and with gaunt and sickly faces. Squeers’s posture and facial expression are both menacing, and yet he wears a grin on his face, as if he takes pleasure in hurting the boys. His students seem to be cowering with fear, as if expecting the schoolmaster to strike a blow. — In fact, none of the careworn students is smiling and one boy is actively crying. It seems as though Squeers controls his school with fear, which makes him a very cruel teacher indeed.



Speak It — Warm Up

1. Your throat is full of muscles that help you to make speech sounds. Public speaking (or oration) can be greatly improved if the speaker strengthens those muscles through exercise. Your voice can sound more powerful if those muscles are toned and you learn to control your breathing. The following are a few ways you can do this:
 - Make a sound like a siren with your mouth open wide and then go louder and softer, higher and lower in pitch. Also try saying, “Eee” and “Ooo” in the same way. Be sure to be breathing deeply and exhaling in a controlled fashion.
 - Breathe in deeply and hiss when you breathe out. Do this a few times.
 - Make a humming sound (“Mmmmmm”) until you feel a vibration in your lips.
 - Practice articulation with a few fun tongue twisters, such as “strange strategic statistics,” “red leather, yellow leather,” “seventy-seven benevolent elephants,” or “pirates’ private property.”

Remember that any form of strength training takes time and repetition before you can see (or hear) the results! Also, don’t overdo it or you can tire out your vocal folds.



2. In rhetoric, a **declamation** is a practice speech. It’s often an existing speech that the student performs to gain strength and practice elocution as a speaker. The following are two passages from Dickens’s novel *Nicholas Nickleby*, rewritten as declamations. Choose one speech to practice and deliver in front of your class.
 - a. This first declamation is taken from a chapter in the novel in which Dickens tries to awaken the pity of the reader for the sad students at Dotheboys Hall. This appeal to emotion is called *pathos*, which means “feeling” or “suffering” in Greek. At first you

miserable lad's behalf. You have returned no answer to the letter in which I begged forgiveness for him, and offered to be responsible that he would remain quietly here. Don't blame me for this public interference. You have brought it upon yourself; not I. Wretch! Touch him at your peril! I will not stand by, and see it done. I'm fierce with anger, and I have the strength of ten such men as you. Look to yourself, for by Heaven I will not spare you, if you drive me on! I have a long series of insults to **avenge**, and my **indignation** is **aggravated** by the **das-tardly** cruelties practiced on helpless infancy in this foul den. Have a care; for if you do raise the devil within me, the consequences shall fall heavily upon your own head!

☞ Please note that student answers regarding punctuation may vary somewhat, as Dickens used a complex style of punctuation that is not as common in modern writing. We have only highlighted the punctuation issues that are true errors rather than differences in style.

Revise It—

1. **PROOFREADING**—The following are paragraphs adapted from *Nicholas Nickleby* in which Dickens describes the horrible Yorkshire school, Dotheboys Hall. The paragraphs contain a number of errors, including letters that should be capitalized (2), repeated words that should be deleted (2), a word that is missing (1), a lack of proper punctuation (2), and misspellings (2). Use the following proofreader's marks to mark up the text: **C**



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.

It was such a crowded scene, and there were so many objects to attract attention, that, at first, Nicholas stared about him, really without seeing anything at all. [^]The place

SP. was a bea and dirty room, with a couple of windows. There were a couple of long old rickety

SP. desks, cut and notched, and inked, and dammaged in ~~in~~ every possible way. [^]The walls were

so stained that it was impossible to tell whether they had ever been touched with paint or whitewash.

But the pupils! How the last faint traces of hope faded from the mind of nicholas as he looked in dismay around! Pale pale faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men, deformities upon their limbs, boys of stunted growth, all crowded on the view together; young lives which, from the earliest dawn of infancy, had been one horrible endurance of cruelty and neglect. there were little faces which should have been handsome, darkened with suffering; there was childhood with the light of its eye quenched, its beauty gone, and its helplessness alone remaining. What a Hell was breeding here!

2. **REVISION**—Now look at the following passage describing a meal at Dotheboys Hall, loosely adapted from *Nicholas Nickleby*. The three paragraphs are jumbled. Put them in an order that makes more sense by writing numbers 1 through 3 on the lines beside them.

___ 3 ___ Nicholas choked down a bowl of porridge, for much the same reason which induces some poor people to eat dirt—lest they should be inconveniently hungry when there is nothing to eat. Having further disposed of a slice of bread and butter, he sat himself down to wait for school-time.

___ 2 ___ Into these bowls, Mrs. Squeers, assisted by the hungry servant, poured a brown composition, which was called porridge. A wedge of brown bread was inserted in each bowl, and when they had eaten their porridge by means of the bread, the boys ate the bread itself, and had finished their breakfast; whereupon Mrs. Squeers went away to eat a big breakfast of eggs and bacon.

___ 1 ___ Smike, the servant, shuffled out of the kitchen with a kettle of something that steamed and smelled awful. Mrs. Squeers wiped her hands upon his hair, and arranged a number of little wooden bowls upon a long board. The school boys eyed the empty bowls hungrily.

Lesson 1: *Attacking Wrongdoers and Defending the Virtuous*

Tell It Back—

1. The purpose of the commonplace essay is to stir up the reader's emotions against the destructive behavior of a type of wrongdoer or to encourage the helpful behavior of a certain type of virtuous person. The essays can provide moral clarity, which can be beneficial to society. At the same time, these essays can help the writer examine his own thoughts, attitudes, and behavior.
2. We should be humble because all of us have faults, even if they aren't as exaggerated as the faults of a famous evildoer. Part of the value of a commonplace essay is its usefulness in examining our own behavior.
3. Rhetoric is the art of writing and speaking persuasively. Rhetoric is important because you can use it to make a point and convince others that your argument is the best one.
4. Answers may vary. Here is one sample quote: "In default of a better answer to this question, the little boy screwed a couple of knuckles into each of his eyes and began to cry, wherefore Mr. Squeers knocked him off the trunk with a blow on one side of the face, and knocked him on again with a blow on the other."

Talk About It—

1. A good teacher is kind, patient, and intelligent. She cares about the well-being of her students and wants to see them succeed.
2. When someone has power, he feels as though he can "get away" with cruelty because he doesn't think anyone can challenge his authority.
3. It is similar to the story of Wackford Squeers because in both cases the teacher cruelly punished a student. However, the method and severity of the punishments were different. In addition, the teacher lost her job, but Wackford Squeers never faced any consequences for his cruelty, and in the *Nicholas Nickleby* excerpt, the boy is doing nothing to bother Squeers, whereas the student in the news story talked too much.

Memoria Suggestions for Teachers (continued)—

1. *Contemplate the quote.* We want students to realize that their experience of this quote is not simply practical or functional, but that it is included here for them to think about, dwell on, and consider. Give students some time with it.
2. *Copy the quote and respond to it in writing.* After students think about the quote, have them write down a few thoughts about the quote. For this purpose, you may want students to keep a journal of quotes and contemplations. Student responses may be thoughts that

support, develop, or even challenge the quote. This quote may also make them think about something else they have read on the subject. Thoughts can be written in bullet points and need not be complete sentences.

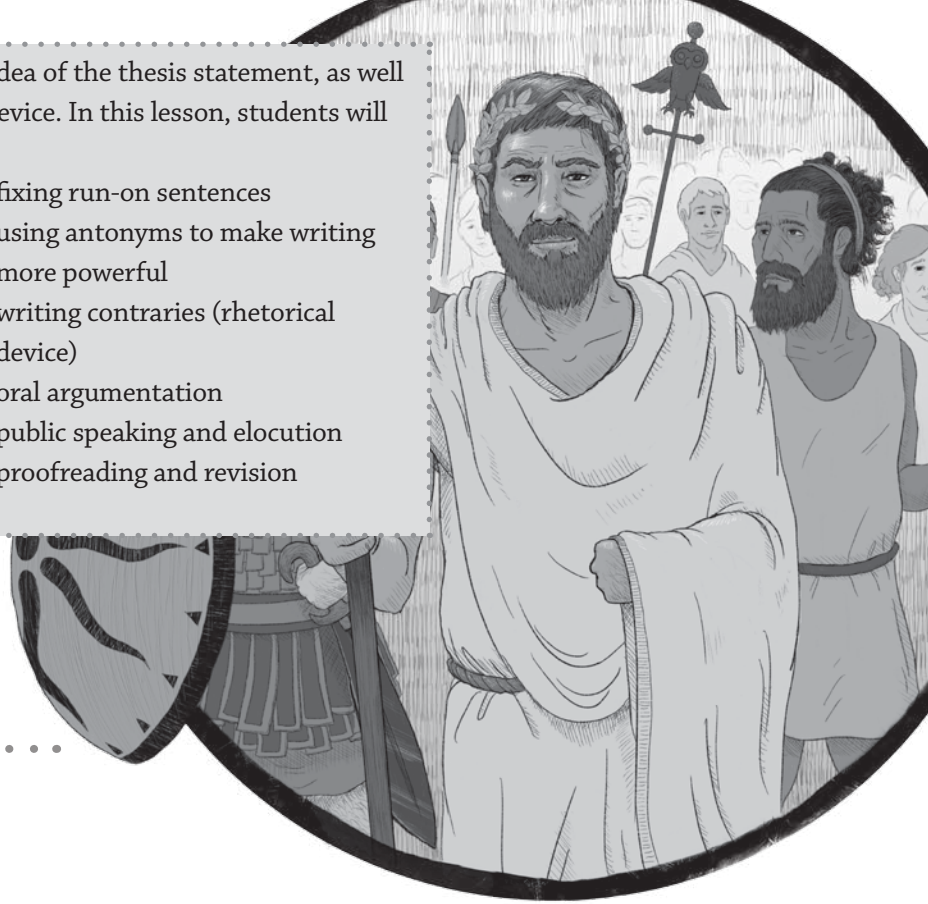
3. *Discuss the quote.* Now pair students up with other students and have them listen to each other's ideas. Partners can challenge, question, or agree with their partners' points.
4. *Write down any new thoughts or ideas.* Allow students to take a few notes as the result of their conversation. Have them again jot down ideas, conclusions, implications, questions, and points that they would like to use to develop the quote.

Writing Time—

^AErasmus argued against overwriting. Whenever excessive words are used, the effect is often pompous or flowery, and off-putting. Interestingly enough, Dickens is often accused of being wordy and in need of a good editor. As modern-day amusements have proliferated, and time for reading has shrunk, Dickens's style of writing does seem excessive. The length of Victorian-era novels makes them hard to get through without copious free time for reading.

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce the idea of the thesis statement, as well as the concept of the contrary as a rhetorical device. In this lesson, students will practice:

- supporting arguments with textual evidence
- oral narration or outlining
- critical thinking
- rhetorical analysis of a picture
- reflection, memorization, and recitation
- identifying and creating thesis statements
- fixing run-on sentences
- using antonyms to make writing more powerful
- writing contraries (rhetorical device)
- oral argumentation
- public speaking and elocution
- proofreading and revision



Lesson 2

Thesis and Contrary

Suppose you are sitting in a classroom with Aphthonius, the famous teacher of rhetoric whose outline for the *progymnasmata* we have borrowed for this series. (Let's hope that Aphthonius is a whole lot kinder than Wackford Squeers!) It is the late fourth century, the year 385, and you are living in Antioch, a Greek town on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea that is now part of the Roman Empire.

Antioch is a town with loads of history. Alexander the Great supposedly camped here. The Romans made it the capital of the province of Syria and now use it as a major center of trade with Persia. Paul of Tarsus preached in a synagogue here, and it is where Christ's followers were first called Christians. German **barbarians** are pressing against the West-

ern Empire, but that threat seems very far away. It seems as if the Roman Empire will endure forever.

You are a good Roman student, and it is Aphthonius himself who is teaching you the commonplace exercise. He decides to use tyrants as his example of a type of wrongdoer. What is a tyrant? A



▲ Map of Antioch and the Roman Empire

tyrant is a ruler who takes power unlawfully and uses power unjustly. He ignores the laws of the land and remains in control of the government by force. And what happens to the lawful leader? Most likely he is exiled or murdered. In order to hang on to his power and keep down all the people who might object to him, a tyrant must be brutal.

Take some time to read the following story from ancient Greece that illustrates what a tyrant is.

The Story of Pisistratus, Tyrant of Athens

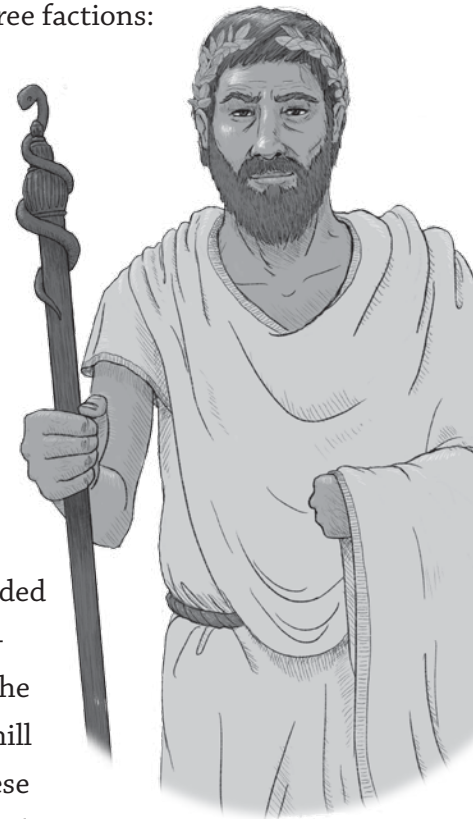
Pisistratus was a Greek soldier who made a name for himself by helping to defeat Megara, a rival to the town of Athens. The people of Athens considered him a hero, but little did they know that he was hungry for power. He actively looked for a way to take over as the sole ruler of Athens.

In those days, roughly 560 BC, the town of Athens was divided into three factions: the hill folk, who were poor shepherds and herdsmen; the plains people, who were farmers and wealthy landowners; and the coastal people, who lived as fishermen and merchants on the Aegean Sea. Pisistratus knew that the poor people, the hill folk, envied the wealthier people of the plains and the coasts. He knew that if he became their champion, he could take over the rest of Athens and become its tyrant.

Solon, the lawgiver, did not think that it was good for Athens to have a tyrant at its head. He warned the people again and again that Pisistratus would take away their freedom, but it was in vain that he spoke; no one would listen to him.

One day as Pisistratus drove in a chariot to the marketplace, the citizens saw to their horror that he was bloody from knife wounds. They crowded round his chariot begging to be told what had happened. This was what Pisistratus wished. He pointed to his wounds, telling them that the men of the plains had attacked him, because he was defending the rights of the poor hill folk. But Pisistratus was deceiving the people, for he had given himself these wounds that he might gain the sympathy of the people. "Please, I need a body-guard," he told them.

Lest he should be killed outright by his enemies, the citizens agreed that he should have a guard of fifty men with clubs and spears. At first Pisistratus seemed content with his guard, but



after a time he began to add to its number—now one, then another—until he knew that he was strong enough to defy his enemies. He then seized the **Acropolis** and made himself master of the state. His bodyguard terrorized and punished anybody who spoke out against him.

The leaders of the plains and the coast were forced to flee, and the people, in spite of the warnings of Solon, were amazed at the cunning and the boldness Pisistratus had shown. These events illustrate the saying, “If **tyranny** and **oppression** come to the land, it will be in the **guise** of fighting an enemy.”

So there you see a tyrant in action. He’s like a bully who takes over a city or nation. In 1775, many American colonists believed that the king of England, George III, was a tyrant. Thomas Jefferson called him “a Prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a Tyrant.”

Now, as he teaches you, Aphthonius assumes that you know all about tyrants, so he doesn’t bother to explain what they are. Instead, he moves right into the first sentence from his essay entitled “Against Tyrants”:

Because laws are established for the good of the people, any person who tries to put an end to laws should be punished.^A

Great beginning! Do you recognize what Aphthonius is doing? Of course! He is using a thesis statement to begin his essay. A thesis statement tells the reader what the essay is all about. It’s the main idea, the theme, and it announces the subject and purpose of the essay. Some theses may be very simple, such as this one from Samuel Adams: “All people might be free if they defended their freedom.” Or a thesis may be more complicated, such as this one adapted from the Declaration of Independence: “Whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government.”

So a thesis tells readers the main idea of your essay—but it’s more than just that. The thesis also makes a statement that can be argued for or against. When Aphthonius says, “Because laws are established for the good of the people, any person who tries to put an end to laws should be punished,” he is making an announcement. He is saying, “This essay will argue that tyrants should be punished.” There are some who might disagree with Aphthonius’s statement. It can be argued for or against, and so for the rest of the essay Aphthonius must strive to persuade his readers that his thesis is correct. Remember that persuasion is the whole goal of rhetoric—persuasion in the service of noble ideas such as truth and beauty, goodness and justice, and love. In this essay Aphthonius is arguing for justice.

As Aphthonius continues his instruction, he reminds you that when you write your own thesis statement, you should make sure it is not a mere statement of fact. If you were to write, “Rats are furry little rodents,” you wouldn’t have anything left to argue. Everyone would nod their heads and probably stifle a big yawn. If you were to write, “Rats once carried the **bubonic plague** but now

^AThe sample essay sentences throughout this lesson are paraphrased from a portion of the actual essay written by Aphthonius.

make wonderful pets,” then you would have more to argue. You would need to persuade your readers why rats—which are a little repulsive to most people—make wonderful pets. But be careful not to go too far. If you were to write, “Even when they carry the bubonic plague, rats are man’s best friend,” you’d have a thesis that goes overboard. No reasonable person would believe such a statement, not if you argued yourself blue in the face.

In addition, you shouldn’t start your thesis statement with, “The purpose of this paper is . . .” or “My thesis will try to prove . . .” or “Here is what I’m going to write about.” You don’t need to shine a glaring spotlight on the thesis. If you write it well, it will be clear and shine all by itself. The thesis is like the lamp of the entire essay. It will shed light on all your ideas as you seek to prove your argument.

Next Aphthonius follows his thesis—that tyrants should be punished—with two supporting arguments. Notice how these statements seek to prove the thesis that punishment is necessary.

Letting a tyrant go unpunished will not make him more friendly to the people. On the contrary, mercy only makes a tyrant more dangerous. A jury that shows mercy to a tyrant and drops the charges against him will later come to harm when the tyrant takes over.

TE

► Read these statements a second time. Can you put Aphthonius’s two arguments into your own words? **B**

B Feel free to work on this as a class or offer more support for this exercise.

These two arguments support and strengthen the thesis of the essay. Aphthonius’s first paragraph then wraps up with this statement, called a contrary:

A kind law should punish a tyrant severely, whereas it would be cruel to set him free.

TE

► It seems a little strange to argue that a severe punishment could be kind. In what way might this statement be true? Why do you think it would be cruel to set a tyrant free?

Now, I hope you’ve noticed that the contrary supports the thesis just as the two supporting arguments do. In fact, everything in a persuasive paper must back up the thesis. The thesis is like the quarterback of a football team, calling the plays, while the arguments that support it serve as defensive tackles and as offensive receivers. A thesis is only as strong as the arguments that support it.

Before you move on to learn about the rest of the commonplace exercise, take some time to practice with thesis statements. This concept is too important to skip over lightly. In fact, being able to argue for a thesis is an important part of being well educated.



Tell It Back—Narration

A thesis statement tells the reader what an essay is about. It also states an argument. The author hopes to convince his reader that this argument is correct. In other words, the thesis is the main argument of an essay or oration.

1. What are two purposes of a thesis statement?
2. As you'll recall, an argument is a clear line of thinking aimed at proving a point. An argument is not a quarrel, which is a sharp and angry disagreement. Look back at *The Story of Pisistratus, Tyrant of Athens*. What is one quotation from the passage that supports the following argument: "A tyrant is willing to deceive to gain power"?
3. Oral Narration: Without looking at the text, retell the brief story of Pisistratus as best you remember it using your own words. Try not to leave out any important details.

Here's the first line to help you get started:

Pisistratus was a Greek soldier who made a name for himself by helping to defeat Megara, a rival to the town of Athens.

4. Outline: Create an outline for *The Story of Pisistratus, Tyrant of Athens* 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. "Dictator" and "tyrant" are words that mean roughly the same thing. They are synonyms. Tyrants and dictators steal power and use force to rule their people. Many modern-day tyrants have used the same trick as Pisistratus to take over a country. Dictators such as Mao Zedong used bodyguards and bloody mobs to destroy their foes. If anybody disagreed with them, they were beaten up and carted off to prison.

Adolf Hitler of the Nazi party in Germany was one of the most notorious dictators in history. He used gangs of thugs called Protection Squads to frighten his enemies. They served as Hitler's bodyguards when he spoke in beer hall meetings, and they would often get into big fights. Hitler added to his bodyguard over time. It grew from a gang of 8 men to a force of over 200,000 men. Eventually the Protection Squads took over the German police force and helped Hitler win control of Germany. How was Hitler's takeover of Germany similar to Pisistratus's takeover of Athens?

2. Once a tyrant takes over, he often tries to persuade people that he's a nice person. This is dishonest persuasion. Do an online search for **propaganda** posters of Chinese dictator Mao Zedong and Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, similar to the one printed in this lesson. Be especially on the lookout for posters that feature



children. What common elements do you see in the posters? Why do you think children are used in the pictures?

3. Look at the following sets of two statements. One statement is a thesis statement (which can be argued or debated), and the other is a statement of fact. Explain which sentence is which.



▲ Propaganda poster for Josef Stalin.

TE

- ❖ A tyrant seeks to rule alone.
- ❖ All tyrants were violent when they were children.

TE

- ❖ *Tyrannosaurus rex* was a meat-eating dinosaur whose name means “king of the tyrant lizards.”
- ❖ The *Tyrannosaurus rex* was the fiercest dinosaur of the Cretaceous period.

TE

- ❖ The Greek people were idiots for following Pisistratus.
- ❖ The Greek people were deceived by Pisistratus.

4. Look again at Aphthonius’s thesis about tyrants:

Because laws are established for the good of the people, any person who tries to put an end to laws should be punished.

Now consider the same sentence changed into a statement of fact:

Laws are established for the good of the people, but some people try to put an end to laws.

In what ways are these two statements different?

☞ The quotations used in the Memoria sections of this book will sometimes be derived from the readings in these lessons. An understanding of the context of a quote always helps it to be more understandable, relevant, and easy to memorize.

Memoria—

If tyranny and oppression come to the land, it will be in the guise of fighting an enemy. ☞

TE

1. Discuss the meaning of this quotation. Define any words you may not know. How does this quotation relate to the story of Pisistratus?
2. Memorize this quotation and be prepared to recite it during your next class.
3. Write the quotation in your commonplace book, along with any thoughts you have about it.

Go Deeper—

1. Find and underline the thesis statement in the following paragraphs. Remember that a thesis is the main idea and announces the point the author intends to prove. Keep in mind that the thesis may not be at the beginning of a paragraph. It can also appear in the middle or at the end. **D**

Whereas many people today would use the terms “Native American” or “African American,” we use the historic terms “Indian” and “Negro” in these passages derived from primary sources. This gives the passages both credibility and accuracy.

a. **Life’s Shortness and Vanity** —by Samuel Davies

NOTE: Samuel Davies was a preacher during the First Great Awakening in the United States in the 1730s and 1740s. He was a Presbyterian minister in Virginia and advocated for religious freedom. His style influenced many other orators, including Patrick Henry.

The time of life is absolutely short: a span, an inch, a hair’s breadth. How short the time between the cradle and the grave! How short the journey from infancy to old age, through all the intermediate stages! Let the few among you who bear the marks of old age upon you—in gray hair, wrinkles, weakness, and pains—look back upon your tiresome pilgrimage through life, and does it not appear to you, as though you commenced to live but yesterday? They are but a very few who drag on their lives through seventy or eighty years. Old men can hardly find **contemporaries**; a new generation has started up, and the aged have become almost strangers in their own neighborhoods.

—adapted from “Sermon XXIII: Life’s Shortness and Vanity” from *Sermons on Important Subjects* by Samuel Davies

b. **Iroquois Land** —by Chief Cannassatego

NOTE: Chief Cannassatego was an Iroquois leader who gave the following speech in 1742. His words echo similar complaints by other Native Americans, from Powhatan to Tecumseh to Sitting Bull, all of whom felt pushed out by European settlers.

We know our lands are now become more valuable. The white people think we do not know their value, but we are sensible that the land is everlasting, and the few goods we receive for it are soon worn out and gone. . . . We are not well used with respect to the lands still unsold by us. Your people daily settle on these lands, and spoil our hunting. . . . Your horses and cows have eaten the grass our deer used to feed on.

—adapted from the original printing by Benjamin Franklin

c. **Indian Courtesy** —by Isaac Weld

NOTE: Born in Ireland, Isaac Weld was a writer, artist, and explorer. He traveled around North America for two years, publishing his thoughts on the trip in a popular book called *Travels through the States of North America*. The following passage is adapted from that book.

No people are possessed of a greater share of natural politeness than the Indians. They will never interrupt you while you are speaking. Nor, if you have told them anything which they think to be false, will they bluntly contradict you. “We dare say, brother,” they will answer, “that you yourself believe what you tell us to be true, but it appears to us so improbable that we cannot give our assent to it.”

d. The Negro As a Soldier —by Christian A. Fleetwood

NOTE: Christian Fleetwood was born an African American **freeman** in Baltimore in 1840 and served as an officer during the American Civil War.

In all the events of the war, from Bunker Hill to Yorktown, [Negroes] bore an honorable part. The history of the doings of the armies is their history, as in everything they took part and did their share. Their total enlistment was about 3,000 men—a very fair percentage for the population of that period. I might instance the killing of Major Pitcairn, at Bunker Hill, by Peter Salem, and of Major Montgomery, at Fort Griswold, by Jordan Freeman. The part they took in the capture of Major-General Prescott at Newport; their gallant defense of Colonel Greene, their beloved commander, when he was surprised and murdered at Croton River, May 13, 1781, when it was only after the last of his faithful guards had been shot and cut down that he was reached; or the battle of Rhode Island, when a battalion of 400 Negroes withstood three separate and distinct charges from 1,500 Hessians under Count Donop. . . . —adapted from *Masterpieces of Negro Eloquence*, edited by Alice Moore Dunbar

e. Colonial Strength —by G.A. Henty

NOTE: G.A. Henty was a **prolific** nineteenth-century English novelist who specialized in adventure tales for boys. The following paragraph is adapted from *True to the Old Flag: A Tale of the American War of Independence*, one of his many books that are now available to us in reprint.

In England neither the spirit nor the strength of the colonists was understood. Men could not bring themselves to believe that these [colonists] would fight rather than submit, still less that if they did fight it would be successfully. They ignored the fact that the population of the States was one-fourth as large as that of England; that by far the greater proportion of that population were men trained, either in border warfare or in the chase, to the use of the rifle; that the enormous extent of country offered almost **insuperable** obstacles to the most able army composed of regular troops, and that the vast forests and thinly populated country were all in favor of a population fighting as **guerrillas** against trained troops.

f. Colonial Strength —by Patrick Henry

NOTE: The following excerpt is adapted from Patrick Henry’s famous “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech. Along with Samuel Adams, Henry was vital to stirring up the colonials to fight against England.



They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so **formidable** an **adversary** [as England]. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally **disarmed**, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by **irresolution** and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying **supinely** on our backs and hugging the **delusive phantom** of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave.

2. Based on the supplied information, change each statement of fact into a thesis statement that reflects either an American or a British point of view. Keep in mind that a thesis statement puts forth an idea that can be argued at greater length, while a statement of fact cannot be argued.

Example:

Statement of fact: The Boston Tea Party of 1773 destroyed forty-five tons of tea.

American point of view: John Adams saw the Boston Tea Party as a “most magnificent” act of defiance. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting an American point of view.)

American thesis: The Boston Tea Party of 1773 was a most magnificent act of defiance.

British point of view: British merchants saw the Boston Tea Party as a terrible insult to royal authority. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting a British point of view.)

British thesis: The Boston Tea Party of 1773 was a terrible insult to royal authority.

- a. **Statement of fact:** As leader of the Sons of Liberty, Samuel Adams organized the Boston Tea Party.

American point of view: Thomas Jefferson viewed Samuel Adams as the father of the American Revolution. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting an American point of view.)

American thesis: As leader of the Sons of Liberty, Samuel Adams was

the father of the American Revolution

British point of view: General Thomas Gage ordered his soldiers to arrest Samuel Adams as a rebel and a traitor. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting a British point of view.)

British thesis: As leader of the Sons of Liberty, Samuel Adams was

a rebel and a traitor

b. Statement of fact: The Stamp Act of 1765 was enacted by Parliament to pay for its army in America.

The Stamp Act was a tax that the British parliament imposed on the American colonies in March of 1765. Colonists had to pay a tax on paper items, such as newspapers, playing cards, and legal documents.

American point of view: Americans saw the Stamp Act as unlawful taxation without representation. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting an American point of view.)

American thesis: The Stamp Act of 1765 was

unlawful taxation without representation

British point of view: The British saw the Stamp Act as a proper way to pay for the protection and defense of the American colonies. (Use this information to write a thesis reflecting a British point of view.)

British thesis: The Stamp Act of 1765 was

a proper way to pay for the protection and defense of the American colonies

Writing Time—

- SENTENCE PLAY**—The following sentences are adapted from the journals of Lewis and Clark, who led the first expedition westward through America, starting in May of 1804. The sentences are written as run-ons. Run-ons are two or more complete sentences that are not separated properly by a period or connected properly with a conjunction. Correct the sentences by adding punctuation between sentences or adding conjunctions such as “and”

or “but.” Write your corrected sentences in the space provided. You may need to make more than one change.

Example: I saw elk, deer, and antelopes, and a great deal of old signs of buffalo their roads went in every direction the Indian woman informs me that a few years ago buffalo were very plentiful in those plains.

Change to: I saw elk, deer, and antelopes, and a great deal of old signs of buffalo, and their roads went in every direction. The Indian woman informs me that a few years ago buffalo were very plentiful in those plains.

- a. We saddled our horses and set out I took leave of my worthy friend and companion Capt. Clark and the party that accompanied him I could not avoid feeling much concern on this occasion, although I hoped this separation was only momentary.

Sample answer: We saddled our horses and set out. I took leave of my worthy friend and companion Capt. Clark and the party that accompanied him. I could not avoid feeling much concern on this occasion, although I hoped this separation was only momentary.

- b. I sent out the hunters, who soon returned with three very fine deer of which I gave the Indians half these people now informed me that the road which they showed me at no great distance from our camp would lead us up the east branch of Clark’s river.

Sample answer: I sent out the hunters, who soon returned with three very fine deer of which I gave the Indians half. These people now informed me that the road which they showed me at no great distance from our camp would lead us up the east branch of Clark’s river.

- c. There was an abundance of excellent grass for our horses the evening was fine, the air pleasant and no mosquitoes a few miles before we encamped I killed a squirrel.

Sample answer: There was an abundance of excellent grass for our horses, and the evening was fine, the air pleasant and no mosquitoes. A few miles before we encamped I killed a squirrel.

- d. This morning at daylight the Indians got up and crowded around the fire Joseph Fields had carelessly laid his gun down behind him near where his brother was sleeping, one of the Indians slipped behind him and took his gun.



Sample answer: This morning at daylight the Indians got up and crowded around the fire. Joseph Fields had carelessly laid his gun down behind him near where his brother was sleeping, and one of the Indians slipped behind him and took his gun.

- e. The snow appears to be lying in considerable masses on the mountain from which we descended on the 4th of September I observe great numbers of the whistling squirrel these squirrels burrow their holes on each side of the glades through which we passed.

Sample answer: The snow appears to be lying in considerable masses on the mountain from which we descended on the 4th of September. I observe great numbers of the whistling squirrel. These squirrels burrow their holes on each side of the glades through which we passed.

2. **COPIOUSNESS**—In the last lesson, you practiced using synonyms to amplify your writing. Synonyms are words that have the same or similar meanings. On the other hand, **antonyms** are words that are opposites. In order to write a contrary, you must be able to use words that oppose one another. Antonyms can also help you to compare and contrast ideas and to argue against a poor thesis. By thinking in terms of synonyms and antonyms, you will be adding flexibility to your writing muscles.

The following sentences also are adapted from the journals of Lewis and Clark. In this exercise, replace the underlined phrases or words with an opposing idea and rewrite the sentences in the space provided.

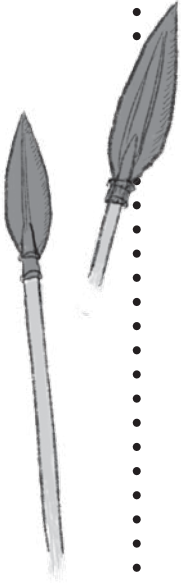
Example: I had all our baggage put on board of the two small canoes which when lashed together is very sturdy.

Change to: I had all our baggage put on board of the two huge canoes which when lashed together is very weak.

- a. I returned to camp a little after sunset, having killed one deer. Finding myself tired, I rested.

Sample answer: I returned to camp a little after sunrise, having killed one deer. Finding myself fresh, I got busy.





- b. As I was landing this evening, I saw a black bear, the largest I ever saw, eating a dead buffalo.

Sample answer: As I was landing this evening, I saw a black bear, the tiniest I ever saw, eating a live buffalo.

- c. The mosquitoes were so troublesome to the men last night that they slept little.

Sample answer: The mosquitoes were so well-behaved to the men last night that they slept much.

- d. I set out early this morning and had not proceeded far before Shannon discovered he had lost his tomahawk.

Sample answer: I set out late this evening and had not proceeded far before Shannon discovered he had found his tomahawk.

- e. The wind blew so hard from the northwest that we could not proceed.

Sample answer: The wind blew so softly from the southeast that we could proceed.

3. THE THESIS STATEMENT—

- a. The following paragraphs lack a thesis statement. (Remember, a thesis is a statement of a main idea that can be argued for or against.) Write a thesis at the beginning of each paragraph.

1) Sample thesis: No nation treats her colonies as badly as Britain treats America.

Britain is the parent country, say some. Then the more shame for her conduct. Even brutes do not devour their young nor do savages make war upon their families. The phrase parent or mother country have been adopted by the king and his **parasites**, with a low design of gaining an unfair **bias** on the weakness of our minds. Europe, and not England, is the parent country of America. This new world has been the **asylum** for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty from every Part of Europe. —paraphrased from *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine

- 2) Sample thesis: Ordering the colonists to help British troops is no better than taxing them through the Stamp Act.

—paraphrased from *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* by John Dickinson

If the British Parliament has legal authority to order us to help their troops, they have the same right to order us to supply those troops with arms, clothes, and every necessary, and to force us to obey; in short, to lay any burdens they please upon us. Isn't this just like taxing us? How is this any better than the Stamp Act?

- 3) Sample thesis: Taxing people without representation leads to the destruction of every human right.

No man should take my property from me, without my consent: If he does, he takes away my liberty, and makes me a slave. No law of society can make this just—The very act of taxing those who are not represented appears to me to be taking away one of their most essential rights, as freemen; and if continued, seems to be getting rid of every civil right. Are civil rights worth anything, after a man's property can be taken from him anytime, without his consent?

—paraphrased from *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* by James Otis

- b. One of the ways you can be sure you are writing a thesis statement is to ask yourself a speculative question. A **speculative question** has more than one answer, and these answers are open to opinion and debate. On the other hand, a **factual question** has only one answer and is based on fact; unless the facts change, it is not really open to opinion and debate.

For example, a factual question asks, "What is the longest river in America?" The factual answer is, "The Mississippi is the longest river in America." A speculative question asks, "What is the most beautiful river in America?" This question has more than one answer, and these answers are open to opinion and debate. The thesis statement that follows might be, "The Ausable River is the most beautiful river in America." You can debate for or against the opinion that the Ausable River is the most beautiful river in America. You cannot debate that the Mississippi is the longest river in America. **E**

EYou will find this note in the TE pages for this chapter.

Circle any of the following questions that are speculative questions. Do not circle the factual questions. If the question is speculative, write a thesis statement that could answer the question.

Example: What is the average lifespan of a hummingbird? (do not circle; factual question)

What is the prettiest color?

Purple is the prettiest color.

a. What is 72 times 123?

b. What are some qualities that a good brother needs to have?

Sample thesis: A good brother should be kind, protective, and tender.

c. Which is tastier: strawberry or chocolate ice cream?

Sample thesis: Strawberry ice cream is tastier than chocolate ice cream.

d. Who was the second president of the United States?

e. Does the sun revolve around the earth?

f. Who was the best president in American history?

Sample thesis: George Washington was the best president in American history.

4. THE CONTRARY—**F**

The contrary is also known as the antithesis. However, we have used the word “contrary” here to avoid confusion with the term “thesis.”

A kind law should punish a tyrant severely, whereas it would be cruel to set him free.

The final sentence of Aphthonius’s introduction uses a special rhetorical device known as a **contrary**. It is a sentence that considers two opposing ideas, positive and negative, often



• approving of the positive and disapproving the negative. “A kind law should punish a tyrant severely”—this is the positive idea, and the author clearly agrees with it. “It would be cruel to set him free”—this is the negative idea; the author disapproves of setting a tyrant free. In this quote, kindness is contrasted with cruelty. Punishment is contrasted with setting free.

• Do you already see how using antonyms might come in handy in your writing of contraries? You need to know, for instance, that kindness is the opposite of cruelty.

A rhetorical device (also known as a rhetorical figure) uses words in clever ways to be more persuasive. There are many types of rhetorical devices, such as two you’ve learned about in previous books: simile and hyperbole.

• The following are some other examples of the contrary:

• If staying up late causes poor performance in school, doing well requires a good night’s sleep.

• What are the two opposing ideas in this sentence? A good night’s sleep, the positive idea, opposes staying up late, the negative idea. Similarly, doing well opposes poor performance. How about this one?

• Contentment leads to peace, whereas envy leads to conflict.

• What are the opposing ideas? Write your answer in the space provided.

— Sample answer: Contentment, the positive idea, opposes envy, the negative idea. Similarly, peace opposes conflict.

• The proverbs of Solomon are full of contraries:

- Lazy hands make a man poor, but **diligent** hands bring wealth. (Proverbs 10:4)
- A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret. (Proverbs 11:13)
- Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid. (Proverbs 12:1)

• Not all contraries show approval or disapproval, however. The following are some examples of more neutral contraries. Notice how opposites are used in all of these famous quotes.

- That’s one small step for a man, a giant leap for mankind. —Neil Armstrong
 - Speech is silver, and silence is gold.
 - It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom; it was the age of foolishness. —Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*
- a. Now it’s your turn. Circle any of the following statements that are contraries. Remember that a contrary considers two opposing ideas. Look for opposites!
- 1) Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits. —Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

- 2) By gnawing through a dike, even a rat may drown a nation. —Edmund Burke
- 3) We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools. —Martin Luther King Jr.
- 4) The sun shines on the dunghill and is not corrupted. —John Lyly
- 5) Love sought is good, but given unsought is better. —William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*
- 6) King David loved those who hated him and hated those who loved him. —observed by Joab in 2 Samuel 19:6
- 7) Whoever is wise seeks the counsel of others, whereas the fool takes only his own counsel.

b. Now write your own contraries using the following writing prompts.

- 1) Prompt: If pride leads to mistakes, humility is the path of virtue.

If war brings sorrow, peace brings joy

- 2) Prompt: If bread is the food of the poor, cake is the food of the rich.

If yellow is the color of happiness, black is the color of despair

- 3) Prompt: A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. (Proverbs 15:1)

Cleanliness is next to godliness, but dirtiness is devilish

- 4) Prompt: Books add fire to the imagination, whereas video games are like cold water that **quenches** the mind.

Eating broccoli is always healthy, whereas eating ice cream can be bad for you

- 5) Prompt: Exercise is healthy, whereas always sitting around is harmful.

Going bowling is fun, whereas reading the phone book is boring

6) Prompt: Thunderstorms frighten me, but a gentle rain soothes my soul.

Failing a test frustrates me, but getting an A+ encourages me

5. **SHORT ARGUMENT**—Joseph Warren, a colonial doctor during the American Revolution, said, “We determine to die or be free.” Look at the image of a flag from the time of the revolution. It is called the Gadsden flag and was created in 1775. What do you think the image on the flag is meant to represent?
- Your teacher may split you up into partnerships of two students. Examine the flag closely for about a minute, silently noting any details.
 - Hide the image and describe it with as many details as you can remember. Your partner may help you fill in anything you miss.
 - Discuss with your class what the illustrator is trying to say about the conflict between Britain and America. First describe the image and then think about these questions: Why is a snake being used to symbolize the Americans? What are some qualities that a rattlesnake might share with the revolutionaries? Use details such as the snake’s sharp teeth and upright posture to make your case.
 - Now use your observation of this flag to write a paragraph supporting the argument that the Americans will not be easily defeated. First describe the image in writing, and then support the argument with evidence from the image of the flag.

The image on this flag designed by Christopher Gadsden demonstrates that the American colonists were not going to be easily defeated.



▲ Gadsden flag designed by Christopher Gadsden

Sample paragraph: The image on this flag designed by Christopher Gadsden demonstrates that the American colonists were not going to be easily defeated. The rattlesnake represents the colonists. It symbolizes the fierceness and just anger of the American colonists against the “tyrant king” of Great Britain. Just as the snake’s mouth is open, baring his fangs, the colonists have opened their mouths to protest against tyranny and will not be silent. The snake looks dangerous and ready to attack, and it is coiled into a ready-to-strike position. Like this snake, the colonists will not cringe in the face of their enemies. The snake is also frightening, and his rattle is a warning that his enemies should watch their step. Anyone who steps on this rattlesnake will not be able to crush it; they will only get hurt. In the same way, anyone who confronts the colonists will find them difficult to defeat.



Speak It—For and Against: A Warm-Up Game^G

Your teacher will write some thesis statements on index cards—one statement per card. She will then hand each student a card, but you may not look at your card until it is your turn. When it is your turn, you will have thirty seconds to think and two minutes to speak. When speaking, you should argue in favor of the statement for the first minute and against the statement for the second minute.

For example, if your card says, “Ice cream is the best dessert,” for the first minute you might say: “Ice cream is best because it is cold and soft and melts in your mouth. On a hot day, nothing cools you down like ice cream. You might be sticky and sweaty and, in a flash, you feel like a polar bear on an iceberg. You might be hot and grumpy and suddenly you feel cool and happy.” And so on. Then, for the second minute, you might say, “Ice cream is the worst dessert because it melts and stains clothing and falls off of ice-cream cones. It is also much more expensive than candy.” And so on.

The following are some sample thesis ideas:

- The best season is winter.
- Parents should allow young people to play video games.
- Money will not make people happy.
- It is better to be loved than to be famous.
- Dogs are superior pets to cats.
- We will never see the end of war.
- All people should know how to farm.
- Football is a better sport than soccer.

^G Please note that you may want to prepare index cards as noted before doing this exercise in class.

Revise It—

1. **PROOFREADING**—The following paragraph contains a number of errors, including letters that should be capitalized (2), repeated words that should be deleted (2), words that are missing (2), a lack of proper punctuation (2), and misspellings (2). Use the following proofreader’s marks to mark up the text:



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.



I was in the act of firing on the elk a second time when a ball struck ~~struck~~ my left thigh

about an inch below my hip joint. Missing the bone, it passed through the left thigh ^{and} cut the

^{SP.} thickness of the bulet across the hind part of the right thigh; the stroke was very sever ^{SP.}

I instantly supposed that Cruzatte had shot me in mistake for an elk, as I was dressed in

brown leather and he cannot see very well; under this impression I called out him, “You have

shot me,” and looked towards the place from whence the ball had come ^{to} seeing nothing I

called Cruzatte several times as loud as I could but received no answer; I was now persuaded

that it was an Indian that had shot me as the report of the gun did not appear to be more than forty paces from me and Cruzatte appeared to be out of hearing of me. In this situation, not knowing how many Indians there might be concealed in the bushes, I thought best to ~~to~~ make good my retreat. I told my friends that I was wounded but I hoped not mortally, and directed them to follow me that I would return and give them battle and relieve Cruzatte if possible, whom i feared had fallen into their hands

—adapted from the journal of William Clarke

2. **SENTENCE PADDING**—Sometimes writers purposely add empty sentences to their work to make a paragraph longer. These sentences serve no useful purpose; they just take up space or repeat ideas. Trust me, as a teacher I instantly recognize sentence padding, and I do not appreciate it! In the following exercises, ask yourself if a sentence adds any useful information. If it does not, cross it out.

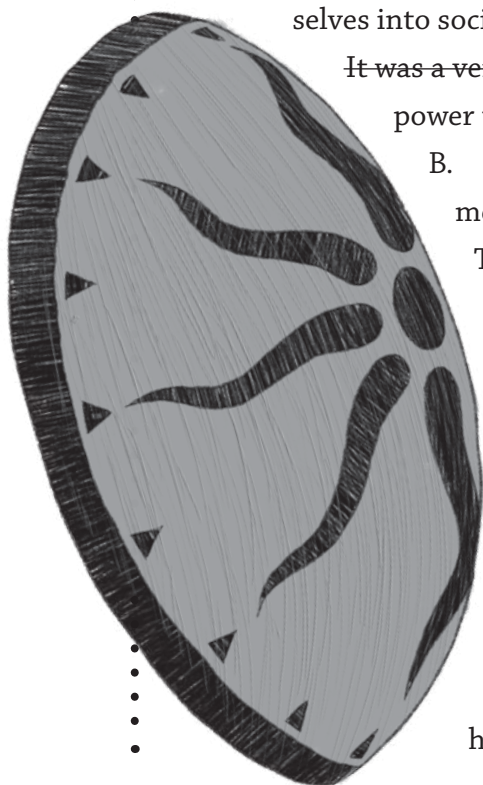
Example: A tyrant is a ruler who takes power unlawfully and uses power unjustly. ~~That's the definition of a tyrant.~~ (Cross out one sentence.)

A. As soon as the trouble between England and America broke out, the men formed themselves into societies and called themselves “Sons of Liberty.” ~~That was a good name.~~

~~It was a very good name.~~ They pledged themselves to do everything in their power to drive back the English rule. (Cross out two sentences.)

B. The women, too, not wishing to appear to be one step behind the men, formed themselves into societies—“The Daughters of Liberty.” They pledged not to buy a dress, or a ribbon, or a glove, or any article whatever that came from England. They formed spinning societies to make their own yarn and linen, and they wove the cloth for their own dresses and for the clothes of their fathers and brothers, and husbands and sons. ~~Now that is what I wanted to write about. I wanted to write about the women, and I did.~~ (Cross out two sentences.)

C. ~~Here is what happened with the Stamp Act.~~ One of the first things England did to raise money from the colonists was to issue the Stamp Act. The king sent over a large amount of paper on which had been put a certain stamp. The king ordered the colonists to use





this paper for all their government writing. ~~How do you think the colonists reacted?~~
~~Well, I'm about to tell you.~~ The colonists all over the country were furious when this stamped paper was sent to them. The people of Boston declared they wouldn't buy one sheet of it. To show their contempt for the whole matter, they made a straw figure of the English officer who had the paper to sell, dressed it in some old clothes of his, and hung it on a big tree on Boston Common. (Cross out three sentences.)



Lesson 2: Thesis and Contrary

The Story of Pisistratus, Tyrant of Athens

- ▶ Read these statements a second time. Can you put Aphthonius's two arguments into your own words?

These two arguments support and strengthen the thesis of the essay. Aphthonius's first paragraph then wraps up with this statement, called a contrary:

A kind law should punish a tyrant severely, whereas it would be cruel to set him free.

Sample answer: Punishment prevents tyrants from becoming more dangerous. Or, being merciful to a tyrant only makes his behavior worse.

Tyrants will harm the very people who try to help them.

- ▶ It seems a little strange to argue that a severe punishment could be kind. In what way might this statement be true? Why do you think it would be cruel to set a tyrant free?

Sample answer: A law that punishes a tyrant is kind because tyranny would have harmful effects on everyone. It is kind to protect innocent people from the harm a tyrant would do. It would be cruel to set a tyrant free because then he would terrorize innocent people. The cruelty would be toward the people the tyrant would harm.

Tell It Back—

2. "But Pisistratus was deceiving the people, for he had given himself these wounds that he might gain the sympathy of the people."

4. Sample Outline:

- I. Pisistratus was a Greek soldier from Athens who helped to defeat Megara, a rival town.
 - A. Pisistratus was seen as a hero by the people.
 - B. Pisistratus was hungry for power.
- II. Athens divided into three factions around 560 BC.
 - A. Hill folk were poor shepherds and herdsmen.
 - B. Plains folk were farmers and wealthy landowners.
 - C. Coastal folk were fishermen and merchants.
- III. Pisistratus decided to use this division to his advantage.
 - A. He knew he could gain power if he became a champion of the hill folk.
 - B. Solon, the lawgiver, warned the people, but they would not listen.
- IV. Pisistratus deceived the people.
 - A. He appeared in the town square, bloody from knife wounds.

1. He accused the plains folk of having attacked him while he defended the hill folk.
 2. He had wounded himself to fool the people.
- B. He asked for a bodyguard to protect him, and the people granted him fifty men.
- V. Pisistratus grew in power and took over Athens.
- A. He seized the Acropolis with his bodyguard.
 - B. He attacked his enemies.
 - C. Leaders of the plains and coast were forced to flee.
 - D. He illustrated the saying, “If tyranny and oppression come to the land, it will be in the guise of fighting an enemy.”

Talk About It—

1. Both Hitler and Pisistratus started out by using a group of bodyguards, supposedly for protection. These bodyguards were used to scare and harass anyone who was opposed to them. The group of bodyguards expanded until the tyrants were able to control the people.
2. Many of the posters show the tyrants smiling, as if they are happy men with pleasant personalities. In some posters the dictators are surrounded by adoring children as if they are just like the fathers or uncles to the people. Children are used in the pictures to convince people that the men are kind and harmless, because it can be thought that anyone who loves children must be nice.
3. ❖ The first statement is a statement of fact because tyrants, by definition, seek to rule alone. This statement is not open for debate. The second statement is a thesis statement because it could be argued for or against. It may or may not be easy to prove that all tyrants were violent as children. However, you could search for examples and evidence to support this claim. Did they beat dogs with sticks? Did they pull the wings off of flies? Did they push and shove while playing games?

❖ The first statement is a statement of fact because “king of the tyrant lizards” is an accurate translation of *Tyrannosaurus rex* and is not open for debate. The second statement is a thesis statement, because someone could argue that other dinosaurs of the Cretaceous period were even fiercer.

❖ The first statement is the thesis statement, because it could be argued for or against. Note that different people could define the word “idiot” differently, and it would take considerable effort to prove that an entire people was idiotic. For that reason, this statement is a weak thesis. The second statement is a statement of fact because it is not arguable.
4. The thesis statement is open to debate. It proposes that “any person who tries to put an end to laws should be punished,” which could be argued. Believe it or not, many tyrants have supporters. These are people who hope to gain something such as money or power from having a tyrant take over a government. Like the friends of a bully, these people would argue that a tyrant should not be punished. Other people might be afraid of the tyrant and argue that the tyrant should be left alone in order to protect themselves. On the other hand, the

statement of fact can't really be argued. It's true that laws—good laws, at least—help people live together in harmony. It's also true that some people try to overthrow laws to take over a city or a nation.

Memoria Instructions—

1. Oppression: a cruel or unjust use of power
Guise: false appearance

This quote means that tyrants often use an enemy as an excuse to take power. Pisistratus pretended to need a bodyguard to protect him from enemies and so was able to take power over the city of Athens.

Writing Time—

3. THE THESIS STATEMENT

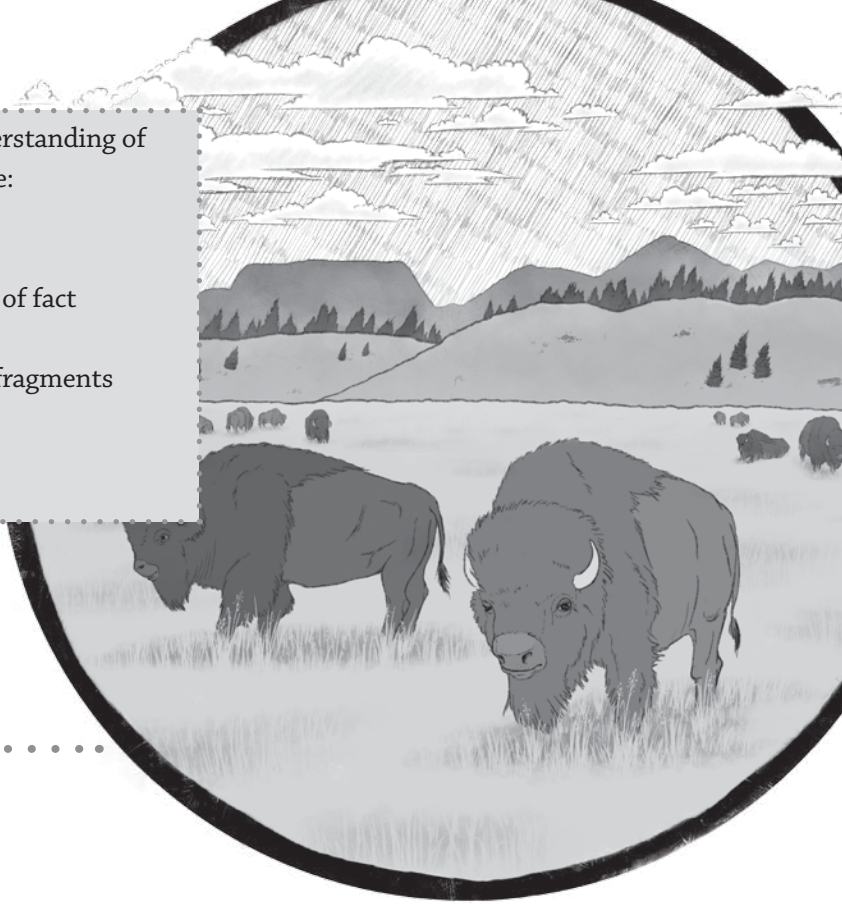
■ The following are some other examples of factual versus speculative questions:

A factual question asks, “In the book *Anne of Green Gables*, who was Anne Shirley’s best friend?” Everyone who has read the book knows that Diana Barry is Anne’s “bosom friend.” A speculative question asks, “In the book *Anne of Green Gables*, why was Diana Barry Anne’s best friend?”

A factual question asks, “What are the health benefits of drinking tea?” A speculative question asks, “What beverage is most beneficial to a person’s health?”

The purpose of this lesson is to expand students' understanding of thesis statements. In this lesson, students will practice:

- critical thinking
- reflection, memorization, and recitation
- distinguishing thesis statements from statements of fact
- writing thesis statements
- identifying and fixing both run-ons and sentence fragments
- writing paradoxes for rhetorical effect
- public speaking and elocution
- proofreading and revision



Lesson 3

Getting Better Acquainted with Thesis Statements

You learned in the last lesson that a thesis statement is the main idea or theme of an essay. It is the main argument of a persuasive paper. Thesis statements boldly take a stand on an issue and are open to debate.

Say you want to argue that punishment in colonial America was too severe. Ducking stools were used to dip scolding women into ponds. **Slanderers**, cheats, thieves, drunks, and **brawlers** were bound by their feet in stocks or by their necks in **pillories**. Whipping posts and branding irons were used for more serious crimes. If you wanted to argue that punishments such as these were too severe, would the following sentence make a good thesis statement?

Ducking stools were used as a punishment in colonial America.

Indeed, no! This is a statement of fact. It is not debatable that ducking stools were used as a punishment in colonial America. A thesis needs to be arguable or debatable. It needs to be a statement of opinion. Here's a better attempt:

The punishments of colonial America were cruel and unusual.

Even though most people today would agree with you that ducking stools, pillories, and whipping posts are cruel and unusual, at least with this sentence you have something to argue. Why are they cruel? Why are they unusual?

Or, you *could* also be a bit of a contrarian. (That means you like to argue against popular opinion.) Maybe you want to write a paper in favor of stocks and pillories. Look at an example of an intelligent contrary opinion:

The punishments of colonial America were more effective than modern punishments at discouraging crime.

This thesis may be quite a handful to prove, but it would make for an extremely interesting paper.

So, as you've seen, thesis statements are not statements of fact. They are statements of opinion, which means they are debatable. If you understand the difference between fact and opinion, you're halfway there. But there are some more qualities of a good thesis statement that you should know as well: **A**

You will find this note in the TE pages for this chapter.

Mind you, it isn't always easy to tell the difference between a fact and an opinion. Some facts sound like opinions ("Chocolate is a health food"), and some opinions sound like facts ("Beethoven was the most significant musician of all time"). Also, some opinions may be more true than others. For example, there is more evidence to support the opinion "People will one day live on the moon" than the opinion "People will one day live on the sun." Don't feel that you've somehow failed if you can't always tell facts and opinions apart perfectly.

The best thesis statements are not too broad and are not too vague. What does that mean? Say you want to discuss transportation during the westward expansion of the United States. The following is an example of a thesis statement that's too broad:

Pioneer transportation was terrible.

This thesis is so broad that you are going to have to discuss covered wagons, keelboats, steamboats, schooner ships, canal barges, stagecoaches, locomotives, the pony express, and human legs to show how each form of transportation was terrible. Also, to what are you comparing pioneer transportation when you make your claim that it was terrible? Are you contrasting it with modern transportation? A better thesis would be:

Locomotives offered many advantages over covered wagons.

This is a limited thesis that is easily supportable. You are limiting your subject to a comparison between covered wagons and locomotives, which is much easier to discuss than every possible mode of transportation. You could support this statement by telling your reader about how much faster locomotives were than covered wagons, or how it was easier to avoid bandits on a locomotive.

Now look at an example of a thesis statement that's too vague:

Benjamin West was a really good painter.

Do you see how this thesis doesn't really say anything specific? What does it mean to be a "really good painter"? Does it mean Benjamin West didn't spill yellow paint on his dog's head? Or perhaps it means he was a master of painting bedroom walls. Or maybe it means he could paint tiny murals on his toenails.

A better thesis would be:

Benjamin West proved to Europe that an American painter could create neoclassical masterpieces every bit as good as those of Joshua Reynolds.

This thesis tells the audience specifically what the author intends to prove. She intends to compare the work of two painters and show that the American was as skillful as the European. By being specific instead of vague, the author helps the audience understand exactly what argument they are considering. A vague thesis is next to impossible to prove, because it is not clear what needs to be proved, and therefore fails to convince anyone. A broad or vague thesis is *not* persuasive.

So a good thesis makes an argument and is clear and specific. It can also be proven with evidence. **Evidence** consists of facts and ideas that support the truth or validity of an argument. Take a look at the following thesis. Can evidence be found to support it?

People will all have purple skin by the year 2025.

This thesis certainly makes an argument, and it makes a clear and specific claim. However, it is not a good thesis because there is no evidence to support it. Now take a look at a thesis that can be supported with evidence:

Jet packs and flying cars will never replace travel on roads.

Although this thesis is open to debate, you could make a case that roads will still be necessary, even when people are flying in cars. After all, flying cars will need runways to land on, and people will probably not take flight just to visit a neighbor down the street. The idea that flying cars will never replace travel on roads is a thesis that can be supported with evidence.

Now that you know a few more characteristics of a good thesis—it should be clear, specific, and supportable by evidence—it's time for you to get some more

practice with identifying good thesis statements and writing your own.



Tell It Back—

TE What is the definition of a thesis statement? What characteristics make a good thesis?

Talk About It—

1. Look at the following three pairs of statements. For each pair, explain why one would make a stronger thesis statement than the other. Remember that a thesis is a statement that can be argued for or against.

TE a. The only thing necessary for the **triumph** of evil is for good men to do nothing.

—Edmund Burke

I hope that real love and truth are stronger in the end than any evil or misfortune.

—Charles Dickens

TE b. Just walk beside me and be my friend. —Albert Camus

A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out. —Walter Winchell

TE c. Acrylic paints are better than oil paints because they dry faster and don't smell bad.

Oil paints are slow-drying paints that often use linseed oil as a base.

2. Read the following passage and then choose the thesis statement that best fits the evidence in the passage. Remember that a good thesis statement makes an argument that can be supported by evidence.

The Whiskey Rebellion

In 1791, the United States government under George Washington decided to tax all alcoholic beverages to help pay for the American Revolution. People called it the “whiskey tax” because whiskey was the most popular alcoholic drink at the time. The farmers whose crops were used to make whiskey became very angry with the tax. They felt that they were unfairly targeted by the government—they had to pay 18 cents for every gallon of whiskey they sold. Very quickly the farmers formed mobs that tarred and feathered tax collectors. They burned the homes and barns of tax collectors. They even started a small army in Pennsylvania to fight United States troops. Eventually Washington called for soldiers to stop the protesting farmers, and 150 protesters were arrested. Because it caused so much anger and **strife** for the new nation, the tax was stopped in 1801.

Which of the following thesis statements could be argued based on the text?

TE a. The early United States government was wrong to collect taxes.

b. The whiskey tax caused more trouble than it was worth in the early days of the United States.



Memoria—

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing. —Edmund Burke

TE

1. Discuss the meaning of this quotation. Define any words you may not know. Then think about *The Story of Pisistratus, Tyrant of Athens* that you read in lesson 2. What connection does this quote have to that story?
2. Memorize the quotation and be prepared to recite it during your next class. Keep in mind that memory work is so important to rhetoric that it is one of the five canons or laws of rhetoric.
3. Write the quotation in your commonplace book, along with any thoughts you have about it.

Go Deeper—

1. After each statement, circle the phrase that best describes the sentence. Remember that a thesis is the main idea or theme of an essay, and it can be debated.
 - a. My thesis is going to talk about poverty.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - b. Honey bees are insects that produce honey.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - c. Football is the greatest American game.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - d. If not for the help of Native Americans, the Plymouth Colony would have disappeared like the Roanoke Colony.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - e. I love the book *Treasure Island*.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - f. Despite its unhealthy reputation, tobacco was an important crop in Virginia's history.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
 - g. The real cause of the American Revolution was the French and Indian War and the buildup of British troops on American soil.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| not a thesis (statement of fact) | broad or vague thesis | good thesis |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|

h. Of all northeastern native tribes, the Mohawks were the best fighters.

not a thesis (statement of fact)

broad or vague thesis

good thesis

i. All hornets' nests should be destroyed.

not a thesis (statement of fact)

broad or vague thesis

good thesis

j. Digging canals was more dangerous to immigrant workers than laying railroad tracks.

not a thesis (statement of fact)

broad or vague thesis

good thesis

2. **THESIS WRITING**—Rewrite the statement of fact after each of the following readings to make it a thesis statement. Or, create your own thesis statement based on the reading. Remember that a thesis must take a stand and be clear and specific.

a. Sometimes a harpooned whale will attack the boat and demolish it with one stroke of her tail. In an instant the fragile vessel is splinters and the whalers are immersed in the sea. . . .

Sometimes a whale will swim away as if untouched, and draw the cord with such swiftness that it will set the edge of the boat on fire by the friction. Other times it may happen that she is not dangerously wounded, though she carries the harpoon fast in her body. . . . She then soon reaches the length of the cord, and carries the boat along with amazing speed. . . . The harpooner, with the ax in his hands, stands ready. If the boat is greatly pulled down and starts to take on too much water, he must bring the ax down and cut the cord.

Statement of fact: Whales can be very dangerous animals.

Thesis statement: _____

Sample answers:

- Whaling was the most daring job on the sea.
- Whaling was a foolish enterprise that put many sailors at risk of death.
- Whales fought bravely against whalers in uneven combat.
- Old-fashioned whaling shares much in common with bullfighting.



—adapted from *Letters from an American Farmer* by Hector St. John Crèvecoeur

b. In the first and second years, this old man, with some companions, killed from six to seven hundred of the noble bison merely for the sake of their skins, which to them were worth only two shillings¹ each; and after this “work of death” they were obliged to leave the place till the following season. . . . In the two following years, the same per-

1. shilling: a British coin once worth twelve pennies (or pence), no longer in circulation

sons killed great numbers out of the first **droves** that arrived, skinned them, and left their bodies exposed to the sun and air; but they soon had reason to repent of this, for the remaining droves, as they came up in **succession**, stopped, gazed on the mangled and **putrid** bodies, sorrowfully moaned or furiously **lowed** aloud, and returned instantly to the wilderness in an unusual run. . . . Nor did any of them ever return to the neighborhood. . . . The **carnage** of beasts was everywhere the same. I met with a man who had killed two thousand buffaloes with his own hand. . . . In consequence of such slaughter, not one buffalo is at this time to be found east of the Mississippi.

—adapted from
*The Extermination
of the American
Bison* by William
T. Hornaday
(1889)

Statement of fact: Buffaloes were killed in large numbers by hunters.

Thesis statement: _____
_____.

TE

- c. The colonists turned eagerly to tobacco culture. Rolfe’s little crop had been pronounced in England to be of excellent quality. The news spread rapidly from settlement to settlement, bringing with it new hope and determination. Immediately tobacco absorbed the thoughts of all farmers, and every available patch of land was seized upon for its cultivation. The grassy areas within the forts were crowded with tobacco plants, while even the streets of Jamestown were used by the eager planters. In 1617 a ship set sail for England laden with 20,000 pounds of Virginia leaf, the first of the vast fleet of tobacco ships which for centuries were to pass through the capes of the Chesapeake bound for Europe. By 1627, the tobacco exports amounted to no less than half a million pounds.

The London Company, who wanted to be in control of the colonists’ business, was much disappointed at this turn of events. The colonists had found nothing but a little weed to make money from. This plant not only contributed nothing to the wealth of the kingdom, it was felt, but was positively **injurious** to those who indulged in its use. Surely, declared one writer, men “grow mad and crazed in the brain in that they would adventure to suck the smoke of a weed.”

—adapted from *The Planters of Colonial Virginia* by Thomas J. Wertenbaker

Statement of fact: The colonists’ obsession with tobacco disappointed The London Company.

Thesis statement: _____

Sample answers:

- The London Company was right to be disappointed with colonial tobacco farming because it made the colonists rich but contributed nothing to the wealth of the kingdom.
- Even though tobacco is unhealthy, tobacco crops were good for the fortune of America.
- The London Company should have punished tobacco growers because tobacco was injurious to peoples’ health.

- d. This is how the typical day happened for the king of France in his palace at Versailles: Before eight o’clock in the morning, princes, nobles, and officers of the court, each fresh



Writing Time—

1. **SENTENCE PLAY**—Remember that a fragment is a sentence that is incomplete, and a run-on sentence is a sentence that lacks proper punctuation and should really be divided into separate sentences, either with punctuation or a conjunction. On the lines beside each of the following sentences, identify which of the sentences are fragments and which are run-ons. Then rewrite them as complete sentences in the space provided.

Examples: fragment The waiting room was the gathering place of princes and nobles.

Corrected sentence: The waiting room was the gathering place of princes and nobles.

run-on The colonists turned eagerly to tobacco culture the news about Rolfe's little crop spread rapidly.

Corrected sentence: The colonists turned eagerly to tobacco culture. The news about Rolfe's little crop spread rapidly.

a. fragment The remaining herds stopped, moaned, and returned. Instantly to the wilderness.

Corrected sentence: Sample answer: The remaining herds stopped, moaned, and returned instantly to the wilderness.

b. run-on Sometimes a harpooned whale will attack the boat it will demolish the boat with one stroke of her tail.

Corrected sentence: Sample answer: Sometimes a harpooned whale will attack the boat. It will demolish the boat with one stroke of her tail.

c. fragment They were obliged to leave their cabin. Till the following season.

Corrected sentence: Sample answer: They were obliged to leave their cabin till the following season.

d. run-on The carnage of the beasts was everywhere alike I met with a man who had killed two thousand buffaloes.

Corrected sentence: Sample answer: The carnage of the beasts was everywhere alike. I met with a man who had killed two thousand buffaloes.

e. run-on A whale can set the edge of the boat on fire by the friction other times it may happen that she is not dangerously wounded.

Corrected sentence: Sample answer: A whale can set the edge of the boat on fire by the friction. Other times it may happen that she is not dangerously wounded.



2. **COPIOUSNESS**—Sometimes authors, poets, and orators use antonyms, or words that are opposites, in pairs to capture their audience’s attention. For example, if a speaker told you, “My love is so cold and hot, bitter and sweet,” you would certainly wake up and pay attention. Just what does he mean by using antonyms like that? Charles Dickens begins his novel *A Tale of Two Cities* by using antonyms: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” He put together two opposites (“best” and “worst”), and the sentence is now known as one of the most famous story beginnings of all time.

a. In the following exercises, fill in the blanks with opposites based on the examples given.

Example: Saying good-bye makes summer feel as if it’s winter.

Eating too much cake makes something good feel as if it’s bad.

1) I must be cruel to be kind.

I must be sad to be happier.

2) Christmas has a darkness brighter than the sun.

The Fourth of July has a loudness quieter than the dawn.

3) I am a deeply shallow person.

I am a seriously silly person.

4) My only love is sprung from my only hate.

My only laugh is sprung from my only cry.

Ice cream is so cold it feels hot.

The dog is so ugly he looks cute .

- b. In the following speech from *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet uses adjectives that seem opposite to their nouns. Underline any pairs of adjectives and nouns that seem to be opposites.

Beautiful tyrant! **Fiend** angelical!

Dove-feather'd raven! Wolfish lamb!

Despised substance of divinest show!

Just opposite to what thou justly seem'st,

A damned saint, an honorable villain!

B“Feather of lead” is a noun phrase with the modifier “of lead” following the noun. When doing this exercise, be sure to inform students that “of lead” serves the same descriptive function as the adjective in the adjective/noun pattern of the antonym combinations.

These combinations are also called oxymorons, which are figures of speech that juxtapose two seemingly contradictory ideas (e.g., living dead, deafening silence).

- c. Now look at another speech, this time by Romeo. Again, underline any pairs of adjectives and nouns that seem to be opposites.

O heavy lightness! Serious vanity!

Mis-shapen chaos of well-seeming forms,

BFeather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,

Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

CIf coming up with a thesis from scratch is difficult for your class, feel free to instead use the sample theses and discuss why one is stronger than the others.

- d. Create two short phrases using antonyms to grab the attention of your reader, just as Shakespeare did in the previous examples.

Example: What dirty cleanness!

1) Sample phrase: Such thick thinness! _____

2) Sample phrase: O crazy sanity! _____

3. **WRITING A THESIS FROM EVIDENCE**—Sometimes in order to create a thesis you have to be like a detective. A detective looks for clues at the scene of the crime and comes up with an idea about what happened based on the evidence. A writer looks for clues in a collection of facts and comes up with an idea of what to argue based on the evidence. Both a detective and a rhetorical writer are searching for the truth. In the space provided, write a thesis statement based on each of the following lists of evidence: **C**

Example: The Barbary Wars

- In the early nineteenth century, the United States fought several wars with North Africa. North African pirates roamed the high seas, plundering the United States' ships and taking captives.
- President Thomas Jefferson refused to pay any ransoms for US captives, and he sent a naval fleet across the sea to attack North African coastal pirate cities.

- The United States' military action, along with the aid of several European countries, was ultimately successful.

Thesis: The only way to stop North African piracy was to fight the pirates aggressively.

a. The Louisiana Purchase

- In 1803, the United States government purchased over 800,000 square miles of land from France.
- The United States paid the equivalent of over 11 million dollars for the land. This is less than 42 cents per acre in today's money.
- The land bought in the Louisiana Purchase became the states of Kansas, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, Arkansas, Iowa, and more.



Thesis: Sample thesis: The Louisiana Purchase was a wise investment because the land was cheap and later became many of the states that we know today.

b. Aaron Burr (1756-1836)

- Aaron Burr was vice president of the United States from 1801 to 1805. He served under Thomas Jefferson.
- In 1804, Burr fought a duel with the secretary of state, Alexander Hamilton. Though Hamilton never intended to fire at Burr, Burr fired at Hamilton and killed him.
- Burr was arrested in 1807 on charges of treason. He was accused of plotting to create his own country in the middle of North America. He was released, but his political career never recovered.

Thesis: Sample thesis: Aaron Burr was a traitor and a murderer who never should have been put into office.

c. "Federalist #10" by James Madison

- One of the best advantages of a strong central government is that it protects against small political parties called factions.
- Factions are dangerous because they can lead to tyranny. If one faction gets very powerful, it could try to control everyone else.

- Factions are a part of human nature, because everyone has a desire to be part of a group and to be competitive.

Thesis: Sample thesis: The United States should build up a strong central government to control factions.



Speak It—Eighteenth-Century Speech Festival

There's nothing more stirring than hearing fiery speeches from days gone by. The speeches in this section have lasted for many decades because of their powerful rhetoric and because they changed the course of history or changed individual lives.

Why not stage a speech festival for your school in which students memorize and deliver such well-loved speeches and poems? Be sure to allow plenty of time to practice, to make costumes, and to invite family and friends to hear the speeches.

D, E, F You will find these notes in the TE pages for this chapter.

The following selections are all from the late eighteenth century (1700s) and have been shortened somewhat to allow for easier memorization. One, two, or three students can deliver each speech or poem. Feel free to add other speeches to the list. See the elocution instructions at the back of this book for tips on how to make your delivery more effective.

Patrick Henry, "Liberty or Death"

NOTE: This is the famous speech delivered by Patrick Henry to the Virginia Convention of Delegates in March of 1775. Henry was a planter and a lawyer from Virginia. After America won her independence, he became governor of the new state of Virginia.

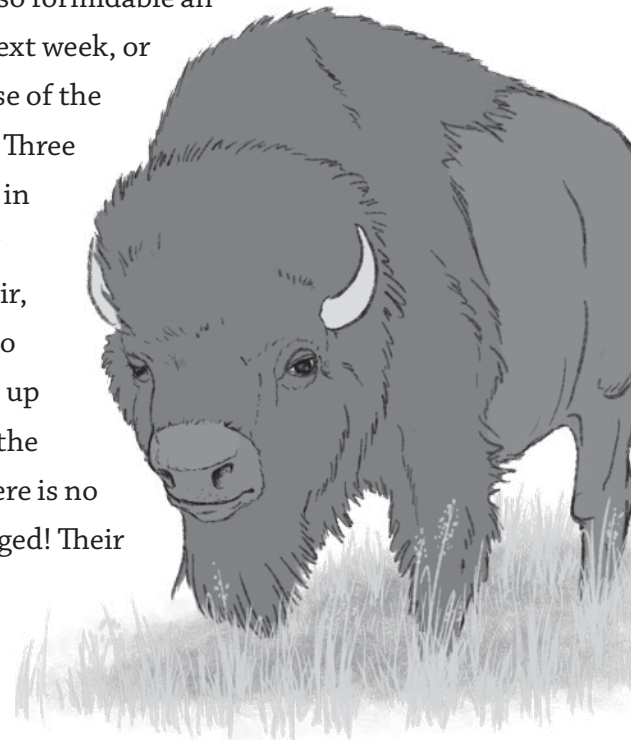
No man thinks more highly than I do of the patriotism, as well as abilities, of the very worthy gentlemen who have just addressed the House. But different men often see the same subject in different lights; and, therefore, I hope that it will not be thought disrespectful to those gentlemen, if, entertaining as I do, opinions of a character very opposite to theirs, I shall speak forth my **sentiments** freely and without reserve. This is no time for ceremony. Should I keep back my opinions at such a time, through fear of giving offence, I should consider myself as guilty of treason toward my country, and of an act of disloyalty toward the majesty of heaven, which I revere above all earthly-kings.

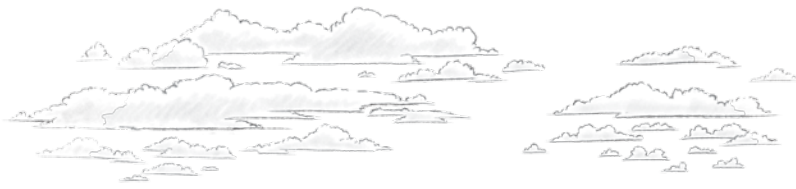
I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided; and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging of the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years, to justify those hopes with which gentlemen have been pleased to **solace** themselves and the

House? Is it that **insidious** smile with which our **petition** has been lately received? Trust it not, sir; it will prove a **snare** to your feet. Suffer not yourselves to be betrayed with a kiss. Ask yourselves how this gracious reception of our petition comports with these war-like preparations which cover our waters and darken our land. Are fleets and armies necessary to a work of love and **reconciliation**? Have we shown ourselves so unwilling to be reconciled, that force must be called in to win back our love? Let us not deceive ourselves, sir. These are the **implements** of war and **subjugation**; the last arguments to which kings resort. I ask gentlemen, sir, what means this **martial** array? If its purpose be not to force us to submission? Can gentlemen assign any other possible motives for it? And what have we to oppose to them? Shall we try argument? Sir, we have been trying that for the last ten years. Let us not, I **beseech** you, sir, deceive ourselves longer. Sir, we have done everything that could be done, to **avert** the storm which is now coming on. We have petitioned; we have **remonstrated**; we have **supplicated**: we have **prostrated** ourselves before the throne, and have implored its **interposition** to arrest the tyrannical hands of the ministry and parliament. Our petitions have been **slighted**; our remonstrances have produced additional violence and insult; our supplications have been disregarded; and we have been **spurned**, with contempt, from the foot of the throne. In vain, after these things, may we indulge the fond hope of peace and reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. If we wish to be free—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Sir, we are not weak, if we make a proper use of the means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who **presides** over the destinies of nations; and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. There is no retreat, but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is **inevitable**—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to **extenuate** the matter. Gentlemen may cry peace, peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring





to our ears the clash of resounding arms.

Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I

know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!

Samuel Adams, “Courage, My Countrymen”

NOTE: This selection is adapted from the speech given by Samuel Adams to the Philadelphia Convention in August of 1776. Adams was one of the early agitators for independence from Britain, and he was the leader of the Sons of Liberty.

We have explored the temple of royalty, and found that the idol we have bowed down to, has eyes which see not, ears that hear not our prayers, and a heart like the nether² **millstone**. We have this day restored the **Sovereign**, to whom alone men ought to be obedient. He reigns in heaven, and with a **propitious** eye beholds His subjects assuming that freedom of thought and dignity of self-direction which He bestowed on them. From the rising to the setting sun, may His kingdom come.

Courage, my countrymen! Our contest is not only whether we ourselves shall be free, but whether there shall be left to mankind an asylum on earth, for civil and religious liberty.

We are now on this continent, to the astonishment of the world, three millions of souls united in one common cause. We have large armies, well disciplined and appointed, with commanders inferior to none in military skill, and superior in activity and **zeal**. We are furnished with **arsenals** and stores beyond our most **sanguine** expectations, and foreign nations are waiting to crown our success by their alliances.

The same force and resistance which are **sufficient** to procure us our liberties, will secure us a glorious independence and support us in the dignity of free, **imperial** states. We can not suppose that our opposition has made a corrupt and **dissipated** nation more friendly to America, or created in them a greater respect for the rights of mankind. We can therefore expect a restoration and establishment of our privileges, and a **compensation** for the injuries we have received from their want of power, from their fears, and not from their virtues.

From the day on which an **accommodation** takes place between England and America, on any other terms than as independent states, I shall date the ruin of this country. To unite the Supremacy of Great Britain and the Liberty of America, is utterly impossible. So vast a continent and of such a distance from the seat of empire, will every day grow more unmanageable.

2. nether: beneath the surface

We have now no other alternative than independence, or the most **ignominious** and **galling** servitude. The legions of our enemies thicken on our plains; desolation and death mark their bloody career; whilst the mangled corpses of our countrymen seem to cry out to us as a voice from heaven: “Will you permit our **posterity** to groan under the galling chains of our murderers? Has our blood been expended³ in vain?” Remember that the men who wish to rule over you are they who, in pursuit of this plan of **despotism**, **annulled** the sacred contracts which had been made with your ancestors; conveyed into your cities a **mercenary** soldiery to compel you to submission by insult and murder—who called your patience, cowardice; your piety, hypocrisy.

Our Union is now complete; our Constitution composed, established, and approved. You are now the guardians of your own liberties. The hearts of your soldiers beat high with the spirit of freedom—they are animated with the justice of their cause, and while they grasp their swords, can look up to Heaven for assistance. Go on, then, in your generous **enterprise**, with gratitude to Heaven for past success, and confidence of it in the future. For my own part, I ask no greater blessing than to share with you the common danger and common glory. If I have a wish dear to my soul, it is—that these American States may never cease to be free and independent!

George Washington, “Farewell Address”

NOTE: This speech is adapted from the letter written by George Washington to the people of the United States of America in 1796. Washington was the most prominent leader of the American Revolution and first president of the United States.

Of all the **dispositions** and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are **indispensable** supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of patriotism, who should labor to **subvert** these great pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of men and citizens. The mere politician, equally with the pious man, ought to respect and to cherish them. A volume could not trace all their connections with private and public **felicity**. Let it simply be asked: Where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the **supposition** that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle.

3. expended: spilled

It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government. The rule, indeed, extends with more or less force to every species of free government. Who that is a sincere friend to it can look with **indifference** upon attempts to shake the foundation of the fabric?

Promote then, as an object of primary importance, institutions for the general **diffusion** of knowledge. In proportion as the structure of a government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be **enlightened**.

Observe good faith and justice towards all nations; cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality **enjoin** this conduct; and can it be, that good policy does not equally enjoin it—It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the **magnanimous** and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence.

The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible. So far as we have already formed engagements, let them be fulfilled with perfect good faith. Here let us stop. Europe has a set of primary interests which to us have none; or a very remote relation. Hence she must be engaged in frequent **controversies**, the causes of which are essentially foreign to our concerns. Hence, therefore, it must be unwise in us to **implicate** ourselves by **artificial** ties in the ordinary **vicissitudes** of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.

Olaudah Equiano, “The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano”

NOTE: This speech is adapted from the book by the same title published in 1789. Equiano was a freed slave living in London who took up the abolitionist cause to end slavery.

I hope to have the satisfaction of seeing the renovation of liberty and justice resting on the British government, to **vindicate** the honor of our common nature. . . . May Heaven make the British senators the **dispersers** of light, liberty, and science, to the uttermost parts of the earth: then will be glory to God on the highest, on earth peace, and goodwill to men. May the blessings of the Lord be upon the heads of all those who **commiserated** the cases of the oppressed negroes, and the fear of God prolong their days; and may their expectations be filled with gladness!

The inhuman traffic of slavery is to be taken into the consideration of the British legislature. The abolition of slavery would be in reality an universal good. Tortures, murder, and every other imaginable barbarity and iniquity, are practiced upon the poor slaves with impunity. I hope the slave trade will be abolished. I pray it may be an event at hand. The great body

of manufacturers, uniting in the cause, will considerably **facilitate** and **expedite** it; and, as I have already stated, it is most substantially their interest and advantage, and as such the nation's at large (except those persons concerned in the manufacturing of neck-yokes, collars, chains, hand-cuffs, leg-bolts, drags, thumb-screws, iron muzzles, and coffins; cats, scourges, and other instruments of torture used in the slave trade). In a short time one sentiment alone will prevail, from motives of interest as well as justice and humanity.

My life and fortune have been extremely chequered,⁴ and my adventures various. I early accustomed myself to look for the hand of God in the **minutest** occurrence, and to learn from it a lesson of morality and religion; and in this light every circumstance I have related was to me of importance. After all, what makes any event important, unless by its observation we become better and wiser, and learn "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before God"? To those who are possessed of this spirit, there is scarcely any book or incident so trifling that does not afford some profit.

Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving Husband"

NOTE: Anne Bradstreet was the first female poet from British North America to be published. She was a Puritan who lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee.
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of gold
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give **recompense**.
Thy love is such I can no way repay
The heavens reward thee **manifold**, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

4. chequered: changeable, up and down

: Anne Bradstreet, “Verses on the Burning of Our House”

In silent night when rest I took,
For sorrow near I did not look,
I waken'd was with thund'ring noise
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.
That fearful sound of “fire” and “fire,”
Let no man know is my Desire.
I starting up, the light did spy,
And to my God my heart did cry
To straighten me in my Distress
And not to leave me **succourless**.
Then coming out, behold a space
The flame consume my dwelling place.
And when I could no longer look,
I blest his grace that gave and took,
That laid my goods now in the dust.
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.
It was his own; it was not mine.
Far be it that I should **repine**,
He might of all justly **bereft**
But yet sufficient for us left.
When by the Ruins oft I past
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast
And here and there the places spy
Where oft I sate⁵ and long did lie.
Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest,
There lay that store I counted best,
My pleasant things in ashes lie
And them behold no more shall I.
Under the roof no guest shall sit,
Nor at thy Table eat a bit.
No pleasant talk shall 'ere be told
Nor things recounted done of old.
No Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee,
Nor bridegroom's voice 'ere heard shall be.
In silence ever shalt thou lie.



5. sate: sat

Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity.
 Then straight I 'gin my heart to **chide**:
 And did thy wealth on earth abide,
 Didst fix thy hope on mouldring⁶ dust,
 The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?
 Raise up thy thoughts above the sky
 That dunghill mists away may fly.
 Thou hast a house on high erect
 Fram'd by that mighty Architect,
 With glory richly furnished
 Stands permanent, though this be fled.
 It's purchased and paid for too
 By him who hath enough to do.
 A price so vast as is unknown,
 Yet by his gift is made thine own.
 There's wealth enough; I need no more.
 Farewell, my pelf⁷; farewell, my store.
 The world no longer let me love;
 My hope and Treasure lies above.

Revise It—

1. **SENTENCE PADDING**—Remember from the previous lesson that sentence padding is no fun to read. When a student writes sentences just to take up space, the result is weak and empty writing. Cross out any unnecessary sentences in the following paragraphs about the War of 1812.
 - A. The War of 1812 took two and a half years. ~~It was a war.~~ The British would often force captured American sailors to serve on their ships. This was called impressment, and it caused the Americans to be very angry. This anger was one of the causes of the war. ~~It caused the Americans to be upset. Because they were upset, they declared war.~~ The war took place both on land and on sea. (Cross out three sentences.)
 - B. Tecumseh, a Native American leader, sided with the British during the War of 1812. He was born in 1768. ~~He was a Native American.~~ His tribe fought in the Revolutionary War, and he grew up surrounded by warfare. He became a leader of a Shawnee tribal band and fought in many famous battles. ~~Here is one of them.~~ He even fought in the

6. mouldring: decaying

7. pelf: wealth acquired wrongly

Battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794. No one knows exactly who killed Tecumseh. He was shot during the Battle of the Thames on October 5, 1813. (Cross out two sentences.)

C. After the War of 1812 was over, both the United States and Canada thought that they had won a victory. The United States had put down a Native American uprising on the western frontier and kept the British from meddling in its trade. The Canadians believed they had defended their lands from American aggression. The British, on the other hand, were too distracted with fighting Napoleon to care how the war ended. ~~Can you believe that? The British barely even cared.~~ Sadly, the biggest losers of the War of 1812 were the native peoples of the Midwest. They were rewarded with broken treaties and many dead warriors. ~~So that's the story of who won and who lost the War of 1812.~~ (Cross out three sentences.)

2. **PROOFREADING**—The following paragraph contains a number of errors, including letters that should be capitalized (2), repeated words that should be deleted (2), words that are missing (2), a lack of proper punctuation (2), and misspellings (2). Use the following proofreader's marks to mark up the text:



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.

During the early years of this century England's naval power stood at a height never reached

before or since by any other nation. On every sea her navies rode, not only triumphant,

but with none to dispute them. Since the year 1792 each European nation, in turn, had

learned to feel bitter dread of the weight of England's hand. From that day England's task

was but to keep in check any of her foes' vessels as she had not destroyed France alone still

possessed fleets that could be rendered frightening, and so her harbors were watched con-

stantly by the English. Such was Great Britain's naval power when the Congress the united
States declared war upon her. While she could number thousands of sails, the American
navy included only a dozen ships; so it is not sorprizing that the british officers regarded
their new foe with **contemptuous** indifference.

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Lesson 3: Getting Better Acquainted with Thesis Statements

^AFacts and opinions are often taught as being mutually exclusive, and students are encouraged to form a dichotomy in their thinking. We see this as an important opportunity to talk about this issue, which has philosophical and even spiritual implications. The following is one common way that students are taught to tell facts and opinions apart:

- **Facts** are statements that can be proven true.
- **Opinions** are statements that reflect the author’s feelings or views, and they cannot be proved true or false.

We should be careful with such sweeping definitions, however. Some facts were once held to be true and were later proven false. For instance, not long ago people took it as a fact that eggs were bad for the heart. Now eggs are recognized to be a highly nutritious food. So facts can change over time as new discoveries are made.

At the same time, some opinions are true whether or not they can be proven by science or math. It is a statement of opinion to say, “It’s wrong to pollute rivers” or “It’s good to be kind to children.” These statements are moral judgments, but they can be strongly supported by evidence. Many reasonable people can be convinced by the truth of such reasoned opinions if they are properly supported.

Of course, there are some opinions, such as “Purple is the best color,” that can never be proven true or false or right or wrong. However, there are other opinions, such as “Criminals can never be reformed,” that demand proof to be convincing. Opinions that demand proof are the type of opinions that make for good thesis statements. Students need to argue in such a way as to convince people that their thesis (opinion) is right. An opinion becomes a thesis when facts are organized and supported persuasively.

Tell It Back—

The thesis is the main argument of an essay or oration. It tells the reader what the essay is about. It also states an argument, an idea that is open to debate. The author hopes to convince his reader that this main argument is correct. A good thesis is clear and specific. It can also be proven with evidence.

Talk About It—

1. a. Burke’s thesis is stronger because it is specific and can be proved using examples. Dickens’s thesis, on the other hand, is vague. In both cases, the term “evil” would need to be defined, but Dickens must also define “real love” and “truth” in order for the statement to be clear. In other words, Dickens uses too many fuzzy words for us to really know what he means. He also says, “I hope,” instead of making a stronger, more definite statement. Because Dickens’s statement is vague and expresses a hope rather than an opinion, it cannot be proved or disproved with evidence.
- b. Winchell’s thesis is stronger because it is an arguable statement. It seeks to define a friend as someone who stands beside another person who has suddenly become unpopular. This definition could be supported with evidence, but someone else could argue for a

different definition of “friend” instead. Camus’s statement is not a thesis at all. It speaks directly to the reader instead of stating an arguable opinion.

- c. The first statement makes a stronger thesis because it makes a debatable argument: that acrylic paints are better than oil paints. The statement also contains two evidences: the speed of drying and the smell of the paint. The second statement is a plain statement of fact that cannot be debated and would not make a good thesis.
2. b. The second thesis is better because there is more support for it in the text. The United States needed to collect taxes to pay for its debts. However, the whiskey tax unfairly targeted farmers who made alcoholic beverages, and in response they formed mobs and protests and even a small army. As a result, the US government decided the tax was more trouble than it was worth and stopped it.

Memoria—

1. triumph: victory, conquest

This quote means that if good people do not work to prevent evil, a tyrant can easily gain power. The story of Pisistratus illustrates this quote. Pisistratus was able to take power in Athens because good people did not investigate his claims that he was attacked by enemies. They also did not question whether or not he really needed a bodyguard. As a result of good people doing nothing, an evil tyrant became triumphant.

Go Deeper—

2. Thesis Writing

- b. Sample answers:

- The wasteful slaughter of buffaloes in the nineteenth century reveals how hunters often think about wildlife.
- Hunters of today are very different than the buffalo hunters of the nineteenth century.
- As the disappearance of the buffalo shows, it is vital that people not hunt game animals wastefully.

Speak It—

^DFor additional practice, you can encourage students to write summaries of the speeches they are reciting. These speeches contain complex ideas and elevated vocabulary, both of which can be simplified by the process of summarization. Students will find that summaries help them to understand the “big picture” of each speech better as well as provide support for memorization.

^EIf you feel that your students aren’t ready for this much memorization, you can have them read the speeches to the audience instead. Likewise, if you don’t have the time to spend on memorizing and costuming and putting on a show, students can simply read these speeches in class to practice delivery. Even reading a speech or poem from the page can take students closer to the goal of beautiful speech.

^FPlease note that these speeches have been abbreviated to a length suitable for a speech festival. Whole documents are available at various locations on the Internet, including the National Archives (<http://www.archives.gov/education/>), AMDOCS: Documents for the Study of American History (www.vlib.us/amdocs), and, for Anne Bradstreet, poets.org.