

THE COMPLETE WRITER

A Plan for Writing Well, Grades K-12

Overall Plan

Elementary grades (1-4): Writing with ease

Learning basic grammar and style, basic sentence structure, and paragraph structure.

Method: grammar, copying, and dictation.

Middle grades (5-8): Writing with skill

Learning how to organize sentences into arguments that prove specific points.

Method: diagramming, outlining, outlining and rewriting, narrative compositions

High school (9-12): Writing with style

Learning how to argue original points and ideas.

Method: modelling and the progymnasmata

The steps in writing:

INARTICULATE IDEA ----->
IDEA IN WORDS

IDEA IN WORDS ----->
WORDS ON PAPER

Elementary Grade Students

Three sets of skills taught simultaneously:

Basic skills in grammar/

Basic skills in spelling/

Basic skills in writing

Elementary Grammar

Systematic grammar and punctuation

Goal: explicit knowledge of the rules that govern the conventions of sentence-writing

Grades 1-2: Primarily oral

English for the Thoughtful Child

First Language Lessons for the Well-Trained Mind

Grades 3-4: Move towards written work

First Language Lessons

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Voyages in English

Elementary Spelling

Beginning exposure to spelling rules and lists

Goal: gaining knowledge of the rules that govern the spelling of English words and the punctuation of written work.

Spelling Workout (Modern Curriculum Press)

Spelling Power (Castlemoyle Press)

Caution: may not see transference to written work in early grades

Elementary Writing

Putting words on paper: Copywork

First grade: Copy sentences every day from good writers

Second grade Write single sentences from dictation

Third grade: Write two to three sentences at a time from dictation

Fourth grade: Write paragraphs from dictation

Purposes:

Create a visual memory of proper written language

Form a visual picture of proper written language from spoken words

Hold words in head long enough to get them down on paper

Techniques:

Repeat until student can repeat back to you

Warn student of upcoming punctuation challenges

Use your voice to indicate punctuation and other elements

Give all necessary help in spelling and punctuation

Elementary Writing

Putting ideas into words: Narration across the curriculum

First and second grade: Narrate to parent

Second and third grade: Narrate to parent and take dictation

Fourth grade: Narrate to tape recorder

Purposes: Develops skill in original expression without demanding creativity in content

Teaches student to identify the central elements of narratives

Techniques:

First through third grade: Guided narration

Fourth grade: Move away from guided narration

Summary of Elementary Writing

Basic grammar

3x per week

Primarily oral, Grades 1-2

Move towards written, Grades 3-4

Basic spelling

2x per week

Copywork/Dictation

3x per week

History, literature, science

Narration

3x per week

History, literature, science

Middle Grade Students

Basic skills in spelling/
Basic skills in grammar/
Basic skills in writing

Middle Grade Spelling

Continue with spelling program

(Spelling Workout, Spelling Power, or other)

Begin list of frequently misspelled words

Help student transfer rules knowledge to written work by finding the rules that govern misspelled words

Troubleshooting

Change program

Have student copy misspelled words 10x

Ask student to write rule governing misspelled word in margin

Middle Grade Grammar

Systematic grammar and punctuation

Goal: explicit knowledge of the rules that govern the conventions of sentence-writing

Additional goals: expertise in diagramming and outlining

Resources:

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Voyages in English

Shurley English

Purposes of Diagramming

Understanding the logic of sentences

Developing a method of self-check

GOOD SENTENCES

Our prayer and God's grace are like two buckets in a well: while the one ascends, the other descends.

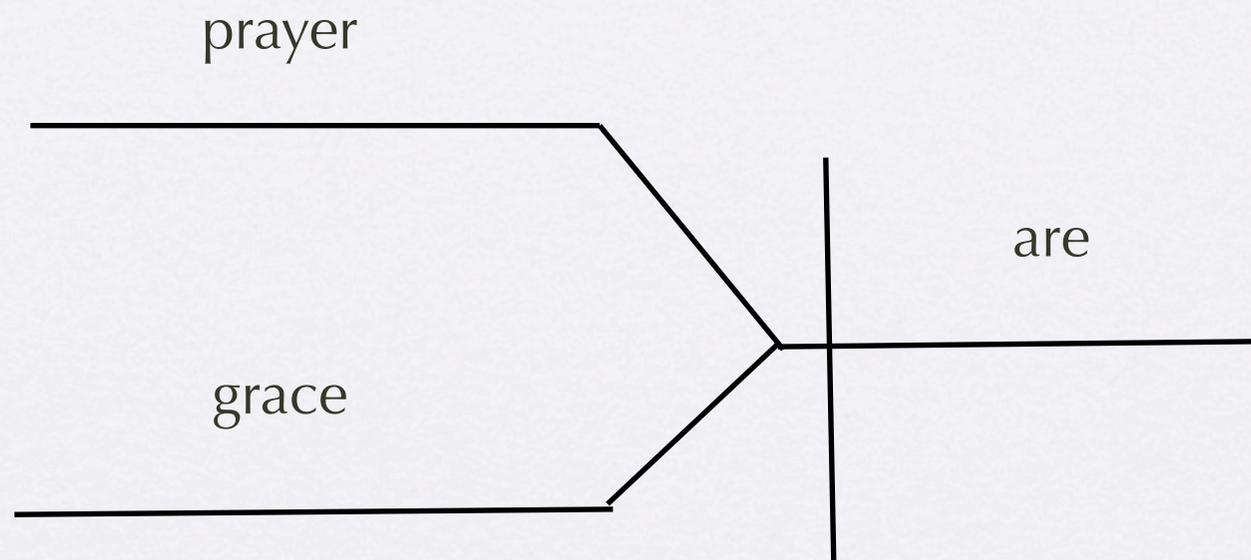
BAD SENTENCES

In *Pride and Prejudice*, her mother's bad manners and wishing to get married made Elizabeth discontent.

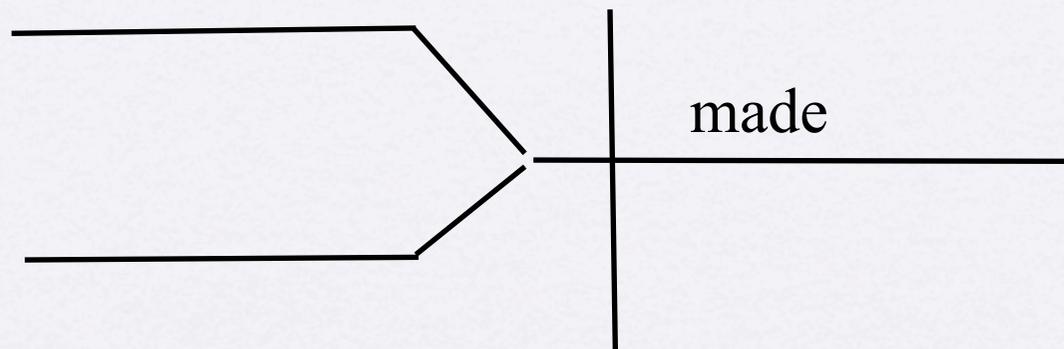
In addition to the city, Theodore Dreiser's society is depicted in its people.

Therefore, the character of Irene is a summary of women of the time.

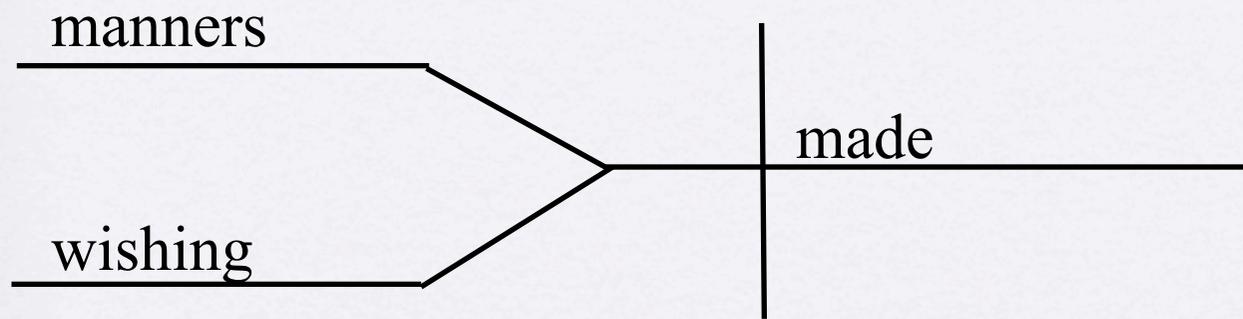
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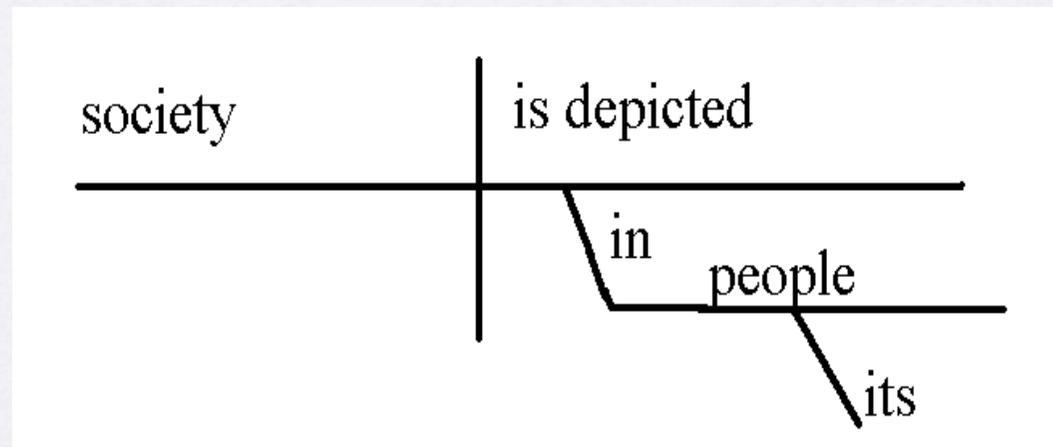
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Diagramming Resources

Rod & Staff
Voyages in English

The First Whole Book of Diagrams, Mary Daly
hedgeschool.homestead.com

Study Skills Strategies: Outlining
www.walch.com

Purposes of Outlining

Provide the student with a model for constructing logical narratives

I. MAIN POINT

A. First supporting point

1. Additional information about first supporting point
 - a. Detail about that additional information

B. Second supporting point

1. Additional information about second supporting point
2. More additional information about that second supporting point

II. NEXT MAIN POINT

Outlining Resources

Rod & Staff
Voyages in English

Note Taking & Outlining
schoolspecialitypublishing.com

Grammar: 3x per week, 30-45 minutes

Spelling: 2x per week, 30 minutes

Writing?

Middle Grade Writing

Fifth and sixth grade: learning to outline, while continuing to write narrative summaries as in third and fourth grade

Seventh and eighth grade: rewriting from outlines

INARTICULATE IDEA → IDEA IN WORDS

IDEA IN WORDS → WORDS ON PAPER

One-level outline

Goal: a sentence that identifies the passage's most central thought (NOT a sentence that contains most of the information in the paragraph.)

Useful questions:

1. What is the main thing or person that this paragraph is about?
2. Why is that thing or person important?

From *The Story of Canada*, Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore

The Blackfoot had always gone on foot, using dogs to help carry their goods, for there were no horses in North America until Spanish colonists brought them in the 1500s. Soon after that, plains people captured animals that had gone wild, or stole them in raids. They traded the horses northward and early in the 1700s, horses came to the northern plains. Suddenly the Blackfoot were a nation on horseback. How exciting it was, learning to ride a half-wild mustang and galloping off to the horizon!

What is the main thing the paragraph is about? Horses.

Why are horses important? The Blackfoot tribe learned to ride them in the 1700s.

I. The Blackfoot tribe learned to use horses in the 1700s.

Two-level outline

From *The Story of Canada*, Janet Lunn and Christopher Moore

The Blackfoot had always gone on foot, using dogs to help carry their goods, for there were no horses in North America until Spanish colonists brought them in the 1500s. Soon after that, plains people captured animals that had gone wild, or stole them in raids. They traded the horses northward and early in the 1700s, horses came to the northern plains. Suddenly the Blackfoot were a nation on horseback. How exciting it was, learning to ride a half-wild mustang and galloping off to the horizon!

I. The Blackfoot tribe learned to use horses in the 1700s.

- A. They had always gone on foot before.
- B. The horses were brought to North America by Spanish colonists.

Goals of middle grade writing:

Learn to construct outlines through modelling

Learn to write from outlines through modelling

Begin to write responses to literary works

BEGINNING LITERARY ANALYSIS

- Whom is this book about (central character)?
- What does he/she/they want?
- What keeps him/her/they from getting it?
- How do they get what they want?
- Do they have an enemy or enemies? Is there a villain?
- What does the villain want?
- What do you think is the most important event in the story?
- What causes this event to happen?
- How are the characters different after this event?
- How many different stories does the writer tell?
- What is the most important thing that happens to [pick a character].
- How does it change that character?

1. Begin by writing narrative summaries as learned in elementary grades, 1-2x per week (choose from history, literature, or science), not more than 1/2 page.
2. Work towards doing a two- to three-level outline of 1-3 pages (depending on density) of nonfiction reading, 2x per week (outline itself should be 1/2-3/4 page)
3. Write one “literary” essay, 1x per week.
4. When outlining skills are in place, drop narrative summaries and rewrite from outlines/on model of outlines in history or science, 2x per week.

High School Writing

Continue skills in spelling/word study

Reinforce skills in grammar

Develop skills in persuasive writing

Spelling: transition into word study

Vocabulary from Classical Roots

Vocabulary notebook

Grammar: continue with upper-level program for reinforcement

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Analytical Grammar

Stewart English Program

Warriner's English Grammar and Composition

High School Writing

1. Study of rhetoric, 2-3 hours per week
2. Two 1-page persuasive papers per week in history, science, or literature
3. Longer research papers in history, science, or literature
 - Two ninth-grade papers, 4-8 pages
 - Two tenth grade papers, 5-10 pages
 - 1 eleventh-grade paper, 12-15 pages
 - 1 twelfth-grade paper, 12-15 pages

Study of Rhetoric

Progymnasmata: a set of writing exercises intended to equip the student with a “toolbox” for persuasive writing.

For example: Slanted and direct narratives

A dog was sitting at the side of the road. A man walked up, put a collar on the dog, and took the dog away.

A mutt was crouching at the side of the road. A dog-trainer approached cautiously, managed to get a collar around the dog's neck, and dragged the dog away.

A St. Bernard was sitting on the side of the road, wagging his tail. His owner rushed up, put the dog's collar on, and led him away.

Self-Study in Rhetoric

Anthony Weston, *Rulebook for Arguments*

Frank D'Angelo, *Composition in the Classical Tradition*

Thomas S. Kane, *The New Oxford Guide to Writing*

Edward Corbett, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*

Read a section of the text, outline its content, and then do the exercise; if not exercise is provided, write a paragraph illustrating the technique or find an example.

3-5 hours per week

Two one-page persuasive papers per week in history, science, or literature

Learn how to formulate and support a thesis statement.

A proposition that you can defend

A statement that you can either prove or disprove

An assertion that has to be supported by evidence.

NON-THESIS STATEMENTS

Homer and William Blake both talk about nature.

Jane Austen's characters can't be open about their feelings.

Hamlet had a fatal flaw.

ASK:

How are these things the same, and how are they different?

Why?

When?

THESIS STATEMENTS

How are these things the same, and how are they different?

Homer sees nature as a hostile force to be reckoned with while Blake sees nature as a friend of man

Why?

In Pride and Prejudice, Elizabeth pretends to conceal her feelings, but she actually reveals them to Mr. Darcy in many subtle ways.

When?

Hamlet is sane throughout most of the play, but goes mad during the duel.

Finding topics in history:

Question motivations of historical actors

Argue that place and/or weather affected the outcome of an event

Argue that one event was caused by a previous event

Prove that a certain group of people was
better or worse off after a certain event

Show a connection between two events or
people in two different countries

Speculate on how history might have changed
under different circumstances

Finding topics in literature:

Discuss some element (scene, plot, or character) that are either interesting or annoying. Explain, using quotes from the work, why it interests or annoys.

Compare the work with something else (anything else) and draw parallels.

Point out how some metaphor or technique is used in the work, and explain

Argue that one of the characters acted in a way that is ethically right or wrong

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Finding topics in science:

Focus on discovery/invention:

What was the need for the invention?

Why did the scientist look?

(What question was he trying to answer?)

Focus on theory:

How has this theory changed the way we think?

Is the change good or bad?

Longer research papers

Two ninth-grade papers, 4-8 pages

Two tenth grade papers, 5-10 pages

1 eleventh-grade paper, 12-15 pages

1 twelfth-grade paper, 12-15 pages

Informational, not persuasive

**Goal: learn how to find and use sources,
proper documentation**

Opportunity to explore a topic of interest

**Techniques for research papers:
*Writing Great Research Papers***