

A CREATIVE APPROACH TO THE CLASSICAL PROGYMNASMATA

# Writing Rhetoric

BOOK 4: CHREIA & PROVERB

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*Writing & Rhetoric, Book 4: Chreia & Proverb*  
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# A Typical Teaching Week

Veteran teachers know that rarely is there anything typical about a teaching week. These guidelines are intended to help bring some predictability to lesson planning. Although the parts of speech and other elements of grammar are important aspects of this course, its primary focus is writing and rhetoric. It is recommended that teachers alternate between a course in grammar one week and *Writing & Rhetoric: Chreia & Proverb* the next week. Another possibility would be to blend grammar into the Writing & Rhetoric exercises. Lessons in grammar can be inserted before the “Writing Time” exercises or after the “Speak It” section. The weekly schedule includes four days so that you have the flexibility to spend more time on revision or to cover additional exercises.

## 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 story 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. Playacting the story from memory is another possible form of narration. (Note: 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.

## Day Two

1. Optional: The teacher can appoint a student or pair students to read the text again.
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 dictation, sentence play, copiousness, and the chreia exercise itself. You may want more than one day for this step.

## Day Three or Four\*

1. A time of sharing work can wrap up each lesson. In order to build confidence and ability in public speaking, students should be encouraged to read their work aloud—either in pairs or to the entire class (or cohort).
2. The “Speak It” section creates opportunities for students to recite, to playact, and to share their work aloud. Please consider using a recording device whenever it would suit the situation. In this case, have the student listen to her recording to get an idea of what sounded right and what could be improved. Have students read the elocution instructions at the end of the book to help them work on skill in presentation.
3. At this level, teachers should give feedback to students and request rewrites whenever feasible. The art of writing is rewriting. Most students do not self-edit well at this age or provide useful feedback to each other. As the child gets older, self-editing checklists will be provided within the Writing & Rhetoric course.

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\*The number of days per week assigned to the lessons is four so that you have some flexibility according to the pace and level of depth that you can take advantage of with your students.

# Introduction to Students

## Here We Go Again

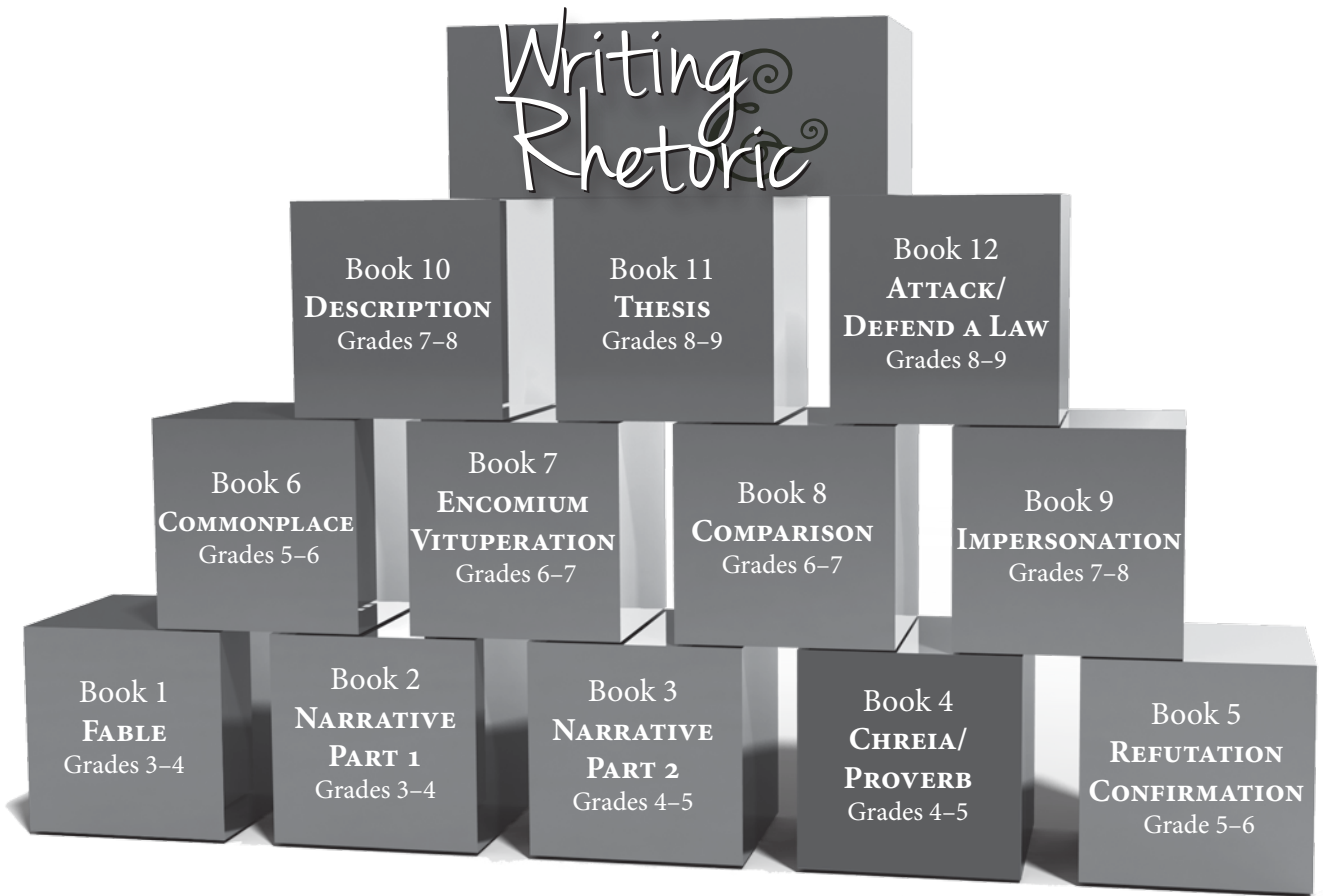
Clear your desks! Sharpen your pencils! We're back in action! If you've been blowing bubbles with your bubble gum, now's the time to knock it off! We don't want a big explosion to leave you with your eyelashes glued shut.

At this point you have most likely studied three Writing & Rhetoric books: *Fable*, *Narrative I*, and *Narrative II*. This next book will change things up a bit. You will still be enjoying stories about real people who lived in history: kings and queens, monks, brave women, and more. You will continue to read about their deeds and some of the wise things that they said. But here's the change: You will use these stories as background information for writing six-paragraph essays.

"Whoa!" you might say, "Get outta town! Six-paragraph essays? That sounds like a leap!" Well, yes, it is a bit of a leap, but this leap will come naturally to you. You will start with what you know and take it from there. In fact, you will be surprised by how capably you have been prepared by the previous books to write an essay.

In addition, the lessons in this book will give you a little help. Sometimes students are asked to conjure up essays from thin air. "Write an essay about an important goal you have for your life." "Describe an experience that has impacted you significantly." "Write about a happy moment in history and why it was so happy." Writing like this can be fun, but we believe that the best writing skills are developed when you have many ideas, words, and examples with which to work, so in this book, you will have writer guides to help you reach your destination.

The ability to think clearly on paper, and to share your thoughts orally, are skills that you will use for the rest of your life. Most of all, we want you to enjoy learning and writing about people who lived many long years ago. Who knows? They might actually become friends of yours across the distance of years and miles. Tallyho and away we go!



You are here ↗

# Introduction

## Writing Happily

### Where We Are Now with Writing

When it comes to writing, some students see the process as pure delight. That was my experience. I always loved taking a blank sheet of paper and transforming it into something magical: a carnival twinkling in the night, a city street shining with rain and reflecting gas lamps, an avalanche flying down a spire of rock. But I know that writing is not a magical world for many children or even some adults.

When I served as a writing instructor at the University of Southern California (USC), I saw firsthand the failure of writing instruction at our primary and secondary schools. Hardly a day went by that I wasn't grading a stack of papers, and the torment, the agony, of writing seemed to writhe through the pages.

Many of those college students had difficulty writing grammatically correct and coherent paragraphs—let alone entire essays, persuasively written. These were smart students from privileged backgrounds. So how did they get to college with such meager writing skills? What was happening in school or at home to sabotage the development of writing? Something was clearly not working.

Some years after teaching at USC, I helped to establish The Oaks Academy in the inner city of Indianapolis. Our school has grown from a modest 50 students in 1998 to 500-plus students today. At The Oaks, our mission is “to provide a rich, classical education to children of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.” Our diversity includes children who grow up in highly involved families as well as children who have limited access to opportunity and must often fend for themselves academically.

As director of curriculum, I was determined to find a writing program that served the needs of all of our students. I wanted a program that combined the best modern practices with the principles of classical education as defined by such disparate educators as the Roman rhetorician Quintilian and nineteenth-century British reformer Charlotte Mason. I felt strongly that students could be confident, persuasive writers by the eighth grade if they received the right combination of models and practice. Above all, I wanted to avoid the wasted years that led to faltering communication in college and beyond.

I examined quite a few programs. Each in its own way seemed to be lacking—both the modern courses and those purporting to be classically inspired. Nothing seemed to be “just right.” Some programs were difficult to use. Others seemed too frivolous on the one hand or too heavy on the other. Still others lacked the necessary incremental steps.

The book you have in your hand is the fruit of my dissatisfaction. This is a curriculum built on the solid foundations of the past and framed with the vitality of the present. This is a curriculum that has been tested by ancient, medieval, and modern kids and has proven reliable for the ages. Along with caring teachers and a diet of good books, the Writing & Rhetoric series has taken the young people of The Oaks, kids from all sorts of advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds, and shaped them into fine communicators. As an eighth-grade teacher, I am often delighted by the rhetorical firepower in my classroom.



## Imitation as a Foundation for Learning Writing

An examination of the theory and practice of modern composition reveals some obvious problems. Too often students are asked to brainstorm, “prewrite,” or “free write” according to their personal interests. This means, in essence, that they are supposed to conjure ideas out of thin air. When faced with a blank piece of paper, many students naturally draw a blank. They lack a conversation in their heads about where to begin. Good writing requires content. It abhors a vacuum.

Students are also expected to write with no clear model before them. Modern composition scolds traditional writing instruction as rote and unimaginative. It takes imitation to task for a lack of freedom and personal expression. And yet effective communication from writer to reader always requires some sort of form and structure. Many of history’s greatest writers learned by imitation. Benjamin Franklin, for example, taught himself to write by studying classic books and copying whole passages verbatim. He would then put the book aside and try to reconstruct the passage from memory.

Today’s emphasis on originality and creativity has failed. When students lack a form by which to express their ideas, their creativity lacks vitality. As Alexander Pope tells us in his “An Essay on Criticism”: “True Ease in Writing comes from Art, not Chance, / As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance.” In other words, writing takes the same kind of determined study as ballet or diving. Creativity uses conventional form as a stage or a springboard from which to launch grand *jetés* and somersaults.

But there’s yet another problem. Too often students are expected to tackle complex writing assignments without learning the necessary intermediate steps. Without the requisite scaffolding, teachers require summer vacation narratives, persuasive letters, research papers, and poetic descriptions. All of these forms require skills that must be developed in stages. It’s too often assumed that everyone should be able to write well simply because most everyone can speak English well enough to be understood and form letters with a pencil. And yet how many of us would expect a child to sit at a piano, without piano lessons, and play a concerto? How many of us would expect a child with a hammer and a chisel and a block of marble to carve the statue of David as well as Michelangelo?

Writing is never automatic. The skills of the trade will not miraculously materialize somewhere along the school way. They take years to master. This is because writing demands thoughtfulness, organization, grammatical skill, rhetorical skill, and an ear for the English language. Most children have a natural inclination for one or two of these skills. Rarely do they have a knack for all. The other skills need to be developed and matured.

When it comes down to it, writing is simply thinking on paper (or thinking in some digital realm). Writing is thought translated to symbols—the symbolic language of the alphabet. The difficulty lies in the process of translation. I may picture a face or a waterfall clearly in my mind. It’s quite another thing to describe the face or waterfall articulately in writing. I may have beautiful arguments on the tip of my tongue for buying a Great Dane puppy, but can I make the case persuasively on a piece of paper? The thinking comes first; the writing comes second. Both need to mature together.

## What Is to Be Done

If we have lost our way, it rarely helps to plunge blindly forward. It often helps to retrace our steps. And so it is with writing. We have much to learn from the wisdom of the ages. The Greeks developed a system of persuasive speaking known as rhetoric. The Romans, who came later, were also in love with rhetoric, but they took it to the next level. In order to prepare their young students for dazzling oration, the Romans invented a complementary system of persuasive writing.

This writing system was so dynamic, so effective, that it outlasted the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance. It even survived into early modern times. This method employed fluent

reading, careful listening, models for imitation, and progressive steps. In short, it did many of the things that are out of fashion today, but gave us writers such as Cicero and John Milton.

The Romans in the Greek-speaking part of the Empire called their system the *progymnasmata* (pro-gym-naz-ma-ta). This strange mouthful of a word derives from the same root for exercise as do “gymnasium” and “gymnastics.” It means “preliminary exercises.” The goal of these lessons is to prepare students for rhetoric, which is the art of writing well and speaking persuasively. This method assumes that students learn best by reading excellent examples of literature and by growing their skills through imitation. Successful writers study great writing. Successful orators study great speeches.

Each exercise is intended to impart a skill (or tool) that can be employed in all kinds of writing and speaking. The exercises are arranged from simple to more complex. What’s more, the exercises are cumulative, meaning that later exercises incorporate the skills acquired in preceding exercises. This means, for example, that the skill of reporting or narrating (derived from the narrative exercise) will be regularly practiced and used in future exercises. While engaged in praising an individual (encomium exercise), a student will need to report or narrate an important event or achievement. While comparing two individuals (comparison exercise), a student will often need to praise one of those individuals (encomium).

Studying and acquiring the skills imparted by the *progymnasmata* (hereafter abbreviated *progym*) exercises is much like the way in which we acquire skill in cooking or in a sport such as soccer. In the case of cooking, students must first learn the foundational skills of measuring, pouring, and mixing. Then they must learn skills relating to using a frying pan and oven. Each recipe requires the employment of these foundational skills—no matter how complicated it is. A sport such as soccer also requires the mastery of basic skills such as kicking, passing, and dribbling. These foundational skills are carried forward into every soccer play and every game strategy.

Think of the *progym* as a step-by-step apprenticeship in the art of writing and rhetoric. What is an apprentice? It is a young person who is learning a skill from a master teacher. Our students will serve as apprentices to the great writers and great stories of history.

Quintilian, one of the master teachers of Rome, tells us that good habits are the foundation of education. In his *Institutio Oratoria*, he writes, “Once a bad habit has become ingrained, it is easier to break than bend. So strong is custom formed in early years.” This master teacher also tells us that natural ability is nothing if it is not “cultivated by skillful teaching, persistent study, and continuous and extensive practice in writing, reading, and speaking.”

## Getting Started

The place to begin is reading, which should be encouraged as one of life’s great pleasures from a child’s earliest days. Parents should introduce books to babies as soon as they can keep their eyes open. Babies love to hear the sound of their parents’ voices. They love the feeling of snuggling in a parent’s lap. They love bright books and pictures. Reading helps develop joint attention, which is necessary for any language acquisition. The more a child reads and is read to, the better the foundation for writing. And if a parent feels he or she has been negligent in reading, it’s never too late to get started.

The necessary corollary is that we must limit screens: TV, the Internet, and video games should stay off as much as possible! Without realizing it, many parents sabotage the ability of their children to think by allowing an excess of these media. Researchers are telling us, in no uncertain terms, that an imbalance of electronics can be harmful to clear thinking and focused attention. If children don’t have time for books, they don’t have time for glowing screens. (Unless, of course, that glowing screen contains a book.) Even boredom and daydreaming can be more productive than too much media exposure! A brain needs rest in order to do the hard work of synthesizing information, problem solving, and making connections between ideas.

Next to reading, it's important for children to get comfortable with the formation of letters. Children should work on penmanship to strengthen neural pathways that allow thinking and writing at the same time. Once writing mechanics come easily, it is much easier to make progress in the complex skill of "thinking on paper." As is often the case, there's more to a fine motor skill than meets the eye. With writing, children must learn to grip the pencil properly, to move their arms and wrists smoothly, and to stay focused on the page. Keep practice sessions short, but frequent.

Before children begin *Writing & Rhetoric: Chreia & Proverb* they should have covered the concepts in the previous three books. Many teachers and parents have begun older students with the *Fable*, *Narrative I*, and *Narrative II* books and worked through them to gain the skills those books offer.

## **After This—Formal Rhetoric**

The formal study of rhetoric will develop in students a solid theoretical understanding of rhetoric, helping them to better understand why and how to employ the skills they have acquired while studying these exercises. The *Writing & Rhetoric* series (twelve books in all) will prepare students to enjoy transforming that blank sheet of paper into a spectacular view from atop the pinnacle of their own imagination.

# 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 owes almost everything to 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 *Chreia & Proverb* these include:

- 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 related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose
- providing reasons that are supported by facts and details
- providing a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented
- asking and answering questions to demonstrate understanding of the text
- summarizing the text
- producing clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience
- drawing evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

While these goals are certainly worthwhile, the *progym* derive their 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, but rather 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, but 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 essays with narrative, expository, persuasive, and comparative elements
9. Thesis—Persuasive essay with narrative, descriptive, expository, and comparative elements
10. Defend/Attack 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 *Chreia & Proverb***

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

1. Expose students to various proverbs, pithy sayings, and life stories, especially from the Middle Ages, and challenge the notion that this period of history was unrelentingly dark and morally ignorant.
2. Develop students' appreciation for the usefulness of concise sayings and actions and how these ideas impact their lives. To demonstrate that ideas and words influence actions.
3. Introduce students to the expository essay using a six-step outline. The predetermined outline helps students to organize their thinking into patterns of ideas.
4. Give students opportunities to creatively imitate and reshape proverbs and sayings.
5. Develop the concept of biographical narrative.
6. Introduce the idea of paraphrase as well as comparing and contrasting.
7. Model fluent reading for students and give them practice reading short texts.
8. Strengthen working memory through dictation, thus improving storage and manipulation of information.
9. Increase understanding of the flexibility and copiousness of language through sentence manipulation.
10. Facilitate student interaction with well-written texts through questions and discussion.



## Lesson 1 .....

# What in the World Is a Chreia?

“**W**hoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”<sup>1</sup> “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”<sup>2</sup> “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”<sup>3</sup>

Do you recognize these proverbs? They are said to have been composed by Solomon, a king of Israel, about three thousand years ago. A **proverb** is a wise saying or a short, clever insight into human behavior.

Because Solomon’s proverbs are useful for teaching right and wrong, they all qualify as subjects for a **chreia** (cray-uh). The word “chreia” comes from the Greek word **chreiodes** (cray-o-dees), which means “useful.” It is a short essay or remembrance that praises the author of a saying and shows why the saying is useful. If you were to say, “Let’s hear it for Solomon, king of Israel, for the very useful proverb, ‘Pride goes before destruction!’”, that would not be exactly a chreia, but you would be on the right track.

- 
1. Proverbs 12:1
  2. Proverbs 15:1
  3. Proverbs 16:18

In order to better understand how to write a chreia, take a look at one of Benjamin Franklin’s proverbs. In *Poor Richard’s Almanac*, Franklin wrote, “Fish and visitors stink after three days.” This is a proverb that warns visitors not to stay for too many days at another person’s house so they don’t risk becoming unwelcome.

► Why do you think a visitor might become unwelcome after three days? Can you guess?

The problem with visitors is that they aren’t really part of your family. It’s harder to relax when a friend—even a very close friend—is hanging around. You feel that you need to focus on your visitor, make her happy, and do the things she wants to do. That takes a good deal of effort. You also need to be on your best behavior. You don’t want your parents to snap at you or your brothers or sisters because you are behaving badly in front of a guest. It can be stressful on the whole family to be

To be able to write a decent chreia, you will need to know something about the life of the person being praised. Before you start writing any chreia in this book, you will read a short **biography**. “Biography” is a lovely Latin word borrowed from the Greeks. It combines the prefix *bio*, meaning “life,” and *graphy*, meaning “description of.” So a biography is a description of someone’s life.

so “perfect.” Your house has to be neat and tidy so your guest feels relaxed. Another thing: A guest usually doesn’t do any work around the house. He isn’t expected to mow the lawn or take out the trash or prepare the food. A guest for a day or two or three is a wonderful thing. But after three days he can sometimes become a burden. In some countries long-

term guests become a working part of the family, but in America we are not used to this and can tire of guests more quickly.

To show the usefulness of Franklin’s proverb, a chreia can be written as follows:

*First*, praise the person who has said or written the proverb. In this case, Benjamin Franklin was the speaker. The chreia should show how the speaker lived his or her life according to the principles in the proverb or saying. For example:

How clever and wise of Benjamin Franklin to say, “Fish and visitors stink after three days!” Franklin was a highly practical man, and he published this advice in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*. As a frequent traveler himself, Franklin tried never to overstay his welcome, even when he was ambassador to the courts of France, because he knew that the United States needed many friends.

*Second*, give a new version of the saying. You will use your own words to form a new proverb or rephrase the saying to show that you understand it. For example:

This amusing proverb might be rewritten to say, “Any visitor who stays too long at the home of a friend risks becoming as welcome as a vomiting cat.”

*Third*, write why this proverb was said. Give details to explain why it might be useful. For example:

At first, a guest is a wonderful thing. What a joy it is to catch up with old friends and what fun it is to make new ones! But the longer a guest stays, no matter how close a friend he is, the more the host feels that his private space is being invaded. To most people in America, a home is a highly personal and private place—a place to rest from the work and conflict of everyday life. It is difficult to live for very long with a houseguest in one’s personal space. If the guest remains a guest, he is taking advantage of the host. A guest expects certain privileges but does not share the responsibilities of the household.

*Fourth*, introduce a contrast. Think of an example of someone in history or in a story who didn’t follow such wise advice or who didn’t pay attention to such a useful saying. You’ll want to give your example in the form of a very short narrative or story. For example:

In Latin the term *persona non grata* means “an unwelcome person.” One example of such a person is Menelaus, king of Sparta, who received Paris, a prince of Troy, as an honored guest in his palace. He threw the young man a huge feast and gave him the freedom to wander his gardens. And how did Paris repay such fine hospitality? By flattering Menelaus’s wife, Helen, and stealing her away. It was Paris’s abduction of Helen that started the Trojan War. If there was ever a bad guest, a *persona non grata*, Paris certainly deserved the name.

*Fifth*, introduce a comparison. Now you'll want to think of an example of someone in history or in a story who lived by the wisdom of the saying. Again, give your example in the form of a very short narrative or story. For example:



On the other hand, the poet Homer was always a welcome guest wherever he wandered. Legend tells us that he was a blind minstrel, little more than a beggar, but that he was in great demand for his skill as a storyteller. Greek chieftains and kings would throw feasts for Homer just to have him strum his harp and sing about the lives of two heroes, Achilles and Odysseus. His stories were so wonderful that they are still remembered today as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

*Sixth*, conclude with a brief epilogue. An epilogue is nothing more than a tidy ending for your essay. It is like the ribbon on a present that wraps up everything neatly. You can use a story from your own life as an example or conclude with any relevant thoughts. For example:

I apply the “rule of three days” to myself whenever I am visiting friends. I try never to intrude on anyone’s home for more than three days, unless I am

**D**oes writing a chreia sound difficult? Never fear! This book will walk you through each stage of writing the essay. You’ll see that it’s not as complicated as it sounds. And as you get started, remember this very useful proverb: Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

particularly well acquainted with the family. Even then, I work to be as helpful as possible by washing the dishes and making my bed and helping to prepare the food for our meals. I would not want any of my acquaintances to think of dead fish when I enter their homes!

Now take a look at the whole chreia put together:

How clever and wise of Benjamin Franklin to say, “Fish and visitors stink after three days!” Franklin was a highly practical man, and he published this advice in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*. As a frequent traveler himself, Franklin tried never to overstay his welcome, even when he was an ambassador to the courts of France, because he knew that the United States needed many friends.



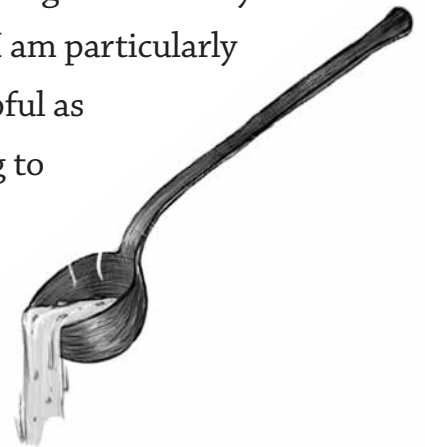
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I apply the “rule of three days” to myself whenever I am visiting friends. I try never to intrude on anyone’s home for more than three days, unless I am particularly well acquainted with the family. Even then, I work to be as helpful as possible by washing the dishes and making my bed and helping to prepare the food for our meals. I would not want any of my acquaintances to think of dead fish when I enter their homes!



## Tell It Back—Narration

Without looking at the chreia in this lesson, tell back the most important information from it as best as you can remember it.

- What was the proverb?
- Who said it?
- Why is it useful?
- Who was the example of a bad guest and why?
- Who was the example of a good guest and why?
- How did the author bring the parts of the chreia together at the end?

## Talk About It—

1. Have you ever stayed at someone's house for an extended period of time? Did your visit get better, get worse, or remain the same the longer you stayed?
2. Hospitality is important in every culture around the world. In Roman times, dusty travelers were often bathed, given fresh clothes, and entertained by dancing or song. During medieval times, a feast was thrown for noble travelers, and their horses were groomed and fed by stable boys. Monasteries gave every visitor, rich or poor, food and a bed for the night. In Arabia and India today, a big meal is served to guests, and guests must have the good manners to try every dish and eat to excess. What are some customs of hospitality in your family? How are guests treated in your home? Can you remember a very special time of hospitality in your life?
3. What makes a saying useful? Give examples of some useful sayings.
4. Is there a saying your mother or father often repeats?

## Go Deeper—

• For each question, circle or supply the correct answer(s).

• 1. What is a proverb?

- a. a verb that goes before a noun
- b. a very short story
- c. a wise saying
- d. a speech by King Solomon

• 2. What is the meaning of the Greek word *chreïodes*?

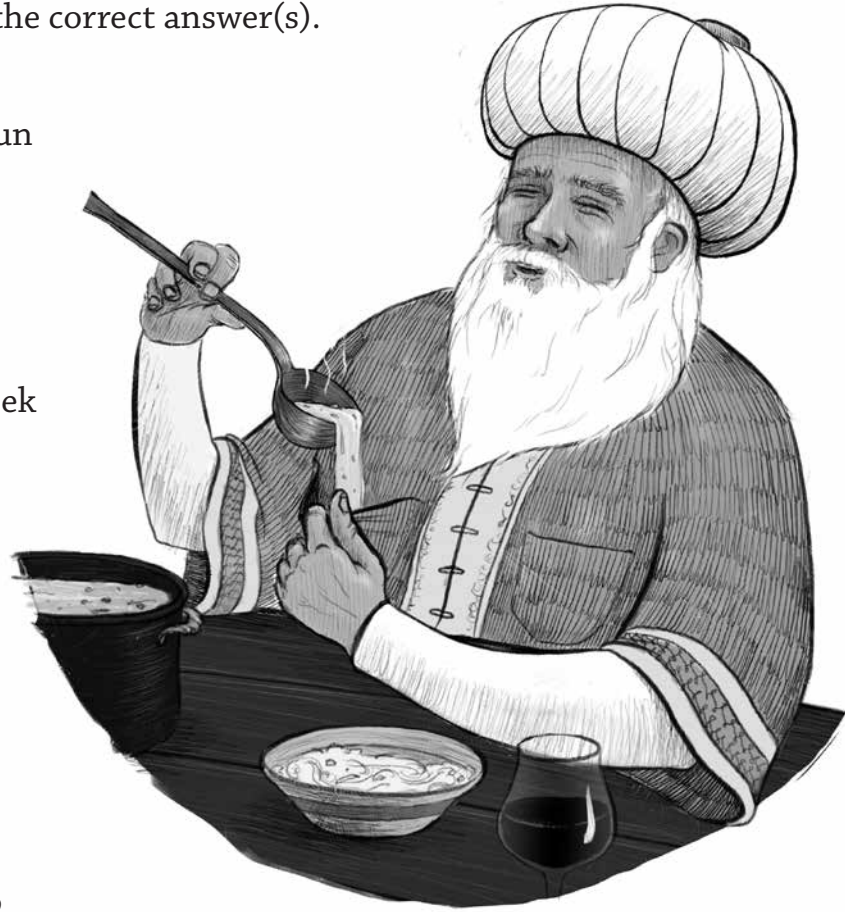
- a. clever
- b. useful
- c. complaining
- d. beautiful

• 3. What is a chreia?

- a. a short story with a moral
- b. a long essay about a proverb
- c. a study of several important people
- d. a short essay about a person's useful saying

• 4. The word “hospitality” derives from the Latin word *hospes*, which means “guest.” If a host is supposed to show good hospitality to his guests, what is the most likely definition for “hospitality”?

- a. kindness to guests
- b. rudeness to guests
- c. dinner for guests
- d. a bed for guests



5. Use the word “hospitality” in your own complete sentence. Make sure that your sentence hints at the meaning of the word. In other words, a reader should be able to guess at what “hospitality” means because of your sentence.

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6. How do you think the word “hospital,” meaning “a place for healing the sick,” is related to the word “hospitality”? In other words, what do a hospital and hospitality have in common?

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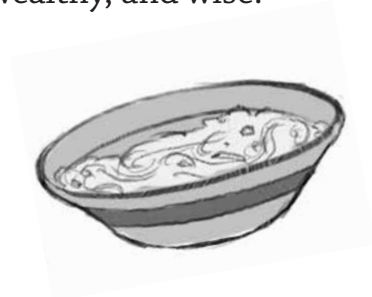
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7. In the following list, underline the sayings that might be useful for teaching wisdom or for teaching right from wrong.

- a. Go on up, you baldhead!
- b. Bend the tree while it is young.
- c. Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise.
- d. A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!
- e. A rose is a rose is a rose.
- f. Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats?
- g. A living dog is better than a dead lion.



- h. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.
- i. No man can serve two masters.
- j. I float like a butterfly, sting like a bee.
- k. I came, I saw, I conquered. (*Veni, vidi, vici.*)
- l. Be like a snail in planning and like a bird in getting things done.
- m. Time is the wisest of all counselors.
- n. Nonsense makes good sense.

## Writing Time—

- 1. **DICTATION**—Your teacher will read a little part of the chreia from this lesson back to you. Please listen carefully! After your teacher reads once, she will read slowly again and include the punctuation marks. Your task will be to write down the sentence as your teacher reads it.

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- 2. **SENTENCE PLAY**—How clever and wise of Benjamin Franklin to say, “Fish and visitors stink after three days!” Use this sentence as a model to create similar sentences for the following sayings. Feel free to use different adjectives than “clever” and “wise.” Remember that an adjective describes a noun.

Example: John Heywood said, “Look before you leap.”  
 Change to: How smart and sensible of John Heywood to say, “Look before you leap!”

a. John Heywood said, “Two heads are better than one.”

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b. Baltasar Gracian said, “A beautiful woman should break her mirror early.”

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c. Jennifer Lynn said, “Some men are only handsome until they open their mouths.”

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3. **COPIOUSNESS**—

A. If you’ll recall, a synonym is a word that has nearly the same meaning as another word. Use synonyms to change the underlined nouns in Benjamin Franklin’s proverb. Use specific species names for “fish.” Following the example, write two new sentences that are roughly synonymous. Use a thesaurus only if you get stuck.

Example: Fish and visitors stink after three days.

Change to: Tuna and guests smell awful after three days.

i. \_\_\_\_\_

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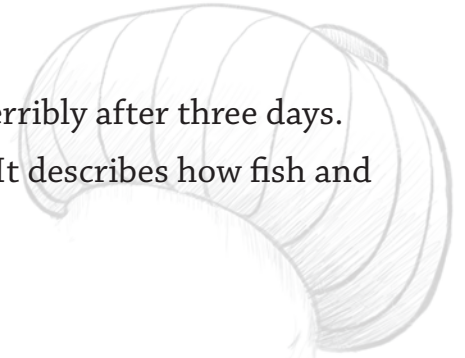
ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. Add an adjective to describe both “fish” and “visitors.” Add an adverb to describe the verb “stink.” An adverb answers questions such as, “How?” “When?” and “Where?” and can describe verbs as well as adjectives and other adverbs.

Example: Fish and visitors stink after three days.

Change to: Dead fish and strange visitors stink terribly after three days.

In this sample sentence, “terribly” is the adverb. It describes how fish and visitors stink.



Example: Fish and visitors stink after three days.

Change to: Greasy fish and silly visitors stink frightfully after three days.

In this sample sentence, “frightfully” is the adverb. Again, it describes how fish and visitors stink.

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Use an adverb to replace the phrase “after three days.” Change the tense of the verb as necessary. Your adverb should explain when, how, or where the fish will stink.

Example: Fish and visitors stink after three days.

Change to: Fish and visitors will stink tomorrow.

Change to: Fish and visitors always stink.

Some other adverbs you can use are “never,” “often,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “soon,” “yesterday,” or “later.”

i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Move the prepositional phrase “after three days” to the beginning of the sentence. Now replace the phrase with a different prepositional phrase. Prepositions are often short words that show a time or space connection between words, such as “on,” “around,” “between,” “near,” “at,” “by,” “in,” “out,” “over,” “under,” “during,” “since,” and so on. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition, such as “against all odds” and “down by the bank.” In these sentences the prepositional phrase describes the conditions under which the fish and visitors will begin to stink.

Example: After three days, fish and visitors stink.

Change to: During hot weather, fish and visitors stink.

Change to: In the month of July, fish and visitors stink.



i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. **FABLE**—Do you remember fables from *Writing & Rhetoric: Fable*? Fables are short stories with a moral lesson, often with talking animals. Many proverbs serve as moral lessons for fables. “Slow and steady wins the race” is the moral lesson for *The Tortoise and the Hare*. “It is wise to learn from the misfortunes of others” is the moral lesson for *The Sick Lion*, in which a sickly Lion eats his guests. And the proverb “Self-conceit may lead to self-destruction” is the moral lesson for *The Frog and the Ox*.

Your job in this exercise is to take Benjamin Franklin’s proverb “Fish and visitors stink after three days” and write a short fable to illustrate it as a moral lesson. Use animals that act like people to show how a guest becomes obnoxious to her host over the span of three days. How are things on the first day, the second day, the third day, and finally on the fourth day?

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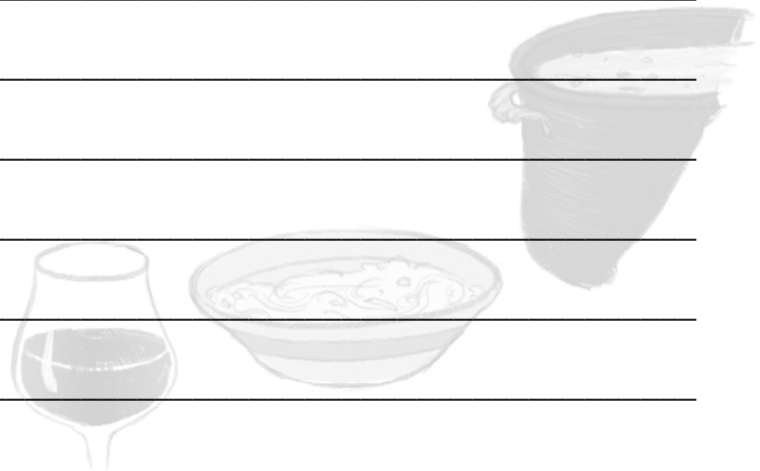
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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_









- *Jack and the Beanstalk*, England
- *Jesus Anointed by a Sinful Woman*, Luke 7 in the Christian Scriptures
- *Odysseus and the Cyclops*, ancient Greece
- *Penelope and the Suitors*, ancient Greece
- *The Princess and the Pea*, Hans Christian Andersen
- *Vasilisa the Beautiful and Baba Yaga*, Russia.

## Eat, My Coat, Eat

—adaptation of a Turkish tale by trickster Nasreddin Hodja

The Hodja was invited to a dinner party. Not wanting to be a show-off, the Hodja wore simple clothes. But when he got to the party, he found that everybody was dressed in their finest clothing and bedecked with jewels. These other people ignored him because they didn't want to be seen talking to someone in such plain clothing. They didn't even give him any food to eat. So the Hodja ran back home and put on his best suit and shoes. When he returned to the party, everybody greeted him warmly and invited him to sit down and eat.

When the soup was served, the Hodja dipped his sleeve into the bowl and said, "Eat, my coat, eat!" Everybody was shocked by this behavior. Then the Hodja took some meat and potatoes and stuffed them into his pockets. "Eat, my coat, eat!" he said.

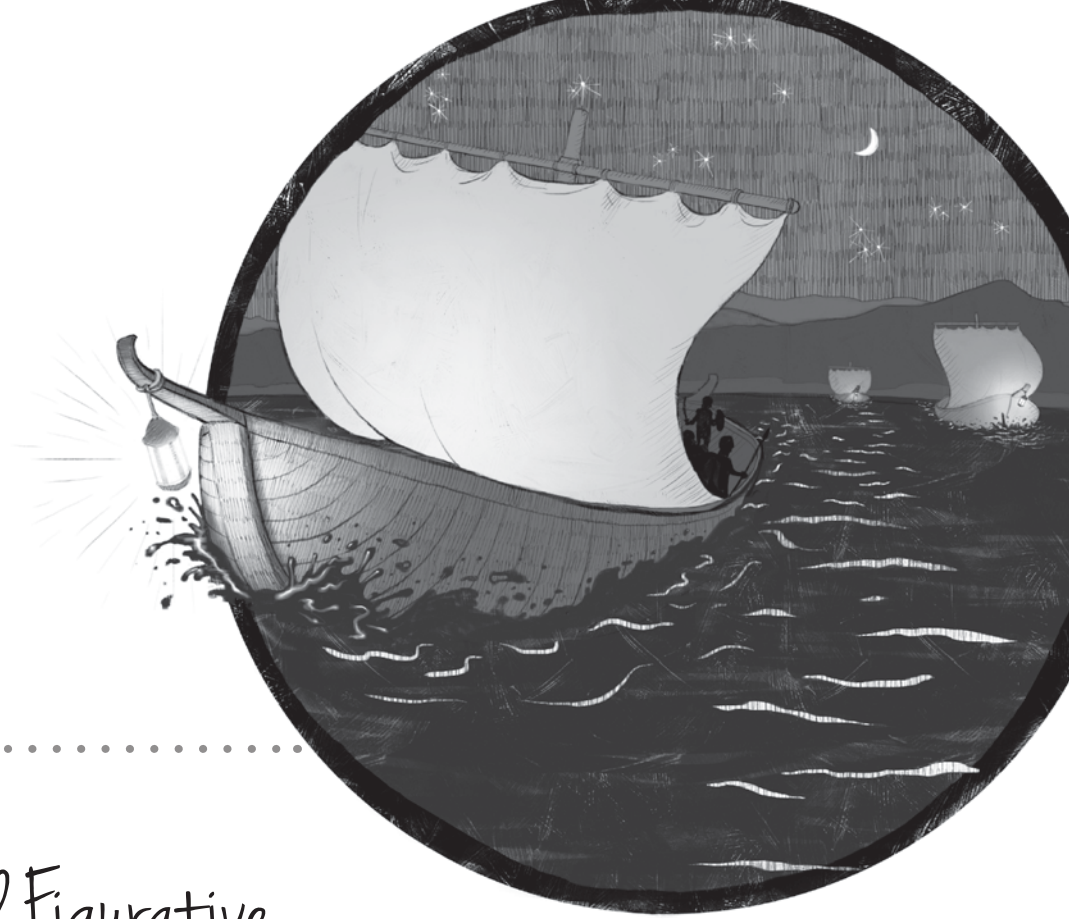
Finally, the host asked the Hodja, "What's the matter with you? What are you doing?"

The Hodja replied, "When I first arrived here wearing my plain clothes, no one offered me anything to eat or drink. But now that I've come back wearing this fine coat, I was immediately offered the best of everything. I can only assume that it was the coat and not myself who was invited to your dinner party. So now I am feeding it."

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## Lesson 2 .....

# Literal and Figurative Language in Proverbs

Many strokes **overthrow** the tallest oaks.

**T**his proverb was written by John Lyly, an English playwright who came before William Shakespeare. It is certainly true that many strokes of an ax can chop down a big tree, which is the proverb's **literal** meaning, or the ordinary or factual meaning. But, as with all proverbs, this saying means more than its literal meaning.

► What else do you think the proverb can mean?

John Lyly has employed **figurative language** in this proverb. Figurative language is wording that suggests an imaginative meaning that goes beyond what the actual words say.

Say you're a great speller, but you lose the spelling bee. After the tournament, your teacher gives you a pat on the back and says, "That's the way the ball bounces." She's not talking about a literal ball. However, balls do bounce in unpredictable ways, and spelling bees take unpredictable turns. So your teacher is really saying, "Never

mind. Don't worry about it. That's the way life goes sometimes." There are other ways of saying, "That's the way the ball bounces," or to emphasize the unpredictability of our lives. These include: "That's the way the cookie crumbles," "That's the way the dice roll," or simply, "That's life." In French it would be "*C'est la vie.*"

Take a look at another example of figurative language: Say you want to have a chat with a friend. You could say, "Come over and we'll chew the fat." Do you really want to chew fat? No, but when cooked right, fat is the tastiest part of meat, which people like to chew for its flavor and then spit out once the flavor is gone. Fat was once considered a very pleasurable thing to chew. "Let's chew the fat" is a figurative way of saying, "Let's have a nice, long, juicy talk." Other ways of saying the same thing include "Let's shoot the breeze" and "Let's chew the cud."

When John Lyly said, "Many strokes overthrow the tallest oaks," he was talking about more than chopping down a tree. He meant that it's possible to overcome a big obstacle with persistence and willpower or to do a difficult thing piece by piece. For example, we can't learn to play the piano in one day, but we can improve little by little every day. We can practice our scales and later be able to play songs that use those scales. In the same way, if we want to change a bad habit, which rarely goes away all at once, we must work on it little by little. This is the figurative, or deeper, meaning beneath the literal illustration of a person chopping down a tall tree with one ax swing after another.

There are other sayings that use figurative language to show the importance of persistence. Here are a few:

- The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.
- Drips of water may wear down a great stone.
- Pebble by pebble, an ant may raise a mountain.

Now take a look at a different proverb: "Let sleeping dogs lie." What is the literal meaning of this saying? Obviously, it is that if you see a dog, you should let it keep sleeping. What is the deeper meaning of the figurative language? In other words, what lesson is this proverb trying to teach? If you wake up a sleeping dog, it could be in a snappish mood and bite you. Therefore, don't go looking for trouble.



Can you think of other figurative ways to express the idea of “Don’t go looking for trouble”?

- If it isn’t broken, don’t try to fix it.
- Don’t try to count the teeth of a crocodile.
- Give a roaring lion plenty of room.
- Swim like a fish, but not with the sharks.

Now it’s time for you to sort out the figurative meanings of some proverbs and to write your own.

## Talk About It—

1. There’s a Nigerian proverb that says, “When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers.” What is the literal meaning of this proverb? What do you think is the deeper meaning of the figurative language? Hint: Think of the elephants as kings or powerful people.
2. The Chinese have a saying, “One mouse dropping ruins a whole pot of porridge.” What is the literal meaning of this proverb? What do you think is the deeper meaning of the figurative language? Compare this proverb to the English proverb “One bad apple spoils the bunch.”
3. The Indians have a saying, “Distant hills always look most beautiful.” What is the literal meaning of this proverb? What do you think is the deeper meaning of the figurative language? Compare this proverb to the English proverb “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.”
4. Why do you think people all over the world create proverbs? Why are they useful?



## Go Deeper—

1. See if you can match the following proverbs with their deeper meanings. Put the correct letter in the space next to the proverb.

\_\_\_\_\_ Don't bother giving ginger to a monkey. —India

\_\_\_\_\_ When it rains, it pours. —England

\_\_\_\_\_ Your elbow is close, but you can't bite it. —Russia

\_\_\_\_\_ The cub is from the lion. —Africa

A. The child is like the parent.

B. Things are not as easy as they look.

C. Don't waste valuable things on ungrateful people.

D. Troubles never come alone.



2. The deeper meaning of a proverb is usually shared by many other proverbs. See if you can match the list of meanings from the previous exercise with proverbs from other parts of the world. Put the correct letter in the space next to the proverb.

\_\_\_\_\_ The child is like the parent.

\_\_\_\_\_ Things are not as easy as they look.

\_\_\_\_\_ Don't waste valuable things on ungrateful people.

\_\_\_\_\_ Troubles never come alone.

A. Don't cast your pearls before the swine.

B. Like father, like son. Like mother, like daughter.

C. One stone causes an **avalanche**.

D. It's one thing to hear a mosquito, another thing to kill it.

# Writing Time—

1. **DICTATION**—Your teacher will read two proverbs to you. Please listen carefully! After your teacher reads once, she will read slowly again and include the punctuation marks. Your task will be to write down the sentences as your teacher reads them one by one.

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2. **SENTENCE PLAY**—Pebble by pebble, an ant may raise a mountain. Follow this sentence pattern to create a new proverb about something small becoming something big, or about something difficult overcome by little steps.

Examples: Grain by grain, a farmer feeds a nation.

Footstep by footstep, we walk around the world.

- a. Drop by drop, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- b. Push-up by push-up, \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, a composer creates a symphony.

3. **COPIOUSNESS**—When writing, you'll mostly want to use active voice. In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs an action. Take this sentence, for example: "I lit the candle." In this case, the subject is "I." The action is lighting the candle. In the sentence "Oliver kicked the rhinoceros," Oliver is the subject. The action is kicking the rhinoceros.

Active voice uses strong verbs and is livelier and less wordy than passive voice. The passive voice uses weak verbs (such as “is,” “am,” “are,” “was,” “were,” “be,” “being,” “been”), and the subject is not doing the action. Rather, some action is being done to the subject and the subject just seems to sit there doing absolutely nothing. Look at the same two sentences in passive voice: “The candle was lit by me” and “The rhinoceros was kicked by Oliver.” Notice how the candle and the rhino are just sitting there while “me” and “Oliver” are doing the acting. Both passive-voice sentences aren’t quite as zippy as the two sentences in active voice.

A. Change the following sentences from passive to active voice. Keep the same verb tense.

Example: The runner was cheered by the crowd.

Change to: The crowd cheered the runner.

i. The boat was rocked by the wave.

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ii. Every Saturday, clean laundry is hung up by the maid.

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iii. When it’s bedtime, stories are read to me by Dad.

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iv. The cavity in the patient’s tooth will be drilled by the dentist.

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v. Write your own sentence, using active voice, about a rhinoceros knocking down a tree.

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- B. This time, work the other way around. Change the sentences from active voice to passive voice. Keep the same verb tense.

Remember that you really don't want to use passive voice very often. You are doing this exercise so that you learn to recognize weak passive-voice sentences in your own writing.

Example: At the pizza parlor, Mom ordered two large pies.

Change to: At the pizza parlor, two large pies were ordered by Mom.

- i. The cat will scratch the boy.

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- ii. Paco gave Maria a gift for her birthday.

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- iii. A thief must have broken the window.

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- iv. Li-Hua picks a basket of pears.

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- v. Write your own sentence using passive voice.

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- C. Some sentences fall flat because the writer uses a state-of-being verb when she could use an action verb instead. State-of-being verbs belong to the "to be" verb family; they are words such as "is," "am," "were," "was," "are," "be," "been," "being."

Which do you think is the more interesting sentence: “The cat is on my face,” or “The cat sleeps on my face”? The verb “sleep” is more interesting than “is” because it paints a more vivid picture. How about this one: “The logs were bright,” or “The logs flamed brightly”? Thanks to the second sentence, you know why the logs are bright: The logs are on fire. “Flamed” is a more interesting verb than “were.”

In this next exercise, change the underlined state-of-being verbs into action verbs. You may alter the sentence as long as the meaning remains nearly the same.

Example: Hu is in China every summer.

Change to: Hu visits China every summer.

i. The wolf was in the forest, waiting for Little Red Riding Hood.

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ii. Little Red carried a basket of shortbread cookies that were delicious.

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iii. While she was in the dark trees, she noticed some bushes moving up ahead.

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iv. The wolf was like a beast when he pounced, and he was happy to gobble the cookies.

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v. Next time, Little Red will be with a basket of poison-ivy cupcakes.

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D. The medicine is worse than hot sauce. Change this sentence two ways using an active verb. You may alter the sentence as long as the meaning remains nearly the same.

- i. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- ii. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. **CREATE A NEW PROVERB**—Read through the following list of some common proverbs. For each one, first write the proverb’s literal meaning. (Remember, the literal meaning is what the sentence is actually describing.) Then write the proverb’s figurative meaning. (The figurative meaning illustrates a new idea that goes beyond what the actual words say.) Finally, write a new proverb using different language and images to suggest the proverb’s figurative meaning.

Example 1: Don’t count your chickens before they’re hatched.

- i. Literal meaning: Not all eggs hatch, so don’t imagine owning a whole flock of hens until they do.
- ii. Figurative meaning: Don’t be so confident that you take success for granted.
- iii. New proverb: Don’t cross the bridge before you come to the river, or Don’t think you’ve won the game before you score a goal.

Example 2: Birds of a feather flock together.

- i. Literal meaning: Birds that look alike gather together in flocks.
- ii. Figurative meaning: People who act alike usually hang out together.
- iii. New proverb: If you’re a thief, your friends will be thieves.

A. Look before you leap.

- i. Literal meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Figurative meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. New proverb: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

B. It was the straw that broke the camel's back.

i. Literal meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Figurative meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. New proverb: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



C. You can't tell a book by its cover.

i. Literal meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Figurative meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. New proverb: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. The burnt child dreads the fire.

i. Literal meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Figurative meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



iii. New proverb: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

E. Beggars can't be choosers.

i. Literal meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ii. Figurative meaning: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

iii. New proverb: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. **COMPARE PROVERBS**—Choose a set of proverbs from the following suggestions. Write a short paragraph comparing the two similar proverbs.

In your paragraph, answer the following questions:

- What are the proverbs and what do they mean?
- Where (in what countries) are the proverbs used?
- Why and how are the proverbs useful?

Example: One day of cold weather won't make three feet of ice. —China

Rome was not built in a day. —France/Italy

Paragraph:

Two proverbs share a similar meaning. The first proverb, "One day of cold weather won't make three feet of ice," and the second proverb, "Rome was not built in a day," both mean "Big things can't be done quickly." Whenever we start a big job or begin a significant undertaking, it's important to know that it can't be rushed. If we understand the truth of these proverbs, we will be patient and give any task the time and effort it deserves.



B. Idea: As soon as something is born, it begins to die.

Proverb: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

C. Idea: No work gains no reward.

Proverb: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

D. Idea: Happiness comes from having a clear conscience.

Proverb: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E. Idea: Weak people should stand together against a bully.

Proverb: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Speak It—**Lexis and Inflection**

Say your friend jumps out of a closet and scares you. You warn him with the proverb, “What goes around, comes around!” That is not public speaking. Or say you’re at a pool party and you shout, “Hey, everybody. Watch me do a cannonball!” That is not public speaking, either. Public speaking is speaking formally to a group of people, such as when you recite a poem to your class or give a speech to parents. It is something you practice ahead of time.

You already know that proper elocution, or the manner of presentation of a formal speech, is important for public speaking. Ancient educators taught us nearly everything we know about rhetoric, the practice of persuasive speaking. Aristotle noted two important parts of rhetoric: *logos* and *lexis*. *Logos* is Greek for “word” and also for “logical reasoning.” So *logos* is the content, the substance of a speech. It’s what you put down on paper and the words that are spoken. *Lexis* is the delivery of the words, how the speech comes across to the audience.

Both *logos* and *lexis* are important for effective public speaking. We might call them substance and style today. The content of a speech can mean the difference between sharing excellent ideas or spouting stuff and nonsense. The way you use your voice in speaking can mean the difference between catching the interest of your audience or putting it to sleep.

► Can you remember some important ways to improve the delivery, or *lexis*, of a speech?

You already know that proper volume—loudness and softness—is vital to *lexis*. Speed—how quickly or slowly you speak—is also key. In addition to proper volume and speed, there is also **inflection**. What is inflection?

Think about the different ways you could say the words, “I’d like to have you for dinner.” If you say this sentence in a nice, casual voice, it sounds as if you are inviting someone to your house for a meal. If you say it sarcastically, it sounds like you really don’t want her to come over for dinner. If you say it in a raspy, wolfish voice, it sounds as if you want to eat someone up. The change in the pitch or tone of your voice is called inflection.

Try to say the following proverbs with different inflections to give them different meanings:

- A big nose never spoils a handsome face.
- If you hang around dogs, you’ll get fleas.

In order to hold your audience’s attention, you are going to need to use the highs and lows of your voice. Inflection tells the audience when they need to be excited or when they should laugh or get serious. We know that when a person asks us a question, his voice will get a little higher at the end of his sentence. We know when we’re about to hear bad news because a person’s voice goes lower. A good speaker will know how to use inflection to make his speech more powerful.

Now try reading something longer with inflection. After you become acquainted with the content of the following passages, practice saying the passages using different inflections, speeds, and volumes. The passages are

• adapted from John Haaren and A.B. Poland's *Famous Men of the Middle Ages* and  
• from M.B. Synge's *The Discovery of New Worlds*.

- 1. Speak this passage by changing inflection, that is the pitch and tone of your  
• voice. Speak it tragically, lightheartedly, and with no emotion.

• Now we come to a time when the power of Rome was broken. Tribes of  
• barbarians who lived north of the Danube and Rhine Rivers took pos-  
• session of lands that had been part of the Roman Empire. These tribes  
• were the Goths, Vandals, Franks, and Anglo-Saxons. From them have  
• come some of the greatest nations of modern times, including Germany,  
• France, and England. All belonged to the same race and are known as  
• Teutons, or Germans.

• Some thirteen years after the death of Constantine, a great change took  
• place in the position of the Germans. Suddenly a horde of fierce fighters  
• appeared from the wild regions of Central Asia. They were the terrible  
• Huns, who had fought their way over the high tablelands of Asia until  
• they reached the Sea of Azov and found the land of the Goths. On rolled  
• the flood of invaders, striking terror before them, conquering the lands  
• of the Goths, pressing ever on and on toward the Danube, the great Ro-  
• man boundary.

• Dreading the fate that awaited them, the Goths looked across the broad  
• Danube at Rome, with its well-tilled plains beyond, and at last they  
• crossed over. Day after day and night after night ships crossed and re-  
• crossed the Danube, until thousands of Gothic warriors with their wives  
• and children stood on the soil of the Roman Empire, while the watchfires  
• of the Huns blazed away behind them on the other side of the river.

- 2. After you have read it for content, speak this passage slowly, quickly, and  
• moderately. Then vary the speed to make it sound best.

• The Teutonic tribes worshiped the same gods. Like the old Greeks and Ro-  
• mans, they had many gods.

Woden, who was also called Odin, was the greatest god of all. His name means “mighty warrior,” and he was king of all the gods. He rode through the air mounted on Sleipnir, an eight-footed horse that was fleetier than an eagle. When the tempest roared, the Teutons said it was the snorting of Sleipnir. Our name for Wednesday comes from Woden—“Wednesday” meaning “Woden’s day.”

3. After you have read this passage and understand it, speak this passage loudly, softly, and somewhere in-between. Then vary the volume to make it sound best.

Thor, a son of Woden, ranked next to Woden among the gods. He rode through the air in a chariot drawn by goats. The Germans called him Donar and Thunar, words which sound like “thunder.” From this we can see that he was the thunder god. In his hand he carried a wonderful hammer, which always came back to his hand when he threw it. Its head was so bright that as it flew through the air it made lightning. When it struck the vast ice mountains they reeled and splintered into fragments, and thus Thor’s hammer made thunder. Our name for Thursday comes from Thor—“Thursday” meaning “Thor’s day.”

4. Find the proverb in the story: When you are done practicing your elocution, see if you, with your class or parents, can figure out a proverb for the passage about the fall of Rome in #1 of this section. Be sure to share your proverb with the proper inflection.





## Lesson 3 .....

# Creating a Paragraph and Topic Sentences

I know that you are eager to dive headfirst into the chreia pool. You can't wait to start swimming around—I know, I know! Before you do, however, let's have a short lesson on creating **paragraphs**. It will make everything easier in the long run, and there will be less danger of drowning. I promise to be brief.

You'll notice that almost every book is divided up into paragraphs. Paragraphs are marked by indentations on the first line or by a space between each paragraph. If you don't believe me, pick up a book and see paragraphs in action.

► So what is a paragraph?

When you read the following passage, you'll see that it's all jumbled and very hard to understand:

Knights fought on horseback, and the word "chivalry" comes from the French word *cheval*, meaning "a horse." Be courageous in battle. It was a lasting disgrace! They were to come to the rescue of any lady in distress or danger.

Chivalry was a code of behavior for knights. She would not marry a coward or a braggart, even if he owned ten thousand acres of land. In those rough days of the Middle Ages, beautiful ideas, in the form of chivalry, started to blossom. The worst thing a knight could do was to be rude to a lady. By the code of chivalry, knights learned to truly value women. Always treat people with good manners. They were to serve the lady and fight for her good name. Speak the truth instead of lies. Above all, never insult a lady. And she would never give her love to any man who was not worthy of her. Be gentle in peace.

Now see how much more sense these sentences make when they are organized into two tidy paragraphs and order is given to the material:

Chivalry was a code of behavior for knights. Knights fought on horseback, and the word “chivalry” comes from the French word *cheval*, meaning “a horse.” In those rough days of the Middle Ages, beautiful ideas, in the form of chivalry, started to blossom. These were ideas such as: Be courageous in battle. Be gentle in peace. Always treat people with good manners. Speak the truth instead of lies. Above all, never insult a lady.

The worst thing a knight could do was to be rude to a lady. It was a lasting disgrace! By the code of chivalry, knights learned to truly value women. They were to come to the rescue of any lady in distress or danger. They were to serve the lady and fight for her good name. And she would never give her love to any man who was not worthy of her. She would not marry a coward or a braggart, even if he owned ten thousand acres of land.

Each of these paragraphs focuses on a single idea. The first paragraph seeks to define the word “chivalry.” The second paragraph describes the most important aspect of chivalry: how knights treated ladies and how ladies treated knights.

The most important sentence in each paragraph is called the **topic sentence**. This is the sentence that tells what the paragraph is about. A topic sentence can come anywhere in a paragraph, but most often it appears at the beginning.

► Look at the two previous paragraphs and see if you can locate the topic sentence in each of them.



Think of a paragraph as a sailboat in a fleet of sailboats, all going in the same direction, all heading to the same destination. The topic sentence is like the rudder on each boat that helps to keep it on course.

Now take a few minutes to play with paragraphs and topic sentences so that these ideas truly sink into your noggin.

## Tell It Back—Narration



- Without looking at the text, tell back the definitions of “paragraph” and “topic sentence,” and describe why they are both important.

## Go Deeper—

- Underline the topic sentence in each of the following paragraphs. Remember, the topic sentence tells us the main idea of the paragraph.

### Food During the Middle Ages

—adapted from *Manners, Customs, and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period* by Paul Lacroix

- Pork was the most important meat during the Middle Ages. In those remote days, when the land was still covered with enormous forests of oak, much space was devoted to pigs, whose special liking for acorns is well known. Thus the bishops, princes, and lords caused many herds of pigs to be fed on their lands. There was no great feast at which hams, sausages, and black puddings were not served on all the tables.
- Even in the city of Paris, there was scarcely a townsman who did not have two or three young pigs. There were so many pigs that they made a nuisance of themselves. During the day these unsightly creatures were allowed to roam in the streets. Pigs did keep the streets clean by eating up garbage of all sorts, which was thrown out of the houses, but they also

left behind dung. One of the sons of Louis the Fat fell off his horse and fractured his skull after a pig ran between the horse's legs.

- c. For many centuries fattened geese were more highly prized than any other kind of poultry. Charlemagne ordered that his domains should be well stocked with flocks of geese. Goose herders drove these tame geese to feed in the fields like flocks of sheep. These birds were considered a great delicacy by peasants and townspeople alike.
- d. Desserts of the Middle Ages were different than those we have today. There was a dish, called "dessert," that was made with pears, crabapples, peeled walnuts, figs, dates, peaches, grapes, filberts, spices, and red sugar plums. After dinner, wealthy people also ate wafers with spiced wine. They enjoyed jellies molded in the shapes of swans, peacocks, and herons.

## Writing Time—

- 1. **DICTATION**—Your teacher will read a quote from a paragraph at the beginning of this lesson. Please listen carefully! After your teacher reads once, she will read slowly again and include the punctuation marks. Your task will be to write down the sentences as your teacher reads them one by one.

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- 2. **SENTENCE PLAY**—There were so many pigs that they made a nuisance of themselves. During the day these unsightly creatures were allowed to roam in the streets. Notice how the second sentence flows smoothly from the topic sentence. The second sentence gives you information about why the pigs were such a nuisance.

If you change the topic sentence, how would that change the sentence that comes next? In the following exercises, write a second sentence that flows from the first.

Example: There were so many birds that they made people happy. During the day these bright-feathered creatures sang songs so sweetly.

a. There were so many dogs that they made a nuisance of themselves.

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b. There were so many goldfish that they made people happy.

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3. **COPIOUSNESS**—Mark the correct part of speech for the underlined words in the following passage. Place an *N* over the nouns, an *ADJ* over the adjectives, and a *V* over the verb. Remember that a noun is a person, place, thing or idea, an adjective describes a noun, and a verb is often the action word of the sentence. Then rewrite the passage with synonyms for the underlined words.

In those rough days of the Middle Ages, beautiful ideas, in the form of chivalry, started to blossom. These were ideas such as: Be courageous in battle. Be gentle in peace. Always treat people with good manners.  
Speak the truth instead of lies.

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4. **PARAGRAPHS**—Divide the following narrative about the Frankish king Clovis into four paragraphs. Draw a line between sentences to show where a new paragraph should start. Remember that a paragraph is a group of well-organized sentences that form an idea.

The four ideas are as follows:

- a. The first paragraph talks about Clovis's youth and character.
- b. The second paragraph introduces the problem of the Romans.
- c. The third paragraph talks about the Battle of Soissons.
- d. The fourth paragraph talks about Clotilde, the woman Clovis hopes to marry.



## Clovis, the First French King

—adapted from *Famous Men of the Middle Ages* by John H. Haaren

Each tribe of the Franks had its own king. The greatest of all these kings was Clovis, who became ruler of his tribe in the year 481. Clovis was then only sixteen years of age. But though he was so young, he proved in a very short time that he could govern as well as older men. He was intelligent and brave. No one ever knew him to be afraid of anything, even when he was but a child. When Clovis became king of the Franks, a great part of Gaul still belonged to Rome. This part was then governed by a Roman general named Syagrius. Clovis resolved to drive the Romans out of the country, and he talked over the matter with the head men of his army. “My desire,” said he, “is that the Franks shall have possession of every part of this fair land. I shall drive the Romans and their friends away and make Gaul the empire of the Franks.” Near the city of Soissons, the Roman army met the Frankish army. The Romans thought that they would win the victory easily, but they were mistaken. Every time that they made a charge upon the Franks they were beaten back by the warriors of Clovis. The young king himself fought bravely at the head of his men and with his own sword struck down a number of the Romans. He tried to find Syagrius and fight with him, but the Roman commander was nowhere to be found. Early in the battle he had fled from the field, leaving his men to defend themselves as best they could. The Franks gained a great victory that day. Not very long after Clovis became king he heard of a beautiful young girl, the niece of Gondebaud, king of Burgundy, and he thought he would like to marry her. Her name was Clotilde, and she was an orphan, for her wicked uncle Gondebaud had killed her father and mother. Clovis sent one of his nobles to Gondebaud to ask to have her for his wife. At first Gondebaud thought of refusing to let the girl go. He feared that she might have him punished for the murder of her parents if she became the wife of so powerful a man as Clovis. But he was also afraid that by refusing he would provoke the anger of Clovis, so he permitted the girl to be taken to the court of the king of the Franks. Clovis was delighted when he saw her, and they were immediately married.

5. **TOPIC SENTENCE**—The following paragraphs are missing topic sentences.

Read each paragraph to determine its subject, then write a topic sentence that would help the reader to better understand what the paragraph is about.

- a. In the gate of a castle there were murder holes, through which hot oil or boiling water could be poured on the heads of attackers. There were arrow loops in the walls and towers. Archers could shoot out of these holes and hit anyone who dared to come too close. When attackers brought up rams to break down the doors, castle defenders threw heavy stones down on their heads.

Write your topic sentence about castle defenses.

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- b. The churches are a blaze of lights. The markets are packed with pyramids of oranges, melons, and lemons. The shops are brilliantly illuminated and profusely decorated with ribbons and flowers. Bonfires are lighted; a great slaughter of turkeys is enacted, to the loud accompaniment of protests screeched by the flocks of birds awaiting their last moment; streets are thronged with an excited populace, diving in and out of shops, dancing on the pavements, processing along the roads, lingering to enjoy the sights.

—from *Peeps At Many Lands: Spain* by Edith A. Browne

Write your topic sentence about Christmas Eve in Spain.

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- c. When the silkworm is fully grown, it spins around itself a small ball of **silk** called a cocoon. If this cocoon were left to itself, the worm would change to a moth, and the moth would eat its way out of this little house. But this, of course, would cut the little threads and spoil the silk. Therefore, as soon as the cocoon is made, it is put into hot water to kill the worm. In this way the silk is saved. —from *Home Geography for Primary Grades* by C.C. Long
- Write your topic sentence about where silk comes from.

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## Speak It—

If the topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph, it should be emphasized in public speaking. Deliver the following paragraphs with proper elocution, but try speaking more softly or more loudly when you come to the underlined topic sentence. Your audience will listen more carefully when you use volume—loudness or softness—to emphasize a sentence.

### Medieval Medicine



—adapted from *Medieval Medicine* by James J. Walsh

The first modern university formed around a medical school in Salerno, Italy. There, medical monks encouraged good cleanliness as the way to good health. They believed very much in early rising, washing in cold water, thorough cleansing, and exercise in the open air without sudden cooling afterwards. They even made up a rhyme to teach cleanliness:

At early dawn, when first from bed you rise,  
Wash, in cold water, both your hands and eyes.

With brush and comb then cleanse your teeth and hair,  
And thus refreshed, your limbs outstretch with care.

The greatest surprise of the whole range of medical history is that medieval surgeons anticipated many medical advances. Medieval surgeons washed wounds with wine, scrupulously removing every foreign particle. Then they brought the edges of the wound together, not allowing wine or anything else to remain within. Dry surfaces were their desire so that the skin could knit together. Upon the outer surface they laid only lint steeped in wine. They killed germs with wine long before germs were discovered.

Medieval surgeons also wanted to operate painlessly on their patients. Some surgeons prescribed drugs, such as opium, the juice of the morel, mandrake, ivy, hemlock, or lettuce, which sent the patient to sleep, so that the incision would not be felt. A new sponge was soaked in the juice of these items and left to dry in the sun; when the surgeons needed it, they put a sponge into warm water and then held it under the nostrils of the patient until he went to sleep. Then they performed the operation.

