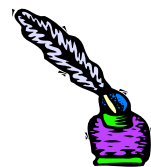


WRITE WITH

THE BEST

*Modeling Writing after
Great Works of
World Literature
Vol. 1
Grades 3-12*

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I dedicate this curriculum to my four children, who, by their presence,
have always challenged me to do my best!

Special thanks to my oldest son, Evan, for his enthusiastic assistance
with the literary passages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	6
HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM	9
SPECIAL NOTE #1 AND #2	13
UNIT 1: WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH – DESCRIBING AN OBJECT <i>20,000 Leagues Under the Sea</i> by Jules Verne	14
UNIT 2: WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH – DESCRIBING A PLACE <i>A Christmas Carol</i> by Charles Dickens	20
UNIT 3: WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH – DESCRIBING A CHARACTER <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> by Daniel Defoe	25
UNIT 4: WRITING A DIALOGUE <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> by Kenneth Grahame	31
UNIT 5: WRITING A SHORT STORY <i>“The Gift of the Magi”</i> by O. Henry	37

	PAGE
UNIT 6:	
WRITING A FABLE	50
<i>“The Ants and the Grasshopper”</i>	
and	
<i>“The Shepherd’s Boy and the Wolf”</i>	
by Aesop	
UNIT 7:	
WRITING A FRIENDLY LETTER	55
<i>Treasure Island</i>	
by Robert Louis Stevenson	
UNIT 8:	
WRITING POETRY – RHYMING VERSE	61
<i>“The Daffodils”</i>	
by William Wordsworth	
UNIT 9:	
WRITING POETRY – A BALLAD	66
OR NARRATIVE POEM	
<i>“Paul Revere’s Ride”</i>	
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	
THREE CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE	75
THE BEST WRITING <i>THE BEST</i>	
PROOFREADING CHECKLIST	76
GRADING CRITERIA	77
LEARNING STYLES SUGGESTIONS	78
AND OTHER WAYS TO AUGMENT THIS CURRICULUM	

	PAGE
ADDITIONAL LITERARY PASSAGES FOR MODELING WRITING	80
<i>HOW TO WRITE GUIDE</i>	84
HOW TO WRITE A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH	84
HOW TO WRITE A DIALOGUE	86
HOW TO WRITE A SHORT STORY	87
HOW TO WRITE A FABLE	89
HOW TO WRITE A FRIENDLY LETTER	90
HOW TO WRITE RHYMING VERSE	92
HOW TO WRITE A BALLAD OR NARRATIVE POEM	93
ANSWER KEY TO CITED LITERARY PASSAGES	94

INTRODUCTION

It doesn't take long, when looking in educational arenas – homeschool, public, and private – to discover that writing has been one of the most neglected subjects of our modern educational era. In the state in which I live, mandatory educational reforms have been made to improve the writing skills of students in elementary, middle, and high-school grades. This was finally accomplished because state colleges complained about incoming freshman who were unable to write even a paragraph adequately. The large majority of these students were required to take remedial composition classes before they could enter regular freshman English classes. In twelve to thirteen years of public or private education, they were never taught to write. Unfortunately, I have also seen this trend among homeschooled children. In the writing classes that I teach, I have found that many students have been taught to write sentences and brief paragraphs, but have never moved beyond that point into proficiency in various writing genres. For example, they have no idea how to correctly write a letter, compose poetry or write an essay and have no idea what it means to write *descriptively*. We all know that competent writing is essential in our age of communication and is a huge component of an excellent and complete education.

This curriculum was devised as a result of eighteen years of teaching writing to students in grades K-5 through 12, including public, private, and homeschooled children. Many of the ideas presented in this book were used in a homeschool writing class that I have taught for the last four years. I used classical literature and other great works as models of excellent writing, while teaching students literary appreciation and analysis at the same time. Students were required to bring in weekly samples of “excellent” writing and to be able to explain what made the writing “excellent”. They took weekly dictation from the passages and modeled their assignments after these writings. Amazing improvements

were made, and many of my students who had been diagnosed as having learning disabilities in written expression began to enjoy writing for the first time in their lives. I also interviewed homeschooling parents who were dissatisfied with the writing curriculums they had used thus far, and I found that they desired a curriculum that taught writing systematically, yet in a simple and clear way. They requested that a guide be included in the curriculum that would provide instructions on exactly how to write specific genres. Many parents also indicated that their students became bored with various curriculums because they did not offer interesting activities, etc. All of these issues have been addressed in this program. In addition to the instructions contained within the curriculum, a helpful “How To Write Guide” is included to assist parents in the teaching of each genre. A chapter entitled “Additional Literary Passages For Modeling Writing” is also included. Both of these make it possible for parents to continue teaching writing by using my approach, even after the initial literary passages are used. The greatest way for students to learn to write is through continued practice, so I have included resources to insure the continuation of writing skills. Proofreading and listening comprehension skills, which are essential to successful writing, are also taught, and all learning styles are accommodated.

The curriculum contains excerpts from great works of world literature regarding the various genres covered. Although all genres for excellent writing are listed in the complete set, each volume stands alone as complete regarding the genres that it contains. Volume 1 naturally begins with the prerequisites of successful writing and progresses until the end of volume 2. Volumes 1 and 2 together cover grades 3 through 12. You are not required to purchase separate books for each grade level. Devised in this way, the curriculum is very cost effective.

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Focus and Goal

The focus and goal of this writing program are effective and simple. Its purpose is to zero in on the skills that produce excellent writing and to teach students to use these same skills. To accomplish this, the program doesn't abstractly emphasize various grammatical rules for composition, but rather focuses on the *actual skills* of successful, excellent writers and teaches the observation and emulation of these same skills. Grammar is taught in the context of writing, not as a separate subject. The effective method of this curriculum follows in the *literary* steps of writers of great works of world literature, modeling writing after their methods and techniques for successful composition. *In summary, the focus of this program is to teach students to write **descriptively** through emulating the actual skills of masters of great writing. The goal of the program is to produce successful writers who know how to write effectively, who know how to proofread their work efficiently, and who know how to properly analyze great literature.*

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

1. This two-volume writing program was designed so that parents could use each volume for a total of 18 weeks (one half of a school year), with each unit taking 2 weeks to complete. However, many parents will want to use this volume for a full year. Students who have never written a short story or dialogue before may need 3-4 weeks to work on perfecting each of these skills. This may also be the case for other genres. The objective is mastery of writing skills – not to rush through each genre in order to move on to the next one. It is *very important* that students master each prerequisite skill before moving on, even if this takes a month or two months. Students can practice and accomplish each skill by writing a few or several examples of the same genre.
2. I highly encourage teachers to have their students write about topics that they are studying in other areas, such as history or science. It is a proven fact that children retain information much better if it is incorporated into as many subjects as possible. An example of this would be to write a friendly letter to Thomas Jefferson, while you are studying The Declaration of Independence or to write a short story about the pyramids in Egypt while you are studying ancient history.
3. Evaluate the writing of your students according to their ages and ability levels. For example, if you have two students (one in 3rd grade and one in 9th), you certainly cannot expect the same quality of writing from both students. A simple descriptive paragraph with 5-6 sentences will suffice for a third grader, but an older student would be expected to write a longer and more detailed paragraph. However, keep in mind that this does not include students with learning difficulties. Regardless of age or grade level, if a student has not learned the elementary skills of writing, evaluate him as a beginner.

4. Each family must have a dictionary and a thesaurus. An English handbook may also be beneficial for parents. Many parents will want to provide additional practice in capitalization, punctuation, English usage and using specific parts of speech. Many excellent English workbooks cover these skills. For students in grades 3-8, I recommend *Daily Grams* and *Easy Grammar*.
5. To thoroughly utilize the “Proofreading Checklist”, some students will need instruction in some of the skills addressed in the checklist such as run-on sentences and subject-verb agreement. Any English handbook will cover these, as will most English workbooks. For additional practice with proofreading skills, I recommend *Editor-In-Chief* or *Great Editing Adventures*. However, the best practice for proofreading skills is for students to constantly proofread their own papers, which is an effective feature of *WRITE WITH THE BEST*.
6. Some students may have difficulty reading the literary passages by themselves. If such is the case, parents should read these to the students while the students follow along. For students who have motor difficulties or problems writing down their thoughts on paper, it is totally acceptable for teachers to write what their students dictate to them. This can be done with each objective that requires writing on the part of the student.
7. One dictation exercise is included in each unit to reinforce the modeling of good writing. Dictation is proven to encourage good listening skills and writing habits, as well as to improve spelling, editing, and usage skills. After taking dictation during each unit, students should then correct their writing *by comparing it* to the literary passage. Students who are not skilled in dictation should begin by taking one sentence of dictation. All other students need not take more than three or four sentences of dictation. However, additional dictation from the literary passages can be given if parents so desire. (Students with motor

difficulties should not be expected to take dictation.)

8. In each unit, students are directed to find another example of the genre they are writing. Many families will have books at home with these examples, but please use your local libraries and librarians to help you if you do not have them available in your home. Plan ahead by looking in the “Table of Contents” at the next genre you will be working on.
9. The teacher should read the objectives of all 10 days of each unit before the student begins so that the progression of the curriculum can be realized. There is a calculated progression in the program. Also, some days are extended into the following days.
10. Teachers must make sure that all of the objectives of each day are achieved so that the goal of this curriculum, mastery of good writing skills, can be realized.
11. Emphasis in the form of **bold** text, *italicized* text, and underscored text is used throughout the book. Each different kind of emphasis is utilized for clarification of each objective so that the student will not miss each important element within each objective. Sometimes emphasis is not repeated when the objectives restate issues.
12. Students should look up the definitions of all unfamiliar words in the literary passages while reading or listening to the passages. This will help improve their vocabulary and comprehension skills. Great works of world literature are excellent for teaching vocabulary. If your student finds any of the passages difficult to understand, realize these passages were chosen to teach vocabulary together with writing skills.
13. Parents are permitted to copy only the pages containing the cited literary passages (also referred to in this curriculum as reading passages) and the “Proofreading Checklist” for their students’ use. You will need to make copies of the pages containing the cited literary passages and the “Proofreading Checklist” if you are using the book for more than one student or if you desire to maintain the book un-

marked. Therefore, under such circumstances, making copies of these passages and the “Proofreading Checklist” is not just permitted, but also recommended.

14. An answer key has been provided in the back of this book to verify the student’s work concerning the parts of speech and literary elements found in the cited literary passages. Only descriptive adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and specific nouns are listed. Not all nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs are included. Each verb, adjective, and adverb listed is color specified in order to facilitate use of the answer key.

Special Note #1

We have chosen the great works of world literature found in this program because of their incomparable descriptions, themes, characters, and their styles of writing. Even though their authors were excellent writers, some of them at times did not follow a number of our modern rules for punctuation and sentence structure or utilize our modern models for writing paragraphs and friendly letters. Therefore, we have corrected some of the punctuation and sentence structure in the literary passages, but have not changed any of the paragraph structure or the friendly letter. When teaching your students, please point out to them that we are modeling these writers because of their content, style and *primarily* their superb descriptive skills. When they depart from our modern rules of punctuation and structure, we will follow the proper requirements as stated in the “How To Write Guide” and your English handbook or workbook. In summary, our aim is to combine the best of both worlds – superlative writing style and correct writing form.

Special Note #2

We have not changed the spelling in the various literary passages cited. We have reproduced the spelling as rendered by each author.

UNIT 1

WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH -
DESCRIBING AN OBJECT

Please Note: For students who have never been taught how to write descriptively using adjectives, verbs, and adverbs, you may want to take longer than two weeks per unit to fully teach and emphasize this very important skill.

I highly recommend *Easy Grammar* by Wanda Phillips for students who need extra practice understanding nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. These parts of speech must be mastered in order to learn how to write descriptively.

Day 1 3 Objectives (each objective is indicated by an asterisk)

*Read this passage from 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne.

Looked in my turn, and could not repress a gesture of disgust. Before my eyes was a horrible monster worthy to figure in the legends of the marvellous. It was an immense cuttlefish, being eight yards long. It swam crossways in the direction of the Nautilus with great speed, watching us with its enormous staring green eyes. Its eight arms, or rather feet, fixed to its head, that have given the name of cephalopod to these animals, were twice as long as its body, and were twisted like the furies' hair. One could see the 250 air holes on the inner side of the tentacles. The monster's mouth, a horned beak like a parrot's, opened and shut vertically. Its tongue, a horned substance, furnished

with several rows of pointed teeth, came out quivering from this veritable pair of shears. What a freak of nature, a bird's beak on a mollusc! Its spindle-like body formed a fleshy mass that might weigh 4,000 to 5,000 lbs.; the varying colour changing with great rapidity, according to the irritation of the animal, passed successively from livid grey to reddish brown. What irritated this mollusc? No doubt the presence of the Nautilus, more formidable than itself, and on which its suckers or its jaws had no hold. Yet, what monsters these poulps are! What vitality the Creator has given them! What vigour in their movements! And they possess three hearts! Chance had brought us in presence of this cuttlefish, and I did not wish to lose the opportunity of carefully studying this specimen of cephalopods. I overcame the horror that inspired me, and, taking a pencil, began to draw it.

(*Parents, discuss with your student *why* he/she thinks this passage is an example of “good” writing.)

*Read “Three Characteristics that Make the Best Writing *The Best*” on page 75.

Day 2 4 Objectives

*Learn these *parts of speech* meanings:

Noun: a person, place, or thing

Verb: a word that shows an action (It is not necessary to discuss linking verbs at this time.)

Adjective: a word that describes a noun

An **adjective** answers these questions about a noun: *Which one? What kind? How much? How many?*

Adverb: a word that describes mainly a verb, but also an adjective and other adverbs

An **adverb** answers these questions about verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs: *When? Where? How? To what extent? (how much or how long?)*

*Review characteristic #2 from “Three Characteristics that Make the Best Writing *The Best*”. *Discuss with the student the meanings of **nouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives** and **adverbs** and their importance in descriptive writing.

*Write your own examples of **nouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives**, and **adverbs**. Name at least *five examples* for each one.

Day 3 2 Objectives

*Review the meanings of *parts of speech* from yesterday.

Note: Descriptive adjectives, verbs, and adverbs create pictures in the reader’s mind. Descriptive verbs are action verbs and do not include linking verbs such as *are, is, was, were, be, being, and been.*

Specific nouns also paint word pictures by giving particular and concrete details that readers can visualize.

*Underline each *descriptive* **adjective** in red, each *descriptive* **verb** in green, and each *descriptive* **adverb** in blue in the reading passage. Also, circle each *specific* **noun**.

(See the Answer Key to verify the student’s work.)

(Parents, younger students [Grades 3-5] and students who do not have experience using descriptive parts of speech should not be expected to

find every descriptive adjective, verb, adverb, and specific noun. If they find some, this is sufficient.)

Day 4 3 Objectives

*Complete the following exercise using a *thesaurus*. (Parents, this is a good time to explain the purpose of a thesaurus to the student and to teach him to use it.)

*Replace the following **nouns, verbs, adjectives,** and **adverbs** with more *specific* and *descriptive words*. **Nouns** should be *specific* rather than generic. For example, instead of just saying “car”, you could say “Chevy” or “limousine”.

Replace each word with at least 3 substitute words. *Write these words down.

1. walk
2. see
3. little
4. slowly
5. hungry
6. house
7. quickly
8. nice
9. give
10. street

Day 5 5 Objectives

Now that you know what specific and descriptive **parts of speech** a *descriptive* paragraph should include, *look in a book by a well-known author that you have in your house and find an example of a descriptive

paragraph describing an object. *Write down all of the *descriptive* words that you can find. *Close your eyes and have your teacher read the passage to you. Can you virtually see the object? Can you feel it? Can you hear it? Can you taste it? Can you smell it? *Take dictation from your teacher from the book you chose or from the reading passage in this unit. *Correct your dictation by comparing it to the book or passage.

Day 6 1 Objective

(*Parents, discuss with your student the following *requirements* for an adequate paragraph.)

Learn these five requirements:

1. It must contain a *topic sentence* – a sentence that tells what the whole paragraph will be about. This sentence is usually the first sentence in a paragraph.
2. The paragraph should contain at least 5 *sentences* and preferably more.
3. The *first line* of each paragraph must be *indented*.
4. The *middle sentences* should number at least 3 and must *prove* or *support* the topic sentence.
5. The *last sentence*, called a *concluding sentence*, should basically *restate* the topic sentence, but in different words.

Day 7 2 Objectives

*Each student must come up with an *object* to describe in a *descriptive paragraph*. Choose an object that you have observed or know something about. Choose an object other than the one from the reading passage in this unit. *After reviewing the style of Jules Verne in his description – the way he described his object – write down as many *descriptive adjectives*,

verbs, and **adverbs** as you can think of to describe your object. Write down some *specific nouns* also. If your object is like his, try not to use the actual words that he used to describe his object, but come up with your own descriptive words instead. Remember that you are to *paint word pictures* so that someone can close their eyes and virtually see, hear, smell, taste, or feel what you are describing when they hear your paragraph read to them. You will complete your paragraph tomorrow.

Day 8 3 Objectives

*First, write your topic sentence for your paragraph that you prepared for yesterday. Make sure it tells what your whole paragraph will be about. For example: "My pet gerbil is a beautiful, interesting creature." *Next, write your paragraph containing at least 5 sentences, with at least 3 sentences which support your topic sentence. *Last, write your concluding sentence.

Day 9 2 Objectives

*Proofread your paragraph by using the proofreading checklist in the back of this book. *Underline all *descriptive verbs* in green, *descriptive adjectives* in red, and *descriptive adverbs* in blue and circle each *specific noun*. Make sure you have at least two verbs, two adjectives, and two adverbs, and that at least some of your nouns are *specific*.

Day 10 2 Objectives

*Rewrite or type your paragraph. Make sure all your corrections are made. *Keep your completed paper in a folder to serve as your writing portfolio.

UNIT 2
WRITING A DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH -
DESCRIBING A PLACE

Day 1 2 Objectives (each objective is indicated by an asterisk)

*Read the following passages from A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens.

Once upon a time - of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather, foggy withal, and he could hear the people in the court outside, going wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pavement stones to warm them. The city clocks had only just gone three, but it was quite dark already - it had not been light all day - and candles were flaring in the windows of the neighbouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown air. The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and was so dense without, that although the court was of the narrowest, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the dingy cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might have thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a large scale.

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Meanwhile, the fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a Gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, with tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chattering in its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the main street at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing the gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round which a party of ragged men and boys were gathered, warming their hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. The water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowing sullenly congealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the shops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of the windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed.

*From what you've previously learned, talk about all of the characteristics that make these passages examples of "good" writing.

Day 2 4 Objectives

*Review the meanings of **nouns**, **verbs**, **adjectives**, and **adverbs**.

*Underline all *descriptive verbs* in green, **adjectives** in red, and **adverbs** in blue in the reading passages. (Parents, give examples for review, if

needed.) *Circle *specific nouns*.

(See the Answer Key to verify the student's work.)

*Notice the way Dickens gives personal (human) qualities to "Nature" and "the old bell" in the ancient tower. We will cover this use of figurative language in Unit 8.

Day 3 3 Objectives

**Look carefully* at what the author does to make you feel you are actually in this place. *What *senses* does he appeal to? Does he appeal to *sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing*?

*Make a list of each of these senses found in the reading passages.

For example, under "sight" list all the words that Dickens used that have to do with seeing.

Day 4 3 Objectives

*Think of a place that you would like to describe. Visit this place if you can. *Write down as many descriptive words as you can think of to describe this place to someone *who has never been there before*. *Pretend that someone else you know cannot see – what words would you need to vividly describe this place to him? How would you explain the place to make it come alive for him? Think about someone who cannot hear – how would you vividly describe this place to him in writing? Make a list of these vivid words.

Day 5 5 Objectives

*Look in the books that you have at home to find a description of a place.

**Why* or *why not* is this a good example of a description of a place? Give

as many reasons as you can why this is so. *Note the descriptive words the author uses or come up with words that he could have used in his description. *Take dictation from the reading passages in this unit. *Correct your dictation by comparing it to the passages.

Day 6 (Note: This will be a 2 day assignment.) 2 Objectives

*Remembering what you learned from Day 2 about Mr. Dickens' use of descriptive words and from Day 3 about his method of describing a place, begin writing your paragraph. When writing your topic sentence for your descriptive paragraph of a place, remember to make sure that it tells what your whole paragraph will be about. (Review the rules for writing a paragraph from Unit 1 if you need to.) Remember that an adequate paragraph should have at least 5 sentences, but it certainly can have more. *Make this a *longer paragraph* so that you can *adequately describe* your place.

Day 7 2 Objectives

*Finish your paragraph and *add your concluding sentence.

Day 8 2 Objectives

*Read through your paragraph and underline all *descriptive verbs* in green, **adjectives** in red, **adverbs** in blue, and circle all *specific nouns*. You should have at least two of each. *If you do not have enough, use your thesaurus to add more.

Day 9 1 Objective

*Use the Proofreading Checklist at the end of this book to “fine tune” your paragraph and make all needed corrections.

Day 10 3 Objectives

*Write or type your final draft. *Read it to your family. *Place your paper in your writing portfolio.